

December 2011

Volume 7, Issue 4

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Merrill Road Elementary

Mustang Matters

Information from Administration

Ms. Gray & Ms. Bartley

WOW! What an exciting and busy fall semester it has been! I am simply amazed at how quickly the holiday season seems to have found itself upon us.

The boys and girls are showing such growth across the campus. Listening to them read, share their writing, and explain their thinking in working through their math problems has been so exciting! I encourage you to take a moment whenever you're on campus to check out all the student work hanging throughout the hallways. Great teaching and critical learning is evidenced around every corner!

We hope you all have a wonderful holiday break, and enjoy as much time as possible with your family and friends. We will jump right back into the learning mode once we return on January 3rd.

Extraordinarily Yours,

Jennifer T. Gray

Cynthia Bartley

Jennifer T. Gray, Principal

Cynthia Bartley, Asst. Principal

Reminders:

- ☞ Jan. 3rd—Back to School
- ☞ Jan. 6—Flag Raising
- ☞ Jan. 11—Early Dismissal
- * Jan. 12—Ready to Learn @ 6
- * Jan. 16—MLK Jr. Birthday, No School
- * Jan. 19—End of 2nd Nine Weeks
- * Jan. 20—Planning Day, No School
- * Jan. 25—Early Dismissal
- * Jan. 26—Marvelous Mustangs @ 8:40 AM
- * Jan. 30—Report Cards go Home
- * Jan. 31—SAC @ 3 PM

News from P.E.

During the month of December, your child learned about bicycle and pedestrian safety. I taught them the importance of wearing a properly-fitting helmet every time they are on any type of wheels, thus insuring a safe brain.

In the state of Florida it is illegal for a child under the age of 16 to be on a bike without a helmet. Wearing a helmet while riding a bike is just as important as wearing a seatbelt in a car. If your child will be receiving a bicycle over the holidays, please be sure a helmet comes with it.

The students were also taught the correct procedure for crossing the street. At this age, an adult should always be with a child when the child is near or crossing the street. Please practice this safety prompt with your child by saying, "We always stop at the curb and look for cars to the left, to the right and left again, before we step out into the street."

Thank you for protecting your child by being always enforcing the safety rules for biking and street awareness.

Mrs. Brown-Smith



Check out our website at
www.duvalschools.org/merrillroad

Nurturing in Progress

Grade Level Highlights

Pre-K Our Pre-K students recently began participating in the Young Athletes program through Special Olympics of Duval County. This will provide them with the opportunity for Physical Education that is not usually introduced at the Pre-K level due to funding. The program has no cost and will end with a celebration for all children and volunteers who participate. All activities will take place during the school day.

The activities are for children of all ability levels. Special Olympics provides this training at no cost to the athlete or school, as a means to achieve physical fitness, self-esteem and the life skills necessary to be productive, respected and contributing members of their communities. If you would like to know more about the program, please see Mrs. George, Pre-K Room 74.

Kindergarten

Early Reading Behaviors

When children are ready to read there are four behaviors necessary to accomplish this beginning task.

1. **Directionality:** children should recognize that words, books, and lines of text go left to right. They know this when they write their names and when stories are read to them.
2. **One-to-One Match:** children must be able to point to each word in a line of text as it is read orally. This movement trains the eye to make sure what the reader is saying is in fact what is printed on the page. It allows students to monitor their reading for accuracy.
3. **Locating Known Words:** As the child accumulates a sight word vocabulary he/she will use those words to monitor their reading for accuracy: if he/she is pointing to the word *the* and yet reading it as *to*, the child is not locating known words. Encourage your child to locate known words in stories you read together, menus, road signs, anywhere there is text.
4. **Locating Unknown Words:** This behavior is noted when a child comes to a word in text he/she does not know and stops. This means the child has noticed and no longer invents text. It is the first real step to self-monitoring, noticing when something doesn't look right.

Kindergarten students are now showing these behaviors as they point to words in a left to right sequence. When you are reading together they will now be able to locate words they have learned on the printed page.

First Grade

Our 1st grade field trip to Diamond D Ranch was a huge success. We rode the horses, fed the cows and goats, saw a bison, and went on a nature walk. The field trip was fun and educational, reinforcing our learning of living and non-living.

In Readers Workshop, we have been working hard on learning our reading strategies. These strategies will help your child become a stronger reader. While reading remember to ask “wh” questions (who, what, where, when, why and how) and have your child make predictions about what they think may happen next. After reading have your child retell the story using time cue words (first, next, then, finally) and identify the characters and setting. Constant and consistent practice will help your child to become a more successful reader. Look for the reading strategy bookmarks coming home soon!

Over the Winter Break, visit the Duval County Public Schools website (www.duvalschools.org) and type “winter packet” in the search box. On this link, you will find resources for Math, Reading, and Science by grade level. There are parent letters, tips for parents, worksheets for each subject, hands-on activities for math, and a reading list. The winter packets are designed for student enrichment during the winter break. We encourage you to take some time during this busy season to explore the wonderful resources available.



Box Tops, Pop Tops, and Campbell Soup Labels

Did you know BOX TOPS and CAMPBELL SOUP LABELS give back to our school directly? Clip, tear, or cut and return them to your child's teacher.

Simply POP those TOPS off your beverage cans, as well as labels off your soup cans, and be a part of helping everyone who relies on The Ronald McDonald House.

Each of the items above are collected on the first Friday of each month!

**When everyone helps,
everyone wins!**



**Merrill Road is
“A Good Place to
Grow...through the Arts!!”**

Grade Level Highlights (cont'd)

Second Grade Our second graders have been working hard. They were excited and enjoyed saluting our military and our country by singing patriotic songs at their evening chorus performance.

Students are reading every day in school. The targeted strategies students have been learning is how to compare and contrast how characters, places, and objects are the same and different. In addition, students have learned the difference between an opinion and a fact. Your child should now be able to read without stopping for at least twenty minutes. We are working our way to thirty minutes without stopping by spring. This ability will help when it is time for the FCAT in third grade. We are also trying to increase reading speed. It is important for students to continue reading at home daily.

In math, students learned about place values, odd and even, counting by 2s, 5s, 10s, and using various strategies to solve addition and subtraction story problems. Our students continue to study the weather and learn about the life cycle of plants. To extend their learning students visited Tree Hill Learning Center.

ESE Many children "regress", or lose progress, forget, and revert to previous academic deficiencies, due to school breaks. In particular, learning disabled students regress substantially higher than their general education peers. Special education students would require a greater than usual time to "recoup", or get back to the level they had achieved, before a break in service. As teachers, we have noticed significant loss of previous gains in reading and math after such breaks. It is imperative that all students, but especially ESE students, receive continued academic support in areas that they tend to struggle in during these times. Here are a few ways parents can assure their child is returns from a school break prepared for a successful remainder of the school year.

Activities to combat regression of ESE students.

-teacher work packets

-do everyday skill builders/maintainers that deal with areas of struggle for student (ex. math counting-parents can have the student count household items like cans or pencils to help them continue practicing; ex. reading

sight words-parent can post student's sight words around the house so that the student frequently comes into contact with the words; ex. math adding money-parent can allow the student to total a grocery bill or "purchase" some candy with their money)

-parent can/should read everyday with their child, then ask the student questions about what's been read to check comprehension

-journaling and scrapbooking of holiday activities to continue literacy development in a fun way; parent should only be available as a support-let the student take the initiative

A Wish for Wings That Work

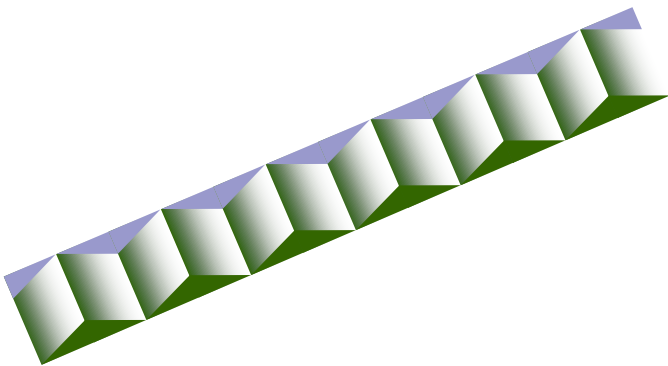


Book of the Month

A Wish for Wings That Work *An Opus Christmas Story by Berkeley Breathed*

Opus the penguin makes a Christmas wish that he might fly. This is such a great story to share with all readers around the holiday season, since it sends the message of believing in oneself.

This story will be read aloud in every classroom this month, and students will be asked to respond to the book in various ways. Students may write about their favorite part or what the story made them think of. Or, students may be asked to change the ending or one of the characters. This allows them to use their sense of storytelling and imagination to create something new. Also, students may be completing activities that go along with the book, so please ask your child about our December Book of the Month.



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FAIR Promotional Requirements

The goal of the Duval County Public Schools is to have every student reading at or above grade level every year. To accomplish this, the district is looking at ways to improve the reading achievement of all students within our community. Recently, the Duval County School Board approved a change to the promotional requirements for students in grades kindergarten, first and second. This new policy measures grade level reading readiness as a requirement for promotion. This means that **any student who scores below 54% on the third administration of the FAIR will be retained and must attend summer school remediation.** Students take the FAIR assessment three times during the year. The final assessment period will determine whether a student is promoted and must attend summer school.

Dismissal Change

Those of you that either “Park and Pick-up” your child or use the “Car Rider” line have surely noticed that our changes in dismissal procedures several months ago have truly made the lengthy process run much more smoothly and efficiently.

As a result, we no longer need to utilize the staggered dismissal times to manage the transition of students in grades Kindergarten through Second Grade as they make their way out to these two areas.

Beginning on Tuesday, January 3rd, which is our first day back from the Holiday Break, **ALL STUDENTS GRADES K-2 will be dismissed at 2:30 PM.** This change will eliminate the 2:20 dismissal time for Kindergartners. ALL STUDENTS GRADES K-2 will all be dismissed at 2:30 PM and will make their way to the “Park and Pick Up” area or “Car Riders.”

This change does NOT affect our bus riders. They will continue to be dismissed as their buses are called from the bus loading zone.

Please make any necessary changes in your schedule to be ready to accept your students beginning at 2:30 PM.



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Branches of Information

Children should not arrive to school prior to 7:50 unless they are enrolled in Extended Day.

If the orange flag is out, children should remain with their parent.

Extended Day Hours

6:45-7:50, 2:45-5:45

School Hours

8:15-2:45

Tardy slips are written at 8:15.

If a child is late, he/she should come to the front office with his/her parent.

Cafeteria Information

Breakfast Cost

Full Price—\$1.00

Reduced Price—\$.30

Lunch Cost

Full Price—\$1.60

Reduced Price—\$.40

Please keep track of whether your child has lunch money or not. If he/she does not have money, he/she will not be given a hot lunch.