

The Conant Crier



Volume 1, Issue 10

June 2009

See inside for....

- PTO News
- Author Visits
- Library Inventory
- Nature Walks
- Sun and Song
- Immunization Information
- Summer Reading Program



June Calendar

6/04 1:30 PM	Graduate Reception ----- Thank You Reception for Mrs. Brusie
6/10 7:00 PM	PTO Meeting
6/19 10:00 AM	Games Day
6/25	Last Day of School Gr . K-6 Progress Reports Issued

The View from Here: Notes from the Principal's Desk



It doesn't seem possible that it is already June! The year has flown by, and I find myself marveling at all the wonderful things that happened over the past twelve months. Just to mention a few

- We welcomed our Before, After, and Extended Day Kindergarten programs
- We piloted a very successful morning Enrichment program
- We started a new volunteer program for high school students
- We held a star-spangled Auction that dazzled the attendees and raised significant funds for our school

And that doesn't include the new laptop computers for our teachers, the new heating system, the new science curricula teachers have developed and piloted, and the new work done this year on the Nature Trails! Wow!

Yet all that's new isn't the whole story of this year at Conant. Piloting new programs is only possible when there is a firm foundation of tried-and-true. Conant has a long history of academic excellence, enthusiastic learners, dedicated teachers, and committed parents who make both the new *and* the tried-and-true possible. I continue to be amazed and deeply grateful at how this community works together to create such a unique environment for learning. As we look ahead to next year, there will be more opportunities for innovation as well as enrichment. In the meantime, I wish you and your family a healthy, relaxing summer. Enjoy a well-deserved vacation, and we'll see you in September!

With all best wishes,
Dr. Christine Price

Games Day

Conant School will host its annual all school Games Day on June 19th. This day is a day full of fun in honor of former physical education teacher Lauraine Riel, who passed away several years ago. This day dedicates her devotion to Conant Physical Education program. Students enjoy a warm day full of laughter, fun, and teamwork! Some activities include water-bucket relay races, spoon and egg challenges, and hula-hoop challenges. All children work and challenge each other by grade levels. Come out and watch your child have success in each activity! Please remind your child to dress for this occasion and bring sunscreen if needed. Any medical concerns, please contact the health office. In case of Rain, Games Day will be moved indoors. Unfortunately, in that circumstance we will not be able to accommodate parent spectators due to space limitations.



--William Chan

June PTO Highlights

Please join us for the last PTO meeting of the year on Wednesday, June 10th at 7:00 pm. There will be a very important budget discussion. Given the current financial situation both locally and at the state level, we will be facing some serious decisions about next year's budget. We really would like to have input from as many Conant parents as possible.

Over the past three years, we have continually been impressed by the generosity and spirit of the Conant community. Your willingness to help wherever needed and your commitment to our school has been outstanding. Our sense of community has only grown under the leadership of our principal, Dr. Price. With this year's successful auction, not only did we exceed our monetary goals, but the sense of pride in our school and the feeling that we are all working together was palpable. The feeling of that evening was special and it is what Conant is all about.

As we wrap up 2 years of PTO leadership, we are truly grateful for the patience through change, the helping hands, the voices with new ideas, and the willingness to pitch in even though your first instinct may have been to hide from us. Thank you for saying "Yes" and "I'll do it" whenever you could.

So from the nurse and the musician, we leave you in the capable hands of the HR specialist and the marketing maven. Kim and Rebecca, we wish you all the best and we're sure you'll do a great job.

Pam and Mary

Sixth Graders serve their school and earn end of school year funds

Breakfast Club had another a successful year as it grew and changed into a combination of Breakfast Club/Snack Shack. Students eagerly volunteered to serve their school community doing small office jobs and putting together the hardcopies of the Crier. Every Thursday they also set up and ran Snack Shack with the profits going toward Sargent Camp expenses. Working Snack Shack provided the children a chance to learn business skills as they artfully arranged the snacks, handled money and greeted customers. And, the kids had fun!

Our Conant School community appreciates the help of these hard working students:

Evi Ali, Umanga Balasuriya, Elizabeth Belotti, Christina Bircsak, Chris Brace, Caroline Cao, Meera Chadda, Sean Crimmins, Robert Fletcher, Caroline Grip, Desiree Harms, Julia Hoggins, Shirley Huang, Vijay Jeevanandam, Audrey Malloy, Nicole McKelvie, Max Pai, Julianne Pebbles, Michael Pebbles, Joelle Perron, Shaurya Shetty, Dani Sim, Keira Sullivan, Kristina Tower, Anindita Yadavalli, Jessie Ying and Carolyn Zhou.

Many thanks to the adult leaders: Beth Ali and John Bircsak

I've been the key coordinator for Breakfast Club for four school years. With my last child graduating from Conant this year, there is a need for a Breakfast Club/Snack Shack Co-ordinator for next year.



'Teen Perron

June Library Inventory

What Books Are Our Children Reading? What Does The Conant Library Have To Offer? How Can I Volunteer At Conant For Just An Hour Or Two?

If you want to know the answers to these questions then we have the opportunity for you! The Conant Library is looking for assistance with our annual inventory process in June. No prior experience in the library is needed and the time commitment is flexible enough to fit anyone's schedule! Sign up and come see all of the wonderful things that our library has to offer.

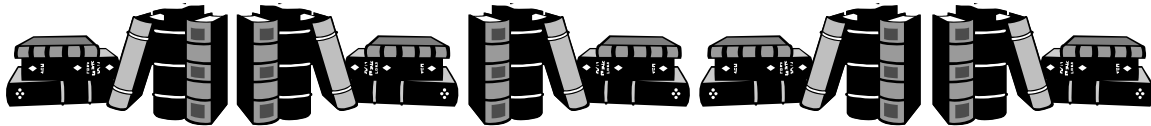
Dates: Any day(s) from June 8th through June 23rd

Times: 1 – 2 Hours any time during the school day

Duties: scanning books, re-shelving books, book repairs, etc.

Sign Up: Contact Kimberlee Coleman with the times you are available
at kimberlee@krclaw.com

Many hands make for light work. Come join us!



Author Mike Knudsen Visits Conant

On Friday, October 3rd, the author Mike Knudson visited our school. He came to speak to grades 3 through 6 about his book, *Raymond and Graham Rule the School*, and his new book, *Raymond and Graham Dancing Dudes*. Mr. Knudson demonstrated brainstorming by drawing out scenes from the book *Rule the School*. He also said that in *Dancing Dudes*, they do square dancing. The funniest part was when he had volunteers be Graham, Kelly DiAngelo, and Mrs. Gibson to act out what happens in a scene from *Dancing Dudes*. Another great part was when he quizzed a boy and a girl about what happened in the book *Rule the School* and what really happened in Mr. Knudson's life. It was a great visit from a very funny author.

By Grade 5 student Kurt Lindberg

AUTHOR MATT TAVARES' VISIT

Do you like to draw? The fourth graders were very lucky to have a drawing workshop this spring with Matt Tavares, an amazing author and illustrator. At the workshop, we drew pictures of the Statue of Liberty using the words from a book he illustrated called Lady Liberty. Matt Tavares also gave us pictures of the Statue of Liberty, so we could get all the details just right. He also gave us ideas for pictures by drawing a picture himself. It was an awesome workshop that no fourth grader will ever forget!

Before he came to the 4th grade classrooms, Mr. Tavares had met with us and other grades in the library to discuss the long process of illustrating a book. He explained some strategies he used for his drawings, including getting pictures from the Internet and drawing from photographs. Sometimes he would have family members and friends pose in the positions of the characters in the book. Then he would take a photograph and draw his illustration from the photo. He even had his wife take pictures of him doing certain poses! After two days of learning from Matt Tavares, the 4th graders appreciate all the hard work it takes to write and illustrate a book, but we also experienced the fun part of it, too!

By Neha Kavi and Nupur Parikh

ALYSSA CAPUCILLI VISIT

When the imaginative author Alyssa Satin Capucilli visited with the kindergarteners, first graders, and second graders, she already knew it was going to be tricky for them to say her last name. "Let me help you with that tongue twister of a name," said Ms. Capucilli. Then helping the students to pronounce her last name she added, "There's a little something "silly" tucked inside each of my books." The children laughed and anxiously awaited hearing Ms. Capucilli's silly stories.

Imagine the excitement of these young readers to see the author of the well known and loved Biscuit series just inches away from them. "You taught my sister how to read", exclaims one student. "Biscuit is the first book I read all by myself", proudly states another. "I read Biscuit in preschool", excitedly announces a third student.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Ms. Capucilli now lives in a small cozy cottage in Hastings on the Hudson, New York with her husband Bill, their two children Laura and Peter and their chocolate Labrador dog Huckleberry.

Ms. Capucilli, a self professed puppy lover has been writing professionally for 15 years. She is the author of many children books including favorites like the Biscuit series about the actions of a silly, little, lovable puppy the color of golden biscuits. Another favorite series is the the Katy Duck books about Katy, a feisty young duck trying to become a ballerina and her humorous antics and discoveries.

Ms. Capucilli was inspiring as she talked to the children about how she gets her ideas for her books, how she keeps hundreds of author journals and how she works with her editor and illustrators to create a book. She also shared insight on the publishing process and how one of her books actually gets made from a large press sheet.

"I am here with you today because I am an author. I didn't know I could be an author and started off as a dancer, which is a different way of telling stories," said Ms. Capucilli. She recounted how as a young girl she went to the library every week with her mother and how she loved to read and write and how reading great books inspired her to write, imagine and tell stories. She told about one of her favorite books Henry and Ribsy by Beverly Cleary and how much she wished she had a dog named Ribsy.

Ms. Capucilli asked her young audience to raise hands asking them "Who is an author? Who is an illustrator? Two hands up if you like to do both." Then she explained to them that authors create a world for their characters and they often write about what they know because it's often what they care about most.

In fact that is how the Biscuit stories started. It was her daughter Laura who loved dogs so much and had asked if the neighbor's huge Golden Retriever could stay over at their house so that she could dogsit him. Then Ms. Capucilli watched her daughter Laura take care of the dog and try to settle him at bedtime. "She brought him a dog snack, a bowl of water, a blanket and even read him a story, but the dog did not settle. She was so gentle, so patient and started to have a dialogue with the dog and she inspired me to write Biscuit," fondly remembers the author. When writing Biscuit Ms. Capucilli changed the neighbor's huge, energetic dog into a silly little puppy who liked to settle down at bedtime with a story and a hug.

For each Biscuit book Ms. Capucilli writes 30 or 40 drafts to get it just right. She decides where Biscuit should say "woof woof" and works on the words for days, weeks and even months. When she has finished her work, she sends it to her editor who often tells her that it can be even better.

Ms. Capucilli keeps author journals that she calls her "treasure keepers" because all of her stories are her treasures. She writes in her journals every day for at least 15 minutes a day, using pen so she can never erase, but these books are filled with many cross outs. Ms. Capucilli explained that the stories come before the illustrations are created and often times she never meets the illustrators of her books because they live all around the world. Then the best drawings are printed and colored in and then her editor combines the text with the illustrations and starts the publishing process. Ms. Capucilli explained to the students how the printing press creates the Biscuit book on one large sheet of paper called a press sheet, which is folded in half over and over and over again to create a book.

Ms. Capucilli's endearing text of questions and comments to Biscuit are followed by the puppy's joyful signature bark "woof woof", which only belongs to Biscuit. It can mean everything and anything. The adventures of this silly little puppy the color of golden biscuits seems to have touched the hearts and minds of many of our young readers, opening up the world of books to them and perhaps, inspiring them to read, write, imagine and tell stories of their very own.

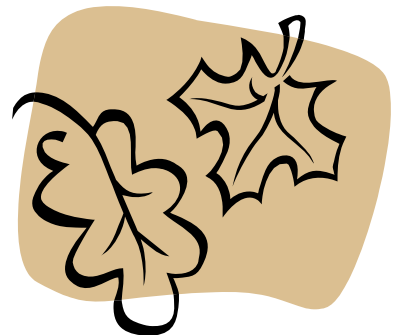
By Palma Cicchetti

Nature Walks at Conant

Spring is a busy time for Nature Walks at Conant, with all grades going out for walks. So far, we have had wonderful weather conditions for observing the changes that spring brings to Conant. Here are some highlights:

- **Kindergarten** – The youngest Conant students will be going out during early June and will be making lots of discoveries about the spring conditions. Walk leaders are needed!
 - **Grade 1** – First Graders continued their study of animals in the Conant schoolyard by focusing on the return of birds to Conant. Before going out, the first graders examined our wonderful collection of bird nests, noting the variety of materials and techniques that birds use in nest-building. The meadow has been full of birds, and groups reported seeing hawks, crows, robins, red-winged blackbirds, chickadees, and killdeer. A few of the groups were lucky enough to get close to the killdeer in the meadow and observe their new babies. So that children can appreciate how birds live, they gathered nesting materials and tried building nests, imagining how hard it must be to do this with a beak. Taking a quiet moment to listen to bird calls was also an important part of this walk.
 - **Grade 2** – The Second Graders continued their study of plants and trees by visiting the four trees that they had examined in the fall and winter. In addition to observing that the buds from winter have all blossomed, they were able to locate flowers on two of the trees: the “helicopter” flower of the maple tree and the catkins of the birch tree. They also took a look at the shallow root system of moss, and dug up some dandelions to observe their long roots and many flowers. Always a treat is lifting up a board in the meadow and observing what has happened to these plants that receive no sun, and maybe discovering an insect or two who like this darkness!
 - **Grade 3** -- With their study of owl pellets and two visits by “Wingmasters” (a woman who brings injured falcons, hawks, and eagles to the classroom), the third grade students learn a lot about birds! Their nature walks support this curriculum by offering two bird walks, one focusing explicitly on habitat. The students traveled to the different habitats at Conant (woods, wetlands, meadow, and stream) and were treated to a variety of birds including robins, finches, red-tailed hawks, red-winged blackbirds, mallards, nuthatches, chickadees, Canadian geese, and starlings. The first walk occurred the same day as Wingmasters’ return visit, so the students were extremely focused as they wanted to have lots of observations to share with “the bird lady.”
 - **Grade 4** – After examining the buds of eight trees on their winter outdoor walk, the Grade 4 students went out in April and May to observe what these buds have produced. Students were particularly interested in the pussy willow, whose flower was in full bloom in April but almost completely gone by May. Also interesting was the ash tree, whose branches each had only one large terminal bud on all previous walks, but in May were bursting with new leaves – all sprouting from one bud on each branch. If you have a fourth grader at home, take a moment to look at trees in your yard; your child may be able to tell you about alternate and opposite branching, terminal buds, conifers, deciduous trees, leaf scars, and catkins.
 - **Grade 5** – The Grade 5 students will be exploring the layers of the forest with an hour-long walk in the Acton Arboretum in June. Students will enter the Arboretum using the Minot Ave entrance and will review the bog and esker that they explored on the fall walk. They then will continue on to the pond and vernal pool to compare these two habitats, which happen to be located next to each other! The Arboretum is full of plants and wildflowers this time of year, and students will likely see cinnamon fern, jack-in-the-pulpit, Canada mayflower, pitcher plants, and ladyslippers.
- Grade 6** – During their last year at Conant, the sixth graders break into small groups and each month monitor their own square meter of land. They record the wind direction, the angle of the sun, the length of a shadow, and the temperature of the ground, air, and water. For the May walk, the students observed conditions on their plot for the last time and pulled up the stakes marking their plots. With plot names such as “Running Brook” and “Dead Tree Creek,” the students are sure to remember their special piece of Conant ground!

Thanks to our many, many volunteers who chaperoned our students and ensured that these spring walks took place. Please consider chaperoning a walk or two next year. You’re bound to learn something new, share in the wonder of a child’s discovery, and gain an appreciation of the natural beauty of the Conant schoolyard.



Sun and Song

By Christine Thiim, Cultural Enrichment

What started out as a cloudy, rainy day, turned into a day of sunshine and smiles inside Conant School. On May 5th, students and faculty were treated to an assembly from musical group, **Sol y Canto** (translated: Sun and Song).

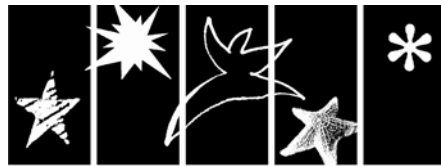
A Latin musical ensemble led by Puerto Rican/Argentine singer/bongo player Rosi Amador and New Mexico guitarist Brian Amador, together with "Nando" from Uruguay on keyboards, they brought their own unique interpretations of Latin music and songs from Latin America, South America and the Caribbean.

This original, acoustic Latin music had a message from Sol y Canto founders, whose musical collaboration began on a peace expedition years ago in Nicaragua. After witnessing the poverty of that country, the couple were committed to bring back their story in song – that people are able to smile, laugh, sing and dance even through adversity.

Their music and songs were accessible to non-Spanish as well as native speakers, that was fun for both kids and adults alike. It didn't take long before some of Conant's own students and teachers participated with built-in percussion -clapping hands and singing in Spanish too! Throughout the performance, the children learned about songs with themes about friendship and peace. Through songs such as "We're All a Family Under One Sky" and "El Doble de Amigos", translation – "Twice as Many Friends", were two of my personal favorites.

In the words of Brian Amador, "Music is something that exists at the core of everybody. That's where it's coming from, something that everybody can share".

This program is supported by a grant from the Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Massachusetts Cultural Council

Saying Goodbye to Conant

After seven years, my final year as a parent at Conant School is about to end. I hadn't thought much about it until I was watching, what would be, my final (and wonderfully done!) Memorial Day Assembly. There were moments during this hour that I reflected on my time at Conant. What stood out to me was how lucky I was to be able to be a part of so many different activities with the kids. The start had been kindergarten lunch helper, and computer lab assistant. Then there were field trips to chaperone and Luther Bear to be dressed. There were Magnificent Me books to be bound, Giggle Cafes to be stocked and many library books to be put away. And of course, Games Day! But one of the most enlightening activities was assisting with the class Nature Walks. In mid-May I thought I had ended the many years of this fun activity with "my" group of sixth graders, when the opportunity to help with the 1st and 2nd graders arose. The kids' enthusiasm and curiosity made them such willing and receptive students of their outdoor world. Being with the younger kids was an unexpected and joyful experience. I was touched and surprised to receive thank-you notes from the kids articulating how they benefitted from their directed time, out-of-doors, observing nature.

The way in which I chose to participate is but one type of role in the network of parents, teachers and administrators that keep things running to educate and enrich our kids. There are many adults who are behind the scenes, giving much of their time, planning and organizing the programs and events, scheduling volunteers and raising funds. It is fortunate that I was able to find a way in which to fit into and add to this thriving network.

No matter what the activity was that I was helping with, I always walked away marveling at how good and kind and interested the kids are in everything they do. I have seen time and again the kids helping each other. I am glad that I took the relatively small amount of time, to give my kids and your kids, the support they need to continue these activities and to feel that their school and education is important to us all.

By Karen Borg

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS: IMPORTANT NOTICE TO PARENT/GUARDIANS OF SIXTH GRADERS

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has the following requirements for all students entering Grade 7 in September 2009:

- MMR 2 doses or 2 doses of measles and one dose of mumps and rubella
- Varicella A physician-certified history of chicken pox disease or one dose of vaccine for students under 13 years old or two doses of vaccine for students over 13 years old.
- Hepatitis B 3 doses
- Td/Tdap one booster dose of Td (tetanus/diphtheria and acellular pertussis) if it has been more than five years since the last dose
- A copy of an up-to-date physical examination will also be required for all students before entering Grade 7.

Many of the above vaccines may have been administered while your child was in elementary school. Please check with your Healthcare Provider to be certain that your child's immunizations are up-to-date and documented in his/her record. Send a copy of the exam and updated information record to your elementary school health office and the information will be included in your child's health record when it is transferred to the Junior High School in June. If you do not have the necessary paperwork completed before the end of school, send it to the school nurse at the Junior High School by August 28, 2009.

SUMMER READING PROGRAM

The information on the summer reading program will go home with the progress reports. **We hope that every student will read over the summer.** We are asking the children to keep a list of the books that they read and turn it in to school in September. Every child who participates will receive a certificate of achievement in the fall. Each child who reaches the goal of reading at least 10 books **or** reading for at least 10 hours will also receive a Conant 2009 key chain. A different keychain will be available each year for our students to add to their collection! Children who wish to do so may also collect one or more pledges to purchase books for the school library. A bookplate listing them as the donor will be placed in one of the books that we purchase with the donated money and they will be invited to be the first person to borrow that book from the library. Please note that this part of the program is entirely optional.

Reading during the summer is crucial to helping children maintain the gains that they have made during the school year. It is also fun and relaxing! Watch for the information to come home and please encourage your child to participate. If you don't receive your forms or have any questions about the program, please call parent coordinator Jean Potter (263-2475) or the Conant Library (266-2550). Information on the program will also be available on the school website (under the *Library News* link). Have a wonderful summer. *Happy Reading!*

Judy Bell
Conant Library



This month's Recipe from:

All Recipes.com

Spiced Peach Oatmeal Muffins

"These sweet and tender muffins are the perfect choice for a summer brunch."

PREP TIME: 15 Min.
COOK TIME: 20 Min.
READY IN: 35 Min.

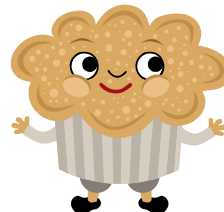
Original recipe yield: 1 dozen

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quick cooking oats
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1/3 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/3 cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 1/2 cups pitted and diced fresh peaches
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon.

Preparation:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C). Grease muffins cups or line with paper muffin liners.
- In a large bowl, mix together oats, buttermilk, brown sugar, apple-sauce, molasses and eggs.
- In a separate bowl, stir together flour, baking soda and baking powder.
- Stir flour mixture into egg mixture, just until moistened.
- Fold in peaches. Spoon batter into prepared muffin cups.
- Bake in preheated oven for 15 minutes.
- While muffins are baking, combine two tablespoons of sugar and 1/2 tea-spoon cinnamon.
- After 15 minutes of baking, remove muffins from oven and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.
- Return to oven and continue baking for 3 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.



Please Read the Conant Crier!

The *Conant Crier* is the newsletter of the Conant School and is published every month during the academic year. Many notices concerning school events will be published in it — there may not be separate fliers sent home regarding these events, so please read the *Crier* carefully!

The best way to submit an item for the *Crier* is to send it via email either as an attachment, or as part of the email message text to the editor in charge of the next publication. We will be happy to confirm receipt of the item. Submissions are always welcome from anyone in the Conant community. The *Crier* staff also has a mailbox in the main office. Please feel free to leave articles/information that may be of interest to the school community and we will consider it for publication.

In order to publish the *Crier* on **time**, please follow these guidelines for submitting articles.

Issue: September **Date:** Sept 11th
Article Deadline: Wednesday, September 2nd

Editor: Seema Shenoy
seema_shenoy@hotmail.com

Courier: Keerthi Kamath

Conant Crier Staff

Editor-in-chief:

Dr. Christine G. Price, Principal
Co-Editors:

Seema Shenoy, 978-897-0035
Anu Krishnan, 978-274-2255

Couriers:

Keerthi Kamath, Grade 2

Divyasri Krishnan, Grade KG



.....
: Didn't see it in the *Crier*? Log on to ab.mec.edu for additional
: information on all Acton Public and Regional schools.
.....

