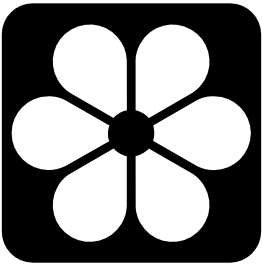


FalkTalk

Volume 14, Issue 6
April, 2004



No Child Left Behind has caused untold aggravation for schools all across the nation.

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From the Director

I woke up this morning when my wife’s school phone rang at 6:00AM. She was informed that there was no electrical power in her entire district. Instant panic - today was the last day for the PSSA exams, and they were not allowed to test on alternate dates. My wife - the Superintendent - spent the next hour working with her staff to identify adequately-lit space within the district (the cafeteria) so that testing could proceed as scheduled. And then - - the power came on at 8AM.

Skip to lunchtime in the Falk School cafeteria. If our power went out, this would be the darkest space in the entire school. I sat there, musing about how I might handle the situation. We have emergency lighting, lots of windows in most classrooms and the gym, but I determined that I would be much more concerned about the safety of the children than the need to finish any testing.

And in thinking about such matters, I identified one more of the differences that separate Falk from many other schools. No Child Left Behind has caused untold aggravation for schools all across the nation. Testing and “proficiency” have become the imposed mantra of public educational institutions. The mantra sometimes causes districts to forget about some of the more important issues of education - and childhood.

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From the PTA President

With spring upon us, it is a pleasure to write about the many springtime events happening in and around our school.

The February 20th Excellence in Teaching annual event, held for the second year at Romp ‘n’ Roll, was a big success. With Falk families lined up at the door to get in, it was clear from the start that the turnout was going to be terrific. We not only succeeded in filling up the facility and having a

great time – kids, parents and teachers alike roller blading, skating, dancing with the Latin samba instructor, eating, and bidding on the silent auction baskets – but we brought in over \$5000 for the Excellence in Teaching Scholarship Fund. The EIT Scholarship Fund supports the goal of increasing diversity through tuition support for minority students who would otherwise be financially unable to attend Falk School and by providing emergency

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Calendar of Events

April 6	No School, Teacher In-service	April 25	Falk Bingo, 4-6pm
April 9,12	No School, Holiday Break	May 14	Spring Carnival, 1pm dismissal
April 21-27	Achievement Testing Parent Conferences, 1pm dismissal	May 24-27	Middle School – Alice in Wonderland
April 21	PTA Meeting, 7:30pm	May 28	No School, Teacher In-Service Day
		May 31	No School, Memorial Day Holiday

Back to the cafeteria - I spent the remainder of the lunch periods observing the students. I am always amazed by the growth of the children from September till April. As I watched the various groups, I was glad that I had spent my professional years at Falk and that I had developed a sense of the true "value added" priorities of a K-8 education. Our children perform well on tests of achievement. The yearly scores are consistently in the excellent range. But as I walk through the halls and as I take visitors into our classrooms, I remain convinced that there is so much more to a child's education. Your children - our students - demonstrate what a complete education should look like. I took two of our kids down to interview the Chancellor of the university on Wednesday. I was so proud of the way they handled themselves. I sat in on a K class this morning and the questions they ask and the insights they have developed are quite astounding. Take a good look at your children and compare them to their counterparts outside the Falk community. The findings will be favorable - I guarantee.

Your children – our students – demonstrate what a complete education should look like.

Oh yes. We will be testing 4th through 8th grade April 21-27 and we will also be holding parent conferences in the afternoons. If there is a power outage, I will also guarantee that we will easily identify alternate dates.

– Dr. McDonald

From the PTA President (cont from page 1)

assistance to students already enrolled, whose families are unexpectedly unable to meet tuition payment deadlines. What better cause to raise money for, and what better way to do it than with an emphasis on exercise, fun, and family. Charlene Barnett, once again, did an incredible job coordinating the event! The majority of the 'profits' of the event come from the silent auction baskets. As is always the case, the bidding was generous and the baskets were impressive. Thank you to everyone who donated time, basket items, and support for this event. A special thank you to the teachers for heading up the individual classroom basket creations again this year!

April and May bring several more school events of note. On April 21st, the last General PTA meeting of the year will focus on an important topic -- the media and its effects on children, presented by Dr. Loreta Matheo Kass -- pediatrician, board-certified

adolescent medicine specialist, and Falk parent. (See notice by PTA Vice-President, Laura Zaspel Lawson.)

Then, on April 25th, we'll have the annual Falk Bingo, headed up this year by new Falk parent Pam Goldman. Falk Bingo is one of the many events provided by the PTA that is not meant as a fundraiser, but is a way of simply adding to the memorable school-focused experiences of our children.

And in May – The Spring Carnival (May 14th – 5:00p)! Under the first-time leadership of Kim Lincoln, another non-fundraising event – the PTA's 'gift' to the Falk students and their families – celebrating spring, another year gone by, and hopefully a welcome to warm weather and blue skies!

So, a lot to look forward to in the coming weeks at our school. Let's hope that "in like a lion and out like a lamb" holds true this year. I look forward to seeing you at these upcoming events.

– Pam Greenhouse

B I N G O

FALK BINGO

SUNDAY APRIL 25

4-6 PM



**SPRING
CARNIVAL**
May 14, 5pm

Excellence in Teaching News

The Excellence in Teaching Skating event at Romp N' Roll was a great success, thanks to the Falk parents, students, teachers and staff that participated! We had fun while raising over \$5,000 for the scholarship, which helps minority students with emergency tuition aid for Falk. This fund is over two decades old, and this was one of its most financially successful years, I'm sure the fact that Dr. McDonald was zooming around the roller rink on rollerblades impressed the children, and the adults as well. Bravo Dr. Mac! And of course, the majority of the money was raised thanks to the generous donations of items being auctioned by our classrooms in our silent auction, and by those donating wonderful monetary contributions directly to the scholarship. Thanks for coming out, and thanks for your contributions.

The good news regarding **Dr. McDonald's retirement dinner event**, is that the invitations were mailed recently, and we will be taking "reservations" on a first come first served basis, so please send in your RSVP card promptly if you wish to attend, as we have a limited number we can accommodate. If you are unable to participate in this celebration, please consider sending greetings to Dr. Mac in the form of a card, letter, film, photograph, or some other unique expression. As has been historically done since the inception of the Excellence in Teaching Scholarship, we, (the EIT trustees) host the dinners for our retiring Directors, and in doing so, also assist in helping the fund raise monies for the tuition aid for needy families. It's a wonderful cooperation of kindred spirits showing appreciation for the leaders of this fine school, who are also instrumental in maintaining an important population of Falk, and thus the cultural diversity that we all cherish about our school. Questions about the EIT Scholarship can be directed to me, or to Dr. McDonald.

-Charlene Barnett

* R E M I N D E R *

Excellence in Teaching Dinner

Saturday, May 15, 2004
To Honor Dr. McDonald

General PTA Meeting

Please join us for the last General PTA meeting of the school year for an informative and interesting discussion with Falk parent Loreta Matheo Kass. Dr. Matheo, a pediatrician and board-certified adolescent medicine specialist, will speak about the effects of the media on children in her presentation entitled:

"The Gray Hairs Kids Give Their Parents, and How the Media Highlights Them"

In addition, the following proposed slate of Officers of the PTA for the 2004-2005 school year is presented, and will be voted on at the meeting:

President	Laura Zaspel Lawson
Vice President	Sharon Semenza
Secretary	Martina Wells
Treasurer	Greg Weingart

Child care for Falk students will be available. Light refreshments will be provided.

Hope to see you on April 21st!

- Laura Zaspel Lawson

Primary News

Room 112 would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the PTA for purchasing a television and a cart for their classroom.

All of the primary classrooms have participated in the *Hop-A-Thon* to help raise money for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. The students hopped as much as they could during a two minute time interval. They are currently collecting pledges, we hope to report the amount raised in the next edition of FalkTalk. The primary classes have a long history of generosity.

The Primary 1 and 2 classrooms have finished their Social Studies unit on *Russia* and are now actively involved in their Science unit *Force and Motion*. The Kindergarten classroom is currently working on *How Living Things Help Us* and will soon start *Transportation*.

- Jill Sarada



GENERAL PTA MEETING

April 21, 2004

7:30 P.M.

Falk Cafetorium

Dr. Loreta Matheo

*"The Gray Hairs Kids
Give their Parents
and How the Media
Highlights Them."*

The Computer Room



Donations help to purchase new equipment and can range from computers, projectors, and cameras, to books and software programs.

The computer/technology curriculum is created with many factors in mind (Are the projects engaging? Are they challenging enough for this particular group of students? Are they too challenging? Do we have the necessary software programs? Do the projects meet national curriculum standards? Will these projects help smooth the student's path in High School? How do these projects compare with other projects from other schools?) With this in mind, Adobe Photoshop continues to be a major part of this year's middle school curriculum. Adobe Photoshop is a major software program used to manipulate photographs. Its' technology has been imitated by many other programs. Currently, there are examples of middle school projects displayed on the walls near the gym and computer lab. This cycle's most recent project is a "digital pun." Students use the digital camera to take pictures of objects and then use Adobe Photoshop to combine those pictures. An example would be "eyeglasses." The image would show a drinking glass with a person's eye on the front of it.

Intermediate students are at the very beginning of a new science project. Students are exploring a new software package "The Great Solar System Rescue" by Tom Snyder Productions. The CD-ROM package is designed to engage students in learning about the solar system and other aspects of planetary science. Students are also learning about the planets in their academic curriculum.

Some of our primary students have been introduced to Microsoft's Excel software. Students learn to recognize and use a spreadsheet, name a cell, paint the cell in color, and import a photo. The final product is a picture of Falk School with the words " GO FALK."

Other primary students are reinforcing reading skills with another new software program, "Let's Go Read 2: An Ocean Adventure" by Edmark. "Throughout Ocean Adventure young readers build skills using the activities and then apply them to read and enjoy a wide variety of richly illustrated books."

Falk School recently located one of our two SmartBoards (interactive white boards) in the computer lab. Soon your children will be telling you stories of how the words and pictures moved on the whiteboard.

The Giant Eagle Apples For The Students program ended on March 20th! Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to letting you know what wonderful technology/school equipment is chosen.

Donations to the computer room are always appreciated. The computer lab is expensive to maintain and update. Simply note on your check that you'd like your donation directed to the computer lab. Donations help to purchase new equipment that can range from computers, projectors, and cameras, to books and software programs. Donations can be a gift to someone you know or love. Let me know any address details so I can send a thank you card.

I am always available.

Thank you for the privilege of teaching your children.

– Barbara Bianco
412-648-8459
bbianco@pitt.edu

Library Book Fair April 22-23 & 26-27, 2004

The purpose of the Library Book Fair (book sale) is to encourage reading of quality children's books while raising additional funds to expand the library collection. A Literature Book Fair will be supplied by Scholastic, Inc. The Fair will once again be held in the gym on four days of the spring parent conferences, Thursday, Friday, April 22-23 and Monday, Tuesday, April 26-27.

Each primary and intermediate class is given an opportunity to shop at the book fair during the school day. The tentative schedule for the classes is given below. Arrangements will be made for the middle school students to visit the Book Fair during the first two periods of the day. Students will be bringing home updated publicity.

Thurs. Rm. 112 and Rm. 222
Fri. Rm. 115 and Rm. 224
Mon. Rm. 111 and Rm. 221
Tues. Rm. 116 and Rm. 225

The book fair will be open until 6:00 P.M., Thursday, Friday, and Monday and until 4:00 P.M., Tuesday. Parents are encouraged to stop in before or after conferences. Please note the fair will close at 4:00 P.M. on the last day, Tuesday, April 27.

Library Book Fair Volunteers Needed

Volunteers will be needed to work at the Library Book Fair setting up Wednesday April 21, during the Book Fair and packing up Tuesday April 27. This involves a one-time 2-3 hour time commitment. Contact Shelley Ross, Book Fair co-chair at 412-687-0503.

School Library Month—April

Spring Reading Initiative

Special events are planned in April and May to celebrate "School Library Month." Detailed information about these events and the Spring Reading Initiative was mailed home in late March.

These include:

1. *The Library Book Fair*: Thursday, Friday April 22-23 and Monday, Tuesday April 26-27. See details above.

2. *Reading Calendar (April only)*: Families are encouraged to set aside 15 minutes daily for recreational reading, together if possible. "Reading" includes individual reading, reading aloud, and listening to reading aloud. During April use the Reading Calendar to record reading times for intermediate and primary level students. Parents are asked to sign the calendar. More than one person may record times on the same calendar. Students who turn in their calendar with the requested information will receive a certificate.
3. *Book Badges*: Students, parents, teachers, interns, staff, and family members are encouraged to fill out a Book Badge for each book they read or is read to them. Book Badges may be turned in to the homeroom teachers or sent to Ms. Herward by way of the school office. One sheet of Book Badges will be mailed home. Cut these apart. Additional badges will be available in the library and in intermediate and primary homerooms. Note unpagged books usually have 32 pages.
4. *Reading Chain*: Badges will be attached to a paper chain strung about the library. The chain will be moved to the school for the Read-In. The community's total page count will be tallied and displayed each day on the library bulletin board.
5. *Page Tally*: A running total of pages read will be recorded and posted in the library. Total number of books read and the total number of pages read will be announced at last week in May.
6. *Read-In*: A school wide SSR Read-In will be held at the end of May. The entire Falk School Community will be invited to join in Sustained Silent Reading in the gym for twenty minutes on a specified day at the end of May. Parents are invited to join in. Details will follow.

Please support these activities. Information concerning the activities is available on the Library Web Site at <http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>. These Reading Initiative activities continue through May.

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Volunteers will be needed to work at the Library Book Fair, Thursday and Friday April 22-23 and Monday and Tuesday, April 26-27, 2004

Birthdays/Gift Book Program

The library and the PTA coordinate a Gift Book Program as a means of expanding the library collection while commemorating special times and special persons: birthdays, holidays, grandparents, teachers, interns and sometimes even pets. An appropriate bookplate is placed in each book. A note of acknowledgement is sent to each teacher honoree and to others if address is provided.

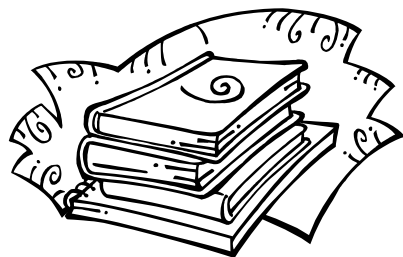
All Falk students, teachers, interns, and staff benefit from the continuous updating of the collection. The Gift Program information will be sent soon to the families of students with winter birthdays. These materials including the Gift Book Form and Winter Gift Book List of suggested books are also available on the library website at <http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>. If you would like to make a donation or have questions about the Birthday/Gift Book Program contact Ms. Herward (412-624-8010), Bonnie Gorscak (412-243-3672), or Beatriz Kanterewicz (412-521-7168).

Library Gifts

Thank you to the students and families who recently donated books to the library: *Sarah Hrusa*, *Ms. Herward*, *The Del Presto Family*, *Lucas D. Johnson*, *The Greenhouse Family*, *Madeline Schatten*, and *Hengxiao Tao (Sean)*. More complete information concerning these gifts is published on the library web site, <http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>.

Britannica Online

The library subscribes to the Britannica Online School Edition. To access the Britannica Online go to www.school.eb.com. To login, the user name is "falk" (all lower case) and the password is "school" (all lower case). After the first time used, your computer should "remember" the password and login and there should be no need to login again. The Britannica is an excellent general information resource. The Britannic subscription is a gift from the Rao family, a former Falk family.



The Library Website

<http://tc.education.pitt.edu/library>

Need information concerning the library? Visit the library website. The site includes information about the library staff, curriculum resources (middle school research projects), class schedule, policies and procedures, the Gift Book Program, new library materials, special events, MLA Work Cited stylesheet, the library catalog, and magazine collection.

The Falk School website (www.pitt.edu/~fls) includes a link to the library website.

Library Receives Title V Funds

In the fall of 2003 library received an allocation of \$1,600 in Title V government funds to be used for educational materials. Nonfiction books, reference books, and videos were purchased supporting the curriculum at the primary, intermediate, and middle school levels. The materials included nonfiction books about the states, international foods and festivals and *The New Book of Knowledge Encyclopedia*, 2004 edition.

Heartwood Books

Honesty is the attribute for April.

Main Books:

The Empty Pot by Demi;
Osa's Pride by A. Grifalconi;
Our King Has Horns! by R. Pevear;
Roses Sing on New Snow by P. Yee;
The King's Fountain by L. Alexander;
The Gold Coin by A. F. Ada.

Supplementary Books:

The Dragon's Robe by D. Lattimore;
A Pair of Red Clogs by M. Matsuma,
A Penny's Worth of Character by J. Stuart;
Sam, Bangs and Moonshine by E. Ness;
Striding Slippers by M. Ginsburg;
Summer Wheels by E. Bunting;
The Talking Eggs by R. San Souci;
Taro and the Tofu by M. Matsun;
The Treasure by U. Shulevitz;
The Truthful Harp by L. Alexander;
The Winter Wife by A.E. Crompton.

– Linda Herward

Music Notes

Thanks to all those who have already performed for Falk's Music classes as a part of our "Music in our Schools" celebration. We have heard an interesting variety of performers, and look forward to many more. If you have not signed up yet—please call me and I'll schedule you into the class of your choice.

There are a lot of major musical events coming up in April and May. Get your calendars ready!!!!

March 21 – Kindergarten class attends Pittsburgh Symphony's Tiny Tots concert at Heinz Hall. (11:15 concert).

March 28 – Second grade students attend Pittsburgh Symphony's Schooltime Concert at Heinz Hall. (10:30 concert).

April 29 – Intermediate Chorus Concert
7:00pm, Falk cafeteria

May 12 – Falk Band Concert
7:00pm, Falk cafeteria

May 25-27 – Alice in Wonderland
Middle School Musical, 7:00pm, Falk cafeteria



– LeeAnn Conover

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FalkTalk

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