

I hope that this email finds you doing well! It's a long one, but I hope you can find answers to any lingering questions that you may have. First quarter is coming to a close, and I now have a detailed picture of each of my 50 students. This is an important quarter as it helps me piece together the puzzle of your child and their learning, not SOLELY based on test results. I assure that I am doing everything in my power to help your child succeed, not just this school year, but in the years to come. I want them to build confidence as a learner, to develop the stamina to push past obstacles and weaknesses, and to find the willingness to try, even if they are afraid of failing.

HOMEWORK: I would like to clarify my thoughts / reasoning on this hot topic!

I believe it can be very helpful for students if it is assigned in an authentic and meaningful way, or if it is based on specific learning as practice. A comprehensive body of research shows that it is not **as** beneficial in elementary, but it can be helpful if it is developmentally appropriate. Most studies show the benefits in 7th grade and beyond. After many years of doing a weekly packet, or not assigning homework at all, I have found that I am somewhere in the middle. For a link to read both sides of argument and research, click [here](#). If you prefer more scholarly research, feel free to click [here](#) to look at a variety of studies, and the overall synthesis based on this research. I continue to read about this every year, and reflect on my practices often.

Sometimes, they will have homework! This will depend on your child, and what they need. This could include incomplete work, reading passages with questions, or grammar/ writing practice for an area of weakness. This might be self-guided, as students set their own goals in class, and choose to read, write, or practice at home without anything being assigned. They are always encouraged to show you their work, and you are more than welcome to give feedback and ask questions! I only ask that you resist the urge to correct it for them. It is helpful for me to see their errors so that I know how to better support them in the classroom.

They have access to their **Google Drive** at home, so they may work on writing at any time. To access, they will simply log on with their Google login id and password. This is optional as not everyone has access to the internet at home. I will contact you individually if I feel your child needs support in a specific area. Please contact me if you have questions, I would be happy to talk to you about any concerns!

AT HOME: If you want them to be busy in the evenings, and you would like to check their work, ask them questions! Here are a few examples of meaningful questioning:

GENERAL:

- Can you show me an example?
- Could you teach me that thinking strategy?
- What has worked in class?
- How did you collaborate today?
- What do you do when you disagree with another student?
- Do you understand the assignment? Why or why not?
- How can you problem-solve?
- What specifically are you struggling with and how can I help?

READING:

- Does this remind you about anything you have read before? Why? Why not?
- How do you feel about what you read? Why?
- Has your thinking changed as you read further in the story / article / text?
- How does the author describe a specific character or emotion?
- On a scale of 1-10, evaluate what you read? Why do you say that?
- How many books have you read so far this year? (They have a 40-book challenge, per child!)

WRITING:

- What writing piece are you working on? What is the topic?
- What writer's techniques are you trying or adding to your writing?
- Where are you in the writer's process?
- How have you improved as a writer?
- Could you add more details? Imagery? Dialogue? Character actions or thoughts?

BINDER CONFERENCE: I am sending home a *Binder Conference* form for you and your child. Please click [here](#) to print one at your convenience. Your child will lead the discussion, but the talking points on the form will help you both during this discussion! These portfolios of their work are a big part of how we learn; They use these to compare text and review learning. It will probably look quite different than how you and I learned. They annotate thinking, highlight evidence, and write / think in a variety of forms. Ask questions!

We also do quite a bit of in class work online, so you won't see everything. There is not a deadline for this conference, but I do want the form back as soon as possible, preferably before break. I only ask you that you look for the positives! You are more than welcome to help them set goals, and to reflect on both strengths **AND** areas for growth! **Both** are important in the learning process.

JUSTICE: This has been such a relevant unit, and students are thankful that they can process current events that they are exposed to, and research an area of justice they would like to investigate further! Some of our state standards include discussing, collaborating, and making connections to the world. Students have been able to share how different groups of immigrants have adapted in the United States.

We have read appropriate grade level text, and discussed facts from the text in a safe environment. I have never been more impressed with a group of students discussing non-fiction text in an empathetic and respectful way. They have learned how to disagree respectfully using specific evidence to support their thinking. Your children are very passionate and energetic about learning, and they seem to love what we are doing in the classroom.

UNIT 3: Unit 3 begins right after fall break! Our reading unit focuses on fictional text, primarily describing characters, settings, and different events in the plot. These stories will be heavy in figurative language and sensory images, which can be difficult because it is so abstract. In order to support and extend their thinking, try talking about word choice and how it adds meaning to a story or poem. For examples of figurative language, and other literary devices, click [here](#). In writing, they will write 2-3 short fictional stories using many of these techniques. They will also complete a variety of interactive writing assignments related to descriptive language.

REPORT CARDS: I am finishing up grading and adding scores and re-scores to RDS before fall break. Many students have worked on extra assignments for extra credit. Unit 2 tests looked great! I can't begin to tell you how much improvement I have seen since the beginning of the year. Their writing is really taking off! Unit 1 test helped students understand the expectations at the fifth grade level, so based on performance as a whole in fifth grade, we added as many points to their scores as we could. I printed tests so you could see the expectations as well. Typically, I will not print these due to limited time and resources.

WEBSITE: Please check my website, or Mrs. Nance's, for more info about what we are doing in the classroom. You may download images from our sites at any time! I am continually adding links and resources, but it does take time so bear with me! Click here to check out our site:

wtshockwave.weebly.com

FIELD TRIP: As Mrs. Nance previously mentioned, we are heading to the **FOP camp** for **DARE** on **Wednesday**. Permission slips were sent home last week! Thank you for returning the forms and money quickly. If you haven't please do this as soon as possible. If your child "accidentally misplaced" the form, please let me know asap and I will send another one home.

Have a great week, and all my best to you and your family over fall break!

Mrs. Renee Schefer, M. Ed.

Fifth Grade Team, West Terrace

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