

News from Burr

School Newsletter

Spring / Summer 2015

Dear Burr Community,

I recently read an online article where an English teacher living in Italy listed the homework assignments he gave his students over the summer. Some of these assignments included reading as much as you can, seeing a sunrise, playing a lot of sports, and watching films with poignant dialogue. In the spirit of his work, here is my list (a partial list of course) of summer homework for Burr's students. (Please feel free to share this with them.)

- Read as much as you can. Not because it's an assignment but because it will make you a better person. (An addendum to this would be to read during a rainstorm.)
- Write a letter to someone – a handwritten letter – and then mail it.
- Cook or bake something with an adult. Use this as an opportunity to practice math (measurement, etc.)
- Eat ice cream. Experiment with interesting and different flavors. Try new toppings.
- Watch your favorite movie with someone who hasn't seen it yet.
- Start a garden. Eat what you grow.
- Tell someone you love them at least once a day.
- Run (and jump and somersault and throw and catch.) Be active.
- Play a board game that takes at least an hour to finish. (An addendum to this would be to complete a really complicated puzzle.)
- Listen closely to all the sounds around you. What do you hear just before bed? First thing in the morning? While sitting on your back porch?
- Dream and imagine. Invent something. Sketch something. Build something.
- Smile at someone—everyday. Hold doors for strangers. Say "Please" and "Thank you." Be polite.
- Do one chore at home everyday to help your parents. (Make your bed, clean out the dishwasher, etc.)
- Try one thing that you have never tried before. Embrace change.





I also 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 fifth grade teacher Linda Chandler who will be retiring. Also a warm thank you and goodbye to Lisa Sherman, Math Science Teacher, who is leaving Burr to assume an assistant principal position at Beecher Road School in Woodbridge. Michelle Allen, a paraprofessional at Burr, will be leaving Burr in order to begin some new adventures. Finally, we will be saying goodbye (hopefully, a temporary goodbye) to Marilee Root, first grade teacher, and Kelly Sadick, fourth grade teacher, as they spend time with their families in the upcoming year. All of these teachers are part of Burr's family, and we thank them for their service and dedication to our school.

Please look for all communication this summer to be electronic including supply lists and 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, September 3rd. There will also be a new family orientation on Thursday, August 27. Whether you are traveling halfway across the world or staying close to home, I wish you a happy, healthy, relaxing summer. See you on September 3rd.

Warmly,
Jason
Jason

News from Pre-Kindergarten

Mrs. Totilo Smith

Pre-K is exploring all different aspects of the season of spring! We are learning about changes in the weather outside and what we see growing and changing outside – warm sunny days, rainy days, green grass, green leaves and the many flowers in the Burr school atriums. We are learning about the lifecycle of trees, flowers, robins, frogs, and butterflies! We planted Marigold seeds and Iris bulbs and are now watching them grow with Mr. Jeff from Home Depot. We also visited The CT. Audubon Center to see owls, turtles, rabbits, tadpoles, frogs, and all kinds of trees. We are watching caterpillars change into chrysalises and then into butterflies! A special THANK YOU to the Burr PTA, for providing us books through the May book fair, for providing the High Touch, High Tech programs for Pre-K to learn about insects and weather, and for welcoming our new Pre-K students and families at our Pre-K Orientation.

Happy Summer!

News from Kindergarten

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

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 skills 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? Pretend you don't understand. Let them be the teacher and explain things to you.

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— dice, cards, and board games that require counting help keep math skills sharp. Inventory the shells on the beach (Just kidding!) Study volume by pouring water from one size bucket to a different size bucket. Throw water balloons at sight words on the driveway.

Take the time to be five/six again. Go outside as much as you can. Predict the weather by watching the clouds in the sky. Watch a popsicle turn from a solid to a liquid. 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. Root, Ms. Sherwood

We are so pleased with the success of our students this year! Below are some suggestions for incorporating learning fun throughout your summer days. Reading aloud can become a family adventure. Enjoying chapter books together is a wonderful opportunity to get everyone involved and reading. Try reading a chapter a night. Make predictions, talk about the characters, summarize the chapter and discuss the author's message. Look for the Governor's Reading Challenge to come home. Visit the library together to find books for places your family is visiting. Find the area on a map. Subscribe to a children's magazine such as *National Geographic for Kids*, *Ranger Rick*, or *Sports Illustrated for Kids*.

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 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.

Go outside. Create a huge number line on your driveway with chalk. Skip count by 3's and 4's. Play math games that involve counting and strategy planning. 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. The students have worked very hard throughout the year and we are very proud of them!

Enjoy your summer vacation.

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! In writing we explored the worlds of narrative, informative, and opinion writing. In reading we became stronger readers by focusing on decoding, fluency, comprehension, and making good book choices. In math we became stronger partners and problem solvers by focusing on discourse during partner work and math congress. It's been a year filled exploration, discovery, and learning.

Haiku, 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 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. We worked hard on our States' websites and they'll soon be available for viewing.

Our second graders have made incredible progress this year. We hope they will maintain all of their excellent skills by continuing to read independently and with others each day. 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 to explore. 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 and are looking forward to the upcoming activities such as Field Day and our end of year celebrations. 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 are publishing their writing by making their own poetry anthologies. We have also spent time this year formulating clear and thorough written opinions through speechwriting and petitions. In math, students have delved deeper into their understanding of multiplication and division, measurement, and geometry. They have learned the properties of different shapes and content vocabulary such as congruent, symmetry, and angles. In reading, students have demonstrated their comprehension abilities through their partnership and group discussions during our poetry unit. They have practiced skills important for team work such as active listening and how to disagree respectfully. Third graders have also been working on their Soggy Paper experiment in which they have collected data on the absorbency of various types of paper products. Finally, third graders have been working collaboratively in preparation for the Africa Fair which will take place in June. They are excited to share their learning with you!





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 frequently. Trips to museums and nature walks are examples of other ways for authentic learning this summer. One of our favorite authors is Oliver Jeffers, so check out some of his books this summer with your child!

Thank you for all of your support this year as we worked together for a successful year!

News from Fourth Grade

Mrs. deRegt, Ms. Passero, Mrs. Sadick

Your child is almost a fifth grader! This year has flown by. It has been wonderful to work with your children, watching them learn how to think deeply about their reading, write incredible essays, stories, and informational books, and learn about fractions, division, and measuring angles. We are so proud and impressed by all their accomplishments this year. Students are working towards completing their first informational book about the Revolutionary War. Ask your child what topic he/she has become an expert on. You will be amazed at how much they know! We recently had a wonderful trip to Sturbridge Village where the students furthered their education of Colonial Times. During the past few weeks, students participated in book clubs, shared their informational writing books, embarked on a math unit about measurement, and participated in many end-of-the-year activities. These included field day and the spring concert.

This summer, it is important to keep your child's education going strong to ensure that 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 create fictional stories. When asked about the highlights of their year in fourth grade, here's what some students said: "Getting to play an instrument," "Visiting Sturbridge Village," "Participating in Mrs. Persson's weekly book group," "Studying colonial America," "Visiting the Ogden House," "Participating in the Burr talent show," "Studying the explorers," and finally, "Participating in the Mile Run."

Enjoy your summer, and we look forward to seeing you all in the fall!

News from Fifth Grade

Mrs. Beno, Mrs. Chandler, Mrs. Phillips

Fifth grade has been keeping very busy!

In reading, we have focused on the art of conversation in student-led book clubs. Students independently prepared themselves for weekly meetings, spoke deeply about their books, and reflected on how they could further improve their conversations by adding text-evidence. We have now embarked on reading poetry. Students have learned how to read and analyze a poem for its poetic devices. They have taken mentor poems and have used them for an inspiration to write their own poems, full of qualities of great poetry.



In writing, we dove deeply into memoir. Our students' goals were to share a memoir that told their audience who they are as individuals as well as sharing a deeper message that they wanted to get across. As a culminating activity students created fun and creative six-word memoirs.

This year we participated in the prestigious "Connecticut Writing Contest" sponsored by UCONN. We are so proud of the hard work the entire fifth grade put into preparing a writing piece for this contest. Three Burr students won and are published in the "Connecticut Student Writers" magazine and fourteen students received honorable mentions for their work! It was so wonderful to see our students writing gain statewide recognition!

In math, we continue to investigate volume, geometry, and fractions. We have studied the Mill River System. We made our trip down to the river for some hands-on investigations in April. Our students created their very own invention for the invention convention. Students had the opportunity to present this project to the entire school. They chose a topic they were passionate about to present to their classmates and parents via technology for their passion projects. We are so proud of how creative our students are!

As we wrap up our year, we thoroughly enjoyed the completion of students' 20th Century projects, as well all the fun activities that come with fifth grade! We loved going to the Italian Center for fifth grades' field day and Mystic Seaport for our end of year activity. In addition to this, students had their last concert and were excited to receive their certificate at the closing ceremonies and begin their new journey in middle school.

We would like to thank the parents and PTA for their continued support for all our activities! We can't believe how fast this year flew by. We wish all our fifth grade families a smooth and happy transition to middle school. Have a wonderful and relaxing summer!

PE Happenings

Mr. Hilinski

I can't believe another year is ending...Amazing things have happened in Physical Education class this year. It has been a pleasure to watch your children grow physically, socially, and emotionally. Each student has made tremendous strides in improving their gross motor readiness through running, hopping, throwing, catching, kicking, rolling, tumbling, climbing, and striking.

Attention 3rd graders... in the fall we will begin our state mandated physical fitness test. All 4th 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, 3rd 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 4th grade.

To our 5th 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 lots of time playing!! Take care and we'll see you in September!!!

Art Room Happenings

Mrs. Yessenow

The annual Burr Art Show went really well. Every student was represented and did some amazingly creative work.

Art this spring also had some new exciting projects! The Kindergarten learned how to "draw" with glue. We then used colored chalk to make some beautiful blended color designs around the dry glue lines. Messy, but fun! First graders learned about the abstract artist Piet Mondrian. They learned how to use a ruler to create a geometric design like his. We painted them with the primary colors! We finished the license plate designs in second grade to go with our classroom webquest unit. A clay fish dish was the next exciting project we did.

Our third graders made some beautiful clay ponds filled with "water" and wildlife. We also created African masks to coordinate with our classroom studies. If you've been in school to see the art show you can't miss the Hanger Characters the fourth graders created! They are fun and funny collages that are large and free-form. Fifth grade students designed a scene with a background, middle ground and foreground on shrinky-dink plastic. We shrank them in an oven for a cool miniature piece of art.

Encourage your child to continue to make art during the summer. They can draw or paint outdoors. Chalk in the driveway can be fun too. If you are taking some car trips you can bring many fun art and craft activities along for entertainment!

Noticias de la Clase de Español!

News from Spanish class!

Mrs. Sugrue

Grade four students recently completed their study of the unit *Let's Go to 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 creating a poster with sentences related to many of the themes we have studied this year.

Grade five classes are at the conclusion of 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 will be comparing 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 also 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 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.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer filled with lots of relaxing days, fun, and *español!*

News from Music

Mrs. Maravich

The **Fifth Grade Choraleer Ensemble**, which meets with me on Tuesday mornings at 8AM, and for the past month on Wednesday mornings as well, continues to expand their choral music repertoire. They are beginning to master the art of “tonal blend” in singing. They have accomplished so much this year in a very short time of being a Vocal Ensemble. They are eager to perform and have expanded their taste in music.- to songs from many different genres . BRAVO to all of them for their efforts and thanks to all of their parents for getting them here to school so early each week.

As for our **Select Girls Ensemble**, I must say this is one of the most talented groups of 5th grade sopranos that I have worked with. Their voices have a beautiful blend and they have an amazing top register. I have never heard a 5th grade girls’ ensembles sing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” as spot on beautiful as these girls did. There wasn’t a dry eye in the house at the fifth grade concert! I look forward to seeing and hearing the amazing things they will do musically at Tomlinson.

AND I would be remiss to not comment on our very talented and oh so much fun **Boys Ensemble**!! They have the incredible ability to hear and make up harmonies. BRAVO to them and they have been so much fun to work with.

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. They have also learned much about being active and respectful listeners.

Meanwhile, the **third graders** are officially playing their recorders and what a cacophony of sound!! I do believe their biggest challenge for them is remembering that the left hand is on top of the recorder. (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. And I must say “bravo” that they have moved along much faster in their performance skills than many other years.

NOTE to THIRD GRADE and FOURTH GRADE PARENTS: Each year I advise 3rd grade and 4th 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 (or my mom threw it away, or my dog ate it...etc.!) I have no way of helping them. If they can’t find it, but they follow my directions, I can at least say “by George, I know where you put it.....check your underwear drawer”!!!!)

Fourth grade students are becoming accomplished and advanced recorder players as well as good music readers. I am extremely proud of this group and all that they have accomplished. Also...they have been having fun with singing partner songs and canons and exploring the music of different composers.

The fifth grade has certainly come a long way! 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 - especially considering the cut in 5th grade instructional time in music. They are wonderful children and I wish them and their families a successful 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 J

News from Math/ Science

Mrs. Sherman

During the past school year the students at Burr have been engaged in math; not just in their classes but also throughout the day, and even night! In addition to the units of study they engaged in they have had opportunities to solve challenging problems in our Problem of the Week, engage in brain benders through our Mysterious Math bulletin board, and have had some fun guessing how many objects in a jar through our monthly Estimation Station. Many students and parents showed up to play fun math games during Math Night. The night was such a success; the teachers requested that we run it again during the school day, which we did earlier in the spring. I’m highlighting this work to illustrate that math doesn’t have to happen just in math class, but can occur throughout the day. Math truly is EVERYWHERE!

As we move into the summer months it is extremely important that students continue to practice, play, and DO math regularly. The district will provide math work for students entering grades 3 through 5. Burr will be providing some suggested work for our primary students to complete. However, there is no need to limit math to just the suggested activities and problems. Below is a list of some fun websites that students can access. In addition to these websites, there are also a number of apps, available for a variety of devices that make math FUN. Finally, when you are completing your summer reading, take some time to check out some of the many wonderful titles in your local library that include math. Have a wonderful summer!

Sheppard Software

<http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/math.htm>



National Library of Virtual Manipulatives

<http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html>

Chili Math Games

<http://www.chilimath.com/games/index.html>

Hooda Math

<http://www.hoodamath.com>

Bedtime Math

<http://bedtimemath.org>

News from Language Arts

Mrs. Felberbaum, Mrs. Henkel,

With summer break soon to begin, 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 with and to your children 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 urge *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 will be sent home in the coming weeks via Infinite Campus 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!

Pupil Services

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

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



Summer Suggestions...

- Continue to read to your child – they are never too old to hear good readers 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.
- Most of all relax and enjoy the summer with your child!

End of Newsletter—Thank you for reading!