

March 5, 2010

Dear Parents,

The students are currently learning about weather patterns and systems and their effects on land areas in science. They are reading the material, taking simple notes, and organizing the information to help them make sense of content material and the important facts from the text book.

I am showing the children how to use the bolded headings in the material as a guide for reading. Almost always, the heading of each section gives the reader a clue as to what is important in that section. The students are writing the heading on their note sheets, and then writing one or two important facts under each heading. They are learning that any word in bold font is a vocabulary word, and it should be included in the notes. Practicing these note taking skills helps the children in all areas of the curriculum. They begin to recognize the situations themselves in which they should be taking notes.

In reading the class is just beginning the novel *The Sign of the Beaver*. This novel introduces the students to two boys. They are an unusual pair who normally would not be friends with each other. But because of a variety of circumstances, they develop a strong relationship and gain mutual respect for each other. The students will learn about character and plot development and new vocabulary as they read the book. In the next few weeks, ask your child to tell you about the book.

I was so proud of the fourth graders yesterday. Their speeches were quite impressive. Each child has improved their reading and speaking skills a great deal since the start of the interpretive reading process. Not only did they do well with the presentations, but they also used good listening skills while they enjoyed the stories from their classmates. Congratulations to the finalists: Bellamy Perez, Katie Hemmen, Hannah Van Hollebeke, and Ivy Hawksford. After pulling names from a hat, Katie and Hannah were chosen to read at the assembly today. Congratulations to all!

The St. Mark School Science Fair takes place on May 11. All students in grades 4-8 will be participating. I spent a great deal of time explaining the guidelines and procedures to the class yesterday. We had a lengthy discussion about the process and all that is expected of them in the coming weeks. I have some materials in the classroom for your child to investigate for ideas. The school and public libraries are also excellent sources of information. The Topic and Description Form is the first part of the required material that must be completed. This form is due March 18. Your child must have his/her science topic approved by me before March 18. If you have any questions, please call or email me. I am more than happy to assist you in any way possible.

The children were quite excited to receive a letter back from Deacon Joe Altenhofen yesterday. They wrote letters to him during Catholic Schools Week back in January. Deacon Joe will be ordained a priest this coming June. He truly appreciated the prayers and support from the children.

To help the students become familiar with the Schoolwide Learning Expectations, we had included the seminarian letters on our classroom goal chart. The letter writing fell into more than one category: communication skills, organizational skills, active global citizens, and act with compassion and justice. The class was eager to see they had reached their goal when they saw and read the return letter. Our goal of collecting 100 cans of food for the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank was also on the chart. We came close by collecting 88 cans! I hope you continue to talk about the Schoolwide Learning Expectations with your student to see how they are connected to everything your child accomplishes at school.

Reminders: March 12 – 10:00 Mass and 2:00 School Stations of the Cross
 March 19 – No School, Teacher In-service

Enjoy the weekend,

Pauline Storino