



The ASU Leader

Elementary Edition

Volume 1, Issue 2

October 2013

Upcoming Events:

- Nov. 1: Parent Teacher Conferences
- Nov. 4: Chinggis Khan's Birthday (No school)
- Nov. 27: Parent Teacher Association meeting
- Nov. 29: Spirit Day
- Dec. 13: Winter Concert

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School Spirit – and ghosts – haunt halls of ASU during October

Students dressed in a variety of ghoulish getups gathered in the multipurpose room on Halloween for the monthly Spirit Day assembly. After Spirit House captains announced point totals for each house, students who had demonstrated special achievement during the month



received recognition as awards were presented.

The assembly proceeded with the traditional birthday song for all October celebrants and concluded with a special performance by the kindergarten students, who had a chance to showcase the Tootie-Ta song and dance they had been learning.

Principal's Message

As temperatures get colder, brrrrring warm clothes is a must

Winter is approaching and the temperatures are dropping. While the children are excited about the cool, crisp air and the occasional snowfall, it is important for them to dress properly for outdoor activity. As long as it isn't raining, we will continue to have outdoor

recess until the temperature drops below -20 Celsius. However, students will not be allowed outdoors during these cold days unless they are properly dressed. They should have a warm jacket, as well as a hat and gloves. They should also have outdoor shoes (especially

if there is snow on the ground) in addition to their black uniform shoes that are for indoor use. Winter is traditionally a fun time for children, and we want them to have plenty of opportunities to play outside, but let's also keep it a safe and healthy environment.

Fifth Graders face fear and find adventure in reading and writing

Grade 5A has been busy! We just finished reading the novel *Matilda* by the wonderful Roald Dahl. We are now enjoying the fantastic world of Narnia of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. When we read the novels we studied new vocabulary, making predictions and learning story sequence. Currently we are learning about story timelines. It is so exciting to compare our own lives here in Mongolia with all the wonderful characters from our novel studies.

Another exciting new thing happening in 5A is letter writing with our 5th grade pen pals in America. We have written letters introducing ourselves and have shared some information about Mongolia with them. We included pictures and drawings of our life here at ASU. We are looking forward to receiving letters that will introduce our Michigan pen pals to us!

Science and Social Studies have been challenging for us. We have just finished our Ancient Egyptian group projects in Social studies. We will continue to practice our research skills for our next ancient culture project on Rome very soon. In Science we have been looking at energy sources. The renewable energy sources we have studied are: Solar, Hydropower, Biomass, Wind, and Geothermal. Over the next couple of months we will be learning about the four non-renewable energy sources.

Grade 5B has been moving along with a variety of fiction books in our reading. We have enjoyed the tale of Nora in *The Report Card*, by Andrew Clements, and discussed and written about the importance of grades, not being afraid of testing, and making a good effort. For listening, we have shared the adventures of Mafatu in *Call it Courage*, by Armstrong Sperry. We learned what it takes to overcome fear and make the most of our skills. In November we will be looking at the creativity of language with *Frindle*, again by Andrew Clements, and contemplating immortality with *Tuck Everlasting*, by Natalie Babbitt.

For our writing skills we have practiced our friendly letter form weekly in our Message Journals. This activity lets our 5B students write home daily to their parents about their school activities. We have written other friendly letters home, such as ideas for future vacations. We have also used our writing process skills with an *Extra, Extra Read All About Me!* newspaper. This large format project allowed each student to shine in talking about important people, experiences and things in their lives.

We are covering the basics in mathematics with Quick Quizzes, our 4 standard operations, and reviewing the value of numbers. Decimals have been rounded, operated on, and primes and composites put into perspective. Our learners have squared and un-squared numbers, and converted fractions, (see **5th grade**, p. 3)



Ms. Geshel shares an illustrated version of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with her students (above) before students take turns leading shared reading of the popular Lewis story (below).



(5th grade, cont. from p. 2)

decimals and percents.

In Social Studies we completed our Internet and reference book research about the ancient Indus Valley civilizations. Our presentations and posters were shared with the 5A class, who covered ancient Egypt. In Science we constructed renewable energy booklets and types of energy mini-booklets. In November we will continue our studies into nonrenewable energy and energy sources around the world.

ASU elementary takes targeted approach with standards, assessments

You might have noticed something different about your child's report card this term. Starting last school year, ASU began moving toward "standards-based report cards," first at the lower elementary levels, and now for grades 3-5. Rather than seeing the traditional letter grades, you will have noticed codes such as EE (for "Exceeds Expectations") or NY (for "Not Yet"). Rather than addressing every standard with a single grade as in the past, the report card notes where the student is in regard to each standard they are expected to meet based on their grade level. This will give the school – and parents – a better understanding of individual areas of strengths and challenges and inform the teacher where to focus attention for that student.

The standards-based report cards are just one area in which we are aiming to provide more accurate data related to student achievement. Another way we are targeting student needs is through language-related assessments.

Probably the most familiar of the three assessments conducted this fall is the Maculaitis Assessment of Competencies, better known to teachers and students as "the MAC Test." This test, conducted at the beginning and

end of the school year, measures student competency levels in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing, using five levels: Advanced, High Intermediate, Low Intermediate, Beginner, and Basic Beginner. It provides important details in a number of ways: whether the student is prepared to enter a given grade; how much progress they have made during the school year; how their English proficiency compares with other Limited English Proficiency students, if the student is ready to leave the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and how well the ESL program – and the Language Arts program in general – is working. In other words, it not only details how the student is doing, but also how the school is doing.

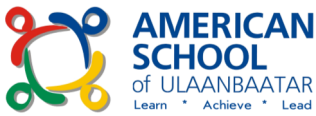
We also added two more assessments this year to fine tune our reading and writing instruction. During the first week of October, we conducted reading assessments using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. This system uses carefully designed books that measure the level at which a student is able to



ESL Coordinator Ms. Joanne conducts the speaking portion of the MAC Test with a student.

read fiction and nonfiction texts. During the assessments, teachers determine how well students sound out words, how fluently they read, and how well they understand what they read. We will conduct these assessments quarterly.

In November, we will be conducting the first of our quarterly writing assessments using the 6+1 Traits of Writing. The students will receive a writing prompt in order to complete a short essay, which will then be assessed by teachers using a writing rubric. The traits of good writing include *Ideas, Organization, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Conventions and Presentation*. This gives teachers a standardized, targeted approach to teaching writing.



Home of Future Leaders

Treats abound for students during Halloween celebration

This month's Spirit Day celebration was all about Halloween, that day of the year when children – and adults – dress up in colorful costumes and make their way through the 'neighborhood.' This year's event brought out the witches and wizards, princesses and pirates, plenty of superheroes, and an assortment of costumed creatures. Children went trick-or-treating to each classroom, and received a special treat at one of them – a performance featuring Frankenstein.



Teachers give a haunting performance in Frankenstein's lab.

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Kids of all ages get into the spirit of the event with colorful costumes.



Seeing double, with Superman and Snow White

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Expected School-wide Student Outcomes

ASU students will be...

Academic Achievers

Critical Thinkers

Involved Citizens

Effective Communicators

Self-Directed Lifelong Learners