

Classroom NEWSLETTER

Seneca Elementary School | Where Your Future Begins!

Mrs. Durych's | Grades K-2

Week of October 14, 2024

Classroom Highlights

This past week was full of exciting learning experiences for our class! We kicked off the week with a delightful tea party where students learned about the origins of tea,



tracing it back to ancient China. They heard the story of how tea was discovered when leaves from a tree accidentally fell into a pot of boiling water over a fire. We discussed how tea became a beloved tradition in countries all over the world, including England,

where it is a central part of social gatherings like the Queen's famous tea times. Our own tea party included a real teapot, cream, sugar, and a linen tablecloth, making it a special event that the students thoroughly enjoyed.

Later in the week, we ventured out on a walkabout in the neighborhood around the school. The students excitedly showed me where they and their grandparents live, and along the way, they began collecting treasures from nature:



leaves, feathers, pinecones, rocks, and even a dandelion ready to make a wish. Inspired by our earlier lesson, they asked if they could make tea with their finds! So, we returned to the classroom and added their collections to a clear mug of hot water. As the mixture

steeped, the water turned a lovely amber color and took on a wonderful scent reminiscent of Christmas trees from the pinecones. While we didn't taste this nature-inspired "tea," the students were thrilled with the experiment and the chance to apply what they had learned about tea.

Additionally, the class worked together on a large 4-foot by 18-inch puzzle depicting a body of water with fish. Without any help from me, they completed the puzzle entirely on their own, showcasing excellent teamwork. This activity was a perfect reminder that collaboration and perseverance make great things happen!



Science & Social Studies

This week in Social Studies, we connected our lesson to a special classroom celebration—Wesley's birthday! To mark the occasion, we looked up historical figures who shared the birthday, us to learn about the famous explorer, Leif Erikson.



During our tea party, we dove into fascinating details about his adventures. The students had a great time with a Leif Erikson fun facts packet that included lots of historical information, along with coloring pages to bring history to life.

In Science, we explored two engaging topics! First, we talked about how the sun and moon create the different seasons. The students watched an educational video and then used Play-Doh to model their own versions of the sun and moon. It was a hands-on activity that sparked a lot of creativity.

Next, we had a blast with our magnet lesson. The students were thrilled to discover which objects in the classroom were magnetic and which weren't. They even transformed a rolling metal projector cart into an "ice cream cart" using colorful magnets, and joyfully pushed it around, selling "ice cream" to their classmates.



Finally, we took the learning outdoors with a fun evaporation experiment! We poured water on the hot asphalt and circled the spot with chalk. After setting a timer, we watched as the water evaporated and the chalk circle grew smaller and smaller. The students were amazed to see how quickly the water disappeared and loved being outside in the sunshine. In between observations, they even drew hopscotch blocks and had fun jumping around.



Upcoming Dates & Events

Mark your calendars for these important dates:

- **Thursday October 31st / 1 – 2:30PM:** Halloween Party – Get Ready for some Spooky Fun!
- **Tuesday November 26th / 1 – 2:30PM:** We are hosting a Thanksgiving Feast – it is sure to be a memorable & tasty afternoon!
- **Thursday December 18th / 6PM:** Our annual Christmas Program – We can hardly wait to share the joy of the season with all of you!

We hope to see you at these wonderful events!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

This week, we are shining the spotlight on **Severin** for his incredible energy and creativity. Severin brings so much life to our classroom, and his love for learning is contagious. Whether he's building with blocks, exploring through hands-on activities, or creating vibrant artwork, Severin shows us all that learning can happen through movement, movement, movement!



He has an amazing ability to connect with the world around him, and it's a joy to see the world through his eyes. Whether it's in art, music, or problem solving, Severin's enthusiasm and imagination are truly inspiring. Keep up the fantastic work, Severin! We love having your bright spirit in our class.

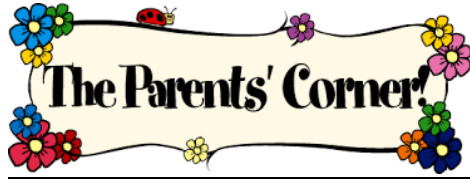


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Last week, we had an incredible turnout for parent-teacher conferences—100%! I so appreciated the opportunity to meet with each of you, sharing highlights from the classroom, and discussing how your child is progressing. I truly enjoyed the chance to connect and get to know you all better. Thank you for making the time to be there!

We also handed out a survey for parents to fill out, either at the conference or to take home. If you haven't filled it out yet, *please* do so—we are aiming for 100% participation on that as well! Your feedback is so important to us.

Along with conferences, we hosted an open house where we served light snacks and drinks. It was a great event with fantastic attendance! The students, parents, grandparents, and guests had a blast working with Mrs. Sullivan on a science lesson, building with modeling clay and toothpicks, and learning about the molecular structure of H₂O.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to announce that we'll be holding a parent meeting just for our classroom in the near future. I look forward to seeing you all again soon!

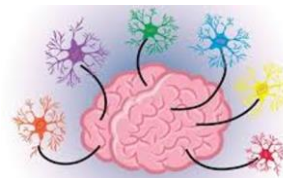


This week, we took advantage of the beautiful weather by bringing our easels and canvases outside for some outdoor painting! Each student had the chance to create on both a large and small canvas while soaking up the sunshine and fresh air. The kids had a blast painting outdoors, and we can't wait to do it again soon.

In addition to painting, creativity flowed through our math lessons as well! We explored pattern-making with wooden blocks and shapes. Even though it was part of math, the students loved expressing their creativity by designing and sharing their unique patterns with one another.



We also spent a good amount of free time building with wooden blocks, creating everything from buildings and roads to garages and parks. The endless possibilities kept their imaginations running wild, and their structures were as tall and creative as their ideas!



Fun Facts & Brain Boosters

Did you know? In many small rural schools like ours, combination (combo) classes—where students from different grade levels learn together—are sometimes seen as a result of lower student numbers. However, combo classes are not just a necessity; they are an incredible educational opportunity! Here's why:

- **Individualized Attention:** With smaller class sizes, teachers have more time to focus on each student's unique strengths and areas for growth. Students receive more one-on-one support, ensuring that everyone progresses at their own pace.

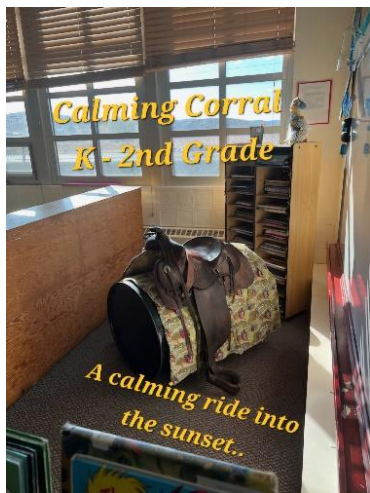
- **Peer Learning:** In a combo class, students benefit from learning alongside both older and younger peers. Younger students look up to the older ones, while the older students reinforce their knowledge by explaining concepts to the younger ones. This peer teaching strengthens understanding and fosters leadership and responsibility.
- **Flexible Curriculum:** Teachers can creatively combine subjects and lessons, providing enriched learning experiences. With multi-age groups, the curriculum is often broader and more flexible, encouraging students to think critically and solve problems in ways they might not in a single-grade class.
- **Strong Sense of Community:** In a small rural school like ours, combo classes cultivate a tight-knit community. Students develop close relationships, and there's a strong sense of camaraderie and mutual support, making for a welcoming, encouraging atmosphere.

Combo classes are not a compromise—they are a valuable and enriching educational format that provides our students with a unique learning experience. We're fortunate to offer such a dynamic and supportive learning environment right here in this community!



...IN THE CLASSROOM?

We are excited to introduce a new addition to our classroom—the *Calming Corral*! This special corner is



designed to help students self-regulate and take a break when they feel overwhelmed or need a moment of calm. It features a real saddle mounted on a barrel, a horse brush, and a horse tail for tactile sensory experiences. There are also essential oils, a weighted blanket, and a mood chart to help students identify their emotions. We've even

added some calming books for the students to look at while they relax. The calming corral is not a place for punishment but a supportive space to encourage self-care and emotional well-being.



Reminders & Friendly Notes

Please remember to send hats and gloves and warm jackets. Even though it is warm in the afternoons the mornings are quite chilly.

We've now been in school for seven weeks, and as a new teacher to Seneca, I've absolutely fallen in love with this wonderful rural school and the amazing students in my classroom. I'm so happy to come to work every day and learn alongside them. A big thank you to the parents for all of your support and for welcoming me so warmly into your community!

Warm regards,

Mrs. Durych

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I wish everyone a safe
& fun Halloween!

