



## FIFTH GRADE CURRICULUM LETTER

Dear Fifth Grade Parents:

We are looking forward to an exciting and challenging year with your child. We have planned two curriculum-related field trips in addition to the regular academic program. We are here to work together as partners with you for the benefit of your child. We would like to make you aware of the academic and behavior policies we share as fifth grade teachers. Hopefully, this will provide some insight into our expectations for your child.

**WORK HABITS:** The main emphasis in fifth grade is helping your child to develop excellent work habits and skills. We expect all fifth graders to be responsible for following directions, completing assignments on time, taking care of their personal belongings, and demonstrating the other characteristics of a successful learner listed on the report card.

During the first week of school we established the procedures and expectations with the students. We plan to keep a record of each child in the task/personal interaction skills listed on the right hand side of the report card. If your child receives three difficulties in one of these listed skills in one subject area, he/she will receive a *Needs improvement* on the report card. For example, three incomplete assignments in math will result in a *Needs improvement* on the report card under *Completes assigned work*. The student will know **EACH TIME** he/she receives a check on our records. In the area of assignment completion, you will be notified when your child has two incomplete assignments by means of a note.

**HOMEWORK POLICY:** There are two comments about homework in fifth grade:

(1) There isn't enough. (2) There is too much! Time is often provided during the day for the students to begin their homework in order to make sure they understand the assignment. Each student has been supplied with an agenda which they are expected to use on a daily basis. All homework assignments and upcoming tests and quizzes are listed on the board in each homeroom. If your child is absent, we will be happy to send home their assignments. You may request their work by calling the office no later than 11:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. Please don't use email to request homework because the teachers may not have a chance to check their email until the end of the school day.

**GRADING:** Students will work to master concepts at the fifth grade level. The report card key is as follows:

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Percentages</b>	<b>Progress Descriptors</b>
A	100%-90%	Excellent
B	89%-80%	Above Average
C	79%-70%	Average
D	69%-60%	Limited
E	59%-Below	Not meeting requirements

Participation in group work will be taken into consideration in social studies and science.

**CONFERENCES:** Conferences are officially scheduled twice a year as indicated on the school calendar. However, we are available to discuss questions and concerns with you as needed, either teacher or parent prompted.

**AGENDA:** We have implemented a program in fifth grade that will help your children learn the important skills of time management and organization. Each fifth grade student has received an agenda for recording ALL homework assignments as well as test dates and other important information. The agenda is also a valuable tool for strengthening home-school communication as it provides a way for parents and teachers to communicate. Parents are asked to look at their child's agenda daily, read teacher notes when recorded, and write notes to the teacher as needed. Parents will also be asked to sign the agenda periodically. Students are expected to carry their agenda to every class, record all of their assignments, and purchase a new agenda if the original is misplaced. The teachers will monitor the recording of assignments, check student agendas frequently, read and respond to parent notes, and write notes to parents as needed. The students will be using the same agenda when they attend Mellon Middle School.

**SOCIAL STUDIES:** Our fifth grade social studies program, *History Alive* by Teachers' Curriculum Institution (TCI), provides students with the opportunity to "experience" social studies. TCI presents the content in a unique way using theory-based active instruction, preview assignments in the beginning of each chapter to introduce key concepts and tap into students' prior knowledge, multiple intelligence teaching strategies to engage a variety of learning types, and graphically organized reading notes.

Throughout the year we will review maps and globes and geographic landforms, as well as take an in depth look at the history of our nation. We will start with a review of geography, followed by studying the lives of the Native Americans that inhabited America, continuing with explorers, colonization, slavery, the Revolutionary War and the Constitution. The students will complete a structured study guide in class at the conclusion of each unit. All chapter tests will be announced several days in advance and the students are expected to use their study guides to prepare for the chapter test.

**MATHEMATICS:** Our math program is a joint usage program combining the use of a traditional text focusing on procedural understanding published by Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley and an activity based program focusing on conceptual understanding called *Investigations in Number, Data and Space*. The combination of these two components offers students a balance of mathematical experiences including: teacher directed lessons, purposeful practice, cooperative learning, hands-on activities and investigations involving real world applications. Our goal in teaching mathematics is to help students develop a strong foundation in skills and concepts and to learn to investigate, reason and explain their thinking.

Our traditional textbook, Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley Mathematics, is a research based program consisting of teacher directed lessons focusing on procedural understanding. Problem solving strategies as well as test taking strategies are integrated into the lessons.

The second component of our math program, *Investigations in Number, Data and Space*, is an activity based program organized into four units: 1) *Thousands of Miles, Thousands of Seats* which focuses on addition, subtraction and the number system 2) *Measuring Polygons* focusing on geometry and measurement 3) *What's that Portion?* focusing on fractions and percent and 4) *How Long Can You Stand on One Foot?* focusing on data analysis and probability. The Investigations units offer student-centered activities which encourage creative thinking and enable students to construct knowledge and develop their own problem solving strategies. Students work cooperatively with classmates and participate in games that reinforce their understanding of important math concepts and skills. Students are encouraged to think, reason and share their mathematical ideas both orally and in writing. Family letters are sent home to communicate essential information about each Investigations unit.

**TECHNOLOGY** – The technology component of our math program can be accessed by students and parents by clicking on “links” on the Foster School home page and then clicking on *Pearson Success Net*. A letter was sent home during the second week of school with a user name and a password for you and your child. Students and parents can access the student textbook on line and also the Student Math Handbook which serves as a resource for major mathematical ideas and contains math games and their directions. Students and parents can also access interactive math games by clicking on “Take it to the Net.”

Our reading program also has a link on the Foster School home page. Click on *Harcourt Trophies* to access games, activities and resources organized by grade level, theme and story title so you can reinforce what your child is learning at school.

All fifth grade students will have the opportunity to use *Study Island* which is a web based provider of standards based learning. *Study Island* presents math topics built from the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors. Students move through the lessons and learn at their own pace using *Study Island*.

In each fifth grade classroom there are six student computers. Foster School also has a class set of laptop computers that can “travel” to our classrooms. The students will use *Microsoft Word* for word processing and *Microsoft Power Point* to prepare slide shows as an alternate way of presenting their work.

Fifth graders will also have access to the Internet to visit sites that are directly related to their course work. District guidelines have been established for Internet use and these will be reviewed with the students.

**LANGUAGE ARTS** - Our language arts series, *Trophies*, is published by Harcourt Brace and is a research-based developmental reading program. It contains high-quality childrens’ literature, as well as informational texts and a variety of genres and styles.

The program focuses on “The Five Big Ideas of Reading:”

1. Phonemic Awareness – means awareness of sound in spoken language, not written
2. Phonics – means to decode printed words using phonetic rules
3. Fluency – means the ability to read a text accurately and quickly with expression
4. Vocabulary – refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively
5. Comprehension – which is understanding -- the reason why we read

## LANGUAGE ARTS (continued)

Research has shown that good readers routinely use the following reading strategies, and these strategies are taught throughout the year:

1. Use decoding and phonics
2. Make and confirm predictions
3. Create mental images
4. Self-question
5. Summarize
6. Read ahead
7. Reread to clarify
8. Use context to confirm meaning
9. Use text structure and format
10. Adjust reading rate

The student anthology is divided into six themes. These themes help students realize they are a part of a large independent world, and they discover how different authors present issues about the same theme. Students can then make connections among books and in real-life situations. Each theme is listed below followed by the universal theme to which it relates.

Theme 1 – Look Inside (Self Discovery)

Theme 2 – Teamwork (Working Together)

Theme 3 – A Changing Planet (Growth and Change)

Theme 4 – Express Yourself (Creativity)

Theme 5 – School Rules (Community)

Theme 6 – American Adventure (explorations)

We are continuing to focus on the writing process through **WRITER’S WORKSHOP**. Our students have 60 minutes of uninterrupted writing every day during Writer’s Workshop. The Workshop is introduced with a 10 – 15 minute mini lesson, followed by a 30 – 35 block of writing. The hour ends with an author’s chair, which allows students to share their writing.

**SCIENCE:** Our approach to the teaching of science is one of discovery through investigation. The *Focus-Explore-Reflect-Apply* learning cycle that we use is based on research which indicates that knowledge is actively constructed by each learner. Children learn science best in a hands-on experimental environment where they can make their own discoveries. After focusing on and exploring a topic, the students are then guided by the teacher to reflect on their discoveries and to construct a system of understanding which can be shared with others and applied to new situations.

In fifth grade science, we will explore concepts in Physical Science and Life Science. We will investigate the laws of physics by exploring the ASSET module, *Energy, Machines, and Motion*. Students will explore the concepts of force, work, energy, power, and conservation of energy. In addition we will explore everyday objects as well as microinvertebrates as part of the ASSET *Microworlds* module. Students will learn how to make good observations and use those skills to observe living and non-living organisms under a microscope. Each test will be announced a week in advance.

## SCIENCE (continued)

In addition the students will participate in the Lutherlyn Environmental Education Program on **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009**, and **THURSDAY, MAY 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010**, at Camp Lutherlyn, which is located in Prospect, PA (near Butler). Our camp experiences will provide the students with interactive learning opportunities involving the natural world. All activities are led by experienced environmental educators and are directly related to our fifth grade curriculum.

## OFFICE HOURS:

Mrs. Hopkins and Miss Lutz are available before school (8:15 - 8:30) and after school (3:30 - 4:00) to answer student's questions and further explain concepts taught in class.

## SPECIAL SUBJECT SCHEDULE:

Monday	-	Library
Tuesday	-	FLEX (French – first 9 weeks; German – second 9 weeks); Gym; Chorus
Wednesday	-	Music
Thursday	-	Health
Friday	-	Spanish; Gym; Art

## IMPORTANT DATES:

<b>Field Trips:</b>	Lutherlyn	Thursday, October 15, 2009
	Lutherlyn	Thursday, May 20, 2010

## Testing Schedule:

PSSA Reading and Math	Week of April 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2010
PSSA Writing Test	Week of April 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2010

We ask for your support and encouragement in helping your child develop the independence, responsibility, and self-reliance necessary for success in school and in life. Your cooperation and communication is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

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Miss Lora Lutz  
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