

September 25, 2016

Hello Upper School Families and Students,

What a rough and stressful week last week. Thank you to all of you for your positive energy and prayers. I want to especially thank Courtney Haddick, Laurie Geiger, and Maryanne Felkins for jumping in and helping with the class and taking care of my kids. My family is important, but my kids are a big part of my family.

This week we are starting with classroom meetings and team building activities. Now that all the students are here we can actually do this. The illnesses and absences we have had has really impaired our abilities to bond as a group. That is really important if we want to progress academically and individually. We are going to work even more on leadership skills and how important leading by example is to encourage our classmates and not overwhelm them. We are also going to be working on mentoring and more one-on-one instruction. Luckily the packets the kids completed last week has served as a good assessment of where they are and where they need to go.

We do have a lot of things happening this week. On Tuesday we have our S&B Burger Joint fundraiser. I want to thank Gwen LeBeau and Laurie Geiger for being our designated representatives there during the day and night. We need all the rest of you to come out as well, not just to eat and support the fundraiser, but to show the Carbondale community how wonderful our school is and what a great alternative we have to the public schools. I recently had a past student visit from Colorado and this reinforced for me just how important CNS is not only to local area, but to our entire country and world. I am sure that any of you following the rhetoric associated with current news, can agree that we need a lot more kindness and a lot more common sense. I really want to thank this student for reinforcing my commitment to these two important areas we stress here.

Keeping those things in mind, we are moving ahead academically as well. Yes, we will test out of microscopes this week. We will have the microscopes and slide making materials out all year though to encourage individual experimentation and inquiry. Math is moving ahead well at most levels. Some kids need some extra work especially if they have missed a lot of school or need one-on-one instruction. The first math class is working on place value and rounding. All other math concepts really depend on getting this down. In the second math class with Laurie, one group is working on properties and estimation while the other group is working on mean, median, and mode. In my second math class, we will be moving into coordinate graphing and linear equations this week. All groups will have a POW again this week. These are thinking problems and can be solved using many different strategies. The key to scoring well on them is following the rubric and explaining and showing all your work. Last week in my group, only one student got the correct answer. Unfortunately, that student also got the lowest score for leaving off their name and date.

In social studies we will continue our study of various colonies and I am going to ask some of the older students to work on some research/inquiry projects to add to our background knowledge and help them focus on some of their own questions.

In language arts we will continue to work on words with the students finding and agreeing on definitions this week instead of using mine. They will also be adding to their bullet journals and I will be checking these and giving them a grade daily. Some students do fine without this, but some students need the extra incentive. We will continue our reading, writing, and research homework. Just a reminder that children in grades 4-6 need to spend 60 minutes on homework nightly, while those in grades 7 & 8 need to spend 90 minutes. *If students have left over school work, then that comes out of the time first.* The priority of the rest of the work is writing, reading, then research. At the end of the time, they are done. I recommend setting a timer. There is not a page requirement except for 500 pages of reading during the entire month, but I do expect them to consistently put in the time on the work

daily. They just need to let me know what they worked on during that time if they have other work they have had to work on. This is important so I can judge their abilities and tailor assignments accordingly. However, I still expect them to do their schoolwork at school as much as possible and I may have them stay in at lunch to work with me if I think they are not using their time wisely.

In ELA we will also be moving on with the writing process and work on different types of essay writing. Students will also start producing articles for our newsletter and work on some things for upcoming fundraisers. I find that real world applications also work as great incentives.

For the next two weeks, I will be observing kids in special classes and at recess, so I may be out of the classroom or office in the afternoons. Please feel free to set up an appointment time with me if you have individual concerns. Seven a.m. to 7:30 are good times as are times between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. I am happy to give you my time, but I can't take any time away from my kids right now. As you know my kids are my number one priority and will remain so. Also, feel free to email me at any time with concerns. I will always get to these as soon as possible and respond. I take all of your concerns and ideas very seriously. Please remember, that with a class of 14, I have at least 28 other people with concerns and ideas, some very different from others, and these have to be balanced with what is best for each individual child.

I hope to see you all at S&B Burger Joint Tuesday evening. I will need to leave before 8:00 as my husband has an MRI scheduled that night. LOL, even SIH knows my kids come first.

Best wishes,

Carla