Class Newsletter October 3, 2014

Dear Friends and Families,

It was great to see so many of you at curriculum night on Wednesday. I hope you feel more informed about the learning your student will be doing this school year. As always, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me via email; jgalusha@bsdvt.org

Here’s a summary of what we have learned:

**Readers’ Workshop** – **Our learning target for reading is *I can tackle tricky words*.** This week we learned more strategies to use to figure out words when we get stuck. We’re building independence as readers and empowering students to try their many strategies on their own instead of asking to be told what a word says. Here is a summary of all our strategies, many of which refer to the *guess* we make when we get stuck:

* Readers always ask ourselves, “Does this make sense?”
* Readers check the pictures
* Readers get our finger ready (to check the letters we see)
* Readers get our mouths ready (to make the sounds that match the letters)
* Readers ask ourselves, “Does this sound right?”
* Readers ask ourselves, “Does this look right?”
* Readers find parts of the word that we know.

Coming up next week we will learn:

* Readers skip the word, read the rest of the sentence, and ask ourselves what would make sense.
* Readers go back and re-read the sentence.

**Reading Homework-** You will receive a “bookmark” with all these strategies including the visual cues I’ve used to teach them! **Starting on Monday, I’ll be sending home some reading homework! Students will bring home several books at their current “just right” level. I ask that they read them to you as many times as possible throughout the week, and that you return the bag of books to school once a week so new ones can come home.** 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, start to recognize more sight words, and are able to have deeper conversations about their books with you.  Please look for their reading homework bags starting on Monday!!

If you want additional homework, please help your child practice our word work (see below.)  We 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.  We know how hard your children are working all day and that they need some down time in the evening.  We 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.*** First graders are learning about what writers do.  Writers write about things we know well.  We’ve started with Personal Narratives, or true stories about our own lives.  Students learned how to use a story map to organize our ideas, then move from their story map planner to writing sentences, editing them, and illustrating.  We'll continue with our story writing next week.  One of our goals is for children to internalize the writing process of planning, writing, revising, illustrating, and then planning the next story; writers are independent and prolific!  Personal narratives

give students a chance to write about a topic they're familiar with.  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.

In **social studies** we started learning more about Diversity, namely how we are all different and our families are different. We read the stories; *It’s Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr and *Families are Differe*nt by Nina Pellegrini. The students were asked to identify something you like to do together as a family. Some responses were; watch the sunset together, walk down to the lake, eat ice cream, watch football.

**Math** – **Our current learning target is *I can model my math thinking*.** We had a fun week of working flexibly with counting strategies to determine the amount of items in each of the students *counting collections* in our museum. In addition this work presented the opportunity to explore efficient methods of working in collaborative teams. By Friday the students were assigning each member of the group roles, such as “recorder”, “spokesperson”, and “counters”. They worked together by sorting the items into groups of tens and extras. Once sorted they counted by tens and added on the extras. The recorder, collected the information and documented their work on a tens and ones chart. For example: Students counted 118 Cheerios. They recorded the number 11 in the tens column and 8 in the ones column. This exercise really helps first graders understand our place value system and the concept of unitizing.

**Word Work** – This year our Word Work will include 2 different programs. *Fun*dations focuses on pattern-based spelling and explicitly teaches skills students can apply to many different words. Our Sight Words will include words that students are expected to know by sight because they often contain spelling “tricks” that we can’t sound out or “tap out.” Our current *Fun*dations unit is: **digraphs at the beginning and end of words**  These are words with th, ck, sh, and ch at the end of the word, like **wish, sock, with, such**

Here are the kindergarten words we reviewed this week: **here, come, with, have, said, went, today, because, good, say**

Next week starts our first grade sight words, which are: **that, done, his, they, be**

Current sight words 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.**

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)