

COFFIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S NEWSLETTER

Issue Three 2013 – 2014

November 2013

Dear Coffin School Families,

I hope that this finds all of you well.

As a part of the time I spend in classrooms every week, I often ask students questions about their learning. Our conversations usually start with a straightforward, "What are you learning?" and evolve from there. Sometimes I'll ask this follow-up "How do you know that you're learning?" (tough question), and encounter widely varying answers.

Noting the impact of my questions on the responses, I've been framing questions a little differently. Now I also ask, "What's something you do really well here at school?" (the 'recess' answer is not an option...) followed up by, "Tell me how you know this." Wow! What a difference. By changing to a more open-ended mode of interaction, I'm able to learn much more about the students and how they see themselves as learners. This latter line of questioning consistently brings out livelier and more engaging answers.

I share this knowing that you'll be conferencing with your child's teacher in these next couple of weeks. There will be discussion of benchmarks, assessments, and report cards that cover a variety of essential learning areas. Teachers will be anticipating your questions and concerns and will be ready to answer and respond. In addition to these important lenses, I trust that you'll also find time to simply celebrate your child's growth from the beginning of the year.

I know that teachers are very much looking forward to joyfully sharing with you your child's academic and social progress. In the midst of this increasingly busy time of year, conferences can be a welcome few minutes to step back and to take pride in how far we've come.

Wishing you and yours a pleasant Thanksgiving holiday.



Mr. C.
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Coffin Calendar

November

Saturday the 9th, 3rd Annual Elementary Craft Fair @ HBSS
Monday the 11th - Veteran's Day - NO SCHOOL
Friday the 15th - K-5 trimester ends
Friday the 15th - Walk/Bike to school
Tuesday the 19th - CFC Meeting @ 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday the 26th - Early Release @ 1:00 PM (conferences)
Wednesday the 27th - Conferences - NO SCHOOL
Thursday the 28th and Friday the 29th - Thanksgiving Break

December

Wednesday the 11th - Early Release @ 1:00 PM (staff development)
Monday the 23rd through January 7 - Holiday Break
Tuesday the 17th - CFC Meeting @ 7:00 PM
Friday the 20th - Walk/Bike to school
All Month - A.A.E. (Arts Are Elementary - Katy Rydell) in Kindergarten

January

Wednesday the 1st - New Year's Day
Monday the 6th - school resumes from Holiday Break
Friday the 17th - Walk/Bike
Monday the 20th - Martin Luther King Day
Tuesday the 21st - CFC meeting @ 7:00
Wednesday the 29th - Early Release @ 1:00 (staff development)
All Month - A.A.E. (Arts Are Elementary, - Julie Yeo) in Grade 1



Students add to the weaving wall during our recent Coffin School Harvest Festival. Many thanks to Community for Coffin - our fantastic parent group - for organizing this perennially successful event.

A Message From Mrs. Bradley Coffin School Counselor

This month I had the opportunity to attend a very enlightening conference hosted by Dr. Ross Greene in Portland, He is the author of *The Explosive Child*, *Lost at School* and a strong advocate for non - punitive methods of managing children's behavior. There were people speaking and attending from many parts of the United States. I came away with a greater understanding about the connection between some discipline strategies and children's brain development.

I would like to share some information that may be helpful reminders for all family members caring for young children. Experts who have studied many different groups of young children have found that physical punishment, especially spanking, can have immediate and long term negative effects. Spanking, or the fear of spanking, raises the cortisol level in a child's brain which often causes a child to have more difficulty focusing, learning, and managing their impulses. Spanking interrupts the trusting "you and me" connection needed for a child's healthy emotional development.

I learned that many studies have found this punishment and other stressors in early childhood are often linked to later physical and mental health problems in adolescents and adults. Normal frustration and the discipline adults experienced early in their own lives certainly influences their own choice of discipline strategies when children's behaviors are challenging.

The good news is that there are many parenting resources available to help with behaviorally challenging children. If you are interested in more information about this topic please feel free to contact me or check the website :

<http://stopspanking.org/resources/>

Library News

We in the Coffin library are very pleased that we have so many children and families who are enthusiastic about books. This was evidenced by the wonderful response we had to the book sale at the Harvest Festival. Our book fund is now \$208.00 richer. We'll be able to buy several books to add to our collection. Thank you for loving books and supporting your school library.

More good news! The library is pleased to announce that as of November 18th (the first day of the second trimester), first grade and multiage students will be able to check out two library books at a time, if they do not have an overdue book. Of course, no first grader or multiage student has to select two books; they may decide to choose only one at a time. Both books must be returned before any new books are checked out.

Mrs. Margy Soule and Mrs. Ruth Wilson

msoule@brunswick.k12.me.us or 319-1955



This first-grade Professional Learning Group (PLG) analyzes the 'Words Their Way' spelling program.





This lunch table is one recipient of the daily 'Quiet as a Mouse' cafeteria recognitions. The goal is to encourage students to practice using their quietest voices during the last ten minutes of lunch. This allows friends to finish eating and makes for smoother transitions to the next activity.



Mrs. Shea leads a literacy lesson on the parts of a story with the secondary goal of building independent reading stamina. You'll notice on the bulletin board behind her that in literacy students are working on comprehension - *I understand what I read*, accuracy - *I can read the words*, fluency - *I can read accurately, with expression*, and understanding what I read and expression - *I know, find, and use interesting words* (CAFÉ).



Mrs. Sciacca, Mrs. Erb, and Mrs. Martin have been recognizing students who strive to be a Baxter's Helper during a Baxter's Helper Meeting every Friday afternoon. The awards go to students who are caught going above and beyond the expectations and to those students who have been working hard to make positive changes.



Welcome to secondSTEP®



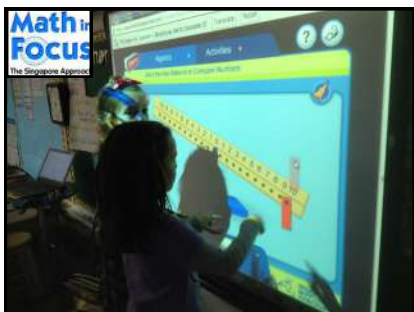
Kindergarten students play a game of "Follow, Follow" as part of our weekly Second Step lessons. During this game, students have practiced waiting for directions, following multi-step directions, ignoring distractions and using self-talk to help to remember – all *really* important skills for learning!



We are very fortunate to have a number of Brunswick High School students who volunteer weekly in classrooms. Here, two high school students are helping out during a literacy lesson in Mr. Bernier's room.

Brunswick High School

Students in Mrs. Doughty's first grade class practice using a number balance to find different two parts that equal a whole (e.g., 3 and 7 equal 10).



K-5 Curriculum Coordinator/Administrative Consultant Cherie White leads a recent staff development for K - 2 staff on the Developmental Reading Assessment.



Tessa Kingsley from Coastal Maine Pediatric Dentistry gathers Halloween candy as part of this year's 'buy back'. All collected candy will be sent to our troops.



Mrs. Crosby constantly updates the beautiful displays of student artwork that brighten our hallways.

A community of learners founded on safety, gentleness, kindness and the pursuit of quality work.



Kindergarten Open House - Follow-up

The Kindergarten team is grateful for those families who could attend the curriculum night on October 10th. We understand the business of family life. Handouts from the evening can now be found on the web so that everyone can have access to that information. Our hope is to give all parents a greater understanding of math, literacy, and social/emotional growth in kindergarten. On the evaluation sheets, two questions were asked about the role of play and the role of technology in today's kindergarten and we want to address these important issues.

The goal for every kindergarten student at Coffin School is to become an independent, confident, and self-directed learner. The goal for every kindergarten teacher is to provide opportunities every minute of every day to help each child achieve success in all areas of their public school experience. The kindergarten team feels that this success is achieved through a careful balance of activities that engage learners fully. Research is clear that play is imperative for kindergarten students to try on roles and explore the world around them and make it their own. Play encourages self-reliance, problem solving, persistence, negotiation, advance planning, and spatial thinking. Teachers imbed math, science, and literacy activities into fun meaningful contexts through play. Play is important for cognitive, social/emotional, and physical growth. Each kindergarten teacher provides time for outside play and indoor play. Play is part of the necessary work of children.

At the same time, we know as teachers we cannot physically expose the children to all the knowledge they seek. We need to use technology as one tool to open up new horizons. At Coffin School we use a wide variety of technology to expand and enhance the children's understandings. We use technology to connect with and build onto our kindergarten curriculum. Technology is used to differentiate instruction.

At Coffin School, your child is engaged in a well-balanced program to nurture their development and prepare them for their future. We are so pleased to have you as partners on this journey.

Copies from the resources shared at Kindergarten Open House can be found at these two links: Academic - <http://tinyurl.com/k9rufeh>
Social-Emotional - <http://tinyurl.com/kweo8fj>



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Community for Coffin

<http://www.brunswick.k12.me.us/cof/community-for-coffin/>



Thank you, Coffin Community!

Last Friday and Saturday were excellent examples of all the time and talents that are so generously shared by our wonderful community members. Friday morning started with parents selling healthy snacks at the Snack Shack, and a crew of teachers and families greeting students for Walk/Bike to School Day. Throughout the day there were community members volunteering in classrooms and the library. After school a crew of volunteers set up the Book Fair while another crew tended the atrium plants and met the truck delivering mulch for our gardens. On Saturday, eight families gardened over several hours to prepare our front gardens and raised vegetable beds for winter.

We are thankful for our terrific Community!



Some of the parents and teachers who greeted students and helped them walk safely to school on our November Walk/Bike to School Day



Coffin Garden Club leaders Kim Bolshaw Noetzel and Barry Logan, pictured separately, hard at work in the



One of the Coffin School bike racks on our November Walk/Bike to School Day



We love our volunteers - come join us!

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