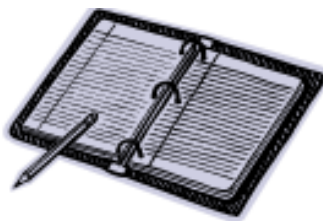


Gloucester Township Elementary School



Principal's Notebook

Mr. Gentile, Principal

Winter Edition 2009-2010

New Writing Program Achieving Great Results!



All students at GTES are showing great progress and performance with our new writing series called Writer's Workshop.

Writer's Workshop is authored by Lucy Caulkins from Columbia University – Teachers College in New York. The program has been phased in the last two years starting in the early grades. Our school had a head start on some of the other buildings in the district, as Mrs. Wright piloted this new instructional technique before it was introduced in our school system.

Writer's Workshop contains a series of skill sequences designed to develop the student's creativity, as well as teaching structure and organization.

Your children will tell you that a Writer's Workshop lesson will begin with a mini-lesson of 10 minutes that explains the target skill for that day. A 20 to 30 minute writing session follows in which students work on an individual written sample. Teachers will conference with selected students during the writing segment to provide guidance and allow for self-expression. Each lesson closes with a 5 minute sharing session where both teachers & students point out positive elements of hitting the target skill.

Teachers are amazed at how well students are writing and the amount of passage that is created with this new program.

Guided Reading Meets Individual Instructional Needs!

Teachers in Grades K, 1, 2, & 5 are using a new strategy during their literacy lessons called **Guided Reading**. Grade 3 will add the program in the near future and be joined by Grade 4 in September.

Guided Reading is now providing the individual/small group instructional segment of all classroom literacy lessons. Small group instruction will take place almost every day for all students. During small group meetings, students who are not meeting with the teacher will work on independent literacy activities or learning centers.



Literacy instructional blocks are now made up of direct reading instruction, Guided Reading, Writing Workshop, and a final block for Spelling/Grammar/&Phonics. Teachers use a diagnostic system called Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment to determine the student's instructional level. The program includes a special Guided Reading insert with all report cards to let parents know how their child is performing. It is completely data-driven!

During Guided Reading, a group will meet with the teacher for about 20 minutes. The group session includes working with small leveled reading books that pinpoint each student's individual instructional level. Strategies include new vocabulary, oral whisper reading, & analyzing text. Teachers take anecdotal records on student progress and assist students when difficult text is encountered.

Snow Days Change School Calendar and Day Numbers!



The recent shot of cold, snowy weather has caused our school calendar to change. Due to the missed snow days on Dec. 21 & 22, our school year will move back to run through June 16th. Spring Break and President's Weekend have not been impacted at this point.

Parents are asked to be aware of the changes in marking periods, report card dates, and dates for interim reports.

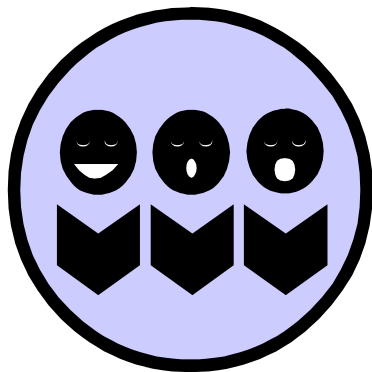
Day #s also are impacted. January 4th starts as Day #5. It is important for students and parents to know day #s for special subjects such as Physical Education & Art.

Programs such as Skill Builder and Confidence Booster (Gr. K, 1, 2) and SNAP (Gr. 3, 4, 5) should not be effected by the snow day changes, as they take place on specific days of the week.

*See the new calendar days included in this Newsletter.

5th Grade Winter Concert Now Rescheduled for January 12!

5th Graders will perform their Winter Concert on Tuesday, January 12th. Two shows are scheduled---2pm for students and the always exciting 7:00pm night community performance for parents & families.



5th Grader Sarah Robbins Completes Rare Hat Trick!

5th Grade student Sarah Robbins has had quite a year so far. After transferring to Gloucester Township Elementary School in September, Sarah has racked up an impressive set of awards and recognitions.

Included in the list are three of the school's & district's most prestigious awards: *Student of the Month*, *Board of Education Shining Star Student*, and *Martin L. King Day of Service Award*. It is the first time a GTES student has completed the natural "hat trick" of these three major awards in the same year!

Sarah's consecutive triple has been achieved with hard work and outstanding citizenship. She has made new friends, contributed in a positive manner in the classroom, and given a wonderful effort on all school work.



A student in Miss Franco's classroom, Sarah will receive the Day of Service Award on MLK Day on January 18th, at CW Lewis School. She is being recognized for outstanding community service with the Girl Scouts and for her hard work in making her town a better place to live.

Student of the Month Breakfast A "Grand Slam" at Denny's and "Big Hit" at Meadows Diner!

Our popular EPC Student of the Month Program will again use two local venues. The student award winners now have their free breakfast a Denny's on Blackwood-Clementon Rd. and the traditional location of the Meadows Diner on Black Horse Pike.

Students and EPC get a discounted rate and their own private room at Denny's. We also receive special seating treatment at Meadows.

The program continues to be a popular incentive for all our students---thank you, EPC!!



Parents...Please...Contact The Teacher or Principal If You Need Further Information About An Occurrence or Happening!

Students at GTES are always encouraged to share their daily experiences with parents & family. Going to school is a wonderful time in a child's life and going to a small community based school such as Gloucester Township Elementary School is a particularly special experience!

From time to time, students will share experiences with their family concerning an occurrence that took place in school that day. While most of the happenings are positive, sometimes a student shares a story about an incident that may be troubling to parents or to the student themselves.

An incident may be something that **happens** in the classroom or a non-instructional area (cafeteria, lav., hall, etc.), something that occurs between students, a staff member and a student (disciplining, etc), or something that was **said** by someone (student or staff).

If you or your child is troubled by something that happened or was said during the school day, please contact your child's classroom teacher. As indicated in ***Agenda/Parent Handbook***, our staff is available to explain any happening or incident that occurs in school.



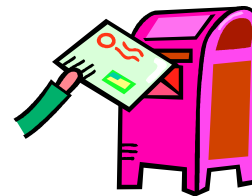
We welcome inquiries from parents & families who seek additional information or are unclear about something that is happening or was said in school---many times students misunderstand, misinterpret, or do not provide accurate accounts of something that happens or is said in school.

As principal of Gloucester Township Elementary School, parents can be assured that all happenings, occurrences, or incidents are taken seriously by myself and our staff. Our school is managed in a tight and very secure manner, with security and **safety** a continuous and ongoing first priority.

All incidents are taken seriously and with urgency as indicated by the level of the occurrence. Dealing with elementary-aged students and what they do & say requires training, experience, and an *understanding* of the maturity level of the student. Our GTES students range in age from 5 to 12, which is the greatest span of any school level. All interventions from our staff are after investigation and in the best interest and what is developmentally appropriate for our students. Each occurrence is individual in nature. In addition, parents are reminded that the school's office can only take action on what is clearly determined and verified.



If you have questions about something that happened during the school day, please contact your child's teacher first. If you seek additional information or perspective, then a call to the Principal's office is an appropriate course of action. If you are still dissatisfied with any communication or response from our staff or my office (*and, we will make every attempt to meet your needs & questions*), Then we would try to help by referring you to a district level official or supervisor who might be of some assistance-→ At GTES we are very proud of our record of parental communication and staff availability.



While parents are free to seek help from any district official, pursuing communication with other offices or personnel that are not in our school or familiar with daily happenings will only prolong any answers or action that you might seek.

Our Gloucester Township Elementary School staff asks for the **courtesy** of contacting our staff **first** before going outside the school.

As always, we thank you for your support.