



# CGS PTO Newsletter October 2011

## Coventry Grammar School

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CGS PTO Newsletter

October 2011

## A Memo From Marybeth Moyer, Principal

Hello October! Mums are decorating our doorstep, the air is crisp and cool and our students have proudly given their families tours of their classrooms at our traditional Open House. Over the past month, teachers and students have settled into their classroom schedules and instructional routines. Beyond the instruction that is ongoing in our classrooms, teachers and support staff are analyzing information and data that has been collected throughout the first month of school in an effort to further target instruction for all of our students.

The Coventry School District is firmly committed to providing the highest quality education for every student. To meet this goal, we have begun planning and implementing a tiered approach to instruction. This process, known in Connecticut as *Scientifically Researched Based Instruction* or SRBI, first gained attention when federal law established these practices as an approach to identify and provide intervention to struggling students. Each tier provides additional support beyond the core curriculum. Students needing intervention will be monitored frequently to ensure they meet grade-level expectations. All students will continue to participate in the core curriculum within their classrooms even if they need the support of tier two or three interventions.

In tier one, classroom teachers will continue to use a variety of strategies within their lessons to address the learning needs of all of their students. Those who are experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties or who are not meeting the targeted goals on grade-level benchmark assessments will be provided interventions matched to their needs. These tier two interventions will take place in small-group settings for approximately 30 minutes up to four times a week. An instructional-support team will provide the instruction and track the student's progress with the intervention plan on a regular basis. Interventions will occur for a minimum of 6 weeks but may continue up to ten weeks to ensure student success in the core program. The instructional-support team may make adjustments in the plan based on the student's progress. Depending on the student need and progress, the team may change the intervention or increase the frequency, time or intensity of the planned instruction. This more intense level is considered tier three. Students provided with tier three interventions are placed in smaller groups than tier two with an increase in the minutes of instruction. Monitoring a student's progress will continue on a regular basis.

At Coventry Grammar School we recognize the educational needs of young learners. In developing the foundational skills for life-long learning we are committed to providing the support that may be necessary to allow students to succeed. In our efforts to put this plan into action a program is underway at all grade levels.

Please be assured that as we monitor student growth throughout the year, parents will be apprised of their child's progress and the need for additional support. At Open House, parents were asked to sign-up for a November report card conference. This meeting will be one opportunity to discuss your child's progress in-depth.

We certainly want you to be informed of the instructional practices so that you can support our efforts at home. We look forward to sharing additional information with you as we progress through the school year.

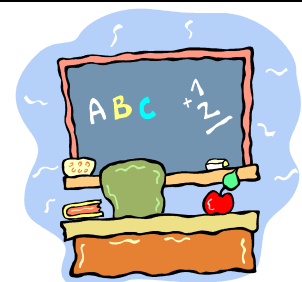
Enjoy the cool and colorful autumn days!



Welcome Autumn!

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## Kindergarten News

### Kindergarten Team

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



Autumn leaves are falling down,  
Falling down, falling down,  
Autumn leaves are falling down,  
We love autumn!

We are celebrating the wonderful changes that fall brings to us in Coventry. Nature walks, stories and colorful art projects will be part of our October work in kindergarten. All kindergarten classes will be taking a trip to Hurst Farm in Andover, to pick pumpkins and experience the season first-hand on either October 20 or 21.

In literacy this month, we will be focusing on *Concept of Print*. *Concept of Print* is an awareness of how print works and how it looks. Print is made up of letters, the letters correspond to sounds and words, and text is read from left to right across the page. We will also continue working on our *Foundations* units of study. We are practicing writing our letters correctly, identifying the letters and the sound the letter makes. Remember to use the same language at home when completing the Home/School Notebook activities! Hearing the same language at home and school strengthens the connections made by your child. We are hearing a lot about Sky Line, Plane Line, Grass Line and Worm Line!

Kindergarten is also using a program called *Making Meaning* to help our kindergarteners build their reading comprehension skills. We build upon the stories we read in the *Making Meaning* program with Mrs. Dubois, our art teacher, on enrichment activities that connect the learning with an artistic representation. These art enrichment lessons will occur every other week.

At the math center, there will be activities and experiences with beginning number concepts. Children will explore the concepts of position i.e., inside/outside, above/below, before/after, over/under, left/right. Opportunities to work with 3-D geometric shapes as well as simple patterns will also be part of mathematics instruction in October.

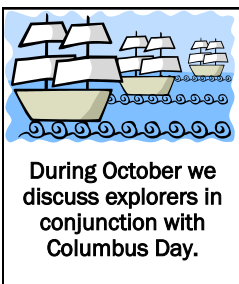
Fire Prevention will be one of the topics this month as well. We will be discussing fire safety and what to do in the event of a fire. One important safety tip is to help your child learn how to state his/her complete name, address and phone number.

We welcome student interns from ECSU. Michelle Lombardozzi is with Mrs. Hosey and Mrs. Bosco and Ashley Prizio is in Ms. Bitwinski's classroom. They will be working at our school two days a week throughout the semester. The primary focus of this experience is to support and scaffold the learning and social development of our students.

It was wonderful to see so many kindergarten families at Open House! It is so nice to have such supportive and caring families at C.G.S.!



Fire Prevention will be one of the topics this month as well. We will be discussing fire safety and what to do in the event of a fire. One important safety tip is to help your child learn how to state his/her complete name, address and phone number.



During October we discuss explorers in conjunction with Columbus Day.

## 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

Our first graders have been busy, busy, busy! Students have learned to navigate the building, learned new names of friends and teachers, and learned new routines in the classroom. Eating lunch at school is always a big "first", and children are becoming comfortable with this. All students have been hard at work being "bucket fillers" and following the school rules of safety, responsibility, and respect.

Open House is an exciting time, and this year was no exception! It was fun to greet our new families and to see old friends. Many parents signed up for November conferences. If you have not yet done so, please contact your child's teacher.

Teachers will be sending reminders home later this month. We look forward to meeting with you in November about your child's progress.

In keeping with this time of year, we will observe weather and seasonal changes. We encourage children to come to school dressed appropriately for outdoor play.

(First Grade - continued)

During October we discuss explorers in conjunction with Columbus Day. We also welcome our local fire fighters to teach and review safety tips and emergency procedures to observe Fire Prevention Week.

Many students will begin to bring home guided reading books to share. Please take time to sit with your children and listen to the stories they have worked so hard on. During whole group and small group reading instruction, we will be focusing on exploring and responding to literature. Students will begin to understand and appreciate the importance of literature in everyday life. They will begin to respond to information and make connections to their own personal experiences, other texts, and the world around them.

As our season changes into fall, we look forward to our "Storybook Character Day" on Friday, October 28, when we will dress as our favorite storybook character. Start your imaginations working!

We continue to enjoy using our *Growing With Mathematics* hands-on materials and have begun *Understanding Addition and Subtraction*. Students will be reviewing addition and subtraction language, counting on, practicing addition facts and writing subtraction number stories.

In discussing the *Hopes and Dreams* for first grade, it was no surprise that "learning to read" was the top desire of many children. The interest and help that you give from home is of HUGE importance. A variety of exciting activities that our first-grade classes engage in are *Book Buddies*, *Book Contracts*, special book projects, and literacy components integrated into homework. Please, please, read at home to and with your child! Thank you for taking the time each day to check notes and school work in backpacks. As sight-word cards are sent home, it is really important to keep them in a special place for frequent review. We appreciate your working with us as partners as we share your wonderful children.

The first-grade teachers want to welcome two student teachers from ECSU to our grade level. Miss Amanda Ericson is working with Ms. Klaneski, and Miss Mindy Maher is working with Mrs. Hamblett. Our first grade students are very lucky to be working with such capable young teachers this fall!

## 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 Holever

Autumn, with bright orange pumpkins, clear blue skies and the many colorful leaves is evident everywhere you look ! Our second graders are enjoying this beautiful season with a variety of fall activities, as well as moving into high gear in all areas of academics. Reading finds students exploring various types of text, expository and informational, as well as narrative stories and poetry. Students are identifying story components, structure, and sequencing events.

Social Studies connects to many of these reading skills as students discuss the characteristics of their culture, and make connections to characters and families in the stories we are reading.

In writing this month, second graders continue writing complete sentences using correct capitalization and punctuation. We are also exploring real world, writing opportunities, such as composing friendly letters, invitations and thank-you notes.

We are getting our hands dirty in science this month while we discover the many secrets of soil! Second graders are examining different types of soils to identify characteristics such as color and texture. We are also conducting experiments to determine the best types of soil to support plant growth.

Using our *Growing with Math* series, students are practicing addition and subtraction strategies such as using doubles, counting on and counting back. We are also solving and writing story problems and using information from graphs to solve problems.

Second graders are in the middle of our health unit taught by Mrs. Caldwell. Students meet with her weekly to learn about healthy behaviors, such as eating well, exercising, first aid, disease prevention, and making positive choices.

We enjoyed meeting with you at Open House last month! We hope you had a chance to sign up for parent-teacher conferences, which are just around the corner. If you do not have an appointment, please contact your child's teacher to set up a conference time.

Enjoy this beautiful month!



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## From Our School Nurse ~ Mrs. Paula Curtiss

### Head Lice

Head lice are an occasional problem in schools and can spread when children come in close contact with one another. Head lice are not a health hazard or a sign of uncleanliness. This is not responsible for the spread of disease. The most common symptom is itching/scratching of the scalp. I strongly encourage parents/guardians to do frequent and regular checks of their child's scalp at home.

Although it is impossible to totally prevent head lice, it is prudent for parents/guardians to teach their children not to share personal items such as combs, brushes, scarves, hats and other articles of clothing or headwear. Please contact me if you have any questions or if you discover your child has head lice. I can provide you with additional information and assistance.

### Cough Drops

As an alternative to cough drops please consider sending your student to school with a water bottle. A frequent sip of water will probably be just as effective, and a healthy alternative. If you feel that cough drops for your student may be necessary, please be advised of the guidelines for their use in school.

- Parents/guardians must send a note in with their student giving them permission to have them in school.
- The classroom teacher will hold the cough drops and only allow the student to have them if they will be seated at their desk, and there is an obvious need for them.
- If a student's cough is excessive or disruptive, he/she will be sent to the health office for evaluation to see if it is appropriate for the student to remain in school.

### School Nurse Substitutes Needed

Openings are available for school nurse substitutes in Coventry. You must be an RN with experience in the last 5 years and have a current CT license. For more information please visit the Coventry Public Schools website under job openings.

Enjoy all the beautiful things that autumn has in store for us. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns.

Paula Curtiss RN, 860-742-4558  
[pcurtiss@coventryct.org](mailto:pcurtiss@coventryct.org)



**If a student's cough is excessive or disruptive, he/she will be sent to the health office for evaluation to see if it is appropriate for the student to remain in school.**



**On Dolphin Book Days, students at CGS receive a FREE book to take home and read! Volunteers are needed for each grade level on those days to help organize and stamp books. The volunteer time is about one hour.**

## From Our Reading Room ~

It was wonderful seeing all our visitors at Open House. We enjoyed talking to families about reading and the importance of reading to your children at home.

We would like to take this time to send out a huge thank you to our generous PTO for providing funding for CGS's Dolphin Book Days. The dates for our book distributions will be Storybook Character Day on Friday, Oct. 28, and Read Across America Day on Friday, March 2.

On Dolphin Book Days, students at CGS receive a FREE book to take home and *read!* Volunteers are needed for each grade level on those days to help organize and stamp books. The volunteer time is about one hour. Siblings still at home are welcome to come along with parent volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering, please sign the form below and return it to your child's teacher or email Jennifer Jones at [jjones@coventryct.org](mailto:jjones@coventryct.org). If you have any questions, please call Jennifer Jones in the CGS Reading Room at 742-7313 ext. 195. Thank you for your support!

### 2011 - 2012 Dolphin Book Day Volunteer

Parent(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade/Teacher (indicate am/pm for Kindergarten): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**TEACHERS: PLEASE PUT IN MRS. JONES' MAILBOX. THANK YOU.**

## From Our Math Corner ~ Mrs. Stephanie Wissler, ASSIST Program

Here are some activities to practice math while at the grocery store. (from *Helping Your Child Learn Math* - June 1999)

- The grocery store is one of the best examples of a place where math is real. It's a great place for practicing measurement, estimation, and quantity. Since trips to the store usually affect everyone in the family, the following activities include various levels of difficulty within the activity.
- Allowing your children to participate in weighing, counting, and figuring price per unit versus price per pound will help improve their ability to estimate and predict amounts with accuracy.

### Get Ready - Grades K-2

#### What you'll need:

- Grocery store coupons and paper

#### What to do

- Involve the family in making a shopping list. Mark checks or tallies next to each item to indicate the number needed. This helps children learn to collect data.
- Involve the children in predicting how much milk or juice will be needed for a week. You might decide to estimate by cups, explaining that 4 cups are equal to a quart and 4 quarts are equal to a gallon. Also, try estimating by liters. How does a liter compare to a gallon?
- Choose coupons that match the items on the grocery list. Discuss how much money will be saved on various items by using coupons.

### Put It Away - Grades K-1

#### What you'll need

- Paper, pencil, ruler, and computer

#### What to do

- After getting home from grocery shopping, find one characteristic that is the same for some of the products. For example, some are boxes and some are cans.
- Put together all the items that have the same characteristic.
- Find another way to group these items.
- Continue sorting, finding as many different ways to group the items as you can.
- Play "Guess My Rule." In this game, you sort the items and ask your child to guess your rule for sorting them. Then, reverse roles and let your children sort the items so that you can guess their rule.
- Using paper, pencil, ruler, and computer make a chart of how many items are in each category.



The grocery store is one of the best examples of a place where math is real. It's a great place for practicing measurement, estimation, and quantity.

Allowing your children to participate in weighing, counting, and figuring price per unit versus price per pound will help improve their ability to estimate and predict amounts with accuracy.

## From Our School Psychologist ~ Mrs. Heather Zilora

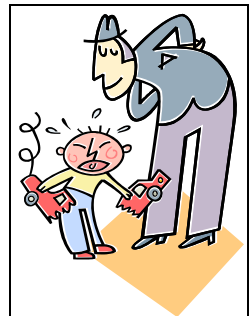
Excerpts from Pass-Along Papers by Active Parenting Publishers

According to experts, children misbehave to accomplish certain goals. They might want attention, a feeling of power, or revenge. Sometimes they act helpless and inadequate when they are feeling discouraged. Adults often label actions as misbehavior, when actually they are the result of a child being sick, tired, hungry or frustrated. In other cases, inappropriate conduct may be caused by a child's curiosity, desire to be helpful, or ignorance of the rules or customs. Remember that all troublesome behavior is not misbehavior. Next, if the child is misbehaving, try to pinpoint the goal of the child's misbehavior. If the intentional misbehavior works to accomplish the goal of attention, for example, the child is more likely to repeat the action in the future. How parents respond to misbehavior will determine whether it is used in the future to achieve goals. If you believe that the child seeks attention, redirect the child and provide the needed attention for positive behavior. If the child displays inadequacy, remember that he or she is trying to tell you not to expect too much. The child is discouraged. Don't give up and do things for the child and avoid criticizing the child. Instead, focus on small accomplishments and efforts.

Suggestions:

1. Avoid confrontations by sensing when your child is under stress or approaching the frustration level.
2. If you sense a squabble is about to turn into a brawl, step in and guide the children in working through their problem (but wait until the last minute, in order to give them a chance at problem-solving)
3. Help young children, in particular, interpret the impact of their actions on others. Since they are basically self-centered, young children rarely deal with the full implications of behavior.

More to come next month!!



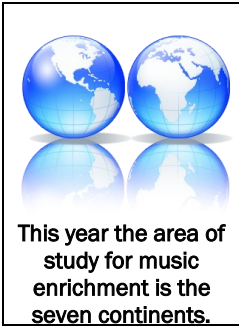
Adults often label actions as misbehavior, when actually they are the result of a child being sick, tired, hungry or frustrated... If you believe that the child seeks attention, redirect the child and provide the needed attention for positive behavior.

## Music Enrichment ~ Mr. Jim Careau

Music enrichment is a collaborative program designed to reinforce and enhance student learning. Currently, first-grade students are participating in music enrichment. This year, the area of study for music enrichment is the seven continents. Each class is taught jointly by regular classroom teachers and the music teacher. Students memorize the names of the seven continents and learn interesting facts about different locations on each continent. During each lesson, songs are taught to the students which are directly related to the continent being studied. For example, while studying the continent of Antarctica, the students will learn a song called "I'm a Little Penguin."

While studying Europe, the students learn about several different countries within the European continent. This year France will be an area of focus. The student will learn to sing the song "Frere Jacques" in both French and English.

The enrichment program as a whole (art, physical education, and music) has been very successful in helping our students obtain a deeper understanding of the world they live in.



## Art Enrichment ~ Mrs. Jeanne DuBois

The purpose of art enrichment is to enhance the core curriculum in the areas of literature and theme-based units. All classes receive art enrichment each year on a rotating basis. These classes are in addition to their regular weekly art session.

Literature is a major focus of art enrichment. Students are read a story by their classroom teacher. The story is followed by an art lesson. The lesson may focus on the theme of the story or the artistic style. The students learn about the role of the illustrator and the types of media used. The story may coordinate with a season or a particular unit of study within their classroom. The story and art lesson may be a prelude to an upcoming field trip, cultural art performance or guest speaker. Each lesson is designed to enhance students' motor skills, self confidence and awareness of themselves and their surrounding environment. Also during art enrichment classes, students are introduced to new materials and techniques. All students are then encouraged to retell their story to their families while using their art project as a visual aid.



## Health Enrichment ~ Mrs. Barbara Caldwell

Physical education enrichment classes are devoted to health lessons in areas that are not covered in grade-level curriculum. There are significant tasks in three subjects that need to be taught by a health certified instructor. The areas are *Human Growth and Development*, *First Aid and Disease Prevention*, and *Making Healthy and Safe Choices*. These lessons will bring Coventry Grammar School into compliance with the National Health Education Standards.

Lessons will be taught in Grade 2 in the fall, kindergarten in the winter, and Grade 1 in the spring. The lessons are taught using age-appropriate materials that include literature and storybooks, videos and role playing.

This teaching experience gives Mrs. Caldwell the opportunity to work with all students in a classroom setting and provides them additional skills that are vital for their health and well-being.



## From Our Friends at the Coventry Early Childhood Center

No matter how compliant a child, there will be times when he/she does not want to put on socks or pick up toys. As young children develop, they begin to understand that they can make their own decisions. And occasionally they make a power play at an inconvenient time.

While a power play can be frustrating for the adult who is trying to get the child to do something, it is a healthy part of children's social/emotional development. These incidents help children develop a stronger sense of self and the capability to set their own limits.

We adults need to react appropriately. In many instances, trying to force the child to do what he has said he will not do escalates the situation in a full-blown power struggle.

Try offering assistance instead. For example, you might say, "You can put on your socks by yourself or I can help you this morning." Or, "I could help you put away your toys. Would you like that?"

Or offer choices. "OK, you don't want to wear these socks today. Would you rather wear blue ones or green ones?" "Let's see. Which would it be easier to start with: putting the blocks in this tub or putting the cars back in their case?"

Power plays are simply a part of growing up. When handled by adults in a calm manner, they offer opportunities for children to develop self-esteem and self control.



## PTO News

We had an amazing turnout at our September meeting! It was wonderful to meet so many new and returning parents and to hear great ideas. The Board was sad to say goodbye to Anita Hilinski (board secretary), but we welcome Cathy Veerasammey who will fill this role. Both work Anita and Cathy work tirelessly to help support the PTO, and we appreciate their participation.

We enjoyed seeing so many families at the Open House. Thank you very much for getting to know your child's school family and shopping at the Book Fair. Our profit from the Book Fair will be determined shortly and reported at the PTO meeting. We offer a heartfelt thank you to Martha McKerley for chairing this terrific event, along with a great group of volunteers that pitched in to support all the events of the evening. Our children were so proud to share this special evening with their families and friends.

The PTO is currently sorting through all of the membership forms and volunteer lists that have been submitted, and we will be in touch with those of you who signed up for particular committees and/or events. We are also updating our email distribution list for those of you who have expressed an interest in receiving the PTO minutes via email.

### A few upcoming events that we have to look forward to are:

- Welcome Back-to-School Family Fun Bingo Night: Friday, October 21, 2011
- Fall Fundraising with Lyman Orchards and Original Works
- The Box Tops Challenge that will be held until the end of the month
- Teacher Appreciation during November conferences
- The joint PTO winter Bake/Craft sale
- Apples for Teachers event

### Volunteers Needed

- Spirit Wear – To find a new vendor and help order new spirit wear
- Fine Arts – To present and teach students about different types of art and different ways of interpreting art in the classrooms Note: Training will be provided and there is free childcare available
- Fall Fundraiser – To work the pick-up date on November 22, 2011
- Teacher Appreciation – To organize and bake for this week
- Apples for Teachers – To send information home about the event, set up the tree and prepare the apples
- Joint PTO Bake/Craft Sale – To accept and price goods the night before, work the table the day of and to bring in baked goods for the event on December 3, 2011

### PTO TREASURER'S REPORT - AS OF AUGUST 24, 2011

Beginning Balance	\$ 2,261.29
Income	\$ 200.02
Expenses	\$ 50.00
Ending Balance	\$ 2,411.31

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

#### **Haley Small, Co-President**

(860) 670-0137  
[haleysmall@vzw.blackberry.net](mailto:haleysmall@vzw.blackberry.net)

#### **Leslie Ryan, Co-President**

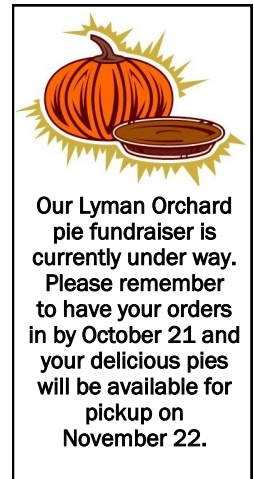
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### ***Weather-Related/Emergency Closings, Delays, and Early Release Notifications***

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](http://www.coventrypublicschools.org).

For an electronic copy of this newsletter, or for additional information about the Coventry Grammar School, please visit our website: [www.coventrypublicschools.org](http://www.coventrypublicschools.org)