

K-K News

January 9, 2009

Dear Families:

Happy New Year, and welcome back! It was wonderful to see the children again on Monday morning and despite the disruption to our momentum that Wednesday's weather brought, it has been a full and productive week.

In mathematics, we have begun a unit called Measuring and Counting. This combination sometimes surprises people, but the way we begin our measurement work involves using cubes and craft sticks to measure items in the classroom, so there is a great deal of opportunity to practice counting skills. In addition, the children are working on developing their understanding of critical skills in measurement: using a baseline; lining up units of measurement carefully; counting and checking for accuracy. We will continue our work in this unit for the next several weeks.

In writing, we have shifted our focus from handwriting - which will be embedded in our writing work for the next several months - to writing workshop. The children returned from vacation with many stories to tell, and we have capitalized on their enthusiasm as we work to record stories. The skills we are working on right now include recording each part of the story on a separate page; drawing detailed illustrations that match the text of the story; and recording text with as much independent spelling as possible. Julie and I circulate and work with children on individual goals after all of the children have received their folders and a brief lesson on a skill that everyone needs to attend to at this point in the year.

In reading, the children were delighted to return to their "just right" books, and to receive new books this week. They are also enjoying the many new books in the classroom, courtesy of your generosity at the book fair.

Finally, we have returned to our unit on Mexico. While the fiesta may have felt like the end of this unit of study, it was actually only the midpoint. Having focused on the location of Mexico, the flag, and an understanding of holiday traditions in our neighboring country, we will now turn our attention to topography. The topography and climate of a region have dramatic impact on housing, clothing, and food. This is a huge idea in social studies, and one on which we will be focusing for the next several weeks. This week, we began adding elements to our classroom map of Mexico (mountains, deserts). Once the map is complete, it will allow us to consider what housing and clothing considerations would be necessary in a given region of Mexico.

In other news...

- Before the vacation, many children had to leave early or arrive late for medical or dental appointments. While we certainly understand the need for these appointments, we have two requests: 1) Whenever possible, please schedule appointments on the days your child does not stay; 2) Please follow the school policy of going to the office to drop your child off or pick him/her up. This will allow us to continue instruction for the rest of the children with a minimum of disruption to student learning. Thank you for your cooperation with these requests.

- Once again, we beg you to label all clothing that is coming into the classroom. We lost a lot of instructional and recess time trying to match children to boots or mittens this week.

- Book order forms are coming home in home folders today. Please place orders on-line by Friday, January 16. Thank you!

- In anticipation of a project coming up, please send clean, empty 64-ounce juice bottles in to the classroom. Thank you for sharing your recyclables!

- **Water unit volunteers**: Thank you for taking the time to attend the training sessions before vacation. Please remember that we are scheduled to meet on Monday, February 2 at 3:15. If this date is not possible for you, please let me know as soon as possible, as I would like to have everyone present for this meeting. Thank you!

- Information about our upcoming play with Nan Rumpf is in home folders today. Thank you to Liz Butcher for her help with coordinating this project, and to the parents who are signing up to help us with this big event!

- Finally, there are a number of special events coming up in the next few months (including the aforementioned play on January 29). Please check the calendar on the website, as well as this newsletter, to insure that you are up-to-date on all that is going on in the classroom.

Thank you again for the incredible generosity of your holiday gifts. Enjoy the weekend with your children!

Warmly,
Lynn