

Weekly newsletter

This newsletter has had names removed to protect individual privacy

31 August 2014

Dear Parents, Teachers, & Friends,

We have our freshest news on the website and on Facebook that you can share with friends and colleagues to help enrollment grow. On the website, links in the first paragraph go to new pages about the farm visit (<http://lascrucesacademy.org/FarmTrip/FarmTrip>), the new engineering club (<http://lascrucesacademy.org/EngineeringClub/EngineeringClub>), and tennis (<http://lascrucesacademy.org/LearningTennis/LearningTennis>). Our posts on Facebook are at <https://www.facebook.com/lascrucesacademy.org>. "Likes" on Facebook help us get the word out, too.

The most exciting event of the week was the **field trip to the Mountain View Market farm in Mesilla**. Nicole Fuchs, the farm administrator took us around; the students got to see pigs, goats, chickens, fish, and worms as well as vegetables, including beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, & okra. Those who wanted to got to hold or touch worms and one of the chickens, and then all of us got to eat fresh okra and lemon cucumbers. We all had a good time. **Thanks very much** to the **parents who drove** students to and from the farm: E A, A C, L D, A E, E H, M L, R M, A M, P P, and M T.

This was also the week for the first meetings of the theater and engineering clubs. **Elizabeth** met on Tuesday after school for the **theater club**. The students who participated said they had a great time. On Thursday after school, Elizabeth and her husband, **Aaron**, supervised **engineering club**. There were interesting structures being built and the students seemed to have a very good time.

Coming up:

Monday, September 1st – Labor Day holiday No classes

Tuesday, September 2nd – Open House, 8:00 – 10:00am and 5:30 – 7:00pm – If you have any friends or colleagues who are interested in learning more about the Academy this is a good time for them to visit. One of our goals for the Academy for next year, to insure that the Academy grows and thrives, is to double the enrollment. We need your help to reach this goal; you are our best recruiters.

Friday, September 5th – deadline for parent contracts and student immunization records. We absolutely need the immunization records, **by state law**, and we need the contracts for our own policies, including insurance – we can't assume risks for medical problems, for one. **We can only admit children to the classes** if we have these records by Friday. Most of you have these in, and we thank you for your understanding.

Thursday, September 11th, Student photographs taken by E C starting at 9:00. E asks that the parents place and pay for their order before she takes the photos; we did this last year and all parents were satisfied. Her photos are quite good; she makes sure that she gets good shots of each child. I will make sure that you get the order forms for the photos well before the 11th, when the photos will be taken.

Saturday & Sunday, September 13th to 14th – Diez y Seis de Septiembre celebration in Mesilla, noon to 5:00 on both days. **We will have a table to advertise our presence and we need volunteers** to help man the booth. Please contact Lou Ellen (always around!) or Vince at 571-2269 or vince@lascrucesacademy.org.

Saturday, September 13th, 10 AM to 2 PM – Hearts for Autism will be held at the Hotel Encanto. We have a connection, and we can have a table there to publicize the LCA. **We'll need volunteers** if we're to do this.

Thursday, October 2nd – our first LCA Community Meeting. You've seen the previews, now see the show! We appreciate the turnouts we had on August 6th and 15th. The Community Meeting will **start with a potluck dinner at 5 PM**. Our Parent Committee and our Board will talk about all the great initiatives for the school. Please put it on your calendar.

Donations:

F & J H donated a very big box of bandages; **M L** donated an office chair; **H G** donated an entire box of copy paper; **L C** donated plastic cutlery, paper cups, & 2 large plastic tubs; and **M T & J C** donated storage shelving units. All these donations are greatly appreciated.

Reports from teachers:

Report from Ellen, early kindergarten / kindergarten:

Reading: Group 1 is working on their reading fluency and practicing c-v-c blends, focusing on words that end with *ad*. Group 2 is learning how to read the long *i* and long *o* sounds in words like bike, zone, smile, and quote. Group 3 has started answering reading comprehension questions that focus on recalling information directly from the text. All of the groups are practicing reading in groups and pairs. The concept was a bit difficult for them to grasp at first, but now the reading groups are flowing more smoothly and all the students seem to be enjoying it.

Math: Group A is classifying objects based on attributes and identifying objects that do not belong to a set. Group B is counting objects to 20 and writing the corresponding numeral. They have also begun working with the concept of place value. Group C is constructing addition and subtraction equations based on sets of objects. For example, if the student is shown a picture of 8 white dragons and 6 black dragons, he might construct the following equations: $8+6=14$, $14-6=8$, $14-8=6$.

Handwriting: This week the students continued writing their first names using a capital letter at the beginning followed by all lower case letters. We also learned how to write the letters *Ee* and *Ff*.

Report from Janet:

1st, 2nd, and afternoon kindergarten

We continue to work on writing skills - handwriting, capitalization, and punctuation. We discussed elements of writing on a topic such as titles, introductions, interesting details, and conclusions. We used the writing prompt "My Pets" or "The Pet I Want". Some of the students read what they wrote aloud to the class and the rest will finish up next week.

The students wrote very charming thank-you letters to Nicole after the wonderful field trip to the Mountain View Market farm. I started giving Saxon spelling "tests" and small dictation sentences that will increase in difficulty. All of these are good practice and review. My read-alouds include poetry, fairy tales, and Aesop's fables. The students have a reading log in their folders. They are encouraged to read at least 30 minutes a day outside of school. The spaces on the log are very small so I will find a better one. In social studies we've been learning the names of states, capitals and other features on the USA map, as well as information about New Mexico

and our bordering states. In math I'm working on having them memorize basic addition and subtraction facts, doubles facts, and fact families.

Report from Erica:

Spanish, grades 1 & 2:

On Monday I read a bilingual book, "What a Tantrum! / Vaya Rabieta!" and we played charades with animal vocabulary that the students learned from the songs last week. We watched the video "Puedo ir al baño?" <http://www.senorwooly.com/video/puedo-ir-al-bano?subtitles=spanish> Students started learning the vocabulary and phrases in the video, and sang along to the video. I gave them subtitles in Spanish and they took turns translating them into English. I was really impressed with their ability to decode the meaning so quickly. We used the video for several activities this week and will continue next week. Several of the 2nd-graders have been doing a great job asking routine questions in Spanish during class. The first graders have been working hard as well, building their vocabulary and trying to use it.

Spanish, grades 3 to 5:

On Monday the students took a spelling/vocabulary quiz then watched the video "Puedo ir al baño?" <http://www.senorwooly.com/video/puedo-ir-al-bano?subtitles=spanish> Students started learning the vocabulary and phrases in the video. We used the video for several activities this and will continue next week. Students continued speaking practice by formulating questions in Spanish about things they can and cannot do in Spanish, using the various forms of the verb **poder**. We made a rule to speak in Spanish only and students did an incredible job this week communicating to each other and me in Spanish. I did have to set up a reward system to encourage them to follow through and it has been working well. They earned enough "points" (dollars) to buy a "game" period on Friday. Students could choose an educational game to play with a friend. A group of students started creating a board game for us to use in class. The questions for the game pertained to both Spanish and social studies.

Social studies, grades 3 to 5:

The students received their first *Scholastic News Weekly Reader*, a current events magazine. The rest of the week we focused on the idea of work, the history of worker's rights, and Labor Day. The Debate of the Week in their Readers concerned a law proposed in Spain requiring children to do chores. We discussed their chores at home, whether they are paid or not, and the role government should have in the private lives of citizens. Students overwhelmingly felt the government should not have much say in the personal lives of citizens. We discussed other laws, such as those that require children to attend school. They felt this was okay and considered some laws may be necessary to protect children. We talked a bit about the Industrial Revolution and the assembly line. We set up a mock assembly line in the classroom and students were given Legos to build a house. I acted as factory boss and promised to pay them (with the dollar points they've been earning) for their work. As they worked, I demanded they work harder, faster, constantly changed the conditions, told them to start over, etc. At the end I refused to pay them since they didn't follow orders. Of course this caused a heated, mini revolt which we discussed in the next class. Students brainstormed what they might do to change conditions in the workplace and what makes a good work environment and how workers should be treated. We discussed the idea of unions, strikes, and protests. The 5th-graders shared with the younger students what they learned about the Haymarket Affair of 1886 in Chicago, leading to the establishment of Labor Day, otherwise known as International Workers Day, on May 1st. Students watched a Ted Talks video about Labor Day, unions, the Haymarket Affair, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and briefly touched on why the US and Canada celebrate it in September instead of May. We discussed the struggle for an eight-hour day, a 5-day work week, and child labor laws. Students shared what they knew about the situation of child labor in other countries today. Students in 5th grade have an assignment due next Wednesday concerning controversial child labor practices in the United States today.

Report from Jennifer:

Music Group 1, 1st - 2nd Grades:

This week we continued singing our various types of songs - call and repeat, simple songs, classical music appreciation, and those with hand motions and movement in music. We again sang songs from John Feierabend's First Steps in Music curriculum: *No More Pie*, *Chop Chop Chippety Chop*, *Five Little Ladies*, *Had a Little Rooster*, *Over in the Meadow*, and *Jennie Jenkins*. The students have really taken to *Jennie Jenkins* and surprised me by singing the song as I was entering the classroom to teach. It was a welcome surprise! We also continued to dance to the well-known skipping rope song, *Teddy Bear*. This week we started learning the hand jive to start preparations for one of the end-of-term performance songs, *Halloween Hand Jive* from John Jacobson's Music Express magazine. (Vince's note: I am impressed by the musicality of their singing in such a short time of instruction.)

Music Group 2, 3rd through 6th Grades:

On Tuesday, we completed music sprints, which are very similar to math sprints, having students identify a set of notes while recording the time it takes them to complete the set. The notes covered were in the treble clef going from "middle" C to G. The students did a great job identifying notes. Next week we will move up the scale a bit and start at G. We then completed a music reading unit for the notes F & G, which are represented as Do and Re. The students need to read the music to sing the notes as well as follow the beat representations on each presented staff. Again the students did a great job and were only stumped with the challenge line.

On Thursday we went over the words to the *Halloween Hand Jive* song. I gave each student a copy of the song to keep with them, so they can practice outside of class. We read through the words of each verse to the song's cadence. After each verse the music was played, and while tapping the beat of the music the students sang the verse. We ended with the song being played in its entirety while students sang the song. There are still a few places where we need practice, but the students are making wonderful progress in learning the song. As soon as everyone is comfortable with singing the song with minimal mistakes we will move on to the choreography of the song.

Math, grades 2 - 5:

All students completed the week 2 skill sheets Monday - Thursday, with the assessment completed on Friday. We also completed last week's assessment on Monday of this week.

On Friday Groups 2 and 3 worked on a color-by-mathematics sheet that came from the book, "Math Line Art from around the World". Students who are currently in the level 2 books completed sheets based on three digit subtraction without borrowing.

Group 2: (A, A, E, L, & T)

A completed working on extra, long division practice this week. She then continued working in her book, and by the end of the week she had finished the unit; after corrections she will move on to the unit test. A completed the unit on time and after doing corrections he will take the unit test before moving on to the unit on capacity. E continued working in her book. She is continues to do a great job of checking her work as she completes problems. She will be finished with the unit soon. L continued working on making corrections to her book. She needs to do all corrections before she can continue on in her book. Corrections are an important part of making sure that the basics are understood. T continued to work in her book on three digit subtraction with borrowing. She worked with the base-10 blocks to help with the concept, and by the end of the week she was able to complete problems without the help of the blocks.

Group 3: (D, E, & N)

D continued to work on the unit for weight measures. She worked on corrections as well as adding and subtracting measurements with yards, feet, and inches. E continued working on the first unit in her book. She completed the unit and finished the week working on the unit test. She moves into the unit of length next. N completed the first unit in her book this week and was able to begin the unit test. She will complete this test coming week and then move on to the next unit in the book.

Group 4: (A, A, F, L, L, S, & T)

On Friday the students worked on a version of a classic mind puzzle problem - the goat crossing problem. The students were frustrated with not being able to find the answer immediately, and were even frustrated after not being able to find the answer after our hour-long class. This is a skill I want all students to work on, as not all problems are solvable in a single class or a single day, and in the future they may encounter problems that need to be worked on for longer periods of time. For this first problem I did provide students with the solution at the end of our second class meeting.

A completed the end-of-book test and passed into the next book. Congratulations A! A completed working on the test for the first unit in her book. She then moved on to the second unit looking at the perimeter and the area of circles. F continued to work on the unit on fractions and is moving quickly through that unit. L continued working in his book on the unit of length units. He needs to pay more attention to corrections that need to be made in his book, and he will not move on in the book until previously needed corrections are made. L completed his work on the unit on percentage. He was also able to complete the unit test, and then move onto the last unit in his book on the concept of speed. S continued working in his book this week, and completed the first unit. He is currently taking the unit test. T started the week taking the test on the section of the unit covering the multiplication table of 8. It became clear while she took this test that she needs more practice with checking answers in long division, especially with what to do with a remainder. After the unit test she will move to the next section on the multiplication table of 9.

Report from Elizabeth:

English for 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th graders: (D, E, N, L, F, S, L, A, A, & T—7 periods per week)

This week, we began putting our knowledge of informational texts to work. Students thought of a location that they would like to know more about and began using the encyclopedias to find information about that place. Before beginning, the students generated specific research questions that they wanted to answer. I showed the younger students how to locate an entry in an encyclopedia, and I showed all the students how to use the "research index" to locate additional entries. They began encyclopedia work on Wednesday, reading for main ideas, as well as for the answers to their questions. The students are using notecards to keep track of the information they find. As our research continues, students will use various nonfiction books, as well as online articles, to complete travel brochures for their chosen locations.

Students wrote in their writing journals every day. Our journal topics included, "The person I admire most is..." and "One thing I don't like to do is..." One of our journal prompts led to a short lesson on similes (comparisons that use "like" or "as").

We spent one period this week practicing our spelling words before our spellings tests on Friday. Most of the students missed one or two words on their tests.

English for 5th and 6th graders: (S, L, A, A, & T—5 periods per week)

This week, we read the poem "Wide Sigh" by Melissa Broder (<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/wide-sigh>). As a class, we worked to determine what the poem meant, and students shared times when they did not think that they were "good enough" at something. One student was even able to connect the poem with the book we have been reading: *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. We learned some new poetry terms, including

“lyric” and “turn” (the part of a lyric poem where something changes). We also reviewed poetry terms, such as “line” and “stanza.”

We finished reading *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* this week, with book discussions both Monday and Friday. One of the questions that sparked discussion was “If you could give Charlotte some advice, what would it be and when would you tell it to her?” On Friday, students were eager to discuss the book’s ending. We also talked about gender and class in the book. The students could see that Charlotte and other characters are influenced by well-defined social roles, but they also expressed frustration with the characters because of these roles. Several of the students were interested in the kinds of clothes that Charlotte wore—perhaps this would be a good topic for an individual research project.

In the book, Charlotte kept a diary which was eventually destroyed. I asked students to imagine that, somehow, a single page of the diary survived. Students had to select an event in the book and describe it from Charlotte’s perspective, her diary entry. The students will finish their first draft of this project and begin a second draft next week.

English for 3rd graders: (D, E, & N—2 periods per week)

This week, students worked on their summaries for the “Biography of Abraham Lincoln” worksheet, which we began last week. On Thursday, I read from Beverly Cleary’s classic book *Dear Mr. Henshaw* while the students followed along. Periodically, I stopped to ask students to write about the book. Our first assignment was to make a list of words that could describe the main character, Leigh Botts. We will continue this activity next week.

Report from Vince:

Technology class, grades 3 - 5, Group East: F, L, & S.

Having built up some understanding of light for imagery, we discussed types of satellites – weather and other Earth observation, communication, GPS, and spy. We noted which countries have them – primarily the US, Russia, China, the UK, India, France, and the European Union. We touched on who puts them up (NASA, NOAA, DOD in the US...but soon there will be more private satellites). Only the weather satellites provide the imagery we’re looking at. The students’ homework was to search for information on weather satellites, particularly NOAA-19, the satellite we rely on most at the LCA. I emphasized using books as sources of cohesive knowledge. F used the Internet but needs to learn effective searching, having found only the generic information on satellites. L and L had no results...and, indeed, in our book holdings at their grade level there was little information. On Friday, L and I went to COAS Bookstore and bought 12 books on satellites and allied technologies and on electronics.

Technology class, grades 3 - 5, Group West: A, A, T, & L.

We’re working through the major steps for completing the light-up periodic table. We focused on the digital control of the LEDs that light up behind each element’s cell on the big poster. We reviewed how the latches get information (commands) from the Raspberry Pi computer and then pass it to each other. We discussed where the lags occur in signal transmission, finding that it’s in the RPi. We have to figure out a very practical problem – can we place 19 chips, each with 20 pins and accompanied by 6 resistors, on the small project board. This is the interesting homework problem (it can be done). In a diversion that is spectacular and also demonstrates direct electrical action (induction of currents by electromagnetic waves) rather than heat, we “fried” CDs in a microwave. Seeing that the students will benefit from good reference books on electronics, I researched modern introductory texts for younger readers and ordered two of them from Amazon.

Tennis:

We had our third set of lessons and fun for both groups. Elizabeth B and Brenda K again were essential co-coaches. Student skills are building slowly but surely from a considerable diversity of levels.

Both groups started their sessions with mobility exercises, some of which are pretty tricky. For the younger group, K-2, we practiced getting a level stroke; we adults would drop a ball for the kids to hit. We also gave them slow tosses over the net.

The older group, grades 3-6, practiced hitting balls thrown gently for a forehand stroke and then for a backhand stroke. This worked up to their receiving soft services. They also tried rapidly realigning their position to deal with a ball coming straight at them. S, as the most advanced player, and I demonstrated volleys that continued beyond the service.

Outside the lesson times, on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday, we striped lines for the courts. We made a larger court ("orange") for the older students and a smaller court ("red") inside that one. I looked up dimensions and figured out a usable placement on the parking lot. Brenda K and Lou Ellen helped greatly in the tasks of laying out the lines (all 125 meters of them), cleaning the parking lot surface, and painting the lines with pretty durable but ultimately removable tempera paint.

Report from Lou Ellen:

Science – early kindergarten / kindergarten:

We continue to learn about the parts of the body, we reviewed the bones and we talked about the digestive system – the parts, what they do, and their various sizes (the very long small intestine was a surprise), and the respiratory system, its parts and how we breathe.

Science – 1st and 2nd grades:

This group finished learning about parts of the digestive and the respiratory systems. The students asked that we read the *Magic School Bus* book about the body, so we have started that. We spent some time talking about what a nutritious diet is and what is considered junk food. The students all admitted that they loved some junk foods but had a hard time understanding why people (read this as adults, who are supposed to be good) would make junk food if it is bad for us.

Science – 3rd through 5th grades:

The students have been loving watching the You Tube video: [Cells, Cells - Parts of the Cell Rap](#), and have voted to learn it to perform at the end-of-term performance. I'm impressed how much this rap song has improved their memory of what the various organelles do in the cell. We also started talking about the cell theory and our understanding of the cell. One of the advantages of being "old" is that I personally lived through much of the time when our understanding of cells and groups of organisms was changing rapidly.

Thanks due to:

F & J H, M L, H G, L C, and M T & J C, for their generous donations; **M L**, and **J & K H**, for watching the students during lunch;

R M, B K, & E S for watching over the students after school so there were always two adults present during the end of the day; and **A & E E**, and **L D** for cleaning the building. Thanks also to **Vince, Brenda K**, and **Elizabeth B** for teaching tennis; and to **Elizabeth B** and **Aaron B** for their work in organizing and running the after-school clubs. Thanks to **Vince** and to **David G** (and, Vince adds, **Lou Ellen**) for working on the extreme mathematical challenge of devising a near-optimal class schedule by simulated annealing – the results will be forthcoming. Thanks to **David** and to **Yi Li** for further work on moving the LCA website to use Wordpress.

Thanks to **Vince** for purchasing books, toner, and shelving, assembling shelving, negotiating a favorable extension of our lease for the building, and much work on getting the best liability and workers' comp insurance policies. Vince thanks **Brenda** and **Lou Ellen** for helping stripe the tennis courts for regulation play for younger students ("red" court) and older students ("orange" court).