

CLASSROOM V NEWS TO KNOW: MARCH 2011

Cultural Studies: From the Beginning of the Universe to Ancient Civilizations

“Cosmic education” for the 6 – 12 year old student is at the heart of Montessori elementary education. In their book, *Children of the Universe*, Montessorians Michael and D’Neil Duffy sum up the purpose of cosmic education neatly: *“This six-year Montessori experience gives elementary students opportunities to appreciate their roots in the universe, to sense their place in its context, and to embrace the role this defines for their lives.”*

In Classroom V, this means that we integrate our science and cultural studies through prehistory and history. For example, when geological processes and biological phyla first appear on Earth, we incorporate them into our Earth history presentations. We present these lessons as a story-based curriculum entitled Great Lessons. We focus on the creation of the universe, the Earth, and the coming of life. As we progress into human history, we proceed to discover how humans met their basic needs – both physical and spiritual/artistic. Stories of cultural achievements are told; for example how the transfer from a hunter/gatherer society to an agricultural society creating the need for counting.

Since the start of the school year, students have been presented with the history of the universe; fundamental forces, states of matter and physical laws of the universe; earth history with its geological processes and emerging life forms; and finishing with our last era of Earth history, the Cenozoic.

Last week as part of our study of the Cenozoic, the students learned about the earliest hominids that appeared in the Great Rift Valley in Africa 2 million to 1 million years ago. Included were lessons on plate tectonics and the unique geology of the Rift Valley, as well as tool making. The class will spend the remainder of the school year studying ancient civilizations, with the Incas and Mayans among the focal points.

Bird Count

On Friday, February 18, the class participated in the 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count. This is a project of Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. We watched birds for 20 minutes and filled out a check list of what we saw. Ms Z. submitted our count on the internet.

Friendship Gifts

We have chosen names for our friendship gifts. We annually make a handmade gift for each other. This year our designs will be Aztec, Mayan or Incan. Everyone will make this gift at school. We will display them as they are finished.



Ms. Schirm helped students locate the Great Rift Valley on classroom maps.

It's Almost Gardening Time

With the weather gradually getting warmer (maybe the groundhog was right this year!), the students will begin to work in the garden. As we prepare the soil for spring, the garden is in need of new native plants and ferns. If your family grows plants native to Kentucky that you can share, please bring them to Ms. Schirm. Also, Michler's Florist on Maxwell St. has a terrific selection of native plants. A new garden path is also on the classroom's wish list. If any parents are able to volunteer to help pave a path using limestone, or donate limestone for this purpose, your help is appreciated.

Have You Seen the Snack Bag?

The snack bag has been missing for quite a while now, and it's important that it returns to the classroom. The "sending home of the snack bag" serves as the reminder to students that tomorrow will be their snack bag.

Dates to Remember

- **Wednesday, March 16:** Lower Elementary classrooms will see The Lexington Philharmonic perform *Appalachian Style* at the Singletary Center.
- **Wednesday, May 4 and Thursday, May 5:** Lower Elementary overnight at 4-H Camp.

