



Durkin News

Nixon School

Reading

After reading individually with each of the children in the beginning of the month, I was very pleased with the improvements that ALL of the children have made in their reading comprehension and fluency abilities.

Our guided reading groups have been focusing on 3 types of folktales: fables, myths, and legends. I was very impressed with the background knowledge and familiarity a lot of students had with Greek Mythology. Students are showing tremendous growth with their ability to respond to literature through writing a well-organized and cohesive response that includes specific evidence from the text to support their answers.

Another strategy we've been using to keep ourselves thinking while we're reading is the "Flag Your Strategy" colored stickies. Ask your child about the 6 different colors and what types of things they are flagging while they read.

When your child is doing his/her weekly independent reading (30 minutes a night) you should sit with them from time to time and have s/he read aloud to you for a little bit. A short conversation about the book can really help to improve their reading and thinking about the book. Some guiding questions may include:

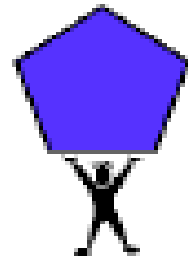
1. How do you think the main character is feeling at this point in the book? Why are they feeling this way?
2. What predictions can you make based upon what you've just read?
3. What themes are developing in this book? (friendship, survival, hope)
4. Have you noticed any figurative language the author used to make this part of the story come to life?

Writing

We are wrapping up our unit on Poetry by putting the finishing touches on our 4 poems: a simile poem, a color poem, a show don't tell poem, and our Where I'm From poems. Students have worked diligently to include figurative language, vivid descriptions, and feelings. They should be very proud of the beautiful poetry they have created and I know they are anxious to share them with family and friends.

Math

We'll be covering the area of a triangle and coordinate planes next week in math, which will bring our Geometry Unit to a close. A study guide (pink paper) was sent home yesterday to help students prepare for the assessment next Friday. The middle of unit assessment is being sent home today with some study tips to help students review the information in a productive and effective way. This is a good opportunity to help your child start developing positive study habits.



Spelling

Based on our mid-year assessments, we have structured new spelling groups. All students in our class showed growth in their development and mastery of the spelling patterns we have been working on. Your child may continue to meet with the same teacher that they started off the year with, others have moved into a different group based upon their current level of performance shown on the mid-year assessment.

Social Studies

The month of February was filled with discussions about King Phillip's War as well as the Pequot War. Did you know that the King Phillip's War was fought nearby? Do you know who King Phillip is? Ask your child, as they should know.

We also looked at slavery. The children were very engaged in this topic. We looked at it from the point of view of a slave. The children learned what it was like during the West African slave trade, how it was on the slave ship from West Africa to America, and then what life was like for a slave in America.

Lastly, we have begun to discuss the disagreements that are brewing between the colonists and the British Parliament. Your children have looked at the different acts or laws that the British Parliament passed in order to contain control over the colonies as well as make money in order to pay off debts that were obtained in the French and Indian War. Wow...February was a busy month in Social Studies.

Science

Students are continuing to explore with "Mystery Powders and Crystals." We have talked about the different properties of these substances and are now learning about the different *indicators* that can be used to test for the presence of these different items. Each of the powders is identified (for now) with a different color sticker dot. The students will eventually discern "which is which" by comparing the different indicators with the properties of the six different powders. Very hands-on and **VERY** fun!

DARE

We had our very first DARE lesson with Officer Rocky this past Tuesday. The children are excited to work with Officer Rocky to learn important ways to say "no" when faced with difficult situations in the future. DARE will meet every Tuesday for 10 weeks. There will be an essay that the children are asked to write at the end of the program. Be on the lookout for the requirements and dates that drafts will be due. As always, we will also have a DARE graduation that you will all be invited to attend. I will be

informing you of this date and time as it draws near.

Report Cards/Conferences

Spring conferences are just around the corner! If you would like to meet with me to discuss your child's progress, we have two scheduled conference days on Early Release Wednesdays. Those dates are March 10th and March 24th. These fifteen minute conferences will run from 1:15-3:30. Please let me know via email if you are interested in having a conference and a few possible time slots that work best for you. I will send you a confirmation once I have created a schedule.

MCAS is quickly approaching
ELA (English Language Arts)
Day 1: **Wednesday, March 31**
Day 2: **Thursday, April 1**

We ask you to help your fifth grader perform his/her best by making sure s/he gets a good night's sleep, eats a healthy breakfast, packs a healthy snack, brings a water bottle (and a good book!) **and** gets to school **on time**.

(We do begin the test sessions as close to 9:00 as we can to give the students an optimal amount of working time)