



CGS PTO Newsletter

Coventry Grammar School

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CGS PTO Newsletter September '09

A Memo From Marybeth Moyer, Principal



Welcome Back to School!

Inside this issue:

Kindergarten News	2
First-Grade News	2
Second-Grade News	3
Welcome	4
From the School Nurse	4
From the School Psychologist	4
From the Reading Room	5
From the Coventry Early Childhood Center (CECC)	5
In Memoriam: Jean Ballok	5
Donuts With Donna	5

Greetings! We are off to a great start at Coventry Grammar School! We began the year with 417 eager and enthusiastic students. We were so proud of the way 133 new kindergarten students rode the bus the first day, navigated the winding hallways and joined their classmates for a full week of exciting, learning activities in their new classrooms.

Our first-and second-grade students certainly led the way by confidently joining their new teachers, quickly settling into their classroom routines, eagerly reacquainting themselves with their classmates during lunch and recess and greeting one another so positively throughout the day. And to think the year has just begun!

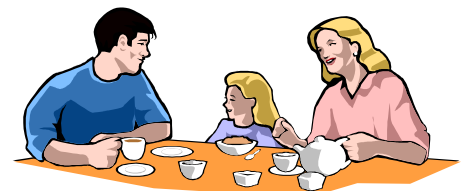
In addition to the hours that our classroom teachers spent preparing for their new crop of students, the entire CGS staff spent two days involved in professional development that focused on team building and collaboration and expanding our technology skills. Our goals for this year will include increasing reading fluency through a school-wide poetry initiative, expanding student writing strategies across all grade levels, developing intervention strategies that will benefit all learners plus revising and updating curriculum.

There are many ways that parents can support our school efforts. The CGS PTO is an active parent-teacher organization which holds monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. There will be an opportunity each month to gain insight into educational trends that are happening in our school from the principal, a team of teachers and parent members. These hour-long meetings are open to all parents, and childcare is provided. The PTO packet that recently came home is an informative resource that explains the many committees or tasks that may be of interest to you.

Along with joining PTO, we encourage parents to become active, school volunteers. The informational packet for volunteers that was distributed at Open House lists a variety of ways that both staff and students at CGS could use your help. Please consider how you can share your strengths with us at school or assist us with projects that can be completed at home.

As your children begin the first few weeks of school, please take the opportunity to talk to them about their new and renewed school responsibilities. *What rules did you talk about in your classroom? What did you share at Morning Meeting? Were there new materials introduced in your classroom today? What classroom centers did you visit?* By initiating this daily dialogue, you will be connecting the key elements in your child's school day and will help us by emphasizing and supporting the importance of these classroom routines.

I am certainly looking forward to meeting and working with you. Together, we will make this a very positive and successful year for the students of Coventry Grammar School.



"As your children begin school, please take the time to talk to them"

Kindergarten News

Kindergarten Team: Teachers: Wendy Bayer, Terry Bitwinski, Debbie Hurlburt, Susan Schardt; Para-Educators: Debbie Carroll, Laurie Darling, Sue Lewis



**All About Me...
the characteristics that
make every child
unique**

In kindergarten, we will be exploring the theme, **All About Me**, as our first unit that integrates literacy and social studies. The focus will be on the characteristics that make every child special and unique.

Children will be learning to give information about themselves ... their first and last name, address, phone number and birthdates. Please work with your children on these skills at home to reinforce their learning. It is important for each school-aged child to be competent with his/her personal knowledge. Each class will have an **All About Me** project this month. Children are to design a poster or fill a box or bag with special items about themselves. This will be presented to their classmates during class sharing times. Specific information regarding these projects will be sent home with each child.

We are getting started in our math program, *Growing With Mathematics*, by building math into classroom routines. Children will be introduced to a daily calendar, collecting and representing data as part of daily routines, and participating in a variety of activities that have a connection to the theme of getting to know one another. Look for the parent letters which will be sent home throughout the school year to explain mathematics in Kindergarten.

Now that school is beginning, many parents will ask, "What can I do to help my child become a reader?" Here are some suggestions for kindergartners. Try to read together each day. Reread favorite stories. Children enjoy and learn from reading the same stories again and again. Talk about the stories. As you read, stop now and then to ask questions to get your child involved in the story. Let your child read to you. Your child may tell a story from the pictures or from memory, but s/he is using strategies that will help when s/he does begin reading words. The key is to enjoy this time together so that your child will grow to love and cherish reading. Check out the parent shelf in our school library for literacy materials. Starting Out Right and Read It Aloud! and *What Parents Can Do To Build Reading Skills* and *Read To Me* are just some of the books and videos available for parents.

We look forward to an exciting year in kindergarten with you and your children!

**"Let your child read
to you. The key is to
enjoy this time
together..."**

First-Grade News

First-Grade Team: Teachers: Megan Babcock, Bruce Gale, Colleen Hamblett, Pat Klaneski, Matthew Kyer, Cristy Rau, Ginny Taber; Para-Educators: Jennifer Ray

First graders were greeted by seven first-grade teachers this year! As you make your way down the B wing hallway you will find all the classrooms filled with Grade One children learning, laughing, and trying to remember all the routines of a full day.

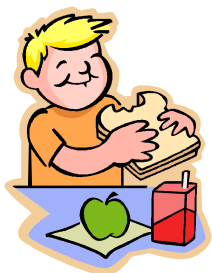
Children also met our two paraeducators, who are assisting teachers once again. Although their duties are divided among the seven first-grade classrooms, their hands-on help with children is always appreciated.

Due to the large number of children in Grade One, the children will eat lunch and have recess in two teams. Team 1 (Ms. Klane-

ski, Mrs. Rau, and Mr. Kyer) will be eating and playing between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 PM, while team 2 (Mr. Gale, Mrs. Babcock, Mrs. Taber and Mrs. Hamblett) will be eating and playing between 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m.

Our children have had an exciting (perhaps exhausting?) start of their first year of a full day schedule. We have all been busy with class routines, rules, and of course READING. We will always encourage parents to keep reading regularly with their children, and our home-school reading programs will soon be underway.

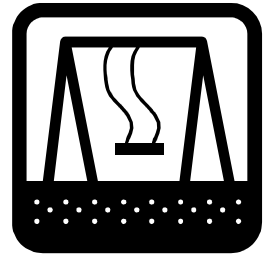
Children will be having outdoor recess daily



**The children will eat
lunch and have recess
in two teams.**

(except in rain) so please have them dress appropriately for cool weather. During morning recess children may eat a snack from home. Due to possible allergies and other considerations, please discourage your child from trading or sharing snacks.

Although it is very early in the school year, we need to ask parents to help us by signing up for November conferences. This allows everyone to select a day and time that is convenient for both parents and teachers. With the great parents, programs, and personnel we enjoy at C. G. S., we can truly look forward to an exciting year together!



Second-Grade News

Second-Grade Team: Teachers: Susan Beeching, Carolyn Bennett, Jerry Craig, Nancy Gwozdz, Heather McPeck, Nancy Plaster, Angela Puccia; Para-Educators: Gloria Barry, Heidi Holever

We are very excited about the start of our year with our second graders! During our first weeks, we have had time for our classes to build respectful communities and develop safe routines and rules that will help all students flourish.

During the month of September in reading, our students will practice using various strategies *before* they read a story and *while* they are reading a story. Some of these strategies are taking a picture walk through the text and telling a story, stopping every two or three pages and talking about what the text is about, and finding parts of the text that connect to their lives. As a family, these are all strategies you are able to reinforce at home during your family's reading time.

These strategies will also go along with our home/school program called W.E.B. Some-time during this month, your children will be assigned nightly reading. This W.E.B. program, which is short for We Enjoy Books, is a time for your children to read to you. Please look for information to come home with your children during the next few weeks to help you and your children get started.

One area that is new for our students is formal spelling. Students are working on short vowel words. At times, you will hear your children talk about blends such as bl-, digraphs such as ch-, and closed syllables. These are all part of a new program we are starting, and we anticipate this program will help our children become better spellers and readers.

As part of language arts, our children are learning to listen and communicate with each other throughout the day, and they are

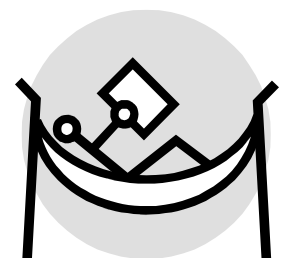
working on creating quality sentences with beginning capitals and appropriate ending punctuation in each subject area. They will start working on adding some simple details to their sentences by the end of the month.

Our science unit will be a "dirty" one. We will be experimenting with various soils and learning about their characteristics. We will be planting seeds to find which soil is best suited for growing. The children really like this unit with all the "dirt", water, and fun, and there are always a great many "ah-hah" moments in this unit.

Initially, our math has been an overview of first grade with emphasis and extension on understanding relationships of numbers. This will continue as we explore the concepts related to addition using concrete manipulative and activities. We also have an ongoing emphasis on calendars and math concepts related to weather in our Morning Meetings, which will extend throughout the year.

Last but not least, we are so pleased to have had so many parents and extended family members come to Open House. It is always a pleasure to meet you, and we look forward to working with you and your children throughout our second grade journey.

"The children really like this unit with all the dirt, water, and fun, and there are always a great many "ah-hah" moments in this unit."



W.E.B. —We Enjoy Books!

A Warm Welcome To New Staff



Welcome New Staff!

We have new faces in new places at Coventry Grammar School!

Mrs. Hurlburt has joined the kindergarten team and is teaching an A.M. class.

Mrs. Wissler is now working at both G.H.Robertson and CGS in an academic assistance position. She will be in our building two afternoons a week.

Mr. Jerry Craig has joined our second-grade team this year. He comes to us from G. H. Robertson!

We wish these fine teachers all the best in their new roles this year!

From Our School Nurse ~ Mrs. Paula Curtiss

Welcome to Coventry Grammar School, and to returning students, parents and guardians, welcome back.

There are just a few reminders as we begin the year.

Please complete and return the emergency contact card that was sent home on the first day of school.

It is so important that we have current phone numbers and contact information in the event of an illness or emergency.

If your child will be absent from school, it is required that you notify the Health Office at 742-4558 on the first day of your child's absence.

Please call by 9:30 am. A call will be made to your home if you have not contacted us.

Finally, students are not allowed to carry medications of any kind to or in school. Any medication that is required during the school day must have a written authorization form (available from the nurse) from your physician and must be brought to the Health Office by an adult.

This information is explained in more detail in the Coventry Grammar School Handbook. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions and concerns.

I wish all students and their parents and guardians a happy and healthy school year!

Paula Curtiss

860-742-4558

pcurtiss@coventryct.org

"It is so important that we have current phone numbers and contact information in the event of an illness or injury."

From Our School Psychologist ~ Mrs. Heather Zilora



"School psychologists work to find the best solution for each student and situation..."

My name is Heather Zilora. I am the school psychologist at Coventry Grammar School. You may wonder what my role is at the school. Here is a little information about my job and the role of a school psychologist in general.

Who Are School Psychologists?

School psychologists help children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students that strengthen connections between home and school.

What Do School Psychologists Do?

School psychologists work to find the best solution for each student and situation and use different strategies to address student needs and to improve school and district-wide support systems.

School psychologists work with students individually and in groups. They also develop programs to train teachers and parents regarding effective teaching and learning strategies, effective techniques to manage behavior at home and in the classroom, working with students with disabilities and preventing and managing crises.

From the Reading Room ~

By now, parents have received the letter explaining the Fast Start poetry program. This is a school-wide initiative that will be supported by all your child's teachers. Research shows that schools that strive to promote parent involvement and literacy activities linking what is done in school with what is valued at home report higher and enduring academic achievement. The poems will be posted on the website for your reference. Thank you for supporting our summer reading program. Your children will receive their free book after Sept 11.



News From the Coventry Early Childhood Center

Michelle Abbatemarco, Sara Spak, Lisa Decker, Donna Meehan, and Marilyn Piecuch

The Coventry Early Childhood Center, Inc. is busy preparing our center for a "Good Start" for the 2009-2010 school year!

On Tuesday, September 1, we had our "Come and See" Day when all the children and families were able to meet their new teachers and explore their new environments.

We are pleased to welcome Mrs. Lisa Decker to our Early Childhood Center. She is a Coventry resident with many years of teaching experience. Mrs. Decker has also been a long-time substitute teacher and tutor within the Coventry Public Schools and is excited about being part of our team and working with young children and families at the Center.

During the school year, we should all remember:

"Our actions speak louder than our words. Children watch closely what we do with each other more than they listen to what we say to each other: Clearly our modeling behavior is more important than almost anything else we do." (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

The Coventry Early Childhood Center wishes everyone a wonderful new school year!



In Memoriam: Jean Ballok

A young educator once said, "We think of the effective teachers we have had over the years with a sense of recognition, but those who have touched our humanity we remember with a deep sense of gratitude." This quote has become especially meaningful now for the staff of Coventry Grammar School with the loss this summer of dear friend and colleague, Jean Ballok, whose valiant struggle with leukemia ended on August 16.

After twenty years in the Coventry schools, most recently as a para-educator in Grade 1, Mrs. Ballok naturally assumed a great deal of responsibility. The staff relied heavily on her understanding of children and families, her vast knowledge of the community and her familiarity with the workings of CGS. Mrs. Ballok and her work ethic were truly the "glue and paste" of our school.

The staff at CGS recently celebrated the dedication and work of Jean Ballok by planting a tree in her honor on the school grounds.

At the request of Mrs. Ballok's family, donations may be made in her memory to the Jean Ballok Library Memorial Fund at Coventry Grammar School.

Donuts With Donna

The Superintendent of Schools is available for casual conversations with community members during the school year. "Donuts with Donna" is a way for you to greet your school Superintendent, ask questions, and keep informed about education in our town. Please feel free to stop by, where there will be an informal atmosphere with an open dialogue and no set agenda. The next session of "Donuts with Donna" is scheduled for Tuesday, September 29, from 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. at the Lisicke Beach Pavilion on Route 31/Main Street.



PTO News

A big welcome back from the PTO! Every new school year brings joy, sadness, tears, and hope—and we hope you'll get involved in our school!

By now, everyone has received the back-to-school packet with all the information you may need and want from the CGS PTO. Please plan on attending the monthly PTO meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 7PM. We always have free babysitting available, so bring the kids and leave them to play while you learn all about the wonderful and exciting volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

Never hesitate to contact any member of the PTO board at any time with a question, concern or new idea! We look forward to introducing ourselves and meeting all of our new parents at our next meeting on October 13th at 7PM.

See you then!

Kari Bennett, Co-President (498-0087)

klianemcb2@aol.com

Jennifer Zawacki, Co-President (742-5074)

jenniferzawacki@yahoo.com

Beth Hassett, Secretary (742-5605)

bhassett5605@charter.net

Darby Muia, Treasurer (742-2899) darbyk7@yahoo.com

PTO Treasurer's Report



As of September 8, 2009



Beginning Balance	\$	3330.25
Income	\$	600.00
Expenses	\$	2548.53
Ending Balance	\$	1381.72

