

September 9, 2011



Mrs. Taht's Fourth Grade Newsflash

Parent / Teacher / Student Conferences

Fall conferences are approaching, and it's time to begin preparation. I ask that these first conferences include your child, as he/she is an integral part in setting goals for the fourth grade year. I have sent a questionnaire that I ask you to complete (without your child). Your child also completes a similar form at school. I gather information from both you and your child, and add my own "two cents" (for what it's worth), and together we set reasonable, attainable goals for the year. This is a fun learning experience for your child because he/she is empowered to have choices in his/her learning. Thank you for providing honest and insightful feedback for these conferences.



Figure 1: enjoying art



Figure 2: Clay Woman

Our first field trip to the Denver Art Museum was a whopping success! Everyone learned a lot about how different cultures from around the world have used clay to create art and sculpture. The children wrote some lovely paragraphs about what they learned, liked, and/or found interesting at the museum. I hope you'll enjoy reading these paragraphs. The paragraphs were a nice way to introduce "prompt" writing. I will attempt to provide a variety of opportunities throughout each month for children to respond in a paragraph format to a specific prompt idea. This is good practice for the real world, as well as good practice for the writing portion of our state standardized testing next March. We're planning our next field trips to include trips to CU - the planetarium to compliment our sun, moon and stars unit and to University Theater (in December) to see the Winter Holiday play, *A Wonderful Life*. We'll be asking for parent drivers for these trips. Permission slips for these field trips will come home in a few weeks.



Next three weeks at a glance...

- 9/12 Book Orders & Fri Folders Due
- 9/13 Choir begins
- 9/16 DEAR Contract Due
- 9/19 Friday Folder Due
- 9/22 CAP workshop 8:45-10:00
- 9/23 DEAR Contract Due
- 9/26 Friday Folder Due
- 9/26-10/7 Student Count days
- 9/30 DEAR Contract Due & Twelfth Night presented by CSF 12:20-2:30
- 10/12, 10/18, 10/20 P/T/S Conferences



Do we or don't we bring toys to school? That was part of a discussion during our class meeting time today. Toys don't really have a place at school, and bringing them sets up the possibility of negative consequences (i.e. theft or loss). Please ask your child about our discussion, and encourage your child to leave those toys at home - that way they'll be there for playing with when your child gets home from school. ☺

Check out our new learning goals....

Reading	DEAR – weekly contracts, daily logs in class, AR quizzes as a book is completed Small group fantasy books to focus on summarizing, questioning, predictions, vocabulary, and literary elements of similes and metaphors
Writing	Building a writing community Using ideas from mentors and our own lives to craft stories
Language	Spelling –(all) high frequency word list tests on Fridays Spellography – working on vowel and consonant sounds Rules – doubling rule, silent ‘e’ rule, change ‘y’ to ‘i’ rule
Math (4 th gr)	Place value (numbers to the millions); rounding and estimation with bigger numbers; money and decimals Speed tests = addition facts and subtraction facts (check our website for strategies)
Science	Sun, Moon, & Stars Unit study



Reading Groups!!!!



This past Tuesday, we began our first round of reading groups. Our books are in the fantasy genre, and were chosen based on your child's interest (book talks were shared the week prior), as well as appropriate reading level. Your child is either reading: Castle in the Attic, Pigs Might Fly, or The Cricket in Times Square. I still find small group instruction to be vitally important in fourth grade. Our small groups do not read together, as in primary grades. Instead, the children are assigned pages to read on their own, and are given an assignment to compliment these pages. These assignments have (or will) include instruction in: the interpretation of similes and metaphors; inferring the meaning of unknown vocabulary words based on context clues in the book; summarizing; and predicting. Your child will meet twice a week with his/her reading teacher (either my literacy tutor, Jenni Manfredini or me). It is imperative that your child has completed the assigned reading and the written work prior to the meeting date (your child has a schedule for the entire book, going through 9/30 so he/she will know what to expect). These schedules are also posted on our website. Your child's participation during group time is important because this is the time when the teacher will help to answer and clarify questions about the story, and will also deliver direct instruction about the above comprehension strategies. Think about these meetings as your child's first introduction to "book clubs". They are designed to promote discussion of the stories among the children, to foster the love of reading, and to deliver instruction. On the days that your child's group isn't meeting, he/she is expected to work on the reading and written assignments. Please let me know if you have any questions about our group work.



Spelling in our fourth grade classroom...

HF Words: Thanks to our volunteers, Sue Mills and Pam Stormo, we are off to a great start with our high frequency word tests. If your child was tested today, the results came home in his/her Friday folder today. If not, you can count on testing next Friday. Our goal is to test every child at least twice during the month, on the same words, with mastery as our goal. When your child shows mastery (spells a word correctly each time tested), then that specific word will be removed from the next month's word list, and more will be added. You can expect a new monthly list in the first Friday folder of each month (i.e. October's will come home on 10/7). Home study is important to ensure successful spelling by your child. We will not work with practicing these in school, as we will be spending time on other types of spelling and grammar activities. The high frequency word list must be practiced, as these words typically do not adhere to any spelling rules - they just have to be memorized. The mastery of this list will also help to excel your child's reading and writing because as they learn to spell a word correctly, they will also recognize it automatically in their reading, and will have direct recall of the word when they are writing (for assignments as well as for enjoyment). A note was sent home last week with ideas for practicing - this is also posted to our website. Thank you for helping your child to be successful in this endeavor.

Leveled Groups-meeting your child's unique spelling needs...ask your child which he/she is doing:

Spellography is an intervention program that includes direct instruction in phonics, spelling rules, spelling patterns, and incorporates "speed reads" of similar word patterns in order to build recognition and fluency. Children using this program have already begun receiving daily direct instruction in a small group (six students) by my literacy tutor, Jocelyn Miller. It is a fun, engaging, and very verbal spelling program, and I hope you will see the benefits and results from it as the year progresses.

Rules Most of our students are taking the month of September to review some of the "rules" in our English language. In October we'll begin other programs. The rules introduced are:

- **Doubling rule:** When adding a suffix to a word, one must doubling the ending consonant if the word is only one syllable word and ends in one vowel followed by one consonant (example = run, running)
- **Silent 'e' Rule:** When adding a suffix to a word, one must drop the silent 'e'
- **Change 'y' to 'i' Rule:** When adding a suffix to a word ending in 'y', one must look at the letter preceding the 'y'. If it is a vowel, just add the suffix. If it is a consonant, one must change the 'y' to an 'i' before adding the suffix (unless the suffix begins with an 'i').