



The MESsage
Official Newsletter of
Middlebury Elementary School
Middlebury, Connecticut
Fall 2009-10

"E" Edition

A Message from the Principal

Helicopter Visit: "Mom, a helicopter landed in our soccer field!" The Sikorsky Blackhawk visit was a big hit at Middlebury Elementary School last week. At 9:30 a.m. in the morning, an 80 foot long, 5 hour old, \$15,000,000.00 Blackhawk helicopter circled the school and landed in our soccer field. All of our students and staff, as well as members of the Middlebury Police and Fire Departments, watched with amazement as the pilots skillfully set the aircraft down with effortless skill. Each grade level then had a chance to listen to presentations made by the pilot about helicopters, aviation and what it is like to be a pilot in the United States Army. We owe a great debt of thanks to one of our MES parents, Rick Thorpe, who works at Sikorsky Aircraft and was instrumental in making this opportunity available to our students. To see a short video of the helicopter taking off from MES, click here <<http://www.region15.org/mes/Blackhawk09.wmv>> .



Curriculum Update: During October's PTO meeting, two members of our faculty presented to parents about changes that are currently being made to Region 15's Language Arts Curriculum. Mrs. Shove, Reading Consultant, and Mrs. Higgins, Language Arts Instructional Teacher Leader (ITL), presented an overview of the work that we are doing to revise and enhance our instruction for students. Central to this work is the addition of leveled reading materials rather than sole reliance on the reading anthology that we have used in the past. Our anthology provides a collection of literature and we will continue to use pieces within this resource at certain grades, however, leveled readers will be used in addition to the anthology in order to challenge students using reading leveled books that are specific to their literacy needs.

As part of this work, parents have been very generous in donating gently used books to our school. In addition, the PTO has donated \$6,000 so that our teachers can make additional purchases of leveled books and mentor texts. As a result of the revision to our curriculum, I have already seen many wonderful changes in our classrooms where students are more interested in the content of their reading and teachers and students are involved in richer literacy discussions. When students are more interested in their reading, the quality of their reading fluency and comprehension will benefit as a result.

During the course of the school year, we will provide additional discussions and correspondence about our work to enhance curriculum and instruction in Region 15 and Middlebury Elementary School. Should you have questions about curriculum and instruction in your child's classroom, please feel free to talk with your child's Teacher, Reading Consultant or Principal. As with any change or transition, there is a learning process for adults as well as students. We continue to do our best to support parents in their learning about these changes so that all adults are empowered to support our children in their learning.

As we head into the holiday season, I hope that you and your family are surrounded by good health and happiness.

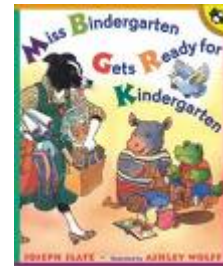
Kindergarten M.E.S.sage...

The kindergarten year is off and running! The children have done an excellent job of learning the rules and routines of school.

In math, we are having a lot of fun exploring with patterns. Pattern Day was a huge success and it's great when they notice their classmates wearing a pattern. They have also enjoyed the counting boxes and finding out if they had enough spoons at home for a class feast. If you have not already met him, Mr. Origin will be coming home to you very soon! He teaches us about position and location words, such as left and right.

In language arts, we have been learning how to read each other's names. They love taking home the class books based on the story From Anne To Zach and Miss

Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten. We have been using our reader's workshop time to learn about what good readers do, such as read every day, talk about their favorite parts, and be good listeners. We started our writer's workshop and are thrilled about writing in our journals.



We have also been learning about each other in social studies. They made "All about Me" posters and we have been discussing feelings. They were so excited when they made their pots to wear on their heads for Johnny



Appleseed's birthday! Speaking of apples, we have used them to learn about the five senses in science.

It just wouldn't be kindergarten without our wonderful parent volunteers. Thanks for making Pancakes and Pajamas day a success and for all of your help with centers so far. We could not do it without you!

As you can tell, we have been having a fantastic time and look forward to spending a great year with all of you!

Joan Benson

Becky Chaplinski

November MESsage-First Grade

First graders are off to a fantastic start! We're busy beavers, learning how to read and write. Each week we have new vocabulary words that we are working on, and books that we are practicing. During our Reading Workshop each morning, the boys and girls are all enjoying the many different types of books they have chosen for their personal book bins. They are proud of their independence during private and partner reading time. In the daily Writing Workshop, the children are inspired to write about themselves, stretching and sharing their small moments.

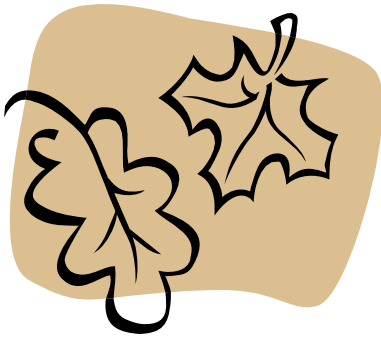
In math, we've had some fun using pattern blocks. We've already learned how to tally, and how to use a data table. We're using our new skills in a practical way, as we tallied and recorded our weather in October each day. Our numbers are looking better and better, and we are beginning to learn some math facts. We enjoyed our first Craft Rotations in the cafeteria when first graders relished in a fun-filled morning of crafts, games, stories, and some very delicious treats. We all looked very festive in our "Crazy Caps!"

Mrs. Butler, Mrs. Flisher, Miss Martocci, & Miss McCann

Fall is once again upon us and the children have settled nicely into second grade. Each of us have made new friends and met new teachers. We have had a preview of what the year is going to hold and we look forward to it with great anticipation.

Our focus in Reading has been on recognizing story settings and character's feelings through their actions and words. The students have enjoyed reading different fiction and nonfiction books with their teachers in small groups. We are learning about "Just Right Books" and practicing how to find a "Just Right Book" in our classroom library. We are becoming independent readers and enjoying conferencing with our teachers about our books.



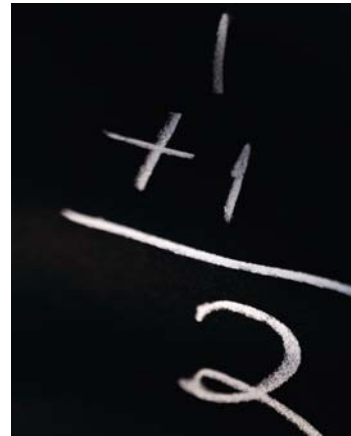


We have been learning about what a community is and how it works. It has been fun to find ourselves on the map and learn where Middlebury is located on the globe.

Our Science curriculum began with learning about the life cycle of plants. The Brassica plants we are growing are not letting us down. Most plants have flowered and we have begun working like busy bees pollinating our plants in hopes of seed pods. We are learning a great deal from them.

In writing, our imaginations are beginning to soar as we learn about how to write exciting beginnings and descriptions. Students know how to “hook” their readers with action, sound words, dialogue, and thoughts or questions. The students look forward to beginning their first processed writing piece using what they have learned. We hope to publish and share many pieces of our work with you as the year goes on.

In Math, we are trailblazing our way through word problems by learning different strategies to help solve them. We know that we can solve any problem by using addition, subtraction, our 200 chart, ten frames, and/or drawing pictures.



Each of us continues to grow as a confident and independent learner. We look forward to a wonderful year! Happy Fall!

~Mrs. Higgins, Mr. Koppel, Mrs. McClellan, Mrs. Minutillo



MESsage from the Reading Room

THANK YOU to all the wonderful PTO people for the monies and gently used books to support our students in our Language Arts curriculum! Students in every grade level are reading so much throughout the day and enjoying the time with books and literacy. Because there are so many more books in each classroom, students are able to choose books on their reading level and of interest to them which makes reading more enjoyable and rewarding. We are very grateful to our families who are always there to support our hard work with our wonderful students!

Most sincerely,
Rena Shove
MES Reading Consultant



Third Grade Fall Happenings

It's hard to believe that summer has passed and another fall has arrived in our third grade classrooms. The children have already experienced some of the wonderful extra activities that make third grade such an awesome year. We recently took a field trip to The Eli Whitney Museum in Hamden, Connecticut. A big "Thank you" goes out to all the parents who so generously gave of their time to serve as chaperones for the day. The children loved it and it proved to be a very rich experience for them.

In science, the students have been studying life cycles and food chains. Eggs have been cracked and observed under hand lenses. Our anoles and crickets joined us and the classrooms were hopping (no pun intended, of course) as the children investigated these critters.



The children continue to blaze new trails in math. So far this year we have done a considerable amount of sampling and graphing exercises and are now reviewing subtraction and multiplication strategies.

The students are becoming more familiar with the Six Traits as we continue our journey in writing. Right now students are exploring and learning about the importance of voice as well as description in their writing.



In addition, this fall we have welcomed Reader's Workshop into our classrooms. The children are loving the reading and responding that goes with our new program. They are writing letters to their teachers in their Reader's Response journals using reading language.

They have also learned how to classify books into the many genres including mystery, fantasy, and biographies to name a few.

We look forward to an enjoyable fall and winter season as we continue our third grade journey.

The Third Grade Team

News from the Art Room:

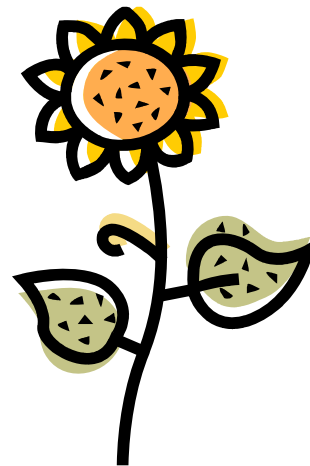


Kindergarten artists have been in full swing learning about and experiencing COLOR.

We work for several weeks using a variety of media to explore each color on the color wheel beginning with primary colors and then going on to secondaries. We will put all this artwork into a book and finish our last page with a mixing of all colors to create neutral hues. The books are finished with a cover created by each student. I have been working with Kindergarten artists on this color book unit for a few years now and firmly believe it provides a good grounding in color theory, painting, drawing, collage work

and having time to explore materials that our kindergarten students need. Please sit down with your children and go through their books with them when they bring them home. Your interest in their artwork will encourage them to continue to want to explore and enjoy art.

Grade One kicked off the new school year with printing. We made a variety of print art works, starting with shapes, cardboard pieces and finally sponges. Our sponge sunflowers were spectacular. We then created art based on apples; the “realistic, animated, abstract” drawings are so much fun, and the still life with apples paintings were great. As Halloween approached we sharpened our scissor skills with a ghost scene and then enjoyed sparkly spider webs. Great fun!



Second grade artists begin to work with more involved artwork and our first paintings were watercolor “negative space daisies”. In these the students painted everything except the white petals of the daisies. They understood that this created the white color of the flowers. We proceeded on to scarecrow self portraits which helped our students understand body proportions as well as how to create a pattern for fitting clothing onto a body. These scarecrow people were highly creative and very lively. Halloween inspired us to make our fun 3D spooky houses once again, great practice in cutting skills. Most recently we have made posters to honor our veterans for Veterans day, I will hang these in as many places as possible and the balance I will send to Rocky Neck Veterans Hospital.



The sea was our beginning idea for grade 3 and we drew sea life with glue and pastels. We will return to the sea when we work on a poster for protecting Long Island Sound, which dovetails with the students’ study of waterways in Connecticut. We

recently have been learning about Vincent Van Gogh’s contributions to the art world and have recreated his Starry Night painting in a more personal way. A student in every class seems to inevitably bring up some of the darker parts of his life story and the students

always want to discuss them. Rather than avoid their questions we talk a bit about Van Gogh and seem to get to a place where they know today we have doctors and medicines that can help people more than was possible in the 1800's. We then try to think about the beautiful paintings he created for us all to be inspired by. We soon will create clay luminaries to brighten the darkness too.

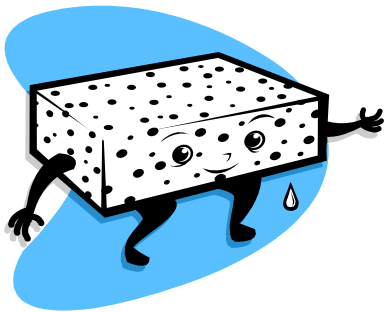
Yes, fourth grade is working presently on Fire Prevention posters, and honestly this is such a good reminder to think about ways to be safe with fire and electricity that we all too often take for granted. We began our school year by painting very loose and lively roosters to wake us up to the fact that we were back to routines and early mornings again. I honestly can say I fell in love with every single one of these paintings. I'm hoping we create a collage piece from their practice pre-painting sketches, they were so much fun.



We did manage to squeeze in a cartooning lesson on how to draw turning heads with some jack' lantern scenes, and soon we will be drawing from life with some real gourds and pumpkins in the art room; hoping they last!

Analogous colors began grade 5 this year and we have revisited the color wheel and color theory in more depth. Each student was asked to think of a creative way to include the color wheel in a painting of his or her choice. This lesson in developing a painting has put more responsibility on the students' shoulders to think through each step of creation in art. It began with the idea and initial intent. Once an idea is established the artist needs to plan how it will be shown with a composition to fill the paper. Drawing from references gathered is the next step and finally the artist adds the color, trying to stick with the initial intent to complete the painting. We're getting there with these and it has been step by step along the way. Gathering references to help us develop our drawings and remembering the initial intent has been challenging. I think many students are beginning to realize that art, too, requires hard work. We will definitely head into some 3D work after this lesson is completed.

Wanted:



Parents,
Any old toys, dolls, action figures, cars, tools, Halloween masks, are always welcome in the art room to inspire us to practice drawing and creating. I do go through sponges so fast that any donations of sponges (any size) would be most welcome too. Thank you again for all your support.

Mrs. Kathy Miller



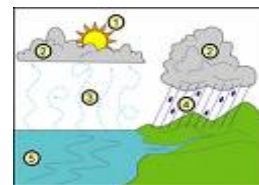
The fourth graders are flourishing through fall! The TRUCKers are flowing forth like a waterfall, as students positively encourage classmates and teachers, reassure them that it is okay to make mistakes, and politely remind each other that nobody is “perfect.”

Students have “launched” their Writer’s Notebook, by adding their voice, or personal touch, not only to decorating the covers, but also to each of their entries. During reading we use our strategies, such as *predicting* or *questioning*, to help us understand and enjoy our literature selections. We also take note of the author’s techniques to help their readers create a movie in their minds. In this way, we may learn from the pros.

In math, students conducted a lab to determine if you can predict a person’s height, given their arm span. Was there a link? Ask your child for a full report.

Our first unit in Social Studies has us getting to know Connecticut and its history. Did you know that Connecticut’s first people came here roughly 10,000 years ago? We also learned that the state bird is the American Robin, and everyone knows that the state flower is the Mountain Laurel. Do you know what the state animal is?

Student scientists have been busy studying the water cycle and locating places on earth where water is stored. We discovered that water is found in plants and is released into the air through the process of *transpiration*. All you need to demonstrate this process is a tree, a plastic bag, and a twist tie. Ask your child for more details.



We look forward to a colorful fall filled with many exciting activities as we spend time getting to know our first grade buddies, and celebrate a whole lot of whole class TRUCKers!

Mrs. DeRidder, Mrs. Shugrue, and Mrs. Wagner

From the School Counselor

Our Systematic Training for Effective Parenting Group is now in its fifth week. Our group is full. We are covering topics to include: how to recognize the goals of misbehavior and how to respond appropriately; how to encourage our children; how to use natural and logical consequences. We are also learning how to discipline by giving choices and allowing our children to be responsible for what they choose; teaching children self-control and exploring the techniques in the 1-2-3 Magic text and video.



The fifth grade Friendly Helper Program is involved in many helping activities this fall. We recently visited with the Senior citizens at Shepardson Community Center on October 21st to play a game of Bingo. A good time was had by all. The Friendly Helpers will also be involved in helping children pick out gifts for Christmas at the Middlebury Library in December.

World Kindness week November 9th - 15th

We will be celebrating World Kindness Week through our guidance classes by doing a special project. Our fifth grade Friendly Helpers will assist with our kindergarten and first graders by tracing their hands on paper, for each finger the students will come up with ideas of how we can be kind to each other, i.e. inviting others to play, holding the door for others; using good manners to name a few. They will be listening to the song “Hands” by Jewel, as they trace. The words to the song include the phrase, “in the end only kindness matters”. We will wrap up our project by singing the song “Kindness is Contagious”. A special Thank You to Chris Turecek for putting the song to music.



Enjoy the holidays with your family and friends!!!!

Karen Kemp, School Counselor

FIFTH GRADE

The fifth graders are off to a wonderful start to an exciting school year. Being the “seniors” in school means fun, but it also means more responsibility. Instrument lessons began in September and the first band meeting was October 20th. Students have adjusted well to their busy schedules. Wow!



Fifth graders recently participated in their first Scrabble competition. Everyone involved had a terrific time learning new words and strategies. We all look forward to playing again on November 25th! We had our first Book Chat where the fifth graders were able to share projects they completed about some of their favorite books while eating some healthy snacks!



A special thank you to the parents who have volunteered to help out with activities and events this year. You are helping to make fifth grade an even better place to be.

We are looking forward to a fabulous year!

Mr. Falzone, Mrs. Robinson, and Miss Tullgren

**POMPERAUG REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 15
NOTICE TO PARENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF**

SEPTEMBER 2009

A formal asbestos management program has been in place at Regional School District 15 since 1986. The purpose of this program is to identify any Asbestos-Containing Building Material (ACBM) that may be in our schools and to take steps to make sure this material does not present an exposure hazard to the students, faculty, or staff.

The asbestos management program is implemented through asbestos management plans. A separate plan has been developed for each of the following facilities:

Gainfield Elementary School
Long Meadow Elementary School
Mary Johnson School / District Offices
Memorial Middle School
Middlebury Elementary School
Pomperaug Elementary School
Pomperaug High School
Rochambeau Middle School

These management plans identify the locations of the ACBM in our schools, and detail our ongoing management program. The management plans also include descriptions of previous asbestos inspections and our plans for repair or removal of damaged asbestos-containing materials.

Under our asbestos management program, the ACBM listed in the management plans is inspected every six months to assure early detection of problem areas. Furthermore, each building is completely re-inspected once every three years by a Connecticut-licensed asbestos inspector to make sure that all ACBM is properly identified and that the asbestos management plans are up to date.

An asbestos management plan is maintained in each school office. Additionally, a complete set of management plans is maintained in the Superintendent's office at 286 Whittemore Road, Middlebury, Connecticut. These plans are available for review during normal business hours.

Regional School District 15 has designated Mr. Robert Dionne as the person responsible for ensuring that the requirements of our asbestos management program are properly implemented. Mr. Dionne can be contacted at 203 758-2470.

Integrated Pest Management Plan

September 2009

In compliance with Connecticut State Public Act #99-165, "An Act Concerning Notice of Pesticide Applications at Schools and Day Care Centers", Regional School District #15 hereby advises you that policies concerning the use and application of pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides are in use and available for review in the main office at each school.

Region 15 has developed three policies relating to this Public Act: 1) General Pest Control, 2) Rodent Control, and 3) Ornamental Turf Control. Each policy describes the procedures for applying pesticides and herbicides, and the brand names of the products to be used.

You have the right under the law to register your name as one to be notified in the event that an application of these controlled substances becomes necessary at your school. If an emergency condition requires immediate use of one of these substances, the school will attempt to notify you as soon as possible to advise you of the event. To receive notification of these applications, you must request registration of your name in writing and send it to the Principal of your school.