VESTAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

MAY 2022

THE CHANGING LOOK OF VMS

Congratulations to our cast of Mary Poppins! It was a wonderful show!

UPCOMING EVENTS

5/9-12 5th grade tours of the middle school

5/19 PTO Meeting

5/24 NYS Science Performance test

5/26 Chorus Concert

Kite Flying

Our 7th grade Project Lead the Way classes built their own kites. We are thankful for beautiful weather so they could take flight!

VMS OBSERVATIONS…..

- The NYS Math assessment was April 26th and 27th.
- Building Planning Team met in April to discuss May. May will focus on Mental Health.
- 6th grade FACS classes made use of our new kitchen and cooked pancakes this month. 7th grade FACS classes made soft pretzels!
- Congratulations to the Green and Gold casts on their wonderful performance of Mary Poppins! It was a wonderful show!
- Construction continues at VMS. Over the break the main office area had new desks and a counter installed.
- We are preparing for the 8th grade trip which will be June 21st at Dorney Park!
- PTO sent home boxes of food for 40 students over Spring Break as part of our vacation power packs.

SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Miller's 6A classes

Our year in Earth Science has taken us into space and throughout the physical setting of our planet, both inside and out. We are in our final unit, Weather & Water, the last of Earth's "spheres" to explore (Lithosphere, Atmosphere, Hydrosphere, Biosphere). Throughout this unit, students will be uncovering the science of weather. Students are excited as much of our lab work will be conducted outside, where the weather actually is! The higher level thinking skills we've worked on developing throughout the year will be put to the test as students attempt to think critically about why we get the particular weather conditions we experience in our area. In recognition of Earth Day, students investigated the Air Quality Index of Vestal and compared that to the rest of the country (they even wondered how the war in Ukraine is affecting the air quality there and investigated their AQI!). They conducted research on causes of air pollution, the role they play, and the connections to climate change. Students devised plans for how they can become an eco-warrior!

Mr. Murphy's 7C classes

Cellular transport, photosynthesis, and cellular respiration are three main topics for seventh grade Life Science. Students grew grass from seeds in plastic cups to see a real-life example of these concepts. Students were responsible for planting, watering, and placing their seeds in sunlight each day until the seeds germinated.

Once growing, students could see how different amounts of water and sunlight affected plant growth. In addition to learning these important science concepts, students practiced plant maintenance: they were required to maintain the height of their grass by trimming it every few days and removing brown and dead pieces. At the conclusion of this several weeks-long process, students with the best grown grass earned prizes.

Mr. Faughnan's 7B classes

In 7th grade, we study life science. So far this year, the students of team 7B have explored life and living things, starting from determining what makes something alive, exploring the inside of cells, and discovering the processes that keep organisms alive. Recently, we have discussed how an organism's DNA determines the traits that it has and the proteins that it can make. Last week, we learned about genetic engineering. The students engaged in a researched, structured debate about the pros and cons of genetic engineering, both for agriculture and genetically altering humans. They really seemed to enjoy the process and used their skills in scientific argumentation to make their case. Now, we are continuing the genetics unit - we are currently studying inheritance. We will be determining the likelihood of different traits being inherited and expressed, as well as discussing how environmental factors affect those inherited traits.

Mrs. Emmons' 7A classes

In our study of life science this year, we started big with Ecology, and have gradually zoomed in to study more about organisms, systems, cells, cell parts, and now we are finally on the topic of DNA. In our unit on Ecology, we went outside to collect leaves to learn about different pigments that help with photosynthesis. We also discussed how all of the organisms in the ecosystem depend on each other to keep ecosystems stable. During our unit on cells, we looked at all different kinds of cells through the microscopes, and learned about similarities and differences between types of cells. We also explored more about the cell membrane by doing the "Naked Egg Lab," in which students observe how different substances affect when and how water moves through a membrane. We are currently learning about how the molecule of DNA is like a blueprint for life! Students recently conducted a lab activity in which they extracted DNA from strawberries. From here, we will learn about how amazing it is that a tiny molecule like DNA can control so much of life. Students always seem to enjoy and have a lot of questions about DNA and Genetics, which is why I end the year with those units. I am excited to discuss how DNA works and how genes are passed down through generations as we finish up the year.

Mrs. Skinner 8A

Earth Science students are making PSA's to educate and empower the public about global warming, to change and encourage individuals to make a change because every change helps. Physical Science students are working with the new NSYLSS standards to make their thinking visible. They are creating models to illustrate phenomena and demonstrate understanding. The improvements are amazing.

Submitted by Jacqui Miller, *Vestal Middle School Science Department Chairperson*