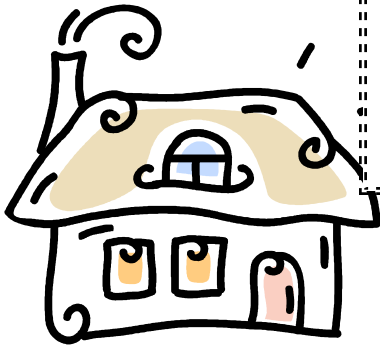


Date: March 2008

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Dates to remember:

- Wednesdays in April: Field trips to local food cupboards
- Friday, April 4: Sara's group hosts Assembly
- Sunday, April 6: Greg Mortenson at the Media Theatre
- Monday April 7: Noontime concert at Swarthmore College
- Friday, April 11: John Blake and Charlotte Blake Alston, 11:00 (families invited)
- Friday, April 18: Earth Day Celebration (events tbd)
- Sunday, April 20: April Madness bidding begins
- Monday, April 21: SRV Chorus to Russell Byers Charter School
- Wednesday, April 23: Grandparent and Special Friend Sing, 8:15a.m. in Grace

Shelter

PC will soon embark on the third leg of our yearlong study of the cultural universals of food, clothing and shelter. Some of the things we think are important ideas for the children to learn about shelter include shelter in the past, features of modern homes (including the processes and economics involved in supplying them with heat, light and running water), the trade-offs and economics involved in renting versus buying shelter and the students' ideal homes in the future.

Shelter is different from food and clothing because most children haven't thought about or paid much attention to their home. Here are some questions we'll ask during the study:

- What is shelter? Why do we need shelter?
- Why do people choose different kinds of homes?
- What types of homes do we have in our community?
- How do climate and physical features influence the types of homes we have?
- Why do people sometimes have portable shelters?
- What are some of the decisions people have to make when choosing a home?
- Why are there so many different kinds of shelter?

We hope to venture beyond the basic understanding that "people around the world live in many different kinds of houses" to explain why these different housing types exist. Our shelter unit will explore multiple facets of this cultural universal in depth, including considerations of the geographic, economic and cultural reasons that have led various past and present societies to develop their characteristic housing styles. Students will understand how and why humans in different times and places have developed contrasting responses to their shelter needs, along with knowledge about cultural, economic and technological aspects of shelter in today's society.

During the next several weeks, we'll send home assignments that go with this unit of study, which will involve lots of family discussions.

(over)

Margaret Wise Brown

We have begun a study of the works and craft of author Margaret Wise Brown, an author instantly recognizable to the children from her books Goodnight Moon and The Runaway Bunny. Why are we studying her work? Among many reasons, Ms. Brown was influenced by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, an educator at what is now the Bank Street College of Education in New York. Mitchell turned the world of children's literature on its ear in the 1930s by suggesting that writing for children should be grounded in the child's own experience. M. W. Brown was the first writer to popularize this concept. Her study of children revealed rhythms and patterns of language and ways of seeing the world that differed for each stage in the primary years.

One of her books is The Important Book, a book about the important thing about rain, grass, an apple, etc... The children will write their own "The important thing" poems to tell one another what is important about themselves.

During our morning meetings, we will talk about "the important things" about our group (pulled from our Mission Statement) such as this: "The important thing about our group is that we have friends who stand up for us and don't laugh at us." How can I stand up for a friend today? At the end of the day, we'll reflect on any moments during that day when we stood up for someone or someone stood up for us.

service and partnership learning minicourse

"We can help another one, and together we can get the job done. What can one little person do to help this world?..."

Strains of this beloved song might float from Grace on any Wednesday morning about 8:30 during Sing. And this year the song takes on new meaning as we embark on All School Service time. "What Can One Little Person Do?" (the song referenced above) will be both our May Fair theme and an Essential Question unifying SRV's efforts over the next several weeks. On Wednesday afternoons (the time usually spent in All School Choice or Minicourses) the entire school will devote an hour to a range of service projects that connect the curriculum to the idea of service and partnership.

In Primary Circle, we will divide our time between helping out at a local food cupboard, and doing projects to support Habitat for Humanity, an organization that helps people buy shelter affordably. As you can see, we specifically planned that our service efforts would build on what the children have learned in our social studies themes. In other words, we'd expect them to walk away with both knowledge about cultural universals and awareness about how to use that knowledge to help others. Additionally, we'd like them to gain the understanding that they can help in both distant places (e.g., the Clothing Sale and Penny Drive for Heifer International) and local places (donating time at the Bernadine Center in Chester and supporting Philadelphia's Habitat for Humanity branch). Stay tuned for ways you can support the children further in their development as compassionate global citizens.

Specials

News from the Art Room

The Primary Circle completed their batik project with much enthusiasm. This was not a "true" batik since we used a paste of flour, alum and water, which we made in the blender. Traditionally hot wax is used as the resist. The results were satisfying to the students, and they were eager to bring them home. We will work on making African Mud Cloth next week. Mud Cloth or "Bogolanfini" originates from Central Mali. Traditionally, the local dirt is turned to mud with a tea of fruit juices and then applied to cotton fabric. The cotton cloth is woven on backstrap looms in 6-inch wide strips and sewn together to construct a larger piece used for clothing. We will use SRV dirt and black tea for its tannin. The tannin will make the color of the mud 'set' in the cotton. We have discussed and demonstrated "positive and negative" space and will use this knowledge in designing our individual swatches of Mud Cloth.

News from the Library:

In library, the children will put the finishing touches on their non-fiction alphabet book. They will be working on alphabetizing the pages, the dedication, title page, glossary and index. They will also prepare questions to ask Roland Smith for his visit this week.

News from the Science Room:

What makes a mammal a mammal? or a fish a fish? Our study will include birds, reptiles, fish, insects and possibly more depending on time.

News from the Music Room:

We're starting tone chimes. We'll also do some listening (old and "new" stuff), some discussion about families of the orchestra in preparation for our visit with the young instrumentalists (hopefully on 4/4). And, we'll begin work on our May Fair dance.

News from Technology:

In technology, we have begun a short unit focusing on keyboarding. Through exploration and student-led discovery, we will learn about the structure and organization of a keyboard. This is not our first exposure to keyboarding, however. Throughout the year, we have been getting more and more familiar with finding letters and numbers through experiences typing sentences or captions during other technology projects. Many students have already begun noticing that they are able to find the letters faster than before. For the next couple of weeks, we'll focus on the home row keys (A through semicolon) and correct hand placement when typing on the home row. As the year progresses, authentic experiences with keyboarding will continue to be interwoven with other projects. We will continue to touch on the ergonomics of using the computer in order to begin laying the seeds of lifelong comfortable and safe computer use. More formal touch typing instruction and practice begins in Main Circle.