



Goosehill Primary School
Weekly Notes-January 29, 2016



Dear Parents,

As you know, our teachers assess their students' skills in a variety of ways throughout the year. They observe and talk with children to gain insight into how they approach reading, writing, and math tasks. Teachers take notes as they observe the children at work and analyze their observations. This type of "informal" assessment happens every day and helps teachers design lessons and target instruction to address children's specific learning needs.

We also engage children in more "formal" assessments on a regular basis. Some assessments are traditional end-of-unit paper and pencil tests and others are computer-based multiple choice assessments. The children are commended for their effort and never made to feel pressure to perform. Our students can tell you that assessments are simply ways for their teachers to know "what they need to teach me next."

We use a combination of informal and formal assessments to help us determine which students may need a little bit of extra support. Some support is in the form of after-school extra help, provided by the child's teacher. Other kinds of support may be in the form of 5-10 minutes of practice, with something such as sight words, provided by one of our teacher assistants. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) may be thirty minutes a few times a week of extra support in reading, and is provided for many, many students at Goosehill at different times during the year. We try to support our young readers before they become frustrated so that reading continues to be a pleasurable experience for them. We consider AIS a "boost" because often it takes just a little extra time to foster competence and confidence.

Another component of the student assessment process is added in grades 3-8. As all states do, New York State requires that students take annual assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics. These assessments were designed to ensure that all students in our state have the opportunity and support necessary to achieve at high levels. They provide an additional piece of information that helps schools determine students' needs for AIS. As you may have heard, some parents across the state have voiced objections to the current assessments and elected to have their children refuse or "opt out" of the tests. Because Cold Spring Harbor parents of students in grades 3-8 may have questions about what they are hearing in the news about test refusals, Dr. Wilansky, Mrs. Bellino, and our team of School Principals sent a letter home this week outlining reasons why student participation matters. Although Goosehill students are not affected by the New York State assessments, I have attached the letter to these notes to help you understand the issues.

As a school district, we are committed to ensuring that our students continue to enjoy a high-quality education. We work diligently every day to prepare them to face a variety of challenges within a framework of support. Our mission to foster each child's academic and social-emotional growth remains at the forefront of everything we do: *Each student...every day.*

If you have any questions about the assessment process, or any other aspect of your child's educational experience, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein

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