



GHR NEWSLETTER

MAY 2009



From the Principal~ Mr. Dave Petrone

Dear Parents,

With this year rapidly coming to a close, we are now beginning the complex process of placing students for the upcoming school year. This process continues into the next two months and requires careful consideration of multiple factors from a wide range of sources. It is our expectation to follow this process and create well balanced classes where all of our students will grow and succeed.

Frequently, parents ask if they can request their child's teacher for the next school year.

Over the past few years, we have maintained the practice of not accepting parent requests for specific teachers.

However, we do recognize that parents know their child best and may have valuable insights into their specific needs. Based on this belief, I will accept letters for consideration that explain special circumstances, particularly if their child should be separated from or placed with other children. Please note that your input will be considered, but I cannot guarantee that it will be honored.




I also ask that you not press teachers for placement recommendations. When these personal requests are made, it often creates an awkward situation for the teacher. Any information you wish to offer for consideration should be put in writing and forwarded to my attention.

I have great confidence that the staff will continue to place our students with sensitivity and a genuine understanding of what is best for students to learn and flourish.

Sincerely,
David Petrone
Principal

MAY 2009



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HOLIDAY

News from Grade 3

Springtime officially arrived in time for our annual Poetry Festival. We are happy to announce that through the efforts of State Representative Joan Lewis and by proclamation of Governor M. Jodi Rell, that Friday, April 24, 2009 was officially **Celebration of Poetry and Daffodil Day** in Coventry! What began in 2004 as a partnership between the Coventry Village Improvement Society and the Third Grade has become an annual event. We'd like to extend a gracious "thank you" to members of the Village Improvement Society for their efforts over the last five years, especially for the inspiration behind hundreds of poems written by our students. Their daffodil donations made the backdrop for our poetry fest all the more beautiful. While the flowers swayed in the sunny skies, the warm breeze around GHR was filled with wonderful presentations of classic springtime poems and recitations of original poems by our students. It gave us, as teachers, a moment to catch our breath as we forge right into the last quarter of the school year. Needless to say, it is a busy one at that!



We would like to give you some advanced notice concerning several field experiences that are scheduled for mid May to mid June. As part of our study of Coventry, its history, and the community in which we live, students will travel back in time to experience life as a young child by spending a school day at the **Brick School House** with schoolmarm Ginny Dilk. They will visit the sites of several early Coventry school districts and learn about how our town and our lives have changed in the times since the early 1900s. Another field trip will be a partial day at the **Nathan Hale Homestead**. Here, students will participate in several early American activities and walk on the grounds of our favorite Revolutionary War hero. Through these two separate experiences, it is our hope that students will be able to identify similarities and differences between the lifestyles, customs, and challenges of these two time periods, as well as gain a greater appreciation of our town.



Have a wonderful May!

Donna Gwozdz, Gail Sroka, Erin Brown, Katie Stiles, Ronnie Giana, Jen Emerson, Heidi Bosco, Anne Burke, Jan Spangle, and Nan Kandolin

News from Grade 4



Fourth grade spring has arrived with fair weather, fabulous field trips, facts, and learning fun.

Fun was the name of the game for the P.T.O. since the last newsletter. Thank you to the P.T.O. for the enormous effort put into the Kid's Fun Fair and fundraisers that support student learning and the student community at G.H.R.

Since the last newsletter, fourth grade students participated in an electrical safety presentation put on by Connecticut Light & Power. In addition, fourth grade students flexed their reading muscles in the "Reading Challenge." The students "ran," or better yet, "drove" with the challenge and read a total of 62,991 minutes, as of this writing. Students were thrilled to watch their class car race based on the class reading totals. Finally, it was good to meet with parents during conferences. Teachers and parents discussed issues important for student success.

Whether on the field trip bus, at their desk, or on the gym floor for the math bee, fourth grade will spend the next months on the edge of their seats. The grade level will continue to tackle new concepts and sharpen concepts already studied.

In math, students will study fractions, percents, perimeter, area, and other new concepts. While we study these concepts, students will be preparing for the fourth grade "Math Bee" at the end of the year. Monthly, each math class competes to establish a winner who will participate in the "Final Math Bee." As of this writing, students participating in "Final Math Bee" are Abby P., Connor R., Trevor B., Nina Y., Dale B., Grace S., Meghan B., Jason S., Kwabena O., Orkan O., Nicholas E., Justin W., Harry D., Callie M., Madegan M., Konnor S., Ben C., Chris P., Amanda M., Abigail N., Kristi F., Robbie M., Amber B., Richard K., and Carli D.

As part of our social studies curriculum, the fourth grade will be visiting the Mashantucket Pequot Museum on May 14 and May 15. The trip is an important part of our study of Native Americans. The museum offers an excellent simulation of a Native American village with many interactive exhibits that will enrich students' study of Native American life.

In addition to the Pequot Museum, some fourth grade classrooms will be visiting Bluff Point, and other fourth grade classrooms will be visiting Mashamoquet State Park. The classrooms visiting Bluff Point will not only enrich their study of ecosystems through an investigation of the shore along Long Island Sound, they will also experience the diversity of cultures in our community through a Pen Pal program with neighboring towns. Classrooms visiting Mashamoquet State Park will also build communication and teamwork skills with students of diverse backgrounds, while solving different problem scenarios using Legos.

Beginning early in their school experience, students have been writing wonderful stories, using the narrative diamond as part of their language arts study. In the fourth grade, students begin formally writing expository essays (writing to provide information). Students have begun this study with an introduction to the expository pillar, an outline of the important elements of an expository essay.

As we go forward, please continue to support your child in his/her daily learning. As always, students should read at home, study their spelling words, practice their multiplication facts, and complete any other homework assignments.

The fourth grade wishes you the best of this wonderful spring.

Jerry Craig, Mike Daigneau, Jim Dzwonchyk, Janine Goldsneider, Erin Hazzard, Nora Jones, Michelle Santese, Barbara Timberman

News from Grade 5

Grade 5 – May Newsletter

Grade 5 teachers would like to thank all the parent chaperones for their help at making our trip to Old Sturbridge Village a tremendous success. We had fantastic weather for the experience as the students learned about life in the 1830's. We were complimented time and again about the respectful behavior of our students. Once again, thank you!



During April, we held our canned and non-perishable food drive and eclipsed our goal of 200 food items.

As the warmer weather has finally taken hold we have begun to plan our next field experience. Grade 5 teacher and students will be attending a New Britain Rock Cats baseball game. Students will be introduced to the rich history of baseball; the statistics of batting, pitching, and fielding; and the economics of running a baseball park.

Back in the classroom...social studies classes are studying the structure and function of our government. From the Constitution to the development of the 3 branches of government, students are discussing the effects of checks and balances within government. In reading classes, students are completing their latest novels. Writing classes have students continuing to refine the structure and content of their expository writing pieces. Students are focusing on the inclusion of amazing adjectives and vivid verbs as they seek to continually refine their writing techniques. In science, students have recently completed the unit dealing with light and are moving into the study of lens types and the use of lenses in science and technology. Finally, in math, students have completed a unit dealing with collecting, organizing and displaying various forms of data. Students have created a variety of graphs and drawn conclusions about the data using statistical landmarks such as maximum, minimum, range, median, mode, and mean. Students will begin a unit dealing with integers and order of operations, as well as continuing to refine their skills using fractions.

Gr 5 – Mrs. Bernier, Mr. Carlson, Mrs. Piteo, Ms. Steeves, Ms. Silvernail, Mrs. Sandberg, Mr. Spivey, Ms Woodin

MATH MATTERS- Kim Licata ASSIST Teacher

Introduction to Algorithms

Even if you have never heard the work algorithm, it is a part of the vocabulary used by your children in the Everyday Math program. Algorithms are actually a working part of our everyday life. You are using algorithms when you assemble a new toy, use a recipe, and defrost something in the microwave. Each of these examples illustrates the use of an algorithm. Here is the official definition: An algorithm is a well-defined procedure or set of rules guaranteed to achieve a certain objective.

Here is a mathematics example: An algorithm for multiplication is a specific series of steps that will give you the correct answer no matter what numbers you multiply together. You might have used one particular algorithm for multiplying when you were in grade school. The students in our school are learning that there is more than one algorithm for solving multiplication problems-or addition or subtraction or division problems. If children understand the mathematics behind the problem, they may very well be able to come up with a unique working algorithm that proves they "get it."

Helping children become comfortable with algorithmic and procedural thinking is essential to their growth and development in mathematics and as everyday problem solvers.

If you would like more information about the various algorithms that your child is learning in school, please contact me and I will be glad to send home more information.



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 last 2008-09 session of *Donuts with Donna* is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19 from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. at Coventry Pediatrics, 1683 Boston Turnpike.



INFORMATIONAL SEMINAR:

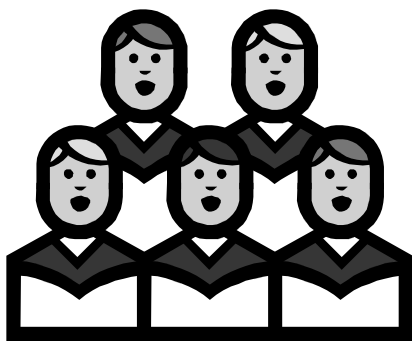
Do you ever wonder how some things work in the local school system? It is the intent of Coventry Public Schools to keep the public well informed. In that interest, look for a new informational seminar entitled: *A Balanced Curriculum Showcase*. On the evening of Tuesday, February 10 Coventry schools unveiled its new web-based curriculum format to the public. Parents are now able to keep informed from home regarding their child's curriculum. Tune in to channels 13 & 17 to view excerpts from the evening's presentations.

Please know that the official last day of school this year is Tuesday, June 23. Graduation is set for Saturday, June 20.

“Just a Note!” From the Music Room ~ Mrs. Labelle

Concert times: Grade 4 – 12:30 P.M., Grade 3 - 1:30 P.M., Grade 5 – 2:30 P.M. on Wednesday, May 27, 2009

Thanks , in advance, for all your help!! Dorothy



From the Band Room: Mrs. Gould

The GHR Band Concert is closing in on us! We are a bit behind at this point, so extra practice is a must! The preparation for this concert is more involved than the previous one. Students need to be sure to attend lessons and full band rehearsals.

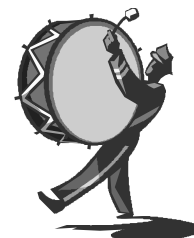
We will be attending a combined rehearsal with the grade six band on the day of our concert. We plan to perform 2 selections together. It will be a nice experience to play with the older students.

I want to also make you aware that after grade 5, group lessons are not a part of the band program. Band will meet twice weekly in large groups. Private lessons would be a possible option for those students that are not at a level they need to be at this point.

So, I look forward to seeing you at our concert on May 18 at 7:00 pm.

Thanks for your support.

Sincerely,
Carol Gould
GHR Band



From the Reading Room ~ Mrs. Sue Hansen

Books for "In Betweens" and Preteens



When choosing books for your children ages 9-12, look for the following:

- Collections of odd or unusual facts fascinate many children at this age and often pave the way to reading non-fiction books on a favorite topic.
- Humorous exaggeration, particularly as characters express their thoughts and feelings, as in cartoons.
- Books containing bonds of loyalty between characters
- Stories that show young people actively solving problems, overcoming odds. These may be set in the past, present, or future.
- Stories that grab the reader's interest in the first few pages by quickly introducing a conflict and/or character your children identify with
- Greater length – books that will be read over several days rather than in one sitting
- Out-of-the-ordinary experiences, both true life and fictional (mysteries and ghost stories appeal to many children at this age)
- A variety of settings, both in time and place

Reading aloud offers opportunities to introduce books your children may not discover on their own – such as classics, folk tales,

Nurse's Corner ~ Therese McKeever 742-4529

Are you concerned about the amount of time your child watches TV or plays video games? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting children's TV, movie, and computer games to less than 1 to 2 hours daily. Too much screen time can result in problems such as: obesity; irregular sleep; behavioral problems such as bullying, attention difficulties, depression or anxiety; impaired academic performance; and less time for active, creative play.



To help reduce screen time The Mayo Clinic recommends:

- Eliminate background TV – just being on, the TV is likely to draw a child's attention.
- Keep computers and TVs out of children's bedrooms – these kids tend to watch more TV and videos.
- Don't eat in front of the TV – this encourages more TV time and mindless munching, both leading to weight gain.
- Set school day rules – free time is usually limited on week days; this is your chance to make the most of it.
- Suggest other activities – reading, playing a sport, or board game are good options.
- Set a good example – limiting your own screen time could even benefit you.
- Become an active participant – plan what to watch and then watch with your children. You could even discuss the show after viewing.
- Choose video games that encourage physical activity or family time.

Greetings From the Media Center! ~ Mr. Lowman

Welcome to May! We are very excited to welcome author Elise Broach to our school on May 8th. She will be presenting on her Nutmeg Award nominated book, Shakespeare's Secret, to our 4th and 5th grade students. Our third grade students will be hearing Mrs. Broach talk about the bookmaking process from idea to book. This promises to be a fun and educational experience. Thank you to all students who purchased books - they will be autographed and distributed the afternoon of the assembly. If you have a copy of one of her books at home that you would like signed, please send them in on Thursday, May 7th, clearly labeled with your name and we will have it autographed for you.



As we approach the close of the school year please make sure to be diligent in returning all books to the media center. Thanks for your help and support with Box Tops, Ink, and Campbells Labels for Education!

GHR PTO News

Spring Fundraiser

The Spring Fundraiser has been scheduled and pick up is May 6th 5:00pm to 7:00 in the school cafeteria. If you cannot make it please contact me at 742-2519 to make other arrangements. I am still awaiting the final sales numbers for our vendor so I should have them by 5/6/2009 and will present them at the May 12 Meeting.

Annual Walk-A-Thon

I have scheduled the Annual Walk-A-Thon for June 4th, 5th & 8th to cover for rain days. This event raises money each year for The Connecticut Children's Hospital. Last year the kids raised just shy of \$3000.00 from this one day event. It was hosted by Damon Scott from 96.5 radio station. That afternoon Damon was kind enough to start his show off by talking about our event and what great kids we have at G.H. Robertson. Our school was also used as a challenge during another local radio station's telethon for the Children's hospital as an example of what the power of children can do. Once again we will look for volunteers to help out that day. You can walk with your children. We are encouraging all kids to bring a water bottle that day.



Board Positions

As stated previously, Kelly and I will be moving on to the middle school next year which leaves all board positions open. I have had the great privilege of being the president for the past two years and it has been a great experience. Right now there are no board members for next year at G.H. Robertson. If you would like to volunteer, please feel free to call me with any questions you might have at 742-2519

**Next PTO
Meetings! :
Tuesdays
5/12/09
3:30 p.m.
GHR Meida Center**