**Welcome Letter**

Dear families,

Welcome to the new school year! I am excited to join your students in our learning adventures this year. We have exciting things happening at Keller and in our classroom that will benefit your students, some of which are detailed below.

**Project-Based Learning:**

Our class will almost always have projects in progress. We will start slow as students learn how to work through projects together. Projects motivate, develop a deeper understanding of concepts, allow opportunities for public speaking, and teach students how to work in groups. Most projects will be completed in class, but we will occasionally need help from home. **NOTE: Please do NOT spend money on projects. As we will at school, use materials you find at home or in the library.**

**Spelling:**

I do not believe the typical weekly spelling process teaches spelling well. Few students apply the spelling concepts in their work after memorizing words for weekly spelling tests. Instead, we will focus on spelling concepts (phonics) in class. Students will study and analyze words in class before choosing their own spelling words based on their current abilities. Then they continue to study and analyze words during the week. Copying spelling words teaches few students to spell well. As a result, STUDENTS WILL NOT HAVE SPELLING HOMEWORK.

**Homework Changes:**

Homework will look very different in our class. Research shows that homework is ineffective, or even negative, in the lower elementary grades. It often leads to unneeded stress in many families, especially if a child struggles or has a learning disability. Therefore, I will not assign the typical nightly homework.

**Spelling**

As already mentioned, students will not have spelling homework.

**Math**

Instead of the Math Expressions homework pages, I assign math fact practice, in the form of math facts pages or math games, Monday through Thursday nights. Students are expected to answer each math equations in three seconds. **Once a student has mastered math fact fluency, I will notify the student’s parents that the student no longer has math homework. \*\*\* Math fact homework should NOT cause frustration. If it does, please stop and contact me!** We will find a different method for learning the same material. Our main goal is to build a love of learning.

These homework changes should give you child more time to recharge and to explore the world around them. Therefore, I suggest that you:

* Read **with** your children 20-30 minutes every day and make reading time special to develop a love of reading and learning. This also increases their vocabulary and helps them develop more knowledge of their world. This is true no matter your home language.

As the love of reading develops, your child will start reading on his/her own or asking to read to you. If not at this stage yet, making reading time special will slowly move your child in this direction.

* Incorporate learning into your regular activities, like doing phonics searches on labels at the grocery store, card games to reinforce learning of math facts, and have discussions like the ones I suggest in our monthly newsletters (our weekly phonics focus is also included). Suggested activities are also provided on another sheet and on my website.
* Help your child if he or she is struggling in a particular area.
* Encourage your student’s curiosity and creativity by letting them explore and discover their world through play and investigation!
* Provide 10 hours of sleep for your child each night. This powers their brains to learn better during school hours.

**Snacks, Breakfast, & Water Bottles**

Please send healthy snacks with your child. I tell the children that sugar, in any form, should not be one of the first three items on the ingredients list. Students should bring a water bottle every Monday to be sent home for cleaning on Fridays. The brain should be hydrated for optimal learning. I also suggest a high-protein, low-sugar breakfast, especially if your child struggles with behavior.

Finally, our class is always open. Feel free to volunteer and observe our classroom at any time. We love our adult visitors! If you have any questions or would like more information, please call, email, or stop by after school.

Thank you,

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