Parents can do a lot to encourage higher order thinking with their children. Higher order thinking is on a level higher than memorizing facts or repeating what was said verbatim. It requires taking facts and understanding them, making connections to other facts, making inferences and eventually applying them to new problems.

Parents can help their children develop these skills by doing the following:

- Ask open ended questions, ones that don’t have a right answer.
- While reading a book, discuss what might happen next and why, how the story relates to you, or why the character made certain decisions.
- When visiting an unfamiliar place, discuss how it is similar and different from familiar places.
- When making a decision, discuss why you would make that choice, and what the outcome might look like.

You can even ask these questions in writing, then engage in a written dialogue back and forth asking more thought provoking questions.

Another way to encourage higher order thinking is to have your child seek out the response to questions you don’t have the answers to. You might say, “Let’s look that up on the internet.” or “Let’s go to the library and find the answer.” or “Who do we know who might have the answer to that?”

You should also encourage your child to brainstorm or to consider alternative explanations. When brainstorming it’s important to remember that all ideas are put on the table. Which are the “keepers” and which are not is decided upon later.

The main goal of educators today is to teach children to be critical thinkers. Instead of memorizing facts or ideas, children need to engage in higher levels of thinking to reach their fullest potential. Parents can be a significant role in this development.

Our Science Fair is a great event that celebrates inquiry, imagination and fun. And it all begins with a question. This year we will ask that all of our 1st - 4th grade students follow the Scientific Method while our kindergartners can submit a collection or display.

The Scientific Method:
- Ask a Question
- Do Background Research
- Construct a Hypothesis
- Test Your Hypothesis by Doing an Experiment
- Analyze Your Data and

Draw a Conclusion
- Communicate Your Results

Winners from each grade level will be selected to participate at the Brookhaven National Laboratory Elementary Science Fair on May 4, 2013. Good
After 31 years in public education here in Huntington I am retiring at the end of this school year. When I think back over my time here what I remember most are not the lessons or the teaching strategies, but the people and relationships that have left their imprint on my heart. From my very first kindergarten class to my final year as principal, I can honestly say that I genuinely loved coming to school each and every day. Who wouldn’t want to be surrounded by the positive energy and endless possibilities that comes from being in a primary school? I feel very fortunate to have been able to see and be a part of the impact that motivation and personal, positive encouragement have on children as they learn and grow. I want to thank everyone for supporting me over the years and wish you all the very best. I will miss you all very much! 

We still have many days before the last, so let’s have some more fun!

Mrs. Matthews is happy to report that we had a wonderful turnout for the American Heart Association Jump Rope For Heart Program. Through Jump Rope For Heart, kids participate in various “jumping” stations, learn how their heart works and raise money to help kids with special hearts. In addition, the AHA provides our school with gift certificates to purchase new physical education equipment. The more money we raise, the more our gift certificates are worth. This year we have raised over $4,000.00 and are still collecting donations. Mrs. Matthews has set a goal of collecting $5000.00.

All children participate in the various “Jumping Stations” during their physical education period. Ask your child about the agility ladder or jump the creek. Mathematics are tied into these stations as well, for example, measuring the distance jumped.

One of the easiest ways to avoid having problems with heart disease in the future is by developing healthy habits as a child. You can find tips to help your family at https://www.heart.org/jump

Mr. Armstrong delighted everyone at Southdown with some traditional Irish bagpipe music on St. Patrick’s Day!

Our fourth grade Student Council members have begun to learn about ways to make our Southdown Community stronger through positive actions, team building exercises and leadership. They are using a program called Lion’s Quest to find ways they can help build camaraderie and support among the younger students in the building. Over the next few weeks, 4th grade student council members will be visiting all 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms to share some brief exercises designed to get kids working together. Once they have completed these exercises with all classes, the student council members will be training all fourth grade students to assist as we expand the program. The unit we will be focusing on in the spring is called Celebrate You and Me. We will be learning about how we can appreciate each other’s unique traits while working together as a community. In addition, the students will be invited to participate in school-wide community service projects.