

December 8, 2013

Dear Parents,

The holiday excitement has clearly been building, helped along by our Gingerbread House art project and our viewing of the 1969 animated classic "Frosty the Snowman" during lunch on Friday. To their credit, the students are holding it together academically and still focusing well on the many new academic units we began this past week.

In Language Arts, they have (almost) all now finished the final draft of their biographical fiction writing piece, and will begin typing their story in keyboarding this week. They have all done extremely well on their stories, and each showed remarkable perseverance throughout the multiple editings and re-draftings demanded by our writing workshop process. With the authors' permission, once their stories have been typed and illustrated I will publish them on our classroom web page. The Newbery Book Report project was kicked off Friday as the students eagerly selected their books - I encouraged them to read their books first for pleasure, then to re-read as they fill out their story elements map.

In Math, the students are starting to see the fruits of their labor in learning their multiplication tables. Some students are frustrated by their lack of significant progress on our regular "60's tests" - we had a class discussion about both patience ("there are no shortcuts"), and also how it is sometimes wise to vary study methods (such as practicing specific times tables that are giving you trouble, rather than randomly generated questions). Something I mistakenly left off the supply list that students need is a compass - they are now being asked to draw circles of various diameters and need a (safe) device to do so. Several are available that do NOT involve the very sharp (and dangerous) metal points that I'm sure we all remember from our childhood. Please pick one up for your child as soon as possible.

In Science, our "erosion walk" this week really helped to solidify some of the concepts we've been discussing in class. The torrential downpour Friday morning also provided a great illustration of the power of water to move sediment downhill - right to the spot where Mr. L parked his car! This week we'll be conducting an erosion experiment following the Scientific Method we learned earlier in the year. This will hopefully start the students' thinking about their Science Fair project coming up in the new year - it's never too early to start planning, especially if the experiment involves growth or change over substantial time periods.

In Social Studies, we have finally reached the 1600's and the start of the original

13 American colonies. Given the holiday just passed, our discussion this coming week of the Pilgrims is particularly timely.

At the monthly assembly this past Thursday, the students did an excellent job presenting the Gary Paulsen "Tuning" piece we have been practicing in class. Middle school was absent for the assembly, so we plan to reprise the performance at January's assembly (hopefully with a microphone - volume was our only issue, and those middle schoolers can increase the background noise level significantly!)

I'll close with some conversation starters from the week ... ask your child about:

- Frosty the Snowman - a surprising (to me) number of them said they had not seen it before!
- Nelson Mandela - we talked about his life and accomplishments during News time on Friday
- chess - there has been a significant up-tick in interest since I brought in my Harry Potter Wizard Chess set

I hope you are all having a good weekend!

Mr. Mac