



# CTL CORNER

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



## Important Dates

**October 14-** Columbus Day Holiday - No School.

**October 31** - Please join us from 12:30 to 3:00 for an afternoon of family fun—Halloween Carnival from 12:30-2:00 p.m. followed by the 5-8 Drama Presentation *Everything You Didn't Want to Know about Zombies*. from 2:15 to 3:00.

## Important Reminders

\*School begins at 7:55 a.m., and Morning Meeting begins promptly at 8:00. Please have your child at school by 7:55.



*I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers.*

— *L. M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables*

The promise of a *cold front* arriving at a slow pace this week has cleared the humidity and given us all a burst of energy as the temperature drops ever so slightly, promising 50s by the end of the week. What a wonderful month October is with pumpkins, changing colors, fall festivals, fresh fruit, and Halloween carnivals with excitement and candy treats.

At CTL we will enjoy it all amidst the energy already created in the lively classrooms where students are engaged in learning. The weather allows lots of outdoor play where the air is filled with squeals and giggles and laughter and where children and young adults are learning the value of friendships and kindness.

Take a peek into our classrooms this month and get a glimpse of what we at CTL enjoy daily—students and teachers constantly reflecting on learning and teaching, reflections and assessments that guide everything we do at CTL. Preparing each monthly newsletter allows us to reflect back on the month before and the goals for the next and provides each of you a glimpse into the process. Next month you will be able to reflect alongside your children in their student-led conferences..

No one makes us appreciate October like L.M Montgomery in *Anne of Green Gables*: *October was a beautiful month at Green Gables, when the birches in the hollow turned as golden as sunshine and the maples behind the orchard were royal crimson and the wild cherry trees along the lane put on the loveliest shades of dark red and bronzy green, while the fields sunned themselves in aftermaths. Anne reveled in the world of color about her. "Oh, Marilla," she*





*exclaimed one Saturday morning, coming dancing in with her arms full of gorgeous boughs, "I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers. It would be terrible if we just skipped from September to November, wouldn't it? Look at these maple branches. Don't they give you a thrill—several thrills? I'm going to decorate my room with them."*

Let us all revel in the beauty of October—cherishing every moment, allowing time for reflection and inspiration, enjoying family!

**Linda Ellis**

### *Pre-K Class*

September has been an exciting and fun time for Pre-K, as we began a new school year and created new friendships. We are looking forward to fall with all the beautiful changes that occur in nature and finally putting the hot days of September behind us. This year, we welcome familiar and new faces to the classroom.

At this time of year I am also filled with excitement as I anticipate meeting each of your children and we begin a year of learning and having fun together. The Pre-K class will provide many opportunities for each student to grow in self-esteem and independence as it prepares them to be successful in kindergarten. In reading workshop we enjoyed many childhood favorites including *Ten Apples Up On Top*, *The Dot*, *Say Something*, *Stick and Stone*, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, *Friendship Fruit Salad*, and *My Friend is Sad* to name a few.

The amazing authors in the Pre-K class have each been hard at work writing their fabulous books each day. They love to share their stories in author's chair with their classmates.

Science workshop included an apple investigation where the children brought an apple to school where they weighed, measured, and examined it. Afterwards we made homemade applesauce with our apples and enjoyed it as a yummy afternoon snack. In studying our five senses unit, we organized an apple tasting in which they discovered they preferred Red Delicious apples over the Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples.

Our STEAM challenges were based on two of our favorite books, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* and *Ten Apples Up On Top*. In each challenge, the student had to design a tree structure to see how many letters or apples each tree could hold.

Throughout the year we will explore simple math concepts in our math workshop. This month we introduced sequencing, simple patterns along with number recognition and beginning subitizing.

October we will be looking forward to our study on bats, spiders, and pumpkins.

**Becky Billings**



### *K-1 Class*

In reading during September we began our study of non-fiction texts. We have been reading about many things, especially plants and seeds. This correlated nicely with our green bean planting activity for science.

Also in reading we have been discussing how good readers think while they are reading. The students have started using Post-It notes on a page in their book where they either wondered about something (question mark) or liked something they read (heart). Then they all share their thinking with the class at the end of reading. It is so fantastic to listen to them talk about their thinking as readers!

In October we will continue to focus on what good readers do while they are reading. For example, good readers look at the pictures to help them with the words they will read on each page. Also, good readers ask themselves, "Did that make sense?" Then they know to go back and check the words again if it did not make sense.

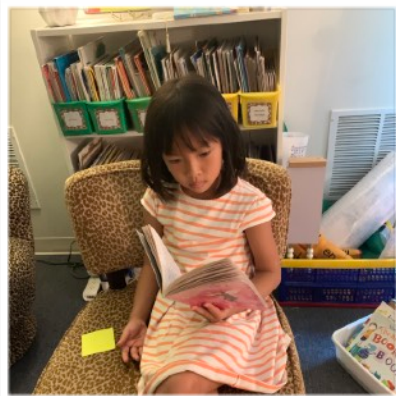
In writing we have been working on our stamina. At the beginning of the year, students are unable to write for very long, as the muscles in their hands fatigue very quickly. We are trying to build them up. I have introduced revising as part of the writing process. We learned how to add information so that the reader can understand more about our pictures.

Next in writing, we will continue to work on our stamina and be able to add more words to our writing pieces. We will use the letter sounds that we know to more independently write some words during writing time. We will also begin to use sight words in our writing. Most importantly we will continue to enjoy writing and sharing our stories!

In math we have been doing several different activities to build a strong number sense. The students have been playing math games which they enjoy very much and have been practicing the meaning of *more* and *less* with our counters. We have also been practicing accurately counting groups of objects and writing down how many we have *altogether*. Building a solid understanding of these math terms will set the students up for success in math in the future.

Next in math we will continue to strengthen our number sense. For example, we will begin to see groups of objects and be able to *count on* to identify the total number of objects instead of starting from the beginning and counting by 1's. We will also continue to focus on our base ten strategies. We will begin to be able to identify sets of numbers that add up to ten.

In science we have been studying plants. We have learned about what plants need to grow. We have been monitoring the growth of our classroom green bean seed as well as the ones we took home. We will continue our study of plants and animals and will be



learning about the needs of different plants and animals and how humans must take care of and share the earth.

In social studies we have been getting to know each other and our classroom community. The students shared about their favorite things, their families, and their pets. We have been learning to be good citizens in the classroom. We are kind to one another and are learning the routines of the classroom so that we can all be happy and ready to learn.

In social studies we will focus on our family and how we help each other.

**Cathy Sagar**

### *1-2 Class*

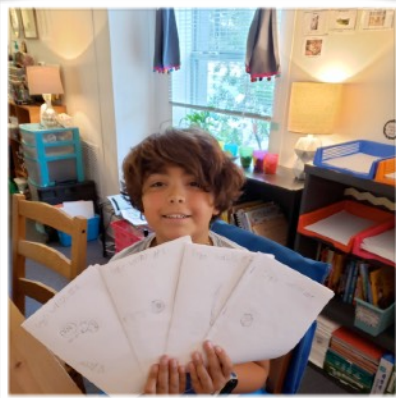
September proved to be a great start to our year. We enjoyed making new friends and learning the procedures and expectations of both our classroom and the school.

Reading workshop is going well with many of the students reaching new reading levels already! The kids are eager to choose new books each day. They are doing a great job choosing books for their book bags as well. I have completed the Developmental Reading Assessment on each student so I know exactly where they are in their reading. This helps them to know how to choose just-right books.

The class is busy writing every day in our writing workshop. Many of the students have completed a few books. I have been conferencing with each student to see where they are in their process. I also encourage them to share their pieces in Author's Chair at least once a week. They can share an entire piece or just what they have so far. It is great to hear the students share their comments and connections with our authors. It is such a confidence booster.

In social studies the class is finishing up their community models. They will be on display soon in the school hallway. You will see all of their hard work and attention to detail. Thank you for your support by sending supplies for them to use for this project.

Math workshop is always a busy time. The class has had the luxury of having Ms. Want help us each day so that we can get a good grasp of each students' strengths and challenges. Students have worked individually, in pairs and in groups to complete math activities. We are learning how to make ten, use Rekenreks to solve problems, use a number line for adding and subtracting 1-, 2- and 3-digit numbers and play math games to reinforce what they have been taught each week. We can't express enough the importance of having a strong foundation before having students move on to higher level math. Many of you were able to join Ms. Want for our parent math workshop last week to get a grasp of our math curriculum and



procedures.

We have been growing radish seeds in science as we learn about plant needs. We are comparing seeds grown in the dark versus seeds grown in direct sunlight. The class is also learning about the parts of a plant. We continue to do STEM challenges on Fridays. Our class will be using the science lab every Thursday during science to complete experiments. They are really excited to get down to the big *kids' lab*! I am impressed with their organization when recording in their science notebooks too.

Next month we will continue to grow as readers and writers through independent practice. This will give the children every opportunity to practice the strategies they have learned to strengthen their skills. The class will continue to use all the math strategies they know to figure out problems involving number sense. We will evaluate their progress throughout with mini assessments. We will move on to geography in social studies where we will learn more about maps and Texas. In science we will focus on animal needs and adaptation.

We are looking forward to our first field trip in October. The class will be traveling to Dewberry Farm for a fun-filled day of fall activities and learning.

**Lisa Lipar**

### 3-4 Class

Happy Fall Y'all! In Grades 3-4 we are happy it's finally October, and we're crossing our fingers for cooler weather soon! In the meantime, we are busy learning in class daily. We celebrated the completion of our first read aloud! *The Wish Tree* is on the Texas Bluebonnet Award list and was a delightful and heartwarming story. Ask you child to tell you a summary of the book. We are now reading *Watchdog* which is also a Bluebonnet Book. So far we are enjoying the action-packed adventure. Independent reading time is part of our daily routine. Students read self-selected texts and are responsible to keep track of their progress in their reading logs.

Writing workshop is definitely a class favorite. Students are focused and writing personal narratives and/or fiction texts. This month students will be encouraged to revise and edit one piece and begin to type some or all for publication. Our writers LOVE to share in the Author's Chair which allows students to learn from each other and celebrate each other's writing progress.

In social studies workshop students are working on a group presentation about the five geographic regions of the United States. Students are using information from text to present and teach about their assigned regions to the class. We will continue to focus on social studies concepts within the topic of the United States.

As mathematicians students are strengthening their mental math muscles by solving equations only mentally. We then discuss



answers and different efficient strategies to use when solving. We are finishing up our unit on place value, comparing numbers and rounding. This month we'll do a quick addition and subtraction review then begin diving into multiplication!

As scientists students have gained a deeper understanding of adaptations and sense receptors. This month students will begin a new science unit on changes over time to Earth's surface and resources. This unit has several subtopics. We will begin with rock patterns.

**Corrie Sheldon**

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

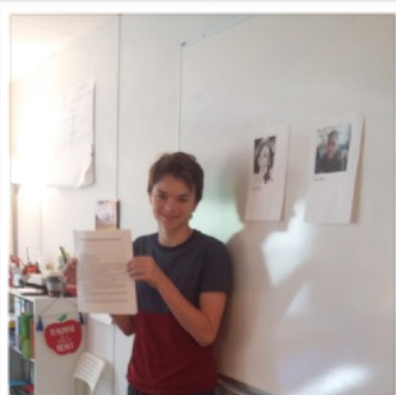
We have had a wonderful first six weeks of school. In Grades 5-6 we just finished reading our class read aloud book *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes. A Bluebonnet Book Award nominee and a Lone Star Reading List book, Rhodes took us on a journey and allowed us to step into the shoes of a 12-year-old African American boy who was killed because his pellet gun was mistaken by police for a real gun. I was impressed by the students' ability to identify the key themes within the book and how they all agreed that the overall tone was one of sadness.

Our new read aloud book is another Bluebonnet nominee *Mr. Gedrick and Me* by Patrick Carman. A complete change of pace from *Ghost Boys*, this book is a quirky take on Mary Poppins. Who is this new "manny" that has appeared to help out Stanley's mom? We will have to read on to find out!



We also completed our first round of book projects, and I was delighted by the quality and variety of the presentations given by everyone. We had everything from trifolds to iMovies. This is one of the cornerstones of creating a reading community in our classroom, and I noticed several students already picking up books their friends had recommended in their book projects.

In writing workshop the students have just completed their first round of writing, and we all enjoyed our first Publishing Day together. This involved the students making several revisions to their pieces of writing before proofreading and editing them. Then their pieces were finally ready to share with everybody. Publishing Day is always an exciting day, and the children get a lot out of opportunities to share their writing with others in a meaningful way.



In Grade 7-8 reading-writing workshop, we are all engrossed in our read aloud book, *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak. Death is narrating the story of a young girl, Liesel, who finds herself in the midst of the birthplace of Nazi Germany at the beginning of World War II. The writing is absolutely beautiful, deeply touching and poetic. I don't think it is a style of writing that any of the students have come across before. This book is certainly providing us with lots to talk about and mull over.

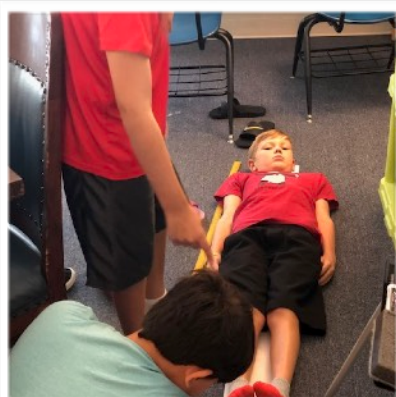
We also just completed our first round of book project presentations. Book projects are always so much fun, and I was delighted to see so many creative and imaginative presentations. Students had done everything from filming themselves acting out parts of the book through to creating clay models. Book projects are always a favorite time for students. As well as practicing their presentation skills, book projects also help to foster a classroom full of young people who just love reading books and sharing them with their friends.

In writing workshop we have just celebrated our first Publishing Day of the year. Everyone has been having fun with the writing process and a wide range of memoirs, short stories, ghost stories, and humorous pieces have been created. Publishing Day is always exciting as students feel the benefits of sharing their writing with their peers and receiving lots of positive feedback.

In Grade 9 English 1, we have had a brilliant first six weeks of school. We have almost finished our first read aloud book, the classic text *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. This has been a fantastic book to grapple with and provided us with strong themes around identity and the human condition for us to ponder and think about. The conversation around the rug has been lively and full of insights, connections, confusions, and clarifications. We have been loving the Shakespearean quotes as well as the bizarre concepts within this text. I am looking forward to us getting stuck into our next text, a modern day book that was inspired by *Brave New World*, so we might begin to compare, contrast, and make connections between the two.

We had our first round of book presentations, and I was delighted to see students be able to evidence their claims about their chosen book's themes and tone with strong quotations. I was also pleased to see them transfer the literary knowledge and discussions we have been having around the rug during read aloud time to their own books and explain some of the devices they had begun to notice in the texts they are choosing to read. This is a real step-up in terms of ability and being able to be a *thinking reader*, and I am delighted to see our students being enthusiastic about engaging with these ideas.

In writing workshop we have just completed our reflexive writing pieces. Students have worked on up to nine drafts of their memoirs and incorporated all of the lessons we have been discussing from looking at what makes an effective compared to an ineffective memoir to ensuring we all had a strong theme - or So What? to



checking our paragraphing, our descriptive details, through to polishing our prose and finally editing it before sharing it with their peers.

**Carrie Harrison**

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

Grades five through nine continue to improve with their mental math. The students are strengthening their number sense by focusing on number relationships rather than memorized procedures. All students are advancing in their collaboration skills and active listening. They have been continuing to impress me daily!

Fifth and sixth grade mathematicians have spent the month revisiting and extending their thinking about rounding and place value. In preparation for decimal multiplication and division, students have also been exploring a variety of strategies for multiplying and dividing. Rather than relying on the memorization of strict algorithms, students are encouraged to explore a variety of methods for solving.

Seventh grade math students have been exploring fraction and decimal operations. Connecting fractions, decimals and percents to our real lives has led to great math conversations between students about applying these concepts outside of school. Last week we began investigating solving equations. Students used algebra tiles to physically model the scenarios prior to moving to abstract equations.

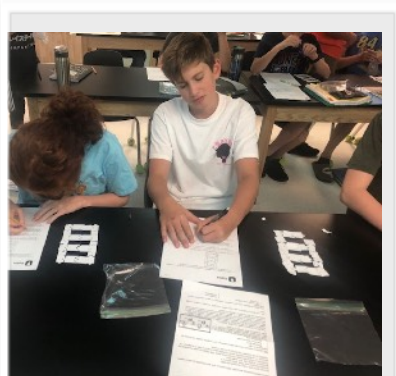
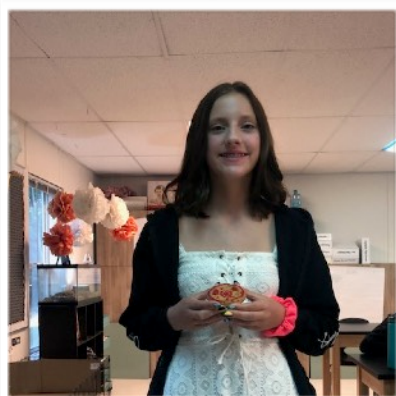
Algebra students tackled solving linear equations embedded in real-world contexts. They examined situations to determine initial values and rates of change. Students were initially challenged by the operations of polynomials but have begun to apply those skills when solving equations. Most recently, algebra students examined an ad for a “Bottomless Mug” of coffee. Rich class discussions led us to creating linear equations to determine if the \$139 mug was a good deal.

**Claire Want**

### *7-8 Science Workshop and Grade 8-9 Biology*

Grades 5-6 finished their first unit called *Structure of Matter*. The students were expected to develop models to describe the atomic composition of simple molecules and extended structures. We started our unit with a fun exploration of the periodic table and can now combine molecules! We also covered our unit on Physical and Chemical Properties. Students were expected to analyze and interpret data on the properties of substances before and after the substances interact to determine if a chemical reaction has occurred.

We are currently on our unit all about synthetic materials where students are expected to gather and make sense of information to describe that synthetic materials come from natural resources and impact society. They are HARD at work researching a natural



material and what synthetic materials we make from it. They are also expected to explain the impact of using natural resources to create such synthetic materials.

Grade 7 completed their unit on *Cells*. In this unit students conducted an investigation to provide evidence that living things are made of cells—either one cell or many different numbers and types of cells. We used microscopes to analyze living and nonliving items under the lens. 7th grade also completed their unit on *Cell Anatomy*. Students were expected to develop and use a model to describe the function of a cell as a whole and ways parts of cells contribute to the function. Students created some yummy cookies and recreated the cell organisms with icing.

Grade 7 students are now learning about *Bodies and Systems*. They are expected to use argument supported by evidence for how the body is a system of interacting subsystems composed of groups of cells. They will end this unit with a wonderful project where they create a 3-D model of a system of their choice.

Biology students' first unit this year was *Cell Division and Complex Organisms*. The students were expected to use a model to illustrate the role of cellular division (mitosis) and differentiation in producing and maintaining complex organisms by the end of the unit. Biology students have also completed their unit on *DNA to Proteins*. Our current unit is on *Inheritance of Traits* where students are expected to ask questions to clarify relationships about the role of DNA and chromosomes in coding the instructions for characteristic traits passed from parents to offspring.

**Laura Wellbrock**

### *5-6 Social Studies Workshop*

Grades 5-6 students have just finished their first multi-genre research project and their work exceeded my expectations. A multi-genre research project encourages students to express their knowledge, understanding and learning in any way they choose. This can be quite overwhelming to some students as it is very different to the traditional teaching and learning most students have been exposed to in their education to date. This next paragraph may be overwhelming, but it is why I love teaching at CTL so much, and I will happily bore you with a more detailed explanation of this paragraph any time you are willing to sacrifice an hour of your life.

The emphasis in this project/inquiry based learning model is about each student sourcing information related to the topic being studied from anywhere they choose (YouTube, wikis, books, conversations). They then synthesize or organize this information to recognize common themes or ideas and add it to what they already know so it makes sense to them. The students are then guided to pursue or dig deeper into the topic from a perspective that is interesting or relevant to them, and they are encouraged to make inferences and predictions



as they gather and begin to comprehend or make sense of all this new information. At this point I steer the students through the process of categorizing and creating context or perspective around its importance and/or relevance to the main idea, question or topic we are exploring.

Our class topic was exploring the first examples of farming around 12,000 bc in the 'fertile crescent.' They had to display an understanding of how humans moved from a hunting and gathering existence to one of stability, agriculture, farming, domestication of animals and early housing.

The creativity demonstrated by the students was varied and rich. We had a rap song, two model houses, a life size early man, a spear made with a rock and stick, a replica tool made from clay, a painting, a birth certificate, maps, slide show presentations, a menu, posters, a picture book and many more pieces, all of which demonstrated the students clearly understood the key ideas and themes in the curriculum. Each student made short notes to accompany the presentation of his/her project that provided context and a rich learning experience for the entire class.

**James Milner**

### *7-8 Social Studies Workshop*

In Grade 7-8 Social Studies Workshop we finished our family tree project for this year. Once again, I have been so impressed by the creative ways students decided to display their trees. I feel they have been really engaged and interested in this topic and have heard with delight how it has opened up conversations at home about relatives and family stories. By working on their own family histories, students now have a firm starting place for our main topic this year of *The United States through Industrialism*.

So far, we have examined the Native American Tribes, discovering how numerous they are, how culturally rich they are, and how far back their history goes in terms of being tied to the land that we now called the continent of North America. We have now begun to look at the early European explorers, and how the work they were involved in has not only impacted the history of the USA but also the history of the Native American people as well.

**Laura Wellbrock**

### *Grade 9 World Geography*

We have just finished a peer group research project exploring the five themes of geography where the students investigated the geographical facts of the United States and its physical features and how they impact how we use the land. They also looked at why populations are driven to certain areas and how water and climate influence food and lifestyle.

We will now move north to explore Canada and how culture and environment are connected. This will culminate in a depth study



comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the neighboring countries that share the North American continent.

**James Milner**

### *PK-8 Art Workshop*

In addition to drawing lessons with crayons, markers, and colored pencils, the Young Rembrandts classes used oil pastels and paint to create some pretty amazing portfolios. The portfolios will be used to keep students' artwork in during the trimester. After each trimester, students will select three outstanding pieces for their portfolio binders and write an evaluation on each piece. Other pieces of artwork not included in the portfolios will be sent home at that time. Pictured on your left are young artists working hard to create their portfolios.

**Pam Mayo, Young Rembrandts**

### *5-8 Drama Workshop*

Our focus during September was stage time—as much time as possible with scripts in hand projecting our voices and presenting with confidence. Against my better judgement, I put all the Grade 5 boys together under the stewardship of Raleigh in Grade 8 to deliver the play *Duck for President*. They all did a sensational job and were both entertaining and loud!

The students in our drama class speak with such confidence and energy, and I look forward to their first live performance at the end of October at our Halloween carnival. They really are crying out for an enthusiastic and intimidating live audience experience.

I have now cast and distributed scripts for our Halloween play, *Everything You Didn't Want to Know about Zombies*. Don't worry—it won't be scary!

**James Milner**

### *PK-8 Music Workshop*

Hello CTL Parents! Over the last few weeks, our music students have begun working on the selected songs for our winter musical. Now that they are familiar with the tunes and lyrics, we have also incorporated hand movements and dances.

In addition to preparing for the musical, each grade level has also been focused on continuing to learn and apply new concepts. The PreK and K classes have learned the Solfege (Do-Re-Mi) pattern in order to explore pitch. The 1st-4th grades have been using music terms like Dynamics, Rhythm, Tempo, Instrumentation and Mood to describe various listening selections. The 5th-8th grades have started learning about music notation and composition.

**Melanie Garcia**



### *PK-4 Physical Education Workshop*

We have been actively working on motor skills including walking, running, galloping, skipping, hopping and jumping. Pre-K through 4th grade played many games incorporating motor skills to reinforce these movements along with spacial awareness. Motor skills are the building blocks of all games and activities in physical education. The kids were having fun and have seen improvements with their coordination! This month we will be focusing on kicking.

***Sarina Eckhardt***

### *5-8 Physical Education Workshop*

Our first unit will be six weeks long, and the students will be playing Ultimate Frisbee. We love starting with this sport because it exemplifies teamwork and playing with integrity. We are slowly transitioning into SOCCER, a class favorite!

***Laura Wellbrock & Stephanie Jone***

### *PK-2 and Grade 9 Spanish*

In Spanish class we had fun discovering new words—from designing things with shapes to knowing how to tell the weather! Ask your children what the weather is like today, and you will discover the beauty of learning!

***Bethy Meixeiro***

### *Grade 9 Communications*

Progress toward starting our own radio station is going well. On Friday October 4 we were lucky enough to visit the iHeartRadio studios in downtown Houston. It was an awesome experience with the station teaching more in an hour than I could in a year. the kids learned how radio is made, why it's made, who makes it. They had a range of guest speakers lined up including on of their biggest stars across radio and social media. we were then swept into a production room and Noah,, Elise, Gavin, Eddie, Grayson, Asher and Sean all got a chance to voice an advert for Old Navy that played across Houston on The Beat, Sunny 99.1 and The Buzz. We even got the chance to hear Gavin's voice as we drove back from the city.

More planning is ahead though as the real work has to get started.

***James Milner***