

January 10, 2015

Dear Families,

Happy New Year! It was great to have everyone back this week. Kids settled into regular routines quickly and we had a great week. I am looking forward to this time of year with your children—it is usually a time of much growth. We have a lot of new things happening in the classroom. Read on for more information...

Reading

This week I opened up the non-fiction section of our classroom library. We spent time this week discussing the ways that fiction and non-fiction differ. This week we spent a lot of time looking at non-fiction text features such as bold faced text, charts and graphs, index, glossary, side-bars, captions, and more. These features not only make non-fiction text look very different than fiction, but as readers, we also rely on these features to gain more information and understanding of the text. Next week we will learn strategies for using text features like headings and subheadings to help us understand the main idea of what we read.

Although our in-class lessons will focus on reading non-fiction, students will still be expected to continue reading fiction texts as well. Students will be given some time in class each day to read their fiction chapter books, and they will be expected to read their fiction books for nightly reading as well.

Writing

We have been working on writing informational paragraphs and essays in class over the past month or so. Students have learned how to write a topic sentence, how to structure their writing using transitions and key words, and how to end their work with a strong conclusion. There are many nice connections between our writing work and the work we will do with reading non-fiction. Next week students will begin a longer writing project creating an informational book about a topic of their choice.

Math

We are about half way through our fifth math unit. So far we've been working on developing place value understandings to the millions. On Friday we had fun calculating how many minutes old students were on their last birthday. This number was about 4,000,000 minutes! Next week we will begin learning about place



value in decimals. Students will develop the understanding that a decimal is like a fraction—it shows part of a whole. We will use base ten blocks and other manipulatives as we develop our understandings of decimals. As we practice reading both large numbers and decimals, we have been careful to only use the word “and” when we are reading a decimal. For example, 30,402 is read “thirty thousand, four hundred two,” NOT “thirty thousand, four hundred AND two.”

Science

We finished up our science unit on Forces and Motion on Friday. Next week we will begin our life science unit on animals. We will be learning about habitats, inherited traits and adaptations, life cycles, food webs and fossils. The culminating piece of this unit will be a group research project at school. Students will be researching a Maine animal and will be presenting their findings to parents later this winter. More information to come!

Computer Lab

We visit the computer lab at least once each week. Among other tasks in the lab, students are practicing keyboarding skills using a program called Type to Learn. We have also been working to create book reviews and other documents using our Google Docs account. Last week students began learning about Google Slides (or Presentation), which is similar to Power Point. Students are welcome to log on to their Google accounts at home to practice creating documents or presentations.

Have a great weekend! Stay warm!

