

November 6, 2012
Principal Lynn Main

Most days at Lafayette I have one of those “Gee whiz, I didn’t know that moments.” Art Linkletter was right when he said that kids say the darnedest things each day on his House Party show. I never quite know what to expect when I visit a classroom or start talking to students moving through the school. Most of October is filled with Halloween comments about characters I haven’t even heard of. I’m in total ignorance when it comes to Angry Birds. But last Friday a trip to Mr. King’s class is the clear winner for amazing me so far this year.

Second grade is working on a multidisciplinary unit called Then and Now. How things have changed over time. How people lived in the past. Inventions and communication. Transportation and clothing. Part of this is in relation to their unit on Native Americans. What life was like in America on the prairies and in the desert Southwest. Costumes will soon be made and classroom displays prepared. A busy month of November leading up to the Native American museums open right before Thanksgiving.

Last week I visited Mr. King’s class and students were working in small groups during their reading/language arts period. On the Smart Board were a series of pictures of bicycles, from some of the earliest ones to the most modern. The students in this group were looking through the pictures and finding similarities and differences. Then they were putting down their information in a compare and contrast format. The Smart Board made it easy to switch back and forth between the pictures. Modern technology in the classroom.

The group that did me in though was in another part of the classroom. They were looking at a piece of technology that was something they had never seen before. They were very eager to show me this amazing device that lets you also look at pictures. Pictures that are loaded in the top of the device using a large round circle. A device with a lever that changes from picture to picture. Yep. They were using View-Masters. The most wonderful invention they had ever seen!

When I was growing up everyone had a View-Master. When you went on vacation you often got a new reel at a gift shop so you could remember where you had been and could show your friends highlights of the trip. Stories were on View-Master reels. Practically every national park had a reel of its most celebrated features. I’m sure reels of the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite were produced in the millions. There have been some 25 viewer models since it was invented in 1939, thousands of titles, and 1.5 billion copies of reels. Despite its long history and many changes in models and materials, the same basic design of reels and internal mechanism remained the same. Every reel will work in every model. Mr. King had some interesting reels from a department store showing how store displays should be set up to best highlight a product. There were also pictures of what could only be shots of Cuba before the revolution. And this little device was simply enthralling to students who use I-Pads and Gameboys on a daily basis. Who would have guessed?

We sometimes forget that what is old is really very new to students in elementary school. When I meet with the 5th grade students in January at the start of their quilt unit, they are fascinated with my Singer sewing machine that is well over 60 years old. It looks so OLD. Yet for the most part it works just like the newer machines they will soon be using in class to make their own quilt. The pottery wheel amazes the 4th and 5th graders as they watch Ms. McLaughlin make a pot out of a lump of clay. A sizable number of kids show up at open art to see if they can do it too. And they can. Lacrosse and archery have been on the schedule in physical education classes. Cave men technology updated for current students. So while you may ask your children each evening if they

learned anything new today, maybe they didn't. Instead they learned something very old. Something that you learned in school or I did or even ancient people did. We know we are preparing our students for the future. That time is coming ready or not. But sometimes a trip to the past is also a part of the day. Especially when something as super neat as a View-Master is involved.