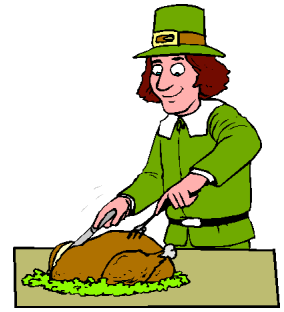


MRS. SAMARCO'S NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER



Writing:

We ended our personal narrative unit and they are finally all on display on the bulletin board outside of our classroom. The students are now diving into writing personal essays. We took an "observation walk" around the school and the children wrote down anything that they observed, keeping in mind all of their senses (with the exception of taste :)

We then made a t-chart of what bigger topics their observations made them think of. While this can be a difficult task, you should be proud of you children as their topics are really getting deep. For example, one student observed a pencil falling out of the pencil jar and it made them think of being left out. Another student observed the differences between what is put on Kindergarten's bulletin board and what is up on the fifth grade bulletin boards. This made him think about how difficult school gets and how things get more and more advanced as you get older. These are wonderful ideas to begin working with. We recently discussed a thesis statement and how it is needed to write an effective essay. You may see how they are trying to write thesis statements in their "What I am Thankful For" essay. What budding little essayists we have in our class!

Reading:

We are finishing up our whole class reading of The Sign of the Beaver. The children are all working on using context clues to determine meanings of unknown or unfamiliar words. The Sign of the Beaver really gets the students thinking about the relationship between the Natives and the European settlers, which is closely related to our Social Studies curriculum and very fitting, thinking about the first Thanksgiving. The children read it individually or with a small group of children and then we read it aloud

together. and the children continue to work on comprehension questions. All of these reading activities are on top of guided reading groups in which all students are engaged in predicting, questioning, determining author's purpose, and drawing conclusions. Whew...we are busy during reading workshop! We are also loving our whole class read aloud of The Mysterious Benedict Society. It's a higher level chapter book that students get to utilize all of the strategies they are learning in guided reading groups to understand as well as simply enjoy being read to!

Math:

We just wrapped up unit 2 in the new TERC curriculum. You've seen plenty of the worksheets coming home in the math homework packets. Students continue to hone their "Finding Volume" skills... Ask them if they know how to LABEL their answer in terms of units.... We have begun unit 3, in which we are working on place value, addition and subtraction of larger numbers and starting to analyze data with three different averages; mean, median & mode! We also continue to practice multiplication and division strategies.

Science:

We are also coming close to the end of our wonderful weather unit. Don't miss our class weather report at school meeting on Wednesday, December 9! The students are currently looking at the water cycle and the different types of clouds. Challenge your child to look up in the sky and determine the type or types of clouds that are in the sky! The students will be very excited that New England Cable News weather forecaster Matt Noyes will be here at Nixon the very

next day on Thursday, December 10! We are looking forward to his presentation - thanks so much to the Nixon PTO Cultural Enrichment committee for setting it up!

Social Studies:

November has been quite a busy month for us in Social Studies. The students went from being underwater archeologists to researchers. They're broadening their understanding of explorers. When they dove underwater they found a sunken ship. Ask your child some of the artifacts that were found on the boat. They then had to read about them and decide whether this was an item that they were bringing with them from Europe to the New World or bringing back from the New World to Europe and why it was important. Ask your child about the exciting thing we learned about tomatoes...although we think of Italy when we think of tomatoes, they might not have originally been grown there prior to exploration... Their explorer projects look great! So many creative and wonderful depictions of the explorers. I am excited to see the presentations.

A Note From Mrs. Samarco:

It has been a pleasure meeting with all of you at our conferences. I thank you for getting together with me to discuss your wonderful children. The more we all stay on the same page, the more progress the children will make overall! Those of you that I still need to meet with in December, I very much look forward to our meeting.

A very important theme has come up in our classroom and even in the conferences that I have had already. The children are viewing themselves as smart and/or dumb. They believe that there are "smart" reading or math groups and "dumb" groups as well. We have discussed this during Open Circle and will continue to discuss this at length.

It is my personal goal for the children to keep remembering that we are all different and we all learn differently. While I

understand that the children are growing up and are aware of these things, I feel that real learning will only occur when they feel confident in their abilities and approach each subject area with a positive outlook and not worry about what others are thinking.

I want them to view groupings as working with a teacher, who may not be me, on things that they need to work on.

Everyone in the classroom needs to work on something and those needs are met differently depending on how a child learns.

I ask you to please reinforce this with your children as not view meeting in groups negatively. They should all be proud of their abilities and understand that everyone has different needs and that I am trying to meet those needs when pulling groups.

I also wanted to reiterate something that I brought up at Open House about homework. We, as a fifth grade team strive to meet the district guidelines in terms of homework, which is 45 minutes per night with an additional 30 minutes of reading each night.

This is our goal and we recognize that some students are completing their homework in a lesser amount of time and some are taking longer. For those students who seem to be taking longer, please stop them after about 45 minutes, have them write a quick note, and then please sign that note. This lets me know that your child has actively worked on their homework for 45 minutes and that you are aware of this. With that said, this is the year to take a step back and see what your child is capable of completing independently. Homework should not be a stress for you as I want your child to learn responsibility and independence. Taking this step back can be difficult but it will benefit your child in the future.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and everyone in your family!

Sincerely, Meghan Samarco