Class Newsletter September 12, 2014

Dear Parents and Families,

We earned our first 100 Champ Cards this week for following the school rules of being safe, respectful, and responsible. It was nice to be introduced to everyones special stuffed animal friend. The class was so responsible with their stuffed animals that they were able to spend the entire day learning with us in the classroom!

This week I completed most of our beginning of the year assessments in Reading and Math. Assessment results are used to identify student strengths and needs in order to guide my instruction. Formative assessment will continue throughout the year to monitor student progress in literacy and math.

Here’s a summary of what we have learned:

**Readers’ Workshop** – **Our learning targets for reading have been; Getting to Know Ourselves as Readers, Building a Community of Readers, and Building Good Reading Habits.** Our focus questions are: *What types of books do I like to read? What is my favorite place to read? Why do readers read?* Students have been practicing reading with a “wide awake brain” by asking questions, making predictions, and summarizing. **The learning target is for students to be active readers, increasing their comprehension of the text they read.** Additionally, we have begun establishing the structure of our daily Readers’ Workshop. We’ll always start with our lesson, then have independent reading time with books at our “just right” level while I meet with guided reading groups, then some time to share about our reading and how we applied the day’s lesson. Students have been working on building stamina and reading with their “wide awake brains!” Becoming a reader is so important in first grade. Please, try to read with your child at home whenever possible. This includes reading aloud to them!

**Integrated Studies –** We have had a lot of fun writing riddle books about someone in our family, or a pet. Children are learning how to apply a learning skill or format to produce their own independent writing. Impressive!

We were all excited on Wednesday when or Monarchs arrived. Before observing or learning about them we activated our background knowledge by recording things we already know about Monarch butterflies in our Investigation Notebooks. As a class we generated questions we wonder about Monarchs. Some of the questions were: *How many eggs does a female butterfly lay at once? How many different colors are on a Monarch? How long do Monarch live?*

In science this year students will learn the steps of the scientific method and practice these procedures through our investigations throughout the year. We’ll be learning how to ask questions, make predictions, make observations, collect data, and draw conclusions. Our first observation was of the inside of an apple. In this exercise your child drew a detailed diagram of the apple with labels, recorded what they noticed, and measured the width of the apple in centimeters. This exercise prepared us for our observation of our caterpillars, which are still very small. Students noticed: *holes in the milkweed plant, stripes on the caterpillar’s body, and the black, yellow, and green colors of the caterpillars.* Ask your child about their observations!

**Math** – **Our current learning target is recognizing that numbers are made up of other numbers.** We are building numbers with tally marks, Popsicle sticks, ten frames, and through symbolic notation. On the tenth day of school we spent a lot of time talking about how import the number 10 is in first grade. The number 10 helps students begin to conceptualize unitization; that we can form a single unit by combining singles into a whole, *1 group of 10*. Mastering our facts to ten in first grade is so important. This helps children compose and decompose numbers mentally with ease. We built a *Tens Partner Rainbow*, which is a great visual for children to use when beginning to master these facts. Go to our website to learn more about the *Tens Partner Rainbow*. We read the book *Tally O’Malley*, by Stuart J. Murphy, a story about children who use tally marks in a useful way when counting. The class used the skill of tallying to solve word problems and to record information in a dice game. To support this learning at home have your child count a collection of object using tally marks!

**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: **CVC words** These are Consonant, Vowel, Consonant words with a short vowel sound, like **sat, hot, tub, bit, get**

Here are the 10 kindergarten words we reviewed this week: ***me, we, she, he, my, an, us, up, to, of***

Next week’s words are: ***the, and, was, can, yes, no, see, you, day***

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

**Homework** – First grade homework will include practicing our sight words at home, and in a few weeks, reading our “just right” books to an adult at home as often as possible. I will not be sending home worksheets or other written assignments on a regular basis in first grade. 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.

**Some other logistics:**

* **Please remember to check your child’s backpack daily for important forms and notices from school.**
* **Newsletters** – you’ll get a weekly newsletter from Champlain School and a separate one from our classroom. School news comes home on Tuesdays and is printed on blue paper. Our classroom newsletter comes home on white paper, gets emailed, and posted to our website on Fridays. Please be sure to read both in order to stay informed about important dates, notices, and our classroom learning.
* **CHANGE OF DATE: Curriculum Night** is NOW **October 1st; 5:30-6:00 and 6:05-6:35**.
* **Applefest**: Friday, September, 26th 5:30-7:00pm
* **Picture Day Monday, September 29th**

Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

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