

Curriculum Center Current

Curriculum Newsletter



March 14, 2012

It's Not Just about Crayfish Anymore!

Third grade students are certainly well versed in crayfish structures and habits. Their exciting, hands-on experiences with these crustaceans can tend to overshadow the primary goal of the unit, which is to teach about adaptation. Last fall, the Curriculum Center received an FBE grant to enhance the third grade unit in a way that will help students to apply and extend their conceptual understanding of adaptation to other species. The children will have the opportunity to investigate animal skulls and see how the teeth of carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores vary according to their diets. Experiences with simulated birds' beaks and models of animal paws will also allow them to identify adaptations related to the animals' habitats. These activities have been thoughtfully designed to allow for students' independent use during centers. National Geographic readers have been purchased at various reading levels, including books on specific animals which may be used as the basis for the nonfiction reading and informational writing included in the new Common Core.



We will be contacting each third grade team to set up a time to deliver and review the new materials. We are excited about the updates and look forward to sharing this work.

Six Traits Live!

This summer, BPS will offer a FREE professional development opportunity for all K-6 general and special education teachers. Deborah Rutherford (K-2) and Fred Wolff (3-6) will provide a one day training on Wednesday, June 20. Please mark it on your calendar now!! This training will promote the six traits of writing (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions). These traits are meant to give teachers and students a clearer picture of how to improve student writing to produce the best possible product. More details coming soon!



Summer Writing Work

If you are currently on the writing team, please contact Jaynene ASAP if you are interested in the possibility of working on lesson development this summer. After gauging the interest level of the team, we will then move forward with a final proposal.

Additional Funding

We are happy to announce that the Curriculum Center will be receiving \$3600 from the Belmont Savings Bank. This money will be used to purchase an assortment of mentor texts to model the traits of writing (ideas, organization, word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions).

These mentor texts will consist of published books that each K-4 teacher may use during writing lessons to a) teach a writing skill or b) motivate the students to want to write something similar. In addition to a reading library, we feel that it is equally important for teachers to have a writing library which serves to engage all students in this communication process.

This is Your Opportunity!

Jaynene and Katie presented at Winn Brook and Wellington during the February 29th staff meetings, and will present at Burbank and Butler during the April 4th staff meetings. This time will be used for grade level collaboration around the work of both the writing and math curriculum teams.

This is an opportunity for teachers to meet and discuss the developments from both curricular teams. The writing team will share each grade levels' scope and sequence, and explain the process for unit development. The math group will take this time to share information about the two programs being evaluated. We encourage everyone to take this time to provide feedback and ask questions about the process.

Math Textbook Evaluations

The math committee listened to presenters from both *Envisions* and *Think Math!* during their last two meetings. Regardless of the committee you are working on, please look through the sample materials on display in your building. Although we had originally expected to make a selection by the end of this year, the timeline has been revised. We will provide a recommendation by the end of November 2012. This will allow time for training during the spring months.

There are things around us and right at our very feet that we never have seen, because we have never really looked.

Alexander Graham Bell

Up Close with Science

Mary Dominguez, our K-5 Science Facilitator, is always available to help! Through this role, she has the opportunity to support classroom teachers with their science curriculum. Each year, Mary meets with new teachers to introduce their units of instruction and to provide the science kits and materials necessary for the school year. It's great to have a second set of hands to help with the experiments or to model a lesson. Please take note of the following services that she can provide:

- ⇒ Meet with teachers to go over units and experiments
- ⇒ Order supplies to refill and update kits
- ⇒ Provide classroom pets



- ⇒ **Model enrichment activities** that coordinate with some of the science units. These activities include:
 - K-2: Consults on what you may be reading related to science, and **brainstorms connected hands-on activities** for small groups.

Grade 3: Water unit – A Mystery of Two Cities which involves **an activity related to hard and soft water**

Grade 3: **Star Lab presentation** – often combined with the study of Myths and Legends associated with the constellations.

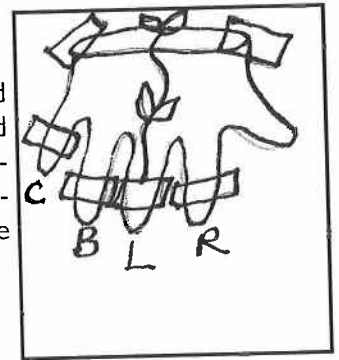
Grade 4: Earth Materials unit – **growing borax crystals**.

Mary is always willing to sit down to discuss enrichment activities related to science with any teacher. Please send her an email if she can assist you with your teaching of science.

A Garden in a Glove

Learn the process of germination through an enjoyable spring activity.

Seeds remain dormant or inactive until conditions are right for germination. All seeds need water, oxygen, and the proper temperature in order to germinate. When a seed is exposed to the proper conditions, water and oxygen are taken in through the seed coat. The embryo's cells start to enlarge. Then the seed coat breaks open and a root emerges first, followed by the shoot that contains the leaves and stem. Try it with your students using the attached materials.



Directions:

1. Soak seeds in water overnight to speed up the germination process.
2. Cut off and discard wrist from the disposable plastic glove.
3. Pour water only in the **fingertips** of the glove.
4. Scotch tape the glove onto a window. Place tape above the line of the water. **(Use diagram as a guide to correct placement of the tape, which is critical.)**
5. Drop the seeds into each of the four fingers. The tape will prevent the seeds from falling down into the water.
6. Use a dry erase marker to write the type of seed (corn, green bean, lettuce, & radish) under each finger onto the window. Also, students can use the marker to record information about growth and daily temperature.
7. Seeds will germinate in 3 to 5 days. The roots will go down into the fingers, while the leaves may grow up and out of the wrist opening.
8. If you'd like, you can transplant after 1½ to 2 weeks to prevent the sprout from dying.

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