

Orca Team Open Cluster – Meeting Notes

Date: April 19, 2017 @ 2:10

I. **Welcome** – Mr. O’Neill began the meeting by welcoming those who have been to prior open clusters and explaining the purpose of an open cluster meeting to others.

II. Curriculum Updates

Science - We used the ice melting plates as the phenomenon for figuring out how heat transfer happens. We built upon the children’s understanding of density and molecular movement and arrangement to explain how conductors and insulators work. The children were asked to build a device that uses evaporative cooling and heat transfer to refrigerate a piece of fruit. They were given a variety of supplies in which to build their device.

They tested their device, gathered and analyzed data and determined whether or not they were successful. They had the opportunity to view other models and discuss what worked and didn’t work with their designs. Then they revised their model and tested again.

They have been sharing their results through Productive talks where they share their ideas on how a particular phenomenon works. We have been practicing our skills of sharing our ideas, respectfully disagreeing with or questioning others ideas.

We moved into our weather unit where the children are using their knowledge of density, molecules, heat transfer and evaporation. We went into great detail about the water cycle. We investigated air pressure, winds, and they predicted weather by looking at the fronts and pressure systems on weather maps.

We recently started our unit on Water and Ecology. We have a field trip planned for May 2 to the SoundWaters Coastal Explorers Center in Stamford. The children will conduct hands-on activities to sample and test the quality of the water in the Long Island Sound, create, test and observe how groundwater is filtered and conduct an Asian shore crab population study.

After returning from our field trip we will continue to investigate watersheds and their impact on ecosystems through a project. The children will identify and choose a location on the outside of the school where there is storm water runoff. They will research different “green” solutions to preventing or utilizing the runoff. They will then create a physical model to showcase their design.

Math - 6th grade Orcas have continued to work hard in math. We have spent the last few months studying Ratios, Rates and Percents. Areas of study have been writing and simplifying ratios, using ratios to solve multi-step word problems, calculating and comparing unit rates to determine the better buy, and using speed, distance, and time formulas.

We are currently working on our Percent unit. The unit started with establishing a general understanding of percent. We then went into how to convert percents, decimals, and fractions. Next up was word problems, where given a percent, students had to find the part or the total. This unit will conclude with percent applications. Students will learn how to calculate the tip, tax and total cost of a meal. They will also learn how to find the discount, sale price, sales tax and total cost of an item.

Up next will be Chapter 7, where we will work on Algebraic expressions. Students will learn how to use a variable to represent an unknown quantity. They will learn how to write, evaluate and simplify algebraic expressions. We will also explore how to expand and factor expressions. We will finish up the chapter by solving real-world problems.

Throughout all our work in every chapter, a continued focus has been on always showing neat, organized, complete and labeled work. Students have been doing a great job with this and I am so proud of all their effort.

Just a reminder that all homework assignments and dates for tests and quizzes are always posted on Schoology. Test topic sheets are handed out well in advance of all assessments, and have an outline of all the topics that will be tested, what section they are in the textbook and how to access extra practice problems through the online textbook (my.hrw.com). The password for all students is coley23.

Language Arts – In Language Arts class, students have just started a research unit. The topic is climate change, and students may have the opportunity to narrow their focus to a more specific aspect of the topic once we've grasped the big picture. The learning objectives of the unit include determining a central idea from textual details, analyzing informational text structures to aid in comprehension, and writing organized, informative text to examine a topic.

We will continue with vocabulary study built around Greek and Latin roots. We will continue with grammar study around prepositions / prepositional phrases and skillful sentence combining.

I hope to squeeze in one more book club session in May, in which case we'll end the year with writing connected to that unit. If the timing won't quite work for book club, we'll return to short stories for our literature work to end the year.

Social Studies – We are finishing up our study of Africa. We have been looking at the geographic features of Africa and how these features helped shape the development of the African culture. We explored some of the reasons why parts of Africa have developed, while other areas continue to struggle. The video, 'Guns, Germs and Steel' was an excellent teaching tool to explore how some early European settlements flourished while others failed.

Our next unit will be China and other areas of East Asia. Mr. Horrigan (CMS librarian) will be coming in to speak to the students and show them pictures of the time he spent in China as an exchange teacher a few years back. A study of China is very interesting in terms of how they are attempting to balance modernization with their ancient customs.

Our year will conclude with an overview of North and South America. We will discuss the native people who were in the Americas when the Europeans began to arrive. We will look at how different areas of the Americas were colonized by European powers.

As always, parents are encouraged to engage their children in discussions about current events. The students have been watching CNN Student News and reading Time for Kids to keep up to date on what is happening in the world around them.

III. World Language Week – Mrs. Zheng and Mrs. Kupinse (WL teachers) stopped by to share some of the exciting things the WL department was a part of during World Language Week before vacation. The students continue to do an excellent job in Spanish, Mandarin and French classes.

IV. Guidance Update – Mrs. Hassey will continue to meet with students individually and in small groups until the end of the year. The last developmental guidance focused on internet safety and the ethical/moral aspects of communicating online. The upcoming developmental counseling lessons will focus on time management and how to balance the various aspects of your life. Please contact Mrs. Hassey if you have any questions or concerns.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:45.