

February, 2011

Hello,

Each day Miss Irwin and I get to enjoy spending time with your children. Here are some of the things we see:

A young three-year-old who believes he has had a lesson with the Africa puzzle map because he has loved it and watched it so often... He lays out two mats, carries this heavy puzzle map to one of the mats and carefully(!) takes out each piece (by its knob, great practice for his hand), and lays them, perfectly placed, on the second mat. He puts South Africa back in the frame and then is a bit lost.

In the meantime there is a six-year old, first-year student, next to him, struggling and PERSEVERING through the puzzle map of Europe.

I see that the three-year old needs help; after all it is almost bell-time. I send for a four-year-old who has been working on puzzle maps diligently for some time. He walks to the two mats and offers his assistance. He looks down at the sea of mixed-up puzzle pieces and says (no fooling), "Hey, what is this?" He picks up a puzzle piece and hands it to the girl next to him who is working on Europe! It really did belong to the Europe map, after all...

The pieces to Africa fly into the frame (in a controlled manner of course). When almost finished, there is a piece missing from the center. Another six-year old walks by and says (again, no fooling), "It's the green and yellow piece that is missing." Sure enough the puzzle piece that represents Ghana and Togo, separated by green and yellow, was found under the mat when they rolled it up! Many children reach this proficiency level with the puzzle maps if they practice them often.

Did you know one of our students has parents who visited Costa Rica? (We were a little confused and thought they got married there...). I have that information since we worked with the language of the North America puzzle map. This verbal story was told to me during a geography/language lesson and then was taken directly to a language lesson where we wrote words on a moveable alphabet about sun, surfing, sharks, marry...

The language cards of the Presidents of the United States have been very popular recently. One student, new to our class as of January, went home and asked to do more. The solar system has also been a recent interest to many students and Miss Irwin.

Cutting is always popular. I am able to witness such concentration when I watch children of all ages cutting shapes. Just yesterday a three and four-year-old come to mind. Heart cutting for Valentines and pentagon cutting have been extremely popular.

Many students have been learning to put on gloves and zip jackets. I still help with a few zippers, but I haven't struggled tiny fingers into gloves in some time now and they all wear them each day. On our practical life shelf there is a can with a pair of gloves to practice putting on and taking off. Practice at a non-stressful moment is one of the secrets. This is true for tying as well. After children learn to tie the tying frame I have a little wooden shoe for practice. The last step to tying shoes is typically to go into the cubby room and get their shoes mid-morning to practice in the classroom.

Reading, reading, reading! You may hear one child identifying sounds and happily saying a word, or you

may hear one of the most advanced readers in the class reading about the gnu, (African name for Wildebeest), from the encyclopedia. After a lesson for two Kindergarten-aged boys on homophones (words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings), they discovered that new, knew, and gnu were all among that classification. A trip to elementary is always fun to gather more information.

The elementary students have been very helpful with our readers. One student in particular has done wonders to assist a student who is right on the brink of reading. His patience was astounding and he has been back many times.

Vincent Van Gogh is the current artist we are studying. The children are enjoying learning about his life as a painter and participating in activities designed by Sandy Murray.

As you can see the classroom is buzzing with work. At any given moment you can look through the room and see joy, caring, love, determination, maybe a tear or two, conversations, cutting, drawing, addition facts, snack eating (always!), writing, painting, teamwork, exuberant walking, smiling, singing, the potty dance as we call it when a child has waited a bit too long, or hear the song Doe a Deer from the Sound of Music being played on the bells, inspired from watching the movie with family.

Farmer Boy is being enjoyed by the afternoon students and we await the Farm School kids to come and spin wool for us. Mrs. Kuzmick will also dye wool for us and we hope to see the Farm School sheep get shorn this spring.

There is only one thing that remains constant: My job is never boring and always enjoyable. You are invited to come in and observe. Please call the office to schedule a visit.

Sincerely,

Carrie Irre