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Albert City-Truesdale Community School Newsletter

December 2011/January/February 2012



Albert City-Truesdale celebrated its 100th Day of School on January 26, 2012. Many classroom lessons focused on the number 100 and a fun day was had by all!

After School Homework Club (ASHC) has been off to a great start!! We gather in the Library/Media Center room after our 3:20 dismissal until 4:00 pm. Thanks to Mrs. Bjork for her help monitoring the students until I arrive after walking the Pre-K to the bus or awaiting parents! ASHC is offered to students in grades 3-6 everyday. If we have an early out due to weather; then ASHC will be cancelled. If you stop in you will find the students hard at work getting their school work done before the 4:00 pm dismissal!! ~Ms. Vickey Roberts

News from the Elementary School Counselor *By Wendy Wildeman*

During large group guidance classes, the older elementary students have been learning about the process of making choices. We have talked about finding solutions to problems by considering all possible alternatives and predicting the consequences of each possible course of action. The students understand the benefits of “thinking it through” before they act.

As an extension, we talked specifically about making safe choices at home, especially if this older elementary student is at home for a short period of time without a guardian. From our lesson titled “Home Safe” from The Guide: Elementary School Guidance Activities, it is suggested that each child knows:

- Important Names and Telephone Numbers - Each child should know the telephone number for their home and the place(s) of work of their parent(s), the number of a nearby friend or relative, the name and number of a neighbor, and emergency numbers such as 911. A list of these important names and numbers should be posted by the telephone.

- When a Parent Will Be Home - Each child needs to know their parent's schedule, as well as how to tell time.
- How to Use the Telephone - Each child needs to know how to make a telephone call, answer a call, and write messages.
- How to Enter and Exit the House - Each child must be able to keep track of keys, know how to lock and unlock doors easily, and know the Fire Escape Plan.
- What Appliances to Use and How to Use Them - Each child must know which appliances in their home are approved for his or her use while home alone and how to operate them safely.
- Where to Go for Help - Each child needs to know an adult who lives or works nearby who will help in case of an emergency.

Update from Mrs. Annette Benedict, K-6 Resource Teacher

This year the Special Education classroom received some new technology! We now have a Smart Board, two iPads, and a large screen computer. The technology has helped the students work on needed skills with a higher level of engagement and independence. It has also been beneficial in helping prepare my older students for middle and high school, where they will take part in a one-to-one laptop initiative.

We currently have quite a few iPad apps and computer programs that we use often. One of the programs used by multiple students on both the iPad and the computer is *Dragon Naturally Speaking*. This program allows a person to speak into the microphone and then it automatically types what was said. We have had some issues with it not always catching all the words correctly, but it still has been an asset to students who struggle with writing.

We have also been experimenting with a word prediction program that works sort of like texting; it reads what you are typing on the computer and then creates a list of possible words for you to choose from. This is very helpful for students who are slow at typing and/or have trouble spelling words correctly; instead of typing the whole word, they can get the beginning sounds down and choose the appropriate word from the list by clicking on it.

Overall, we have found some great programs to help us learn new skills for school and life! The students and I have really benefited from using the technology on a daily basis and we look forward to learning more ways to utilize our new tools in the classroom!



ASG (After School Club) News by Mrs. Lange

The After School Club is dedicated to providing a safe, fun, educational place for children of working parents from the end of the school day until their caregiver arrives. This year at Albert City-Truesdale, 65 children are enrolled in the program. An average of 15 children a day attend. Some stay until closing at 5:30pm while others leave

sooner. This service is provided at the school and you can get more information by calling the school during regular school hours at 712-843-5416.

The first 10-15 minutes is spent working on homework or with a book, puzzle or coloring page. It is sometimes difficult for some of the group to remain quiet and sitting after an entire day of school; but we do try to do our best.



Since this year we have had such nice weather, we have been able to spend time on our nice playground. We enjoy this very much and it's a favorite time for us. We are able to play with friends that are not necessarily in our class or our age. We are learning a great life skill and having fun at the same time. After work and playtime we take a break to have juice and a snack. We would like to take this time to say thanks to those who have donated supplies for us: The Albert City Chamber, Ag Partners LLC, and parents. We have also had donations of toys, books, paper, and cards. We always appreciate these things too.

REMINDER!! AC-T collects Land O'Lakes Milk caps, Box Tops for Education, Campbell's Soup UPCs, and Hy-Vee receipts. Donations can be brought to school to benefit our students! These funds help to purchase supplies for students at AC-T. Thanks!

AC-T Elementary Library... by Mrs. Paulette McCall, Librarian

A goal of the AC-T elementary library program is to teach students to become information literate and lifelong learners. First semester has been a busy time with the study of fiction and nonfiction, the Dewey decimal classification system, call numbers, and the learning of skills in the use of a thesaurus, dictionary and an encyclopedia.

We also discussed differences between a play and a Reader's Theatre performance. Students practiced their drama and oral reading skills in a variety of Reader's Theatre scripts.

As discussed in *The School Library Link* newsletter, there are many ways that parents can support their child's reading proficiency, also.

- 1) Read aloud to your children often. Reading aloud should begin in the toddler years, so that children hear more words, see pages turning, and notice that a story accompanies those words. Older children benefit from being read to as well. Children can learn new vocabulary, listen to how parents use inflection to tell a story, and most importantly, witness reading being modeled by their most important adult.
- 2) Help your child find books that they can read easily without getting frustrated. Following the "Five Finger Rule" is a good practice. If your child reads a page in a book and more than five words on the page are difficult, then that book is probably too hard for them to read comfortably.

Parents also play a big role in giving children freedom to get excited about books.

- 1) Encourage children to read whatever *they like*. Pleasure reading should be just that: pleasurable. If your child begins a book and doesn't like it, give him or her permission to put it down and find one they do.
- 2) Withhold judgment about books you may not care for, but that your child is really excited about. Humorous fiction, graphic novels, and nonfiction are three genres that often get reluctant readers excited about reading. They also seem to attract the statement "That's not real reading." Anything your child reads enthusiastically will help them read more, and then read for life.
- 3) Let your child attempt something "too hard" every once in a while. Many times carrying home that Harry Potter novel just feels good, even though it may be violating the "five finger rule." Experimentation in reading choices is part of the process, and it helps your child begin to figure out what they like to read, what they can read, and how to work up to that big book that all the other kids are reading. (www.theschoollibrarylink.com)

Web Sites to Help Parents Raise Independent Readers!

“Helping your Child become a Reader,” a booklet by the U.S. Department of Education
<http://1.usa.gov/bw9cw/>

Scott Foresman Family Times Reading Booklets,
<http://bit.ly/pELuC9>

Links to Reading and Literacy Skills,
<http://1.usa.gov/b9oZn7>

Breaking the Sound-It-Out Barrier,
<http://bit.ly/pqiCre>

Succeed to Read,
<http://www.succeedtoread.com/>

(www.theschoollibrarylink.com)



Winter Reading Testing By Mrs. Christina Balder, Title 1

Each school year students are given reading, spelling, and vocabulary tests. The results of these tests are used to place students into reading and spelling groups. They will also help determine any interventions a student may need. In December, we completed our winter testing. The results along with teacher recommendations are used to determine if students need to change groups or remain in the groups they have been receiving instruction.

The tests given are as follows:

PAT (Phonological Awareness Test) - This test is given to students in grades K-2. Students are tested to see if they have the basic skills needed to become successful readers.

BRI (Basic Reading Inventory) - This test is given to students in grades 1-6. It is used to assess rate, comprehension, and how accurately a student reads the words in a given passage.

PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) - This test is given to all students in grades K-6. The examiner says a vocabulary word and the student chooses a picture, from one of the four pictures shown, that best illustrates the meaning of the word.

DSA (Developmental Spelling Analysis) – This is a spelling test given to group students according to their spelling needs highlighting specific strengths and weaknesses for appropriate instruction.

In the spring, students will be tested again using these same tools. This testing will show student growth from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year.

News from the 6th Grade

Get To Know Our Sixth Graders

SAMANTHA GARVICK

BY: KILEY FUCHS

Samantha Garvick was born in Storm Lake, but now lives in Albert City. Samantha's parents are Jaime (mom), Nick (step dad), and Andy (dad). She has three siblings: Two brothers, Aiden and Jonathon, and a little sister, Arianna. She also has three pets: two dogs, Pebbles and Monterey and a fish; Tubby. Samantha's nickname is Emma. She enjoys school lunches; her favorite school lunch is scalloped potatoes and ham. You should really get to know Samantha!

BRANDON DEMERS

BY: Thor Nielson

Brandon Joseph Demers lives by Truesdale, Iowa. He has one sibling named Dalton who is in 8th grade. His dad's name is Danny. Brandon loves cats. He likes the color red. He loves to play video games. Brandon's most favorite game is Modern Warfare 3. He loves to read in school. His favorite lunches at AC-T are macaroni and cheese, spaghetti, and mashed potatoes. His least favorite color is black. The game Crash on the Apple iPad is Brandon's favorite game on it. Brandon's most favorite thing to do in school is to play at recess with army toys. My favorite thing about Brandon is his sense of humor.

Mercedes, the Magnificent
by Gabby Long

One day there was a fire in Laurens. Mercedes the Magnificent swooped in with her pink cape; one that she got from The Buckle. She saved her friends Gabby, Shera, Makayla, Leslie, Hannah, and Kiley from the fire. She saw her sisters Selena and Vanessa and her parents Kris Unger and David Unger at the scene. The next day it snowed! Of course Mercedes had to ride her snowmobile! After a long day of snowmobiling she sat down on her couch and watched Dance Flick, drinking grape crush and eating puppy chow. The next day was school. The first class of the day was math, Mercedes' favorite. Christmas break was starting and the next day was Christmas. That morning she opened her presents and looked in her stocking. What a crazy dream about Mercedes! Mercedes is a super and awesome person that you should get to know!

GET TO KNOW Shera Smith
BY: Natalie Badock

Shera Lee Smith was born in Spencer, Iowa on September 13, 1999 and she weighed 7 pounds. Shera is a very fun person and she is cool. What she likes to do for fun is to hang out with her friends and play sports. She is excited about getting a new computer next year at Sioux Central. Her parents' names are Steve and Marla. Her siblings' names are Tyler and Janae. Shera used to have a fish named Bruce. Shera's favorite sports are basketball, softball, volleyball, track, and swimming. What Shera likes about school is being with her friends. She likes all the teachers. Shera's friends are all the girls in her class. Her favorite school subjects are Reading and Social Studies. Her favorite TV show is NCIS. You should spend some time getting to know Shera.

Interviewing Michelle Reisner

By: Lainnie Miller ☺

AC-T has a new Daycare in the building. It is called First Step Daycare and Michelle Reisner is the owner operator. I asked what her favorite part of her job is and Michelle likes teaching the kids and interacting with them. I asked her if she likes coming to work, she said yes. Michelle's favorite color is **Green**. Michelle is married to her wonderful husband Andy. Michelle has two kids named Katie, four and Braden, three. Michelle has two dogs at home. Her favorite food is pizza. I had a good time interviewing Michelle Reisner.

Interviewing Mrs. Wenell by Crystal Johnson!

Mrs. Wenell has been working at AC-T for the longest. Her husband's name is Allan Wenell. She has four children, two boys and two girls, and seven grandchildren. Her children are April, Amy, David, and Brian. April is expecting a baby in April and I think that is cool. She has worked here for 38 years. She started in January, 1975. She loves coming to school every morning to see her class. She has taught 4th, 6th, TAG, preschool, and middle school. Her favorite color is blue. She likes anything chocolate. Her favorite subject to teach is reading. She loved teaching all the grades while she was teaching them. She loves teaching 6th grade. She has a dog named Latte. I think Mrs. Wenell is a really nice teacher and I will miss her when I go to Sioux Central.

Up Close With PACT!! By: Makayla Bjork

Did you ever wonder what PACT means? It means "Pride of AC-T". The PACT group shows their pride well by helping us students out in so many ways. One of them just recently was the Penguin Patch. The Penguin Patch is like a mini store at school. They have it, so that we can buy Christmas presents for our family and friends. They get the merchandise from Fort Worth, TX. The PACT group had a great time, and they were happy with

the participation. Another way they help is, that they supply snacks for ITBS. That will start towards the end of January, and the beginning of February. There are other things that they help provide such as some of the expenses for the Spring Musical, the Halloween party, cookies for Grandparents Day, and the visit like the Reptile Guy that came last year. The PACT group does many things for our school. Karen Feeley is the Chairman of the PACT group, but many other parents do a lot of work too. They welcome anyone who wants to join. (They don't have a "membership".) They meet every 3rd Monday of each month. Karen's favorite thing that the PACT group does is anything with the kids! PACT was started when the High School started going to Sioux Central; the "Booster Club" had money left, and so they started a group for the Elementary. There is no maximum or minimum to the amount of people that want to be in the PACT group. Since 2004, when PACT started, we have been grateful for all they've done for us kids at AC-T!! Thank You PACT!! ☺

Student Council

By Hannah Johnson

The Student Council is a group in school that helps us with deciding what we should raise money for or things that we should do for fun; for example: silly hair day, gum day, or hat day. We do these things to raise money for something every year, and this year we decided to raise money for recess equipment. We also listen to student ideas and make proposals to Ms. Kady to help solve problems. For example the Student Council told Ms. Kady, when we go to lunch it should be 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th then it will be 4th, 5th, 6th, 3rd, and so on. What we decided to try to get for recess are soccer nets, hopscotch and four-square permanently painted on the black top, and hula hoops. My favorite thing that the student council does is they help the students have fun throughout the year.

The Christmas Field Trip By Mercedes Unger

This year for our Christmas field trip students were able to go and see a movie in Pocahontas at the Rialto Theater. Students went to see "Cars 2". We received popcorn and soda. We went on December 23, 2011 and we left as soon as everyone arrived at school and were ready to go. A special thanks to the

AC-T student council for covering all the expenses, with the money from pop cans. We enjoyed it!!! After all the students got back they went to their own classrooms and 3 or 4 of the students' parents brought treats and played games for the rest of the day. Then before everyone left we went to the large gym and sang Christmas carols until 2:15. Then everyone went home and Christmas vacation started.

Christmas Program by Shera Smith

The Albert City-Truesdale Elementary school had a Christmas concert on December 20, 2011. The PACT group held a bake sale before and after the concert to raise money for their school projects. The fifth and sixth grade bands are directed by Adam Perry and played Christmas songs to begin the program. Next, each grade took turns to sing songs!☺ Laura Sievers is the music teacher and picked out songs for the program. They were great and some of my favorites were "Santa is the Man" and the "Mr. Grinch" song. It was a dress up concert and everyone was looking their best! To end the concert we all sang "We Wish you a Merry Christmas." Everyone did a great job and all of us had lots of fun

VALENTINE'S DAY

By Samantha Garvick

When we have Valentine's Day in my classroom, we always have a party! We get lots of yummy candy and play games. Sometimes my teacher, Mrs. Wenell, reads us a really funny story. My friend Kiley said that "Valentine's Day is about love and Happiness and lots of Yummy chocolate!" And my friend Crystal said that on Valentine's Day she sometimes gets gifts. On Valentine's Day in my house we always get a gift and candy. And sometimes my family has dinner at my Grandma's house. I hope you have a Happy Valentine's Day!

History Day by Carter Beckman

The TAG kids this year are working on History Day. Their topic this year is Revolution, Reaction, and Reform, with that they are working on Carrie Chapman Catt. She was a woman's rights leader. She was born on January 9th 1859. She was the president of NAWSA [National Woman's Suffrage

Association]. She was a great speaker; before she died, she had given over 100 speeches. She had two husbands; her first husband's name was Leo Chapman; he died in 1886. Her second husband's name was George Catt; he died in 1905. They did not have kids. When she died there was an honor supper for Carrie and Eleanor Roosevelt spoke. Carrie was able to see her hard work pay off as the 20th amendment was passed on August 18, 1920.



WHAT DID YOU DO OVER CHRISTMAS BREAK?

BY BRANDON DEMERS

Mrs. Benedict: I went to my Mom & Dad's house. We played games and put puzzles together. We also butchered a cow and some pigs to make hamburger and sausage.

Mercedes Unger: The best thing that happened over break was that I was able to meet my cousins from Canada for the first time. They were visiting here in Iowa.

Carter Beckman: I spent Christmas with my family opening gifts. My favorite gift was my Under Armour sweatshirt.

Cyndie Holt: My favorite thing was that I didn't need to prepare the Christmas dinner for the first time in forty some years. My son and his family hosted the Christmas dinner.

Isaac Albeus: My favorite thing was my Hot Wheels that I received for Christmas.

Mrs. Mavis Loving: I was with my family over Christmas vacation, which I enjoyed! My favorite present was the flat screen TV my daughters bought for my husband and I.

Mrs. Moe: We flew to North Carolina to visit our daughter and her family. My favorite Christmas gift was a new sewing machine.

The third grade and all of AC-T enjoyed a special visitor before Christmas!



Notes from Superintendent/Principal Kady

We hope this newsletter finds you enjoying the wonderfully mild winter we have had this year. We currently have no snow days to make up this year! Classes were cancelled one day in January, but since the determination to cancel classes was made after some students and staff had arrived at school or were already on buses and headed for school, the day will not need to be made up.

As you read this, most of the Iowa Tests will have been taken by AC-T students. The test is a new version this year. As the results are received, parents will be informed of their children's results. We hope to have the results back by the spring parent teacher conference dates in March. As a faculty, the results will be studied to determine student needs and to celebrate accomplishments at AC-T.

Also as you read this, your 2012 Iowa legislative session will be in progress. Each year, the Iowa Department of Education gathers enrollment numbers from each school district. These numbers form the basis of school district budgets. During the 2011 Legislative Session, the Iowa Legislature established a two percent allowable growth for FY 2013, the 2012-2013 school year. This is an increase of \$118 per student served. That sets the state cost per pupil for the 2012-2013 school year at \$6,001. School funding in Iowa is based on the number of pupils in the district and the cost per pupil, and these are the numbers your school board and administration will review carefully as the school district budget for next year is developed.

While a 2 percent allowable growth is an improvement over the 0 percent the Legislature agreed upon for the current school year, it doesn't necessarily mean that school district budgets will automatically grow by two percent next year. The two percent increase gives the school district

the authority to spend an additional \$118 per student next year, for all students who are in the school district. For some districts in the state, this is an increase in total budget potential, and for others, it is a decrease. Your Albert City-Truesdale School District has seen a decrease in enrollment in grades K-12, which, in turn, results in a decrease in school spending authority. So, the \$118 per pupil increase must stretch a long way, especially as all Iowa districts are recovering from a zero change in the district costs per pupil in the current school year. Costs continue to go up, while funding stays the same or even decreases. For example, beginning July 1, there will be an increase in both the employer and employee contribution to the IPERS (Iowa Public Employee Retirement System) in order to bring the fund back to a sound position. The remainder of the per pupil increase must pay for increased fuel and transportation costs, employee benefits and salary increases agreed to through the collective bargaining process, textbooks, technology, and other costs, including costs for state and federal programs that are not always funded.

The good news is that the level of state revenues has rebounded to an estimated level of just over four percent for FY 2013. We hope the current legislature will work to restore funding for ongoing school expenses and to help districts recover from several years of low funding or funding cuts.

As Iowa's economy continues to improve, we hope our state policy makers will continue to prioritize the education of our students as they set the allowable growth rate for FY 2014 and beyond.

Your school board and administration are committed to providing the resources needed to continue to provide excellent educational opportunities to help students succeed. The AC-T faculty and staff are skilled at recognizing and responding to the needs of each student. Your school board, administration, faculty and staff at AC-T take very seriously the charge to create and maintain an environment for all children to achieve. Parents and community members continue to be supportive of the school. Though faced with some challenging economic times, you can be confident and proud of the educational opportunities for students at AC-T!

School Improvement Advisory Committee

The School Improvement Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, January 17, at the Albert City-Truesdale Library. This committee is established by Iowa law, and its membership is to represent a cross section of the community. The committee makes recommendations for goals leading to higher student achievement, makes recommendations for board policies and school rules, recommends amendments to the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, and serves as the liaison between the school and the community. The Committee serves in an advisory capacity, as under law the final decisions are the responsibilities of the school board.

At the January 17 meeting, information was presented on the following topics: The Annual Progress Report, including test scores and school achievement goals, reports on buildings and grounds, the daycare facility being housed in the school, transportation, finance, and nutrition. Members of the committee include Carter Beckman, Makayla Bjork, Vanessa Brent, Tim Bruns, Luke Ehlers, Deanna Heuton, Ellie Hillmer, Barb Kady, Melissa Loving, and Michelle Reisner. The committee will meet next on May 1. Thank you to each member of the committee for your willingness to serve your AC-T School District in this way!