

December 15, 2013

Dear Parents,

The highlight of the past week has to be our 2-hour "Erosion in a plowed field" science experiment on Wednesday afternoon. This involved every student experimenting with dirt and water (a.k.a. "mud"), and I really hoped to be able to conduct the experiment outside. The weather did not cooperate, so I brought a big tarp to the classroom and we prepared fields of dirt on a slope, "plowed" the fields both across the slope and with the slope, then "rained" on the fields and collected the water and sediment that washed away. Students then completed a lab report detailing the problem, their hypothesis, the experiment procedures, and their observations, data and conclusions.

As you may well imagine, I expected at least one major accident involving spilled rainwater (best case) or spilled sediment-laden runoff (worst case) - but there were no incidents and the cleanup went very smoothly! Unfortunately, I was monitoring things so closely to prevent accidents that I totally forgot to take any pictures. The kids had a blast - it seems 4th graders still like to play in the mud! This refresher of the steps of the scientific method will help them decide what they would like to do for the upcoming Science Fair in the spring; some students are already talking about ideas they have for their projects.

In Language Arts we have finished "The Landry News" and will take a break from classroom literature study while the students work on their Newbery Book Report projects. We will focus on Language Conventions (grammar) and Poetry in class for the next 6 weeks or so.

In math, on Friday we added metric and US customary capacity units of measure to the length measurements we have been working with for the past couple of months. This is like learning a foreign language for many students, and they all need as much authentic practice as possible with units of measure to help them solidify the concepts and conversion ratios they are expected to know in class. You can help immensely by having your child assist in the measurements as you bake, craft and wrap over the holidays.

In Social Studies, we will wrap-up the establishment of the original 13 English Colonies by the end of this week, then start our study of Colonial Life in January.

Conversations starters from the week- ask your child about ...

- the original "How The Grinch Stole Christmas" (we watched it at lunch on Friday)
- what a haircut with "the works" means in Turkey

- which president was a triskaidekaphobic - and also said "Rabbit, Rabbit, Rabbit" on the first day of each month
- Only 10 days to go!

Mr. Mac