



NEWS FOR THE WEEK OF
February 8, 2010

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News and Notes

About Cross Country Skiing This Winter

The children are enjoying the skiing on Royalston common on Fridays. Here are some of the great things that are happening:

1. First of all, the children learn to master a skill and take on a physical challenge. This builds confidence, which can be called upon for future skill learning and challenges.
2. The children work as a group. This strengthens reading-buddy connections, and connections between older and younger children. It builds school community.
3. The older children have grown into being mentors and coaches for the younger children. It is lovely to watch an older child encourage a younger child, and cheer him on.
4. The older children push themselves physically- they are encouraged to do "their course best", which for some children is 4 circles around the field, and for others, is 6. They learn to face challenges and not back down. It is especially rewarding to watch children who are normally more sedentary and cautious, work at skiing. They bloom on the ski track.
5. And of course, it is great aerobic activity. Children get into a rhythm with the breathing and the kick and glide, and after a few circuits of the field, coats pile up by the 'well', as the children warm up. Cries of disappointment often greet the sound of the whistle calling the children to stop and walk back to school, "Can I go around just one more time?"

Our next challenging physical activity will be swimming at the YMCA, which begins on Fridays in March. Please sign and return the attached swimming permission slip.

Thank You Parents, seen and unseen, for pitching in at the Open House. We had a great crowd of visitors. The school was welcoming, warm, and vibrant.

Feedback on Literacy Night from a Parent

What impressed me most about the Literacy Night was the continuity of the reading and writing program with its natural progression from one grade to the next while still being flexible enough for a new student to seamlessly enter at any grade and benefit. At the end of the evening, I walked out inspired. *Fanny Elouz*

MUSIC UPDATE

Jocelyn is offering private recorder lessons at the school on next Monday, February 15th from 3 to 5 p.m. This is a great opportunity for students who need extra help with recorder, or would like more challenging material to work on. Email Rise to schedule lessons.

After vacation, students in the 4th-6th class will learn about guitars, and we would love to borrow any acoustic guitars that parents and friends are willing to lend to us for a few weeks. We hope to collect at least 7 guitars, so that each student can have their own guitar to try during recorder group. Talk to Jocelyn if you can lend a guitar.

Preschool

This week the preschool will decorate their Valentine's mail box and make cards to mail home. We will walk to the Royalston Post office of Thursday to mail them – an adventure itself. On Friday the children are invited to bring valentines to school to "mail" to their friends. The class will be learning these songs: *I'm Going to Wrap Myself in Paper*, *Love Grows One by One*, *Love is Something if You Give it Away*. Our story this week is *Snow White and Rose Red*, about two sisters who love each other very much. This story has a grumpy troll and a bear who turns into a prince. Last week Leanne and Kim made

a 'volcano' out of play dough, and placed it in a tray with dinosaurs surrounding it. On Wednesday and Thursday, Kim and Leanne used baking soda and vinegar to help the volcano 'erupt.' The children gathered to watch and were very attentive. The excitement in the room was palpable and the children squealed with delight as the volcano overflowed. The colors of the lava flow ranged from orange to purple. Lots of discussion followed about dinosaurs and volcanoes. Since this is our last week before February vacation, a bag will go home on Friday with your child's art work.

| February 2010 | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|--|--|
| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
| 8 8:45 All School Sing 2nd-3rd Lunch & Wolf visit field trip | 9 8:45 Book Buddies Music Classes 2nd-6th knitting | 10 Spanish | 11 8:40-9:10 K-1 Theme Share Art classes | 12 Yoga Last 1st-6th cross country skiing Contracts due for reenrollment |
| 15 Presidents Day | <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">Vacation Week</div> | | | |

Kindergarten—1st Grade

We complete our *Birds* theme this week with the Native American story *Gluscbi and the Wind Eagle*, a tale about where the wind comes from and why. Last week we worked on writing stories based on the book *Owl Moon*. We retold the story, then we wrote a class story titled *Eagle Mountain*. The class then set to work on their own stories about an adventure to find a bird. The class produced great ideas and titles including *Cardinal Mountain*, *Parrot Forest* and *Blue Jay Way*. Last week in art, the children glazed their clay ducklings and owls. When the ducklings were completed, feathers were attached and they were given a small pond made from a paper plate and blue tissue paper to swim in. The class had a lot of fun playing with their creations which will also be used for a story writing activity this week.

In Science last week the class worked on a bird beak activity involving trying to pick up objects with different tools. There were eight workstations to try including using chopsticks to pick up rubbers worms, using nutcrackers to open nuts, and using tweezers to pull apart pine cones, all activities various birds are expert at.

This Thursday morning, we are having a theme share in the classroom to celebrate the work the children have produced on birds.

2nd - 3rd Grade

Last week we heard the story *Wolves and Coyotes*, a Native American legend about how a man learned from wolves and coyotes how to help and heal his people, becoming the first healer. This week we will finish up our wolf study with some stories about wolves and we will write a poem about our own spirit animals using last week's poem of the week *I am a Wolf* as inspiration.

The children have become quite the detectives over the past few weeks. They have developed a good eye for discovering clues and have enjoyed trying to solve the mysteries before they are solved in the story—they get very excited when they figure it out before they read the solution. They have enjoyed partner reading and have had some interesting discussions about the stories they are reading.

Our rebus stories are almost finished. We have a story about a mouse who must prove to other animals that he is capable of doing things that the other animals can do, a shark and a piranha who work together to find a cave to live in, a dog who loses a bone and needs to find it, and a turtle, snake and rabbit who search for a new tree to live in when they lose their home. The children have worked diligently to expand their stories and add details to them so that their readers can see what they see.

Last week we went tracking during science. As we looked for tracks we tried to figure out the stories that went with the tracks. Students drew the tracks they saw in their tracking notebooks. We saw the tracks of: squirrels, foxes, young moose, a grouse and deer. We also found where an animal tunneled under the snow and a place where an animal had buried and then dug up acorns.

In math, 2nd graders are working on describing and identifying objects and designs that have mirror imagery. 3rd graders continue to work on finding the area of objects and different shapes.

This week, the children have small amounts of reading and math homework so that they can concentrate on writing valentines as their homework. They should make homemade valentines with a personalized message for each student. We will 'deliver' our valentines on Friday.

Downhill Skiing at Crotched Mountain February 26

Don't forget to return Crotched Mtn. permission slips, for downhill skiing at Crotched Mtn. in N.H. for the 2nd-6th on Friday February 26.

Parents and visitors are invited to the K-1 classroom from 8:40 until 9:10. It will be fun with singing, stories, a bird watch and lots of work to admire. Don't miss it!

We had an interesting visitor to the school compost bin last week – an opossum! We got a good photograph of it. As it appeared on February 2nd we're guessing that this may be the Village School equivalent of Ground Hog Day. We found it again in the compost on Friday afternoon after skiing, and most of the class got to see him/her, with a very pink nose, white face, tiny ears, gray fur and a long hairless tail. We were careful to keep our distance, and not disturb the possum. We don't mind him or her chowing down on the compost at all.

In math, the kindergarten group has been measuring various items in the classroom using popsicle sticks laid end to end and then recording their findings. 1st graders will continue their work on measuring objects in the classroom with cubes, squares, craft sticks and in inches.

4th - 6th Grade

It was hard to tell who was more excited, the givers or the receivers, when the 4th-6th graders presented their reading buddies in the pre-school and K-1 classes with the stories they had written. The stories were the product of a discussion about writing for particular audiences, in this case younger children, which helps the children to focus their thinking as writers. The happy and successful publishing party on Friday was a celebration of the whole project. As we were saying at our Literacy Night on Wednesday, these publishing parties give a reason for children to write, because their writing goes beyond a mere exercise if it is read by others. So, many thanks to all those who came to enjoy the children's stories and offer comments about them.

Our new writing project is already under way. The children have chosen an individual topic within the overall theme of Ancient Greece and are busily researching information in order to write a report about it. Topics include the Parthenon, Greek music, women in Ancient Greece, ideas of the underworld and the battle of Thermopylae – one of the most celebrated military defeats in history.

In science we had our successful first 'annual Village School science conference', in which each student presented his or her Science Night project as a work in progress. We re-arranged the tables in a horseshoe to aid the presentations, and the event gave the children a chance to discuss each project, and to make suggestions for further tests, or new ways of looking at data that had already been gathered. The conference ended with everyone enjoying donuts, which science teacher Cathy Szal said are an essential part of all science conferences. Who were we to argue?

Pianist Elan Sicroff has returned after three weeks of performing concerts in Italy and London, so we were able to resume our work with movements. We began by working on a new movement that George had learned in Italy the previous week.

Finally, we were very happy to welcome another new student to the 4th-6th grade class last week. Gabe Jackson is a 4th-grader and he is already an integral part of the class, gamely tackling - and succeeding with - new challenges from movements to knitting to skiing.

In math, 5th graders will begin a new unit on geometry. They will examine and classify polygons as they answer such questions as "are all squares rectangles?"