

Dear Families,

Each year I am astounded when the beginning of the school year quickly progresses to the holiday season. Thanksgiving is upon us and the first snow has arrived. Many of you know the kindergarten kids have been immersed in learning about the early Native American people. I was so impressed during conferences hearing the little snippets kids brought home to tell their families and how much they treasured their projects: coloring a booklet of the wigwam, longhouses, hogans, and other early dwellings; their totem poles made from the loving care of their hands and paper towel tubes; and the pinch pots and Indian corn art projects in process with our famous art teachers Mrs. Cook and volunteer teacher, Mrs. Flores. We have read wonderful books about the early history of this country and have recently begun reading about the Mayflower with much more history in store in the upcoming weeks prior to our winter holiday. The kindergarten children will culminate December learning about the thirteen colonies, the flag of the United States and learning the words to our national anthem.

It is also a tradition in our school for our students to enter the holiday writing contest at Samuel's Library starting their kindergarten year. For those of you whose children are not quite that age, never fear, they are continuously learning about letters and sounds, and many are writing creatively with the movable alphabet, typically starting somewhere between four and four-and-a-half. They get so excited when their friends start writing their holiday stories.

Last evening I had the privilege of being a judge for the library contest at the 9th grade level. It was a delightful experience for me to be a part of that process. We have an amazing library with very dedicated staff who are inspiring our children in Front Royal to write creatively. I heard last night they had more entries than ever before! Along with the written stories the library includes holiday art contests and produces a magazine for sale after the contest. Mountain Laurel has had many literary and art winners in past years. We'll keep our fingers crossed for this year's winners.

To highlight the creative writing process, in January I will start author studies in our class, highlighting four authors and one poet. I will put some books on the wish list that I am hopeful to gather for our class. The library is a great resource, but having the books in our own class would also be wonderful. We will donate them to our school's library for future use upon finishing our author study. Here is a list of books I am hopeful to collect, gently-used or new. Any duplicates will be donated to the Samuel's Library or the school's auction in the spring if the donor specifies their desire.

Herve Tullet: Mix it Up, The Game of Finger Worms, Say Zoop, Press Here, The Good Morning Game, and The Book with a Hole

Cynthia Rylant: The Relatives Came, Dog Heaven, Poppleton (the original), Night in the Country, Give me Grace, and In November

Shel Silverstein: Don't Bump the Grump, Who Wants a Cheap Rhinoceros, The Giving Tree, A Giraffe and a Half, Lafcadio, and a book of poetry called The Runny Babbit Returns

The poet we will study is Robert Louis Stevenson: Picture Books in Winter, My Shadow, The Swing, The Whole Duty of Children, and Block City
We have the Children's Garden of Verses in our school library already.

I wish you all a peaceful time of year amidst the hustle and bustle. Please take note of the invitation to visit our class Tuesday, November 20th prior to Thanksgiving break (look for details in this week's newsletter for times), to get a glimpse of our botany work this fall. We have many drawings of flowers, leaves, and trees on display, paintings of basic leaf shapes, leaf rubbings, interesting botany books to read and we are learning a poem to recite titled Trees.

Also take note of the volunteer opportunities for one of our most treasured traditions at MLMS in December: Winter Holidays Around the World on December 14th. Speak to Odays Martin if you are able to volunteer.

Sincerely,
Carrie Irre