



CONESTOGA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TOWNHALL

2020-20201 BUDGET INFORMATION SUPERINTENDENT, DR. BETH JOHNSEN

A school district's budget is different than other public, private, and personal budgeting years. At a public school, our budget year starts in September and ends the following year in August. The Board of Education passed our 2020-2021 budget in September and it has been approved by the Nebraska Department of Education. A detailed budget is on our district website; <https://www.conestogacougars.org>. A brief overview of a district's budget has its largest expenditure as the payroll and benefits for all the school district employees. Often, close to 80- 85% of a budget covers the employees' costs. Currently, the district has 109 staff members. The staff is considered a top priority to ensure the quality of education that our students need to be successful at Conestoga. The expenditure costs of school employees are very consistent with all Nebraska School Districts. How districts vary on budgets are the resources of revenues and additional expenses beyond employee costs. Property owners and personal owners in Nebraska pay taxes to support their local school district. Depending on the locations of the schools, the additional resources, and expenses, will generate the taxing needs that are imposed on local taxpayers. I'm including quick reference information for Conestoga and other neighboring Cass County School Districts.

BELOW ARE THE 2020-2021 CONESTOGA LEVY AMOUNTS FOR EACH AREA OF THE DISTRICT'S BUDGET.

General Fund	\$.95	Special Building Fund	\$.10	QUCPIF Fund	\$.03	Total Levy	\$1.08
(operating \$ for all budget expenditures)		(resource for buildings improvements & needs)		(resource to improve safety needs)			

The tax levy is lower than previous years for Conestoga and is lower than other Cass County districts.

DISTRICT	TOTAL LEVIES
Conestoga	\$1.08
Elmwood-Murdock	\$1.10
Louisville	\$1.17
Plattsmouth	\$1.23
Weeping Water	\$1.29

Another chart of information is the Assessment of Property Values Report with Percentages

District	Residential Property %	Commercial/ Industrial % Property	Agricultural % Property	Personal Property %
Conestoga	61%	2%	31%	6%
Elmwood-Murdock	32%	2%	59%	7%
Louisville	56%	8%	20%	16%
Plattsmouth	73%	10%	11%	6%
Weeping Water	31%	5%	52%	12%



CURRICULUM CORNER

DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT, MRS. BERGMEYER

Conestoga Elementary and Jr/Sr High mathematics program are in the first year of implementing a new math program: Into Math. The teachers spent time during the summer of 2020 to align the Nebraska Math standards to the lessons in the math program. Additionally, teachers have worked with the previous grade level or course to determine standards or skills that may be new or difficult to students due to the closure in the spring. As you can tell, when beginning a new program, there is a lot of work that goes into the planning to ensure our Conestoga students are learning and growing!

In addition to all of the alignment, the program offers enhanced technology components which encourages student engagement and provides the opportunity for students to receive a more personalized instructional system that will meet their learning needs. I would like to thank the Conestoga School Board for always supporting the students and staff of Conestoga by allowing us to keep on top of the most current educational opportunities!

NETFLIX AND "CHILLS"

JR./SR. INSTRUCTIONAL COACH, MS. LEWIS

It's November, and it's beginning to get chilly outside. However, that's not the only thing causing chills right now. Have you seen the Social Dilemma on Netflix? The Social Dilemma is a documentary that was created to share the unethical practices and rise of social media addiction. Are our kids falling into a hole they may never escape? How has social media impacted their daily routines, mental health, and perception. The chilling truth is that students, like all users of social media and technology, are the product of these big companies that are money driven by the use of their platforms. Take the opportunity to take into perspective the views of these top technology gurus and be informed of the outcomes of excessive technology and social media use. "There are only two industries that call their customers "users": Illegal drugs and software."– Edward Tufte

A NOTE FROM THE JR./SR. HIGH PRINCIPAL

MR. ROB GEISE

Quarter 1 is in the books and what a quarter it was! I couldn't be prouder of our students and staff. Both came into the school year with a willingness to learn, a willingness to be flexible and a willingness to do what it takes to be in school. In addition, we continue to progress so we can be the best for our students. We won't let COVID hinder our ability to make positive strides each and every day.

We're fortunate to have outstanding technology at Conestoga Public Schools and this has enhanced our ability to be successful. By far, the biggest challenge faced by our teachers is that of remote learning.

Along with 15–20 students present in the classroom, we also have remote learners that we're serving as well. This is a daunting task for teachers at times, but one that they've approached with a positive attitude. The teachers at Conestoga put kids first and they're always willing to get better. As seen below, great things occur each day at Conestoga Jr/Sr High School. Go Cougars!



PHYSICAL SCIENCE & BIOLOGY CLASSES

SCIENCE TEACHER, MR. SCHMECKPEPER

Integrated Physical Science students recently finished a rocket launch project in which they explored Newton's Laws of Motion.

During phase 1, students created a rocket out of either 17-oz, 1-L, or 2-L bottles. Experiments were designed to test how the variables of force, mass, and acceleration related to each other. After launch, students analyzed data to determine the relationship between the variables. From the data students could easily see that mass & force are directly related, acceleration & force are directly related, and mass & acceleration are inversely related. During phase 2, students redesigned their rockets in an effort to decrease the force on the rocket upon impacting the ground. The class came up with many creative designs.



About half of the rockets were effective at reducing the force of impact, and those students that were unsuccessful learned valuable lessons that helped them re-evaluate why their design failed.

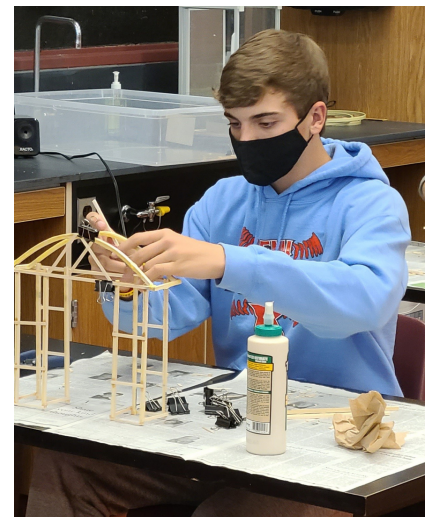
Biology students have been learning about cell membranes and how different molecules move across the membrane to help a cell maintain homeostasis (a stable internal environment in order to sustain the processes of life). Students were able to create and use some hands-on models to better visualize the various functions of the cell membrane.



BUILDING BRIDGES

SCIENCE TEACHER, MR. HUSKEY

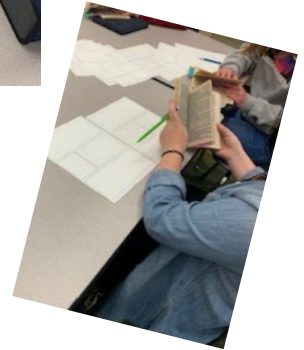
The bridges will be testing soon. Here are a few students putting on the finishing touches to their basswood strip creations. Bridges that hold the most but weight the least are considered the most efficient.



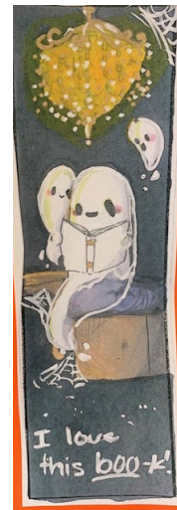
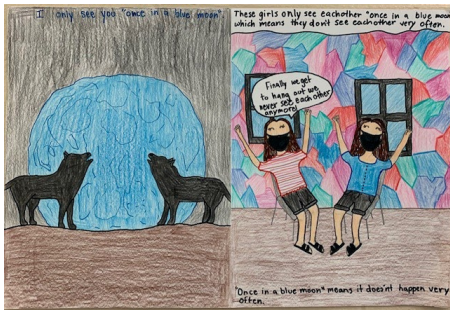
7TH GRADE READING AND ENGLISH CLASSES

ELA TEACHER, MRS. IVERSON

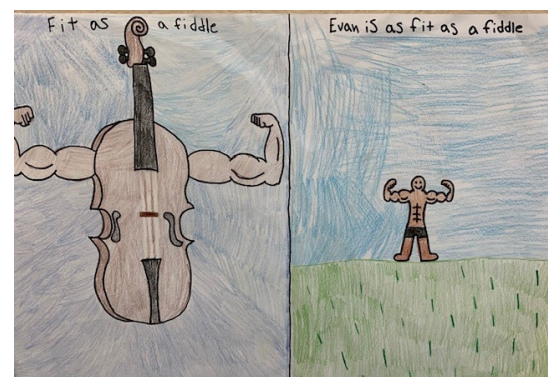
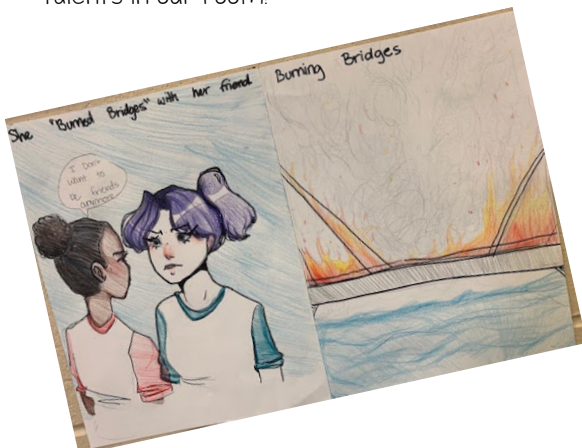
We have completed the first quarter of 7th grade! We have gotten into the swing of things and are cruising right along in our reading of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor. The students are all captivated by the story! One activity that they really gravitated towards was completing a graphic novel for chapter 3 and 4. They first got into a group, (pictured) to discuss and decide what the key elements that were in each of the chapters. Once finalized, each person in their group was assigned to complete a section and turn it into a graphic novel. I can't wait to see the final results.



In English class, we have been working on grammar and writing skills as well as practicing text-dependent analysis by reading informational texts like the history of mac and cheese (thank you President Jefferson!) and the history of soap... you would NOT want to use the soap they did in the 1770s.



One thing I like to do in my class is allow kids to show their creative side! We've worked on an idiom poster where they had to draw a literal and figurative drawing for the idiom. In addition, we studied puns and what made it a pun. It was a very "pun" activity! Lastly, we created our own Halloween themed bookmark puns. We have such talents in our room!



COLLEGE WEEK

7-12 GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, MRS. KREIFELS

September 28th through October 2nd we celebrated College Week! In Cougar Connections students completed a Know How To Go college activity. Student were also encouraged to wear college gear and tweet pictures of themselves on college campuses for prizes. Juniors and seniors had the opportunity to attend a virtual college fair during the week. They listened to presentations on a variety of topics and then could visit hundreds of virtual booths. Seniors also participated in a Financial Aid Presentation presented by EducationQuest. Friday was Apply2College Day for seniors during their English period. They were to research colleges, complete applications, and work on scholarships. We celebrated the steps they were taking towards their futures with footprint cookies. The idea of this week is to have fun and get students thinking about their future and all the choices that are out there!

Together We Transform Lives
TEAMMATES
MENTORING

TeamMates Mentors Needed! There are six students at Conestoga Elementary that are waiting patiently for an adult mentor. Please consider making a positive difference in the life of a child. When you mentor a child, you give them confidence, inspire positive choices, and create hope for a better future. All it takes is just a little of your time once a week during the school year. Visit www.teammates.org for more information, or contact Deb Leffler at dleffler@conestogacougars.org.
Join the team!

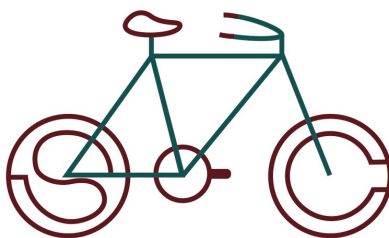
JR/SR HIGH ART DEPARTMENT SECONDARY ART INSTRUCTOR, MR. SWANTEK

The first quarter has come to an end. With a different looking structure of class time by utilizing block scheduling, the art department has been hard at work creating new works of art as well as practicing techniques, and also learning new skills. Taking advantage of the longer classes has produced some nice results for the high school students. A benefit of having block schedule is the students not having as much stopping and starting to deal with. Back when we had shorter class we would have to take time to get stuff out and cleanup leaving you with a short work time in-between on workdays. You still have to get things out and cleanup but with the new format however you now have a much larger window of time to work in-between. It often allows students more time to try out what is being discussed in the lecture right away as opposed to getting a brief start and returning to it the following day.

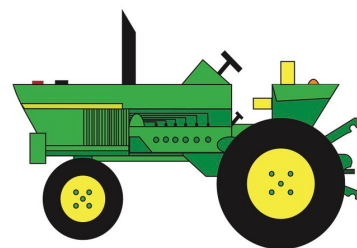
I teach a variety of classes all with their own projects and unique skills we are working on. The 8th grade explore class lasts 1 quarter and then students rotate to new classes so they can experience a broad range of interests to better help them identify what kind of classes they would like to take in high school. Because of the time limit, I try to pack as much of a variety of projects in as I can. Students draw, paint, work with colored paper and sculpt using clay throughout the class. This wide array of mediums and practices involves a variety of lessons into things like color theory and perspective drawing which will be very useful in years to come.



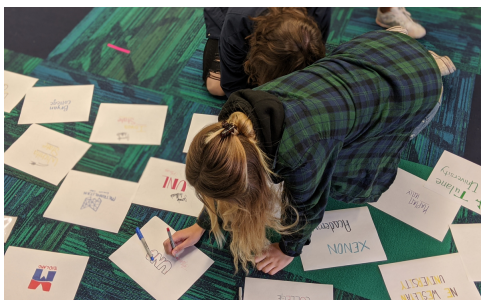
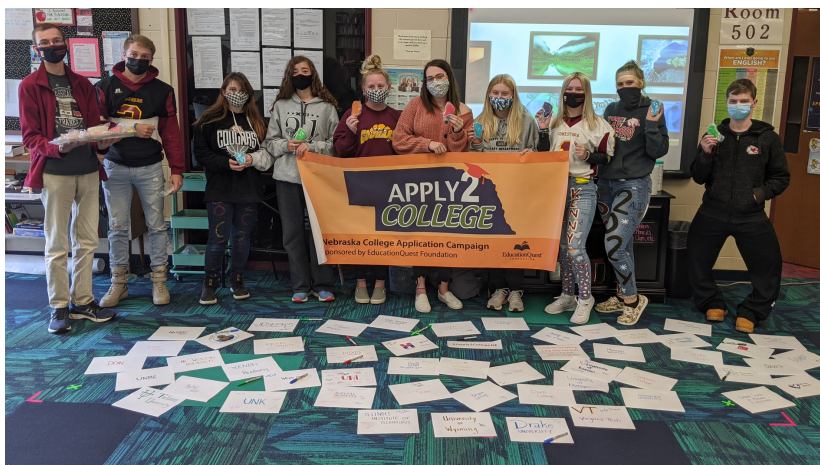
8th Grade- Color Wheel -
Gracy Steckler



Logo - Sydney's Cycles - Sydney Honaker



Emoji- Tractor - Evan Svanda

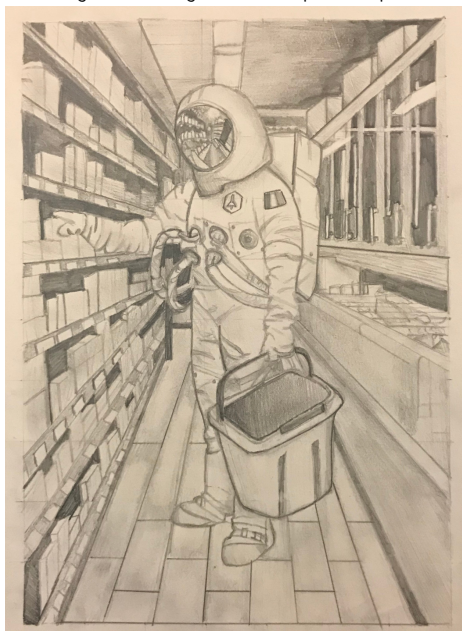


CONTINUED..... ART DEPARTMENT

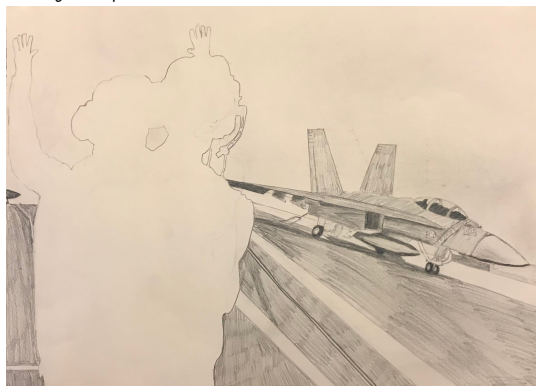
Another class I teach is Graphic Design. With this class we spent a lot of time during the first quarter gaining an understanding what goes on in the field of graphic design, what responsibilities a designer might have, and of course the students began working very hard to grasp the basics of the digital software. We are focusing on using vector art in Adobe Illustrator and will begin to use other software as the year progresses. The projects that stand out to me so far from this class creating logos and new emojis. It isn't easy to pick up all of the new vernacular and tools that we are using and the students are adjusting well and are making great stuff.

Art 1 is a class where we focus on laying a strong foundation for our artwork. In this class students are in the middle of learning the elements of art. These are the ingredients that help make artwork feel complete, they can also be used to enhance ideas to be more visually appealing. Often times students are using them without knowing they are, but when the students gain more of an understanding of each individual element and how it has been used or how they could use it in their own art, it begins to show in their own art growth. So far, we have worked through line, shape, space, and color. With our upcoming projects based around value, texture, and form. Because of this focus on the elements the work being produced is heavily based around one or a few of the elements at a time which helps show the understanding the student has of each element which is cool to see.

Up next is Drawing & Painting. In this class as the name might give away, we focused heavily on drawing this past quarter with briefly starting to paint near the end. We focused heavily on developing drawing skills through still life techniques, grid drawings, and drawing often. The students put in a lot of time developing their drawings skills so far and will continue this throughout the year. Drawing is a vital part of creating art and will be useful when painting. Helping students create strong compositions and learning while practicing turning ideas into reality is a very useful skill to have. The students' skills have grown a ton already and their paintings are very creative and off to a great start. They have been using the skills that they learned in Art 1 and its exciting watching them expand upon them so quickly.



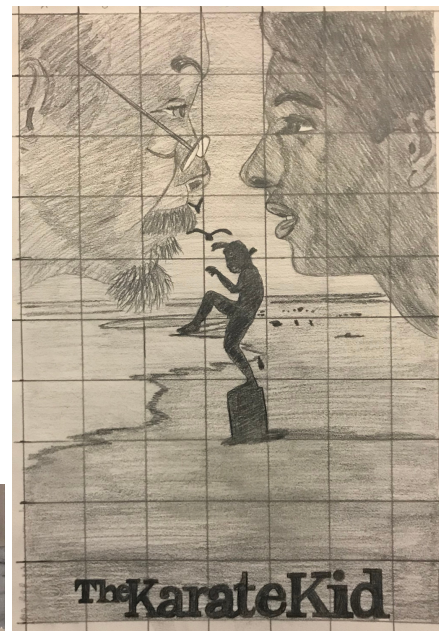
Grid Drawing – Astronaut Shopping–
Addie Priefert



Negative Space Drawing – Flight Deck with Jet
– Carter Arens



Pottery– Student work waiting to be fired in the kiln.



Grid Drawing– Karate Kid–
Sophia Tegels

The final class on my schedule is pottery. This year pottery has taken advantage of the block schedule as well. This being the class that takes the longest for the students to prep for the day, as well as the cleanup being more time consuming and in depth than the other classes, having that longer time without needing to clean up has been productive. Students are able to learn a new technique such as pinch, coil, or slab construction and then immediately practice with that technique then to turn around and create a piece the next time they are in class in one sitting is great. In years past trying to store wet clay can provide a challenge to students. Clay could dry out if not put away correctly thus making it very difficult to work with which either would impede progress or stop it all together. But this year students are more likely to finish with in the work day time period. The use of space within the classroom is different this year which provides some challenges but they have overcome and are on their way to making some really cool works out of clay. So far this year they have done a paper sculpture project, as well as learned and practiced with the 3 construction techniques mention earlier. As I fire the kiln more and more we will start seeing the products of the hard work being done by the pottery students.

The classroom has stayed busy in the art department so far this year and will continue to be that way. The new ideas, the new projects, and the new adjusted way of working has been a good opportunity for all of us to use our creativity and we will continue to make art to the best of our abilities and I am excited to see what else is created throughout this year.

STUDENT SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES, MRS. WRIGHT

We have wrapped up a successful first quarter of the 2020–2021 school year at Conestoga. Parent teacher conferences were held virtually this quarter, with students assisting in the presentation of information shared with families. Our amazing teachers continue to do a fabulous job of teaching in person and remotely. All staff have done such a wonderful job following through with new expectations due to COVID. We are now tackling second quarter and working to enhance the remote learning experience for all involved.

What is remote learning? At Conestoga, it's a blend of in-person instruction and online instructional components completed via Zoom and online platforms such as Google Classroom.

The success of remote learning requires the school and family to work as ONE with everyone supporting each other. Here are a few tips to help support our remote learners and the article link is included for those interested in learning more!

Set a Schedule

Don't Teach....HELP

Know Where to Go for Help

Ensure Materials are Ready

Identify Barriers

Complete Work

Honor the Learning

Communicate

Achieving success by staff, students, and families working as ONE

Want to learn more about Remote Learning?

Search: <https://www.teachthought.com/technology/remote-learning-tips-for-parents/>

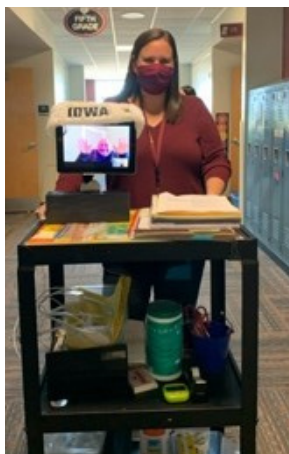
A NOTE FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

MR. ERIC DENNIS

Since the start of the school year we have had virtual students. These students have been receiving instruction via Zoom by their classroom teacher. For some of the families it is by choice, but for other students it is because they may need to quarantine for a certain period of time. What if we had a teacher exposed or test positive to COVID? How do we handle that situation?

Don't worry we know the answer! That teacher can remote teach from home. By using Zoom, Google Classroom, Nearpod, and other online instructional apps and instructional material, the teacher is able to instruct their students as if they were in the classroom. The remote teacher could not instruct the class alone.

There is an adult in the classroom to help monitor the students and to give feedback to the remote teacher on students understanding of a lesson. The remote teacher and substitute are truly team-teaching and the students are benefiting from the attention they receive from both teachers. Although this may not be an ideal way of teaching, we are making it work! Teachers want to be physically in the classroom. However, it shows that in this day in age we are able to overcome the challenges presented to us to meet the needs of our students.



COACHES CORNER

ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL COACH, MRS. TONKIN

With school in full swing, our teachers are working hard to build strong reading skills with our students. A solid foundation in reading is paramount for future success in all subject areas. To support what they are learning in school, there are several things you can do at home to reinforce their reading skills.

First and foremost, the best thing you can do is read to/with your child. Set aside 15–20 minutes each day to read with your child. Simply reading together is one of the best ways to build vocabulary and comprehension. While reading a story ask your child questions about the characters' feelings & actions. Are the characters realistic or are they animals or creatures? Ask your child about the setting as well as the problem and solution of the story. If you have older students, ask them similar questions about books they are reading on their own. To build fluency, have your child read aloud to you, a sibling, a grandparent, or even a pet. If it's difficult to find time for your child to read aloud, I suggest having them read aloud while you are cooking dinner or while you're in the car. In addition, having students record themselves reading on an iPad or phone is great for practicing fluency and gives students immediate feedback on their own oral reading fluency.

Spending a few minutes a day engaged in reading with your child can yield significant improvements in their reading abilities in and out of school.



ACTIVITIES AT CONESTOGA

ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR, MR. JASON AHRENS



The fall activity season has come to a close and it will definitely be one to remember with all the COVID-19 protocols that needed to be followed and also for the growth and the success that our students and teams experienced throughout the fall. I want to say thank you to everyone who contributed to this successful season: student-athletes, coaches, parents, guardians, event workers, teachers, administrators, the Booster club, and many more, your efforts and support are appreciated! Here are some highlights from this fall.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Cass Wildcats finished the season with a 7-17 record. Six of those wins came in the second half of the season. Seven total is more than the previous two seasons combined.
- The JV Football team finished the season with a 2-1 record.
- The JH Football team finished the season with a 3-3 record.
- The Varsity Football team competed well all season and picked up a win versus Cedar Bluffs in the homecoming football game.
- The high school cross country team showed continued improvement throughout the season.
- Danie Parriott placed 5th at the State Cross Country meet in Kearney. It was her second straight year with a top 5 finish at the state meet.
- The JH XC team finished the season this past weekend at the State Meet in Gering. James Kansteiner placed 25th.
- The Volleyball team finished their season with some of their best play with the JV team placing third at the Weeping Water tournament and the Varsity team playing three very competitive in their final district game.
- The marching band received a Superior rating at the Oxbow Competition in Ashland.

UPCOMING NOVEMBER DATES:

November 11th: JH Boys Basketball Photos

November 16th: Opening Day for HS Winter Sport Practices

November 17th: 1st JH Boys Basketball Game @ Elementary

November 23rd: Capitol Conference Play Production Competition November 24th: Girls and Boys Varsity Basketball Jamboree Games

November 30th: District Play Production Competition

ACTIVITIES AT CONESTOGA

HEAD FOOTBALL COACH, MR. TRENT CLAUSEN

Another football season is in the books for Conestoga! The 2020 High School Football Team ended the season with a Varsity record of 1-7 and a JV record of 2-1. Each player on our team showed improvement as the season progressed. Our Varsity win took place on Homecoming Night versus Cedar Bluffs, setting a school record of 76 points scored in a single game by the Cougars; our two JV wins were against Freeman and Mead. We were very lucky to get all of our Varsity games played with COVID taking place. This was our first season of playing 8-man football since 2009 and provided for some exciting football. We had 21 players on the team this season which were led by four seniors: Brody Hassler, Toby Nolting, James Parriott, and Cameron Williams.



The rest of the team consisted of Juniors: Bryson Berg, Keaghon Chini, Jared Lewis, Wyatt Renner, James Shade, Evan Svanda, and Carter Wessar; Sophomores: Lucas Anderson, Breckin Berg, Carter Plowman, Aydin Smith, Gage Totilas, and Jayden Widler; Freshmen: Dallas Katzenstein, Alrich William Rigionios, Trey Rodis, and Mickey Turner-Hickey. The team was coached by Shaun Brothers, Trenton Clausen, Jeremy Lutt, Clayton Moore, and Chad Schmeckpeper. Our managers were Jennifer Sedlacek, Heather Fitzpatrick, Kayla Chadwick, Ella Lewis, Logan Lutt, and Ike Schmeckpeper. A continued goal of the Conestoga Football Program is to attract more players each season so that we are able to play within the Class that our enrollment qualifies us which would make our team playoff eligible. We greatly appreciate any help that our district and community could provide us on accomplishing this goal. We look forward to carrying the momentum gained during the 2020 Football Season into the rest of the sports seasons for Conestoga!



ONE-ACT SHIFTS GEARS IN RESPONSE TO COVID

SPEECH/ONE ACT COACH, MRS. SCHLICHTEMEIER



The large sets and choruses of recent CHS productions are waiting in the wings as COVID put a halt to "normal" theatre productions. After choosing a show in April, Mrs. Schlichtemeier was faced with the hard decision of changing the script right before the school year began in response to continued risks of COVID spread.

The 2020 show, "No Problem," centers around five students as they struggle to complete an in-class writing assignment on the prompt "I'm addicted to." While they tell each other they are just "making up" an addiction, their topics reveal the true problems each student faces in their lives outside of school. Leading the cast are seniors Lily Drannen and Jasmine Rainey, playing the roles of Melissa Ann Banbridge and Jennifer Scott respectively. Melissa writes that she is addicted to shopping, a habit that evolves into shoplifting as a cry for attention from her workaholic parents. Jennifer is addicted to chewing gum, something she picked up trying to lose weight to become a better swimmer. The stress of being the best pushes Jennifer to a dangerous eating disorder.

Joining Drannen and Rainey are junior Lindee Watson, playing Dillon Fenway who is addicted to winning after being pushed to succeed in sports by her former-All-American father, and sophomores Delaney Deterding and Ella Lewis, bringing the roles of Paula Dearborn and Jessie Joseph to life. Paula is addicted to fun and friends, leading to risky behaviors to fill the void left by her absent father who has started a new family in another state. Jessie is addicted to jokes, serving as the class clown to cover up her rocky home life caring for her alcoholic mother. Rounding out the cast are Dani Ahrens (Michaela Scott), Alyssa Knight (Paula's mom), Hannah Lewine (Melissa's mom), Dawson Hardesty (Dillon's dad), Trace Widler (Scott), Kyle Nickels (Rex Joseph), Addi Andersen (Meredith), and Shelby Curlo (Jessie's mom).

This year's set is very limited since the stage is doubling as additional seating for lunch, but also to help prevent contact spread.

Since they are not building a huge set this year, the crew has been working hard on other elements, such as costumes, makeup, sound effects and lighting cue to help set the mood of the play, which flashes from present time in the classroom, to a series of flashbacks to help audiences see the real problems these students face. Seniors Bridget Wagner, Jozlynne Kozak, and Levi Bell, juniors Bella Basino and Keaghan Chini, sophomores Stephanie Colvert and Karissa Nickels, freshmen Richard Colvert, Evelyn Murdoch, and Xavier Victor, and 8th graders Andy Lamoureux and Ryleigh Hill make up the stage crew.

Along with limiting set pieces and props, students have been practicing with masks on to help prevent to potential spreading of the corona virus. Other elements of a typical rehearsal, such as vocal warm-ups and yoga, have also been eliminated this year to help maximize rehearsal time. When at all possible, rehearsals are ending early and have set agendas to allow certain cast and crew members the night off to help limit the number of people at practice.

Another key component of the one act season that is different this year is the actual competitions. The troupe will be traveling less, and contests will have tight restrictions. The first performance for the year will be Thursday, November 5th with the home public performance. The traditional dinner theatre will not happen this year and all audience members will be required to wear masks during the performance. Admission will be a flat \$5; activity passes will not be accepted as this is the theatre department's lone fundraiser. The team will travel to Minden for their only festival on Saturday, November 21st and then will host the Nebraska Capitol Conference contest on Monday, November 23rd at the Lofte in Manley. Conestoga will perform first at 8:30 a.m. Audiences will be limited and will not be allowed to stay for the entire day. The team will also be returning to school immediately after their performance to ensure actor, director and judge safety. Conestoga will also be hosting the district contest at the Lofte, which will take place on Monday, November 30th. If the team wins, they will advance to the state competition in Norfolk on Friday, December 11th (afternoon session).



Conestoga Public Schools
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Murray, NE 68409-0184
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