A Unique Experience with the Staff from The Mattress Factory

When students were asked, “What is the Mattress Factory?” Most of them answered with the logical response, “A place where they make mattresses.” However, when talking about the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh’s North Side, the answer is a museum exhibiting room-size installation art. Students in MACS’ third, fourth, and fifth grade classes not only found out what they do at the Mattress Factory Museum, but they also created their own installation art exhibit on February 4th in the school library.

Students made slides using colorful cellophane and each slide was projected on the giant white walls set up by the Mattress Factory. The students experienced how they had the ability to create a certain mood with their color and design choices. The Mattress Factory was brought in to offer this unique experience by Reading is FUNdamental (RIF). MACS participates in RIF’s Books for Keeps program three times each school year. During each of these times, students take part in a reading celebration and they get to choose a book to keep. Students always look forward to choosing a free book; but when RIF brings in special guests, they get a book and so much more!

Middle Schoolers Doing Extraordinary

Think about it. It’s Saturday, 6:30 a.m. eight students, two teachers, and a tired principal all meet up for the MathCounts Regional Competition. Math at 6:30 a.m. on a Saturday?! This is just one of many things in which our kids are competing and excelling when it comes to extracurricular academic activities.

MACS brought home three awards from the Future City Competition held at Carnegie Museum, allowing students to design a modern city. MACS ended up sixth out of 35 teams.

The Science Department has been busy with science projects that will now be entered into the PRESF (Pittsburgh Regional Science Engineering Fair) held at Heinz Field and the Science Center. The Charles Drew Science Fair will be held at the Neighborhood Academy in April.

MACS SuperStars attended Academic Games League of America, PRESIDENTS competition at Seneca Valley on November 7th. The team that represented MACS displayed a stellar performance. They received 5th place in the overall competition for middle school. Jason Bottoms and Michael Kisner placed individually in the top ten percent. Michael placed 1st and Jason placed 4th in the overall Presidents competition.

When most kids are done for the day, our 7th & 8th Graders attend the BOLD Program (Building Our Leaders Daily) at Point Park University. Dr. Herman Reid sets up workshops on accounting and finance for our kids using volunteers from the Pittsburgh business community.

Parents, Staff and Students should all be very proud.

Vas Scoumis, Chief Executive Officer
GO PITT!
Thank you to all our parents and staff for participating in this year’s PTO fundraising activities and for collecting box tops/labels! All proceeds benefit our students. MACS’s Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) invites all parents and teachers to join this exciting organization. We are growing in numbers every year and are always looking for new members to help spark ideas that will enrich our school.

The PTO is dedicated to supporting MACS’s students and staff! So far this year, the PTO has donated money towards busses for the winter field trip and covered the cost of ice skating. They also donated money towards our school’s Black History Performance.

The PTO is also active in supporting teachers. Every year during teacher appreciation week, the PTO finds creative ways to make teachers feel special. The PTO also asked teachers to provide a classroom wish list. At various times throughout the year, the PTO randomly picks a teacher’s name, and that teacher is given items from their classroom wish list.

In the future, the PTO is looking forward to planning a spring Family Movie Night. Also, look for a PTO suggestion box on the window sill behind the front desk. If you cannot attend a meeting, but have some ideas or suggestions, please leave them in the box.

Thank you to everyone who supports and participates in our PTO!

One of the things I love about MACS is the priority it places on reading. Most parents in most schools would be shocked at how little time is spent actually reading during the school day. Research suggests that many students in grades K-5 spend as little as seven minutes per day reading!

We at MACS recognize the importance of allocating larger chunks of time reading. Every Monday through Thursday, every second – fifth grader spends 20 to 25 minutes in reading groups, typically in groups of four to six students and the reading is in addition to the regular curriculum.

Research tells us that guided oral reading, which is reading with an adult who can guide the process and facilitate comprehension, helps students make gains in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. In the vast majority of cases, a teacher, paraprofessional or reading specialist leads reading groups at MACS.

Books are chosen to match the students’ abilities and levels of fluency. In the course of a school year, students may end up reading four to seven challenging and engaging texts. The list of books read so far this year is far too long to include in this column. Some of my favorites are:

1. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
2. The Watsons go to Birmingham
3. Who was Harriet Tubman
4. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing
5. Holes
6. Miss Mary is Scary

When your child gets home from school today, ask him or her about reading groups. Chances are your child will give you an earful!
Parent Involvement: Key to Student Success

As the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at MACS and a volunteer “lawyer in the classroom,” I have had a unique opportunity to observe student performance both in the classroom and in preparing themselves for life.

In the classroom, students whose parents are involved in the school do better in terms of class preparation and class discussions, no matter what the subject matter. These students talk with their parents about the content of the class and get both input, as well as feedback from their parents about the subject matter of their courses.

Outside of the classroom, these students volunteer for special projects such as the Sim City project and Mock Trial and Entrepreneurship offerings and they excel in these project based learning opportunities. While all students are given the opportunity to participate, it is usually the students of parents who are involved with the school who get the greatest benefits from these course offering.

I recently asked Jason Bottoms, an eighth grade student to attend one of our monthly Board of Trustees meetings as a representative of the class and invited his mother to attend the meeting also. His mother’s contribution to the Board meeting was tremendous and every member of the board commented that they learned so much about the education of our students through the comments of this student’s parent. She didn’t just tell the Board what she thought was good about the school, she also made suggestions as to how to improve the education for her child and other children in the class and we all left the meeting much more informed and committed to doing a good job, better.

Jason’s comments also enlightened the Board as to what skills and overall preparation he was receiving from having an involved parent and committed faculty working on his behalf. It was truly a revelation to have them both participating in the student’s educational journey.

Educators around the country agree, that having parent involvement in the schools their children go to is important and I would argue that parental involvement, no matter how little, or great can make the margin of difference between a child that enjoys learning and a child that struggles to learn and is easily distracted and prone to becoming disinterested in education.

I urge all parents to take advantage of the opportunity to help your child learn, by getting involved in the learning process of the school and becoming a “coach and counselor and cheerleader” for your student at MACS.

The Board of Trustees works better with parent involvement and the classroom works better with parent involvement on an ongoing basis. It does take a “village” to properly raise and educate our children and we need your support and we need your involvement.

By Carl Cooper, Esquire

Get Connected

FIND US ONLINE...
The MACS website: www.macs.k8.org
The MACS Blog: macs.k8.wordpress.com
MACS on YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/MACSCharterSchool
Like Us on Facebook: Manchester Academic Charter School

Events Calendar

2nd Grade Cross Curricular Days

Once a month the entire second grade takes a break from the normal routine to have a fun-filled day, packed with themed centers. These centers allow us to explore concepts in math, reading, science, social studies, writing, and the arts in ways we don’t get to do during a regular school day. So far students have participated in Oreo Day, Pumpkin Day, Gingerbread Day, Thanksgiving Day and Loose Change Day.

We have dropped pumpkins out of windows, raced Oreos down a ramp, spun coins in a battle arena, produced and tasted homemade butter, and created life-size gingerbread men and tasty gingerbread houses. These cross-curricular days have proven to be very exciting for the second graders because it allows them to create, explore, discover, and investigate ideas in an unusual way. Upcoming cross-curricular days include Black History Day, where students will learn about the impact of great African Americans in history, and Jelly Bean Day, where students will test the weight, size, and taste of different jelly beans.

We look forward to even more of these special days as they continue to spark curiosity and excitement for learning in our students. Special thanks to all second grade parents who have donated items to our classrooms and have volunteered to make these cross-curricular days a huge success!
NO NAME CALLING WEEK

Bullying is a major societal issue affecting everyone worldwide. According to current statistics, more than 30 percent of our school-age children—approximately 5.7 million children—are bullied in schools, on playgrounds, and in recreational facilities each year. The fact is: NAMES HURT! And during the week of January 28th through February 1st, MACS did something about it. National Junior Honor Society members launched No Name-Calling Week to start an ongoing effort to end name-calling and bullying.

No Name-Calling Week, a nationally recognized week to create awareness of the damages of name-calling and bullying in schools, consisted of a variety of activities for students and staff at MACS, including reading and writing assignments, poster contests, viewing anti-bullying videos and discussion groups. Anti-bullying and name-calling posters were made by students and displayed in hallways throughout the school. Students signed an “Anti-Bullying Pledge,” making a promise to stop bullying and name-calling. NJHS members taught a “Names Hurt” lesson to grades 3-5 and Training Wheels. The lesson topic was on how negative and positive words have an impact on our lives. The goal of the lesson was to decrease name calling and verbal bullying while increasing use of positive words.

The week of activities was met with enthusiasm by both students and staff, and was a huge success. We hope that No-Name-Calling Week helped all students consider the weight of the words they use, and make school a safer, healthier place for all. The challenge now: to make every week “No Name-Calling Week!”

MACS 2012-2013 BASKETBALL SEASON

As the basketball season comes to an end it is time to reflect on all the season that was. Our 6th – 8th grade teams played well against some of the biggest schools in the WPIAL. Both the girl’s team and the boy’s team were out manned, sometimes playing teams that had more players than we have students. Still we had fun and we are getting to know the huge school districts to the North.

Our 4-5th grade teams played mostly city teams, still bigger, but not AAAA. Our girls are in their second season and developed well, led by Amira Jackson.

Our boys made it to the championship. They played well all season, led by Nehemiah Brazil. Coach Tria said she was proud of the team and we look forward to the future.

MACS would like to thank all the players and Coaches Braxton, Moran, Davenport & Wright. Thank you for making us proud to be a mustang.

NO NAME CALLING WEEK

POWER SCHOOL

As a PowerSchool parent, you can check to see whether or not your child is in class right now, find out what tonight’s homework is, confirm that last night’s homework was handed in, and view your child’s final grades as they exist in the teacher’s gradebook at this very moment.

You can also track the formative progress of your child’s performance on state standards, register to receive alert notifications, review the daily comments from teachers, and much more.

To register for Power School or for more information please contact Mr. Dimucci by phone 412.322.0585 ext. 174 or by email at ddimucci@macsk8.org.

ALERT NOW

AlertNow is an industry-leading rapid notification service, designed specifically for the K-12 community. With AlertNow, educational administrators and leaders can send out important voice calls, email messages or SMS messages to students, parents and staff.

Please make certain MACS has your latest contact information, so you can be contacted if the need arises.

A SPECIAL NOTE

We are looking for stories and pictures from years gone by. We also would love to hear about our alumni and all the great things they are doing. Please email any information or pictures to vscoumis@macsk8.org with the subject heading “MACS Alumni”.

Our class of 2009 will be featured in the upcoming newsletter, so make sure you tell us what and where and how things are going.
WHY I LIKE MACS

1ST GRADE

Kaitlyn McClain — I like MACS because it’s a good school and kids are nice and not bullying each other. I like the special and even Gym because sometimes we have free play.

Elijah Whyte — two of my favorite cousins go here and I always have fun.

Ramon Preston — we get to go on field trips and have specials. Specials are fun.

Nathan Brazil — its fun and we do a lot of things in Gym and learning and math.

2ND GRADE

Nelson Morris — it’s fun, my mom taught here and you learn lots of things.

Kamili Wiley — you can learn a lot and lots of opportunities... nice teachers and principals.

Khalil Collins — we get to play on the ipads and laptops.

Kinverlyn Fleming — I like MACS because this is the first school I came to and the only school I like.

3RD GRADE

Ryen Harrison — they (teachers) teach us a lot of stuff we need to know about.

Jamia Foster — they (teachers) do good stuff with us.

Ryan Jones — the teachers find a way to teach the children in a fun way.

4TH GRADE

Diamond McGrady — it’s better than my other school and more challenging. And we have nice teachers.

Tirzah Duncan — of the field trips we go on and the MACS store. I like the specials because they are really fun to learn about.

Oisin McMahon-Carse — I like the specials because they are fun.

5TH GRADE

Morgan Martin — it feels like a home to me.

Christopher Ransom — I like this school because it has a lot of space and you can do a lot of things here.

Amir Walton — What I like about MACS is you get an education while having fun and you do a lot of activities.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH:
FAITH IN OUR FUTURE

Our founder Dr. Betty Robinson and her husband Rev James Robinson worked hard to have an environment where Black History could be celebrated and appreciated throughout the year. We have tried to maintain this climate while celebrating the National Black History month of February.

STUDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN...

UNITY BLACK OUT DAY:
This is a day to pay homage and show pride!

BLACK HISTORY TRIVIA:
Staff and students will share Black History facts. Students will be awarded prizes for correct answers during the trivia.

AFRICAN AMERICAN STAMP CONTEST:
Students will design a stamp of a famous African American.

BLACK HISTORY ASSEMBLY:
This is an opportunity for students to engage in activities orchestrated by various community organizations to celebrate Black History.

BLACK INVENTORS EXHIBIT:
Each student was assigned an African American Inventor to research. The students will complete a report and make a model of their invention. All projects will be on display in our MACS Black Inventors Museum!

DOOR DECORATING CONTEST:
Each class will create a door display that embraces the theme “Faith in Our Future” and follows the set criteria.

This all culminated with the Faith in our Future presentation on February 22. With the help of the August Wilson Center, our kids and teachers celebrated with dance and song... Wow we have talent.

BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM:
A program that celebrates and acknowledges the achievements of African Americans by showcasing the talents of our students and members of the community.

Thanks to all for supporting the entire month.
**Our Mission:**
We foster the dreams of all children by providing an outstanding and dynamic education in a nurturing environment.

**Our Vision:**
We will continue to be an educational center of excellence and become a community pillar of support where students excel, families are engaged, teachers are empowered, and alumni flourish.

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**Heinz Helps Out**

MACS was the recipient of a Heinz grant that will help further our educational goals. We identified four goals — Parent Engagement, Teacher Empowerment, Student Based Learning and Curriculum Blending. All four goals align with the Heinz Endowment.

One initiative is providing internet access to all student when they are at home. MACS is working with Comcast to provide internet access to any student that does not have it. Heinz funding will purchase high speed Internet access for the estimated 50 MACS families who do not have Internet access at home.

In the not so distant future we will also provide mobile computers for those that do not have it. Heinz funding will purchase about 40 laptops to be available to students and families for after school use.

This is just two of the many initiatives MACS will undertake thanks to Heinz.