The Enrichment Program at Sawmill is in full swing! After brushing up on the Engineering Design Process, each grade level went head first into an engineering project this trimester! Third graders have been working relentlessly to help Flynn, a little girl who got lost in the Amazon Rainforest while there on a trip with her parents. Flynn’s parents are engineers who traveled to Brazil to help find a way to get clean water from the rainforest to the people living in the city. While in the jungle, Flynn wandered away from her parents and got lost in the Amazon. Don’t worry, she is not alone! The entire third grade class at MSIS is using their engineering intuition to help Flynn survive and make her way back to her parents. In the process, they have also engineered solutions that will help the native Brazilians as well. First, using only the materials available in the rainforest and what Flynn has in her backpack, the students designed and built a suspension bridge across a ravine so that Flynn and the native Brazilians have easy access to a star fruit grove. After getting Flynn something to eat these talented third graders began engineering a shelter that will keep Flynn dry, off the ground, and protected from bugs. After doing careful research on building shelters they successfully built Flynn a shelter using only the materials in Flynn’s Backpack and resources found in the Amazon.

Thanks to this talented bunch, Flynn has access to food and is protected from the elements in her newly built shelter. The good news is Flynn’s friend monkey found her parents in a small town just down the Amazon River as he was swinging through the trees. We have no doubt that these tiny engineers will find a way to get Flynn to her parents using the river! As fourth grade, these young engineers have been working diligently to figure out a way to improve Aid Drop Packages. You see, we were contacted by two high school students, India and Jacob, who travel all over the world. They have a friend named Ratana who lives in Thailand. As a result of the annual monsoons, Thailand often suffers from flooding. Many people living in remote areas are cut off from the main roads that give them access to fresh water and food. In an effort to solve this problem, the Thai government drops bags filled with emergency supplies out of planes to the affected families. ever, there are some problems with these aid drops. Sometimes the materials are damaged or even worse, the packages are never found. The fourth graders at Sawmill have been working as packaging engineers to improve the aid drop package design. They have used various materials to wrap the aid drop package as well as attaching items to slow down the packages’ descent. After many tests these engineers are interpreting their data and working on a plan for a new and improved aid drop package. We will be building and testing them out in the near future.

The fifth graders are no strangers to the Engineering Process! India and Jacob reached out to them as well. After vacationing in Australia, India and Jacob flew to New Zealand to meet up with a friend. Unfortunately, they didn’t travel alone. Unknowingly, India and Jacob brought a Cane Toad from Australia to New Zealand. This warty creature had hopped into Jacob’s backpack and escaped once they landed in New Zealand. The fifth graders did some research on Cane Toads and found out that this could be catastrophic for New Zealand’s ecosystem. As it is, the Cane Toad has wreaked havoc on Australia’s ecosystem. This Toad is an invasive species. It was brought to Australia in the 1930’s by Sugar Cane Farmers. They needed to control the Cane Beetle that was decimating their crops. The Cane Toad ate these beetles which made the farmers very happy until they realized the devastation that began to take place on the animals indigenous to Australia. The Cane Toad secretes poison from their skin and it is lethal to animals. When the animal attempts to eat the toad it suffers a heart attack and is killed instantly. Large animals, such as the fresh water crocodile, are not immune. The fifth graders at Sawmill are not about to let this happen in New Zealand. They have been busy engineering traps that will capture the lone toad before it is too late. We know that this situation will be under control very soon!

Submitted by,
Lindsey Persichilli - Enrichment Teacher
A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT

The Mandracchia-Sawmill musicians have had a fantastic start to the school year! The fourth and fifth grade choruses have been hard at work since September. They are learning how to work and sing as a team as well as how to blend your voice while still listening to the other people in the group. There are many vocal and breathing techniques that the students have been learning and using throughout their performing as well. Growing into a great musician starts at a young age and develops over time with a lot of practice and dedication. In combination with the curriculum taught in band, orchestra and general music classes, the students begin to develop a well-rounded approach to being a successful and knowledgeable musician.

Both the fourth and fifth grade string and band members continue to expand their technique and music theory knowledge while diligently working to develop their tone. During early morning orchestra and band rehearsals, you can find them pencils in hand and instruments ready! They continue to work together on balance, support, music reading and ensemble playing. The fourth graders are making music on their instruments and looking forward to performing as a group for the first time this spring. Our seasoned veterans, the fifth graders, will show off their musical talents at the winter and spring concert in May! In the week before winter break, our Sawmill Strolling Musicians spread holiday cheer for the faculty, staff and students by playing and singing holiday music in the halls of MSIS. Select members of the Fifth Grade Band & Orchestra will be preparing New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) solos to be performed for and graded by NYSSMA adjudicators in May.

Much time, effort, and energy is spent in preparing scales, solos, and sight reading skills beyond the regular assignments of the band program. It is an honor to participate and their work is to be commend- ed. Select students who participated in last spring’s NYSSMA Solo Festival were nominated to participate in this year’s Suffolk County Music Educators Association Festival (SCMEA) All-County Festival in March. MSIS will also have two 5th grade orchestra member represented in the Long Island String Festival (LISFA) in January. LISFA consists of the best nominated musicians in the county. Congratulations! All of our young musicians are the perfect representatives of what MSIS students stand for. They run on respect, perseverance and courage. They define teamwork, focus and discipline. We thank you for supporting the program at MSIS.

Submitted by,
B. Foti, K. Sottile, T. Stopper & N. Thompson

CHALLENGE & DISCOVERY at the DOLAN DNA LEARNING CENTER

The DNA Learning Center (DNALC) of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) is the world’s first science center devoted entirely to genetics education. Students in the Challenge & Discovery Program visited the center during the months of October and November.

Guided by experienced instructors, students used sophisticated laboratory and computer equipment to perform experiments several grade levels ahead of their peers.

Fourth graders investigated taxonomy using compound microscopes as an adjunct to their classroom study of the micro-cosmos.

Back at Burr and Sawmill, fifth grade C&D students are engaged in solving an environmental mystery and are exploring a range of crucial environmental issues. At the DNA Learning Center, students and instructors discussed the impact of genetic mutations and observed mutations in fruit flies using stereo-microscopes.

These lab experiences, during students’ intermediate school years, allow them to discover that many people choose a science as a career and devote their entire lives to studying it. Moreover, many people derive great pleasure from doing science! Science is a highly creative, dynamic, social and human endeavor.

Submitted by,
Leah Bernstein
A NOTE FROM THE ART DEPARTMENT

Another year is well under way in the art rooms at MSIS. The students are exploring different art mediums and creating projects which build on and add to their artistic skills and creativity. Our lively class discussions are informative and open us to other people’s thoughts and ideas. As always, a variety of artists and art work is being studied by each of the grade levels. We have already used artists Vincent Van Gogh, Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Warhol and Stuart Davis, as inspiration for some of our art projects. As this article is being written, the art classes are finishing their colorful notecards, coordinated by the art teachers and the Arts in Education committee at MSIS.

We will continue our curriculum, using a variety of materials. Clay, Model Magic, oil pastels, tempera and acrylic paints are just some art mediums which will be used during the school year. Our art work often has connections to the studies in the classrooms. Third graders will create ceramic tea bowls, inspired by the Japanese Tea Ceremony and their studies of Japan. Mats and coil pots created after examining the various patterns and designs in Native American art work help to bring the Native American curriculum of the fourth grade to life. Observing and drawing three dimensional solid forms and discussing their two dimensional geometric counterpart causes fifth graders to access their knowledge of mathematical concepts.

Throughout our lessons the students are building their art vocabulary which broadens and enriches their academic vocabulary. While defining and using words and terms such as landscape, foreground, complementary colors and contour line, students are able to express themselves during class discussions and in real life situations. During positive critiques, as we observe and examine master and student work, the children are able to articulate their ideas about art elements and art styles. The skills of finding details, using context clues, comparing and contrasting are applied in the art room and reinforce the same skills being taught in the classroom.

The Art Department is pleased to share the wonderful, creative art work of the students of Mandracchia-Sawmill. Please check out the outstanding displays of the student pieces which will be shown throughout this school year.

By Barbara Palmadesso and Mary Jo Tumminello

STUDENT COUNCIL

The weather outside has gotten chilly, but we at Sawmill have gotten cozy to spread some snuggly happiness to children in need. The Mandracchia-Sawmill Student Council held a "Pajama Jammie Jam" to provide new pajamas and books to children across the United States. Sadly, many youngsters do not know the comforts of being tucked in at night with warm pajamas and a bedtime story. Sawmill’s students and staff had fun helping get PJ’s and books to those who need them. Everyone was encouraged to donate a pair of new pajamas, a new book, or a make a financial donation, and wear their own pajamas to school on November 25. As always, the Sawmill community came through! We collected 135 pairs of pajamas, 291 books, and $570! (For every $10 collected, the Pajama Program can provide one child with pajamas and a book to read! Wow!) We’d like to thank everyone who participated for their generous contributions and great show of spirit! If you’d like more information on the Pajama Program, please visit www.pajamaprogram.org.

Laura Keen, Tara O’Grady & Kathi Woolley Student Council Advisors
...NEW YORK STATE ASSESSMENTS
STANDARDIZED TESTING

Parents are asked to note the following test administration dates for standardized tests administered during the 2015-2016 school year.

Grade 3
NYS ELA                         April 5, 6 & 7
NYS Math Assessment    April 13, 14 & 15

Grade 4
NYS ELA                         April 5, 6 & 7
NYS Math Assessment    April 13, 14 & 15
Written Science Exam     June 6

Grade 5
NYS ELA                         April 5, 6 & 7
NYS Math Assessment    April 13, 14 & 15

FOR THE SAFETY OF THE CHILDREN

An Important Reminder….
Reminder to Parents…
The safety of each and every child is our greatest priority. To ensure the safety of all children, no cars are permitted in the circle after 8:00a.m. due to the arrival of buses.

- Cars should enter the circle in single file using only the inner lane of the driveway next to the curb.
- Children should exit the car using the passenger side only.
- Cars should leave the circle in single file. Please do not pass another car.

In addition, at the beginning of each school day, and at dismissal, we have up to eight vans that need to park in the area of the parking lot nearest to the building. As the students disembark or enter the vans, each driver turns on the red flashing lights and extends a stop sign from the driver’s side of the vehicle. The teachers who monitor the students who travel on the vans have reported that vehicles pass the vans and back up to exit the parking lot as the vans are trying to arrive and park in their designated area.

We remind you that it is a New York State law to stop and wait until a school bus or van has turned off the red flashing lights before you proceed. In addition, we ask that you refrain from backing up and driving toward the vans as they arrive. We appreciate your support with this safety issue.

The importance of appropriate behavior on the school bus cannot be overemphasized. In every classroom, teachers discuss bus safety. In addition, three annual bus drills allow us to review all the safety rules with the children. Please discuss the importance of these rules: children must stay in their seats at all times, speak in an appropriate tone and not fool around or fight on the bus. Parents of children who do not follow these rules will continue to be contacted. Repeated reports will result in bus suspension. Your full cooperation is necessary so that we can insure the safety of all children.

January 6 - PTA Meeting @ 9:30a.m.
January 12 - Grade 5 Parents/Guardians Camp
            Mariah Presentation at MSIS—7p.m.
January 13 - Grade 3 Sports Night  6:45-9:00p.m.

January 18 - School Closed
January 19 - Girls’ Maturity Night 7p.m. @ MSIS
January 20 - Boys’ Maturity Night 7p.m. @ BURR
January 29 - SMINGO- 6:30p.m.
February 3- PTA Meeting - 9:30a.m.
February 4 – PTA 43rd Annual Founder’s Day
            Dinner @ Larkfield Manor - 6:00p.m.
February 8 – District Art Walk/Music Concert @
            CMS - 6p.m.
February 15-19—School Closed
February 23 - MSIS Wellness Day
**ATTENDANCE/TARDINESS/EARLY DEPARTURE**

In accordance with our Board of Education Attendance Policy, which recognizes that regular school attendance is a major component of academic success, we will account for student late arrivals and early departures (ATEDs), in addition to student absences, beginning this marking period.

Excused ATEDs are defined as Absences, Tardiness, and Early Departures from class or school due to personal illness or death in the family, impassable roads, inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, visit to a physician’s or dentist’s office provided that evidence of attendance is produced, attendance in school competitions and school-generated obligations.

The instructional day at Mandracchia-Sawmill begins at 8:50 a.m. and ends at 3:05 p.m. Late arrivals (past 8:50 a.m.) and early departures (prior to 2:50 p.m.) compromise your child’s instructional time and also disrupt the instructional time for all children in the class. Late arrivals and early departures should be reserved for unavoidable and emergency situations only.

When parents sign students out of school for doctor appointments, etc., parents must return to the building with the student to sign them back in the office.

**VISITOR SIGN-IN PROCEDURE**

A new visitor sign-in procedure has been put into effect. Please have your license ready to present to the Lobby Receptionist upon entering the building. Once your photo identification has been cleared, you will be given a temporary pass to wear during your school visit or present to the main office staff. We appreciate all visitors following this procedure.

Thank you.

**FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE**

Persistent coughs, colds and fatigue may be symptomatic of a more severe problem. A check-up by a physician is often necessary so that any illness can be diagnosed and treated early.

Students should dress in layers during the next several months. Temperatures can vary greatly from early morning to afternoon.

A parent’s instinct usually is an excellent indicator if a child is not feeling “up to par.” Observe your child’s eating habits, sleeping pattern and level of activity before having the child return to school after an illness. **Continue to call the Attendance Office at 858-3660 to report your child’s absence.**

In case of prolonged illness or serious accident, home tutoring may be arranged. Please call the school nurses’ office directly at 858-3660.

Students arriving to school late are missing valuable instructional time. Please continue to have your child in school by 8:50 a.m. Latecomers must report to the security personnel in the lobby.
LUNCH SELECTIONS

As part of the daily routines, students choose their lunch selections, classroom teachers tally the information and then send it to the kitchen so that a sufficient number of lunches are prepared for each of the choices.

It has come to our attention that students who bring lunch to school often decide, during their lunch period, that they prefer a selection from the menu and discard their lunch brought from home. They then buy their lunch from the cafeteria. In addition, we have noticed that other students bring lunch from home and then choose to buy a second lunch from the cafeteria. This has become a concern for several reasons. One concern is that students discard home-prepared lunches. Another concern is that some students have two lunches without their families knowing and thirdly, the kitchen is often left with a shortage in a particular prepared food selection because of the last-minute decisions of the students.

We would appreciate it if you can discuss with your children the importance of eating the lunch that you prepared for them or choosing a hot lunch in advance of the morning routines.

With the home and school working together, we can better meet the desires of all students to have a healthy and appropriate lunch. Thank you.

LOST AND FOUND

The M.S.I.S. Lost and Found is located in the Nurses’ Office. There are articles of clothing and lunch boxes that belong to students at our school. Children can check this area during the lunch periods. Please remind your child to check this room for any lost or misplaced items.

STUDENTS ATTENDING PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Please be reminded that you must apply for transportation in the 2015-2016 school year no later than April 1, 2016. Applications are available through the transportation office at 912-2020 and must be postmarked by April 1, 2016.

With winter here, it is important for parents to once again become familiar with the various schedules that could be implemented due to inclement weather conditions. These schedules are Early Dismissals, Delayed School Openings and School Closings. Please keep this information convenient as you may need to refer to it in the future. In the event of a delayed opening, all morning activities (i.e., CML, word masters, intramurals, music rehearsals) will be cancelled. You can also view information on the website @ www.commackschools.org.

Delayed School Opening – School Messenger, a district implemented phone call recording, will be made to all households regarding school closings, delayed openings or early dismissals. We will again this year use a delayed school opening procedure on inclement weather days when it appears that we can open safely at a later time. We will delay opening for one (1) or two (2) hours later than the normal schedule. Children will be transported back home on the normal transportation schedule. You are urged to listen to these radio stations for information on school closings and delayed school openings: WLIX, WABC, WALK, WGSN, WCTO, WHLI, WOR, WGLI, WBAB & TV Channel 12 and can also view information on the website @ www.commackschools.org.

School Closings – Please refer to the district website at www.commackschools.org to learn about school closings or delays or on any of the radio stations listed above.

UNEXPECTED EARLY DISMISSAL

(Decision usually made by 12 noon)

Please plan for and familiarize your children with specific actions they are to take when they arrive home if school is dismissed early due to bad weather conditions. Please do not include instructions to call you since school telephone lines are few in number and must be kept open for incoming calls. Children should know if they are to go directly home or go to a neighbor’s house on the same block.
Please make sure the early dismissal card indicates a home on the bus route or your child has access to enter the house.

- Provide yourself with a copy of the early dismissal card so that you can review the information and notify us if any changes are necessary.
- Review with your child, weekly, the alternate plan should you be delayed during an early dismissal. Be sure your child is familiar with the contact person(s), and can locate the house(s). Remember that early dismissal may occur at any time of year for reasons other than snow.
- Note that the emergency contact card information is not the same as early dismissal. Be sure to complete each one with care and accuracy.
- Check your local radio and TV stations or Commack School District website for accurate, updated closing information. The School District Calendar contains the listing of radio stations that provide our school closing information.

**SCOPE PROGRAM**

In the event of an unscheduled early dismissal, or if the district cancels after-school activities (due to hazardous weather conditions) after operating a full day of school, the SCOPE After School Program usually remains open. SCOPE contacts the parents directly to inform them of the time students need to be picked up.