

## APRIL NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents,

### -March Highlights-

We enjoyed meeting with you for **Spring Conferences** and sharing what and how your child has been doing since report cards. Again, if you ever want to visit for a day, or even part of a day, you are more than welcome to come. Just let us know what day you would like.

Room 5 students also were happy to have you come and spend time with *them* in their classroom on **Parent-Child Night**. They had lots of stories to share the next day, and they seemed very proud of the work they did to "teach" you. Thank you for being eager, cooperative students!

Our first stay-at-home-base **field trip** this past month, the **Oakland Fairyland Puppet Theatre**, was a complete delight. Mr. Randall Metz creates both the stories/scripts and the puppets, and the children were captivated by both. An added bonus is that at the end of the show, Mr. Metz shows how the puppets were made, and how he makes them move. This year's story was *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, complete with some magic tricks! We're sure your child gave you some great details about it too.

**St. Patrick's Day** was an extended type of celebration. We spent the week looking for the hidden leprechaun each day and then writing about it. Your child's "**Leprechaun Diary**" (a good exercise in how to write descriptive directions) was the end product of that event. We had some very nice results, and we're sure you enjoyed reading them as much as the children liked making them. When we celebrated St. Patrick's Day, we joined the First Years and enjoyed shamrock cookies and green milk while watching the traditional Irish dancing of *Riverdance*. It proved to be inspirational to quite a few of them who asked if they could try to "dance like that" too. Very cute.

We completed the celebratory part of our month (and we do seem to celebrate a lot!) with our annual **Easter Egg Hunt and Party**. Before that day came, they were all busy with planting and then tending their own "living Easter baskets." The grass is wheat grass and is edible. Hopefully over Spring Break they have kept up with its care. The baskets can continue to grow for quite a while.

We began our study of the **Ancient Greeks**. We immersed ourselves in their daily lives, their buildings and inventions, their gods and their myths (how they all love to hear the myths!), and the Greeks' great wisdom. It was capped off by hearing (in a simplified version) Homer's *Odyssey*. It is the story of King Odysseus and his many adventures as he tries to return to his homeland after the Trojan War. It's fun to read something where your audience is hanging on every word... But such was the incredible talent of the Ancient Greeks' ability to create stories. Now there is only left to have one of our "cultural feasts," this one with typical Greek foods. The children invariably leave our study of the Greeks with great reluctance (as well they should).

In **Botany** we did a lot of studying and discussion about the beautiful **buds** opening themselves all around us. Our campus offers a great exhibit. There have been a number of lovely bud projects that have been made too, using bare twig branches we collected and then adding leaf and flower buds from tissue paper. And of course we reveled in the beauty of our tulips and daffodils blooming at our door throughout the month.

As part of their supplemental **math work**, **Seconds** have been working diligently on **telling time**. **Thirds** have become adept at **weighing objects on a gram scale**. In **Geometry**, **Thirds** learned about many different aspects of something previously thought of as so simple: **a line**. (They no longer use the word "simple"...)

In **Language**, **Seconds** are completing their **Verb** work (expect a book of that work to come home at its conclusion). **Thirds** have begun their journey with the certainly challenging **Adverb** work. (An easy definition: adverbs "add" information to the verb, i.e. *describe* verbs, telling how, when, where, how much.) Our biggest "Language" event, though, was memorizing, creating art work, and then reciting **our latest poem, *Escape at Bedtime* by Robert Louis Stevenson**. Now that they've brought it home and you've heard it, we're sure you would agree it was indeed quite a challenge, and they accomplished it spectacularly! We hope they will take time to go out to look at the stars, especially the constellation Orion, the Hunter and the Dog star, Sirius which are both clearly visible even with streetlights around. They know what to look for; have them be your guide.

### **-Upcoming Events-**

On **Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>**, we'll have our annual **MCH Baseball Day**, celebrating the opening of the new Season. On that day everyone may wear a shirt and/or cap of his or

her favorite team, instead of MCH uniforms, and Jo will have some special games outside. May our abundant enthusiasm add to the start of a good season ahead for the Giants and the A's!

Our **field trip** for April will be **Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, to the U.C. Berkeley Botanical Gardens** which will be in glorious Spring bloom. They have magnificent specimens of plants and flowers from around the world. We will see them in their various plant habitats - from deserts to grasslands to deciduous forests and even tropical rainforests. In particular, we will learn how various plants adapt to the particular ecosystem in which they live. And since we have been previously studying about buds, it will be great to see how buds have now burst into beautiful flowers. Spring is a wonderful time to visit the gardens, especially as part of our **Earth Week** activities.

Our **new poem** will be *The Pasture* by Robert Frost. It is a more modern poem in a lovely conversational style about some simple pleasures on a farm in Springtime.

In **Math**, we have added a new Friday assignment - a worksheet of **Word Problems**. It's one thing to be able to add, subtract, and multiply, but quite another to be able to apply that skill to specific concrete situations. Both groups have now launched into this *fun* weekly world of word problems (no worrying allowed). Also in Math, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Years will begin work with **Fractions**.

This month we also begin our **civilization study of the Middle Ages**. There are so many fascinating aspects to life in Europe in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. - from castles, kings, and knights to monks in monasteries slowly and meticulously copying texts. The children will have their own "monastery" experience when they copy some pages from one of their own precious books - all in capital letters, as lower case and punctuation had yet to be invented. We will copy with only window light and candle light and at the same time hear Gregorian Chant from that period - the first music to be written down on paper. They will be "illuminating" their texts with their own designs, plus coloring some of the original designs from that period. This will transition to Guttenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450, and the monumental impact that had on civilization.

April is also the time of the year for the **Stanford 10 Achievement Test** which will be given to the **Third Years**. The test will be on three consecutive days, **Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup> through 26<sup>th</sup>**. It will be about an hour and a half

each day. We will begin at 8:15 each morning. By starting at 8:15 it will have the least impact on the rest of our regular class time. There is nothing your Third Year needs to do to prepare for this test. The only important thing is to arrive on time, well-rested, and having eaten a good breakfast.

Happy Spring to All,

Mary Anne and Toni

**Calendar:**

Tuesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> - Baseball Day - wear your favorite team shirt and/or cap

Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup> - Sharing Day, "Collections"; Book Orders due

Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup> - to kick off Earth Week, it's Bring-A-Globe-To-School Day!

Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> - Field Trip to U.C. Berkeley Botanical Gardens

Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup> - Earth Day; free dress if you wear blue, brown, and/or green

Tues. - Thurs., April 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> - **3<sup>rd</sup> Years** take Stanford 10 Achievement Test  
...arrive at 8:15

Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup> - Arbor Day, free dress if you wear green, brown, or something with trees on it