

# EAST FARMS SCHOOL

February 1, 2012

## From the Principal's Desk

Dear Families,

During our December assembly our next Core Belief, **Relationships Matter**, was introduced to all of the students. At the assembly, I shared the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* by Carol McCloud. Bucket filling is an easy-to-understand concept: *Everyone carries an invisible bucket that holds our good thoughts and feelings. When our buckets are full, we feel happy and when our buckets are empty, we feel sad.*



Children quickly understand that they can fill buckets when they do and say things that are kind, considerate, caring, and respectful. They also learn that when they are mean, inconsiderate, uncaring, or disrespectful, they dip into buckets and remove those good feelings. Even the youngest child understands that actions and words can either fill a bucket or dip into it.

- Bucket filling creates positive energy that is contagious.
- Bucket filling reduces negativity and self-centeredness and increases kindness, compassion, resiliency, and other-centeredness.

During the next few months the teachers will be introducing the concept of a "lid" that we all have for our buckets. Lids help protect our buckets from others who may dip into them. We can also use our lids to help protect others. This is one way that we can form positive relationships!

If you would like to learn more about bucket filling, visit the Bucket Fillers website, [www.bucketfillers101.com](http://www.bucketfillers101.com). Bucket Fillers offer a free weekly e-newsletter for parents and teachers.

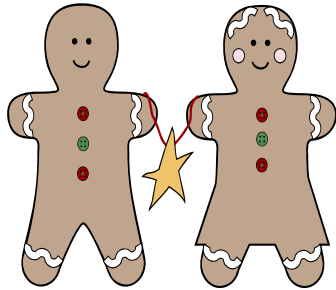
Together we can nurture the whole child and ensure that each student receives a new opportunity every day to perform at his/her best. We believe that developing caring and supportive relationships between and among educators, students, and parents leads to higher levels of student achievement.

Sincerely,

*Renee St. Hilaire*

# Kindergarten

Kindergartners have been learning about and enjoying traditional tales and Mother Goose Rhymes during Readers and Writers Workshop. Some of our favorite traditional tales have been "The Gingerbread Man," "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" and "The Little Red Hen." We have also enjoyed listening to many fractured tales.



These tales follow the traditional version of the story but with a twist at the end. Our favorite tale is not about a boy at all but a Gingerbread Girl. She is a very smart cookie and outfoxes the fox.

Our mini lessons focused on character development, story structure — all stories have a beginning, middle and end, traditional tales all begin with Once Upon a

Time, and that there is an element of magic to them. We compared and contrasted different versions of tales.

We continue to reinforce letter-sound connections, saying a word slowly and stretching it out, leaving a space between words and using our word wall to help with high frequency words.

Mother Goose came for a visit recently. She shared many of her Nursery Rhymes and Traditional Tales with us. This was a very exciting day in Kindergarten. The children were just mesmerized by her. It was fun watching them join in with the rhymes and songs.



In the area of mathematics, Kindergartners have continued to explore place value concepts with higher number (i.e. understanding

that 25 is 2 tens and 5 ones, etc.). We continue to practice counting by 10s to 100 and to use the 1-100 number chart to discover new number patterns. In addition, each Kindergartner has a "Math Mystery" journal where number stories (word problems) are investigated and solved using diagrams, symbols and number sentences. Students need to show their work. Our emphasis is in organizing their data rather than simply writing an answer. We are very proud of our students growing number sense and accomplishments as math problem solvers! Soon we will be celebrating our upcoming 100th day in school with special number activities and projects. It has been exciting to see how much our Kindergartners have grown over this period of time!



# Grade 1

First graders have been traveling around the world! Through books and videos they have gone on African safaris, journeyed through South American rainforests and even explored the icy lands of Antarctica. By the end of their world tour, the first graders will have visited all seven continents. By locating places on maps and globes and reading both fiction and non fiction literature, the children have been making many exciting discoveries about the world they live in. The around the world unit will culminate with an interdisciplinary presentation in March. Details will be forthcoming.



It has been so exciting to watch the first graders blossom into independent readers and writers. Can you believe they are more than halfway through their first grade year? (Yes, the 100th day celebration is approaching!) They've learned so much and are more than ready for the fun learning experiences ahead. As children become more independent with their reading both at home and at school, it will be important for them to have opportunities to talk about the stories they are reading. This will help them stay actively engaged in what they are reading, as well as help adults monitor their thinking and comprehension. Even if your child is a highly competent and independent reader, it is still very important to continue to read books together and discuss stories often.



First graders have been talking about books with their learning partners during our independent reading time. They have been reading together and then discussing elements (character, setting, problem/goal, events/action, solution/accomplishment and ending) of a story. Ask your child about story elements as he/she reads with you. Also, challenge

your child with "Why do you think that?" when they share their thinking with you.

In Writer's Workshop, first graders are continuing to work on adding details and description, staying focused on one topic, stretching their words slowly to hear all of the sounds from the first to the last, using ending punctuation and writing sequential stories that include a beginning, middle and ending. In the most recent writers' workshop unit, the children were recalling experiences from their own lives and capturing them in small moment stories. The

children enthusiastically shared their best work with students from another first grade class. Please continue to help your child notice small moments happening in his/her life that can be stretched into a small moment story. The final product might even become a published book!

In math on most Fridays, the children will be working with flexible groups (Flex Math) according to their mathematical needs. They will be working with different teachers and peers while they become great math thinkers. In Flex Math, we focus on various aspects of our Everyday Math curriculum. Upcoming topics may include: money, time and number stories. Asking your child to tell you the time or to exchange pennies, nickels and dimes for fewer coins are quick activities to do at home. Don't forget to have your child continue to practice recall of addition and subtraction facts up to ten. Counting by 2's, 5's and 10's is also very important.

Coming soon... our first Science Unit... States of Matter!

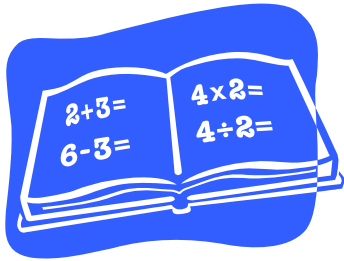
Recess Reminder: Children should be dressed warmly (winter jacket, hat, and mittens) as we try to go outside on most days.

As always, thank you for all of your wonderful support at home and at school.

# Grade 2

Second graders have been hard at work! In math, we have been working on teaching the process and deepening the students' understanding of subtraction with a different method, we ask that you please understand that the students in second grade are expected to solve their problems using the method taught in school. If you have any questions regarding that method, do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher. The students have also been working on understanding that multiplication is finding the total number of objects in equal groups. They are building arrays to solve these problems; please keep in mind that it is only a brief introduction and students are not expected to have mastered the concept yet. We will continue to practice it. Also in math, please continue to practice addition and subtraction facts up to 18 with your child at home. Students are expected to have mastered these facts in order to meet year end standard.

In reading and writing, we are continuing to study realistic fiction. We are spending a tremendous amount of time reading realistic fiction stories. Students are applying what they have



learned from our analysis of the books to their own realistic fiction stories they are writing. Students are learning to recognize the predictable structure in narratives. They are beginning to pay attention to the setting and problem/solution, in addition to character development. In writing, students are using what they have learned from reading realistic fiction stories and writing believable stories about a human main character who experiences a realistic problem.

In second grade, we have a new phonics principle each week that is designed to address the needs of the students to help them become better readers and writers. It is important that students not only learn the works for that week, but also that they continue spelling those words correctly in their writing. The phonics principle is meant to be applied for the remainder of the students' careers! Please hold onto the sheets that come home weekly with your child, review them with him or her and hold your student accountable for the phonics principles in his or her work.

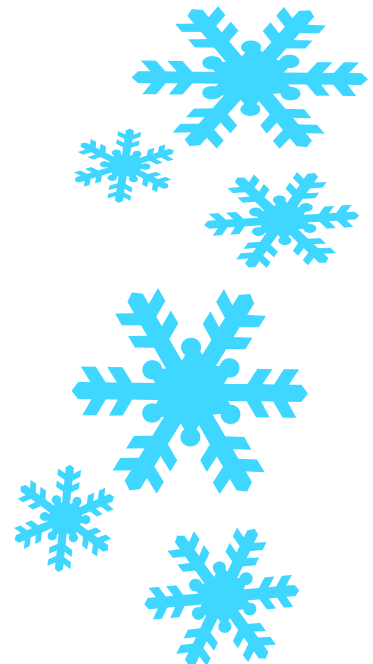


We are in the midst of our study of nutrition in science. We are studying the importance of being healthy and making

healthy decisions at school and at home. We have introduced My Plate, which is how we proportionally eat foods from the five food groups, and have discussed why each group is nutritional and valuable for creating strong healthy bodies.



Thank you for all your support at home with the learning we do in second grade. We couldn't do it without you!



# Grade 3

It may be cold outside but in third grade rooms at East Farms it's been hot, hot, hot!! That's because students have been learning exciting new information about realistic fiction, geometry, and early Colonial Americans

We continue to 'think about our thinking' in our Realistic Fiction Unit in Reading. Students are learning about the genre and learning how authors develop realistic characters that we can connect to. Students are looking for details to support their ideas when they talk and write about their reading. They are learning that they must be able

pick out parts of the text to show where their ideas

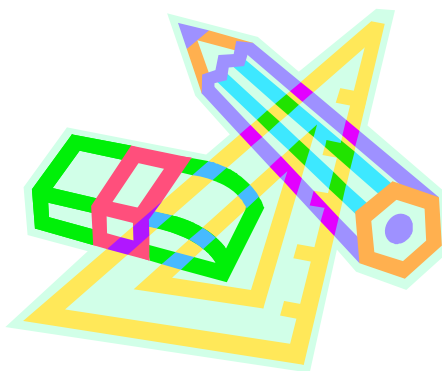
come from. Finding 'text evidence' is important when students talk or write about their reading. One way to be sure students are doing this is to write on sticky notes some of their thoughts and note the details from the text. Sticky notes can be recording reactions to the text in the form of personal connections, questions they have, predictions, surprises, new learning, etc. Looking at your child's sticky notes is a great way to kick off a conversation about a



book. Talk with your child about what they are reading and thinking.

Realistic Fiction is the focus of our writing unit too. Students have tried their hand at developing realistic characters. They have thought about the traits they want their character to possess and incorporated them into their writing. The Realistic Fiction stories written during this unit focused on creating situations with realistic problems and solutions. Other lessons during this unit centered on stretching out the main event and making sure that our writing has a balance of action, dialogue, and description.

Third graders have been busy with a unit on Geometry. Students have been learning the definitions of terms like segments, rays and lines, as well as being able to identify geometric figures. Math continues to be an exciting time of the day. Incorporated into our weekly lessons are hands-on activities and engaging games that challenge or extend student strategies to problem solve. At home, you can support your child by helping him or her practice math facts and play games on the Everyday math website or other math websites.



Third graders have begun their second Social Studies unit for the year on Early Colonial Americans. The unit began with the age of explorations and the reasons that explorers ventured out into the unknown world. The unit will focus on the early time period of the 1600's which includes the Plymouth Colony. Students will investigate the geography, food, shelter, clothing, traditions and values of these people. They will make comparisons and learn about the conflicts that arose with the Native Americans that were already living in this area. Third graders look forward to a presentation on Colonial Kids from the Connecticut Historical Society in late February.

# Grade 4

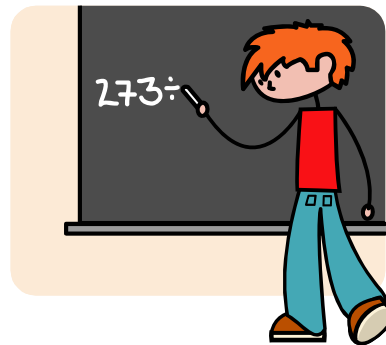
Understanding universal themes will continue to be the key teaching point of our current fantasy unit, in reading. Additionally, through the reading of a variety of texts, the students will learn about the universal elements of fantasy. In writing, students have begun to craft "fantastical" stories. Throughout the process, the students will be given opportunities to write stories that include imaginative characters, setting, and plot elements. They'll focus on developing stories that includes rising action, tension, and problem resolution that exemplifies a universal struggle or theme.

In math, we've just concluded our unit on division. In addition to solving basic division equations, the students had numerous opportunities to apply their understanding of division to solving complex division word problems. Please encourage your child to practice his/her multiplication/division fact triangles at least three times a week. As we proceed through the curriculum, automaticity becomes

increasingly crucial. Our next math unit will be *Fraction and Their Uses: Chance and Probability*.

Science continues to be a popular subject. Currently we are exploring the concept of energy and discovering some of the fundamental properties of electricity and magnetism.

REMINDER: Now that the weather has gotten cold, please be sure that your child is responsible for bringing a hat and gloves to school every day. Students *will not* be allowed outside on the playground without a hat and gloves. Thank you for your help.



## Physical Education News

The gymnasium is a busy and exciting place this winter! Our basketball unit was a great success. Students learned some interesting facts leading to the invention of the sport, and participated in activities designed to further skill development.

We are now looking forward to beginning our Circus Skills unit. Emphasis will be placed on the scientific principals involved, eye-hand coordination, balance and stability. The skills introduced in this unit include: juggling, plate spinning, pogo



stick skills, stilt walking, dance stick manipulation, Diablo spinning (Chinese yo-yo), balance board challenges and runt bike skills (mini two-wheeler).

The Farmington High School Peer Leader group has organized a field trip to our school in February. The high school students will spend some hands-on time in the gym during the Circus unit. We are all looking forward to their visit!

REMINDER...

Please be sure that students pack sneakers each day this winter.

# Music



**Congratulations to our Fourth Graders for a wonderful concert!** What a great example of what one can accomplish given effort! The new season of **Blue Ribbon Singers** will start on **Wednesday, February 1st at 8:00 am.** **New members** (and old members) are most welcome!

Members of Blue Ribbon Singers are welcome to come in at **7:45 on Wednesdays** for the **Recorder Ensemble.** Students will challenge themselves by learning how to play more difficult recorder pieces in multiple parts.

**Kindergarten** music students just completed a unit on **Nursery Rhymes and Songs.** We have practiced changing our voices to sing high or low pitches. We can pat or play a fast or slow steady beat on an instrument. We also know loud and soft and jumpy and smooth. These terms will help us with the upcoming listening unit based on "The Carnival of the Animals" by Sean Saints.

**First graders** have been working on music literacy by reading and writing the pitches so and mi on the treble staff. We are now beginning to add la to our known notes. So far we can use rhythm syllables for quarter and eighth notes and the quarter rest. We have been studying the music of various **Continents** to integrate with classroom curriculum. So far, students have learned songs from Asia and Africa. Ask your first grader to show you how to sing "Atama Kata" and "Kye, Kye, Kule", which are Japanese and African game-songs similar to our own Head and Shoulders! On **March 8<sup>th</sup>** students will present all they have learned in their classrooms, music, art and P.E. in a special presentation. Further information will be sent home over the next few weeks.

**Second graders** did a wonderful job on their special presentation about "Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds." In music, Second Graders learned how composers use patterns in music and why jingles are easy to remember. Students applied these concepts

and skills to their own commercial jingles for healthy eating! Congratulations, Second Grade.



**Third graders** have begun a unit on the four families of instruments in the orchestra. We learned what each instrument sounds like, the physics of how the sound is produced and how composers choose what instrument works best in a piece. We have been visiting the New York Philharmonic website at [www.nyphilkids.org](http://www.nyphilkids.org) to assist in our

studies. Students will be working on a project at home to create their own instrument and present how it produces sound and how a composer could use their instrument to communicate different feelings. Watch your child's homework folder for information on this project!

**Fourth graders** will continue to use the recorder and work on singing, reading, and writing. We will work toward playing "Ode to Joy" which was written by the next composer we will be studying, **Ludwig Van Beethoven.** Each student will still be expected to continue to practice for their **Recorder Karate Belts.** This should consist of at least **fifteen minutes** of practice between each music class. The next **Fourth Grade Concert** will be held on **May 16th.**

Please visit "The Music Room" website at <http://www.fpsct.org/page.cfm?p=1001>. In "The Music Room" you will find curriculum materials and how to reinforce skills at home that we have learned in music class. There is also a bulletin board across from the main office where you can find information and extra forms that have been sent home! As always, please contact us with any questions or comments and thank you for your continued support of our music program. - Mrs. Sullivan, Mrs. Germain and Ms. Hernandez

*We're on the Web!*

[www.fpsct.org](http://www.fpsct.org)



## Dates to Remember

### February

- 1 Good Start, 6:30 p.m.
- 7 Grade 2 Strings Night, 7:00 p.m.
- 16 Grade 3 Strings Night, 7:00 p.m.
- 17 Cultural Arts Assembly
- 20 **No School, President's Day**
- 28 **Grade 4 Parent Night at West Woods, 7:00 p.m.**



### March

- 1-9 CMTs
- 7 Good Start, 6:30 p.m.
- 9 First Grade Field Trip to Children's Museum in West Hartford
- 16 Core Belief Assembly, 2:25 p.m.
- 23 Report Cards Go Home
- 26 Parent-Teacher Conferences, Early Dismissal at 1:15 p.m.
- 27 Parent-Teacher Conferences, Early Dismissal at 1:15 p.m.
- 28 PTO Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

