

Room 3's Parent / Student Handbook 2007~2008

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Welcome

Welcome to Room 3 for the 2007~ 2008 school year. I hope that it is filled with learning, laughter and lots of memories. I am excited to be teaching your children this year. I am also looking forward to getting to know all of you and working together to make this year a bright one for your child. I am sure that this year will be an engaging one.

This handbook was created to help you understand some of the activities, routines and norms that are a part of our classroom community. While I have tried to be as complete as possible there will no doubt be additions, deletions and corrections throughout the year. Also, if you have any questions at all don't hesitate to make contact with me at your earliest convenience. My contact information is located on the cover of this handbook.

Please take a few minutes to look through the handbook and then put it in a safe place so you can reference it throughout the year. You can also find an online version on our class webpage.

Thanks and again welcome to Room 3.

Mrs. Laura Calek

Independence & Responsibilities

It is never too early to start learning how to be independent and responsible about one's possessions and one's behaviors. Students are encouraged to become more responsible and independent by making choices and then dealing with the positive and negative consequences of those actions. While this may sound very "grown-up", it is in fact a very important part of school and becoming a capable and successful student. Students who have many opportunities to choose which activities they wish to engage in or what subjects they would like to learn about are more likely to be motivated by the tasks in which they are engaged. Being responsible for turning in assignments and projects on time will help reinforce the importance of accomplishing tasks in a timely manner.

Another area that develops responsibility is taking care of supplies and materials. If students are always given a new pencil when they lose or break theirs, they won't truly appreciate the value of the pencil in terms of money and natural resources. Instead a child who has to use half a pencil or a crayon will better appreciate a new pencil the next time they are given one. While some children are not ready for this kind of responsibility, others are and benefit from being held accountable for their behavior and their actions.

Choice Time

When students have finished their work, they are allowed to have some Choice Time in the classroom. This can be a quiet choice at their seat or someplace in the room. This is what I use to motivate students to accomplish their work. Once they are done, then they can choose to do what they want. I am trying to help them to become internally motivated and committed to finishing work that they begin.

Communication

I feel that strong, consistent, two-way communication is extremely important to the success of both students and parents. One way that I will be communicating to you is through the Friday Letter. This is also an excellent place to find out what we have done during the week and what is coming ahead. It is also a place to learn some of "why we are learning what we are learning" as well as to find some suggestions for parents to support what is happening at school.

I am a teacher because I love working with children and helping them to get the most out of their time at school. I hope that together we can provide the opportunities for your child to have a wonderful year. Your daily support for what occurs in the classroom and your continued efforts at home will only help to insure that your child reaches her or his potential.

Please feel free to talk to me about your child and our classroom. You can leave me a message here at school at 310-457-9370x103 or e-mail at lcalek@smmusd.org

Friday Papers

These are a very important link between home and school. They include information from school and the classroom as well as share some of the progress and work that your child has made during the week. Please take some time to go through the paper with your child so that you can make connections together.

Thinking Aloud

One of the strategies that I use to help children learn is to think aloud. This is a process where you get a little hokey and actually talk out loud to yourself so others can hear you. By bringing my thinking out of my head I am modeling how I go about deciding what I am going to do. The more children can see and hear examples of how we think the more they will think on their own. Give it a try and see if your child connects to your thinking.

Volunteering

I encourage you to participate in your child's education as often as you possibly can. Whether you can commit to a regular weekly time, want to work on special projects or activities or would like to help behind the scenes please try your best to volunteer.

If working with students is your preference, the times that volunteers are most need are Monday through Fridays 8:50 to 9:55 and 10:15 to 11:45. If these times don't fit your schedule please contact me and we will work out a time for you to join in on the fun.

If you would prefer to work behind the scenes (copying, putting material together, and word processing) or if this fits your schedule better, there are also things for you to do.

Please sign up at Back to School Night so that I can organize my volunteer schedule and make sure that your time is well spent. Also, don't forget you need to have a valid TB test on file with the school and have participated in a volunteer training conducted by Ms. Kim before you can start in the classroom on September 24, 2007.

If you can't make your volunteer time please try and find a replacement or notify me via email or leave a message as soon as possible so I can adjust what will occur in the classroom.

Calling All Talented Parents!

Do you have an area of expertise or a special interest in case we need information, advice, etc.? OR, is there something that you'd like to come to school and do with the children? We'd love to have you!

SO—this is an open call for artists, architects, storytellers, gardeners, builders, chefs, lawyers, actors, homemakers, etc., etc., etc. to let yourselves be known!

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- an idea for a project you'd like to work on
- an approximate time frame for how long it would take to do the project
- a list of any materials that need to be supplied

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- to be ready and willing to hear what you have to teach us
- to provide a working space (our classroom is all yours!)
- to provide any materials or to reimburse you for materials you've purchased

Please contact me so as soon as possible so we can work out the details.

Tide Pool Info

The Following is what your child will learn about our monthly trips to the tide pools. We usually leave right after lunch and return by 2:30. You are encouraged to volunteer to come along and help. If you do choose to come, please be aware of the rules so you can help to reinforce them for all the students in the class room.

Grayfox Walk Rules

- ÿ There is safety in numbers
- ÿ Walk with an adult nearby
- ÿ Walk on the side of the road but off of people's property (stay off the corner house's rocks)
- ÿ Listen and watch for cars on the road.
- ÿ Students not following rules should hold an adult's hand

Tide Pool Etiquette

- ÿ Touch animals with one or two fingers only
- ÿ Never pick up animals, shells, rocks or other tide pool objects
- ÿ Watch where you step, there are animals everywhere
- ÿ Stay on the rocks and close to the shore
- ÿ Leave the tide pools as you found them

Data Collection Procedure

- ÿ Gather your group of students
- ÿ Find a spot in the tide pool to lay your rope
- ÿ Lay rope in a circle
- ÿ Count and tally the amount of each kind of animal on your sheet
- ÿ Make note of any animals or plants that are not on your sheet
- ÿ Return sheets and equipment to teacher when finished

Literacy

We are using the Houghton-Mifflin Language Arts program adopted by the school district. It is a comprehensive reading and writing program with a variety of components. The program will also be supported by a variety of reading, writing and speaking opportunities such as journal writing, read aloud, sharing, guest reading and writing workshop. Our goal is to empower your child to be an independent, confident communicator who can read, write and speak in authentic situations. One of the most important activities that you can do to support your child's growth in this area is daily reading. 15 to 20 minutes a day spent reading to, or listening to your child read, will help to reinforce what is being learned in school.

Read Aloud

Although students are beginning to read on their own and need to practice the skill of reading, they also need to continue to hear good literature. The more that a child is read aloud to, the more engaged they will be in the reading process. For more information about reading aloud to your child and/or recommendations for read aloud books visit Jim Trelease's website. <http://www.trelease-on-reading.com>

Guest Reader

Encourage your child to master a book that he or she will read aloud to the class. They should read the book many times and then practice reading to an audience. You can help them to project and modulate their voice so that they keep the listener engaged. If your child is ready to be a guest reader have them let me know so that I can put them on the list and give them a time and place to do it.

Writer's Workshop

This is the time of the day when your child can express themselves with words. Students are encouraged to work independently and write using their own spelling. Their work is kept in a folder where one side has finished work and the other side has work that is still being revised. Encouraging your child to write at home like this will only help to reinforce what he or she is doing in the classroom. Our school is using The Teacher's College Writing Program

which will include units of study in the following areas: small moments, personal narrative, poetry, non-fiction including how-to and all about books, realistic fiction, revision and authors as mentors.

Math

We are using the Harcourt-Brace Mathematics program adopted by the school district. This program covers state and district standards in the areas of the number concept, computation, problem solving, critical thinking, algebra, geometry, spatial relationships, time and money. We also use a program called Bridges that applies mathematical reasoning into games and activities. These programs will also be supplemented with games, activities and projects that I have used over the years to give children opportunities to use what they have learned in real life situations. Our goal is to give each child the confidence and the tools necessary to be successful mathematicians. You can help support your child's mathematical knowledge by giving her or him opportunities to use their skills at home. Playing card games (i.e. go fish, 21, addition war) and board games (i.e. Checkers, Chutes and Ladders, Trouble, Connect Four) will help them with their thinking and counting skills. Asking them math problems while driving in the car, on a walk or in the bath will help them with their basic math facts. Encourage them to use their fingers or other objects to help them find the answer. Mental math games (i.e. 20 questions, I Spy, estimation) and other activities such as doing puzzles, building objects and cooking will also contribute to helping your child to think mathematically. The more you can get your child thinking mathematically, the better.

Marine Science

We will have a marine science focus this year that will include Earth, Life and Physical sciences as a part of its activities. We will be taking advantage of our school's science lab and our fabulous science teacher, Sandy Carter, as well as our local, natural resources to help learn more about our environment and the many ways that we can help nurture its continued existence and growth. We will also be going on monthly tide pool walks to collect data and observe animals in their natural habitat. Our goal is to give students an understanding, appreciation and a sense of responsibility for the world in which they live as well as teach them the scientific process.

Science/Social Studies/Technology Rotations

We will be working with the other two first grade classes to maximize our instructional time. Mondays and Fridays we will be rotating between the three classes with myself teaching science, Mrs. Cullen teaching social studies and Ken Harris teaching technology. In science the students will focus on Earth, Life and Physical sciences as well as the scientific process. Our goal is to give the students the tools necessary to ask and answer questions. In social studies, our goal is to give students an understanding, appreciation and a sense of responsibility for the world in which they live as well as teach them more about themselves, their community and the world. We will examine our families and cultures as well as the people and places of other families and cultures. We will also explore the impact that each individual can have on her or his environment. Our goal is to help your child develop into a kind and responsible citizen of a global society. In technology, our goal is to have students gain knowledge about the computer and how it can assist to learn. Being comfortable with the keyboard and knowledge of basic computer skills are our goals.

Art/Yoga

This year we are working on learning with our minds and our bodies. We will be engaging in yoga and art activities weekly in order to help us feel healthy and express our creativity. As individuals, we will be participating in a variety of art and yoga activities throughout the year. In conjunction with the art we do in the classroom, we will be working with an art teacher throughout the year. Art is meant not only to improve skills and understanding of different media but also as a way to express creativity and improve appreciation for the aesthetics and value of art in each person's life.

Music

Along with the music education we will do in the classroom, we will be working with, Julia Holland, our music teacher throughout the school year. We will be singing and learning basic musicianship skills. The scope of music will range from classical to modern and much of what comes in between.

Physical Education (P.E.)

We have PE, with the P.E. Coach, Monday through Thursday for 30 minutes. Please make sure that your child wears shoes and clothes that are appropriate for running, jumping and exercising. The more comfortable your child is, the more likely they will be to participate. They will learn new games and skills as well as practice sportsmanship and cooperative learning. Students who are injured or unable to participate in PE must have a note from their parents excusing them from participating.

Handwriting

We are using a program called Handwriting Without Tears. At the end of this handbook is a chart of how the letters are made so that you can become familiar with the system and assist your child practicing at home.

Snacks

We have snack time at recess (9:55-10:15) every day. It is important to make sure your child has a healthful snack (carrots, apple, half a sandwich, and water) every day even if they are buying a school lunch. Learning takes energy and students constantly need fuel to keep the learning going.

Star of the Week

Each student in the class will be honored as the student of the week on Monday afternoons. You will be notified one week in advance via the Friday Papers. The students are given time to share about themselves, their families, their hobbies and their talents. There will be stars with questions on them for each student to complete. The students are also asked to create a poster board with pictures of themselves, their family, as well as hobbies, pets, travels and more to share with the class on Mondays. Students are also encouraged to bring in objects to share such as favorite books, collections, art they have created or other prized possessions. This sharing can happen throughout the week. If your child has a talent or would like to perform something he or she has learned please encourage them to share it with the class. While pictures of pets are preferred because of allergies and liabilities,

we can discuss exceptions when appropriate. Your child will also get to bring home the Room 3 Estimation Jar, which they will fill with some kind of item for the class to estimate and count on Friday. Finally, your child is encouraged to bring a Friday snack to share with all of us. Please make sure that it is a healthy snack and that it complies with the new state guidelines. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask. The hope is that this is an enjoyable project for each student and those who help put it together. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Birthdays

Birthdays are usually celebrated in the classroom right before recess (9:55). If your child would like to share a treat with the class please bring it in before school or just before recess. There is a "no sugar" policy therefore treats leaning towards the healthier side of the spectrum such as fruit, cheese, whole wheat crackers and water are what is expected.

Another option instead of the treat is to donate a special Birthday Book to the class. A Birthday Book can be any book that your child loves or thinks other students would enjoy. We'll write your child's name and birthday in the book cover and students will enjoy this gift for many years.

Please do NOT bring birthday invitations to class to hand out or put in cubbies. This is school policy. If you would like more information about this policy please ask Ms. Kim.

Homework

Our focus this year for homework is to make it an enjoyable and thoughtful experience for all. Homework this year will consist of maintaining a Reading Log in conjunction with the use of Book Bags. Learning Logs are another activity that you can do at home. If you feel that you need to supplement your homework with worksheets or other activities there are a list of suggestions.

Book Bags

A Book Bag is a collection of books that your child is working with in school. Your child, as well as the teacher, will choose the books in the bag. If your child has a book at home that they would like to add to their Book Bag please feel free to include it when your child brings their Book Bag to school each day. The purpose of the Book Bag is to increase your child's reading abilities by giving them opportunities to practice their reading strategies as well as learn how to select books of interest and at or slightly above their skill level.

In order to give your child more practice with these books, she or he is being asked to bring home their Book Bag every night and return it to school the next morning. I have explained to your child how important it is for them to be responsible for their Book Bag. I have also emphasized to them how important it is to keep track of all the books in the bag. Each book costs our library and school around \$6.00. Please help your child to be responsible for their Book Bag by establishing a place in your house where your child can keep the book bag and remember to bring it back to school daily. The book bags should be put into your child's desk each morning.

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation in making our home-school connection as strong as possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or stop by the classroom.

Learning Logs

Learning occurs any time your child participates in an activity. Whether they are playing a game with friends, helping out around the house, or working independently on a project, they are learning. Helping your child become more mindful of the learning that he or she is engaging in is key to them becoming more independent as a learner.

The Learning Log is a place to record activities and more importantly reflect upon the learning that occurred. The log itself can be a journal or notebook in which your child can write, draw, and put pictures or artifacts. For each entry in the Learning Log your child should reflect upon what they have done and

then dictate or write about their learning. In order to help your child to reflect in a meaningful way they will need guidance and support from an adult. Asking specific questions, summarizing the activity, talking about ways to build on the activity in the future are all great ways to help your child be more mindful of what they are doing. The hope is that in time, they will start engaging in this thought process on their own.

Learning Logs can be turned in on the last Friday of every month for review by the teacher and sharing with the class.

The following are two examples of Learning Log records and reflections. Your child is playing a board game or video game. He or she records the activity by writing or dictating a summary of how the game is played. Their reflection could focus on the strategy they used to play the game, the skills necessary to win the game or what they might do differently the next time they played the game. For example, if the game was Checkers, you might ask your child what is the best way to get the most kings. How many jumps do you think it takes to finish a game? If you had to teach this game to someone, what would say is the most important this to remember? Your child takes gymnastics class. In the Learning Log a picture of a person doing a somersault is drawn. The reflection might focus on the necessary technique involved in doing a somersault or why it is important to warm up and stretch before you start. The reflection might also involve discussing some of the specific vocabulary used in gymnastics and why it is important to learn the proper terminology. Writing about how it feels when you are doing gymnastics is another reflection possibility.

These examples are meant to help parents to be more mindful of ways in which they can engage their children in a discussion about an activity. There are a multitude of questions, topics and opportunities in which you can record and reflect in a Learning Log. It will take time, patience, practice and an understanding of how your child thinks in order for the Learning Log to be most meaningful. However, don't feel pressure to write something down or make an entry, just having the discussion is valuable.

As you engage in this activity with your child please make sure that you also take time to reflect upon how it is going and ways you might change what has occurred. Questions to ask yourself might be how can I ask easier questions first and then lead up to more thought provoking ones. How much should I do for my child, and how much should she or he do? Is the finished Learning Log

entry and reflection more important than the process that creates the content of the learning log? Is my child starting to ask questions of him or herself? Do we engage in more meaningful discussions since we have started to be more mindful about our activities?

The Learning Log is an exciting opportunity for you and your child to examine the learning that occurs in everyday activities. At first, it will be a challenge for everyone involved. In time, the work will become less artificial and more a natural part of your child's thinking process.

Please start slowly and remember that this should not be a chore but instead a guided, focused way to interact with your child about their world and their learning. If you have any questions or would like my support, please let me know.

Supplemental Homework Ideas

Many parents ask about getting more homework assignments. I firmly believe that children need unscheduled time to play, read, draw, use their imaginations and that MORE homework takes away from that time. I strongly suggest eliminating or severely limiting television and video games (all count as "screen time") on school nights and giving your child more time to be a child.

There are other learning activities you can do with your child besides additional worksheets for school. Here are some suggestions:

- Read, read, read, read, read
- Write summaries of the reading
- Write a new ending to a story
- Write a new beginning to a story
- Write a poem or a song
- Write a new title or new chapter names
- Keep a journal
- Compare and contrast characters
- Write letters
- Write fiction
- Write an instruction manual
- Write a new story using familiar characters
- Research an interesting topic

Make a diorama of a favorite scene in a book
Draw a picture
Cook together
Build something with wood
Knit, crochet, and sew
Build with blocks or Legos
Look up unknown words
Play a board game
Write word problems
Play "21" (Blackjack!)
Play Scrabble or Boggle
Make a scrapbook
Turn off the TV!

Be creative and have fun with your child.

For those parents who feel that their child would benefit from added work at home, we have included a list of places and websites that you can use to obtain practice materials. Please don't hesitate to contact me to discuss what would be appropriate for you to obtain for your child.

Educational Stores:

- Sophie's Education Corner in Thousand Oaks (805-777-0077)
- Lakeshore in West Los Angeles (310-559-1684)

Bookstores:

- Diesel in Malibu (310-456-9961)
- Borders in Thousand Oaks (805-497-8159)
- Barnes & Nobles in Westlake Village (805-446-2820)

Stores

- Ralps in Malibu (310-456-2917)
- CVS in Malibu (310-456-9645)
- Costco in Westlake Village (818-597-3901)
- Staples in Westlake Village (818-865-9660)
- Target in Thousand Oaks (805-480-9114)

The Internet

- <http://www.kidzone.ws/math/index.htm>
- <http://www.edhelper.com/>

- http://www.mathbuilder.com/math_grade1.htm
- <http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/hmr/1/>