

Blanchard Bits **October 2008**

In just a few short weeks, the empty summer halls and classrooms of Blanchard have been transformed into bustling centers of activity. As I visit the classrooms, it is evident that students are settling down and eagerly engaged in all aspects of learning.

I enjoyed seeing many parents at our Open House nights on September 22 and 25. In preparation for Open House, large stars, decorated by students and staff and representing our S.T.A.R. values, hung from the walls of Blanchard. At the start of the night, parents had an opportunity to learn about their child's curriculum, while students were supervised in the gym. Specialists then escorted students back to their homerooms to join their parents for the Open House segment of the program. Thank you for the many positive comments on this new format.

A big thank you also goes out to Chuck Lord and Carver Hill Orchard located in Stow. To celebrate Johnny Appleseed's birthday, Mr. Lord donated, for a third year in a row, apples for every student at Blanchard. Dr. Bates dressed as Johnny Appleseed and greeted students with an apple as they entered the school on Thursday, September 25.

The preschoolers have been having lots of fun throughout the past couple of weeks exploring their classroom learning centers, singing many new songs and playing games with new friends. They are also well into their fall unit where the focus is on learning about shapes and colors. Next week, they will be transforming the Dramatic Play Center into a Pumpkin & Apple Stand. All of the concepts introduced in the preschool are integrated into the learning center's songs and stories as well as being reinforced throughout their daily routines.

Third grade is off to an exciting start. Their first language arts unit entitled, "Off to Adventure," is full of fascinating fiction and nonfiction reading with opportunities to respond in writing. In math, students are working on place value and reading and writing greater numbers. You may have some interesting conversations about food with your child as they learn about good nutrition habits in science. The big hit with many students is the introduction to cursive writing. Finally, keep those third graders' WEB reading at home Monday through Thursday.

The fourth graders trekked down to the science lab this week to grow crystals as part of their current geology unit. The students learned about the geometric structure of sugar crystals and were incredibly engaged during their investigations. Another type of crystal the boys and girls made utilized several ingredients including bluing solution, ammonia, salt and water. Students used household sponges to serve as a growing surface for these rapid-growing

crystals. The students were simply amazed how quickly these crystals formed. Check out the fourth grades' web page to see the photos of these cool crystals.

Our fifth graders are well into practicing their new routine and working together as a team. They spent a Friday afternoon getting to know their second grade buddies and working on the S.T.A.R.R. stars that so beautifully decorate the school. After spending some time getting to know each other and preparing for Open House, they have delved right into some serious learning. Children have completed writing benchmarks, reviewed and begun applying reading strategies, and are well on their way to being master readers and writers. In science, students monitor and record the temperature and are watching the numbers rise and fall just ahead of the leaves falling from the trees. Math begins each day as students lead and work their way through a round of Pico, Fermi, Bagel. It is a wonderful way to get "math minds moving". Students have worked with place value and are beginning some algebra.

The art room is bustling with activity! The kindergarteners started their first class talking about how artists "observe" and create their own "ART EYES." First graders made shiny collages and second graders studied Vincent Van Gogh and painted "Starry Nights." Third graders are weaving with paper and will soon be making small pockets with yarn. Fourth graders learned about Illuminated letters and created their own fanciful letters using markers and colored pencils. Fifth graders worked on positive/negative designs and learned about complementary colors. Sixth graders began the year designing the "Class of 2009" banner. Phew....how does that sound?

This year's library program has gotten off to a great start. Our younger students have been learning about library routines and how to care for books while enjoying some wonderful stories. Older students have been busy reviewing how to use the library catalog to find books, they have set up their network folders on the computers, and they are beginning to review use of electronic resources and internet safety.

A big thank you to the PTF for their support of the library program. With the funds they've provided, we've been able to add many new books to the collection. Ms. Long used the new digital camera to create a slide show for the Open House/Curriculum Nights. Plans are also in the works for student projects using the new equipment.

Mrs. Walsh, our Guidance Counselor, has the Second Step program in full swing at Blanchard. By now, all kindergarten through fifth grade classes have had at least one Second Step class. If you are not familiar with the program, check out the Committee for Children website: www.cfchildren.org for details. The first few months of Second Step are devoted to empathy. We teach children to talk about their feelings, learn to read emotions on faces, and feel what other people might be feeling. In the younger grades, the emphasis is on facial

expressions. In the upper grades, we combine the facial expressions with a situation and talk about conflicted feelings. Please take time to talk with your child about their feelings, proper ways to express strong emotions, and keep your ears open for Second Step vocabulary words!