



Goosehill Primary School

Weekly Notes-March 3, 2017



Dear Parents,

Our teachers assess their students' reading skills through the use of benchmark assessments at least three times a year. They are administering reading assessments this month and will share their observations with you at the upcoming parent-teacher conference. During a reading assessment, the teacher listens to your child read and takes notes on her observations of his/her reading strategies, behaviors and skills. The teacher observes and takes note of the strategies your child uses to decode unfamiliar words, whether or not s/he self-corrects errors, and how fluent, or smooth the reading is. After the reading, the teacher asks your child to retell the story or explain what s/he learned from the book. The retelling is conversational so that your child is comfortable telling all s/he gleaned from the text. In this way, the teacher has an accurate assessment of your child's reading comprehension and can target instruction to support his/her developing skills.

Teachers administer a variety of assessments throughout the school year. Some are administered individually, like the reading benchmark. Most are embedded in the daily work of the classroom. Teachers carefully observe children as they engage in classwork to gain insight into how they approach tasks. They analyze their writing and their attempts to solve problems to look for evidence of the skills and strategies that have been taught. Teachers take notes on their observations and use them to determine what skills their students need to be taught next. Some assessments are more "formal" such as Foundations quizzes or Math chapter tests, and some may be computer-based. All assessments help teachers design their lessons to meet the needs of their students.

Assessments also help us determine which students may need a little bit of extra support. As you know, we provide support in many forms at Goosehill Primary School. Some support may be in the form of 5-10 minutes of practice provided by one of our teacher assistants. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) may be offered a few times a week, and may also be provided in the area of social skills or self-regulation. Many students receive extra support at different times during the year. We try to give our students what they need before they become frustrated so that school continues to be a pleasurable experience for them. Our goal is to do whatever is necessary to foster competence and confidence in every young learner.

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 are designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support necessary to achieve at high levels. As you may have heard, some parents elect *not* to have their children take the tests. Because we believe that assessments are an important part of learning, our administrative team has written a letter to our parent community outlining reasons why student participation matters. Although Goosehill students are not affected by the New York State assessments, I have included the letter in this week's electronic attachments for your information.

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 challenges within a framework of support. Our mission to foster each child's academic and social-emotional growth is at the forefront of everything we do.

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