IN THIS ISSUE

- What’s Up This Week
- Lunch
- Pick Up Original Works
- Committee Announcements
- TNS Spotlight
- Kinship Campaign
- Nominate STEM Teacher
- Volunteer Corner
- Stay Connected

WHAT'S UP THIS WEEK

TUESDAY 12/17
Grants Committee, 8:30am
Auction Committee, 8:30am

WEDNESDAY 12/18
Art Committee, 8:30am

THURSDAY, 12/19
Garden to Cafe
PTA General Meeting, 8:30am

LUNCH

MONDAY 12/16
Stuffed Shells in Marinara Sauce
Fresh Broccoli with Garlic & Oil
Salad Bar Garden Greens

TUESDAY 12/17
Peach BBQ Chicken Drumstick
Honey Corn Muffin
Slow Roasted Carrots
Salad Bar Traditional

WEDNESDAY 12/18
Brunch Specialty Breakfast Sandwich
Home Fries
Grab-n-Go Chicken Caesar Salad
Salad Bar Burger/Sandwich Fixin’s
FRIDAY, 12/20
Garden Committee, 8:30am
SING, 8:45am

MONDAY 12/23 TO WEDNESDAY JAN 1
WINTER RECESS – SCHOOLS CLOSED

THURSDAY 12/19
Vegetarian Chili Served with Rice
Roasted Zucchini
Fresh New York Apples
Grab-n-Go Chicken Caesar Salad
Salad Bar Taco Bar Featuring Roasted Tomato Salsa

FRIDAY 12/20
Pizza
Assorted Toppings
Green Garden Salad
Salad Bar Pizza Toppings Featuring Balsamic Chickpea Salad

ORIGINAL WORKS ARE HERE

Pick up Original Works this week at the PTA table in the lobby!

Tuesday 12/17: Morning drop off (7:45–8:45 am) and Afternoon pick up (2:30–3:15pm)
Wednesday 12/18: Morning drop off (7:45–8:45am) Afternoon pick up (2:30–3:15pm)
Thursday 12/19: Morning drop off (7:45–8:45am)
Friday 12/20: LAST CHANCE Afternoon pick up (2:30–3:15pm)

ART COMMITTEE

Save the Date for the first annual ART DAY on Saturday, Jan. 25th. We’re putting together a great day of hands-on art-making for our kids. From poetry to painting, photography, and more, there will be a range of fun workshops for all.

If you or someone you know have a skill/craft/art that you would like to share, please let us know! We’re specifically looking for dancers, musicians, drama, and other visual arts such as origami, bookmaking, and mixed media. You can contact Amy at apoueymirou@gmail.com AND fill out this form here. Haven’t led a workshop for kids before? No worries! We can help with the formatting of the workshop to ensure it's a success!
We'll also be having a Committee Meeting this Wednesday, Dec. 18th at drop-off in small cafeteria. Please join us! We need all the help we can get for our ambitious event next month.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

We had a wonderfully successful Hour of Code event last Wednesday featuring on- and off-line activities introducing students to computational thinking. Many thanks to Cheryl Wolf and Freddy Pena (Dad to Max 3rd grade) for organizing and facilitating the various activities.

Also, a shout out for our wonderful Librarian, Cheryl Wolf, who was recognized by the New York City School Librarians Association as the "Spotlight Librarian" for the month of November. As [this announcement](#) noted, we are all very lucky to have her as our librarian!

ECO COMMITTEE

DECEMBER GREEN TIP

This month is all about setting your intentions for the upcoming year! There are tons of ways to cut down on your own personal waste and make the planet a better place for everyone! This chart has ideas for something you can do for almost each week of 2020. Even if you only do 1 or 2 of these, it'd be a great step in the right direction!

YOU can do it!
–The Eco Committee

The Dead Caterpillar:  
a True Story about how a Library Book and the School Garden  
Inspired Science Curriculum

by Emily Hartzell

the book

On the first day of school, Cheryl showed me a picture book called *The Dead Bird*, by Margaret Wise Brown. I was excited, because Margaret Wise Brown also wrote *Goodnight Moon*, which is my favorite children's book. In this book, a group of children discover a dead bird in the woods. They pick it up and notice that its body is getting cold and hard. They feel sad that it died. They write a song for it. Then they bury it in the ground and decorate its grave with flowers.

I loved the way the book was both matter-of-fact and reverent. Death always comes up in Science class, so I checked out the book and kept it on my desk.

the caterpillar

One morning a few weeks later, Karen, the parent who cares for the garden, ran into my room.

"Emily!" she cried. "There are caterpillars in the garden! Do you have something you can keep them in? If we leave them there, they'll probably be eaten by birds!"

I found my butterfly enclosure and followed her downstairs to the garden. On the way, we kept talking. Karen said, "They must be swallowtail caterpillars."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I found them on the fennel. Swallowtail butterflies always lay their eggs on fennel, since that's what their caterpillars love to eat," she explained. This reminded me of monarch butterflies, who lay their eggs on milkweed. By now we had reached the garden, and I followed Karen over to the fennel plants. At first I didn't see the caterpillars, because they were so well camouflaged. But once I saw them, I couldn't tear my eyes away.

They were beautiful! About an inch long, they were pale green with black stripes, and black and yellow spots. With their two rows of little legs gripping the fennel stems, they looked like subway trains on an elevated track.
We cut the fennel stems that had the caterpillars on them. We also cut some parsley, since swallowtail caterpillars also eat parsley. I brought the enclosure back up to my room and filled a little beaker with water and tucked the stems into the water so the fennel would stay fresh for the caterpillars.

They ate all day, and they grew fast!

Each day, on the way to my classroom, I'd stop in the garden to cut a few stems of fresh parsley and fennel for the caterpillars, and almost every time I'd end up finding another caterpillar. Soon, there were five plump striped caterpillars in the enclosure, each of them getting bigger daily. The kids loved checking on them every time they came to Science.

transformation

One morning when I came in, I noticed that the biggest one had transformed overnight into a pale brown, papery pupae. It had spun a little thread like a spider, and used it to suspend itself from the top of the enclosure. It looked like it was resting in a tiny hammock! I showed all my classes a video of the process, and we discovered the pupa actually emerges from WITHIN the caterpillar, bursting through its striped skin and then shimmying out of it, finally knocking it to the floor. The transformation was so shocking that some kids screamed when the head of the caterpillar in the video split open!
One by one, over the next week, the rest of the caterpillars transformed into still, faceless pupae. For some reason, two of them chose to hang their hammocks off of another pupa, so they looked kind of like a bunch of alien grapes. By now, there were just two caterpillars left. Catlin’s class named the smaller one Stripes Candy.

a sad day

When I came in on Monday morning and added some fresh parsley, Stripes Candy fell off his fennel stem and landed on the floor of the enclosure. I picked him up and put him back on, but he was too weak and fell again. I put a piece of parsley next to him there on the floor and hoped he would eat it to gain strength. But later that day, I found him still and lifeless.

Stripes Candy had died.

I looked through the stack of books on my desk to find The Dead Bird, the book I'd checked out of the library on the first day of school. When Catlin’s class came to Science that afternoon, I told them what had happened. Then I read them the story about the children who found the dead bird, sang it a song, and buried it. I asked them if they would like to write a poem for Stripes Candy. They raised their hands, taking turns adding lines to the poem, and this is what they wrote.

Goodbye Caterpillar
by Catlin's Class

Oh Caterpillar, you're dead.

You can't move
You can't eat
You can't drink.

You can't play with your caterpillar friends.

You were lying on the branch in the morning, and you were lying flat on the floor when Emily came back.

Oh Caterpillar, Oh Caterpillar

Your beauty was amazing.

Oh Caterpillar, I'm so sad you can't be a butterfly.
the funeral
The next time Catlin's class came to Science, we laid Stripes Candy in a toothpick box and carried him down to the garden. We shared memories of him, read the poem aloud together, and buried him in the garden, wrapped in parsley. We picked a few flowers to decorate his grave.

epilogue
One day I ran into Karen in the garden, and she said "How are those caterpillars doing?"

"They've all turned into pupae," I told her. "Except for one," I added sadly, thinking about poor Stripes Candy.

"We better put them in the fridge," she said.

"The fridge?" I asked. "Why?"

"It might take them a few weeks to turn into butterflies, and by then it will be too cold to release them in the garden," she explained. "There won't be any flower nectar for them to drink. If we'd left them in the garden and they'd turned into pupae, they wouldn't have hatched until the spring when it's warm."

"They would have stayed out there through the whole winter?" I asked, shivering.

"Yup," she replied. "It's called 'overwintering.'"

"Wow, so by putting them in the fridge, we're kind of tricking them into thinking they're outside, and it's winter," I concluded.

"Exactly," she confirmed.

So that's where they are. . . in a plastic container with holes in the lid, at the back of the third floor fridge, behind a bag of bagels. I can't wait to bring them back to the Science room once there are flowers blooming in the garden in the spring.

I hope they all turn into butterflies.
Thank you to all TNS families who have already given -- please forward this message to family and friends! Don't forget to ask your employer about matching donations.


STEM TEACHER AWARD

NBC Star Teacher Awards
NBC 4 New York and Telemundo 47 have once again announced the Star Teacher Awards. Do you have a favorite S.T.E.M. teacher that you’d like to recognize? The application for nominations is currently live through December 31. Please visit nbcnewyork.com/weatherkids or telemundo47.com/ninosdeltiempo to nominate our next class of “Star Teachers”. The winners will be announced in March 2020 and receive a special cash prize for their classrooms.

Just a Note

We want to make sure that people are hearing about important community news and events. We have worked to improve PTA communication -- through our weekly newsletter, social media, tabling on the ground floor, and putting up posters around the school for specific events.
In the past, backpack mail has been another way to communicate with parents, but many of us have expressed a strong interest in conserving the use of paper for environmental reasons and we have heard that most parents prefer electronic communication. We are also mindful that backpack mail frequently takes teachers' precious time to organize. Not to mention, some of us have experienced the consequences of imperfect mail-carriers (our wonderful children!) and have had backpack mail arrive soggy and crumpled beyond legibility (it has happened!).

Over the next few months, we will be surveying parents (both through online and offline methods) to identify the best ways reach them and, based on that research, will develop a more complete policy around PTA communications. In the meantime, backpack mail is reserved for official school communications that cannot be effectively delivered any other way. If you have information to share with the school community, please email ptaparentengagement@tnsny.org and have it added to the weekly newsletter or ask how best to share that information with the school.

Let us know any questions.

YOU GUYS! Thank you for everything (and I do mean e v e r y t h i n g!) You baked and popped popcorn and made a Movie Night and a Halloween Party and a Holiday Fair! You chaperoned field trips and brought snacks and shelved books in the library and worked in the garden and went to meetings and shared thoughts and smiles and learned names and played "Monster" after school on the playground with other people's kids and did any one of the million tiny things that no one sees or says thank you for but that make this school function and thrive and all I can say is THANK YOU A THOUSAND TIMES OVER!

Have a wonderful break and we'll see you in the New Year!
We're on Instagram!
@neighborhoodgram

https://www.facebook.com/groups/TNSNY
TNS Facebook Group for current families only
View the livestream of PTA meetings here!

Our Facebook Group and Instagram Page is private and for current TNS families only
All others are welcome to follow our public Facebook Page
https://www.facebook.com/TheNeighborhoodSchool/

Please submit announcements by Thursday  ptaparentengagement@tnsny.org

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