



CTL CORNER

Center for Teaching & Learning | 25925 Budde Road, The Woodlands, TX 77380 | 832-474-8214

Important Dates

Friday, January 8

Brother's Pizza Friday Lunch

Friday, January 15

Quiznos Friday Lunch

Parent Council at 12:15 p.m. at CTL

Monday, January 18

No School - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Thursday, January 21

Grades 5-8 Parent Open House with Ms. Dos Santos at 6:00 p.m. at CTL

Friday, January 22

Chick-fil-A Friday Lunch

Friday, January 29

El Chaparro Friday Lunch

Important Reminders

*Please ensure your child is at school by 8 a.m. All students arriving after 8 a.m. will be marked tardy.

*Please ensure your child has a snack, lunch, and water bottle every day and tennis shoes on PE days (Mondays and Wednesdays).

*Please encourage your child to wear his/her CTL t-shirt each Friday.

*Please check your child's teacher's RenWeb page for class announcements, homework, and resources.



Happy New Year!

How exciting to see our CTL students return from the holiday break eager to share their holiday stories with their friends in morning meeting and through their writing. Thank you for your generous donation of time and resources to make our December holiday month so special for the CTL students.

CTL teachers met together on January 4 for a fun day of professional development and preparation, and the next day the students joined us and quickly got back into the learning groove. The building was once again bustling with the excitement of students and learning. Even though the grass is worn off our playgrounds, many students are going to miss playing in the dirt when the mulch and pine needles arrive.

We are excited to announce the addition of Chantal Dos Santos to our CTL team as our grades 5-8 Math/Science and grade 5 Social Studies teacher. Chantal graduated from the University of Pretoria in 2006 with a B.Ed. in Mathematics Education and from University of South Africa in January, 2015 with an H.B.Ed. (Honours in Education) in Mathematics Education. Before joining CTL Chantal served as lead math/science and social studies teacher at St. Dominic's Catholic School for Girls in Johannesburg, South Africa where she taught math and science in grades 4-7 since 2010. Prior to that she taught math, science, and social studies from 2007 to 2010 at Beaulieu Preparatory School in Johannesburg. Chantal's excitement, enthusiasm, passion, background/studies, and practices align perfectly with CTL's philosophy and vision. We are excited for Chantal to join our CTL team and welcome her with open arms!





At professional development this month, our CTL team revisited our vision as a Professional Development School and Demonstration School and the role of our Teacher as a Researcher Model. Last year we hosted our first student teacher, and in the fall we hosted Lori Williams from Sam Houston State University for her field experiences. Lori served us well as our full-time substitute as we awaited the arrival of Chantal. We were also highlighted in the fall in an article written by University of Houston graduate student Paul Prince (posted on our Facebook page) who visited CTL after 124 hours of field experiences to see his first reading/writing workshop classrooms, and Paul invited Ms. Bailey and Dr. Ellis to present with him at the Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts Conference in Austin January 23. Ms. Phipps and Ms. Lipar will attend the Early Childhood Conference sponsored by Harris County Department of Education in Sugarland on January 30. This week we are honored to host the Head of Schools and leadership team from St. Francis Episcopal Day School in Houston to visit our morning meeting and classrooms. We look forward to many more visits in the future. This keeps us on our toes as educators to continue to research best practices through our own professional development and through research in our classrooms and share our best practices with others.

We also are hosting many tours this month with numerous international and local families as our wait list continues to grow for the fall. It excites us to see so many families finding us from all over the US and in other countries as they search for a cutting-edge school for their children. The CTL vision and philosophy resonates with parents who are searching for a school where their children can and will fall in love with learning.

We celebrate the approval of the permits finally by Harris County, and the developers are making preparations to complete the prep work for our move to Creekside in the fall of 2016. We have renewed our contract at our current location through the spring and have negotiated space in the adjoining house for morning meeting, enrichment classes, and our enrichment clubs which will give us more room to spread out in the building.

We look forward to seeing our CTL parents on Friday, January 15 at 12:15 for Parent Council. We encourage you to share your celebrations, ideas, and questions with us.

What an exciting beginning to 2016!

[Linda Ellis and Jennifer Chamberlain](#)

Kindergarten

Kindergarten had so much fun in December! Thank you for your support of all the extra fun activities we squeezed into this month. Thank you as well for your generosity at Christmas time. I really appreciate the blanket (which I'm wrapped up in as I type this) and Pandora beads from the whole class, as well as all the treats, gifts, and sweet cards individual families gave me! I love working with your children each day and appreciate the gratitude you showed me during the holidays.

In reading we enjoyed many versions of *The Gingerbread Man*. Each time we read a new story, we thought about how it compared to other versions we had read in its characters, plot, and setting. We enjoyed reading many Christmas stories together as well. Through them we were able to continue working on comprehension skills such as making predictions and story elements. We began an author study of Jan Brett that we will continue on January. We love her books about the *Gingerbread Baby*! We are especially enjoying searching the details in her illustrations for clues that help us make predictions in her stories.

In writing many students were interested in writing "how to" books so we looked at many published "how to" books to see what features they have. We



noticed several things they had in common such as steps to follow and a list of needed supplies. Several students gave this new genre a try. In January we will examine another type of writing in which the class has shown interest. We will look at published "all about" (nonfiction) books and see what we can learn from them to help us write our own books about topics on which we are experts.

In math we have been working on concepts including composing and decomposing numbers, writing and recognizing numbers beyond 10, and composing shapes from smaller shapes. Our favorite math activity this month was probably working on measurement skills as we made gingerbread men! In January we will be measuring weight and capacity, understanding teen numbers, and representing addition and subtraction with pictures, objects, and symbols.

In science we studied objects in the sky including the sun, stars, clouds, and moon. We learned that there are many events in nature that happen in cycles including day and night and the appearance of the moon each night. The students enjoyed selecting a topic to research with a partner at the end of this unit. They researched their object on the computer and then recorded interesting facts in a pamphlet to share with the class. Next month we will begin our study of life science. We will begin by learning about the characteristics of living and nonliving things and the needs of living things.



In social studies we learned about strategies we can use to solve problems including calming down, listening to each other, coming up with possible solutions, and trying another solution if our first choice didn't work. Everyone brought a poster depicting their family's winter holiday traditions. The students enjoyed talking about their traditions and how they are similar to or different from the traditions of other students. Next month, we will be learning about how to be a good helper at school and what is in our neighborhoods.

Stephanie Phipps

Grades 1-2

I hope you all had a wonderful, relaxing break. The Explorers ended 2015 with a bang! They enjoyed all the fun created at CTL. From our class Elf, Jingle and his escapades each day, our pajama/Polar Express fun, the treasure shopping to the holiday parties, the class was BUSY! We had a great time making our holiday shirts too. The Holiday Music concert was absolutely awesome. All the kids did a great job.

We finished our units in science and social studies and are set to begin our new and improved math workshop. I love seeing their reactions to our new changes we began our first week back. The kids were ready to amp up their math skills.

Please read all correspondence available to you through RenWeb. I know I mention it often, but it is full of important information and announcements.

We are ready to start the new year fresh and





jump into some new activities and concepts in all subjects. Our school wide clubs began last week as well. I will be co-leading the Dr. Seuss Club with Mrs. Billings. We are excited to share our fun snacks and activities that go along with all of the Dr. Seuss books.

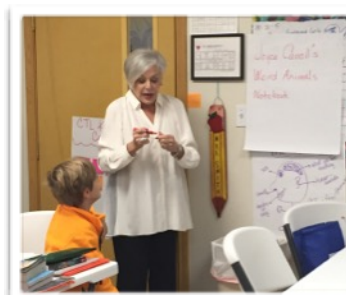
Happy New Year!

Lisa Lipar

Grades 3-4

What a fun month December was in our 3rd and 4th class! The beautiful weather accompanied with growing anticipation of the holidays filled our days as we counted down to the winter break. Thank you, students and parents, for your gracious gifts. I loved each and every present I received. The chocolates did not last long once in my house — nor did the gift cards! Your generosity warmed my heart. I feel blessed to have a wonderful group of students with a supporting and giving set of parents.

For December in reading workshop students continued to grow as readers by immersing themselves in their books of choice. Through continued teacher conferences students are sharing their love of books with me. During reading conferences, I've listened to students read and discussed with them why they are choosing certain books. Students are becoming more aware each day of particular genres and authors they want to continue reading. Students are not only sharing what they've read with me to show comprehension, but they are becoming sophisticated readers as they discuss author's styles and reasons why they are enjoying a book. It is wonderful to see students become immersed into what Nancie Atwell calls the "reading zone." When we returned to school in January I gave each student a small slip of paper and asked him/her to write down the title of a book they would like me to read as our next class read aloud. The plan is to make a list of books students want to have read aloud to them and allow them to vote on their top favorites. Before I could finish passing out the slips of paper, several students already had titles written down. No one struggled with thinking of a book they wanted to read. When students are excited about reading and can discuss titles and authors without hesitation, this is a mark of good readers!



In writing workshop, we delighted in having a guest teacher, Dr. Joyce Armstrong Carroll, founder and director of Abydos Learning (formerly New Jersey Writing Project in Texas). Dr. Carroll engaged students in the art of researching. Pink Dolphins of the Amazon began a lesson that illustrated to students how to research "weird animals" and write expository essays. Charged with researching their own "weird animal," students have continued their online research from the December lesson.

In January, we will learn how to assimilate all of our research into a well-written expository essay. Students will go through the writing process learning how to write exciting leads as well as the importance of giving credit to their resources from their research. Since her December lesson, Dr. Carroll has revisited our class, and students clamored to share their research with her. Their enthusiasm and depth of knowledge gained from their research will surely make their final published essays a joy to read. Besides expository essays, students are writing stories, poems, memoirs, and other choice pieces.



In math we have moved into multiplication and division. Some students already have multiplication facts memorized, while some students are being introduced to the concept of multiplication. We are working in groups to address the needs of each student. While we work with multiplication, we are simultaneously working with division. It is important that while students work toward memorizing their multiplication facts, they are memorizing not only sets of numbers but also seeing that division is the inverse operation of multiplication. Although memorization is important, it is imperative students understand the concept of multiplication in order to successfully memorize and use multiplication as a tool to solve mathematical problems. We will continue to work daily on our multiplication and division facts with emphasis on terms such as *repeated addition* and *groups of*. When a student's memory fails them, they need to have a back-up plan for deconstructing numbers in order to solve multiplication and division problems. Knowing repeated addition and breaking numbers into groups helps students solve problems. If you are interested in helping your child memorize multiplication facts through the use of flashcards, triangle shaped flashcards are a wonderful resource. With all three numbers together on the front of a card, students can practice both multiplication and division simultaneously. Triangle shaped flashcards may be purchased at any local teacher supply store.



In science we researched snowflakes by reading about Wilson Bentley, also known as the Snowflake Man. Viewing his amazing photographs of individual snowflakes spurred us to research how snowflakes and crystals form. Through a science experiment using boiling water and Epsom salt, over several days we patiently observed crystal formations. Although we set out to extend our knowledge of land formations (learning

how glaciers form), we reviewed physical science concepts such as solids, liquids, and gasses and how molecules behave in each state of matter. We discovered cold means the absence of heat and observed how this impacted the formation of crystals. In January, we begin moving into life science. Our research of weird animals has been a great cross-curricular way of moving into our next unit of study.

In social studies we have broken our study of geography into specific terms such as physical features, physical geography, natural resources, and climate. Besides becoming familiar with the location of each of the fifty states, we will begin researching the geographical features of each region and how those features impact peoples' daily lives. We will take a look at the geography of our community compared to the rest of the United States and see how our lives on a daily basis are impacted by our physical surroundings.

Melanie Smith

Grades 5 Language Arts

It was exciting to hear about the many books students read and/or received over the holidays. Several students have chosen to give a book talk about those they have enjoyed the most. Thank you for supporting your children in their growth as readers and writers. Deep reading is continuing to be modeled through the daily read aloud of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare. We ask that students read for a minimum of 30 minutes each night.





This not only improves their reading fluency, stamina, vocabulary, and comprehension, but also creates avid readers. Reading improves both reading and writing. We will continue our reading roundtable discussions about story elements and author techniques in order to gain a deeper understanding of the books students choose to read independently.

Students were also happy to get back into their writing when they returned. Many wrote over the holidays and are ready to begin working on final drafts. We will spend some time looking at poetry in the coming weeks to discover different ways writers express thoughts and feelings. I encourage students to write in their Thought Journal each night in order to capture new ideas and insights to be used in future pieces of writing.

I would like to thank you all for the generous gift basket. The journals and other items have already been put to good use and I'm looking forward to using the gift card to Barnes and Noble. Your generosity and kindness are very much appreciated.

Grades 6-8 Language Arts



It was exciting to hear about the many books students read and/or received over the holidays. Several students have chosen to give a book talk about those they have enjoyed the most. Thank you for supporting your children in their growth as readers and writers. Deep reading is continuing to be modeled through the daily read aloud of *Ship Breaker*. We ask that students read for a minimum of 30 minutes each night. This not

only improves their reading fluency, stamina, vocabulary, and comprehension, but also creates avid readers. Reading improves both reading and writing. We will continue our reading roundtable discussions about story elements and author techniques in order to gain a deeper understanding of the books students choose to read independently.

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I would like to thank you all for the generous gift basket. The journals and other items have already been put to good use, and I'm looking forward to using the gift card to Barnes and Noble. Your generosity and kindness are very much appreciated.

Grades 6-8 Social Studies

During December, students learned about the characteristics that lead historians to classify a society as a civilization and created a version of their own civilization. They enjoyed the project and will present their ideas to the class this month. Next, students will begin an individual research project that will culminate in an expository essay.

[Angela Bailey](#)





Grade 5-8 Math

December was an extremely busy and fun month! In math students completed a mid-year assessment. They then broke into small groups and finished the year reviewing fractions.

Grade 5-8 Science

In science students used seashells to learn about the process skills of science. They then utilized those skills to create our own labs testing the different properties of foam! It was messy, but they had a great time and learned how to apply the skills they have been learning. Before Christmas they made paper chromatography Christmas lights and used mixtures to create crystalline snowflakes.

Grade 5 Social Studies

In social studies we completed our Project Based Learning unit on the geographic regions of the United States. Students worked with their groups to develop presentations to persuade others that their region was the best region to live in. The presentations were excellent, and all students had a great time learning about the different areas of the United States.

Meet Ms. Chantal Dos Santos

What an amazing first week here at CTL! What a hidden gem for you as parents to have found an educational establishment that is better compared to a haven of education than merely a school. It truly is a blessing to be teaching at CTL which is at the forefront of educational practice for both learners and children.

I will be teaching 5th through 8th grade math and science and 5th grade social studies. Mathematics and science are both passions of mine, and my goal is to share my love for these subjects with your children. I hope that each day they will go home with a love for these subjects and will start 'stepping out of the box' in the way that they think and start thinking about thinking.

I have taken time to get to know all of your wonderful children and will begin with informal baseline assessments this week to ensure that all mathematical and science concepts are covered to their entirety. We will be hosting an Open House Thursday, January 21 where I would love to introduce myself to you all. I'll be available to answer any questions you may have concerning your child in any and all of these content areas.

Thank you for welcoming me to CTL. I am so happy to be a part of this amazing family!

Chantal Dos Santos

Grades K-8 Physical Education

Much of PE time in December for grades 3-8 revolved around creating and practicing a group jump rope routine. This proved much more difficult than expected, not because of jump roping ability but in the ability to work as a group. The end results were some interesting routines and a great lesson on compromise and communication.





Kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 began the catching and throwing unit. As it was December though, our games took on a holiday theme. Not to be left out, even the older students got in on holiday fun during PE. Throwing skills were practiced as the younger grades delivered presents down chimneys and had a "snowball" fight with fluff balls, while Rudolph and Santa Tag had our heart rates racing. The older students had team relays to rebuild tree farms, top trees with stars, and blast snowballs. The Abominable Snowman was the favorite though. A game with a twist, the "Abominable Snowman" keeps changing throughout the game so when the "Abominable Snowman" that got you out gets out, you are back in! We had lots of fun in what turned out to be a beautiful December.

As January gets underway, the catching and throwing unit will continue for K-2 with an emphasis on accuracy, distance, and overhand throws. The older students will be exploring lacrosse. We are fortunate to have a coach from The Woodlands Junior High Girls Lacrosse Association provide a clinic this week.

IMPORTANT: Please have your child dress weather appropriate on PE days. Because we lack a large indoor space, we will be going outside unless it is raining. Hopefully the mulching of our field will decrease the amount of dirt your child brings home.

Marci Murphy

Grades K-8 Art



ART CLASS

Artist Technique Mini-Lessons...

- Working with scissors to improve fine motor skills
- Working with liquid glue, rhinestones, beads, and sequins

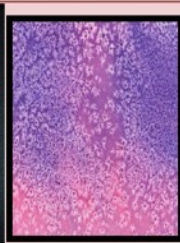
A Few of Our Art-Creating Experiences...



3-D "Bedazzled" Christmas Trees



Paper Gingerbread Houses



"Silent Starry Night" Watercolor Paintings with Kosher Salt



Festive Pipe-Cleaner Icicles

Community-Building, Empowerment Questions and Topics We Have Discussed...

- Maintaining Expectations with Consistency and Excellence After Returning from Thanksgiving Break
- What to Do When Smudges Happen
- How to Turn Mistakes to Masterpieces
- How to Use Kosher Salt with Watercolor Paints
- How to Not Compare Your Work with Others
- How to Celebrate Your Own Creativity

December 2015 was a month of festive creating for all CTL students. Every child was so excited to participate with every art project. Their creative energy is magnetic! The table overview is a quick snapshot of what we accomplished in art class for the month of December 2015.



January 2016 marks the beginning of fresh and inspiring art projects, intriguing art history mini-discussions, and hands-on art-making opportunities! Students will continue to reflect on their experiences making art. More specifically, we are going to focus more on the “process” of making art and the “feelings” we notice we have while we are creating art. Art classes will be structured to expose students to a plethora of new mediums and innovative art techniques. I am so excited for this year!

Students in grades K-8 are currently busy making Valentine’s Day cards to give to a local senior citizens’ home to bring some CTL joy to the residents, and

Mrs. Kinzel and the students will perform songs for the residents as well.

Special thanks to Mrs. Kinzel for such a joyful collaboration with art and music!

As a reminder, students in grades 6-8 will sign up to teach “CTL Young Artist Mini-Lessons” during art class, with guidance from Mrs. McKissic. During student-led mini lessons, students will share a favorite art technique or skill with the class and provide their peers with real-time modeling skills. All students in grades 5-8 will be participating in Artists’ Investigations during Trimester 2, where they will be able to research an artist of their choice to discover more about his/her childhood and life as an artists All details are forthcoming.

Treva McKissic

Grades K-8 Music

December was an awesome month for CTL music. I was proud of all the students and the wonderful performance they gave at the Holiday program. All their hard work came shining through in their singing, movement and instrument playing. I look forward to our next opportunity to perform for you. We concluded our December music classes with selections from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*. By adding movement and props to each selection, they are able to more easily identify them by name. We had a sword fight in “March,” danced the Russian and Chinese dances and added a parachute to “Waltz Of The Flowers.”

Currently we are working toward a CTL service project performance at the Harvest Home in Tomball. After dismissal Friday, February 5, we will go to the retirement home to give two performances—one for the general population and one for the Alzheimer’s unit. CTL students will also distribute Valentines cards they will be making in art class. This will be a wonderful opportunity to spread some cheer and happiness. Immediately after our performance everyone is invited to my home for fun and a cookout. Watch for a Sign-up Genius coming to let us know if you will be able to participate.

Debbie Kinzel