



Happy New Year!

September 7, 2012

Hello everyone!

Where else can you have 6th, 7th, and 8th graders happily taking high school Earth Science and 5th & 6th graders studying the periodic table of elements? Student-based inquiry is how we do science at Mandala. The curriculum is derived from the questions and wonderings of the students. For example, on Wednesday Lizzy asked, *What is zinc?* That prompted a gathering of information from other students, digging out the periodic table, and an extended discussion about elements, compounds, oxidation, and even a short skit on electron orbits.

Interest drives learning. When the focus is on student interest, they want to know more. In the process, the so-called traditional curricula gets learned but in a much more exciting and long-lasting manner. Intrinsic motivation not external control is the secret to life-long learning.



We have been outside every day, took our first field trip to Sinking Ponds, and today we are having our first community lunch. This sense of community with its mutual responsibility is at the core of Mandala. We need to function as a healthy community if we want to learn as much as we can and be as good as our true selves tell us. With this group of people it seems easy.

By the end of the week everyone will have finished a math review, done a writing sample, enjoyed Lizzy's self-made birthday cake, and made some new friends. We have done some preliminary planning for Camp Allegany (Oct 1-4) and thought about special projects we want to undertake. We are off to a great year!

Best Wishes,
John, Barb, Ben, & Carrie