

September 26, 2008

5H News

Writing

Students in 5H completed their first personal narrative. We worked on generating good leads, finding the “so what, who cares?” in your story and showing not telling in your details. Children are now writing based upon a photograph to illustrate a “picture in life.”

Students in 5H are also completing science journal entries, current events responses and reading responses each week. There are outlines and strategies in student journals.

Science

5H students are working on straw cube and bridge structures this week. Ask your child about these projects! Ask your child what shapes are the strongest.

Upcoming Dates

September 30 No School

September 29 – October 10 ONE Reading Response due during 2 week period due to the holidays

Forms! Forms! Forms!

Be sure to return your child's NEO permission slip and math handbook permission slip.

Labels

We have a weekly class meeting in 5H to address social and academic issues. It is similar to the Open Circle program of the younger grades; however, at this age we deal with more abstract concepts. Our goal is to promote community and understanding. This week 5H students played the “Labels Game.” Each child received a label to wear on his/her forehead. The labels were common ones that children give each other; (athletic, smart, funny, mean, sweet, perfect, artistic, etc.) Children did not know their own label and no one could tell anyone else what the label said. Children then interacted with one another according to the labels. Quickly, students figured out the labels. We then spent time debriefing what it means to “be labeled” and why it is so harmful. Children so elegantly talked about feeling left out, prejudged, being seen one-dimensionally. 5H students were quick to note that even seemingly positive labels lead to problems. One child described how a label doesn't describe the whole person. Other students talked about the self-fulfilling prophecies of their labels. “Since I was labeled at mean, no one was nice to me, so to get their attention I was mean!” Others found themselves gravitating to “like-labeled” students, (not necessarily like-minded!) I encourage you to talk to your child about our activity and the concept of labeling.

5H

28 Cameron Street
Wellesley MA 02482

PHONE:
781-446-6275 x424

FAX:

E-MAIL:
HEATHER_HASKELL@
WELLESLEY.K12.MA.US

Mathematics

What's a Cluster?

A cluster is a group of related math problems. The cluster generally contains landmark, or familiar problems to help a child solve a more complex problem. For example, in solving 265×4 , a cluster may include 250×4 and 15×4 . These are problems that most fifth graders can solve mentally. When added together they form the solution for 265×4 . Another strategy may be to use subtraction. For example, 17×50 can be solved by using 20×50 and subtracting 3×50 .

Why Use Clusters?

Clusters are strategies for building number sense, mental math skills, estimation skills and flexibility in problem solving. In addition, they serve as a precursor to an understanding of expanded notation. Our goal is that children don't run for a calculator to solve 75×4 or solely rely on setting up a traditional algorithm, "*5 times 4, carry the 2, 7 times 4 plus the 2 I carried...*" This is not to say that there is not a place for the traditional algorithm in mathematics. However, using landmark numbers is more efficient in mentally solving problems and making estimates.

How Can I Help My Child?

Set up practice problems. Ask your child to solve landmark problems "*What is 25×4 ? How can you use that to help you with 250×4 ? $2,500 \times 4$?*" Help your child build an understanding of the powers of ten, "*How many times greater is 1,000 than 100?*" "*What is 299×3 without using paper and pencil, what problem is close to this one?*" Help your child with the basic multiplication facts. Children do need a level of automaticity to successfully solve more challenging problems, so their mental space is free for more complex thinking. If a child is stuck on the 8s, have him/her use the 4s to help. "*I know you know 4×4 , how can that help you with 4×8 ?*"

Will They Ever Learn the Algorithm?

Yes. Children will learn traditional algorithms, however they need to have

an understanding of what they are doing, why it works and when it is appropriate to use. The algorithm is not always the most efficient method, nor the one that makes sense for most children. It does not preserve place value. A child that automatically reaches for the algorithm to solve 25×3 , is not confident in using landmark numbers or mental math. Currently in 5H we are working with clusters, expanded notation ($4,025 \times 6$ by using $4,000 \times 6$ and 25×6), and related facts 49×5 is (50×5) minus 5. With students I will be introducing an expanded notation of the algorithm this year and looking at how they are related. We will be asking - *how is the algorithm working?* Simply memorizing a series of steps won't promote mathematical thinking. Working together to building mental math skills, place value and flexible thinking in math will go a long way toward a deeper understanding of mathematics.