



November 6, 2006

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The first quarter is now behind us. The second grade students have moved through the transition period of getting acquainted with a new grade level and all that is expected of them to be successful. They were introduced to data notebooks and monitoring their academic progress. They also revisited skills such as graphing and place value. Students used their prior knowledge of these skills to build onto the new concepts that were taught during the first quarter.

We have now entered the second quarter that will bring the introductions of new strategies and skills. Although the curriculum is like a winding stairwell (each skill continues to be revisited at a higher level), there is always more to be learned and more rigor to be added. In math students will be focusing on Geometry in unit 2. By the end of second quarter, students will be able to identify characteristics of plane and solid figures, as well as identify and model symmetry. They will also be able to identify and model congruent shapes. These processes will be achieved by using concrete materials and drawings. In addition, students will begin unit 3, which focuses on addition and subtraction of two- and three- digit numbers. The skills that students will sharpen after completing this unit include adding and subtracting two- and three- digit numbers using a variety of strategies, solving problems in addition and subtraction using models, and identifying missing numbers in number sentences. The best way to help your child prepare for the unit on computation is to practice basic facts for 5-10 minutes a night with flashcards or computer activities.

During our balanced literacy block, the students will read for information and for literary experience. Some of the skills that will be taught include using text features to gain information, comparing and contrasting information, utilizing context clues to understand unknown words, forming questions through reading, and reorganizing information. Part of reading to be informed includes lessons on performing tasks. The second grade team has also planned an activity that will be an exciting extension of reading to perform a task. The task will take place right before the winter holidays and involves students using directions to make gingerbread houses. Parent volunteers will be greatly appreciated when this activity takes place. The date, time, and contributions to the project will be given to you in a separate letter at a later time. We will revisit reading for literary experience by reading and discussing the characteristics plays. The author's spotlight will shine on the literary writings of Gail Gibbons who writes non-fiction, informational texts.

Students will continue bringing home books that are used in the classroom for daily instruction. In order for students to become successful readers, as well as continue to evolve into top notched readers, they must read on a daily basis in and out of school. Students should spend at least twenty minutes reading these books with a parent or guardian. If the student has mastered the fluency level of the book at a quicker pace, then begin to ask your child some comprehension questions. Some questions to consider would be: Who is the main character? What is the setting of the story? What is the plot of the story? If you could give this story another title, what would it be? Why? What is the book mainly about? How do the text features help you understand the text? What new information did you learn? These books need to be returned to school daily in order for the children to use them during guided reading instruction.

In writer's workshop, the student's will be writing to inform. Our classroom word walls will continue to grow as basic second and third grade sight words are added weekly. The students will work on vowel sounds

combinations and also focus on homophones, prefixes, suffixes, added endings (ing, ed, s, es.) Additionally, we will focus on writing conventions such as nouns and pronouns, subject and verbs, and subject-verb agreement.

The unit of study for science is balancing and weighing. During this unit, students will explore the relationship between balance and weight and learn strategies for making comparisons. This exploration will be achieved by manipulating objects on a beam balance, building mobiles, and using an equal-arm balance.

Our Social Studies unit will focus on physical and human-made features, including landmarks, landforms, and bodies of water. We will also investigate the historical events and culture of the Wampanoag, a Native American tribe. The first unit ends with students learning about the daily life of Pilgrims in Plymouth and the harvest celebration of 1621.

As part of our Music program all 2nd grade students will be attending the Symphony at Strathmore Hall on Tuesday, November 14. This is a county-wide initiative to introduce children to various types of instruments and music. Unfortunately, we will not be able to take any parent chaperones on this trip as seating is restricted. We are confident that your children will tell you all about it.

We have already begun preparing for the Terra Nova 2 (TN2). This is a county-wide, mandated, norm-referenced test that will compare the skills of second grade students throughout the United States. This preparation will not only take place in the student's homeroom class, but it will take place in reading and math. The preparation of skills has already begun in the form of Daily Warm-ups in both reading and math. Every afternoon students are given sentences to correct that involve grammar and punctuation mistakes. As parents, you can also help the students to prepare for this test by reviewing money and telling time to the hour, half hour, and quarter hour.

During the first quarter the students were introduced to data notebooks. You will now have the opportunity to track their child's progress by reviewing the data in the notebooks the 15th of each month. Please make sure to sign it in the back and have your child return the data notebook to school the next day. Students will use the data in the notebook to help them make and track their own personal goals.

The second grade team is excited about all the successes of our students. We are also very proud of the children who made it to the Principal's Wall of Fame during the month of October, which is a rigorous accomplishment since students need scores of 90% and above on their reading and math assessments to be eligible. We are definitely looking forward to seeing those names on the Wall of Fame the next time again, as well as many more.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss any of the above information in more detail, please contact your at (301) 929-2002 or by their email address listed below.

Sincerely,

The Second Grade Team

Francine_Burpo@mcpsmd.org
Joelle_M_Thompson@mcpsmd.org
Stacy_VanDyken@mcpsmd.org
Kimberle_Wilson@mcpsmd.org
Angela_Winston@mcpsmd.org