



OUR 24TH YEAR
 NEWS FOR THE WEEK OF
December 2, 2013

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News and Notes

The Parent Group Meeting is This Wednesday

Come to Parent Group meeting this Wednesday, 8:45 a.m. at Kyra's house down the road. We'll prepare for the Holiday Celebration, talk about a possible Book Festival next fall, and enjoy the camaraderie.

Annual Fund Phone Calls to Parents

Thank you to all of you for donating to the Annual Fund. If you haven't donated or made a pledge yet, Sarah Briggs is calling this week to take your pledge. We aim for 100% parent participation - every donation counts, and works hard to keep the school itself at 100%.

About Friday Afternoon Soccer

Mathew Hamer has been teaching soccer at the Village School on Fridays this fall, focusing on individual ball handling skills and team work. He's a homeschooled high school student who lives in Hubbardston. Matthew also teaches ukulele and guitar in the Village School After School Music Program.

Check Out the Lost and Found !

Winter Gardens Begin Today

In the next four weeks, the whole school enters into an appreciation of nature, with the K-6th children creating individual winter gardens in their pie plates and the preschoolers creating one large garden in the classroom. This week, we are mindful of the mineral world. Starting with a thin layer of sand, children will look for special rocks, crystals, or minerals to put in their garden. (You can send unique specimens in, they will not get lost.) Next week we will add a thin layer of moss to represent plant life, (next Monday children can bring in moss dug up at home) and in the third week the children add small clay animals. The gardens go home to grace your table for the 4th week, when a candle is lit in the garden, symbolizing the light that each human being brings to this world.

The Holiday Celebration

Our Holiday Celebration is Friday Dec. 20th at 11 a.m. at the Town Hall. The children are preparing to sing for you, and more. There is no Lunch Program or After School Program that day. That will be the last morning of school until we start again on January 6th.

Preschool

Before Thanksgiving, the class began "selling" groceries at their new grocery store, complete with reusable bags. The only problem was that some of the store "clerks" didn't like it when the "customers" wanted to take items away from the store. Restocking the shelves was another sticking point! Nonetheless they were having fun pretending to buy and sell food. This week the class will hear the story *The Mitten* retold by Jan Brett. This is an Ukrainian folk tale about a boy who drops his mitten in the snow. The mitten stretches and stretches as it becomes home to many woodland creatures. The class will decorate a pair of paper mittens and practice sewing around the edge of a mitten with yarn.

We will begin our class's winter garden this week. Our train table will become home to sand and rocks to represent the mineral world. Next week we will add moss to represent the plant world. This is a fun way to bring some green into the classroom during the winter. The class will use spray bottles to keep the moss green. On the third week we will put in animal figures.

The children are practicing songs to sing for parents at our Holiday Celebration at the Royalston Town Hall on Friday, December 20th at 11:00. There is no Lunch Program or After School Program that day.

December 2013				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2 8:45 All School Sing Winter Gardens begin: rocks and minerals	3 8:45 Reading Buddies	4 8:45 a.m. Parent Group meeting	5 8:45 Reading Buddies 1:00 2nd-3rd to Camp Caravan	6 COFFEE ORDER DUE soccer yoga
9 8:45 All School Sing Winter Gardens: Moss and plant life bring in layer of moss	10 8:45 Reading Buddies	11	12 8:45 Reading Buddies	13 soccer yoga

Kindergarten—1st Grade

We continue our theme of *Olden Times* this week with the children journaling olden times events that they have been hearing about in *By the Shores of Silver Lake* by Laura Ingalls Wilder. This is the read-aloud that we have been reading daily at snack time since September, which the class listens to avidly. When we finish this book, we will start the next one in the series, *The Long Winter*.

This week we'll begin our Winter Gardens, focusing on the mineral world. We will put in a layer of sand and a few special rocks to make the base of our garden in the pie plates that the children brought in. In art this week we'll be painting and glazing our pottery that we made three weeks ago.

In phonics we are looking at the letters 'e' and 's', and the kinder-

garten will practice reading words made with familiar letter sounds. Last week the kindergarten math class began making AB repeating patterns with blocks using two colors, such as yellow-red, yellow-red. First graders are continuing the unit *Solving Story Problems*. This week we'll be writing counting strips, counting up to and over 100, and finding missing numbers.

In music we are singing songs about winter and preparing for our holiday performance at the Town Hall on December 20th when the class will be singing a selection of songs and playing recorder.

On Friday we'll continue with soccer practice, weather permitting.

2nd - 3rd Grade

In math, 3rd graders have been working on using 100 as a landmark number. They have been solving "distance riddles" such as: "This number is 35 away from 100. What numbers can it be?" Once they figure out the numbers are 65 and 135, they then have to find the difference between those two numbers, which is 70. Subtraction fact cards will be sent home this week for homework. Children should figure out which combinations they "just know" and which ones they have to figure out. The ones that they have to figure out are the combinations they should practice until they "just know them."

For the next three weeks in reading, the whole class will read the same book, *Buffalo Dreams*. We will engage in discussions about the book and think about the importance of story to the Native Americans. This is always a favorite activity and the children really enjoy reading and discussing the same book. Children should continue to read their 'just right' books at home.

In theme, we turn to the night sky. We will begin to hear stories about the night sky and learn stories about the origins of certain constellations. We will also create dream catchers. The children are busy finishing up their memoirs. Some are writing second drafts, while others are creating pictures.

For the holiday concert, the children were sent home with lyrics, music and a practice chart before the Thanksgiving break. They should be practicing their songs every day to prepare for the holiday concert. They also chose a name for the secret gift giving. They should create a homemade gift for their person. Supplies may be bought to create the gift. They should bring the gift in on Wednesday, December 18. We will exchange gifts on Thursday, December 19.

This Thursday afternoon, we will visit Camp Caravan with Jim Farnham, a Native American elder, to learn more about the four directions, see a sweat lodge and participate in ceremony. Children should be dressed to be outside for the afternoon.

4th - 6th Grade

This week the children will begin assembling their winter gardens in the pie plates they brought in. We begin by putting a layer of sand and rocks in the plates, symbolizing the soil and mineral life on which all life depends.

Just before Thanksgiving, we continued our memoir and theme work and we also had time for useful class discussions on how the children can best work with their Reading Buddies, and about Thanksgiving itself.

The class has now been divided into two recorder groups to prepare for the holiday concert on Friday December 20th. The two groups are working on different parts of various songs, and have begun putting them together in harmony. The class as a whole is a very musical group, with almost everyone learning at least one other instrument.

In science last week we began working with simple machines, by looking at levers. The children were interested to learn that there are three different classes of levers, and they were surprised to hear that simple devices such as nutcrackers or a pair of scissors are simple machines. They were particularly intrigued by the idea that a wheelbarrow is a class two lever, and that our own jaws are another example of a lever.

Last Monday we held the draw for this year's secret gift event, and everyone now knows the name of the person she or he will make a gift for. Please help them to keep this name a secret, because that's part of the fun. The gift should be something each child makes, and not something bought. Please make sure your child brings his or her gift to school on Wednesday December 18th, all wrapped up, and we will share them all on Thursday Dec. 19th.

Recorder Practice

All 1st-6th graders will be performing on recorder for our upcoming Holiday Concert. Students have a chart to keep track of their practicing at home over the coming month, and they should add a check mark each time they practice. 1st-4th grade students should practice at least 5 minutes a day, and 5th-6th graders should practice at least 10 minutes a day.