



Thursday, September 8th, 2011
Day 3, PM (Week 1)

petty: (adj). not important

*Ex: When we divided the lunch bill, it seemed **petty** to argue over who would pay the extra five cents.*

BE A FRIEND

*Wherever we are, it is our friends who make our world.
- Henry Drummond*

Reading: 1st / 5th

Reading Homework Expectation is **30 minutes per night** (150 min/week)!
Bring your SSR (Silent Sustained Reading) book to school **EVERY DAY!**

Students read Mr. Adam's Letter of Introduction (see below).

Writing: 3rd / 7th

Students read and analyzed "I Am From" poems. We then brainstormed ideas within several categories of information using a graphic organizer and our writing binder. The poems should be ready to type by the end of Friday. **DUE Monday, September 12th.**



Thursday, September 8th, 2011

Greetings, Students and Parent(s)/Guardian(s)!

As you all know by now, my name is Mr. Adam, and I am absolutely thrilled to be your Language Arts / Social Studies block teacher this year! Even though today is the third day of school already, I wanted to write to you so that I could properly introduce myself so that you can know me better, and so I can help to clarify some of your lingering questions about what to expect this year.

I was born in frosty northern Minnesota 31 years ago, and graduated from St. Olaf College with a Bachelor of Arts in music and psychology. I subsequently fled to the milder climate and more open-minded attitudes of the West Coast, where I pursued dance, worked as a painter, a musician, a dance teacher, and a cook for the next four years. Montessori education drew my attention because it matched my desires for positive change in the world and for working with children. I worked as an educational assistant in a first- through third grade classroom, and then finished my Master's in Education. Because of my passion for social justice, I decided to become certified to teach public school, which led me to my Master's in Teaching. I've worked in a Kindergarten classroom, student-taught in first grade and fourth grade, and ultimately landed an amazing job as a fifth-grade teacher at Chapman Elementary. And all along, for the last five years, I've also been a piano teacher!

I live in SE Portland with my partner, who is an incredible elementary music teacher, and our two shih-tzus, Maggie and Daughter. Last year we remodeled our kitchen, which is particularly exciting because I love cooking, baking, and eating! I also love exercising in many different forms such as triathlons, tennis, turbo kick box, dancing, cycling, soccer, and just about any outdoor adventuring. Two weeks ago, I ran the Hood to Coast race with some friends for the first time, and it was a blast! I love watching movies, gardening, spending time at the beach, traveling, spending time with interesting people, and especially teaching!

As a teacher, I strongly believe in developing and encouraging students' intrinsic motivation and drive to be a life-long learner. As much as possible, my energy will be directed toward helping the students become independent with and accountable for their work. I especially believe that learning opportunities should be fun, interesting, and meaningful, but **learning** will always be the focus. In my opinion, learning is more effective when I teach to the whole child, and when we can all strive to maintain strong relationships with each other and with the activities and content. I have high expectations for students because I believe in their incredible potential, and I will model that standard by working extremely hard as your teacher. I am very transparent about what I do, and I welcome constructive criticism and feedback from families! Please feel free to contact me; I will support you!

The Block:

Reading (Period 1 or Period 5):

By reading literature from a diversity of genres, we will be developing and fostering reading skills related to comprehension, fluency, listening, and vocabulary acquisition. Students will be guided through the process of reading critically, discussing literature, and exploring literary elements and



devices. Our expectation is that students will incorporate our learning in class to their reading homework, which is to consume 30 minutes of text per night (on average) in a variety of genres. They are also responsible for selecting and presenting a creative book report three times per quarter.

Writing (Period 3 or Period 7):

Because the cognitive processes of reading and writing are so integrated in the brain, our writing lessons will also flow with our reading class. Students will learn more about how to utilize the writing process (pre-writing, sharing, drafting, editing, and publishing), along with some much-needed attention to grammar usage and mechanics. Students can expect to write frequently in a variety of forms and for different purposes and different audiences so that they can become equipped with all the tools toward authorship! We will also be accessing the EMC literature anthology, a curriculum designed to differentiate to all types and levels of learners.

Social Studies (Period 2, alternating daily between AM and PM block students):

The sixth-grade curriculum is called History Alive! The Ancient World, which is an exciting study of the Sumerians and Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece and Rome, as well as Ancient Egypt, India and China. Our language arts lessons will be practiced, reinforced, and honed using this ancient civilization content. Tests and quizzes will be administered periodically, and project due dates will be announced and posted as they are created.

The Details:

Grading:

Student performance will be evaluated using a wide variety of formative and summative tools that assess participation, daily assignments, quizzes/tests, and projects. Grades will be calculated on a point basis, which will be converted to a percentage and then a letter grade. My personal philosophy around grades is that they should be an indication of strengths and areas of challenge, and that achievement and learning lie on a constant continuum. I want grades to be meaningful and to focus the students' learning goals! Eventually, I will have access to the web-based program Ed Box, in which parents and students can see their evaluations as the term progresses. More information will be coming to you from the district and at Back to School Night on September 27th!

Plagiarizing will not be tolerated in my classroom. If a student is caught plagiarizing, they will receive a ZERO for the assignment, and will not be allowed to make up the work.

Absences:

Please note that students with an excused absence will have a one-day grace period to turn in missed assignments. Students are welcomed to talk with me if clarification is needed, but they are expected to review the instructions and the assignment as posted on my website first. Students should not expect to be taught a lesson they have missed, but they may make an appointment to see me for help during lunch recess. It is the student's responsibility to find out what must be completed and to make arrangements to accomplish that assignment! Parents may want to oversee this process



at the beginning of the year until the student can manage it independently. This procedure will also be taught and reviewed in class!

Student/Parent Access:

Since I was hired so late in the game, I would just like to ask for your patience in allowing me some extra time to launch my website, which will contain descriptions and due dates of assignments. Because of an I.T. problem, I still do not yet have access to Ed Box, the new on-line gradebook program), so I have not been able to launch that yet either. Thank you in advance for your patience on this matter!

Students and parents/guardians, we are going to have an excellent year together! I look forward to meeting you all and getting to know your family better! Please remember to mark September 27th on your calendar for East Sylvan's Back to School Night!

Cheers to a successful year of learning, community, and growth!

Mr. Adam