

January 29, 2018

Dear Families and Friends,

I apologize for not getting this to you all sooner.

Our time has been busy with preparing for Shakespeare auditions for the older students. Jes Kuzmick is ready to make costumes for us, and she needed to know sizes before she could start. So, even though we will not be actively working on Shakespeare until late March, we dove in - reading, analyzing, learning lines, and practicing. Now everyone knows the role they will be playing. Meanwhile a group decided to study Shakespeare's life and create a timeline.

Along with Martin Luther King Day, we have been reading about what life was like in our country during the 50s and 60s. Learning that there were separate bathrooms, water fountains, schools, etc. when I was a child is shocking for most of our students. We also have a timeline of Dr. King's life getting started.

The ancient days of Mesopotamia have also been another topic in our class. Some students did a read-aloud play based in Babylon. We have read about Hammurabi's Code, the first written laws that we know of. We discussed whether each of the laws seemed just or unjust to us.

In math we are learning about decimals, multiplying by 10s, word problems using division and ending up with a quotient including a fraction. Recently several students have realized they can do division without the use of the stamp game. A group of students is teaching others about signed numbers and practicing their skills on their own. Younger students are learning about the commutative law of multiplication and division with the stamp game. Everyone is working on memorization of math facts.

In geography we have learned about the work of water over millions of years which has resulted in the many rivers of the world. The major rivers of the world have been a topic of discussion as the children try to find them on our world map and in atlases, learning to use an index and to use coordinates to pinpoint locations. We have also been reading about Russia in preparation for Natasha Wagner's very gracious lesson she will be giving us soon on her country of origin.

We have had some sentence analysis going on with all ages recently as young students practice finding subjects, predicates, direct objects, and adverbial modifiers and older students diagram sentences with prepositional phrases. Many writing lessons have taken place. Younger students have worked on recognizing the beginning, middle, and end of stories, and many have incorporated their knowledge into their own writing. They have also practiced creating characters. Older students have worked on different types of grabbers to start their writing as well as making better use of dialogue in their stories. We are also learning to read non-fiction more effectively, using highlighting to help us remember the main ideas in paragraphs.

Our class has a number of serious musicians who create songs and/or work out songs they know on the xylophones and recorder. Many are actively pursuing learning to read notes and write their own songs. We have shared stories and music of Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach. We were just about to study Beethoven, but the students beat me to it by learning to play "Ode to Joy" on the xylophones!

Painting of geography charts, self-portraits and pop-art as introduced by Mark Cook have been a part of our everyday life. Some of this work adorns our classroom.

Sincerely,

Mona