WINTER

CANON-MCMILLAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

ELEMENTARY & INTERMEDIATE

SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

NEWSLETTER ABOUT HAPPENINGS ACROSS OUR ELEMENTARY AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

Literacy Mid Year Update

Canon-McMillan School District is committed to helping every student learn how to read. Our Structured Literacy approach focuses on delivering evidence-based reading instruction in an explicit and systematic method.



I am excited to share the K-6 Literacy Mid Year report to provide insight into the effectiveness of our instructional methods and programs used to teach students how to read.

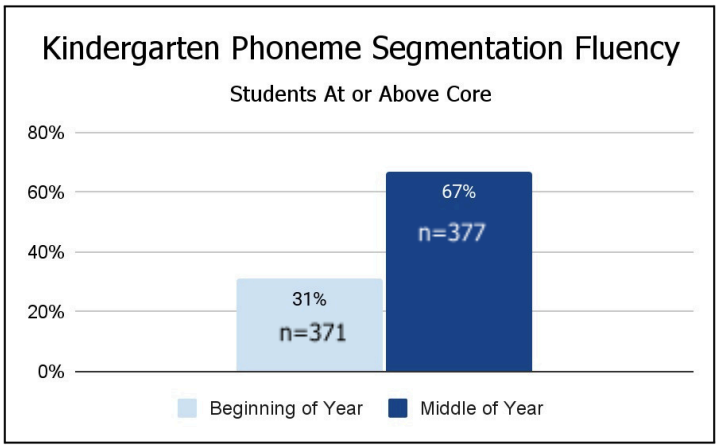
Our mid year DIBELS results show strong growth across all grade levels, reflecting the dedication of our students, teachers, and families. From whole group instruction with classroom teachers to focused small-group and one-on-one instruction with our reading specialists, students are working hard to learn how to read!

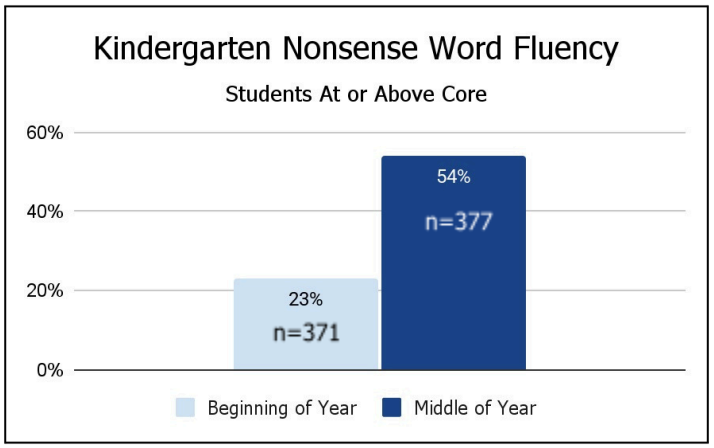
Our Structured Literacy program continues to help our students acquire and strengthen foundational reading skills while also building background knowledge with content-focused texts: Geodes, Amplify CKLA, Amplify Science!

ON THE NEXT PAGE, THE MID YEAR LITERACY UPDATE SHOWS STUDENTS' GROWTH FROM BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TO THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR FOR GRADES K-4.

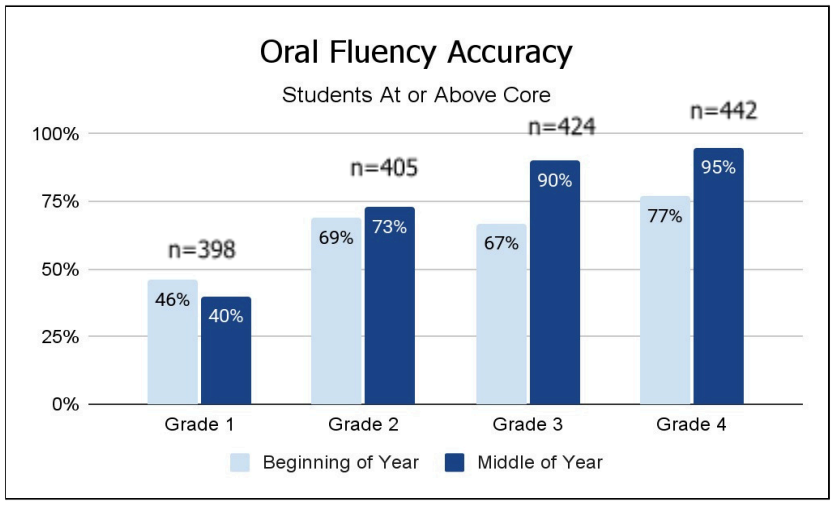
LITERACY UPDATE

Beginning of Year to Mid Year
2025-2026

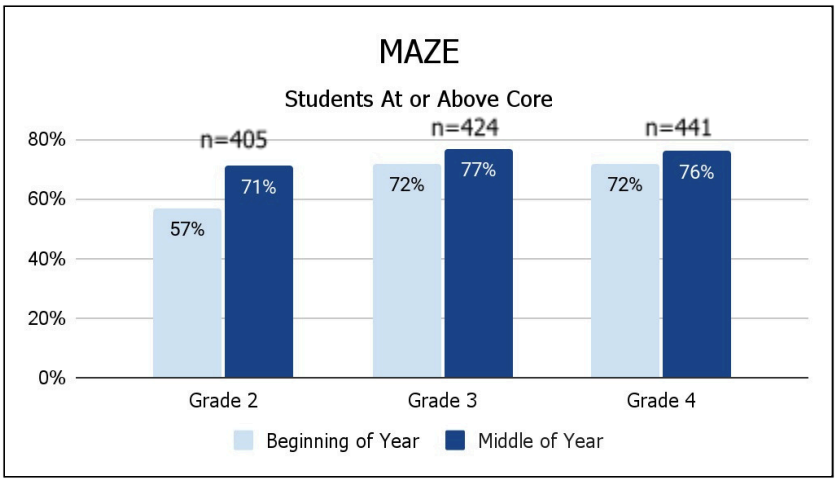




Our kindergarten students have made significant growth inphoneme segmentation fluency, the ability to hear, break apart, and work with individual sounds in words. Additionally, students continue to improve their decoding skills,as evident in the 31% increase in nonsense word fluency correct letter sound. **Growth in these two assessment areas demonstrate the impact of daily structured, research-based instruction in foundational reading skills.**



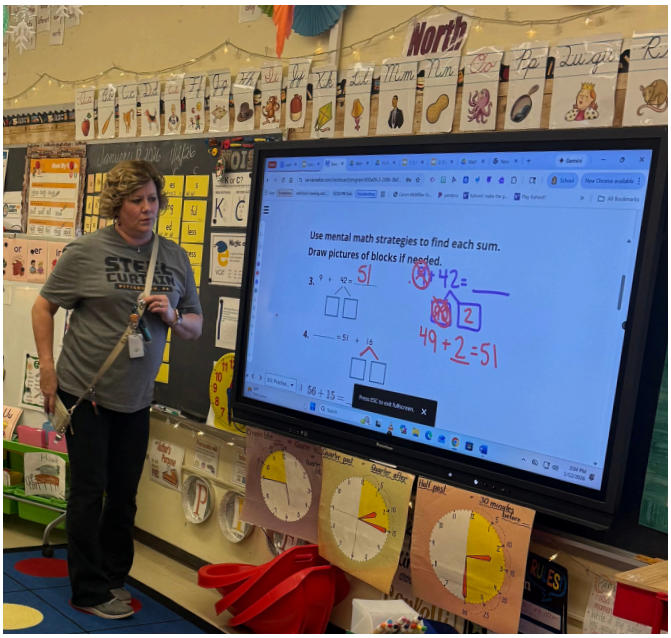
Students' oral reading fluency accuracy improved across grades 2-4. In first grade, students' fluency accuracy declined slightly. Grade 2 increased modestly, 4%. Grades 3 and 4 demonstrated significant gains, which indicates students are developing strong fluency as they progress through the grades.



Maze results indicate growth in reading comprehension from the beginning to the middle of the year across grades 2-4. Grade 2 showed notable improvement, increasing by 14%. Grade 3 and 4 demonstrated continued growth. Overall, the data indicates that students' ability to comprehend and make meaning of what they read continues to improve as texts become more challenging.

MATH PILOT UPDATE

As communicated earlier this school year, a Math Task Force was developed to pilot Savvas enVision+ across grades K-6. Since beginning the pilot in early January, feedback from teachers has been positive!

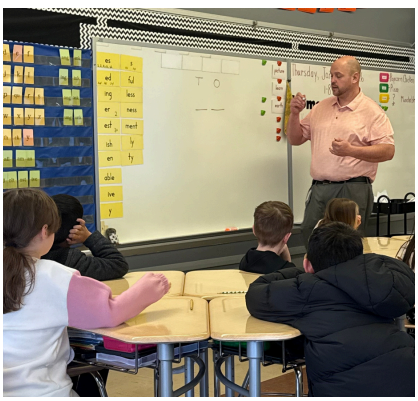


Pilot teachers have reported that there is a lot of opportunities for practice and problem-solving within each lesson after examples are modeled in a step-by-step fashion.

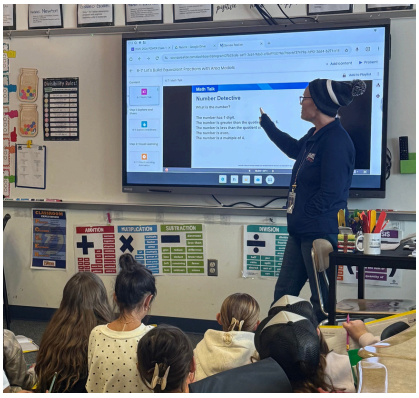
An area that has gained a lot of positive attention is Math Talk, a 5-10 minute teacher-led discussion at the beginning of a lesson. During the Math Talk, teachers engage students in math reasoning activities to stregnthen number sense and fluency. In the primary grades, students talk about counting routines and breaking numbers apart. In the upper elementary grades, students engage in mental math strategies with multiplication and division and explain different strategies to compare fractions.

Parents of students participating in the pilot have shared that the QR codes embedded in students' workbooks have been helpful when assisting with their homework. The QR codes link to demonstration videos of topics within each lesson. Parents can quickly scan the QR code to help their child if they are having trouble.

Our pilot teachers and their students have been doing a great job of providing insightful feedback to help us collectively evaluate enVision+ math program later this month. More information will be shared with all K-6 families in March.







THERMAL ENERGY

OpenSciEd 6th grade science curriculum puts students in the role of figuring out how the world actually works. Over the course of the year, students explore big ideas like how light and heat interact with different materials, how energy moves through Earth's systems to create weather and natural hazards, and how living things function all the way down at the cellular level. Instead of just memorizing facts, students ask questions, test ideas, analyze results, and use evidence to explain what they see, building real scientific thinking skills along the way!



In Unit 6.2 on Thermal Energy, Cecil Intermediate science teacher Mr. Patterson took his classes outside to demonstrate how heat moves and how it changes matter by conducting experiments and engaging students in scientific discussions.



Observing a balloon held over a flame and compare different cups to figure out why insulated cups keep drinks warm or cool helped students connect what they saw to what's happening, how energy transfers, and why materials behave the way they do when heated. Through observation and discussions, students learned how thermal energy affects the world around them.

EMPIRES IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Mrs. Fuch's fourth graders at South Central brought the Middle Ages to life by celebrating with a medieval-like feast, listening to music from the time period, and designing their own crowns to help make connections to what life was like long ago.





The Empires in the Middle Ages unit introduced fourth grade students to what life was like in Europe during the medieval period. They learned about key events in western Europe and the leaders who shaped the region.

This unit helps students build a strong foundation of knowledge about the major civilizations that influenced the Middle Ages.

A fun and engaging unit for students as they explore topics like castles, knights, monarchies, and the feudal system!



As a culmnating activity, Mrs. Valancius' and Mrs. Cypher's fourth graders created stained glass windows to tell a story, similar to how they were used in the Middle Ages.

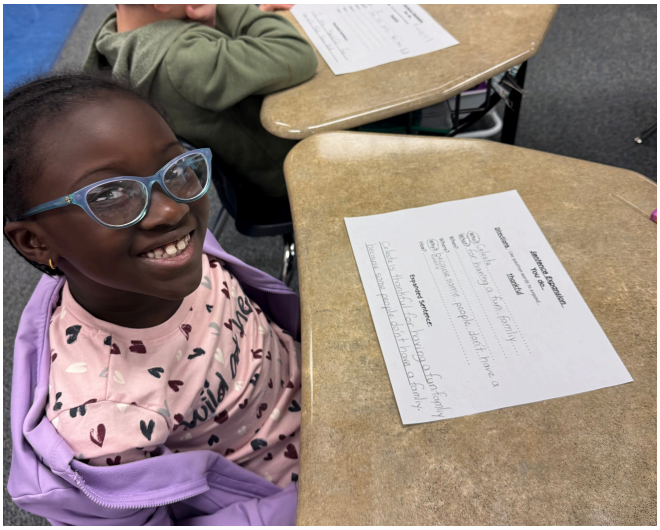
Since many people at that time couldn't read, stained glass windows often helped share important stories and ideas. The colorful light shining through the windows also helped create a meaningful and special atmosphere, making these works of art both beautiful and purposeful!

STRUCTURED WRITING

After reading The Lakota and the Buffalo Geode story, Mrs. Cole's second graders at Muse practiced expanding sentences using question words. During the lesson, students answered questions about the word thankful and how it connected to The Lakota and the Buffalo. They then used their answers to build an expanded sentence!



Learning to write can be challenging, especially for younger students. Through our second grade writing program, The Writing Revolution, students are building strong writing skills using a structured approach that helps them become confident, effective writers.



Combining Geode books with sentence expansion activities helps students develop foundational reading skiils, build knowledge, and write with clarity!

ANCIENT ROMAN CIVILIZATION

Mrs. Myers, Muse third grade ELA teacher, introduces key vocabulary terms as students get ready to read about daily life in the city of Rome as part of the Amplify CKLA Grade 3 Ancient Rome unit. Students learned about the history, culture, and stories of one of the most influential civilizations in the ancient world. They learned how Rome was found through legends like Romulus and Remus and exploreed myths about Roman gods and goddesses!



HISTORY BOWL COMPETITION



Mrs. Sill's gifted students competed at the 2025 History Bowl.

Teams took part in three creative challenges that highlighted Pittsburgh's history. The first challenge required students to explore the Pittsburgh Is Special A–Z exhibit to identify artifacts and connect each one to what makes Pittsburgh unique.

In the second challenge, Spooky Scavenger Hunt, teams of students hunted through the Hidden Pittsburgh exhibit for shadowy silhouettes, practicing observation skills while enjoying a playful, mysterious twist on museum exploration. The last challenge, called the Ultimate Pittsburgh Sports Trivia, had students using information and artifacts from the exhibits to design their own trivia-style quizzes. Students then tested each other's knowledge of Pittsburgh sports history!

24 MATH CHALLENGE

Mrs. Lavallee's fourth and fifth grade gifted students from Muse and Cecil Intermediate competed in a 24 Math Game Competition.



The 24 Puzzle is a classic math challenge that requires players to use all four math operations to combine four numbers to come up with the number 24.

Multiple students at Cecil Intermediate paced at the challenging event!

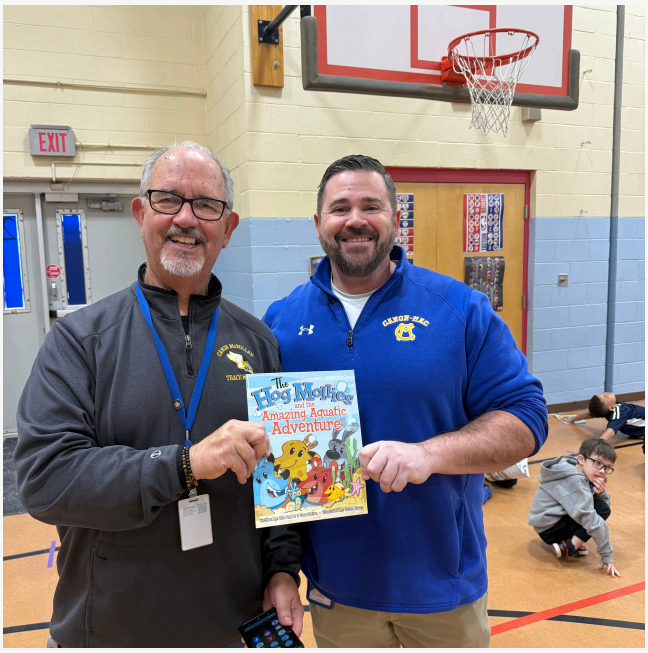
PROMOTING READING

South Central second graders participated in a reading event that happens each year on February 7.

Organized by Mr. Lance Valley, CM Track and Field coach, high school track team members took turns reading the story, The Hog Mollies and the Amazing Aquatic Adventure. Each student got their own book to take home and pledged to read every night!

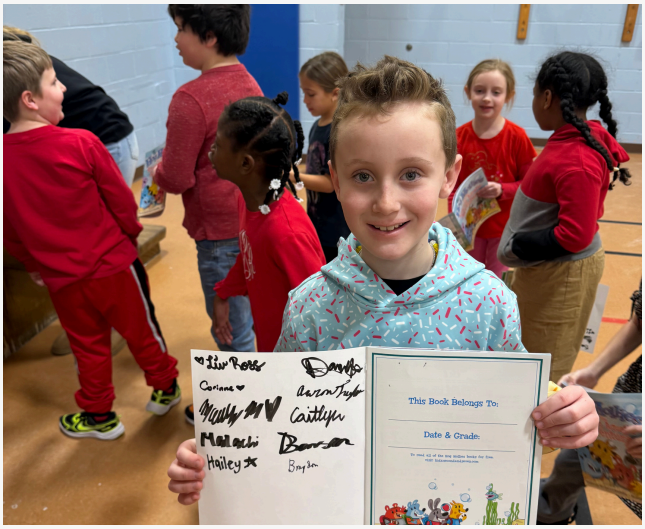
The Second and 7 Foundation promotes literacy by providing free books to children and encouraging positive student athletes to read aloud in schools. The name “Second and 7” represents a manageable opportunity to make progress, a powerful reminder that reading each day leads to big gains over time. The key message shared with our second graders: strong readers build strong futures.

We look forward to expanding this event to all of our K-4 buildings next year!









ANIMAL AND PLANT DEFENSES

First graders gained knowledge of how an animal uses its defenses to protect itself from predators during Amplify Science's Animal and Plant Defenses unit. After reading Frog Models, in small groups, students choose one of four aquarium animals and created a model that shows how that animal defends itself. Students put their reading and writing skills to work during the planning phase of the project!

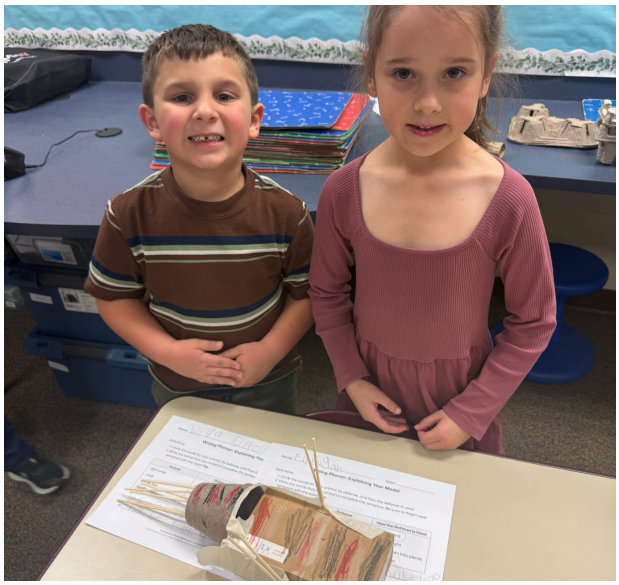
South Central first grade students in Mrs. Malencia's class were excited to share their models and explain how the animal they chose protects itself and survive in their environment.

Students enjoyed creating their models and explaining how their animal uses its defenses during this hands-on learning activity!









BUILDING DEEP CONNECTIONS

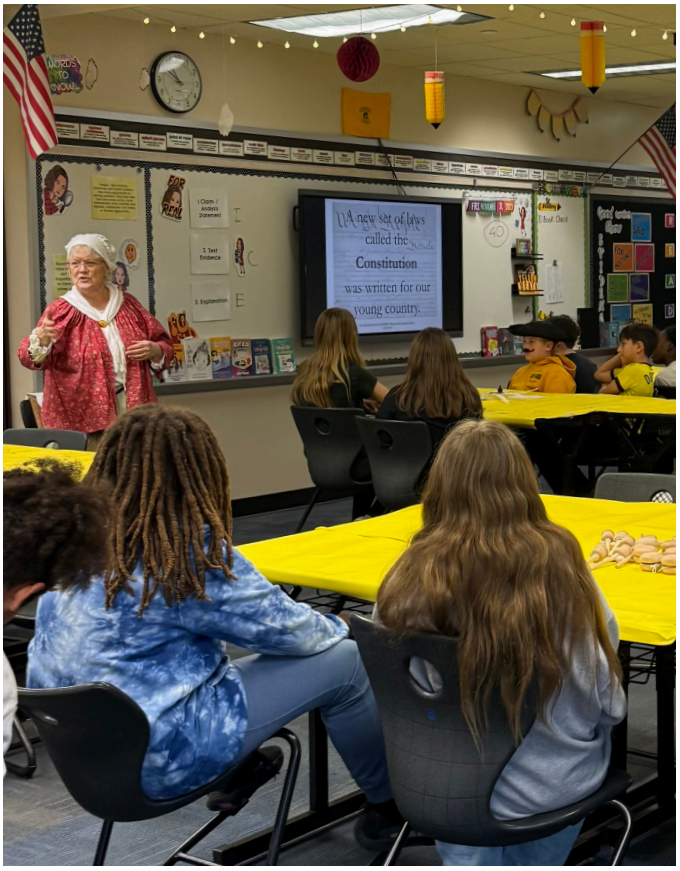
The Bradford House Historical Association visited the 6th grade reading classrooms at Ceciil and North Strabane Intermediate schools to extend students' knowledge about what life was like for children and adults in the late 1700's.

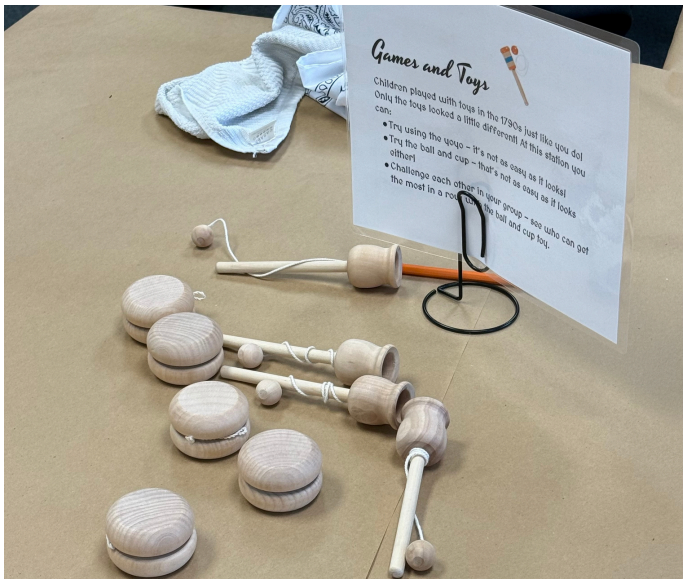
This in-house "field trip" connected to the novel Fever 1793, part of Amplify's Mysteries and Investigations unit.

Mrs. Denise Cummins, member of and presenter for the Bradford House Historical Society, shared insight about the Whiskey Rebellion to teach students about Western Pennsylvania history.

Students made deep connections about a difficult time in our history. Engaging experiences like this build students' background knowledge about important historical events! Students had fun coming to school dressed in 18th century frontier clothing!







SAFEARRIVAL UPDATE

Since the launch of SafeArrival across our K-12 schools, feedback from families has been positive.

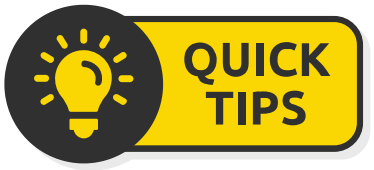
If you get an "404 Error" message when entering an absence via MyPowerHub it can be quickly resolved by the school. Please follow the steps below if you get this error message:

1. Report your child's absence by calling the SafeArrival toll-free phone number.

2. Contact the school secretary to let them know you received the "404 Error" message so they can update your contact information.

To learn more about this absence management system, visit the SafeArrival page on the District's website.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION
OPEN FOR 2026-2027 SY



Save the SafeArrival phone number 1-888-905-5815 as "SafeArrival" contact in your phone. This makes it easy to have the toll-free number on hand and to easily report an absence.

It is also helpful to see "SafeArrival" as a contact if the school is calling to verify an unreported absence.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Our elementary and intermediate schools provide Special Programs that are designed to help students build knowledge, make good decisions, and develop respect for themselves and others.

In addition to your child's school communicating information about the special programs, you can learn about each program by visiting the Special Programs page, located under Curriculum and Instruction.



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K-6 Curriculum & Instruction

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