



CGS PTO Newsletter January 2012

A Memo From Marybeth Moyer, Principal

Happy New Year! By the time you read this newsletter, the holiday decorations will have been put away for another year, and we will have rung in the 2012 New Year! We enjoyed the final week of school in December as we embraced traditions and came together at our annual holiday sing-a-long. We thank the PTO for again funding the *Crabgrass Puppet Theatre!* The students and teachers all enjoyed the lively performance. Thank you to all the families who purchased items for the *Mitten Tree* during the month of December. Our students and families showed both school and neighborly spirit by reaching out to others in our community.

As December came to a close, I began to think about the many ways people celebrate and ring in the New Year. When I watched the celebrations of those around the globe, I wondered about the various traditions in which the children in those cultures would be participating. Would I understand their holiday and their customs? How would I communicate a New Year's greeting? I could certainly try to extend my greetings in their language just as you see here.

Spanish – Feliz ano nuevo
Chinese – Xin nian yu kuai
Hawaiian – Hau'oli Makahiki hou

My attempt might come across in a humorous fashion, but, hopefully, they would appreciate my effort to communicate in their language. I know that in my daily life it is vital to share ideas effectively. When I am connecting with students, it is very important to make sure that we both understand what is being said and what the intent of my words mean. With the foreign language greetings above, if what I am saying is not communicated clearly, my intent might be completely misunderstood.

One way I try to engage in a conversation is by practicing "active listening." By listening very carefully to what is being said, I can make sure that what I said was understood. I also try to send the message that students have my undivided attention and that what they are saying is very important to me.

I have found the following techniques for effective listening useful in my daily conversations with students with whom I work with each day. You may find that these techniques also work in your daily conversations with your children.

- *Take a moment and listen to what is being said.* It is important to make eye contact and kneel down to a child's level. If the timing of the conversation is difficult, say, "Let's talk in a few minutes; I need to finish this so we can talk."
- *Ask specific questions to gather information.* Good questions can get children to talk about all the feelings they may be experiencing, yet can't put into words.
- *Repeat what you heard.* It is often useful to restate what is heard to try to put the feelings of the conversation into words.

One of my goals during the new year will be to become a better communicator. If I can ever help clarify anything or if you need to connect with me, please feel free to contact me at 860-742-7313 or at mmoyer@coventyct.org.

I look forward to seeing and "communicating" with all of you during the upcoming months!

Coventry Grammar School

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CGS PTO Newsletter

January 2012



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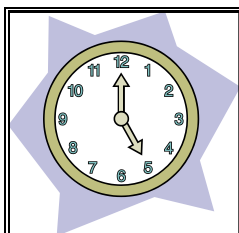
You may find that these techniques also work in your daily conversations with your children.

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- Ask specific questions to gather information.
- Repeat what you heard.

Kindergarten News

Kindergarten Team

Teachers: Wendy Baver, Terry Bitwinski, Heidi Bosco, Eileen Hosey, and Debbie Hurlburt
Para-Educators: Debbie Carroll and Sue Lewis



Share with your child the ways you measure and use the clock in your daily schedule so that they can make a practical connection to the mathematics introduced in kindergarten.

Red mittens, blue mittens ... mittens for cold weather.
Wool mittens, knit mittens, fingers all together.
Lost mittens, found mittens ... mittens in the snow.
Wet mittens, dry mittens, hanging in a row.
Green mittens, orange mittens, yellow mittens, too!
Furry mittens, soft mittens ... which ones are for you?

Now that the excitement of the holiday season has passed, we will return to our normal routines in kindergarten. As we continue with our study of seasonal changes, we will learn about weather, how a thermometer works, and how birds and animals cope with winter weather conditions by migration, hibernation or adaptation to the environment.

Measurement activities will continue into January as part of our math series. Children will be comparing and describing objects by length, weight or capacity. They will also order objects using these same attributes and be exposed to the idea of telling time. Share with your child the ways you measure and use the clock in your daily schedule so that they can make a practical connection to the mathematics introduced in kindergarten. Later in January, we will work on comparing, ordering and joining numbers as part of our math program. These new concepts and skills build upon the prior activities that kindergartners have experienced.

At this time of year students are beginning instruction in guided reading groups to develop emerging reading skills. Specific information from your child's teacher will be shared with families.

What can parents do to support their children in becoming successful readers? Talk with your children. There is no substitute for time spent talking with your child. You are teaching new words and ideas. Talk in complete sentences and encourage them to do the same. Encourage your child to describe experiences and ideas. Use photo albums or magazine pictures to start a conversation. Take your child to visit interesting places – playgrounds, music or dance performances, libraries, museums and historical sites. Discuss these places or read more about them. Help your youngster make connections among words or concepts such as winter = cold, snow, holidays; or dinner = food, family, evening. Remember to have fun with your child. From making up silly sounds to talking about a story, appreciate your child's special joy for learning new things. So laugh even when your child asks you to read that one favorite book --- *again!*

Speaking of visiting places, kindergarten students will be taking a field trip to the Booth and Dimock Library in January. Ms. Bitwinski and Mrs. Hosey's classes will be visiting on Monday, January 9, and Mrs. Baver, Mrs. Hurlburt and Mrs. Bosco's classes will visit on Wednesday, January 11. We look forward to exploring the library with Miss Jennifer Needham!

Do you know the *star words* of the week? Kindergartners will be exposed to different high frequency words each week for the remainder of the school year. All kindergarten rooms will have yellow stars with the *words of the week* displayed on them. There will be a homework assignment each week to go along with our star words so be on the look out for those. Ask your child to say, spell and write the word of the week for you at home! We are joining the first and second graders by including this literacy activity in our daily routine.

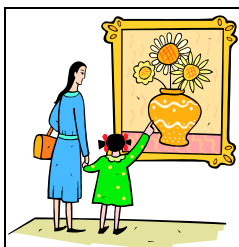
Mrs. Caldwell has begun teaching our state-mandated, health curriculum with kindergarten classes! They will still have P.E. classes but will also be hearing stories and doing activities about healthy habits throughout the month of January.

Our challenge and enrichment teacher for the district, Mr. Jeff Spivey has begun working with kindergarten classes. He will work with one class each week on magnets, as part of our Properties of Matter unit in science throughout the month of January. He will continue to work with us on other science subjects for the remainder of the school year.

We would like families to be aware that there will be a presentation to the Coventry Board of Education, about all day kindergarten on January 12. The board meeting begins at 7:30 PM. Please consider attending.

Please remember to mark all clothing, boots, hats and mittens with the name of your child. Also please encourage your child to independently collect his/her belongings and dress him/herself. This includes zipping, snapping, tying shoelaces and getting into and out of boots without assistance. If your child has difficulty tying shoes or zipping, please work with him/her on this. Make it a "New Year's Resolu-

(continued on page 3)



What can parents do to support their children in becoming successful readers? Talk with your children... Encourage your child to describe experiences and ideas... Take your child to visit interesting places – playgrounds, music or dance performances, libraries, museums and historical sites.

(Kindergarten, continued)

tion” to accomplish such a task. Whenever winter boots must be worn, please send in a pair of shoes or sneakers with your child; winter boots cannot be worn all day at school. We spend a good part of our day in activities on the rug and a change from bulky winter boots to sneakers is necessary for everyone’s comfort.

Parenting Tip: Try not to compare things your child can do to things his or her friends can do. Instead, talk about the things your child can do now that he or she could not do the year before. Talking about these accomplishments can give your child the confidence and patience needed to try new things.

First-Grade News

First-Grade Team

Teachers: Megan Babcock, Bruce Gale, Colleen Hamblett, Patricia Klaneski, Matthew Kyer, Cristy Rau, and Ginny Taber
Para-Educators: Laurie Darling and Jennifer Ray

Happy New Year! We welcome first graders back to school after a long break. We hope everyone is ready to re-establish their daily routines.

In math, students will continue to solve addition and subtraction problems as they further develop their understanding of the relationship between the two processes. Later in the month they will concentrate on ordinal numbers and multiples of ten. They will use concrete objects and pictures to represent two-digit numbers as tens and ones. Students will also learn to represent two-digit numbers that are one or ten more or less than a given two-digit number.

In class and guided-reading instruction children will compare and contrast elements of a story and make predictions as the story progresses. Students will continue telling a story sequentially including details. Children will have many opportunities to practice short vowel sounds and high-frequency words. Please help your child practice recognizing the high-frequency words and *star words* that are sent home each week. At the end of the month students will begin bringing home ten spelling words to learn each week.

Although the month of January can be very cold, outdoor recess is still a possibility. Please provide your child with mittens, a hat and boots each day. Sending an extra set of socks and mittens is a good idea. Children should always bring shoes to wear in the school building. We hope to keep our students healthy, happy and comfortable in the new year.

Second-Grade News

Second-Grade Team

Teachers: Carolyn Bennett, Jerry Craig, Nancy Gwozdz, Erin Hazzard, Heather McPeck, Nancy Plaster, and Angela Puccia
Para-Educators: Gloria Barry and Heidi Holver

The second-grade teachers would like to extend best wishes to all for a healthy and happy New Year!

In the classroom, students continue to learn and apply new skills in reading, writing and math. In reading, students are applying new strategies to improve their fluency and comprehension. This month, we are focusing on visualization, inferencing and understanding character traits. Students are also making connections with the stories they are reading. In writing, students are learning different techniques such as creating entertaining beginnings and adding descriptive details to their stories. In math, students are applying their basic computation skills to adding and subtracting numbers with regrouping. Students are also applying these skills to solving story problems. Please continue to work with your children at home on practicing their weekly spelling words, studying their math facts, and most importantly, reading for fifteen minutes daily.

The month of January brings in cold and wintry weather. With that in mind, please send appropriate winter attire for your child including winter coats, snow pants, hats, gloves and boots. The students will go outside for recess unless conditions are deemed unsafe due to excessive cold weather.

Please note the following changes to the 2011 – 2012 school calendar. First, there will be no school on Monday, January 16, in celebration of Martin Luther King Day. Also, students will have a half day on Friday, January 27. The release time will be 11:40. Finally, students will receive their second quarter report cards on Tuesday, February 14. Although conferences are not scheduled during this time, please contact your child’s teacher with any questions or concerns.



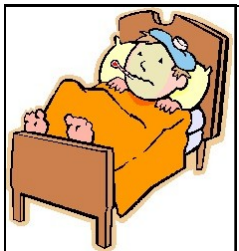
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From Our School Nurse ~ Mrs. Paula Curtiss

It is hard to believe it is now 2012! I would like to wish all of you a very happy and healthy new year. This is the time of year our students experience a higher incidence of illness. Please follow these guidelines to keep our schools as healthy as possible!



This is the time of year our students experience a higher incidence of illness. Please follow these guidelines to keep our schools as healthy as possible!

- If your children have had a fever please keep them home until they are temperature free (without “Tylenol” or “Motrin”) for 24 hours.
- If your child has been vomiting or experiencing diarrhea, please keep him/her home until he/she have been tolerating a regular diet for 24 hours.
- For strep throat, conjunctivitis or other illnesses requiring treatment with an antibiotic, your child should have a full 24 hours of the medication before returning to school.
- If your child has symptoms that prevented him/her from sleeping during the night such as an asthma flare-up or severe cough, he/she should stay home.
- If your child is complaining of severe ear pain or throat pain, he/she should stay home and be seen by the health care provider.
- If your child is not well enough to participate in the full school day (including outdoor recess if weather permits), they should remain home.

If we all do our part, it will make a big difference!

~ Paula Curtiss RN, School Nurse

860-742-4558, pcurtiss@coventryct.org



A child with a strong self-image is self-reliant and doesn't fear independent activities ... If we build a proper foundation our kids will be strong enough to stand on their own!

From Our School Psychologist ~ Mrs. Heather Zilora

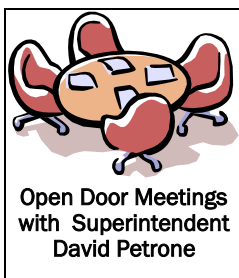
Some children lack confidence in their abilities to succeed and may be afraid of new challenges and experiences. Children may cling to their parents in strange situations. A positive self-image and a sense of independence go hand in hand. It's difficult to have one without the other, and they are mutually enhancing. A child with a strong self-image is self-reliant and doesn't fear independent activities. Independence is a demonstration of competence, while simultaneously contributing to it. Here are some suggestions of ways to build or enhance your child's independence.

- Provide your child with plenty of attention. Children who don't get enough attention will spend time hovering around adults trying to get more- instead of trying out their independence.
- Provide a secure home-base from which the child can venture out into independent activities, knowing there is always a safe place to return.
- Provide time for independence. If you are always in a rush to get your child off to school, there probably isn't adequate opportunity for the child to select clothing or pack a lunch.
- Use discipline and problem-solving techniques based on self-control and voluntary participation, rather than commands or orders.

Kids need help from adults to learn skills and model behavior. If we build a proper foundation, our kids will be strong enough to stand on their own!

~ Heather Zilora, School Psychologist

hzilora@coventryct.org



Open Door Meetings with Superintendent David Petrone

A Note from Superintendent David Petrone

“As I begin my tenure as the superintendent of schools, one of my initiatives is to meet with as many parents and members of our Coventry community as possible. Open communication is a key component for true collaboration. I invite you to keep informed about education in our town by attending any of my open door meetings this school year. All of these informal gatherings will be held in the conference room of the Administration Building at 1700 Main Street.”

Tuesday, February 7 at 5:30 p.m.

Monday, March 12 at 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, April 11 at 3:30 p.m.

Friday, May 4 at 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, May 31 at 6:00 p.m.

From Our Reading Room ~

Reading Room Team: Jennifer Jones, Carol Bittner, Nan Kandolin, Jennifer Oberlin, Hannah Pietrantonio, Mary Talaga

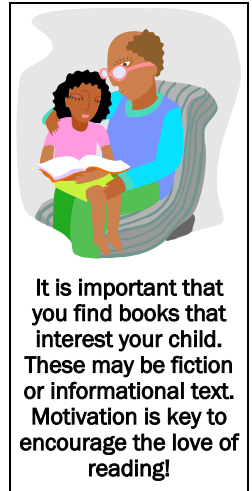
What is leveled reading all about?

Your child takes the Developmental Reading Assessment to identify an independent reading level. Students must meet specific criteria in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension to pass the test. Additional questions are asked to have the child reflect on his or her favorite part and make connections. The DRA₂ is given one-on-one as children read books they have never seen before. A set of leveled texts, which increase in difficulty are used for the assessment. Your child's independent reading level will be noted on his/her report card.

The leveled books that your child may bring home for practice are books on his or her instructional reading level. These are books that have been introduced by the teacher in guided-reading groups. The teacher has pre-taught tricky vocabulary words and supported the child's strategy use. Leveled books sent home may be a few levels above his or her independent, reading level scored on the DRA₂, since these books have been read a few times in class. Reading familiar books at home is a way to improve fluency and build confidence.

It is important that your child does not choose books to read independently that are at his or her frustration, reading level. These are books that your child may read with too many errors, word-by-word or choppy and/or have difficulty understanding. Books that are "just right" should be read at home. These books are neither too hard nor too easy. Using your child's DRA level, you can match books that are just right for him or her to read alone. A Booth and Dimock leveled, book list can be found on the CGS website under Academics/Reading/Language Arts tab.

Remember that you can read books at a variety of levels when you read aloud to your child. It is wonderful to expose our children to robust vocabulary and story structure. It is important that you find books that interest your child. These may be fiction or informational text. Motivation is key to encourage the love of reading! Take a trip to the library today!



From Our Friends at the Coventry Early Childhood Center ~

Happy New Year!! All of us here at the Coventry Early Childhood Center wish you and your family a happy and healthy 2012!

To support a nutritional year for your young children, we would like to share some thoughts and ideas on *But I Hate Broccoli!!*

Parents often worry because they think their young children don't eat enough. Some children seem to be naturally finicky. But others simply may be so overwhelmed by the amount of food placed on their plates that they don't know where or how to begin eating.

How much food is enough? And how can we get our children to participate more successfully at mealtimes?

Physicians tell us that a child needs one tablespoon of food per year of age at each meal. That means a 3-year-old needs at least three tablespoons of food at breakfast, at lunch, and at dinner in order to maintain health and growth. These are not the heaping portions that we are tempted to put on our children's plates; they are standard measurement portions.

Allowing children to serve themselves encourages them to eat larger portions of a variety of foods. When children get to control their choices and the amount of food they take, mealtime becomes more enjoyable for them and you. Participation in meal planning and preparation also encourages children to feel that they are a part of the process of mealtime.

A family meal can be a time of conversation and relaxation or a time of frustration and anger. By offering children smaller amounts, the opportunity to help prepare meals, and the chance to serve themselves, we can provide a calmer, more satisfying family time for everyone.



Weather-Related/Emergency Closings, Delays and Early Release Notifications

Announcements regarding these closings, delayed openings and early releases will be made via our ALERTNOW calling system. In addition to broadcasting this information on selected TV and radio stations, all student homes are now phoned by ALERTNOW. If families would like a list of the selected media outlets, please see the website at www.coventrypublicschools.org.

PTO News

We hope everyone enjoyed the break and time with their families. The numbers are in for the Joint PTO Craft/Bake Sale...CGS made \$2,278.08! That is a phenomenal amount of money and is almost \$150.00 more than last year! Thank you again to Beth Hassett and the volunteers who baked, made bows and worked.

Spirit Wear orders have been delivered, and the PTO made \$2 on every item sold. We have decided to keep the website up throughout the year for all of your CGS gear needs for end-of-the-year gifts, birthdays, holidays, etc. You can go to the Coventry Grammar School website and click on the "spirit wear" tab to place your order. Thank you Carrie Houk for helping get this going again!

Pajama Day and our movie night for CCMC were a big hit with our students and families! The tables were lined in donated toys. We made \$565.00 for CCMC and enjoyed ourselves and our CGS families while filling buckets! What a wonderful way to end the calendar year! Our families are always so generous when it comes to charitable events.

We are easing into 2012 with a donation to CGS with a Dimitri's night fundraiser on January 17. Dine-In or Take-Out at Dimitri's between the hours of 4:00 - 10:00 pm and 10% of the proceeds will be donated back to our school! Reminder emails and facebook postings will be sent as the date gets closer.

The Crayons 4 Cancer date has been set for January 27, between 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Crayons 4 Cancer raises funds for kids currently battling with cancer. We are raising funds in honor of Tarsh Brown, Jr. (TJ), who lost his life to cancer just before he reached four years old. Bring in your unwanted crayons to help! There will be crayon slicing, peeling and sorting, ribbon cutting, crayon bagging, card making for children currently in hospitals and fun in the name of charity! We will be accepting dollar donations at the door and small toys to be donated. A flyer will be coming home shortly about this event.

Our next meeting will be held on February 6. Happy New Year!

HELP NEEDED

- Volunteers are needed to chair and/or help with a BJ's membership fundraiser.
- Volunteers will be needed to help with Jump Rope for Heart.
- Volunteers will be needed for our Crayons for Cancer Fun Night.
- Volunteers will be needed for the Talent Show.

PTO TREASURER'S REPORT - AS OF NOVEMBER 21, 2011

Beginning Balance	\$10,603.78
Income	\$ 2,060.50
Expenses	\$ 2,144.17
Ending Balance	\$10,520.11

Haley Small, Co-President: (860) 670-0137, haleysmall@vzw.blackberry.net

Leslie Ryan, Co-President: (860) 742-8066, imfweezin59@yahoo.com

Cathy Veerasammey, Secretary: 860-742-6577, catv3@yahoo.com

Camilla Byam, Treasurer: 860-742-8682, camillabyam@hotmail.com

Look for the CGS PTO on Facebook and become a member today!



**Happy Chinese New Year!
Gung Hay Fat Choy!
Welcome the Year of the Dragon!**

