

The Big Scoop

Ice Cream Community Newsletter

December 1st, 2005

Projects

The Penny Harvest has officially wrapped up, although Common Cents has yet to schedule our pick-up date. We are still accepting pennies (and other coins) until pick-up. Grand totals will be announced soon. Under the enthusiastic leadership of the Ice Creams, our entire Gillen Brewer community has come together to raise over three hundred dollars to date! In the contest between students and staff, the students are the runaway winners. A mysterious benefactor named “Alice Kinderstein” has been motivating the children with a daily challenge to earn 100 pennies. Every day after lunch Linda leaves the room for five minutes, during which time the children must clean up thoroughly. Linda returns to inspect for spills, trash and crumbs. If she finds any, “Alice” leaves 100 pennies for the teachers in the “secret bag.” If Linda finds no mess, “Alice” leaves 100 pennies for the children. Our floor has never been cleaner. “Alice” is keeping her identity a well-guarded secret. An in-class Penny Harvest wrap-up party will be scheduled for the week of December 5th.

Social Studies

We are completing our “Me on the Map” books this week, and spending time talking about New York State before beginning our individual state research projects. We will encourage children to select a state that has some personal connection to them, e.g., the site of a family vacation or the birthplace or home of a relative. Although most of the research will be done at school, through books and internet, we will ask you to help your child discover and/or recall these personal connections.

Science

We are applying and practicing concepts and skills introduced so far through frequent activities such as using the digital microscope to find details on coins, classifying assorted objects according to various criteria such as shape, size and color, and using thermometers to see if adding salt to ice water changes its temperature. The curiosity and creativity with which the children engage in these activities is wonderful to see. Vocabulary to reinforce at home includes:

thermometer	gas, solid, liquid
degree (the word and the symbol)	temperature
pounds	scale
magnify (also enlarge)	observe
classify	
estimate (a thoughtful guess about something that is not being acted upon, such as the weight of an item)	
predict (a thoughtful guess about the outcome of an action, such as putting a thermometer next to a radiator)	

Our current units include magnets and compasses, which will tie into the mapping we are doing in social studies.

Math

Our foci this month are money and weight, which are of natural interest due to the Penny Harvest. It is hard for the children to believe that the impossible-to-carry 30 pound sacks of pennies weigh LESS than they do! The children are collecting state quarters as part of both our math and social studies units. Milt came into our classroom to share his collection and talk to us about how money is minted. We will also be filling in a 100-year timeline with pennies from each year. In addition, students will continue to practice their computation. Mid-month we will have a unit on using calculators.

Language Arts

We will be finishing The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe any day now. The children are responding to the story with remarkable insight and are very involved with the characters. A favorite game has become a variation on freeze tag in which one player is the Witch, who can turn you to stone with her wand, and another player is the Lion, who can break the spell. (These are elements of the story.)

To reinforce the idea of fantasy, we spent a day exploring another fantasy, The Firebird. Sarah V. read us the story from a beautiful picture book. We then made paint and feather artwork while listening to the Stravinski score. Next, Sarah shared a video of herself dancing in the ballet. Finally, the children took turns dancing “solo” or “de deux” to the music. Some of the boys who had greeted the activity with “Ew, yuck, ballet!” were seen reenacting scenes with unexpected grace and control.

We have begun our “Writer’s Circle,” during which time children and teachers share true personal stories with the group. This activity is intended to plant the seeds for further journal writing.

Finally, the students are making good progress in their reading and comprehension groups. Please let us know if we can provide reading material or suggestions for books for the nightly reading. Thanks for helping your children complete book reports each week. Sharing reports is an important activity that builds recall, comprehension and presentation skills, as well as provides a chance for children to talk to each other about the books they are reading.

Notable...

☺ Thanks again to everyone for the delicious Thanksgiving feast. We are very thankful to have such generous and involved families.

☺ Thanks to all of you who have supported your children in their “above-and -beyond” penny harvesting efforts.

And Quotable

“It’s not anyone’s fault. It just happens sometimes.”
-A.K. on the death of Manini Leah Chicken, R.I.P.

From Linda, Andrea, Sarah,

*A.K., Andy, Francesco, Henry, Jack, Leo,
Manny, Randall, Sam and Sammy*