

FROM THE DESK OF MRS. KUUSELA... Reflections 2014



December 19, 2014



My how jobs can change in one year. Last December, I had no idea that soon I would be teaching 2nd-6th grade Highly Capable once again. At the time, my 5th grade curriculum was fine

tuned after 6 years at Central and I fully expected to end my career in the regular classroom.

In June, when I was asked to plan a program which would engage students, as well as, track each individual for specific needs, it took some careful thought to accept. The responsibility for such a wide range of ages and needs seemed a bit daunting and I questioned whether a change would make my life easier. (I don't like to

admit it but, it is getting harder for this "old dog" to learn new tricks.)

Once I decided to approach this year on a daily basis, relying on the students to show me their needs to direct my instruction, I accepted the position. Since then, there is no doubt I made the right move. The students are eager to learn and joyful about doing so. So here is a big "Thank You" to the teacher "genie" in the sky for making my dream job come true in 2014!

Volume 1 Issue 5

Special points of interest:

- ✓ Personal Reflections on 2014
- ✓ Combining Art, and the Science of Genetics
- ✓ DNA Investigations
- ✓ Reading the Classics in Depth
- ✓ Field Trip Highlights

Mix and Match Designer Mutts

What do you do to end a few weeks of study about dominant and recessive traits, chromosomes, alleles and DNA? Why you combine it with an art project that demonstrates the same principles with dog traits.



Students were given an envelope with coded strips that represented specific traits in dogs from body shape to head type. Strips were chosen in order and the student had to draw that particular trait, no matter how bizarre the dog looked. The strips were taped

together ala DNA strips so that the variety of mutts could be appreciated.

Enter the art. Once the dogs were drawn, the students were taught Watercolor wash and pen/ink hatching. Students completed frame-able treasures of the following new breeds: Saint Berneiners (Saint Bernard x Weiner dog), Great Dane

(Great Dane x Pug) and a Peep Dog (Pug x Sheep Dog) just to name a few. The paintings were hung on the classroom bulletin board in the hall and in the library.

Rumor has it that several paintings will go



"Saint Berneiner" by Emersen Wagner 4th grade

on display at the district office in January.



"Golden Bernard" by Baker Cerrillo 2nd Grade

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Seeing is Believing: Students Precipitate Their Own DNA!



Yes, there is student DNA in that cheek solution and it was made visible in our last investigation. The swishing sports drink to gather cheek cells, for two minutes, was voted the most difficult part of the experiment. After gathering cheek cells, several household items were added to the solution

including clear dishwashing soap, pineapple juice and cold rubbing alcohol. With accurate measurement



2nd grade Swishing.....

and precise methods, all students were able to see their own DNA in a graduated cylinder. Hard to believe that all of our traits are



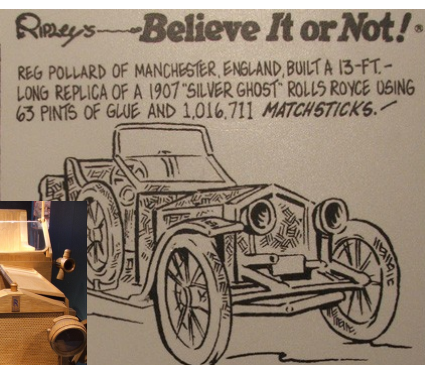
Left and Above- 6th grade Geneticists



coded into the millions of strands we saw floating in the solution. How does nature pack all that information into such a tiny glob of slime? How does such a delicate structure not get damaged or destroyed more often in our world?

The Ripley's Experience

Last Tuesday, December 9, the entire High Cap Group attended the Ripley's Exhibit at the Pacific Science Center. Students studied many of the exhibits and were able to see a life size model of Titanoboa, portraits of famous people made out of unusual media and watch a 3-D movie about Great White Sharks. Optical illusions using holograms, and colored light shows activated by viewer bodies were especially entertaining. The trip was a success



due to our preparedness and appreciation. The traffic even cooperated allowing us to arrive safely

home an hour early. Our next field trip will travel back to the Science Center in April to see the Pompeii Exhibit.



6th grade blasting off !

Classic Vocabulary Replaces DOWL for Grades 3-6 Parking Lot Questions- November and December



The level of student's choice literature for regular classrooms usually does not stress very deep vocabulary. For this reason, Ms. Babcock, Rhodes and myself came up with a list of classic books that would challenge

the students. Every week the students are to read from a classic book and bring in 5 words or phrases that they did not understand. This activity replaces the daily DOWL work and will be checked every Friday for completion and handwriting neatness. Eventually we will add comprehension questions as the students get further into the stories. They are only required to read one classic a trimester for high cap, so this is not meant to be speed reading, rather a deeper

understanding of the writer's style. If a student is totally lost in the book's meaning, then they may choose a different book to read midway. One word/phrase will be chosen each week per student and the list will become a vocabulary builder with a spelling test once a month.

I can see the growth of understanding already, especially in comprehending terms that are long gone from everyday English. A copy of the first week of phrases and the Parking Lot questions from the past two months is attached.

CLASS IN ACTION



Current Study: Crystals, Chemistry and the Periodic Table

Developing a New Generation of Chemists.....



One of the Ripley's exhibits showed giant gypsum crystals discovered in Naica, Mexico. In the year 2000, silver mine workers discovered this magical

cave 900 feet underground. The temperature is a whopping 224 degrees F when humidity is calculated! People can only be in the cave for 15 minutes at a time without dying. This cave inspired the lessons on crystals, elements and the periodic table. Students learned atomic symbols for minerals and then experimented creating a

variety of crystals from NaCl—Sodium Chloride (Salt) to Magnesium Sulphate-Epsom Salts (MgSO_4). The students had to bring 250ml of distilled

water to saturation with the mineral they chose. Once the solution was saturated then a string was suspended into the jar and now for the hard part, waiting for crystals to grow! This will be a long process and will take much patience; however, not as long as Naica, which had been growing for hundreds of thousands of years.



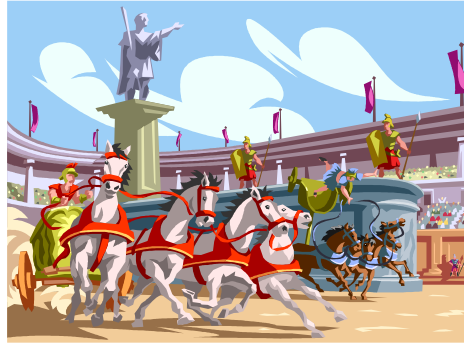
The End of the “Oddities” Unit and Looking Forward to the New Year



Our time with Ripley's Oddities is ending. After the New Year, we will begin a short unit on

Engineering Design. Students will spend 4 weeks discovering the basics of simple machines and problem solving solutions using found materials. No field trip will be scheduled for this mini-unit, rather the next field trip opportunity will be the Pompeii exhibit at the Pacific Science Center in April.

The Pompeii unit will dabble in Roman history and culture. Common Latin words/phrases which remain in modern society will be discovered. Diaries written from different perspectives of the Roman Gods will be kept by students. A study of the volcanic cycle of rocks will make Vesuvius more understandable. Since the IMAX will show a movie about



Greek Culture when we visit, we will need to compare the two societies. Greek and Roman cultures are frequently confused. Our comparison will give the students a better sense of each culture's place in time and geography.

Central School Calendar

January

Student of the Month trait: Caring
School Board Recognition Month

Monday, 1/5/15	Welcome back from Winter Break!
1/5/15 thru 1/30/15	DIBELS & easyCBM testing for K-2, MAP testing for 3 – 6
Wednesday, 1/7/15	CPG Fudge bar sales today during lunches for 75 cents.
	ASB Meeting, Room 3, 12:40
Thursday, 1/8/15	CPG Meeting, Library, 6:30 p.m.
Friday, 1/9/15	Matt at WSU Superintendent Certification Program today in Olympia
Monday, 1/12/15	School Board Meeting, SSB, 7:00 p.m.
Friday, 1/16/15	Temperance and Good Citizenship Day observed today!
Monday, 1/19/15	NO SCHOOL in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Wednesday, 1/21/15	CPG fudge bar sales today during lunches for 75 cents.
	ASB Meeting, Room 3, 12:40
Friday, 1/23/15	5th Grade to Skagit Symphony at McIntyre Hall, times t.b.a.
Friday, 1/30/15	ASB Spirit Day today! Sports Day!