

December 8, 2015

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 to 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

We have shifted gears this week and are beginning our first non-fiction reading unit of the year. This week has been a week for assessment and for discussing how non-fiction and fiction differ. We will be learning about the unique text features of non-fiction and how we can use them wisely as readers. For example, we'll explore how headings and subheadings help us find the main ideas and supporting details in text. We will do a lot of non-fiction work in class, but students are still expected to continue their fiction reading during quiet reading time in class and for their 20 minutes of reading at home.

### 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 GO—write a topic sentence, 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 our work on informational writing when we return after the break.

### Math

As you know, we have been working hard in math to learn strategies for multi-digit addition and subtraction. Although several strategies are taught, kids will eventually be encouraged to find the method they prefer and to master that method. The second half of the unit will return to a focus on developing conceptual understandings of multiplication and division. Please see the Unit 3 Family Letter for more information.

### Upcoming Dates

**Dec. 23: Class Holiday Party,  
11:00-12:00**

**Last day before break**

**Jan. 4: School Resumes**



## Science

We have been exploring our Force and Motion unit with many different experiments to help us understand how force (pushes and pulls), gravity and friction affect objects in motion and objects at rest. Next week we will shift our focus to magnetic force. We have been exploring the scientific method as we design and conduct various experiments. 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.

We participated in Computer Science Education Week this week with “An Hour of Code” on Monday during computer lab. I’ve added a link to [code.org](https://code.org) to our website. This is a fun site that engages kids in code building activities. Feel free to enjoy these with your family at home—no passwords needed!

## Fun Stuff

Our pod has a few fun activities planned for the 22nd and 23rd. On Tuesday 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 11:00 to 12:00. 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 Wednesday the 23rd. I will send a letter with more information about this in the next few days.

**We will be doing a craft on Wednesday the 23rd. For it I will need donations of cardboard toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, or a wrapping paper roll would work too! We’ll also need paper egg cartons. Thanks for contributing if you can!**

