

NEWS FROM ACT

Jenison ACT Newsletter | January 20, 2023

A Message from Dr. Clark

I hope these past two weeks spent getting back into the routine of school have been great for all of our ACT students and families! After a holiday break that found my family and I dealing with illness, I decided to start 2023 off with a bang with a foot fracture. Talk about bad luck! The students have been such big helpers for me since we've had a busy few weeks with lessons that involve a lot of prep work. They are true gems!

I wanted to take a moment to share a big THANK YOU for all of the kind well wishes, messages, emails, cards, and gifts that I received around the holidays. I'm a bit behind on my personal thank-yous, but I wanted to say how much they all mean to me. I feel so honored to lead these amazing young people, and your support does not go unnoticed. Thank you!

General Class Update

We are starting our 19th week of ACT classes next week, and students are well into their second units. I hope your child enjoys sharing his/her learning with you on ACT days. Please be on the lookout for "artifacts" to come home showcasing our learning endeavors. I also usually ask students to share what they learned each week with someone at home – I hope you enjoy hearing about our classes and have fruitful conversations that follow!

We've had quite a few parent volunteer opportunities as of late, and I wanted to send a quick reminder that it is important for all parents to have

the JPS volunteer waiver on file with the school.

Thank you for your help and cooperation with this.

Please read on to hear more about all things ACT.

Best,

Julie



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GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

3rd Grade

After finishing up our Oregon Trail unit with an epic feast (and a fun activity to determine how well our pioneers survived the first winter in Oregon), we jumped right in to our next unit entitled *You Are What You Eat: An Introduction to Food Science*.

This unit began with us investigating our own personal food preferences while learning a little about human anatomy. We completed a Jelly Bean Science lab in which we investigated taste and smell, and we connected this back to how our own unique food choices. We then set our sights at learning about the digestive system – specifically learning how our food is broken down into the nutrients we need to live and survive. Students made hands-on models of the digestive system. This week, we spent more time learning about what nutrients are, the six essential nutrients our bodies need, and what can happen when we are nutrient deficient.

All of this work was in preparation for our next two sessions in which we explore more specifically the *macronutrients* (protein, carbohydrates, and fat) that our bodies use for energy. Next week, I'll be demonstrating the steps of the scientific method and the procedures that we'll use for our food nutrient testing. In this lab, scheduled for **January 30** (Monday students) and **February 1** (Wednesday students) the students will test various food items for the presence of these nutrients using chemical reagents. I will provide a variety of food items to test, but students are also welcome to bring along snacks they are curious about on their class day.

Thanks to all of the volunteers who signed up for this in-class activity. Please be on the lookout for an email from me with more information in the near future.



All smiles at our Oregon Trail feast! I loved seeing the teamwork and friendships being built as we kicked off our year!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

3rd Grade Continued



Oregon Trail Feast Fun!



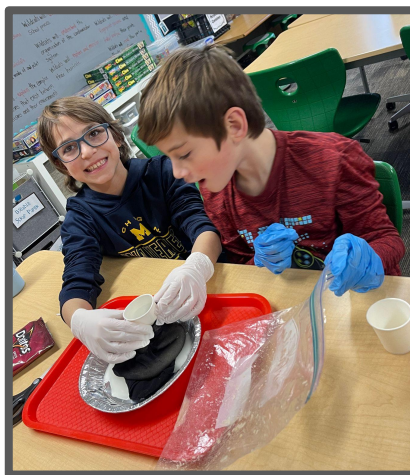
Thank you so much for your help with food donations! We had an amazing feast!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

3rd Grade Continued



Fractured foot buddies!



Students had a fun time learning about the digestive system in a hands-on (albeit a little messy) activity last week!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

4th Grade

Our mini-golf extravaganzas that were held in December were a hit, and it was great to see all of our hard calculations and work come to life. Thank you to all of the parents and grandparent visitors who joined in for this fun event. It is great to have an authentic audience with which to share our learning.

The second unit for fourth graders this year is entitled *Owl Pellet Ecology*. We have spent the last five class sessions learning about birds of prey, their physical characteristics, behavioral traits, and – most specifically – their unique digestive tracts.

Last week, we successfully dissected owl pellets (regurgitated remains that an owl cannot digest) and this week, we spent time analyzing the bones, graphing the numbers we found in our pellets, comparing the rodent bones to those in our own bodies, and reassembling the skeletons. This work took a lot of patience and determination as students looked for very small, minute details and differences in the individual bones. I was very impressed and proud of all of the students' grit and hard work.

In three weeks, on **Friday, February 10**, we'll be headed to the Outdoor Discovery Center to tour the *Birds of Prey* exhibit, learn about adaptations that plants and animals make in the winter months, and hopefully snowshoe! Please see the email from me earlier this week if you'd like to sign up to be a chaperone along with other information. As our trip approaches, I'll also send more detailed information via email. Be sure to check out some neat pictures below of all of our hard work!



Check out that amazing golf course! The students' creativity shined!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

4th Grade Continued

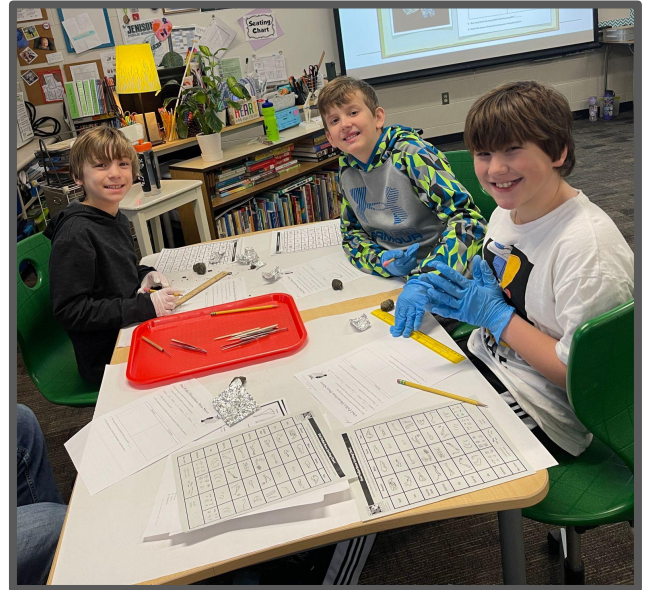
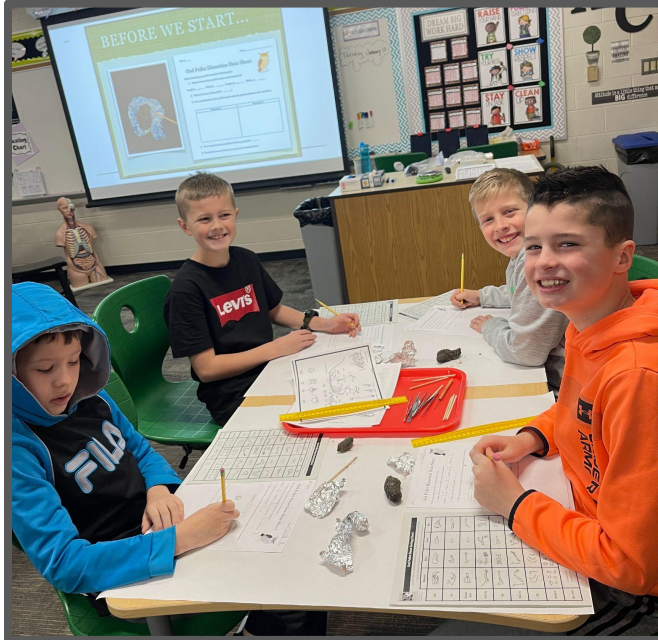


A Pac-Man themed golf course!



GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

4th Grade Continued



Dissection is such a powerful way to learn about the scientific method, how to follow procedures, critical thinking skills such as analyzing and predicting, and it is engaging and fun!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

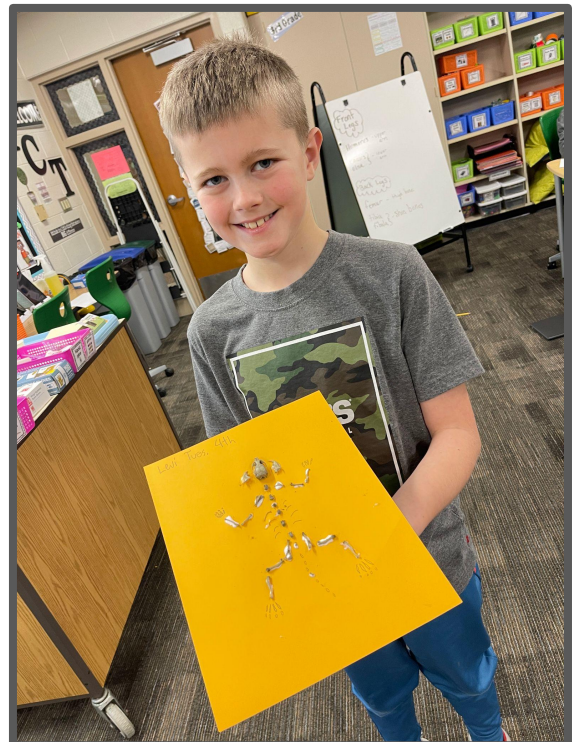
4th Grade Continued



We love when family members can join us in class!



Students worked hard to reconstruct the skeletons of the prey animal their owl last ate. We even found evidence of two birds inside pellets this year!



GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

5th Grade

After we wrapped up our *Surfing with Sharks* unit, the fifth grade students and I dove into our second unit of the school year entitled *Mystery Disease: Diagnosis of Symptoms & Experiences*. This unit finds the students simulating what it is like to be medical doctors with the task of eventually “diagnosing” a “patient” and coming up with a reasonable treatment plan.

Our time so far has been spent working through various medical school “rotations” in which we have been learning about the various systems of the body. So far, we have covered the Circulatory, Respiratory, Nervous, and Musculoskeletal systems. Each week, I have designed hands-on/interactive activities that allow students to explore the various body systems. This week was our big chicken wing dissection! This was a first for me – I’m always looking for new ways to amp up our lessons! On Wednesday, we welcomed former JPS science teacher and administrator, Mrs. Donna Bergeon, to our classes as she shared her wealth of knowledge about the chicken wing and how to complete the dissection. It was fascinating to see the tendons and ligaments. The students had a blast getting the chicken wing to “flap” by moving the muscles (and thus moving the bones!). What’s more, Mrs. Bergeon and I were very impressed with their patience and determination to complete all steps of the dissection. I hope you heard all about it at home!

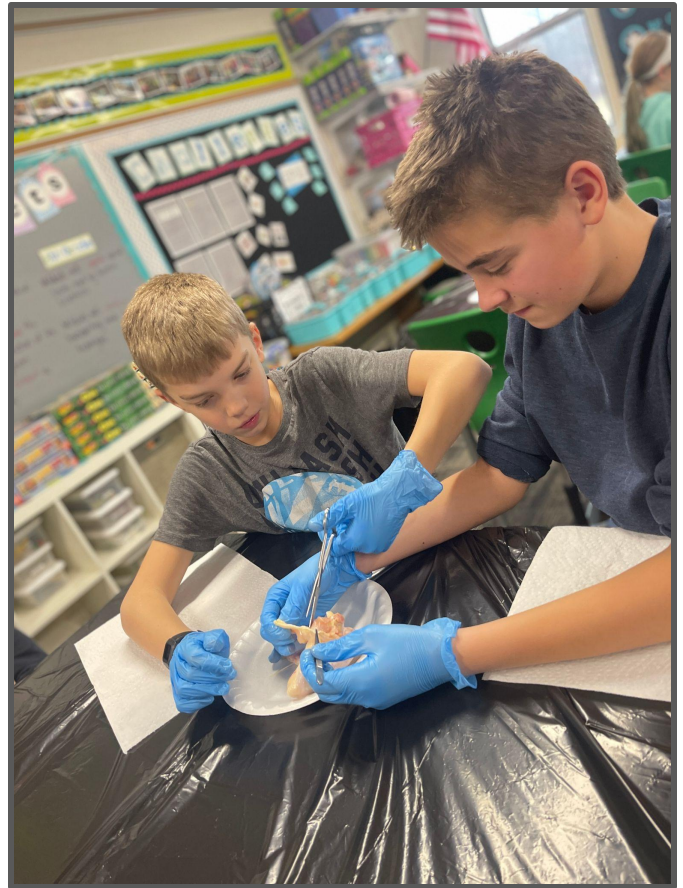
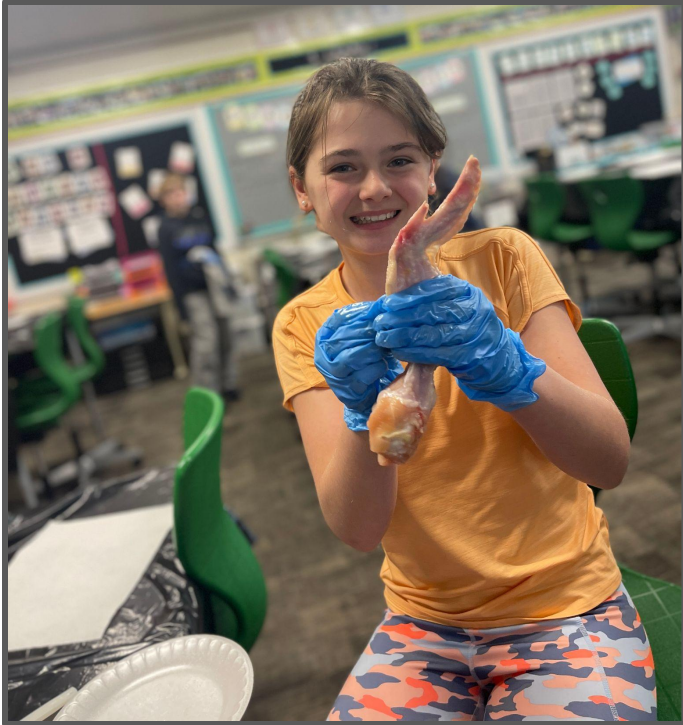
Next week, we will tackle the digestive system and I will introduce students to their final project/simulation in a few weeks.



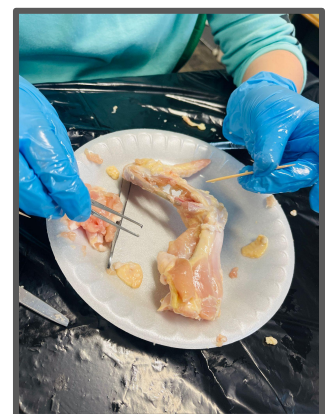
Our shark-themed *Cake Wars* was a fun way to celebrate all of the hard work from our research project websites!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

5th Grade Continued

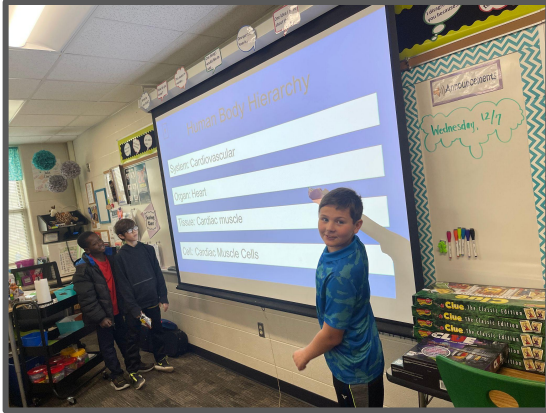


Chicken wing dissections were fascinating! The students jumped right in and were so curious throughout the entire thing. Great work!

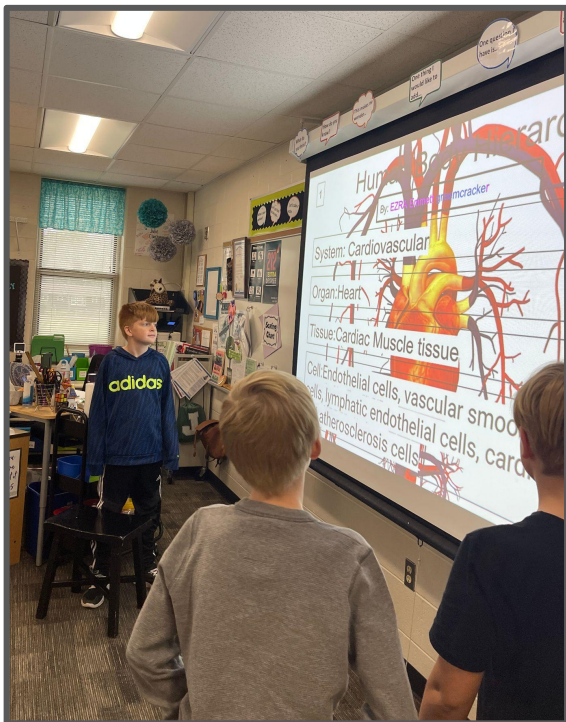


GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

5th Grade Continued



To the left: Students started this unit breaking up into teams to research the hierarchy of each human body system we planned to study. They then presented these to the class. We try to include many opportunities for public speaking in ACT!



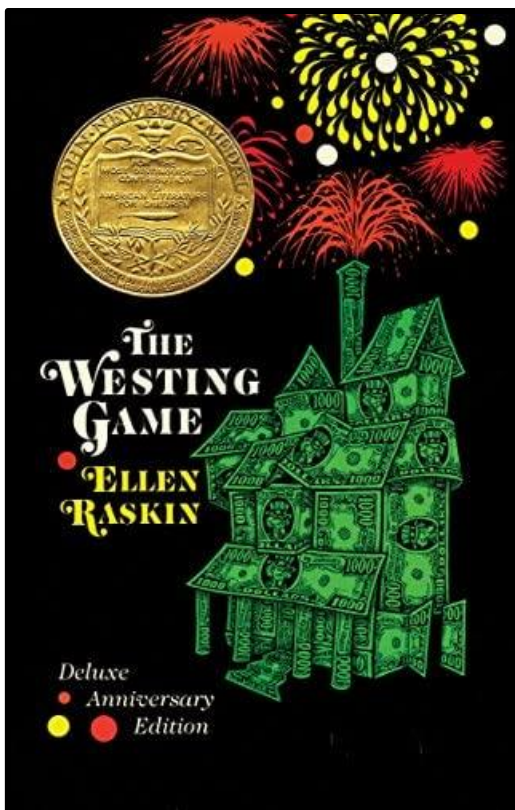
A special thanks goes out to Mrs. Donna Bergeon! Her heart for Jenison Public Schools, our students, and our community is huge. She is a treasure!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

6th Grade

Sixth grade ACT students did a phenomenal job on their final presentations for our *Limnology* unit, and we are now well into our second unit of the school year: *Forensic Science Sleuths*. This unit has been a blast so far as it is pretty high interest and lends itself well to many hands-on, exciting lessons. We kicked off this unit with an ACT classic: the *Escape Room*, and then spent a few weeks building our background knowledge about crime scene basics. We spent one week discussing circumstantial (testimonial) evidence and the problems that are inherent in eyewitness testimony, then, we set our sites on further investigating direct, physical evidence. So far, the students have taken their fingerprints, explored handwriting evidence, and chromatography (the separation of mixtures into their individual components for the purpose of identifying the substance). Next week, we will learn about blood typing and DNA evidence as we work our way to our final crime scene project.

Accompanying this unit we are reading an amazing *whodunnit* mystery called The Westing Game. Hopefully your child has shared a little bit about the plot so far, including the character he/or she is reading. We are reading this novel as a Reader's Theater, and it has been exciting seeing the students get into character. I LOVE this story, and it offers a lot for us to digest as readers: *predicting, inferring, red herrings, characterization, plot* and so much more. Consider asking your child more about his/her predictions!

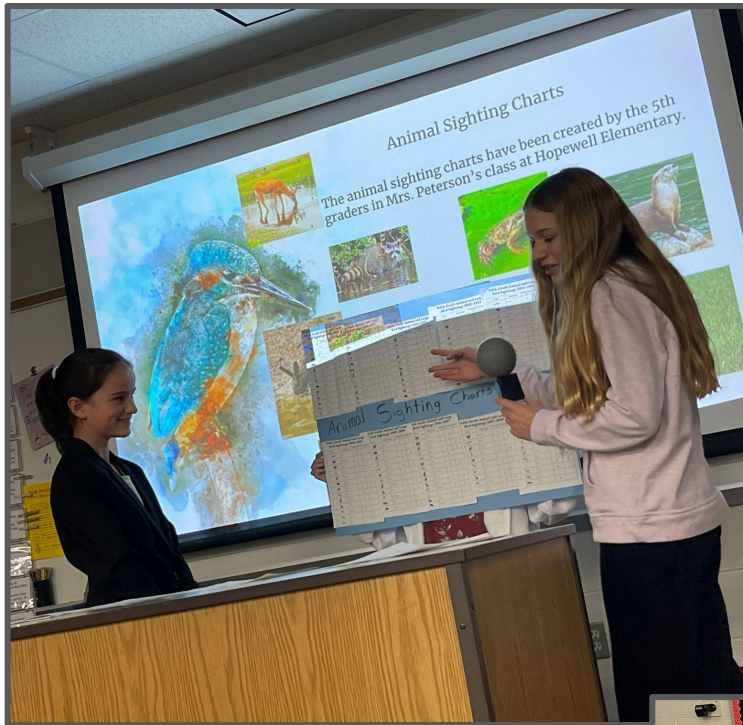


Winner of the John Newbery Medal in 1979 for its story, Ellen Raskin is an amazing storyteller. It's no wonder students are "hooked" as soon as they start to read this fun and intriguing book! Below: Discovering clues with a blacklight!



GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

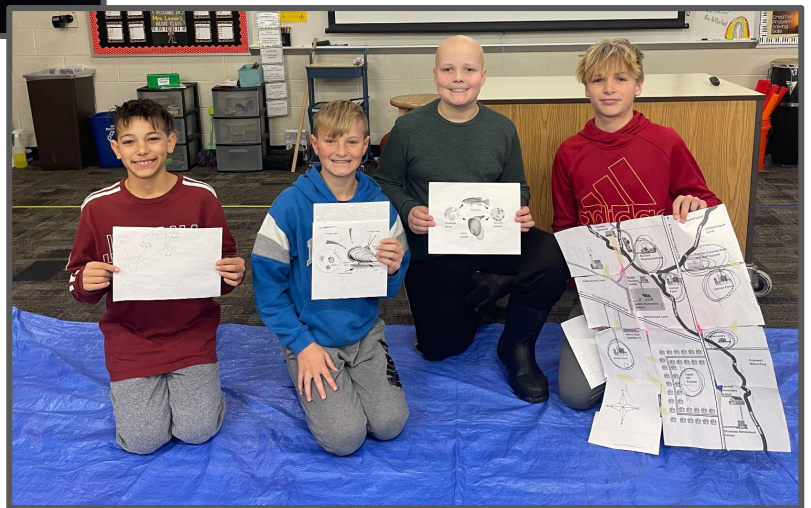
6th Grade Continued



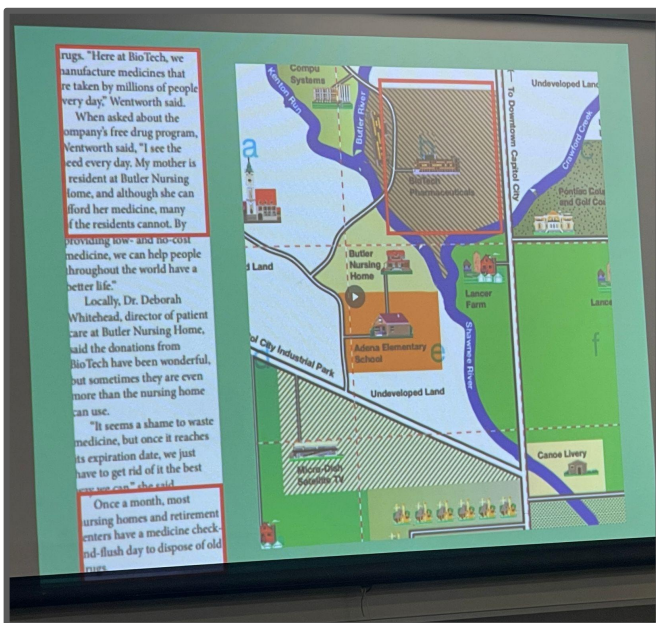
I enjoy watching students be creative! Many groups had fun creating props and visuals to support their presentation.

Above: A great group of newscasters!

Below: Students did a fantastic job citing evidence to support their thinking. What a great skill they are learning early in their school career!



The culminating project for our *Limnology* unit involved students creating a presentation to share their theory of why the mussels in the town of Capitol City were disappearing as well as their *action plan* to solve the problem. They were required to *cite evidence* as part of their presentation and include an systematic and researched plan for how to rehabilitate the mussel population. Students were given a choice of how they wanted to present, so we saw a lot of creative products such as skits, newscasts, songs, and more!



GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

6th Grade Continued



Students tried their hands at forensic sketch artistry to showcase how it can be difficult to remember the features of a suspect as well as to draw them!



We kicked off our *Forensic Science Sleuths* unit with a fun Escape Room! Students had to work together as a team using deductive reasoning, logic, and problem solving skills to unlock locks, solve riddles, and "escape the room!" This is by far an ACT favorite!



We Escaped!

GRADE-LEVEL UPDATES

6th Grade Continued

We enjoyed a portion of our one of our beginning classes – in which we learned about deductive and inductive reasoning – playing the classic murder mystery game, *Clue!* Below: Students analyze suspects from our Escape room. Also below: Chromatography in action! This was a great chemistry review as students took notes about mixtures, solutions, solvents, compounds, etc.

