

APRIL 2026

Orca NEWSLETTER

Classroom News

Our students have been fully immersed in the excitement of March is Reading Month! From cozy reading time to lively book discussions, it's been wonderful to see their enthusiasm for books grow each day. A highlight of the month has been our unit-wide visit with author and illustrator Mike Artell! We enjoyed learning some specific cartooning and illustrating tips and tricks from him, many of which our students are excited to practice in their own writing and artistic creations!

Important Dates

- **April 1-3:** Spring Break
- **Week of April 13: Book Fair**
- **April 17:** Mother/Son Dance
- **April 18:** Daddy/Daughter Dance
- **April 23-24:** No School - Spring Comprehensive Student Reviews (CSRs)
- **April 30:** Evening CSRs

Character Corner

Two more of the Habits of Mind (the 16 life skills and intellectual habits that we teach here at CSA) that we often focus on in our classroom include taking responsible risks and thinking flexibly. Our guided math block lends itself nicely to discussions around these two traits. Oftentimes in math, students are presented with a new problem and are asked to try solving it using their prior knowledge. In addition to this, we ask students to find alternative solutions or pathways to solutions in helping to continue their overall growth and development. Having this growth mindset going into the final term of the year will be a great way for your child to start with a fresh outlook and open mind to problem solving in other areas as well, not just in math!



What We're Learning!

Reading:

This month, students will be interpreting, analyzing, and comparing the literary elements of fictional texts – characters, setting, plot, theme, and points of view.

Writing:

Students will be writing claims based on their opinions, brainstorming reasons and evidence that support their claims, organizing their information, and beginning to draft multiple paragraphs for a persuasive essay.

Early Math:

Students will begin working to understand fractions as parts of a whole by identifying them on number lines, modeling and writing equivalent fractions, and relating fractions to whole numbers. They will also begin representing and interpreting data through various charts and graphs.

Developing Math:

Students will continue their studies on fractions by adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions and mixed numbers, as well as problem solving with fractions. They will also continue studying measurement and equivalence by interpreting data.

Science:

We will explore how groupings, habitats, and ecosystems impact an organism's chances of survival. We will also begin studying fossils and the clues they give us regarding organisms and prehistoric ecosystems.

Socialization

A big conversation topic at this age is how to best cultivate and maintain healthy socialization. If you're interested in some straightforward and comprehensive tips on how to approach these conversations at home, we find [THIS ARTICLE](#) does a nice job of summarizing some basic strategies for navigating specific social situations. While focusing on middle schoolers, the information is universal and can just as easily be applied to our age range, 8-11, (which we know is often "forgotten" in the realm of research)!

NWEA + M-STEP Testing

As we look ahead to spring, we want to share that both NWEA and M-STEP testing will be approaching. Students will take the NWEA assessments in reading and math, as well as the M-STEP, which measures skills in ELA (including reading, writing, and language) and math. While we do not yet have confirmed testing dates, we have begun talking with students—especially about M-STEP—to help answer their questions, explain what to expect, and ease any worries. Our goal is to ensure students feel prepared and confident. We will share more detailed information with families as we get closer to the testing window and receive our specific schedule!

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Photo Album

