



# Goosehill Primary School

Weekly Notes- October 17, 2014



Dear Parents,

Teachers spend the first weeks of school getting to know their students. They enjoy talking to each child individually, listening to his/her stories, and observing interactions among all of the children. Teachers also assess their students' strengths and learning needs during instruction in all areas. As I shared at the GPFA meeting last week, we also administer short benchmark assessments to give us additional information about students' skills in order to provide them with the instruction and support they need.

Reading assessments are administered in October, after the children have acclimated to school routines and feel comfortable with their new teachers. We assess kindergarten students' ability to identify letters and the sounds they have been taught, as well as some common sight words. Once children are reading, we assess their ability to read words and short books. During a reading assessment, the teacher listens to a child read an appropriately-leveled text and takes notes about his/her reading behaviors and skills. After the reading, the teacher asks the child to retell the story so she has an accurate assessment of his/her reading comprehension.

Teachers use the information gleaned from reading assessments in many ways. One way is to guide them in helping a child find books s/he can enjoy without getting frustrated. Research shows that children need lots and lots of practice reading books at their independent levels---when 95-100% of the words are known to him/her. If too many words are unfamiliar, the child's comprehension suffers and it is likely that reading that book will not be an enjoyable experience. (At-home reading practice should be at the **independent** level so that your child develops the lifelong habit of reading for pleasure.)

Another way assessments are used is to help the teacher determine what reading skills a child needs to be taught next. For example, if a child is reading word by word, the teacher can plan to address his/her fluency by teaching him to read in phrases (two or three words at a time). If she observes that a child has difficulty decoding short words (e.g. run, shop, cut), the teacher knows to provide additional phonics lessons. And if a child has difficulty retelling a story, a teacher's instructional focus will be on comprehension strategies.

As a school, we also offer support provided outside of the classroom by certified teachers. The support is called "AIS", which stands for Academic Intervention Services. At Goosehill, AIS is provided for many students for short periods of time. We believe in giving children a "boost" right when they need it so that they continue to develop their skills without becoming frustrated.

If you hear from your child's teacher that we would like to offer AIS, it simply means we have found an area in which your child could benefit from some extra attention. The support will be short-term and progress will be monitored closely. Our goal is for all children to feel confident and competent as learners. Learning is fun when it has just the right amount of challenge; it isn't fun when it's too hard.

I will be offering a Parent Workshop on Thursday, October 24 at 9:30 where we will discuss the reading skills children need and ways parents can support them. Please join us!

Warm regards,

Lynn Herschlein