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EAGLE EXPRESS SPECIAL EDITION

THE SPECIALS!

January, 2010

Spring Events Related to Special Subjects:

- *Thursday, Jan. 28*—*Bluebonnet Book Vote*
- *Wednesday, Feb. 17*—*Ash Wednesday and Beginning of Lent*
- *Thursday, Feb. 18*—*Chinese New Year*
- *Friday, March 5*—*Read Across America*
- *Thursday, April 8*—*Reenactment of Last Supper and Washing of the Feet*
- *April 13-16*—*Book Fair*
- *Wednesday, May 5*—*Cinco de Mayo*

At St. Alban's we like to teach technology concepts on a "need to know" basis—quick lessons that are necessary "at the moment". When a student or teacher "needs to learn" is the BEST TIME TO TEACH!!!

... Alice Hirst,
Technology Coordinator

The Specials of St. Alban's

At St. Alban's "specials" refers to the programs that are designed to fulfill the school's mission of "educating the whole child." Special subjects currently refer to **Library**, **Spanish**, **Art**, **Technology**, **Religion** and **Science**. **Music** will be returning as a special in 2010-2011.

Preschool children visit the **Library** twice a month. Beginning in Kinder, however, students come to the Library once every week. The librarian teaches library skill classes and offers assistance in finding suitable books for students to read.

Spanish, **Art** and **Religion** classes are designed for grades 1 through 6 on a weekly basis.

Weekly **technology** classes are offered to grades kinder through 6th. The lab is often reserved for additional time at the request of classroom teachers.

Fourth, Fifth and Sixth grade students have **science** classes three times a week.

This newsletter is devoted to "the specials". We hope you find it informative!

Art Feeds Our Creative Energy, by Nancy Popkes

Learning about other cultures is of special interest to me so this influences my art themes for the year. I usually pick 3 or 4 countries and offer a brief history of the culture, traditions, celebrations. Each grade is introduced at the same time to a particular culture and then projects are chosen according to grade levels and ability levels. I work with classroom teachers, upon their requests, to do art projects which enhance their curriculum.

Teaching art with a cultural theme has given me an opportunity to create an annual celebration that is enjoyed by students and teach-

ers alike. The Chinese New Year has become a tradition at St. Alban's. January through mid-February is a time we not only study Asian art but also the traditions, stories, writing, and food of Asia. Some of our projects include writing symbols on rice paper, doing fish printing, and creating all kinds of kites. We also paint on hand fans and lanterns, make hand puppets, and paint murals. One of the highlights of the festivities is a Chinese New Year's Parade which includes a 30 ft. long dragon. Students in grades 1-6 dress up and march with music throughout the school to the

delight of the kinder and pre-school children.

Springtime is usually when I do outdoor painting, printing and drawing. This year we will be making a fabric quilt block wall-hanging. Students of all ages will learn to measure and cut fabric and basic hand stitching. Their individual blocks will be assembled into the wall-hanging.

"Students easily become enthusiastic about the art projects, and their enthusiasm fuels me to keep dreaming of new and exciting adventures for us to do."

SPANISH ENRICHMENT, by Bertha Campos

Spanish was reinstated as a special at St. Alban's in January, 2009. For many students, however, it is a totally new experience. For me, it has been a rewarding and exciting experience, and I look forward to many more years and to the eventual development of a full-fledged and rich curriculum for our students.

First and Second grades:

Text: *Santillana: Comienzos and Canciones* for beginning students of Spanish

During the first semester, we spent a significant part of the time getting to know each other and recognizing numbers, letters of the alphabet, colors, shapes, days of the week, months of the year, objects around the classroom, and parts of the body.

Students practiced greeting each other and the teacher, asking questions (like "How are you?") and responding to them. The objective of the class was to make students comfortable with learning a new language. Students love music, so whenever possible, songs were used in connection with a concept. Concepts are introduced in English with transition into Spanish, and students have learned to expect to hear and respond to questions in Spanish, e.g. Teacher: Good Morning, *Buenos días*. How are you today? Students: *Muy bien, gracias*. Teacher: What day is today? *¿Que día es hoy?* Students: *Hoy es martes, cinco de enero*. The emphasis was on oral learning and repetition.

The second semester will reinforce the concepts introduced at the beginning of the year with gradual additions and expansion. For instance, students will be asked to expand on the answer to the question: What day is today? *Hoy es martes, cinco de enero, dos mil diez*. Additional vocabulary will be included as the year progresses.

Since the second grades have had the benefit of the class for a year, they are slightly ahead of the first grade. Their class is progressing at a faster pace. They will be involved in role-playing opportunities as well as more opportunities to read and recognize written language.

Third and Fourth grades:

Second and Third grade students have had one year of beginning Spanish, but are showing a readiness to begin reading and writing Spanish. As with the first grade, there is an ongoing emphasis in acquiring new vocabulary. Gradually, Spanish is replacing English as the language spoken in class. Students are encouraged to ask in Spanish for such things as: being allowed to go to the bathroom and drink water or to go to the office or use the pencil sharpener: *¿Puedo ir al baño? ¿Puedo tomar agua? ¿Puedo ir a la oficina? ¿Puedo usar el sacapuntas?*

The first semester was an opportunity to review what they had learned last year, and to reinforce these skills as well as to re-teach concepts that needed to be reintroduced. The second semester will introduce more opportunities for role-playing, reading dialog, and writing. Beginning in the third grade, history and culture will be introduced along with the lesson. Wherever appropriate, the "whys" of language will be explained. Language is dynamic. It changes; it crosses borders. It is both adopted and adapted by different countries and regions within countries. Third and fourth graders possess a lively curiosity and are eager to learn these tidbits of linguistic history along with the language.

Fifth and Sixth grades

Students in fifth and sixth grades expand on material presented in the third and fourth grades. The challenge for me will be to give them the basic tools of the language and keep them engaged in the learning process.

Fifth and sixth grades love a challenge. Their minds are maturing and thus are able to grasp concepts quickly and understand their use in the language. I give them as much historical background as I can when I introduce new vocabulary. At this level, students readily understand and appreciate that linguistic terms can be applied across the curriculum. Spanish words are found in geographic terms, e.g. *sierra* and *cordillera*. We get some of our English words from the Spanish, as for example with words from our cattle ranching

history like *rodeo, lariat, chaparral*.

Fifth and sixth grades, like the third and fourth grades will be encouraged to use Spanish more in the classroom. They will be exposed more to the rules of the language. For example, while the younger students are encouraged to notice the placement of accent marks on a word, fifth and sixth grades will be given the rule governing the use of accents. This level loves hands on activities and the use of the computer whenever possible. During the second semester they will have more opportunities for research and use of the computer in Spanish class.

This second semester, we will continue to celebrate the magic of Christmas with King Cake, or Rosca de Reyes. Students will learn that it is a continuation of the celebration of Christ's birth in Latin American countries. It is tied to the Epiphany, January 6, an important date in Church history when the three Kings found the infant Jesus and brought him gifts. In Mexico, Spain and many countries of Latin America, children gather to open their gifts, eat Rosca de Reyes, and eagerly watch to see who will get

"We will end with Cinco de Mayo, and a history lesson about the ousting of the French from Mexico but not before the French left their mark on Mexico's history in the form of the rich Mexican pastry that has traveled north into the Rio Grande Valley in the United States." . . . Bertha Campos

the "baby Jesus" hidden in the cake. The lucky person will host yet another celebration on February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, the day when Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple as was the Jewish custom.

SCIENCE BY DISCOVERY, by Judy David

Science, by its very nature, is ever changing.

My purpose in science is to arouse curiosity, to teach scientific method of investigation, and the importance of testing theories. The hallmark of the science program is a quote from C. Robert O'Dell: **“Be willing to revise your theory when presented with new facts.”**

We try to have many hands-on activities. Students keep journals, recording in words and drawings what takes place in class.

Fourth Grade

1. We begin with a review of scientific procedure, metric measure, and record keeping.
2. The major project is the dissection of a real owl pellet. The actual bones are then glued on a chart. The students then draw conclusions from their particular chart.
3. We move on to matter and electricity. The students make their own electrical circuit, lighting model houses. We also construct electromagnets, to demonstrate how electricity and magnets work together.
4. Earth science covers volcanoes and earthquakes.

Fifth Grade

1. Fifth grade focuses on systems. We start with weather. Most years nature provides us with a series of hurricanes to track and study.
2. We study six of the human body systems, their functions, and how they work together.
3. Systems in nature include the nitrogen cycle, the oxygen/carbon dioxide cycle, and the water cycle.
4. Our solar system is the key point of the fifth grade curriculum. The culmination is a field trip to *The Challenger*, a laboratory in San Benito where the students take a “virtual” trip into space and rendezvous with a comet. The students play the role, and perform the duties of, astronauts on a space ship and at the NASA control center.

Sixth Grade

Sixth grade delves more deeply into each of the units studied in the previous two years. They extract actual DNA from a banana. They learn how living things are classified, and how to use the Periodic Table. They do some chemistry, and experiment with light and sound waves. They learn about simple machines and how they work, then build their own models

On-going, through all classes, is the message to protect and preserve our planet. We want to respect all things, living and non-living.

ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS, by Alice Hirst

“My job is to react to a teacher’s request for assistance and to find suitable websites for research as well as develop lessons that will enhance classroom instruction. Sometimes students may have difficulty with a particular concept and at the teacher’s request I can develop a lesson using technology that will assist students in visualizing the concept from a different perspective.” . . . Alice Hirst, Technology Coordinator

Basic skills for every grade level include:

- Developing skills for input devices such as mouse and keyboard
- Opening and saving files in various programs

- Following oral instructions
- Using Internet sites to reinforce reading and math skills that are introduced in the classroom

Kinder Level – development of mouse skills, becoming familiar with opening, resizing and closing programs, following oral instructions, using the Internet to reinforce reading and math skills that are introduced in the classroom

First Grade –

- opening and saving existing files in Word,
- using the drawing toolbar to color (this helps to develop mouse skills) (continued on page 4)

FOLLOWING RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS IN TODAY'S WORLD, by Katherine Uhlhorn

The ability to openly discuss God's greatness in an elementary school setting is a gift with a fantastic reward. Bottom line, weekly Religion classes enable children to learn that they are hand crafted by God...complete with unique qualities, interests, gifts and purpose. Building life on a solid spiritual foundation makes for a more self-assured child, pre-teen and yes, (before you know it) adult! Because we live in times in which *Bad News* comes at us from all sides at a lightning's pace it is a blessing for me to spread God's *Good News*. I consider it a great privilege to teach your children.

Religion Class meets one time a week for 30 minutes (1st -4th grade) or 45 minutes (5th & 6th grade). My lesson plans are loosely based on the Elementary Positive Action Biblical Curriculum. The Religion Classes meets one time a week for 30 minutes (1st -4th grade) or 45 minutes (5th & 6th grade).

1st grade— Focus on God's Gifts to us .Our world, families, and friends, possessions Jesus Christ and God's care for us.

2nd Grade—Study the life of Moses by stories in the book of Exodus.

3rd Grade—Study the Life of Joseph in the book of Genesis and the life of Daniel in the Book of Daniel

4th Grade—Studies include the life of Christ, and Holy Spirit from the Gospels & Acts , and the development of Christian Character through the study of the life of Paul using the book of Acts.

5th Grade—Survey the Old Testament Gaining insight how Old Testaments fit together in one pattern.

6th Grade—Enrich their lives with the wisdom of Proverbs.

LOVING TO READ AND READING TO LEARN, by Nancy Yates

The library program is off to a great start this school year with the addition of our updated Accelerated Reading program. With our new web-based Accelerated Reader Enterprise and the most current Star Reader program, our grade school students now have access to the most up-to-date reading tools available through Renaissance Place.

AR Enterprise offers unlimited access to more than 125,000 quizzes on books from publishers around the world, plus a constant stream of new quizzes as they are created. Students are no longer limited to the shelves of the St. Alban's library and they love it!

AR Enterprise has made it easy to select books that are appropriate for your child to read. If you haven't had a chance, please visit

www.arbookfind.com

to access AR BookFinder. This website helps you search for titles to determine if a book is an AR book and whether it is an appropriate book for your child.

In addition to the traditional Reading Practice quizzes, AR Enterprise now offers Vocabulary and Literacy Skills quizzes as well. Our teachers have recently completed some additional training on these new quiz types and are looking forward to implementing some new strategies.

It is through the success of the Scholastic Book Fairs and the Box Tops for Education fundraisers that we were able to purchase this fantastic program for our school. Thank you for continually supporting our fundraisers! A very special thank you goes to Garianne Fuentes and Tracy Velarde for all of their many volunteer hours in the library.

The school year is not over yet, and we have some more fun planned for second semester. In January, our annual Bluebonnet Award election and celebration will take place. All 3rd -6th graders who met the reading requirements will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite Bluebonnet Book and be a part of deciding the winner for the 2009 – 2010 Texas Bluebonnet Award. This is a wonderful event sponsored by the Texas Library Association!

In the spring, our school will celebrate Read Across America on March 5th. Look for Mrs. Duffy and Mrs. Lamon in some great costumes! Also, mark your calendar for the next Scholastic Book Fair on April 13th – 16th.

If you have questions about our new AR program or just want to see the library, please know that you are always welcome!

Second Grade –

- creating and saving new files in Word,
- using basic shapes from the drawing toolbar to be creative,

Third Grade –

- introduction to basic keyboarding skills,
- using the Internet for research
- opening and saving existing files in Publisher,
- creating and saving new files in Publisher,

Technology Continued

- using Excel to create basic worksheets and charts,
- creating slides for class Power Point presentation,

Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grades

Basic skills continue to be stressed but focus is placed on integrating the skills learned into the curriculum as requested by the classroom teacher. Technology becomes another **teaching tool** that the teacher can use to teach. One assignment used by the 4th grade is a Power Point presentation where students **draw illustrations** for their oral book report. "We are thrilled with the capability of the students to create slides that **illustrate** different stages of the story and then orally discuss with their peers what the slides represent in relation to the book they read," says Mrs. Vano.
