

January 20, 2014

Parents,

I hope you are enjoying this beautiful and sunny MLK Jr. holiday! Please don't be put off by the cold temperatures - dressed appropriately, it's a great day for a walk or other outdoor activities in the fresh air!

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As most of you know, I was raised in Canada, have traveled and lived around the world, but only relatively recently became an American citizen. Teaching 4th grade Social Studies this year has given me the opportunity to delve more deeply into American history than ever before, and I am continually surprised and excited by what I discover. The above quote by MLK Jr. is a prime example - it may be familiar to most Americans, but until I went looking for an MLK photo for my web page this past weekend I was unaware of this wonderfully succinct statement that so aptly captures my own personal philosophy of teaching.

Our classroom is buzzing these days, with a lot going on both in class and at home. Here's a summary to help you keep up-to-date and on track - all items have been discussed in class, so feel free to "Ask your child about..."

- We are mid-way through the Newbery Book Report project, with **important due dates coming up** (see my web site for details).
- We have just kicked off the Science Fair project - we're at the idea stage now, but depending upon the project, **experiments may need to start soon**.
- We have a Colonial Life **field trip to Tipton-Haynes** scheduled for this coming **Thursday, January 23rd**. Permission forms have been sent home and are **due back tomorrow**.
- The Ashley Academy **Spelling Bee** is this **Friday, January 24th**. Just as we showed in the Geography Bee, I believe our 4th graders can give the Middle Schoolers a run for their money in the Spelling Bee! For students who are willing to go the extra mile, I have loaded a selection of the Spelling Bee words onto SpellingCity.com, and have set up links to Spelling Bee strategies and tips on my web site.
- Our **Asheville Earth Science/Math & Art field trip** has been rescheduled to next **Wednesday, January 29th**. Please let me know if you have any changes to the permission slips already returned for this trip.
- Our **Classroom Economy was launched this week**, and the students are

all enthusiastically performing their daily "jobs", earning bonuses, and depositing their "MacBucks" with the classroom bankers. Students had their first "Payday" on Friday and are eagerly anticipating the monthly auction at the end of January where they will have the opportunity to bid on items, spending any savings they have accumulated (after paying their monthly rent and utilities expenses). The number of auction items will be limited each month to encourage bidding, and I'm trying to limit the amount of toys/candy and get creative with the items. Some ideas I have so far include: getting to choose who you sit beside for the month, having Tori bake and send you sugar cookies for a week, and getting to choose what we watch/listen to during our Friday classroom lunch. **If you have ideas to share or items to donate, please let me know!**

As you can see, we are doing our best to deliver on MLK Jr's invocation to "think intensively and think critically". I sincerely hope that I am successful in my attempts to model, communicate, and infuse your children with the same sense of wonder, curiosity, and thirst for knowledge that I experience every day.

Mr. Mac