

Laurel Mountain 2nd and 3rd graders participated in their first enrichment cluster meetings this past Friday, January 23rd. This year, we offered 16 different enrichment clusters to those students.

During class time, the 2nd and 3rd graders ranked their top 4 cluster choices. Mrs. Levitan took their preferences and entered that data into a spreadsheet. Then, she sent the spreadsheet to Eric Deal, a Laurel Mountain parent. Mr. Deal wrote a program that sorts all of the students into their clusters based on how their preferences.

The computer program randomly assigns the students to their clusters. The program tries to give every child their first choice. When that is not able to happen, then the program moves the students their second choice, then their third choice and finally their fourth choice. Also, the program takes into account the number of students per cluster, trying not to give more than 15 students per cluster. This helps keep the facilitator to student ratio low.

With our 2nd and 3rd grade students, 155 students are in their 1st cluster choice, 58 are in their 2nd cluster choice, 24 are in their 3rd cluster choice and 8 students are in their 4th cluster choice. Even though this is not a perfect system, we feel that this is the fairest way possible to sort the students. Using the program will also allow us to track student choices throughout their years at LME.

Below you will find a summary of what took place during each first cluster meeting.

Happy Feet - Mrs. Jackson

Happy Feet had a great first cluster. Joyce Willett of Joyce Willett Studio of Dance came and spoke with the children about how she got involved in dance and how it became her career. She also taught us some tap steps and we tapped down the hall. We played rhythm games, too. We decided that maybe after we learn about dance, we will choreograph some dances of our own and teach them to each other. If we have time we may perform for a

group to be determined in the future. Next week, Kailani Ward, a real ballerina, is coming to talk to us.

The Hot Spot - Mrs. Nguyen

The Hot Spot is ready to erupt with excitement. During our first meeting, we shared what we knew about volcanoes and the room was spewing with wonderful facts. We will research and build models of famous volcanoes around the world...Mt. Fuji, Mt. Saint Helens and Mt. Vesuvius. We will also make fake lava rocks and if you stick around long enough, there might even be an eruption. The children are fired up to begin our voyage into a volcano.

Sew What? - Mrs. Campbell

The cluster started with the teacher explaining what cross-stitch is and showed them two pictures that the teacher had finished. The children learned how to put their cross-stitch rings on their piece of fabric. The children learned how to thread a needle and make "X"s on their fabric.

Champion Chefs - Mrs. Schuster and Mrs. Wheeler

The first meeting of Iron Chefs of LME was a huge success! Our facilitator chefs and apprentice chefs had a brief discussion about food to break the ice, and then dove right into cooking. Our apprentice chefs made Indian-style pita snacks, and had a fabulous time while cooking; using and cleaning up materials in an orderly fashion; and getting along. We are all excited about the many types of food our chefs will make in the future, and they've decided that Champion Chefs will be our cluster's new title.

Lion's Pride Quilters - Mrs. Marshall and Mrs. Rung

For the first meeting of the Lion's Pride Quilters, we discussed our purpose and what each of us would like to learn. The decision was for each member to make a quilt to donate to the "Linus Project". The mission of the "Linus Project" is: To provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need through the gift of new, handmade blankets. After creating a quilt to donate, it is the hope of the cluster group for each member to design and

make a quilt of their own. Next, we explored several different quilts made by Mrs. Marshall, some quilt patterns and quilting books. The group also used wood geometric shapes to create a variety of designs. We also reviewed important sewing safety rules and rules to help ensure the success of each project. It was a great first meeting that generated a lot of excitement about our upcoming clusters.

Flutter Friends - Mrs. Hieronymus and Mrs. Markle

On our first meeting we talked about why everyone chose this cluster. We watched a video about Monarch butterflies and planted milkweed seeds in the garden and in seed starter trays. We decided to research some butterflies of Texas and to create a butterfly habitat in the garden as a part of our final product. We also decided that we want to bring kindergarten students to the garden and teach them what we learn through our butterfly research.

Hocus Pocus! - Mrs. Wenum and Mrs. Briggs

Now you see it! Now you don't! The Hocus Pocus Enrichment Cluster kicked off its first meeting on Friday, January 23, 2009. All the students came in very excited sharing their magic stories and tricks. Next we explored several magic kits practicing with wands, dice, cards, ropes, paper and rulers. Everyone was excited to end the cluster learning a new "Magic Dice Trick." We are excited to have our next meeting and discuss what products and service we will do as magicians....

Fabulous Fable Theatre - Mrs. Carrera and Mrs. Sanders

Today, the 'Fabulous Fable Theatre' group of second and third graders met. We discussed what the Cluster is all about, practiced some vocal warm-up exercises, played an interaction game, read Chicken Little, then had everyone read parts and get up on stage. Next time, we'll practice more vocal/movement exercises, and learn some theatre terms. Then we'll read and choose a few different 'fable' stories to which the students will help write their own short-skit scripts.

Clay Creations - Ms. Schorn and Ms. Elliott

The Clay Creations Cluster began their cluster observing a potter, Ms. Mithu Deb, who demonstrated her skill on the potter's wheel. We watched as she turned the piece of clay into a beautifully formed bowl. She taught us how to wedge the clay first to ensure there were not any air bubbles in it. Next, she showed us how to center the clay on the potter's wheel. Centering is very important so that the final product is balanced. Two students worked on the potter's wheel while the other students worked with clay to create a design of his or her choice. Next week, we will begin learning techniques and continue taking turns on the potter's wheel.

Fantastic Fitness Fun - Ms. Peters and Mrs. Gordon

During FANTASTIC FITNESS FUN, we talked about the benefits of a healthy diet and getting exercise regularly. Then, we worked out by doing some TABO! The kids really enjoyed the motions and movement of kick-boxing and punching! Our cluster decided on creating a work-out video that includes three parts; stretching for warming up, cardio to get our hearts pumping and finally relaxation techniques to help with our cool down. We look forward to sharing our video with other students in the school and helping LME become a healthier community!

Spotlight on Kids with Character - Ms. Bolch and Mr. Ferrin

Friday, January 23rd, eight second and third grade girls had their first meeting for the cluster, "Spotlight on Kids with Character". For the first meeting, the girls read over 2 plays that highlight different positive character qualities. They each picked the part they wanted to read and did a run through of both plays. They then discussed what they liked about each play, and were asked to make a decision about which play they want to work with for this cluster. They chose a play called "Little Bit" which highlights being responsible. The girls then decided that they would like to change many of the names in the play (including the title). They each gave suggestions for different names of characters and

decided that voting would be the easiest way to pick which names would actually be used. When all of this was done, about half of the names were changed, and the name of the play is now "Oreo." Time was almost up, so they wrapped up by deciding how they wanted to perform this play. They overwhelmingly wanted to perform a traditional play, and discussed a few ways that they could make props, such as roller skates. The girls worked very well together, were able to listen to each other's ideas, and showed that they really are Kids with Character!

Hooked On Paint - Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Deal

The Hooked on Painting cluster definitely loves to paint! After thinking briefly about what they want to do in this cluster and what kind of painting and painters they enjoy, the kids went straight to painting. Today they got to do some freestyle painting to explore different types of paint brushes and practice thinking about what they want to paint, sketching it out, and then painting it. The kids are thinking about doing some type of art show with their final products and a few kids are interested in incorporating a charitable organization into this project in some way. Next week we'll have a special guest who will present an artist and work with the kids to emulate a specific style of painting. The kids will be working on their masterpieces soon!

Remarkable Reptiles - Mrs. Scott

We had a great time playing with my two bearded dragons. The children learned how to hold the dragons, what they eat, and how to care for them. They saw the dragons hunting for crickets and catching them. We also watched a video and learned about a variety of reptiles. We learned that snakes have a scale over their eyes because they do not have eyelids. Snakes cannot hear, but feel vibrations. Also, we found out that Komodo dragons are the most dangerous lizards alive.

Brain Puzzlers - Mrs. Trejo

We learned about 5 different types of puzzles: logic grids, math, word, brain teasers, and jigsaw. The students got the opportunity to try each of the five types of puzzles. We used

the internet to try a couple of puzzles that the students can access at home or school. The website is www.mathplayground.com. The students can access my teacher web page as well to get to a couple of the online puzzles. They are located on my Links page. At the end of the one-hour session, the students were given the opportunity to complete any of the five types of puzzles that were introduced.

Reach for the Stars - Mr. Johnston

This week in "Star Wars" we started out taking a trip through the universe with Ms. Frizzle and the Magic School Bus, where we learned about several kinds of stars and clusters of stars called constellations. As a group we talked about what we would like to do in our cluster, including renaming it. I introduced the "Reach for the Stars" Cluster. We had several other submissions, but after a close vote "Reach for the Stars" won. We also came up with several project ideas including: Solar System Model, Mural of the Solar System and a Constellation Box. The kids also came up with materials they may need, jobs that will need to be assigned and who we would like to make our project for. We are off to a great start and I can not wait to see what they produce.

The Computer Connection - Ms. Rumpf and Mr. Weiler

The Computer Connection is still in the process of voting on a name for our cluster. We will learn how to use different programs like Photo Story and PowerPoint. After that we will create tutorials on how to use the programs. The first class, Mr. Weiler took apart a computer and showed us the different parts and what they do.