

August 19, 2009

Dear Parents,

Thank you for bringing your child to school for the reading testing. It was wonderful to meet you and organize supplies before the first day of school.

Today, I introduced myself by sharing my "Me Bag," which is a bag filled with four items that represent my hobbies and interests. The first homework assignment is for your child to bring a bag to school with four items that represent what your child likes to do. Each child will present his/her Me Bag to the class on Thursday or Friday. In class, the students will draw self portraits and illustrations of the items they brought and will compile their drawings as a collage.

What follows is an explanation of our class guidelines and procedures for behavior and discipline and expectations for nightly homework. Our class rules correspond to our school's Positive Behavior System, better known as SOAR. The S stands for "Be Safe," the O stands for "Be On Time," the A stands for "Have an A+ Attitude," and the R stands for both "Be Respectful" and "Be Responsible." Glued to the margin of your child's planner/agenda will be a behavior chart your child will color code each day based on what type of behavior was exhibited. The color code is at the bottom of this chart and is a way to let you know on a daily basis how your child behaved and what consequences, if any, were given. After the final recess, the children will write their homework in their planners/agendas and will color code their SOAR charts. I check each child's planner for accuracy and use a date stamp to let you know that what your child has written and color coded is accurate.

In class, conduct is divided into the categories of behavior and responsibility. If your child is not exhibiting expected behavior, he/she will move his blue card on the chart in the classroom to the yellow section, meaning it is a verbal warning. If inappropriate behavior continues, the card will be moved to the red section, meaning a loss of recess is the consequence, and if warranted, the card will be moved to the black section which means you will be contacted either by phone, a note, or by the principal.

Responsibility cards are red. If your child does not return his/her homework on time, loss of recess is the consequence. If more than 3 school days pass before data notebooks, field trip permission slips, or other forms needing parent signatures are not returned, loss of recess will be the consequence. If school supplies need to be replenished, I have the students write what they need in their planners. They are responsible for letting you know so that they are prepared to learn with the proper materials. Another area of responsibility involves bringing a backpack every day with the math Student Reference Book, the homework folder, the math homework workbook called the "Home Links" book, and the planner/agenda. If your child does not bring these four items each day and it interferes with his/her learning, the responsibility card will be moved to red. If it is a consistent problem, you will be contacted.

I have learned through experience to be very consistent in my discipline yet focus on the positive. I manage my classroom to encourage a very caring, cooperative environment. Consequences are delivered in a very matter-of-fact, calm manner. I communicate my expectations clearly, and I provide opportunities for students to practice expected behaviors before consequences are enforced. I reward students with SOAR tickets for outstanding citizenship and I reward the class for following guidelines as well. When three weeks' worth of homework assignments are completed on time, your child will earn a homework pass to be used in place of one night's worth of homework.

Homework will begin next week. Please help your child get into the routine of referring to the planner, finding the appropriate activity to complete for spelling (see list of activities clipped into the homework folder) and in the Home Links workbook, completing them neatly and with accuracy, and placing the sheets in the front pocket of the homework folder. Please keep the Home Links book in your child's backpack, for on occasion, we complete these pages in class.

Your child needs to read each night for 15-20 minutes. Please begin logging the minutes in the "Parent Log" section of the Homework Log sheet in your child's homework folder next week. You have the option

of recording the minutes nightly or you may get caught up on that over the weekend. I check homework folders every day except Mondays since there is no homework on Fridays other than reading. I will place a stamped checkmark in the teacher log section of the homework log and will place your child's homework in the back pocket after spot-checking it for accuracy and neatness. It is my philosophy that homework is a parent's responsibility, so although I will be spot-checking, I will assume that the answers are correct since you will have checked it. I'm sure you would rather have me teaching your child rather than spending an hour of instructional time grading homework, so I hope you agree this is a fair trade-off!

Clipped into your child's homework folder is a "Spelling Activities" sheet. There are two activities from which your child may choose each night. You have the option of guiding your child through one or two activities with at least 10 of the third grade "Core Words" and/or words your child has spelled incorrectly in his/her writing which are written on the "Words to Learn" sheet. These sheets are clipped into the homework folder. I use the Sitton Spelling Program, which has a strong phonics focus and emphasizes the correct spelling of over 350 common words in writing rather than learning the words for a weekly test. A parent letter outlining this program will be sent home soon.

Please use the math Student Reference Book to help your child with the nightly homework. I know the Everyday Math program is very different from the way we learned math when we were in school, but believe me, it is an outstanding program proven through independent research to be the most rigorous, and student achievement data across the nation and in our school proves its effectiveness. Please be positive even though it is different and sometimes difficult to understand. The answers to the Home Links are in each parent letter at the beginning of each unit, so you can check your child's work for accuracy, or if you are like me, you check the answer first so you know how to help your child with the problem!

An ongoing homework activity that will not always appear in the planner is the study of math facts. Addition facts are the focus for first quarter. Second quarter is subtraction, third quarter is multiplication, and fourth quarter is reserved for division facts for students who have mastered their multiplication facts (up to 10). Our district has identified a "Big Idea" for each grade level, which is multiplication and division facts for third grade, so we will focus on this throughout the year even though your child will not be officially evaluated on these facts until the second semester.

Another homework item is called "Oral Reading Fluency." If your child is reading at a Level 1, or fewer than 64 words per minute, he/she will have a sheet in the pocket of his/her homework folder that will have a reading selection on one side and questions on the other. Please have your child read the selection out loud to you every night and complete the activities on the other side on or before Thursday night. These sheets are due on Fridays.

For the remainder of this week, we will continue our orientation. Next week we will begin our regular routine. We have P.E. every other Thursday, and intramurals every third Tuesday. We will write "PE Tomorrow!" in the planner so your child knows to wear/bring appropriate shoes the following day. Please email me or leave me a message on my voice mail should you have any questions that I have not yet addressed and that cannot wait until curriculum night. I will keep you informed throughout the year via my website that can be accessed via www.rrps.net.

Thanks again for making the time to bring your child to school to meet me. I look forward to another wonderful year!

Sincerely,

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