

Science News!!! - December

SCIENCE FAIR: By now your student should have a clear idea about what they are doing for their Science Fair Project. They have shown me an initial proposal and their final set of procedures and materials is due this Thursday (5th and 6th grade) or Friday (7th and 8th grade). Every student also has a copy of all of the Science Fair due dates. Please ask to see this! It might be a good idea to post this on the refrigerator and check off items as they are completed! Again, my goal is to make the science fair project as painless as possible (and maybe even a little bit fun!) for all involved. The 5th grade students will be doing their projects in teams, but all other students need to do an individual project. As announced in the RAM newsletter, we will be having a Science Fair meeting for anyone with questions on Tuesday, 12/9 at 7 p.m. in the Science Lab. If you can't make the meeting but still have questions, please feel free to give me a call!

SCIENCE SPEAKERS: I am still looking for speakers to come into one or more of the science classes to talk about how they use science in their work. In particular, I am looking for someone in the hair care/beauty industry, someone who works in cooking/baking, and someone who is an artist or potter. If you or someone you know would be willing to come to the science classes, we would love to have them! Just e-mail or call.

5th Grade – We have decided on our Science Fair topics and are working on developing our procedures and materials lists. Every student should have their own Science Fair Notebook that stays in class so we can record data throughout the next few months. If your student does not already have one, it would be very helpful to get a notebook and bring it in as soon as possible!

6th Grade – The sixth graders have started their individual science fair projects and are also continuing work on their Famous Scientist biographies. Their essays have been edited for format (thesis statement, topic sentences, concluding sentences, etc.) as well as mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.), so they should be ready to turn in a final copy by Friday, December 12. If a student needs more time, I would like to see what they have by Friday and then I would be more than willing to extend a due date. Please remind them they also need to have a bibliography of their sources. As well as these two projects, we have been learning about the Periodic Table of Elements. This information is going to help us to our mineral classifications during the Mineral ID lab, and it will also help in understanding the layers of the interior of the Earth! I sense an edible “Earth Lab” in our future!

7th Grade – The seventh grade has also started their Science Fair projects and should be starting to collect data on their projects. They are also working on a biographical essay of a famous life scientist, the first draft of which is due Friday, December 12 and the final draft is due no later than Friday, December 19. We will be editing these drafts for format and mechanics in class to help the students prepare an excellent report. Please ask to see their work so far and remind the students that they need a bibliography of their sources. The seventh grade has also been delving into the organization of the Periodic Table paying special attention to the elements of life such as hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. We will be looking at elements in the human body as well as our own food! Ask them if they can identify three elements in their breakfast cereal! This is preparing us for the study of cells and cell processes such as osmosis and respiration.

8th Grade – The eighth grade students are researching a famous physical scientist for their research papers. The first draft of their essay is due Friday, December 12 and the final draft is due no later than Friday, December 19. Again, we are editing the papers in class for format and mechanics. We have already worked on the development of “grabber” sentences and thesis statements, so they should be well on their way to a very interesting paper! They eighth grade is also applying their laboratory skills to their science fair projects. Please have them show you the list of due dates so you can help them keep up with the schedule. We are continuing our investigation into the periodic table paying special attention to how the table is organized and what it can tell us about the structure of each of the elements. We will be using this information to predict chemical reactions! By Christmas vacation they should be well versed in the Engaging Lives of the Elements!

Christmas Ideas!

As a parent and a teacher, I thought it might be helpful to offer a few alternative choices to the usual Christmas lists ideas. The following are a list of websites that offer different gift ideas that also support our planet. These are just of the organizations that I have personally dealt with, so if you have any other ideas to add to the list, please let me know!

1) World Wildlife Organization (www.worldwildlife.org/gifts) – adopt an animal in the name of your student! This money goes to helping protect and preserve wildlife across our globe.

2) Invest in a family membership in a local zoo, Natural History Museum or aquarium. These organizations are on the forefront of research and education that helps protect, preserve, and rehabilitate wildlife species. It's a great family outing and provides monthly "gifts" in the form of newsletters and magazines. Here are some of our local (or fairly local) zoo websites:

Coyote Point Museum – www.coyoteptmuseum.org

Happy Hollow Zoo and Park (great for pre-schoolers and younger kids) – www.happyhollowparkandzoo.org

San Francisco Zoo – www.sfzoo.org

Oakland Zoo – www.oaklandzoo.org

Longs Marine Lab – www.2ucsc.edu/seymourcenter

Moss Landing Marine Lab - <http://friends.mlml.calstate.edu>

Monterey Bay Aquarium – www.montereybayaquarium.org

California Academy of Sciences (San Francisco) – www.CalAcademy.org

3) Donate to a local animal organization. These folks really do the dirty work of rescuing and caring for animals that are abandoned, injured, or given up do to differing circumstances.

SPCA of Santa Cruz – www.santacruzspca.org

Santa Cruz Animal Service – www.scanimalservices.us

Native Animal Rescue – www.nativeanimalrescue.org

Project Purr – www.projectpurr.org

4) The human species needs our care as well, and many of you are already supporting families and those in need through your parishes. Here are a couple of other organizations that can always use our support. This is not, by any means, an exhaustive list nor is it a recommendation. These are just the three organizations I have dealt with personally.

St. Francis Soup Kitchen – www.stfrancissoupkitchen.org

St. Vincent DePaul – this organization can be googled to find the website

Catholic Charities – www.dioceseofmonterey.org