

UNION SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



From the Principal's Desk

February 2012

When my children were young, we always asked them the same question at the dinner table: *What did you learn in school today?* We didn't ask the more interesting question: *Why are you learning that?*

At Union School we are continuing to focus on teaching our children to understand and articulate the purpose of learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge. We've taught them to ask: **Why is this important?** We want to be sure our students understand how what they are learning in school connects to the real world, other disciplines, and how they can use their new learning in authentic and important ways. Knowing the purpose for learning increases motivation and performance. Typically there are multiple reasons why learning something new is important. For example, here are 5 reasons learning music is important:

- We learn music to experience the joy of performing to a real and appreciative audience, whether the audience is a packed auditorium or Grandpa in the living room.
- We learn music to engage with other people, playing in an orchestra or a garage band, attending concerts, dancing to our favorite tunes, or simply singing to our children. Music enriches our lives and relationships, as listeners as well as performers.
- Learning music is important because it has a positive impact on learning across other disciplines. For example, learning rhythms and counting beats help students develop math skills. Brain-research tells us that learning music makes us smarter.
- Music can help citizens from diverse cultures make positive connections. Musicians in China, India, Kenya, and Unionville communicate in a language understood and appreciated by all. Music is a universal language.
- Learning music is fun!

I hope you will continue to engage in great dinner-time conversations that go well beyond the Katz family's *What did you learn in school today?* You just might find your family conversations become more interesting, thought-provoking, and keep you all at the dinner table a little bit longer! Bon Appetit!

Lynn



Dates to Remember

- February 9 PTO Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- February 11 BOE Meeting, 7:00 p.m. FHS Special Budget Workshop
- February 13 BOE Meeting, 7:00 p.m. FHS Regular BOA Meeting/ Budget Workshop
- February 14 BOE Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Budget Workshop
- February 15 BOE Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Budget Workshop (If needed)
- February 16 Grade 2 & 3, Clue Night 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- February 20 School Closed, Presidents Day
- February 27 BOE Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
- February 28 Parents Night WWUES, 7:00 p.m.

Kindergarten News

What an exciting time in Kindergarten! We love all kinds of winter topics - animals that live in Polar Regions like penguins and polar bears, poems about snowmen and mittens, and we are hoping for some snow so we can bundle up in our snow gear and play in the snow during an extended recess.

Kindergartners are learning so much about non-fiction books. In our Informational reading unit, we have learned that non-fiction books are full of facts and teach us about different topics. In the coming weeks we will be learning about different parts of non-fiction books like the table of contents, photographs, diagrams and labels. These special parts of the book help us find information and learn. We are using this information to help us write our own non-fiction books.

In math, we continue to explore larger numbers; tricky teens and beyond! We are adding and telling number stories to make it interesting! We play lots of games that help us practice making teen numbers; we learned that teen numbers are 10 and some more! We are counting to 100 by ones and tens, and we are practicing reading and writing numbers to 20.

We heard a story about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and learned that he taught everyone to be kind to each other. That is something we practice in Kindergarten every day!



First Grade News

First graders are working hard to get to know the characters in their books. As we read we are looking at what the characters are doing, how they are acting and what they are saying. We notice what they like and dislike. We are learning to infer what kind of people they are and how they are feeling in certain situations and how their feelings change across the story.

In writing, we have been working hard on our small moment stories. We talked about how as authors of small moment stories, we need to stretch the action across several pages because the moment is so important. We discussed that just like the authors of our favorite books, we can add details in many ways including using our senses, having our characters talk, describing how our bodies are moving, sharing the characters' thoughts and feelings and adding sounds. By adding these details we make our stories come alive. The first graders have been very busy writing their own writing small moment stories and will be ready to publish again soon.

In math the children have been using rulers and tape measures to measure various objects around the classroom. We have discussed how important it is to know where to line up the rule to measure accurately. The students are also learning about "fact power" which is the instant recall of sums of one digit numbers without stopping to figure them out. There are many ways to practice these math facts at home such as playing games like Addition Top-It, using flash cards, and playing computer games.



Second Grade News

Second graders have been working very hard in all areas of the curriculum. We have been reading a lot of realistic fiction stories and learning how to write our own! Our classes have been analyzing characters' thoughts and feelings to understand how they change throughout the book. As you read at home, it would be helpful if you talk with your child about the characters and how they change. In writing, second graders are planning and writing stories with believable characters that have realistic problems. Throughout this unit, we will continue to work on elaboration techniques using characters' thoughts, feelings and ideas. In math, we are exploring geometry. We are learning about line segments and polygons and even constructing our own three-dimensional shapes. Next, we will be moving on to whole number operations and number stories. It is important that your children continue to practice their addition and subtraction facts to 18 at home in order to develop stronger fact fluency. We are also beginning an exciting science unit which focuses on soils. Students are investigating the three components of soils and learning how to conduct a variety of tests. Our performance assessment will take place in June, and it will involve administering these tests to determine which soil sample is best for planting flowers at Winding Trails. This will provide students with an authentic purpose for learning about soils.



Remember, when the reading challenge ends the blue reading logs will be coming home again. These are expected to be returned every Friday.

We are very busy learning, but we also enjoy taking our classes to recess during the winter months whenever the weather allows. So, please make sure your child is dressed for the weather. They need hats, gloves, and coats to be comfortable outside. If we get snow, children are only permitted on snowy areas if they have boots and snow pants. Please send all of their "winter recess clothes" in a large, durable bag so that articles don't get lost.

Third Grade News

In reading workshop, third graders continue to work hard on reading a variety of genres and responding to their reading in writing. They have practiced making connections, imagined they were giving a talk to their class, found surprising and important details, and analyzed character traits and emotions. We have been emphasizing using specific details from the text to support thinking about text. When reading and discussing books with your children at home, have them support their thinking by showing a detail from the text. Remember, third graders should be reading independently a minimum of 20 minutes every night. It really helps them to build stamina to read without interruption every day.

In writing workshop, we have studied the qualities of great realistic fiction. The third graders are learning about character traits and how they motivate characters to act in different situations, methods of describing various components of narrative writing (setting, character emotions and reactions), crafting engaging beginnings and satisfying endings, and balancing stories with action, dialogue or thought, and description. We have also looked at several ways that writers reread with specific purposes in mind to improve their writing.

In math we have been busy working on a variety of concepts such as place value, arrays, problem solving and computation. Please continue to encourage your children to practice their multiplication facts daily. They are expected to memorize their 0, 1, 2, 5 and 10 facts. Don't forget about addition and subtraction facts, as well. Please remind your children to play Everyday Math Games and access Brain Pop, Jr online to support the math curriculum. These programs as well as many other valuable resources can be found on the Kid Links website through the Union School Library web page.





Fourth Grade News

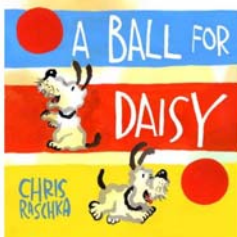


Happy New Year! What a wonderful start we have had to the second half of the fourth grade year. We have been reading and discussing I Have a Dream: The Story of Martin Luther King. We have also been learning about multiple-meaning words and using context clues to monitor and improve comprehension when we read. These skills also help build our vocabulary.

In math, we have just finished studying multi-digit multiplication in which students learned two methods for solving multiplication problems. Ask your children to show you their preferred method: partial-products or lattice. Students should continue to practice basic facts in multiplication and division in order to have fluency and be successful at math computation. Next, we will begin our study of fractions.

Many of our fourth graders are joining book clubs this month. Just like many moms and dads (and teachers), small groups of students are choosing books that seem interesting to them, they are developing discussion questions, and even determining timelines for completing chapters before their next book club discussion. Students are learning the collaboration skills needed to have successful conversations that will deepen their comprehension and enjoyment of reading. We will be inviting our fourth grade parents to join our Parents as Partners Book Club in the spring, when we all read and discuss the classic book by E.B. White, *Trumpet of the Swans*. Think about starting a family book club at home, using a read aloud that would appeal to all members of the family. Your fourth grader could even lead the discussion!

FROM THE LIBRARY



The library has been very busy in January! On the evening of January 19, kindergarteners and first graders enjoyed coming to the library with their pajamas on, listening to fun stories, and creating their very own pipe cleaner creation. Thank you so much to our parent readers Jackie Martin, and Ryan Schlagheck, and to Miss Paula from the Farmington Library. Thank you also to Tisha Masi for purchasing all the snacks!

During the month, kids also participated in our winter reading challenge entitled Reading Takes Us Places! I'm so proud of all our motivated readers! We have "traveled" to many continents thanks to the numerous hours our students have read. A special thank you to Kara Sardilli, Holly Hannan, Audrey Chung, and Holly Pullis for tallying minutes and keeping our classroom reading charts updated.

I look forward every January to the announcement of the Caldecott Medal winner. The Caldecott Medal has been awarded annually since 1938 by the American Library Association to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children. The 2012 Caldecott Medal winner is *A Ball for Daisy*, written and illustrated by Chris Raschka. It is a wordless book about a spirited little dog whose most prized possession is accidentally destroyed. 2012 Honor books are *Blackout* by John Rocco, *Grandpa Green* by Lane Smith and *Me...Jane* by Patrick McDonnell. If you are looking for a great picture book for sharing with your children, I highly recommend a Caldecott Medal or Honor winner! These and other picture books provide students with opportunities to practice their inferring and summarizing skills.

Coming events:

Thursday, Feb 16, 6:30-8:00 pm	Clue Night for second and third graders
Thursday, Feb 23	Author Catherine Gibson (grades 2,3,4)
Friday, March 2	Dr. Seuss Reading Marathon

Mrs. Farrah



STRING NEWS



Apprentice Teacher

We give a big hearty welcome to Miss Jennifer Lucian. Miss Lucian is a senior at Central Connecticut State University majoring in Music Education. She is studying to be a string educator. She will be at Union School until March 16, 2012.

District-wide String Festival

The Union School Orchestra is preparing for the District-wide String Festival which will be held at Farmington High School on Tuesday evening, April 10, 2012.

All string students from grades 4-12 participate. The grand finale will be all strings performing "A Patriotic Medley." About 600 string students will be playing in this spectacular musical evening.

The Union School string students will practice at Farmington High School on the day of the festival and then will return in the evening with their families to perform.

Grade 2 Strings

Grade 2 String Players have completed All the "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" Variations and Theme. In their mini lessons string students are progressing in their Suzuki Books. Violas and Cellos have learned "The French Folk Song." The violins have learned "Lightly Row."

In the Grade 2 group class the students have learned: "Hot Cross Bun," "Mary Had A Little Lamb," and "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

Grade 3

Grade 3 string students have all passed the note reading assessment for the A string. This is something to celebrate. They are now learning the notes on the D string.

The third grade students are to be congratulated for progressing in their Suzuki Books

Grade 4

Grade 4 String players gave an awesome Winter Concert on January 26, 2012 which featured music from North America.

Now the Grade 4 Orchestra is preparing for the District-wide String Festival, The Union School May Day celebration and the Spring Concert.

Home Practice

A great way to help your children to practice is to ask them what they learned new in their mini-lesson, then what they reviewed and what they did as a warm up. Also, ask your children why practicing is so important.

Grade 3 & 4 String students should be note reading every day from their book, "Strings Fun & Easy."

Note reading is just like regular reading, if you do it every day you get really good.

Grade 2 students should be practicing 15 minutes everyday

Grade 3 students should be practicing 20 minutes everyday

Grade 4 students should be practicing 30 minutes everyday



Odds and Ends from the String Room

IMPORTANT: Please label instrument cases with a luggage tag, including your child's name, address and phone number. Please help your children bring their instruments and folders on their mini-lesson day and group lesson day.

Mrs. Fantozzi

MUSIC NEWS



Please ask your musicians the following questions to hear about what they are learning in music and why it is important:

The Kindergarteners are performing steady beat on a variety of instruments while singing or speaking their songs and poems. Some of the most recent instruments have been shakers, tubano drums, and boomwhackers. We are also learning that music can go up and down in pitch. While listening to the piece *Wild Horse* we show how the horse is galloping up and down the hills and mountains, which matches the up and down of the piano music.

Ask me: What is steady beat? Why do songs have steady beat? Could you show me a song or poem with a steady beat?

The First Graders are becoming experts in the solfege notes, sol and mi, and are just learning to read rhythm using “ta” “ti ti” and “rest.” We are starting to write the “rhythm of the words” of our familiar songs and poems with this new notation.

Ask me: Which note is higher, sol or mi? Could you show me the hand signs for sol and mi? Could you sing me a song that has sol and mi in it?

The Second Graders are perfecting their knowledge of the solfege notes mi, re, and do. Using the song, *Hot Cross Buns*, the students are making connections between their learning in the general music classroom and their learning in string lessons.

Ask me: Could you sing me a song that has mi, re, and do in it? How do you know how to read mi, re, do on a music staff? Why is this important?

The Third Graders have been studying two of my favorite topics: improvisation and songs that contain high do! Each class created their own arrangement of the drumming poem *Peter, Peter*. Within these arrangements are opportunities for different instruments to improvise. The students are also adding new songs that contain high do to their repertoire and reading them with solfege.

Ask me: What does improvisation look like, feel like, and sound like? Why is improvisation important to a musician?

The Fourth Graders are wrapping up their composition projects based on the song *Great Big House*. All students learned to play the melody, bass line, and composed countermelody on barred instruments. We are also continuing to study sixteenth notes and solfege notes below do. The recorders have arrived so it is imperative that each Fourth Grader brings his or her recorder and music to music class.

Ask me: Why is it important to read music with solfege, letter names, and counting numbers?

Miss Smallidge

FROM THE NURSE

Is it a cold or is it the flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

Fever
Cough
Sore throat
Runny or stuffy nose
Muscle or body aches
Headaches
Fatigue



Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets made when infected people cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching his/her own mouth, eyes or nose. Hand washing is very important and remembering to cough/sneeze into the crook of your arm are two important ways to prevent the spread of these droplets.

Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose.

If you are not certain whether your child has a common cold or the flu see your pediatrician. And remember: If your child has a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, he/she should be out of school for 24 hours after the last episode and should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Ann Savarese RN



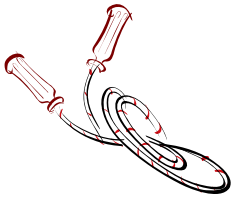
ART NEWS



Please come in to view the beautiful work that is on display at Union School. In the art room we have been concentrating on understanding why we learn about different cultures and artists. Ask your children about WHAT they are learning and WHY they are learning about it. Kindergarten artists are becoming more independent in the art room. We are working with the elements of design, line, shape, color and texture! Ask your kindergarten child where they can find texture in your home. First grade artists are beginning to understand the differences and similarities between a landscape and a seascape. Ask them to compare the two! Second graders are busy creating clay snowmen as a celebration for their hard work and creative thinking. In third grade we have finished a unit on the rainforest. This unit explored the question, *Why would an artist chose to create abstract work opposed to realistic work?* You will be impressed with their thoughtful answers. In fourth grade we have completed a unit on Ancient Egypt. This was not only exciting but provoked much conversation about the purpose of learning about world cultures past and present. Ask your fourth grader about this. Keep creating and problem solving everyday!

Ms. Magnee

PHYSICAL EDUCATION NEWS



During the week of February 15, Union School will be holding a “Jump Rope for Heart” event for students in grades two through four. Students will jump rope during regular physical education class. While encouraging community service, it is also an educational program. Our students will learn jump rope skills while raising money to fund lifesaving research and education programs for the American Heart Association.

Family and friends are welcome to support your child’s efforts by making contributions. However, we ask that children not go door to door or ask strangers for donations. Checks should be made payable to the American Heart Association. Children can also raise funds on-line by creating their own fund-raising web page.

Students will receive thank you gifts based on the amount of contributions they collect. Everyone will receive something! In addition, the school earns valuable gift certificates for physical education equipment based on the total amount raised. If your employer has a matching gift program, please indicate the matched amounts on the Sponsor Form on the collection envelope. Jumping rope is a fun, aerobic activity for the entire family. Try it!

Mr. Avezzie

A Good Start

Do you know of any children in your neighborhood who will be 5 years old by 12/31/2012? If so, please encourage parents to call the school office and register their children for Kindergarten for the 2012-2013 school year.

A Good Start dates for 2012:

February 1, 2012
March 7, 2012
April 4, 2012



School Closing Reminders

It's official: winter is here! It is a good time to review school closing procedures. When snow or ice creates unsafe driving conditions, school may need to be closed early, school opening may need to be delayed, or school may need to be closed for the day.

School closing information is available on our web site (www.fpsct.org) or may be heard over one of several radio or television stations.

We ask that you not call the Superintendent's office for this information.

The following stations broadcast our closings and delays:



WTIC AM 1080/WTIC FM 96.5
WDRC AM 1360/WDRC FM 102.9
WRCH FM 100.5
WTNH Channel 8
WFSB Channel 3
WVIT Channel 30



The ParentLink system will **only** be used in emergencies. Please be sure that Union School has current email addresses, home phone numbers, cell phone and work phone numbers for your family.

In the event that school must be closed early, it is the responsibility of parents to be aware of the closing and assure supervision for their children when they arrive home. Please review early closing plans frequently with your children to avoid any confusion.

**Remember, we are Farmington Public Schools.
Please do not confuse Union School with the
Union Public School District or Union
Elementary School in Union, CT.**