



NEWS FOR THE WEEK OF October 5, 2009

PO Box 122 ♦ Royalston, MA ♦ (978) 249-3505 ♦
www.villageschool.to

News and Notes



K-6th Jacobs Hill Hike This Friday

This Friday afternoon, the K-6th will hike to Jacob's Hill in Royalston and back. The 2nd-6th leaves the school at 12:45 and walks to the trail entrance. We will drive the K-1 to the trail entrance at 1:10. (K-1 parents are encouraged to attend and help drive.) There will be water to drink at the trailhead. Children should wear good shoes for hiking. Parents are very welcome to join us - the view is spectacular. K-1 children can be picked up at the trailhead at 2:45. The 2nd-6th will be back to the school by 3:15.

October 18 Parent Work Day 10-4 come any time

This is our once a year event when parents pitch in to make the school and the playground a safer, nicer looking place. If you see a project that needs doing, let the office know. We will clean the 'dungeon', wash windows, seal drafty windows, and much more. You can drop in anytime that day, and put in a few hours. Bring the kids- we'll have child care in the playground. If you have "skills," let the office know too. You'll enjoy getting to know parents.

A reminder: Thank you for picking up children at 3:15, which makes it possible for teachers to transition to after-school meetings. Pick-ups after 3:25 become After School Program charges.

Thank you to everyone for pitching in at the Village School tent at the Garlic Festival. We were a busy spot, with children drilling, sawing and gluing to their hearts' content.

Visit www.villageschool.to to see photos of Harvest Day, to get reminders about Field Trips, and lots more.

Curriculum Night Review

It was wonderful to see the faces of many enthusiastic parents with children who have just started in the preschool. If there was any doubt about the sacrifices we all make to get our children to the Village School every day, it evaporated after an evening with the staff discussing the curriculum. We should all emulate the enthusiasm the staff has for educating our children. These are the individuals who start an emotional connection to learning for our children. It becomes crystal clear how this love for learning grows as we walked from one classroom experience to the next listening to the curriculum objectives, observing the learning methods, various learning styles and work from our children. George gave the parents kudos for making it to the "last leg" of Curriculum Night, but we should certainly give the entire staff (Rise, Wendy, Kim, Leanne, Cathy, Jocelyn, Trina, Martin, Shannon, George and Renee) all the kudos. They are the ones that cause our children to run INTO school in the morning. Leadership, kindness, curiosity, attention, authenticity, confidence, voice, comfort and flexibility – all the tools our children will need as the foundation of their learning and the words threaded throughout the evening's presentations. *by Christina*

School Photo order forms are in the hallway.

Overheard at the Preschool lunch:
"I want to be a grown up someday. You know why? So I can sharpen my own pencils."

Preschool

Today the class walked to the Royalston Library and heard a story read by librarian Jen Bartkus. On the way back to school we picked apples (with permission) from the neighbor's apple tree. We are looking forward to making apple sauce this week. In morning circle the class has been learning this song: "Shake, shake the apple tree, apples red and juicy. Shake, shake the apple tree, apples red and juicy. One for you.....and one for me.....shake, shake the apple tree!" Ask your child to sing it with you. Our story this week is *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, so of course we will also have porridge for snack

In Spanish lesson, the preschoolers are having lots of fun learning to count. They are 'feeding' a very hungry caterpillar puppet and are also learning the names of different fruits in Spanish.

Next Monday, Columbus Day, is no school, so it might be hard to remember that we go to Sweetwater Farm in Petersham the next day, Tuesday, October 13. So please mark your calendars to meet at Sweetwater Farm at 9:00 a.m. that morning.

October 2009

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|--|
| 5 All School Sing | 6 8:45 Book Buddies Music K-1 Maggies Farm | 7 Spanish 2nd-6th at Sweetwater Farm K-1 Red Apple Farm | 8 Art Classes | 9 Yoga Coffee orders due K-6th Jacobs Hill Hike Parents welcome 2nd-6th 12:45 K-1 1:10 |
| 12 NO SCHOOL COLUMBUS DAY | 13 8:45 Book Buddies Music Classes Preschool 9:00 to 11:15 Sweetwater Farm | 14 Spanish 8:45 Parent Group Meeting | 15 Art Classes | 16 Yoga Coffee in Parent Work Day on Sunday |

Kindergarten—1st Grade

We complete our *Gardens and Vegetables* theme this week with the book *Autumn Harvest* about people and animals at work in the fall. In our work in the garden, we are putting it to bed for the year by digging it over, adding compost, mulching and planting a cover crop of winter rye in some of the beds. We have had many happy memories from the garden through the year. During Harvest Day last week, the younger children worked with older reading buddies to bring in potatoes, carrots, squash and pumpkins. The produce was laid out on the picnic tables for washing and storing and each child chose a special potato for poetry writing later in the week. See more below.

Last week in art, we glazed our pottery cups and used fabric paint to finish our napkins and pillow covers. Our visit to Sweetwater Farm last Wednesday was a treat. The activities included collecting apple and peach drops, visiting the cows, digging potatoes, picking (and eating!) raspberries and hiking to the old apple orchard.

In math last week, the kindergarten group began to record numbers in their Counting Jar books. They are representing the amount of items in the jar by writing the numeral or by drawing a picture of the

items. The 1st graders are working on addition and number combination problems and are playing *Seven Beans and Carrots*, *Three Towers* and *Heads and Tails*.

It's a busy field trip week. On Tuesday, we go to Maggie's Farm in North Orange to help harvest carrots and then share our learning about gardens with the children from the Chicken Coop School. We leave the school at 8:45 a.m. and return by lunchtime. Don't forget to leave car seats in school that morning.

On Wednesday we will visit Red Apple Farm in Phillipston. Drop off is at the Farm at 9:00 a.m. and pick up is at 11:30. Parents are welcome to accompany both trips.

On Friday afternoon, we will hike to Jacob's Hill in Royalston with the 2nd-6th grade. Parents are very welcome to join us. We will drive to the trailhead on Rt. 68- about a mile from the school- at 1:10 p.m.. We will be ready to be picked up at the trailhead at 2:45, or at the school at 3:15. The foliage should be outstanding, and the view to the west and Tully Mtn. is special.

2nd - 3rd Grade

On Friday, Sept. 25, the children enjoyed an afternoon with Elizabeth Farnsworth, a local artist, scientist and fern expert. We identified and drew 7 different species of ferns right around the Village School. We learned how each species has different kinds of spores. When we went for a hike on Monday afternoon, the children were hunting for ferns and identifying them. Thank you, Elizabeth, for taking the time to teach us about this ancient plant.

In response to the children's interest in beading, we changed our plans last week and learned about Native American beadwork. We learned about the different materials used to make beads and looked at belts made out of beads. The children were fascinated by the designs—trees and people—incorporated into the belts. We learned that the woodland tribes that lived near the shore used beads (called wampum) made from whelks and quahogs for trading. And, of course, we had a lot of fun beading.

Last week on Harvest Day, the older children took their reading buddies under their wings to work together in the garden. There were squeals of delight as children unearthed potatoes and pulled carrots out. Please see below about the potato poetry project.

In math, 2nd graders are working on combinations that make 10; they will also work on story problems. 3rd graders are working on combinations that make 100 and are playing the game *Close to 100*.

Our poem of the week is *Night Herons* by Judith Wright. Here's one stanza of the poem: "First one child looked and saw / and told another, / Face after face, the windows / flowered with eyes."

Weather willing, we will have a canoe trip to a local pond this Friday morning, October 9, with a make-up date of Friday, October 16. Please sign the attached permission slip and return it before Friday.

Don't forget, we have our Sweetwater Farm visit on Wednesday. Children should wear boots and be dressed to be outside all morning. Drop-off is at 8:45 and pick-up is at 11:45.

4th - 6th Grade

As the potato poetry project dominated last week's work, we pulled the classroom tables together in to symbolize the fact that we were all working together on this special event. This week we continue to write poems, concentrating on choosing interesting vocabulary. We have some fine poems displayed on the wall. As with the potato project, the children were asked to write about something they could see and touch at home, and having a concrete object made the poems much more vivid. And as Wendy pointed out, the class has certainly got the idea of giving poems a twist in the end.

The previous Friday we enjoyed the visit by Elizabeth Farnsworth, the scientist and illustrator who co-authored the *Peterson Field Guide to Ferns*. Elizabeth gave the children a simple scheme for identifying ferns and then took us into the woods to look for different varieties. The children excitedly found new ferns and named them by identifying specific features. Each child was given a special fern journal in which they drew the various ferns we discovered. This was Elizabeth's second visit, and we are grateful to her for sharing her encyclopedic knowledge and her infectious enthusiasm.

Ferns were one of Earth's earliest plant forms, and in science, we have been studying the earliest history of the Earth. Two weeks ago, the class measured different colored ribbons, and cut them in proportion to the time of different pre-historic periods. We then fastened the ribbons around the walls of the room to represent each period. Thus the Pre-Cambrian period is shown by a 25 ft. piece of red ribbon, while our own era, the Cenozoic - stretching back a mere 65 million years - is covered by a purple ribbon just six inches long. Each child chose an organism from each of the four main periods, ranging from bacteria to dinosaurs to relatively modern mammals, and wrote facts about them on note cards, which are now being mounted at the appropriate points along the ribbons.

This Wednesday we will make our second visit to Sweetwater Farm in Petersham. Drop-off is at 8:45 a.m. and pick up is at 11:45.

Reflections on the Potato Poetry Project

Last week was all about potatoes. The whole school harvested potatoes, carrots and squash from the school garden on Tuesday and then each child from Kindergarten to 6th grade chose a potato of their own as the subject for a poem. The children carefully examined their potatoes and wrote down all sorts of ideas before writing their own poems. In the K-1 class, each child wrote a short poem in his or her journal, and the class also composed a group poem. In the older classes, the children revised and improved their poems – taking out unnecessary words, altering line lengths and fine-tuning vocabulary. And everyone drew their potatoes.

On Friday, the K-6th classes got together to read their poems to each other. The K-1 children were paired with their 4th-6th grade reading buddies for their recitals. It was lovely to see the confidence of the younger children when faced with a crowd of two dozen children and adults. The poems themselves showed an amazing variety of ideas and styles. We ended the whole project with a feast of roast potatoes, the very potatoes the children had dug up earlier in the week, and in some cases, the specific potatoes the children had chosen. For, as Marissa observed in her poem, "Your growth is over, time to help me grow." We will post potato poems online, and have a potato poetry compilation to view in the hall.