

# **SALEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## **GIFTED PROGRAM NEWSLETTER**

**Nancy Chandler, Gifted Resource Teacher**

**NOVEMBER 2008**



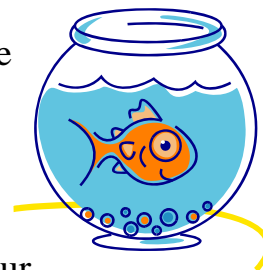
### **Greetings!**

I cannot believe we have just completed our first grading period. The cluster classrooms have been busy from day one! I am happy with what we have accomplished and am looking forward to what is before us. Our cluster teachers are the same as last year, which helps to make this program even more successful.

The resource cluster model is an arrangement in which a group of identified gifted students are assigned to a classroom with a cluster teacher. She collaborates with the gifted resource teacher to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction. In addition to the classroom teacher, the gifted resource teacher works with these children at least three times per week. The gifted resource teacher also gives continuous training and support to the cluster teacher throughout the year.

### **SECOND GRADE**

The children in Mrs. Inge's class learned at the very beginning of the year that "Systems" is the theme of our focus for the year. So that the children can understand this concept, I used a fishbowl as an example of a system. We talked about the inputs, outputs, interactions, boundaries, and the elements of a system based on this fishbowl example. As a surprise I set up a real fishbowl with four fish. Each week one child from Mrs. Inge's class has the job of feeding the fish and changing the water. Believe it not, the fish are thriving in their new home. After studying Egypt, we discussed why Ancient Egypt is a system on a larger scale. We will do the same thing for China in the near future.



Math Exemplars, a higher level of word problems, will be used throughout the year. The children must solve problems using pictures, graphs, charts, and math equations. They must then write a paragraph explaining how they solved each problem. Each

child gets to grade themselves using a student rubric. Finally, I grade them using a rubric. They are learning what it means to be a novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert. Our objective is to eventually become experts when we do these problems.

Junior Great Books are introduced in second grade. This program of higher literacy will give the students many opportunities to interact with thought provoking questions and answers. With each story we read, write, and develop critical thinking skills. A few of the stories we have read so far are “The Happy Lion” and “How the Camel Got His Hump”. Please ask your child about the French words they learned in “The Happy Lion”.

In the beginning of second grade we learned what being a scientist is all about by reading the book *Archibald Frisby*. From the story they learned that science is really a lot of fun! While studying the three states of matter, a group of students got to perform an experiment to see what happens when different solids (salt, sugar flour, etc.) are placed in a liquid (water). First they had to develop a hypothesis as to whether the solids would dissolve or not dissolve. We discussed what their independent variable was, and then they got to write up their conclusion. They were able to see that science can be really fun!

## **THIRD GRADE**

Children in Mrs. Raftery’s third grade class started the year with a fun “get-to-know-you” activity. Each child was given a brown bag and a list of questions to help define who they are. They identified items and placed them in their bag that would tend to address these different questions. For example, someone who wanted to become an airline pilot might put a small model airplane in their bag. Mrs. Raftery and I did our own bag so the children could get to know us better. What fun we all had learning about each other – our various likes and dislikes.

Third graders became home improvement experts by taking an old dilapidated house and deciding what needed to be fixed on it. They worked in teams and decided on five things they felt should be fixed. These things ranged from replacing windows to putting on a new roof. Since they had just completed studying simple machines, the students then had to decide what tools should be used and how each problem should be fixed. In some cases more than one simple machine was used. Their findings were presented to the class. So in the future, if you need some renovations done to your home, don’t ask commercial professionals, ask your child.

Weekly Mrs. Raftery's class completes a lesson from Challenge Math. This is a math program for highly motivated students. This program includes novel situations, games, detective stories, and puzzles. The children are introduced to the Papy Minicomputer boards which are an integral part of this program. You child can tell you all about the Papy Minicomputers!

What fun we had doing Reader's Theater. This reading program motivates the students to practice fluency, and at the same time use scripts to practice their part in a play. We performed "Teaming With Mr. Cool" for the other third grade classes. The students do not memorize their parts and costumes are minimal. The students convey their roles by using only their voices. Fun was had by all!

*Science Court* is a software program that was used when we studied simple machines. A humorous courtroom drama provided the setting for the activities. The students, working in cooperative teams, acted as courtside commentators. At various breaks in the trial, Jen (the courtroom correspondent), led the students through a review of the facts, hands-on-activities, and a prediction about what would happen next. At the end of the trial, the students got to predict how the jury would vote. *Science Court* is fun, funny, and a great learning experience.

## **FOURTH GRADE**

Mrs. Wylie's class became meteorologists using their knowledge to complete a RAFTing activity on weather. We differentiated by interest allowing the children to pick the activity that interested them. Small groups were formed, and team work was necessary. As an example, one of the activities was making a weather ABC book to give to the second graders. Each letter had to have a weather word and a picture to represent that letter. Some of the letters were difficult to do, but the task was completed, nonetheless. This book will be presented to Mrs. Inge's second grade class when they study weather.

A Junior Great Book story *Thank You, Ma'am*, written by Langston Hughes, offered a lively discussion about a young boy who made a bad decision and was not let off the hook so easily. As the story unfolded, students identified similarities between the young boy and another character who was an older woman. At the end of this story there was much discussion about the controversial ending.

Technology is a very important part of our gifted program. Laptops are used often for research and other activities. While studying the phases of the moon, we took a virtual trip to the Moon for each child's birthday. We visited Virtual Reality Moon Phase Pictures Web site, a virtual time machine that enables you to time-travel to see how the Moon would have appear for almost any date in the past, present, and future. Each child had to sketch what the Moon looked like on the day they were born and how it appeared every three days for the next 30 days. In each case they were able to see a pattern forming.

## **FIFTH GRADE**

### **Jamestown Presidential Election**

**By Michael**

At the same time that our presidential election was taking place, so was the presidential election for Jamestown taking place in Mrs. Arnold's class. We held a mock election between Pocahontas and Captain John Smith. The class was divided into two groups. Each group had to gather information about their person - Pocahontas and John Smith, create a speech, and finally decide on a person to present the speech. John Smith was one of the first leaders of Jamestown. He was not well mannered, but he believed in dividing the work up among the people. Pocahontas was Chief Powhatan's daughter and had little experience as a leader. She was well liked and would keep working until the job was done.

The speeches were video taped and presented to the class. Voting day was intense. The two teams held their breath as the last votes were counted. We waited for the results! The new president was Pocahontas! Congratulations Pocahontas!

### **Math Exemplars**

**By Matthew**

Do you want to hear about some of the sensational things we have done with Mrs. Chandler? I know you do! Well, I am going to tell you about the Math Exemplars we do.

The first awesome exemplar we did was called “Job Hunting”. We had three jobs to choose from, and we had to pick the best one. The jobs were babysitting, delivery route, and work for the Green Mountain Bank. We had to show all the data and give mathematical reasons why you were choosing one job over the other two jobs. For babysitting you work two hours per day on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It pays \$4.50 per hour. For the delivery route job, you must deliver 100 papers each day after school Monday through Friday. It should take 45 minutes per day using a bike and one hour and 15 minutes if you walk. It pays \$0.05 per paper. The final job was working for the bank. It is almost like a community service but you are getting paid. You work five hours per week and you get \$3.00 per hour. You also get a \$10.00 bonus for overtime. Those are the three jobs and the information that we were given.

Another fantastic exemplar we did was called “Who Owns the Most Land”, and whose land is more valuable? Those are just two of the magnificent exemplars we did with Mrs. Chandler.

## **Hands on Equations**

### **By Donny**

Hello Rams! I’m going to talk about “Hands On Equations”. This is a “hands on” method of learning algebra. It is very easy if you pay attention. We use pawns (the blue pawn equals “**x**” and white pawn equals “**⌘**”), number cubes, and a picture of a balance scale. We learn that both sides of the scale must be equal for the problem to be correct. After we find the value of “**x**” or “**⌘**”, we then must check our answer. We learned about legal moves which I call opportunities to make the problem easier to solve. We are able to solve problems like-  $2x+x+x+2=2x+10$ . We will definitely be ready for middle school!