

Weekly Newsletters

Weekly newsletters can serve as a great, consistent way to share news about the classroom with families. They can work well because families know to expect them, and they can read them to hear about what their child is learning each week. This makes families feel connected to their child's learning. Newsletters also serve as a great way to share important upcoming dates so families can plan accordingly. Lastly, some families feel that lots of communication from schools can be overwhelming, but through a newsletter you can summarize the most important bits of school news and focus on what is applicable to your class and set of families.

Tips about weekly newsletters:

- Choose a day to send them out and commit to this day so families know when to expect it
- Keep a consistent format that is easy to read
- Explain all academic activities in words you know that families will understand
- Translate the newsletter as needed for the families in your classroom
- Set up a clear avenue for two-way communication if parents want to discuss anything about the newsletter or have questions

In the following artifacts, you will see an example of a newsletter that a teacher sends home each Friday. This newsletter gives important reminders, and a summary of what students learned that week (as well as important dates, when applicable).

Teachers:

- Find out what method works best for your families—email or hard copy (you may send it to some families one way, and to other families another way)
- Find an appropriate length that works for your families—if it's too long, families may not read it
- Save your newsletters so you can copy and paste your "upcoming dates" list each week adjust it as necessary
- Including photos makes a newsletter even more exciting!
- Pay attention to news being sent from the school to families—summarize anything extremely important in your newsletter
- Give families a list of forms/student work coming home so they know what to look for (and know if something is missing)

School Leaders:

- Set an expectation for some sort of standard, weekly communication from teachers to families
 - Give teachers some agency when crafting their newsletters for their classes
 - Get feedback from teachers about what school communication is best for families
 - Allow 'expert' teachers to provide models and/or lead workshops during PD sessions on weekly newsletters and other family engagement strategies
-



Created by Ellie Crutcher

Sample newsletter:

Dear Fourth Grade Families,

September 26, 2014

I can't believe we've already had 5 weeks of school! Several exciting things happened this week:

- 1) Our class decided on our class name: The Electric Airlines
- 2) We led a great Schoolwide Meeting all about Hispanic Heritage Month

I'm sending out this letter via email starting this week. However, if you prefer a paper copy please just let me know and I can accommodate that. In this letter you will see a review of what we've learned this week, and some other important notes.

In Math, students learned how to add and subtract numbers up to 6 digits. In addition to this, they learned a helpful strategy for checking their work: estimation. This is how it works: before solving a problem (addition or subtraction), you need to round each number to its leading, or first, digit and then complete the problem. That will give you an estimate of the sum or difference. Then, you solve the problem and check it against your estimate. Students also learned how to round a number to any given place, which was a tricky concept for many of them.

In Reading, students are continuing to love our Read Aloud text-*Liar & Spy*. They've been continuing to learn how to study characters deeply by analyzing character dialogue, envisioning (making a mental picture), and inferring character feeling and motivation by making a personal connection.

In Writing, students continued developing their characters for their realistic fiction stories to ensure that they're complex and believable, and they also decided on their characters' motivation and struggle. Next, students planned out their story on a story arc and then began drafting by **SHOWING**, not telling. They are working on including lots of description, sensory details, and character dialogue, feelings, and internal thought. The stories are looking great so far!

In Social Studies, we began our first unit this week: The First People and the Land They Lived On. The students watched a video and read a text about several theories on how the first people came to the Americas. We focused on the land bridge theory.

OTHER NOTES:

Field Trip:

Next Thursday, October 2nd, the whole 4th grade will be taking a field trip to the Museum of the American Indian. Please sign the permission slip in your child's Friday Folder and return it on Monday. These are due no later than Tuesday! The cost of this field trip is \$5 per student, as we are taking a chartered bus to the museum. We've had difficulties in the past getting there efficiently on public transportation. If this cost presents any issues for your family, please let me know. Lastly, please send your child with a bagged lunch on Thursday.

Weekly Math Quizzes:



Created by Ellie Crutcher

Starting this week, the 4th grade is giving weekly math quizzes to assess how well students are holding onto the concepts we're teaching. Please see your child's quiz from this week and review it with them. It is out of 5 points. I will send home extra practice resources (photos of our math charts, links to videos, practice problems, etc.)-please take a look at these with your child for any of the problems that s/he missed. You can keep the copy of this quiz! We will have our first assessment on our Place Value Unit next Wednesday, October 1st. Please encourage your child to do some extra practice problems this weekend for anything s/he missed on the quiz! In your child's Friday Folder you will find some rounding practice problems, and practice problems for any additional concepts they need to practice.

iReady:

Next Tuesday, every 4th grader will take an online math diagnostic test to determine their strengths and areas of growth in math. They will take it on laptops in our classroom. This first test is just to gather data about ways to best support and challenge every individual student.

Other Forms and Letters in Today's Friday Folder:

- Permission Slip-please sign and return on Monday!
- Pottery enrichment class flyer
- iReady parent letter
- Social Thinking packet
- Also coming home: DCPS calendar

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. I hope you all have a great weekend!

Best,
Ms. Ellie Crutcher

