



HOME OF THE PATRIOTS | CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS

# Southwest Middle School



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IN THIS ISSUE: CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

## Academic Writing: Writing to Learn

The article, *A Range of Writing Across the Content Areas* by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey, states that if students aren't writing fluently, then they probably aren't thinking fluently about the topic of study.

Did you know writing to learn, to build comprehension and understanding, is a method teachers can use in core contents, the arts and beyond? To support teachers on how to incorporate the writing process in the learning environment with scholars, the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) will focus on content-area writing for this school year.

As a recap of our literacy focus as a district and learning community, scholars have been provided with opportunities to develop skills through practice in close reading, academic conversations and pre-writing via the guidance of the ILT and classroom teachers. These aforementioned steps have

created a strong foundation to reach the next level of curriculum and instruction. There will now be intentional opportunities to write before, during and after a unit of study.

Parents, how can you support the writing to learn process at home? Ensure your child participates in school-based or district writing contests, such as *Do the Write Thing*. Also, when reading newspapers and magazines, discuss the traits found in the articles that make, you, the reader truly understand the topic or message conveyed. If the writer did not achieve this goal, then discuss what the writer could have done differently to reach his or her audience.

**Family Challenge:** You and your scholar can write a letter to a family member you have not seen in a while. Mail it via snail mail. No e-mails or text messages!

### 8<sup>TH</sup> Grade

Nicole Scotti

Fran Mayer

Olivia Robinson

Beth Kohlhoff

Marilyn Bollinger

Grant Huether

Deborah Baysinger

Grant Joreid

Anna Marcello

Deborah Nahikian

### 7<sup>TH</sup> Grade

Charlotte Pohlig

Katrina Maurer

Lisa Johnson-Ritchey

Ray Adams

Alecia Bryant

Barnetta Boston

## Teachers of Gifted Scholars

### 6<sup>TH</sup> Grade

Jordan McMullen

Melissa Busteed

Jordan Wilson

Geoffrey Reckerd

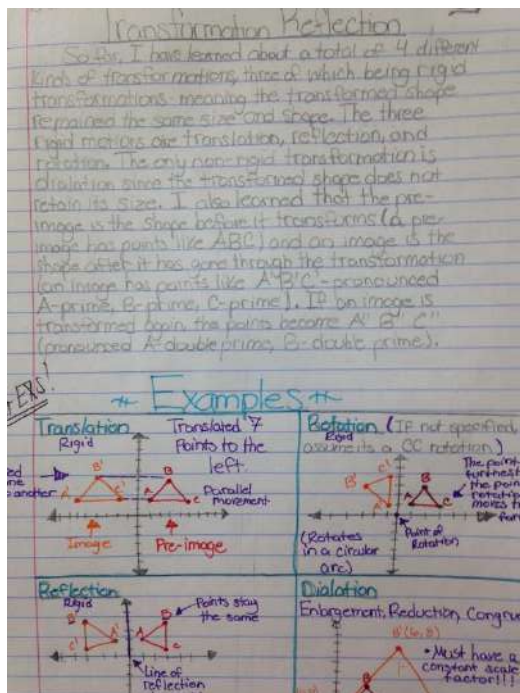
Kelly Mayreis

Luke Eller

Jeyna Minnick

Jennifer Vega-  
Prieto

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math



In Math 1 and 2 this year, students are analyzing and synthesizing their learning in written reflection summaries.

Students are also given the option of “testing out of” a particular unit (Linear in Math 1, Quadratics in Math 2). If they are successful with this pretest, they then complete an alternative, more rigorous assignment in small groups and then present it/teach it to their peers.

This is a form of compacting the unit so that further and more in-depth learning can take place. In this way, students’ understanding expands and grows foundationally and they are able to assist the classes’ learning process.



## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math

6th grade Honors Math is focusing on delivering 6th and 7th grade curriculum to ensure that all honor students will be able to take Math 1 by their 8th grade year.

Honor students participate in a 10 week Fantasy football unit to support the use of formulas, operation with negative numbers, increase proficiency with decimals and fractions. Increase use of reading strategies with Problem Solving scenarios from both 6th and 7th grade curriculum.

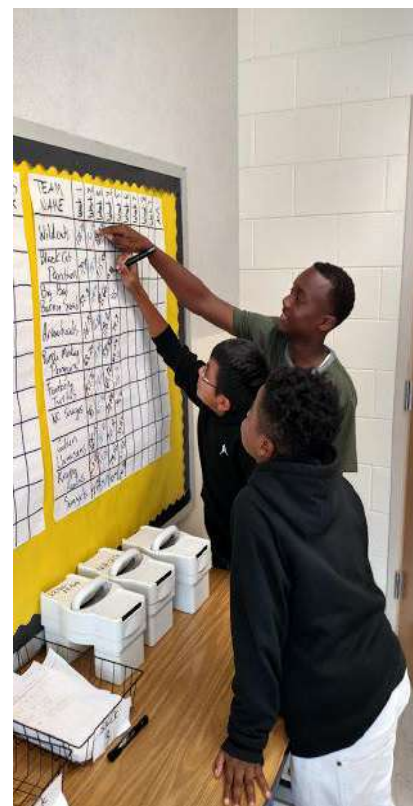
Students are also focused on learning Rational numbers, positive and negative, and perform a variety of operations with Rationals and solve multi-step problems.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math

Both 7th grades Math 1 and Honor students are allowed to take ownership of their own learning through curriculum acceleration. They are instructed to work ahead to problems of skills that they do not know. Students are encouraged to learn the value of attaining knowledge in their lives, taught how to research skills by accessing information that promote higher level thinking, creative thinking and problem solving skills. In addition, the students learn how to communicate newly acquired information with their peers by allowing them to lead classroom discussions during instructions; students are given the opportunity

to become instructors, while the teacher becomes the facilitator.

Students are supported and guided to set their own goals that are specific, measurable, realistic and within a reasonable time frame. However, we ensure not to place expectations that are too high or too low. Embracing diversity and honoring differences in the classroom is our goal by establishing a warm and accepting classroom environment. Next quarter the focus will be on encouraging all students gifted and non-gifted to participate in academic contests that tend to be competitive by nature. Also, we will increase literacy awareness in writing in mathematics by allowing scholars to write, reflect and publish a class newspaper to distribute to 7th graders.



# English Language Arts

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Students are currently working on Fiction Menu Projects (titled "Think Tac Toe"). Through reading and researching various types of texts, students are learning about author's style, elements of fiction, and literary elements.

Choice menus allow students to create projects based on their strengths. Education is not a one size fits all program in this class. Students learn through a series of different ways and are assessed using a variety of channels. Project Based Learning is geared towards students who are academically disciplined and have the drive to push themselves further.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

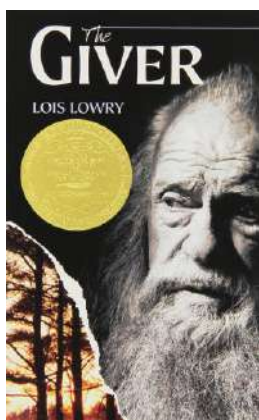
Seventh grade Honors English Language Arts students are reading novels as a way to identify literary elements and strategies in an independent setting. Students are also using nonfiction reading strategies and annotations to better understand the world around them and connect the world to the literature we are reading in class. Students are working at becoming critical thinkers, readers and learners.

Students have been using testing data to reflect and set goals for the coming quarter and year. Students have been tracking their own data to take leadership and responsibility for their efforts and learning.

Scholars in some 7th grade Honors classes are completing weekly book blogs, sharing their comprehension and evaluations of novels with the world. Students will be posting new blogs on their current novel every Friday. These students will also have the opportunity to see and critique a live performance of a novel they are reading in class. Students will be instructed in live performance etiquette. Also, these students will get to see their in-class novel brought to life.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Sixth grade scholars are bringing literature to life! They participated in a learning extension that reenacted a scene from our current novel, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. During the "Ceremony of Twelves" students received "job assignments" that correlates with our culminating project. The project gives students an opportunity to create a Utopian version of our school. Students had nine options for their project, emphasizing student choice and academic rigor. Many AIG students chose to combine projects to increase the level of difficulty or came up with their own spin on the options. Our students are being incredibly creative and demonstrating their strengths.



The Community  
8

“The worst part of holding the memories is not the pain. It's the loneliness of it. Memories need to be shared.”

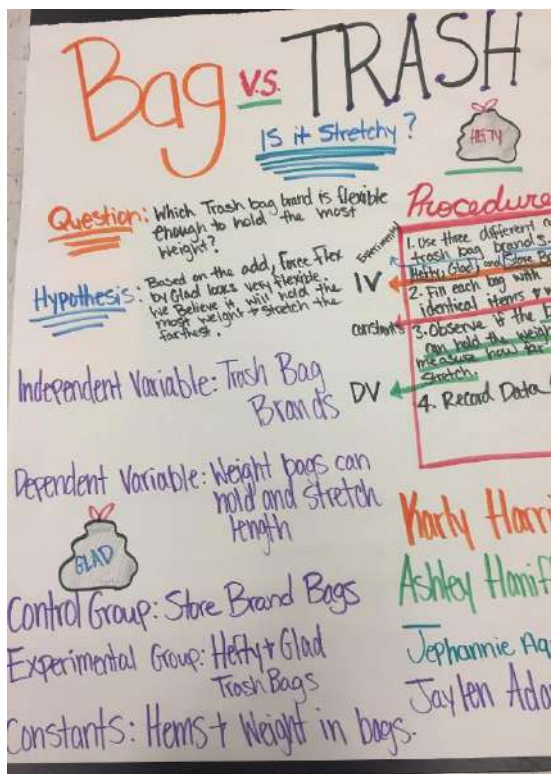
— Lois Lowry, *The Giver*



## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

In science we have been learning about scientific method, metrics and chemistry. While reviewing scientific method, we connected it to real life by taking a look at advertisements and using the steps of the scientific method to design an experiment. The students created a poster to show the different steps.

This past week we have spent time calculating density. We completed two separate labs calculating the density of alcohol, water, vinegar and glycerine. Using this information, we made inferences about why Coke and Diet Coke act differently.



## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

Scholars are learning about the conditions that affect the Atmosphere where we live and around the world. They have sailed around the world using wind on the surface and in the air. Scholars took on the role of teaching their peers in small groups some academic words that may be difficult to understand. Scholars evaluated their peers, on the information, effort and clarity of words.

Scholars are exploring the cells that make up living things and the human body. This year scholars are required to make a representation of a plant or animal cell. Students are to ensure that the organelles functions and locations are accurately depicted on the model. Scholars are able to choose from a 3-D model with common household items or make a model that is entirely edible. They will summarize their unit of the human body by constructing a paper on the effects of the homeostasis from the discussed body's organ systems. Scholars are to include the organs of the specific system and the functions.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Science

Sixth grade students designed their own solar ovens to cook S'mores. The students have been learning about energy and energy transfers. Students took solar energy and transferred it to heat energy in their solar ovens to cook their S'mores.





# Social Studies

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Scholars this quarter are showcasing their historical knowledge on various units by creating visually appealing 3-D models and recreating important historical documents.

In this unit, scholars analyzed the musical *Hamilton* in order to get ideas on how to create their own musically inclined writing on the American Revolution. They will get into groups and debate via a poem, song, or freestyle if they would have been a loyalist or a patriot.

Towards the end of this quarter the students will walk into an “active” Industrial Revolution crime scene in which they have to use their historical evaluation skills to solve a crime that occurred during this time period.

Please go to [aleciabryant.weebly.com](http://aleciabryant.weebly.com) for more information on class activities!



6<sup>TH</sup> grade scholar Monica Cescon with her Cave Painting

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Spotlight: Mr. Eller

In social studies, scholars have been working hard at writing, reading, becoming independent thinkers and artists. The subjects of Geography and History intertwine to take the students on a fascinating ride through the Ancient World. The students have completed several projects in the first quarter that have pushed their senses and encouraged creativity. The smiling faces and passionate dialogue amongst students have demonstrated how impressive these young minds are.

Our projects have included an Archaeology Dig, Cave Paintings (Early Human Art), Building a Tool from the Paleolithic Era (being creative with what nature gives), creating yourself as an Egyptian god/goddess, and the enticing Ancient Egypt Project coming soon, full of creative opportunities such as building a 3-D pyramid from found objects, or journaling as a member of ancient Egypt's social hierarchy.



Scholars creating their Egyptian gods/goddesses



Ian Peterson, Ava Childress, Ruth Hailu, and Joanna Badawy show off their early humans Make-A-Tool Project