

Ohio Elementary School News

March 2009

Dear Parents,

It is hard to believe that we have already celebrated the 100th day of school and are sailing past the halfway mark of our school year. It has certainly been a busy one for all at Ohio this year!

As noted in our February Newsletter, I have included an article in this newsletter that begins to address the Reading Levels that we are currently using as we assess student reading progress throughout the year.

It is so important to know and understand that reading is a complex process of growth and development. Through this article, I have tried to begin to explain many of the considerations that are part of developing a solid reading program for students. As parents, it is tempting to look at a reading level and 'label' our children as such: "*My child is reading at a level M.*" The temptation is even greater to compare our children's progress, or be tempted to want to "push" our children through a level to the next at a quicker pace. I would, however, greatly urge you to read and begin to understand that no single reading level (identified through letters A-Z) can possibly summarize your child's reading program in a simple sentence or thought.

As such, I hope to begin to share some of the insight during this newsletter and upcoming newsletters so that you can engage in effective dialogue regarding your child(ren)'s reading progress. It is more important to ask questions that focus on the goals or your child's reading than it is to ask the teacher to identify currently recorded level. It is my hope that through reading this article and articles within the future newsletters, you will have a better understanding of the questions to ask and the dialogue to engage in – to better support your efforts as parents at home.

Our partnership in learning is a valuable one. As we can share in common efforts to enhance each student's progress, we can mutually enjoy and celebrate the success we experience.

Thank you for your efforts to work together!

Sincerely,
Karen Cuddy-Miller

Calendar at a glance:



March 2009

- 2nd 3rd Gr. 3 NYS Math Assessments
- 4th O.H.I.O. meeting – 6:30 p.m.
Gr. 4, 5 NYS Math Assessments
- 5th Gr. 4 NYS Math Assessments
Parent Teacher Conferences – ½ day!
- 6th Gr. 4, 5 NYS Math Assessments
- 11th Gr. 6 NYS Math Assessments
- 12th Gr. 6 NYS Math Assessments
- 17th – 19th **District Kindergarten Registration**
- 24th Parent Teacher Evening Conferences
- 25th March Recess – No School

April 2008

- 1st O.H.I.O. meeting – 6:30 p.m.
- 10th-19th Spring Recess, No School
- 28th Kindergarten Pictures
Grade 4 Recorder Ensemble & Chorus
@ 7:00 p.m.

NYS ASSESSMENT in March:

Please note: Correction in dates from February Newsletter are underlined!!

Grade 3: March 2 & 3 (Monday & Tuesday)

Grade 4: March 4, 5, & 6 (Wed., Thurs., Fri.)

Grade 5: March 4 & 6 (Wednesday & Friday)

Grade 6: March 11, 12 (Wednesday, Thursday)

Please remember, the best way to prepare our students for the New York State Assessments is to make certain our students are well rested with a good night's sleep, and to start their day with a good breakfast on the morning of the testing.

Thank you for your efforts to support our Ohio students in these ways!

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Pot 'o Gold - Your "Golden" Contributions



If you have been in our Ohio Main office recently, you may have noticed a clear plastic “bin” ready for any donation of loose change you might have. This bin will be out for a couple of additional weeks – as any donation of loose change will go toward the purchase of books for Ohio’s students via the upcoming book fair. We gratefully accept any loose change that you might offer to donate the next time you stop by!

Thank you!!

Reading Levels: What do they mean to our students and to you?

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As you meet with the classroom teachers during upcoming parent teacher conferences and review the progress on report cards, you will notice that we have now moved to recording a text level for your reference. It is **IMPORTANT** to know and understand that this is a complex reference to the development of reading skills for each child, and is **NOT** intended to be a comparison between or among children - regardless of comparisons that you may be tempted by within a family, among friends, or within a classroom.

Reading levels, also known as text gradients, are a venue for teachers to communicate with other professionals regarding the skills and experiences a student has with varied reading materials. As parents, it is important for us to ask questions about the learning objectives that are specific to our children, in order to help them to continue to make progress. Text gradients are not, and **SHOULD NEVER BE** used as a measure of how quickly a student moves from one level to the next. Each text level represents a group of skills that need to be developed with breadth and depth in order to be certain that our students are developing a solid foundation that will assist them in applying their reading skills across the curriculum and in real life!

With the North Tonawanda City School District’s recent commitment to the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, our teachers have access to comprehensive materials that assist us in identifying specific reading, writing, speaking, spelling and listening



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goals for every individual student. Teachers take much information into consideration when designing and building their reading program for your child. Teachers are looking at different genres, (such as fantasy or narrative, poetry, or nonfiction...); the content of text (familiar or unfamiliar); themes and ideas of text materials, (such as friendship or courage); illustrations that support reading; even print length and layout in selecting the appropriate text for your son or daughter's reading program. All of these considerations are guided by the text level or gradient that is most appropriate for your child.

Teachers are also using much information to determine the specific instructional goals for the student reading programs. These goals may be overarching goals for a unit of instruction or they may be smaller, more specific goals that are reflective of an individual lesson for a given day. These goals cross many areas - **Thinking within the text**, **Thinking beyond the text**, and **Thinking about the text**. When students are thinking within the text, we are developing skills that include recognizing or identifying words, monitoring and correcting our reading, searching for and using information, summarizing and fluent reading.

When students are thinking beyond the text, we are developing skills that include making predictions, making connections with the text, applying higher level thinking skills such as synthesizing and inferring.

When students are thinking about the text, students are learning to identify what writers have done to make the text surprising or funny. Students begin to notice use of specific words to convey meaning, (i.e. "said" vs. "shouted"), as well as share opinions about the writing or ideas within a text.



As students gain skills in each of these areas, they become better readers and more effective learners. Young readers, who are working at early or emergent reading levels, may appear to travel through reading levels at a "quicker" pace than older students. It is important to understand that the complexity of skills - the breadth and depth of skills that our students must develop increases significantly as the Reading levels (or text gradients) increase. A student reading at a level C is working on developing skills while working with text that has familiar easy content (such as family, pets or school), while a student reading at a level Q may be working with content that goes beyond the readers' personal experiences or require knowledge of history or geography to understand. It is easy to see and understand that students at higher grade levels may take nearly a year to progress through a text level.



All of this underscores the importance of having a dialogue with your children's teachers about the goals and objectives of their learning. Our dialogue should always be about the learning that is happening - and not a focus on a reading level letter!

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ART NEWS! – OHIO END OF FEBRUARY PROJECTS AND MARCH



New growth has been blooming and “springing forward” inside the art room this February and March, as winter is slowly fading away outside. The Kindergartener’s are learning about symmetry and shapes, as they expand their knowledge about the artist Kandinsky and how to use watercolors. Just ask them to show you how to make the shapes in their Kandinsky artwork...they’ll demonstrate for you!

The 1st graders are coming back up to the surface from their trip “Under the Sea”. They learned about all kinds of things that live and are found under the ocean. These students looked hard under water while they had their goggles on to show in their artwork what they found on their swim! For their next project they are on the land to learn about symmetry and what makes up a still life.

2nd grade.....

The study of Vincent Van Gogh and the way he paints is what the 2nd graders are finishing up over the next couple of weeks. Ask them to show you the hand movements they learned to go along with one of his most famous paintings. I bet you might look at the night sky a little differently than before. Next, they will be learning about a new artist by the name of Pablo Picasso and some of his famous still lifes by the window. So, take a look out the window, and remember what you see!

The stamps and envelopes have been mailed into the hallways of Ohio Elementary for the 4th graders! Their designs all came out great! And they really used their imaginations for this project. Next for the month of February is learning about the time period of Impressionism, and some of its most important artists. Great art products will be the end result of this lesson we’re sure!

The 5th grade is just finishing learning about Salvador Dali and surrealism. All of the students came up with really great objects, and then put them together to make something surreal. Just ask a 5th grader to give you an example of something surreal, and they will give you a great answer. They are then going to jump into the techniques of how to draw a still life, by using different kinds of shading and lighting effects.

The 6th grade just finished Matisse and his unique painting techniques by creating different colored trees while using watercolors. They are then going to learn about the next phase in Matisse’s life when he couldn’t paint. Instead, he “painted” with paper as his brush strokes!

Art work is continuing to be framed in the cafeteria, the teacher’s lunch room, and the conference room, as the students portfolios get bigger and bigger by the week. CONGRATULATIONS to the following students whose work has been added to these select locations:

Kristina Tran
LeAnne Richert
Jacob Hewitt

Courtney Beach
Sarah Cornell
Tami Decker

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From the Gifted and Enrichment Program

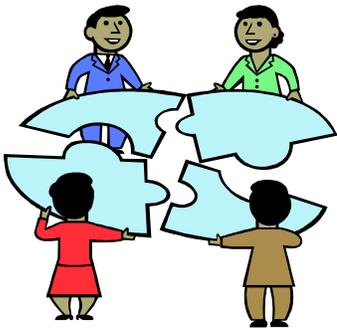
Mrs. Young and Miss Stiegler, a teaching candidate from Buffalo State College, will be guiding the first and second grade science enrichment groups in their exploration of the scientific method using a variety of “gushy” materials.

The first grade junior scientists will be working in scientific teams to explore super absorbent polymers. A super absorbent polymer is a substance that absorbs and holds a large amount of water, such as the material found in diapers. They will be reading to follow directions for experiments, practicing science safety, conducting experiments, recording outcomes in a scientific journal, and creating their own experiments using super absorbent polymers, water, food coloring, and a variety of other materials. So if your child is participating in this group and comes home saying words like “sodium polyacrylate and observation” you know where they heard it!



The second grade scientists will be working in scientific teams to explore oobleck. Oobleck is a colloid. A colloid is a state of matter, which is not a liquid or a solid, but has properties of both. These students will be learning about the scientific method, science safety, the four states of matter, reading to follow directions for experiments, conducting experiments, and recording outcomes in a scientific journal. If your child is participating in this group don't be surprised if they come home saying words such as “colloid and hypothesis”.

For more information on how to make oobleck and conducting experiments with these materials at home, simply Google *oobleck* or *super absorbent polymers*. www.youtube.com has some wonderful videos of demonstrations using these 2 materials. However, please preview the video clips before showing them to your child to be sure their content is appropriate for your family.



The third to sixth graders in the gifted and enrichment program are currently preparing for the “Super Spontaneous Showdown”. In April 2009, 8 Ohio students from grades 3-6 have the opportunity to participate in a “Super Spontaneous Showdown”. This will be a competition with students between the North Tonawanda elementary buildings. The competition will be at night in the Spruce School auditorium. The competition will consist of an 8 member team from grades 3 to 6. The teams will compete against same age teams in a spontaneous 3 event competition. It is anticipated that there will be 3 events lasting 15 minutes each: hands-on, artistic, and verbal. The exact topics and materials used will not be known until the night of the competition.

*The Hands-On Event will consist of building something together as a team.

*The Artistic Event will consist of creating a mural on a given topic.

*The Verbal Event will consist of various 3 to 5 minute trials such as creating words out of larger words, brainstorming, and word building exercises.

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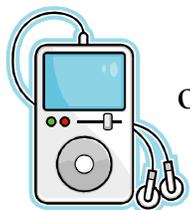
Dear Families,

It's hard to believe but a very busy spring performance season is upon us.



The 4th grade chorus and recorders will perform on Tuesday, April 28th here at Ohio School. The afternoon performance will be at 2:00 p.m. and the evening performance will start at 7:00 p.m. Get ready for a circus of fun!

The 5th grade chorus and band will present our version of the musical "Annie" on June 11th here at Ohio. The evening concert will begin at 7:00 p.m. Come and meet the nasty Miss Hannigan and the loveable orphans.



The 6th grade chorus and band will perform here at Ohio School on June 10th. Their look at American Popular Music will certainly bring back lots of memories for the Dick Clark/American Bandstand watching fans.

As a special addition to our performances this spring, the 3rd graders will be presenting a school performance of a Japanese folk tale called, "The Stonecutter" on May 14th. This 2:00 p.m. performance will be a wonderful chance for the 3rd graders to share their talents with others at school. Please mark your calendars so that you may come and share the occasion with them.

Congratulations to our All-County singers from School. They represented us well at the county at the end of February. They are: Leeanna Cracknell, Courtney Beach, Chrissa Dimmick and Strowger.



Ohio
festival
Rachael

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The Ohio Clothing Closet!



During the month of January, Ohio Elementary School has worked to open a Community Clothing Closet. In order to “stock” this closet, we have and will continue to warmly accept any gently used clothing – shirts, sweaters, pants, coats, boots, etc. that families may have outgrown. **All sizes are welcome!!**

As our clothing closet is filled, we would like to make these clothing items available to any family in need. If you or your family is in need of any item, we are happy to provide these to you!

Donations may be dropped off to the main office. Any requests for clothing may be made by using the Clothing Closet Request Form below.

If you are interested in receiving some of the clothing that has been donated – please fill out the Closet Request Form below and forward this to the main office.

Please mark the envelope: Attention: Mrs. Dawn Lowry

Cut here: -----

Clothing Closet Request Form

Please describe the clothing items you need:

1.) Clothing item(s): _____

Size: _____ Male Female / Child Adult

2.) Clothing item(s): _____

Size: _____ Male Female / Child Adult

3.) Clothing item(s): _____

Size: _____ Male Female / Child Adult

Please return to the Ohio Main Office – **Attention: Mrs. Dawn Lowry**

Contact Information: Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Teacher Name: _____

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Attention Parents: Notes to Note

Smarter Adults - Safer Kids District Training Dates:

<u>Date - Time</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Location</u>
<i>March 12 - 7:00 pm</i>	<i>Meadow</i>	<i>Conference Room</i>
<i>April 21 - 9:30 am</i>	<i>Middle School</i>	<i>Room 163</i>

Substitute Support Staff – North Tonawanda is always looking for interested people!

The North Tonawanda City School District always accepts applications for the following substitute support staff positions:



Teacher Aides (\$8.90 per hour)
Typist (\$8.90 per hour)
School Monitor (\$8.25 per hour)
Child Care Worker/BASE (\$8.25 per hour)
School Bus Attendant (\$8.25 per hour)
Nurse (\$15.15 per hour)

Applications are available at the Administration Building, between the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 175 Humphrey Street, N. Tonawanda.

Central Registration

As of July 1, 2008, all new students to the North Tonawanda City School District must register at the Administration Building at 175 Humphrey Street. Additionally, all address changes must be completed and approved. The district requires certain documentation in order to register your child and/or make an address change. These forms can be obtained at the 175 Humphrey Street Building or by calling to make an appointment at 807-3535.

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SEX OFFENDER NOTIFICATION

The North Tonawanda Police Department has informed the school district that we will no longer be receiving written notification of level 2 and 3 sex offenders through the mail as we have in the past. The Niagara County Sheriff's Department created a web site listing all the level 2 and 3 sex offenders in their jurisdiction and the NT Police Department has teamed up with them. Level 2 and 3 sex offenders residing in North Tonawanda are now on that web site.

Additionally, the web site will allow users to sign up for a notification service that will automatically notify you via e-mail every time a level 2 or 3 sex offender moves into or from place to place within Niagara County.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Department web site is www.ncsd.com/SOR/. Please also remember that the New York State web site is www.criminaljustice.state.ny.us/sor/. The state web site allows you to search by name, county, or zip code throughout New York. The state's toll free number is 1-800-262-3257.

The District will continue with notifications using the District newsletter and District web site www.ntcityschools.wnyric.org.

Attention Families: Has your contact information changed?



Emergency Contact Information

Attention Ohio Elementary School - Please note these changes in our contact information:

Student Name(s) and Grade levels _____

- Our new home phone number _____
- Our new cell number: _____
- Our new address: _____
- Additional persons with permission to pick my child(ren) up from school:

- Other contact information changes: (i.e.: Grandparent phone number changes if they are listed as emergency contacts)

Parent Signature

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