Class Newsletter October 10, 2014

Dear Friends and Families,

Parent/Teacher conferences are next week. Please be sure to sign up for a conference time (see details below). Next Wednesday is a half day and students are off from school on Thursday and Friday.

Here’s a summary of what we have learned:

**Readers’ Workshop** – **Our learning target for reading is *I can tackle tricky words*.** First grade readers have learned 9 specific strategies to figure out tricky words!  Our goal is for readers to always be reading for meaning; Readers notice when something doesn’t make sense, and then go back and try it again.  First grade readers need to be able to use their strategies flexibly.

**Homework -** Your child’s reading homework bag includes a copy of our reading strategies bookmark so you can help support your independent reader at home.  When they get stuck on a word and ask you to tell them what it says, point them toward these familiar visuals and use the language on the bookmark to prompt them to use their strategies.   **I ask students to read their books to you as many times as possible throughout the week, and bring them back at the end of the week to trade in for new ones.**This means they are reading you the same 4 books several times throughout the week. Repeated reading is so important in first grade!  Students need to practice reading accurately and fluently, and every time they re-read a book they gain confidence, build their sight-word recognition, and are able to have deeper conversations about their books with you.

If you want additional homework, please help your child practice our word work (see below.)  I will not be sending home worksheets or other written assignments on a regular basis in first grade, but will always include ways to support our learning at home in our weekly newsletters.  I know how hard your children are working all day and that they need some down time in the evening.  I also want to respect your time together as a family at night.

**Integrated Studies –** **Our learning targets in writing are *I can use a planner to write sentences* and *I can plan and write personal narratives.*** Students continue to apply the writing process (plan, write, illustrate, revise, celebrate) as they start to see themselves as independent, capable authors. When we plan our stories, we think about the characters, setting, problem, steps to solve the problem, solution/ending, and the “so what?” In first grade, we guide students toward writing a conclusion sentence, often referred to as the “so what?”  In other words, what’s the point of this story?  What is the important message?  You can support this work at home by helping your child identify some things from their own lives that they could turn into a story. Topics that work best for story writing have a clear problem, or something the character wanted or was trying to do, and a way that issue was resolved.

**Science –** Almost all our caterpillars have moved on to the next phase of their life cycle, the chrysalis! As we continue to learn all about Monarchs and wait for the arrival of our butterflies our class is participating in a Symbolic Migration. Each year, Journey North, an internet-based program that engages students and citizen scientists around the globe in tracking wildlife migration and seasonal change, conducts a Symbolic Migration of the Monarch butterflies to Mexico. In the fall, over 60,000 students across the globe create symbolic butterflies and send them to Mexico. Children who live beside the monarchs' winter sanctuaries in Mexico protect the paper butterflies and return them in the spring. Through the Symbolic Migration, children are united by the monarch butterfly and celebrate its spectacular migration. They learn authentic lessons of conservation and international cooperation.

This week our class created ambassador butterflies that will travel to Mexico to represent our class’ study of the Monarch. The students created individual life sized butterflies that were decorated to represent our country, our state, and friendship. Examples of student work includes; the flag of the United States and Mexico, the Green Mountains and Lake Champlain, children holding hands, and beautifully colored butterflies. Our new long-term Art sub, Ms. Sammut collaborated with us by constructing a larger classroom symbolic butterfly. Check the Classroom Gallery on our website to see our work. To learn more about the Symbolic Migration you can visit the website:

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/sm/News.html>

**Math** – **Our current Learning Target is *I can use numbers and words to help me make sense of problems.*** First graders are learning to reason abstractly and quantitatively. We practiced this skill by solving and creating ladybug math stories that use adding, subtracting, and skip counting. First, we solved problems together. Students were challenged to not only provide a solution to the problem but to clearly articulate the strategy used to solve the problem. We recorded the variety of strategies, which included using math hands, drawings, and facts we know. The goal is for students to be able to solve their own and a friends problem, and be able to articulate the strategy used to solve the problem. We are using the language “show me your way” to emphasize that everyone thinks about a problem differently. As students share and articulate their strategies in problem solving to the class, our community of mathematicians is learning that there are so many ways to think mathematically. The strategies we learn from each other will provide us flexibility in our own thinking.  This year we'll be emphasizing strategic thinking and process-oriented problem solving.

Some of the ladybug math stories the children created were; “There are 6 ladybugs. How many wings?” “6 ladybugs were in a tree. 6 more climbed into the tree. How many in all?” “15 ladybugs. 3 flew away. How many are left?” The class did a great job of solving each other’s problems and articulating their math thinking. This work can be supported at home by making up simple story problems and asking your child to explain their thinking and validate their thinking through pictures, symbolic representation (equations), or math hands.

**Word Work** – Our current *Fun*dations unit is: **bonus letters** These are words with a “bonus” l, f, s, or sometimes z at the end of the word, like **buzz, kiss, fall, puff.**

Here are the sight words we practiced this week: **that, done, his, they, be**

Next week’s sight words are: **There will be no new sight words next week due to the short week.**

Sight words for the week of October 20th are: **this, from, or, one, had**

Current sight words and *Fun*dation skills are listed on our website [www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com](http://www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com/)

**Some other logistics:**

* **Parent/Teacher conferences** will be scheduled online again this year. You may start signing up on the morning of Tuesday, September 30th by going to the Champlain home page <http://champlain.bsdvt.org.> **If you do not have internet access, please call the school for scheduling assistance.**
* **Parent/Teacher conferences** will take place on **Wednesday, October 15th and Thursday, October 16th.** If you know you will need an alternate date, please contact me as soon as possible.
* **Due to Parent/Teacher conferences Wednesday, October 15th, is an early release day. The school day will end at 11:30.**
* **Reminder: Mrs. Galusha’s first grade class picnic, this Sunday, October 12th at 3:00pm Callahan Park by the playground.** Please contact Elizabeth Bauer (ezipern@gmail.com) or Christine McConnell (cmcvt@hotmail.com) with questions.
* **There will be no newsletter next week due to the short week.**

Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Jeannine E. Galusha

jgalusha@bsdvt.org

[www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com](http://www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com/) [www.twitter.com/galusha1stgrade](http://www.twitter.com/galusha1stgrade)