Class Newsletter September 3, 2014

Dear Parents and Families,

We are off to a wonderful start in First Grade! In the last week and a half we have been establishing our classroom community and getting to know each other. I am having so much fun learning about each and every one of your children. As you might imagine, we’ve spent a lot of time reviewing school rules and learning about our classroom. First grade is a very academic year, which I know is quite different from kindergarten. This year we will be working on building students’ stamina, independence, and work habits.

Here’s a summary of what we have learned:

**Readers’ Workshop** – First grade is such a big year for literacy growth! **The learning target for our first unit is to know ourselves as readers.** Our focus questions are: *Who am I as a reader? Why do readers read?* This year, I want all students to see themselves as competent, independent readers. It has been so fun getting to know your children as readers! We’re learning about our reading preferences, favorite books, favorite places to read, and the importance of reading in our everyday lives. Today we were “text detectives,” looking for text in our own classroom and around the school. You can support this learning at home by encouraging your child to find environmental print at home and in the community. **The learning target is for students to recognize the importance of print/text in authentic context.** Here are some examples to get you started: food labels, street signs, recipes, directions, shopping lists, mail, email, store signs, etc.

**Integrated Studies –** This year we are combining our writers’ workshop with our social studies and science studies, calling it *Integrated Studies*. Integrated studies combines curriculum from two or more disciplines, allowing students to see how ideas are connected. Teaching in such a contextual manner promotes collaboration, critical thinking, and knowledge retention. We’ve started by writing “Who Am I?” pieces, giving clues about ourselves so someone else can guess whose page it is. This is a great way to get to know each other and build our classroom community. Ask your child to tell you about their work! **Our current learning target is to build stamina and independence as writers.** Students will be writing their next “Who Am I,” “riddle books” about a member of their family. You can help them think about this by naming some possible clues they might use for a family member. Here’s an example: Your child might choose her or his baby sister to write about. Their clues might include, “I love my bunny and blanket. I am a messy eater. I have curly hair. I am funny. I am a good climber.” What clues could they write about you?

First grade students are not expected to spell accurately at this time of year. The expectation is that students write all the sounds they hear. If you would like to support our writing at home, you can ask your child to:

* Say their whole thought out loud first, then focus on one word at a time.
* Say the word slow. “Stretch it out.”
* Write all the sounds they hear. (ex: first may look like frst) Reinforce their emergent spelling by helping them read back what they wrote.

**Math** – We are focusing on concepts of early numeracy. Early first grade skills include equations to 10, concepts of place value, counting forward and backward, skip counting, and noticing patterns. **Our current learning target is to recognize that numbers are made up of other numbers.** We are building numbers with tally marks, popsicle sticks, ten frames, and through symbolic notation. This year will emphasize strategic thinking and process oriented problem solving. Your child will be introduce to algebraic concepts that require them to be strategic and develop their own understanding of numeracy concepts! To support this learning at home build numbers with marbles, buttons, or Cheerios at the breakfast table. Help your child break the collection into smaller numbers to determine the sum of the whole collection.

**Word Work** – We are starting by reviewing some of our “sight words” from kindergarten. These are listed on our website ([www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com](http://www.mrsgalushasfirstgrade.weebly.com)) so you can help support our work at home. Most of these words contain a spelling “trick” and can’t be sounded out. These words need to be known by sight and memorized.

Here are our first 10 words: ***I, a, at, am, is, in, it, if, on, go***

Next week’s words are: ***me, we, she, he, my, an, us, up, to, of***

**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.
* **Assessments** – I will be meeting will all students one at a time for Reading and Math assessments next Monday and Tuesday. I will be in the building, but there will be a guest teacher in the classroom these two days.
* **Curriculum Night** is on **September 25th at 5:30**.

Please feel free to contact me at anytime.

Sincerely,

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