

May 1, 2012

From the Principal

*by Lynn Main*

It's time for our youngest students at Lafayette to take center stage. For the past few weeks, Ms. Perll has been busy helping each child select one piece of art to showcase at their Arts Night on May 9. That was just the first step. Each piece has now been mounted and labeled. This week, the bulletin boards on the first floor will start to be covered with all of this work as we get ready to open our doors to you, letting you see just how much work our students have completed this school year.

In music class, songs are being rehearsed for the exact same reason. Everyone has learned so many new songs and how to play new instruments. So music class will be moving to the cafeteria this week getting ready for our big night.

Yet while this is happening at one end of the school, back in the early childhood rooms other big things are occurring. In PK you may see us walking around with some pretty disgusting boiled lettuce. This is for our Rock Creek Park tadpoles. Thanks to a very observant parent, we catch frog eggs in the park each spring and bring them back to school. With the lettuce as their food source, these eggs soon hatch into tadpoles and the children get to see the tadpole eventually grow legs, lose their tails and turn into frogs. Then it's back to the park they go for a summer of eating bugs. In fact if your children tell you they went to the frog center, that's true. Watching the tadpoles swim around and observing the changes is very popular right now.

In kindergarten it's habitat time. While this comes around each spring as a study theme, what the teachers do with it never ceases to amaze me. One year each class studied a different habitat, desert, ocean, woodlands, rain forest, and invited their classmates to visit each room and see what was on display. Another year each class took a different part of a farm and showcased what they learned about that. This year it we are going to several different habitats and comparing and contrasting what we learn about each. Our kindergarten students are doing their own research as they look through and read books about animals and plants in various parts of the world. Habitat displays are just getting a start as they recreate what they have learned through their own drawings and put them on display in their classrooms.

This is the time of year when we really can see just how student-like our littlest children have become. They will sit for long periods of time with magnifying glasses looking for the smallest changes in their tadpoles. Quite a change from last fall when they seemed to be in constant motion. They can describe to you in

minute detail just what they are seeing using many of the new words they have learned this year. In kindergarten they can use Venn diagrams as they compare and contrast different regions of the world and the plants and animals that are found there. Something I don't even think I saw until 5th or 6th grade. They spend long period of time poring over classroom libraries that are now filled with books on habitats looking for the most minute detail about the forest floor or the ocean shoreline so they can add more details to their classroom displays. It's not enough to put a frog in the mural. It has to be the right kind of frog, drawn using the right colors. Our kindergarten students are big on details right now.

All this is preparation for next fall and on into the future. Learning to pay attention to the details is part of learning to read and taking on mathematics, both big parts of elementary school. Observation is used in science and art. Having just the right words to use makes writing so much easier and clearer. And being able to compare and contrast isn't just used in habitat studies but in choosing products to buy and politicians to elect. So while it may seem like it's only kindergarten, it really isn't. It's real life in a smaller space with teachers around helping develop real life skills. We know this year is coming to a close. It won't be long until we take the kindergarten students on their "trip" to first grade so they can see where they will be next year. But watching them right now, we know they are ready for that big step and the many more that will follow as they move through Lafayette. Skills build on each other, one at a time. When a child is ready. With the help of you the parents and us the school, a pretty solid foundation has been started all before as the children say, "we are now in the number grade".