

9-12 Class News

February

The New Year has brought a flurry of new projects and work to the 9-12 classroom. Here is an update of some of the new avenues we are exploring.

Literature Groups- The 4th Years are blazing through *Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo and the 5th Years are in the midst of *Touching Spirit Bear* by Ben Mikaelson. Literature Groups give the opportunity for students to interact with great literature on a deep level through discussions, projects and written responses. *Tiger Rising* explores themes such as friendship and the process of becoming comfortable with and expressing your emotions. *Touching Spirit Bear*, set off the coast of British Columbia is the powerful story of a boy struggling to take responsibility for himself and his choices. Both groups have had many lively discussions related to the books and the insights and connections students make never ceases to amaze me.

Our class book is *Skellig* by David Almond, a British writer, who consistently seems to write engaging and provocative children's books that explore the balance between hope and despair. There are many aspects of the 9-12 classroom I am happy about but, each child's strong love of literature and excitement to engage with themselves and one another through a good book is a real high point for me.

National Geographic GeoBee

We just wrapped up the school's first involvement with National Geographic's GeoBee. This Geography Bee proved a great way for students to explore Geography. The GeoBee is set up as a competition and provided a context for us to dialogue about how to compete, the role of luck in competitions and how to push yourself in positive ways.

The GeoBee also exposed students to test taking and we spent a lot of time practicing different strategies. I was impressed with the quality of practice and "real" questions that were presented to students. Questions integrated political geography, current events, ecology, world religions and more. More than a Geography Bee, the experience was a springboard into great class discussions and individual research projects.

If you want to challenge yourself visit <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/> There are daily quizzes that are great fun.

History

We have begun an investigation of North American History by looking at the first human migrations onto the continent. Next steps will be to look at pre-European civilizations and then European exploration. We will then explore the collision between European culture and Native cultures.

6th Year Projects

The 6th Year students have moved into a long term research project that will serve as a vehicle for them to explore technical writing and research. Our current area of focus has been library research and Internet Literacy.

Thank You

Nicole and I are so grateful for the wonderful holiday gifts that we received. From tasty treats to thoughtful cards we felt appreciated and so thankful to teach in this community.