

Small's Schools Specials in Review February, 2009

LIBRARY NEWS

In March we will be finishing up reading the 10 "Chickadee" books and voting for our favorite. We will send the results to Augusta where a state winner will be determined. (The three books we have left to read are about a female sushi chef, a butterfly and the salt marsh. I will be bringing in my sushi-making equipment, my butterfly collection and the molted shell of a horseshoe crab to complement these books.) We will also be enjoying our new carpet and bean bag chairs in the "reading nook." These were purchased with book fair profits. Our book displays this month include our new dance books (purchased with a PTA grant) to go with our enrichment theme, books about Ireland or Irish folk tales.



music

The fourth and fifth grades are currently playing the handbells. This is new to the fourth graders and they are very excited about making music in a new way. The classes will give a concert at the end of the unit in April.

The third grade has been very involved in a composition unit. The students have been working in small groups and have each chosen a fable by Aesop. Their project has been to compose music for an introduction, background music or sound effects during their narrated story and music for the ending. When all of the groups are ready they will perform their stories for each other.

The second grade is starting to rehearse the musical "Welcome to the Jungle". It is based on the story of the "Lion and the Mouse" and the message is about friendship and community. The performance will be in April if it ever stops snowing on our rehearsal day (Monday).

The first grade and kindergarten continue to have many different experiences during their music class period. Some examples are: singing, playing off instruments, moving with colored scarves to music, bouncing balls to music, playing circle



COMPUTER

Children in grades K-5 all receive technology instruction in the computer lab with Mr. Thurlow and their classroom teacher. Grades K-3 have one 45-minute session two out of three weeks while grades 4 and 5 have weekly sessions. Some classes also use "open lab" time for additional access to our computers to work on projects or enrichment activities.

The technology curriculum is integrated and developmental. Teachers and the computer specialist work collaboratively in a team-teaching model to integrate technology skills with the classroom curriculum. Younger children use web-based activities and do some basic projects with software while older students learn basic research skills followed by creating multimedia projects designed to demonstrate new skills and knowledge of the subject area they are studying. Some examples of this year's curriculum K- 2 are outlined on back.



Our Model and a Few Words on Safety and Ethics of Computer Usage

In South Portland, we present with an **Integrated Model for Technology Education**. Along with the skills and the application of technology to learning, we also teach and model responsible and ethical practices very early. Children learn what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. They learn how to use citations in their work. They learn about safe use of the Internet and the important rules necessary for their protection. And they hopefully develop an appreciation of the computer and Internet as learning tools, not just entertainment devices. Families can support this mission by always supervising children online, monitoring everything they do, encouraging learning activities (which multimedia sites makes very entertaining), and – most importantly, limiting "screen time" to reasonable amounts. A wonderful guideline is to expect children to be physically active in sports, chores, exercise or just active play for an equal amount of time they use a computer or TV. Also, you can teach your child how commercialism is as much a part of the Internet as it is in print and television, and how companies try to get us to buy their products by using all sorts of methods. When kids understand what this is all about, they can learn to ignore the commercialism and enjoy the great content that many sites offer.

Finally, just as you monitor what your children watch on TV, the movies they go to, the books they read, etc., selecting websites you know are safe - and closely supervising them online is the only way to ensure they will be safe. Filters and parental controls have their technological limitations. The only reliable filter is an informed parent, teacher or other caregiver who guides their use. If you would like more information about online safety or the technology curriculum at our school, please don't hesitate to contact John Thurlow @ thurlojo@spsd.org.

Come check out Fifth Grade Band

They are currently rehearsing for the annual All-City Concert. Their début will be **May 27, 2009** at the South Portland Auditorium.



ART



These are the activities the kids are doing these days---

K's – Learning about the Color Wheel. Creating collages after making a wheel and cutting it apart.

1st - Finishing Chinese Paper Lanterns and beginning a Gustave Klimt project.

2nd - Working on clay pinch pot-based animal sculptures.

3rd - Trying out a drawing contest for the "Arthur" series. Marc Brown, the creator wants to add a new character with a unique ability, character trait or disability; and beginning clay coil pots.

4th - Working on 3-D clay storyteller figurines based on the sculptures of Helen Cordero.

5th - Made Victorian "Cobweb" Valentines and will be starting 3-D clay gargoyle sculptures.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In March, students will be learning how to jump rope. All students will learn different ways to jump. They will also learn how to swing a long jump rope. Students will use single ropes and the long jump rope. I am also working with grades 3-5 on appropriate half-court basketball play at recess.



A FEW EXAMPLES OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATED INTO CLASSROOM LEARNING, K-2

Kindergarten: In the fall children learn how to access the Internet and navigate to carefully selected web sites which teach and reinforce literacy skills (such as www.starfall.com). We use multimedia sites to promote mouse dragging and clicking skills while problem solving or playing fun and creative games. Kindergarten kids also create "digital paintings" by learning to manipulate software tools, begin rudimentary typing with a word processor and create their first graphics with posters made with PowerPoint or Publisher (these are the actual programs in the Microsoft Office Suite). We also use math software which is part of the Investigations program adopted by the district. One example is "Shapes," which is a computer program of virtual pattern blocks which students manipulate to create elaborate designs or solve complicated puzzles. Some curriculum integration also begins at this level, such as the unit on China Mrs. Thompson's class has been doing collaboratively with Mrs. Grant's first grade. Finally, the kids begin to learn how to log on to the computer network with a user name and password.

First Grade: We build on basic skills introduced in Kindergarten in grade one but their prior experience provides opportunities for more elaborate projects and many new skills. By first grade, students can independently log on to the network, navigate a web browser to select from websites that are developmentally appropriate, and can do basic typing and graphic design. They use Publisher and PowerPoint to create digital posters (such as a holiday cards or posters of China), and their digital paintings now take on a realistic form such as the beautiful pictures of a farm scene during the fall. Some classes have also been introduced to mapping technology such as Google Earth, an incredible free software program which even six year-olds can manipulate to travel the globe in three dimensions and view satellite images from their neighborhood to the Eiffel Tower. For a child who recently moved away, one class created a bound "farewell book" with each child contributing a personal page of images and text complete with their school photo. We also introduce some multimedia math websites for children to practice math facts and problem-solving in an engaging way. Math and technology are integrated when students create "symmetry posters" using a variety of fairly complex shapes and textures.

Second Grade: At this grade, more integration of technology and the regular curriculum occurs. For example, students study insects in the fall, and once they have knowledge of anatomy, habitat and behavior, their digital product is a detailed digital drawing of an insect of their own invention. These must be realistic but original, and they even label their insect's parts and invent a name for it. We also begin informal keyboarding with online keyboard sites so students begin to learn proper finger positioning and to promote more fluent typing. While most projects do not involve using large amounts of text, we do a unit on letter writing. Desktop publishing includes creating more elaborate designs with the Microsoft Office programs which includes "harvesting" images from the Internet, using clip art, word art and shapes to create, for example, holiday cards. Some students used Google Earth for scavenger hunts of landmarks, played a map game from National Geographic, typed poems they had written using Microsoft Word, and one teacher is beginning to introduce web-based research on animals.

Updates were provided by the following specialists, emails are included if you would like to contact them or provide feedback:

Anne Mason—Librarian
John Furman—Band
John Thurlow—Technology Teacher
Rosemary Osann—Music
Phil Conley—Physical education
Leslie DeGeorge—Art

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