

School in the Woods Field Notes

February 2020

Dear Parents:

January was certainly NOT a time of hibernation at School in the Woods! Mr. Stansfield, our 'resident' storyteller, visited our school for a workshop designed to teach about Native American storytelling traditions. Each naturalist picked a story, identified the significant events, and has been practicing retelling it in his/her own words. The stories that our students are sharing with their classmates are delightful. We are so impressed by the confidence we witness being exhibited by our youthful storytellers.

Making pine needle baskets has been a long-standing tradition at School in the Woods, and our naturalists eagerly embraced this important and meaningful experience. Countless ponderosa needles had their caps removed and were then stitched into coils. 'Sinew' was pulled tight while the coils snaked round and round. The baskets have been completed, and they look amazing! We have plastic gauges and pine needles available for those who want to make another basket. This ancient, utilitarian art form is an example of early American survival skills. Each student should have a strong sense of pride in what they have accomplished.

We have been reading from various textbooks and pieces of informational texts. Naturalists will soon begin reading various novels such as Stone Fox, Charlie's Raven or Sign of the Beaver. We know our naturalists will be eager to dive right in and become immersed in these extremely engaging novels. Be sure to have them share what they are reading about and even make predictions of what they think may happen next!

In science, our studies will center on the concepts of electricity and magnetism. Our students are learning about the importance of electricity, electrical circuits, and the relationship electrical energy has with magnetism. The students will participate in many hands-on experiences involving these concepts. Talk with your child about things that use electricity around your house and ask them where they think the electricity comes from and how it travels.

In social studies, we are furthering our knowledge of Colorado history and are starting to study our Colorado state government. We will be learning the three branches of government and how they balance one another. Particular attention is given to the legislative process and how laws are created. The culmination of the government unit occurs when the naturalists propose "bills", vote on, and then accept this year's class name. It's always exciting for the naturalists to come up with this special symbol of their class identity.

Reading for Fun and the Latest in Math

During these winter months, we encourage our naturalists to spend extra time with good books. Our library may appear small, but it is filled with thousands of amazing

titles. Not only do we have countless highly engaging fiction books at many reading levels, but our nonfiction section has probably one of the finest collections of natural science books in any elementary school. We have a checkout limit of three books to encourage even more books getting into the naturalists' hands. Help remind them of the importance of caring for the books they borrow. Remember to discuss with your naturalist that reading from a book for fun at least twenty minutes every day strengthens reading skills and helps promote a life-long love of reading.

For math we continue to use smaller and differentiated groups that appear to be working out quite well for our naturalists. Fraction studies are next with naturalists learning to generate equivalent fractions. They will also be learning to order and compare fractions. They can use games and iPad apps to practice these topics, along with response pages in Go Math! This understanding will lead us to our next steps in our numbers and operations standards: **adding and subtracting fractions**. Our grade-level target is student success with fractions and mixed numbers having the same denominator. Above-grade-level naturalists will focus on working with differing denominators. We will continue to apply skills through problem solving and daily multiplication facts practice. You can support your child at home by monitoring progress in the weekly Home Learning Folder, which may include paper home learning assignments and/or online activities.

New AV Equipment at SITW

Thanks to funds raised during our 8th Annual Turkey Trot, each classroom now has a powerful and interactive short throw projector. They are beautiful projectors that are bright and allow for interactive use. We are very appreciative of our current SITW families and our alumni who helped earn the money needed to purchase the projectors.

Important Calendar Notes

If you would like your child to attend any school for fifth grade other than the school that he or she attended in third grade, you need to submit a Choice Enrollment Application to District 20 Central Registry by 4:00 PM, **Friday, February 28**.

Spring conferences will be held on March 18 and 19. CMAS testing will take place the first couple of weeks of April.

A couple of our handmade pine needle baskets

