Everett Enrichment -- October 2009

Kindergarten Language Arts Groups: Children in various groups have been using their keen observation skills to analyze words and to find clues in the text and illustrations of Halloween stories. We have focused on story elements -- characters, setting, problem, solution -- and sequencing the plot. The children have also worked on inferring characters' emotions from the text and illustrations. One group used deductive reasoning and learned to consider all clues before identifying Halloween characters.

Kindergarten Math Groups: Kindergartners used small Halloween character pieces to transfer line patterns into square patterns. They also translated their patterns into letters to symbolize their pattern (AABC or ABBC). Then the students used the pieces on a mat to ask math questions and observe the relationship between addition and subtraction. Here is an example: Seven ghosts in the house; 5 goblins on the fence. How many in all? Twelve creatures in all; the 5 goblins run away. How many are left? We wrote the two related number sentences: 7 + 5 = 12 and 12 - 5 = 7.

First Grade Language Arts Groups: First grade students are showing their strong comprehension abilities as they read stories that require inferential thinking. They are using text and picture clues to help them infer meaning that is not literal. They enjoyed learning vocabulary and studying cause and effect as they read *Lights Off, Lights On*. The students kept track of the plot using a graphic organizer.

First Grade Math Groups: First graders showed understanding of the base-ten system by thinking of many ways to make ten and to make 100. They used Halloween creature pieces to tell complex stories that resulted in long equations, such as 10 + 5 = 15 - 2 = 13 + 6 = 19. They asked good math questions at the end of their stories. The children used creature pieces to make arrays to explore multiplication, and they used the "draw a picture or diagram" strategy to illustrate problems involving multiplication.

First Grade Whole Class Lessons: In the classrooms, the teachers and I worked together on rain forest logic puzzles. We discussed how we use logical reasoning to match known clues to a rain forest animal, then we used the process of elimination to make logical matches for new clues. The students learned how to use equal and not-equal signs on a logic grid to organize and illustrate this process.

Second Grade Language Arts Groups: New groups of second graders met to read and analyze *What's Under my Bed* and other James Stevenson books. They analyzed story elements and compared the story with a brief film adaptation. Next, they are reading other James Stevenson books to compare the author's elements and themes, which include grandparents' relationships with grandchildren and the power of imagination. The books also have picture clues that motivate inferential thinking.

Second Grade Whole Class Lessons: Second grade students have begun to examine thinking skills through the *Thinking Hats* principles of Edward De Bono. Mr. De Bono has worked with businesses and schools to analyze productive thinking and effective decision-making. We began with "white hat thinking," which focuses on finding reliable information and distinguishing fact from opinion. Through activities, students discovered the importance of asking good questions in logical order. They realized that better questions lead to better information. We will apply fact-finding skills to all curricular areas and continue with more thinking skills "hats" over time.

Third Grade Language Arts Groups: Third graders are reading *Picnic at Mudsock Meadow* by Patricia Polacco to enjoy rich literature and to show their strong thinking skills. They have analyzed story elements, plot, and themes of the story, comparing rural community life in the 1920s to their lives today. They have had interesting historical discussions. The students have made inferences about characters' motivations and evaluated their actions. Understanding vocabulary and applying it in new situations is another goal in their reading.

Third Grade Math Groups: New groups have worked on the pre-algebra concepts of balance and function. They have applied their knowledge of all four math operations to complete complex equations. This process has helped then apply math facts to novel situations and strengthen their logical reasoning ability. The students are also analyzing word problems for clues, questions, and to find reasonable solutions.

Third Grade Whole Class Lessons: I have worked with each third grade class on systems for approaching complex word problems successfully. The students brainstormed on the beginning steps necessary for solving all kinds of problems. We discussed strategies and steps for success. Together, we used complicated word problems to identify the main problem and clues, show work that effectively proves the solution, write complete explanations, and check all facets to make sure we are correct.