

November 14, 2008

# 5H News

## MFA

check to the MFA. We will be back in time for lunch that day. Thank you!

Grade 5 students will be traveling to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston on Thursday December 4th. We will be traveling by school bus. We have two parent chaperones from each room attending with us. As a school, we now have a policy of taking a school bus whenever possible for field trips. It provides a consistent policy and ensures that every child arrives and departs from the field trip location at the same time.

The cost for the MFA field trip is \$6.50 for children and \$15 for adults. Please fill out the attached permission slip and send cash or a check made out to Heather Haskell in an envelope with your child's name. I will be writing one

## Ancient Egypt

5H began the study of Ancient Egypt this week. A major part of our unit is focused on developing non-fiction reading skills. Children began this week by reading categorical text and practicing how to pull big ideas from the text. For example, children read a National Geographic book about life in Ancient Egypt. Children read a section of the text, briefly closed the text, thought about key ideas from the section and made notes. (I use the term making notes, rather than taking notes, because we are looking for children to be actively engaged in developing understanding, not passively copying text or simply dragging a highlighter across a page.) For example, in reading about farming - children needed to pull the big idea that the Nile River flooded each year depositing fertile soil along the riverbanks for crops, not simply listing all crops grown in Egypt.

During Social Studies, children learn the process of gathering information, make sense of it and synthesize it to create writing and other projects reflecting understanding of the content. While the content of Ancient Egypt is important, learning the process skills is invaluable and transferable to all contents and topics. These are the lifelong thinking skills we want children to develop. (I will also attach a copy of the outline and a sample paragraph for the non-fiction response to our website.)

5H

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## “Good Person and Popular Person”

As parents and teachers, we spend a great deal of time talking to our children about being a “good person.” By the fifth grade, children are familiar with many outward signs of respect in a community - using please and thank you, saying excuse me or listening when someone is speaking. However, at this age, the issues of “popularity” or “being cool” begin to emerge and can cloud kindness and respect for some children.

In a recent class meeting I posed two questions to students. 1. Think of a fifth grader in our community that is a “good person.” Without naming names, list the qualities of this person. 2. Think of someone that is “Popular.” Without naming names, list the qualities of this person. Next, we discussed the qualities and talked about whether or not there were overlaps. The conversation took some interesting turns in discussing how a person may not be solidly in a category, or how being “good” all the time was hard because you don’t want to be “too perfect.” It was interesting how many of the qualities of being popular were not positive or in the “good person” category. From there, children discussed how the two categories could be combined so that being a good person IS the popular thing to do!

I probed 5H children about why it is so difficult to be a “good person.” I told children that I know this is what your parents value and talk about at dinner. No parent is overtly pushing the qualities of being popular at the expense of not being kind. Children make the most astute observations. One child shared that it was “so different” when my parents were growing up - bullies just hit you - they didn’t use mental power and try to drag you down. (I prompted children to really discuss these ideas at home - you may find things were not quite so different in the “dinosaur age” of your parents and teacher.) Another child shared that some parents DO value kids being popular or in with a certain crowd. This prompts me to pose questions to parents and myself; do we push our children toward certain behaviors of “fitting in” at the expense of the deeper

qualities we want in our children? Am I giving children enough validation for making the tough choices of being kind and listening to them explain just how hard that choice can be? A third child described how he would like to be “good” but it comes with great risk from certain peers. Lastly, several children noted that they really don’t feel the need to impress anyone else, “I have my friends and don’t really need to follow what anyone else says - even if it means I don’t have a lot of friends.”

The good news is children *do* learn to successfully navigate this social arena and find ways to balance being a good person with having friends. Children were eager to continue this conversation I encourage you to keep these conversations open with your child as these thoughts continue to develop and mature.

### 5H’s List of Qualities

#### “Good”

Trustworthy  
Includes others  
Happy for your success

Inviting

Thoughtful  
- check in w/you  
Understanding  
Shares

Kind  
No bragging

Fun

Can make you laugh  
Cheers you up

Similar interests/values

#### “Popular”

Leads a group  
Others fear  
Followed  
-physically,  
dress, language,  
opinions

Often, “better  
looking” on  
outside

Athletic

Can be nice, but  
chooses not to  
be all the time

Braggs  
Feels pressure  
Does not like  
Everyone  
Looks down

Good at  
“everything”

Not always  
trustworthy