

Primary School Newsletter

Spring Term 2 2017

Welcome to the Primary School Newsletter!

We are pleased to introduce this wonderful showcase of all the exciting activities that take place every half-term in Primary School. On the following pages, you will find articles and photos about each year group that illustrate your child's successes and fun experiences.

Each and every week I am amazed by the children's engagement at school. As I walk around, it is apparent how happy and excited they are as they stop me to talk about what they are learning -- whether it's filming peers in a role-play lesson, carrying out research, or hunting for clues as they search the building for shapes, letters and sounds.

The second half of Spring Term was no exception! It was a busy period, with many children donning their thespian hats to learn lines, songs, and dances for their annual plays. These polished, professional performances were met with a rousing reception from students, staff and family members. The children also celebrated World Book Day with storytelling workshops, in which they wrote novels to share with peers around the school. It was a fantastic opportunity to learn from each other and see how storytelling affects children of all ages. We also had tremendous fun on Pi Day with a series of House math contests facilitated with help from Year 10 students.

Please read on for more snapshots of the half-term. I look forward to sharing more with you over the coming weeks!

John Biggs
Head of Primary



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Nursery & Reception

Pancake Day

In February we had great fun learning the origins of Pancake Day. Of course, a bit of taste-testing was part of the learning! The children munched on European-style pancakes with a topping of their choice. What a delicious treat!

Pump it Up

As part of our Transport Topic, the children enjoyed a fantastic field trip to Pump it Up in Lincoln Park. We explored body movement in a vibrant, soft environment. The children are *still* raving about all the climbing, bouncing and sliding.

Valentine's Day

On Valentine's Day the children designed and decorated cookies, sang songs, and crafted cards for loved ones. We talked extensively about the people we love and why we care about them. It was a real treat for working so hard over the first half of Spring Term.

Chinese New Year

We put on an authentic Chinese New Year celebration with traditional music and cuisine. After devouring pot stickers, noodles and egg rolls, the children learned about Chinese traditions and dress.

Theatre Trip

Our trip to the theatre in December was especially memorable. It was our first field trip on a yellow school bus! At the theatre, we watched a performance about insects, growing and changing.



We Love Teddy Bears

In a world of ever-increasing technology, teddy bears still remain popular. Who can resist their fuzzy, warm hugs? Certainly not Year 1! The children were thrilled to learn about teddy bears as part of our Magic Toymaker Topic. We first explored their history, including the “teddy bear” name and origin. The children were interested to learn the teddy bear was born in two parts of the world at about the same time. They also learned how the appearance and materials of teddy bears have evolved.

Then we made our own teddy bear! We talked about instructions and how to follow sequences. First, we carefully drew around a template on two pieces of felt. After that, the children cut out the felt shapes. Next came the stitching. We looked at different methods

and used blanket stitches to sew the pieces together. We encountered a few difficulties, like the needle becoming unthreaded and the thread getting tangled (a few times!). The children demonstrated resilience and didn't give up – they knew the best part was yet to come. After leaving a gap in the stitching, the children stuffed their bear. Finally, after stitching up the gap and adding their own touches, like bows and ribbons, the teddy bears were complete. The children loved naming their teddy bears, which certainly received lots of hugs and attention.

We linked this activity to English and wrote our own instructions for making a teddy bear. We learned how the language used for instruction-writing differs from non-fiction, fiction and poetry.



Teamwork Writes a Brilliant Story

For World Book Day, Primary children created and shared a story with peers. Year 1 always shows great teamwork skills, so they decided to create a pass-it-on story – a shared piece of work that everyone in Year 1 could help compile.

The Elephants began with the introduction, setting the scene by creating and describing characters and settings. The Elephants passed the story to the Zebras, who took it in a really interesting direction. Finally, the Giraffes wrote a memorable conclusion. All three classes also came up with adjectives, adverbs and punctuation marks to make the story really engaging. The end result was creative, brilliant and created by every Year 1 child. Read “Whiskey and the Magical Potion” in the reading area of your child’s classroom!



Year 2

Bravo! Bravo!

We were very busy prepping for the production of “What Happened After Once Upon a Time?”

This exciting journey started with the children demonstrating their talents in an audition-style activity, in which they performed lines from a given play. Each child had the chance to adapt the role to reflect his/her individual performing style, which was a huge success. This activity led to the next step - casting the children in a role that suited them perfectly. Then rehearsals began.

Children took home the script and learned their lines. After weeks of rehearsals in class, the children took to the stage the morning of performance day. They caught on quickly to stage directions, and adapted beautifully under the bright lights.

The show was incredible! The children’s motivation and enthusiasm was extremely impressive, as was their stellar comedic timing. They delivered lines with fantastic expression and varied actions to embody their casted role. We are so very proud of their effort and hope you enjoyed the performance.

Fun with Fractions ...and Pizza

On top of their dedication to play prep, the children were engaged in all of their subjects...including Math! This term we learned about fractions and associated vocabulary, like numerator and denominator. To apply this fraction learning to our Things People Do Topic, we helped Giovanni, a Chicago restaurant owner, create pizzas for his fussy customers. The children used orders from Giovanni’s restaurant patrons to create a variety of delicious pizzas, working out the fraction of toppings on each. We enjoyed pretending to be restaurateurs.



Mapping Mania

We discovered maps as part of our Explorers and Adventures Topic! To start, we looked at a world map and plotted the countries where children have visited and lived. We used two atlases to locate these countries and compare their locations. We also used the Internet and books to research countries we want to visit in the future. As part of this exploration, we learned about map scales.

In STEAM lessons we explored features of the area around school. We discovered bridges, buildings of different sizes and purposes, gardens, parks, streets, and decorative elements like flags and street signs. To illustrate our findings, we started work on a large, 3D model of our school and the South Loop. We had to use what we learned about 3D shape nets to plan the construction. Then we played with and selected different materials based on the purpose of the building or feature.

Throughout the project, we worked collaboratively in groups and as a whole class to make sure the scale of our map matched all the features we engineered.

The map is a work in progress, and we will Tweet the final result, so stay tuned!



Map Facts

Cartography is the study of maps and map making. Someone who makes maps is called a cartographer.

The **first map of America** was created by German cartographer Marin Waldseemuller in April 1507.

The **first world map** was created in the sixth century BCE in Greece.



Young Inventors

Our Inventions that Changed the World Topic has offered us a great opportunity to be inquisitive, imaginative and to practice our research skills.

We started the Topic with a knowledge harvest, collecting all the information we already know about inventions and then asking questions about what we wanted to find out. We conducted a lot of research using books, encyclopedias and search engines. Using the information we found, we practiced our biography- and instruction-writing skills in Literacy. It is much harder to write biographies, explanations, and instructions than you might think, so we peer-assessed and edited our work to make it better.

On top of looking at inventions and inventors from the past 100 years, we researched and learned about the Islamic “Golden Age of Invention”.

During the ninth and 13th centuries, we discovered the birth of lots of inventions, like the concept of zero, the camera obscura, ideas for human flight, and elephant clock.

To further our understanding of inventions, we designed our own during STEAM lessons. Our challenge was to design something purposeful that would change the world. We had lots of creative ideas...but learned that many have already been invented. We were resilient and persevered to improve our designs, making diagrams that show how they will work. Our Math learning in measurement, geometry and angles came in very handy.

We are excited to apply our new knowledge of inventions in Summer Term, when we will invent, design, produce and market our own product.



Cross-Curricular Composing

With ski trips, plays, and engaging projects, we have been busy! This term we carried out a very exciting, cross-curricular book study. We used the adventure story “Clockwork” by Philip Pullman as the root of our learning activities.

We began by analyzing the text, discovering lots of interesting description and ambitious vocabulary. We also got to know all the characters. By examining their friendships, emotions and back stories, we were inspired to create character profiles of our own.

After our analysis, we used the book to inspire our writing and explore the topic of perspective. Our challenge was to write this tale from another character’s point of view. The results were very impressive!

We wrote prequels, created new characters, and even hinted as to what happens next in the story. This writing exercise gave us another chance to focus on reviewing and editing our work.

Our biggest task was still to come...outside of English lessons. The Music Department chose Year 5 to work with the amazing Rachel Calloway, Mezzo Soprano. Together, we used “Clockwork” to create a composition for multiple voices and instruments. We also came up with a choreographed scene. Ms. Calloway was a tremendous help, motivating us to fine tune our composition and performance skills.

The end result is fantastic. [Click here](#) to watch the performance!



“ I love the wonderful video you made of the opera and the whole process...just marvelous. You are an inspiration, and I’m so happy to have had the opportunity to collaborate. I hope we’ll be able to do so again in the future. ”

Rachel Calloway,
Mezzo Soprano



Children Shine Bright in Last Primary Play

Play productions are a cornerstone of Primary School. It's thrilling for the children to embrace their inner actor and take to the stage! So, we were excited to prepare and put on a show for family members in Spring Term.

"The Pirates of the Curry Bean" followed a bunch of rascalion pirates, led by the fierce Captain Redbeard, in their quest for hidden treasure on the island of Lumbago in the sea of Sciatica. The children dug the story! They jumped headfirst into singing the songs and performing their lines with the most impressive comedic timing.

Weeks of rehearsals paid off because the performance went off without a hitch. On top of this, the children remained calm and supportive of each other throughout the process as they worked under a tight time line.

We are so proud of the children in their last Primary School performance. Now, it's on to the big stage in Middle School!

