

January 18, 2016

Dear Families,

Happy New Year! Our new year at school is off to a good start. We began last week with New Year's Resolutions for home and for school. For our school resolutions, we revisited the goals we set at conference time. Reinforcing good study habits at home such as nightly reading and logging, practicing math facts, and staying organized with materials is a great way to help students work towards their goals. Thank you for your efforts!

Read on for a recap of what we've been busy with in class, and a peek at what's ahead...

Reading

We are continuing with our non-fiction reading unit this month. Students are learning to determine the main idea and supporting details in what they read. Strategies to help determine the main idea include....

- Read the headings and subheadings. Turn the heading into a question and read to answer that question.
- Pause after a section of text and think: What was that mostly about? What did the author want me to learn?
- Look for the "pop-out" sentence that states the main idea

Students are learning to take notes using "boxes and bullets" (like an outline). They've learned that drawing pictures or diagrams can aid understanding as well. Later this month we'll shift gears and focus on narrative non-fiction and biographies. While we are spending a lot of time reading non-fiction each day in class, students are still expected to carry on with their fiction reading at home.

Octopus protect themselves from predators.

- swim backwards quickly— called jet propulsion
- squirt invisible ink
- ink blinds predators

Sample "Boxes and Bullets"

Writing

In writing students just started working on writing their own informational books. Students have chosen topics about which they are an "expert" and will be creating a book with several chapters. Topics include gems, golden retrievers, wasps and bees, manatees, fighter planes and ears! Last week we began by creating and

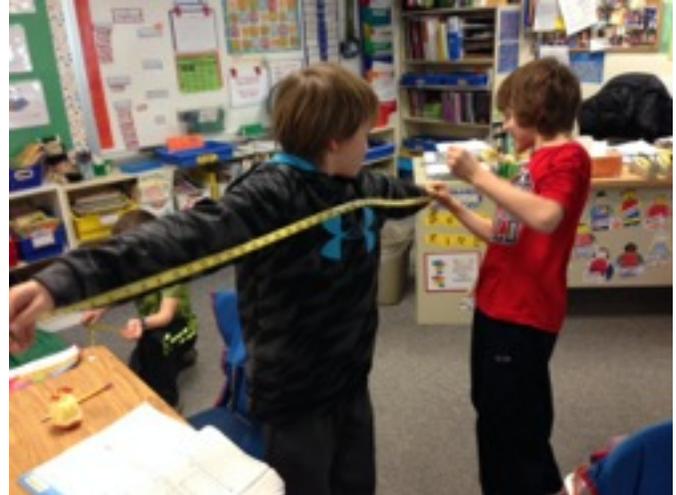
revising a table of contents for our books. Students have now begun to plan out each chapter using an outline or planner. We've been looking at various structures for our chapters, including compare/contrast, cause/effect, and pro/con. The kids are really motivated by this writing unit and have been working quite diligently on planning their writing. I'm excited to see what they come up with!

Math

Our current math unit (unit 4) covers many concepts related to measurement and geometry. This unit can tend to be very vocabulary-heavy, as students learn to compare different attributes of polygons. A big focus of the unit is finding perimeter and area of shapes. Area and perimeter are frequently confused by third graders. To help us keep them straight, we talk about how "Peri" the snail helps us measure perimeter by measuring the distance around the shape. Students have also noticed the the word peRIMeter has the word "rim" in it, helping to remind them that this is measuring the outside of a shape. Area, on the other hand, sounds a bit like "array," and last week students began to develop the understanding that multiplication can be used to find the area, or the part inside, a shape. We will finish up unit 4 next week and will plan to take the unit test on Thursday and Friday.

Science

Last Friday we completed our Force and Motion unit with a set of experiments exploring static electricity. Students also had the chance to watch me create an elctromagnet by wrapping a nail with wire and attaching it to a battery. We were very excited to find that we were able to pick up several paper clips and staples with our electromagnet. Students had a chance to explore magnetic force just before our vacation in December. In our next science unit, we will learn about animals, with a focus on adaptation. Students will also conduct a group research project on a Maine animal during this unit. More details on this research project will come home soon.



Charlie and Garrett practice measuring skills by measuring one another.



Practicing measuring and writing code during the Hour of Code.

