

October 28, 2009

Dear Parents,

We enjoyed meeting all of you at conferences. Please encourage your child to continue to work on his/her goals.

This month's curriculum includes:

Language Arts - We have finished Theme 1 and are starting Theme 2, *Side by Side*. This theme explores situations that highlight the benefits of teamwork. Students learn that cooperation strengthens relationships, and they are encouraged to apply this concept to their own lives.

Our first story is "The Baker's Neighbor", a play adapted by Adele Thane. In this play, the neighbor of a baker enjoys the smells of the baked goods but never buys anything. The greedy baker employs a judge to make his neighbor pay for smelling his pastries, but the judge's idea of payment is to let the greedy baker enjoy touching the neighbor's golden coins. In the end, the judge claims free pies for all the villagers as his fee.

What If Game

The children in the story play a game in which they ask each other what they would like to be if they were not people - what color, what sight, what sound, and what smell. Play this game with your child, using such prompts as this one: "If you could be a beautiful smell instead of a child, what smell would you be?"

Say It, Guess It

The following words are new vocabulary your child has learned while reading "The Baker's Neighbor":

ad lib	shiftless
luxury	privilege
elated	shamefacedly
indignantly	assent

To reinforce the meanings, play a game in which you say a word's dictionary definition and your child tries to guess the word.

Your child is reading "The Emperor and the Kite," a Chinese folktale by Jane Yolen. In this folktale, the tiny daughter of an emperor gets no attention or love because she is so small. When the emperor is captured by bad men and imprisoned in a tower, it is the tiny girl, and not her bigger and stronger brothers and sisters, who manages to save her father and finally win his everlasting love.

Make a Kite

Visit a library and learn how to make a homemade kite. Find books on Chinese art, and use them to get ideas for ways to paint your kite. Help your child fly the kite, and discuss how the wind works to keep the kite up in the air.

Word of the Day

The following words are new vocabulary your child has learned while reading "The Emperor and the Kite":

insignificant	plotting
twined	steely
encircling	loyal
neglected	unyielding

Play a vocabulary-building game with your child. Have your child arrange the words in alphabetical order, and then assign a word to each of the coming eight days. For example, on the first day, you and your child can try finding things you think are *insignificant*. Make a list of what you find for each word.

More Folktales

You and your child might enjoy searching for more international folktales at your local library. Choose character and narrative parts, and read each folktale aloud. Discuss the message of the folktale.

Chinese Recipes

Look in cookbooks for easy recipes for Chinese food. Help your child plan a simple meal and work together to prepare the meal and serve it. If possible, use chopsticks to eat the food you have prepared.

The next story your child is reading "Nights of the Pufflings," a nonfiction article written and photographed by Bruce McMillan. This selection describes how puffins, which are small sea birds, come to shore on an island near Iceland to raise their chicks. It also tells how, on the nights when the young birds leave their nests and attempt to fly out to sea, the children of the island help by rescuing baby birds that crash-land on the island. These children later release the rescued birds into the sea.

Watch a Wildlife Program

Ask your child to choose a wildlife show on TV to watch with you, or borrow a wildlife video from your local library to watch with your child. Encourage your child to take notes as you watch. Afterward, ask him or her to summarize the information presented in the program. Then share with each other your personal reactions to the program and its content.

Word Scramble

The following words are new vocabulary your child has learned:

uninhabited burrows
venture stranded
nestles instinctively

Play a word-scramble game. Choose three words and scramble the letters in each to create nonsense words. Have your child do the same. Then take turns trying to unscramble the words, and use them correctly in sentences.

Visit an Animal Shelter

Your child might benefit from a family visit to an animal shelter to learn firsthand how animals are cared for there, what the shelter does to try to find new homes for strays, and how volunteers can help. As an alternative, you might visit a farm, a zoo, a pet store, or another place where animals are kept and cared for, so your child can observe and learn about caring for animals.

The fourth story your child will be reading is "The Garden of Happiness" by Erika Tamar. In this story, a girl learns about different cultures, community pride, and helping others when she takes part in making a neighborhood garden.

Plants in Action

In "The Garden of Happiness," Marisol grows a beautiful sunflower that makes many people in her neighborhood happy. With your child, think about and list the purposes a plant can serve. You may want to walk around your house or block to find ways in which plants help people. (Examples: Flowers make people happy; plants make oxygen for people to breathe; many house and pieces of furniture are made of wood from trees; cotton and other plants provide material for clothes; people use plants for much of their food.)

On the Lookout

The following words are new vocabulary your child has learned while reading "The Garden of Happiness."

inhaled lavender

mural haze

skidded

Help your child notice when these words are used during the week.

Making a Difference

In "The Garden of Happiness," Marisol and her neighbors convert an empty lot into a community garden. You might want to choose a community volunteer project that you and your child could do together, such as helping with a food drive or cleaning up a nearby park.

Rereading Together

Have your child read his or her favorite part of "The Garden of Happiness" to you. Encourage your child to read with emotion, as if he or she were telling the story. After your child has finished, talk together about the story's plot, characters, setting and message.

Our last story is "How to Babysit an Orangutan" by Kathy and Tara Darling. In this article the authors describe a visit to a camp in Borneo where orphaned orangutan babies are nurtured by human babysitters until they can survive on their own. You may enjoy discussing the article and doing these activities with your child. Together you can develop and explore your child's language skills.

Local Wildlife

If possible, visit a local natural history museum or local wildlife preserve with your child to learn about animals that are native to your area. Suggest that your child independently use reference sources to find out answers to any questions your visit raises.

Fun with Related Words

The following words are new vocabulary your child has learned while reading "How to Babysit an Orangutan":

displeasure jealous
endangered smuggled
facial manageable
coordination

Each day, choose one of these words and use a dictionary to find and list other words in the same word family. (For example: for *displeasure*, you might list *pleasure*, *please*, *displease*, *pleasant*, and *pleasing*.) Improvise conversations in which you and your child use a vocabulary word and the related words in as many ways as you can.

Changing Habitats

Ask your child to interview you about changes you have seen in your own local environment. Your child can take notes during the interview and then draw the original environment as he or she imagines it and write a description to go with the picture.

On the Wild Side

With your child, review upcoming shows on your local public television station to find presentations about rain forest habitats, apes, or other topics related to wildlife. Watch a show together, and encourage your child to summarize what he or she learned.

Accelerated Reader - Don't forget that your child needs to have their Accelerated Reader requirements (17 points reading books at their level with 70% accuracy) finished by **Monday, December 1st** . **I shared their AR report with you at conferences.**

Spelling: Spelling will continue as usual. Please make sure your child studies their spelling words. Watch the monthly calendar for the theme we are on.

Math - We have finished our *Basic Facts Fluency* unit and are starting Unit 1, *Solve Multiplication and Division Word Problems*. Solving word problems is an essential part of the Math Expressions curriculum because these problems connect the outside world to the classroom. In students own lives,

they encounter mathematical situations that require them to understand the relationships between known and unknown quantities. This unit encourages students to analyze the structure and language of different types of word problems and to discuss different models that can be used to solve the word problems. This unit builds literacy and communication skills for all students.

Social Studies - We are still in Unit 1, *The Land of the United States*.

Learn About It

In this unit, your child will learn:

- about the geography of the nation, including its land, water, and resources
- how to define a region and what makes the regions of the United States unique

Here are some ways that you can help your child learn:

Talk About It

Chapter 1: What on Earth Is Geography?

Where you are

It is important to know your location on Earth. With your child, pretend you are giving directions to your house for someone who lives on the moon. What landforms and bodies of water are near where you live? On what hemisphere do you live? What natural resources can be found in your area?

Chapter 2: Understanding Regions

Differentiating regions The United States has many different regions. Ask your child which region you live in. What are some characteristics of your region?

Make It

A comparison chart

There are three types of local regions in the United States. Working together, design a chart comparing urban, suburban, and rural areas. Use pictures from magazines to describe each region. Include these pictures in your chart.

Read to Learn More About It

One Day in the Alpine Tundra, by Jean George. Relates a boy's adventure when he is alone on a stormy day in the alpine tundra of Wyoming.

Puzzle Maps U.S.A., by Nancy L. Clouse. Introduces the 50 states and their shapes through simple puzzle maps.

Sierra, by Diane Siebert. One of the Sierra Nevada describes the beauty of these mountains.

Science and Health - We are finishing our bus safety and unit on Weather. We will be starting our next unit Astronomy. Your child will learn about the solar system. This unit will focus on the following process skills:

- Collecting data
- Analyzing data
- Interpreting data

A fun activity to do at home with your child is:



Family ASTRO Chocolate Chip Constellations (pan cookies)

- 2 1/4 cups all purpose flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup butter, softened**
- 3/4 cup sugar**
- 3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 cups (one 12-oz. package) semisweet chocolate morsels**
- 1 cup chopped nuts (optional)**

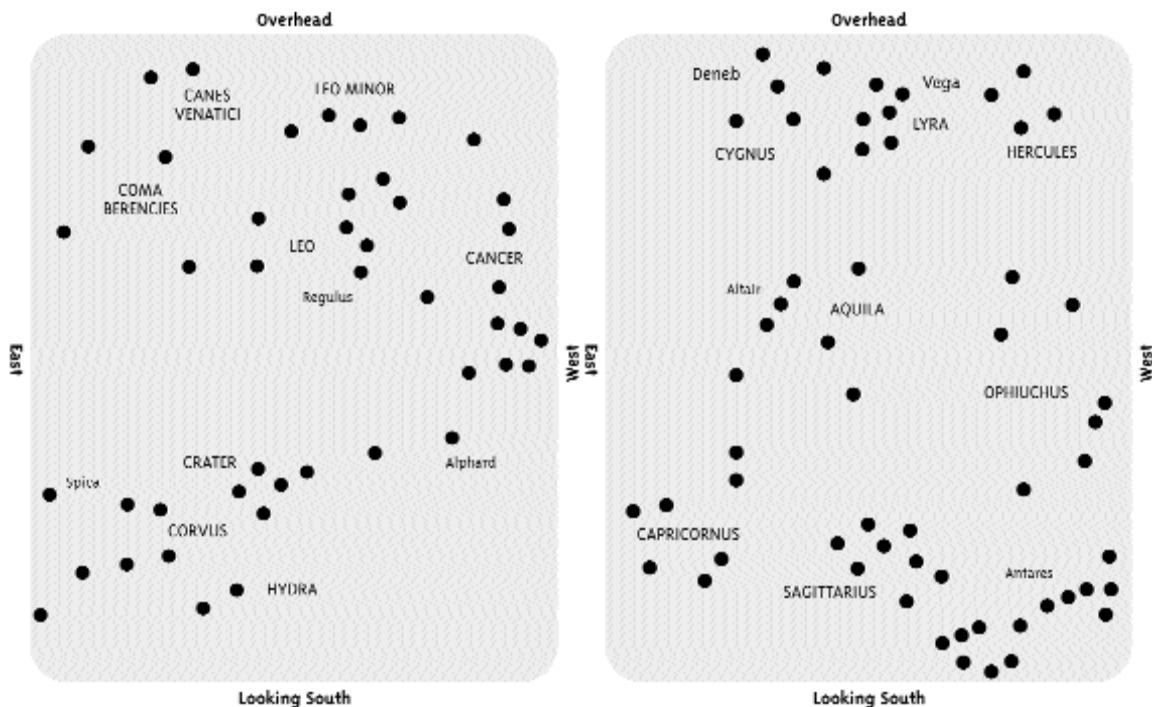
Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

In small bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt; set aside. In large bowl, combine butter, sugar, brown sugar and vanilla extract; beat until creamy. Beat in eggs. Gradually add flour mixture. Stir in nuts and chocolate morsels, reserve 1/2 cup to make constellations.

Spread into greased 15 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 1-inch baking pan. Smooth top so no chocolate morsels show.

Arrange 1/2 cup of reserved chocolate morsels to make constellations of the season (Follow the templates below).

Bake at 375 degrees F for 20-25 minutes. Cool; cut into 2" squares or divide by constellation for giant cookies.



Keyboarding - We will also be reviewing keyboarding in the computer lab. Please encourage your child to keep their hands on the home row when they use the computer at home.

Halloween Party - The Halloween parade for grades K-3 will be at 2:15. Grades 4-6 will watch the parade and have a treat in their rooms.

Conferences - We have included our winter conference dates so you can plan ahead. Palmer Lake winter conferences are Tuesday, January 26th, Thursday, January 28th and Thursday, February 4th.

Recess - Please make sure that your child has a hat and gloves to wear at recess. When there is snow on the ground they should have boots to wear. Also, snow pants are encouraged so they don't have to sit all afternoon in wet clothing.

Please call if you have any comments, questions or suggestions. We can be reached at 763 561-1930 or at teacher's last name and first initial@District 279.org and follow the prompts. If you need to view this letter or the November calendar just go to the Palmer Lake web page and Parent Resources where you will find my parent letter, calendar and a list of spelling words.

Have a great Thanksgiving!!

Sincerely,

Fourth Grade Teachers