

Thomas G.
Connors Weekly

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 15

DECEMBER 23, 2016

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FROM THE
PRINCIPAL**

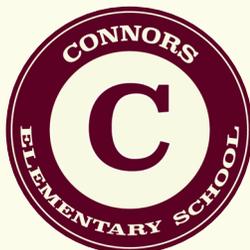
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A Message from Dr. Pollins



I wish you a restful winter break and hope you enjoy this time with your children. For the New Year, I wish you health and happiness and hope the winter recess offers opportunities for you and your children to do things you might not be able to do when school is in session. Please enjoy this Teacher's Edition of our Connors Newsletter!

Upcoming Events

December 23, 2016—1:00
Dismissal for all Hoboken Public Schools as start of Winter Break
Interim Progress Reports will also be distributed on today.

January 3, 2017—Schools reopen at 8:15am for the start of 2017.

We would like to wish all of our families a happy and healthy winter break!

Social Media Connection

Stay up to date with district and school news by following us on social media:



District News: @HobokenSchools
School News: @ConnorsSchool



Like "T.G. Connors Elementary" for news and announcements from our school!

Special Area Classes

Art Class with Ms. Musella

In the visual arts room at T.G. Connors, Mrs. Musella and the students explored the French artist Henri Matisse (1869-1953). He was known for his originality and strong use of color and was one of the most important artists of the 20th century and a leader in the modern art movement.

In his later years, due to illness and age, he became unable to paint, therefore he began a new technique called "Drawing with Scissors" and these pieces were called collages. The abstract collages he created were done using organic and geometric shapes in bright colors.

The students in grades K-2 were able to identify with Matisse's paper cutout style called "Collage" by exploring abstract art and listening to the story "Henri's Scissors" by Jeanette Winter. They created a collage using a sea motif in bright colors.

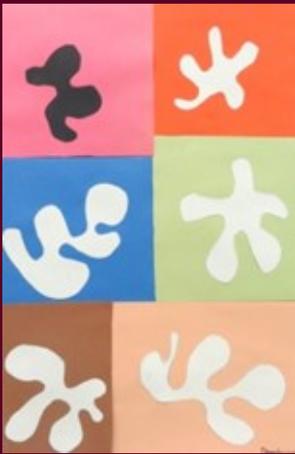
The students in grades 3, 4, and 6 were able to explore the expressive properties of shape and identify with two types:

Geometric shapes – shapes that are commonly found in geometry, such as squares, triangles and rectangles

Organic shapes – shapes that are commonly found in nature, usually with curved, irregular lines.

The students were able to create a Matisse-inspired collage using these shapes and contrasting colors.

The students in grade 5 were able to explore Henri Matisse's colorful still life painting "Goldfish" and recognize his use of bold colors and patterns. They were able to create their own still life inspired by Henri Matisse.



World Language Class with Ms. Meza

The World Language Classroom is abuzz with activity. At Back to School Night, earlier in the school year, I was able to meet with parents and share with them the approach to second language acquisition that I would be implementing at each grade level. Though classes meet, for the most part, once a week, it is imperative that I plan for intensity and students have to arrive at my room ready to learn!

Kindergarten: We are completing a thematic unit using Hanna Hutchinson's version of *Los tres osos*. This text affords students the ability to learn opposites, family terms, and numbers, as well as preparing students to interpret a video exclusively in the target language from Georgia Public Broadcasting. Check out the video at <http://bit.ly/2hBMfbz> Also, be sure to check out my playlist on my YouTube channel "TMTGC" to see some videos that I have used in the classroom or will use in the classroom during the course of the year. The next thematic unit will focus on colors and animals using *Oso, pardo, Oso pardo ¿Qué ves ahí?* by Eric Carle.

First Grade: Students are learning Spanish through the seasons. We began with *otoño* (autumn) and created a book with our favorite autumn activities. Now we are in *invierno* (winter) and students have interpreted a winter poem and illustrated it, reviewed color words using the YouTube video *¿De qué color es?*, and are presently learning winter clothing terms. They will soon dress an old fashioned paper doll and describe in writing what their paper doll is wearing. For enrichment, some 1st graders engaged in yoga, made piñatas, and created holiday cards where they wrote "Feliz Navidad".

Second Grade: I am using the Colega series from Spain and students are hard at work interpreting vocabulary and making connections from English to Spanish. Most recently, students interpreted a family tree and respond to a *Who?* question. For instance, in Spanish I asked, Who is Pilar's father? Students had to consult at their family tree and sentence frame in order to respond: Felix is Pilar's father. Although a bit sophisticated for second grade, the results have been positive and astounding.

Third Grade: How did you learn your first language? Well, as an infant you do a lot of listening and a lot of figuring out until you are ready to take a risk and begin to formulate sounds and then words. Such is the case with this grade. I model a dialogue with them after pre-teaching target vocabulary and then the whole class engages in what I call a "mixer activity." Students are given a handout with the target dialogue and board with everyone's name on it. They must perform the dialogue with each classmate, including me, and get a signature from each person. It is truly magical when the students perform this task. It takes them about 20 minutes to complete the task, but it is 20 minutes in which students are actually speaking exclusively in Spanish.

Fourth & Fifth Grade: Novice learners in the 4th and 5th grade are achieving second language acquisition through storytelling. Students are pre-taught about 6 words or structures, through comprehensible input, and then read a mini-story. Sometimes students are asked to act out vocabulary or a story, or are asked to translate or write a story of their own.

Sixth Grade: There are 21-Spanish-speaking countries in the world and sixth grade is traveling to an assigned country and discovering interesting facts. They are presently designing a travel presentation for a family of four. After the break, students will hand sew the flag of their assigned country and learn how to describe their flag in Spanish.



Music Class with Mr. Azzarto

A lot has been going on thus far here in the music classroom at Thomas G. Connors Elementary School (T.G.C). All students school-wide, have been having plenty of fun learning about many elements of music from theory to singing. Let us start out with the youngest and move up in grades.

Our four new kindergarten classes are learning to aurally and visually recognize various western orchestral instruments and world percussion instruments. They are beginning to draw various notation used in western music and singing plenty of songs that incorporate movement. They even had a chance to play recorders! The first grade students are actively identifying music notation and the various time values that are associated with each note. We will be moving onto identifying treble clef notation after the winter break. Second graders have mastered the treble clef and are aurally identifying instruments that use treble, bass and the grand staff. I cannot wait to move onto the other clefs and the "musical math" activity. The third grade has been working on note identification on both treble and bass clefs and are ready for the big grand staff. They have also mastered the "musical math" activity. Our big fourth grade is learning at the speed of light. All of the clefs, staves, and time identification have been mastered and we are beginning to learn about major and minor chords. The fifth grade has also learned all clefs. They are now aurally identifying major and minor chords and scales. That is truly a skill. The seniors of our school, the sixth grade, are also working on chord identification, answering various musical questions and writing their answers in their journals, as well as getting ready to begin composing their own songs.

Lastly, all classes, from kindergarten to sixth, sing various songs in a choral setting that range from simple melodic pieces to complex pop songs. The singing activity always seems to be the highlight of the forty-five minute lesson and our students really do love to sing.

I have also been given the honor of teaching instrumental music here at T.G.C. Many fourth, fifth, and sixth-graders are learning to play various instruments with great success. We finally have our first ever T.G.C. Elementary Band and we are gonna rock the house!

It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with all of the students here at T.G.C. throughout the fall/ winter and I am really looking forward to a fun and productive second half of the 2016-2017 school year!

Physical Education Class with Mr. Kolmer

It has been a wonderful beginning of the year in Mr. Kolmer's Physical Education "Funhouse." In grades K, 1 and 2, the children have been introduced to various motor movements such as skipping, hopping, jumping, galloping and many more. These children have also started a variety of exercises that I hope will jump-start a lifetime of commitment to exercise and movement as well as recreational activity. Some games that we have played include healthy choice tag, ninja turtle tag, steal the bacon, scooter racing, parachute, and addition chase.

In grades 3 and 4, I have been focusing on developing a fitness plan. Students have been aiming to increase their baseline data on exercises such as sit-ups, push-ups, and the shuttle run. The children are enthusiastic about improving their September fitness levels and seeing a big difference come this May. Some sports that we have introduced at this grade level include pin bombardment, basketball, multiplication relays, dance moves, and scooter basketball. The 3rd and 4th graders love to compete in all of these activities!!

In grades 5 and 6, my physical education classes tend to be more sports-themed. By this age, my students have been well versed in the importance of a good warm-up and exercise routine, so we tend to get through those parts of the classes pretty quickly. My older grade students are always excited to participate in sports and games that we have done so far including baseball, kickball, basketball, bowling and are looking forward to beginning hockey!! All in all it has been a very busy first few months of school in PE for the Connors Students and I look forward to keeping them healthy and active as the year moves on!



Kindergarten Update

Ms. Sheridan, Ms. S. Rodriguez, Ms. E. Rodriguez, and Ms. Ayers

What a fun and exciting time it has been so far in our kindergarten classrooms during the 2016-2017 school year! Students have been learning all about alphabet letter names and sounds using different kinds of materials in literacy centers. Children love working with their peers in small groups by writing sentences, learning grammar concepts, and reading sight words in texts. The students enjoy being introduced to new sight words and sounds of the week in fun ways...singing, dancing, using technology, and so on!

Students are hard at work in math centers! We have been practicing composing and decomposing numbers to 5 by counting with different manipulatives. Students enjoy playing games with their partners to help them learn how to count larger numbers and quantities. Students become very excited when they complete fun math challenges with their peers! And it is so rewarding for us to see!

We continue to learn about the following topics in social studies: families, rules and routine, types of neighborhoods, seasons and weather. The students enjoy listening to books, completing anchor charts together, and sharing their ideas!

First Grade Update

Ms. Fleischer, Ms. Pinkas, Ms. White, and Ms. Pasculli

In first grade our students are busy bees! In language arts students are learning vowel sounds, phonemic awareness and reading comprehension skills. Some comprehension skills that they have been working on are sequencing a story, "think 6" and finding key details in a story. Each of the skills discussed will lead students towards gaining confidence in their reading fluency and comprehension skills when reading a story on their own. In writing, the students are learning capitalization, punctuation, contractions, past tense verbs and the importance of a rubric. Since September, the students have been working on their handwriting and blending sounds to make coherent words, which enables the students to write concise sentences independently.

Math is lots of fun in first grade! Students are learning to solve word problems on their own. They have completed the Hungry Bill Project which challenged students to create their own word problems to solve with a friend. Students became engineers and designed an object using the shapes provided. Then, student had to reorganize how many shapes were in their objects. Also, students are learning how to distinguish between plane shapes vs. three dimensional shapes, adding and subtracting numbers to twenty and place value.

During social studies students learned about the election. We discussed the candidates and read stories such as *My Teacher for President* and *Duck for President*. Students created a text-to-self connection about what they would do if they were president. Then, students voted on what Connors teacher would be a good president and why. Finally, students wrote their reasoning to support their claim. Currently, students are learning about their community and other communities around the world.



Second Grade Update

Ms. Canino, Ms. Romanowski, and Ms. Pasculli

Second grade students have been very busy over the past four months here at Connors School!

In language arts, second graders have spent the first two units of study focusing on friends, family and animals as they explored various genres of text. Some comprehension skills they have worked on include visualization, making predictions and identifying problems and solutions. In nonfiction texts, they have worked on identifying the main idea and details, making predictions, and strengthening their understanding of a text by asking questions and using text features. Students' writing skills continue to improve as they have used various strategies they were taught to strengthen their narrative and expository writing pieces.

In math, both classes have completed the first four chapters of study. In Chapter 1, students learned about place value, the forms of numbers, ordering and comparing numbers and number patterns. In Chapter 2, students learned about addition with and without regrouping. In Chapter 3, students learned all about subtraction including subtracting with and without regrouping and subtracting across zeros. Presently, students are working on using bar models to solve addition and subtraction word problems and solving multi-step problems. Second grade students are becoming experts on hunting for clue words in word problems to help them decide which operation is needed to solve the problem. Throughout all math topics, second graders work on problem-solving strategies as well as real world application for the skills they learn. Students are challenged to think critically as they explain their mathematical reasoning both orally and in writing.

Both classes have enjoyed several exciting topics of study in social studies. They began the school year discussing families, communities, and community helpers. Next, second graders studied landforms, map skills, weather, and Earth's resources. One of the best parts of social studies the creation of fabulous projects by students to demonstrate and extend their learning. Dream catchers, collages, and shoebox dioramas are some examples of items you can often find decorating the walls and hallways outside their classrooms.

Ms. Canino, Ms. Pasculli, and Ms. Romanowski are very proud of the hard work their second graders put in each day and they are very excited to see the great progress their students will continue to make as the school year continues!

Third Grade Update

Ms. Coppola and Ms. Januse

Third grade students have been so busy being challenged and supported in their daily academics!

Both Ms. Januse and Mrs. Coppola infuse writing in all assignments to produce better thinkers and planners with the result of more accomplished writers. The students have been writing in paragraph format, using temporal words (First, Then, Next, Finally) and editing their work prior to submission.

Social studies projects have commenced and will continue throughout the school year. It is imperative that all students participate in this activity as it counts heavily for participation and a final grade. Learners enjoy creating a rubric to follow and implement as they score themselves and peers. It is truly a sight to observe!

Thank you Board of Education and parents for supporting and funding all of our 3rd grade to attend Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, N.J.--it was amazing!

In math, 3rd grade learners have learned about distributive properties, repeated addition, arrays, and are currently working with fractions. Students participated in and completed the Hour of Code by completing sentences to apply in a game! It was super cool! Multiplication drills are always a plus! Keep on practicing 3rd grade! You can do this!

Wishing you and your families a safe and healthy holiday season!





Fourth Grade Update

Ms. Schulz, Ms. Rodriguez, and Ms. Phalen

The students in the 4th grade have adjusted well to the challenges and changes of moving to the 3rd floor. They have been focusing on socialization, cooperation, self-control, and responsibility. On entering the 3rd floor, one can see the character tree that displays important traits the students are learning as they mature and prepare for future grades.

As there was a monumental election this November, the 4th grade participated in events such as a mock election, creating a timeline of voting rights, researching the candidates' positions, and learning about the Electoral College. The students are currently learning about the history of New Jersey and the impact past events have had on who we are today.

The students have been working meticulously with authentic literacy in language arts. They have been exposed to various genres and engaged in discussions which allow them to develop a deeper understanding of the text. They are thinking analytically and evaluating informational text as they cite evidence that proves facts in their writing. Students have also written narrative pieces expressing personal experiences, informative pieces telling about natural disasters. Their writing improves through daily writing, conferencing, and peer editing.

The students jumped right into challenging multiplication and division problems as they are now expected to compute multi-digit multiplication, and long division problems. Through the scaffolding of instruction, students have been able to utilize the process in solving real-world word problems. The classes have worked diligently in learning the process and steps as they also practice their multiplication facts which will help them as we begin our study of fractions.

The 4th grade has infused technology into daily instructional activities across the curriculum. Highlights include participation in the "Hour of Code," differentiated independent practice using various programs, and publishing writing pieces. Moving forward, the students will continue to utilize technology to strengthen research and presentation skills.

Fifth Grade Update

Ms. Lee and Ms. Ortiz

Students in 5th grade have been very active and engaged in the rigorous learning requirements of the grade level. In language arts we have covered fiction and nonfiction text. For fiction we have worked on story elements, point of view, author's point of view, figurative language, and theme. We have just begun nonfiction and have covered nonfiction text features and nonfiction text structure. In addition to this, students have been diligently working on their expository writing skills. Students understand how to break apart a writing task, organize complex tasks, and cite evidence from text when stating answers.

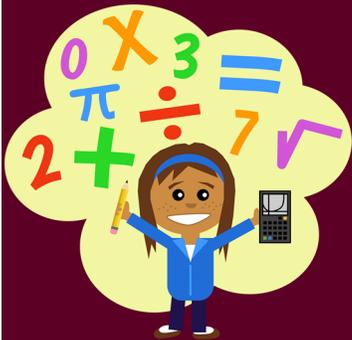
In math, students have been just as busy. We started the year by exploring place value and reviewing concepts from 4th grade. Afterwards, we moved on to multiplication and division. After students showed proficiency in multiplying and dividing we moved on to Algebra where we worked on the order of operations. Afterwards we explored decimal place value and three dimensional shapes and volume. After all of that, we have spent a great amount of time on fractions. Fractions are a very important skill in the 5th grade and students have learned how to add and subtract them thus far. In the upcoming weeks, we will continue our work on fractions and will also work on decimals.

In social studies, students have worked on various engaging tasks. Social studies is when students are given the opportunity to learn about history and current events. Students have begun to learn that history often repeats itself. In Social studies, students have covered topics such as United States regions and Veterans Day. Ms. Ortiz' class has also studied 9/11, the presidential election, immigration reform, and the Dakota Access Pipeline protest. In Ms. Lee's class, students are currently learning about Native Americans.

In order to make the learning process meaningful to students, students are encouraged and allowed to research, create, and evaluate often in each subject area.



6th Grade



Sixth Grade Update

Ms. Gerson's and Ms. White's Math and Social Studies Classes

In math, the sixth graders have been using a mixture of independent and cooperative learning to solve complex sixth grade math concepts. Students started the year by reviewing the standard algorithm for multiplication and division. By the end of the review, students were able to multiply and divide up to four digit numbers and used QR code task cards to discover their own errors throughout the math. To build on this skill, many students will be learning how to use a technique known as lattice multiplication to solve similar calculations.

The advanced multiplication and division became the basis of the many of the other skills the students learned. Students learned to calculate measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) and applied those skills to analyzing sports statistics. Students then learned the four operations with decimals and how to divide fractions. Students soon moved on to integers (positive and negative numbers) and analyzed how those integers could be used to graph on a four quadrant coordinate plane. Both classes enjoyed using their graphing skills to graph mystery pictures. Finally, students learned how to use ratios, unit rates, and percentages and applied those skills to real world problems. In order to engage in the concepts, students used QR code task cards, the IXL iPad application, Post-it carousels, as well as smart responder quizzes. Students have had the opportunity to work independently, work with a peer, and work in small groups (3-4 students). We will continue these processes throughout the year and students will continue to advance their skills and prepare to move on to 7th grade.

Ms. Rozmester's and Ms. White's ELA and Social Studies Classes

In 6th grade ELA class, the students have been working vigorously on their Night Writes, in which they just finished one of their core novels—*Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick. The students enjoyed reading this unique story told from a first-person perspective they could relate to, since the voice is a middle school student like themselves, going through many different obstacles in life. They highly recommend the novel and feel honored to have shared the friendship of *Freak the Mighty*. They have participated in numerous engaging class discussions and have composed many essays discussing the theme, plot, character development, and comparing the novel to the movie *The Mighty*.

Now the students are getting into the holiday spirit and reading an adapted version of *A Christmas Carol* in which they will learn that writers use stories and distinctive characters to teach us lessons. Students will also explore how the choices of characters affect the plot and build the theme of a story. Students will come to understand that redemption can be found in selflessness and in valuing people over material possessions.

Throughout the year, students keep a journal in which they write daily on topics discussed in class, giving them the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned. On Fridays, students participate in "Fun Friday Free Writes" where they can write about anything they wish. Some students use it to reflect on their week or something personal about themselves, others like writing short stories or have a story in which they continue to expand on each week. After writing their journal entry, a few students share their writing with the class, practicing their speaking skills, while giving the rest of the class a special treat.

Project Lead the Way Update

Mr. Monaco's K and 1 Classes

As part of our first marking period lessons on the five senses, science skills such as observing and comparing, using science tools, and living vs. non-living things, we decided it would be a fun learning experience to plant various seeds. On September 27, each of the kindergarten and first grade classes planted the seeds: two pumpkin seeds (each in a different pot for purposes of observing and comparing based on frequency of watering), and seeds of three different types of flowers (Petunia, Thumbelina Zinnia and Evening Primrose).

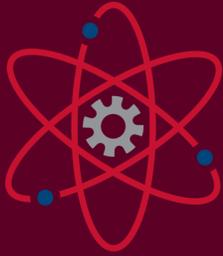
Some seeds were planted in regular topsoil and others were planted in organic potting mix. Based on seed development or lack thereof, we were able to use our science skills to evaluate, record and discuss our observations and comparisons regarding the effectiveness of each type of "dirt."

Prior to planting the seeds, all students were given an opportunity to observe and compare each type of seed to be planted based on size, color, weight, texture and other similarities or differences the students noticed. Students used their senses of sight, touch and smell to learn more about the various types of seeds. Some of the seeds were so small that we needed a hand lens (magnifying glass) from our "science toolbox" to be able to see them better. Also, in filling the pots in preparation for planting, students counted out how many scoops of "dirt" we used in each pot. When some pots were full in fewer scoops than others, the students were able to determine that it was because we were using bigger scoops of "dirt" to fill some pots and smaller scoops of "dirt" (but more of them) to fill other pots. I was very proud of the students for using their science and math skills to evaluate the situation, form a hypothesis and reach a successful conclusion.

After a few days of being placed on the window ledge, we determined the pots may not be getting enough light and we would need to figure out a way to provide more light to increase the chances of successfully developing our seeds. With supplies we inherited from my predecessors in room 102 and the assistance of Mr. Metcalfe and Mr. Donovan, my STEM / PLTW colleagues for grades two through six, we were able to set up artificial light stations for all 18 pots right in our classroom.

On October 4, we very excitedly noticed that some pumpkin seedlings appeared while we were out of school over a three day weekend. Upon closer observation, we realized that the only pumpkin seeds that sprouted were some of those that were planted in the organic potting mix while none of those planted in the top soil had shown any visible progress to that point. More seedlings were visible on October 11, after another three day weekend, including in one of the pots where flower seeds were planted. Also on that day, students used a ruler (another of their science tools) to measure the various rapidly growing pumpkin plants which now included some of the seeds planted in the topsoil. The students observed that the sizes of the pumpkin plants ranged from almost three inches high to more than nine inches tall and recorded the data in their notes.

Unfortunately, our seeds didn't develop any further, and all plants eventually died, so we weren't able to grow any pumpkins. Through this project the students learned multiple new vocabulary words and lessons, utilized various science skills and tools and greatly enjoyed the educational process.



PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

PLTW



Project Lead the Way Update

Mr. Donovan's Grades 2, 3, and 4 Classes

The second and third grade students are deeply engaged in experiments involving seed germination, plant growth, plant life cycles and the variation of traits that are passed down in both plants and humans alike. These experiments, whether theory-based or text-book based, lay the foundations for the upcoming experiments, thanks to Science Fusion. We will soon be moving forward to the PTLW hands-on activities, which the students really embraced. They are showing a high level of engagement and eagerness to learn. The experiments, while teaching the growth and cycles of plant life and building on students observations and prediction skills, have a covert message. Embedded in the experiments is the idea that all living things grow and change, yet each is unique and should be respected for the qualities it possesses. The experiments have instilled in the students a sense of pride in ownership, independence, group cooperation and team work. With continued diligence, all students will be able to take pride in the work and a green thumbs up for their success.

Mr. Metcalfe's Grades 4, 5, and 6 Classes

Thomas G. Connors 4th Grade PTLW students are learning how the regions of the brain work to control our body. The class investigated what normal activity would be disrupted by someone who sustains a concussion during play or sports. The class learned about what warnings of concussions and steps one needs to take in order to heal from such injuries. The class explored short term memory; in peer groups they worked on memorization tasks and recorded and compared data based on their group results. The class has learned so much and has continued to show their strong interest in PTLW and learning new and innovative ways to explore the content daily.

Thomas G. Connors 5th Grade PTLW students collaborated to create a balloon racer. The students analyzed how jet propulsion is a force that can be use to power their unique racers to travel. Using the engineering design process, the group designed, built, tested, and modified their racers when necessary. Students were able to determine that the distance their balloon racers were able to travel was directly related the weight of materials, size of balloon, amount of air released from the balloon, and the force applied on the balloon to move the racer. The students did an excellent job and were innovative within their designs. PTLW has opened the doors wide for creativity and learning. Our students are enjoying every minute.

Thomas G. Connors 6th Grade PTLW students are learn about simple and compound machines and how such machines are used daily to make tasks easier for individuals in society. From their lessons and research, the 6th Grade will be designing their very own Rube Goldberg Machine, a complex arrangement of simple and complex machines to complete a simplistic task. The students have been brainstorming and are collaborating between groups to create the innovation within their design. Please continue to look out for progress updates, as the students are very excited to share their designs and project results with everyone.

