

ALABAMA WALDORF SCHOOL

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Math & Local Geography Reviews Ms. Downs' 4th Grade

We learned a lot in this math block! We started out with review of topics from math blocks last year – long multiplication and long division. As always, things are easier the second or third time around! As we went over these processes again, I also introduced some of the math terminology that goes along with them. We practiced our math facts with many different games, especially ones that allowed us to practice multiplication facts. Most of the students know at least half their tables in and out of order now; some know all of their tables well!

We covered many new topics as well. The students learned to factor numbers – both listing out all of the factors and breaking a number down into its prime factors. We used the lists of factors to determine whether numbers were prime, abundant, deficient, or perfect. We found that there are many deficient numbers (whose factors add up to less than the number itself). Multiples of twelve tend to be abundant numbers (factors add up to more than the number). Perfect numbers – where the factors add up to the number itself – are very rare. The students also learned about the Sieve of Eratosthenes, which is helpful in finding prime numbers. We wrapped up the topic by learning to find the Greatest Common Factor and the Least Common Multiple. Since I have always had trouble keeping these two straight, I tried to find an image that would help the students remember them. We used the image of a tree – with the factors being roots and the multiples being branches. When comparing two 'trees,' we always wanted to find the number they had in common that was closest to the tree trunk. If we were looking for the Greatest Common Factor, we looked at the roots; if we were looking for the Least Common Multiple, we looked at the branches. I also brought in Venn diagrams as we looked at the factors or multiples that they had in common. All of this work with factoring will benefit us greatly in later math blocks as we get into fractions.

Throughout this block, we continued our study of the Native Americans with stories and artistic activities. The students have been working on creating various useful items out of gourds – bowls, dippers, jugs, and cups. I have been quite impressed with their work and cannot wait to see the finished products. Since the gourd project has taken longer than expected, we have not begun some of the other craft projects that I had in mind, but we will move on to these when we finish with the gourds. Next up will be moccasins!

Toward the end of this block, we went on a field trip to the Anniston Museum of Natural History and Mt. Cheaha. The students loved the museum and were quite excited to see many of the exhibits. The museum had some very nice fossils of many of the creatures we had discussed in our studies of ancient Alabama. Interestingly, many of the fossils were from different parts of Russia! For a short time that day, we were also the tallest people in Alabama. We ate lunch on Mt. Cheaha, then climbed up into the tower to enjoy the highest vantage point in the state.