

January 25, 2012

Dear Nixon Parents,

Happy New Year! We were pleased to see all of your children back at school ready to learn.

Noticing Positive Behaviors

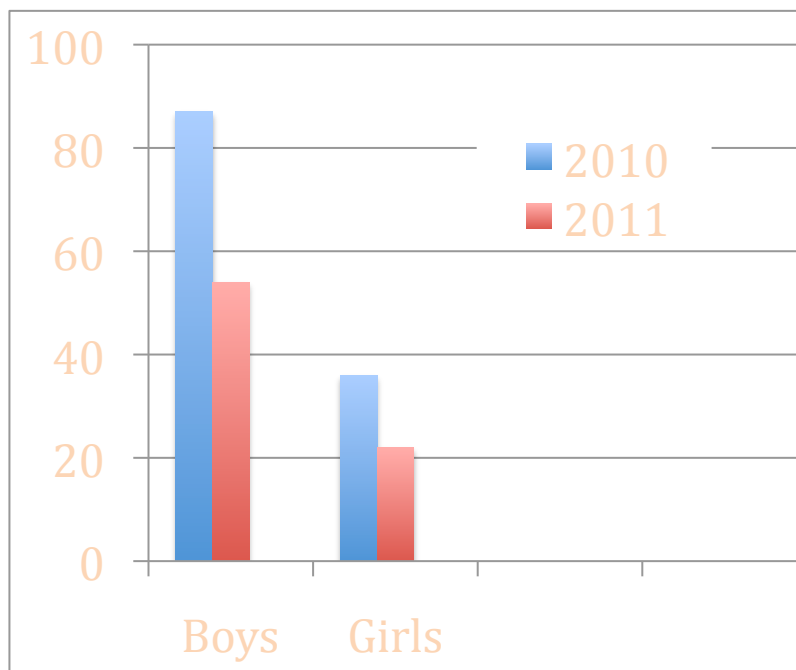
Recently at School Meeting, students continued our new Nixon tradition of **nominating students who have been particularly respectful and kind**. Students recognized peers who: include those who don't have someone to play with, encourage those who miss a play, help someone who is hurt, offer to referee a game, are flexible in playing what someone else wants to play, etc. Students can also recognize each other by filling out a **"Nixon Cares" form**. (We encourage children not to focus on close friends when making nominations.) Next time you are in school, take a look at our bulletin board where we recognize positive student actions.

State of the School—How are we doing?

Are you interested in what's going on at Nixon? I recently presented the **State of the School to the School Committee** and will give the same presentation to parents at the **PTO meeting on Friday, March 9**. The presentation includes statistics about connections, behavior, and bullying, as well as video clips from students. I hope many of you will be able to attend.

Following is one of the many pieces of data I have compiled recently. This graph compares the **number of students involved in disciplinary incidents** at the administration level from September to December of each year. Obviously, we will need collect data over multiple years before we can identify a trend. Some actions that may be helping are our increased focus on positive behavior and connections and clarity and consistency about expectations and consequences through the Student Aggression Rubric.

Number of Students Involved in Disciplinary Incidents (Sept.-Dec. 2010 and 2011)



Nixon Staff Update

I am very pleased to introduce **Mrs. Jo-Ann Schuster**, our new **Administrative Secretary**, who will begin on Friday. Mrs. Schuster has a degree in Executive Secretary Administration, many years of experience in this role, and has a warm and professional manner. We selected her from over 120 applicants for this position. Please join us in welcoming her.



One of our initiatives is to help develop connections between students and staff. Each week a class “**features**” a **staff member**, gives some interesting info about the person over the PA and invites children to talk to the special person. Ask your child which **staff member has a cat with three legs**.

What do we do during Professional Development Days?

Recently we participated in full day of professional development designed to help us meet children’s needs. I thought you might be interested in what we have been and will be doing. Research is very clear that **ongoing, high quality professional development is one of the keys to a high performing district**, and we appreciate your support of our learning.

- Kindergarten—Teachers are learning how to **use student drawing and storytelling to develop kindergarteners writing**. They also will learn about the new Common Core standards in **mathematics** for kindergarten.
- First and second grade**—Teachers have been learning to implement **reading focus** lessons using literature to teach reading **comprehension** skills. They have also learned about new **Common Core** English Language Arts and have begun to develop lessons related to the new expectations that young children **write opinion pieces**. (I know I will get letters from the children on why we need more recess!)
- Third** grade has spent a number of sessions immersed in the Common Core **mathematics standards and best practices** in teaching math. There will be fewer standards, and students will explore them more in depth. Third grade will have an increased focus on multiplication and mastery of facts, for example.
- Fourth and fifth** grade **regular and special** educators have been focusing on how to **work together** for the benefit of all children. Their focus has been on teaching **fractions**, a particularly challenging topic for many students.
- Guidance** counselors and **nurses** have been learning how to help children **manage difficult feelings** including frustration, sadness, disappointment, anger, fear and anxiety.
- Nurses** have been working on recommendations for a **head injury** policy.
- Team chairs and psychologists** have been developing their knowledge of **Functional Behavioral Assessments** and **positive behavior** support plans.
- Assistants** have been learning additional strategies for **identifying and dealing with challenging behaviors**.
- Spanish teachers** have been working on incorporating **technology** into their teaching and developing **common assessments**.
- Art** teachers have been **sharing ideas for lessons** that meet art standards.

- PE** teachers are developing **common assessments** for their units of study.
- Music teachers** are developing **assessments for singing, improvisation and composition.**
- Secretaries** furthered their knowledge of **Google** documents.

MCAS

Following are the specific dates we will give MCAS at each grade level. It is important that children be present on these days, as the state requires that all children participate. However, if your child is ill, we will arrange for him or her to take a make-up exam.

As always, I want to remind you that MCAS is **only one way that we assess** children. We use nationally normed assessments, curriculum based assessments, class work, projects, and teacher observation to gain a more complete picture of your child’s strengths and needs.

At Nixon we feel that children are **well prepared for the exam through our regular curriculum** and instruction on **test-taking skills**, which will serve them throughout their educational careers. We do not recommend that parents drill their children on MCAS questions.

English/Language Arts - March	Math and Science/Technology-May
March 22 3rd Grade ELA #1 March 27 3rd Grade ELA #2	May 7 3rd Grade Math #1 May 14 3rd Grade Math #2
March 20 4th Grade Long Composition March 23 4th Grade ELA #1 March 30 4th Grade ELA #2	May 8 4th Grade Math #1 May 15 4th Grade Math #2
March 26 5th Grade ELA #1 March 28 5th Grade ELA #2	May 10 5th Grade Math #1 May 11 5th Grade Math #2 May 17 5th Grade S&T #1 May 18 5th Grade S&T #2

A few quick announcements

If your child’s class shares **Valentine cards**, please send a card for **EACH child**. Also, please **do not send candy or food** in the cards or otherwise. Any food provided for parties must be planned ahead, approved, and checked by the nurse before it goes the classroom to keep children safe and ensure a healthy balance of food.



Thank you for sending in those boots and snow pants. **Boots** continue to be necessary due to **mud**. **Snow pants** need only be sent for K-4th graders when there is **snow** on the ground.

I am always available to talk to parents via phone, email or in person. I hold an **Open Hour** on Wednesday mornings from 9-10 for **quick chats**, and I am **happy to schedule an appointment** to talk with you if you have an issue that needs more time. My email is joni_jay@sudbury.k12.ma.us.

I hope to see many of you at **Family Movie** night, featuring *The Smurfs*, this Friday, January 27.

Warmly,

Joni Jay