

# News from Burr

Burr's School Newsletter

Summer 2014

## Message from the Principal

Dear Burr Community,

We have reached the end of a very successful year at Burr, and I wanted to take a moment to congratulate the staff, parents, and, of course, Burr's students for their hard work, creative thinking, and good cheer. We have much to be proud of this year including:

- The implementation of a new writing curriculum K-5.
- The implementation of a new math curriculum and instructional model K-2.
- Monthly character based assemblies that involved the entire school.
- The expansion of Burr's Student Council work.
- Passion based projects in grade 5.
- The expansion of technology into student and teacher discourse. (Ex. Collaborized Classroom)
- A successful Math Night K-2.
- The successful implementation of the SBAC assessment.
- Continued service work to a variety of organizations including Guiding Eyes for the Blind and Operation Hope.
- A new Burr mascot.

I could keep going, but suffice it to say, the entire staff of Burr is working hard to make our school a dynamic, student centered learning environment. Looking ahead, I wanted to offer some thoughts about learning over the summer for you and your children. They include:

- Read. Read books. Read magazines. Read online newspapers. Read fiction. Read non-fiction. Read to your children. Make reading a bonding opportunity. This includes trips to the library, discussions about read aloud books, and even the creation of a book club in your house or in your neighborhood. Reading is a great way to learn about the world, build curiosity and higher order thinking skills, and become completely engaged and enthralled. We would also appreciate it if all students could return the *Governor's Reading Challenge* form when they return to Burr in the fall. It is attached to Burr's website.





- Encourage writing. Give your child a stamped, addressed postcard and have them send it to someone that is special to them . Other ideas include keep a nature journal, check out the pen pal project resource guide at Great Schools, or keep a scrapbook that reviews your family's summer adventures.
- Be active in the community. Encourage your child to participate in community service activities. This is a great way to build self esteem, confidence, and an awareness of social responsibility.
- Exercise. Whether it's playing on an organized team or going for a bike ride, have your children exercise for 60 minutes everyday, eat healthy, and play with other children.
- Plant a garden with your children. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and spices are easy to grow and can be used for salad, tomato sauce, and a variety of other cooking recipes.
- Make things that are cool. *Dad can Do* is an interesting site that is full of crafty ideas that children and parents can build together.
- Try Geocaching and Earthcaching. This is like a real world scavenger hunt . Check out the following website for more information. <http://www.geocaching.com/>

Finally I wanted to take a moment to say goodbye to some key staff at Burr. These are people who have made an indelible contribution to Burr Elementary School. Congratulations and best wishes to Linda Zarelli, special education teacher, and Linda Zwickler, band teacher, who are retiring. Also a special thank you to Stacey Vigeant, grade 1 teacher, and Mark Moura, grade 4 teacher, who are moving on to other schools. Finally, Dorna Persson, Burr's library media specialist is retiring. Dorna's work is legendary and her shoes will be impossible to fill. I am so proud to have worked with her during the past two years, and I know that whatever she does with the next stage of her life, it will be filled with a passion for technology and a love of literacy.

Please look for a summer mailing in August with information from the PTA. Class lists will be posted in August (date TBD) and will be accessible through Infinite Campus. The first day of school is Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a new family orientation on Wednesday, August 20. Whether you are traveling halfway across the world or staying close to home, I wish you a happy, healthy, relaxing summer. See you on August 28<sup>th</sup>.

Warmly,

Jason



## **News from Pre-Kindergarten**

Mrs. Totilo Smith

Pre-K has been enjoying a variety of hands-on experiences to learn about spring changes. Such experiences included a visit from Mr. Jeff from the garden center at Home Depot in April. He taught us about seeds and bulbs, how they grow and what they need to grow. We then had the opportunity to plant and grow flowers for our moms and grandmas for Mother's Day. In May, we enjoyed our first field trip to the Audubon Center of Fairfield, where we learned about animals and their habitats. We were fortunate to find salamanders, red newts, and tadpoles on a long trail walk. We also had the chance to explore a variety of items found in nature, such as feathers, shells, rocks, snake skins, birds' nests, and birds' eggs. The day ended with a visit from Tony the Turtle and Phantom the Falcon! Back in our classroom, we explored such topics as spring weather changes and the metamorphosis of caterpillars to chrysalises to butterflies! At the end of May, we released our butterflies in the LMC atrium, where they can enjoy the flowers!

Thanks to the generosity of the PTA, we were able to enjoy two programs through Hi Touch Hi Tech that allowed us to further explore the study of insects as well as wrap up our study of spring weather changes. The PTA also provided book donations for each Pre-k student from the spring book fair. We also celebrated on our final field trip to the Fairfield Public Library, where Pre-k parents and students had a chance to learn about free reading programs, resources, and activities available to them for the summer. Pre-K has had a fun-filled year of learning!

## **News from Kindergarten**

Mrs. Root, Mrs. Schallau, Ms. Sherwood, Mrs. Thompson

Kindergarten has been a year of learning, friendship, responsibility, problem solving, growth, risk-taking, and fun. We have watched your children grow as readers, writers, mathematicians, and members of our classroom communities. We are all proud of their accomplishments and know they will continue to blossom as first graders. You can help your children continue to grow over the summer by keeping their skill sharp in fun ways. Talk to them. Tell them stories about summer days when you were their age. Ask them to tell you stories. Introduce your children to window shopping on the Post Road. Can they figure out what a store sells from the display in the window? How do they know? Read to them. Have them read to you. Talk about the books, the characters, the author's message, and how they would change the story if they could. Enjoy reading magazines, letters, billboards, etc. Visit the library often. Write with them. Make a list of things you want to do this summer. Write journals, poems, postcards, a neighborhood newsletter, and a list of directions for the babysitter, etc. Let your children write in the ways that suit them best. Play games like dice, cards, and board games that require counting help and keep math skill sharp. Study volume by pouring water from bucket to buckets etc. Throw water balloons at sight words on the driveway. Take the time to be six again. Feel the wind and the sun. Walk in the rain. Enjoy your summer with your children!



## News from First Grade

Ms. Kurimai, Mrs. Musante, Mrs. Vigeant

We are so pleased with the success of our students this year! Below are some suggestions for incorporating learning fun throughout your summer days and keeping your child's skills polished. READ, READ, READ! Your child should be reading for 20 minutes a day. You may also want to incorporate some comprehension and retelling questions. Build opportunities for writing over the summer. It would be fantastic if your child kept a summer journal to write about different summer experiences. It will help them hold on to the spelling and grammar rules, as well as concepts of print and other writing conventions they have learned this year. This journal may also be valuable for writing ideas to be used next year in second grade. Please have them work on fact fluency over the summer by using flashcards, math games, etc. Help your child develop his/her organizational skills by incorporating chores and responsibilities into their daily routine. Putting clothes in drawers, setting/clearing the dinner table, and putting toys away are just a few examples. Your children have worked very hard throughout the year and we are very proud of them, (You should be too!)

## News from Second Grade

Mrs. Cinquegrana, Mrs. Miles, Mrs. Uliasz

As the year draws to a close, it's a perfect time to reflect on all we've accomplished—and celebrate! Haiku, What If, Acrostic, and Diamante—these are some of the many kinds of poems you may have seen in our published books of poetry. We've explored opinion writing and how to support opinions with strong evidence. Before we leave for the summer, we will set goals for summer reading and writing and create lists of books we can't wait to dig into and writing topics we'd love to ponder. In geometry, we have found solid figures and plane shapes in items around our houses and school. We've covered fractions as well. Southport beach was the site of our CANE trip where we explored the habitats of the intertidal zone and the creatures that live where the tide may be high or low. Washington D.C. was our final topic, rounding out our studies of our town, state and country.

Our second graders have made incredible progress this year. We hope they will maintain all of their excellent skills by continuing to read and think about reading each night. Journaling about the day will make a precious collection of summer memories while keeping writing skills fresh. Practicing math facts will help with math fluency and there are math fact websites and apps. A list of keyboarding websites and a summer reading/writing packet will be on the way with more information. We hope our students will all enjoy the great outdoors and the wonder of summer.



## News from Third Grade

Mr. Jasgur, Mrs. Noonan, Ms. Taylor

Wow! What a year we have had in third grade. Third graders have enjoyed our



end of year activities such as our Eli Whitney field trip, Field Day, and our end of year celebrations.

The third graders have continued to work hard as we near the end of the year. In writing we have studied various types of poetry, and the students recently took home their poetry anthologies. We have also spent time formulating clear and thorough written opinions through speechwriting and petitions while taking charge of our own learning through self-reflection and goal setting. In math, students have delved deeper into their understanding of multiplication and division. They have experimented with authentic problems in multiple ways including numbers, words, pictures, charts, graphs, etc. In reading, students have demonstrated their comprehension abilities through their partnership and group discussions. They have practiced skills important for teamwork such as active listening and how to disagree respectfully. Third graders worked on their Soggy Paper experiment in which they have collected data on the absorbency of various types of paper products. Finally, third graders worked collaboratively in preparation for the Africa Fair which took place in June.

With the summer ahead, it is very important you talk with your child about what work they will be doing to continue their learning and prepare for 4th grade. Have your child set goals for what they want to accomplish this summer and why. This will hold them accountable for their own learning while also teaching them responsibility. It is necessary that students read, write, and work on their math facts consistently during the summer. Thank you for all of your support this year as we worked together for a successful year!

### **News from Fourth Grade**

Mr. Moura, Ms. Passero, Mrs. Lamontagne

Your child is almost a 5<sup>th</sup> grader, can you believe it? This year has flown by. It has been wonderful to learn and grow with your children. We are so proud and impressed by all their accomplishments this year. The students have been working hard to understand the importance of the Revolutionary War. The students' rigorous investigations created a buzz among the students and staff, and culminated into a debate to see who is truly worthy of hall of fame status. They completed their first informational book about this important topic. Ask your child what topic he/she became an expert on! We recently had a wonderful trip to Sturbridge Village where the students furthered their education on Colonial Times. We also took a field trip this year to the Discovery Museum to learn about electricity. At the conclusion of this year, we worked on: writing "Where I am from" poems, participating in book clubs, sharing our informational writing books, studying the pioneers and the Oregon Trail, electricity, and division with multi-digit whole numbers. This summer it is important to keep your child's education going strong to ensure the start of their last year here at Burr goes well! Please be sure to have your children practice their math facts, read, and keep a journal in which they can write about their summer adventures, opinions they may develop, and creating fiction stories. Enjoy your summer, and we look forward to seeing you all in the fall!



## News from Fifth Grade

Mrs. Beno, Mrs. Chandler, Mrs. deRegt, Mrs. Phillips

Fifth grade has been busy these last few months! We have accomplished a great many things, including: Passion Project Presentations, the Spring Concert, finishing and celebrating our opinion writing unit, our field trip to the Mill River and Mystic Seaport, and the annual Invention Convention. We have been researching the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and expressing its importance through picture presentations. We also had a great time at the Lakewood Trumbull YMCA trip, organized by our wonderful PTA and volunteers, as well as Field Day. Students are very excited about the prospect of starting middle school soon and can't wait for the summer to begin. We will miss them dearly and wish them all the best as they continue on their educational journey!

## PE Happenings

*Mr. Hilinski*

Field day was a tremendous success this year. Thank you to all the parents and staff that volunteered their time! Field Day is so successful each year because of all the help and support we receive from our parent volunteers.

Attention 3<sup>rd</sup> graders... in the fall we will begin our state mandated physical fitness test. All 4<sup>th</sup> graders are required to take this test. Over the summer, please spend about 1 hour each day involved in some type of physical activity such as riding bikes, swimming, hiking, jogging or just playing outside with friends. In addition 3<sup>rd</sup> graders should begin to practice each component of the test (push-ups, sit-ups, curl-ups and running a mile). Parents please help your child practice, so they can have as much success as possible when they return in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. To our 5<sup>th</sup> graders, it has been a pleasure watching each and every one of you grow into the person you are today. I have seen you learn compassion, teamwork, sportsmanship, and care for each of your classmates. I wish you all the best on your new adventure as you transition into middle school. Don't forget about us and come back to visit. Lastly, to all our Burr families—I hope everyone has a great summer and spends a lot of time playing!! Take care and we'll see you in September!!!

## Art Room Happenings

Mrs. Yessenow

Once again our annual Burr Art Show was a big success! The children worked hard all year on these beautiful creations. They learned so many new skills and experienced using many new materials. Our Pre-K classes made several kinds of 3-dimensional flowers. We've been practicing our cutting, gluing and coloring all the time in art. Our kindergartens have been painting with cool and warm colors to make a fish bowl with a model magic fish. They also had a blast designing stick puppets with "shrinky dink" plastic heads and many collage materials.



Our first graders made paper weavings that looked like “snakes in the grass” and used our new glitter markers with much excitement! We’ve also been painting our primary and secondary colors using tools that are not paint brushes! Can you guess what they might be?

Second graders finished up their foil Connecticut coin designs. These 3-dimensional relief coins are very cool looking. We also folded a Japanese Origami leap frog. Everyone drew a repeating pattern design on an index card to make them wild looking! Third grade has been studying Africa in the classroom. So in art we studied masks around the world. If you come to the African Fair you will see our clay mini masks. They are styled with many painted designs, feathers, and African raffia. Our fourth grades recently created a slab style clay project. These cute “pocket pals” look like a taco with a face! We also read the book Tonight is Carnival and learned about the Arpilleras made in Peru. Then we created our own Arpilleras using a variety of collage materials. Fifth graders had fun learning how to write in Calligraphy. Then they used this skill to create a whimsical business card for a story character.

Recently we finished up a unit on clay sculpture. Each student designed a person, creature, or animal figure using several methods of clay construction. They are fabulous 3-dimensional pieces. The best way to keep your child’s creative juices flowing is to provide encouragement, time and art materials over the summer. Give them recyclable materials and watch them create amazing things. Let them paint outdoors and the clean-up is easy! Parents can go to [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) and look up "art projects for kids" or "crafts for kids". There's a wealth of ideas there. Help them to exercise that “creative muscle” and the rewards are great!

### ***Noticias de la Clase de Español!***

#### **News from Spanish class!**

Mrs. Sugrue

Grade four students recently completed their study of the unit, *In My School*. They have acquired vocabulary and language structures to talk about various objects used in the classroom, what they do in different areas of the building, and who works at Burr. We will finish the school year by becoming meteorologists, learning how to describe the weather in Spanish.

Grade five classes completed the *Student Life* unit. Students can now talk and write about their school day and their favorite subjects. They can also share information about what they do in each class as well as what time each class takes place. Students compared a typical school day in Fairfield to a school day in Bogotá, Colombia, allowing them to see similarities and differences between cultures. To conclude this year’s studies, each student created his/her own ideal school schedule!

Your child will be bringing home his/her Spanish folder, which includes a picture dictionary for each unit studied this year. Please remind your child to spend time this summer reviewing the material to maintain the foundational skills



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that have been established. This will allow for a smoother transition to our programs next year.

Also included in the folders are brightly colored sheets containing questions for conversational practice! A fun activity for the summer would be for you to ask your child the questions, making the review more communicative, and providing a way for your child to share what he/she has learned this year.

I appreciate the enthusiasm, interest, and diligence of the children in learning a new language! I will surely miss the fifth graders as they move on to middle school, and I am looking forward to another year with the incoming grade five students. Wishing you all a wonderful summer filled with lots of relaxing days, fun, and *español!*

### **Pupil Services**

Mrs. Gardner, Mrs. Harkins, Mrs. Lawrence,  
Mrs. Montgomery, Ms. Raucci, Mrs. Shea, Mrs. Zarrelli

We are so very, *very* proud of all the accomplishments your children have achieved and applaud their efforts, motivation, and persistence over this past school year! While we wish you a wonderful and most relaxing summer break, we also encourage you to keep your child's passion for learning *red hot* during the steamy summer months. Here are some **Summer Suggestions from the Special Education Staff:**

- Continue to read to your child – they are never too old to hear a good reader read with fluency and expression!
- Talk about how the story makes your child feel or how the characters might feel.
- Take your child to the public library. Let them get their own library card. Get involved in a parent – child book group or start one!
- Give your child a journal or diary and encourage them to write every day.
- Encourage your child to write about special events or a family vacation.
- Look for fun ways to include math in your daily activities. For example; counting change from the ice cream man/woman.
- Create a scrapbook of your vacation and encourage your child to write subtitles below each picture.
- **PLAY!!!** Did you know that good social skills are a key predictor for success as an adult?! Remember to get your children off the computer, and away from the TV. Unstructured time to hang out is one of the best summer gifts. There is a big, wide world out there! Play continues to be a cornerstone for social development throughout elementary school and beyond. Through play your children are developing essential skills including self-regulation,





problem solving, negotiation, and compromise; all key components of good social skills. You are the best judge of how much support your child will need. Even with older children, your participation in planning and facilitation can really set the stage for success.

**P**repare. Plan ahead. Have play materials and snack ready.

**L**imit number of peers. With younger children, start small, one or two peers.

**A**ppropriate activity. Choose an activity that your child both enjoys and can share.

**Y**ou facilitate. Be available to model and coach.

**D**ay and time? Choose a day and time when your child is rested and has an open schedule.

**A**ct it out. Role play to practice language and skills needed for success. Older children particularly benefit from practice with conflict resolution.

**T**ime limited. 1 ½ -2 hours for younger children, longer for older children. End while it's still fun!

**E**xpectations. Be realistic. Conflict will happen, use it to teach.

Have a wonderful summer!!!!

### **News from Music**

Mrs. Eckhardt, Mrs. Maravich, Mrs. Zwickler

The **Fifth Grade Choraleer Ensemble**, which met with me on Tuesday mornings at 8AM, and for the past month on Wednesday mornings as well, worked hard to expand their choral music repertoire. They worked on mastering the art of "tonal blend" in singing. They have accomplished so much this year and I will miss them with all of my heart. They are eager to perform and have expanded their taste in music to songs from many different genres. They have reminded ME that they remember what I have taught them ("you get out of it, what you put into it!") Their love of music and song and their excitement about singing is nothing short of electric! BRAVO to all of them and thanks to all of their parents for getting them here to school so early each week.

The **lower grades** have expanded their exploration of spatial relations moving safely in space. Their beat competency has come a long way and they have quite an extended song repertoire. They have learned much about playing well with others through dance and song creation.

Meanwhile, the **Third graders** are officially began playing their recorders and what a cacophony of sound!! I do believe their biggest challenge is remembering that the left hand is on top (knowing their right hand from their left hand has been a challenge!) They have really advanced in their ability to read and to write rhythms in duple meter. They have been exploring folk songs, ballads, and cumulative songs.



**NOTE to THIRD GRADE and FOURTH GRADE PARENTS:** Each year I advise 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade children to put their music notebooks, folders, and their recorders in a clean plastic bag in the bottom of their “underwear drawers” at home! We all laugh, but should they return to school without these materials they will have to purchase a new music notebook, pocket folder, and a new recorder. Often this happens and when they say “I don’t know where I put it and/or my mom threw it away, “ I have no way of helping them. If they can’t find it, but they follow my direction, I can at least say “by George, I know where you put it.....check your underwear drawer”!!!!)

**Fourth grade students** are becoming accomplished recorder players and good music readers. I am very proud of their progress. Also...they have been having fun with singing partner songs and canons.

**The Fifth Grade** is a wonder when it comes to singing....they have mastered a high level of ear training and the ability to *audiate* and sing two part music. They have accomplished much in a very short amount of time. They are wonderful children and I wish them and their families a wonderful transition to Tomlinson School.

To all of our BURR students and families..... please take time to sing together....make music together as a family, and parents please expose your children to different genres of music. Singing together in the car is a fun family activity, so unplug those electronics and close the cases!

Have a great summer and keep singing .

### **News from Language Arts and the Library Media Center**

Mrs. Felberbaum, Mrs. Henkel, Mrs. Persson

With summer break here, we hope that all students and families will continue to grow as readers and writers. We cannot stress enough the importance of reading each day and taking time to explore and enjoy new books. There are many different genres your child can read, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, realistic fiction, fantasy, biography and many more. You can support your child’s continued growth by making sure they have opportunities to read, write, and visit bookstores and public libraries. We would like *all students* at Burr to participate in the **Governor’s Summer Reading Challenge**, in which they will read and record titles of each book read over the summer on the special form that they will receive. This form should be returned to school in the fall to be tallied by class. Information has been sent home via the Burr Buzz along with a link to “Summer Reading” on the Burr website. There you will find a link to the Fairfield Public Library’s motivating summer reading program as well as booklists for all children. Our hope is that all students will return in the fall ready and eager to share exciting stories they have read.

There are also many ways to support writing at home over the summer. Take advantage of opportunities to have your child practice writing with notes, lists, letters, stories, poems, etc. They can use their Writer’s Notebook to add

to entries or create new ones. We all know that summer is a great time for making memories, and writing about them is a great way to capture and treasure those moments. We wish you all a wonderful, relaxing and enjoyable summer with your children. Happy reading! May the adventures continue!

## News from Math/ Science

Mrs. Sherman

In kindergarten the students completed units on addition and subtraction within 5 as well as working on bigger numbers. First grade students built place value understanding into the hundreds as they collected and organized their classroom materials. In second grade our mathematicians wrapped up a unit on addition and subtraction within 1,000 and worked on their geometry unit. Math in third grade continues to be exciting as our students grappled with complex problems that had them doubling numbers into the hundreds as well as building on their multiplication facts. Our fourth graders learned how to use a protractor as they studied angles and angle measurement. They also learned multi-digit multiplication and division. Our fifth graders worked on ratios and rates as they also solved challenging problems involving gas mileage and distance. They also learned skills such as adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions with different denominators.

Our estimation jar has been a HUGE hit at Burr, with over 200 estimates coming in each month. Students have been taking time to explain their strategies using pictures, numbers and sentences! Their ability to estimate is clearly improving, as evidenced by the many students who have been winning prizes!

Finally, with summer here, it is so important that our students continue the hard work they have been doing throughout the school year. Once again, the Fairfield Public Schools will be putting out a summer math calendar for students entering grades 3-5. There is a letter on the Burr website and coming through the Burr Buzz with information on how to access the summer math calendar! There is an additional letter, for all of our Burr mathematicians, with suggestions for how to continue to do math all summer long that will also be available through the Buzz, on the Burr PTA website, and on our school website.

Have a safe and sun-filled summer!

**End of Newsletter—Thank you  
for reading!**

