



# CTL CORNER

Center for Teaching & Learning | 26131 Kuykendahl, The Woodlands, TX 77375 | 832-474-8214



## Important Dates

**November 11-14** – CTL  
Trimester 1 Club Showcases  
during Morning Meeting  
(Monday - Construction &  
Science Fair, Tuesday - Book Club,  
Wednesday - Photography &  
Yearbook, Thursday - Reader's  
Theater

**Friday, November 15** - Trimester  
1 Ends - Teacher Workday - No  
School

**Monday, November 18** -  
Trimester 2 Begins

**Thursday, November 21**- CTL  
Thanksgiving Feast. Please join us  
as we eat a family-style  
Thanksgiving lunch from  
11:00-12:00. *Early Dismissal at  
12:00 p.m.* Sign up to bring your  
favorite holiday dish at [https://  
www.signupgenius.com/go/  
20f0c4aaaab2daaff2-ctlfamily](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0c4aaaab2daaff2-ctlfamily)



## A Time of Reflection and Gratitude

“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”  
— *Melody Beattie*

It's that time again! What a wonderful time of year! We have so much to be grateful for! The weather this week brought the reality that winter is finally here and so is the end of the first trimester. Next week will bring portfolio time, a time when your children will teach you about their accomplishments, their challenges and their goals. For at CTL, all are equally rewarding--all are opportunities for real learning.

This week your children are engaged in portfolio workshops—a powerful time as they reflect on their learning. Reflection at CTL is ongoing, but the portfolio process happens three times a year. It is always a favorite time! As I walk from classroom to classroom, I see students sitting at tables or on the floor examining their work as they put together a collection of their most treasured pieces in their portfolios to begin the process.

This selection and examination process combined with the writing of self evaluations of their learning in every content area—their strengths and accomplishments, their challenges and their goals—one of the most valuable times of the year. Self-evaluation is an important real-world life skill, and the students get better and better at the process. It is their most valued learning tool. It's when they learn what real learning is all about. It's when learning is solidified.



## Important Dates

**November 21-22** - CTL Student-Led Conferences. Please be sure to sign-up via SignUpGenius to reserve your conference day and time with your child's teacher.

**November 25-29** - Thanksgiving Break. *No School.*

**December 2-13** - Interfaith Toy Drive coordinated by Ms. Lipar's Grades 1-2 class and Scholastic Pajama Drive coordinated by Ms. Brown's Pre-K and Ms. Billings' K.

**Wednesday, December 4** - Grades 5-9 Field Trip to Two Stages Repertory Theater to see Panto Hansel and Gretel.

## Important Reminders

\*Please have your child at school by 7:55 a.m. every morning so he/she does not miss our Morning Meeting that begins at 8 a.m.

\*Please make sure your child has a water bottle every day, a jacket on cold days, and tennis shoes on PE days.

\*Invite your child to show CTL school spirit by wearing his/her CTL t-shirt on Fridays.



This Friday and over the weekend, CTL teachers will be curled up for approximately 25 to 30 hours studying your child's self-evaluations, reflecting on your child's learning and writing your child's Progress Report Notes, the narrative reports you will find in his/her portfolio next week. I am grateful to work side-by-side with such dedicated, reflective, passionate teachers who daily ignite the passion to learn inside your children here at CTL. CTL was born from that kind of passion. It is what we do! It is what makes us unique!

Something to think about... Frank Smith, one of my favorite educators, in *Insult to Intelligence: The Bureaucratic Invasion of American Classrooms (1986)* included *The Learners' Manifesto* (p. 62). It resonates with me today as much as when it inspired me over 30 years ago—especially during portfolio time.

### *The Learners' Manifesto*

1. *We learn exactly what is demonstrated by people around us.* Schools must stop trying to teach through pointless drills, activities, and tests.
2. *We fail to learn only if we are bored, or confused, or if we have been persuaded that learning will be difficult.* Schools must be places where learning can take place naturally.
3. *If we understand, then we learn.* Schools must change themselves, not try to change us, to ensure we understand what we are expected to learn.
4. *We learn while doing things that we find useful and interesting.* Schools must stop creating environments where we cannot engage in sensible activities.
5. *We learn by apprenticing ourselves to people who practice what they teach.* Schools must stop trying to deliver instruction mechanically. If teachers cannot teach, there must be better teachers, not more tests and programmatic instruction.
6. *We demonstrate the worthwhile things we learn by engaging in those activities.* Schools, teachers, and parents should not have to rely on marks, scores, or tests to discover if we have learned.
7. *We remember how we feel when we learn and when we fail to learn.* Schools must not treat learners like battery hens or like machines.
8. *If we are threatened by learning, then the learning will always threaten.* Schools must recognize that continual testing is intellectual harassment.

I am thankful for each of you for choosing CTL for the education of your children and for being the backbone behind everything we do. Have a wonderful holiday with your families!

**Linda Ellis**



## Pre-K Class

Reading workshop has been very busy for Pre-K and we've enjoyed many of our favorite books this month. Some of the favorites were *Stellaluna*, *Elmer*, *Pumpkin Hill*, *The Very Busy Spider*, and *Room on a Broom*. When we read *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, Mouse, the character in the book, made a special delivery of chocolate cookies to our classroom for everyone to enjoy. And after we read *If You Take a Mouse to School*, everyone wanted to duplicate the science experiment that mouse conducted in the book.

This month in science, we started by talking about the life cycle of a spider, why spiders are not insects and the difference between the two. In our bat unit, we explored how bats are helpful to our environment by eating lots of mosquitos for dinner each night, which seem to be in abundance this fall. We closed both of our units by making a fun snack with Oreo cookies, pretzels for legs and savory Doritos for wings. After reading *Room on a Broom*, each student had a cauldron to create his/her very own magic potion. Some of the fun ingredients were crushed dragon teeth, unicorn dust, troll slime and Dracula's toenails.

Pre-K had several STEAM challenges this month. After reading *Five Pumpkins on a Fence*, our STEAM challenge had the students build a structure to hold five pumpkins and not allow them to roll away. After reading *Spookley the Square Pumpkin*, they had to design and build a fence to hold the pumpkins inside and not allow them to roll away. Our last challenge was to design and build a Halloween haunted house to keep their friendly ghost inside. We have also been practicing our subitizing skills and ten frame activities.

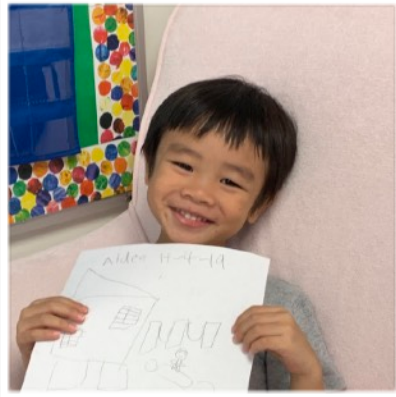
Pre-K also took a field trip to Dewberry Farms and enjoyed many fun activities and games. The top favorites were the bouncing area, jungle play structures and the tractor train ride.



A fun time was had by all at our annual fall festival. Everyone looked fantastic dressed in their favorite Halloween costumes. A big thank you to our room moms for organizing the ring toss for the annual CTL carnival.

In November, we will be looking forward to portfolio presentations and lots of Thanksgiving activities.

## Beckey Billings



## K-1

Wow! Time is flying by in kindergarten. We are having so much fun learning!

We had a great time on our field trip to Dewberry Farms. The weather was amazing and we were able to explore so many activities. The next week brought even more fun as we did some cool activities with our class pumpkin. The month ended with an awesome Halloween Carnival! A big shout out to our room moms for assisting us on the field trip and helping with the Carnival.



In reading workshop, K-1 students have been developing their strategies for figuring out unknown words. They also enjoy partner reading as well as the class read alouds. In writing workshop we have been writing about our life experiences. We are practicing trying to expand our writing by adding more details. It is a true pleasure seeing each one of your children develop into readers and writers. They are excited to write about their experiences and to share their stories with the class.

In math workshop, we have been using the arithmetic rack to highlight the ideas of compensation and equivalence. We are developing our number sense and learning how to show different groups of the same number as well as writing the equation.

In science workshop, we have been talking about recycling and how we can help with pollution. We enjoyed a fun activity of sorting different metal, plastic and paper into different bins.

In social studies, we are learning how we can get along at school. We talked about kindness and how we can show it. We shared how we were kind to someone and how someone was kind to us.

In November, we are talking more about comprehension in the books we read and expanding our vocabulary. We will use these strategies to expand our writing. We will continue to talk and explore the idea of reducing human impact in science. In math, we will continue with number sense. We will work on counting by 10s and adding and subtracting equations. In social studies we will talk about Veterans Day and what it means. We will also learn more about the first Americans and how we are thankful.

Thank you for trusting me with your children. It is my pleasure to be their teacher.

**Gina Brown**



### *1-2 Class*

Reading workshop continues to grow our readers every day as they read independently and conference with me to see how they are doing with reading just right books. I encourage the kids to remember to change out their book bags as they finish with the books they read at home. This helps keep them on track with their at-home reading and allows for the books to be returned for other students to read as well. Keep up the reading at home!

During writing workshop the students continue to write personal narratives and even some fiction stories. They are learning about the various strategies to use in their writing through our mini lessons. The class also participated in interactive writing as I modeled proper spelling, punctuation and spacing in writing.

In social studies, the class is learning about the various types of maps and how they are used. They are learning the importance of cardinal directions and why people use different types of maps. They will soon be creating their own maps in our upcoming map project.

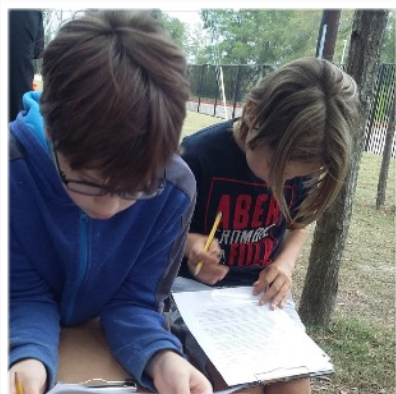
Math workshop is plugging along as we continue to use our math strategies to figure out more math problems. The class is working on telling time to the hour, half hour or quarter hour. We continue to play a variety of math games to reinforce the math the children are learning. I have seen such growth in the mental math and continue to encourage kids to be risk takers and learn new ways to figure out math. We all learn from each other, make mistakes, revise and strengthen skills along the way.

We have completed a few labs to build on our knowledge of seed transfer and its importance in the environment. We learned how seeds are transferred from place to place with the help of insects and animals. We created animal and insect body parts to simulate this phenomenon. We also explored pumpkins in STEM by designing ramps to roll pumpkins. The challenge being how far their pumpkins would roll. We used engineering and math to create the ramps and measure the distance they traveled. The class discussed incline and speed as it related to the ramp design.

We had a wonderful time at our annual Halloween Carnival. Thank you to all who helped to make this day so special for our kids. They really do appreciate it. I was proud of my Reader's Theater Club who performed. Many of them were from the 1-2 class. They did an awesome job!

Thank you to all who helped out with our first field trip. The kids were buzzing about the fun activities they were able to participate in at Dewberry Farm. We are fortunate to be able to provide field trips for the kids. They experienced animals, nature, physical activity, friendship and fun!

November will be a short month with the upcoming Thanksgiving



break. We will continue to build our skills throughout the curriculum. The class will be hard at work preparing for their student-led portfolio conferences. This takes a great deal of time and patience as the kids work on self reflection, evaluation, selection and presentation of their learning at CTL. We look forward to our fall portfolio presentation. I am sure you will be impressed with your student's work.

**Lisa Lipar**

### *3-4 Class*

Time is flying by, and we have been learning like crazy!

Reading and writing workshop includes continuous independent reading and writing practice. Students have and will continue to evolve as readers and writers. Students are learning about character traits and point of view. Writers are learning to include sensory details and to "show not tell" as an author. We are learning about "to be" verbs and how to change them to strengthen their writing. Student authors now have the option to publish a piece by typing it in a Google doc using their CTL Google Drive.

As mathematicians, students continue to review place value concepts through new strategies of multiplying. We will practice strategies and facts through math partner games and solving many equations and real-word math problems.

In social studies students are learning about Native American tribes and regions. Then we will begin studying a new topic, Exploration. We will explore how and why Europeans came to the new world.

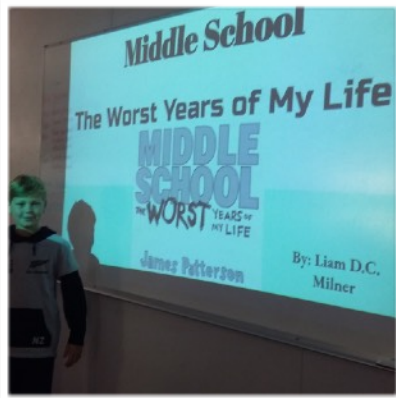
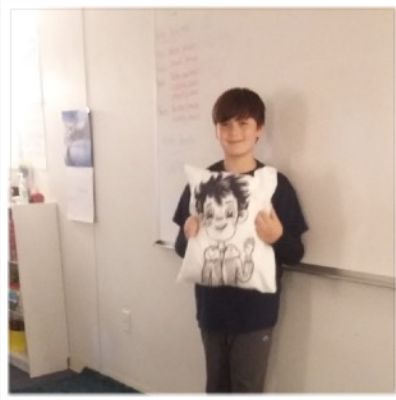
In science students continue to learn about our changing land through erosion and weathering. This month in science we dig deeper into how our land changes by learning about plate tectonics.

We are looking forward to many fun holiday events in the next few weeks too!

**Corrie Sheldon**

### *5-8 Reading-Writing Workshop and Grade 9 English*

We have had an incredible first trimester in our 5-6 reading workshop class. I have read three books aloud to them: *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, *Mr. Gedrick and Me* by Patrick Carman, *Hansel and Gretel Reinvisioned* by Neil Gaiman. We are now into our fourth book, *Saving Winslow* by Sharon Creech. These books have provided rich material for discussion around four different genres—historical fiction, fantasy, traditional fairy tales, and realistic fiction. Our class favorite so far is *Mr. Gedrick and Me*, and I wonder if this book will win our votes for the Bluebonnet Award come January.



We have also just started our second round of book projects. I have been impressed by the standard of presentations. Everyone has really listened to the advice of minimal text if they are doing a slideshow, of making good use of cue cards, and of coming up with a creative idea to impress their friends. I know several children have already been inspired to pick up a different book thanks to their friends' presentations.

In writing workshop, we enjoyed our second Publishing Day. This is when the children's hard work pays off and they get to share their stories with their peers. This time around 5-6 students shared their pieces with grades 7-8, and they then read the older grade's work. They enjoyed this process and were able to immediately see how beneficial it was for the reader to have pieces that were correctly punctuated and broken up with regular paragraphs.

In 7-8 reading workshop we have been continuing to enjoy our class read aloud, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. Mr. Schimmel was kind enough to come in and talk to the students about his grandfather's experiences during WWII. This helps provide context and additional information to the story we are reading together. *The Book Thief* is beautifully written and deals with a difficult topic in a way that gently pulls you in and has you caring deeply about the characters. As a piece of historical fiction it becomes even more meaningful as we know that the experiences described were the reality for millions of people during that time. We are all looking forward to watching the film adaptation next trimester and discussing the similarities and differences between the film and the book.

Our second round of book project presentations has just begun, and I have been so impressed by the level of creativity demonstrated so far. We have had an amazing book trailer, a biography of an author, a poster display, and a character chart so far. I can't wait to see what next week brings. The students love hearing about what their peers are reading, and book projects are a cornerstone to building a community of young people who love books.

In 7-8 writing workshop, we just enjoyed our second Publishing Day. This is when the children's hard work pays off and they get to share their stories with their peers. This time around 7-8 students shared their pieces with grades 5-6, and they then read the younger grade's work in return. They enjoyed this process and were able to immediately see how beneficial correct punctuation and paragraphing is. They also verbalized how much they enjoyed the work of students who had created believable characters who were dealing with interesting problems and authors who had also managed to play a movie in the reader's mind with their words. The sign of brilliant writing indeed! The older students were absolutely amazed at the quality of the younger students' writing. They had no idea we had so many budding authors in our midst. They spoke about how excited they were to see who would be published first. High praise indeed! And rightly so. The younger students were



equally as excited about their older peers' work and were buzzing about how good the stories were.

In Grade 9 English, as a group we have been enjoying the class read aloud *Divergent* by Virginia Roth. We have been making a number of comparisons between *Divergent* and *Brave New World*, our classic text from this trimester, and also to another modern book, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. All of these books are providing us with rich discussion materials around what it means to be human and what aspects of our life potentially influence our personality. Can our personality be controlled or manufactured? And is it even possible to be rigidly one personality type or another? We have also enjoyed talking about where authors get their ideas from and what influences them to write the plot lines and create the characters that they do.

Our second round of book presentations are just about to begin, and students have been working to create their presentation scripts and have been putting a lot of thought into the themes presented within the books they have chosen to read independently. Individually 9th graders have read everything from horror through to historical fiction, from fantasy to murder mystery and everything in between. This leads to varied and interesting presentations; a keystone process in terms of building a community of readers and of young people who will go on to read throughout their adult lives.

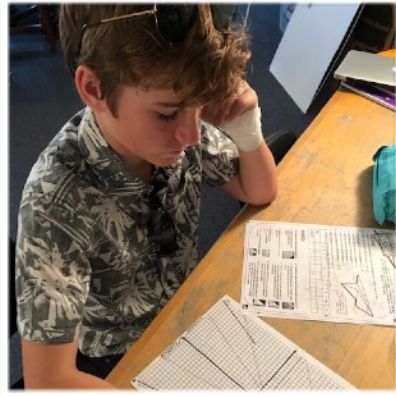
In grade 9 Creative Writing we have just completed a fantastic poetry unit. We have been working toward a Poetry Slam—a kind of dance off with poems. We have immersed ourselves in poetry Monday through Thursday every week for five weeks. The students have marinated themselves in quality writing in order to create their own unique and creative poems. I was so impressed by what this group of young people achieved. They wrote and performed multiple pieces of poetry each, featuring multiple styles and forms. They presented with confidence, with humor, and with genuine emotion. It was an amazing end to a really enjoyable unit of study. I was extremely proud to call myself their English teacher and feel lucky to be working with such a group of talented and creative young people.

**Caroline Harrison**

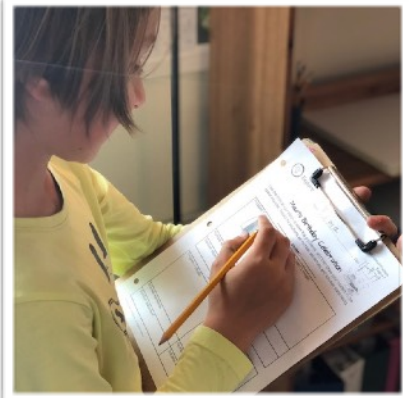
### *5-8 Math Workshop and Grade 8- 9 Algebra*

Fifth and sixth grade mathematicians explored multiple strategies for multiplication and division and settled on individual strategies to yield efficient results. Some students successfully multiplied and divided for the first time, while others improved in efficiency and reasonableness. This group also spent time devising methods for multiplying and dividing decimals. Investigating the “why” behind traditional math rules allows these students opportunities to create meaning behind abstract concepts. Most recently, we have begun an exploration in fractions and students are eager to improve their thinking about rational numbers.





Seventh graders examined methods for solving equations and inequalities. Students were presented with various scenarios where they had to calculate monthly payments to determine which items were affordable on their given budget. This led to interesting conversations about enjoying their time living at home before adulthood sneaks in and requires them to pay bills! We investigated ratios, rates, and unit rates. Be on the lookout for unit rates at the grocery store!



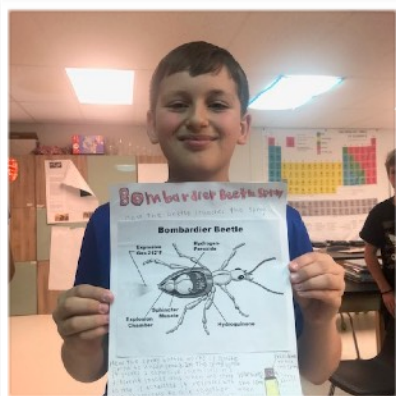
The Algebra class has been working diligently to solve challenging equations. In “The Illest Road Trip Ever” project, students built a road trip and used linear equations to meet the given criteria. They also recorded “truck month” advertisements that allowed the class to practice writing and solving linear equations. They were challenged by simplifying square roots, but rose to the occasion. Our last project of the trimester involved building paper airplanes after meticulously solving and graphing linear equations. This group continues to impress with their questioning and amazing collaborative math conversations!

**Claire Want**

**5-8 Science Workshop**

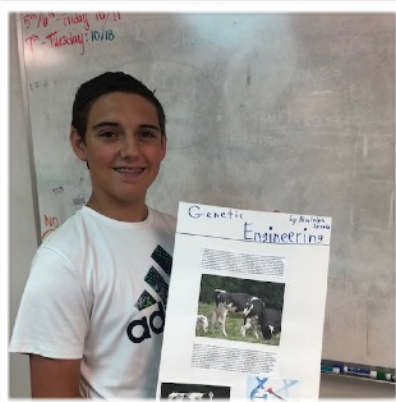
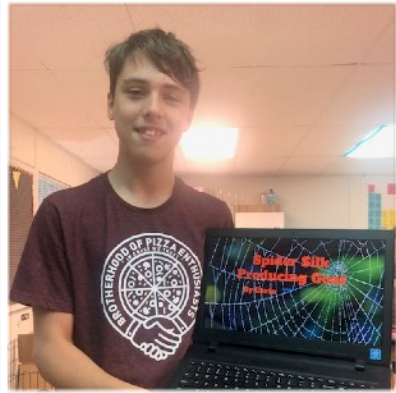


Grades 5-6 have been working hard on their unit all about The Law of Conservation of Mass. During this unit students are expected to develop and use a model to describe how the total number of atoms does not change in a chemical reaction and thus mass is conserved. Our next unit is Heat and Matter where students will be expected to develop a model that predicts and describes changes in particle motion, temperature, and state of a pure substance when thermal energy is added or removed.



Grade 7 has been exploring Sensory Receptors where they gather and synthesize information that sensory receptors respond to stimuli by sending messages to the brain for immediate behavior or storage as memories. They are moving past the study of the body and moving into Ecosystems. Their first Ecosystem unit is Competition on Ecosystems where students will be expected to analyze and interpret data to provide evidence for the effects of resource availability on organisms and populations of organisms in an ecosystem.

Biology students have been studying Variations of Traits where they were expected to finish the unit by making and defending a claim based on evidence that inheritable genetic variations may result from: (1) new genetic combinations through meiosis, (2) viable



errors occurring during replication, and/or (3) mutations caused by environmental factors. Looking forward, our next unit will be Organization of Systems. Students will develop and use a model to illustrate the hierarchical organization of interacting systems that provide specific functions within multicellular organisms for their unit project.

**Laura Wellbrock**

### *5-6 Social Studies Workshop*

Social studies has been a lot of fun lately. We've finished exploring the creation of first societies and have been researching a famous early god, emperor or conqueror. Each student got a character and a book about them. We went into the playground, and they read to start their learning journey. After this the students were presented with their assignments. They will write a 60-second speech, make a poster promoting their person, make a prop for their person and finally, on Friday December 6 they will become their person at a wax museum in our enrichment room between noon and 1 p.m.

We look forward to presenting to you Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Demeter, Aphrodite, Boudica, King Tut, Hammurabi and many many more.

**James Milner**

### *7-8 Social Studies Workshop*

Grades 5-8 social studies has closed the book on the Roman medieval time period and is now driving into the Renaissance time period. To do this, students went to the Renaissance Festival and interviewed two to three trades they found interesting.

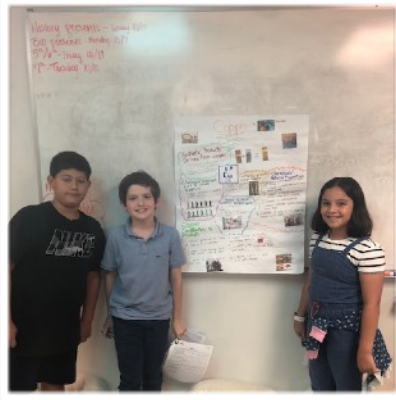
When we return from break, students will have until December 6 to research their trade of choice. We will join with the Grades 5-6 wax museum, and the 7-8 students will become their trade from the Renaissance time period and educate parents on life for them back then.

**Laura Wellbrock**

### *Grade 9 World Geography*

It has been a busy month completing the first major assignment on Canada and understanding some of the big issues confronting the world in the 21st Century. Each student made a website to satisfy the elements of the assignment,; so as well as learning about the geography and environment to the north of America, they developed some great skills navigating and designing their own web pages.

We are looking at water pollution, urban sprawl and immigration and evaluating the pressure these issues are putting on individual



societies and the world in general. Having a clear understanding of how these issues impact American life will help as our attention turns to poorer less-advanced continents next trimester.

**James Milner**

### *Grade 9 Media Communications*

The media class have developed a lot of new skills in the last month. As a group, last week they put together a news bulletin complete with sound effects that reflected the top stories of the day. They sat around the board table and had an editorial meeting where Asher took the lead, got everybody to select a story and created the order of the bulletin. About 20 minutes later, stories were getting completed and Asher appointed Eddie as Editor. Eddie then worked with everybody to get their stories written and ready for recording. Eddie and Asher appointed Grayson as Production Manager, and they set up a studio next door and set to work recording and editing their bulletin. They missed their 10:15 deadline, but at 10:45 I was called in from Photography Club to listen to a full five-minute news bulletin that truly reflected November 1st. It had great structure with four news stories, a human interest story, some sport and the weather. A superb effort by all!

Over the next couple of months the students will be spending more time making and editing audio to improve their skills and the length of time it takes to record and get things ready to air.

**James Milner**

### *Pre-K-2 and Grade 9 Spanish*

October was an exciting month, we learned about the tradition of the day of the dead and the emotions of the little Halloween monsters.

November is a fun month, we are learning the vocabulary of animals and some occasional grammar!

Please ask your children what animals they have at home or what animals they see at the zoo!

**Bethy Meixeiro**

### *PK-8 Art Workshop*

The month of October proved to be a highly creative one with Young Rembrandts. PreK and Kindergartners learned to draw a Dress Up Bear, Ice Cream Sundae, Lion, Bulldozer, and Spider Web. While drawing these subjects, students used the elements of art-line, shape, color, texture, space, and value. They also learned about good coloring techniques and craftsmanship.

Grades 1-4 learned about the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs and



proportions of facial features while drawing an Egyptian headdress. While drawing from a still life which included fruit such as apples and oranges, young artists learned about highlights, lighting, shadows and practiced proper coloring and shading techniques.



In a cartooning lesson, students learned to draw a cartoon squirrel complete with clothing and accessories. Artists also drew an intricate, detailed dragonfly which featured the use of symmetry. Finally, students finished the month gaining knowledge about Mexico's Day of the Dead celebration and painted a balanced composition of Sugar Skulls.



The 5-8 electives class also drew an apple and orange in a still life drawing, composed an intricate dragonfly, and painted a balanced composition with Sugar Skulls. In addition to these projects, the artists practiced drawing the human figure in a scuba diving scene. The highlight of the month was learning about the famous artist Vincent Van Gogh and his life and work. Students then created their version of *The Starry Night* using pastels. The activity took two art periods, and the results were amazing!

**Pam Mayo**

### *PK-8 Music Workshop*

The CTL music classes have been working hard in preparation for our Winter *Make A Difference* Musical. Now that the students are confidently singing and dancing, we have switched over to practicing with the instrumental accompaniment. All of the music classes will perform the opening and closing songs called "Make A Difference" and "Agents of Change". The PreK and Kindergarten students will perform "Big Hearts". The 1st and 2nd grade class will perform "I Can. You Can. We Can." The 3rd and 4th grade students will perform "This Is The Only World We've Got". The PreK-4th grade students look forward to our first school rehearsal on November 14th.

**Melanie Garcia**

### *5-9 Drama Workshop*

Our 5-8 drama group have presented our first major production for the year at the Halloween carnival. The class did an amazing job of challenging themselves to get to know their characters and become believable in their roles. They worked really hard to memorize their lines and overcome nerves to perform in front of an audience.

Each student worked to develop a specific talent in our zombie play,



from challenging them to remember more lines, focus on physical movement or develop their understanding of comedy timing. Every student made great progress.

As the cooler weather rolls in our drama work moves indoors a little more and the students will be developing story ideas to turn into short movies. They will work in small groups and develop some important filmmaking skills.

***James Milner***

### ***PK-4 Physical Education Workshop***

The kids enjoy practicing locomotive skills, which include walking, running, hopping, jumping, leaping, skipping and galloping. These motor skills help improve their coordination. They play fun games that reinforces these movements. I have incorporated kicking soccer balls, which includes practicing running while dribbling the ball to cone and passing the ball to a classmate. We will continue practicing kicking this month.

***Sarina Eckhardt***

### ***5-8 Physical Education Workshop***

In Grades 5-8 PE we are continuing our unit on soccer. We began to develop sportsmanship and teamwork in our first unit on Ultimate Frisbee and are extending our learning into this unit.

Specific soccer skills we have worked on include ball control and how to throw the ball back into play when it goes out.

***Laura Wellbrock and Stephanie Jones***

