



# Curriculum & Instruction Newsletter

## WHAT'S NEW IN CURRICULUM?

Dear Fair Haven Families,

This has been an exciting month in both Knollwood and Sickles. I have had the pleasure of taking part in many of the activities that have become traditions for the Fair Haven staff and students and I continue to have the opportunity to see amazing things happening in classrooms. Each and every day, my heart is warmed by all of the smiling faces I see in the hallways and in the interactions I have with our students.

As this year is quickly coming to a close, I have begun to reflect upon the past few months and am looking forward to the new year. I am very excited about all we have in store for the district as we head into January, and continue to look forward to sharing as much as I can in this brief newsletter with you. I hope you enjoy this issue of the Curriculum & Instruction Newsletter!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Romano

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

### PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

As we take a look at some of the featured stories, we reflect on how our students got to where they are today. Their amazing writing, their ability to fluently read and to think critically, their skill in playing a musical instrument or in creating a work of art; this did not come without persistence and practice. This also did not come without mistakes and frustrations.

You will see students practice skills and work toward mastery, spiraling specific concepts throughout the year and into future grade levels. Through practice, hard work, and repetition, students build upon their educational foundations, leading them to success across disciplines. As the saying goes, "Practice makes perfect," but I'd also like to share the wisdom of Thomas Edison, "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."



## FEATURED ARTICLE: RANGER IN TIME BOOK CLUB BUDDIES

Reading is so essential to every student's success in and outside of school. Through reading, students are gaining fluency, comprehension, stamina, vocabulary, and a host of other benefits, including the outlet to be drawn into a story and experience a whole new world through the eyes of a character. At times it can be difficult to find texts that students enjoy, but this is not the case for seven boys in Ms. Boccino's third grade class. Avery Bellincampi, Chace Tily, Justin Kelly, Quinn Gaun, Christian Larsen, Colin Murphy, and Trey McCormick have taken the love of reading to the next level; they have created their own book club outside of school!

Upon hearing this news, I was both intrigued and excited. I had to get the inside scoop on how the boys came together and found books that they enjoy so much that they are spending their free time talking about them. I was able to catch up with this outgoing group of boys and have them share their love of reading and their book club with me.



The discussion began with the boys sharing that they were at the school book fair and they wanted to form a group. They were all friends to begin with and they found a common interest in the book series *Ranger in Time*. The boys made sure to highlight that this interest came about because Colin's mother read the first chapter of the book to them and they were hooked. She came to class as a book fair reader and has since helped them to obtain the books they are interested in reading. To date, they have completed two books and are eagerly awaiting their third.

The group shared a bit of the process for being a successful contributor to the book club. The boys take about 1-2 weeks to read a book and they try to read one chapter a night. They all like to be on the same page for their discussions. Once they complete a book, they meet at a group member's house, with books in hand, and they talk about the characters, setting, events, and their favorite parts in the book. They also talk about the title of the book and create alternate titles based on the context. At times they engage in some minor shenanigans, which included a grape war (yikes!), but sometimes you need a little play with all the hard work going on.

The group members shared what this series was all about. The *Ranger in Time* books are realistic fiction. The boys have read books pertaining to Hurricane Katrina and D Day, all through the eyes of Ranger, a time traveling dog. Ranger goes back in time to specific events in history and each time he has a new owner. The boys shared details of the books they read, using interesting vocabulary, such as "levies." They are learning so much through this type of genre and they clearly articulated the key details of these two events, as well as understand new and interesting words they came across. They are awaiting their third book about the South Pole. I can't wait to hear all about this book and their next book club meeting.



What a wonderful thing it is to see a group of students so excited, interested, and invested in reading! They are not only learning so much, but they are also influencing the reading choices of classmates based on their love and enthusiasm for the *Ranger in Time* series. The success of this book club also is a nod to our Fair Haven families and all they do for their children. Thanks to Colin's mother and her insight on what the boys may like to read, they are now hooked on reading. It is amazing to see how we are truly a learning community and all the benefits that come from it.

To extend their reading into writing, I asked Avery, Chace, Justin, Quinn, Christian, Colin, and Trey to read and edit this article. The article you are now reading is a result of their editing and revising. Thank you, boys, for working with me to make this writing the best it can be!

## A WORD TO LIVE BY



Do you have a word or phrase that is meaningful to you or evokes a certain emotion? Did you ever think about how that word or phrase would be represented in print? In Ms. Heeren's 7th grade art class, students learned the importance of typography and how it can lend to an overall feel in an image. For example, if you want a word to look strong, you would want to use bold lettering, as opposed to thin or fancy text. Students learned about three types of text, all of which they could reference when they decided the word or phrase they would detail. Students would then draw out their design and transfer it to a linoleum block to be able to practice relief printing.

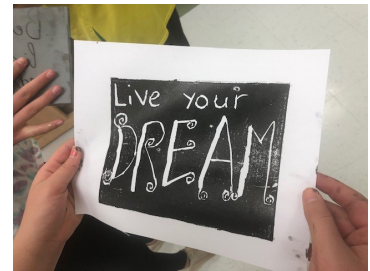
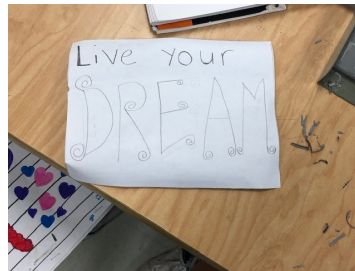
This particular project seemed difficult at the onset because when students had to think of a word or phrase that was meaningful to them, they seemed stumped. As an adult, it is difficult to come up with one word to live by, but in 7th grade the task could be daunting. However, after a few great suggestions from classmates, the creative juices of all the students began to flow and the results were impressive. Students came up with a variety of words and phrases, which included, "It's the climb," "Happy," and "Power isn't everything."

To pick the text style that best matched the message students wanted to send, they used the iPads to research scripts. Students were able to either decide on using one or a combination of a few fonts to bring visual meaning to their word or phrase.

Once their designs were set, they transferred the images to linoleum blocks, carved the blocks to create a raised surface, then rolled on ink to begin the printing process. This project took several lessons to accomplish due to the intricate detail of the lettering and students were able to explore using black and colored ink to create their designs.



This activity was both engaging and thought provoking. Students found meaning in words and were able to articulate this through art.



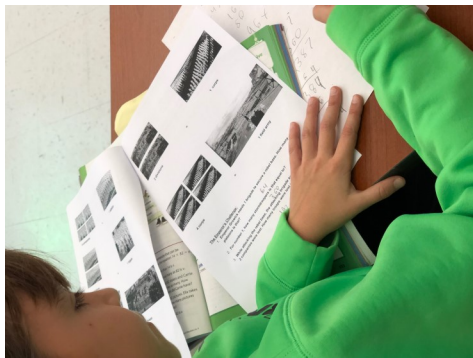
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*"I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I look at it until it begins to shine."* **Emily Dickinson**

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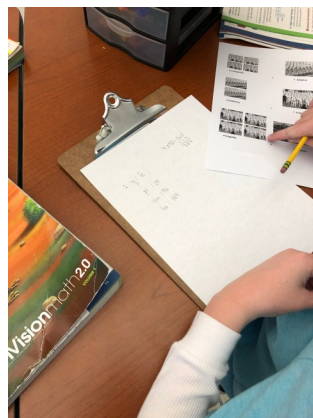
## EMPORER GROWICK'S IMPERIAL MATH ARMY



Anyone that appreciates Star Wars can find themselves right at home in Mr. Growick's classroom. Even those of us that may be unfamiliar with the intricacies of the franchise, can appreciate this approach to creating an army of students who excel at multiplication and division.

It is critical that students are able to respond to a question, but then build off of that response to draw conclusions or be successful at solving multi-step problems. This interesting take on how to do this was a lesson to be seen! Students were intensely working in pairs to be able to solve a series

of questions based on the make up of Star Wars stormtroopers. They started simple, two stormtroopers make up one team, three teams make up one squad, four squads equal one platoon, and so on. Students started with some examples, for instance if they had three teams, they had to determine the total number of stormtroopers. Simple,  $3 \times 2 = 6$ . The rest of the lesson was not this easy. Students were looking at some of the largest representations of stormtroopers (field army, corps, divisions) and were breaking them down into smaller units to essentially determine how many individual stormtroopers would be present. Using a chart and chunking the problem into smaller pieces, students attempted to solve multiple questions that built upon their first answer. The students were so engaged in the activity that the room was almost silent, with the exception of quiet conversations between partners. The students were invested in the activity, interested in the representation of content, and learned so much in the process!



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## HOURL OF CODE



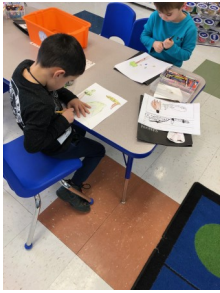
Animations and the most current dance moves...how does that tie into school? Aside from being fun and providing a few laughs, students in Ms. Smith's 6th grade science class used animations and dance as they participated in the Hour of Code. The Hour of Code is celebrated worldwide and has made it's way into Ms. Smith's class through sites such as [www.code.org](http://www.code.org). Students are able to chose activities of interest and then create code to make certain things happen on the screen. There are infinite possibilities ranging from making a character run and jump, to having them be part of a flossing dance troupe. This type of work doesn't appear like work to the students, but much thought goes into coding and you could see

all the students in Ms. Smith's class continuously revising and editing their codes to make sure their games and patterns functioned properly. They were also working collaboratively, asking each other how to make characters on the screen move, taking the lesson to the next level where students were teaching each other how to code. Many times during the period, students would say, "This is so fun! Can we do this everyday?"

Making connections for students, through activities like these, help them to understand the greater importance of coding in the real word. Ms. Smith brings coding to life by connecting students with a personal colleague of hers who is a Controls Engineer. This colleague uses code in his job to program conveyer systems for Amazon and even sent codes to Ms. Smith's class to try out! Throughout the period, he was available to answer student questions in real time, providing them with answers to their questions about his job and coding in general.



## KINDERGARTEN AUTHORS



In Ms. DiPasquale's kindergarten class, you can find 12 budding authors. Students, also referred to as “scientists,” wrote stories about various types of leaves and were ready to complete their publications. After closely examining different types of leaves and learning about them, students wrote several pages dedicated to their findings. They were writing like scientists!

The next and final step in their writing process was to tie all of their writing together with a cover that matched the contents of their books, a relevant title, and also give themselves credit as the author and illustrator of the

book. After much careful thought, planning, and drawing, students each had a beautifully designed cover that was completely aligned to the contents of their books. They eagerly shared their manuscripts with each other and were using their “sound power” to spell out and say words within the texts. The students also shared many interesting facts about leaves. Did you know that a sassafras leaf looks like a dinosaur foot? I certainly did not, but was excited to find out about this and other interesting facets of leaves.

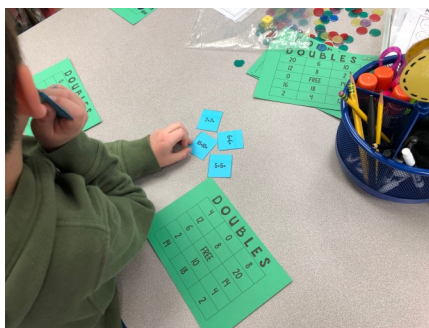


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## MATH GAMES

Becoming fluent in math facts is one of the building blocks students need to be successful as they work through all aspects of math. Math fact fluency is the ability to recall the answers to basic math facts automatically and without hesitation. Fact fluency is gained through significant practice, with mastery of basic math facts being a goal of both teachers and parents<sup>1</sup>.

In Ms. Kennedy's class, students practice mathematical fluency through a series of fun and exciting math games. Students are engaged in some traditional games, but with a twist. All throughout the room, students rotate through stations to try their hand at these games and put their addition skills to the test! In Doubles Bingo, an equation is called and students need to mark the sum. The students were anxious to get bingo and some were quietly chanting, “I need 0+0, pleeeeeease!” Another oldie but goodie, revised to make math practice fun, was Doubles Go Fish. Students have cards with the sum on them and had to ask the other players for the equation they needed. For example, if a student had a 6, they had to ask the players for 3+3. These are only a few of the activities taking place in Ms. Kennedy's class that had children mastering their number facts. They are also great to play at home too, giving students more opportunities to practice.



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<sup>1</sup> What is Math Fact Fluency? [http://www.csdspartans.org/userfiles/servers/server\\_3653291/file/snyder/math%20fact%20fluency.pdf](http://www.csdspartans.org/userfiles/servers/server_3653291/file/snyder/math%20fact%20fluency.pdf) (accessed December 19, 2018)



## BRICKS 4 KIDZ



Sickles Media Center was buzzing with excitement this month! Students were working together to build helicopters using Legos and motors, following step-by-step instructions through kits called Bricks 4 Kidz. Ms. Sustick takes full advantage of this amazing program, provided by the Fair Haven PTA. Students of all ages can participate and the level of the builds become more and more challenging as students travel through the grades. Bricks 4 Kidz has a philosophy about teaching, that Ms. Sustick and all teachers embrace; students learn best through activities that engage their curiosity and creativity.



Third graders begin their class with a demo and background information about helicopters. They explore the differences between helicopters and airplanes, as well as learn about the specific movements of each vehicle. Students are given just a few tips to help them in their build, then they are set off to start creating. Each team is given a box of organized Lego pieces

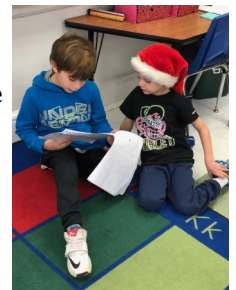
and a build manual. Page by page, students follow directions to ultimately create a working helicopter. I was truly inspired by the students' persistence and patience with the project. They would test out pieces, sometimes they ran into some snags, but they kept pushing through, thinking about their choices, reviewing the directions, and revising their builds until they were successful. What's also great about these kits is that each can facilitate up to 50 different builds, providing students with so many opportunities to be creative, critical thinkers.



## THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE



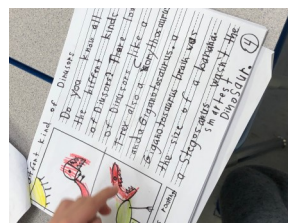
Through partnerships within the school, Sickles students benefit from working with one another, learning from one another, and ultimately being role models within their school. These partnerships are invaluable, as seen in Ms. Venino's and Ms. Robinson's classes. Ms. Venino's students work with their kindergarten buddies on various projects throughout the year, but during this time of year, they wanted to do something special. Ms. Venino's class gave Ms. Robinson's class the gift of knowledge.



All students gathered around the rug and hovered over a beautifully wrapped box, eagerly awaiting to see the contents. Ms. Robinson slowly took the top off of the box to reveal handwritten stories, wrapped in bows. The students gasped in awe and excitement over these gems! What makes the stories so special is that each student in Ms. Venino's class personally authored and illustrated "all about" books to read to their buddies. Students were able to choose a topic they were interested in and became the expert in that topic by writing about it. There were so many stories



and topics to choose from, that any kindergartener could find a friend with an interesting book to share. Books ranged from space to baby dinosaurs to rocks and cats, and even PS4! Each team of buddies found a cozy spot in the room and began to proudly read their books. The students clearly put a lot of time and effort into making their books perfect and in helping our kindergartens to not only learn something new, but also see a model of what they will be doing in a few years.



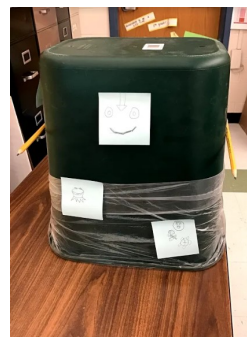
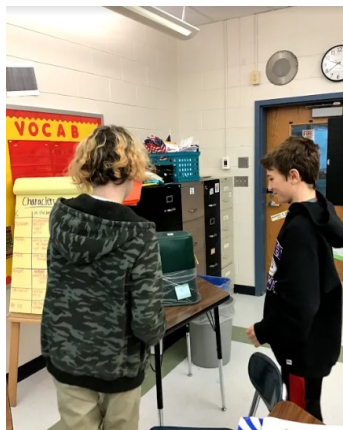
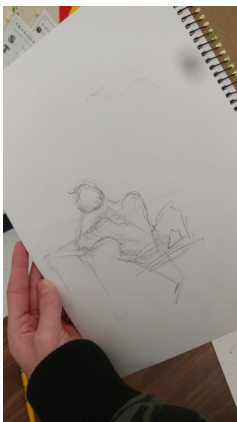
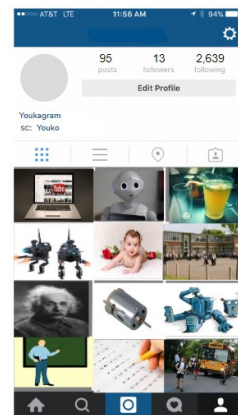
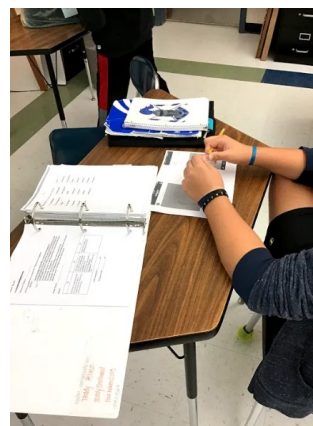
# Staff Submissions



Social media is used in everyday life. People all over the world communicate, share memories, and make connections on a daily basis. These communications are in real time, providing instant information at the fingertips of users. How can we connect social media, in a meaningful way, to learning? In Ms. Duymich's class, students emulate social media accounts (offline) to express the feelings and share the lives of characters in a book. In this safe environment, students use textual evidence to build mock Facebook pages, Instagram pages, Twitter feeds, and YouTube accounts based on the book *Ungifted*. This particular novel is narrated from multiple perspectives, and follows the character Donovan Curtis, who is accidentally sent to an academy for gifted students. It details the characters' growth and change as they learn to balance being intellectual, as well as being social.

Due to the nature of the story, the students had choice in character and they began to bring the character to life through the mock social media they chose. To assist the students artistically, Mr. McNeil even visited the class to share some of his artistic prowess, as he attended a magnet high school for the arts as a teenager.

This activity took a real life connection for students and tied it into literacy. Below are some pictures of the work they did with their characters/posts they created and mock social media platforms.



Until Next  
Time

...the next Curriculum & Instruction  
Newsletter will be out on January  
31st!