



CTL CORNER

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



Important Dates

September 21 - Reading Workshop for Parents - Please join us from 12:00 to 1:00 to explore with us the research and philosophy behind how we teach reading at CTL.

September 28 - Writing Workshop for Parents - Please join us from 12:00 to 1:00 to discover the research and philosophy behind how we teaching writing at CTL.

October 8 - Columbus Day Holiday - No School.

October 26 - CTL Annual Halloween Carnival. Please join us from 1:00-3:00 p.m. for an afternoon of family fun. More information to come.



Keep It Simple

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.... [Anybody] can make things bigger and more complex. It takes a touch of genius and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction.—Albert Einstein

What a fantastic beginning to a new school year! A great CTL Team! Phenomenal students and parents! All the ingredients for success!

We are off to a great start with our theme for the year to *Keep it Simple*. The theme is not new. It has followed us from the beginning, and each year it takes us back to our roots--the desire to create a school that focuses on children and their unique needs and gifts rather than test scores. Why, we asked, do we have to focus on numbers and competition? Why does learning have to be hard when most of what we really learn in life we learn because we desire to learn it? So once again, as we do each year, we return to our roots--to keep it simple and make learning fun!



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 snack, lunch, and 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 orange CTL t-shirt on Fridays.



As you experience this new learning journey with your child this year, please help us keep it simple. We value the uniqueness of each child. Every learning opportunity a child has is an opportunity for teachers to assess what he/she can do independently in order to take them to the next step. This provides parents and teachers with the opportunity to see what a child can create. When students take ownership of their work, that authentic feeling of success, of gaining new knowledge, should *ignite and grow a love of learning*, not something to be dreaded. If that were to happen, then we would be defeating the purpose of the learning experience and of our vision at CTL---to turn students on to learning--not off to learning. Learning experiences are to be positive, to stretch their creativity, to be less than perfect. The purpose isn't the product but the process of getting there, of asking questions, of finding answers, of challenging oneself. If the focus is on perfection, then we loose because we are focused on the wrong thing.

We had a tremendous week this summer as a team to engage in the love of learning. It was a time when we experienced positive, ready-to-learn energy. There was no homework--only questions, read-alouds, independent reading time from choice books on bean bags, writing and author's chair, mental math, science experiments, discovering our own passions. We energized each other through reviving our own discovery of fun in learning, just as we vowed to do for our students. Help us to make learning fun for them. What we desire to hear from you is that your child is curled up with a book or writing or doing math or science or a myriad of other activities that they see as fun, not that they are assigned, not homework.

We are excited about our new team members and all the resources and expertise they bring. This year brings the restructuring of CTL's math workshop with constructivist math experts and the addition of a new science teacher whose passion for science is contagious. Fridays we have returned to the roots for both the students and teachers (students with the original schedule, reading buddies, passion projects across all grade levels, and council to end the day and the week. We are witnessing meaningful and in-depth learning across the board in every classroom. Teachers become the students/learners during our Friday PD sessions as they engage in workshop-style learning, read-alouds, and discuss content, child development, and strategies to maintain consistent alignment with CTL's vision and mission statements.

The time when students are at home, we want them spending time with families, being kids, being involved in extracurricular activities because they choose to not because it is a chore or a homework assignment. Help us by sending them to school to learn. Encourage them to explore--be kids--be readers--be writers---be scientists--be mathematicians--be historians--be musicians--be artists--be actors--be fitness enthusiasts. That is our goal! Keep it simple! Enjoy!

Linda Ellis and Ryan DuFour



Pre-K Class

The Pre-K CTL Little Learners have had a great start to the school year! During the first two weeks, we've spent a lot of time getting to know each other and getting to know the rules and routines of CTL. We have already started Reading Workshop, and here are a few books that we have enjoyed thus far: *The Kissing Hand*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Pete Goes to School*, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* and *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, just to name a few.



We have started Writing Workshop, and I am especially proud of the books they are writing. I am amazed daily by their creativity and imagination.

In Math Workshop we have also been exploring some of the manipulates we will be using throughout the year. Many of our activities will be focused on number sense and counting.

In Social Studies Workshop we will continue learning about ourselves and our friends. Your children have made some beautiful nature self-portraits. All the supplies were retrieved from CTL's playground. Please check them out when you get the opportunity. They are displayed in our hallway.

Upcoming in September, we will be looking forward to talking about our five senses, we will continue to learn about ourselves and our friends and we will complete a few science experiments. And we are also hoping for some cooler weather!

Beckey Billings

Kindergarten Class

Greetings from Kindergarten! We are off to a fantastic start at CTL. We have been building our community while establishing our routines and procedures for work and play. Kindergarten is a year of growth and discovery. Children learn to become more independent as they develop efficiency as learners and discover their passions. I have an incredible group of students who have quickly become confident and comfortable in our learning environment. I look forward to an outstanding year together.

Thank you for sending all of the necessary supplies daily





including the daily folder, two snacks, water, lunch and indoor shoes. Please remember to send your child in athletic shoes on Monday and Wednesday for P.E.

I strongly encourage you to read to and with your child each and every day. I will begin sending home books with the children very soon each Friday on their reading levels. Upcoming in September, we will "fall" into reading.

Annie Manning

1-2 Class

What a great start to our school year! The Explorers class is starting to gel and find their way together as a team. We have had so much fun getting to know each other. They have been introduced to our class pet gerbils, Shadow and Snowflake. They can't get enough of them!

The class has fallen into the routines and procedures nicely. We reviewed our schedule and gradually added components of each subject so the class could ease into the structure of the workshops and flow of the curriculum.



The Explorers have begun to learn about strategies to use when they read and come across unfamiliar words. We are studying Kevin Henkes in our Author Study. We have read several of his books and have learned that he is an author and illustrator, and he uses many fun characters who are carried throughout his books. Students are also selecting just-right books for independent reading during Reading Workshop. Each child is able to find a quiet place to read and get comfortable with books that will keep them reading the entire time.

Writing Workshop is in full swing. The Explorers have been introduced to our mini lesson where I have modeled writing by writing my own story with the class. My dogs, Delilah and Piper, are my topic and have become a big hit! They learned prewriting strategies to get them started with their writing topics. They have been sharing their writing in the Author's Chair. This is exciting as they are all anxious to read their pieces to the class and hear comments and connections from their peers. It is a great way to get them encouraged to stretch their ideas further.

In our Math Workshop the class has learned the importance of Number Talks, worked on sorting, organizing, and grouping items into tens, fives and "loose" ones. The focus of making ten and understanding how to compose and decompose numbers within ten has been enlightening. It is interesting to see how each student is



thinking, manipulating objects, and sharing their findings in our math congress. I am eager to see where their thinking leads as we move forward!

In Science Workshop the class looked at the various body coverings and characteristics that help animals survive, eat, and adapt to their environment. They each chose one animal and described three characteristics that help it survive.

Social Studies Workshop was fun as the students looked at themselves and what makes them unique. We each completed an *All About Me* book, designed a creative family tree, and made a life-sized drawing of ourself. The Explorers shared and found out information about each other in a "getting to know you" interview activity. It was special to see them all interacting with each other and having fun!

I am eager to guide them through their learning and watch as the class explores, creates, and solves problems together while learning how awesome it is to be different and unique. I am encouraged as I hear the rich language and discussions they have shared so far. This is going to be an enthusiastic year full of discovery! Thank you all so much for your support. I truly have been given the privilege to teach your children.

Lisa Lipar

3-4 Class

We have had an awesome start to the 2018-19 school year! We have been focusing on rules and procedures along with cultivating a positive classroom learning environment. Since the first day of school we have been enjoying our read-aloud book *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes* by Jonathan Auxier. Daily we read independently. Students are encouraged to be comfortable and spend at least 30 minutes reading. They have expressed to me that they love this part of the day during Reading Workshop! What a great group of students! After reading students share with peers or write a reflection about what they've read.

In Writing Workshop students are working on personal narratives. Students write daily and are allowed ample time to write and share their amazing narratives. We will explore personal narratives and organizing ideas throughout this trimester.

In Social Studies Workshop students are learning more about their families and family history. We have discussed family trees and are working to make our own family tree.

In Math Workshop we are excited to use the new CTL math curriculum which includes "math talks" as a warm up. Then we work together on a math problem and share our conclusions. Students are encouraged to use different strategies and discuss how they came to their conclusions. This is the way we will approach all of our math topics this year.



In Science Workshop we have explored plant and animal life cycles. Our science topics this year will be guided by *Stemscopes*, our CTL science curriculum resource. We will continue to compare and contrast life cycles and notice them in the world around us.

I am excited to learn and grow along with our amazing class! It is going to be a wonderful school year.

Corrie Sheldon

5-8 Reading Writing Workshop

In 5th and 6th grade Reading Workshop, our read aloud book is *Philip Pullman's Northern Lights (AKA The Golden Compass)*, and we are learning how to see a movie in our minds as we listen. We are understanding how characters grow and develop as layers of information are provided to us by the author.

In 7th and 8th grade Reading Workshop our read aloud is a first-person narrative told through an animal's mind's-eye, Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse*. We have been discussing recurring themes presented in the book including friendship, misfits, and the massacre of working class men during World War I.

You can hear a pin drop during our Reading Workshop time for all grade levels, as the children have dedicated silent reading time with their books of choice. Every child has found a just-right book, and several have already finished their first novel.

In Writing Workshop we have been focusing on ideas generation and pre-writing activities. Our *Author's Ideas* composition books now have several pages of story ideas

generated from the children's own memories. We have freely written (meaning we aren't worrying about spelling, punctuation, grammar - but are instead working on getting the story out of us and onto paper) the start of several stories. This free-writing will continue for another week, and we will then move into developing our initial ideas, drafting and re-drafting to refine the storyline on one of our pieces. Then we will take one piece through the process before having at least one final published piece at the end of the first six weeks (first week of October).



We have also been enjoying our Friday "Reading Buddy" time. The older students are relishing the opportunity to mentor their little reading proteges during snack time once a week. We have reviewed



read aloud techniques with picture books and have revisited some of our favorite books as young children. We are all looking forward to seeing how these reading relationships develop throughout the year.

Caroline Harrison

5-8 Math Workshop

Fifth through eighth grade mathematics investigations are underway. These mathematicians begin every class period with a mental math activity. Our goal with mental math is to develop strong computational efficiency and number sense. Students are replacing cumbersome and inefficient strategies with their own approaches that are constructed through recognizing patterns and developing number sense. All grade levels have been concentrating on building our community of learners. Mathematics requires risk taking, and our classroom is no different. All students are encouraged to think and share in a safe, secure learning environment.

The focus in fifth grade has been analyzing various strategies for multiplication and division. We are striving to determine which methods are most effective for each individual, while also recognizing problems that lend themselves to certain strategies. Our goals are to develop meaning behind the operations with whole numbers and develop computational fluency.

The sixth grade students have been expanding their understanding of fractions. By investigating a problem involving students needing to split sandwiches evenly on a field trip, the class has developed fractional relationships. We are striving to construct meaning behind fractions and their operations.

Seventh and eighth grade math students have been developing several big ideas related to proportional reasoning by examining two pet stores: Bob's Best Buys and Maria's Pet Emporium. We have conducted some in-depth investigations involving ratios and rates. The eighth graders are extending this thinking into unit rates and ratio tables. Some eighth grade students even began writing equations to represent different rates.

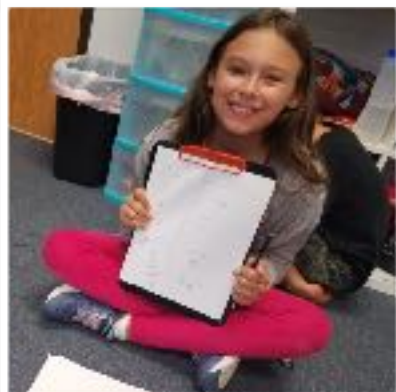
Claire Want

5-8 Science Workshop

Fifth grade Science Workshop started off with a BANG! Now we are exploring science that can't be seen with the naked eye. We are exploring "All About Matter" and using the guiding question, *Does matter exist if it can't be seen?*

As we move through our unit on matter, the students will Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Extend on Matter changing states, properties of matter, and mixtures. After studying matter, we will be excited to learn about our next unit "Organisms' Use of Matter and Energy."

Sixth grade Science Workshop is currently exploring "The Structure



of Matter” (physical science). We have been diving deep into the periodic table of elements. We have learned how to navigate the periodic table and read an element for information.

In our Science Workshop Lab students began by learning that atoms can combine to form various substances and then discovered that a subscript following an element symbol and a chemical formula explains how many of a particular atom are present in a molecule. Students wrapped up the lab by discovering that pure substances contain atoms from a single element or repeating units of combined atoms. The students read a chemical formula and were able to take different colored snap cubes and combine the correct amount of each to recreate a substance. For example H_2O : The students combined 2 hydrogens and 1 Oxygen.

Both seventh and eighth grade CTL Scientists will be exploring cells (life science). We are currently focused on the unit "What Are Cells?" The students were expected to conduct an investigation to provide evidence that living things are made of cells; either one cell or many different numbers and types of cells. We took drinking water, pond water, a leaf, and sand under a microscope to examine living vs. non-living. Our next unit is very exciting and will really stretch the students' knowledge with the anatomy of a cell. The students will be 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.

Laura Wellbrock

5-6 Social Studies Workshop

Grade 5-6 Social Studies Workshop is off to a great start! We spent our first week refreshing ourselves about maps and longitude and latitude—I bet the kids know it better than most of you. Our trick to remembering the difference is latitude rhymes with “flatitude”; therefore, latitude lines go east to west! You’re never too old to learn a good rhyme that may help you out in a game of trivial pursuit.

Next up is a two-week investigation of Native Americans. This is our first project-based assignment for the year. Project-based learning is a core component of my teaching style. It encourages the students to dig deeper to look for answers and lets them pursue areas of interest to them. As they become intrigued by a fact or a story, they become more inquisitive and start to access higher-order thinking skills as they search for and answer key questions relevant to their area of study. This first task they’re doing is in pairs, but as we progress through the year they’ll move to more





independent learning tasks.

Socially our new students have settled in well, and I like the way they sit next to different people all the time. They are all engaged and working hard.

Soon we'll begin studying the immigrant experience in America so if you have a family story or know a friend who has one, I'll be asking the students to do some interviews and research.

We have a spectacular group of 5-6's and the speed they're working at is awesome.

James Milner

7-8 Social Studies Workshop

In 7th and 8th grade Social Studies Workshop, we have been focusing on understanding our place in history through our Family Tree Project. This has already provided many interesting relatives who have been alive during turbulent times in the past. We will also begin working on another major topic this year, American History through to Industrialization. We will start this topic by investigating Native American Indian tribes over the coming weeks.

Caroline Harrison

PK-8 Art Workshop

Pre-K and Kindergarten art workshop students began the year on the hunt for colors and geometrics as we launched the basic "Elements of Art." Our focused shape has been the circle. For grades 1-8, art workshop students have been engaged in stories by Peter Reynolds, *Ish* and *The Dot*, which fueled our adventures through the creative process. These literary offerings prompted critical discussions on the drawing of textures and the use of color to illustrate mood and energy. Famous artists, Salvador Dali and Wassily Kandinsky, introduced us to various approaches and techniques giving us license to more fully express ourselves. Their works inspired us to use our imagination to utilize complimentary and analogous colors as we worked to create both symmetrical and asymmetrical multi-media works of art.

In the next few weeks, we will take a look at shapes found in nature, how artists illustrate things seen and unseen (Van Gogh's *Starry Night*) and how artists incorporate their ideas with natural elements (Christo and Jeanne-Claude). By observing and discussing elements found in nature, then integrating found objects and a variety of mediums, personal as well as collaborative pieces will be created, age-appropriate, for all to enjoy.

Abby Salazar

5-8 Drama Workshop

To me, drama is not about acting; it is about confidence. It is about empowering our young students to stand in front of an audience and perform or present with energy and enthusiasm. My new drama



workshop class is already blowing my mind! They are spectacular. My new students have come in and joined the class with a huge amount of energy, and our older students have stepped up, making more decisions and leading.

We've already had one drama performance to the rest of the school of *Billy Goats Gruff*, *Sleeping Ugly* and *Cinderella* (Diego was excellent as the Fairy God-dude). We're now rehearsing for our second set of shows. The plots are a bit more complicated, and there are a lot more lines to memorize...more work for everyone. I'll let you know through Facebook when we'll be performing *Aladdin*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Princess and the Dragon*. It'll be a Thursday afternoon in late September, and it'll just be a small production as we work toward our art-music-drama night later in the year.

James Milner

PK-8 Music Workshop

First, I am thrilled to be joining the CTL community! I have loved meeting parents and students and can sense the energy and enthusiasm that the school seeks to foster every day and in every class. And I am excited to be teaching music to your kids. My goal is to inspire each one with a love for music of all kinds and to see each accomplish amazing feats in their own music-making.

Our theme for the year is "Traveling the World Through Music." In the lower grades, we enter the room as planes zooming into a landing on the carpet. We have talked about the globe and the different countries, languages, music, and people of the world. In Pre-K and K music workshop, we are learning "Hello to All the Children of the World." They love learning the different words for "hello" in different languages! In 1st through 4th, we are learning "What a Beautiful World" by Louis Armstrong, and their voices are lovely! This trimester we are working on rhythm skills, so we are experimenting with different percussion instruments such as rhythm sticks, bells, sand blocks, finger cymbals, to practice the difference between beat and rhythm. We have used play dough to visualize eighth and quarter notes so far, and we will be playing different rhythm games to reinforce each rhythmic concept we learn. We also will read a different picture book each week about learning an instrument, the joy of music, or a specific kind of music like jazz. We learned about the country of Japan last week and some specific aspects of Japanese music, as well as learning the folk song "Sakura," a song about cherry blossoms that are blooming just as children are starting back to school in Japan. It is a lot to pack into 50 minutes each week, but the students are doing an excellent job.

In the 5th through 8th grades music workshop, we are experimenting with all different kinds of natural instruments to learn rhythm and percussion. We are also focusing on learning to work together as a musical group. The first week we watched a short video of the group called "Stomp." Then we started experimenting right away with



different beat patterns on buckets. Last week we reviewed rhythm notation for eighth, quarter, half, and whole notes, and then we started learning a two-part percussion piece on buckets with mallets. Then we added in some cymbals, triangles, and sand blocks to open up the sound--it is a great piece! Coming up, we will be adding in shakers, scratchers, and glass bottles. We will explore the basic tones on the high rim, side, and center of the buckets, as well as stick clicks and mallet maneuvers. We will also start practicing the four modes of one bucket groove, unison, group groove, and movement groove. It is definitely a drumming dreamland!

Sommer Trebilco

PK-4 Physical Education Workshop

We have been active outside for every day but one since school started. Students are learning expectations, safety, how to be prepared to participate in activities, and appropriate behavior in PE. Pre-K and kindergarten P.E. Workshop students are learning a fun sing-along rhyme to do their physical warm-ups each morning while simultaneously learning personal space. They have been working on their hand-eye coordination by practicing throwing a ball in a small basketball hoop. First through fourth grade P.E. Workshop students have been running to get those heart rates up, stretching, and learning how to properly kick a soccer ball. They played their first practice scrimmage this week. It was a great opportunity to learn team-building skills while having fun. They all participated and demonstrated commitment in the activity. I was quite impressed by their enthusiasm. While we were inside we enjoyed yoga. We're off to a fantastic start!

Sarina Eckhardt

5-8 Physical Education Workshop

I am excited that our fifth and sixth grade students have a love for soccer like I do! They have chosen to focus on soccer for the first trimester. During this trimester we will conduct drills to learn important skills necessary to play. The students are currently focusing on throw-ins, passing, and dribbling. I have dedicated Mondays to drills and Wednesdays to small matches to show our skills we practiced on Monday. When we find ourselves inside due to weather, we engage in 20-minute work outs and 20-minute yoga sessions.

CTL seventh and eighth graders have chosen to explore a wide range of P.E. activities. We will emphasize team games that will challenge the students to come up with strategies and execute these strategies as a team. To begin we are playing a variety of different "tag" games that promote physical activity but also force students to work together to create strategies to complete the challenge. These games start easy, but with each round they begin to have more challenges and experience change. When we find ourselves inside due to weather, we will focus on 20-minute workouts and 20-minute yoga sessions.

Laura Wellbrock