Elementary Newsletter
February 2021

Mysterious Creatures - K-2nd Grade
Barbara Castrejon

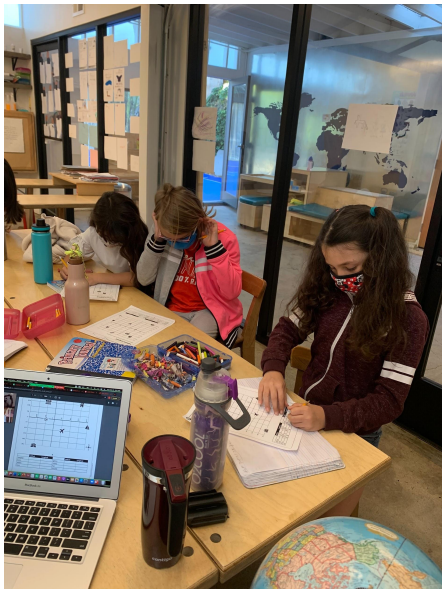
On February 16th I started teaching at CityKids L.A. I am so excited to be here! I will be teaching the Powerful Champions and the Brave Shooting Stars in the Mysterious Creatures class started by Teacher Mariana. I will also be teaching the History of California with the Loyal Leaders.

In the week I have been working with Powerful Champions and the Brave Shooting Stars, we have continued the studies Teacher Mariana began by exploring further aspects of myths, legends, fairy tales, and folk tales. Powerful Champions looked at the Phoenix myth and the role monsters play in fanciful stories across many cultures. We built on the Champions' knowledge gained from their exploration of dragons earlier in the semester by researching common facts and surveying the abundant and varied images of mythical creatures created by others before rendering our own unique dragon illustrations, each named by the student artist. Brave Shooting Stars looked at synonyms and antonyms and how word choice can change and improve written and verbal communication. Both classes have done impressive work participating in short freewriting exercises at the beginning of each period. In just a few days, the students have displayed great creativity, a wealth of effort, critical thinking skills, and improvement in spelling and penmanship. I feel very fortunate to have two groups of such industrious, curious, and resourceful thinkers! I appreciate how warmly the students have welcomed me into their world of education and discovery.

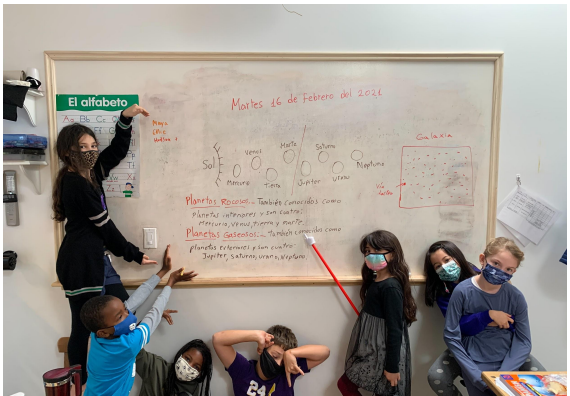
History of California - 3rd/4th Grade
Barbara Castrejon

Loyal Leaders are hitting the books as well as the trails in a comprehensive exploration of California history. We are embarking on a study of the California missions, looking at such issues as who established the missions, when, the economic and political reasons involved, and, of critical importance, why they were founded. We will discuss the impact of European settlement and development in California and the ramifications of this historical event on native people and their culture, as well as how the phenomenon shaped the political realm of California through the present day. Loyal Leaders recounted their studies with Teacher Mariana through interesting and reflective drawings and written summaries, as well as in lively class discussions, about topics like the French Revolution and the Atlantic slave trade. The Loyal Leaders kept pace with their younger counterparts in their excellent and increasingly well-developed quickwrites done at the start of each class. The students have shown great ability and innovation in their journal writing on themes as diverse as showing compassion for others, which resonates with our newly begun investigation of the European settlers' treatment of native Americans in California's early settlement, to clever and entertaining accounts of daily activities and preferences. Once again, I am pleased to say that CityKids' eminent school leaders went out of their way to give me a warm welcome to the school. I am full of ideas and inspiration for our studies as we head into the next part of the school year. I know that the Loyal Leaders will bring their own unique and exhilarating suggestions and thoughts about our upcoming activities and explorations in the classroom. We are going to have a wonderful and enriching journey!

Keys to the Universe - 3rd/4th Grade
Jorge Chavez



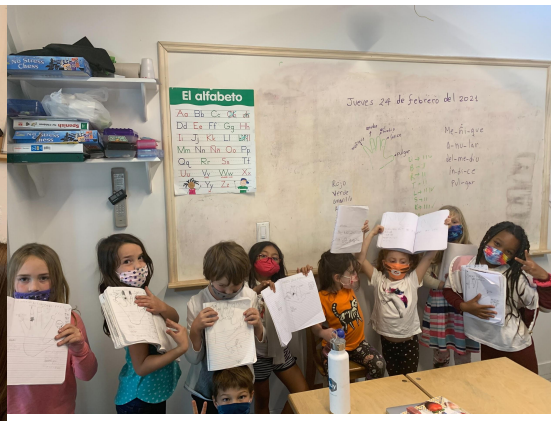
This month, the Loyal Leaders have been learning about the planets within our solar system and how we can classify them. We learned that we have three types of planets: rocky, terrestrial worlds (Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars); gas giants (Jupiter and Saturn); and ice giants (Uranus and Neptune). Based on our current technology, humans so far, have only been able to land on rocky or terrestrial planets. It was exciting to hear about the Perseverance landing on Mars and seeing a real-world application of what we are learning.



Although we are learning about the solar system as a whole, we wanted to take some time to focus on our planet, Earth. We introduced the concept of Longitude and Latitude as a means of determining a specific location and how to use it on a map. It is a universal language that people from around the world use to share locations and used by NASA to direct scientists to specific places on the globe.

Board Games Strategy - K-4th Grade
Teacher Jorge

For the month of February, we used games such as Twister to find a need to communicate and learn new vocabulary in Spanish. Many students mastered using left vs. right and naming the parts of their body such as arm, foot, leg, hand. Then, we downscaled the game and introduced finger twister! It is played the same way as regular twister, but this time, with just our fingers! We had a ton of fun and used this opportunity to learn the names of our fingers in Spanish as well as review directional and color words. All the classes have found success in learning math vocabulary in Spanish through games practicing odd, even, and prime numbers; multiples of 2's, 5's, and 10's; adding and subtracting mentally; and for our older students, multiplication and division facts.



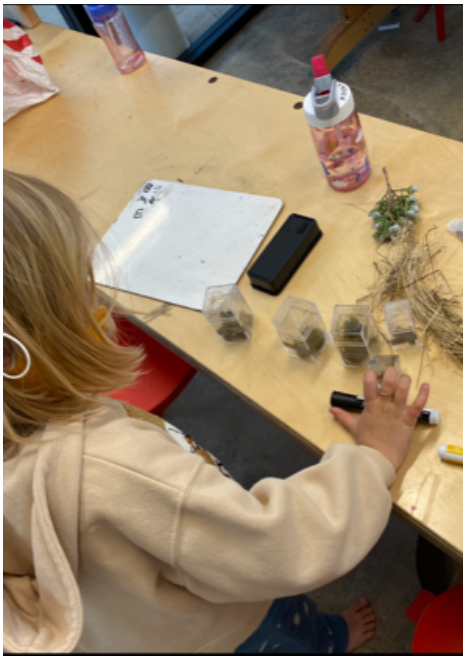
History of California - 3rd/4th Grade
Tasha Taylor

Our Loyal Leaders have been busy following the expedition of Lewis and Clark during the early 1800s. They studied the native americans they encountered as well as the new terrain they had to forge through heading west. This expedition was imperative to the westward expansion as they were able to note different plants, water sources, animals, and types of land for agriculture and travel. The Loyals are finishing their seven best medicinal plant pamphlets used by native americans, and from there have chosen the tribes that Lewis and Clark met throughout their expedition to create a second pamphlet on the specific plants utilized by these native tribes. We are looking at the similarities and differences of these plants and basing it around factors such as where they are living and the type of land used in their agriculture. We have also touched on some of the technology they might have used on their journey such as for navigation or to find drinking water. Some of the tools they used were then utilized on our nature hike at Vasquez Rocks, such as a compass attached to our goats' backpacks. We studied the plant types found in Southern California on the hike and talked about the native american Tataviam tribe, who were native to Vasquez Rocks. Observing the goats, we were able to see which plants might have been used by natives in the area such as the Yucca, a spiky plant that once dries out can be pulled apart to create rope like material.

For math we have been practicing our short multiplication and division as well as our long, multi-step word problems, financial literacy, doing order of operations using PEMDAS, and learning our equivalent fractions to get ready for adding and multiplying them by a whole number. One highlight this month has been our Tonga day where we celebrated the islands that make up Tonga. We studied 7 types of sea turtles and talked about the most abundant type found around the islands. They then were able to choose their favorite to sculpt out of clay.

The Holistic Farmer - K-2nd Grade
Tasha Taylor

Our farmers have been busy starting on their plantars to utilize for our new school garden. Each class was able to pick out two different kinds of seeds to plant which included: squash, watermelon, beans, carrots, and sweet peppers. We started by measuring the water level needed for each small soil pod to absorb and grow before planting the seeds. We then needed to check to see how deep, in inches, each type of seed needed to be placed in the soil. From there we put our seeds out in the sunlight and with a little time we are hoping to see growth. The students have also been learning the use of animals in the agriculture world and why they might be needed to help grow crops. We talked about soil erosion and how certain hoofed ruminant animals are rotated on land patches to graze and move the soil around to keep it healthy. Even the animals' feces are essential as it gives nutrients back into the soil to use as fertilizer when growing crops. We were able to see this first hand when we went to Vasquez Rocks and study our goat friends, Walt and Roy. Along the way, we did a project where we observed the types of plants they were eating and took some of each to study back at school. The students also gathered the goats droppings (with gloves!) in three separate containers: B-Beginning hike, M-Middle of hike, E-End of hike. When we got back to school we observed the droppings and compared it with the plant samples to see how certain plants may change the consistency of their feces. We could also tell which plants might be better for water absorption.



We recently have been studying pigs, including their basic anatomy, role they help play

with plants, and their intelligence level. The students were then able to take what they are learning in math such as subtraction with regrouping, addition, word problems, basic multiplication with and without arrays, financial literacy, and some graphing, to apply towards some “pig math problems.” The class also recently went on a field trip to White Point Nature Preserve where we learned that the recent increase of white garden snails was due to the increased rainfall during winter. We got to see first hand what role garden snails play in the environment, and even though the snails don’t know it, how their recent increase has had a negative effect on the native plants on the preserve.

Exploring Mother Nature - K
Clara Cruz

As the months seems to pass very quickly here is a summary of what we did during the month of February. This month our focus was ultimately to begin creating art using nature therefore our walks throughout the community continued. We were in search of items that were flat and decorative. The children researched about how to make “papel reciclado con acentos naturales” which means “recycled paper with nature accents.“ During our walks we discovered that the best accents that we could

use for our recycled paper would be to use items that were flat and colorful. We wrote down each step of how recycled paper was made and we attempted to create our first batch. We began by making our very own deckle which was a bit challenging for us but we were able to locate items around the school that would serve as a strainer. The children tried to make the deckle but it didn't turn out so well but we tried our best with what we had. Once the children tried making our deckle we moved on to the actual paper portion which we had fun tearing paper into smaller pieces. Once that step was completed we had to leave the paper soaking overnight. The next morning we began to blend our paper to create our paper paste. We found it challenging to blend the paper considering that the blender was a bit too small for the amount of paper we wanted to blend. Once we blended up the paper we were able to start molding it onto a strainer and taking all the water out using sponges and towels. Now that we have attempted our first batch of recycled paper we can begin the process of making more and begin to more color, texture, and scent.

Throughout the month of February the children got to celebrate and learn about different types of special days that we celebrate around the world. As a class we got to enjoy Valentine's Day together in which we were all thankful for being able to celebrate it amongst our friends with what is happening around the world. The children were very excited to make their shoebox mailbox to put in all the fun stuff they would give each other. On Valentine's Day, the children were able to share nice comments or compliments about each other as they handed each of their trinkets out. To see the smile and gratitude coming from each child was an amazing feeling. Late in the month, we also had the opportunity to celebrate Chinese New Year and the children became familiar with the meaning and traditions within Chinese culture and they were able to create their very own Dragon and also learned that it is the Year of the Ox. We focused on learning

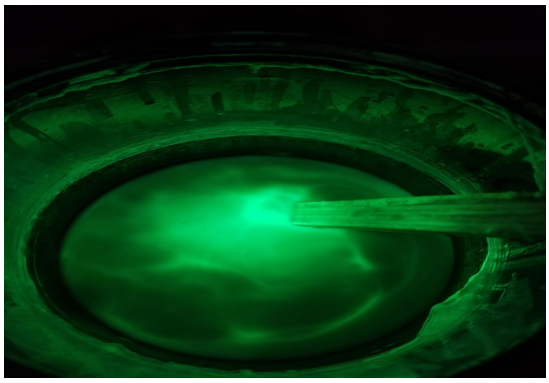
about African American History Month as well, and the children got to learn about different “Lideres Afroamericanos” (African American Leaders). The children got to read a short informational booklet about each person and also had the opportunity to research facts about each other the leaders they chose to learn about.

We continue to focus on our days of the week and have moved on to learning our months of the week and have also been working on asking “como se dice” when they don’t know how to say something in spanish. The children have new ideas on nature based projects that they would like to work on. Stay tuned to find out what the Lightning Owls will do next!

Engineering and Design - K-4th Grade
Phil Cannella

Recently we have been discussing light waves, light absorbing minerals and solar energy focusing on how light travels and how it’s stored and used for energy. This is in preparation for a build using small 5v solar panels to run a pair of 3 watt L.E.D.s. All classes will participate in this build and are very much looking forward to it! As we prepare, we have conducted a series of experiments using strontium and UV lights. Everyone made a glow in the dark magnet of their own design using our custom

blended acrylic paint which will absorb light and radiate 4 times the amount of light it is exposed to. We continue to study geometry and mathematics to aid in the building of our projects and apply what we have learned weekly on our free build fridays (thursday for Lightning Owls) where we practice using what we have learned while designing and building a project of each students' choice from materials they must measure and fit themselves, allowing students to be creative while challenging themselves and giving them hands on experience using the skills and theories we have learned. The Loyal Leaders have continued using CodeCombat to learn Python and basic code two days a week to develop an entry level understanding of script and functions using programming language.



Reminders:

There is no school this Friday, March 5th for Professional Development.

Whale Watching has been rescheduled for Wednesday, March 3rd from 12:00-5:00pm.

Reading Challenge Update:

Reading by the numbers!

So far, City Kids students have read:
18,143 Minutes
13,025 pages
306 Books

8,279 - Kudos to the Powerful Champions who have read the most minutes!
5,017 - Kudos to the Lightning Owls who have read the most pages!