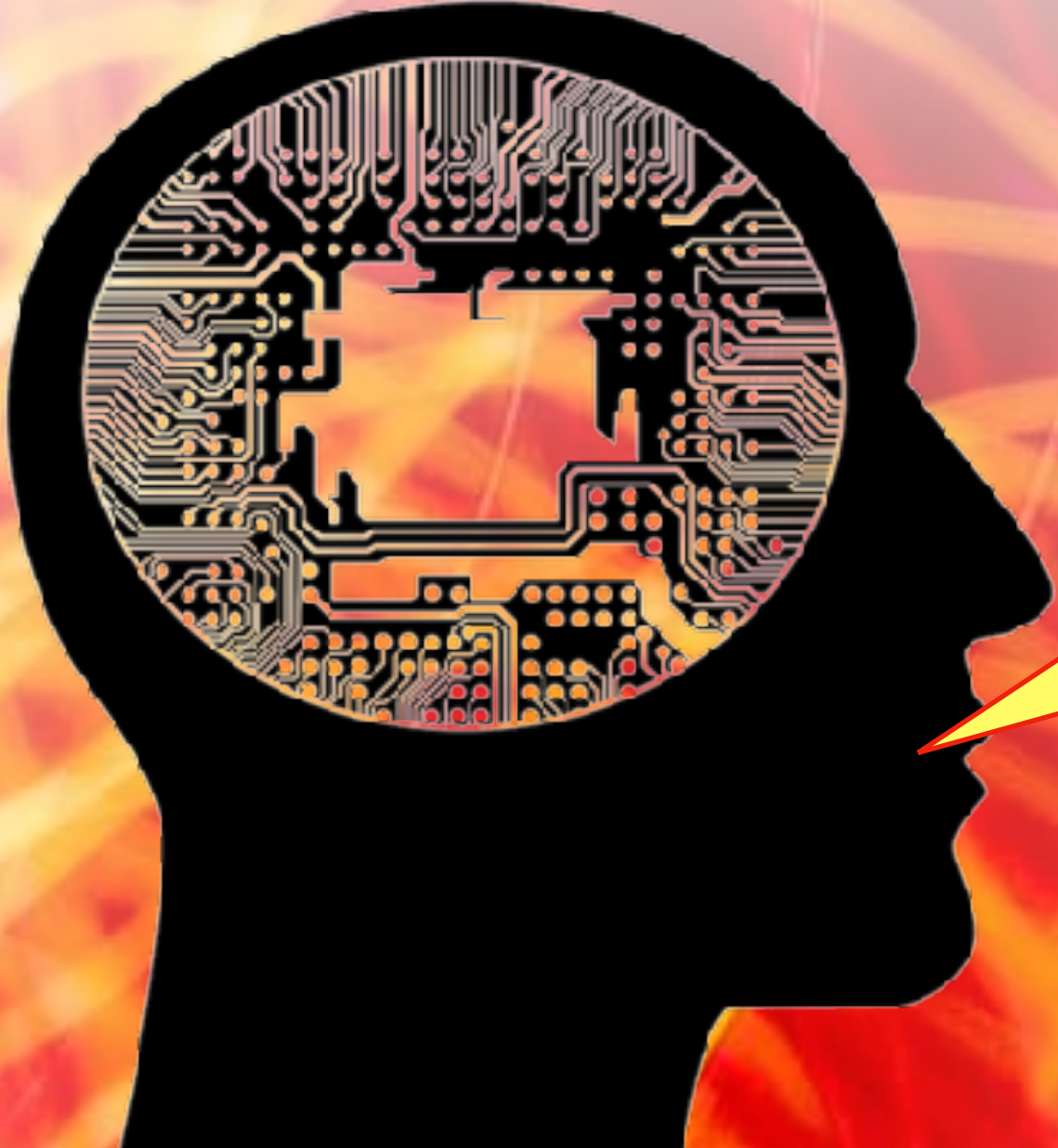


# One teacher's PBL- like projects in a normal classroom (my 5th-grade class)

A black silhouette of a human head in profile, facing right. The interior of the head is filled with a detailed circuit board pattern, symbolizing technology or thought.

Ya don't need a special  
school to do this!



# My Mini PBL Projects

Each mini-project included:

- student interests and choice

Many included:

- teamwork in self-chosen groups
- performance of finished project

All were engaging, challenging, and curriculum related. Most were **ungraded**, so their **engagement was their motivation**.

reading:

writing:

spelling:

math:

social studies:

science:





# Daily Book Talks

To encourage outside-of-class reading for interest and enjoyment, I created a daily **BookTalk period**. Up to three students could present daily, up to three-minutes each. This was not a graded activity.

When finishing a book, they scheduled a book talk. They could do a dramatic reading, report on the author, or write a play or interview script and act it out with classmates. Props, costumes, and sound effects helped make **this a high point of the day**.

For a book talk, students are giving a play or skit based on a book they read.





# Writing



Some years the class **wrote a class newsletter that went out to parents**, other years a school newsletter. Each student could write an article of their interest.

**For a poetry unit**, student wrote original poems, fine-tuned them, typed them on Mac computer, and printed on laser printer in their choice of font. Class **compiled all into a poetry booklet** with a student-designed cover, generating one for each student, looking very professional.

Some years the class **wrote a fiction story expanded to “book” length**. Three best were professionally printed with copy for student and for school library. Over 100 of the bound copies were popular to check out of library. (stole idea from Bethlehem Public Library)



# Weekly Spelling

*stole idea from 3rd grade teacher*

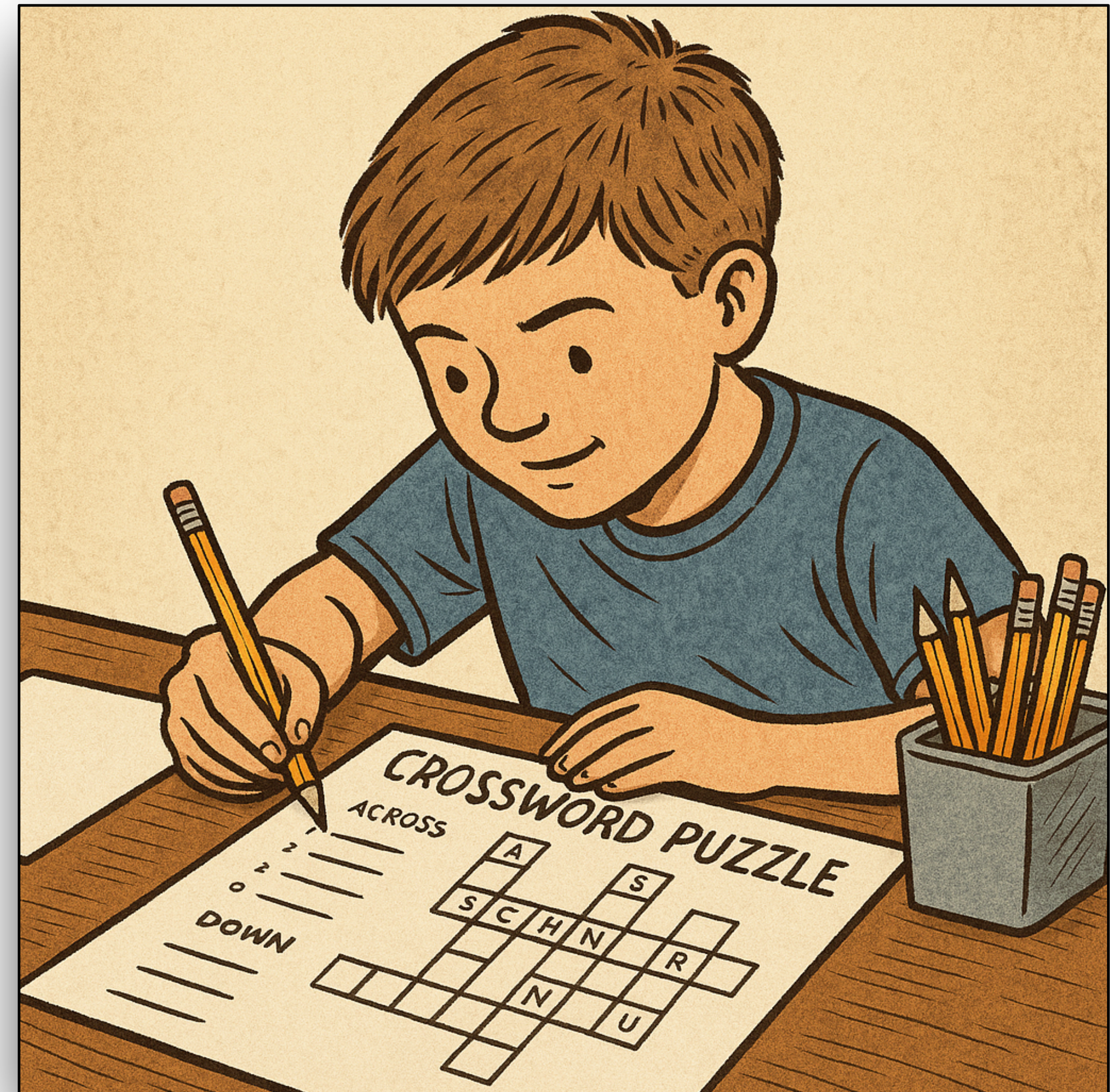
Monday - All students take **pre-test**.

Tuesday - Students pick words they want to learn to **replace pre-test words they got right**.

Wednesday - They used all 20 for **THEIR** words in a **creative activity: a story or crossword**.

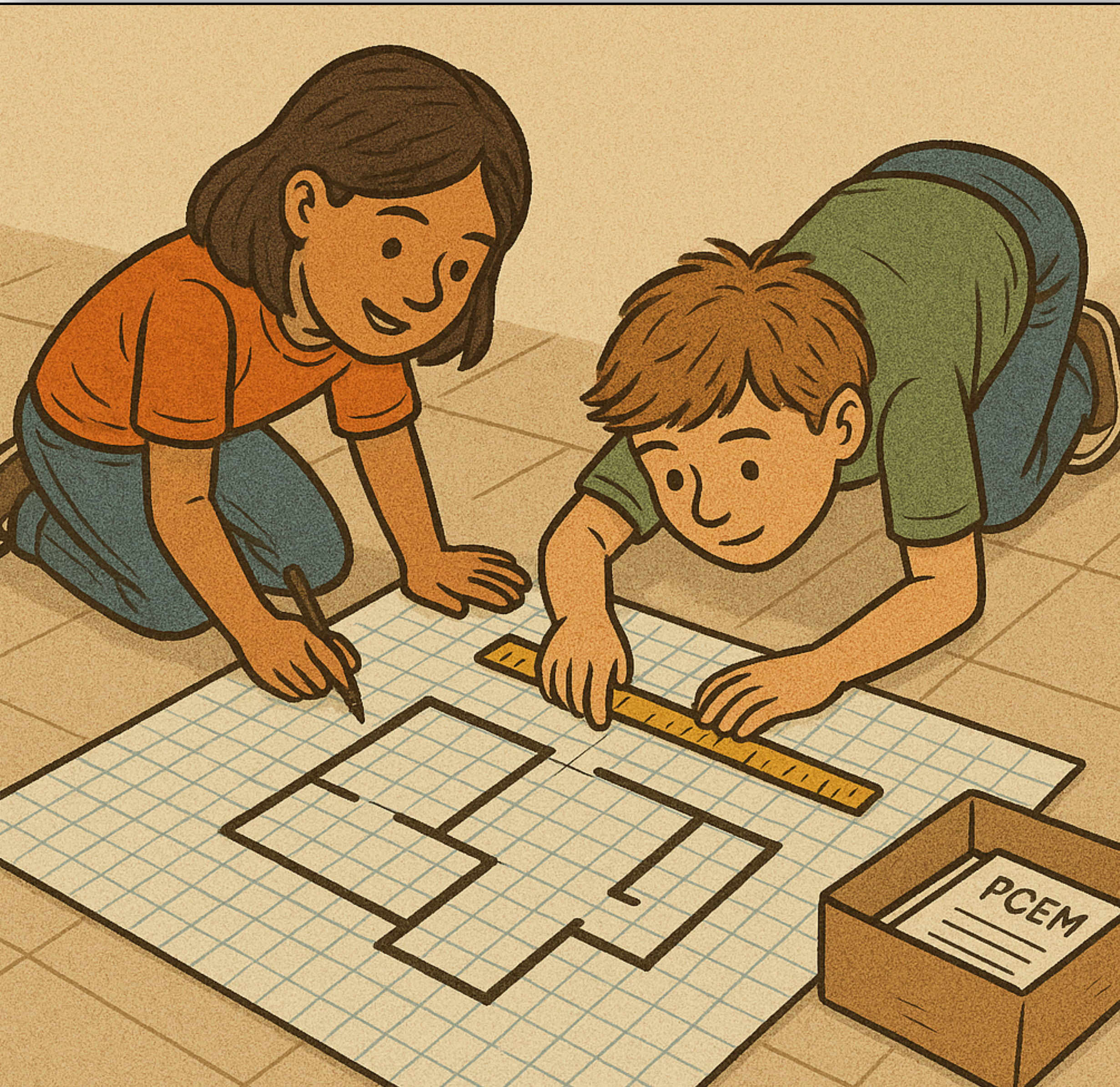
Thursday - They **exchanged crossword** with spelling partner, learning each other's words.

Friday - Partners **gave each other the test** using the 20 unique word list. (only this was graded)





# Math



To start each math unit, **students took the unit pre-test** to see if they already understand the material (and would be bored if they had to re-study it)

Those who demonstrated prior understanding **could choose an alternative challenging project** to replace normal unit work.

**Projects included** math art, designing their perfect bedroom, and creating a floor plan of part of the school (classroom, hall, gym, library, office). The projects were not graded.

**A Surprise!** As units got harder, more students aced the pre-test!!! A student confided that they hated the text and wanted to do the challenging independent projects ... so they studied the unit themselves in advance, learning on their own initiative!



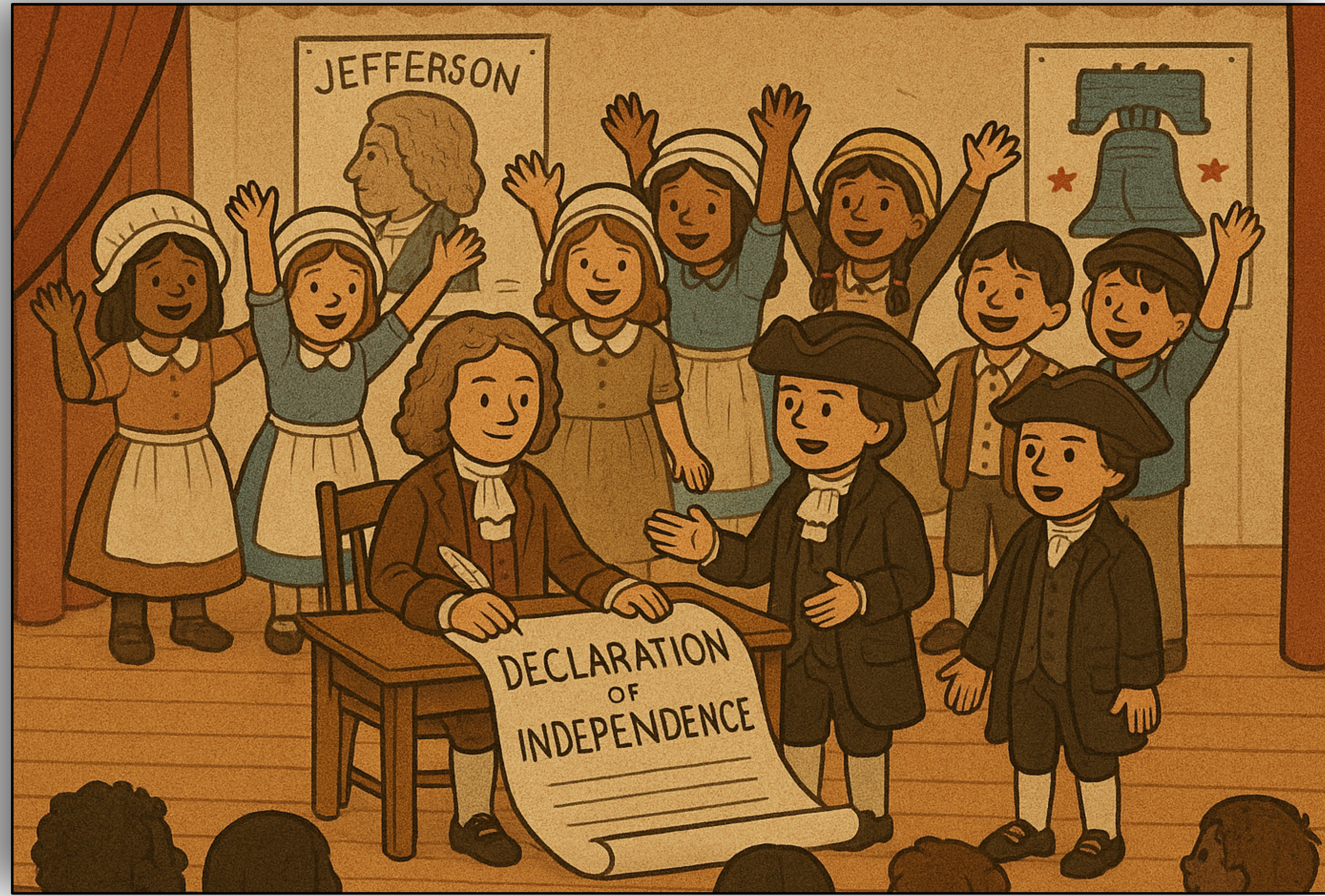
# Social Studies

In 1976 we celebrated the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson wrote the declaration, and we were in the Jefferson School.

As a class, project, students decided they wanted to create a play about Thomas Jefferson. They called it "Jefferson at Jefferson."

They wrote a script, chose actors, created costumes and put on the play for the entire school.

With the help of the art teacher, the class created four large murals, about 4'x6,' illustrating Jefferson's life. The murals were hung above our blackboard and in the school stairwell (and hung there for years).





# Science



Following a personal interest, in middle school student teaching, I organized fossil collecting field trips. In 5th grade, there was a geology unit in science curriculum.

In the context of the devonian age of local sedimentary rocks, introduced devonian sea life and visited two fossil collecting sites. Students collected brachiopod, clam, crinoid, and trilobite fossils and made labeled collections.

As a grad-student project, I created a game called “The Devonians” to help students identify the various samples in their collections. They loved learning complex ideas and names that they would have hated in a textbook.