



The Renaissance School Newsletter February/March 2010



A letter from the Director

We are in the second semester of the school year and the middle of the winter season. The children are comfortable with their teachers, classmates and their learning environment. It has been a pleasure getting to know all of the new Kindergartners this year, and visiting with all of the returning students. There are so many wonderful learning experiences taking place each day in every classroom. The hallway is a wonderful gallery that gives everyone a glimpse at the work from each grade level. We invite you to browse the hallway and view all of the fantastic work that the children have produced. Currently you can view the following displays: Kindergarten-math problem solving and animal tracking

First Grade-models of the solar system

First/Second Grade-"If I were an astronaut" stories and models of space stations

Third Grade-The life cycle of a salmon and a character study of Roald Dahl's book The Twitts

Fourth/Fifth Grades-Influential People mini reports

Sixth/Seventh Grades-Written report on flight from their Starbase classes.

The children are creating such fascinating and fun projects. We are looking forward to the second half of the year and continuing to work with the children in a peaceful, encouraging and loving way. We wish everyone a happy and warm winter season!

~Leah Mulvey

Since the children spend so much time on the farm, this goat thought, why not spend some time in the school?



Please come to the University Mall for the Champlain Valley Regional Art Show from Mar 8-17 to see the children's artwork displayed.



Dates to Remember:

- FRI. FEB. 19: KINDERGARTEN AUTHORS BREAKFAST 8AM
- FRI. FEB. 19: H1N1 CLINIC (FOR 2ND DOSE) 1:30-2:30
- FEB. 22-26: WINTER BREAK **No SCHOOL**
- MON. MAR. 1: CLASSES RESUME
- MAR. 8-17: CHAMPLAIN VALLEY REGIONAL ART SHOW, UNIVERSITY MALL
- FRI. MAR. 12: FUNDRAISER TO BENEFIT THE RED CROSS
- WED. MAR. 17: ST. PATRICK'S DAY
- FRI. MAR. 19: 3RD-7TH GRADE SCIENCE FAIR
- FRI. MAR. 26: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT **No SCHOOL**
- THUR. APR. 8: SCIENCE IN MOTION DRAMA PRODUCTION 3RD-7TH GRADES. 6:30 AT THE COMMONS
- THUR. APR. 22: EARTH DAY CELEBRATION
- APR. 26-30: SPRING BREAK **No SCHOOL**

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Main Office Notes

In these chilly times, it's sometimes hard to think about what you might be doing this summer. Before you know it, the snow will begin to melt, the crocuses will be poking their heads up out of the ground and the warm weather will be here. Our Summer Camp brochures are now available. We will be offering the Summer Pre-School as well as The Renaissance Summer Enrichment Academy for children in elementary school. Brochures for both camps are available at the school and are posted on our website.

We feel blessed to have many full classes for next year. If you have not submitted a re-enrollment form and deposit or returned your enrollment agreement for next year, your child is at risk of not having a space in the fall. If you are unsure of your plans for next year, please call and let us know where you are with your re-enrollment decisions. For questions, new forms or tuition assistance materials, please call 985-2153.

Classroom Guidelines

We want to make sure every child has a good experience at The Renaissance School and that the children understand the classroom guidelines and expectations. The Renaissance Code of Conduct is posted in every classroom and on the parent board. Our goal is to nurture love and respect among all members of our school community, to address aggressive or disruptive behavior in a consistent and effective

Bake Sale for Haiti

The terrible earthquake that took place in Haiti has affected many people in many different ways. Haley Harder, a sixth grader at The Renaissance School, wanted to do something to help after watching the devastation in Haiti on the news. She saw that local people in Vermont were helping to raise money for the people in Haiti, and she wanted to do something too. Haley thought of having a bake sale at Renaissance to raise money. The fifth/sixth/seventh grade class made some delicious baked goods to sell to our school community. The bake sale was a huge success. Parents and students purchased \$358.76 worth of baked goods! The money was donated to the Red Cross.

Below, Ed Dixon and Josh Wolfstein present a check to the Red Cross on behalf of their class.



manner and to maintain an optimal learning environment at school. When there is a difficulty, our general classroom guidelines are that children will be given verbal and/or written reminders. Children may be asked to leave the classroom and go to the office, depending upon the severity and frequency of the problem. Children may be asked to develop a plan of action to correct the behavior by the school administrator. The Code of Conduct is on the back page

Parent Reminders

Please make sure your child comes to school every day with appropriate outdoor clothing: hat, mittens, coat, snow pants and boots. We don't want anyone to have to stay in from recess and it is difficult to borrow clothes from other children.

Children need to have a water bottle every day at school, so they can keep themselves hydrated throughout the day.

Important notices and information are always posted on the front door, the parent bulletin board, and by the parent mailboxes. Please make sure to read the notices before you pick up your child.

Please help your child to clean out his/her cubby before the February vacation. When you return, please make sure there is an extra set of clothing in his/her cubby.

If your child stays for late care, please pack an extra snack for him/her. Children are often hungry in the late afternoon.

of the Renaissance Parent Handbook. We want to make sure everyone in our school community understands the general classroom guidelines. The teachers and administrators are charged with following these guidelines, which help support a safe atmosphere for all of the children. The parent handbook is a useful resource for understanding the philosophy and the school policies, and it is on the school website at www.renaissancevt.org

Extra Curricular Activities

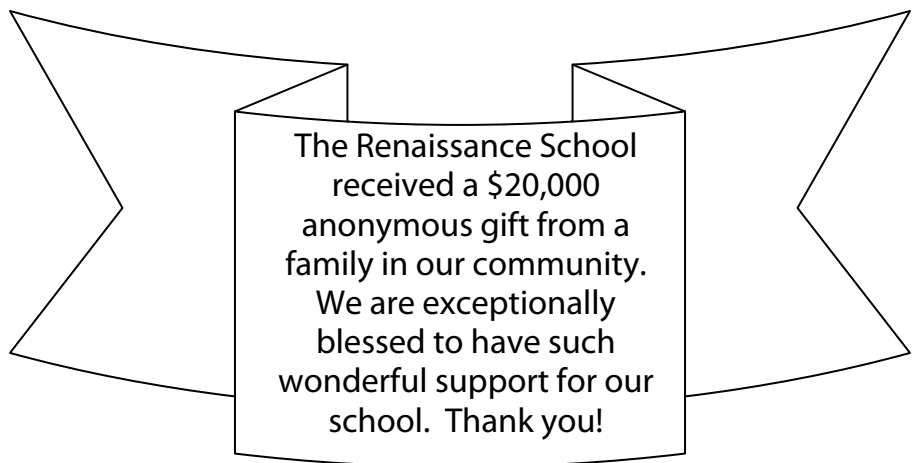
This year there have been several extracurricular activities taking place at the Renaissance School. In the fall, the children could participate in the Fun Runs on Monday afternoons, which we are looking forward to again in the spring. In this activity, the children gather for a nice jog on one of the farm trails, followed by a snack. Many children also joined the fencing class which took place at the Commons this fall. This winter there is a Brownie Troop that meets once a month at The Renaissance School. The troop leader is Sara Kruk, the mother of

Kelcie Kruk in the second grade. Currently, there is a String Ensemble group that meets every Thursday afternoon at the Commons and is taught by Nowa Crosby. The next eight-week session for this group starts on April 1st. Please see the sign up at the bottom of the stairs. Starting on Monday, February 15th, our very talented music teacher Ellie Tetrick will begin guitar lessons which will meet every Monday through March. The parent group is planning on organizing Chinese classes again this year for the

spring. Movie nights continue to be a fun opportunity for the children to gather in their pajamas, watch a fun movie, eat dinner and have a dance party afterwards. Movie nights are coordinated by Stephanie Decarreau, our first and second grade teacher, assisted by Danielle Harris, our Kindergarten teacher as well as parent volunteers. We want to thank everyone for helping to make these activities possible. They provide an enriching environment for the children to learn and grow after school.

School Store

The Renaissance School store sponsored by the parent group will be open at the farm on Friday's from 2:50-3:20. The store sells Vermont Coffee Company coffee, Renaissance t-shirts, ceramic and travel mugs, pencils and stickers. All profits support the Renaissance school's extracurricular activities, and field trips.



Renaissance Remembers Martin Luther King Jr.

All of the classes gathered on the Monday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day to hear Louise Piché speak about this great leader and why he contributed so much to our nation's history. Louise told stories about the civil rights movement and shared how strong Martin Luther King was to fight for equality for everyone. After the assembly, the children spent the week learning

about Martin Luther King Jr. in their classrooms and discussing the civil rights movement. We planned a peaceful march to recognize this historic figure. The children prepared special banners with slogans that reflected the message from Martin Luther King. We gathered together that Monday morning and marched up and down the



hall with banners in hand, singing "We Shall Overcome." We ended the march with the children taking turns sharing their own "I have a dream" speeches. It was a wonderful opportunity for the children to deliver their own messages of peace, hope, justice, and equality for all.

Climbing at Petra Cliffs

On Tuesday, February 2nd, the fourth graders traveled to Burlington to visit Petra Cliffs, an indoor rock climbing facility. The fourth/fifth grade class has been divided for several weeks on Tuesdays, as the fifth graders participated in the Starbase Program at the Air National Guard. Petra Cliffs gave the fourth graders an opportunity to experience something fun and educational while their fellow classmates were away.

The children who attended the field trip had all been rock climbing before and were eager

to go again. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a rock climbing instructor who gave all of us a short lesson on safety and the basics of scaling the rock wall. The children quickly suited up in their gear, special shoes and harnesses while Heather and Leah took on the role of belaying (controlling the ropes while the children climbed). The instructor let the children try an easier wall first, to get warmed up.

The children loved the challenge of making it to the top where they could ring a bell to signal that they made it! Once they all mastered

this wall, we tried out several different, and more difficult, climbing walls. They loved rappelling, swinging through the air like birds, and laughing with their friends. Mac Henzel later said, "My favorite part was this rock wall. If you let go of the rocks, you could fly through the air in your harness!" The children also took turns on a bouldering wall without any ropes. At the end of the trip, everyone had tired arms and enjoyed rest and a snack before heading back to school.

Starbase

Members of the Renaissance School community gathered together at Shelburne Farms on Tuesday, January 26th to watch the fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students blast rockets and release hot air balloons into the winter afternoon. The student's wide smiles and proud eyes were warmth enough for teachers and parents as they watched the class chase down not only their landing aircrafts, but also running toward what seemed like their heart's desires. Science was alive and inspiring young minds in Shelburne that day.

The class is grateful to be participating in Starbase Vermont and exploring matter and energy through the study of Aeronautics and Aerodynamics. The program started running in 1994 and at that time, they had to solicit schools to participate. Today, with one site in Rutland and one in South

Burlington, the certified teachers at Starbase Vermont reaches between 1,300-1,400 students each year. "Students participate in our hands-on, activity-based curriculum spanning 25 hours over 5 school days. Our ultimate goal is to inspire interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Some of the core curriculum areas we cover include physics, chemistry, design engineering, computer aided design, aerodynamics, aviation, navigation, data analysis, and STEM careers," said Doug Gilman, State Director of Starbase Vermont.

No student will feign sickness with a day at the Vermont National Guard on the schedule. They upper-grade class has been engaging in lessons involving Newton's Laws of Motion, model rocketry, space exploration, and the development and innovative

use of technology; and that is only a few of the curriculum highlights. Starbase teacher Dan Strider recalled the story of a former student who came to the program in middle school who is now attending college in the engineering field.

By Stephanie Decarreau



Winter Sports

We returned from the winter break to beautiful white fluffy snow, perfect for the start of our winter outdoor activities, which include cross country skiing and skating. The two activities are rotated each week. Every class has been enjoying the snow and skiing on the trails at the farm. The kindergarten class had many children who never skied before. When they returned from their adventure with rosy cheeks, they were eager to know when they would go again. This winter there has been a very friendly goat, named Zola, in the farmyard, and she has enjoyed playing with the children in the courtyard as they practice their skiing. Zola even followed the children into the school one afternoon when they were putting away their skis. The older children enjoyed skiing in the field across from the courtyard and developing their climbing skills, as well, by going up and down a gentle hill.

Sledding has been a big part of recess every day. The children really look forward to zooming down the hill with their friends. They have races to see how far they can go, and have built several small jumps. Sledding has become a highlight of the children's afternoon. All of the classes are skating at the Commons as part of the physical education program. The ice has been very smooth and provides a perfect surface for spinning, racing, and practicing. The children have picked up this sport quite easily. They have been working on stopping, starting, skating backwards, making turns, and being very careful around their friends. They are usually smiling and laughing as they glide across the ice. At The Renaissance School, the physical education program is designed to promote activities upon which children can build lifelong skills and habits. We are so happy to see the children enjoying these fun winter sports.

Valentine's Day Poetry Reading

The children in the first/second grade class taught by Stephanie Decarreau, have been working on a special project. They have been writing poems with similes to describe nature, favorite animals and the feeling and meaning of love. They began by writing about topics using the five senses and then learned how to compare two unlike objects as a tool for description. The culmination of their hard work was a series of poems entitled, "Love, is like..." One student wrote, "Love is like decorating for the holidays...love is like a tender, crunchy Kit Kat melting in my mouth ...love is like a flower bursting..." All of the children were dressed in beautiful shades of red and pink. The words the children spoke were very touching and it could be seen on the faces of the audience that their poetry was deeply felt. They looked so proud as they took turns one by one reading their work out loud. When the poetry reading was over, the parents sat individually with their children to hear their love poems one more time. At the very end of the reading the children and parents gathered together to share muffins, cookies and juice.



First and Second Grades Explore Space During Music and Drama

Grab your helmets and prepare to shoot to the moon—our first and second graders are ready to fly!! To enhance the classroom theme study of the solar system, the first and second graders in Jocelyn and Stephanie's classes will do a 10-week session of Space School in drama class. The astronauts will take their knowledge and create works of art to "show" their learning. They will sing songs, create dances, and present scene-work. Maybe these astronauts will be ready for Mars in 2015?



Heather's Class Visits ECHO

By Heather Dudley

On Tuesday January 19th, Heather's class visited ECHO. The children enjoyed the tidal pool touch tank where they were able to see, touch, talk about, and learn about the animals they might have seen when Lake Champlain was the Champlain Sea, after the glacier had receded. They were especially interested in the horseshoe crab, and the sea anemone that was in the process of splitting in two! Mac was so intrigued by the animals that he nearly went up to his armpits in the water!

We also made it there for the first animal feeding of the day in the big tank next to the shipwreck on the main level. Students were able to see how the various fish that live in the deep parts of the lake feed. According to their mouth position and appetite, the different fish were fed either squares of fish gelatin or dead fish infused with the fish gelatin. Bottom feeders, such as catfish were given squares and the spiny sturgeon were after the lifelike bait! The fish were larger than many of us expected and there were drum fish that looked like they belonged in the ocean. The children listened intently to the feeder during the presentation and didn't want to leave the feeding! At one point the drum fish seemed to be mesmerized by Gabriello's yellow shirt...the feeder had trouble getting him away from the glass!

Right now the ECHO Center has

a visiting exhibit on frogs of the world. They had about 10 or 15 different types of frogs from all over the world in mini-habitats. Many were so well adapted to their surroundings that it took quite a while to spot them, the cases were glass. This was a great tie in to the 3/4 theme studies this year of life cycles. The children were able to see the changes in habitat from one frog case to the next. Each frog needed something different in order to survive.

All three children enjoyed seeing the new exhibit, "Contraptions," where they explored many motorized gadgets. There was a giant cuckoo clock with working gears and windows that opened, a rope thrower, a kitchen gadgets sand scooper, optical illusions and many, many more hands on child friendly contraptions to try. They spent a good amount of time here, taking turns making each contraption move and watching the gears power each part of each creation.

Echo provides online scavenger hunts, guides and information for children, parents and teachers. The children were equipped with pencils, clipboards and curiosity as they gathered information from one exhibit to the next. They worked as a team to make sure that each student had the information they needed before leaving an exhibit and moving to the next one. Gabriello took his time and filled the scavenger hunt paper out almost completely, Eliza had fun learning by watching, touching, and exploring each exhibit and Mac engaged in conversation to answer

questions he had about the exhibits that he saw. All students used their scientific curiosity to lead them through the Center.

After touring the ECHO Center, the class lunched at The Skinny Pancake, right up the road. Students ate their bag lunches at the large picnic style table above the kitchen and were able to see their special dessert crepe being crafted below! As they waited for their sweet treat, a waiter came by with fancy hot chocolates and extra whipped cream! A perfect surprise for a perfect field trip!

On their way to the bathrooms in the Skinny Pancake building, the students met a painter who was in the process of creating an "endangered animals mural," on the walls. He told the children that it had taken him months to paint, and it would probably be months more before he was finished! The children watched in amazement as he spent meticulous moments on each detail, making every habitat and animal look as lifelike as possible. He explained, when asked by the students why his work wasn't hanging in a museum, that this was just like a museum and his work would make people think about the world around them as they went walking by. He commented as the children were leaving, that he loves when people talk to him as he paints, and that the children were so kind and encouraging. He said it made his day to see the reaction of the children as they were in awe of the mural that goes all the way to the ceiling!

Taiko Drumming Field Trip And An Interview with Jocelyn Rogers

The first grade class taught by Jocelyn Rogers took a very special field trip to the Burlington Taiko Drumming Studio. Their teacher Jocelyn is a Taiko drummer herself, and was excited to share this unique Japanese style of drumming with the children. Upon arrival to the studio they were greeted by Stuart Panton one of the founding members of the Burlington Taiko Group. Stuart was dressed in his traditional Taiko attire which included a special t-shirt, vest and head band. The children were immediately interested in the numerous types of drums that were displayed throughout the room. The children sat on the floor while Stuart gave a brief history about his involvement with and the origin of Taiko drumming. He encouraged the children to repeat after him while he used Japanese phrases and taught them the names of the different drums. Stuart demonstrated the difference in sound between small and large drums, and drums built with wood or plastic. He then allowed the children to play on the drums on their own. At the end of the discussion, he demonstrated a traditional dragon dance with a very amazing costume and wooden mask. The children laughed as he danced around the room pretending to nibble on their arms (a sign of good luck) and quietly pretended to sleep to a traditional Japanese lullaby. At the end of the visit Stuart set up rows of chairs with tires on them where the children could use their own drum sticks. He led the children in a drumming exercise similar to what he does with the

Burlington Taiko drumming group. It was a wonderful learning experience for the children, and a great opportunity for them to see a craft that their very own teacher Jocelyn loves so much. Jocelyn, who has been drumming since November of 2006, was happy to answer some questions with Leah Mulvey about Taiko Drumming.

LM: What does Taiko mean and where did it start?

JR: Taiko is Japanese for "big drum". Taiko drumming originated in ancient India where the drums were often used in religious ceremonies. This style of drumming eventually moved east toward China, Korea and eventually Japan. In the 1950's, Taiko drumming started being used as a performing art in Japan. Then, a little over forty years ago, my Taiko teacher's teacher, brought Taiko to North America founding San Francisco Taiko Dojo.

LM: What are the different types of drums and where are they made?

JR: There are many different types of Taikos. Some of the drums we use regularly are the mia daiko, the drums that are most often played in performances with multiple drummers. The shime daiko, a higher pitched sounding drum and the okaido a drum that sits horizontally on a stand so that two or more players can play it at once. The biggest drum is the O daiko it is five feet in diameter with a very deep beautiful sound. There are taiko drum makers in Japan, but the Burlington Taiko Group has made many of their own drums.

LM: Who can participate in Taiko drumming?

JR: Anyone! Taiko drumming is a great work out too because of all the choreographed movements and dancing. My sensei, Stuart Paton has many beginner and advanced classes locally. There are children and adult beginner classes at the Burlington studio. He also offers classes in Richmond and Montpelier. The classes are fun and you learn so much because Stuart is such a skilled teacher and so knowledgeable. If you are interested you should try it!

LM: Where do the Taiko drummers perform?

JR: Our group performs all around New England and sometimes beyond! Locally you will find us performing at many festivals and celebrations around Burlington. Stuart also goes to schools to lead workshops and residencies with teachers and students, and our group performs at schools as well.



From Space Camp To Classroom Science

With a teacher who just returned from a week-long summer adventure at Honeywell's Space Camp for teachers, students in 5th through 7th grades are approaching their science studies of matter and energy this year from an unusual perspective. "The ideas of space and flight are naturally fascinating to human beings," explains their teacher, Eve, "and children are no exception. When I realized that I could teach these science concepts through such engaging topics, I knew it would capture the children's imaginations, and as Albert Einstein said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.'"

In addition to their weekly excursions to the Vermont National Air Guard base in South Burlington for the Starbase program, the students are also learning about the concepts of force and motion by conducting experiments with new equipment provided through a grant from the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences. The collection of physics equipment includes spring scales to enable the children to measure forces and digital stopwatches for timing experiments, as well as pulleys, weights, and other materials for setting up and conducting experiments.

Special classroom art projects and supplemental studies are also connected to space and flight. Earlier this year, when they were studying electricity and magnetism, children in Eve's class created whirligigs using old tennis balls to capture the sense of spinning most often used to generate electricity. In an upcoming art project, they will

explore symmetry in flight while constructing a bird and using weights to balance the forces involved, and in their science studies with their Farm Educator, Peter Bullock, the children will learn how Newton's Laws of Motion apply to work done with simple machines, such as wedges, levers, and pulleys, while helping with chores in the farmyard. When the children resume their science studies in March, they will learn more about simple machines and how they help to reduce the amount of force required to accomplish a task.

The children also added depth to their studies by learning about the history of flight through research projects. Each student chose an aviator to study, from the Montgolfier brothers, who launched the first hot air balloons in 1783, to Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, who were the first to circle the globe nonstop without refueling in 1986. Each child created a life-size replica of his/her aviator and consulted books, encyclopedias, and other resources to find out about the person's life and accomplishments. The children's reports also include some analysis, as the children placed their aviator into the context of history by contemplating how that person was inspired by the endeavors of those who came before and how his/her achievements contributed inspiration and vision to those who came afterward.

During February, Eve's class will follow up on their studies of flight, their work at Starbase, and the orienteering work that they did in the fall by working with maps that pilots use. Together with the fifth graders, their next science study in

March, after simple machines, will focus on heat, sound, and light. In reading, children in Eve's class are focusing on making inferences, and using a graphic organizer to record their inferences in three parts: evidence from the text and their own schema (prior knowledge and experiences) leading to an inference. They did several examples together with a book that Eve is reading to the class (*The End of the Beginning* by Avi), and will continue to develop this skill with the books they're reading independently. In math, the children have been working with formulas for the perimeter of a rectangle or triangle, circumference of a circle, and area of all three of these figures. They particularly focused on the derivation of the area of a triangle based on constructing a rectangle using the base and height and proving that a second triangle of equal size would fill the empty parts if cut into two pieces (except in the case of a right triangle, in which case it wouldn't be necessary to cut the second triangle).

Eve Dubois explains, "All of the children's studies are interwoven, enabling them to connect new learning with prior knowledge and experiences to form an intricate mental web that enhances their ability to retain and later remember what they learned. This multi-faceted approach of differentiation strives to provide each child with the best opportunities for learning and growth, which is the mission of our school." With all of these engaging learning experiences, these children are sure to soar to new heights.



At left, Eve is pictured at Mission Control at Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama