

December 12, 2008

5H News

Mathematics

5H began a study of fractions this month. One of our goals is solidifying the concept of a fraction as a part/whole relationship. For example, $\frac{3}{4}$ means 3 parts out of a whole group of 4. Children need practice seeing how this relationship can be equivalent to others such as $\frac{6}{8}$ or $\frac{75}{100}$. Many children began by simply parroting, “multiply the top and bottom by the same number.” What does that mean? Why does that work? How does that work? We want students to understand equivalence in addition to applying it in problem solving situations.

Many students fear percentages. This year, children are learning to see percents as “out of 100.” 75% simple means 75 out of a whole of 100. Since our number and monetary systems are base 10, percents are simply an extension of

Upcoming Dates

December 15 Winter Concert 8:45

December 19 Nile Brochure Due

December 15-19 Courage Essay Work
Due – 19th

earlier learning.

Children should be able to explain why $\frac{5}{6}$ is less than $\frac{7}{8}$ not simply by finding a common denominator, but understanding that the “piece missing” from $\frac{7}{8}$ is a smaller piece than the one “missing” from $\frac{5}{6}$. Children are also working to see the relationships among fractions – why is $\frac{1}{8}$ half of $\frac{1}{4}$? If you know that $\frac{1}{4}$ is 25%, what percent is $\frac{1}{8}$, what percent is $\frac{5}{8}$?

Throughout the unit children will be working with a variety of fraction models. Area models are the most familiar, pies and bars. We also work with parts of a set; 5 out of 8 students in a group wore jeans or 4 out of 12 marbles were blue. Children will also be working with a number line model – seeing how fractions are part of the number line. This is most apparent in our Fraction Tracks game played later in the unit.

I encourage you to have conversations about fractional parts and how and when percents are used. Rather than multiplying by .2 to calculate a tip – teaching a child to take 10% or a tenth and double it. Work together to find out how much tax will be by finding one tenth of the bill and cutting that amount in half. Doubling and halving are familiar strategies from our multiplication and division unit earlier this year.

Most of all, I hope you enjoy those math conversations with your child as s/he makes sense of it all!

5H

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Ancient Egypt

5H students are completing a great deal of nonfiction reading in class related to Ancient

Egypt. In addition, students are working on writing responses to questions from the text. For example, *What was the purpose of work gangs in building the Great Pyramids? Describe the three phases of pyramid building.* Students are using a response rubric to be sure they have clearly answered the question with examples from the text. You may see the following rubric attached to responses in students' notebooks.

Rubric

- Topic Sentence that restates the question
- Gives a gist answer
- Gives 3 supporting details from the text
- Correct mechanics
- Clearly written
- Neatly written and presented
- On Time

Homework Note: Nile River Brochures due next week! Be sure to ask your child about his/her progress. Notes should be done by now and writing of final paragraphs happening at home.

December Novels

All 5H students began reading one of four novels last week. Students will be reading books, meeting in small groups for discussion, completing journal questions and writing an essay related to their reading. The four novels are There is a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom, Taking Sides, Loser and Bridge to Terabithia. All four novels deal with the issue of courage. The books are all rich for discussion and opening conversations about what it means to be courageous. The novels deal with issues such as racism, bullying and death.

Often, parents question reading "sad" or "difficult" books with children. Even though I have read each of these books many times, I still pause to reflect on our goals in reading with children. In addition to meeting our literacy goals of

building fluent readers who comprehend text, a book is a great way to engage in conversations with adults (and each other) about real life topics. These are issues children think and talk about. Having an assigned book to read grounds our conversation, helping children ask questions and hear that other people think and feel the same. Many of these conversations will happen with or without us as adults, and this gives adults a chance to answer questions.

This week's reading journals are about these books and the week of December 15th all children will be writing a "Courage RRJ." I will attach the description of this essay.