

November 1, 2017

Dear Families,

Halloween in Room 152 was a great success! With the help of many volunteers, the students enjoyed playing Spooky Number Hunt, Roll A Jack-o-Lantern, Pin the Nose on the Pumpkin, Paint a Small Pumpkin, Pumpkin Letter Bingo, and they loved making a spider web for a glittering spider! The whole kindergarten participated in a Halloween parade through VES' classrooms and hallways. As always, we were amazed at the creative efforts of kids and parents in providing great costumes. A big thank you goes out to all of the parents who contributed to our party and to Hillary Fitzgerald for making all of the arrangements.

Our **study of Native People** begins this month. We had a wonderful visit to White Pines. After a brief introduction, our guide led us on a fifteen minute hike through the woods to the first destination, Moosefoot Lodge. We walked over log bridges and entered Moosefoot lodge, where we sat on wooden benches around the edge. In the center, a campfire warmed us. David Sanipass, a member of the Micmac tribe, greeted us. David is the official storyteller for his tribe of over 2,000 members! The group left Moosefoot Lodge and hiked a short distance to another clearing. There we watched a demonstration of fire-making. After this demonstration we gathered around an outdoor kitchen with a crackling cooking fire. We learned that Native People used nature as their "grocery store" as long ago they couldn't depend on Hannaford! David Sanipass and the White Pine staff taught us that Native people only hunted to feed their families, not for sport. They also used every part of the animals they hunted. After learning some hunting sign language, the group went out to "hunt". We quietly learned to "track" a volunteer "deer". The children also learned about 'debris art' by weaving natural items from

the earth's floor on a makeshift loom with 'sinew' stretched between trees to act as the loom. In addition, the children contributed to and crawled into a shelter made from sticks and leaves.

This trip was a great introduction to our study of Native People. As we complete activities and read books over the next month, the children will have a personal experience to help scaffold their understanding. We will learn lots of songs and chants, Native American games, and "kindergarten versions" of some Native crafts. **Thank you for sending in Native American items with your child for his/her share day!**

The children will participate in a **Native American "pow wow" celebration** by designing their own Native American nature medallion, creating a sand craft, weaving, and delving into many other informative activities and games. **We will need volunteers to assist with some of these activities.** Our volunteer coordinator will send-out a plea for both supplies and volunteers for this celebration! We also hope to entertain you all with a **Native American pow wow dance and music performance.** Ms. Pattison's kindergarten and our kindergarten class will perform Native American songs, chants and dances. We have not yet scheduled our pow wow, so be on the lookout for an email with details.

In **math** we have been learning and continue to learn about a variety of topics! Topics include: reading and writing numbers, making comparisons to determine more or fewer objects while sorting, graphing pattern blocks, recording dice rolls, representing numerals on number cards and on a number line, comparing items by size, identifying and describing objects as longer or shorter, comparing shapes by analyzing and describing their properties, features, similarities and differences. The children have also worked to solidify their understanding of counting and cardinality. They have had experiences that solidify one to one correspondence and the cardinal

principle when counting sets. They have also had opportunities to work on the successor function: recognizing that each successive number is one more than the previous number. Foundational counting concepts will be further explored in our current unit of study. One very important thing you can do **at home** is to **count with and for your child. Listen to your child count and help him/her make little steps toward learning the next numbers. Make it easy and fun:-)** (Car rides are a great time to practice counting!)

We carved a pumpkin for Halloween! Estimates of the number of seeds inside our pumpkin ranged from 10 to 2,000,000. After counting for quite some time, we discovered that our pumpkin contained 440 pumpkin seeds. Our counting helped us understand why it is important to learn to count by ones, tens and hundreds as we attempted this feat! After we hollowed out our pumpkin, we designed our "**Shape-o-Lantern.**"

Our Maine weather has cooperated in many ways during our **weather investigations**. Lessons about weather conditions include: discovering weather conditions by learning about how the sky looks and how the weather feels, measuring temperature with color correlated bands on thermometers, and thinking about how the weather affects our clothing choices. Observing, measuring and graphing weather patterns helps us see patterns in weather. Observing how water plays a role in our weather and observing clouds can help us predict when we might get some precipitation. Observing the movement of leaves in trees and our playground windsock help us learn about the direction and speed of the wind. Observing the effects of sunlight help us learn about illumination and warmth. We will continue to observe the weather through different seasons and conditions. Our "student meteorologists" help collect weather data and

share observations with the class. Students graph the daily weather conditions regarding temperature, wind, clouds, sunlight, and precipitation.

Each student has a **writing** folder. Children are also encouraged to draw their “story.” We have been using letters to label items in pictures and to write ideas to reflect our stories.

We have also begun to “stretch” words. We stretch out a word slowly (but not too slowly!) to hear as many sounds as we can. This helps children to write not only the beginning sounds in a word but also the middle and ending sounds. It is so helpful if your child knows the letter names and the sounds that each letter makes. The month of November will focus on letter sounds during our literacy center work. Any extra practice with naming the letters and knowing the sounds that the letters make, would be a big help! The point of our writing is to communicate!

When your child practices writing at home, encourage him/her to say to him/herself: “Say the word slowly, what do I hear? Write it!” We are working on “quality work” and have learned how to “fancy up” our illustrations. This means details, careful coloring, outlining and shading.

The children are taking pride in their writing and illustrations by earning a Caldecott Award!

So far the students have been introduced to **four priority words**- “the,” “and,” “is,” and “we”.

By the end of the year we will have learned to read and spell 10 priority words. You may see class stories or our take-home Scholastic newspapers come home with our priority words circled or underlined! Any practice with reading and writing these words will be helpful to your child as we begin to read these words and write these words daily.

Students have also been “**reading**” repetitive and predictable books. I encourage the children to read their books to parents, siblings, grandparents, dogs, cats, fish... We have

been working on finger pointing and pointing with our eyes as we read these predictable books. Children practice touching each word as they read, dragging their finger under the word as they read it and “hopping” to the next word. We have also talked a lot about how to tell where a word begins and ends, and the important job of spaces in both reading and writing. Another important strategy we practice is to look at the pictures. Good readers use pictures to help with tricky words in text. All of these reading behaviors are “training wheels” for a beginning reader.

The children have been introduced to the concepts of “the important part” of a story, a favorite part of a story, the cover, the title, the title page, the back cover, characters and setting. Students have been instructed to “read” (tell stories using the pictures and/or words) both independently and with partners. Children often “turn and tell” their partners important ideas about their books during our literacy block.

Our class will meet their **first grade book buddies** from Miss Twomey’s class the first week of November. The children are excited to read one or two books from their book baskets to their book buddy! They will also have the opportunity to listen to their book buddy read to them. This allows them to hear fluent reading of a first grader! It is an exciting time to share in the joy of reading! We will meet each other in the library and practice our listening skills as well as our early reading strategies.

November is also **parent/teacher conference time**. During our conference we will share some of your child’s work and various assessment results. **Thank you for using sign-up genius to secure your child’s parent/teacher conference. If you have not yet completed**

your sign-up, please try to complete it by the end of this week!

Thanks for your support in **sending in Home/School folders every day**. We always look there for notes and papers. While **homework** is optional in kindergarten, it is encouraged. Your child will be proud to share what he/she is learning in school with you. Another bit of “homework” is sharing our class books with your child at home. We do a lot of whole class book-making on many subjects. It is usually a source of pride and excitement for your child to share his/her own page in our class book. We always enjoy the reader’s comments which we read periodically to the class. It is always nice to get positive feedback from people who have read your work! Thank you for keeping the class books in the bag and returning them promptly so others may enjoy them! Students have enjoyed sharing their math homework with the whole group!

Please check our **class web page** periodically. We are posting newsletters, photos, displays of learning on our class web site.

On future snowy days **be sure your child has an extra bag (one of the large, handled, plastic-coated reusable grocery bags...labeled with his/her name) to carry all of his/her snow gear**. Students will need snow pants and boots to play on the snowy part of the playground. Children without snow pants and boots will only be allowed to play on the tarred part of the playground. **Mittens and a hat are a necessity** from now until Mother Nature decides we’ve had enough of her cold weather! Please **label EVERYTHING** your child wears to school!

Many children’s “extra clothing” bags need weather-appropriate clothing swaps. Please **notify us with a note in your child’s folder when you are ready to “swap” and return your child’s**

“extra clothing” bag to school. We will be sure to send the bag home the same day, and we will look for it's return the next school day! You might want to include an extra pair of mittens and warm socks too for the coming months!

Thank you ahead of time for your continued assistance and support!

Fondly,

Jen Ellis and Melinda Gallagher (scroll down for “Important Dates”)

Important Dates:

Sunday, Nov. 5: Daylight Savings Time begins

Friday, Nov. 10: Veteran’s Day observed-no school

Monday, Nov. 20: Students have school. **Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences** by appointment on sign-up genius (parents and teachers only)

Tuesday, Nov. 21: Parent/Teacher Conferences by appointment (No School) (parents and teachers only)

Wednesday, Nov. 22–Sunday, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Break (No School)

***tentative date: Friday, December 1 pm:** Ellis/Gallagher/Pattison Native American Pow Wow (time TBD)

Thursday, December 21 Holiday Party from 9:30-11:00