

Arts & Letters

PARENT BLAST



Upcoming Events

May 26th-27th- 4th and 8th Grade
Hands-on Science Test

May 27th-29th- 7th Grade Trip to
Boston

May 30th- Springfest 10:30am-1pm
6th Grade Orientation 9:30am
Kindergarten Orientation 11am

June 1st- 4th and 8th Grade Written
Science Test

June 4th- Chancellor's Day (No School
for students)

Dear families;

The letter this week is an attempt to describe the response of a large number of our 4th graders to the death of a bird. I have interviewed a few primary players and have pieced together key moments so that I could understand some of what has gone on over the past four days. Please do not think it a maudlin topic, for it has not been sad or depressing. The events have inspired wonderment in me. Growing up is so complicated. There is so much beauty, pain, success and failure that it is hard sometimes to get to the wonder of it all.

Two weeks ago a number of 4th graders found a starling nest about 15 feet up along the wall at the back of the handball courts. In the nest, students saw two fledglings. According to five students (Clio, Taryn, Brooke, Eshey and Marley) the fledglings were learning to fly last week and had been seen fluttering from the nest to the ground and back. This past Monday during recess, a group of them went to look at the nest. The nest was empty. Towards the end of recess they

found one of the fledglings under a bush, dead. As soon as the dead bird was discovered a call went out and 30 4th graders circled around to look. A group of six or seven of them quickly ran away once they had seen the bird. When I asked why they ran away, Lemaj said that they were scared. When I asked her what exactly was scary about the dead bird, she said calmly, "It is dead and there are worms coming out of its beak." Having heard this I could understand some of the nervous fascination that I had observed.

On Tuesday as soon as the 4th graders got out for recess a group of ten of them ran to the bush where the dead starling was. Five of them began to collect fallen tree blossoms and two of them collected water from the water fountain. According to Eshey, they poured water over the body "so the bugs would get off." They then began to cover the bird with the blossoms. When I asked them to tell me more about the flowers, Taryn said that they wanted to "cover it with something nice and something that smelled good. It's smelly." By the time that Ms. Micoli rang the bell for the 4th graders to go eat lunch, the dead bird was covered and encircled with bluish petals.

Wednesday's recess had many of the 4th graders out by the bird again. They were presented with a stronger smell, more bugs and further decomposition of the body. Unbeknownst to me they decided to dig a hole, move the body to the new site and then bury it. If I had known their plans I would have provided an alternative to what happened. I found out that they had moved the bird a few minutes later when on my trash collecting rounds I picked up a plastic bag and was told by Clio that the bag had just been used by Kahlil to scoop up the bird and put it in the hole. My response, of course, was "Kahlil! Go wash your hands!"

There was a buzz on Thursday morning in the 4th grade classrooms about the plans for a funeral for the starling. Before recess I talked with Brooke and Eshey about what was going to happen. Eshey said, "Yesterday's burial was sort of a practice run, like a little ceremony, but today the funeral will be bigger." Brooke added, "Well we are going to sing the national anthem and Amazing Grace and make speeches for the bird. We also got these flowers and we are going to have a moment of silence." I asked them what they thought people might say about the bird, and Eshey replied, "Maybe something like 'The first time I saw you'... stuff like that...we don't know." I told them that I was quite impressed by the agenda for the service. As I escorted them back to class they asked me if I would come to the funeral and I said I would be honored to be there.

So when recess started on Thursday afternoon, 30 4th graders circled up around the burial site, left flowers and notes, sang the national anthem, Amazing Grace, and a couple of other songs. At least three people spoke about the bird, one of whom called the bird "Little Fluffy" in her talk. There was a moment of silence toward the end. Throughout the ceremony the group was both serious and joyful. It was quite a send off for the baby starling.

Thanks to you oh wonderful families and Arts & Letters staff for helping instill in these youngsters a strong sense of empathy.

I hope you enjoyed the long weekend.

-John

CELEBRATIONS

Week of May 15th

8th: Naiima Miller- Clarity
Imaiya Lemons- SHoW
Nia -SHoW
Allana Hoyte- SHoW
Isaiah Simpson- Creativity
Shelley Peebles- Creativity

7th: Ambria Creary- Creativity
Alonzo Smith- Creativity

6th: Kayla Davis- Clarity
Anthony Breland- SHoW
Chloe Hale- Creativity

Thursday Book Talk with Ms Ballantine

Phobiapedia by Joel Levy

Slithering snakes, creepy crawlies, harrowing heights - everybody is afraid of something!

PHOBIAPEDIA is an encyclopedia of all the things we fear the most, from more common fears like spiders (Arachnophobia), heights (Acrophobia), and confined spaces (Claustrophobia) to the strange and unusual like dust (Koniophobia) and the color yellow (Xanthophobia). From their fascinating names to their fearsome effects, PHOBIAPEDIA explores all aspects of the things that make us shiver and scream. You'll learn what makes us fear them and why sometimes it's not such a bad idea to be scared. Packed with amazing images and filled with facts and figures. here at your fingertips is the truth behind the scariest things on the planet.

CELEBRATIONS

Week of May 22nd

8th: Malik Williams- Confidence
Lexi Ramirez Solomon- SHoW
Yaminah Angulo- SHoW

7th: Laila Chase- Compassion
Stacey Duran- Compassion
Mejeen McLain- Compassion

6th: Skye Silvero- SHoW

Staff: Ms. Timmins- Clarity
Mr. Fischler- Clarity

IN THE CLASSROOM

Willoughby 1st Grade
with Ms. Cabrera and Ms. Boodhoo

Willoughby teachers and scholars have been exploring Animal Diversity, and closely looking at the life cycles of butterflies and silk moths. Throughout this unit, students have discovered the anatomy of each insect, their habitats, adaptations and stages of their life cycles, including metamorphosis. Willoughby students have learned how to care for these insects and how they adapt to different environments within enclosed spaces, such as our classroom. As our Animal Diversity unit continues, we will look into writing journal entries from the perspectives of the silk worm and caterpillar.

We hope you have the opportunity to come visit us!



6th Grade Humanities with Ms. Visich

On Wednesday, May 20th, the mighty gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus gathered in room 302 for the annual Greek Banquet of the Gods. Dressed as their favorite god or goddess, many with handcrafted helmets and capes, the sixth graders feasted on the food of the ancient Greeks to celebrate the completion of the creation of their original myths. In attendance were an abundance of our favorite cast of characters such as Hermes, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, but surprisingly, only one Zeus. Each student presented a "boast," bragging about their own traits and contributions that had improved the lives of the ancient Olympians, followed by a "toast" to a god or goddess they appreciated or admired. Many cups of juice and hummus were consumed, as were laughs and all around merriment.



A&L HAPPENINGS

1st Grade Trip to Brooklyn Botanic Garden



1st Grade Feeding Silkworms & Releasing Butterflies



4th Graders Honor a Feathered Friend



Inter-age Play at Recess



Staff Development with The Ackerman Gender Institute Workshop Leaders Jean Malpas and Randi Kaufman



Spring Articulation Night

