

DR. HIGDON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2009



Elementary School.
Classrooms have been

during the afternoons,
after 1:00 or on other
days. We are planning



Message from the Principal

Dear Parents,

We are entering an historical time in our country. With this Inauguration, we are spending time in the classroom discussing the importance of the Presidential Office and the importance of the PEACEFUL transfer of power in this country. We are also discussing the importance of celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and how we strive to share peace and unity in our country. As a PBIS school, we try to follow this at Dr. Higdon

on-line reading about our new President; discussing the Inauguration; and having dreams to make make our country peaceful and equal for all. It is a thrill to talk to the children about current events, so as you share with them, I hope you enjoy what they are learning as well.

The third quarter will bring our "Super Bowl" of teaching with MSA for grades 3, 4 and 5. We will test in March during the week of March 16 and 23rd. We are asking that you schedule all doctor and dental appointments

to test MATH on the 17th and 18th. Reading will be on the 24th and 25th. We need all children in school on the 16th and 23rd for review. The 19th, 20th, 26th and 27th are for make up testing. Of course, on those days, research shows that children who are well rested, have solid breakfasts that include protein and some carbohydrates and are on time, do much better than if they are tired, stressed or are hungry.

During the third quarter we will have Career Day and we are looking for

volunteers who will present their job choice. Children need to see why they go to school, why learning is important and the best way to do this is to see what types of education they need to meet these careers. Please contact Mrs. Petersen if you are interested.

Also, on Feb. 19, we will host another PBIS event for those children who earn 30 positive paws. They earn positive paws for a variety of reasons and this is a time to celebrate those positive behaviors. You should have or will receive a letter explaining how they can earn their way into the event. This event will be a movie. We want to see everyone earn the right to attend.

Don't forget to get reading for the Passport Assembly on March 20. Any children who choose to participate in the special reading program will attend this assembly and will be recognized for their hard work. On this same day, Pre-K will have "Dad's Day."

As you can see, third quarter is very full of

great activities. We hope you'll continue to support us with working on math facts with your children and by encouraging them to read for 20 minutes each and every day.

Sincerely,

Peggy E. Mertes

Pre-K

Pre-K continues to work on name writing. They have begun learning the letters, the sound the letters make, how to write the letter and listing things that begin with the letter. Parents need to review the letters with their child, so they don't forget. We are talking about nursery rhymes and "The 3's", the 3 Bears, the 3 Pigs, and the 3 Billy Goats Gruff. We are having fun acting out the stories.

The children are getting good at counting, one to one correspondence, and recognizing numbers to 10. We are still working on our patterns and sorting by shape, size and color.

We are very appreciative to our

families that have sent in snacks and paper products.

Kindergarten

It is hard to believe that we are slowly approaching the 100th day! Be on the lookout for a letter in your child's homework folder. We have been adding a number to our number line each day and will soon be able to count to 100. In math we have been working on addition to 10 and telling time to the hour. Ask your child to tell you the time on an analog clock. We have also worked on ordinal numbers and positional words. Ordinal numbers are first, second, third, etc. The positional words we worked on were under, above, beside, on, over, right and left.

In reading we have been working on beginning sounds, the short a sound and blending short a words. We also have been working on comprehension skills, summarizing a story, and story structure; beginning, middle and end of a story. As you are reading with your

child you can ask questions about the story to check for comprehension. Talk about concepts about print as you are reading- words vs. letters, the first and last letter of a word and the return sweep. A return sweep is when you read to the end of one line and return to the beginning of the next line.

It is important that you check your child's homework folder each night and return it the following day. The children are now getting yellow lights for leaving their homework folder in their backpack. Please talk with your child about personal responsibility. We sent home a letter asking for a change of clothing to be sent in for unexpected accidents. If your child is having frequent accidents and they do not have clothing we will ask you to come to the school to change them. We have a limited number of extra clothing; if your child comes home in borrowed clothing please wash the clothes and return to school.

Please continue to read to your child for 20

minutes each night. Keep in mind that we are participating in the Readers are Leaders program. The children will be rewarded for this at our next Celebration of learning assembly.

1st Grade

The first grade students continued to work hard in the second quarter practicing and learning their skills in both Reading and Math.

Reading: This quarter the students were introduced to various types of letter clusters. This skill was worked on throughout the quarter and will continue into the third quarter. The students use this specific skill to help them sound out unfamiliar words. We have continued to work on building words with short vowel sounds. Towards the end of the quarter we began discussing words with the long a vowel sound. Each day, the students work on practicing and learning new strategies to help them sound out unfamiliar words. We have also emphasized the comprehension skills of sequencing, summarizing,

evaluating, reading for meaning, questioning, and cause and effect, as well as recognizing the setting, characters and problem within a story. The students have also begun to take weekly spelling test where they spell words using the spelling pattern we are covering that certain week.

Math: We have been counting and keeping track of objects up to 100. The students are continuing to find different combinations of numbers to equal certain sums or differences. We continued to work on our strategy of counting on when trying to find the answer to an addition problem. This quarter we continued to work on addition story problems and also introduced subtraction. We practiced area, length, and width when the students completed an activity called "How Big Are My Feet". We also completed a unit of describing objects and sorting them into different groups based on attributes. Currently we are working on data collection and surveys. The students are coming up with their own survey question and then

collecting data by asking their classmates their question.

The first grade team will be going on a field trip at the end of January to see the play, The Little Mermaid at the CSM Campus in La Plata.

Second Grade

Second grade has been busy this quarter. We have been learning new and exciting things! In reading, we have been reading to find the topic, main idea, and supporting details. As we read, we have been making inferences and drawing conclusions.

In Math, we have been solving addition and subtraction story problems. We have been counting by ones, twos, fives, and tens. We have worked on our geometry skills including symmetry and 3-D shapes.

In Social Studies, we have been talking about the differences of “yesterday” and today. We have compared communities and schools in the past and present. The students have really enjoyed looking at things in the

past and how things have changed!

In Health, we have been working on ways to keep our bodies healthy. We have read about how our brain works and ways to eat healthy!

Third Grade News

During the Second Quarter, Third Graders have been learning about multiplication and division, measuring area, telling time to the nearest minute, Incredible Stories (fantasy and realism), Japan, and landforms and water systems. We are looking forward to the Science Fair! Thanks for all of your help and participation!

Coming up in the Third Quarter, we will continue our practice of multiplication and division, learn about life in the Polar Regions of the World, study linear measurement, geometry, fractions, and explore probability. In Reading, we will be learning more about text features in informational text and starting our Animal Habitats themed unit. We will be reviewing throughout the quarter to

prepare for the MSA in March. Writing brief constructed responses (BCRs) to show **complete** understanding of concepts is critical in both Math and Reading!

Thanks for your continued support at home with daily checks of Agendas and homework! It is appreciated!

Fourth Grade

In second quarter Math, we studied equivalent units of time, as well as computing elapsed time, beginning and ending time. We collected and organized data, interpreted line plots, graphs and coordinates. We spent five weeks on multiplication and division skills as well as determining the range, median, mode and mean of a set of data. In Reading, our comprehension skills focused on generalizations, summarizing, categorizing and classifying, noting details, and questioning. In our 6 + 1 Traits of Writing, we have worked with Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, and Sentence Fluency.

Second quarter ended in a flurry with our holiday party, CCPS quarterly assessments, and discussions about the inauguration of our 44th

President. Students enjoyed watching history as we visited websites that explained the plethora of activities that make up this historic day.

Fourth grade will be working hard in Quarter Three, honing our Reading, Writing, and Math skills in preparation for the MSA, which begins on March 17th. In Reading, we will be reading stories about people who work towards a goal, who overcome obstacles, and who figure things out. The Reading strategies of predicting, summarizing, evaluating and others will be targeted. Geometry, fractions, measurement are among the concepts to be covered in this quarter in regular Math. Enrichment Math will be studying decimals, fractions, factoring, elapsed time, area, perimeter and other concepts. In Writing, we will continue to follow the “6 Traits of Writing” as a way to practice and improve our written skills.

Students are responsible for reading 20 minutes four nights a week and recording on their Reading Log. Please check to be sure your child has adequate school supplies. Many students are coming to class with no pencils or paper. We want them to be prepared each day for the MSA.

Fifth Grade

During the 2nd quarter our focus for math was working with fractions, shapes, and measuring angles. In Social Studies we learned about the Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence. In Reading we continue to work on reading comprehension, and reading for meaning. The focus in reading also paralleled what was being taught in Social Studies.

Mr. Fucito’s class also went to Nanjemoy Creek for an overnight field trip in November. Mr. Buzby’s class will be going to Nanjemoy in Early February (dress for the weather!). Ms. Hunt’s class will be going to Hard Bargain Farm in the month of May.

During the 3rd quarter students will be learning about the colonies and how the establishment of government was formed. In math, students will focus on measurement

(time, area and perimeter, mass, length and weight), as well as statistics and probability while continuing to work with fractions. Reading will continue to focus on word study, reading comprehension and reading for meaning.

ILT News

The ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) is keeping busy working with groups of students in reading, math, and enrichment activities. Our team consists of Mrs. Kernozek, Instructional Specialist, Mrs. Long, Reading Resource Teacher, and Mrs. Dempsey, Elementary Gifted Resource Teacher. When we are not working with students, we serve as a resource to teachers, manage data, assess students, and deliver important information from the county to our staff.

As we get closer to the Maryland School Assessment (MSA), which will be given this spring at grades 3-5, we will strive to help students and teachers be prepared for this

important test. We know that our Higdon Huskies have what it takes to succeed!



Special Education

Many famous people who have faced learning difficulties in their lives have come forward at some point in time and shared their stories, hoping to encourage and inspire others to overcome obstacles in their lives.

Please read the following quote:

"I, myself, was always recognized . . . as the "slow one" in the family. It was quite true, and I knew it and accepted it. Writing and spelling were always terribly difficult for me. My letters were without originality. I was . . . an extraordinarily bad speller and have remained so until this day."

-- Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie, one of the world's best-known mystery writers, is one

of the all-time best-selling authors of any genre. Her books have sold over two billion copies in the English language and another billion in over 103 foreign languages. She claimed to be a struggling learner, yet look what she accomplished during her lifetime!

EVERY child learns in a different way and at a different pace. While some children may need a little extra help in school in order to get the very best out of their education, other children may need a lot of help.

Just think of the potential "Agatha Christies" here at Higdon. Hopefully, our little "Agathas" will be inspired and encouraged to know that others who have experienced learning problems in school have eventually overcome their difficulties and made major contributions to society.

Science News

Third quarter started off wonderfully in science! 2nd Graders have begun investigating heat, electricity and light. 3rd Graders are

busy learning all about the layers of the earth and various landforms and water systems. 4th Grade is continuing to work on life science. We will soon be investigating innate vs. learned behaviors and genetics. 5th Grade is finishing up a unit on wave interactions such as light and sound. They will soon begin to examine plant and animal cells and learn about all of the important parts that make up cells.

Art News from Mrs. Anna May Cowan

We will all be finishing up the pictures to be sent to Art to Remember and will then, begin new projects, which will include: clay masks with the fifth grade; a project on abstract art with the fourth grade; third grade will be doing some projects linked to social studies; second grade and first grade will be participating in a poster contest sponsored by the Humane Society; and kindergarten will be continuing to learn how to use and become skillful with all kinds of tools connected to drawing, painting,

cutting, and sculpting.
Students in all grade
levels will, also, be
learning more about
famous artists and their
works.

PE PAGE

February is National
Heart Month. Let's
remember to be good to
our hearts! Keep
exercising and drinking
water. The Just Say No
Club will be doing Jump
Rope For Heart on
Friday, January 24th at
8:15 a.m. If you would
like to contribute to this
worthwhile cause,
please see Ms. Jowdy
for details.
Until next
time.....
.....Ms. Jowdy

Music in the News

We will be focusing on
the elements of rhythm,
melody, form and
harmony.
All grade levels will be
participating in
activities, to support this
instruction, the activities
will be geared to the
grade level of your
child.

