

New Fairfield Public Schools

# Program for Gifted Learners Newsletter

November 9, 2022

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## What we're doing!

The Program for Gifted Learners at New Fairfield Public Schools seeks to provide rigorous and unique opportunities to challenge and extend learning, while creating individualistic thinkers and team-oriented leaders.

**Teachers: Emily Peterson and Barbara Strashun**

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## At the Elementary School



Fifth grade students meet with Barbara Strashun, teacher of the gifted, daily during their science and social studies block. So far, students have been working on creating a class aquaponics system by “diving deep” into relevant vocabulary and researching the components of this type of symbiotic ecosystem. Students work independently as well as in “committees” to create the aquaponics system.

Additionally, fifth grade students have embarked upon a year-long Latin unit, while continuing the exploration of America’s early history, physics, and Rube Goldberg machines. Woven within our gifted curriculum are Social Emotional Learning (SEL) opportunities geared specifically for gifted students in this particular age group.

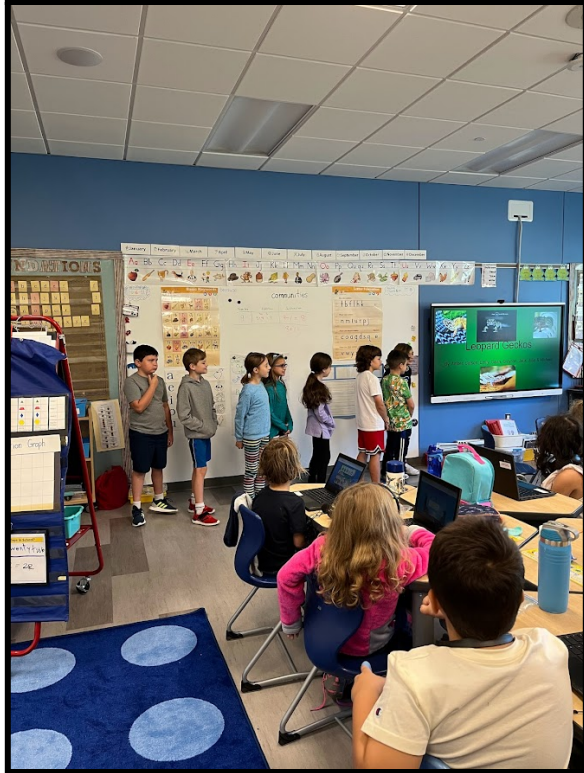
Fourth grade students also meet with Barbara Strashun daily during their science and social studies blocks. Our science investigations have included the physics of energy and motion, simple/complex machines, and chain reactions as well as an introduction to Rube Goldberg Machines.

We began our social studies journey with an introduction to Albert Wegener and his theory of Pangaea. Students took a deep research dive into tectonic plates, layers of the earth, continents, and continental drift. Knowledge of the world’s changing geography helped us to better understand human migration and indigenous people. This knowledge will assist us in our further investigation of the Age of Exploration and America’s early history. In addition to content area focus, time is devoted to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students in this age group. Students will also refine their communication skills within group discussion and class presentations throughout the year.

Third grade students are currently being screened for future identification.



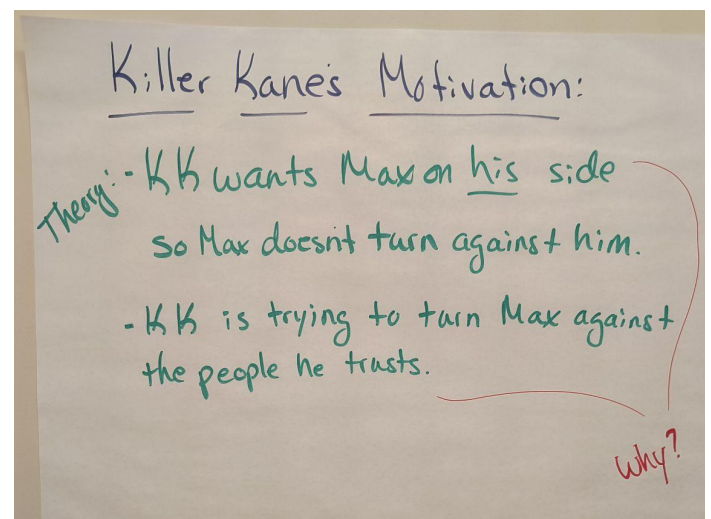
## At the Middle School



Students are currently working with whole class novels to create meaning and improve their ability to analyze, comprehend, and question. Students are also participating in puzzles, challenges, and word problems to increase their imaginative and intuitive thinking.

In 6th grade students are almost finished with reading *Freak the Mighty*. We've been working on explaining how conflicts and motivations contribute to plot and propel the story forward. After the novel is finished, we will begin work on student-directed projects relevant to the topics and themes presented in the novel.

7th grade has been working on reading *The Outsiders*. Doing this novel together has provided a unifying experience for the class and allowed us to really dig into character traits and, most importantly, changes. We're currently reading to discover what qualities make a static or dynamic character and how that is communicated through the author's choices in a text. After *The Outsiders*, we'll move into reading independent novels that discuss similar themes related to society and social norms which will provide opportunities for student-lead projects relevant to this topic.



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For 8th grade students, a deep dive into World War II Historical Fiction will comprise much of our study this year. Students have been reading *Unbroken* as a means to study the hero's journey, personal experience, and heroism. We're about halfway through the text right now and have been putting a lot of thought and emphasis on creating quality questions to help us analyze a text. When we are done reading, students will have the opportunity to choose their own independent novel on World War II and will then design and construct a project about a theme, topic, or concept that is present in these texts.

### A Journey

- Start + End (Resolution)
- Climax, Conflict, Goal
- Ups + Downs
- Obstacles
- Lesson Learned
- Relationships (Mentor)
- Inciting Incident (call to adventure)
- Death + Rebirth (or near death)

Is a journey  
different from  
a plot?



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**Please join us for a parent seminar in the New Fairfield Middle School Media Center on Tuesday, December 6, 2022 at 6:00pm. To r.s.v.p., please [click here](#).**

## Parent Resources

Those in the Program for Gifted Learners are unique students with unique needs and interests. This list of available resources seeks to provide relevant information and connections.

- **Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG)**
  - CAG is a volunteer driven, non-profit organization whose membership of parents and educators work to promote the welfare and appropriate education for gifted and talented. [www.ctgifted.org](http://www.ctgifted.org)
- **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)**
  - This is a national-level advocacy group consisting of parents, professional educators and affiliate groups from many states that support gifted education. The home page provides links to enrichment/summer programs, parent association membership, parenting information, and publications and material. NAGC, 1707 L Street, Suite 550, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 785-4268, FAX (202) 785-4248. [www.NAGC.org](http://www.NAGC.org)
- **Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)**
  - The mission of SENNG is to improve the quality of life for gifted individuals so that they might appreciate, understand, and enjoy fully the intellectual and emotional talents they possess. The home page provides browsers with articles, gifted related web sites, and electronic lists and discussion groups. [www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)



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## Enrichment Opportunities

There are many wonderful enrichment opportunities in Connecticut and beyond.

### CAG Sponsors:

Random Hacks of Kindness, Jr. (Woodbury, CT) (Kids Coding for a Cause-Applying technology to achieve social good, 4th-8th grade)

Skills 21 at EdAdvance Personal Interest Projects (Online) (Grades 4-12)

### Connecticut:

- Connecticut Odyssey of the Mind
- Connecticut Science Center (Hartford, CT)
- Discovery Science Center (Bridgeport, CT)
- Eli Whitney Museum (Hamden, CT)
- Maritime Aquarium (Norwalk, CT)
- Project Oceanology (Groton, CT)
- Reach PREP (Stamford, CT) (For Black and Latinx students, must apply at the beginning of 4th grade)
- Stepping Stones Museum for Children (Norwalk, CT)
- Talcott Mountain Science Center (Avon, CT)
- The Palace in Stamford, CT (Music, Theatre, & Dance programs throughout the year.

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## Nationwide:

- [Davidson Institute](#)
- [Harvard Undergraduate International Relations Scholars Program \(Grades 9-12\)](#)
- [Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth](#)
- [Michigan State University](#)
- [Northwestern Center for Talent Development \(Online\) \(Ages 3-18\)](#)
- [Purdue University](#)

## Journals

Journals are a reliable way to stay up to date on the latest information, research and practices surrounding the education of gifted learners.

- **Communicator**
  - This publication is the official publication of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG). It is published four times a year, and each issue is developed around a theme. The newsletter is a benefit of membership. [www.ctgifted.org](http://www.ctgifted.org)
- **Creative Kids**
  - Creative Kids is a popular magazine by and for students. The publication contains games, stories and opinions all by students ages eight to fourteen. <http://www.prufrock.com/>
- **Journal of Secondary Gifted Education**
  - The Journal of Secondary Gifted Education offers practitioners information needed to build an effective educational environment for gifted adolescents. It offers a mixture of theory and research focused on adolescents. Past issues have focused on the special needs of gifted females, effective acceleration options, gifted learners with disabilities, authentic assessment and post secondary options for high achieving young people. <http://www.prufrock.com/magazines.html>