

December 14, 2014

Dear Families,

I hope that you've been enjoying December so far! There are so many fun activities around town to celebrate the season. Despite all the excitement, we are still working hard at school, though we're looking forward letting loose a little with a few fun festivities on the 22nd and 23rd (see the end of the newsletter for more information). Here's what we've been working on....

Reading

Our current unit in reading has us thinking a lot about the characters in our books. We are working hard to read closely, gathering clues that help us get to know these characters. We use what we've learned about our characters to guide our questioning and to help us make strong predictions as we read. Students are also learning to use the skills of visualization and personal connections to empathize with characters. Next week, we will work to build bigger ideas, or "theories" about our characters' personality traits and to back up these ideas with evidence from the text. Some questions you can ask your child to help them think about the characters in their books are:

- Who is the main character? Do you like him/her? Why?
- How are you like/not like your character?
- What is your character like? "My character is the kind of person who...."
- What makes you say that?

Writing

Our current writing unit is focused on writing informational (expository) paragraphs. Students are learning to use the colors of a traffic light to help them organize a paragraph. (Green for a topic sentence (GO!), yellow for slowing down and giving a detail or fact, and red for stopping to explain further.) We have written several short paragraphs so far, each complete with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. We've begun exploring different tools, such as an outline, to organize our ideas before drafting our paragraphs. We will be continuing this work when we return after the break.

Upcoming Dates

**Dec. 19: Compass Rose
Contest Entries Due**

**Dec. 23: Class Holiday Party,
10:30-11:30
Last day before break**

Jan. 5: School Resumes



Math

We are nearing the completion of our fourth math unit which focuses on multiplication and division concepts. Early in the unit we solved multiplication and division number stories by using counters, drawing arrays, and even physically acting out stories. This work helped your child build conceptual understanding of multiplication and division. This week our work has focused more on learning shortcuts for developing fact power. I sent fact triangles for the easier set of multiplication facts to help with at-home practice. We also learned a fun game called Baseball Multiplication. I sent home a scoring sheet and directions for the game on Thursday. Students should begin practicing multiplication facts daily at home, using the fact triangles, the baseball multiplication game, or any other way that works for your child. I suggest beginning with the easier facts ($\times 1$, $\times 2$, $\times 5$, $\times 10$) and then moving on to $\times 3$, $\times 4$, $\times 6$ etc. Thanks for your support at home with this!

Science

We are continuing our Force and Motion unit with a concentration on magnetic force. On Friday, students had the opportunity to experiment with different types of magnets and explore magnetic force. We'll have the chance for more experiments with magnets and with static electricity over the next week. I love seeing how excited kids get as they engage with hands-on science activities, and even better is hearing them use new vocabulary like "hypothesis" and "observation" as they discuss their findings with one another.

Fun Stuff

Our pod has a few fun activities planned for the 22nd and 23rd. On Monday the 22nd we will rotate through the pod doing some gingerbread math activities. We may eat a few cookies as well. :) On the 23rd we will have our class holiday party from 10:30 to 11:30. Look for a sign-up genius coming your way with information on how you can contribute to this.

As part of our party, we will do a book-exchange. Each child will be asked to bring in a new or used book for another student. I encourage children to "shop their shelves" and give away a book from home. This is a great way to pass along books we've already read and enjoyed, and is also a fun way to recommend books to others. Books should be wrapped so that everyone has a present to open on Tuesday. I will send a letter with more information about this tomorrow.

We will be doing a craft on Tuesday the 23rd. For it I will need each child to bring in a cardboard toilet paper roll, paper towel roll, or a wrapping paper roll would work too! We'll also need paper egg cartons. Thanks for contributing if you can!

