

Laurel Mountain 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders participated in their first enrichment cluster meetings this past Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. This year, we offered 19 different enrichment clusters to those students.

During class time, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders ranked their top 4 cluster choices. Mrs. Levitan took their preferences and entered that data into a spreadsheet. Then, she sent the spreadsheet to Eric Deal, a Laurel Mountain parent. Mr. Deal has written a computer program that sorts all of the students into their clusters based on how their preferences.

The computer program randomly assigns the students to their clusters. The program tries to give every child their first choice. When that is not able to happen, then the program moves the students their second choice, then their third choice and finally their fourth choice. Also, the program takes into account the number of students per cluster, trying not to give more than 15 students per cluster. This helps keep the facilitator to student ratio low.

With our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, 171 students are in their 1st cluster choice, 63 are in their 2nd cluster choice, 24 are in their 3rd cluster choice and 10 students are in their 4<sup>th</sup> cluster choice. Even though this is not a perfect system, we feel that this is the fairest way possible to sort the students. Using the program will also allow us to track student choices throughout their years at LME.

Below you will find a summary of what took place during each first cluster meeting.

### **Theatrical Lions Guild - Read-a-Thon Edition**

Our first meeting was lots of fun! We began with physical and vocal warm-ups, as well as some discussion of their importance. Then we practiced projecting our voices to the back of the cafeteria, and enunciating our words so that we can be clearly understood. Next, we played a couple of theatre games to promote team building and concentration. Finally, we sat down and brainstormed some ideas for our Read-a-Thon skit. We have a lot of great ideas down on paper, and we're excited about choosing one (or a few!) next week and getting started on our script!

### **Engineers for Tomorrow**

We introduced our facilitators, who are real engineers, to the class and gave some information about what types of engineering problems we deal with in our jobs. The group talked about what types of products that engineers of

different disciplines work on. We demonstrated a robotic vacuum cleaner, the Roomba, in action and brainstormed about how it was built and its' components. We demonstrated a robot rower built by Lego Mindstorms Kit, which was acting somewhat like Roomba by making random navigation. The basic concepts about the robotic kit were introduced. We had a quick overview of the demo rower's programming code, by introducing the robotic kit's programming interface. We also talked about possibilities for our projects during the cluster. The students were asked to pick a teammate and a list of possible projects for next week. Everyone was very excited.

### **Animal Home Builders Association**

What a fantastic beginning to our "Animal Home Builders Association" enrichment cluster! After having the students introduce themselves and share why they chose this cluster, students were able to share ideas of what they might be interested in doing for a cluster project and service. After listening to a couple of Mr. Earley's students share information about a Chimney Swift tower, the rest of the cluster group became very interested in making this our big project. The students decided our product would be the tower and also came up with numerous services this tower would provide. This tower would not only provide a service for helping others learn more about the Chimney Swift, but would also provide a home for these bird to live and nest in as they migrate from the Amazon River Basin in April. In addition, the swifts will provide us a very valuable service by individually eating up to 1000 mosquitoes in a single day!

### **Art from the Heart**

The Art from the Heart students decorated grocery bags with a Halloween/fall theme, to share with the residents of the Summit at Westlake nursing home.

### **Fitness 101**

Students in the **Fitness 101** cluster were introduced to the three types of fitness: to help our **heart**, to help our **bones**, and to help our **muscles**. Students watched a short video and created a chart that showed how the three types help our bodies and exercise examples of each. The students are looking forward to the Tae-Bo kickboxing, strength training, and yoga that we will be participating in over the next few weeks!

### **Kitchen Chemistry**

In Kitchen Chemistry, we were all very excited to have a representative from Mad Science come and perform three experiments with us. We briefly discussed properties of matter including the states, changes and make-up of different materials. Did you know that nail polish or acetone will almost completely dissolve packing peanuts? We watched as our Mad Scientist made an entire jar of these plastic pieces disappear. After that, our group turned regular lemonade into a carbonate drink just by adding baking soda. When given the opportunity to taste this mixture, many junior scientists weren't thrilled with how this tasted, but some really liked it! Our last experiment was to make our very own crystal garden using Sodium Silicate, water, Magnesium Sulf, Nickelous Sulfate, and Copper Sulfate. As we poured our crystals into the liquid, we watched our towers build right in front of our eyes. Next week, we will work as a group to decide where we will be taking our Kitchen Chemistry Cluster!

### **All Star Ad Agency**

Students in the All Star Ad Agency Cluster played a game to see how many advertising slogans, jingles and icons they could match to products and businesses. Then they watched videos of popular TV commercials and compared different techniques advertisers use to appeal to consumers. Mrs. Webster also shared some amazing statistics about the number of minutes of commercials students might see on TV by the time they finish high school! At the end of the hour students discussed how they might support the Leadership cluster by creating various types of advertisements for the upcoming LME Carnival and the Read-a-Thon in the spring.

### **Computer Connection**

In the Computer Connection cluster, students explored websites, blogs, and pod casts that were designed by students in other US locations. We investigated a site designed for the purpose of connecting students internationally called The Global School Connection. We participated in an online chat with Mr. Wheeler and listened to an audio and video pod cast via iTunes. At the close of our meeting, students expressed interest in creating websites, video pod casts, blogs, and finding e-pals.

### **The Clay Creatorz**

What inspired the students in the "The Clay Creatorz" Cluster to choose to work with clay? The infinite possibilities that await us...creating anything we want out of clay: molding it with our hands, painting the design, and firing it in the kiln! To help prepare for this adventure, we watched videos that demonstrated Native American techniques we might use as we work with clay. We had time to experiment and construct our first product! We look forward to the next few weeks as we learn new techniques and observe a potter who will demonstrate her skills.

### **Read-a-thon Assembly**

Today the LME Read-a-thon Assembly Enrichment Cluster talked about what would make for an effective assembly. We also discussed the goal of the assembly, to motivate students to participate in the Read-a-thon and raise money for Libraries of Love. The members of the cluster watched the DVD of Mrs. Marshall's trip to Uganda last summer.

### **So You Want to Rule the World?**

This week Mrs. Janet Marek, Canyon Vista 8th grade Leadership teacher, and Jacob Overstreet, Canyon Vista 8th grade student, led our future world leaders in a crash course on leadership. After experimenting with what appeared to be a helium-filled hula hoop, our kids spent some time discussing what it takes to be a leader as well as various leadership styles. Only one short session, and they're already working together as a team. We'll be building on the leadership activities next week as we move into discussion of effective committees and begin talking about how we will plan this year's Libraries of Love fundraiser. With these kids the Read-a-Thon will go off without a hitch this year!

### **THE SCENE SCENE**

We began learning how to correctly format a screenplay and how to generate ideas to write about. We even did the first page of a scene that had an 82-year-old man riding a buffalo in the bowling alley of the White House! The President was upset—he threw bowling pins at him—because the old man had paid too much for insurance! We can't wait to get back to writing!

### **The Puppet Producers**

The Puppet Producers discussed whether to make puppets or use the many that are available in the library. The consensus was to use the libraries,

which are fantastic! The group decided they would like to produce puppet plays that could be performed for their classmates and the younger grade levels. Books in the library that contain repetitive phrases and many animals were located. Each small group of students analyzed the books and then decided on the book they would like to use as their foundation to write a puppet play. At the end of the class, the students practiced using puppets.

### **COOL KPAW Correspondents**

Students were excited to be a part of KPAW and were more than willing to share ideas that they have for making KPAW even better!!! The KPAW Cluster didn't change its name yet because we wanted to see what type of "jobs" they'd end up doing, but for now, we are the "**COOL KPAW Correspondents**"! Today, students brainstormed all the ways they could participate in KPAW: \*Take a survey of students and staff of what features they'd like to see be a part of KPAW each week or each month. \*Cultural Awareness (interviewing students of different backgrounds/ cultures to ask questions about their culture and traditions) \*Script-Writing (day-to-day writing of the scripts) \*Skits for advertising the carnival and book fair \*Interview teachers on the campus (What made you want to come to LME? What changes have there been to LME over time?) \*Be a reporter and interview students and teachers (formal interviews on KPAW; informal "on-the-spot" interviews) \*Research topics of interest to students (TV shows- how it got started, characters / actors info, etc.) \*Technical assistance- learning how to do "Photo Jam" for the crew credits at the end of the show. \*Student Producer- Helping Ms. B during live broadcasts and during practices. After discussion, students decided on and divided into groups according to interest. It was decided that they could end up doing more than one task during the time we have together. Students ran out of time while meeting with their groups, but are very excited about getting back together again to continue with their KPAW jobs.

### **Scraps of Cloth**

Mrs. Castro and Mrs. Marshall met with a group of (15) 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls to start learning to quilt. Several of the girls already have some sewing knowledge, either by machine or hand sewing. Mrs. Marshall read The Quilt Makers Gift by Jeff Brumbeau and we looked at several quilts that our secretary, Mrs. Bell, graciously shared with us. We chatted about the meaning of philanthropy and how that could be applied to our quilting cluster.

We talked about our guest speaker from "The Linus Connection" of Austin and how this organization could support our service learning project of making quilts and donating them to children in need. We looked at the blanket kits that have been cut out in a 9-patch design and created patterns on the ground with graphical math manipulatives. We also talked about what direction our projects could take after we have finished our baby blankets for the 'Linus Connection". We also thought that maybe we all could meet at JoAnn Fabrics to pick out our own fabric for our personal projects. We left energized and excited to start quilting!

### **Movement in Dance**

Our first meeting started off with some stretching and introductions, after which we introduced 4 short pieces of music from around the world, a Brazilian inspired piece, a hip-hop influenced Indian folk song, a horn interlude from Handel's Water Music and an African song. The girls (and facilitators) slowly got into letting the music take over their movements. We then sat in a circle and talked about our vision and then asked the girls to give theirs. We passed out a brainstorming 'flow chart' for them to work on and/or think about in determining a product, methods and timeline, which we hope to discuss and share at the next meeting. After that, we replayed their 2 favorite pieces of music and got moving again till it was time to say goodbye.

### **Where is Zeek this Week?**

The students discovered that Zeek was visiting Mexico! We listened to music and viewed pictures of where he is vacationing. He sent us an email with a recipe. Unfortunately he was not very specific and we had to do some of our measuring and writing of the recipe. Our Tortillas y Queso turned out really good. We look forward to hearing from him next week. Rumor has it he may be in Belgium.

### **Speed Racer**

Today in Speed Racer we talked about the forces of nature helping to make our go carts move, Gravity, Potential Energy, Kinetic Energy and Momentum. We also talked about the forces that are not our friends, Friction and Gravity again. We started our designs and are very excited. It was absolutely silent while the kids were drawing their designs. Soon we will be ready to order materials! Go, Go, Speed Racer!

### **Solar Pioneers**

Solar Pioneers met for the first time on Friday. Erica Thorson and Cyrus Bavarian of the UT Solar Racing Club presented information on their organization as well as a brief introduction to solar energy. Students explored solar panels that the presenters brought which powered small race cars. All of the students were completely engaged with the presenters and the concepts of solar energy. They enjoyed seeing how the light actually provided the energy necessary for the cars to run.