

## EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING IN THE SPOTLIGHT... KICK OFFS

by Cynthia A. Loring, Principal

Learning Expeditions are the signature Expeditionary Learning curriculum structure. They make content-standards come alive for students. They are long-term in-depth studies which offer real-world connections that inspire students toward high levels of academic achievement. Learning expeditions involve students in original research, critical thinking, and problem solving, and they build character along with academics.

All learning expeditions integrate the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and research, as well as critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration

Teachers plan learning expeditions that include these components: Guiding questions, a kick-off experience, case studies, projects, fieldwork, experts, service learning, and a culminating event.

Learning expeditions begin with a kickoff or immersion experience for students that ignite curiosity and spark interest in the expedition topic. Kickoffs build background knowledge, focusing more on raising questions than answering them.

After the kickoff, learning expeditions shift towards dependence on students' study and research thus allowing them to become experts on the topic.

On October 25, 2011, the Kindergarten kicked off their Bird Expedition with a TRAIL WALK, FEATHER OBSERVATION AND SMARTBOARD BIRD CALLS.

Here are the questions that our Kindergarten students generated after their kick-off. They will be answering these questions through their expedition and throughout the year.

- ~How do they fly?
- ~What kind of creatures do birds fly away from?
- ~How do they get the food home?
- ~How do they make a nest?
- ~How do they lay eggs?
- ~How many eggs do they lay?
- ~Why do puffins live with penguins?
- ~How do birds lay eggs in nests?
- ~Do birds like rain?
- ~How far do they fly?
- ~What do they do in their nests?
- ~How do the baby birds learn to walk?
- ~What do they eat?
- ~Do the baby birds get hurt when they learn to fly?
- ~How do moms and dads help them?
- ~Do they sleep at night?
- ~How do they sleep without falling out of the nest?

- ~Do they have night vision?
- ~How do they make nests without any hands?
- ~How do they get water?
- ~Do they drink the rain?
- ~How do babies get out of the egg?
- ~How do they land without crashing?
- ~How do the babies find their mothers when they get lost?
- ~How do the mothers and fathers protect the babies from danger?
- ~Do they fly at night?
- ~What do they drink?
- ~How do they stay warm?
- ~Can they fly when it is snowing?
- ~When they get soaked can they still fly?
- ~How old can they get?
- ~Do they hibernate?

- ~How do they get food when the snow is down?
- ~How do birds stand on a phone line?
- ~How do birds hang from trees?
- ~How do birds make a nest?
- ~How do birds make their wings fly?
- ~How birds land in their nest?
- ~How do birds build a nest on skinny sticks?
- ~How can an American Kestrel eat frogs with a small mouth?

- ~How can an American Kestrel eat slippery snacks with a small beak?
- ~How long does it take the eggs from an American Kestrel to eat?
- ~Do birds fall down if they fly in the rain?
- How do they get food?



# PRESUMPSCOT AND OTHER PORTLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RECEIVE WHITE HOUSE RECOGNITION

# RON BERGER, CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER, EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING SCHOOLS VISITS PRESUMPSCOT

We are proud to share that we received an official letter from First Lady Michelle Obama congratulating Presumpscot School for achieving the Healthier US Schools Challenge Bronze Award. Along with seven other Portland elementary schools, our school was recognized for our commitment to creating an environment "through education, nutritious food and beverage choices, and opportunities for physical activity . . . [to help] students learn how to make healthy choices now and for years to come." Mrs. Maiorano has led the healthy choices initiatives at Presumpscot and represented our school in Washington D.C. for a celebration with Mrs. Obama. Among our regular fitness and health initiatives is our vegetable gardens, healthy birthday celebration foods (no cupcakes or sweets), and the Morning Track Club.



Representatives from the eight Portland schools who received the Bronze Award, along with Superintendent Jim Morse, Food Service Director Ron Adams and School Health Coordinator Chanda Turner, were invited on October 17th for a celebration with Mrs. Obama at the White House. Photos of our very own Mrs. Maiorano (third from the left) and the First Lady after she delivered her motivating address, Please read Mrs. Obama's letter to Presumpscot School displayed on the main entrance message board, and check out the full story at: <http://www2.portlandschools.org/news/portland>

We were honored to have Ron Berger, Expeditionary Learning Schools' Chief Program Officer, visit our school on November 28th. Ron joined us to facilitate a lesson, using an instructional practice with third graders in Mrs. Surace's class, involving students in "critiquing" students' writing. The lesson was captured on videotape and is part of an exciting EL project that involves producing videos that illustrate good practices, to accompany new printed "toolkits" being produced for teachers, and to be used in professional development.



Here are some of Ron's comments following his visit to Presumpscot School:

*"Thank you again for hosting David Grant and me today with access to a strong and vibrant classroom. Students throughout the school were polite and friendly and positive."*

*"Students were insightful and deep thinkers. It was evident that they have experience with "critiquing" to create a high quality written product and take great pride in the quality of their work."*

*"Some of the student work, projects and photos from Presumpscot School are featured here in our EL Office in Amherst, Massachusetts, and I often highlight these when I travel the country, sharing the good work of EL Schools."*

*"The kindergarten learning expedition on the people and places of Presumpscot continues to be of particular value and interest to kindergarten teachers nationally."*

*"We continue to feel fortunate that Presumpscot Elementary is part of our EL family."*

## The Generosity of Our Families, Community Members and Friends is Astounding!

Thank you for investing in our students!

Thank you so much to all who have contributed box tops, donated to our Direct Donation Fundraiser, and to those who have bought or sold calendar pages for the Calendar Fundraiser. Thanks to the generosity of Presumpscot families, friends and local businesses, we were able to raise \$2,047 through the Direct Donation Fundraiser, and \$2,610 with the Calendar Fundraiser. These funds will be used for learning expeditions, student books, materials and resources as well as school and family events.

Thank you to these Direct Donation donors who kicked off our fundraising this year:

Ali, Asha	Hartnett, Catherine & Matthew Stokes	O'Donnell
American Legion Post 17	Hawkes Family	Parker, Beedy
anonymous	Healey, Laura and Lemery, Dustin	Parker, Lori Renn
Brittingham	Helmstadter, Fran-friend	Picher, Glenn and Caroline
Carter, Jocely/Jaeda	Ingram, Susan	Post, Brad
Charles, Grace	Injac, Tatjana	Puglionesi, Michelle
Childress, Kristen and James	Irwin, Karen	Raymond, Cheryl & Art
Clavel, Anne-grandmother	Jean-Paul, Emile	Roberts, Mr and Mrs
Clay,Ashlee and John Bogolawski	Kev, Bunthoeun	Ruel, Laura and Gregory
Davidson, Julie	King, Valerie and Brian	Snow, Mike and Sharon
Desta, Sisai	Kull, Andrea	Spaulding, Tonya and Kimberly Volk
Dubail, Gloria	LaFond, Janna	Srey, SamLeakhena
Dubail, Julie	Lavigne,Theresa	Telford, Carrie
Foster, Jean	Leeman, Cheryl	Tingle, Donald Will Cunningham
Frie, Nancy	Manoogian, W	Tingle, Jennifer
Fuhrman, Sarah	Martin, Deb	Volk, Donald and Sandra
Ham, Curtis	Muti, Ahmad	Walsh, Shana
Hannan,Clare-grandmother	O'Donnell	Wilson, Stephen and Valerie

# LOOK AT THE WONDERFUL THINGS STUDENT LEARNERS AT PRESUMPCOT ELEMENTARY CAN DO...



*Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each. ~Plato*



Kindergartners in Mrs. Maiorano's class can tell you 3 or more facts about the family life of the Yellow Bellied Sapsucker and they can explain their plan to bring birds closer to their classroom!

Miss Phalen's kindergarten students can collaborate to make a Spider Web out of yarn. They also know how to patiently wait their turn to greet classmates!

PERSEVERANCE ~ HONESTY ~ RESPECT ~ COMPASSION ~ COLLABORATION ~ RESPONSIBILITY



Mrs. Flaherty's first graders can demonstrate responsible actions in the classroom, like putting materials where they belong, without being asked!

First graders in Mrs. Stover's class can name the two parts of a sentence and can write a sentence using the two parts!

Students working with Mrs. Leonard can use tally marks to help with math!

Through partnership with FoodCorps working, Nora Saks, Mrs. Keller's first graders can use a hand lens to observe and describe the ideal living conditions for a worm

PERSEVERANCE ~ HONESTY ~ RESPECT ~ COMPASSION ~ COLLABORATION ~ RESPONSIBILITY



Second graders in Mrs. Burke's class understand what parallel lines are and they can use them to construct polygons.

Ms. Keenan's second grade class can total costs for a pair of items and use play money to pay and make change.

The first graders in Mrs. Linevitch's can come together as a classroom community to reflect on the events of the day and wish each other farewell.



The students in Mrs. Surace's third grade class can use arrays to figure out division problems and they can explain how multiplication and division are connected.



Mrs. Nichol's third grade students can collaborate to form words that begin with consonant clusters!

PERSEVERANCE ~ HONESTY ~ RESPECT ~ COMPASSION ~ COLLABORATION ~ RESPONSIBILITY



Fourth graders in Ms. Ridlon's class can engage in read aloud time and practice the comprehension strategy of inferring (i.e. "reading between the lines")



Students in Ms. Bergeron's fourth grade class can use base 10 blocks to understand and order decimals. They can also put their home-school folder on their desk and begin their morning work without being asked!



PERSEVERANCE ~ HONESTY ~ RESPECT ~ COMPASSION ~ COLLABORATION ~ RESPONSIBILITY



After a visit from Old Fort Western to share activities and information about Maine history, students in Mrs. Dalphin's fourth grade class can describe how Native Americans and Pilgrims thought differently about treaties.



By focusing on literary devices in poetry and writing and exploring vocabulary, students in Mrs. Reimann's fifth grade class can make their stories more interest-



Mr. Millard's fifth grade class can collaborate within their reading group to make decisions about their project, a final letter to Mr. Millard about their book. The groups are working together to create a 'movie poster' for their book complete with illustrations and a strong hook!

PERSEVERANCE ~ HONESTY ~ RESPECT ~ COMPASSION ~ COLLABORATION ~ RESPONSIBILITY



In Mrs. Serway's art class and in Mr. McDonald's physical education class, students can demonstrate their skills like improving their artistic work by adding details or their athletic ability by trapping a ball with their foot.

# FAMILY COUNCIL

## Fall Activities and Events

The Presumpscot Family Council has had a busy fall with various family events and fundraisers. In early October we co-sponsored, along with the Girl Scouts, a Saturday morning tulip planting work group at the Historic East Deering Cemetery, which is located right behind our school. Many people turned out for this, and we will see the evidence of their work in the spring.

There were many happy skaters of all ages enjoying themselves at the Happy Wheels Skate Night in mid October. There were plenty of non-skaters there as well, enjoying the event and taking the opportunity to connect with other families. Thanks to all who came.

The Fall Festival towards the end of October, was another great community night, featuring many kid friendly activity stations and a delicious International Potluck Dinner. It was so nice to see so many families turn out for this event, sharing in the joy of being part of this school. A special thank you to all who volunteered and/or cooked for the event.

## Fall Fundraisers

Our fundraisers have been underway all fall. Thank you so much to all who have contributed box tops, donated to our Direct Donation Fund-raiser, and to those who have bought or sold Calendar pages for the Calendar Fundraiser. Thanks to the generosity of Presumpscot families, friends and local businesses, we were able to raise \$2,047 through the Direct Donation Fund-raiser, and \$2,610 with the Calendar Fundraiser. These funds will be used for learning expeditions, student books, materials and resources as well as school and family events.

**Donorchoose.org is a nonprofit organization that helps teachers bring high quality materials into the classroom. Donations can be made for any amount by individuals or businesses. Please visit the following link to view the projects for our school: <http://www.donorschoose.org/donors/search.favorite>**

## Fundraising Team

We are in the process of forming a Fundraising Team. A small, energetic group met in November to talk about creative ways to raise funds for Presumpscot. We have a plan underway to begin reaching out to the local business community for direct donations, and are talking about ideas such as a silent auction for the spring or next year. If you have skills, experience or interest in fundraising, your help is needed. Please consider joining our team. You can contact Mrs. Loring at 874-8220 if you would like to learn more.

## Basketball Season begins this week!

The coaches have their team rosters, and schedules for practices and games are all set. Practices begin the week of December 5th. Games will begin in January. We do need 5th graders and their parents or guardians to volunteer to help out with concession sales at the Friday night games. The proceeds from the concessions support the Fifth Grade end of Year Field Trip. You are welcome to sign up for one or more shifts during the Basketball Season.

# FROM THE LIBRARY...

The students have been enjoying listening and discussing the Chickadee Award nominee books this fall. Before Thanksgiving we shared "A Pig Parade is a Terrible Idea." They loved the illustrations in this book. This week we are reading "Calvin Can't Fly" about a bird who is a book worm. This book illustrates two of our character traits: collaboration and compassion.

We have been reminding the students about how to respect our library books both at school and at home. Here are some ways you can help your child keep our library books in good condition

- Have a safe, special place at home for the library books.
- Keep books away from pets and small children.
- Let Mrs. Scola or Mrs. Fricke know if the book is falling apart or damaged.

Are you looking for some good books to read with your children? Here are some of my recommendations for this winter.

"Lighthouse Christmas" by Toni Buzzeo who is a local author. It's new this season.

"Learning to Ski with Mr. Magee" by

Chris Van Dusen who is a Maine author and illustrator. Students loved this book last winter.

"Wonderstruck" by Brian Selznick. This is an amazing book of two stories. One is told in words and the other in pictures. I was enthralled by how the stories came together at the end.

"Waiting for the Magic" by Patricia MacLachan. I just finished this charming story of a family going through some challenges. If you are a dog lover you will love this book.

Let me know if you have any questions about the library.

Mrs. Fricke, Librarian



## Wish List

- Dry erase markers
- Headsets
- Snacks
- Tissues
- Pencils
- Visit Donorschoose.org

## Upcoming Dates

- Dec 19~ Chorus concert @ 9:30 & 7:00
- Dec 23 - Jan 2 - No School (Winter Break)
- Jan 16 - No School (Martin Luther King Day)
- Feb 20 - 24 - No School (February Break)

# 2011-12 BASKETBALL SEASON

A high five goes out to Kerri Munson and Sarah Livingston for organizing the league and recruiting our volunteer coaches to help ensure that our students have another season of team building, gaining basketball skills and have fun on Friday nights from January through March. It's such a positive way to bring our community together as well.

Practices will begin during the week of December 5. If you have not been contacted by your child's coach, please give Mrs. Nappi a call at 874-8220.

Our coaches are absolutely the best! What wonderful role models for our students. We appreciate the dedication that our parent volunteers have for our students. Thank you Kim Volk, David O'Donnell, Joe Ramonas, Brian and Valerie King, Ricky Roberts, Charlie Collins, Tiarra Gignac and Gianna Gaudet, Fatuma Olhaye, Glenn Picher, Mark Plourde; Michelle Hawkes; Stillman Mahan; Tom MacDonald; and Violet McCorrigan

Please review the basketball guidelines with your children.

Presumpscot Basketball League.

Game Rules:

The goal of Presumpscot basketball is to have fun, get some exercise and learn some fundamental skills and team play.

**GAME TIME:**

1. K-1: Play four, 5 minute periods
  2. 2-3: Play four, 7 minute periods
  3. 4-5: Play four, 8 minute periods
- There is no half-time or clock stoppage except for injury\* keep games moving.
  - No overtime
  - An "equal" score is kept on the scoreboard for K/1 and 2/3. If one team scores, both teams get points. 4/5 team level keep an actual score. Score can be re-set at this level if greatly uneven.

- Match players of similar ability play man-to-man

- No double teaming on defense, no zone

Players all play an equal amount of time in each game to the extent possible\* players should not be penalized for missing practice by playing less

No full court press

- Defense must fall back to half court allowing offense to freely bring the ball to offense court

- No stealing while player is dribbling, pass "interceptions" are allowed

- No blocking shots

- On free throws, shot must hit the rim before players enter the lane

- Judgment used by referee on 3 second rule in 4-5 grade play

- There are no records kept or play offs.

**Practice Guidelines:**

Please be respectful of other groups that meet prior to practice such as Rec/Aerobics classes. Please keep away from the doors and be as quiet as possible while these classes are in session.

Children should NOT be dropped off by parents for practice unless a coach is in the building. Parents must walk their children into the school for practices.

Parents are strongly encouraged to stay at practice to ensure children are picked up on time.

Coaches may not leave practice until all players have been picked up.

Siblings may not be at practice unattended by parents.

Players must wear sneakers or shoes that have not been worn outside as the floor is very slippery when wet.

Coaches for K-3rd use the lower baskets and are responsible for taking them down and putting them away if they are the last practice of the evening.

Children are not allowed in the sports closet. Coaches and parents are the only ones allowed to take equipment out of the sports closet.

If a child is sick or out of school, he/she is not allowed to practice or play. If school is cancelled, then practices and games will be cancelled too.

Here's to another successful season thanks to the effort and dedication of the parents and friends of Presumpscot School!

# TRACK CLUB

Smiling faces and rosey cheeks abound at Presumpscot school on Tuesday mornings. Getting students' bodies and minds ready for school while having fun is the goal of the Tuesday morning Track Troop. Running or walking the perimeter of the field is offered as an alternative to traditional morning recess. Some parents and teachers have been walking and running with the students as well. Students keep track of their laps and earn colored ribbons for each mile completed (white for one mile, yellow for two etc.). Last week one student told her friend, "This is great! I was so hyper when I got to school but now I'll run it off!"



## WARM + DRY = FUN AT RECESS

All students should be coming to school dressed appropriately for playing outdoors. All students must wear coats, hats, mittens, and boots. Students will need to wear snow pants for playing in the snow to stay warm and dry.

Please help your child pack the appropriate clothing.

If your child is in need of winter clothing, please contact our school social worker, Karen Hunter. We want all students to have fun while staying warm and dry at recess.



## BE PREPARED FOR SNOW CANCELLATIONS

Winter weather is on the way, and now is the time to prepare for snow days. The Portland Public Schools close when it is unsafe for children to get to school due to the conditions of the roads or the sidewalks. School closing decisions generally are made by 5:30 a.m. They are announced on the school district's website ([www.portlandschools.org](http://www.portlandschools.org)), Facebook page (Portland ME Public Schools) and on local radio and television stations, including TV3.

If schools are closed for the day, extracurricular activities are usually cancelled, too. However, Portland Recreation may open a snow camp for participants of their before and after school program. Please call the Recreation information hotline at 756-8130 for updates.

Every family needs a backup plan for snow days. Please arrange for a neighbor, family member, friend or child care provider to care for your child. Be sure that your school has a current phone number to reach you in case of emergency. For more information about snow cancellations, visit [www.portlandschools.org](http://www.portlandschools.org).



## PUNCTUALITY IS IMPORTANT

**PLEASE HELP YOUR CHILD ARRIVE TO SCHOOL ON TIME.** Arriving late is becoming a pattern for some of our students.

Our school day begins at 8:55 a.m. Students should be in classroom at 8:50. Arriving on time allows for a smooth transition to the school day for your child and helps to ensure that your child receives the important learning that takes place first thing in the morning. Please help your child to arrive on time each day. Please let us know if we can be of help in ensuring that your child is punctual. Thank you!

"When students are involved in the assessment process - learning to articulate what they have learned and what they still need to work on - achievement improves." (Stiggins, 2005)

Nearly 100% of our parents/guardians participated in student-involved conferences with their children!

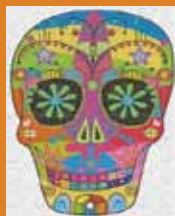
It was wonderful seeing our students sharing the progress they have made, over the last trimester, with family members during conferences. Student/parent/teacher conferences provide a valuable opportunity for each child to reflect on and articulate on his or her learning with evidence (student work) and set goals for areas needing improvement over the next trimester. I commend our staff for their outstanding work, dedication and commitment to meeting the diverse needs of each student each and every day by engaging them in learning that results in deep understanding and high quality work while promoting social responsibility, through the traits, and improved student achievement.

## PROGRESS REPORTS

Due to the added student school days to the 2011-2012 school year calendar, the trimester closes the week of December 2, 2011. We sent home Progress Reports, with students, on November 28, 2011. When you attended your child's conference you did not see your child's Progress Report. The conference focused on looking at your child's work and progress over time. The Progress Report will reflect the progress that your child has made, thus far, toward meeting the grade level targets.

## Spanish Update

It's exciting to watch as third grade students are becoming more comfortable communicating in Spanish on a daily basis. We have spent a great deal of time working on introductions and basic communication skills. We've also learned the days of the week and how to write the date in Spanish. Last week we began learning colors and will soon learn some animals as well. Encourage your student to practice their colors by asking them: De que color es? (What color is that?). The more regular you engage their Spanish, the better they will learn!



In fourth grade it has been an exciting getting to know all my new students and seeing how much language they already know! We have spent a good chunk of the first trimester reviewing last years work. In October studied Mexico's "Día de los Muertos" and created colorful skull masks to honor the day. Currently, we are learning about families and will soon incorporate adjectives. Encourage your student to speak Spanish at home by looking at family photos and naming the family members using their new vocabulary.

## ARRIVING AND LEAVING SAFELY - PLEASE HELP!



We appreciate your patience and consistency with our drop-off and pick-up procedures. We realize that our parking lot has minimal space especially when it snows. Please review and follow these reminders to keep our students safe and keep the traffic flowing smoothly.

- When walking to riding to and from school, please use the sidewalks and do not walk across the parking lot at anytime.
- When dropping off your child, in the morning, please do so quickly and safely. Please yield to the school buses that are on a tight schedule.
- Please open your car doors facing the sidewalk and have your child exit on the sidewalk side.
- When dropping off and picking up your child in the parking lot please drive your car down as far as possible to make way for other cars entering the parking lot.

Mrs. LaVopa, Ms Gilman, Mrs. Scola, Ms. Barber, Mrs. Leonard, Ms. Blotner are there beginning at 8:15.

## PRESUMPSCOT LAUNCHES AFTER-SCHOOL GARDEN CLUB

Presumpscot Elementary School teachers Rebecca Maiorano, Suzanne Keller and Elizabeth Stover approached FoodCorps volunteer Nora Saks at the beginning of the school year with the idea of starting an after-school garden club.

Due to overwhelming interest from students, a lottery system was used to select 12 garden club members, including two representatives from each grade level.

In keeping with Presumpscot's practice as an Expeditionary Learning school, the first step was to have students respond to a guiding question: "How can I use my gardening skills and knowledge to make my school a healthier place, my community healthier and myself healthier?"

The club set goals for all members to collaborate, persevere with a positive attitude, learn to use garden tools safely and responsibly and show respect for all living things as they grow and harvest food to share with the school and community. Members also are learning how to prepare fresh food.

Ilyssa Thaler, garden educator at Cultivating Community, and Rae Belanger, nutrition associate with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Eat Well Program, are helping Saks and the teachers with the club. All three teachers are donating their time.

The Presumpscot Garden Club began meeting in September for an hour and a half every Tuesday and Thursday. At the beginning of every club meeting, the members hold a group meeting and decide the day's work crew assignment.

A group of three students works with Belanger to prepare a nutritious snack made from local, seasonal produce. Other garden club members embark on outdoor projects such as building scarecrows, planting tulip bulbs and garlic and constructing a hoop house to extend the growing of micro-greens for the school salad bar. Club members then gather to enjoy the snack and share their thoughts on the day's projects.



The fall session of the garden club will end in early December. A winter session will begin shortly afterward, with new members chosen by lottery.

Students are engaged and learning from their experience in the club. Here are some of their comments:

*Antonio, a fifth grader: "I like building and planting. I like cooking, too."*

*Hadley, a kindergartner: "I like working with all of the kids to make scarecrows."*

*Cindy, a fourth grader: "I like hanging out with my friends and working hard. The healthy snacks are fun to make, too."*

*Coburn, a fourth grader: "I like to build garden beds and use power drills and hammers. I like to plant, too."*

*Morgan, a kindergartner: "I like to plant bulbs. In the spring, the flowers will come up and our school will be beautiful."*

*Kendall, a first grader: "Building and planting things are my favorite things to do."*