



Hurlbutt Elementary School

9 School Road
Weston, CT 06883

OPENING THE 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR WITH A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

Be Safe, Be Kind and Be Responsible. This is the motto that all Hurlbutt students and staff strive to live by each and every day. Throughout the first month of school, classroom teachers use interactive modeling and guided discovery lessons to bring this motto to life through the use of the Responsive Classroom approach to creating a positive environment for learning. Responsive Classroom is a research-based approach to education that is associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate. This approach consists of practical strategies for helping children build academic and social-emotional competencies day in and day out. Students have been practicing being safe, kind and responsible throughout the building and have been earning honeycombs for our honey hive. Once we fill the honey hive as a school we will have a schoolwide celebration. We are amazed at how many honeycombs we have already earned. We filled the hive in 11 days of school this year! From learning to walk in the halls together to playing safely on the playgrounds these routines and procedures are supported by our entire staff. Mr. Hallgren, our physical education teacher, includes a unit on playground safety. The students learn to use all of the equipment in a safe and responsible manner while making new friends and learning how to include everyone in play. This year, we are still in the global pandemic and some students are returning to in person schooling for the first time in 18 months so creating a strong classroom community is important to a successful school year.



WELCOME CLASS OF 2034

We know that starting kindergarten is a milestone not only for our youngest grade level but it is also a significant transition for our families. Before school officially opens for the year, we have several programs in place that help our families and young learners prepare for the first day of school. As part of the kindergarten orientation process, we held a virtual informational meeting for parents. We also offer individual meetings with families during which parents share information about their child and ask any transition questions or concerns that the family may have. We find that this

individualized approach greatly eases any anxiety about entering kindergarten, especially if it is the first child in the family to enter school.

When August 31 finally arrived, our students had an exciting and fun-filled first full day of school at Hurlbutt. Each teacher took their class on a tour of the building to show them all of the places they will visit and learn in throughout the year. Most of the beginning of the year activities in the classroom are focused on getting to know their classmates and making new friends. Kindergarten teachers explicitly teach classroom routines and transitions so that our students can safely and comfortably navigate the classroom environment. As the year progresses, they will gain more and more independence in daily routines and tasks and they are so proud to be in school just like the big kids!

PTO GARDENS

We are excited to share the following update from our PTO gardeners. *The vegetable garden in the courtyard was transformed into a monarch waystation over the last 12 months, thanks to the PTO, the Weston Garden Club, and the Weston Pollinator Pathway. Planted entirely with straight natives, it's designed so that you can walk in and observe monarch caterpillars from the pathway. Both sides of the path are lined with asclepias tuberosa. This generation of monarchs will be the ones making the long trip to Mexico, soon. The garden is filled with milkweed to feed caterpillars and nectar plants for the butterflies.* Our main entrance butterfly garden is also a great place to spot butterflies. We are grateful to the PTO for their beautification of our campus and their contributions to the pollinator pathways and environment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

We begin the year by celebrating and recognizing all of the summer learning. We have 264 Hurlbutt students who reported reading a total of 6,797 books this summer. In addition to reading, 1,426 math activities have been completed over the summer months. Now in school, our students are filling their book bins with new books to read. The teachers are using formal and informal assessments to determine student reading levels and instructional focus areas for each of them. Our reader's workshop model allows each child to learn and develop at his or her own pace using books at their individual reading level. Instruction is tailored to each student and teachers use small group structures as well as individual student conferences to guide their instruction. In the writing workshop, all grades have been writing stories from their own experiences. They write about people they know, places they go and things they do! Student choice is a powerful engagement strategy and our writing program is designed to allow students to write about stories and ideas they choose. While we are completing our beginning of the year math screens, our mathematicians have been busy counting, reading, writing, drawing & building numbers! It would be fun to take a number walk around your house or in your neighborhood & talk about the numbers they find!



Back to School Night

This year we hosted an all school virtual back to school night on Wednesday, September 8. Our meetings and events have been virtual for the past year due to the global pandemic. We learned that by hosting virtual events, attendance by families increased compared to in person events. The accessibility and flexibility that virtual events offer has had positive results. Administration and teachers shared information about our curriculum, programs and school operations. While we miss the in person interaction at these events, we are pleased that so many families were able to participate.