



High Meadow School Calendar

March 3-7th 4th
NYSED Math Test

March 6-12th 8th
NYSED Math Test

March 8th 8p.m.
Sarah Perrotta concert!

March 12th 7:00
Upper School Open House

Mar. 17-24th
Spring Break, no school!

April 17th Staff Day
No School

April 18th-21st
Passover Recess.

April 22nd Tues. Calendar Correction! School reopens! Fix your calendars!

Please check the **Lost and Found** for your children's forgotten items... They are kept in the cabinets of the Lower School Bathroom.



Notes from Michelle...

I apologize for my past two anemic notes in the Newsletter. Illness, snowdays, and delays had the effect of making the days I was actually here extremely compressed. So let me get a few small, but **Very Important** notes out of the way so I can get to the meat of the matter.

I hope I will see you all at Sarah Perrotta's concert this Saturday at 8:00 PM! She is an up and coming artist who is a must see.

Upper School Open House on March 12th at 7:00 will include some alumni. It will be fun and informative for all parents.

There are some calendar changes that you should take note of and mark on your calendars.

So, I have been thinking about this entry for the past few weeks, as the teachers and I are in the midst of reading a number of articles on **Thinking**. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is spending time in classrooms observing teaching and learning. What do we mean when we say *teaching* and *learning*, and how are those two highly complex activities interwoven and distinct? At High Meadow, teaching incorporates numerous levels of research and development – yes – the old R and D that corporations talk about. Our teachers research the developmental stage of the students they teach so that they can better understand the range of abilities, the work and challenges, and the physical and emotional needs of the age group they are teaching. They read Giselle, Piaget, Walsh, Atwell, and pay close attention to where their students as a group and individually are on the developmental spectrum.

Then teachers gather information about *their particular students*. Assessment is ongoing... through the observation of social interaction, language use, fine and gross motor work and play, personal habits, and frustration tolerance, they learn who the child is in the world. Through ongoing discussions with parents they gain insight into the child's inner world. Through discussions with the child's previous and other teachers and through academic activity – discussion, projects, direct and hands-on instruction, teachers gather information about *how their students learn*.

Students, in the meantime, are busy constructing knowledge. What do we mean when we say constructing knowledge? Jean Piaget, a renowned developmental psychologist, concluded after years of exhaustive research, that children do not just add blocks of knowledge to blocks of knowledge. Rather, they reshuffle and then synthesize their perspectives, presumptions, and understandings of the work as they acquire new knowledge and skills. The outcome is a construction of a body of knowledge about their world that is highly personal. Students need time to examine their thinking. They need to say what they think, how they arrived at that thinking, and what more they want to know. They need diverse and ongoing opportunities to express their thinking in the form of discussion, art-making, block construction, writing, demonstrations, and paper and pencil tasks. They need to struggle with previous conclusions in the face of new information and learn how to **change their minds!**

Teaching is a tri-partite activity – it incorporates a) content knowledge, b) methods and approaches, and c) teacher-student relationships. All of these change from year to year and over the course of the year based on the teacher's constant observations and assessments of students. An ongoing feedback loop guides what happens in each classroom. Thus, while a curriculum is in place, teachers modify and, sometimes, radically alter that curriculum in response to what they learn about how their students learn – as a group and individually. The goal is to provide continuous and appropriate challenge, and when we get it right it's a beautiful thing.

** If you are interested in reading and thinking about thinking, Fran Smith's book, ***To Think*** is food for thought!

Pre-K News

From what the girls tell me, I missed a great show on Monday. The three Eric Carle stories that were told were enjoyed, and everyone was excited when they realized how many books in our classroom library are by the same author. Many thanks to Elena, Simone, and Ryan for driving. Recently we read a funny book called Snowmen at Night. In it, the author explains why snowmen sometimes have a lopsided look in the morning. It's because of their night life- activities like sledding, baseball, and snowball fights. (Of course! J) I asked the girls to imagine what else snowmen might do at night. The resulting art work and dictations are now hanging in the classroom. The work was so wonderful that we decided to share it at gathering last week. After Luella, Ashira and Emily bravely (and voluntarily) made an introduction, each girl proudly held up her artwork as I read her accompanying words. The work was well received by the rest of the school. I feel I have to take a moment to talk about the most popular learning tool in our classroom- the big wooden blocks. Every day the blocks are laid out and turned into a barn or a home of some sort. It might be just two or three girls doing the initial building, but at some point the entire class is involved. At the beginning of the day the home may be for a couple of kitties. As others join, it's fascinating to hear them work out who will be the owner or the baby. Or they'll all suddenly become horses. Blocks are rearranged to make extra rooms. Sometimes one girl will be upset because the part she wants is already taken. The story is quickly reworked to include two mothers or whatever it takes to let everyone play. These girls really care about and enjoy each other. And what amazing critical thinking they're doing! May their important work always be this much fun.



Sarah Perrotta, Rescheduled!

Singer-songwriter **Sarah Perrotta** will perform with her band and special High Meadow guests **this Sat. March 8th** at 8pm in the High Meadow Performing Arts Center! This rescheduled event had been rescheduled (post snow-storm interruption of last Friday), and is much anticipated! Please come out and show your support. Hope to see you at the event!!



Volunteer Hours

Just a reminder that all parents are supposed to be keeping track of their volunteer hours (25 per family) and logging them in the book in the office. If you cannot make it into the office please e-mail them to ATTN: Hope W. at: contact@highmeadowschool.org and I will write them in for you. There are still two big fundraising events this year, the Art Auction (contact Hope W. or Leah G.) and Ride the Ridge (contact Natasha W.). If you know that you still need to do volunteer hours you can either volunteer for a fundraiser or school beautification project (contact Amy W.). If none of these options appeal to you the last option is to pay for your volunteer hours (\$500.00).

Kindergarten

Pajama day was a huge success! The children made "grilled cheese" sandwiches for snack and then snuggled down for "Show and Tell". Each child took a turn presenting his/her stuffed animal and presiding over the group. We snuggled down a little farther and listened to a few very favorite books. Macky's birthday celebration capped the day off nicely and all went home ready for bed. Our trip to UPAC for The Very Hungry Caterpillar was wonderful! It was truly a children's experience. From the very opening scene the children were rapt, delighted and appreciative. The din was spontaneous and heartwarming. 'con't...

K. con't...

In Language Arts we jumped right into the Language Enrichment Program following President's week. This was a perfect time in the year to segue from Reading Readiness. Language Enrichment offers a bit more depth of concept while continuing the phonemic awareness portion and expanding the reading practice and oral language sections. In science we have focused on sight and smell as two of our five senses. We have measured our mouths, noses, forearms, wrists and feet with yarn and charted our findings. We have also focused on number recognition and one to one correspondence through a game called "Penny Toss".

You are all invited to "Parent Breakfast" on Friday March 29th. Please bring your favorite breakfast treat to share!

1st

We have been hard at work the last few weeks. Despite the snow days and delay we are charging forward. It is that time of year when we really can look at the kids and see the incredible growth. We have been working on the theme, Animals in Winter. Every year it feels like we just finish this unit in the nick of time as spring, thank goodness, is around the corner. The kids have been really enjoying working on animal classifications, food webs, and now researching their animal's behavior during winter. We are culminating this unit with an art project that they will be working on with Tracy. We will be taking the animal information that the kids have worked on at home and in the classroom to create individual food chains to then put together a giant food web.

2nd

The second grade has been full of excitement these few weeks. Our trip to Chocolate Cheers was a lot of fun, and informative too, as the children got to see and feel a real cacao pod, and see first hand what the workings of a small scale chocolate factory is like. What a treat that they got to try a little production themselves! In connection to our chocolate theme, we are reading an adaptation of the Greek folk tale The Midas Touch. Our version, as you may have guessed, is The Chocolate Touch, in which a young boy learns to temper his obsession with candy. 'con't...

2nd Grade con't... Our Home Reading Challenge came to an end this Wednesday. Congratulations to all of you who had success. We celebrated with a pajama day Read-In, and the children were great company, all snuggled with their cozies and sharing good books. Thanks to all who helped make this a productive and fun time in our class.

***Many welcomes to our new community member and Spike's new baby sister, Belle Kelly Rossini!!!! Congratulations Spike, Maya and Ryan.

3rd

Our Musical Celebration of the Civil Rights Era was an outstanding performance! The children worked so hard over the last few weeks researching and studying the courageous men, women and children who worked so hard in the struggle for equality in America. Fre Atlas has documented many of the actual songs of this period and we were delighted to include this music. Georgina brought life to our play by adding movements to enhance the singing. We learned about a turning point in American History, but more importantly we found joy and inspiration in the lives of these Americans. This was an important endeavor for the children to accomplish and perhaps marks a turning point in their lives as well. One can only hope. . .

Susan W. visited our classroom last week and gave a workshop on First Aid. The children received information about general health care and practices to maintain good health. We are planning to make a healing salve in the weeks ahead. Susan will also be teaching a class on muscles, complete with experiments to facilitate concepts later in the year.

Our new curriculum is Tall Tales. Not only will the children be required to write an original tale there is a huge emphasis on understanding the different regions of our country. We will be studying the United States through the stories of various legends. It is a delightful way to imprint the exceptional landforms that exist in our country. As we close this unit we will be studying New York State and the Hudson River. Our conclusion and highlight will be visiting the Albany State Museum. (Date to be announced.)

I am still hoping to find some parents who would like to make up some of their volunteering hours by covering books. No experience necessary. Please let me know if you are interested.

4th

I hope you all enjoyed receiving your children's essays last week. They were the result of tremendous effort, and provided opportunity for them to practice all of the writing and editing skills that they have been developing this year. We are wrapping up our second explorer project this week - children will be sharing their research with one another on Friday afternoon. The class generated a list of research questions together, and then each child chose three to answer, based on their reading. The quality of their questions was so sophisticated -- well beyond their years. They have learned so much. We have also begun a political letter writing campaign.

As a consequence of our whale/ocean study (which is captivating us) we have learned that the "right whale" is currently in the most danger of extinction of all baleen whales. (Please ask your children why they are called the right whales, and what "baleen" means - even if you already know.) Subsequently, we have decided to write to our senators in support of legislation that will support their continued existence. As I am writing this, we are in the midst of pajama day. The children are so relaxed and happy to be reading and resting with one another. It is truly one of those great High Meadow days, so cozy and satisfying....Jackie

5th/6th

In our history class, we are attending to the causes of the American Revolution. From the rapid increase in population to the unfair taxation practices of the British, we are examining the factors that lead to the creation of the Declaration of Independence. We will be creating posters which highlight the colonists' plight. In literature, we are about half-way through our book, My Brother Sam Is Dead.

Dress-Up Week has been going swimmingly so far. It is such a pleasure to see the fun the kids are having. From Hippie Day, to Cross Dressing, PJ, Superhero and finally High Society Day, the fun is appropriate and the student's hard work continues unabated. Ally

News from the 5th & 6th grade

BOSTON TRIP PERMISSION SLIPS AND \$55 CHECK ARE PAST DUE.

With snow days and delays it seemed that sometimes moving ahead was thwarted at every turn. It took a week just to be able to finally give a promised math quiz! Fridays have taken the biggest hit with 3 cancellations/delays in one month. As a result, our largest block of science, art, and dance seemed like vague memories. But we were thrilled this last Friday to reconnect with these classes and made the most of the day. The day even offered up a wonderful sledding break mid-afternoon. We made great headway on our scaled model of the Parthenon, with a hopeful completion date in two weeks. In the meantime, we have been studying a great deal of physics, learning about simple and complex machines (what they do and how they work) and about how a machine's efficiency is diminished due to friction. We've learned to spot these inefficiencies by looking for sound or heat, and how to calculate the percentage of efficiency by using algebra.

In math, we have been solving problems related to perimeter and area of rectangles and squares, and the volume of rectangular solids and cubes. Not only do we use whole numbers, but decimals and fractions as well. In the near future, the plan is to move on to circles, learning about circumference, area and volume of spheres. It is IMPERATIVE that your child practices his/her multiplication tables if they have not committed these to memory. Ten minutes each night would do wonders, so get those flash cards out. **Con't...**

5th/6th con't...

Find ways to include examples in your everyday conversations with your child...ex.: "Honey, you've been on the phone for 8 minutes tonight... if you did this every day of the week, how many minutes will you have spent on the phone?" "If we played a game for 9 minutes, three times a day, how many minutes of fun will we have had?" Not only do these questions ask your child to do math, but they help your child to plan and consider what they do with their time. I know that for me, just blocking out specific fragments of time, allows me to fit more in to my own day. In the next week or so, please look for purple notices regarding the Boston trip. Thanks and have fun in the snow while it lasts! Betty

7th/8th News

Tim Rehwaldt 7/8 Humanities

It's "Dress-Up Week," at High Meadow, and so far we've survived "Hippie Day." (This was a bigger stretch for some more than others.) This month, in lit/la, we're looking at musical lyrics as a form of contemporary poetry. In keeping with the dress code, today we looked at Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone." Students have been asked to write a short paper about a favorite song. Why did they choose a particular song? How does it make them feel? What do they think it means, and why? Our goal is to be able to write well about anything, and, as you may have heard, practice makes perfect.

In history, students were asked to give a short presentation on an assigned painter – half of which were women -- from the Renaissance period. Everyone did a fine job. Next we're going to be looking more closely at the role of religion during this period – everything from Michelangelo's work on the Sistine Chapel to Caravaggio's use of mere mortals in the place of angels. We'll also take a closer look at science and inventions of the time, especially those of Leonardo de Vinci.

To my mind, the most exciting thing that's happened in our history class is that my students have come up with their own method for sharing notes and studying together. These are skills that will come in handy from now until the end of their academic careers. Good job everybody!

7th grade math

We have been trying different methods of problem solving in class. In math there may be one correct answer, but it is important to realize that there are different methods of arriving at that answer. So far we have used guessing and checking (trial and error), using a simpler related problem, working backwards, discovering patterns, drawing pictures and diagrams, and making lists and charts. Some of the problems that we have worked with have been real brain-twisters that everyone has enjoyed when they found their method of solving.

8th grade math

Operations with algebraic expressions have been our focus. Adding the expressions went pretty smoothly, however subtracting them takes a bit more care, and that's where we are now. We will move on to multiplying with powers having the same base and multiplying by monomials next.

7/8 science

We have finished our chapter on viruses, bacteria, protists, and fungi. Besides learning about the characteristics of all these little guys we have been working on study methods and habits in order to score better on testing. So while learning about reproduction methods, environments, structure, and methods of obtaining food and energy, we have also been outlining sections, pinpointing main ideas, and identifying key concepts and terms.

7th/8th DRAMA PERFORMANCE DATES

We will be performing "Goldilocks on Trial" the evenings of Friday, May 9th & Saturday, May 10th which gives us 6 classes! Put it on your calendar and keep up the good work on getting down your lines!

