

# First Grade News

**March 2010**

**Highlands Elementary School 630-420-6335  
Naperville Community Unit School District 203**



From conferences to vacation, this month is filled with things to do! We have completed our second trimester assessments and look forward to meeting with each of you to share your child's accomplishments. Conference confirmation slips need to be returned on or before March 5.

As Spring Break approaches, it is important for your child to continue to read and write throughout the week. Some activities might include: recording vacation memories in a journal, playing word games with road signs, or writing postcards to family, friends, or teachers! We hope you have a wonderful, relaxing, safe vacation!

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## Dates to Remember!

March 11: No School  
Evening Conferences  
March 12: No School  
Morning Conferences  
March 26: No School  
March 29-April 4 Spring Vacation



## Word Study

Each week, we continue to add six words to your child's sight word bank. Not only should your child be able to recognize these words automatically, he/she should also be able to spell each word and use it correctly in a sentence. Being able to read these words quickly increases your child's reading fluency.

This month, we will continue learning spelling patterns for long i and u. We will investigate word chunks to help us automatically decode long i and u words.

# Reading: Accuracy, Comprehension, Fluency



There is an old saying that "First we learn to read and then we read to learn." In first grade students are doing both. Another goal for students is to ENJOY reading! As children read, teachers listen, observe and take notes to determine which strategies the child uses and those that need further development. We focus on accuracy, comprehension, and fluency. What are these?

**Accuracy:** By analyzing the errors that a child makes in their reading we can determine if the error is significant or not. Sometimes students will say an incorrect word that means the same as the word printed on the page, but isn't the exact same word. For example, inserting the word "a" for "the" in the following sentence does not change the meaning of the sentence. The dog jumped over the/a bench. The reader is so busy comprehending that s/he is getting ahead of the story and second guessing the writer. After reading, we praise the child for reading for understanding. Then we look back together at the word in the sentence and suggest that the word s/he replaced is the word the author chose to use this time. Our concern is when the child replaces a word that changes the meaning of the story. For example, the meaning is changed inserting the word "there" for "three" in: Were there/three puppies in the basket? Our goal for accuracy is that the student reads accurately in order to understand what they are reading.

**Comprehension** is **understanding** what you are reading. A proficient reader is thinking about the story/information while decoding the words. You can help support your child's comprehension at home in many ways:

1. Build your child's **background knowledge**—engage them in deep conversations and rich life experiences. That way your child will be able to use their own personal experiences to help them make meaning of a story or nonfiction text.
2. Assist in broadening his/her **vocabulary**—even though your child is reading, don't stop reading to him/her. Reading aloud books is a great opportunity to encounter new words. Encourage your child to use context to figure out meaning and then use these words in real life situations.

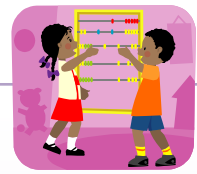
Before, during, and after reading a book, ask your child **explicit** and **implicit questions**. Explicit questions can be answered with information "right there"—you can point to the answer directly in the text or picture. For example, What color was Nicki's mitten? Where did Nicki find his mitten? Implicit questions require the reader to use information from the text as well as from their own knowledge. For example, How would Nicki's grandmother feel if he lost his mittens?--Why? Why did the animals make room for the bear?

What is **fluency**? This is a skill discussed in our first grade classrooms in reading and writing. In reading: Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, smoothly, and with proper expression and comprehension. It is one of the core elements of reading. Reading fluency has two major elements: reading rate and prosody. Reading rate is most commonly measured by a formal assessment of timed reading. Prosody, the reader's ability to use proper phrasing and expression, is evaluated through an observational assessment. Watch for information in the next newsletter about writing fluency.

Fluency and comprehension have a significant, positive relationship, each fostering the other. In other words, fluent readers understand and are able to talk about their reading. If a reader has not developed fluency, the decoding process requires more attention which means less attention is available for constructing meaning of a text.

Teachers assess fluency in order to inform planning and instruction. It allows teachers to target guided reading groups and determine each child's instructional reading level. In order to determine a student's instructional level, fluency is one component assessed along with accuracy and comprehension.

Understanding accuracy, comprehension, and fluency will allow you as a parent to better support your child in his/her reading development.



## Math

In March, we will review and expand on the understanding of number sense. We will look closely at the sums of 10 and use the ten frame to solve addition problems. We will also play math games to reinforce addition strategies (Dot Addition, On and Off, and Totals of 10), and solve story problems to review the problem solving process.

We have been working on a variety of subtraction strategies. One of them is the count-up strategy for subtraction. When two numbers are fairly close to one another (a difference of three or less), start with the smaller number and count up to the larger number. For example  $9 - 6 = \underline{\quad}$ . Start at the 6 and count up 7, 8, 9. The answer is 3 since we count-up three.

Math games continue to be sent home for additional practice of math concepts and skills.



## Technology

How are students exposed to technology and use it in first grade? Technology is a tool that is used like paper or pencils to support their learning. Here are a number of ways:

- ✓ During daily independent work time, students use a laptop for reviewing instruction, independent practice or learning new skills/information. They take out the laptops themselves, start it up, log on with their user name and password, find the Highlands first grade page, find the program they're using and then participate in the learning experience.
- ✓ Teachers use the ELMO projection device for instruction and students also use it by placing their work on it to share and explain to their peers.
- ✓ United Streaming is a site that the District provides for staff to select video segments that support instruction which the students then view.
- ✓ PowerPoint presentations are created by the teacher to enhance instruction. These may contain imbedded video for viewing.
- ✓ PhotoStory is a program used by students to create a story in a photo format. Students may view previously created PhotoStories to assist them when they develop their own.
- ✓ Smartboards are a tool that is used by students as they engage fully in the learning process.

# Writing

This month we will continue working on Voice. The students will be using voice in their writing to emphasize different emotions. For example, we look at a situation and use voice to make our audience laugh. Then we will revise the piece of writing to make our audience feel sad.

Taking on a different perspective will also be a venue for students to experiment with Voice. Just imagine how different Jack and the Beanstalk would sound if it was told from the Giant's perspective. What would the story of Cinderella sound like if it was told from the Prince's perspective or even the glass slipper's point of view? The students will also be using voice to take on the perspective of an object. Whether the object was a basketball, banana, or their chair—how would it be feeling? What would it say? This gives the students an opportunity to try on a new way of thinking and writing.



## Reminders

- ❖ Great job with Ozzie's Reading Club! Keep up the marvelous reading!
- ❖ Parent-Teacher Conferences are Thursday, March 11 and Friday, March 12.



# Social Science Hola!

Did you know?

Spanish is the official language of most South American countries.

The people of Guyana speak English. Dutch is the official language of Suriname.

Native Indians speak their own traditional languages. The people of Brazil speak Portuguese.



Our umbrella question for our next Social Science unit is: How does environment affect families? Our topic is: Families here and there (Brazil, South America).

Our enduring understandings, which would also be good for family discussions, include: (These understandings will be discussed throughout the month of March.)

- ✚ Places can be located on a map.
- ✚ People in Brazil spend their days differently than people in the United States due to climate.
- ✚ Landmarks, festivals and celebrations symbolize the culture.
- ✚ Basic needs will be the same no matter what the location.
- ✚ Basic needs will be met differently depending on the location.
- ✚ Place can affect needs and wants.
- ✚ Jobs are different based on location (urban, rural, and suburban) resources and needs.
- ✚ Leisure activities are based on location, resources and needs.
- ✚ The amount of time spent on leisure activities depends on time needed to meet basic needs.

Each classroom has a unique personality and needs. As a team, we discuss, share and plan, but we approach content in ways that best meet our own unique class needs.

During this case study, we will be incorporating the following applications and skills: analyzing information, problem solving, compare/contrast, developing concepts through literature and multimedia (primary and secondary sources), map skills, classifying, graph and chart skills, sequencing, interpreting and constructing timelines, identifying cause and effect, retelling, and decision making. Our Social Science skills are also incorporated into the rest of our curriculum areas. For some examples, we use graphing and chart skills in math, and retelling in reading. This is Integrated Studies!





## Questions/Conversation Starters for Home

\*\*\*Print this page for at home discussion\*\*\*

1. What are three subtraction strategies you use to solve subtraction problems? When would you use the strategies and why?
2. What are three addition strategies you use to solve addition problems? When would you use the strategies and why?
3. Name 5 features found in nonfiction text. How can they help you determine what is important?
4. Discuss the emotion that an author/illustrator is using. What text or picture clues give the piece a sad, excited or angry feel?
5. Encourage your child to write a couple of notes or letters. Discuss who is his/her audience? How does audience impact your writing?
6. Choose an author and check out a variety of the author's books from the library. After reading, discuss the characteristics of the voice that the author uses.
7. What does it mean to read with expression?
8. Tape your child reading a guided reading book. Listen to the tape and both you and your child evaluate how your child did in the reading of the text. Was there expression used?

