

March 27, 2009
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5H Updates

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Spring!

This time of year is so much fun in 5th grade. Children are confident in themselves as learners. There is a seriousness of purpose blended with the familiarity of routine and community that makes us able to really focus on learning. This week alone has highlighted many of these moments.

“You could hear a pin drop in here,” Dr. Boris-Schacter noted on Wednesday as she observed 5H students making Chinese brush paintings. The children were completely engaged mentally and physically in the creation of plum blossom watercolor paintings. They worked diligently for an hour with many commenting on how relaxing it was.

Likewise in our slide show about the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers, children were full of great questions and connections to the maps of China we created earlier in the week. Children noted where the greatest population density is and how it connects to the landforms, climate and agricultural regions of the country.

On a recent afternoon I paused at a wonderful cliffhanger in our read aloud novel, *True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi. Several children were scrambling to get at the book, while

others firmly planted themselves on the floor. “I will not leave until you read more!” What teacher doesn’t want to hear that?

In our newest math unit children are examining multiplication, division, factoring and balancing equations. There have been multiple *aha* moments in which children make connections to prior learning and are making conjectures about factors. *When multiplying two numbers - If you divide one factor in half and double the other do you get the same answer? Does it always work? Why does it work? What about thirds? Tenths? What about division? Does it work with fractions? Decimals? Odd numbers?*

Lastly, I introduced a grade 5 service project to students this week. In conjunction with our CARE values, every grade level at Hunnewell will be participating in a community service project during the month of April. Grade 5 has chosen the Pennies for Peace project. I read *Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg and Three Cups of Tea* to 5H students this week. It tells the story of Greg Mortenson and his work to build schools in Pakistan. During our class meeting we discussed how education brings privilege and understanding. Children were anxious to discuss what we can do. (Many of you may have read *Three Cups of Tea* or are familiar with the Central Asia

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Institute.)

Children had wonderful questions and demonstrated interest in learning more about the area and the story. More information on this project is forthcoming. In the meantime, please check out the project's website.

<http://www.penniesforpeace.org/home.html>

Dates

March 30

April 1 & 2 Language Arts MCAS

Note: Homework will be lighter over the next two weeks due to MCAS and the observance of religious holidays. However, I am not entirely eliminating homework. There will be a few longer assignments – such as the Mystery Postcard. All 5H students should continue to complete a minimum of 30 minutes of daily independent of reading. I can't emphasize enough the importance of independent reading time every day.

April 7 Early Release

April 10 No School

Social Studies - Ancient China

5H students will be creating mystery postcards from China next week. "Where in China is this 5H student?" Using geographical and historical clues, children must create a postcard from a specific location or time period in China.

Folktales

Ms. Vachani will begin a study of Chinese folktales with all 5H students next week. Students will be reading, analyzing and writing folk tales.