Our students have completed the first half of the 2014-15 school year. It’s amazing how fast the year is going!! Report cards for the second marking period were sent home on Tuesday, February 3rd.

Prior to the end of the marking period, our students were given mid-year assessments, which were geared towards measuring our students’ mastery of the standards that were taught thus far and the progress they are making towards the end of year grade level expectations. The data gathered from these assessments are used to guide classroom instruction as we strive to meet the learning needs of our students.

This time of the year presents us with the opportunity to review and refocus on the three goals we have established for our building for the 2014-15 school year. The goals are: 1. the continued implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, 2. Using data to guide instruction and improve student achievement, and 3. Strengthening our communication with and engaging our parents in the education of our students. We recognize that the success of our students and the attainment of our goals should be a joint effort between school and home. I encourage you to reach out to your child’s teacher if you have any questions or concerns about your child’s progress. By working together we can ensure the success of all our students.

I know that the second half of the school year will be as busy, exciting, and fast as the first. We look forward to your involvement in many of the activities that are on their way. As always, thank you for your continued support of our students, teachers, and programs at Flower Hill.

Congratulations to the following Flower Hill students: Jai Edwards; Anderson Ortega Maldonado; Marcus Argaman; Emma Meystrik; Kayla Malone; Andie DiGioia; Anthony Murillo; Eva Haniquet; Ryan DiVico; Justin Hernandez; Alejandro Orjuela; Aidan Pepe; Sofia Gomez Calderon; Jonathan Kraft; Jannel Marroquin; Anthony Cataldo; Giada LoPorto; Dashiell Ramirez; Jack Morreale; Gemma Cartwright; Dylan Dougal; Natalie Dunn; Katie Meagher.

Great Job!!!!
Kindergarten Highlights

Our kindergarten classes have been working very diligently since we returned from our winter recess! We talked about the things that we would like to learn or improve during 2015.

In Math we are working on addition using number bonds. We are practicing how to fluently add and count on. We are also learning to create and solve story problems. We are practicing oral and written fluency of numbers 0-10. Our upcoming math unit will focus on subtraction. Please make sure to practice these skills at home with your child.

In Social Studies and Language Arts, we learned about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and how he had a dream for peace. We will continue to work on identifying the characters in the stories, the sequence of events in a story, and retelling stories using our own words. The students are also working hard learning the letter names and sounds. They are practicing how to write their own sentences using sight words and stretching out sounds in a word. We are meeting in guided reading groups for reading instruction. Please read with your child every night!

In February, we will be celebrating the 100th day of school! We will also be learning about dental hygiene, famous presidents and famous African Americans. In science, we will be learning how to conduct experiments by using the scientific method.

The Kindergarten Teachers

First Grade Highlights

Happy 2015! Since coming back from our winter recess the first graders have been working hard. We discussed resolutions and setting goals for ourselves for the New Year!!

In math we are continuing to work on addition and subtraction facts to 10 with fluency. We are working hard to solve addition and subtraction word problems and to explain how we solved the problems. We learned many different strategies for addition like counting on, making a ten, using doubles and double +/- one, using a number path and number bonds. We even learned how to add three numbers. Be sure to ask your child if he/she can make a ten or find doubles when adding 3 numbers.

In language arts, we are continuing to focus on retelling, main idea and details. We have discussed the author’s purpose for writing stories including to persuade, to inform and to entertain. When reading at home be sure to discuss with your child why the author may have written the story and ask for details to support their answer. Having your child retell the story and answer questions with you in complete sentences verbally will help them to become better writers. The first graders have been working on their writing, formulating sentences with proper sentence structure. We have written friendly letters, done persuasive writing, journal writing and some “How to” writing.

In February we will be focusing on Presidents and famous African Americans. In science we will be focusing on keeping fit and healthy, dental health and heart health.

Don't forget to get those Box Tops in and help your first grader win a pajama party!

The First Grade Teachers
Our second graders returned to Flower Hill after our two week break eager to learn. They were also excited about their field trip to the Planetarium in Centerport, where we experienced a thrilling sky show. We learned so many facts about the solar system!

Building vocabulary is a weekly focus in language arts. Increased vocabulary coupled with greater fluency helps our second graders increase their reading ability. In January we continued our work with main idea and details. We studied cause and effect and how it can help us understand what is going on in the story. We also focused on author's purpose which can be to entertain, persuade or inform. That led us into our persuasive writing assignments. During the month of February we will focus on analyzing sentence and text structure, cause and effect and identifying the sequence of events. We, of course, always focus on main idea and details. Helpful Hint: When you read at home with your child ask them questions about the text and ask them to support their answers with evidence from the text.

Module 4 in math shows students various strategies to solve addition and subtraction problems within 200. The arrow way, number bonds and tape diagrams are a few strategies our students are taught to apply their understanding of place value to addition algorithms; moving from the horizontal (number sentence) to vertical addition. They progressed from concrete work with number discs to pictorial place value chart drawings to the standard algorithm. During February we will do the same for subtraction.

We continue to do some experiments in our science lab to close our work with the water cycle and extreme weather. We will then study ecosystems. In Social Studies we are studying landforms and then we will move into communities and natural resources.

The second grade staff would like to encourage all families to continue to practice basic addition and subtraction facts with your children. Keep up the good work with reading every night and assisting with homework when needed.

Thank you for all you do!

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Happy New Year! The third grade students have had a busy start to 2015. We began the month of January with our Kindness Matters activity. Our students were encouraged to do random acts of kindness throughout the month and journal their experiences on snowflakes. The snowflakes are displayed on the bulletin boards outside each classroom.

In Language Arts, we are focusing on increasing the students' reading stamina. The passages are becoming longer and more complex. We have been reading various text structures, such as compare and contrast, cause and effect, sequencing, and descriptive passages. We are developing the students' written responses to texts. The students' written response must consist of an introduction (topic sentence), paragraphs that contain three details related to the topic, and a conclusion sentence.

Module 3 Math is wrapping up and we will begin Module 5 shortly. Module 5 will focus on fractions. Fractions will be taught as numbers on a number line. Within this unit the children will identify and label fractions, compare and represent fractions on a number line, identify equivalent fractions.

Science is the study of the water cycle and biomes. The children are using the science lab to create their own water cycle and various other experiments.

Please continue to practice multiplication facts with your child.

The Third Grade Teachers
It has been an exciting start to 2015 here at Flower Hill. As fourth graders, the academic bar has been raised and we’ve been working hard to meet this challenge. Additionally, we are focusing on random acts of kindness and being “Bucket Fillers”. We all wrote and illustrated examples of our kind acts. Some examples were chosen to be shared at the January Star Student Assembly. Between our stories and the quotes we shared on kindness, we hope we inspired others to become “Bucket Fillers”.

In Math, we finished up our unit on multiplication and division. We’ve deepened our understanding of place value and number sense through the composition and decomposition of multi-digit numbers. Students are working collaboratively in order to participate in rich math discussion and attack challenging multi-step word problems. They are connecting math to real life situations and therefore are learning to “use” math rather than to “do” math. Ask your child to share with you one of the multiple methods we have learned to attack problems and the new rich vocabulary they have learned. We’re looking forward to our next two units of geometry and fractions.

In ELA, we have enjoyed reading and discussing fiction and nonfiction text. We are making inferences and drawing conclusions on rigorous text using the close reading strategy. We are learning to justify our responses and make connections by using text based evidence across varied text. Through the use of our weekly vocabulary words, we are continuing to expand our academic vocabulary. Recently, 4th graders have submitted stories about “Into the Future... What Would you Invent for the Future and Why?” The children learned that no invention is too big or too small to make the world a better place. Children are excited about the possibility that their story may be selected for the March Child’s Play assembly. Finally, our most recent writing project has been our persuasive essays. Ask your child to share one or both of their stories.

In Social Studies, we are focusing on building community by making connections between visual imagery, oral accounts, poetry, and written text of various cultures. Through these connections, we have developed an understanding that culture comes from studying stories, oral traditions, and symbols. We are currently focusing on the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) culture. We have learned that Native American were the early inhabitants of New York, and continue to contribute to the region’s history.

In Science we finished up our unit on Matter and our Chemical Substances Kit. The children enjoyed learning about lab safety and developing essential skills including: observing, recording, questioning, analyzing, and drawing conclusions. Although we have finished our first kit, we still visit the science lab weekly to perform hands on science experiments aligned to the fourth grade Science standards. Our current science unit is the classification of living things and we are looking forward to the arrival of our second kit!

The Fourth Grade Teachers
Notes from Nurse Pirolo

Now that we are in the "cold" and "flu" season, here are a few reminders of when it is best to keep your child home from school.

- Elevated temperature, child should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours.
- Coughing, sneezing, or runny nose that would interfere with learning, especially if drainage is discolored.
- Strep-throat, child must be taking antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Any rash accompanied by other symptoms, such as fever, unusual tiredness or irritability.

Please reinforce good hand washing, use of tissues and to cover mouth when coughing. Please call the attendance number 673-2139 to report your child absent. Also, please notify the school if your child has a communicable disease.

Students are not allowed to carry medication in school, including cough drops, unless we have a signed request from the child’s doctor and parent.

Taking a few simple measures to prevent the spread of germs will help us enjoy a healthy and happy 2015!!

Nurse, Pirolo

Library Literary Corner

Greetings from the Flower Hill Library! My name is Jeanine Caras and I am thrilled to be your children’s school librarian for the rest of the school year.

The library is such a warm and wonderful place and I am very much enjoying meeting and getting to know each and every student. In the few short weeks I have been here we have done some read alouds along with writing activities. Please ask your children about The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywalt or Too Many Toys by David Shannon. We celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King by reading several biographies about him and writing about what some of our own dreams for the future are. Currently, I have been introducing students to the term Caldecott Medal - ask your children if they can recall what the medal is awarded for! We are reading some Caldecott recipient books and doing some imaginative writing as well as exploring how we can re-tell a story. There are many more fantastic things we will explore together. Please feel free at any time to contact me. Thank you so much!
Words, Words, Words

One of the most compelling enduring findings in reading research is the extent to which students’ vocabulary knowledge relates to their reading comprehension. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to decode what they read, make connections between what they read and what they already know, and think deeply about what they have read. One big part of comprehension is having a sufficient vocabulary, or knowing the meanings of enough words.

What parents can do to help at home

There are many opportunities at home to reinforce sight word (high frequency word) recognition and increase vocabulary.

- Increasing background knowledge about a topic along with exposure to new words will help your child when reading. Background knowledge is what you already know about a subject.
- Help your child make connections between what he or she reads and similar experiences they have felt, saw in a movie, or read in another book.
- Discuss the meanings of unknown words.
- Focus on real life words and experiences that are important and relevant to your child.
- Discussions and conversations are easy ways to build vocabulary and, thus, background knowledge.

When reading a new or unfamiliar word, encourage your child to think about what that word may mean in the story

The Reading Teachers