

Miss Switzer's Star Notes

September Newsletter



Welcome Back!

Dear Parents,

I have truly enjoyed these first days of school getting to know my new students, your children. Meeting with those of you who were able to come in for our informal open house was also

a great experience. Communication is a priority to me. Please know that I welcome notes, e-mails, and communication of any kind. It's important that we work together to insure that your child has a positive and successful 4th grade experience.

We've had a great beginning to the year! I have gone home every day with a smile on my face and tired! Every conversation we have in class opens my eyes to the enormous hearts that these kids have! The kids seem to be a cohesive group already. We are taking routines and academic subjects very slowly as the year begins. In the Responsive Classroom philosophy, it is stressed that taking this precious time to explain rules, routines, and expectations truly does pay off in the end. This pace also allows us time to get to know each other, for modeling of those things which make our class run smoothly, what/where items are and where they go, and gives time for the students to feel confident and comfortable in their new environment. I am seeing the benefits of this already.

To go along with this philosophy I like to read books and lead discussions that send positive messages about being ourselves, accepting differences, and doing our best. One of my mottos is LET YOUR SPARKLE SHINE! All of my students are my stars, and I want them to learn that they each have very special attributes and abilities that allow them to shine. I believe that building a positive classroom community will encourage and enable us all to do our best while working together this year.



Who Are You Going to Call?

I will be giving the children my phone number next week. They have this listed on their Password Page in their binder. I will encourage THEM to call me if they have news to share or questions about homework, etc... We will also talk about phone etiquette. If I'm not home I will only return calls before 8 P.M. Hopefully the kids are in bed by then anyway! I think this helps to encourage them all to take more responsibility for their learning.

Math

We use the latest Everyday Math edition which is based on the Common Core State Standards. We began math with a beginning of the year pre-assessment. We will begin our first unit on Monday. We will develop routines for mental math, slate work, and daily math messages. Our first lessons will



focus on place value, rounding numbers, and becoming familiar with our Student Reference Books. You will receive our first FAMILY LETTER on Monday in your child's HOMEWORK folder. These FAMILY LETTERS come home at the beginning of each unit. Be sure to save these and read through them as they offer lots of

insight into what your child will be doing in each unit of math. They also offer selected answers (to use in helping your child) to the Study Links that your child will bring home on most Mondays through Thursdays. Your child will be given a password to access ConnectEd. Information about this site will also be sent home next week. The Everyday Math site has many great resources for students and families.

I will take some time exploring the Everyday Math website with the class, showing them what's available, and where to find things.

All of our students will be doing Reflex math this year. It's a program that helps children master their basic math facts. It's vital that children work on these skills because they will make everything else we do so much easier. I would encourage all of our students to practice these basic math facts often. Automaticity is the goal.

First Few Weeks

We are slowly getting into what will become our normal routines. We've now gone to all of our specials except music. Students should remember to bring library books back into school for Tuesday's library class. Friday is P.E., and the kids should all wear or bring in sneakers. Those participating in the Mile Club might want to have sneakers with them more often.

Next week we will start to settle into our schedules as we learn more and more about our 4th grade curriculum and each other. I'm happy to share that so far caring attitudes and enthusiasm have been amazing!

Specials' Schedule

9:20-10:15 (M-W and F)

Monday—Music
Tuesday—Library (bring books)
Wednesday—Art
Friday—P.E. (wear sneakers)

Our Class Webpage

Hopefully, if you haven't already, you will visit our class website very soon. I'm still updating it and making it more user friendly, and I will share more about that as changes are made. I'm also exploring some different tools to use for parent communication. Until then here the address is—missswitzersclass.weebly.com

You will find lots of useful things there including our plan book page, links to games, class photos, and other helpful parent and student sites. I hope you will find our webpage helpful throughout the year.

Social Studies/Science

As you are aware, we will be making globes next week. The kids are really looking forward to that. You will be able to see our finished products later in the month at Open House. Thanks to many of you for already volunteering. We can't have too many helpers. So continue to send in your clippers if you want to help. Thanks so much.



We will alternate between social studies and science units this year. Geography is where we are beginning.

Language Arts

In writing we are taking things slowly. We have taken 1 writing pre-assessment on narrative writing. Next week we will do one on opinion and another on informational. These pieces will be used to begin each writing unit as your children learn about these different genres. Our first writing unit will be The Arc of Story: Writing Realistic Fiction.

We will also do a reading pre-assessment. We will do these as we begin each of our reading units. Again, this piece will help the class as they begin to learn about characters in our first reading unit. We have been working with our reading logs and reading every single day whether at home or at school or both! I've been very impressed with the kids and how quickly they have adopted to our reading and log routines. Thanks to you all, too. We will be working on choosing books,

Testing!!

I will begin giving reading benchmark tests to each student in the next few weeks. BAS (Benchmark Assessment System) is the reading test given at every grade level to assess your child's guided reading level. I will be asking for volunteers to test before or after school as/if needed. I love this time because it allows me one on one time with your child, getting to know them, their learning style, and abilities. Many times the kids enjoy this time, too

Toward the end of September and possible into October the kids will take the STAR test! This is one of the standardized tests that we take here at CRES. Our class will be taking the reading and the math STAR assessments These tests will be repeated later in the year, too.

I try very hard to keep any and all testing situations relaxed. To do this, I really stress doing our best EACH and EVERY day. That way I just want the kids to do what I ask of them every day. We also do some fun stretches before or during to keep the kids energized and calm while working. I promise that we aren't testing 24/7! There are just many things that have to be done at the beginning of the year to be sure that your child is progressing as the year continues.



Star Attraction Weeks

A different student will be our STAR ATTRACTION during one week of the school year. I try to schedule these around children's birthdays while also making sure each student gets a 5-day week, but that isn't always possible. Next week, we will begin this activity with James being our very first star. When it's your child's week, I will send home a letter with directions and a task for your child to do at home, too. This is a fun way to celebrate each student and learn more about each other.

During weeks where we don't have Star of the Weeks, we will have Mystery Stars. These will be York School Department staff who have graciously agreed to share with us each day of their week. The class will try and guess who they are! It's a fun way to learn more about those we work with, and we also focus on good questioning strategies.

Newsletters and Calendars

I'm toying with weekly newsletters vs monthly ones, and I promise that future ones will be much, much shorter than this first one! This one has a lot of important information to get out to you. After this, newsletters will be more about updating and sharing what we are up to. I'm also thinking about utilizing emails more for this type of communication. Stay tuned!

Calendars will be updated online regularly and sent out on a monthly basis.

Growth Mindset



These first few days have also been spent talking and learning about Growth Mindset. The big idea behind this is that WE CAN ALL LEARN AND GROW! However, we can't do that without effort, mistakes, learning from others, and trying our best! The kids "get" this, but we still need to exercise our brain more. My hope is that this mindset will lead to learners and problem solvers who are willing to take risks, not give up, and believe in themselves.

Thanks to You All

I wanted to take a moment to thank you all for sending all of your children's school supplies in. We had almost all of our supplies here on the very first day of school! Wow! Thank you, also, for getting all of the paper work done that helps our school run smoothly. Having dismissal plans in place saves so much time each and every day!

As a reminder, any time your child's dismissal changes from their "usual" plans, you must write a note and send it in. Please do not use email for dismissal changes. If your child is traveling to someone else's home, please be sure to include addresses.

All the Other Stuff You Always Wanted to Know About 4th Grade

My policies, procedures, and expectations for this school year are explained on the following pages. Please take some time to read through these. They explain much about how our classroom is organized. Thanks for the time you give to my letters. I really do appreciate it, and it does help both you and your child get back into the routine of school more quickly and successfully.

My Beliefs

I believe that it is vital to work together for the benefit of "our" children. This communication is a priority with me. Please feel free to call or contact me whenever you have a comment, question, or concern. I can be reached at 363-1800 between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will get back to you as soon as possible. You may also contact me through Coastal Ridge e-mail, but please know that I can't always check this throughout the school day. My e-mail address is bswitzer@yorkschoools.org I can also be reached at home (646-1299). Again, I might not always be available, but if I am- you will have my ear!

Goals

My goals are to encourage my students to be the best that they can be and to prepare them for the transition into 5th grade. I strive to maintain a safe atmosphere that will allow and encourage all of my students to grow, learn, and keep their individuality! I care about them! I'm looking forward to a great year with this very nice group of children!

E-Mail Address

Whenever possible I like to use e-mail to keep in touch. Please use the clipper attached to give me the e-mail address that is best to use for regular contact during the year. Please DO NOT use email to let me know about dismissal changes. Again, notes are the best way to notify me of a change to your child's dismissal plans. When that isn't possible, a call to the school is best. Thanks so much.

Plan Books & Homework Folders

As you are already aware, your child is coming home nightly with a binder, plan book and a HOMEWORK folder. This plan book will be used everyday to record assignments, homework, and any other important reminders. Please sign or initial your child's plan book nightly. This helps to keep the lines of communication open between you, your child, and me. This plan book is a great responsibility builder, and it also prepares the students for the more extensive plan book that they will be using at the Middle School.

All homework, notes home, etc...are put in your child's homework folder at the end of each day. I look at each child's folder and plan book each morning, collecting any notes and/or homework. The kids have been doing a terrific job with homework and understanding our morning routines.

The plan book is also a great place for me to jot down notes, and you can use them to communicate with me, also. If you want to put dismissal info in your child's plan book, please be sure to write it on the page you are initialing or signing each night.

Blue Folders

Most Wednesdays these home/school folders are sent home. There are often notices that are sent home via e-mail, too. Please be sure to read through all of these to be sure you and your children are aware of events. Please return the folders weekly.

Daily Work

Daily work is always due the following morning. Accuracy, as well as neatness/handwriting, should be stressed in each assignment. Four times each week you will see a Study Link as math homework. Eventually the kids might also have other work to complete from the school day. In addition, I would like to encourage students to read for approximately 20 minutes nightly or whenever possible. Reading is so important in every aspect of your child's education. 4th graders are expected to have between 45-60 minutes of homework nightly. Although I don't give homework on Fridays, weekends can always be used to catch up on missing or late work, study math facts, or read.

If work is not completed on time or materials aren't at school, you will receive a small label in your child's plan book. This enables me to keep you informed of the daily progress of your child. The student will also be required to complete the late work AFTER their daily work is completed. When available, recess time might be used to complete work that wasn't completed on time.

I can already tell that you are encouraging your children to show good responsibility by coming to school prepared with the appropriate books, materials, assignments, and binder. Good study habits are very important. Any night when your child does not have any specific homework, encourage them to spend their homework time practicing math facts, reading, writing, or practicing priority words. They will have a spellingcity.com, EDM, and Google passwords in their binders by next week. If your child doesn't seem to have enough or has too much homework, please let me know.

Daily Schedule

A detailed (and still work in progress) daily schedule will soon be available on our website. Some details are still being worked on. Our specials' schedule was listed earlier in this letter. It's very important for your child to be at school AND on time. Those first few minutes of class usually include morning work that sets the tone for the rest of our day. It's inevitable that we all have doctor appointments or something throughout the year. If at all possible, it's best when kids can come into school for as much of the day as possible. However, you know your child best. If this isn't what is best for your child, I get it. As always, I will defer to your best judgment.

Conversation Starters for Home

Many children come home and when asked, "How was your day?" often say, "Good." No information, details, or emotion is shared. To help out with those important conversations I've included a list of Conversation Starters. Just ask your child to tell you about....

Saving Fred
Growth Mindset
Our 1st assembly

Rocks, Paper, Scissors with Hula Hoops
The Book with No Pictures
Seating groups

Final Thoughts

I want all of my students to develop good work habits, a sense of responsibility, good problem solving strategies, and above all--to learn! In addition to that, I also hope to maintain the "Responsive Classroom" that we strive for here at Coastal Ridge. Cooperation, assertion skills, responsibility, empathy, and self-control are encouraged and valued. These are social skills that are used to promote a sense of community in our class and within our school. Being respectful of each other will also help promote a better learning environment for us all. I enjoy teaching in this manner, and I know that the children enjoy school more when they feel like they are important members of a community. I also encourage my students to always try and do their best! Our class motto is BE THE BEST YOU!

I am really looking forward to this year and working with you and your children. I'm very excited about this class! They are a great bunch of 4th graders, and I love them already! Thanks for sharing them with me! Here's to a wonderful year together!

Beth :-)

Please answer these questions. Thanks so much.

_____ I have read this newsletter.

_____ (Optional) I would prefer to receive newsletters through email instead of paper. Save the paper.

_____ I would like Miss Switzer to use this/these email addresses to communicate with me throughout the year (not just for newsletters, but regular communication, too).

parent signature _____



Please sign and return this clipper at your earliest convenience.

Feel free to let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Questions or comments can be included on the back.