



Second Grade News

November 17, 2009



Dear Parents,

It's been such a busy time these days! I have so enjoyed meeting with you for our Fall conferences. I have learned much valuable information from you about your children. I hope you, too, feel you have a good idea of how your child is as a learner in school. Let's continue to stay in touch as we support Second Grade learning throughout this year.

I am planning to do a series of parent workshops where you can experience how we are learning in various major subject areas in Second Grade. I expect to include a general overview of how to support learning, reading, writing, and math. These would be hands-on opportunities for you to participate in actual learning activities yourselves, and not general open houses or conference times to problem solve about particular child issues. (I would want you to schedule a conference time if you have specific concerns about your child.) Are you interested? If so, what time of day would you find best—right after school, late afternoon, early evening? Get back to me via e-mail, please, and I'll coordinate the information. These meetings would likely occur after the holidays, beginning in January.

In writing, we have been focusing on the ways writers use "vivid", rich descriptive language and details that answer the basic questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?) as a way to grab the reader's interest. After we get our ideas written down, we go back to check for spelling of known words, missing words, and sentence conventions. I encourage students to read their work aloud when they are revising as that is often the way one really notices the details. Writing is often used as a way to respond to what we are reading—either to recall information, to compare texts, to make personal connections. This is intended to lead to an increased understanding of what we read. While the decoding, fluency, and pacing of reading aloud are important aspects, what we comprehend while reading is at least equally important. These are some of the traits we also focus on in our reading groups.

In Math, we have continued to use number lines, 100's charts (and a Numberline Hotel chart), and word problems to firm up our number sense and ability to manipulate numbers. While the focus has been on developing an automatic recognition on the math facts that have a sum of 10, it is also important that students move beyond using counters (and fingers) for simple math facts. This is something that we count on families to practice at home. While many think of using flash cards (and, many children enjoy them), I am also an advocate of playing games to practice. Some games that use 2 dice (Parcheesi, Double Trouble, etc.) rely on quick addition. Other card games can do the

same ("War", so called, can be played with pairs of cards added before comparing each player's total). And, many can invent games... However you'd like to practice, I encourage you to do so.

In Science, we have been exploring the food pyramid with the various food groups. Each student has been becoming an "expert" in one of the food groups as they work on a poster. We will be adding an emphasis on healthy snacks, and physical activity as we complete our work. Also, after Thanksgiving, we will have a cooking day—watch for the note that tells of your contribution to the recipe!

By the way, thanks for sending in indoor shoes. This has helped us be able to use our entire room for working. But, I ask that you reconsider "Crocs" as the indoor shoes—many students flip them around and off of their feet during lessons. That's incredibly distracting. Therefore, I would encourage you to consider sending in tie shoes (firm on the feet, safe for P.E., and gives those who have not yet learned how to tie shoes an opportunity to acquire this skill)! Slip-ons, buckle, or Velcro would be welcome, but being able to tie knots and bows is a skill that many children come to 2nd grade not knowing (and, once upon a time, that was a skill acquired in Kindergarten).

Enjoy your Thanksgiving holidays.

I certainly am thankful for your support and interest!