



THE PINNACLE PREP SCHOOL NEWSPAPER

January 2017

Principal's Corner.....

We wrapped up 2017 with a bang here at Pinnacle Prep School! The students presented many outstanding projects to their families on Parent's Day. The amazing projects included futuristic rides at a new amusement park, a Lego City, displays of various writing activities, exhibits highlighting classic books that the students have read this semester and many other exciting presentations!

After finishing their weekly written essays on orphanages from around the world, students in the upper grades will begin essays on career choice this semester. Each week the students will pick a job they may potentially be interested in as a future form of employment and write an essay about it. They will also be required to present their papers during assembly time.

Theater Arts classes have been going well

and the students are learning a lot about performing on a stage, speaking in front of an audience and writing their own scripts. Students are continuing to do the Dale Carnegie book study as well.

I hope everyone had a wonderful winter break and I'm looking forward to a great spring semester!

STUDENT CLASSROOMS

Ms. Anu Math

After having fun filled vacation, we are all set to start with our math. Our Geometry kids will continue working on two column proofs. Students will work on special quadrilaterals and will be identifying various quadrilaterals based on their properties. Algebra 1 students will be working on Quadratic Equations. They will learn different methods of solving and graphing quadratic equations. Some of Algebra 1 kids will be learning different methods of graphing and solving linear equations. Our seventh graders will be working on areas and volume. They will be practicing surface area and volume of different three dimensional figures. Some of our seventh graders will be working on Geometry. They will be learning concept of congruent triangles with different postulates. They will also be working on different types of angles with parallel lines and a transversal.

Ms. Bagbey 1st - 2nd Grade

What a wonderful successful first couple of 9-weeks! As we rapidly move forward in the turn of the year, we will be directing our focus on growing in all academic areas. We will continue to identify and apply reading comprehension strategies using inferences and our many text features to effectively

interpret different types of literature. Our young learners will have the tools of frequently using new spelling and vocabulary words to incorporate in their everyday academic language. We will use a wide variety of literature, such as expository, fantasy, nonfiction and fiction.

In Math, we will continue to fine tune our multiplication skills (numbers 1-9). Furthermore, we will take what we learned about geometric figures to begin our foundational understanding of fractions to introduce equal groupings and parts of a whole. We will be computing whole numbers, fractions, measurements and money.

In the exciting world of Science, we will be learning about our natural world with an emphasis on the Earth's 5 Atmosphere Layers.

Thank you for a fantastic Parent/Teacher conference day! We are all so excited to be walking into the New Year 2018 together!

Mr. Martin English

Students in upper grade English have finished *A Child Called It* by Dave Pelzer, and have been introduced to some preliminary information about our next novel, George Orwell's *1984*. This famous dystopian novel, written in 1948, remains as timely as ever. Among other things, it famously predicted the rise of the modern surveillance

state that's become the norm worldwide in the 21st century. We will continue engaging weekly with writing, grammar, and vocabulary, and our weekly vocabulary tests will include a writing component.

Students in lower grade English finished *The Not-So-Star-Spangled Life of Sunita Sen* and are going to begin reading *Watership Down* in January, in a slight rearrangement of the novels for this school year. As with upper grade English, we will continue engaging weekly with writing, grammar, and vocabulary, and our weekly vocabulary tests will include a writing component.

In the upper level writing and history class, students will be working through *The Skilled Reader*, a college-level reading comprehension text and workbook that provides invaluable strategies for reading nonfiction texts at an advanced level. In addition, students will continue to practice formal academic writing using the outline - rough draft - final draft progression to produce quality work.

Mrs. Hozie Science

What an exciting school year we have had thus far! Our students finished off 2017 by completing a cross-curricular project using knowledge from English, Math, and Science. Students built a model Mars base, a Space Shuttle, a Mythology themed amusement

park, and mini countries. All in all, students had a great time while expanding their knowledge, challenging their engineering skills, utilizing their math skills in creative ways, and communicating their process.

In the coming weeks students will be completing a Science of the Winter Olympics poster project, a science fair proposal, and a new chapter in their respective textbooks. Look for even more exciting events this spring! Welcome 2018!

Ms. Jaya Math

This month students worked on various mathematical projects using real-life objects and examples, to get a concrete understanding of the concepts. Popsicle sticks were a great way to learn geometric shapes. Now they have one more reason to enjoy pizza - it can teach fractions. Students drew floor plans of various animal habitats to accommodate them in a zoo. Many students drew robots, cats or their favorite cartoon characters on graphs sheets and calculated the area of each of its parts. Some of the students drew the floor plans for building a city on Mars and others drew a floor plan to build their own Lego City. Students had lot of fun and were proud to present their work to the class.

We will be start the year 2018 by reviewing the concepts learnt so far and then begin with data and statistics. We will also explore decimal division, look at different operations on fractions and then move on to measurements. Further, we will look at different types of polygons.

Ms. Jessica English/Math/ Science

Happy New Year Pinnacle Prep Students!

At Pinnacle Prep, we focus on integrated learning as well as varied learning styles. Therefore, my 3rd and 5th graders have been participating in our classic novel studies. They have finished reading and analyzing *The Witches* and *Bridge to Terabithia*. Our next class novel for 3rd grade will be *How to Eat Fried Worms*. Fifth grade's next novel will be *The Incredible Journey*.

Continue to ask your students what he or she read about during class. This is a great way to check for understanding. Simply asking questions is a useful way to reinforce learning and comprehension.

The students really enjoyed working on their projects for Open House. Pinnacle Zootopia and Pinnacle's Gotham Lego City were amazing and so creative.

With the start of the New Year, the students will be finishing research on Holidays around the World. In addition, they will be writing about New Year's resolutions as well as research on Martin Luther King Jr. We will finish January with snowflake research, poems and crafts.

All About Science - The students have been doing so well with their research projects and papers. I am so proud at how quickly and easily they have learned the steps and processes.

In January, the third grade class will be learning about the states of matter, measurement, energy,

sound and electrical currents. The students will be participating in a "Sink or Float" experiment using everyday objects. Formulating a hypothesis, recording results and comparing data will also be involved. Feel free to ask your child what we are learning in class. Asking your child what they learned is a great way to continue the learning and create a school to home connection.

Fifth graders are going to be learning about the Earth's surface, changes, resources, properties of minerals, and fossil fuel. As a reinforcement and to extend our knowledge base, we will continue to go to the computer lab for further research. This includes educational videos, games, and experiments about the designated topic. Technology is a great way for students to learn and practice many different concepts.

At school, the students receive further enrichment by using websites such as ixl.com and softschools.com!!!! The websites offer math, English and science practice and the students love it! Happy learning!!

Mrs. Kennedy Pre-K

Another great month of learning has passed, and the progress is exciting. Our newer students are really solidifying the letter names and sounds, as well as memorizing the spelling and pronunciation of sight words. Each group is progressing with the sight word lists, commonly said and uncommonly spelled words. Our emergent reading students are increasing their word recognition and fluency while reading both their journals and beginning books. It's exciting to see the

students tapping out more sounds to make words and see the students recognize smaller words they know in larger words. Our emergent readers and our blossoming readers are both making progress. Keep speaking to your children in complete sentences, and have them answer you in complete sentences as well. I see definite progress in this area when the students share their news, ask questions, and answer comprehension questions after they've heard or read a book.

Ms. Laura 1st grade

Mrs. Laura's Shining Star's: Wonderful to have such a lovely break and enjoy the season of Peace and Reflection. The students have enjoyed the Inuit Community and all the diversity living in those conditions warrant. The main consensus was the environment is awesome but none would opt to live there or in those conditions.

This next session, in January, we will be embarking to China. We will be learning about China and the different modes of Travel: boat, air, train, bus, or other vehicle. They will learn the mean average temperature in China, the languages, and popular dishes. So,

look out for: Ni hao-(Nee how) Hello, Xie-Xie-(Shie Shie) Thank you, Qing-(Ching) Please. How wonderful to learn these beautiful words that open doors with a smile. In our China studies, we will enjoy discovering their New Year, and watch how the world's largest human migration takes place.

The students will continue reading aloud and writing in a sequential order. The children will begin dictation writing, so that they can hear how to formulate a sentence with the proper past, present, and future tense. We will continue with decoding the blended sounds. I will be asking more questions while they read to strengthen the student's comprehension of what they just read. They are building skills for understanding the Beginning, Middle and End of a story to convey information in a manner easily understood. Journal time will continue with writing about information covered in class or stories they read.

Math is progressing wonderfully. The students are continuing to progress with summation and subtraction. They will be playing some math games to reinforce the recall of basic summations and subtractions to the number 20. Some of our class will be continuing onto adding double

digits and using different forms of measurements. Fractions, inches, and graphing will be used to show relationships in documenting physical measurements.

This month holds much discovery and we will enjoy the challenge. Thanks for sharing your little ones with us. This is a great year ahead. 2018, watch us grow!

Mrs. Kelley Drama, Speech, Debate

"Quick and busy" describe this month in both theater and speech/debate classes. We have begun preparations for our spring play productions. Rehearsals for both plays, The Diary of Anne Frank and a one-act adaptation of Pride and Prejudice, will be in full swing when school starts back in January. Watch for play dates to be announced soon!

The students have continued to work on persuasion and the format for speech writing in speech/debate class. They wrote and performed persuasive ads, and they've done impromptu speaking. This work prepares them for the more formal speeches and debate, which we will cover next semeste

STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Science Project

In science class we have recently been working on an amusement park called Mt. Olympus that challenges us to create the ideal ride. My project is called The Ride of Poseidon. I really like the God Poseidon from the series *Percy Jackson*. Poseidon is known as the god of the sea, and pirate ships are one of the thrills in an amusement park. So, I thought that I could make a pirate ship dedicated to the god of the sea.

In this project, I took a series of steps in order to make this ride. They involved math, science, and problem solving. Math was used in making this project to create a layout about how to build my ride. I created a blueprint with a scale and drew my pieces of the pirate ship. I also compared these measurements to other rides to make sure that my measurements made sense. I was also able to create the ideal measurements by looking at the measurements of actual rides such as the Conquistador ride from Six Flags over Texas.

Science played a large part during the making of the ride. While making my project, I had to also figure out which motor was the best to make my ship move. Soon, I figured out that I had to use a pendulum motor. So, in the middle of my project, I had to understand how potential and kinetic energy apply to the motor. The motor has potential energy that is turned into kinetic energy by the battery. Next that kinetic energy runs down to the ship and the ship begins to move along with the motor. Later, I used some super glue and

skewers to solve my problem. People may think that the ship moves slowly, but when you put something like a glue stick in it, then it starts to move more. This is because of its weight. For example, if a person who weighs one hundred eighty pounds then the ride will apply two g's of force to the rider. This means that the rider's seat will have to support three hundred sixty pounds. Additionally, while the pendulum ride is in motion the rider also experiences weightlessness. Weightlessness is when the rider experiences no force from the seat. This is why when a rider is on the top of the ride he is out of his seat. While the ride is in motion you receive centripetal force. Centripetal force is when the ride experiences a force going towards the center of a circle.

When attaching the ship, I had to figure how to do it so that it was sturdy. Later I used some super glue and skewers to solve my problem. I learned three things from my project. I learned to never give up and have patience in every task. I learned that without effort comes no success. I also learned to think more, and also to think of resolutions to problems. I believe that my ship can help people understand more about the pendulum itself. **Ayaan Ch.**

The Westing Game

The tall mansion was swallowed by a sinkhole, pulling the house down in an instant. The Washington's, pulled into the sinkhole, were dead silent, and so scared they could not speak. The only thing left was an oriental rug, the crescent of the Washington family.

The Washington's were known to be a very humble and happy family. They came from West Virginia and moved to downtown Boykins, Virginia. The town was alive, popular, pretty, and white. The Washington's were a very nice family, but they were the first African-Americans to live downtown. The white families were flabbergasted, disgusted, mad, and proud. The whites did not like that the Washington's had money, a happy family, food on the table, and a nice house.

The whites were not happy about this, but the Washington's never were upset. The Washington's were glad for a new start. They had friends and their children were making friends. The Washington's' family members are; Josey the mother, Michel the father, Bill the son, and Dorothy the daughter. Dorothy only had two friends, Mary and Lily. Jack was Bill's friend. The Washington's had been settled in Boykins for about six months, everything going well, except the peculiar neighbor children.

Christmas passed, and the Washington's decided to have a feast on December 30th. The feast was prepared by Josey and Mary's mother, she helped cook the turkey. Josey rushed around the kitchen cooking the side dishes, and the turkey was left to Mary. She put lemons, asparagus, garlic rub, paprika, and some broth from the turkey. Joseph and Michael began to set the table, and after several hours of cooking, the feast was finished. Everyone sat at the table and Mary's mother took the turkey out of the oven.

The dust from her shirt fell on the turkey. She did not notice and set the turkey on the table. All of them had common conversations and the dinner ended following dessert. Then Mary and Lily's family left. But, the Washington's did not feel so good after. They all dropped down to the floor, the only sound was every single body hitting the floor.

The house started to break and crumble, sunk down to the earth's core. Mary and Lily's family did not speak of the accident even though their mother walked out of the door with a little too much pep in her step. **Kendall F.**

Athena's Train of Thought

This year my class and I made an amusement park. Every amusement park had a theme. After a lot of arguing, we were finally able to decide on our theme. The decision was "Greek Gods". It's simple to integrate all of the things we learned, such as Math, English, Science, and the history of Greek Gods. Each student was asked to choose a Greek God and a project. Then the hard work came in to play.

We all were put in pairs, and each of the pairs had to come up with

two projects- one per person. Our class teamwork came later. My Greek God was Athena. Athena is the goddess of wisdom and military victory. She was also the patron of the city of Athens. She was Hercules' half-sister.

For my ride, I picked something that is not usually at an amusement park. That is what makes our amusement park different. I did a chair lift. I enjoyed building it.

I am not a big fan of math, but that didn't stop me from putting my math skills into this project. I needed math for the graphing aspect of this project, and I also needed math to measure my chairs. History was included in our project because we studied the origin of amusement parks, and discussed different eras as rides continued to develop.

For science, I used a pulley system, open and closed circuits, motors, Newton's three laws of motion, and elasticity. First, I used the pulley system when I used the bands, and the motor to change the direction of the pull for lifting a load. This brings us to open and closed circuits. An open circuit is when the electrical cords are not working, because they are not connected. A closed circuit is when the electrical cords are working, in

other words, electricity is flowing. I have a closed circuit because that is how the motor works. Newton's laws of motion came in exceptionally easily.

First law of motion: An object at rest will remain at rest, and an object in motion will remain in motion, at a constant velocity unless or until outside forces act upon it.

Second law of motion: The net force acting upon an object is a product of its mass multiplied by its acceleration.

Third law of motion: When one object exerts a force on another, the second object exerts on the first a force equal in magnitude but opposite in direction.

Last, elasticity had to do with the main part of the ride. If the tension on the rubber band was too much or too little, it wouldn't work, which was not a good sign. Finally, we had put the cord on perfectly, and I had the final product-Athena's Train of Thought.

I absolutely enjoyed constructing this project. To be honest, it was the first time my class and I completed a project without fighting. Now that my project is done, I am very excited to show off the hard work that I did. **Shafa H.**

MATH NEWS

Fractions: Where It All Goes Wrong

Why do Americans have such trouble with fractions—and what can be done?

Many children never master fractions. When asked whether $12/13 + 7/8$ was closest to 1, 2, 19, or 21, only 24% of a nationally representative sample of more than 20,000 US 8th graders answered correctly. This test was given almost 40 years ago, which gave Hugo Lortie-Forgues hope that the work of innumerable teachers, mathematics coaches, researchers, and government commissions had made a positive difference. His hopes were dashed by the [data](#), though; he found that in all of those years, accuracy on the same problem improved only from 24% to 27% correct.

Such difficulties are not limited to fraction estimation problems nor do they end in 8th grade. On standard fraction addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems with equal denominators (e.g., $3/5+4/5$) and unequal denominators (e.g., $3/5+2/3$), 6th and 8th graders [tend to answer](#) correctly only about 50% of items. Studies of community college students have revealed similarly poor fraction arithmetic performance. Children in the US do much worse on such problems than their peers in European countries, such as Belgium and Germany, and in Asian countries such as China and Korea.

This weak knowledge is especially

unfortunate because fractions are foundational to many more advanced areas of mathematics and science.

Fifth graders' fraction knowledge [predicts](#) high school students' algebra learning and overall math achievement, even after controlling for whole number knowledge, the students' IQ, and their families' education and income. On the reference sheets for recent high school AP tests in chemistry and physics, fractions were part of more than half of the formulas.

In a recent [survey](#) of 2300 white collar, blue collar, and service workers, more than two-thirds indicated that they used fractions in their work. Moreover, in a nationally representative sample of 1,000 Algebra 1 teachers in the US, most [rated](#) as “poor” their students' knowledge of fractions and rated fractions as the second greatest impediment to their students mastering algebra (second only to “word problems”).

Why are fractions so difficult to understand? A major reason is that learning fractions requires overcoming two types of difficulty: inherent and culturally contingent. Inherent sources of difficulty are those that derive from the nature of fractions, ones that confront all learners in all places. One inherent difficulty is the notation used to express fractions. Understanding the relation a/b is more difficult than understanding the simple quantity a , regardless of the culture or time period in which a child lives. Another inherent difficulty involves the complex

relations between fraction arithmetic and whole number arithmetic. For example, multiplying fractions involves applying the whole number operation independently to the numerator and the denominator (e.g., $3/7 * 2/7 = (3*2)/(7*7) = 6/49$), but doing the same leads to wrong answers on fraction addition (e.g., $3/7 + 2/7 \neq 5/14$). A third inherent source of difficulty is complex conceptual relations among different fraction arithmetic operations, at least using standard algorithms. Why do we need equal denominators to add and subtract fractions but not to multiply and divide them? Why do we invert and multiply to solve fraction division problems, and why do we invert the fraction in the denominator rather than the one in the numerator? These inherent sources of difficulty make understanding fraction arithmetic challenging for all students.

Culturally contingent sources of difficulty, in contrast, can mitigate or exacerbate the inherent challenges of learning fractions. Teacher understanding is one culturally-contingent variable: When asked to explain the meaning of fraction division problems, few US teachers can provide any explanation, whereas the large majority of Chinese teachers provide at least one good explanation. Language is another culturally-contingent factor; East Asian languages express fractions such as $3/4$ as “out of four, three,” which makes it easier to understand their meaning than relatively opaque terms such as “three fourth.” A third such

variable is textbooks. Despite division being the most difficult operation to understand, US textbooks present far fewer problems with fraction division than fraction multiplication; the opposite is true in Chinese and Korean textbooks. Probably most fundamental are cultural attitudes: Math learning is viewed as crucial throughout East Asia, but US attitudes about its importance are far more variable.

Given the importance of fractions in and out of school, the extensive evidence that many children and adults do not understand them, and the inherent difficulty of the topic, what is to be done? Considering culturally contingent factors points to several potentially useful steps. Inculcating a deeper understanding of fractions among teachers will likely help them to teach more effectively. Explaining

the meaning of fractions to students using clear language (for example, explaining that $3/4$ means 3 of the $1/4$ units), and requesting textbook writers to include more challenging problems are other promising strategies. Addressing inherent sources of difficulty in fraction arithmetic, in particular understanding of fraction magnitudes, can also make a large difference.

Fraction Face-off! A 12-week [program](#) designed by Lynn Fuchs to help children from low-income backgrounds improve their fraction knowledge, seems especially promising. The program teaches children about fraction magnitudes through tasks such as comparing and ordering fraction magnitudes and locating fractions on number lines. After participating in Fraction Face-off! Fourth graders' fraction addition

and subtraction accuracy consistently exceeds of children receiving the standard classroom curriculum. This finding was especially striking because Fraction Face-off! Devoted less time to explicit instruction in fraction arithmetic procedures than did the standard curriculum. Similarly encouraging [findings](#) have been found for other interventions that emphasize the importance of fraction magnitudes. Such programs may help children learn fraction arithmetic by encouraging them to note that answers such as $1/3 + 1/2 = 2/5$ cannot be right, because the sum is less than one of the numbers being added, and therefore to try procedures that generate more plausible answers. These innovative curricula seem well worth testing on a wider bas

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Homeless in Collin County

Homelessness can take many forms and you may have an entire conversation with someone and not even realize that person has a secret. A secret that stokes the fires of anxiety, and in some cases, shame. Not all homelessness looks like the televised versions of the man or woman with the dirty, ragged clothes, layers upon layers, pushing a shopping cart filled with trash talking to themselves. That is a stereotype perpetrated and exaggerated by television to get the most out of the 24 or 48 minutes of ShowTime. What homelessness is about is a lack of housing, period.

That can be anywhere from unsheltered homelessness to homeless shelters, to living with friends or family. Being homeless doesn't mean the person, or family, cannot be clean, and go to work, school, libraries, or stores. What it means is they are not in their own housing for some reason. Those reasons are varied and many and not for us to judge, just to acknowledge and ask how can we assist. Collin County does have a homeless problem.

The number of unsheltered homeless is reaching almost 450, with many of those children (PlanoProfile). Those were the ones counted. What about all the ones sleeping in cars, with friends,

behind a building that didn't get counted?

Collin County is a great place to live and raise a family, according to Forbes magazine, and expensive; second wealthiest county in Texas. As a community, we should not only be aware of this issue, but care for our neighbors. There are people in the county that have stated "I don't care, it doesn't affect me." But it does, maybe not emotionally, but economically, this does affect you and when we can come together as a community to solve our problems, and care about each other, if we ever did, only then can we truly make Collin county a great place to raise a family.

SCIENCE IN THE NEWS

Real life Jurassic Park? Perfectly preserved dinosaur eggs discovered in China

By SEAN MARTIN

www.express.co.uk/news/science

BUILDERS have made a huge discovery in China after finding perfectly preserved dinosaur eggs. Construction workers in the Jiangxi province were building a school on Christmas Day when they stumbled across the perfectly preserved eggs. Experts were immediately called in to analyses

the fossils who dated them back to be 130 million years old. This would mean they date back to the Cretaceous period, which lasted from 145 million years ago to 66 million years ago, when the tyrannosaurus rex roamed the Earth. The workers said they spotted a cluster of “oval-shaped stones” in the ground when they were using explosives to break up the dirt. It is believed there are between 20 to 30 of the eggs encased in rock and dirt, and now scientists are working to extract them while preserving their state.

The discovery comes just weeks after scientists found a piece of amber fossil with a tick inside

which contains the blood of dinosaurs. The insect is actually a newly discovered species of tick, which has been called *Deinocroton draculi* or “Dracula’s terrible tick”, and would have fed on the blood of dinosaurs 100 million years ago. The tick-encased-amber was discovered on the inside of a tree, and also enclosed was a small feather – which began to evolve on dinosaurs before they eventually evolved into modern day birds. The University of Oxford calls this the “first direct fossil evidence of tick’s parasitizing dinosaurs.”

PINNACLE PREP SCHOOL TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Mrs. Anu Boparai Math Teacher

I have been teaching middle and high school Math from last 10 years and for last four years at Pinnacle Prep School. .Being a teacher is a big credited job. I earned my Bachelor’s degree in Math and Education and my Master’s degree in Math. Math has always been my passion. Along with giving quality education I highly focus on discipline and concentration of students. I believe that learning is not something that happens in classroom but every moment of life. I always try to break complex concepts into easier ones by giving different tricks and methods to make problems simpler. It has been my pleasure to be part of Pinnacle team and teaching all my students.

CURRENT EVENTS

January 8 – Students return to school

January 19-January 22 – No School

January 31 – Book reports due

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