Congratulations to Our 5th Graders

LabTalk salutes our 5th grade graduates in Classes 218, 220 and 235!


We congratulate them on their graduation from Lower Lab School and wish them all the best in middle school! Here’s where those six years of hard work is taking them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan East Center for Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Environmental Science</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Grammar &amp; Preparatory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Seminary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverdale Country Day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Out of City</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dear Lab School Community:

June is always a time of transition at the Lab School. The Lab community is busy this month preparing to say goodbye to 5th graders and to welcome next year’s kindergarten families. We’ve elected our new PTA officers, who will take over when our new fiscal year begins on July 1st and we’ve just about closed this year’s accounting ledger (for a snapshot of how we’ve ended the year, see the financial summary later in this issue).

Even in the midst of all this change, however, some things remain constant. For one thing, nurturing young readers is paramount at our school. It is the reason our teachers use literature, rather than textbooks, to teach. It is the reason that we hold so many book fairs during the year. And it is the reason that we’ve added a new line item in next year’s budget just for classroom...
Fundraising – This Summer & Beyond!

The school year is ending and we are gearing up and down at the same time. Our thanks go to all the students, parents, faculty, friends, co-workers, neighbors, merchants and corporate matching gift donors who supported our many fundraising efforts this school year.

As we get ready to depart for our summer activities, I would like to take this opportunity to request your feedback on the fun and fundraising events of this past year. A survey is being circulated to gauge interest in a variety of events for next year. Please take the time to complete it and return it to school. In the survey, there is also room to indicate suggestions for new events and positive suggestions to improve past events so that we can do them even better the next time around. If you have an affinity for a particular event or idea, please go the extra mile and volunteer to organize or run it! Many hands make work light and so much more can be accomplished when we all pitch in.

While we are away for the summer there are several ways to continue raising money for all the wonderful enrichment programs sponsored by the PTA:

- The Summer Read-a-Thon is back and everybody is encouraged to read. This is a great way to promote literacy and to explore the magic of reading. Introduce your child to a new genre. Share one of your own childhood favorites.

- As you shop the internet for back-to-school clothes, consumer electronics and so much more, please shop through our web affiliates. You can access these online merchants through the link on our website www.lowerlabschoolpta.org. Some of our current partners are: Lands End, Target, Walmart, Delias, 1-800-Flowers.com and J & R. Lower Lab receives a commission only when you go through the link.

- Keep clipping those Box Tops for Education. Last year, Lower Lab won a lottery that gave us a $1000 bonus! Please help even more by clipping the coupon along the dotted lines. Encourage relatives, friends and neighbors to give you their box tops.

Next year, the PTA is committed to funding a higher level of staffing (more TA’s!) while supporting the many enrichment programs we have come to expect at Lab. Our task, as the parent body, is to raise over $300,000. That sum is within our reach with creativity, resourcefulness and persistence.

We, Alice Lee and Rita Ashdale, look forward to serving the school as the new Co-VP’s of Fundraising. We encourage everyone to participate as much as they can in whatever capacity is comfortable for them. We welcome suggestions and feedback – our goal is to make every event the best it can be.

So, have fun this summer and come back energized for another great school year!

* * *
The PTA Budget

Below is a summary of the PTA’s income and expenses for 2005-2006. A few things to note as you review it:

- The 2005-06 budget anticipated that we would end the year with an almost $90,000 loss, but thanks to our extraordinary fundraising efforts this year, we are likely to finish with a modest positive balance.

- The balance will not be as high as it was on June 6th, the date of this P&L statement, because all costs from this year are not paid for including payroll expenses until the end of June, graduation costs and other expenses that have not yet hit the ledger.

- In addition, the balance left from this year represents start up funds for next fall (e.g. salaries that have to be paid before any further money is raised), money for the additional teaching assistants in the classrooms, and a reserve.

**July 1, 2005 through June 6, 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinary Income/Expense</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archie Comics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barnes &amp; Noble</td>
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<td>Book Fair</td>
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<td>Box Tops for Education</td>
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<td>Chess Clubs</td>
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<td>Fall Fair</td>
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<td>Family Reading Program</td>
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<td>Gift Card event</td>
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<td>Gift Wrap Sale</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Halloween Party</td>
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<td>Ice Skating</td>
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<td>Lab Gear</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movie Event</td>
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<td>Pies / Coffee Fundraiser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledge Drive</td>
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<td>Read-A-Thon</td>
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<td>Recess Club Contributions</td>
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<td>Recycle Rewards</td>
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<td>Simon Siz Event</td>
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<td>Spring Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Square Dance</td>
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<td>Talent Show</td>
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<td>Website Affiliates</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other Programs &amp; Activities</th>
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<th>Total Discretionary Exp &amp; Reserves</th>
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<td>Fourth Grade Arts Program</td>
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<td>Physical Education / Gym</td>
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<td>Recess Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recess - King</td>
<td>1,710.00</td>
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<td>Recess Expenses (nonpayroll)</td>
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<td>Recess Programs - Other</td>
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<td><strong>Total Recess Programs</strong></td>
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<td>Symphony Space</td>
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<td><strong>Total Other Programs &amp; Activities</strong></td>
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<td>School Supplies</td>
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<td>Art Supplies</td>
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<td>General Supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Safety Supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music Instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Start-up Funds</td>
<td>9,081.92</td>
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<td><strong>Total School Supplies</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Services</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Expense</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net Ordinary Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Income</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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<td><strong>Total Other Income</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Other Expense</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Other Expense</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Other Income</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Income</strong></td>
<td>108,116.53</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SLT Survey Results are In!

Laura Krug  
Lower Grade Rep, SLT

Thanks to the 61 parents who answered our survey. Your comments and suggestions are important in helping guide our discussions and planning for next year. Here is a brief overview of the survey responses.

Parents rated our school overwhelmingly positively:

- 35 – excellent
- 30 – good
- 2 - fair

The categories below were most frequently listed as being excellent (4) or were mentioned as the best things about Lab School.

- Teachers – 44
- Reading – 32
- Writing – 26
- Office to family communication – 25
- Science – 20
- Teacher to family communication – 19
- Office system/supports – 19
- Music – 18
- Spanish – 18
- Parent involvement – 17
- Parent workshops – 16
- Parent Coordinator – 16
- Community – 15
- Children and families – 15
- Social Studies – 15

The categories below were most frequently listed as being poor (1) or were areas of concern about Lab School.

- School building – 29
- Physical Education – 23
- Class Size – 17
- Bathrooms – 16
- Recess – 12
- Math – 11
- Spanish – 10
- PTA – 10

Judging from these results, we must first congratulate our fantastic teaching staff and recognize them as being the overwhelmingly single best component of our school! In addition, their implementation of the reading and writing curriculum is very strong as is parent’s appreciation for our hard working and effective administrative staff. Not surprisingly, the physical space is the most common negative which significantly impacts indoor recess alternatives as well. We are all eagerly anticipating the improvements promised for our bathrooms and air conditioning. The SLT committee has already begun investigating concerns regarding physical education and hope to improve the program by next September.

Thanks again to all of you who took the time to tell us what you think. If you have not done so yet but have opinions you would like to share, it is not too late to hand in your survey.

* * *

“Thank You” from the Halibians. Jackson Halebian and his family would like to thank the entire Lab School community for their support over this past year. We are so appreciative of all the kind wishes, emails, phone calls, cards, blood donations and other touching gestures showered upon us. Jackson has responded beautifully to his treatment for leukemia, and as the 5th graders already know, he returned to school in April and will graduate with his Lab classmates on June 22nd. He was even able to go on the Frost Valley sleep away trip for the 5th graders. Jackson's "patient story" will be featured on the Memorial Sloane Kettering Cancer Center website sometime in July, and will run for a few weeks. The website is www.mskcc.org and it will be on a link that features pediatric patient stories. Again, a big and heart felt thank you to the entire Lab School community.

Alumni Liaison Needed. Lisa Pass, a "graduating" parent is looking to hand over her activities in alumni development to a current Lab parent or parents. This role involves coordinating a one year reunion for Lab grads, keeping recent alumni informed about events, such as the talent show, auction and the fall fair, collecting information on middle school and when possible, high school choices, of Lab grads. Other ideas for alumni activities are welcomed, we just need someone to make them happen. Lisa can be contacted by email at lisa@halebian.com or by phone at 212-988-1236.
**A Successful B&N Book Fair.** The Lab School will receive $192.32 as a result of the Barnes and Noble book fair held June 1 through 4. Thanks to all those that bought books.

**Job Wanted/Needed:** My responsible, sweet, out-going and energetic twenty-year-old stepdaughter from South Africa is looking for a summer job. Child care, clerical, anything! Please give us a call if you know of a job: Susan Beschta (5th graders parent) 212-234-9551.

**Fall 2006 After School.** It’s not too early to begin making plans for after school arrangements for the fall. If you would like to find out more about the Rhinelander after school program, for the Sept’06-June’07 school year, please call Alice Harrad, Director at 212 876-0500.

**Math and Science Champions.** Hunter Massey won 1st Place for the Math Team in 2006 and William Long won 1st Place for Science Olympiad in 2006. Both are fifth graders.

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Over the summer, be sure to visit the Lab School website at [www.lowerlabschoolpta.org](http://www.lowerlabschoolpta.org). Past LabTalks are posted there as well as lots of current and useful school related information and links.

LabTalk is produced for the Lower Lab School community by the PTA. Amy Kates, Editor

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**External Affairs Report**

*By Bijou Miller*

At the June 12th Presidents’ Council meeting, the speaker was James Leibman, the Chief Accountability Officer at the Department of Education. He spoke about the new Accountability Initiative that will be rolled out starting in the fall of 2006. This program has already had a pilot with a group of schools that were selected to be in an “autonomy zone.” These schools had more power to choose their own curriculum and the principals were given more options in how to spend their budgets (Lab is one of them).

Starting in the fall, there will be over 350 schools added and it will be called the “empowerment zone.” All public city schools, and some charter schools, were given the option to apply to become an empowered school for the 2006-2007 school year. So many schools applied that they opened it up to more. In 2007, all city schools will be empowered. Leibman was there to discuss not only this roll-out but the new performance, quality and progress measures that will be put into place in all schools.

He began by saying that he was a lawyer who had faced off against Joel Klein in a NAACP case. He has two kids in the public school system and teaches law at Columbia. Back in 1986, he saw that strictly legal remedies to public school issues were not effective so he began to look at other reforms. He mentioned the standards movement that came in during the nineties and other reforms from the public sector but he came to the realization that things were not essentially getting better when these reforms operated from the center (the Board of Education, for instance). The one size fits all structure does not work for the New York
City public school system. The most important element in getting results is in getting the correct information and the best place to get that information is at the school level. So he feels that getting useful information to create innovative improvements in the school system must come from each school.

He showed a circle/diagram that had Leadership/Clear Goals → Innovation → Evaluation/Adjustment → back to Leadership/Clear Goals with the word "School" in the middle of the circle. He said that the DOE can set goals to lead in a certain direction but must take into consideration individual schools. Schools are the center of the achievement universe. Thus, they are studying schools and pinpointing problems that they want to address. He used the fourth grade ELA test results as an example. Looking at a chart of results, they have to decide how to bring up the level of scores in all schools while keeping the high performers up as well. Spreading success to all schools is the goal and it is a very integrated process. Better information will lead to better instruction which will lead to better results in test scores. Some ways of accomplishing them were mentioned: A new very detailed Progress Report, an on-site quality review of each school, a real-time data management system and periodic progress measures (assessments during the year). All of this will be enveloped in a "vigorous support for a culture of continuous learning."

He described the new Progress report that will replace the report card. These reports will establish a continuum in that they will measure how much progress a child makes from year to year (they will compare reports from year to year). The No Child Left Behind initiative currently compares one fourth grade's results to the next year's fourth grade results. He believes this is wrong because the progress is not measured from year to year. Instead, they should be tracking children from year to year and comparing the results of the fourth grade results to the next year's fifth grade results. This new initiative intends to grade every school in three ways:

1) Environment
   a) Attendance and # of students
   b) Safety
   c) Parent, Student and Teacher involvement.

2) Performance
   This will be based on the results of the ELA and Math standardized test results

3) Progress (assessments during the school year)

   Schools will also be compared to similar schools. Schools with comparable ELL and Special Education students, with the same percentage of free lunches and similar challenges will be compared. High schools will be compared to schools that have similar diploma rates and how many Regents credits students earned. From all of this, the schools will set targets to reach based on similar school's success and accomplishments. In other words, a poorer performing school that has a similar, but higher performing, counterpart will strive to adopt the best practices of that school in order to improve.

   The on-site Quality Review will include a self-evaluation by the school administration that is then studied by an experienced reviewer. A pilot program of 100 schools has had this process and the response from participants has been very positive. Questions asked in this self-evaluation include:

   How well do you know each student in the school?
   How extensively do you challenge each child? And what is the plan for each child? 
   How well do you align your curriculum around these goals?
   Explain why the choices of curriculum are good for your students.
   How well do you know during the year that these choices are working?

   The professional reviewer (from Cambridge) then gives each school one of three ratings:

   Well-developed
   Proficient
   Undeveloped
Leibman explained that after the pilot program, they planned to change the outside reviewer to a review by peers but the principals in the pilot program liked the outside review. He then showed another circle diagram that went like this: Quantum Improvement → More Effective Individualized Instruction → Battle Plan for Each Child → More Empowered Self-evaluation → back to Quantum Improvement. The Quality Review is designed to be done in two intensive days.

He then explained the Data Management System. He described a huge data warehouse with a lot more analytics than are currently in place. The school will do much more specific data gathering and entry and he said that the principal will assign someone on staff to complete this data entry. He said there would be much DOE support and training for this level of data compiling. When he said that the funds for this would come from capital expenses, people were a bit confused but he said that he meant that upgrading the equipment and providing machinery would be capital expenses.

Currently, many schools use ECLAS and Dibbles programs to measure their kids' progress during the year. In K-2 these programs will continue if they are already in place but the teachers will enter the data into Palm Pilots instead of manually. He feels that the capacity of these assessments to provide parents with specific information on how well your child is doing in literacy is key. He mentioned that he himself felt frustrated to go to parent/teacher conferences and only hear that his child is well-behaved.

In third through 12th grade, the system used to measure the kids is called "Tools." Each child will have a record on how they are doing on skills in the fall and then in the spring. He went back to the chart of Fourth grade test results and said that each child will have their own breakdown of ratings on how they are doing in each skill. It is color coded. Green means that a child is doing well and needs to be challenged. Yellow means that the child is on the verge of getting the skill and red means that the child is not getting it. Teachers and parents will be able to see patterns of where the child needs help. These skills will be measured by short assessments throughout the year. They want to see if kids are building on their skills as the year progresses.

These charts will also assess how teachers are doing. If a core group of children are not getting specific skills, it will indicate that their teacher may not be proficient in teaching that skill. Seeing which teachers have strengths and weaknesses will enable the school to partner teachers together to share best practices and bring all teachers up to proficiency in all skills.

The initial 350 empowerment schools will get extensive training that will spread from the principal and a core set of teachers who will then train the rest of the teachers. When asked how principals who are already burdened with minutiae and red tape will be able to take on all of these new tasks, Leibman said that the empowerment principals will be exempt from meetings and much of the red tape will be cut out. He also insisted that some of the "tools" save time instead of taking more time. He said that many high performing schools already use these kinds of assessments and data compilation. He also said that "learning is trying something and if it doesn't work, try something better." He thinks that these new initiatives increase the capacity to focus on each child's strengths and weaknesses. Schools that get high marks will get extra resources and also be magnet schools to other lower performing schools.

Of the schools that get graded Ds and Fs will get a progression of changes to the structure of the school. First there will be a change of leadership if there is no improvement. If that does not solve the problem, the school will be further restructured or closed.

He also believes that qualitative scores predict quantitative scores. He said that it will take a couple of years to see improvement so they will give schools leeway and not decide quickly about a school's fate. When asked how many assessments (tests) the children will take yearly, he said that there would be five assessments a year. He also said that schools that teach a curriculum in a different order have the option of moving the assessments around to align with the curriculum. And he said that while multiple choice tests are quite capable of showing how effectively kids are learning, the assessments will also have writing and open ended question portions. He also said that schools that relied on portfolio assessment would be allowed to use those portfolios as part of their data.
Some parents questioned whether or not the DOE would be really consulting with parents on the surveys. It was mentioned that in the initial Children First consultations, parents were given lip service and none of their input ended up in the plan. Leibman insisted that they will use focus groups of parents, teachers and students in the development of the surveys. He said that this entire restructuring to the empowerment model has been done for parents to provide transparency as well as accountability. He later promised that there would be real working groups of parents putting their views into the development of the surveys.

When people asked about class size and how they can do all of this specific data on each child if a classroom has upwards of thirty kids in a class, he said that if they had mandated a standard class size, it would have been wrong. The design of this reform is not to set standard class sizes. One parent wanted to know if this reform would impose a uniform curriculum. He said no. He also said that schools that emphasized arts programs would not be impacted negatively by this reform. He said that schools that stress arts programs must have the courage of their convictions: that everyone would agree that the arts enhance and strengthen the learning to read, write and do math.

There were some comments on if the DOE could guarantee the quality of the diagnostic tools. One parent said that the data should be measured against other schools in the following ways: 1) compare schools on the rate of teacher retention 2) on teacher experience 3) on class size and 4) on per pupil expenditure. Leibman said that the measuring tool must be dynamic and accurate. He feels that this reform, while not perfect, is better than doing nothing. And there is no guarantee that they will be able to know exactly what every child need to improve but all of the data will provide a wide variety of specific information on each child which will be a start. He feels that this data will be more effective than the current NCLB way of measuring results. He has hopes that this kind of program will eventually replace the NCLB and State reviews.

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**Lower Lab School Calendar**

**June**

Saturday, 6/24 -- Third Grade Music Recital, Hunter College, 5 pm

Wednesday, 6/28 -- last day of school

**September**

Tuesday, 9/5 -- first day of 2006-07 school year

Friday, 9/22 -- Read-a-Thon materials due

**October**

Friday, 10/13 -- Read-a-Thon Awards presentation

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**Kids Sudoku**

Level 2 – Fill in each row, column and box with the numbers 1-6

```
2  1  2
1  4
6  3
4  5
1  4
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Puzzle from PuzzleChoice.com