

Ms. Catherine Forington's
4th Grade Handbook

2016-17

catherine_forington@dpsk12.org

<http://catherine-forington.wikispaces.dpsk12.org/>

Reading/Writing Curriculum

We will use a genre study this year (very similar to previous years). The sequence will go as follows: 1) narratives (both personal and fictional); 2) expository non-fiction (feature article writing); 3) poetry; 4) persuasive non-fiction; 5) opinion 6) traditional stories; and 7) narrative non-fiction.

We may adjust the order of some of these genres in order to have a more integrated approach to the science and social studies curricula.

Math Curriculum

We are continuing to use Math in Focus, a curriculum from Singapore, as the foundation of all our instruction. We will be supplementing with other resources, both printed and on-line. After looking at a variety of data points, we will be grouping children and switching classrooms during math. Your child may have either Ms. Kristin Heilbron, Ms. Annie Witwer, or myself.

Science and Social Studies (“Project”)

Unit	APPROX. dates
Ecosystems	September – October 7
U.S. Elections	October 10-26
Colorado government, history, economy, and geography	Oct 31-Winter Break
Space	Spring 2017
Paleontology and classification systems	Spring 2017
Electricity	Spring 2017
Africa ?	Spring 2017

Field Trips

- Keystone Science School
- SPREE (South Platte River Environmental Education) – our class October 10
- Colorado Walking/writing field trip – early November
 - Union Station
 - City/County buildings
 - Colorado Convention Center
- Colorado State Capitol
- Byers-Evans House
- Colorado History Museum ??
- Steele Planetarium
- Denver Museum of Nature and Science ??

School Attendance

As much as possible, please do not schedule doctor and dentist appointments – or family vacations -- during school days. Much of learning in elementary school cannot be “made up” with a worksheet or reading assignment at home. Your child will miss out on important things, and it creates additional work for me.

Conferences

The official parent-teacher conference day is Friday, November 4th. However, I prefer to meet with families earlier in the school year. Please look for a “Sly Reply” sign-up sheet in mid-October.

Homework

Homework gets “assigned” usually on Fridays and posted on our wikipage. Usually, things are due the following Friday, but I’m open to parents (not students) asking for extensions (not the morning it’s due). Please help your child get the homework in his/her backpack. Students who turn in homework on time may attend both of their Friday electives or have choice time in the classroom. Without homework turned in (even if it’s done and sitting on the kitchen counter), students spend their first elective in study hall.

Vocabulary / Spelling

We are still working on how to handle vocabulary and spelling this year. It is likely that we will have weekly homework and tests for 6 week cycles. Last year we had 3 or 4 cycles of vocabulary work. Keep an eye on that section of the wiki-page for details.

Birthday Celebrations

For many reasons, I do not encourage sweet treats in the classroom as part of your child’s birthday celebration, though they are not forbidden. We have gluten / dairy and nut allergies, so you can avoid the snacks altogether if your child is okay with that. Some children like to bring in stickers, or a fun stamp to stamp kids hands, etc. You’d be amazed at how much children enjoy veggies and ranch dressing or apples and pretzels or a goofy hand stamp or temporary tattoo. Some families enjoy sending homemade banana or zucchini bread. And yes, it’s okay to put in chocolate chips.

Summer / vacation birthdays can be celebrated with me on December 21 (my birthday is December 22 and I like to make my favorite birthday cake to share) OR choose another day to celebrate: the nearest Friday or Monday, the 6 month mark or some other meaningful day.

Star of the Week

Every week I choose one student at random to be the “Star of the Week.” Everyone gets one turn during the school year. Children will know one week in advance, but there’s not much prep (unless you want to do a fancy photo slide show). When your child is the “Star,” here are some things you should know:

- Your child chooses and starts the morning greetings all week. Often, we greet each other in another language, but English is okay, too. Some children like to share a language they feel connected to by way of their family heritage, or just a personal interest. We keep a list of all the ways we learn to greet one another.
- Your child eats lunch with me in the classroom (usually on Wednesday). He or she may invite a friend. I send a note to the lunchroom so that the staff knows your child has permission to bring lunch upstairs.
- Any morning of the week, your child may bring in something to share with the class. A photo sequence of 10 or fewer photos (via photo album, flash drive, drop box or similar) OR an actual object (trophy, photo, stuffed animal, item of clothing, etc.)

- Your child reads a read-aloud book on Friday – either from home or from school. Practice is optional, but encouraged.

Discipline Policy

Room 103 has 3 basic rules – we operate with dignity, kindness and scholarship. Logical and natural consequences will be in effect for forgotten rules. For example, if you waste time, you have to work during your free time. If you drain the teacher’s energy, you might need to help restore her energy by cleaning part of the classroom. If you damage classroom materials, you replace them.

I also use a “color” system which is helpful for some children and some behaviors. For minor infractions (interrupting too much, lounging around on the floor in meeting area, not following directions about getting materials out, etc) they might be asked to move to yellow. At the end of the week, I send a generic email letting you know if your child moved to yellow that week. If they get to red for repeated infractions or something more serious, I’ll contact you that day. Likewise, if they get to purple (Wow! = good), I’ll also let you know. This kind of recognition is also managed with the Bowl o’ Good Deeds and The Bouquet of Joy.

Choice Time/Electives

On Friday afternoons, children have an opportunity to participate either in electives, which are led by teachers, parent volunteers, paraprofessionals, and some outside presenters. Electives choices are sometimes artsy, sometimes overtly academic (coding, robotics, exploring a topic in depth with an expert), and sometimes enriching through fun (board games, Pokémon, etc.)

On Fridays when we don’t have electives, our class enjoys Choice Time, which involves board games, paper airplanes, as well as quiet things like drawing or reading.

Volunteering

I love having classroom volunteers. You may come at any time; there is no need to let me know in advance, although you might want to know if we’re having a test or doing something different from the usual schedule. Some years, I’ve had parents come during a regular time, which is great because I’ll plan around having the extra support. Math and writing times (especially publishing) are the periods of greatest need. In addition, there are some complex science experiments to set up, and extra hands are always appreciated.

Google Classroom

Much of our written work will be published in Google docs; and some assignments will be posted in Google Classroom. Every DPS student has a protected Google account, and to access it you will need to go to the following website: www.polarisstars.weebly.com. From there, click on links, scroll down, and then click Google mail. Every student has a predictable username and password format.

Username: StudentNumber@dpsk12.net

Password: 8-digit birthday

We will practice logging in at school, but students seem to forget. ☺

Best Times to Reach Me

I am here after school most days until around 5:00. With advance planning, I can meet you before school, although that is generally a very hectic time for me. Email works better than phone calls, although there are days when I may not check email until the end of the day.