



UPDATE

March 29, 2010

Pathway to *Excellence*: KEEPING OUR CHILDREN A STEP AHEAD

Last Chance to See Enrichment Clusters in Action

Our kindergarten and 1st grade enrichment clusters begin Friday, March 26. You are invited to tour the K/1 enrichment clusters which round out the last series of clusters this school year. If you're curious about what happens on Fridays during E-slot and enrichment cluster time, this is a great opportunity to see enrichment in action at LME.

Nicole Levitan, LME Enrichment Coordinator, along with other Laurel Mountain staff will tour parents around the K/1 enrichment clusters from 8:00-9:00 A.M. on Thursday, April 1 and Friday, April 23. During the tour you will briefly stop by each cluster to see firsthand exciting activities taking place at Laurel Mountain.

This tour is open to **all** parents, not just parents of the K/1 students currently participating in enrichment clusters. A number of parents who took advantage of earlier tours enjoyed the opportunity to observe how enrichment clusters work and what they look like.

If you would like to join the upcoming tours – the last chance for the 2009-10 school year – go to the Laurel Mountain homepage at <http://schools.roundrockisd.org/laurelmountain/> and click on “Kindergarten and 1st Grade Enrichment Cluster Tours for Parents”. Then click on the pull-down menu and select “Kindergarten and 1st Grade Enrichment Cluster Tours for Parents”. Sign up under the date that works best for you. Your RSVP will save you a spot and guarantee that we have enough staff to provide tours. Please meet in the front office by 8:00 a.m. on your designated tour date; remember to sign in at the Raptor station. We hope you can make it!

Saved the Best for Last

It's hard to believe we are closing in on the end of the school year...but enrichment is going strong at Laurel Mountain.

Some might say *we saved the best for last* as our eager kindergarten and 1st grade students FINALLY get their chance at enrichment clusters! In fact, they participated in their first enrichment cluster meetings on Friday, March 26. Clusters for K/1 last six weeks followed by an Enrichment Cluster Showcase on May 14.

Being last isn't all bad because these students get a bonus: TWO enrichment clusters. Each round of enrichment clusters will last for three weeks, for a total of six weeks. Meeting dates for round #1 are March 26, April 1 and April 9; round #2 clusters will meet on April 16, 23 and 30.

We offered 15 enrichment cluster choices to our K/1 students:

- Clay Creations • Games and Puzzles • Out of this World
- Brick Masters • Dino Hunters • Amazing Animals
- Lion Chefs • Playing with Puppets • Crafty Fingers!
- Lego-Building Buddies • Perfectly Plantiful!
- Wrapped Up In Knots • Castles are Cool!
- Homey Habitats • We're Going on a Lion Hunt!!

How do all these enrichment activities get organized and executed? First off, the kindergarten and 1st graders ranked their top 5 enrichment cluster choices out of the 15 offered. Mrs. Levitan took the student preferences and entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet. She sent this information to LME parent Eric Deal who has written a computer program which sorts the children into their clusters based on preferences.

The computer program randomly assigns students to clusters, trying to give every child their first cluster choice. When that is not possible, the program then moves the students to their second choice, then third choice, etc. It also takes into account the number of students per cluster so there are no more than 15. This helps keep the facilitator-to-student ratio low.

For round #1 of the K/1 enrichment clusters, 128 students are in their first cluster choice, 67 are in their second choice, 15 are in their third choice, 5 are in their fourth choice and 2 are in their fifth choice.

For round #2, 44 students are in their first cluster choice, 80 are in their second choice, 64 are in their third choice, 28 are in their fourth choice and 2 are in their fifth choice.

Even though this is not a perfect system, we found it the fairest way to sort students into clusters. The computer program also allows us to track student choices throughout their years at LME.

Please look for the ENews updates sent periodically throughout the cluster meetings. If you are not signed up on E-news, visit the Laurel Mountain PTA website and click on "Mailing Lists". Then, scroll down for more information on how to sign up for "Round Rock ISD ENews". Also check-out our enrichment bulletin board from the front office which displays photographs and summaries from our K/1 enrichment clusters.

Enrichment Excitement in the 2nd Grade

LME's 2nd and 3rd graders participated in their enrichment clusters from January to March, culminating with the showcase on March 12. However, the enrichment fun does not stop there...

Our 2nd graders began their E-slot electives March 26 and will continue through April 30. The E-slot electives are different than clusters; the idea is to provide students with another opportunity for enrichment in areas of student interests. The E-slot electives span six weeks total – the 2nd graders will participate in two E-slot electives, each one meeting for three weeks. The students are not expected to make a product or service like with enrichment clusters. Rather, the E-slot electives are similar to mini-courses or clubs.

Students gave their input on which E-slot elective they wanted to participate. They reviewed a brochure, very similar to the one they received when they chose their enrichment clusters. Next, they ranked their choices for electives. Just like with enrichment clusters, Mrs. Levitan entered the preferences into a spread sheet, which was then sent to Eric Deal whose computer program sorted the students into E-slot electives based on their rankings.

2nd grade students chose from the following six E-slot electives:

Let's Rock and Roll • Dinosaurs • Top Chefs of LME
Green Art • Dandy Doodling • Lego Creates

Our 2nd grade teachers considered the interest surveys students completed in August 2009 to decide on the different offerings for the E-slot elective, ensuring there was something for everyone.

In round #1 of E-slot electives, 87 2nd graders are in their first choice, 27 students are in their second choice, 1 student is in his/her third choice and no students were placed in their fourth, fifth or sixth choice.

In round #2 of the E-slot electives, 16 2nd graders will be in their first choice, 69 in their second choice, 29 in their third choice, 1 student in his/her fourth choice and no students got their fifth or sixth choice.

We are very excited about the continuation of enrichment before and after a grade level's enrichment clusters. The E-slot electives are another way to encourage enrichment during the regular school day.

Thank You to our Family and Community Enrichment Supporters

OLIVIER PROULX, National Instruments Mentor and helper with *NXT*, a 4th/5th grade E-slot elective

JESSIE LEE, RONDA YANG and HELEN SI, LME parents and E-slot presenters to Ms. Rumpf's 2nd grade class about Chinese New Year

MITHU DEB, local artist and a facilitator for *Clay Creations*, a 2nd/3rd grade enrichment cluster

SUNJA KIM and JA KYUNG KIM, LME parents and E-slot presenters to Mrs. Prentice's kindergarten class on Korean Lunar New Year

DR. DEREK WILLS, UT Astronomy professor and E-slot presenter to kindergarten students on space

JUGAL AMODWALA, LME student and co-facilitator for *Origami Fun*, 4th/5th grade E-slot elective

ANNA ELMAN, LME parent and resource for *Mad Science*, a 2nd/3rd grade enrichment cluster

CAROL DUNCAN, SWATI BIBIKAR, TEJASHREE UPPALA, PAULA HUI and KATHERINE BURNS, LME parents and lantern makers with Mrs. Fox's kindergarten class

MANDIRA VENKAT, former LME student and co-facilitator for *Future Change Makers*, a 2nd/3rd grade enrichment cluster

JANE E (dog groomer), **EDWARD FLORES** and **SAMANTHA FOSS** (dog trainer), community members from Mud Puppies and presenters to *Paws and Claws*, a 2nd/3rd grade enrichment cluster

