

From the Principal

March 13, 2012

One of my favorite parts of auction time at Lafayette is to get to see the class creations. For the past month parents and Laurie McLaughlin have been hard at work coming up with new ideas and projects for each class to contribute as its auction donation. All their hard work has been completed and is on display in various areas of the school. You can also see them on the school website and join in the bidding fun. And while each and every item is lovely, there is a lot of teaching and learning going on here too.

Pre-K studies insects each spring, especially butterflies. They learn about the life cycle of insects with all the big vocabulary words. They study flowers as the source of food for insects. So it is only appropriate that the Pre-K class creations celebrate insects and flowers. We have a butterfly platter, a dragon fly platter, one with flowers and one with both flowers and insects. And as the body or wings of the butterfly and dragonfly, or as the center of a flower we have a little student fingerprint. Lots of little fingerprints all over each platter. Such a creative way to introduce our youngest learners to so many new words and concepts.

While the Pre-k children look at the world up close and in their own backyards, kindergarten has been traveling to outer space – the final frontier. It is jaw dropping to hear these students talk about everything they have learned about outer space. The planets and their moons, the location of the asteroid belt. How we move around the sun and the moon moves around the earth. How people can travel in space but they need lots of protective clothing because there is no air out there. And while there is no such thing as an extraterrestrial, it is okay to draw an imaginary one and add it to the class collage.

First grade did large wall mirrors that have individually created pictures glued to the outer edges of the frames. Four classes have pictures of favorite pets, insects, fish and spring plants. All items that fit into an area of the first grade curriculum. Later this year our first graders will write their first research paper using two sources for the information. But somehow Ms. Plummer's class mirror took off in an entirely different direction. Hers depicts favorite desserts. But all five are very colorful and charming.

Second and third grade do lots of work in social studies on what is a community? In second grade the emphasis is on the differences between rural, suburban and urban communities. In third grade the focus turns to the District of Columbia, history, geography, business and culture. So second grade took a good look out the windows of Lafayette and created wonderful streetscapes of the neighborhood. With the school in the center and building out from there you can see the market and maybe even your house. This is a new idea for this year and has gotten lots of positive comments from parents in the morning. Two third grade classes used their lessons on architecture to create large serving platters with quite a combination of structures. The other two classes decorated large serving bowls with imaginary creatures. Very creative ideas on display.

Fourth grade also divided up into two different directions. Two classes also did decorative mirrors, using embossing techniques. The other two tried something very different. They created individual tiles and the tiles have been installed on the tops of tables. Something that could be used either indoors or out.

Fifth grade does one large grade level project, the fifth grade quilt. For the last few years the quilt has dovetailed with social studies lessons on the Great Depression. I get to work with the kids and show them some of my quilts along with an antique one that was actually made during the 1930's. In class everyone learns to sew a little. A lunch bunch takes over for the long seams and pressing and finally the last step, tying the quilt together is finished. I love to see the pride in the 5th graders when they see the completed quilt. For most of the students at Lafayette this is the first time they have ever sewn anything at all, much less a big item like a quilt. And they can point out exactly which block they worked on, which seam is theirs.

So go on-line this week and see the class creations at the Lafayette auction. See just how unique each and every one is. Bid if you want. But also look to see how so many of these artistic creations tie into other curriculum areas. You can study about architecture, but you don't really understand some of its elements until you create your own building. You can learn about community, but how exciting is it to create a model of where you live. And nature is so beautiful. Isn't it wonderful that we can reproduce so much of it through the arts. The class creations never fail to amaze me each year. This year is no different. Another example of all the learning that goes on everyday at Lafayette.