

Linkhorn Park Gifted Newsletter

May 2009

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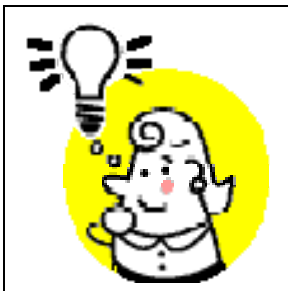


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"We should be teaching students how to think. Instead, we are teaching them what to think."

Clement and Lochhead

Gifted Resource News

Student Scientists Partner to Celebrate Critical Thinking

Linkhorn Park's second grade cluster class never ceases to amaze me. These students hunger for opportunities to learn *how to think* rather than *what to think*.

The topic of magnets was the recent focus for stretching critical thinking skills. What more could a 7-year old learn about magnets beyond the basic understanding of repulsion, attraction, and poles? You would be surprised. Through opportunities utilizing technology and experimental design, our students became producers of knowledge, not just consumers. Can you show if the north poles hold a negative or positive charge? Do you know how to manipulate an iron alloy to create a magnet? We can!

Young science students often become familiar with experimental design through the careful orchestration of the teacher, while sitting in the bleachers during the show (often know as the "demonstration lab"). Mrs. Pearson's cluster students took the lead in a science performance task by creating their own testable questions, independent variables, data, and conclusions. Students took on the role of scientists presenting their findings as a means to synthesize the concepts of magnetism and systems.

With the help of peers in the science community, Mrs. Pearson's students shared their findings with high school students from Ocean Lakes Math/Science Academy and First Colonial High School. They served as guest scientists on a critical review panel.

This partnership was not only a means for critical thinking, the affective domain of all involved was a serendipitous byproduct. Carlo from OLHS beamed, *"I learned about the inquisitive minds of young children...It was really cool seeing them use what they learned and apply it."* It made me think that a variety of authentic audiences can motivate students and provide opportunities for rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Thank you to Angela Boubouheropolos, Kathy Turner, Barbara Kennedy, Cathy Smith, Sheryl Harps-Pearson, Ann Zingraff-Newton and Linda Sidone for their support of our young producers of knowledge!

Second Grade News



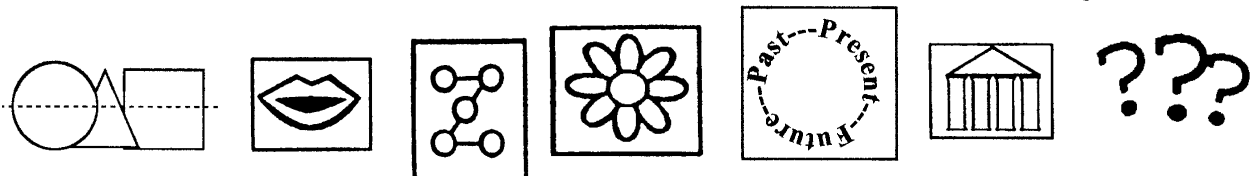
We ended our fabulous Native American study with Socratic seminars comparing all three regions and looking for patterns in Native American systems. As a culmination for our civilizations studies (Ancient Egypt, China, and Native Americans) we worked on a cross curricular study in social studies and language arts. Multiple copies of the book, *Weslandia* helped us to compare the attributes of all civilizations and focus on the concept of economic development. Human, natural, and capital resources, producers, consumers, goods, services, and trade were all incorporated into a series of lessons. The connections made through series of lessons were amazing. Students will begin a class economics project this spring to further apply these concepts.

Mrs. Pearson's mathematicians have worked on many math exemplars and self assessed to find areas on improvement. We focused on communication: explaining how a mathematician arrives at an answer. Charts, tables, graphs, are tools we are using to communicate our answers.



In math and science we focused on collecting, organizing and analyzing data. A pilot of the differentiated gifted unit on magnets was at the heart of this study. Our conceptual lens was systems. How do magnets work as a system? What are the inputs? Outputs? Interactions? We incorporated technology with computer probes that read magnetic energy and graphed the data. Students also created new applications for magnets by force fitting (a creative problem solving tool). Some of the ideas could honestly be marketed! Magnetic fasteners on shoes and magnetic desk strips that avoid losing pencils with an iron based eraser fittings are examples of these great ideas.

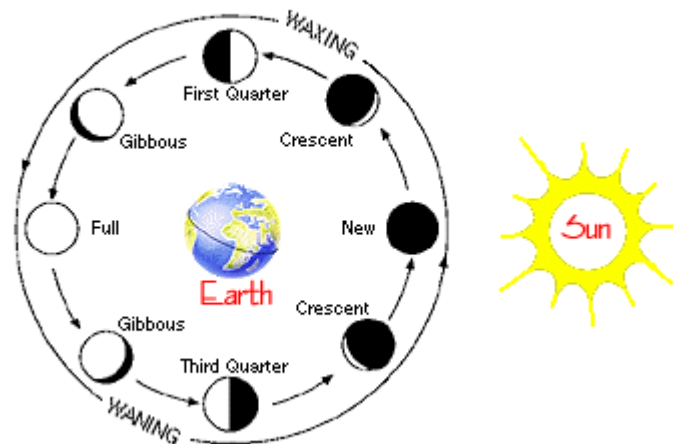
Second graders have become connoisseurs of Kaplan's Model of Depth and Complexity this grading period also. Questions from each of these components have been essential questions for lessons and units of study.



Third Grade News

In Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Murden's rooms, we have continued in the role of environmentalists. On one trip to the Virginia Aquarium, students used flip videos to film what we learned and questions related to our performance task (creating a detailed ecosystem exhibit model.) We used cross curricular themes to integrate into language arts. *The Green Man* story in Jr. Great Books helped us to explore the science themes of cycles. We used those same themes in the role of "field study writer" on our latest trip to Botanical Gardens. It's amazing to see how students have greatly improved in their ability to make connections and observe details (erosion, pollution, adaptations, producers, consumers, etc.). In the M3 Math Pilot, we became experts at collecting, organizing, and analyzing data. Students created surveys and collected data based on the phases of the moon. We learned that very few students and adults knew that the moon in the night sky is the same no matter where one stands on planet Earth. We continue to work on natural cycles as we create interactive cycles books for life cycles, phases of the moon, seasons, day and night, and the tides. Students have applied writing clear directions for our activities as well as incorporating technology to make games, word finds, and crossword puzzles. This performance task has been differentiated by interest, and students are incredibly engaged and motivated as they work to complete their projects. Our technology lovers pull out the laptops and artistic students are using their creative skills to for this task.

The Moon as seen from Earth



In Mrs. Snook's class, we have spent much of the grading period studying classic poetry and its components including simile, metaphor, rhythm, alliteration, form, and emotion. All "cute" poetry was set aside and our teachers became Myra Cohn Livingston, Eloise Greenfield, Karla Kuskin, Gaston Dubois, and Natalia Belding (to name a few). Students are currently working on their on final drafts in collections of interest based poetry. Who knew classic poetry would be so engaging? Trevor announced one week, " *We decided we like poetry so much now, some of us are starting a poetry club that meets each*

Wednesday after school!" When students wrote a reflective writing piece from an ecosystems field trip to False Cape, Ian choose to describe the thunderstorm they outran as a poet would:

*"The Sudden Storm" by Ian Paul
At lunch clouds made rain come
We all got on the bus
And the rain got bad.
Soon it was like a battlefield
And the lightning was the bombs.
Their rain came down like bullets
We ran to the bus that would take us home.*



We also studied biographies and famous explorers this grading period, differentiated by interest and reading level. Students worked in teams to present create the big ideas and contributions for their biographical figure: *freedom, pioneer of science, equality, change, diligence, bravery, and awareness* were some of their concepts shared by teams. After a Socratic seminar, we evaluated which explorers made the biggest impact on the world based on our criteria in an evaluation matrix.

We worked a great deal on scientific design in Mrs. Kampfmüller's class. Students who pre-tested with a good understanding of experiments created their own projects for the spring science fair. They worked in small groups with Mrs. Darnell to clarify all components of experimental design. The results were impressive and varied: ecology, engineering, physics, and human behavior were among the topics.

Mrs. Crain's classes have continued writer's workshop from the National Writing Project. The philosophy of this project is to instill in students the love for writing. Students are encouraged to creatively write about a subject of their choice. Each week students are introduced to a writing trick that they can use to improve their stories. Please look for our parent coming soon with details of our writing celebration. All parents are invited! Hope to see you there.

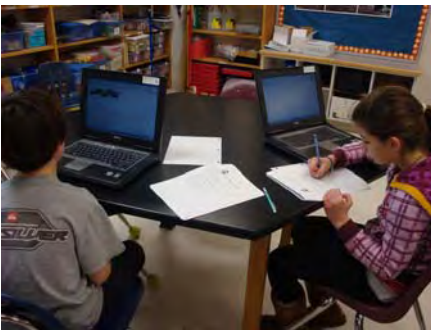
The T.V. By: Beth Hill

Christian looked through the translucent screen. It was 12:00 midnight, the moon was out, but the thick clouds were covering it. Lightning boomed the black T.V. turned on. Christian looked at the screen. The image was clear; a girl appeared on the screen. It looked like the girl was from Mrs. Crain's class! Christian lifted his arm and stuck it in the TV. The rumor about the midnight channel was true! He stuck his head through. Suddenly, something pushed him in! The room was dark and lonely. "So, you've come" a hushed voice said.

In Mrs. Torres' science class, students took the preassessment for their plant unit. Students took on the role of a botanist and participated in a three-four week science experiment based on student interest. Students also completed their Fowler Post-test assessment. They analyzed their pre/post results and discussed improvements that they would like to make for the last quarter of school.



For the past couple of weeks, in Mrs. Carolino's class, students our participated in a poetry unit. They wrapped this unit up by focusing on African and Hispanic poetry from the William and Mary unit, Literary Reflections. Students studied the life of Langston Hughes and how his life impacted his poetry. Groups worked together to dissect his poem, "Dreams Deferred" and presented a literature web to the class. Students also analyzed the poem, "Boarder Towns" written by Roberto Duran.



4th graders in the Math and Science Academy have been diving into the investigation of Ecosystems. The students assumed the role of "Ecologist" from the very beginning. With newly acquired skills, language, and tools associated with the study of life, students were able to break apart the components of an ecosystem and look at the relationship between communities, populations, and habitats. Students used the tools of an Ecologist to dissect Barn Owl pellets in the science lab. This was an exciting hands-on activity that required scientific knowledge of predator versus prey interactions, as well as the flow of energy

within a food chain. Students have been researching adaptations of animals as well and have been able to reflect on survival needs. The focus of the Ecosystem unit has been for students to take on the role of a scientist in order to understand the interactions that occur in an environment.

Written by:
Sarah Combiths, Student Teacher



Sensory Images
Lesson



Fifth Grade News

In Mrs. Ramirez's cluster class, students ended their series of lessons on the Declaration of Independence. They worked in small groups to complete a vocabulary web which included the following information: synonyms, antonyms, definition, origin, word family, example, and stem. Students shared out their web with their classmates. While groups shared their information, their peers recorded additional information on their personal copy of the document. Students completed an exit ticket explaining how the document has impacted how they live today. In science, students studied the rock cycle. Based on readiness groups from the unit pre-assessment, students created a clay animation depicting a story of how the rock changes throughout its cycle. Students used digital cameras, Movie Maker, and audacity to complete this project.

The topics for the stations were led by the students of room 28 and ranged from food production and packaging to growing and transporting food. Jacob Benner, a student in Mrs. Ramirez's class, had no problems discussing the complications he and his group members ran into during the first of three teaching sessions. "The difficult thing was keeping up with the students. It was difficult because most of the kids were smart. We had to deal with them by being the boss." Throughout each teaching session, the students of room 28 seemed to become more relaxed and in control of what they were doing. When asking Tatiana Durant, another teaching participant, what she had learned about both her station and teaching, she responded, "Some things I learned at my station (the changing food station) was that the more natural the food the better it is for us and the environment. That we as people shouldn't buy the unhealthy foods because some of the things we buy, the ingredients in them kill the Earth. Such as the processing most foods go through. The purpose of the stations was to teach the different classes to be more earth friendly and to teach them about Earth Day." To sum up the day the way the students of Mrs. Ramirez's class would, "Remember what is good for us, is good for the farmers, and is good for our planet."

~Written by: Miss Bucholz, Student Teacher



This quarter our Math and Science Academy students participated in Reader’s Theater. The plays were chosen based on fifth grade standards of learning objectives. Students were grouped by interest according to the play and role they were assigned. Scripts were provided for students to practice at home. In addition, students made their scenery and costumes. They brought in props for the day of the performance. Students wrote a follow-up letter responding to their experience.

“Performing in front of the class raised my confidence. Reading the compliments made me feel good. It was fun to analyze the other plays.” ~ Caroline

“I enjoyed Reader’s Theater a lot. I learned that they actually made tea, using things they found. I had thought that they did without. I also learned some about the Oregon Trail, and the efforts to conserve it, the Great Depression, and some more about the Constitution.” ~ Morganne

“I think this was a great experience! It teaches you how to work as a team and act. Meanwhile, you learn snippets of history. Also, it teaches you to be creative and express yourself.” ~Tanner



In science, students continue to monitor the growth of sea turtles at the Virginia Aquarium. Each trip includes charting the length of the turtles, weight, and width. Students analyze the data they have charted by noting progress each turtle has made in each category. In addition to measuring the turtles, students meet in small groups to identify different types of turtles (Leatherback, Green, Hawksbill, Kemps Ridley, and Loggerhead), what each turtle eats, and how humans impact their life and death.

