



RICHMOND
FRIENDS SCHOOL

School News!

Feb
2011

A good place to grow: —academics, self-discovery, and social development

RFS Faculty

Interim School Coordinator

Nicole Blair

PreK-K Teacher

Marianne Cope

1-2 Teacher

Laura Josephson

3-6 Teacher

John Sheets

Extended Care/Lunch

Kay Maurer

Office Manager

Chris Fretz

Bookkeeper

Melissa Sheets

School Coordinator: Nicole

I cannot believe that January is already over. I often think of January as the worst of winter...cold, lonely, inside, people hunkering down and staying to themselves. But as I witnessed from my new role in Marcie's position, this January was different. I want to share a few of these observations with you.

My first week began with a call from Scott Trochelman of "The World Around Us" in Eaton. He is a nature enthusiast and an avid snake and reptile lover. He said he heard of our snake-napping, and he wanted to donate one of his snakes to our school. He then proceeded to get donations for a tank, glass for the tank (including a lock!), and supplies for the snake. His motivation was from his desire to see the joy this snake brought to our kids. And it did! I was there last Friday when he delivered Snowflake to the PreK-K class. It was a special moment, and the students were elated for their new pet. Personally, I was touched by Scott's generosity and enthusiasm.

Remember those snowy days in mid-January, where the snow did not begin until after school started for the day? One of those days, John's class shoveled the parking lot and sidewalk for afternoon pickup (Thank you, John's class!). On another late snowy day, I walked outside only to see a parent (thank you, John Passmore!) shoveling a path for pick-up time. I received a call at the beginning of January from another parent (thanks, Shellie Madill!) saying that in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, her company was donating school supplies to local schools, and she wanted to know if there was anything in particular our school needed. Then there were the countless friendly greetings I received at drop-off, during school, and at pick-up from parents, caregivers, and our students. Lastly, the teachers and staff have been hugely patient (as I learn the ropes of this position) and kind to me. The warmth and generosity I have felt from this community during my first month has been overwhelming. I am in deep gratitude to everyone.

Moving on to February...it's READATHON month!! Thanks to our Parent's Committee for their efforts in planning and to all who participated in our

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School Calendar

February 21: Presidents Day; Bring a Friend to School Day

February 25: Last School Day of Readathon! Pancakes and Pajamas

March 3: Half Day; Parent Teacher Conferences

March 4: No School; Parent Teacher Conferences

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informative and fun Kick-off dinner. We have many Readathon related events planned this month, so please continue to check your emails and our message boards for reminders of events and sign-ups for field trip drivers, etc. We greatly appreciate all of the extra parental involvement during this month. The students seem excited and we hope that translates to a successful Readathon. Thank you in advance for all of your efforts!

Also, please note that Bring a Friend to School Day is February 21. Please let your teachers know if you will be bringing a friend. PreK-K guests are invited to stay until 11:30am, while older guests may stay until 3pm.

Here's to a reading-frenzy-February!

Pre-K/K: Marianne

Coming back from the hot summer Kalahari Desert in Africa, to the North American cold winter in Indiana is quite a transition! It was great to return and see the class thriving and eager to share all that they had been doing while I was gone. Annelies, Michele, and Emily did a wonderful job keeping everyone engaged and moving forward with learning and the various routines of the classroom. I loved the journal they wrote to me keeping me informed of what they were doing and I finally got through all the letters they posted in my mailbox. They of course wanted to each read and show me their own work – what an impressive array of writing and drawing. I feel proud of them and recognize how engaged they were while I was away. Annelies reported that it was a real privilege to work with your



Scott Trochelman, the owner of The World Around Us, teaches the PreK/K students about the lives of snakes.

children and said she felt honored to have the opportunity to be a part of this community. I appreciate the care and thoughtfulness she put into her substituting duties. Everyone seems to be thriving.

In my first week back we quickly immersed ourselves in counting activities focused around 100 day. We sang 100-day songs, counted and ate 100-day snack, read 100-day books and had multiple opportunities to count 10 groups of 10 objects to make 100. At the same time some children are learning to write to 100 and all of us are working on tallying. Having the week to celebrate helped. Thanks for your support from home with snack and the various collections.

I know you have heard about the little stuffed animal, Jerry Giraffe that returned home with me from Africa. He and I have had lots of fun telling stories of my adventures on Safari. The children are eager to hear the stories and have asked many good questions. We are continuing to read stories about Africa. Ask your child about the story of "The Greedy Zebra" and how the animals got their cloaks. We had fun creating our own cloaks for various African animals – come in and check them out. We also started reading one of the

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Magic Tree House chapter books after our lunch recess. It's called "Lions at Lunch Time" a story that takes place on the African Plains. The kids love it! I have a feeling this will lead us to reading a few more of the books in this series.

We were in for a VERY BIG event last Friday when Scott Trochelman, the owner of The World Around Us, arrived with a donation for our classroom. In came a huge cage and an albino corn snake named Snowflake. Scott calls himself a nature activist and with his private collection of snakes he travels around offering educational programs on snakes. To our surprise he had heard about our missing corn snakes and wanted very much for us to have another snake. In addition to donating one of his own snakes, he raised funds from local people and businesses to buy the cage and some other supplies. The students gravitated right away to Snowflake who is gentle and easy to handle. In the weeks ahead we will be thinking of ways we can show our appreciation for this thoughtful gift. We have much to be thankful for!

Readathon- read-read read! Please remember that we will be tallying daily all the reading we do in class and we will be giving this total to you to add to your child's list when the month is over. We look forward to this month of reading focus.

African Animal Project- everyone will be choosing an animal to research – information will be coming out soon.

Art is Africa Exhibit- field trip to the Richmond Art Museum Friday, Feb. 4, 12:40 – 2:00pm

Valentines' Day – we love to celebrate this and will be making some valentines at school for each other but we welcome valentines to



Johannah, Hannah, and Maggie got dressed up as their favorite book character as part of the Readathon festivities!

come from home as well. We will have a little party on the 14th.

Bring a Friend to School Day Feb. 21 - Please help your child understand that everyone will not be bringing a friend this day. It is only those families that think they know a friend that might be interested in coming to our school. If your child will be bringing a friend this day, please let me know in advance. Thank you.



*January & February
Birthdays*

Mary ~ Jan 25th

1-2: Laura

We have done many things across the curriculum during January, but I thought I'd focus on language for this newsletter.

During the month of January, we have been learning prefixes. So far we have learned sub, pre, inter, uni, bi, tri, in, auto, and micro. The students have been learning the meaning of the prefix, creating a signal to show the meaning of the prefix, and generating a list of words that contain each prefix before choosing one as our associated word. For example, for the prefix "sub," the students point down like they are diving "under" and their chosen word is submarine. Each day we choose a new prefix and review those we have already learned. The students are enjoying this and they get excited when they encounter words with prefixes they know when they are reading.



Ben reads to his school pen pals, Jack and Nick, as part of the school Readathon activities

We are just beginning to also learn about suffixes. The students are naturally beginning to head there, as they are exploring and dissecting words during their silent and partner reading. I introduced one helpful spelling trick regarding -able and -ible words. It's often hard to know which suffix to use if it's not a word you already know how to spell. So, here's a good trick: If the letters preceding it create a complete word, the suffix is likely to be -able. If not, it'll likely be -ible. It works. Try it!

We read a book called Ron's Big Mission together as a class. It is the story of Ron McNair, who was an astronaut. What you might not know is that he was a hero all the way back in 1959 when he was just 9 years old. We read about what he did at age 9, and then wrote letters to the governor of his home state at that time, to let him know what we think. It was the first "persuasive letter" we have written this year, challenging the students to consider the audience of their writing. Ask your child what it was that young Ron did.

We have been learning about superstitions. We have found a lot of them, and we are enjoyed the silliness of some of them. Did you know that there is an old superstition that if you see an ambulance, you should pinch your nose and hold your breath until you see a brown or a black dog to avoid bad luck? And, be honest, would it bother you if you saw someone open an umbrella indoors? If you have any superstitions you'd like to share with us, please do!

I have just finished reading Sideways Stories at Wayside School aloud to the class. I read aloud after lunch each day for about half an hour. Usually the students can just listen or draw freely as I read. For this book, we did something a little different. There are 30 chapters, each named for a different character. So, before we started to read, the students each received a notebook and wrote each chapter's title, and leaving several pages to write about that character. So, I read a chapter and the students draw and write about what they hear about that character. Most days I read two chapters. Other characters are mentioned in each chapter as

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part of the story, so the students often flip around to various chapters to write and draw about things. In addition, we created a My Opinion section at the back of the notebook where the students may write some opinions they have about the characters and their actions.

Spelling continues to go well. In fact, this past week everyone got all their words right. We are usually close, but this time it happened. Very exciting! We celebrated with lollipops. Shhh.

The students wrote individual books during January. They created small books of about 20 pages. Each pair of pages (picture the book opened) had a drawing on the left side and writing on the right side. They worked hard on these, creating wonderful stories. Their challenge for this writing assignment was to write a story for which the title gives a hint of what is to come, but for their writing to have a gradual build up to what the title suggests, rather than leaping right into the main action of the story. They did quite well with this. The stories are on display in the hallway and in the classroom. Please feel free to read them.

The students, and I, are continuing to do silent reading at the end of each day. What a wonderful, peaceful way to end our days together.

Coming up in February...The students will be writing poems and starting a project on states of the United States.

READATHON ... READATHON ...
READATHON ... READATHON ...
READATHON...



Jordan reads out loud to Mary during the all-school pen pal reading time that is one of this month's Readathon events.

3-6: John

The upstairs class is very excited for the start of the Read-a-thon. This is an opportunity for the students to put into practice some work on stewardship, the last of the "SPICES" testimonials that act as a social guide for the school. The students can see what it feels like to help take care of the school by raising money through their own work. As an additional benefit, the Read-a-thon also serves as a motivation for reading as much as possible throughout the month of February. As a guide for parents, I have talked with the students and set up a unit goal of their grade level times 100. That means a third grader should have about 300 units of reading interactions by the end of the month. This can be difficult to achieve, but is made easier with a bit of creativity. If you listen to a book on tape or CD back and forth to school then you instantly have a couple of units per day. If students get together and read to or with each other, then everyone gets units. If a parent reads to several students then everyone gets units. If you watch a Japanese film with subtitles, then you get units. The bottom line is to try and create as many reading interactions as you can. The good thing is that we will be keeping track of units that are

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earned in school, and I anticipate that every student will generate about 150 units in school by the end of the month. A final part of the Read-a-thon is to get as many people as possible to sponsor each student. It isn't our intention to depend on parents to be their child's only sponsor. Think of communities outside of the school, like church members, social groups (scouts, clubs, etc.), sports teams, extended family members, family friends, close neighbors, etc. The more sponsors that you can find, the more good that each student will see their work accomplish. Finally, keep your eyes open for the special activities that have been organized for the read-a-thon, including special guests and field trips. Please ask me if you have any questions.

The class is working on energy projects. We did some initial work with learning about different energy types and how they are used. Each student then chose, or was assigned, an energy topic. All students should use the beginning of the month to take notes from library books, web sites, and videos. They will then write a report, in their own words, with an included bibliography to show where their knowledge came from. Each student will also be required to create a model or experiment to show some aspect of their topic. Some work will be done in class, but some work will undoubtedly also be done at home. Ask your child if they need any assistance, but try to refrain from doing the work for them. It is important for them to do as much as possible on their own, even if they make mistakes, since that is the best way to learn.

Additionally, the class continues to work on daily vocabulary, weekly spelling, daily math assignments, and weekly writing assignments which help to expand their knowledge base and help form our daily schedule of activities.

Have a fun, reading filled month!

Music: Keith

January music time had all classes preparing for the Read-a-thon kick off performance. We began the month by learning an adapted Danish folk dance called "Seven Jumps" which turned out to be great fun and eventually included on our Jan 25th performance. Laura's class spent some time on a song called "All Day Long" and John's class continued reading practice on music notation in preparation for a piece we will begin learning in February.

Thanks to everyone who donated recycled containers and tubes. With the collected materials we outfitted ourselves with things that could CLANK, SCRAPE, BEAT, SHAKE, and TOOT. We then matched our sounds to echo/response to a song by Dave Holland called "I Can Play the Drums." After some arrangement alterations and additions we learned the piece while matching our recycled instruments sounds with the directions/patterns of the song. In the process, we discovered three famous musicians Ringo Starr, Sheila E., and Louis Armstrong (Satchmo).

At the end of each music time I offer up the "Joke of the Day." Here is last month's favorite. *What did the little flower say to the big flower?..... What's up Bud?*

Spanish: Lindsey

The month of January was one of counting in Spanish class. With the help of Mario (a stuffed bear) and several sombreros, each class was able to do some math problems in Spanish. In the pre-k/K class, we played a few counting games. In the lower elementary class, we created our own math problems using numbers in Spanish. In the upper elementary class we did the same and in addition we worked with the question, "Cuantos anos tienes?" (How old are you). Since we counted all the way to one hundred, we also asked the questions, "Cuantos anos tiene tu mama/papa?" (How old is your mom/dad?) and "Cuantos anos tiene tu abuela/abuelo?" (How old is your grandma/grandpa?) We began a unit on corn as well that will continue with more on food for the month of February.