

Mustang Message

We're Building Tomorrow

October 12, 2011

Franconia Elementary



Students listen as P.E. teacher, Chris Aracich, combines a whiteboard with a computer to teach a lesson. Many students are able to better grasp and retain information presented in this format used by classroom and resource teachers.

A Message from the Principal

There's no doubt about it, life is busy. After-school activities, errands, and just getting ready for the next day often compete with the homework your child brings home. Homework can even be controversial regarding whether it should be done in school or if it's too much or too little. We want parents to remember that homework is viewed as a way to reinforce classroom instruction and give students additional practice.

Finding a time to fit homework in each night is essential. Create a routine at home to help your child understand what's expected of him or her when it comes to homework. Here are some tips to making the homework time go smoothly at home.

Watch the time. The length of an assignment may change, and some children work faster than others; but if you notice your child spending an excessive amount of time on homework, you will want to check for:

Distractions. Don't let the television, video games, cell phones, or siblings distract your child from completing homework. Find a quiet, well-lit spot to complete the work.

- *Advice.* Make sure there is someone around who can answer a quick question if your child gets stuck.
- *Tools.* Homework cannot be done unless your child is well provisioned. Make sure the work space has pencils, crayons, paper, dictionary, etc. readily available.
- *Attitude.* Your attitude counts as the attitudes of children are often affected by the attitudes of parents and caregivers. Be positive and encouraging about the school work. Children need to see that you support and value the work they are asked to do at home.

Share concerns. An occasional homework overload is not grounds for a heart-to-heart with the teacher. However, there are signs that you should look for that signal it's time for a conference or note:

- *Brain busters.* Talk with the teacher if your child consistently has difficulty understanding the assignment.
- *Brainless.* Is everything just too easy? Does your child mock the simplicity of the assignments? Let the teacher know.
- *Unpredictable.* If your child is overwhelmed with homework one day, and has none the next, find out why. Sometimes, children put off projects until the last minute. This could mean they need help organizing their study time.

Scale back. If your child's life is so full with afterschool and weekend activities that he has no time for homework, it may be time to reevaluate. Activities should never replace school as the primary focus of a child's life.

Stop yourself. Many parents like to "help" their children by doing some of their homework. This is never okay. It is better to send a note to the teacher explaining why your child did not finish the work.

Stay involved. Show your children that you care about what they are doing in school. Check assignment books, homework folders, and keep track of projects.

Give your child credit. Praise the work they do and compliment their study happens. When you give them credit for all they are doing and learning, nothing is more important!

Merrell Dade
Principal

Celebrate 9-5-2-1-0 Zip Code to Your Health

During the week of October 17, schools will be celebrating 9-5-2-1-0 Zip Code to Your Health. This initiative is to get children thinking about ways they can make healthy choices every day. You can help your child at home by just remembering...

- 9** – Get 9 hours of sleep each night
- 5** – Eat 5 fruits and vegetables every day
- 2** – Limit screen time to no more than 2 hours per day
- 1** – Get a least 1 hour of exercise each day
- 0** – No sugary drinks!

Join the Fairfax Education Summit on Saturday

Education is moving away from the industrial model and into an era in which individual student goals drive the learning process. If you have been wondering how the county will adapt education in the years to come, plan to join the second annual Fairfax Education Summit on **Saturday, October 15 from 8 a.m. to noon** at Woodson High School. Parents, school system leaders, and community members will be there to take part in this important dialogue.

Advanced Academics testing and screening

All second grade students and students in grades 3-6 who are new to Fairfax County Public Schools will take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in October. Our school will administer this test October 18-21. Scores from this test provide information that is used as part of the selection process for advanced academic school and center-based programs.

Additionally, parents of children in grades 3-6 may request that their child retake one ability test, such as the CogAT, once between grades 3-6. To exercise this one-time option this year, notify the school office in writing by Friday, October 14.

Parent Information Line available in 7 languages

Parents who speak a language other than English can call a phone information line to help them learn information about FCPS and to receive support if they are having difficulty communicating with their children's schools due to a language barrier. The Parent Information Line numbers are:

- Arabic**—571-423-4952
- Chinese**—571-423-4953
- Farsi**—571-423-4954
- Korean**—571-423-4951
- Spanish**—571-423-4950
- Urdu**—571-423-4955
- Vietnamese**—571-423-4956

A parent may call at any time, leave a message in his or her language, and receive a return phone call in that language from an FCPS staff member within 24 hours Monday through Friday.