

## **WELCOME FROM THE PRINCIPAL**

Dear Families,

Welcome to Peirce School! We are a dynamic community of learners working together to help all of our students grow as creative and compassionate citizens, effective communicators, and critical thinkers. Our Core Values of "Patience, Equality, Inclusion, Responsibility, Cooperation, and Effort" remind us that our educational goal is not just the attainment of knowledge, skills, and concepts, but also the development of wisdom about how we can make the world a healthier and happier place for everyone. Children at Peirce School (approximately 305 students in Grades K-5) enjoy a rigorous curriculum in the context of a nurturing school environment that builds on their strengths, supports them in areas of challenge, and emphasizes the joy of lifelong learning. In addition to Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science, our curriculum also includes high-quality experiences with Music (General, Choral, and Instrumental), Health and Physical Education, Visual Art, Library/Research Skills, and Technology Integration. We also join the other Newton schools in providing a rich social curriculum through such resources as Open Circle, Responsive Classroom, Steps to Respect, and the locally-based, widely-acclaimed Understanding Our Differences program.

We invite you to use this handbook as a quick reference for important information regarding life in our school, and we wish all of you a wonderful experience at Peirce School!

Sincerely,  
Mark Chitty  
Principal

## **WELCOME FROM THE PTO**

Dear Fellow Parents:

A warm welcome to the school year to families both old and new! Back-to-school season brings an air of excitement as students, parents and faculty simultaneously embrace new challenges and settle into the familiar patterns which make us all feel at home in our school community.

This handbook is intended to ease the transition for new Peirce families and clarify a range of issues for those who are returning. We hope you will keep it as a reference throughout the school year.

The PTO has become an essential organization in these times of decreasing budgets and increasing educational needs. The goal of the PTO is to offer support and services to the school community. By providing parent volunteers to enrich the academic, cultural and social programs at school we work as a team to provide our children with the quality of education which is important to us all. Each fall we look forward to the fresh and creative energy that new parents bring to the school and urge you to become an involved and active member helping to make this an exciting and dynamic year.

The Peirce PTO

## **PEIRCE SCHOOL RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each student begins the year by receiving the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. This is an extremely important booklet published by the Newton Public Schools. It is important that you read this carefully and review it with your child(ren). It describes the school policies concerning behaviors and consequences.

At Peirce, we have our own code of behavior. Children learn best in a setting that is safe, disciplined, and positive. We are proud that friendly, comfortable, and respectful are the main characteristics of our school.

As a faculty, we hold the following behaviors as paramount in establishing a respectful learning community:

### **PATIENCE**

- Walk Don't Run in hallways and classrooms.
- Don't push or shove when walking in line; walk carefully.
- While in the hallways, please open and close your locker quietly so that you don't disturb others.
- Wait patiently for your turn.

### **EQUALITY**

- Treat everyone as you would like to be treated.
- Be considerate with your words and actions. Pushing, hitting, kicking and fighting are not tolerated at our school. Name-calling, swearing, verbal and non-verbal bullying and threatening anyone are not tolerated.
- Racial, gender, and/or ethnic slurs are not tolerated at Peirce.

### **INCLUSION**

- **You can't say you can't play!** Everyone is to be included in games and activities.

## RESPONSIBILITY

- *Arrive at school on time.* Our school opens at 8:20 a.m.. Instruction begins at 8:30 a.m. Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. are tardy. Students must arrive no earlier than 8:20 a.m. unless they are part of the EDP morning program. There is no supervision provided before 8:20 a.m..
- *Once you arrive, go to your locker, hang up your coat, and go directly to your classroom.*
- Take care of your belongings. Don't leave them in your locker or on the playground.
- Keep your locker clean.
- Take care of the Peirce School and the tools and materials that are in it.

## COOPERATION

- Follow adult directions and respond respectfully.
- No loud talking or yelling in the hallways or classrooms. This includes during lunchtime.
- Be considerate of others with your words and actions.
- Hold the door for others as you pass through it.

## EFFORT

- Give your best effort in everything you do at school!
- Arrive on time to school. Be in your classroom on time.
- Follow the rules of the school.

## PLAYGROUND RULES

Adherence to the following rules will help ensure a safe and friendly environment for all students.

- Any activity that an adult feels poses a threat or danger to you or others is not allowed. Do not throw any objects (snow, ice, sticks, rocks, or anything hard) that could hurt someone.
- Tackle football, rugby or rugby like games, and hard ball games are not allowed.
- Roller blades/skates, skateboards, hard balls, and hockey sticks are not allowed.
- Remain within the playground or on the designated area of the blacktop.
- Remain within the playground area for the entire recess time, unless you are given permission by an adult to enter the school.
- Do not retrieve any playground equipment that goes outside the playground area. Ask an adult for assistance.

## Terrific Tips for Good Sports

You can't say you can't play!  
Don't exclude; it's rude!

Use Build-ups not Put Downs;  
Give compliments; not frowns.

Lead in a positive way  
Ask others to join in the play.

Get things going - organize activities.

When tough conflicts occur, be a problem solver.

- Calm down,
- Identify the problem.
- What's a good ending?
- Make a plan and go for it.

Annoying behavior during play:

Try to handle it this way:

- Say, "I don't like it when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_."
- Say what you want them to do instead.

A clean space is a happy place.

Throw your trash in the can.

Keep our playground spic and span!

Have fun!

Play safe!

## **USE OF PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT** - Conceived by Physical Education Teacher, Gary Nye

### Slides

- \* Sit to Slide - enjoy the ride!
- \* Look before you go!
- \* Go in one direction for your own protection.

### Track Rides

- \* To glide is fun, but there's only room for one.
- \* Look to each side before you glide.
- \* Keep the platform clear when the person gliding is near.

### Rings Monkey Bars

- \* Swing from ring-to-ring or bar-to-bar.
- \* Hanging upside-down is a Double D, it could cause an injury.
- \* Think twice before climbing on top of bars. Kids below won't be able to travel far.

### Swings

- \* To do the correct thing- sit and swing.
- \* Jumping off the swing is a Double D. It could cause injury!
- \* Keep a good look out when moving about!

### Tag Chase Games

- \* When playing tag or chase games with your class, be sure to play them on grass.

### Climbing

- \* Climbing outside the railing is a Double D as it can cause injury!

Have fun and play safe!

## **DISCIPLINE AND CONSEQUENCES**

Within the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, there is a list of actions that result in suspensions. There are other possible consequences for breaking Peirce School rules. Classroom teachers explain the rules of the classroom and the school rules at the beginning of the school year. Teachers often have their own process for consequences. There are times when teachers will send students to the office for a time out. Some of the consequences might look like this:

- Meeting with the other party involved in a dispute to settle differences with the principal as the mediator.
- Writing an apology.
- Losing a recess(es).
- Rebuilding or repairing the community/building in some special way.
- Meeting with parent(s), teacher, student and principal.
- Being excluded from a special school activity or field trip.
- Being suspended at home or in school at the discretion of the principal.

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

This section provides general information about the organization and daily operation of Peirce School. During the first week of each school year, each Peirce student receives a Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, CORI form for volunteers, an Internet Policy sign-off form, insurance and health forms, and information about updating emergency contact information.

### **PEIRCE SCHOOL WITHIN THE NEWTON SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Peirce School is one of 15 public elementary schools in Newton, with an enrollment of approximately 305 students in grades K-5. After 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Peirce students attend F.A. Day Middle School for grades 6-8 and then Newton North High School, grades 10-12.

The schools are administered by the Newton School Department under the direction of the Newton School Committee. The School Department is located in the Education Center, 100 Walnut Street, Newtonville. It coordinates educational programs and services for the schools, develops curricula and resources, tests and evaluates, formulates and administers a budget for the system and provides support services.

The School Committee sets policies, decides on an operating budget, maintains school buildings, appoints the Superintendent, and with his recommendations, hires the teaching staff and employees. The eight

members of the School Committee, one from each ward, are elected at large, non-salaried, and serve for a maximum of four consecutive two-year terms. The Mayor is the ninth voting member, ex officio. Under Proposition 2 1/2, the School Committee no longer had control over the amount of the school budget. The Mayor and the Board of Aldermen set the amount available to the schools and make final approval of costs and capital expenditures.

Individual schools maintain substantial autonomy within the system where each school strives to meet the particular needs of the community it serves. The PTO Council’s Equity Committee has developed guidelines, which are continually being reviewed, and recommendations to insure that all students in the system have equal access to educational opportunities and technologies no matter which school they attend. Schools and PTOs are encouraged to use their cooperative spirit and actions to advance shared educational goals for the entire school system.

Each school receives an allocation for its operating budget, which is based on the number of students enrolled in the building. The principal, in consultation with the School Council, is free to determine how the school budget will be spent. The principal and staff, with input from the School Council, prepare a three year School Improvement Plan, which is revised yearly. The school budget reflects the priorities outlined in the School Improvement Plan.

**SCHOOL CALENDAR**

This calendar is determined by the Newton School Committee each spring and is distributed to your child(ren) following the Committee’s decision. The state mandated school year consists of 180 days; the school calendar also includes a number of “inclement weather days” in case school must be canceled. If these days are not used, they are subtracted from the end of the school year. Decisions regarding shortening the calendar are made and communicated in May.

In the event of a “delayed opening” on a given school day, that day counts for attendance. School calendars are available in the office.

**SCHOOL HOURS**

Kindergarten:	All Kindergartners: Monday – Friday	8:30 – 12:30 & 2 long days
	Group A: Mondays & Wednesdays	8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
	Group B: Thursdays & Fridays	8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
	Long days for kindergartners begin the first week of October.	
	All Students: Tuesdays	8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Grades 1 – 5	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday	8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
	Tuesday	8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

School opens at 8:20 a.m.. Children should arrive at school between 8:20 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Students arriving before 8:20 a.m. must wait outside until the bell rings. Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. are considered late and must sign in at the office.

All doors are locked throughout the school day. Visitors must be buzzed in at the front door and check-in at the office.

There are six early release Thursdays when elementary students are dismissed at 12:30 p.m. The dates are sent home on the first days of school along with MCAS dates and other calendars. Lunch is not served on early release Thursdays. The day before Thanksgiving, school ends at noon; lunch is not served.

### **ABSENCE/LATENESS – CALL BACK LINE**

The Peirce School Call Back Line is a system used to verify that each child who has left home has arrived safely at school. If your child will be absent or late, you must notify the Peirce Call Back Line before 8:10 a.m. by calling 617-559-9650. The Call Back Line is a 24-hour answering machine, which you may call at any time. When you call to record your message, please be sure it includes the following information:

- YOUR CHILD’S NAME
- NAME OF YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER
- DATES/TIMES OF ABSENCE OR LATENESS
- REASON FOR ABSENCE

**CALL  
617- 559-9650**

A child who is late to school must sign in the Sign-In Log kept in the school office before going to his or her classroom. Attendance is taken in each classroom at 8:35 a.m., and the Call Back Line tape is transcribed by office staff who will crosscheck names on the tape and the absent list. If your child is not in school and you have not called, the school secretary, nurse or call back volunteer will then call your home or work number for an explanation of the absence. The principal will be notified if parents cannot be reached. Every effort is made to determine the whereabouts of a student; often a sibling or neighbor is consulted. If the child cannot be located or accounted for the school will contact the Newton Police immediately.

### **ANTICIPATED ABSENCE**

When there is an anticipated absence, such as an appointment or vacation, please notify your child’s teacher **in writing in advance**. In addition, you may call the Call Back Line with this information as soon as you know it.

### **EARLY DISMISSAL – SAFE DISMISSAL PROGRAM**

If you need to have your child dismissed early, you must write a note to your child’s teacher giving the date and requested time of departure. Your child will be dismissed to you after you have signed the Sign-Out Log in the school office. No child will be allowed to leave the school grounds without an adult, that is, a parent or another adult designated by the parent in writing.

### **NORMAL DISMISSAL**

**In order to ensure a safe dismissal, read the following information careful.**

*Kindergartners* are dismissed as a class at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and short days and at 3:00 p.m. on long days. Teachers will only release kindergarten children to designated adults **who should wait outside the front door**. If you need to enter the building it is preferable that you wait until all students have been dismissed and the halls are free of traffic.

\* Please send a note if your child is to be released to other than an already-designated adult.

*Teachers escort children in grades 1 and 2 to their respective exits.  
Grade 1 exits at the front door. Grade 2 exits by the rear door.*

Children in grades 3, 4 and 5 are dismissed at their classrooms and come out of the school individually to the location designated by parents. **Parents should not come into the school building. They should wait at the front or rear entrance of the building for their children.** If you need to enter the building, it is preferable that you wait until all students have been dismissed and the halls are free of traffic.

Kindergartners attending EDP will be met at their classroom and escorted to the EDP room. All other students attending EDP proceed to the EDP room on their own.

Parents who drive to pick up their children at dismissal time must obey the rules outlined in the Traffic Safety section of this handbook. These regulations are **very** important to ensure the safety of all children.

## **SCHOOL BUSES**

Please see the NPS Transportation page for information about school bus eligibility:  
<http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/transportation>.

Children in grades K through 5 ride the bus together in the morning and on Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. On Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday there is a special bus for the Kindergarten children at 12:30 p.m., and a bus for the remainder of the students at 3 p.m.

If your child regularly rides the school bus, please notify the office **in writing** of any changes in his/her routine (e.g., giving permission for your child not to ride the bus on particular days, or get off the bus at a stop that is not their usual stop).

Children who take the buses meet the teacher who is on bus duty at a designated meeting place at dismissal time. Kindergarten teachers or assistants escort kindergartners to the bus meeting place.

Parents should discuss with their children the need to cooperate with the bus driver for the safety of all concerned. Occasionally, a child may invite a friend to ride the bus. The invited child's parent and host parent must both write notes indicating that the invited child will ride the bus. The classroom teacher will pass these notes along to the office.

## **NO SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

For information about school cancellations, please visit the following Newton Public Schools page: <http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us/weather>.

## **SNACK**

Students will need a mid-morning nutritious snack from home each day. Gum, candy, and soda are discouraged. Each classroom follows a different procedure for snack time; please check with your child's teacher to learn about the snack routine.

## **DAILY RECESS**

Children will have outdoor recess each day unless there is inclement weather (precipitation or temperatures below 20 degrees F). Please send them to school dressed accordingly!

## **LUNCH AT SCHOOL**

Students eat lunch by grade level in two rooms on our lower level. Our Lunch Manager, Lunch Attendant, Building Aide, and Northeastern University Co-op Intern administer the lunch program. Attendants supervise children while they eat and take them outside for play, weather permitting. In inclement weather, the attendants supervise indoor recess activities. During cold weather, students have indoor recess when the temperature is 20 degrees or below. This information is announced as part of the morning announcements during the winter season.

All children in grades K-5 may order a school lunch Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. They have the option of bringing lunch from home or of signing up for the school lunch program through Whitsons. Please visit the following page to set up a lunch account:  
<http://schools.whitsons.com/ma/newton-public-schools>

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## **PEIRCE EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM (EDP)**

The Peirce Extended Day Program is an independent, nonprofit corporation founded in 1977 by parents of children at Peirce School. Its mission is to provide a nurturing environment and enriched program of before and after school activities for children enrolled at Peirce. It is administered by an elected Board of Directors who has children in the program and run by a Program Director working with a professional staff. The teacher to student ratio is 1:8 in the kindergarten program and 1:9 in all other programs. The Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services licenses the program. Fees paid by the participating families cover operating costs for the program.

The program offers children a wonderful opportunity to socialize, play and learn together. Children choose from a variety of activities: arts and crafts, cooking, drama, indoor and outdoor games and sports, clubs and homework. Field trips and special events are planned to coordinate with curriculum themes. Classes such as woodworking, skiing, and martial arts are also offered to enrollees during the year. Peirce EDP operates 7:30 – 8:20 a.m. and 12:30 – 5:45 p.m. It follows the regular school calendar with the exception of the February and April vacation weeks when it offers a full day program. For more information, please contact Peirce EDP's Program Director at 617-332-5881.

## **VALUABLES**

The school cannot be responsible for any valuables, although reasonable care is taken to protect children's belongings. If your child brings money or other valuables to school, he or she should entrust them to the care of the teacher.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

There is a barrel in the lower level for the lost and found clothing. All students' clothing and personal items should be labeled, and children are responsible for their own possessions. Small found items such as glasses or jewelry are given to the school secretary for safekeeping. Unclaimed clothing is donated to charitable organizations at the end of the school year.

## COMMUNICATION

### COMMUNICATIONS / DELIVERIES FOR STAFF OR STUDENTS

The school telephone number is 617-559-9630. In emergency situations, parents may leave messages for children. Children may use the telephone in the office for forgotten lunches or musical instruments, but other uses are discouraged. **Plans for after-school activities are to be made from home before or after school.** If you wish to speak with your child's teacher, you may call the office during school hours and leave a message; your call will be returned as soon as possible. Notes to staff are welcome at any time and enable staff to contact parents at a time that is convenient for both parties.

If parents need to deliver non-emergency messages or items (i.e., lunches, musical instruments) during the school day, they should bring them to the school office where office staff will ensure their prompt delivery. Please do not go to your child's classroom – this can be disruptive during the day.

### CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held in the fall and spring. Progress reports are sent home at the end of January and June.

### INFORMAL CONFERENCES

Teachers are always willing to discuss your child's progress. If you wish a conference or would like a teacher to telephone you, please call or send a written request to the school office with your child. Do not hesitate to talk about your child's education with his/her teacher.

Please bear in mind that hallway discussions are discouraged during school hours as this takes away from instructional time and does not honor the privacy of students.

### CURRICULUM NIGHT

Each year there is an open house in late September or early October in order for parents to meet classroom teachers, specialists and the principal. Parents are invited to their child's classroom(s) to hear the teacher(s) discuss the curriculum for the year. Teachers also use this opportunity to inform parents of expectations, policies and procedures that are unique to their individual classrooms. Parents may ask questions and look at materials in the room as well as at their child's work. Curriculum night is not intended for discussion of individual children or their progress. This evening is planned for parents without their children. The date of Curriculum Night will be announced in the **Peirce Link**.

## **PEIRCE LINK**

The **Peirce Link** is the school's weekly newsletter, created and published online through the generosity of parent volunteers. It is made available on Monday evenings and contains the Principal's message, P.T.O. information, system-wide, and other school news and announcements, and a schedule of upcoming school events.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress reports are issued electronically (through ParentConnect) twice a year, in late January and in mid-June. Parent/teacher conferences are held to review and discuss these reports. A sample form of a progress card will be shared with you at Curriculum Night.

# **SAFETY**

## **BICYCLES**

**Bike Safety Program:** This educational program is offered to third and fourth graders by the Newton Police Department in cooperation with physical education staff, classroom teachers and parent volunteers. On bike safety days children walk their bicycles to school for street riding instruction sessions. It is state law that children must wear helmets when biking. The school bicycle rack is located near the basketball court.

## **BUS EVACUATION DRILL**

Bus Evacuation Drill is a state-mandated program requiring all teachers and students to review bus evacuation and emergency safety procedures three times a year, and participate in simulated bus evacuations twice yearly. All buses used for field trips are equipped with seat belts. Teachers and parents encourage their use during field trips.

## **CROSSING GUARD COVERAGE**

At major intersections on the way to and from school, police crossing guards are on duty for 30 minutes before the start of the school day and thirty minutes after the close of the regular school day. Parents should instruct students to walk to and from school during these times. Guards are not on duty for 12:30 p.m. kindergarten dismissal Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday because an adult escorts all students. Guards are on duty until 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday to provide coverage for children participating in the school lunch program.

The Police Department stations crossing guards at the following major intersections in the Peirce neighborhood for crossing children on schooldays:

- The corner of Myrtle and Temple Streets
- The intersection of Hampshire/Berkeley and Chestnut Street

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Fire drills are held several times during the year. Children learn safety procedures for leaving their classrooms. Students are to remain quiet as they exit and reenter the building in order to hear directions and reduce distractions during this safety exercise.

## **VISITORS - Sign In for Guest Badge**

Once the day has started, **all newcomers, visitors, and volunteers should report first to the school office to sign the Guest Book and obtain a visitor sticker** from the box located on the counter. It is school policy for staff members to approach anyone without stickers/badges and direct them to the office. Your cooperation will help ensure a safe environment.

## **CORI CHECK**

In order to ensure the safety of children, Massachusetts General Court passed Chapter 385 of the Acts of 2002, which went into effect February 2003. Under the provisions of the law, school districts are mandated to obtain criminal records information (CORI) for all employees, volunteers, and others who provide service to students in Massachusetts's schools. The law states that a CORI check must be completed on volunteers "prior to [a school system's] accepting any person as a volunteer."

To that end, we ask that parents submit a CORI form at the beginning of the year to ensure that when or if you volunteer at school in any capacity (chaperone on field trips, assist in the library in classrooms, read to students, present to a class, etc.), we have met the requirements of the law.

# **PEIRCE TRAFFIC SAFETY RULES**

Thank you for taking the time to review the following Peirce School Traffic Safety Rules. We are confident that we can provide a safe arrival and departure for all our students, parents and staff if everyone makes the effort to cooperate and respect the guidelines and each other.

## **I. Peirce School Parking Lot**

- 1. ONE WAY TRAFFIC.** At all times, enter only from Berkeley Street and exit onto Ruane Road. Bear to the right for the moving lane in order to drop off or pick up. Bear to the left to exit or park in the visitor parking spaces. *NOTE: there is only one moving lane.*
- 2. DROP OFF AND PICK UP LANE** (moving lane) is located on the curbside closest to the school for moving, occupied cars only:
  - A. Please do not park in this area at any time.
  - B. Be sure and have your children enter and exit vehicles from the curbside.
  - C. Do not pick up or drop off your children beyond the white stop line in the moving lane.
  - D. Do not pass a driver on the right hand side.
  - E. To exit the parking lot after you have picked up or dropped off your children, move carefully to the left out of the moving lane. (You do not have to be the first car in the line to exit.)

3. **CROSSWALK.** Please use and instruct your children to use the crosswalks in the parking lot and at the front of the building on Temple St. This is extremely important in order to prevent children from crossing in front of moving cars. *Do not block any part of the crosswalk at any time.*
4. **SAFETY WALK.** Please encourage your children to use the safety walk near the fence in the visitor parking area to approach parked cars. *Visibility is a major problem when children walk behind cars that backing up, especially with the popularity of jeeps and vans.*
5. **PARENT AND VISITOR PARKING SPACES** are available in the area directly across from the school. They are safely accessible by the crosswalk and safety walk. If there are no spaces available in the parking lot, please park on Ruane Road (do not block anyone's driveway).
6. **HANDICAP PARKING.** There are three reserved H.P. places just beyond the crosswalk. *Please do not park in these reserved spaces unless you have a special handicap sticker or license plate.* If you should experience a temporary condition (illness or injury) which limits your ability to access the school building, please see the principal. The Newton Police department can provide a *temporary* pass, if the request is considered appropriate, which would allow you to use the handicap parking spaces.
7. **STAFF PARKING** places are at the far end of the parking lot, near Ruane Road, and clearly marked for staff use.

## II. TEMPLE ST.

1. **THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO PARKING, NO LIVE PARKING, NO DROPPING OFF OR PICKING UP OF CHILDREN, ON THE PEIRCE SCHOOL SIDE OF TEMPLE STREET.** The only vehicles that may park in front of the building are the school buses.
2. **PLEASE USE THE CROSSWALK COMPLETE WITH CROSSING GUARD TO CROSS TEMPLE STREET.** Traffic is two-way on Temple Street and it can become very heavy, especially in the morning. Visibility is often a problem due to narrow roads, buses and congestion.
3. **PARENT AND VISITOR PARKING** is available on the Temple Shalom side of the street and in the Temple Shalom parking lot. Parent and visitor parking is also permitted on any side streets, which are not marked "No Parking."
4. **PLEASE DO NOT ENTER OR EXIT THE DRIVEWAY AT THE FRONT OF THE SCHOOL BETWEEN THE TWO CROSSWALKS AT ANY TIME.** You may park on the Temple Shalom side of Temple Street or in the school parking lot if you are picking up or dropping off a child at school or the Extended Day Program.

**HEALTH**

## **ACCIDENTS**

School personnel will administer first aid and seek additional assistance (e.g. 911) as deemed necessary and will inform parents immediately. Please be sure an up-to-date emergency telephone number is on record in the school office.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

At the beginning of each year, parents are asked to update all contact information through the ParentConnect system.

## **REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS AND SCREENING TESTS**

By state law every child attending public schools must be immunized against diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps and rubella. Arrangements for immunization may be made through the school nurse. Students who do not have documentation of immunizations excluded from school until proper documentation can be presented.

Children entering kindergarten must have documentation of being tested for lead poisoning and tuberculosis at least once in their lifetime. Upon entering kindergarten, parents need to provide record of at least 1 varicella shot or documentation of having had chickenpox

## **MEDICAL RECORD AND EXAMINATIONS**

The Newton school system keeps medical records for your child from kindergarten through grade 12. The state of Massachusetts requires periodic examinations of every school age child. Newton complies with this regulation by requiring examinations in kindergarten and grade 6. These examinations may be done by your private physician or by the school physician as arranged by the school nurse. If a private physician examines your child, you are required to have him/her complete the medical form provided by the school and return it to the school. Internal health histories are requested in grades 3-9. At Peirce, the school nurse sends home this request for updated health information early in the school year.

## **HEALTH SCREENING DONE BY THE SCHOOL**

**Scoliosis:** The school nurse screens all 5<sup>th</sup> graders for scoliosis (curvature of the spine). Parents and students are notified in advance of the screening and will be informed if a problem is detected.

**Vision and Hearing:** Vision tests are given to students in kindergarten through grade 4. Hearing testing is done for all children in kindergarten through grade 3. Each new student is tested. If any problem is identified or suspected, the school will notify the parents and repeat the screening again the next year.

Parents concerned about a child's vision or hearing should inform the school nurse, and the child will be screened appropriately.

**Head Lice:** Head Lice are common and recurrent problem among school children. If you find that your child has lice, please notify the school immediately so that preventative measures can be taken. If you are unfamiliar with the problem, please contact the school nurse, the health department or your pediatrician

for instructions on how to identify and treat lice. Children who have been diagnosed as having head lice are excluded from school until they are treated.

## **LIFE THREATENING FOOD ALLERGY POLICY STATEMENT - May 10, 2004**

It is the policy of the Newton School Committee to set age-appropriate guidelines for students and schools within the Newton system that minimize the risk for children with life-threatening food allergies (LTA) to be exposed to offending allergens that may trigger a life-threatening reaction. Such guidelines shall include: building-based general emergency plans, life-threatening food allergy emergency plans, individual healthcare plans for all students diagnosed with LTA, appropriate training of staff, availability on site of medical equipment for quick response to life-threatening allergic reactions, and such other guidelines that will ensure that students with LTA can participate fully in school activities without undue fear of harm from exposure to life-threatening food allergens.

It is the School Committee's expectation that specific building-based guidelines/actions will take into account the health needs and well being of all children without discrimination or isolation of any child. It is the School Committee's belief that education and open and informative communication are vital for the creation of an environment with reduced risks for all students and their families. In order to assist children with LTA to assume more individual responsibility for maintaining their safety as they grow, it is the policy of the School Committee that the guidelines shift as children advance through the primary grades and through secondary school.

## **NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS LIFE-THREATENING FOOD ALLERGY GUIDELINES**

### **PURPOSE**

To minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens that pose a threat to Newton students and to educate the Newton school community about life-threatening food allergies.

1. Establish a building-based general Medical Emergency Plan and Life-Threatening Allergy Medical Emergency Plan.
2. Develop and implement an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) for all students with diagnosed life-threatening allergies, based on medical documentation.
3. Implement annual life-threatening allergy and epi-pen training for all staff.
4. Minimize the use of food during the school day.

### **Family Responsibility**

1. Notify the school nurse and principal of your child's allergies.
2. Provide medical documentation from your health care provider to the school nurse.
3. Provide a list of foods and/or ingredients that would cause a life-threatening reaction to the school nurse.
4. Complete the medication permission form before your child enters school.
5. Deliver/provide approved medications in proper containers to school on the first day of school.
6. Meet with the school nurse to develop an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) and Allergy Action Plan (AAP). This plan will include a mechanism for ongoing communication with school staff.
7. Schedule a meeting with the classroom teacher to review the IHCP (Individual Health Care Plan). (Grades K – 5)
8. Educate your child in the self-management of their allergy as age appropriate including: safe and unsafe foods, strategies for avoiding the allergen, symptoms of

- an allergic reaction, how and when to tell an adult a reaction is starting, and how to read food labels.
9. Purchase a medical alert bracelet/necklace and encourage your child to wear it at all times.
  10. Provide the school with safe snacks to be used as stipulated in the IHCP.
  11. Investigate field trip destinations for potential issues (exhibits, activities) that may pose a risk.
  12. Go on field trips with your child, if possible.
  13. Participate in training and education in the classroom. (Grades K-5)

### **School Responsibility**

1. Establish a basic Medical Emergency Plan for the building for use in any medical emergency.
2. Ensure that an IHCP for each child with a life-threatening allergy (LTA) is created and implemented.
3. Establish a cleaning protocol for classrooms, cafeteria, and other areas of the building.
4. Emphasize the procedure of how and when to communicate with the main office and school nurse in the event of an emergency. This plan should include all school staff, coverage plans for the teacher and the nurse, and specific equipment to facilitate communication.
5. Adopt and maintain a no sharing/no trading food policy. (Grades K – 5)
6. Teach students and staff proper hand washing techniques before and after eating.
7. Avoid the use of food for classroom and school-wide functions. (Grades K-5)
8. Advise parents of any school activity that requires the use of food in advance of the project or activity as stipulated in the IHCP. (Grades K – 5)
9. Limit the use of food for curriculum instruction. If food is used, notify parents in advance as stipulated in the IHCP. (Grades K-5)
10. Prohibit food on routine school bus routes. (Food may be allowed on longer trips with appropriate supervision by school personnel.)
11. Eliminate food sales in elementary school stores.
12. At the elementary level, provide guidelines for monitoring snack and lunch. In classes where children have a life-threatening allergy, the principal may:
  - i. send a letter strongly requesting that certain foods not be brought into schools;
  - ii. establish within classrooms/cafeterias eating areas designated for the consumption of specific foods;
  - iii. have flexibility in grouping students during the lunch period to limit exposure to potential allergens, and;
  - iv. completely eliminate specific, potential allergens.
13. Provide an educational program for staff on Life-Threatening Allergies (LTA) in the classroom where there are students with LTA.
14. Conduct training sessions for all school staff as soon as possible each school year. Training will include a review of the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and the proper use of the epi-pen and will emphasize the importance of prevention and risk reduction.
15. Emphasize the importance of early recognition of an allergic reaction and timely use of Epinephrine.
16. Establish an emergency plan for field trips that includes how to activate EMS and who carries and administers epi-pens.

17. Practice emergency LTA Medical Emergency Plan/Medical Emergency Plan twice each school year in September and January.

### **School Nurse Responsibility**

1. Develop an IHCP, corresponding Allergy Action Plan (AAP) and Medication Administration Plan with the parents/guardian and a multidisciplinary school team (when appropriate) prior to school entry or at the first opportunity following a new life-threatening food allergy diagnosis.
2. Maintain open and frequent communication between home and school.
3. Communicate these plans to school staff that have a 'need to know' (e.g., principal, teachers, specialists, food service personnel, bus driver, coaches).
4. At the beginning of each school year, provide education and training of all school staff to review the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and epi-pen administration.
5. Conduct in-service and education for appropriate staff, including before and after school programs and field trip designees, regarding an individual student's life-threatening allergies, symptoms, risk reduction procedures and emergency procedures, as described in their IHCP and AAP.
6. Post a list of students who require epi-pens for allergic reactions in the health office. IHCPs and AAPs for those students will be available in their health records.
7. Provide information on the availability of medical alert identification.

### **WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME**

School personnel assume responsibility for determining whether your child should be sent home because of an illness commencing during school hours. For your child's welfare and for the protection of others you should keep your child at home if he or she has:

- a fever over 100 degrees during the past 24 hours
- a cold in the active stages
- a sore throat and/or swollen neck glands
- an undiagnosed rash or skin eruptions
- vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- head lice that have not been treated

### **NURSE**

The school nurse is employed full time and present at the school each day, 8:15-3:15. Parents will be notified immediately in the event of an accident or illness. Please make certain you have filled out a School Emergency Health Form and that the information is kept current. The school nurse should be contacted concerning a child's return to school following a contagious illness, such as chicken pox, lice, or strep throat.

Children who are injured or not feeling well should report to the Health office. School personnel assume responsibility for determining whether your child should be sent home because of an illness commencing during school hours.

### **MEDICATION**

If your child needs to take any medication, either prescription or over-the-counter, during school hours, following Newton Public Schools procedure must be followed. *The school cannot make exceptions to these rules.*

“Medication will be administered in the schools only under the direct orders from a licensed physician and with the parent’s or guardian’s written permission. Forms are available in the Health office for such requests. Medication must be brought to the school in the original container provided by the pharmacist.

“The public health nurse in the school has general and overall responsibility for the administration of the medication and for the implementation of these procedures. The school secretary is the staff person who will administer certain medications to the pupil under the supervision of the school nurse. (Under State Law, psychotropic drugs can be administered only by the nurse\* or physician.)

“No student is allowed to carry or use medicines in the school without specific authorization from the school physician or nurse.”

*\*The school nurse is available daily to administer these drugs*

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION/SCREENING**

Registration for kindergarten will be held in the late winter/early spring. Please bring your child’s birth certificate, proof of residency, record of immunization, list of illnesses, and information pertaining to the specific needs of your child. To enter kindergarten in September, your child must reach his/her fifth birthday on or before August 31. This is an absolute cut off date set by the Newton School Committee.

### **GRADE ONE ENTRANCE POLICY**

All students entering grade one in the Newton Public Schools must be six years old on or before August 31 of the calendar year of school entrance. This is in keeping with the policy that students entering kindergarten must be five years old on or before August 31. Advantages to the child are the opportunities to meet peers, understand a new school system, and continue to advance his/her learning at his/her own pace, which are facilitated in the current kindergarten program. The parents of students who have completed kindergarten elsewhere but have not turned six on or before August 31 of the year of the proposed grade one entry may discuss an exception to this policy with the school principal. The principal, after consulting with the assistant superintendent of schools, will be authorized to make a determination in these cases with the general expectation that the recommendation will be for the child to enter kindergarten. (Approved by School Committee on February 24, 2003)

### **OPTIONAL ENROLLMENT**

The Newton Public Schools considers applications for students to transfer to schools outside of their home district. It is the goal of the school system to grant to the degree possible requests for out-of-assigned district placements. Impact on enrollment, staffing and space availability now and in the future are key considerations. Out-of-assigned district placements for students who wish to attend a school in Newton other than his/her district school are limited. Such placements will be made on a space available basis only. In addition to Newton residents,

members of NTA Units A, B, C, D, E, NESAs, or the Custodial Union may also apply for placement of their children in a Newton Public School.

Approval for out-of-assigned district placements is subject to space availability in the requested school and grade, and for all subsequent grades as well. Expected class, team and school sizes will be based on the most recent projections by the School Department. Size will be considered for both the requested year and for any future year for which the School Department provides projections.

Applications for the following school year must be submitted on forms that are available in Room 218 at the Education Center **beginning November 17, 2014**. Parents/guardians requesting out-of-assigned district placements should call 617-559-6105 for information. Applications will also be available on-line at [www3.newton.k12.ma.us](http://www3.newton.k12.ma.us) in our *For Families* section.

Completed applications, signed by the in-district principal, can be submitted no earlier than March 2 and no later than May 1. Those received after May 1 and before Labor Day may, under special circumstances, be considered for placement after all other placement decisions have been made. Applications may be mailed in or brought to the Education Center.

The goal is to announce out-of-assigned district decisions as close to June 1 as possible. Students approved for out-of-assigned district placement should understand that the course assignment process has begun prior to June and that they may not receive their first choices in course selection. Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to and from the out-of-assigned district school.

## **TRANSFER REQUESTS**

In the event you plan to move out of the Peirce district, you should notify your child's teacher and the office as soon as possible. Your new address, the address of the new school and the date of the withdrawal are needed so that your child's records may be forwarded as quickly as possible. A release form must be signed by the child's parent or guardian for records to be sent to the new school.

## **TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The Peirce school district is assigned to the F.A. Day Middle School, located at Minot Place, for grades 6-8. A full description of the middle school philosophy and curriculum is available in the Peirce Library.

In the spring, the fifth graders will be invited to visit their future school for a day. Also, the Day PTO invites incoming parents to an informational evening in the spring.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIBRARY BOOKS**

Parent volunteers are the Library support staff. The library is operated in a traditional way with checkout procedures and a due date. If your child loses or damages a school book, you will be asked to reimburse the school. We urge you to help your child develop a sense of responsibility about all school materials and equipment.

## **GIFT POLICY**

It is the Newton School Department's Policy that no teacher in the performance of regular duties shall receive presents from the pupils under his or her discretion.

**The library** offers parents an opportunity to recognize their appreciation for the faculty through a donation program. Contact the school librarian for further information. In addition, **the PTO** spearheads a variety of fundraising events to support the school. The Peirce Link will inform parents about these events and opportunities. In addition, **the Newton Schools Foundation (NSF)** sponsors an “Honor Thy Teacher” campaign. Parents and community members may make a contribution in honor of individual teachers or a school who will in return receive a gift card acknowledging that the teacher/group has been so honored. The Newton TAB lists all those honored in a September edition.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Teachers must be consulted in advance if a child wishes to bring a non-edible birthday treat to share with his or her class at school. Please consult with your child's teacher regarding appropriate non-edible treats. As a school system, we have eliminated the use of food in birthday and holiday celebrations unless specified by the curriculum. Teachers do honor children's birthdates as these are very important occasions and cause for celebration. Teachers have developed creative and festive celebration practices, which they will share with families early in the school year on Curriculum Night. *Note that **birthday party invitations should never be handed out at school, please, even if the whole class is invited.***

## **SCHOOL PICTURES**

School pictures are taken yearly. Parents may purchase individual portraits and class pictures. There is a retake date scheduled for those who were absent on the original date. Although each child's picture is taken, parents are not required to buy any pictures or to pay a sitting fee. The PTO has also arranged for optional family portrait days on weekends throughout September. See the Peirce Link for dates and information.

## **STATE PUPIL RECORDS**

State law and regulations govern our policies on student records. The policy is explained in the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#), which is sent home in the fall of the school year.

The regulations call for the securing of records and the protection of student privacy. Only authorized school personnel, such as the principal, counselor, or teacher, have access to these records. Information cannot be seen by or sent to a third party without the written permission of the parent. In addition, there is a provision for a process for review and removal of information which the student or parent feels should not be on the record.

The student's permanent school record (name, address, phone number, parent information, course titles, grades, transcript, grade level completed and year completed) is to be kept for 60 years. The temporary record (all other information) is to be destroyed five years after the student leaves or graduates.

Parents, and students in grades 9-12, have the right to see appropriate records. Parents or eligible students who wish to see a record should contact the school principal and ask for an appointment. Parents and eligible students may obtain a copy of all or any portion of the student's record upon request.

## **COMMUNITY USE OF BUILDINGS**

The School Committee controls the use of all school building during and after school hours. A fee structure covering custodial and overhead costs has been established by the School Committee for non-school-related and for school-related use. Information and permit applications for use of the school building are available in the school office.

## **ACCESS TO STUDENTS BY NEWS MEDIA**

News media and media-related companies do not have immediate access to children while under supervision of school personnel.

In cases where the system approves media coverage, children will be required to submit a permission form signed by a parent or legal guardian before the child can participate in the covered activity.

## **CONTESTS/ADVERTISEMENTS**

Advertising materials seeking direct contributions from teachers and pupils shall not be displayed or distributed unless endorsed by a vote of the School Committee.

No free advertising shall be accepted for use in schools unless deemed by the Superintendent's office to be a direct aid to learning. There can be no staff or student involvement in civic, charitable or business-endorsed contests that take time from instructional goals unless approved by the Superintendent's office as a useful educational experience.

# **PEIRCE SCHOOL COUNCIL**

## **PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP**

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that each public school form a school council consisting of the principal, teachers elected by the professional staff, an equal number of parents elected by the parent community, and community members who do not have children in the school. The School Council's purpose is to advise the principal in: 1) adopting educational goals for Peirce School consistent with Newton goals, Peirce Core Values and state standards; 2) identifying the educational needs of students attending Peirce; 3) reviewing the annual Peirce School building budget; and 4) formulating the Peirce School Improvement Plan (refer to the Council notebook for details).

The principal and another Council member, elected by the Council, serve as Co-Chairs. Elections are held each fall for open positions. The principal appoints community representatives.

## **MEETINGS**

The School Council meets several times during the year in the Peirce Library. All interested community members are invited to attend. Time is set aside at each meeting for public input.

# **THE PTO AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITES**

## **PTO MISSION STATEMENT**

1. To foster & nurture a community spirit through active participation of all Peirce families.
2. To establish ways of engaging new & existing families.
3. To nurture a strong sense of school pride.
4. To communicate through various mediums what the PTO is doing.
5. To show the Peirce community their efforts and involvement are greatly appreciated.
6. In collaboration with Peirce staff, to enhance the learning environment of our children.

## **PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE PTO**

The purpose and goals of the Peirce PTO are to foster communication, participation, and cooperation among parents and teachers of the Peirce Community in order to achieve the best possible educational experience for the students at Peirce. Parental involvement plays an important role in the life of the Peirce community; children enjoy seeing their parents helping out and benefit enormously from these contributions.

## **PTO MEMBERSHIP**

All Peirce parents, faculty and staff are automatically members of the PTO and are encouraged to attend all meetings.

## **PTO BOARD MEETINGS**

PTO Board meetings are usually held every month on the second Tuesday. Everyone is welcome to attend the Board Meetings, however only Board members may vote at these meetings.

## **PTO OFFICERS**

PTO officers are elected each spring to serve the following school year. Any interested parent is qualified to serve in one of the many available positions.

## **PTO ACTIVITES**

The many activities of the PTO are designed to help promote the intellectual, physical and/or social development of the children in the school. Examples include:

- Providing parent volunteers to enhance and facilitate classroom and school-wide programs.
- Funding the Creative Arts and Sciences programs that the students attend throughout the year.
- Contributing, supporting and coordinating a staff of parent volunteers to assist the librarian.
- Providing classroom teachers with additional opportunities to purchase enrichment materials for their classrooms.
- Producing the **Peirce Link**, and School Directory..
- Holding General PTO meetings, which feature speakers and programs of interest to parents & staff.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Volunteerism plays a significant role in the life of Peirce School. It brings people together in support of common goals and encourages the diverse contribution individuals can make. Volunteer opportunities are organized in a number of different ways and can be designed to suit parents' busy schedules as well as varied interests and talents. For example, consider spending an hour a week in the library, accompanying your child's class on a field trip or helping out in the office.

**Below is a list, with brief descriptions, of some of the volunteer opportunities available at Peirce.** A list of committees and chair people is included in this school handbook. Feel free to contact the school principal, your child's classroom teacher or a PTO board member for more specific information on volunteer opportunities.

**Creative Arts:** This PTO committee reviews citywide arts and sciences enrichment programs and tailors them to suit the needs and interest of the Peirce community. Parent volunteers generate ideas for programs, preview performance, and organize the events. Funds for this program come primarily from the PTO.

**Fund Raising and Social Events:** The PTO holds several events throughout the school year to raise money for its programs. These events are organized and managed by parent volunteers.

**Hospitality:** Volunteers organize refreshments for PTO meetings, curriculum night, etc.

**Landscape and Playground:** Parent volunteers work to plan and implement physical and social improvements to our school grounds.

**Library:** Volunteers provide assistance to students, check books in and out and perform general library duties.

**Luncheon and Teacher Appreciation:** Throughout the school year parent volunteers plan special events for Peirce teachers. These events are one way for Peirce parents to let teachers know how much they value them.

**METCO Partnership Program:** Newton participates in the METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) Program, a voluntary school desegregation program funded by the state of Massachusetts. Through this program, children from Boston families attend suburban schools, including Peirce. There are many opportunities to become involved in a mutually beneficial relationship between Peirce's Boston and Newton families. As a school committed to inclusive practices and to celebrating diversity, all students who attend Peirce are members of our school community regardless of where they live.

**Peirce Link: The Peirce Link** is the weekly newsletter put out by the PTO. Volunteers work with the principal to create and distribute this vital link between the school and its families.

**Program Speakers:** These volunteers assess the interest of the Peirce community and arrange for speakers to attend PTO meetings.

**Room Parents:** These volunteers supply a vital communication link between parents and their children's classroom. Room parents recruit volunteers to help prepare for class and school functions. Other duties vary by classroom.

**Social Action:** This student/parent/teacher committee organizes activities that benefit organizations and individuals who are in need of community support and assistance. Past efforts have included collection drives for food items, used clothing, used books, and cards for veterans.

**Safe Routes to School:** These parents help promote traffic safety around the school building and organize our monthly Walk-to-School Days. They help educate parents and children about safe procedures, and they help supervise safe drop-offs especially during the first weeks of school and during snow and rainstorms.

**Understanding Our Differences:** These volunteers work with the classroom teachers to facilitate the curriculum designed to help our children appreciate others with disabilities.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY – EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!**

Parents who spend time in the school must respect the need for confidentiality. If a volunteer becomes concerned about a situation or an individual, he or she should speak to the appropriate teacher or to the principal and not discuss the matter with other parents. Volunteers must not and should not discuss observed student performance and/or behaviors with anyone outside the school setting. Volunteerism is a welcomed privilege to be honored with respect via confidentiality.

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

### **CREATIVE ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Creative Arts and Sciences is a wonderful curriculum enrichment program, which allows for a variety of science, music, cultural and the theatrical performances to be offered and presented to the Peirce students. Each grade level has an opportunity to experience 3-4 different performances each year. This program is organized and arranged by parent volunteers and is financially supported by the PTO.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

From time to time classes plan field trips to nearby locations. Each child will bring home a permission slip, mandated by the School Committee, for a parent or guardian to sign and return. No child may go on a trip without the signed permission slip.

Parents may be asked to contribute a small amount towards the expense of taking the field trip. Money paid for field trips will not, in most cases, be refunded if a child does not go on a trip. The money for buses cannot be returned since there is a fixed cost for any trip. In cases of hardship, the teacher or principal should be notified. No child is denied access to any field trip.

All buses used for field trips are equipped with seat belts. Parents and teachers encourage and assist students buckle their belts. Teachers are not required to ensure that belts remain buckled at all times (see School Committee Field Trip and transportation policies.).

## **LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS**

Each class visits the library on a regular basis for an introduction to new books and reference tools presented by a full-time professional librarian/media specialist. Kindergartners check books out for one week at a time and may not check out a new book until the old one is returned. In addition to regularly scheduled classes, students may use the library to work on research projects, continue small group work or just browse for a good book. Parent volunteer staff the library each day to help the children, to work on the basic day-to-day necessities of checking books out and reshelving returned items, and to help with other related library activities.

## **UNDERSTANDING OUR DIFFERENCES**

In grades 3-5, parent volunteers present the citywide “Understanding Our Differences” curriculum. This is a unique program designed to help non-disabled children understand what it may feel like to have a disability. Information is presented through an interactive program. The program encourages children to discuss their feelings and concerns about the visible effects and consequences of various disabilities. It further helps them appreciate that disabled people are not unlike themselves.