Dear Mitchell Families,

Some thoughts about MCAS and STRESS

After 23 years as an elementary principal it is my conviction that the stress the young people experience doesn't suddenly appear in the teenage years—it starts in elementary school and possibly earlier.

It happens that I was fortunate enough to be present when each of my three children were born. They looked, much like I will look in a few years: wrinkled, no hair, no teeth, oblivious to my surroundings—but within minutes they were peaceful….completely unstressed. The point is children are not born with stress, nor are they predisposed to seek it out—much of it comes from us—the loving and well-intentioned adults who care about them.

Looking around—in the hallways, on the playground, at the dances, at the sport competitions, at college, at careers, at relationships and romances, at the world—I see the unavoidable stressors that our children face and will face. Most of these we parents are essentially helpless to prevent—or even minimize. We are there to be leaned upon as our children mature and grow in confidence to a point where leaning becomes unnecessary.

However, there is one area where we are all becoming increasingly guilty—and when I say all, I mean our elected officials, our state education departments, our media, our schools, and ourselves. This area is often referred to as “high-stakes testing.” It has many names, in many places—in Massachusetts it goes by the name of MCAS. We have inadvertently, maybe unavoidably, allowed the concern about how states are achieving, how districts are achieving, how schools are achieving to become a problem for how kids see themselves achieving.

I have a related conviction, and it comes from the “credible” vantage point of leadership in a high-performing school, which is that children should be concerned about their effort, not their MCAS score. I have long wished for a District vision statement that said to all students, “All we ask is that you give us your best effort—we can ask for no more.” I'm here to say, with anger and frustration, that many (maybe most) students are beginning to believe that their MCAS score is a measure of themselves as individuals—that it somehow helps define their value to a watchful and anxious adult world.

Prepare your children for the MCAS by not dwelling on it. When the scores come back, don't share them with your children. Instead say this, “Caitie, I love you more than you can know. And I love you just the way you are. I wouldn't change a shiny hair on your head or a freckle on your nose. You taught me how to be a Dad and I wouldn't trade you for all the little girls in Massachusetts. Whenever you do your best, I'm happy and proud. Now, go get your glove and let's play some catch while the sun is still up.”

A final personal conviction as we move into the ridiculously over-emphasized MCAS season: Children will recover from every conceivable snub, mishap, incident, and tragedy except
one—the belief that they are a disappointment to their parents. The stress from that belief is unresolvable.

Mike Schwinden
Principal

MITCHELL NEWS

DATES TO REMEMBER

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PTC NEWS

MESSAGE FROM THE PTC CO-PRESIDENTS

Congratulations and thank you to Sarah Mesnik for accepting the position of PTC co-president next year.

We look forward to seeing all of the innovative inventions at next Tuesday's Invention Invasion. Thanks to Beth Putnam and Larissa Drayer for all of their hard work in coordinating this event.

Based on feedback from a PTC meeting earlier in the year, we have put together a detailed overview of what the PTC has spent so far this year. A document titled, "What has your PTC done for you lately?" will be posted on the Mitchell PTC website. A Constant Contact will be sent out with the link.

In this week's PTC meeting, we announced that a lecture is being sponsored by the Mitchell, Eliot and Hillside PTC's. Dr. Evans will be speaking on Wednesday, April 13, at 7:00 pm in the Eliot Auditorium. Please see below for a summary about the lecture.

Family Matters: Raising Healthy Children in Challenging Times, Robert Evans, Ed.D. There is no harder job than being a parent. Nothing else touches so much of a person so deeply—or so unpredictably—and there is no training for it. As the pace of life accelerates, as media influences intensify, and as the future grows less predictable, some parents and teachers may...
find it harder to be confident—harder to know how to raise competent, caring children, how to resist negative influences in the surrounding culture, how to help foster strength and resilience. Rob Evans will outline these dilemmas and offer concrete suggestions for successful coping at home and school.

Dr. Evans is a clinical and organizational psychologist and the Executive Director of The Human Relations Service in Wellesley. A former high school and pre-school teacher and a former child and family therapist, he has worked with schools and families in Needham and around the country for thirty-five years. His presentations are known for their lively wit and plain talk. He is the author of many articles and three books, including, *Family Matters: How Schools Can Cope with The Crisis in Childrearing.*

Thank you,
Anne Finucane & Chris Kent

### CAFETERIA VOLUNTEERS – March 2011

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<td>Amy Simeone</td>
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<td>Gina Auger</td>
<td>Lisa Bagshaw</td>
<td>Kelly Faggiano</td>
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### FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

The next Food Pantry collection is Tuesday, March 15. This month we are asking for: old fashioned oatmeal, honey, pancake syrup, almonds & raisins for our monthly food pantry recipe bags, Lo-cal & regular sugar, juice [48 oz cans or 64 oz plastic bottles], spaghetti, canned fish [other than tuna], canned Vegetables [other than peas, carrots & corn], Kleenex, paper towels, ketchup, mayo [15 oz. size], cooking oil, liquid laundry & dishwashing soap.

All donations are gratefully accepted. All items will be delivered to the Food Pantry at the Needham Community Council.

Thank you for your generosity.
The Community Service Learning Committee

### INVENTION INVASION

We look forward to seeing all the students who signed up for Invention Invasion and their families on Tuesday, March 15, 2011 from 6:30pm - 8:00pm in the Mitchell Cafeteria and Gymnasium for a family night of scientific discovery and fun, when students from all grades K-5 share their inventions. *(Attendance is restricted to those students who choose to invent something & their families.)*

We could still use one more parent to help set up (6:00-6:30pm) and a few families to help clean up (8:00-8:30pm). Please contact Beth Putnam (781-444-0650 or putnamhobbs9@aol.com) or Larissa Drayer (781-449-2702 or ldrayer@pappas-lenzo.com) about helping, or with any questions.
**DELAYED OPENING COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT**

On March 29th (Delayed Opening), the Community Service Committee will be helping **Birthday Wishes**, a nonprofit organization that provides birthday parties and other support for homeless children. We will gather in the cafeteria at **9:30am** and put together gift bags and prepare other items for parties that will take place at Boston area homeless shelters. At 10 am, someone from Birthday Wishes will speak to us about the important work they do and how our efforts are helping kids who wouldn’t otherwise have a birthday party. This is not a drop off event. Parents please join us and feel free to bring children of all ages. Learn more about the event or RSVP to Laura Hynes at (whynes@verizon.net). We will be sending more information about donations we will need that day to help fill the goodie bags. To find out more about Birthday Wishes, visit www.birthdaywishes.org.

**COMING SOON, MITCHELL USED BOOK SALE**

This year, the sale will be on April 12th and 13th. Starting Monday a collection box will be in the lobby for your used books and DVDs. Super Sorters and Sale Workers needed. Super Sorters volunteer to help empty the box in the lobby and move books to the basement. This can be done anytime during the day at your convenience. We need two people to volunteer for each week during the collection period (3/7, 3/14, 3/21, 3/28, and 4/4). For the sale, we will need help on Monday the 11th in the afternoon to set up and people to work 2 hour shifts at the sale Tuesday, 8-8 (election day) and Wednesday 8-9 or 2-4:00. All proceeds will benefit the Mitchell Media Center. If you would like to be a Super Sorter or work the sale, please contact Lisa Mancino at lbmancino@yahoo.com, or Jackie Boni at jakaam@gmail.com.

**NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPEN HOUSE**

The School Committee will hold its annual spring Open House in the library at High Rock School from 9:00 until 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 26, 2011. This is an informal opportunity for parents, community members, students, and staff to meet members of the School Committee and share ideas, concerns, and ask questions. Please stop by and enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation with your School Committee!

**SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

Please join us at the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) Meeting on March 16, 2011 at 3:30-5:00 pm in the Emery Grover Administration Building, 1330m Highland Ave., 2nd floor conference room.

**AGENDA:**

* updates about SHAC accomplishments
* discussion with State Representative Denise Garlick
* promoting the health and wellness of the Needham Public Schools Community and future directions........

Thank You and Be Well- from the SHAC Steering Committee:
Mimi Stamer- Director of Health Services
Kathy Pinkham- Director of Wellness
Ruth Griffin- Director of Food Services
Tom Denton- Director of Guidance

**RACE TO NOWHERE**

NEF hosts screening of "Race to Nowhere" in cooperation with the Needham Public Schools and Needham Youth Services.
Race to Nowhere is a call to action for families, educators, and policy makers to challenge current assumptions on how to best prepare the youth of America to become healthy, bright, contributing and leading citizens.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2011 at 7:00 pm**

**Place:** Needham High School Auditorium  
**Tickets:** $10 in advance, $15 at the door

To purchase tickets visit: rtnefneedham.eventbrite.com  
For more information visit: www.racetonowhere.com

Screening will be followed by a panel discussion including:  
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. Dan Gutekanst; School Committee Chair: Dr. Connie Barr;  
Needham High School Assistant Principal: Tamatha Bibbo; Director of Community Education: Sue Bonaiuto; Youth Services Director: Jon Mattleman; Needham High School Students.

Read Boston Globe article, Read New York Times article

**NEEDHAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION**  
www.nefneedham.org

**NEEDHAM HIGH SCHOOL TO PRESENT MY FAIR LADY**

Needham High School will present the classic musical, *My Fair Lady*, on March 18th and 19th at 7:30 pm, and March 20th at 2:00 pm. All shows will take place in the Newman Elementary School auditorium. Tickets are $15.00 per seat and are available for advance purchase by contacting the Fine & Performing Arts Department at 781-455-0800 ext 2440 or by going to http://rwd1.needham.k12.ma.us/fpa/ to download an advance purchase form. Advance ticket order forms are also available at the high school main office and the school department administration building. Advance purchase orders must be postmarked by March 11th in order to be processed. After that date, please contact the Fine & Performing Arts Department directly to reserve tickets. Order tickets now.

**PROJECT NIGHT-NIGHT BAG STUFFING**

**Date:** Saturday, March 12th  
**Time:** 10 to 11:30 am  
**Location:** Needham Public Library, Community Room  
**Cost:** Free, but please bring the three items to stuff in the bags  
Stuff a Night-Night bag for a child in an area shelter and make their day a little brighter! Please come with three items: 1) a new, crib-sized blanket (with tags), 2) a new or gently-used stuffed animal, 3) a new or gently-used book. Empty canvas bags will be available to decorate and stuff on site.  
Questions? Email jennyweargeorge@yahoo.com. For more information about Project Night Night, visit www.projectnightnight.org.

**KEEP YOUR CHIN UP**

Healthy Needham 2011 celebrates April by encouraging the Needham community to *keep your chin up*. *Keep your chin up* speaks about resiliency, the quality or ability of most people- children and adults- to bounce back, despite enduring hardships, stress, crises, and trauma. Dr. Robert Brooks will be speaking to parents and the greater Needham Community: Nurturing Resilience in our Children and Our Community, on April 12th, 7-9 pm, at the Newman Elementary School Auditorium.
COACH PITCH BASEBALL REGISTRATION
Coach Pitch Baseball is registering players for April 2011. This is a new spring league for 5, 6, and 7 year olds. For registration and information email nsbcoachpitch@gmail.com. This is not Tee ball and is under the direction of Needham Summer Baseball.

NEEDHAM GIRLS ROOKIE SOFTBALL
Registration for Needham Girls Rookie Softball for the spring 2011 has begun. This league is for girls in kindergarten, first, and second grade. For more information please go to the website www.needhamgirlsrookiesoftball.com

NEEDHAM SUMMER BASEBALL/LEGION BASEBALL
Registration is open for summer travel teams for 8 to 18 year olds. Needham Summer Baseball is now affiliated with Needham American Legion Post 14 Baseball. The 8 to 12 year olds will be in the Pre-Legion Division and the 13 to 18 year olds will be in the Junior Legion Division. For registration and tryout information or questions, email needhamsummerbaseball@yahoo.com.

NHS DANCE TEAM CLINIC FRIDAY APRIL 8TH
The Needham High Dance Team will host a clinic for children in grades K-5 at the A Gym at the high school from 4 to 7 on Friday, April 8th. Doors open at 3:45. For information and to reserve your spot, call Denise at 781.400.1042 or email her at Ry11in2@aol.com. A registration form will be sent to you. Please have your children wear sneakers or dance shoes!
Show Your School Spirit

at the Mitchell vs. Broadmeadow Basketball Game!

(Faculty, staff and parents play in this fun annual tradition.)

Friday, April 15th - 7:00 PM at Babson College Staake Gym

$3 per person, $12 family maximum

Advance ticket sales go directly to the Mitchell PTC and will be available through Friday, April 8th. Tickets purchased at the door will be split between the two schools. Support Mitchell School and buy in advance! **The basketball game is not a drop off event. Children must be accompanied by an adult.**

Players: If you’re interested in playing contact C.J. Smith at csmith8@babson.edu

Volunteers: Many Mitchell parent volunteers are needed to help out in the following areas - concession stand sales, safeguard stairs/hallway, set-up, and clean-up. Please contact Lisa Guagliano at guaglianofamily@verizon.net if you can help. Thank you!!

To Buy Tickets: Please print and detach the order form below and return to the Mitchell School Office by Friday, April 8th. Tickets will be sent home with your oldest Mitchell child on Monday, April 11th.

YES! We plan to attend the Mitchell vs Broadmeadow Basketball Game on Friday, April 15th. (Please make checks payable to the Mitchell PTC and drop-off at the Mitchell School Office.) Thank You!

Student Name (oldest child at Mitchell)______________________________

Teacher______________________________

Your email address______________________________

# of Tickets__________________

Total $ Amount Enclosed__________________

YES! I can help with the event. Circle one area and your preferred shift - **Set-up** (6:30 – 7:00), **Concession Stand Sales** (1st shift 7:00 – 8:00, 2nd shift 8:00 – 9:00)

**Safeguard Stairs & Hallway** (1st shift 7:00–7:30, 2nd shift 7:30–8:00, 3rd shift 8:00 – 8:30, 4th shift 8:30 –9:00.), **Clean-up** (9:00-9:30).
JUMP ROPE WITH HEART is BACK!
And
It is NEVER too late to join!

Mitchell School’s
Jump Rope Club

Time: Tuesday Mornings from 8:20 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
Where: Mitchell Gymnasium

What you will do: Each Tuesday morning you will have a chance to jump rope to music.

What you will need: Athletic shoe & comfortable clothing

The club will encourage children to get moving and have fun. It’s a great chance to get their blood pumping before they start their school day.

In order to get the club started, we are looking for parent volunteers to help out. The commitment can be as little as one time per month.

***A reminder--parent volunteers will need to stop by the office and fill out the brief CORI form ahead of time. All you need is your driver’s license.

___ I give my child ______________________________ permission to participate in the Mitchell School Jump Rope Club. I understand that the Mitchell School is not responsible for student injury. Parent signature:

____________________________
Parent email: ______________________________

PLEASE BRING PERMISSION SLIP TO JUMP ROPE CLUB. Questions? Contact Mitzi Perlmutter, Mitzi@TimeFinder.net or Amy Simeone, SimeoneFamily5@yahoo.com
Healthy Needham 2011 celebrates April by encouraging you to keep your chin up. Keep your chin up speaks about resiliency, the quality or ability of most people—children and adults—to bounce back, despite enduring hardships, stress, crises, and trauma.

Please join us at an evening workshop
Presented by Dr. Robert Brooks:
Nurturing Resilience in our Children and Our Community
April 12, 2011 at 7–9 pm
at the Newman Elementary School

Learn more about Dr. Brooks, a Needham resident, and his publications and work as a leading speaker on the themes of resilience, self-esteem, motivation, and family relationships at http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/.

Please refer to www.needham300.org for details about Healthy Needham 2011 activities and monthly themes.

On behalf of Healthy Needham 2011…
Be well and “keep your chin up”-

Mimi Stamer
Director of School Health Services
Needham Public Schools
781-455-0800 x 2124