



CANON-McMILLAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

ELEMENTARY & INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

The Canon-McMillan School Board approved the adoption of Teachers Curriculum Institute (TCI) Social Studies Alive! (Grades 1-5) and TCI Social Studies Geography Alive! (Grade 6) for the 2025-2026 school year at the March board meeting.

In January, a K-6 Social Studies Task Force was established to pilot the TCI Social Studies program for several weeks to determine if it would meet the needs of our students. During the pilot, task force members taught a unit of study to evaluate the materials and curriculum. After the pilot concluded, task force members shared their feedback about the program's effectiveness, which led to the decision to adopt the program.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) highlights the importance of teaching social studies to elementary students to build foundational knowledge about their community, state, country, and world they live in ([NCSS, 2024](#)). Therefore, our goal was to adopt a social studies program with quality materials and a structured curriculum.

TCI Social Studies is a research-based program that focuses on developing students' understanding of history, geography, civics, and economics. The curriculum is spiral in nature beginning with first-graders learning about their [School and Family](#), second-grade focusing on [My Community](#), and third-grade targeting [Our Community and Beyond](#). In fourth grade, students learn about U.S. geography and economics in [Regions of Our Country](#). By fifth grade, students are ready for U.S. history in [America's Past](#). In sixth grade, students learn about the world in [Regions and People](#).

We are excited to implement this new social studies program with students next school year!



Social Studies Task Force Teachers

From L: Mrs. Zalaznik - Gr. 1 Borland Manor, Mrs. Rinehart, Gr. 6 North Strabane Intermediate, Mrs. Surich - Gr. 4 Wylandville, Mrs. Grubich - South Central Gr. 1, Miss Shaffer - Gr. 5 Cecil Intermediate, Miss Svitek - Gr. 3 Muse, Mrs. Keaton - Gr. 2 Hills-Hendersonville.



While piloting TCI Social Studies Alive!, Mrs. Keaton's second graders learned about who provides services in their community. Students worked in teams to present the various services (i.e., firefighter, police office, engineer, nurse, mechanic) to their classmate while wearing their service job hat!

April 2025

NUMBER SENSE

Starting in kindergarten, students begin building their foundation for all future mathematical learning. Number sense is students' ability to understand numbers, their relationships, and how they can be used in problem-solving. Students need to have a strong number sense to be prepared in later grades to tackle future complex math concepts like place value, operations, and estimating. Research indicates that developing number sense early is a strong predictor of later success in math. By focusing on number sense beginning in kindergarten, teachers are helping students form the foundation necessary to be successful in math as they get older.



South Central first grade Mrs. Gurich uses 100 chart with students to demonstrate patterns with even and odd numbers.

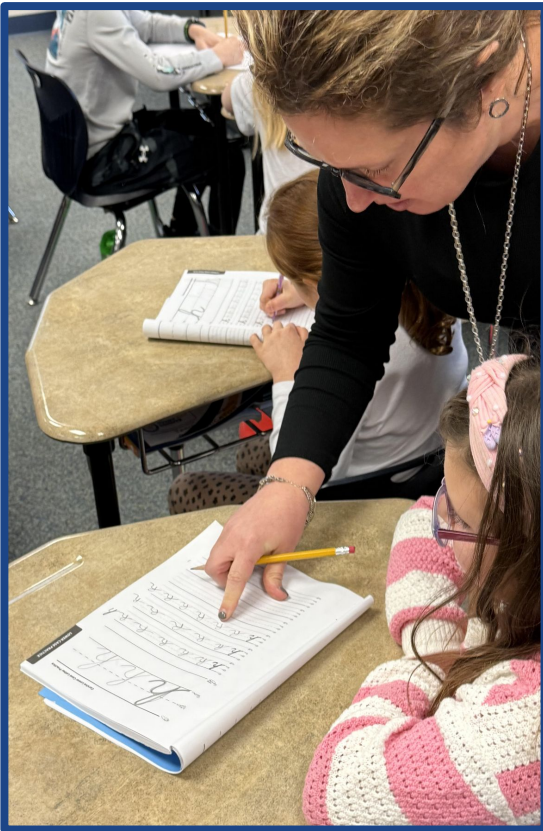


Borland Manor kindergarten teacher Mrs. Nardine practices counting with her students.



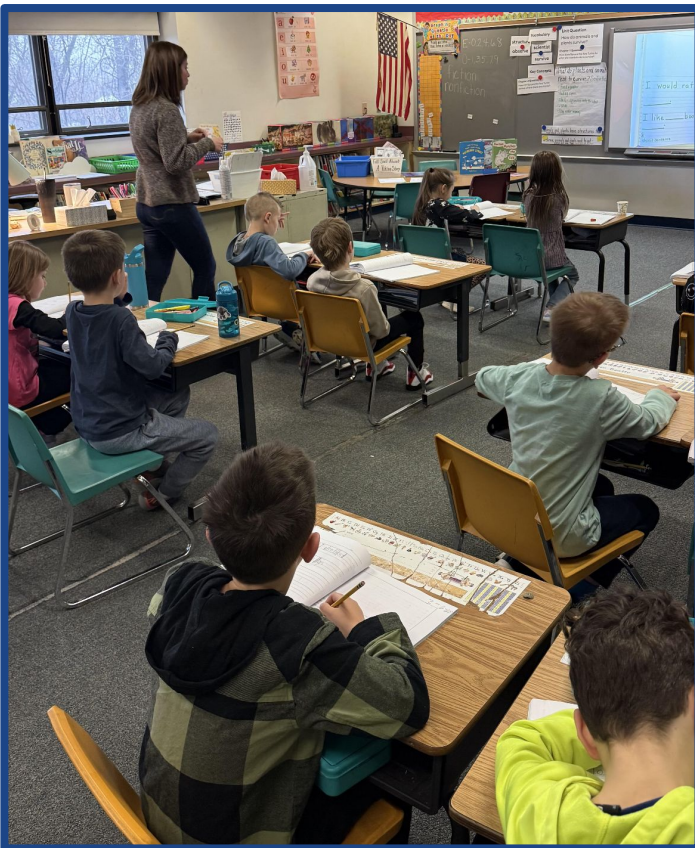
Mrs. Jeswilkowski Wylandville kindergarten teacher models how to count using touch point math.

LEARNING TO WRITE

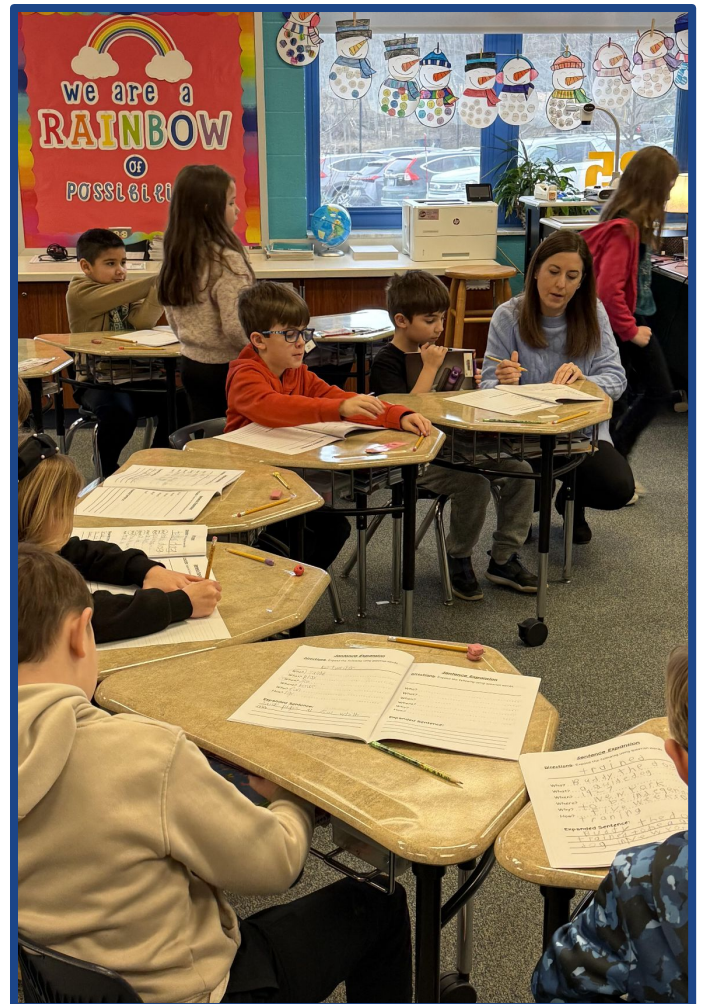


Cursive handwriting is taught to all CMSD students during their second grade year using guidelines from the Wilson Cursive Handwriting program. Using this structured program, students learn how to form letters properly and make connections between them while learning to write smoothly and legibly. Learning how to write cursive is an important step in developing fine motor skills, improving handwriting fluency, and building confidence in students' written communication. As students mature, knowing how to write their signature and being able to read and write cursive will be an asset to them!

Pictured to the left, Muse Elementary second grade teacher Mrs. Crowley reviews a student's letters.



First graders at Borland Manor in Mrs. Schutt's class were attentive during a Bridge to Writing lesson about opinion writing. Students completed sentence stems to support their opinions with reasons.



Muse second grade teacher Mrs. Wendt uses strategies from The Writing Revolution to help students expand their sentences by adding details during an activity about their pet.

AI ROBOTICS IN STEM

As technology continues to shape our world, it is important for our students to develop an early understanding of Artificial Intelligence (AI) terminology and how it can impact their daily lives. Canon-McMillan has established an AI Task Force to look at the research about using AI technologies and the impact it has on students' learning, especially for young adolescents. Our focus will be on teaching students about how AI works, not how to use it for academic purposes like solving a math problem or writing an essay. In April, Intermediate STEM teachers will be piloting UB-TECHS uKit AI Robotics program to begin integrating AI education into our STEM curriculum. This hands-on approach to learning will provide an interactive and engaging experience for fifth and sixth grade students!



North Strabane Intermediate STEM teacher Mr. Sharpnack building a uKit robot.



The Little Mac Band and Chorus Festival was a big success! Intermediate students from Cecil and North Strabane Intermediate played as one while being directed by teachers in the K-12 Music Department!



Mr. Sabol Cecil Intermediate chorus teacher discusses the song oh Shenandoah.



Mrs. Smith Wylandville music teacher directs fourth grade trumpet players!



Muse Elementary Art teacher Ms. Blackburn let's everyone know Punxy Phil's prediction!

STRUCTURED LITERACY



Our K-2 students are receiving quality reading instruction from CMSD teachers with our Structured Literacy approach to learning. This approach includes explicit, systematic instruction to help students acquire essential literacy skills. On a daily basis, teachers use multi-sensory strategies that incorporate visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile components during instruction. With this approach, students are actively engaged, which leads to better retention and stronger connections in the brain. Our Structured Literacy program is a model program in Washington and surrounding counties because it provides students with foundational reading skills while also building students' content knowledge with Geodes, decodable books about a variety of topics.



Mrs. Zalaznik's first graders at Borland Manor improve their fluency by reading in unison their Geodes decodable book, *Towers of Nashtifan*. Students are strengthen their phonics skills and gaining knowledge!



South Central kindergarteners in Mrs. Kuhn's room respond to questions after reading Express Readers story, *Get Up Cub*.



Dr. Kolarcik's kindergarteners at South Central show off their decoding skills by sounding out words during a Foundations literacy lesson!

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE



Borland Manor third graders in Mrs. Westphal's class learned about the Vikings after reading *The Viking Age* in CKLA. Students learned about Vikings as explorers, traders, and warriors from Scandinavia. As a culminating activity, students created their own unique longship like the Vikings used to travel the seas!

Fourth grade Muse ELA teacher Mrs. Valancius holds a retrieval practice session by questioning students about key events of the American Revolution. To conclude this CKLA history-themed unit, students enjoyed a "Tea Party" where they had fun sampling a variety of teas!

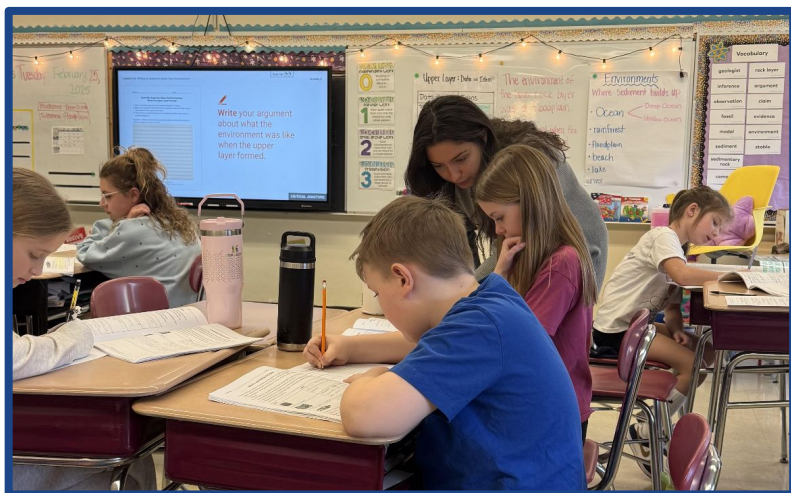


Fifth grade Cecil Intermediate ELA teacher Mr. Tatum teaches students about *The Reformation*, Unit 6 in CKLA. As a culminating activity, students created visual presentations and presented them to their peers to showcase their knowledge about the 16th-century movement in Europe that led to challenging religious beliefs and political structures.

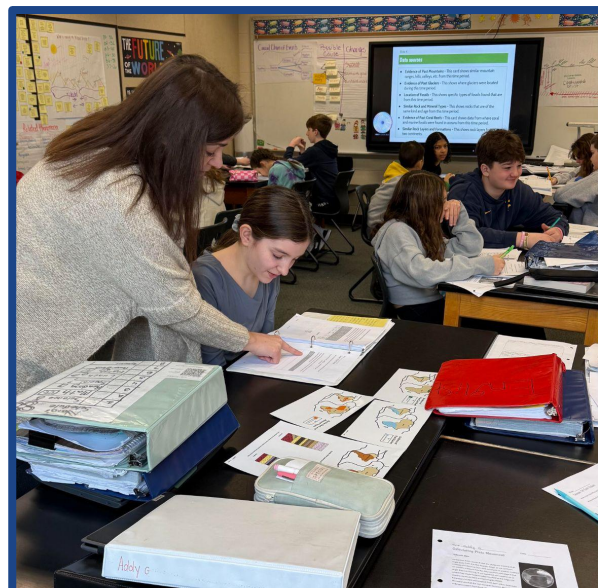


North Strabane Intermediate fifth graders in Mrs. Kramer's ELA class engage in a simulation activity after reading about the Renaissance during Unit 5 in CKLA. Students drew while laying on their back to gain perspective of what it was like for Michelangelo as he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel on his back!

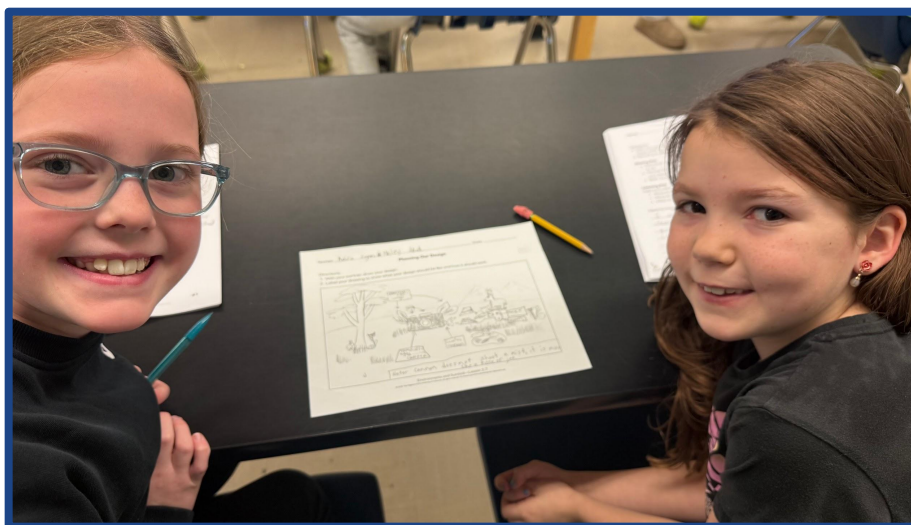
INVESTIGATIONS



After reading Fossil Hunter's Handbook, Amplify Science: Earth's Features, Miss Fontana's fourth graders at Hills-Hendersonville recorded data and generated ideas to make inferences before constructing scientific explanations and arguments about rocks and fossils found in the Desert Rock National Park!



Sixth graders in Mrs. Gonze science class at North Strabane Intermediate School learn about the impact of earthquakes on mountains while studying plate tectonics and rock cycling. Students analyzed the earth's layers to understand what causes mountains to move.



Third grades at Hills-Hendersonville in Mrs. Mosesso's science class simulate the role of engineers after learning about how grove snails adapt to their environment during Amplify's Environments and Survival unit. Students used their knowledge of adaptive traits to apply the engineering design process to imitate how grove snails survive in nature.



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