

January 2, 2012
Happy New Year!

I hope that you all had a great break and are ready to get back to school! It is often hard to transition back into a routine, but we will be working hard to reach that goal!

Speaking of goals, students will be setting goals this week for what they would like to work on in class. I will be offering suggestions as a group activity, but students will pick their own to work on. Suggestions will be completing work on time, focusing on themselves, neatness in writing, punctuating sentences, etc.

You may have heard, but the afternoon aid that was working in our room left us right before break. Ms. Webb is heading to Korea to work with college students. We will be writing to her after she gets settled. We will be welcoming Mr. Cole to our classroom as a replacement for Ms. Webb beginning after vacation. I am hoping for a smooth transition.

We have been working with multiplication facts since the beginning of November, and it is apparent that there are several students who are just not spending the time on them. In 4th grade, it is a requirement (district-wide) to have all multiplication facts memorized. We have made flashcards that the students use in class. Therefore, there will be some form of multiplication homework each night. Students will not be able to move forward into division successfully in February if they do not know their facts. Please practice with your child at home. The district math specialist tells us that for a child to prove mastery of their facts, they should be able to see a fact and solve it in under 3 seconds without using their fingers.

In social studies, we will be working on the Northeast States. You

will see many maps of this region as homework and from in class work. Students will be doing at least one map per day. The more students practice, the more they will have the information learned for the map test of states and capitals which will be given next Friday (1-13-12). We will be doing a lot of work with people, places and things in the northeast, as well as vocabulary.

Spelling finds us using a new spelling program (again). It focuses on spelling patterns and using previous skills to build new skills to carry over throughout all content areas. Please bear with me as we work out the kinks and figure out this new program. Students will still be given weekly spelling lists, and tests will still be on Fridays. I am working hard to incorporate words that students are having difficulty with in their writing that fit the patterns into the word lists, and choosing words that students may not know, to further develop their vocabulary. It is a work in progress. I am excited about the fact that I have some flexibility to choose words that fit a pattern that children seem to be having difficulty with. I am hoping that it will further develop spelling across all areas in the long run.

We continue to work with the workshop method in both writing and reading. Students in writing gather for a mini lesson and then work independently on a piece of their choosing. I move from student to student meeting with them, answering questions and help them figure out where their piece is going. I enjoy the time to sit and talk about their writing, while helping to build their writing skills as well. Many students are now excited about writing time, and look forward to sharing a piece. At the end of each writing workshop, students are able to share pieces that are in progress, and get feedback from their peers. We are learning to use the "I heard..." statements to support our opinions. Something new that I will be adding into the mini lessons is using student work as examples. Students are asked to volunteer a piece to be used. I have a large pile of work that the kids want me to

use in our revising/editing mini lessons. I have never seen a group of kids so eager to write before. I LOVE IT!!

Reading workshop is similar in that there is a mini lesson, and at least 15 minutes of independent read time each day for the students to work on their genre study projects. Students then have a group task assigned for a common text that we are reading. As students work, I either assess reading levels, read with students, or meet with small groups for further instruction. Most of the class really enjoys this workshop time as well!

*Many of us had a very difficult time with the Holiday concert being cancelled due to weather. I explained to the students that the top concern was that everyone was safe. I am working with Mrs. Nelson to devise a way to allow the children to share the song that we worked so hard in writing and practicing. I have an idea up my sleeve, but am working on it and will let you know more when a decision has been made.

*Thank you to those of you that sent in treats for our “Holiday Celebration” prior to vacation.. We really enjoyed them!!!

*Grades will be updated on line by the end of the week.

*There will be NO SCHOOL on January 16th.

*January Book Orders will be sent in a couple of weeks.

If you have any questions, please let me know. I am looking forward to getting back into the swing of things!

☺ Many Smiles☺

Mrs. Brewer