

# Spotlight



March  
2015

the Second Trimester at  
Johnson Elementary School of the Arts

Together We  
**Succeed**



## SPOTLIGHT ON PRINCIPAL'S CORNER



### FULL STEAM AHEAD!

It is hard to believe that our second trimester is almost over for the 2014-2015 school year. There have been unbelievable things happening at JSA and so many more to come. What I know for sure in my many years of working as a teacher, school counselor, District level facilitator, and now as a principal is that positive relationships and communication are what helps our students thrive and our school to be successful. Families, staff, students, and our surrounding community working together are what keeps us on the right track and gaining momentum in being the very best that we can be. At Johnson, I see evidence of this every single day – this is truly an amazing place to be. We are on track in our work toward being the first Magnet School in the Cedar Rapids Community School District beginning the 2015-2016 school year. Plans for Johnson STEAM Academy Magnet School are moving full STEAM ahead as we organize, study, research and move forward with determining best practices in project-based, integrated instruction around a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) theme. Please plan to stop by the Gallery during conferences for more information and to ask any questions you may have. Dr. Trace Pickering, Associate Superintendent, Cassidy Reinken, our new Magnet School Coordinator, and the rest of our staff will be happy to chat with you. Be watching for more information around Open House opportunities this spring, a website launch, and to learn about learning experiences that your children will have. Johnson will be a busy place this summer as construction projects will be underway to give JSA a facelift. Projects included will be all new windows and exterior doors as part of the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) that was passed earlier this year. The blacktop on the playground will be refreshed and the roof will be replaced. In addition, the main entryway and Gallery will be remodeled to reflect the STEAM theme. The design was done by high school students involved in Iowa BIG project-based learning. They have worked hand in hand with District personnel and Shive-Hattery architects and engineers to ensure that their design will be functional and appealing. Over the next couple of weeks all of our students will get the opportunity to work with Jen Neumann, a Johnson parent and partner in de Novo Alternative Marketing to design the new Johnson logo. It is important to us that our students have a voice in and understand the changes that will be happening at Johnson. We have been seeing some exciting teaching and learning around all things STEAM and I even overheard a couple of our students talking about it as one corrected the other saying, "No, it's not STEM it's STEAM, we can't forget the Arts!". Johnson continues to amaze me with the strong sense of community that make it such a terrific place to be. I remain honored to be a part of something so great as we continue to move full STEAM ahead!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Candace Lynch'.

Candace Lynch

Follow the District on @crschools,  
and YouTube

## NEWS FROM SPANISH CLASS

Parent visit day to Spanish class! Coming soon a note will be sent home inviting Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade parents to visit day. Visit day will be towards the end of April. Here is a sample of the new things we are learning right now! Kindergarten- We learning how to count up to 20. Ask your child if they can teach you to count to 20! We just finished learning a lot about shapes and know an awesome shapes song as well. A photo of learning in action with Mrs. McCullough's class practicing number sequencing with Spanish numbers 11-15. 1<sup>st</sup> grade- We are learning some new body parts (shoulders, legs, knees and back). Ask your child to point them out and tell you the Spanish word. 2<sup>nd</sup> grade- We are learning our alphabet in Spanish. Talking about how it is the same and different in English. Ask your child if they can spell their name in Spanish for you.



Learning in action with Ms. Lyng's class working on finding the color and body part that Señora Saxton called out. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade - We are learning about places in the city in our city and what those space places look like in Spain. Ask your child to share with you how they might be the same or different. Looking for some fun learning games for at home? Check out this site! <http://www.onlinefreespanish.com/> what to be able to sing some of my Spanish songs at home? Check out my YouTube Channel: <http://tinyurl.com/SenoraSaxton>

## FAST ASSESSMENT ROUND 2 COMPLETE!

As you may recall, this fall you received information regarding how your child did on the FAST Universal Screening Assessment. This assessment is a "screener", which is used to guide teachers on the proficiency level of each child in the area of reading. The Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade levels focus primarily on foundational and basic reading skills and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade assessments assess reading fluency and comprehension skills. This assessment is intended to be a screener and inform all of us how your child is progressing in reading. We completed the winter assessment the last week of January and are anxious to share your child's progress with you. During our Student-led Winter Conferences, parents will receive a letter informing them on how their child scored. Each grade level has proficiency levels and depending on the student's scores, parents will be informed of any additional reading support your child is receiving. We will also be speaking with parents of students who are considered substantially deficient, which is determined if the student was below proficiency in the fall and winter, and we will be asking parents to commit to supporting their child at home with reading instruction as well. We look forward to seeing all of you at our Winter Student-Led Conferences and sharing with you your student's reading progress.

## BE ATTENDANCE AWARE

Would you know if your child was tardy or had an unexcused absence? Would we know how to get hold of you if your child got ill at school or JSA had a winter weather related closure? Help student safety, by ensuring we have up to date phone, address, email and emergency contact information. JSA and the CRCSD send important communications via phone, email and traditional mail; make sure you are receiving them. Your JSA Calendar and Family Handbook is full of information related to student absences, absenteeism and school closures. One critical piece of information is that the Cedar Rapids Community School District policy states "After a student has accrued (11) eleven absences, for reasons other than a health condition verified by a school nurse and the building level administration has exhausted every means available (phone calls, letters, home visits etc.) to the school to assure that the student is in regular attendance, the following should occur: The school administrator will inform the parent/guardian in writing that due to the lack of improvement in the attendance of their child, the school will be referring the student and the parent/guardian to the District truant officer for further action." Do you know how many days your student has missed this trimester? If you are concerned about your child's attendance, please contact Ms. Conyers, our JSA Transition and Attendance Specialist, at 319-558-2174 or [aconyers@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:aconyers@cr.k12.ia.us)

## BLUE ZONES PROJECT/ WELLNESS GOALS

We are excited to announce we received our Blue Zones Designation! The Blue Zones Project identifies policies and programs that can be implemented at our school to optimize the physical, emotional, and social health of students so they can EXCEL in the classroom.

Parents please ask your children what they have for a nutritious snack each day and what they participate in for their brain breaks! I think you will be amazed!

### Benefits for Blue Zones Schools

Evidence based strategies to help children grow to be healthier, more productive members of society

Blue Zones Project policies and programs increase student engagement and excellence in the classroom

Healthier students earn higher test scores, have higher attendance rates, and tend to be better adjusted and socially connected. Recognition for being part of an important community-wide project to improve well-being.

## IOWA ASSESSMENTS

Iowa Assessments will be taking place from March 9<sup>th</sup> –March 20<sup>th</sup>. All students in 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade will be taking the tests during this two week period. During this time it is extremely important to be on time to school. We will begin taking the tests right away in the morning. Important things to remember during Iowa Assessments:

Be sure to get a good night's sleep!

Eat breakfast

Be on time

Encourage your child to always try their best. The Iowa Assessments provide information about many of the skills your student is learning at school in the content areas of: Reading, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. In addition, Iowa Assessments measures student growth and progress from year to year and help determine how students are performing on the state curriculum as described in the Iowa Core.



## VIRTUAL BACKPACK

The District offers an online Virtual Backpack site to support the efforts of community organizations wanting to share information about educationally-based programming.

Individuals or organizations wishing to post material on the Virtual Backpack submit items electronically and approved materials will appear online for families to access.

Organizations will find a link to submit flyers for consideration on the District homepage at [www.cr.k12.ia.us](http://www.cr.k12.ia.us). Families can access the Virtual Backpack from their school Web site.



# SPOTLIGHT ON THE CLASSROOMS



## FIFTH GRADE NEWS

Mr. Frette and Mrs. Schmitt's 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms are working very hard getting ready for the Iowa Assessments coming up in March. All of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders are working on setting goals for themselves to try and improve their scores from last year. We are incorporating a program called "Learn It, Know It, Show It!" This program focuses on math and reading strategies for students to help them prepare and do their best on the upcoming assessments. Our counselor, Ms. Hill is also helping out during our guidance lessons helping the kids stay focused mentally and emotionally during this stressful time. We can't express enough the effort the students are putting forth to prepare them for middle school! Fifth grade is also getting excited to start a new science unit after spring break. We will be studying the sun, moon and planets. This is a very hands on unit with a lot of experiments and team work. By the end of this unit the students will be able to tell all about our sun, moon and planets. They might even be able to tell what time it is outside by just looking at shadows of the sun! These kids continue to amaze us and lead Johnson every day!



## SECOND GRADE

JSA second graders have been working hard on reading, writing, and math. Some other exciting adventures include a field trip to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, our Immigration simulation, and Super Science Fridays. Our trip to the Czech museum was amazing. We received several compliments from the staff at the museum about how knowledgeable they were on immigration and the Czech heritage as well as how well they followed the B4 guidelines to represent JSA in a positive manner. The staff also commented on how the students were engaged in their learning and were willing to jump in and add to their learning. We were very proud to share this experience with the community. In December we held our annual Immigration simulation here at JSA. The students did an amazing job moving through the stations and making the experience real. This is an experience I am sure they will never forget. Hopefully they will tell their grandchildren about it. Super Science Fridays – During the months of February and March the second grade team worked on some STEAM integration with our Balance and Motion unit. Students were grouped between all the classes and rotated through experiment stations with Ms. Lyng, Ms. Witte, and Mrs. Dorrance. They did a great job sharing their learning with each other and engaging in the balance and motion experiments. We look forward to having them share some of these activities with you at conferences.

## THIRD GRADE

Third Grade has been studying Slavery and Segregation. We visited the African American Museum and explored how the history of African American music tells a story deeper than the evolution of rhythmic patterns and vocal styles. Along with tracing the journey of Iowa's African Americans. We are concluding our unit by researching famous African Americans and creating biography posters to be displayed.

**SAVE THE DATE -SCIENCE AND HOBBY FAIR NIGHT THURSDAY APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup> 2015**

## FOURTH GRADE

4<sup>th</sup> grade has been super busy this semester! We finished our Unit on the Progressive Era with a fun simulation demonstrating what it was like for children working during this time. Students got the chance to participate in an assembly line with some harsh conditions, such as the pace of work, the coldness, ect. We have been quickly diving into our Science unit of the Human body and have



had a lot of fun so far with dissecting owl pellets, and learning about the different bones and joints. 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Mrs. Murphy's class got the chance to team up with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Ms. Lyng's class and experiment with the little bits and Makey Makey. During this we explored how to play pacman on the computer with wires connecting to fruit and vegetables, and how to connect different pieces with the little bits to make different parts light up, or motors run. The students had a lot of fun teaming with each other and exploring all the different options that there are with these kits.

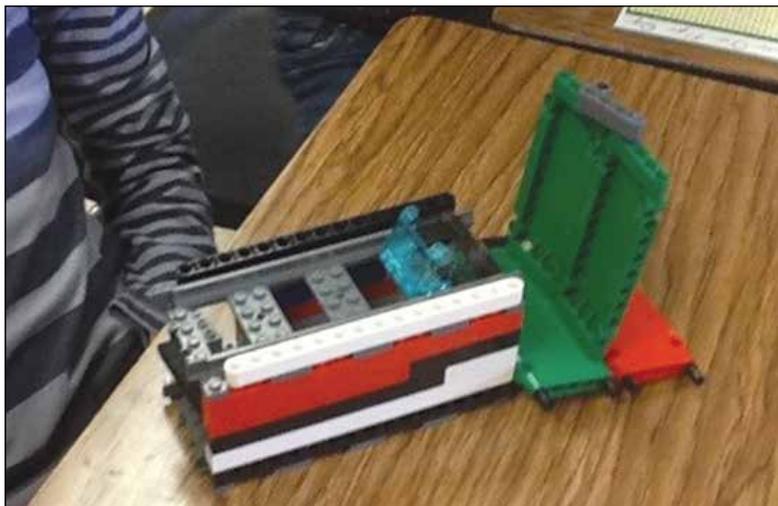
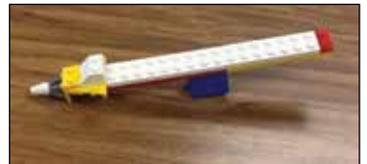
The last thing that 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teamed together to work on was integrating our topics of Immigration and the Progressive Era. 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teams created an invention that they would have created to make immigration easier back then. First they brainstormed together in partners. Then they drew it out on paper. Lastly, they got to build their invention with legos and share them with the class. What a great opportunity to dream of ways that we could have helped make others' lives easier with new technology that we could have invented!



### Shrink Ray

Our invention was a shrink ray. You would push a button on the side and it would go to anything you point it at and shrink it. When you want to unshrink it, you can just push a button and it would unshrink. It would make immigration easier because immigrants could shrink their luggage when they are waiting in long lines.

Written by Meric Gabrielson



### The Scanner

The invention that is at the top of the page is a scanner. It can help make immigration easier and faster by the following. Before you leave your country you will walk through the scanner. If you are healthy you may go through the gate. If you are sick you can't go through the gate. Behind the gate is a dock. The dock leads to a boat which then leads to America. In America there is another scanner. If you are sick, robo doctors will make you better. This hopefully will cut down in the long wait in line that the immigrants had to do.

Written by Ella Ryan

## OH THE PLACES WE'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH...

### THE AHA! (ARTS HEIGHTEN ACHIEVEMENT) ENRICHMENT PROGRAM!

Thanks to the Johnson PTA all Johnson School of the Arts students continue to have the opportunity to discover and expand special interests and activities through this great before and after school educational program. There is no cost for Johnson K-5 grade students to participate in a variety of trimester-long enrichment classes that meet once a week.

The purpose of the AHA! Program is to provide students exposure to a variety of learning experiences and to create extra-curricular opportunities to meet the diverse needs and interests of our students. Johnson staff in partnership with Iowa artists, parents, and Cedar Rapids Community Non-profit organizations have offered enrichment courses this school year that include everything from music ensembles, drama, creative writing, Lego League, Sportsmanship and Running Club, Sculpture and Painting to Comic Books, Arts and Crafts, World Geography and Culture, Dance and Gardening!

Participation in the program has shown that it cultivates positive relationships and increases development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills such as collaboration, creative thinking, problem solving, responsibility and perseverance. We average approximately 175 JSA students involved in an enrichment each trimester and 68% of our entire K-5 current JSA students have participated in one of the enrichment classes this year. Here's what some of the students and parents had to say about it on a recent survey:

They teach you new things. I am good at art. It is exciting and fun.

4<sup>th</sup> grade student

I met new friends in running club this year.

4<sup>th</sup> grade student

I loved my enrichment classes. It was really fun to perform. My mom cried. Not because she was sad but she said because she was so proud of me and my friends.

5<sup>th</sup> grade student

My favorite thing to do is invent things out of clay. I might grow up to be an inventor someday. I just wish enrichments were longer and then I could go every day!

3<sup>rd</sup> grade student

You get to do cool things you don't do in school—like dance lots. Learning is fun!

1<sup>st</sup> grade student

These are great enrichment programs! My 5<sup>th</sup> grader participated all 5 years at Johnson and learned so much. It provides opportunity to learn many art forms in a positive small group comfortable setting. The instructors are great too. They are understanding and motivating.

5<sup>th</sup> grade parent

My student is given the opportunity to learn new things outside of the classroom which will help her be more well-rounded. I feel very grateful for this program and the opportunities it provides my daughter. We love JSA.

2<sup>nd</sup> grade parent



#### Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (employment only), marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status (students/program only) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. District employees with questions or a grievance related to this policy should contact Jill Cirivello, Director of Human Resources, 319-558-2421; jcirivello@cr.k12.ia.us. Students and others should contact Ken Morris, Manager of Student Equity, 319-558-1504; kmorris@cr.k12.ia.us. The District mailing address is 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405-1015.

## FIRST GRADE

What a great time to be in first grade! The first graders have begun exploring the Woodlands! This unit integrates science, reading, writing, and art all in one! We started out by talking about what a habitat is and discovered that the Woodlands is a habitat and within it there are several other habitats. One of those includes a tree, you would be amazed by the amount of animals that rely on a tree as its home. The first graders have taken a look at the parts of a tree and what it takes for one of them to grow. In fact, they created a booklet that shows step by step "How to Grow an Oak Tree". Our next step is to take a deeper look into the animals that live there and research how these animals live, what they eat, and what features help them survive. Our little mathematicians have been working hard on skip counting, using a hundreds chart, and place value. Through our district math assessment we have been able to see how much they have grown in math and are continuing to work hard on the skills they need to have by the end of first grade. Wow! They have really been working hard.



## KINDERGARTEN NEWS

Kindergarten is just finishing up a unit on Amazing creatures. We studied sea creatures, insects, and dinosaurs. Please ask your child if they learned anything. You may be surprised! We are getting ready to start a unit on weather. A news team is going to visit our kindergarteners to tell us more about weather. We are all very excited! Please remember to read with your child ever night. It makes a huge difference in their future success in reading.

## SAFETY CONCERNS

Cedar Rapids Community School District takes your safety seriously and welcomes your input. Please contact your building principal/administrator and report any safety concerns that you may have. Thank you for helping us keep staff and students safe.

**March 6th**  
**Educational Leadership and**  
**Support Center**  
2500 Edgewood Rd NW  
7a.m. – 7p.m.



## Kindergarten – Preschool Registration

To access enrollment information and forms

1. Go to the District website - [www.cr.k12.ia.us](http://www.cr.k12.ia.us)
2. Click on "Schools"
3. Click on "How to Enroll"

For information regarding Kindergarten enrollment contact the Office of Learning and Leadership at 319-558-2247.

For information regarding AK or Preschool enrollment contact the Early Learning Office at 319-558-2549.

**You will need to bring the following items with you on the day of registration:**

### Preschool

- Child's Birth Certificate
- Family income verification (2 current pay stubs)

### Alternative Kindergarten

- Child's Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residence

### Kindergarten

- Child's Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residence





## METRO READS DAY AT JSA

On December 17<sup>th</sup> 6 students and 2 teachers from Metro High School came to Johnson School to spread some holiday cheer. They came and read with the students in Ms. Moore, Ms. Rudish, and Ms. Clymer's classrooms. The JSA and the Metro students all had an enjoyable morning.



## PET VISITS AT JSA

Welcome to our new Therapy Dog Aspen and his owner Ms. Peg! Aspen is a 13 year old Blue Healer Mix dog that Ms. Peg adopted as a rescue puppy. He loves playing in the water, taking walks, and kids. Since November, Ms. Peg and Aspen have come once a month to visit us here at Johnson School. They have been able to visit with all the classes in Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. Aspen enjoys meeting our JSA students and our students have been able to learn a lot about dogs.

