



Friday, February 11, 2011

# STRATTON SCENE

**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

February 10	Kindergarten Enrichment Program (Kidstock 9:00am in cafeteria)
February 17	3rd Grade to Museum of Science
February 21-25	February Vacation Week – No School
February 28	Professional Development - <b>Early Release at 11:30am</b> (No Lunch will be served)
March 4	Movie Night
March 7	Pride Assembly hosted by the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
March 15	Early Release Day – 12:30pm Dismissal (Lunch will be served)
March 24	Stratton Open House – 6:30pm – 8:00pm
April 6	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Group Photo for the Memory Book
April 8	Science Night
April 18-21	April Vacation Week – No School
May 13	Spring Fling

*Dedicated to our Fabulous First Graders!!*

**STRATTON SCHOOL PHONE NUMBERS**

Safe Arrival/Absence (To call your child in tardy or absent)	781-316-3767
Nurse (Mrs. Benes)	781-316-3752
Main Office (Mrs. Fischer)	781-316-3753
Fax number	781-641-5454

**Stratton Website:**

<http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/Stratton/>

**Arlington School Calendar Website:**

<http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/calendar/>

For school cancellations, listen to WBZ News Radio 1030 or go to [www.town.arlington.ma.us](http://www.town.arlington.ma.us)

Note: Lost & Found cartons are located in the Main Lobby.

**FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE**

**Mr. Brown**

Dear Stratton Community,

This article will be in the Stratton Scene this month. However, I wanted to share it with you early. I use the frankness and observations of children in order to share some news.

Change

In past Scene articles I've shared how visiting classrooms and actually "taking-the-reins" produces some entertaining conversation with children. One area that brings the most engaging comments is the accuracy or lack of accuracy I

attain in following classroom routine. The predictability of the day and the procedures of the classroom are important to children as well as teachers. Variance from the predictable creates levels of unease that brings spontaneous comments and reminders from students.

There was the time that I covered a kindergarten classroom for a short period. The teacher went to an appointment and I was to lead the morning meeting. When I arrived the children had already entered the room after second bell, unpacked their materials, handed notes to the teacher, acknowledged classmates, and assumed their places in the room. The teacher informed the boys and girls that Mr. Brown would lead morning meeting and that she would return in 30 minutes - in time for workboard activities. Missteps with routine happened immediately. I starting by announcing that it was time for morning meeting, "Boys and Girls please walk over to the rug,"

Some children hesitantly stood up, sheepishly pushed chairs under their tables and started for the meeting area. Other students stayed put and looked puzzled. Three hands soared into the air - one waving profoundly. I called on a boy. He announced, "Mr. Brown, Mrs. Y calls us to the rug by tables."

I accepted the correction and went ahead. "OK, let's have the blue table go to the rug 1<sup>st</sup>."

The boy immediately corrected again, "Mr. Brown they went first yesterday!"

"I see," I remarked and continued, "Let's have the green table move to the rug." I braced for a correction but, to my relief, none was needed. Once on the rug I began the meeting with a request for sharing. A girl immediately stood up and brought a bag to the front of the class. She opened it enough for me to see two stuffed animals and a neatly folded plastic bag. She faced the room and pulled out the first item - a

light brown large eared replica of a dog. Her audience focused on the stuffed animal with much appreciation. She said, "This is Muffy. I got him for Christmas last year. He is brown and his ears are white and he has a pink nose." She raised the stuffed dog displaying it to one side and then to the other. After a moment she looked in my direction and held the stuffed dog out. I took it and waited for the next item to be shared. A voice from the back proclaimed, "Mr. Brown you have to put it on the sharing shelf."

Morning meeting activities continued and the children, now aware of my need to be informed of correct routine and procedure, enthusiastically offered directions. Even the more reticent children offered advice. Mrs. Y returned to the room, I thanked the children for the enjoyable time with them and moved on.

Over the years I have "filled-in" for teachers at various grade levels and have received thoughtful instructions from the children on the correct routine to follow. It happens in grade 5 just as much as in kindergarten - although 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders enjoy the "spectacle" of routine not being followed.

Now that I have placed the comfort of routine on the table, I announce an adjustment to the Stratton School. I have decided to enter the world of retirement at the end of this school year - the routine of principal over the past 12 years to be altered.

In day-to-day running of a school and a classroom we utilize routine to help us manage the activities of instruction and learning. A school or classroom without an understood schedule is a mess! However, the comfort of routine can get in the way of effective teaching and learning. Good schools - and we are a good school - must to be vigilant about the ever present need to adjust, to invent/reinvent, to experiment, to improve. What a shame it would be if a school or classroom were the same in five years as they are today. In

the same way children need to appreciate their ability to adjust to change, to do things differently, to think outside the box.

My career in education began and will end in Arlington. I am fortunate to have landed in such an interesting community. I will certainly miss this wonderful school and town.

Superintendent Kathleen Bodie will be in contact with the Stratton School Council and the Stratton PTO to arrange meetings to discuss the process for appointing a new principal. My duties will continue until August 31<sup>st</sup> and during that time I will continue my work with planning for the 2010 and 2011 School Year.

### FROM THE PTO

Well it seems that the holidays are behind us now and we're having a snowy winter. With all of the snow days, I think we've all had enough of the snow. I've never seen my kids so happy for Punxsutawney Phil not to see his shadow, I say bring on Spring. Rick and Dennis have been doing a tremendous amount of work to keep the snow away from the school building. If you see them in the hallway be sure to thank them.

With the unexpected news of Mr. Brown's retirement at the end of the school year, it can not be said enough of how much he has helped the PTO in their mission to enrich the education of our children. We've have met with Mr. Brown at all hours of the day, during school and over vacations, with his input, advice and guidance he has truly made Stratton a "Blue Ribbon" school. I'm sure much more will be said as we approach the end of the school year.

Many parents may notice or hear of all the support we've been giving the students and teachers this year through field trips, assemblies and classroom level enrichment activities. Additionally with your generous donations we have acquired reading software (Raz Kids - Online guided reading program with interactive e-books and reading quizzes) for many of the classrooms as well as a large selection of books, DVDs, Kindergarten wireless listening stations (headphones), cordless microphone /speaker, color printers and document projectors (upgrade over a overhead projector) for 3-5th grade. With tight budgets throughout the district and talk of budget cuts for next year, the role of the PTO in school enrichment has and will become invaluable.

Your assistance in volunteering has been great this year; please continue to help out at school as much as you can. Movie Night will be coming up soon and plans are under way for Science Night and Spring Fling as well. Have a great February vacation and stay warm.



### FUNDRAISING

#### **MONTHLY PLUG - Spring Fling.**

We will be on Friday May 13 this year. Help is needed, especially with auction donations!! Please let me know if you have ideas for either soliciting or donating items for the auction. Big ticket items last year were airplane tickets, Disney/theme park passes, summer camps, vacation rentals, hotel nights, and Click and Clack.



### **UPDATES**



**Wilson Farms Stratton Day MOVED TO FRI FEB 11.** By the time you read this, if you haven't already gone, feel free to run out there before the end of the day.

Remember you must have a flyer in hand when you go. As with the Stop&Shop cards, friends, family, neighbors - anyone with a Stratton flyer - will get us credit. So feel free to take a few flyers and pass them around.

**Stop&Shop - get your family and friends to register their Stop&Shop cards to Stratton!! -**

4 more people registered this month! Stratton is slightly behind Brackett now. We're making about \$100 per month.



Ron Spangler notes - You don't have to be a Stratton parent, and you don't have to shop at the Arlington store to earn cash for Stratton. Here's how:

1. Go to [http://www.stopandshop.com/our\\_stores/bonus\\_bucks/index.htm](http://www.stopandshop.com/our_stores/bonus_bucks/index.htm) and click the "Register Your Card" button on the right hand side.
2. You will be prompted for the first three letters of your last name, and your 13 digit Stop & Shop Card number. Enter these and click "Continue to listings."
3. On the next page, enter Stratton's number - 08591 - in the "school 1" box under "express ...", then click the "Register" button at the right.

Remember you can pay for your purchases at Stop & Shop with Stratton Scrip, and still get A+ Bonus Bucks points, for a double benefit to Stratton.

Anyone else's kids enjoying Raz kids as much as are mine?

**Spring Book Exchange** - The Third Annual Stratton Spring Book Exchange is coming up fast! A final date has not been established, but we're looking at dates in March and early April.



For those of you new to Stratton, the Book Exchange is a fun and FREE event. We have held the Exchange in the cafeteria during the school

day. (Bag lunches were available.) For a week before the big day, students bring in gently used books they no longer want. Books are collected and sorted by parent volunteers, and arranged for display in the cafeteria. (Some books may be added to the library collection.) Each class will have a time to visit and select books they would like. All students will get to take home new reading material. However, the number of free books each child receives will depend on the number of donated books. More specifics to follow when a date has been selected!

### ENRICHMENT

Cold temperatures and snow days haven't slowed down classroom enrichment activities and plans. In February, our third graders will be visited by Mass Audubon's Audubon Ark outreach program that brings naturalists and native wildlife to visit. In March, our own Marian Tomusiak will illustrate solar system planets and relative distances with her terrific "Earth as a Peppercorn" program. Marian's son will be moving on to the sixth grade next year, but we hope we can bring invaluable Marian back as a visiting astronomer emeritus. With all that they've learned about the solar system, third graders will be giving (earth-bound) tours of the solar system at Science Night this year.

Speaking of Science Night, Stratton's classroom enrichment teams are busy with plans for Friday, April 8's annual Stratton Science Night. We would love to have lots of helping hands -- experience is not a prerequisite.



## Library News - Mrs. Megson

It is difficult to believe we will be reaching 100 days in school soon. The children continue to return their library books on time and take very good care of them as well. Everyone is using bookmarks which cut down on "dog ear" pages. We have started our book buddies program with K-1 and 5<sup>th</sup> grade and it has been very successful. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade is reading one on one with kindergarteners and next month the kindergarteners will be reading to them!! This is Stratton Pride at its best.

Recently I was able to order books on Continents for second grade, Biomes for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and books with CD's for K-3 using Scholastic Book Fair credits. Please continue to drop off books at the Book Rack and in the Got BOOKS bin. It helps to add books to the library collection.

Next month we will be celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday with a *Read across Stratton* program. I would like to have as many parents as possible come in and read to their child's class during their library period. Mr. Brown, Mrs. Benes, Mrs. Fisher and Mr. "Rick" (custodian) and many parents have all enjoyed doing so.

## Kindergarten News - Mrs. Satlak-Mott, Mrs. Gigliotti

During the months of February the Stratton Kindergartens do lots of thinking and learning about birds. As with many of our science units, we began our bird explorations by brainstorming what we already know about birds (our bird schema) and what we might like to learn about birds (bird questions or "I wonder..."). Some of new thinking about birds includes that birds either migrate or adapt, and we can often "read a bird" tell what it eats and what its



habitat might be like by looking at its beak and feet. After learning about the general characteristics of birds - all birds have two legs, hatch from hard shelled eggs, are warm blooded and have a back bone - we learned about the life cycle of the bird. We also have explored the types of nests that birds build and if they even build nests as well as examining the many different sizes and shapes of birds' eggs.

Every day we expand our thinking and learning about birds by reading lots of fiction and nonfiction books, listening to bird poems, creating bird pictures and projects as well as writing about and drawing our favorite birds.

The Stratton Kindergartens are also expanding and growing as young readers and writers. We have worked on several pieces of small moment and Me Book writing and are all making excellent progress in our guiding reading books. Additionally, FUNdations, our formal phonics and handwriting program is giving us a solid foundation in letter sounds and formation, sound blending into words and breaking words into syllables.

Additionally, our math thinking hasn't been hibernating! Our math explorations have included an AMC unit on developing number concepts, patterns and graphing. Soon we will begin to learn about the math concepts of groups or sets of objects that are equal, more than and less than each other. Numeral formation 0 to 20 and counting to 100 by 1s, 5s and 10s have also been explored.

## Grade 1 News - Mrs. Abbott, Mrs. Magalhaes, Mrs. Forse and Mrs. Pratt

Burr! It's about that time to start counting down the winter days. The 100th day is looming in our future ... make sure you are working on your projects. We can't wait to see them!

In the spirit of cold weather, the first graders are finishing their interdisciplinary penguin study this month. We visited the New England Aquarium on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to see the penguins and other creatures of the sea. Thanks



to all of the chaperones. We had a great time. So far, we have learned that there are seventeen different types of penguins, their range of sizes and

where they live. We've had multiple writing, math and art opportunities that focus on our penguin knowledge. All of the students are finishing their papier-mâché penguins in art class with Mrs. Campagna. When they are complete they will be on display. Make sure you take a look.

Early next month the first graders will have a visit from Mrs. Benes and Mrs. Newel who will both teach a Great Body Shop lesson. Mrs. Benes, our school nurse will teach a lesson on emotions and problem solving; which is very similar to a recent Open Circle lesson. Mrs. Newel, the director of the health department, will be teaching a safety lesson to each class.

Our budding authors continue to develop their writing skills in class and in Writer's Workshop. All students have written narratives and will soon be delving into a non fiction piece and a fictional writing piece. Students are continuing to create beginning, middle and end story structures as they add more details to the middle of their stories. Our authors have also begun to learn about "Word Choice." Word Choice focuses on choosing "just right" words to fit audience, topic, and purposes. Successful word choice depends on understanding 3<sup>rd</sup> nouns and verbs, using a variety of words that appeal to the five senses and using new, colorful and sparkle words. "Sparkle words" are new words or synonyms. For example some sparkle words for the word "good" are fantastic, great, awesome, or wonderful. Students are encouraged to use these words to help them learn new words and to make their

writing more interesting. It is vital that young writers also be readers and listeners, constantly adding to their cache of words and phrases by borrowing from what they see and hear.

In math, our focus has been on standard and nonstandard measurement and fractions. This month we will also begin another round of story problems and number games. These story problems are more complex and follow a more nontraditional format. Some of these problems will focus on finding missing addends and multiple number combinations. The number games will focus on counting by 2's, 4's, 5's and 10's. Student's will also begin to master facts of ten (such as  $1+9=10$ ,  $2+8=10$ ,  $3+7=10$ ) and will be expected to be proficient with these facts by the end of the year. Keep reading each night and practicing those trick words!! In addition, practice math facts to 10! Your support at home makes a huge difference in your child's progress. Thank you for your support.

**Grade 2 News** - Mrs. Daley, Mrs. Shediak, Ms. Piekarski, Ms. Lucente

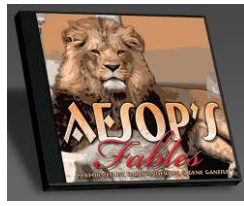


As we enter the month of February with record-breaking snowfall amounts and five snow days already accumulated, the second graders

continue to *shovel* through the curriculum, doing our best overcome the weekly interruptions by "mother nature"!

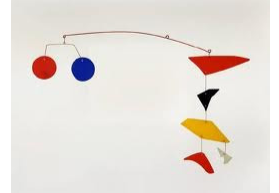
We are continuing with our study of fables in literacy, and we are embracing the morals from these wonderful works of Aesop and trying to give "real life" examples of our own to help explain what these lessons really mean. It is often difficult for second graders to admit that perhaps they have actually, "cried wolf", "not treated others as they would want to be

treated", or even "judged a book by its cover". We all would like to believe that we always do the right thing, but these short stories give us all the chance to explore and think about our own behavior using animal characters as the vehicle for understanding. As we approach mid February, the children will be writing and illustrating fables of their own as part of our Writer's Workshop program. The children will select a moral they would like to teach in their story, find appropriate animals to be characters, and retell their Aesop inspired fable!



this will lead us into our study of Japan, which is a six-week unit.

Science has been filled with hands-on activities as the second graders have been exploring the balance beam, the equal-arm balance and building mobiles. This unit of balancing and weighing allows our scientists to work with a partner and make predictions, experiment, and draw conclusions, and it introduces them to Alexander Calder - The Mobile Man.



The children have all made their own mobiles, and learned the importance of the fulcrum, the beam and the weight.

In math, we have just completed our unit on Time, but the second graders should continue to work on this home, with the use of both the analog and digital clock, and understanding the concept of elapsed time. If your second grader does not own a watch, now would be a great time for that investment!

We are now beginning to work on place value, which will lead us into regrouping in addition and subtraction (what adults usually refer to as carrying and borrowing!) Please keep practicing those basic facts to 20 with your second grader...retrieval of these facts is essential, and explaining how children get their answer is a key part of their understanding. Ask your child, "How do you know?" as they solve these problems, you may be surprised at how sophisticated their responses will be!



Our social studies travels have us leaving Europe, and heading "Down- Under", to the land of Australia. We will spend two weeks learning about the physical geography, the culture and all the famous landmarks, and as we always do, we will write a postcard from the destination. Our next port of call will be Asia after the February vacation and

All of the second grade classrooms are now using Raz Kids the computer, reading program, and all children have access to this from home and in the classroom. Please make use of this tool within the scope of your rules for screen time at your house! The PTO has generously supported this program by paying for our subscription for the year, and it really gives teachers some new and informative ways for looking at reading and comprehension. We are able to generate reports, monitor usage, and see progress of each individual student. This, combined with guided reading and independent reading, exposes your child to a number of wonderful reading outlets.

We have many exciting events coming up in the next two weeks, as we celebrate Valentines Day and the milestone of the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school, and the second grade is also preparing for their P.R.I.D.E assembly when we return from our February break. We are all crossing our fingers for no more snow so we can keep moving along with our learning too!!

We would like to thank you all for your patience and commitment during these unpredictable weather days, as far as keeping up

with homework and reading, practicing trick words and ensuring your children keep well rested and prepared for their school days. Happy Vacation to Everyone...keep safe and enjoy the break!!

### **Grade 3 News - Mrs. Barth, Mrs. Lees, and Mrs. Trottier**

Despite being buried in snow this winter and thus missing 5 school days, the third graders have been working diligently, learning many new things! In Language Arts, we are continuing with the Wordly Wise program and can see our vocabulary expanding already. Soon we will be alternating between Wordly Wise and spelling and hope to fit many of our new words into our everyday discussions. They have also completed their latest Writer's Workshop essay in which they were asked to describe their dream house. Thus, we have read about golden grand staircases, Olympic sized swimming pools, underwater tunnels, and other exotic home features. In addition to these writing assignments, students are building on their own creative writing ideas driven by the Lucy Calkins writing program.

During the winter months the students have been working on the genre of fantasy and are enjoying reading about mystical creatures, ordinary characters in enchanted lands and extraordinary creatures in ordinary life. Books include *Chocolate Fever*, *Bunnicula*, *Dogzilla*, *Garden of Abdul Gasazi* and *Henry Hikes to Fitchburg*. It has been interesting to hear students inform us of movies that fall under this category, as well.



The Reading Rewards program is in full swing. Thank you for your support by sending in book summaries and encouraging your students to read each night. We appreciate all your support

is helping to obtain additional prizes for the children. This year's group is producing some eager readers and we will need a few more rewards. There is a signup sheet outside of room 9 where we have listed local shops that have donated in the past.

We will also continue to meet in comprehension groups in order to improve our understanding of stories that we are reading. The students are becoming experts at reading questions before they read the stories in order to know what they are looking for in the text. Students are reminded to read each passage two times and encouraged to underline where answers are located within the body of the text. They are then asked to explain the reason behind their answer. The students' comprehension seems to be improving each and every day! Students have just received their mystery book report assignment, and we look forward to seeing what projects they choose to do to accompany their report.

In math, the units are really adding up! We just completed our Things That Come In Groups unit which focused on multiplication and division. Please note that we will continue weekly math fact tests. It is very important that students practice their facts at home as often as possible since more complex forms of equations are just around the corner. Students keep their flashcards from each week in their special index card folder that was given them at the beginning of the unit. Your child will want to keep their math facts folder in a safe place and review them over the summer in preparation for entering grade 4.

Our new unit is called Landmarks In The Hundreds, in which we are exploring "landmark numbers", and finding differences between larger numbers, continuing to work with factors and multiples and division story problems. Students are well practiced in using the T.I.N.S. strategy

when solving story problems and it seems to help them organize their thinking a great deal.

In science, we are continuing to zoom our way through the solar system! The students really love learning about the planets and are very excited about the upcoming webquest created by



Mrs. Trottier. Each classroom will be visiting the computer lab to work on the research project in which they try to determine whether plants

or humans could ever survive on other planets. To see the webquest, please visit:

[www.geocities.com/suz\\_trottier/solarsystemframes.html](http://www.geocities.com/suz_trottier/solarsystemframes.html)

Feel free to be part of our mission from your home: print out information and pictures or just take a look for fun! Students are also creating postcards pretending that they are vacationing on one of the planets, so look for those, as well.

We have two upcoming exciting science events. One is our special presentation called "Earth As A Peppercorn", presented by Marian Tomusiak. Students will have a space adventure involving dividing into planetary mission teams of 2-3 and work on concepts of scale, scientific models and determining their flight path across the solar system. Thank you so much to Mrs. Tomusiak who has led this wonderful adventure for many years. The other exciting event is our field trip to the Planetarium at the Museum of Science on February 17<sup>th</sup> to learn even more about our solar system.

Last month we enjoyed a wonderful field trip to Cary Hall in Lexington to hear the Lexington Symphony Orchestra. Many thanks to Taryn Weaver for making this



possible for our third graders again this year. Students learned about the history of music while being thrilled by the powerful sound of the symphony and its many instruments. The theme to Star Wars was a favorite composition among many of the students! Very exciting.

We hope everyone has a restful and enjoyable February vacation and as always, thank you for your support of the third grade!

### Grade 4 News - Ms. Marshall, Ms. Mullen

The students have been working hard to stay focused and motivated during the recent interruptions to our normal school routines! A few weeks before this treacherous stretch of weather began, the fourth grade started to write their first five paragraph essay. The topic: "Tell a story about an enjoyable snow day". If only we had known what was in store; we have literally been living, breathing and writing snow! Students have been faring long stretches of indoor recess with relative ease, although we can sense they are getting restless and are longing for a clear blacktop at the very least!

As we continue on with the year, expectations of the students continue to grow. Recently, both classrooms have been discussing the importance of not only producing accurate, but also neat and organized work. Parents can help at home by reviewing your student's work and ensuring s/he has correctly used the answer lines provided (meaning all letters are touching the line), has used the best possible handwriting as well as correct capitalization and spelling. We have been reminding students it is their responsibility to utilize the provided spelling list to complete their homework with accurate spelling and capitalization. Please do not sign your student's agenda book until they have taken the time to take PRIDE in their work. Students will no longer



be allowed to play Homeworkopoly if they choose to turn in homework that has inaccurate spelling, capitalization or that is messy. Having students complete their work in such a manner helps them learn how to be detailed oriented and will often lead to less "careless" mistakes in their overall work. We know you and your families are very busy, and we truly appreciate your support on this matter!

In school, teachers continue to meet with students in small groups across the curriculum. Small groups provide teachers an opportunity to assess students individually and provide personalized instruction based on their needs. Small groups provide students more time to discuss and interact with the curriculum under the teacher's guidance. It also allows children an opportunity to freely ask questions or clarify their understanding of the topic at hand. The fourth grade is very fortunate to have Ms. Mitrano in the classrooms. Ms. Mitrano is not only able to facilitate the rest of the class freeing the classroom teacher to meet with small groups, but she is also able to successfully run small groups as well; assessing and addressing the needs of students. Small groups are a regular part of the fourth grade routine and take place in every class.

Recently in math, students created their own "fraction kit". The kits were formed by folding and cutting papers that were the same size in order to create commonly used fractions such as halves, fourths and thirds. Creating the fractions kits from scratch reinforced the importance of using the same size whole when creating and comparing fractions. Students then learned games that utilize their fractions kits. These games require in-depth and critical thinking about adding, subtracting and finding equivalent fractions. While the games are played, teachers are able to pull small groups of students in order to introduce new concepts such as improper fractions and mixed numbers. Parents can support our study of fractions by asking

students to discuss everyday items in terms of fractions. What fraction of the pizza was eaten? What fraction of their candy is yellow? Getting students comfortable recognizing and discussing fractions will help them experience success with fractions.



In writing we continue to focus on narrative stories. Since students have learned the organization of a five paragraph essay, we now switch our focus to learning and using the various types of figurative language. Students tend to have the most fun with onomatopoeia - using words to imitate sounds. Many times, onomatopoeia is a great way to kick off a story and get the reader's attention. Another type of figurative language the students enjoy using are hyperboles. Hyperboles are an exaggerated statement that helps the writer paint a picture in the reader's mind. Students' senses of humor often shine through with the use of hyperboles. Parents can help students with their writing by asking students to use figurative language to describe everyday things. Remind students they also know how to use metaphors and similes as well!

Soon we will be wrapping up our study of the United States regions with a 50 states test. While it is important for students to learn the name and location of each state, it is equally important for students to learn and develop their study skills. Students should be consistently using their flashcards and maps that will be provided to study. As we get closer to the test, we will work with students to fine-tune their study skills to manage such a large amount of information.



While we have been learning many new and interesting things, the most interesting thing to

students lately is the announcement of Mr. Brown's retirement. When students first learned of Mr. Brown's exciting news, they were understandable concerned for the welfare of the school. Their barrage of questions such as "Will the new principal still call us down to do the pledge?" , "Will Mr. Brown come back for our graduation" and "Will the new principal still announce our birthdays?" were more of a reflection of their love for Mr. Brown than true concern for the school! As we move forward, teachers will continue to address the concerns of the students. With that said, we are thoroughly happy for Mr. Brown and we look forward to enjoying the rest of the year under his thoughtful guidance and leadership!

### Grade 5 News - Ms. Gaffey, Ms. Smart, Mrs. Ricciuti

It's hard to believe that it is already February 2011! January was a cold, but busy month for the fifth grade.

We just completed our biographies and the students did a wonderful job presenting their book projects in costume. The students read about some very interesting people including, Albert Einstein, Uncle Sam, Larry Bird, Milton Hershey, Harry Houdini, and many more. We are also looking forward to our February book projects where student will complete a "Story Cube" based on a realistic fiction novel. Students will take a closer look at the characters, setting, plot, and theme of their novels, and present them on a cube made from either a tissue box or shoebox. Look for our "Story Cubes" on display at the end of the month!

In math, we are wrapping up our unit on fractions, decimals, and percents. We have played fraction and decimal games like "Capture the Fraction," "Fraction Tracks," "Smaller to Larger," and "Fill Two." The overall goal of this unit continues to be reinforcing the

understanding that a fraction, decimal, or percent, is PART of a whole. Another key concept is recognizing that we use "benchmarks" such as  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 0.5, and 50% to build our reasoning skills. With each day, we are getting more confident in our math skills! Continue to engage in mathematical conversations with your children at home. These home/school connections greatly enhance a child's overall mathematical capabilities.

Our writing continues to improve. As writers, we need to develop organizational plans that help guide the reader through our words. We understand that this is a process that begins in kindergarten that is continually refined and polished at each grade level. We see evidence that the students understand the structure that is necessary to write CLEARLY and CONCISELY. Every piece of writing has a beginning, middle, and an end. We make careful choices as we refine and edit our work through a series of drafts. Writing across the curriculum continues. Writing samples are part of all academic areas. Responses to literature allow us to see connections to our book project books, our read aloud books, and our content-based textbooks. The rubrics for monthly book projects always include opportunities for synthesizing and summarizing the plot lines.



Our Wordly Wise work is in the home stretch. We have a review test coming up on Word Lists 13-16, four more word lists, and a review test on Word Lists 16-20, before the FINAL. These words continue to show up everywhere in daily conversation and student writing.



We will undertake a study of common prefixes and suffixes to further connect vocabulary development with Greek and Latin

roots. We will explore their origin, learn how they impact usage, and use them to build word families. These programs increase the pool of words that students have available to them in both oral and written communication.

Science and health remain important parts of our program. We will also revisit some of the following topics in class discussions and lessons: the types of energy (mechanical, light, electrical, magnetic, heat, and sound), the types of matter (solids, liquids, and gases) and simple and parallel circuits. These help us to better understand the physical world. Additionally, we will continue to study animals and ecosystems throughout our other science units.

In social studies, students will be wrapping up their unit and project on Explorers, and moving into the colonizing of North America. Students

will learn in depth about the 13 colonies and begin to learn about the American Revolution and U.S. government.

School continues to be a busy place. In the weeks and months ahead we will have an orientation tour of Ottoson in April, take MCAS tests in the spring, and plan for fifth grade recognition activities in June.

Time certainly has a way of passing!

The Stratton Scene is the Stratton School's monthly newsletter. It is edited by a rotating group of editors, each of whom oversees the production of one or more issues of the Stratton Scene. This issue was edited by Edith Wendell.