

# Olde Providence AIG Newsletter January 2026

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Happy New Year! I cannot believe that we are at the halfway point in the school year already. I am so proud and happy to report the tremendous growth that I have seen in each student group that I work with. I am seeing vast improvements in their writing, analytical thinking, and problem solving.

Middle of the year assessments and benchmarks are right around the corner. Once new data is collected and analyzed, there may be some small adjustments to groups to reflect the most current needs of students. I really work to emphasize with students that the only thing they need to worry about is whether or not they are receiving what they need, not anyone else.

If you ever have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email. I routinely check it and will do my best to provide support, clarity, and insight.

I look forward to what the next 9 weeks have in store for us as we enter Quarter 3!

In partnership,

*Laura Randolph AIG Teacher*

## **Second Grade**

### ***Literacy***

Students are working on learning new literary devices and the techniques authors use to include them in their writing by completing a novel study using the book *Punished!* Each group is about halfway through the book, and have learned onomatopoeia, oxymoron, and personification. Some students have also been analyzing different sources to determine the author's opinion on what was the cause of dinosaur extinction. Once we finish, we will begin working on reading and analyzing a variety of complex texts using Jacob's Ladder questions. These questions are meant to create space for an in depth discussion on the content of the passages. Students will have to infer,

summarize, determine theme, and cause and effect relationships within the text.

### ***Math***

Students have successfully navigated building perseverance and problem solving skills through Pebble Math puzzles, and are now ready to put these skills into practice! Students have begun learning how to apply specific problem solving strategies to multi-step word problems using the program Problem Solver. Students are currently working on using the strategy Guess and Check. Each problem requires students to solve for two unknowns that follow specific rules in the problem. For example, Ana has 16 more chips than John. Together they have a total of 44 chips. How many chips does each person have? I am enjoying the collaboration and enthusiasm from students around solving these types of problems! After we finish Guess and Check, we will work on the Make a Table, Draw a Picture/Diagram, and Logical Reasoning problem solving strategies.

## **Third Grade**

### ***Literacy***

Students have read and analyzed a variety of texts that center around the theme of adaptations, connecting to the information learned in Module 2 about frogs. Students in Castle analyzed poems and compared them for their structure, style and tone. They have also learned how to use a new analysis wheel for nonfiction texts, which analyzes the main idea and supporting details. Some of the texts they have read have been nonfiction such as *The Circle of Life* and *A New Tree Frog Species*, and poems such as *Fireflies*, *A Series of Deaths*, *Tail Tale*, *Something Told the Wild Geese*, and *In the Leafy Forest of Green*. Students have naturally begun analyzing the author's purpose and perspectives without my prompting and are becoming much more critical readers. They have done a wonderful job analyzing the details of the texts to determine the various animals' adaptations and patterns that they see presented in the texts. Students in Castle have worked to extend their understanding of the

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word adaptations by also completing character analysis and analyzing short movie clips. They have answered depth and complexity questions about selected texts, which requires short written responses. Students also completed a novel study of *Numbed!*, the sequel to *Punished!* A novel they read in second grade. Students received a pacing calendar for assignment and reading completion. They answered comprehension questions and determined the meaning of unknown words. Students received weekly check-ins from their ELA teacher and had their work collected by me for review and feedback.

Next quarter we will focus on the theme of tradition and perspective. Students will read a variety of classic stories and practice character trait analysis.

### **Math**

Students in Castle completed a place value project that required rounding and estimation. Students learned the power of persevering and evaluating an answer for its reasonableness. Students had to imagine that they were chefs and were in charge of creating meals based on customer calorie needs. Students in push in groups and Castle have also been working on learning the foundational concepts of algebraic thinking. Students have learned that equations can contain unknowns and must be simplified using the inverse operation. Students in Castle have used the program *Hands on Equations* where students in push in groups have used the *ABCs of Algebra* and *Balance Math*. They are learning the same concepts, just in slightly different ways to best meet their needs. Students are doing really well and will soon move on to work on fractions.

### **Fourth Grade**

#### **Literacy**

Students have focused on the theme of survival and whether or not all animals should have the same defenses. Students have taken a deeper dive into nonfiction text analysis, including evaluating plant defenses. Students have read a variety of

nonfiction texts and have studied the impact of defenses on predator-prey relationships. Next quarter, students will focus on the theme of conflict. Students will evaluate whether conflict is necessary by analyzing letters, texts, and speeches from the Revolutionary War, as well as other historical time periods. Students in Castle will end the Module by completing a Paideia seminar about the poem Paul Revere's Ride.

### **Math**

Students in push in groups have worked on applying place value concepts in real world contexts. They have learned how to complete fraction magic squares and solve Cryptarithm puzzles. Cryptarithms are puzzles that replace many numbers for letters and require place value understanding in order to solve. For example,  $A + A + A = HA$  is a cryptarithm that can be solved by replacing A with the digit 5, making the equation  $5 + 5 + 5 = 15$ . Students in Castle have taken their *Hands on Equations* knowledge and applied it to algebra word problems. Students have had to write algebraic expressions when given a word problem that contains multiple unknowns. In the past few weeks, they have really gotten a hang of it and I am proud of their progress! We have spent so much time on this topic due to their interest, readiness, and continued mastery of on grade level material. Next quarter we will continue working on multiplicative comparisons and playing games involving multiplying and dividing multi-digit numbers.

### **Fifth Grade**

#### **Literacy**

Module 2 was all about the theme of interactions and whether or not they improve or impede growth. Fifth graders have critically analyzed the impacts of the rainforest and nature on individuals and our wider world. Students have read a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts that implicitly and explicitly examine the short and long term consequences that occur due to human interaction with the rainforest and other natural habitats. Students believe and understand that it is their

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responsibility to become educated on such an important topic because they are the future that will need to protect and preserve natural resources. Despite living so far away from it, they understand the way the rainforest impacts their daily lives and the ramifications if it were to disappear. Students in Castle practiced using new literacy strategies such as the Cascade of Consequences and the Iceberg of Whys to deeply analyze details contained in texts. They also analyzed perspective and author motivation when writing about the topic of deforestation. They ended the module acting as scientists as they considered the consequences of building a gym over a pond as part of an inquiry study.

Next quarter, students will focus on the theme of systems as part of Module 3. Students will learn about influential change makers. They will practice visual analysis of political cartoons and pictures. They will answer the question whether people should be treated equally or equitably.

### **Math**

Students have worked on stretching the strategies they have learned for multiplying and dividing multi-digit numbers. They have been able to evaluate “student” work by pretending to be the teacher. They have also solved multi-step problems using data from cake recipes and the sinking of the Titanic. Students in Castle worked on calculating percents due to interest, readiness, and consistent mastery of current grade level standards.

Next quarter, students will work on the powers of 10 and the relationship between fractions and decimals. Students in Castle will also work on ratios and proportions.

### **Math Olympiad (Grades 3-5)**

All Math Olympiad students are making great progress so far this year! All 4th and 5th grade students that participated last year have shown growth and depth of knowledge for solving these really complex math problems. They are also outperforming the average Math Olympiad participant based on the international data collected. They are really working hard and I am so

proud of them! Third graders are also starting out strong and are learning the importance of understanding strategy over knowing the right answer. 4th and 5th grade just took their 3rd contest this week and 3rd grade took their 2nd. There is so much to celebrate!

### **Caesar’s English (Grades 4-5)**

Students participating in Caesar’s English have enjoyed beginning (Grade 4) or continuing (Grade 5) studying stems and words and learning more about the life of Julius Caesar. They have practiced identifying parts of speech by completing grammar exercises and analyzing relationships between words by completing analogies. Students learn and apply the words by completing activities called synonyms and antonyms, match the meaning, and complete the sentence. Remember, quizzes are cumulative! Please continue to encourage your child to take their notebooks and flashcards home to help them prepare. Each week, the current words that students are working on are located in the vocabulary section of your child’s grade level newsletter. Students also have their monthly calendar and assignments posted on their All Block task cards weekly.

EARLY QUARTER THREE: 5th and 4th ELA students will begin differentiated novel studies once i-Ready data is complete in mid February.

Please see below: information and resources from the CMS AIG Advanced Studies Department!

## Quarter 2 – Winter 2025



### AIG Resource Spotlight 💡

#### Hands-On Equations

Hands on Equations is a manipulatives-based instructional system that teaches students to solve linear equations (algebra) using a balance scale, physical “pawns” and number cubes.

Given an equation ( $2x + 3x + 3 = 2x + 15$ ), the scale represents the equal sign, the pawns represent the variable ( $x$ ), and the number cubes represent the known numbers in the equation (3, 15).

Using a series of “legal moves” students manipulate variables to solve the equation ( $x = 4$ ) and then rewrite the equation substituting numbers for the variable to “prove” their work. ( $8 + 12 + 3 = 8 + 15$ ;  $23 = 23$ )

Using the Hands on Equations system, students learn:

- the concept of an unknown
- how to evaluate an expression
- how to combine like terms
- the relational meaning of the equal sign (both sides have the same value)
- the meaning of an algebra equation
- how to balance algebra equations (using the subtraction property of

equality)

- the concept of the check of an equation
- the ability to solve one and two-step algebra equations
- solving equations with unknowns on both sides
- how to work with a multiple of a parenthetical expression



Students in 5th grade also use Hands-On Equations: Fractions, which works similarly to the regular Hands-On Equations program, but the equations involve fractional amounts and the pawns are replaced with shapes that represent a fractional amount of the whole. You can learn more about this in our next newsletter!

#### Cross-Impact Matrix

The Cross-Impact Matrix is used to analyze a text by determining the relationship, or impact, between various literary elements of the text. In this example, we are looking at how characters impact one another in the text, *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (read in 5th grade EL Module 1). We

can also look at how certain literary elements in a text impact one another as well (mood, tone, setting, structure, etc.), This is used in the upper grades to dive deeply into a text once students have shown mastery of the basic literary elements in a text.

Cross-Impact Matrix: "Esperanza Rising"

| What Impact does → have on ↓ ? | Esperanza | Mama (Ramona Ortega) | Abuelita | Miguel | Isabel |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Esperanza                      |           |                      |          |        |        |
| Mama (Ramona Ortega)           |           |                      |          |        |        |
| Abuelita                       |           |                      |          |        |        |
| Miguel                         |           |                      |          |        |        |
| Isabel                         |           |                      |          |        |        |

## SEL Space

### Executive Functioning Challenges

Executive functioning is a broad term that includes several brain functions that help us execute tasks. Some of the skills under this umbrella include (but are not limited to) planning into the future, prioritizing, time management, organization, focus, task initiation, motivation, follow-through, self-regulation, introspection, and working memory.

In terms of executive function, gifted children may have an advanced working memory, but comparatively, an

underdeveloped ability to switch attention to new tasks when needed. Asynchrony in gifted children can highlight executive function challenges, especially when it appears that a child is extremely gifted in math but then has difficulty remembering to turn in their homework.

What does this look like in gifted children?

- **Lack of self-regulation:** This may manifest as difficulty managing frustration, social skills, self-reflection, and issues asking for help.
- **Homework and chore battles:** Homework and chores are massive and overwhelming for children with executive functioning challenges. A direction like "write a book report" or "clean your room" is actually a multi-step process that requires many executive functioning skills like prioritizing, planning, initiating, switching attention, follow-through, and assessment. Overtime, children start to avoid and resist these tasks, especially when the parent or educator is demanding or using guilt to try to motivate the child to execute the desired task.
- **Anxiety, self-esteem, and motivation issues:** Educators and parents who may not see that a child is struggling sometimes directly or indirectly send shaming messages, especially when they label the child as lazy or obstinate. Over time, the messages may be internalized and contribute to surface behaviors like avoidance, resistance, or apathy towards school



and other responsibilities. This closed-off mindset belies that the child might be feeling invalidated and disillusioned after years of struggling with executive function and not receiving the recognition and support they need.

How can you support your child?

- Help identify which area of executive function they need help in, such as emotional regulation, organization, time management, transition, etc. What are their study habits like? How do they learn best? What roadblocks come up when getting from Point A to Point B on a project?
- Switching to exploration questions, rather than providing directives, may help children who struggle with executive functioning. Rather than telling children what to do, help them practice executive functioning with questions like *"How long do you think each assignment will take you to complete?"* This may also help build some buy-in for the child.
- Instead of just giving a checklist, show your child what the end result should look like and have them walk you through the steps. This helps, especially for those who learn best through visual or kinesthetic methods.
- Teach children how to develop and utilize organizational systems and routines. Collaborate together with the use of organizers, calendars, routine charts, and checklists.
- Teach the process of planning. Help

children identify their goals and consider options for achieving them. Use what/where/when/how questions. Break down tasks into smaller parts and guide children to focus on one part at a time.

- Posted routines and developmentally appropriate checklists at home and at school, when used with training and consistency, can assist children in learning not only time management, but also responsibility.
- Teach mindfulness, relaxation, and stress management techniques (belly breathing, tapping techniques, etc.).
- Support flexible thinking by removing the emotion from the equation, and by focusing on solutions. Instead of focusing on what went wrong, ask what can be done differently to fix the problem.

### Resources:

- *Smart but Scattered* by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare (for parents)
- *Late, Lost, and Unprepared* by Joyce Cooper-Kahn and Laurie Dietzel (for parents)
- *A Kids' Book About Executive Functioning* by Iris Wong (for kids - ages 5+)
- *Flexible Thinking Ninja: A Children's Book About Developing Executive Functioning and Flexible Thinking Skills* by Mary Nhin (for kids - ages 4-10)
- *Jacob Gets Organized* by Denise Abdale (for kids - ages 4-10)

Click the picture below to listen to more information about executive functioning skills and gifted students on the NCAAGT podcast, *They'll Be Fine*.



Info from:

<https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/tips-for-parents-the-gifted-brain-strengthening-executive-functioning-and-future-thinking/>  
<https://drroseann.com/podcast/twice-exceptional-2e-students/>

## Advocacy & Engagement



[Become a member of SENG!](#)

SENG is a nonprofit network of people who guide gifted, talented, and

twice-exceptional individuals to reach their goals intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

SENG's mission is to empower our gifted families and communities to reach life goals through social-emotional health.



**Featured Speaker:**  
**Dr. Emily King**  
Child Psychologist,  
Speaker, and Author



**\$85 (NCAAGT Members)**  
**\$100 (non-members)**

[Register at this link!](#)

**March 13, 2026**  
**8:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

**Embassy Suites by Hilton Concord**  
**5400 John Q. Hammons Dr NW, Concord, NC 28027**

Join parents from around the state to gain practical strategies and inspiration for parenting gifted and talented students! Sessions and panels will be led by voices from around the state and country to help our parents create community and empower families to best support our gifted and talented students.



Use [this link to register](#) for the Parent Day at NCAAGT!

## Important Dates

- **NCAAGT Conference:** March 12-13, 2026 in Concord, NC
- **NCAAGT Parent Day:** March 13, 2026, 8:00 am – 2:00 pm
- **New to CMS 2nd Grade CogAT Testing:** March 2-27, 2026

- Exact dates for OP TBD
- **Spring DEP Parent Meeting:** TBD

### Enrichment Opportunities

- **Spectrum of the Arts:** *The Betty Stovall Spectrum of the Arts* is a unique arts experience for current 4th– 8th grade Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools students who are exceptionally talented in one or more arts areas: visual art, music, dance, drama, or creative writing. At the end of June each year, selected students have the opportunity to spend five and a half hours a day in an intensive, advanced study of the arts. Three hours of each day are spent in a primary area (referred to as a “major”) of talent, and the remainder of the day is divided between each of the other arts areas (referred to as “minors”). This seven-day experience is designed to further a student’s knowledge in their arts area of strength, in addition to exploring other arts areas. On the final day of the program, students “share” a sampling of their creativity with guests during a brief performance and gallery walk.  
**Students are selected for the program based on arts area teacher nominations** from each elementary and middle school. There are a total of 165 students served at Spectrum of the Arts. Please visit [www.spectrumofthearts.com](http://www.spectrumofthearts.com) and to learn more. Nominations have already been submitted for this

summer.

- **Mathapalooza:** Mathapalooza is a unique district-wide math event open to 3rd graders that takes place on February 7, 2026 at West Charlotte High School. Teams of up to 20 third graders are selected by their AIG Teachers to attend the event and engage in individual, team, and STEM competitions. It is a fun, energizing day of math learning and friendly competition!