

CONESTOGA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TOWNHALL

CONESTOGA HAS HIGH EXPECTATIONS

DR. BETH JOHNSEN, SUPERINTENDENT

What does “What’s Best For Kids” Mean?

We often hear the phrase in educational conversations; schools make decisions based on what’s best for kids. At Conestoga, we follow those same practices, believing our decisions are based on research, best practices, safety practices & procedures, and current practices at Nebraska school districts. The curricula and materials used to teach and learn in the classrooms have direct connection to research and state-standards based on what’s best for kids. When we interview for new employees, we work to find the right teacher-fit for who would be best for our kids.

AQuestt is the acronym for Nebraska’s school district accountability system for classifications and improvement designations. Conestoga, as well as, all other public schools in Nebraska are measured by a system that collects data, which provides the evidence of “What’s Conestoga Doing That is Best For Kids”! It’s pretty interesting that the state accountability system collects many data points that reflect best practices. There are six tenets that are part of the accountability process. Of course, academic achievement is one; that’s the NSCAs state-testing that all 3rd-11th graders do in April. As a district, we work hard in the classrooms to improve our student knowledge and our progress are monitored within this assessment piece. Another area that ranks our district is the academic progress that we make from one year to the next. English Language Proficiency and Progress reflects each district’s students’ abilities to be at or above an English proficiency level. Another big tenet that is very important is the graduation rate. Districts have the expectation to graduate all students in 4 years, once students start their freshman year. And the last tenet involves student attendance. Our daily attendance reports for all students are sent to the state department of education. It is important that we have a high attendance percent for all K-12th graders.

Chronic absenteeism for just a few kids, who miss more than 10+ days of school, will bring our attendance percent down.

All of these tenets affect our school district’s classification. Currently, we are a GREAT school. At any given school year, if the district isn’t improving or maintaining high percents in all of the tenets, then we could be classified at a lower status. And we can also improve our percents within each tenet and be rated as an EXCELLENT school.

So, with the AQuestt accountability system affecting our district’s education development, we work hard to do “What’s Best for Kids”! If you hear that we are working on state standards (which are specific skills, like; division of fractions or reading comprehension), and improving our language proficiency, and making sure all kids graduate in 4 years (without dropping out), and being at school every day... then you are better informed of the “whys” of what we do at Conestoga. It all matters.

Please help us do What’s Best For All Kids! Encourage academic hard-work and being at school...everyday! It all matters!

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A NOTE FROM THE JR./SR. HIGH PRINCIPAL

MR. ROB GEISE

The ICU program is underway at Conestoga Jr/Sr High School. ICU is an academic support system for students and a communication tool for teachers and parents that is built around a school-wide electronic database that tracks missing assignments. When students struggle or fail, it is usually because they fail to hand in daily work or fail to hand in quality work. All students completing all assignments is the foundation of the ICU program.

Every assignment is important and with this program parents are informed when their child has missing work and/or when work is not done properly. By working with parents, the school can ensure every child is successful. Parents receive an email and text when an assignment is missing or not done properly. In addition, parents receive notification when it’s completed. With the ICU program, we’re confident our students will learn the essential standards needed to be successful.

The future possibilities for the ICU program are endless. The ICU program will enable the staff at Conestoga Jr/Sr High to have valuable discussions on grading, tie it to activity eligibility and provide academic interventions to our students that need it. It is crucial that parents, teachers, and administrators are all on the same page and convey the message that “All students will complete all assignments and do quality work.”

A NOTE FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

MR. ERIC DENNIS

Conestoga Elementary's math and reading programs are multi-tiered plans that include 3 tiers of supports. Each level targets a specific group of learners, is supported by evidence based instructional material, provides differentiated small group instruction, and routine progress monitoring. Instructional decisions regarding level of services are based on student performance outcomes on both the Aims Web Plus and MAP assessments. Three times a year the students take these assessments. With the data collected we are able to meet the reading and math instructional needs of all students.

The school's goal is to have 100% of our students on tier 1 by the end of the year. The tests help the staff know where we are on meeting that goal for the school. As you can see from the data below, the winter testing does show that we have had a lot of growth since the beginning of the year with our students. With the support of the parents along with the programs we have in place at school I know we can meet the goal. Thank you for your support and hard work at home!

READING

FALL	WINTER
Tier 1 - 71%	Tier 1 - 84%
Tier 2 - 15%	Tier 2 - 13%
Tier 3 - 14%	Tier 3 - 3%

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MATH

FALL	WINTER
Tier 1 - 55%	Tier 1 - 75%
Tier 2 - 20%	Tier 2 - 17%
Tier 3 - 25%	Tier 3 - 8%

STUDENT SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES, AMANDA WRIGHT

Conestoga Early Intervention Services

The Conestoga School District has a team that provides Early Intervention Services to students. The term "early intervention" is important because research shows that the first three years are the most important time for learning in a child's life. Providing developmental supports and services early improves a child's ability to develop and learn. Also, it may prevent or decrease the need for special help later. The goal of early intervention in Nebraska is to "open a window of opportunity" for families to help their children develop to their full potential.

The Early Development Network-Babies Can't Wait can help you and your family support and promote your child's development, within your family activities and community life. Nebraska's Early Development Network supports children birth through three years of age who have special developmental needs. The Nebraska Early Development Network program "connects" families with early intervention services, such as occupational, speech or physical therapy, to help infants and toddlers grow and develop and help their families in this process. It is a voluntary program and does not discriminate based on race, culture, religion, income level, or disability.

Have you ever wondered if your child is meeting their developmental milestones like they should be? Do you have concerns about your child's development? We would be happy to answer your questions and share additional information! You can get connected by calling: Amy Macrander 402-235-2341 amacrander@conestogaps.org or Ann Kavanaugh 402-597-4963 akavanaugh@esu3.org

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ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL COACH CORNER

ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: MRS. BERGMAYER

It has been a busy start to the second part of the school year for our teachers and students! As Mr. Dennis shared in his section, we were busy testing prior to the break and we have reviewed that data to determine learning plans for our students. By law, we are required to notify parents if a child scores under the 30th percentile and if that is the case, you should have received a copy of an Individualized Reading Improvement Plan. If you have any questions regarding this please contact Mrs. Keene.

The teachers dove right back into the year reviewing classroom expectations and school expectations. This is always a great opportunity for students to revisit these skills but also for teachers to raise the bar on their expectations to prepare them for the next year. After all, we have half a year down! The teachers also utilized the month of January to complete article reviews and gain new ideas on classroom management techniques. It is always great to keep growing and learning new things and Conestoga teachers are always eager to embrace new techniques!

Happy New Year!

Mrs. Bobbi Keene
and Mrs. Lisa Bergmeyer

JR./SR. INSTRUCTIONAL COACH: MS. LEWIS

PD- Continuous Learning for Continuous Learners.

The 2019-2020 school year has led many teachers to exposing themselves to new teaching opportunities at various conferences. Check out some of the professional development opportunities our staff have completed over the past year. Not only did they have the opportunity to hear some nationally recognized Keynote Speakers, but also can share back to staff about what they learned at the various breakout sessions they attended. Empowering teachers to diversify their professional development allows our district to grow rich in educational resources and strong educators.

FALL NETA

Each fall, the Nebraska Educational Technology Association (NETA) hosts a fall educational technology conference in Kearney for educators. Conestoga had seven teachers attend and represent our district for this state-wide professional development opportunity. Nebraska Fall Ed Tech took place on November 1st and was kicked off by Keynote Speaker, Beth Houf. The keynote was followed with breakout sessions on new, upcoming technology to implement in classrooms and technology best practices.

#YorkMLK20

While the majority of our staff completed a staff in-service on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, nine staff members from both the elementary and high school had the opportunity to attend #YorkMLKDay at York High School with 600 other teachers for two nationally known keynote speakers – Mike Smith and Ruben Perez – and over 100 breakout sessions.

York Public School's conference is known for their top-notch professional development opportunities, networking, and excellent planning. This year's keynote conversations were "Emotional Poverty in All Demographics: How to Reduce Anger, Anxiety, and Violence in the classroom" and "Leaving A Legacy – What do you want to be remembered for?"

Spring NETA

In March, more of our staff will have the opportunity to attend the state spring conference for NETA. The staff will have one thing in mind "Stretch Yourself" – as they participate in the theme for the conference with two Keynote speakers – Dr. Salome Thomas-El and Holly Clark- seven featured speakers, and over 200 breakout sessions to choose from over two days. Sarah Bohrer and Kyleigh Lewis will also be presenting at the 2020 conference. Sarah will lead a poster presentation on "Scoots" Friday afternoon, and Kyleigh will have two sessions on "Google Certification for Students" and the "Implementation of Computer Science". Look forward to learning more about these great topics.

One high school student, Gavin Hawskey, will be recognized for his first-place finish in 9-12 interactive media. Gavin created the game "Mages Bravery". He coded his game in Game Lab using Code.org. Gavin was instructed under the direction of Sean Trampe.

To play Gavin's game, check out the QR Code below



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COLLEGE CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOOL GUIDANCE DIRECTOR, MRS. KREIFELS

Students at Conestoga have opportunities to earn college credit while still in high school. This typically happens in one of two ways.

1: Dual Credit Courses English IV, Advanced Biology, and Advanced Speech can be taken for high school and college credit through Wesleyan. Students are in class with Conestoga teachers. If they choose to do so, they will receive both high school and college credits. Information for signing up for these classes is given through the class. Business and Welding classes may also be taught on-site through the SENCAP program. Students can enroll in these programs through the counseling office.

2: Online College Classes Juniors and seniors have the opportunity to schedule a class period to work on an online college class. Students are responsible for signing up for the class and then showing proof of enrollment. Students, along with a parent/guardian, will also need to sign an agreement about how the class period will be spent. Students can enroll in a class at any institution of their choice. However, most of our students enroll in a class through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) or Southeast Community Colleges SENCAP program.

Southeast Community College, in partnership with 44 school districts in Educational Service Units 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, are proud to offer high school students the opportunity to enroll in Southeast Nebraska Career Academy Partnership (SENCAP) which offers several academies: Agriculture, Business, Construction, Criminal Justice, Education, Health Sciences, Information Technology, and manufacturing in Energy and Welding. Juniors and seniors in high school will not only have the opportunity to take college-level coursework in a career field of their interest, but also have multiple opportunities to explore their career in a hands-on approach through, job shadowing, field trips, professional speakers, and annual events highlighting resume building, mock interviews, and other worthy career-related activities. Students can enroll in these programs through the counseling office.

KINDERGARTEN ROUNDUP

ELEMENTARY SECRETARY: MRS. ROSANNE BURG



We are now gathering names of students who will be attending kindergarten at Conestoga Elementary during the 2020-21 school year. Conestoga School Board Policy states "While the school district will make the assessment procedure(s) available as required by law, the school district will not allow early entrance into kindergarten.

To enroll in the school district's kindergarten program, a child must reach the age of five on or before July 31 of the calendar year in which the school year for which the child is seeking admission begins." Please contact Conestoga Elementary or go to our website at conestogacougars.org to request or complete our roundup enrollment form. Please return completed form to Conestoga Elementary School,

P.O. Box 68, Murray, NE 68409, or bring it to any of the Conestoga Public Schools attendance centers.

OPTION ENROLLMENT APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE MARCH 15 OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR TO OPTION IN OR OUT OF CONESTOGA SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR.

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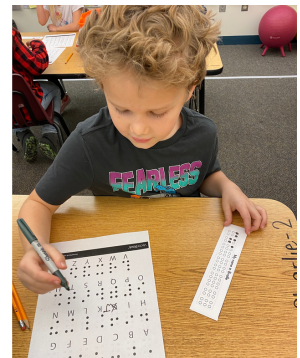
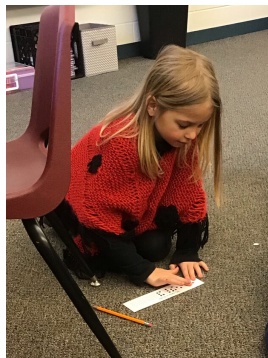
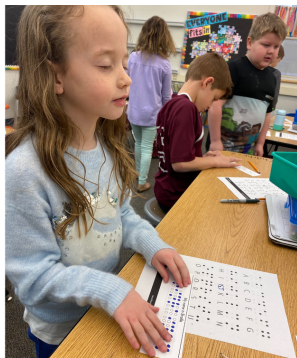
2ND GRADE

TEACHERS: MRS. GLAZEBROOK, MRS. NINCEHELSE, & MRS. WOODS

A Day in the Life of Helen Keller

Second grade has been enjoying many wonderful stories from our Journey's Reading Program. We have read many nonfiction stories about families, culture, animals and their habitats, and weather; as well as some humorous fiction stories that made us laugh!

Our most recent adventure had students reading about the life of Helen Keller. Through this story, students learned how one girl who had many struggles in life was still able to become successful in many areas. Students truly enjoyed learning and were excited for our reading block every day! They were engaged in not only the story, but also the topic of overcoming hardships. The conversations and questions asked by these amazing second grade students were absolutely wonderful! We were able to extend the topic and provide students with a few opportunities to "see" and "hear" what life was really like for Helen. Students learned how to write their name in Braille and were then able to feel the tiny bumps just like Helen would have to do when she was reading and writing. We also had students watch part of a short cartoon about her life without the sound. Some students even tried to get their fellow classmates to complete an action without verbal cues. I think this will be a story in our Journey's book that will stand out to them and they will remember. It was fun to see them so engulfed in the material.



PTO NEWS



Mark your Calendars!

Ice Cream Social and Basket Auction is back this year. March 5th at the Conestoga Elementary from 5:00 to 7:30. All are invited!

FFA GAINS LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

On December 11th, Conestoga FFA welcomed nine new members at the New Jacket Ceremony. Members Ali Gansemer, Brianna Lindsey, Levi Lindsey, Aydin Smith, Ethan Williams, Brink Stanwaik, Jozzy Kozak, Eva Moore, and Kaleigh Gray were welcomed into the organization and received their official FFA jacket. Before break, nine members visited Conestoga's third grade classrooms and taught a lesson on popcorn production in Nebraska as a part of the connecting chapters program. On January 10th, students in plant science and explore plants classes harvested the first crop of hydroponic romaine lettuce from the chapter Tower Garden! Eight FFA members competed in District Leadership Development Events at Norris on January 20th. Kelsi Weilage competed in extemporaneous speaking where she drew a topic, wrote a speech in thirty minutes, and recited a 4-6 minute speech over her topic. She received second and qualified for state convention! Lindee Watson earned a blue ribbon and Shelby Curlo earned a red ribbon in junior public speaking. Lindee spoke about hydroponic growing systems, and Shelby spoke about the need for organic and conventional farming practices. Brianna Lindsey recited the FFA Creed and earned a red ribbon. Six students competed in parliamentary procedure, which is the process of running an official meeting. Kelsi Weilage, Evan Svanda, Lindee Watson, Grant Nickels, Jordan Slafter, and Tobias Nolting placed third as a team with a blue ribbon. Aydin Smith served as a timer for the event. Congrats to all that competed! In February, members look forward to a visit from Nebraska State FFA Officer Megan Fehr. The chapter will also be celebrating National FFA Week through dress up days and school-wide events February 23rd- 29th. Keep up to date on all FFA activities by liking Conestoga FFA on Facebook and Twitter or by contacting Ms. Taylor at ktaylor@conestogaougars.org.



Shelby Curlo, Brianna Lindsey, Kelsi Weilage, and Lindee Watson with their ribbons from District LDEs.



Jennifer Sedlacek, Jordan Slafter, and Kyle Nickels teacher Mrs. Clausen's third graders about popcorn production



Evan Svanda, Grant Nickels, Lindee Watson, Kelsi Weilage, Tobias Nolting, and Jordan Slafter made up the 3rd place parliamentary procedure team.

SPEECH TEAM
TEACHER: MS. SCHLICHTEMEIER

The 2019-2020 Speech season is already underway. We currently have 20 members on our high school team and have begun informational meetings with junior high students interested in competing later this semester. Speech is an activity that has not been part of the Conestoga district for very long, so many students are unaware just what this activity can offer them.

What is Competitive Speech (Forensics)?

Many students shy away from speech because they believe it to be scary, standing on a stage, speaking to hundreds of people. This is not the case. It is a group of energetic students who value the development of writing, confidence, and presentation skills. Students can complete in individual events or in small groups of 2, 3, 4 or even 5 peers. Events also vary, with half focusing on speeches written by the student and the other half more geared towards performing published scripts, stories, and poems. While public speaking is the number one adult fear, it is also one of the most important skills companies are looking for in future employees. We have developed a solid program which takes students who have zero understanding of this activity and transforms them into confident and professional speakers. Anyone can become successful in speech and they will walk away from their years in the activity with skills they can truly use throughout their lives.

History

The Conestoga Speech team was first established as a co-op with Plattsmouth High School in the 2003-04 school year. By 2007 interest in speech had increased enough for Conestoga to establish its own team. During the 2007-08 school year, Conestoga began its first season as an independent team with 12 members. In 2018, the school began its junior high program. Since its establishment in 2007, the Conestoga "Trendsetters" Speech Team has produced numerous tournament sweepstakes championships, six ECNC conference awards, and was named district runner-up in 2011. The team has had several state qualifiers, 11 state medalists, two NCFL national qualifiers, 13 NIETOC national qualifiers and two NIETOC octofinalists.

If you think speech would be a good fit for your child and would like to learn more about our team, please feel free to contact Coach Jessica Schlichtemeier at jschlichtemeier@conestogaps.org or attend our annual showcase on Wednesday, February 12th at 6:30 pm or our home tournament on Saturday, February 22nd starting at 8 am.



2019 Team at Waverly with the tournament runner-up trophy.



CONESTOGA ACTIVITIES



JH BOYS BASKETBALL RECAP MR. KYLE STECKLER

The 2019 JH boys basketball season wrapped up in exciting fashion with both the 'A' & 'B' teams winning their year-end tournaments at Murdock. With the victories at this tournament, the 'A' Team finished the season with a 7-5 overall record. The 'B' Team finished at 6-4, and the 'C' Team finished at 4-1. A few of the goals we set as a team at the beginning of the season were to compete to the best of their abilities, work hard at practice to get a little bit better each day, and have each team finish the season over .500. I believe the boys achieved each of these goals.

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ONE-ACT PLAY PRODUCTION RESULTS MRS. SCHLICHTEMEIER

The One-Act cast and crew had another successful season. The team placed 5th at the ECNC contest. Bella Hogue, Kelsi Weilage and Lily Drannen were recognized for outstanding acting at the contest and Lily was named the conference's Best Overall Supporting Actress. The team placed 4th at the Class B-1 District and received a superior ranking from all three judges. Outstanding acting awards were earned by Bella Hogue, Kelsi Weilage, Lily Drannen, Jocelyn Deterding, Ellie Sachs, and Cassidy Hartig. Congratulations on a great season



District One-Act Outstanding Acting recipients: Cassidy Hartig, Ellie Sachs, Bella Hogue, Kelsi Weilage, Lily Drannen and Jocelyn Deterding.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL MR. TONY THIES

This Lady Cougars came into the 2019-20 season with a mix of experience and youth. The program returned 5 girls who started at least one game in 2018-19, welcomed two new assistant coaches (Kyleigh Lewis, Cassi Vallis), welcomed back senior Ellie Sachs, and brought in a group of 9 freshmen girls. The roster of 20 features 12 newcomers to the program but also returned 2 of our top 3 scorers and 2 All-Conference Honorable Mention honorees (Myah Cummings, Lindee Watson). Overall, the season thus far has been one of continued growth and has shown many signs of reasons for optimism. Sophia Ackerman has started all 12 games for the Lady Cougars as a freshman and has been a valuable asset on both ends of the floor. Soph is currently the second leading scorer, leading rebounder (6.2 RPG), leading shot blocker (1.1 BPG), and is tied for 3rd for assists. Myah Cummings, in her second season as the starting point guard is averaging 8.3 PPG to lead the Lady Cougars, Lindee Watson is following up her impressive freshman season averaging 6.1 PPG (including a career high 18 points against Nebraska City) and 5.3 RPG, Taylor McClatchey has helped the Lady Cougars all over the floor with 4.6 PPG, 3.4 RPG, 1.7 SPG, and 1.9 APG, and Mati Steckler has averaged 4.6 PPG (including a career high 16 points against Louisville) in her first season in the starting lineup. Ellie Sachs has been a valuable sixth man, making her impact most known on the defensive end, leading the Lady Cougars in steals (1.8 SPG). Other notable contributors have been Olivia Priefert, Haven Zimmerman, Ali Gansemer, Jameson Yost, Danie Parriott, and Reagan McPeek. As we pass the midpoint of the season, the Lady Cougars are ramping up for the ECNC Tournament and postseason play. I'm looking forward to seeing the girls continue to compete and improve through this season and beyond!



Back Row (From L-R): Coach Thies, Sophia Ackerman, Jozlynn Kozak, Haven Zimmerman, Myah Cummings, Ellie Sachs, Taylor McClatchey, Olivia Priefert, Lindee Watson, Coach Lewis, Coach Vallis.

Middle Row (L-R): Chae-Woo Kim, Bella Basino, Sophia Tegels, Ali Gansemer, Addi Andersen, Danie Parriott, MacKaylee Madsen, Allison Lewien.

Front Row (L-R): Alyssa Knight, Eva Moore, Jameson Yost, Addi Priefert, Mati Steckler, Reagan McPeek, Mackenzie Jones.

CENSUS UPDATES

Conestoga Public Schools strives to keep informed of the changing needs of the community and its population. The Nebraska Department of Education mandates a census of all children age 5-18 to be taken and reported during the summer for this purpose.

ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA? IS THERE A CHANGE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

We would appreciate you taking a few minutes to call the District office with the information 402-235-2992.

Complete this form and mail it to the district office; PO Box 184 Murray, NE 68409

or

Email ntrofholz@conestogaps.org

Thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to hearing from you!

Adult Household Member: _____

Adult Household Member: _____

Address (physical and mailing): _____

Phone: _____

Names of Children Under 21
at home.

Code

Sex: M or F

Date of Birth

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Code: P- Public School NP-Non Public School H-Home School C-College I-Idle

Conestoga Public Schools
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