

River Rock School

2015 End-of-Year Group Reports

South Group



South group has had an engaging year full of rich and varied learning experiences. One of the highlights was the radio study. For a series of months the group wrote, recorded, edited and broadcast a monthly radio show. This was born out of a small group project last spring and became a whole-class endeavor as interest and enthusiasm grew. Students conducted small group research about the invention and history of radio, the “Golden Age” of radio, FCC and radio law as well the mechanics of radio broadcasting. South also explored the world of chemistry through a series of hands-on experiments. Continuing in the realm of science, this spring South hatched and raised six black Australorp chicks. They are now living near the River Rock school garden in Plainfield. South group was also home to an exciting new K'nex project. After deciding to take apart the ferris wheel, students started to look into other projects of a similar scale. They found downloadable instructions for a seven-foot Grandfather Clock project on the K'nex website and were instantly enamored. The students were thrilled by the enormity of the project. Students from all four groups took part in the sorting and construction. The original South group team served as leaders and mentors to the mixed-aged groups of builders. The collaboration and problem solving that came out of the process was invaluable. If you haven't seen the project, come take a look. It stands seven feet tall and actually keeps time!

West Group

This year in West we have explored many topics and materials both on a community and individual level. In math we worked practiced a variety of skills, including addition, subtraction, interpreting graphs, geometry, fractions, and multiplication. We honed our number sense through math games using cards and



dice. West groupers developed as writers and storytellers in many ways. We wrote comics, coloring books, pop up books, plays, poems, kamishibai stories, and magazines.

We made masks of papier mache for our costumes in our performance of Aesop's Fables, and then went on to use plaster to create more masks. This project took a certain level of trust as another person covered your face with wet strips of plaster! We started needle felting this spring, and Jessica Smith came in to help teach this skill. Students enjoyed the repetition in this work as well as the thrill of using a sharp needle.

West group made regular excursions to the library and became very familiar with and comfortable in the children's library, as well as savvy pedestrians! We also went to the woods to investigate the natural world and stimulate our bodies and minds in a different way. Our outings to the North Branch Nature Center to create nature art and Saben's Pasture to explore the canyon were also fun adventures.

It has been a full and lively year in West and I look forward to seeing everyone next year!

North Group

This year North Group has studied science, social studies, history, math, and writing (of many kinds). We have read many books, both individually and as a group. We studied the rivers and ponds of our area this year. We also ventured to the Cape to see what lives in those waters. We planted trees to help create a better environment along a local riverbank. We studied American History, read "The Witch of Blackbird Pond" and ended up at Plimoth Plantation last week to view the exact setting for that book. We viewed many of the "America: The Story of Us" videos and talked about both the content and how to take notes on what was being conveyed. Jennifer McMahon enriched our writing lives by offering many workshops that got our creative juices flowing. She shared her own struggles with writing her next book and read us excerpts of what she was actually doing, and that was very amazing. We practiced math almost every single day, because it takes a lot of practice to get it down. Because of our age spread, we studied things from fractions to algebra. We did a magnificent play of "Peter Pan", and our next production is graduation! Angus Munro offered the



possibility of taking materials to another level with blacksmithing, welding and carving. The Quintins gave us a stained glass workshop. And the Breakfast Club brought it all year! It was a very good year.

East Group



It's been a spectacular year of growth in East Group this year, both academically and socially. Our group started with four and five year olds in September, with nine students calling East their home base. Now, as the year concludes, we stand strong as a community of ten competent and connected learners.

This year our project work ran the social and scientific gamut. We delved into varied subject matter including endangered species, owls, Civil Rights, exploring varied art media and, most recently, a study of plants. We've read many books, written poems and stories, heard many "Shawnee Stories", learned the game of Pig Out and developed our critical thinking skills in the wonderfully wide world of mathematics.

The vegetable garden allowed us to cap our year with excitement as we discovered, observed and studied our growing greenhouse items. We measured the growth of our tomatoes, enjoyed munching on our lettuce and sniffing our growing basil seedlings. The field trip to the Quintin home provided us with a wonderful culmination of our Spring Growing, and we look forward to harvest time in the fall.

As we conclude our year together I am awestruck at the connections students have made with one another and with their own capabilities. I'm proud to have been a small part of their world and look forward to continued work with these great kids. Have a most wondrous summer, Easties!