

News from Burr

School Newsletter

Fall 2014

Dear Burr Community,

The school year moves quickly. It seemed like only yesterday that we were welcoming students back to school. Now – here we are – on the cusp of the December holidays already having weathered our first (mini) snowstorm.

Recently, I hosted a parent coffee to discuss the work we do at Burr to help students who need extra support. This comprehensive work in both reading and math is called Early Intervention Process (EIP) and involves a number of steps including the analysis of assessment data, the organization of extra support in the form of small groups, and the ongoing monitoring of student progress. I am going to use a question /answer format to describe Burr's EIP process.

How does a student get extra help through EIP?

Students are given intervention services (EIP) in one of two ways. One way is when the classroom teacher has a specific concern. (This could be connected to a teacher's conversation with a parent.) The teacher participates in a consultancy during their common planning time with both colleagues and interventionists (curriculum specialists, teachers.) This team looks at work samples and classroom data to determine ways in which the classroom teacher can help address the student's needs. This work happens entirely in the classroom between the teacher and the student and is often the beginning of intervention services. A second way is by how students score on universal assessments.

What are universal assessments?

Universal assessments are reading and math assessments given three times a year (fall, winter, spring) to all students at Burr. Students who do not meet grade level expectations on these assessments are automatically flagged at a schoolwide intervention team meeting that consists of interventionists (curriculum specialists, teachers), the school psychologist, and the principal. The goal of this team is to determine what intervention services these students need.

What do these intervention services look like?

These intervention services involve students being pulled out of the classroom to work with an interventionist. Students just below grade level expectations get extra support in a small group 2-4 times per week for approximately 30 minutes per





session. Students who need more significant support get extra support in either a smaller group or 1-1 with an interventionist. These sessions happen five times a week for approximately 30 minutes per session. Reading interventionists work on decoding skills, fluency, and comprehension. Math interventionists mostly focus on number sense and place value.

How will I know if my child is participating in the EIP program?

You will receive a letter from Burr and will be contacted by the interventionist or classroom teacher.

When does a student exit EIP?

Over time, students need to show independence in the areas of concern. This happens by tracking universal screening data in reading and math, monitoring daily performance in curriculum work, and monitoring progress in the work that is happening in intervention groups.

Is there EIP help in the area of writing?

At this time, all writing support happens through a daily writing workshop in the classroom. This includes the teacher working with students to help them in the following areas: organizing their writing, elaboration, engaging in a writing process, grammar, and spelling. We are exploring pull out intervention services for writing but have not yet implemented this work.

Do all schools have an EIP process?

All schools in the State of CT are required to have an intervention plan for students who need extra support. In Fairfield, this plan is called EIP. In other towns, intervention is called a variety of things including RTI (Response to Intervention) and SRBI (Scientifically Research Based Interventions.)

What's the difference between EIP and special education?

EIP is a regular education process available to all students who need extra support. Special education is for students who need specialized instruction because of a disability / difference in learning. There are a variety of ways that a student enters special education. If a student does not make adequate progress in an intervention process (EIP), they may be eligible for special education.

I hope this gives you some insight into how Burr addresses students who are not at grade level in reading and math. Please use the following link to learn more about intervention. http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/family_guide_to_srbi.pdf

Also, please be aware that there is additional information on Burr's website in the form of the PowerPoint that was used at the parent coffee.

Have a terrific holiday season.

Warmly,
Jason Bluestein

Jason Bluestein

News from Pre-Kindergarten

Mrs. Totilo Smith

Pre-K has been observing and discussing FALL CHANGES! Outside, we notice changes in the colors of the leaves and the weather turning colder. Inside, we talk about clothes we wear in the colder weather, naming clothing items. We count and compare who is wearing different clothing items. We explore apples and pumpkins, name the parts of each, and describe how they look and feel. Finally, we are learning how to stay healthy and take care of our bodies. We are excited to begin talking about our families and to name and count our family members. We will enjoy celebrating our families and the variety of cultures we have through parent visits to Pre-K during the month of December.

News from Kindergarten

Mrs. Schallau,, Mrs. Thompson, and Mrs. Vigeant

Kindergarten has gotten off to a great start. We spent the first several weeks learning new routines. The children learned the expectations of the workshop model during the whole group lesson, independent practice, and partnership work. Many of these new strategies will be used throughout their entire careers at Burr. The children know how to turn and talk to their partners, prepare for reading and writing workshop, and book shop independently. Impressed? We are! In Writer's Workshop we are now working on writing true stories from our lives. Our goal is to write stories that others can read. You can help your child prepare for this by practicing oral story telling about things you do as a family that your child can write about and practicing reading and writing sight words.

In Reader's Workshop we are reading fiction stories. We are learning about characters, setting, problem, and solution. You can help your child at home by reading fiction stories and discussing them. Looking for sight words they know, quotation marks, punctuation etc. is always helpful as well.

In math we have worked on numbers 1-5. Currently our geometry unit includes recognition of shapes and their attributes (curves, faces, points, etc.) You can help your child at home by reviewing: cone, cylinder, cube, sphere, rectangular prism, triangle, rectangle, square, circle, oval, rhombus, trapezoid, and hexagon. Counting and working with numbers 1-10 are great ways to strengthen math skills. In Science we are learning about our five senses and how they help us learn about the world.

Our CARES goal is to learn to self-control. We are raising our hand and waiting to be called on to talk and respecting the space of others. The children have grown tremendously in the first quarter. We are honored to work as partner with you as we continue to nourish and nurture them in their kindergarten year.

News from First Grade

Ms. Kurimai, Mrs. Musante, Mrs. Root, Ms. Sherwood





In first grade, we are readers, writers, and learners. In reading workshop, our students learned how to build good reading habits. We also learned how to choose “just right” books, read privately, partner read, and discuss books during class “book talks”. We are reading, thinking, and talking about books. The next units of study focus on patterns in books and strategies to figure out tricky words. Parents, please continue to read to and with your child each night. Our upcoming unit will be on non-fiction. We will be observing the elements of a non-fiction book.

We are starting our unit on non-fiction chapter books in writing as well. Throughout our non-fiction writing journey, students will begin by learning how to make a basic type of information book. It will end with children creating multiple information chapter books filled with elaboration, interesting elements, and pictures that supplement the teaching of words (labels/captions). You can help at home by discussing topics your child knows a lot about. For example, football, making their bed, board games, animals, etc.

Through “game like” activities in math, the children are learning to count, compare, organize and problem solve. In Unit One, we learned the doubles facts and investigated patterns made with two colors in the story *Grandma’s Necklace*. In Unit Two, we are learning addition and subtraction within twenty. Students understand that numbers can be grouped in a variety of different ways or presented in a different order and the quantity will stay the same. We are using the *Double Decker Bus* story to learn different quick and efficient math strategies for solving addition and subtraction problems.

Our first unit of study in science was recycling. We learned the importance of re-using, reducing, and recycling everyday items. The children used their creative minds to design a new invention from recycled materials. Stay tuned for our recycling presentations!

News from Second Grade

Mrs. Cinquegrana, Mrs. Miles, Mrs. Uliasz

It’s truly been a great year so far and the best is yet to come! In reading we have been discussing fiction story elements and up next we will be moving onto nonfiction elements and the variety of purposes this genre serves. During our writing time we have been working on personal narratives with elaborative details. We have used different authors as mentors. Studying the various crafts and themes they write about has helped us to revise and improve our own writing. Next up we will be writing nonfiction and becoming experts in various areas. Each week in spelling, students are assigned 5 to 6 new words to study. We practice the words by saying them, reading them, clapping them out, writing them, and hearing them. We also practice different phonics and spelling rules each day to improve our daily writing. A great way to practice the words at home is to visit the [Spelling City](#) website. In math we just finished our unit on addition and subtraction strategies. We have already begun exploring our next unit—place value. In social studies we are studying communities, workers, goods, services, wants, and needs. We hope you enjoyed the presentations from the community interview projects in the LMC. Soon we will be studying about our state of Connecticut. In health we completed the nutrition unit on “Little D” who creatively helped us to learn healthy eating habits from the five food groups. During this time of year, we are so thankful for our wonderful classes and your valuable parent support at home!



News from Third Grade

Mr. Jasgur, Mrs. Noonan, Ms. Taylor

The third graders have been working hard this fall. They have transitioned well into the new grade level and are putting forth great effort with the third grade curriculum. Here is an update on what we are learning about and what will come next in our learning.

In reading, we have practiced finding text evidence to support the thinking we are doing about our books. We are also working on writing about our thinking in a clear and thorough way. Students have worked with a written response rubric to help them create thorough responses. It may be helpful to remind your child of this when they are writing responses at home! We just finished our unit on informational text and have started thinking about comprehension strategies that third graders use. In writing, we have been working on our informational pieces by writing about something that we know a lot about. We are using a checklist to help guide our work and think about how to organize and elaborate the information. In math, we are ending our unit on place value and will begin our unit on multiplication by thinking first about multiplication as equal groupings. It is always helpful to practice math facts (addition, subtraction, and soon multiplication) at home so that your child becomes automatic with these problems. *Xtra-Math* is a useful website that we use, but there are many other strategies and games that you can find online or you can play together.

The third graders have also ended their first unit on the River Basin System. They enjoyed seeing all of the parts of a river in action at the Mill River. Thank you to our volunteers! We have just begun our social studies unit on Native Americans and have learned about note taking and researching!

Students have been practicing their keyboarding in school using the *Type to Learn* program and during our new Technology time. At home, students will begin weekly HW that requires them to type. This will vary for each assignment but may consist of typing up a writing assignment, contributing to our class blog (coming soon!), or simply practicing how to type. Because keyboarding is now such an important skill in our lives, we appreciate your support of our efforts to increase all academic skill areas. Thank you for all of your support at home. We look forward to a great rest of the year!

News from Fourth Grade

Mrs. deRegt, Ms. Passero, Mrs. Sadick

Fourth grade is off to a great start! It's been a busy fall, and fourth graders have already grown so much as readers, writers, and mathematicians. As readers, students have begun learning how to use elements of nonfiction to gather information and develop ideas. Students will use reading strategies to understand text structures and think critically about nonfiction text. Prior to this nonfiction unit, students learned how to study a character's thoughts, words, and actions to determine character traits and motives.



The character study in reading helped students understand the importance of developing a character for their realistic fiction stories. For weeks, the students worked hard to plan their story using a story arc, drafting scene after scene and piecing them together using transitional words and phrases to develop a cohesive realistic fiction story. We are so proud of their published pieces! Currently in writing, students are working on writing personal and persuasive essays. They've begun the process of collecting ideas and will move towards using elaboration to grow these ideas and angling their five paragraph essays to support their thesis statements.

As mathematicians, students are investigating properties of multiplication, including the commutative, associative, and distributive properties. Students will soon be extending the use of partial products and quotients to solve more difficult multiplication and division problems. We cannot stress enough the importance of math fact practice every single night, as fluency with facts allows your child to focus on higher-level math concepts.

Students have begun researching exploration in the Library Media Center. They are learning about explorers of the past, as well as current exploration, and will be creating a presentation to share their knowledge with you in December or early January. Please be on the lookout for more information from your child's teacher in the coming weeks!

We are often asked how you can support your children at home. Please make sure your children are reading for a minimum of twenty minutes every single night, and practicing math facts for a minimum of ten minutes every night. Typing is also an important skill to practice frequently. Homework assignments can be typed up whenever possible.

Lastly, we would like to welcome Lauren DaLan to the fourth grade team as Mrs. deRegt recovers from surgery. We are looking forward to a successful fourth grade year!

News from Fifth Grade

Mrs. Beno, Mrs. Chandler, Mrs. Phillips

It has been a busy fall for fifth grade! We completed our launch and inference units in reading and have moved on to nonfiction. In writing we completed and shared our narrative pieces. Our current unit is informational writing. We researched and wrote a westward expansion piece and are currently working on one about Civil War topics. In addition, we've been working hard in the LMC doing research on the Civil War and are now putting that good information into presentation form. In math we've completed the place value unit and begun the multiplication and division unit. In science we've completed our unit on the moon and the seasons and are moving on to the study of the senses. Thanks to the PTA, we had the *High Touch-High Tech* scientist come to Burr to present a program entitled "Be Sensible" in which we learned about the senses. In December we'll start our Light and Sound units and look forward to a trip to the Discovery Museum later in the winter. Fifth grade continues work in the CARES curriculum – both in the classroom and the school at large. We've begun working with the police department on the new SHAPE program, which replaces DARE. Whew- fifth grade doesn't stand still for a second!



PE Happenings

Mr. Hilinski

It has been a great start to the school year in Physical Education. Students in Kindergarten – 2nd grade have been participating in many different gross motor activities such as basic locomotor skills (i.e. running, hopping, skipping, galloping, etc.), overhand throwing, underhand throwing, and catching. Fourth graders participated in the state mandated physical fitness test where we saw amazing effort out of all of the students. The test is made up of four parts; the sit and reach which measures flexibility, push-ups which measures upper body strength, curl-ups which measures abdominal strength, and the mile run which measures cardiovascular endurance. Students in 3rd and 5th grade participated in the fitness test as a practice in preparation for when they arrive in 4th and 6th grade. Fourth grade results were posted on Infinite Campus on Monday, November 17th. Kalliopi “Kelly” Filippidis will be here at Burr every Monday as a Student Teacher getting familiar with our school and students. Starting in January Ms. Filippidis will be here every day for 6 weeks as part of her student teaching requirements. Currently Ms. Filippidis is a student at Southern CT State University. I’m sure she will do a great job.

Starting in December I would like to create a “Wall of Fame” outside the gym on the bulletin board. On the wall I would like to include student team or individual athletic achievements in the form of a picture. Please make sure the picture is no bigger than a 4 x 6 and their name is on the back. More information will be sent home soon.

As we enter into the winter months it’s easy for kids to become less active, but as we know, staying active helps students with their overall health and well-being. Please try to encourage your child to remain active for 60 minutes each day. I look forward to the next several months as we explore many different ways of keeping our bodies active and healthy.

Art Room Happenings

Mrs. Yessenow

Art this year has some new and exciting projects! Ask your children to tell you what they learned when they bring home a piece of art work. Some assignments you will have to wait to see at our annual Art Show. The Kindergarten has been learning how to use all of the art tools. We have done cutting projects, painting projects and even Model Magic clay!

In 1st grade we read the book Mouse Paint and learned how Primary colors mix to make Secondary colors. We had fun making mice and a cat and mixing our own colors!

2nd grade art students made some fun textured watercolor washes in warm and cool colors. Now they are weaving them together to create a very colorful art piece!

Our 3rd graders have been painting beautiful fall landscape pictures. They are blending colors for some brilliant skies to offset the bright fall leaves!



4th graders just finished a 3-dimensional sculpture project they built out of egg cartons and found materials. Painting and decorating them with fluorescent colors has made them out of this world!

5th grade students are creating trophies to award to themselves. These are using their line perspective skills to make them look 3-dimensional. But the catch is the award may not be for a sport! Maybe you have the World's Best Moon Walker in your house?

When you stop by the school, check out the children's amazing art on our bulletin board and in the glass showcases in the lobby.

Noticias de la Clase de Español!

News from Spanish class!

Mrs. Sugrue

We have been very busy communicating and practicing new vocabulary and language skills in our Spanish classes! During class, students are provided with opportunities to be engaged in activities that make language-learning useful, meaningful, and connected to other areas of study.

Grade 4 students began the year learning how to introduce themselves and others. They also learned many expressions used to greet and say goodbye which are used at the beginning and end of each class! Students were introduced to the concept of formal and informal levels of language in Spanish and practiced the appropriate form of address when greeting adults, family members, friends, and pets!

In our current unit, students are learning various ways to answer the question, *¿Cómo estás tú hoy?* How are you today? We have also worked on learning numbers to thirty and have applied them to practical use in solving Math problems and giving phone numbers.

In our upcoming unit we will be learning how to state the day, date, birthdates, and talk about the weather. To accomplish this, we will focus on learning the months of the year and apply our ability to use numbers accurately.

Grade 5 students are at the end of a unit of study entitled ***The Spanish Royal Family***, and are now able to answer questions about their family members and pets. Each student had an opportunity to write and talk about family members by creating a hand drawn photo album page to share. Students also learned numbers to one hundred to talk about the various ages of family members and friends. We began the unit by taking a look at the Spanish Royal Family as a starting point.

In our upcoming unit, students will be learning about Madrid and the exciting places to visit there! They will be able to talk about places they visit in Fairfield and draw comparisons between the two.

News from Music

Mrs. Maravich



Our music room has, as always, been rockin' and rollin' with revisiting a wide variety of game, story, and various genres of songs. Our songs are in line with our CARES program and allow our children to embrace this program through the right brain in the field of musical arts. The fourth grade is progressing in their recorder lessons, and you should soon be hearing recorder concerts at home.....hang tight parents.....the songs are short!!

All of our children participated in our traditional Veterans' Day Program and while their songs and the fifth grade leadership in our program touched the hearts of all present, nothing touched **our** hearts as much as did our visiting veterans. **They** are the true heroes to all of us! Prior to our program, the children spent weeks learning about the culture of our people during the years of the various wars and the musical journey that developed as our country joined together to support its troops. Our children are much more aware, through our musical and historical studies, of the sacrifices that our veterans made on our behalf. Viva l'America!!

"Bells are ringing, children singing, all is merry and bright"!! Yup.....we are about at that time of the year, though hard to believe! The children at BURR will be involved in a month long multi-cultural journey through music. Exploring traditions and music of people from different cultures helps us to realize the many similarities between people from different cultures. Music is a way to bridge these cultural differences and to help us to embrace the beauty of the customs of all people. There is so much "good" music connected to the various holidays, and it would be sad if our children weren't exposed to it and invited to participate in its performance. Our musical journey has always included singing, movement and the sharing of actual traditions belonging to our children here at Burr. The culmination of this unit will take place in a rigorous sharing of music at our WINTER SONGFEST on the 23rd of December at 10:00 AM in our gym. Through tradition we teach tradition and our Burr family especially looks forward to this one!

Orchestra Notes

Mrs. Eckhardt,

Exciting news for the fourth grade string players!!! They are finally starting to play with the bow!!! But they have not been sitting idle while waiting to learn this much anticipated skill. They have been plucking many songs so far, including Hot Cross Buns, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Twinkle, the D Major Scale, and Boil 'em Cabbage Down, which is a favorite.

Aside from learning the music for the winter and spring concerts, the fifth graders have two additional pieces to learn for the upcoming Orchestra Festival. One of the pieces, New River Train, sounds like an actual train leaving the station, picking up passengers, and going along its route until it finally reaches the next station to stop. Gaelic Castle is written by a favorite composer, Soon Hee Newbold who features each section throughout the piece with different melodies. The rehearsals and the concert are scheduled on March 17-19. Please mark your calendars for this exciting event!!!

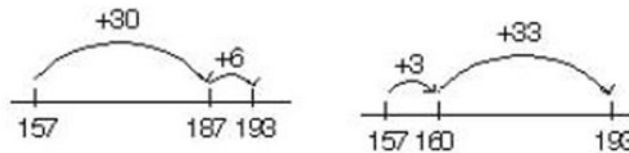
News from Math/ Science

Mrs. Sherman

Has your child come home, settled in to do homework (with a little cajoling I'm sure!) and started their math homework by drawing an empty line on their paper that they then fill in with numbers that seemingly make no sense? Are you wondering what happened to lining up the numbers and adding or subtracting them the way you learned? What in the world IS the Open Number Line anyways?

Consider this problem: $157 + 36 = ?$

Right away, many of us parents would reach for a pencil, rewrite the problem vertically, and begin frantically scribbling away. Students today have a different approach. The Open Number Line allows students to see that the same problem can be solved in a variety of ways. For example, to solve $157 + 36$, one student may begin at 157, add 30 and then add six (as demonstrated in the first open number line below). Another student might start at 157 and break 36 into 33 and 3; then add 3 to get to a friendly number of 160 and then add 33 (as represented by the second number line). The Open Number Line is a visual representation for recording and sharing students' strategies to solve problems while encouraging mental computation.

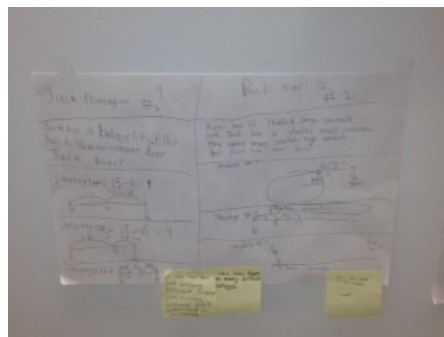


The Open Number Line is introduced in 1st grade, and used throughout the year in 2nd grade. Students in grades 3-5 return to it to solve increasingly complex problems; including situations involving elapsed time and money.

Interested in learning more? Check out the Fairfield Public Schools parent math website for a video on the Open Number Line. In addition to that, you'll find helpful information about other models and tools that are used in the classroom, a guide to our curriculum, useful tips for ways you can help at home and links to websites, apps and a math dictionary.

<http://fairfieldpublicschools5math.wikispaces.com/home>

Of course, you are always welcome to contact me at asher-man@fairfieldschools.org.



News from Language Arts

Mrs. Felberbaum, Mrs. Henkel,

Reading and writing were off to a great start this year. 93% of our students returned their Governor's Summer Reading Challenge form! Yeah for Burr families! Students then wrote and told about their favorite books, providing our school with an enriched literacy environment.

Each grade level began the year with narrative writing. Every student took a pre-assessment in writing and a post assessment. We have seen real writing growth in all students by looking at their September writing and comparing it with their late October writing. This is the second year we are following the Teachers College Writing Units of Study, and the students are truly improving in their story development, craft, and conventions. Students are learning how to assess their own writing and how to revise their work. Other writing units all grades will have are: Informational; Opinion/Argument; and Poetry. Please take a look at the wonderful writing samples from every grade hanging across from the office.

The Benchmark Assessment in reading is being used across the whole district this year. Grades four and five have previously used the Benchmarks, but we are now using them in all grades instead of the familiar DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment). These assessments are used to understand students as readers and to help us determine our next steps for teaching each student. We are looking for the level students can read and enjoy independently and the level for our instruction. The books are very modern, interesting, and appealing to our children. Students really enjoy reading them and discussing them with us.

We are very excited about some great opportunities in reading at Burr this year for our students. This month we had an inspiring author visit by Alan Katz sponsored by the PTA. He met with all grade levels to share his love of reading and writing. Also, this fall, we have had our first ever parent/child book club. All families in grades four and five were invited to participate in reading *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster. We thank Ann Harvey for organizing this with us and the PTA for their continued support of reading!

Please keep reading aloud and listening to your children read. This helps them very much and supports their work in school. Ask them to show you what they are writing and see if they want to send notes to grandparents or to friends who moved away. We want our students to see that reading and writing are part of life everywhere they go. Thank you for your support.

Pupil Services

Mrs. Gardner, Mrs. Harkins, Mrs. Lawrence,

Mrs. Montgomery, Ms. Raucci, Mrs. Shea, Mrs. Torrani

The weather outside might be getting a bit colder, but the "Climate" here at Burr Elementary continues to be warm and inviting! Results from the recent Climate Survey conducted across all district schools suggest Burr continues to be viewed as the clean, safe, accepting learning environment it was when the survey was initially administered two years ago. While there are still a few areas we need to address, overall, results were favorable and most encouraging.





However, good enough is NOT good enough here at Burr as we continually strive to improve our school with the implementation of our CARES Program. This year we are shining the spotlight on our amazing Student Council and turning our microphones over to them to help us develop and deliver our CARES message to all the students here at Burr through our school-wide assemblies. Last month they created an informative newscast that put Cooperation in the headlines and had us all working together for the good of Burr.

New to our CARES program this year, we are challenging our students and staff to a school-wide task and asking them to show us how they are carrying out their CARES responsibilities learned in the assemblies to improve Burr. This month the children decided to challenge themselves to improve the process of lining-up after recess while the staff will be participating in a Cooperation Potluck Luncheon. Stay tuned for the results of our challenge!

Finally, our students here at Burr continue to show their compassion and desire to help others by their overwhelming participation in our many recess Outreach Programs. With the welcomed addition of school psychology intern, Donna Nolan this year, our Outreach students are spreading kindness by raising funds for the Only You Foundation, tending to Miss Evy's Garden, starting a school newspaper, launching an all-out "Smile Attack", growing "Trees of Kindness", "Standing-up for What's Right", addressing the many needs of our furry friends in animal shelters, and showing that we are all "Hungry for Kindness".

Burr is on the cutting edge of kindness...and is a great place to be!

End of Newsletter—Thank you for reading!