

Afton Central School

Elementary Newsletter

April 2026

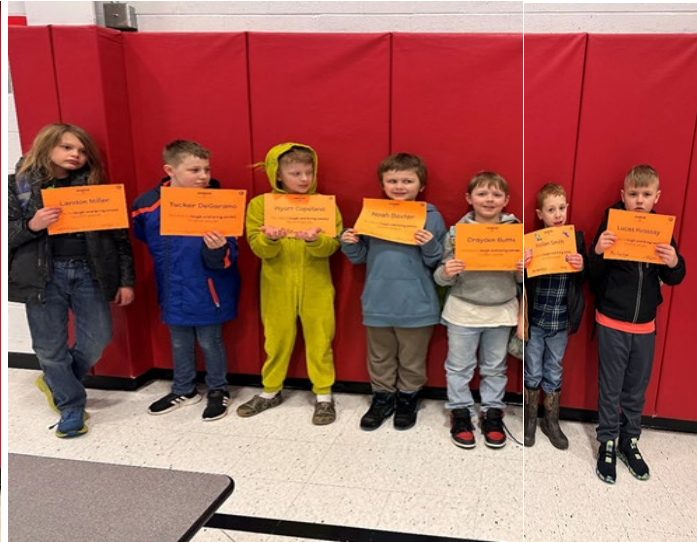


Important Information:

- BOE meeting/Budget Hearing, Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room.
- PTO meeting, Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., in the Board Room.
- BOE meeting, Thursday, June 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., in the Board Room.
- Due to state testing, there will be no guest readers for the month of May.
- Our next Bright Knight's Ceremony will be held on Friday, May 1, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
- NYS Math testing for grades 4-5 will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, and Wednesday, May 6, 2026. The testing will begin at 9:00 a.m.
- NYS Science testing for grades 5 will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. The testing will begin at 9:00 a.m.
- NYS Math testing for grade 3 will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, and Thursday, May 14, 2026. The testing will begin at 9:00 a.m.
- First grade will be going on a field trip to the Ross Park Zoo on Friday, May 15, 2026.
- Third grade will be going on a field trip to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo on Friday, May 22, 2026.
- There will be no school on Monday, May 25, 2026 – Memorial Day.
- Fifth grade will be going on a field trip to Animal Adventure on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.
- The final Bright Knight's Ceremony will be held on Friday, May 29, 2026.
- The final elementary guest reader event of the school year will take place on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at 8:15 a.m.
- There will be a half day for students on Tuesday, June 16, 2026 – Staff development day.
- The fourth quarter ends on Tuesday, June 16, 2026.
- Grades PK through 5 and all elementary staff will be going to Chenango Valley State Park on Thursday, June 18, 2026.

- There will be no school on June 19, 2026 – Juneteenth.
- Report cards will be sent home on Tuesday, June 22, 2026.
- The last day for elementary students will be on Friday, June 26, 2026 (tentatively).

KNIGHTS OF THE WEEK



STUDENT SUPPORT

April is Autism Awareness Month. So, this month I read "Uniquely Wired" by Julia Cook to all students in grades PK-3. In this story, students get to know a boy named Zak who has autism. Students learn many different things that make Zak unique. My hope is that students will begin to understand that differences make us unique and that's a really good thing!

TIPS for understanding children who are **UNIQUELY WIRED**

A special thanks to *Melissa Reinhardt, M.D.,*
a pediatrician, wife, and mom of three boys (one of whom is uniquely wired)!

- 1.** Autistic children have **special gifts and viewpoints**. Try to see the person within and not be blinded or frustrated by the sometimes difficult or "prickly" outward behaviors.
- 2.** There is a saying in the autism community, "Once you've met one autistic child, you have met **ONE** autistic child." Each child has unique struggles, and the array of challenges is why it's called autism spectrum disorder.
- 3.** **Every behavior has a purpose.** You may not understand a certain behavior or action, but children with autism most likely have a very specific need they're trying to communicate. Over time, watching their patterns, trying to think outside the box, and seeing into their world will help you figure out what they're trying to communicate.
- 4.** Some autistic children have **unique behaviors that are done repetitively**. Many of these self-stimulatory or "stimming" behaviors (twirling their hair or flapping their arms, for example) help them calm down, organize their thoughts, or provide a sense of control. While these behaviors can be disturbing to others or emotionally heartbreaking to parents, most provide some benefit to the child. It can be helpful to teach

siblings and classmates about stimming behaviors to encourage greater understanding and tolerance.

- 5.** **Picking up social cues is difficult** for autistic children. As a result, they may be excluded or treated unfairly. Also, they may choose to hit, push, or scream because they have difficulty processing how to handle feelings and emotions. It can be very helpful to teach and practice appropriate situational responses using visual pictures, including images with faces and emotions.

- 6.** **Teach and engage children** using their latest thing or obsession. If it's cars, for example, animate or humanize cars by giving them dialogue and emotions. Ask questions like, "How do you think Red feels when...?" Or, "When the cars are all stopped at a stop sign, they need to take turns before they can go again, just like I need you to take your turn when you play with your friends or brothers." Or even, "Remember when Red had to go through the carwash to get all that dirt off? Now it's your turn to get in your carwash [shower or bath] so you can get clean, too!" Also, you can stretch their thinking with questions like, "Yes, I see that police car. Where do you think he's going?"



For more parenting information, visit parenting.org

- 7.** **Take nothing for granted... and make NO assumptions!** You may need to teach your child **WAY** more things than you ever imagined. **Motor planning** – knowing what you need to do in a certain situation and then transferring that task successfully from your brain to your body and muscles to actually carry the plan out – is often **VERY** difficult and comes more slowly for autistic children. This may be because a child has a deficit in a specific area. It also can be compounded because autistic children don't naturally watch other kids and learn what they do in certain situations. For example, you may have to teach your child to take off their mittens after playing outside in the snow.

- 8.** **Don't be afraid to try something new!** Everyone can use a little push outside of their comfort zones. The first

few steps and the first few tries may be rough, ugly, and difficult. But as the new activity or situation becomes more engrained into a child's bark of "this is something I've done before," each additional attempt will be a little more bearable and, eventually, enjoyable. You might be surprised by how much your child really can handle!

- 9.** **Celebrate the wins!** When you work with an autistic child, you get to see and celebrate accomplishments with a fullness and satisfaction that others with typically developing children may gloss over or take for granted – being able to buckle a seatbelt, consistently putting on clothes the right way, being able to open a screen door that requires pushing and pulling at the same time, uttering spontaneous, fluid sentences, or hugging with their arms wrapped all the way around your neck! Those are the moments, the glimpses inside, we live for and need to celebrate.

For more parenting information, visit:



Award-Winning Children's Book Series from Julia Cook



Every Donation Makes a Difference

More than 3.5 million children and families across the United States benefit from Boys Town's innovative programs each year. Help us write the next chapter by donating today. **SCAN THE CODE TO DONATE.**



BOYS TOWN
Saving Children. Restoring Families.
boystown.org/donate



For information on Boys Town and its Education Model,
Common Sense Parenting®, and training programs:
LiftwithBoysTown.org | Parenting.org
training@boystown.org | 800-545-5771

For parenting and educational
books and other resources:
BoysTownPress.org
btpr@boystown.org | 800-282-6657



April Newsletter: Getting outside with the nicer weather!

Dear Families,

April is here, bringing warmer weather, blooming flowers, and the perfect opportunity to build new routines. While technology serves a purpose in our lives, studies show that too much screen time—now averaging over five hours daily for many children—can lead to poor sleep, reduced focus, increased stress and more difficulty regulating emotions. Research has linked excessive screen time in early childhood to reduced ability to self-regulate, (sourced from the national institutes of health).

Lets discuss some other things that kids can do other than using video games or being on screens.

Why Go "Screen-Free" This April?

Reducing screen time in favor of outdoor exercise or activities offers significant benefits for your child's developing brain and body:

- **Better Physical Health:** Increased activity helps burn energy, improves motor skills, and supports healthy growth.
- **Improved Mood & Reduced Stress:** Nature is naturally calming. Spending time outside lowers stress, anxiety, and depression rates in children.
- **Enhanced Creativity & Focus:** Without the stimulation of screens, children are forced to create, explore, and use their imaginations, which boosts critical thinking skills.
- **Better Sleep:** Exposure to natural light and physical activity helps regulate sleep patterns, leading to better rest at night.

10 April Outdoor Activity Ideas

1. **Nature Scavenger Hunt:** Make a list of items to find, such as a maple leaf, a smooth rock, a feather, or a yellow flower. You can even make a craft with what you find.
2. **Chalk Art Gallery:** Turn the driveway or sidewalk into a masterpiece.
3. **Spring Gardening:** Plant seeds or help weed the garden. Kids love watching things they planted grow!.
4. **Bike or Scooter Rides:** Explore the neighborhood.
5. **Build something outside using things like sticks, mud or grass.**
6. **Bird Watching:** Use binoculars (or just sharp eyes) to identify local birds.
7. **Cloud Spotting:** Lay on a blanket and find shapes in the clouds.

8. **Outdoor Painting:** Take paints or water paints outside and paint scenery.
9. **Evening Walk:** Take a walk after dinner to listen to nighttime sounds. Try to identify what you are hearing.

Tips for Success

- **Be a Role Model:** Let your children see *you* putting your phone down to enjoy the sunshine.
- **Keep Equipment Handy:** Keep balls, bikes, scooters and chalk near the door for easy access.
- **Embrace Boredom:** Remind your children that boredom leads to creativity. It's okay if they don't have a structured activity every minute and they are, "bored."

Let's make this April a time for fresh air, movement, and genuine, face-to-face fun!

For more information, research shows that outdoor play can directly counteract the negative effects of screen time on communication skills, making it a critical tool for development (sciencedaily.com, 2023). <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9271860/>

P2 for Families

Welcome to the **P2 for Families 1-1-3**. You'll find 1 quote, 1 video, and 3 questions to help you and your children discuss The Positivity Project's character strength of the week.

Character Word: Fairness.

Definition: You treat all others the way you want to be treated.

Below is the link to a 3-minute video clip to watch as a family.

[Small Talk | Fairness | CBC Kids](#)

After watching the video, discuss the following questions together.

1. Why is it important to share?
2. What is something that you like to share?
3. Think about a time when you had to share and it wasn't easy. What happened after you shared?

"Play by the rules."

– JOEY, AGE 7

RTI



Our academic MTSS (formerly RTI) providers: Kim Buckler and Peggy Wagner work closely with our classroom teachers, counselors, and administration to meet the needs of the whole child. As academic MTSS providers, they may help by:

- Pushing into the classrooms at different times of the day to help support math and reading.
- Taking groups of students to their rooms to do math or reading that works on a specific skill. This also allows for a quieter place to work and provides students with extra support in areas of need.

If your child needs to officially be entered into academic MTSS based on assessments or classroom data, you will be contacted by the classroom teacher.

PRE-K

Pre-K had a fun month with our field trip to The Discovery Center. We have been enjoying the warmer weather and being able to get outside for recess and learning. We are 2 letters away from having completed the alphabet. The last 2 letters are Yy and Zz. Name and number writing have been a focus. Students are showing growth with these, but practice at home is important too. A number writing practice packet is being sent home and when students have finished it and returned it, they will get a surprise. In our math unit, we have been learning how to combine sets. This has allowed students practice with counting, number recognition, and writing. In science spring, animals and bees have been our focus. We read *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle and looked at the sky to see what the clouds looked like. In social Studies Earth Day, occupations and hobbies have been discussed. We read *The Earth Book* written by Todd Parr and went on a nature walk scavenger hunt. The only things we couldn't find were a caterpillar and a squirrel. We found all the other 10 items.

-The Pre-K Team





KINDERGARTEN

The children have been enjoying the warmer weather and getting to have outdoor recess more often. During ELA time, the kids have been learning about letters Q, J, V, X, and many more. We are making our way through the alphabet and reading a great number of new decodable words. It is nice to see so much growth! Some of the new high-frequency words we have been learning are ***he, they, of, have, said, want, & here.***

For math, we have been working on a new unit comparing sets of objects that consist of 11-20 items. We are spending time going over one more/one less, greater than/less than, and much more.

We recently had our annual field trip to The Discovery Center, and the kids had a blast! It was great to go somewhere new and exciting. It was difficult for the kids to pick just one favorite play area.

-The Kindergarten Team



1ST GRADE

We have been busy in First Grade this spring.

In ELA we have started our last unit of the year! This unit will focus on classifying, astronomy, inventors, sound, and how things are built. Our phonics focus will be /ar/, /er/, /ir/, /ur/, /or/, /ore/, /oar/, /ou/, /ow/, /oi/ and /oy/.

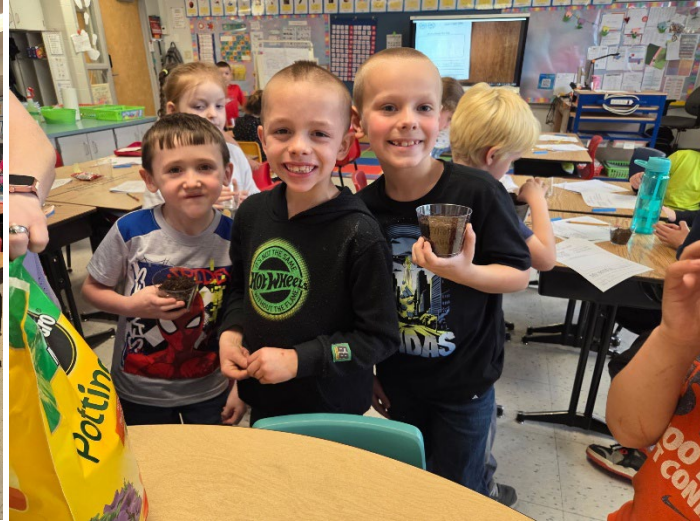
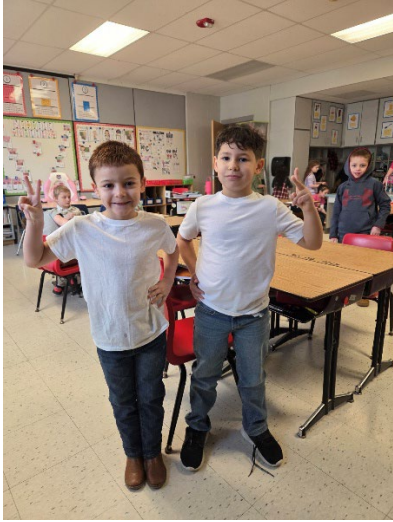
In Math we will continue to work on addition and subtraction of tens, ones, and two-digit problems.

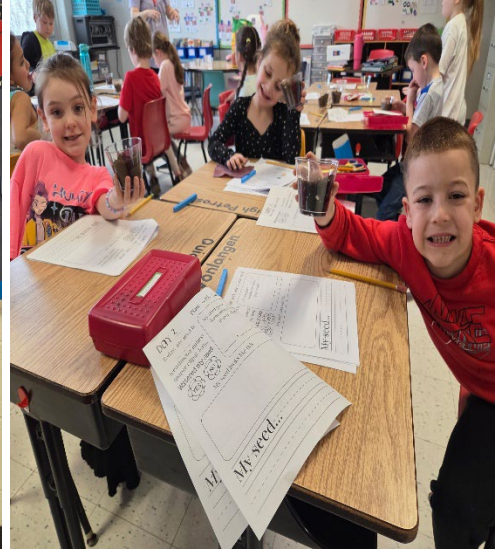
In Social Studies and Science, we will begin our unit on plants and animal habitats.

We hope to get outside frequently in the spring. Please remember to send in a change of clothing for those muddy days!

Mark your calendar for our spring field trip to the Binghamton Ross Park Zoo on Friday, May 15th.

-The First Grade Team





2ND GRADE

April has been a busy and exciting month in second grade! We hope everyone had a wonderful and relaxing Spring Break and returned refreshed and ready to learn.

In Social Studies, we wrapped up our unit on Geography, where students explored maps, landforms, and different places around the world. In Math, we have been working hard on our unit covering 2- and 3-digit addition and subtraction, and we are finishing up with great progress. In ELA, students enjoyed completing our Poetry unit, where they had fun reading, writing, and sharing different types of poems.

We are proud of all the hard work our students have shown this month and look forward to all the learning still to come!

-The Second Grade Team





3RD GRADE

Third grade really enjoyed having another guest reader for the month of April! We have just finished NYS ELA State Testing this week! The students worked hard and now we are gearing up for the NYS Math State Testing.

Students are currently working on paper plate habitat/ecosystem projects. The students had to pick a habitat/ecosystem to study, they did some research and had to write a paragraph. After they completed their research, they started creating their ecosystem on a paper plate. They are really trying to make them 3-D and very realistic. We are excited to see how the rest of them turn out! Stay tuned to see more next month! Please continue to encourage your student to read nightly, study math facts and do spelling practice.

Just a reminder our field trip to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse, NY will be Friday, May 22. Feel free to reach out with any questions.

-The Third Grade Team





4TH GRADE

Fourth grade continues to work diligently! We wrapped up our Earth's Systems Science Unit this week. The students learned about the spheres, types of rocks, the rock cycle, natural hazards, tectonic plates, and the Earth's layers. Our next unit will be a mini unit on circuits. We did a lot of review and practice in ELA to get ready for the state exam. We are so proud of how hard the students worked on the test. They took their time, took notes, and really tried to do their best! That is all we can ask! Now that the ELA test is over, we are in full math mode, finishing up our fractions unit and going over basic geometry concepts (angles, lines, segments, triangles, measurement). Our Math test is May 5th & 6th! Please make sure your students are getting a good night's sleep! They have been working super hard with our preparation, and we couldn't be more proud of them!

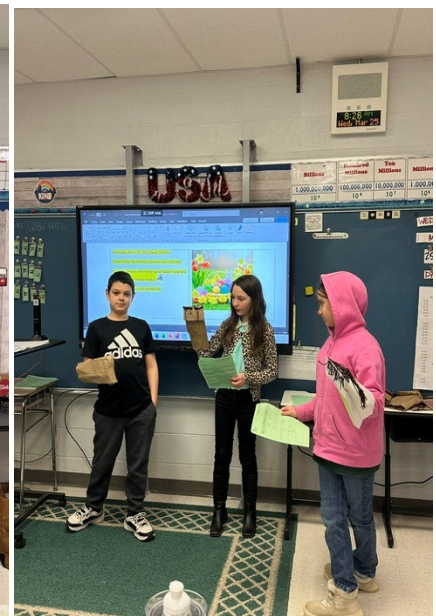
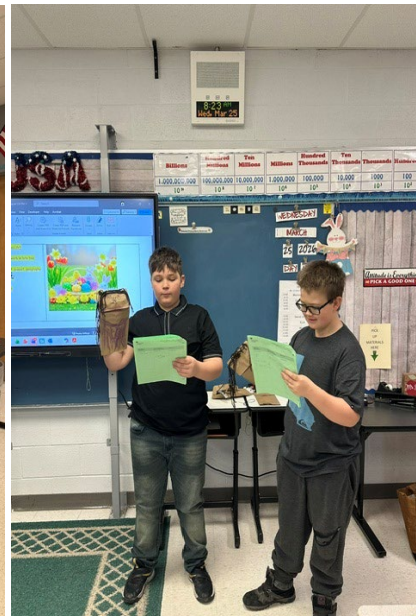
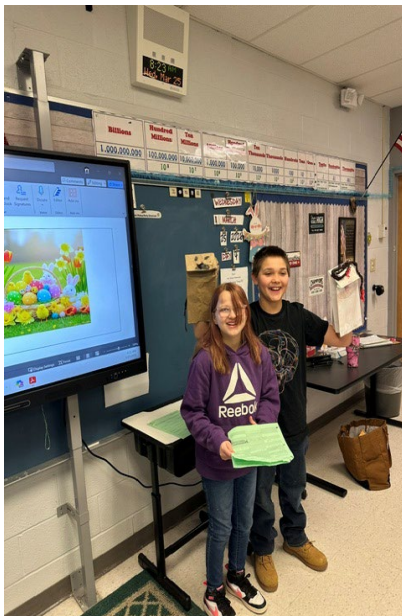
-The Fourth Grade Team

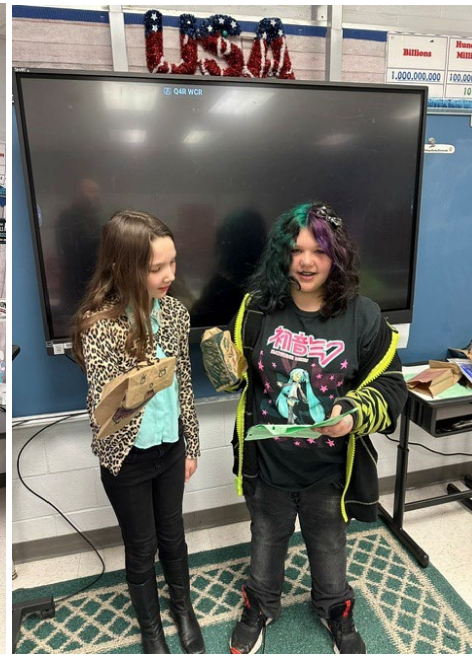
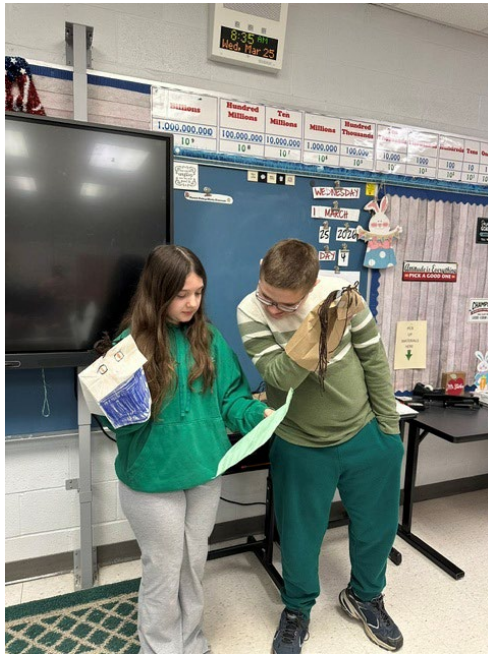
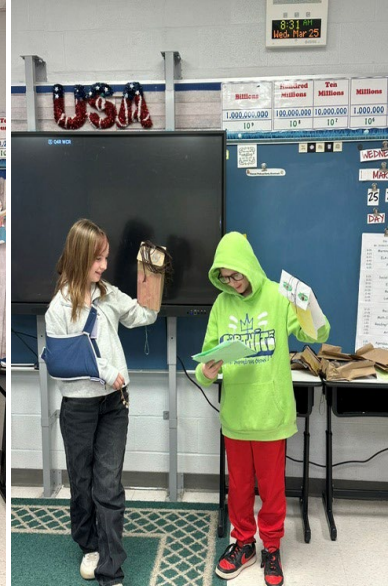
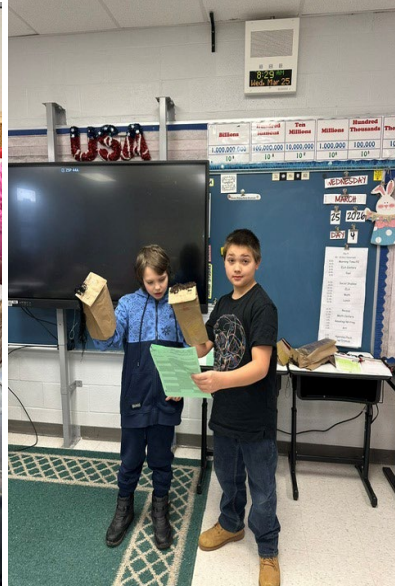
5TH GRADE

Greetings fifth grade families! It's hard to believe we are wrapping up the month of April and are heading into the home stretch of the year! A lot is going on in May and June, from a field trip planned to Animal Adventure, the school picnic, and then the much anticipated fifth grade graduation! Details for all of those events will be rolling out over the next few weeks. As for class, in ELA we finished our novel *Esperanza Rising*, and then started review for the ELA state test. We use released state test questions and passages to familiarize the students with the layout and wording of the actual state test. We hope that helps reduce their anxiety a bit! In Math, we are working with decimals and learning how to multiply and divide with decimals. Next week, we will introduce adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing with fractions. In Science, we have been learning about fossil fuels—from their origins to how they are useful to people. We are discussing ways to conserve fossil fuels (to help the environment AND to save us money in utility bills) and how renewable sources are an alternative. We learned about biomass and are currently conducting an experiment to see how biomass releases biogas into the atmosphere as it decomposes. Finally, in Social Studies, we are working on our geography centers to learn

about different landforms, water forms, and regions of the United States. Ask your child about all the interesting topics we are learning!

-The Fifth Grade Team





12:1:1

This month the class learned about Earth Day and were able to do an art project making their own Earth. They also learned about a man named Thomas Dambo who is a recycle artist. He makes Trash Trolls that are big sculptures made out of recycled items and puts them in places like forest and meadow. The students were amazed by these trolls and learned how it is important to recycle and appreciate nature.

-The 12:1:1 Team

EXTENDED STUDIES

POOL

In aquatics class this month PreK has been working on putting their elementary back stroke together, arms and legs. They have been taking their time and really trying to get them to work at the same time. Kindergarten and the 1st grade students have continued

working on diving. The dives they have learned are the seated dive and the kneeling dive. They have been really enjoying the challenge. The 2nd-5th grade students have continued to work on diving as well. The dives they have learned are seated dive, kneeling dive, compact dive, and standing dive. Most students are focused on the standing dive. They are working on keeping their chin tucked and remembering their safety hands. They are trying to be as close to a 45-degree angle when they enter the water. The students have been doing an amazing job working hard and trying their best.

Community open swim

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:30-7:30pm. The fee per session is \$2.00 per adult and \$1.00 per student. Children under 5 years of age are free. Everyone is welcome! First graders and under must be accompanied by an adult. Also, please note that small children (kindergarten and under) must have an adult in the water with them.

-Mrs. Sheldon

STEAM

Hello Afton Families!

Our STEAM classes have been full of excitement lately!

Some of our older students had the chance to head outside and test out different drones—such a fun hands-on experience! Meanwhile, our younger learners are getting ready to plant their very own sunflower seeds.

Our 2nd graders are diving into the world of landforms, while 1st and 3rd grade students are exploring their computers and discovering all the amazing things they can create using PowerPoint!

We are having so much fun learning, creating, and exploring in STEAM.

-Ms. L





ART

Our artists have been busy exploring new materials, techniques, and creative ideas across all grade levels:

PreK & Kindergarten

Students have been learning all about **texture**—how it looks, how it feels, and how artists use it to make artwork more interesting. To wrap up the unit, they pressed the bottoms of their shoes into clay to create **textured medallions** and **clay sea turtles**. These projects let them experiment with tactile surfaces in a hands-on, memorable way.

1st Grade

First graders have been studying **space in art** and experimenting with **color mixing** to create depth. They recently completed vibrant **3D still life flower paintings**, using overlapping shapes and shading to make their artwork pop. They are now beginning their **clay form** unit, where they'll explore how artists turn shapes into three-dimensional forms.

2nd Grade

Second graders learned how to roll and attach **clay coils** to build their own **coil pots**, practicing patience, craftsmanship, and structural thinking. Their next unit will take them under the sea as they learn about the **Great Barrier Reef**. Students will create **tunnel books**, using layers, scale, and perspective to show different ways artists create the illusion of space.

3rd Grade

Third graders have been working like designers. After sketching and planning their ideas, they are now constructing **clay planters** based on their own original designs. This unit blends creativity with problem-solving as they consider structure, function, and decoration.

4th Grade

Fourth graders just completed their **woven wampum belts**, inspired by traditional storytelling through pattern and symbol. Each belt represents something meaningful to the artist. Next, they will begin their clay unit, designing and building **shelf-sitter sculptures** that balance creativity with engineering.

5th Grade

Fifth graders wrapped up a unique **crayon transfer technique**, exploring how pressure and layering can create bold, textured images. Their next project will focus on observation and detail as they begin drawing their **state bird and state flower**, combining research with artistic interpretation.



Connect to Your Child's Artsonia Portfolio

If you have not yet connected your child's Artsonia account, there is still time. This digital portfolio is **free**, and it will follow your child throughout their years at Afton, allowing you to see their growth and creativity over time.

Family Invite to Connect — Afton Elementary School

Parents and guardians can connect to our school on Artsonia to receive updates about your child's artwork and classroom activity.

To connect:

- Scan the QR code with your phone's camera



OR

- Visit www.artsonia.com/parents and enter the Parent Code:

Parent Code: R4XYCH5P

You can also use this direct link: <https://www.artsonia.com/connect/R4XYCH5P>

Ice Cream/Dance Reading Incentive Party







INCOME ELIGIBILITY FORMS – YOUR PARTICIPATION MATTERS!

Even if school meals are free, completing the Income Eligibility Form is still very important. This form helps your district qualify for funding that supports student programs, classroom resources, technology, academic support, and more. By filling out the application, you're helping ensure that all students continue to receive the services they need.

Online Application Instructions

You can now complete the Income Eligibility Form online using MySchoolApps, a simple and confidential website that guides you through every step.

- Takes only a few minutes
- Completely secure
- One application per household
- Submissions go directly to the district for review

APPLY NOW!

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why fill this out if meals are free?**
It helps determine school funding for important student programs.
- **What does the application impact?**
Academic programs, technology, student services, activities, and grant eligibility.
- **What if families don't complete it?**
Districts may receive less funding, and some programs could be reduced.
- **Is the form hard or time-consuming?**
No! It's quick, confidential, and only takes a few minutes.

Why Your Application Matters

When families complete the application, it helps your district:

- Receive important state and federal funding
- Qualify for grants supporting after-school programs, summer learning, and enrichment
- Support student services, including counseling and academic intervention
- Maintain funding for technology, classroom supplies, and educational programs
- Continue providing strong support for all students in our schools



**Ready to Complete
the Application?**

**Scan the QR code to
get started.**

For questions, please contact
your School Lunch Manager.

**Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete
this important form.**

Your participation helps support students, classrooms,
and programs across our school communities.