

ME 5th grade Team's Classroom Tidbits



Weekly Newsletter
September 10, 2009

Important Upcoming Dates:

September 17 - Picture Day

September 17 - PTSA Ice Cream Social, 6:30pm-8:00pm

September 24 - Early Release (Staff Training)

September 25 - No School (Staff Training)

October 9 - Falcon Fund Run

A message from the ME 5th Grade Team:

We hope this weekly newsletter will be an efficient way to keep you apprised of what we're teaching your students at school and how you can support their learning at home. Please feel free, at any time, to contact any or all of us to ask questions and advocate for your student. We welcome your input. So now, without further adieu, here's the plan for this week...

Parent/Teacher Communication:

We encourage and value your involvement in your child's education and want to be easily accessible to discuss your child's successes or challenges, and any questions or concerns you may have. Open communication is very important to us, as I'm sure it is to you.

As many of you may know, in 5th grade we teach your students in a block style where each teacher is responsible for teaching his/her assigned subject. This year our subject assignments will be: Mr. Tepley - science/technology; Mrs. Idso - writing/social studies; Mrs. Bass - math; Miss Howard - reading/social studies. Feel free to contact any of us directly or through your child's assigned homeroom teacher.

The best time to contact us is before or after school, but you can always leave an e-mail or voice mail at any time for any non-urgent message. We check voice mails before and after school, but check e-mail all through the day. If you have a more urgent message, your best bet for quick action will be the office staff.

In order to keep you up-to-date with our learning plans and important upcoming dates and deadlines, you will be receiving a weekly 5th grade team newsletter by e-mail or by paper copy, whatever way you choose. Each week the newsletter will be on-line and updated by Tuesday morning. If you have any questions or comments after you have read it, please feel free to contact us and we'll provide you with a response as soon as possible.

Learning Climate/Classroom Management: 5th grade vision -To maximize each student's social and academic growth, independence, and confidence

Our classrooms provide a safe and stimulating learning environment where students are challenged and expected to perform their personal best both individually and in groups each and every day. We work together as a team for the benefit of our students, each and every 5th grader here at Mukilteo Elementary. Self-assessment and evaluation are part of each child's learning this year as he/she sets academic and student behavior goals at regular intervals during the year. We have found that students gain greater personal accountability, responsibility, and independence from being actively involved in goal setting and evaluation associated with their performance in school.

Notebook Binders/Supplies:

Organization will be one of the life skills practiced in our classroom. To help in this area, each student will be responsible for organizing and maintaining a binder. We'll do the organizing together as a class, but the maintenance will need reinforcement at home. Students will be required, without exception, to use their binders each day in class and to take them home each night. **Parents can help by checking regularly to replenish supplies; signing reading logs weekly; and reviewing homework and correspondence from the take home section.** Thanks for your help!

Anytime you are curious about assignments, please feel free to check your child's weekly assignment calendar that should be the first piece of paper in your child's notebook. We check assignment calendars daily in each class to monitor whether or not students are writing in assignments in order to make progress in organizational skill development. Maintaining an assignment calendar is a great way to promote student responsibility and accountability.

Curriculum:

The Mukilteo School District's curriculum offers repeated opportunities for students to practice and master the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and grade level expectations mandated by Washington State. Following is a synopsis of the curriculum used in each of the academic disciplines:

Math: Math Connects, Macmillan McGraw-Hill; <http://www.macmillanmh.com>

Developing fluency with fractions, decimals, and polyhedral solids are featured topics in fifth grade. Students are expected to have mastered basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in previous grades.

Language Arts: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

Houghton Mifflin: Materials incorporate research based reading strategies (comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency) proven to develop literacy. Genre study as well as grammar, spelling, and vocabulary are included.

Units of Study: First-Hand Heineman Publishers writing workshop materials by Lucy Calkins focus on developing writers in several units of study. Fluency exercises and mini-lessons are followed by active student participation using strategies practiced by professional writers comprise this highly rated curriculum. A variety of genres, both narrative and expository as well as poetry, will be explored this year.

Social Studies: project based; teacher created Native American unit; Civics/3 branches of government unit; 13 Colonies/Revolutionary War unit; State Report unit.

Science: FOSS Science Curriculum; hands-on approach to science teaching broad scientific concepts in an interactive way. Students are assessed both individually and in cooperative group setting. Units on Variables (Scientific Inquiry Method) and Landforms taught the 1st and 2nd trimesters respectively.

Art: Art concepts will be integrated with other curricular areas. Anyone interested in volunteering to be an art docent to teach art appreciation would be greatly appreciated! Please let us know if you have an interest in this area!

Music, Physical Education, Fitness and Library: specialists

Homework:

Students will have daily assignments in each subject area but adequate time will be given in class to finish work. In addition, we assign a "morning work packet" that allows students to independently reinforce skills already taught in each subject area. Most students will need to plan on **about 50 minutes of homework per night** which includes the 5th grade nightly minimum of 30 minutes spent reading independently. As students

become better time managers at school, they will find there will be less to finish at home.

Work is due at 9:00 the day after it is assigned unless a different due date has been assigned and written in the assignment sheet. Students will be required to finish incomplete or late work in study hall during grade level recess. If incomplete work becomes a habit, we will communicate with you to encourage additional follow up at home, but our goal is to help students take responsibility for their own work. Fifth graders are capable of this and more!

Occasionally, life intervenes with homework completion despite the best of intentions. **If you feel your child needs additional time in order to complete their work, simply send a note and the due date will be extended.**

Absences: Students who miss assignments because of absences will be allowed extra time to complete the work, but are responsible for completing work assigned while he/she was gone. Please send a parent note explaining the absence.

For the occasional lengthy absence, you may opt to have your student keep a daily journal/scrapbook of the trip; keep a ledger of expenses on the trip; make a collection or create a word search or dictionary of travel words. Any of these ideas can be adapted to keep the learning going while you are away. We will save materials for your child to complete at home following your return or will send them in advance of your trip to take with you. Please let us know about your child's planned absences as soon as possible so we can prepare.

Grading:

Following is the scale adopted by our district to evaluate student work in all academic areas:

- 4 Consistently exceeds grade level expectations
- 3 Meets and/or occasionally exceeds grade level expectations
- 2 Progressing, but does not meet grade level expectations
- 1 Little progress; does not meet grade level expectations

Independent reading requirement:

Independent reading represents one-fourth of your child's reading grade on the progress report each trimester. Each week there will be an independent reading log for you to sign in order to keep track of the time your student spends reading outside of class.

Grades for independent reading are as follows:

Grade	Time spent per week
4	150+ minutes
3	120-149 minutes
2	90-119 minutes
1	Less than 90 minutes

Achievement:

Friday Club: Students who have finished all of their work for the week will enjoy 30 minutes of free time on Friday to play board games, read, do art projects, or do other educational, fun events. Students who still have work outstanding will spend this half-hour in study hall.

Birthdays/Special Personal Days:

Birthdays and special days are fun ways of recognizing and celebrating each student. If you choose to send treats to school, please remember that our school district requires all food served in class to be store bought and sealed. Treats will be handed out during lunch at the lunch table. Please contact teacher in advance if you are planning to send something so that adequate time is set aside for the event.

Volunteers:

We welcome and appreciate classroom volunteers. The students benefit greatly from your efforts. There are many ways to participate: share your profession with the class; be our art docent; help with field trips and special events; chaperone; work with small groups or individual students who need help; or be our Scholastic book ordering volunteer. In addition, SWEPTA has lots of opportunities for volunteering if you are interested. We will have a sign up sheet for volunteers at curriculum night. Please read and sign the volunteer agreement as well as fill out a highway patrol background check form (in the office) if you haven't already, before you volunteer.

Thank you for your support!

PTSA Information:

The PTSA web site is very informative. Please explore online at <http://www.meptsa.org>.

Portal Information:

Please visit <http://schools.mukilteo.wednet.edu/me/fifth/index.htm>, the Portal, online. You will find our Curriculum PowerPoint presentation, as well as any handouts you may find useful. Daily student worksheets are also available at this online location.

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