

In The News

from the Director

No more handholding, make students earn it.

It's a familiar refrain. I, like countless other instructors, hear it at the end of every semester from students who haven't quite measured up, yet want a grade they haven't earned. "Professor, are you going to bump my grade up?"

It almost always comes from students who haven't done their part to achieve the grade they want -- like the young woman I taught years ago who, at the end of the term, was three points shy of a B in the course.

She argued that her midterm paper deserved three additional points, even though at midterm she never questioned the grade. I reminded her of the assignment that all students had been given the option of doing, but she didn't want to do more work; she wanted the grade changed on the work already completed, suggesting only then that her paper had been graded unfairly.

When appeals to the teacher fail, students move on to the department chair, the dean, and finally the provost, with whom this young woman, with her mother in tow, ended up. I got a call from the provost and explained the optional assignment. A day or two later, as the deadline approached, the young woman, in tears, came into my office and handed me her assignment.

So it's with interest that I've listened to the merit-pay issue in the Florida Legislature, and I commend Gov. Charlie Crist for his courage in vetoing the bill. I disagree that tying teacher pay to student test performance will make our students more capable of competing internationally. Maybe it's because I've been around longer than some of the people making these arguments.

I remember when parents spent time helping their children with their homework, rather than complaining about the amount of homework given. I remember a time when parents encouraged and supported the teachers and the schools, rather than show up demanding that a teacher be held accountable for their child's grade. I remember when there was discipline in the schools, consequences for misbehavior and awards for real achievement.

By the 1970s, this changed. There was a self-esteem movement in education, and the focus was to de-emphasize competition. No child's self-esteem would be damaged in the process of becoming educated. The emphasis quickly shifted to improving the child's self-esteem, regardless of any real achievement, rather than learning. As a consequence, some students are just ill-equipped to deal with the failures and disappointments that will come at some point in their young lives.

So, fast-forward -- is it any surprise that children who have grown up in this trophies-for-all world expect someone to bail them out when they're just short of measuring up? It matters not that they missed classes or that they failed to turn in assignments. It doesn't matter that they turn in a major course project weeks later than other students who were just as busy, but managed to get the job done on time. In today's consumer-driven educational culture, students simply demand that their grades be changed.

How can it possibly make sense that those students who worked hard all semester, doing what they were asked without complaining, be penalized by inflating the grades of others who make the most noise at the end of the semester? Yet to listen to many of our faculty and administrators, this occurs more frequently with every semester that goes by.

At one university, I asked a visiting professor from Germany what he saw as the major difference between American and German students. Without hesitation he replied, "It's the handholding ... I've never seen so much handholding."

So, if we want our educational system to be competitive, we need to stop the nonsense. More and more American jobs are going overseas, to countries where young people are more often disciplined, willing to work hard and well-educated. Unfortunately, some of our own students need to accept responsibility for the grades they failed to earn. As long as it's easier to get a grade by blaming others, how will our students ever be capable of competing with other students around the world?

Kaye K. Diefenderfer of Maitland is a college psychology instructor who has taught for more than 30 years in schools in Georgia and Florida.

Dates to Remember

May 10-14 (Mon-Fri)
Final Exams

May 17-21 (Mon-Fri)
SATs

May 27 (Thursday)
Shakespeare
7:00PM
Winter Park 9th Grade Ctr

May 28 (Friday)
Grade 8 Graduation
Last Day of School!
Dismissal - 11:30AM

June 1-3 (Tue-Thur)
Teacher Post-Planning



*Florida Solar Energy Center
Bighthouse Solar Cookoff
Elementary Division
3rd Place Cooker Design - Solar Savvy*

SAVE THE DATE

MAY 27, 2010

SHAKESPEARE
7:00PM

Winter Park 9th Grade
Center - Auditorium

KINDERGARTEN

The **Pre-K-Kindergarten** class are now experts on the desert! This is as part of a year-long study of habitats around the world. The children heard many stories, both fiction and nonfiction and paid particular attention to the animals and plants found in this unusual habitat. They found the “adaptations” animals have made over the years to survive in this harsh environment.

The class made lists of plants and animals found in the desert. Each child selected an animal to research, and put the information, along with sketches they made, into a special folder. They selected cacti from the books and created a “Desert Habitat” bulletin board. Each child created a book about their animal. One page told where the animal lives, the next page told what kind of animal it is (mammal, reptile, bird, arachnid) and another page described what it eats (carnivore, omnivore, herbivore). They each selected three facts they thought no one would know about the animal and added those to the book.

The children painted boxes to look like a desert scene. Those whose animals were nocturnal, made a nighttime scene and those that are diurnal, made a daytime scene. Then, using hardening clay, they created their animals for the display.

Kindergarten also learned original poems about their animals. They wrote a circle story that involved a zebra going to each of the desert animals to ask for help getting home. The animals all told a fact about themselves. The children illustrated the pages they had created. We bound the book and are taking turns bringing it home to share with their families.

The next project was turning the story into a play and presenting it to the parents. They did an incredible job. We had a parent program with the purpose of teaching the parents about the desert. The children sang some songs about the sun, did a “Spider Dance”

in the dance studio and then returned to the classroom. Each child read his/her report, recited poems and acted out the play they had written. They finished with some animal songs sung in Spanish.

The last part was the favorite part of the presentation! It was the eating of the treats the children had made for their parents. For the carnivores, the children made “Spider Cookies” made out of melted chips, peanuts and chow mein noodles. For the herbivores, each child brought in a fruit, washed it and cut it up into a fruit salad.

The next habitat we will study will be “The Pond”. We will walk to a nearby pond at different times of the day and record the plants and animals we see. We will collect tadpoles and learn about life cycles. We are waiting for the delivery of caterpillars to study and will observe their life cycle as well.



FIRST and SECOND GRADE

Our next novel is *The Tale of Despereaux*. It is also known as *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread* written by Kate DiCamillo. It tells the story of a mouse, named Despereaux, on a quest to rescue a beautiful human princess. The novel is divided into four books. Each book tells the story from the perspective of a different character. It's a fantasy story we will all enjoy!

As we continue our unit on the American Revolution, we promote historical thinking and focus on the heroes that led us in the struggle for independence as well as identify and explain the basic principles that Americans set forth in the documents that declared the nation's independence from England. We will learn about The Declaration of Independence and Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, the Father of our Country; the amazing Benjamin Franklin; and Betsy Ross and the American Flag.

In Math, some are learning while others are adding to their knowledge of measuring length, mass, capacity, and temperature; counting money, telling time and

fractions. We are still working on our math facts for speed and accuracy as we work on our appropriate levels of addition and subtraction, multiplication and division.

In Science, we continue the exploration of the earth as we identify minerals and create crystals in our garden of odds and ends. We will identify and explain the types of plate movements and relate them to plate tectonics, identify causes and effects of earthquakes, learn how mountains are formed and participate in a volcanic demonstration to make our own model volcanoes.



THIRD and FOURTH GRADE



Language Arts

In Language Arts, students have been working with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as preparation for introducing students to Renaissance times in Social Studies. The integration of Language Arts and Social Studies is a natural one. As students practice for their Medieval presentation, they are applying public speaking skills, have been exposed to primary and secondary sources, and most importantly have been practicing comprehension.

Social Studies

Third and Fourth Graders are in for an exciting time in Social Studies as they recreate life in a Medieval town at the end of the High Middle Ages. Characters will include the baker and his wife, a doctor, the barber, the blacksmith and his apprentices, a guard, the miller, and a wealthy merchant. Students have been extremely busy designing and creating sets, researching characters, and synthesizing their individual roles into one performance. Parents are invited to attend on Friday, May 14 at 2:00.

Students generate knowledge and meaning from their experiences. When students learn about Medieval Times through discussion and investigation in the classroom, then apply that knowledge through an experience like the one planned for May 14, the information takes on another dimension. This historical simulation has caused students to probe further into Medieval Times, as they make connections which provoke even deeper learning.

Math

Third and Fourth Grade have done an excellent job applying their Metric measurement skills to our Earth science unit. The **Third Graders** are moving on to 2 and 3 digit multiplication. The students are all very excited about moving on to "harder" math. **Fourth Grade** is currently reviewing decimals and will begin to work on multiplying and dividing decimals and converting decimals to fractions and vice versa.

They are also continuing with developing problem solving skills. They are currently working on eliminating possibilities to make problems easier and breaking larger problems into smaller ones that they can solve. The class loves problem solving where they have to act out the problem to solve it.

Science

Third and Fourth Grade completed their unit on environmental science. The students learned about alternative fuel sources such as solar, wind, and hydro-electric power and the effects of alternative fuel sources on our natural resources and the environment. **Third and Fourth Grade** all participated in the school-wide Solar day. The students chose which competition they wanted to take part in. Mile and Julian worked as a team to build a solar-powered boat for competition. Gabe built a solar-powered windmill, which he explained would help generate electricity on sunny days when there was no wind. Several teams competed in the solar oven competition. John, Liam, Adam, and Christian cooked pizza, and baked ziti in their solar oven. Emily, Caroline, and Catherine made smores with the solar oven they designed. Mackenzie, Sarah, Kathleen, and Presley cooked apple cobbler in theirs! The students had a great time competing! **Third and Fourth Grade** are now working on individual research projects that they will present to the class in a couple of weeks. Each student, or pair of students, chose a topic that is interesting to them to learn more about and present to the class.



SAT week is fast approaching. Students will be taking the SAT from Monday, May 17 to Friday, May 21. Please make sure students have a good breakfast and that they arrive to school on time. Students will not be admitted to class once testing has started.

FIFTH and SIXTH GRADE



Language Arts

We've learned how to write comparisons. Students compared and wrote about different brands of chocolate, orange juice and cream cheese. They also sampled and wrote about different types of apples. As our final writing project for the year, we'll be using those comparison skills to write reviews of either a book, a game, a movie, or a restaurant.

We're reading the book *Wringer* by Jerry Spinelli in which a young boy grows up in a small town that holds an annual pigeon hunt. The boy doesn't want to be part of the tradition but is afraid to tell anyone. This fine novel about the difficulties of growing up and of dealing with peer pressure is raising a lot of important issues for our class discussions.



Social Studies

We're now fully into our simulation of the Saami reindeer-herding culture of northern Scandinavia. Students will have to manage their own reindeer herds in both an ancient Saami way and a modern way. We'll see how modern inventions like snowmobiles and helicopters are used to make the reindeer herding more efficient, but how the Saami struggle to maintain the ancient ways in a modern world of Hydroelectric plants that flood traditional grazing areas and a nuclear disaster that has poisoned the soil.

Math

Fifth and Sixth Grade finished their unit on two- and three dimensional geometry. The students learned about volume, surface area, and the properties of two- and three-dimensional figures. They also used their knowledge of geometry in several problem solving activities. The favorite was trying to create as many different nets as possible to form a cube. A net in geometry is a flat design that can be folded to create a three dimensional shape. The students had to create nets that formed a closed cube and that had no overlapping sides.



SEVENTH and EIGHTH GRADE

Language Arts

We're wrapping up our study of the Holocaust. We've just finished Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the harrowing story of his time as a teenager in Auschwitz. We've also watched the movies *Schindler's List*, *Conspiracy* and various documentaries about this terrible time. It's been difficult to consider and discuss these atrocities, but very necessary as we try to envision a world where such things can never be allowed to happen again.

In debate, we've been practicing an informal style of arguing in which all students must play devil's advocate and weigh in on both sides of the issue. This will get us ready for our final formal debates of the year which will focus on capital punishment and amateur athletics.

Social Studies

Our final major unit of the year will be on the Civil War. We're using Joy Hakim's fine *The History of US*, which is full of great primary-source material and really makes the events come alive for the reader. In addition, students will be doing their final formal presentations for the year on Civil War topics not fully covered in the book, like Civil War medical practices, Civil War spies and intelligence gathering methods, and Civil War music.

Math

Seventh and Eighth Grade finished their units on graphing linear equations. The students learned to work with cartesian planes and graphing on both the x- and y-axis. They also worked to find the slopes and intercepts for the lines. Algebra has been working on radicals and quadratic equations. They have learned several different methods for solving quadratic equations including, completing the square, using the quadratic formula, and using the square root property. The Algebra students finished their unit on radicals by learning about imaginary and complex numbers. All of the Algebra students are ready to begin Geometry in the fall.



SCIENCE

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.

[John Muir](#)

Populations and ecosystems depend on energy and the major source of energy on Earth is sunlight. The energy entering ecosystems as sunlight is synthesized by producers and enters the food web via consumers. Millions of organisms are alive today and all depend on the interdependence of sunlight and the transfer of energy from producer to all levels of consumers and then to decomposers, assuring the circle of life on Earth.

Grades 5-8 Solar Day was a huge success and a lot of fun. We learned about photovoltaics, distillation, heat gain, sun-prints, solar thermal water heaters, and the intricacies of designing a solar boat that not only floats, but goes where you want it. The food cooked by the solar oven groups was delicious and creative. The judges had a difficult time deciding on just one winner. Three solar oven teams and one solar car team will be competing in the Florida Solar Energy Competition on May 1. Following the theme of interdependency, **Grades 5-8** will be attending a field trip to the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet to participate in a presentation on plankton. Students will venture into the estuary and the ocean to gather plankton samples, and then they will return to the lab to identify and compare specimens.

Grades 5-6 will be attending a showing of the Disney film, *Ocean*. Thank you Marianne Goloversic for arranging this opportunity for the students to immerse themselves in the creative beauty of the marine world.

We have some seedlings ready to be adopted. Ask Lynn or a **5-6 Grader** for details. So far, we have peas, cucumbers, sunflowers, basil, corn, and a few other "forgot to label" seedlings. They are only .25 each.

A representative from Orange County will give a presentation to the whole school about where trash ends up and how our county recycles.

COMPUTERS

Students are continuing to practice typing skills and using the computer and it's programs for creative and educational projects. **Kindergarten** wowed their parents with a Polar game using Keynote hyperlinks, GarageBand, and the internet. They are now working on animation. **Grades 1-2** are exploring PSA's and will be producing their own about recycling.

MUSIC

We are concluding our year with singing. **Grades 3-8** are preparing songs from Mendelssohn's incidental music inspired by Shakespeare's "Midsummer Nights Dream". **Grades 1 and 2** are singing songs sung by children from the Broadway stage. We are also exploring different theater games which focus on being attentive and thinking quick on our feet. Basic improvisation skills are also being explored.

NOTICIAS EN ESPAÑOL (SPANISH NEWSLETTER)

Grades K-4 will continue expanding their use of new and previously learned vocabulary through conversation, games, songs and stories. In addition, their speaking ability will continue to be reinforced by the use of student-to-student dialogue. As part of the end-of-the-year curriculum, the students will also be reviewing all previously learned material.

Fifth and Sixth Grade

¿Como es tu familia? is the topic we will cover to describe family members and friends and tell what other people like and what they do not like to do. They will work on the verbs *tener* (to have) and *ser* (to be) as well as on possessive adjectives.

Seventh Grade

Students will start working on how to conduct a conversation related to health and health practices in the Spanish speaking world; they will describe how they are feeling, tell what parts of the body are hurting, and suggest ways to feel better. They will learn the indirect object pronouns: *me, te, le* and the time expression to tell how long something has been going on.

Eighth Grade

We will celebrate Earth Month by describing the natural environment, listing actions to protect the environment, and discussing environmental dangers. We will work on the present tense of the verb *decir* (to tell and to say). They will learn the affirmative command and imperative forms of present tense verbs as well as the difference between the verbs *conocer* and *saber* (to know).



COACH'S CORNER

PE

K-2

Throughout the school year we have encouraged maximum participation during PE through a variety of activities. These activities are designed to improve their personal fitness, physical skills, and social development. We have worked very hard, had a lot of fun, and enjoyed our new friendships.

Each child is being encouraged to be active and safe throughout the summer, while enjoying their new skills and confidence.

Grades 3-8

With the President's Challenge behind us we are very proud of the efforts put forth by all the participants. We will distribute their respective awards at the Awards Ceremony/Ice Cream Social on May 6th.

ATHLETICS- Middle School

Boys and Girls Tennis

The Boys and Girls Tennis Teams finished the season in 2nd Place, congratulations to all participants!

Boys and Girls Track

Our Boys and Girls Track team finished strong with several Personal Best records! Congratulations to all of our participants.

We look forward to a strong 2010-2011 fall season, we will offer Co-ed Soccer and Girls Volleyball.

Awards Ceremony/Ice Cream Social:

All student participants of the Athletic Program will receive a participation medal, parents are welcome and attend to show your support.

Please remember to bring in your items for a fun and successful event.

May 6th, 1:30-2:45 at The Marks Street Center (corner of Marks St and Magnolia Dr.)

