 8/2/12

Dear Parents,

 Hello and welcome to 4th grade! We’ve written a grade level welcome letter that outlines some of the important school and grade level policies and procedures but I wanted to take the time to tell you specifically about some things that will be unique to our classroom this year.

My name is Meredith Peterson and this will be my 8th year teaching elementary school. I’ve been at North Douglas since I began teaching and I love it here! I spent my first two years teaching 5th grade and have taught 4th grade for the past five years. I am so excited to begin this wonderful year of learning with your child.

I am eager to get to know a new group of students this year and I can’t wait to work with all of you to make this a successful year for your child! One of my main goals this year is to teach your child how to become a responsible learner. This will help prepare him or her for 5th grade and beyond. Creating a classroom community and a support system for your child is also very important to me.

As you know, the Summer Olympics take place this year. I’d like to adopt the Olympic slogan and make it work in our classroom. Instead of our slogan being “One World, One Dream” it will be **“One Class, One Goal”**. The Summer Olympics is a special event that only happens once every four years but I believe that the same values can be applied in our classroom at any time!

**What does it take to be an Olympic athlete?** One has to be talented, dedicated, and hard-working. Your child is talented and I expect them to be dedicated to their education this year. I expect them to work hard in school and show me their best work on a daily basis.

**Does every athlete play the same sport in the Olympics?** No! The variety of events and talents is what makes the Olympics so unique. They are made up of a variety of athletes with strengths in different sports. Just as in the Olympics, every child in this room will bring with them different talents, strengths, and weaknesses. After I become familiar with each child’s strengths and weaknesses, I will expect them to be willing to work cooperatively with their classmates throughout the year. That will involve me asking them to help a peer or be willing to listen to a peer who is trying to help them. Everyone will do both of these things.

**Does every Olympian come from the same country?** Even though many Olympic athletes share a country, the Olympics are made up of athletes from over 200 different countries. Our classroom is going to be full of individuals who come from different backgrounds. We will be able to teach each other and learn from each other.

**Do Olympians succeed on their own?** Of course not! It takes teamwork!!! An Olympian needs a trainer and a coach. They also need the support of their family, friends, and ultimately, their country. Even though only one person out of that group is actually the Olympian, he or she needs the support and encouragement of others to succeed. Your child is like that Olympian. It will take all of us working together and supporting each other to have a winning year! I believe it is important for us to stay in constant communication. If your child is having a great day, I will let you know! Iwill also let you know if they are having trouble, whether it is inappropriate behavior of any sort, incomplete work, or something else because that is keeping them from doing their best work. I would ask the same of you. If something exciting has happened or you see that some is bother them at home and you think it is affecting their schoolwork, please share it with me so we can work together to help him or her.

**Classroom Expectations**

 As part of creating a classroom community, we will have a Classroom Constitution (the class expectations) which we will discuss and model in great depth. Every student is capable of meeting the expectations that I have for them. We will have classroom meetings to encourage one another and smooth out any problems that may arise calmly and respectfully. You will find our Classroom Constitution below.

 We the students of Ms. Peterson’s class, in order to have a successful year, do establish this

Classroom Constitution. We will always…

1. Show respect to yourself and others.
2. Listen to and follow directions the first time they are given.
3. Raise your hand and wait to be called on to speak.
4. Do your best work.
5. Encourage one another.

I do like to focus on positive behavior and give out compliments as I see students exhibiting

these behaviors! I feel it is a much more constructive approach rather than punishing inappropriate behaviors. I’ve set up 3 ways for your child to earn positive rewards.

**Bonus Bucks** (Individual)

When I catch your child being good, they will earn bonus bucks. Every 2 weeks, I will open the classroom store. They have the choice to either trade their bonus bucks in for a prize or save it so they can get a better prize. We will tie this in to learning about opportunity cost and budgets in economics.

**House Points** (Group)

 The students will be randomly sorted into one of four different “houses” on the first day of school. Throughout the year, they will be able to earn points for their house for working cooperatively with others, turning in work on time and to the best of their ability, participating in class discussions, being respectful, etc. They will switch houses each 9 weeks so they have the opportunity to work with different classmates throughout the year. The winning group will earn a special, secret privilege.

**Stingray Party** (Class)

 The whole class can earn pieces towards putting our Mr. Potato Head together by getting a compliment in the hall, making good choices in the cafeteria, behaving in specials, having an outstandingly good day, remaining silent during silent dismissal, etc. The entire class must be demonstrating positive behavior in order for them to earn a piece. Once they have earned put Mr. Potato Head together, the class will vote on 1 of 5 rewards. It gives them a chance to encourage each other to make good choices. When they vote for the reward, they will learn about democracy and popular sovereignty.

**Classroom Consequences**

 As adults, we know that life is full of consequences – both positive and negative. It is important to teach children to take responsibility for their own actions instead of putting the blame on others. Learning this now will be extremely beneficial to them in the future.

While I prefer to focus on positive behavior, inappropriate behavior will be dealt with through the following steps.

1st mark – Warning

2nd mark – Student consequence choice (push-ups, wall sit, 5 minutes off of recess, silent

 lunch)

3rd mark – Different student consequence choice (push-ups, wall sit, 5 minutes off of recess,

 silent lunch)

 4th mark – Teacher consequence choice (push-ups, wall sit, 5 minutes off of recess, silent lunch)

 5th mark – Parent phone call

Repeated disruptive behavior will result in an office referral. In this case, your child will either be assigned community service during specials or an after-school detention.

I send home daily behavior notifications so that you will be aware of the behaviors they demonstrate in the classroom on a daily basis. Please know that when I mark down issues that I am seeing in the classroom that it is for your child’s benefit. If your child is having a difficult time with any of the expectations that I have, they are likely not learning or working to the best of their ability.

In regards to homework, your child will be responsible for copying their homework assignments off the board and into their agenda at the appropriate time. We will not be sending home weekly homework sheets (the ones that already have the assignments filled in) that you have seen prior to 4th grade. We do this to help prepare them for 5th grade and beyond. Please expect that later on in the year, your child will receive weekly review homework sheets in each subject.

 Along with that, organization is a key part of 4th grade. I know it’s a new challenge for the students. I will do my best to help them stay organized at school and would ask that you do the same at home. I will be giving them many notes that are organized by unit. These note sheets will be extremely helpful to them when studying as well as when completing their weekly review homework sheets. While most notes/PPTs will be available on my website, it would be most beneficial for your child to keep them all in one place to begin with.

Again, I am excited about this year! I can’t wait to see that look in your child’s eye when they learn something new and I can’t wait to see what they will teach me and each other!!! I know it will be a great year!

 Sincerely,

 Meredith Peterson

Please complete and detach the following form and return it to school with your child. Keep the letter for your records. Thank you!!

Ms. Peterson’s Classroom Letter

Student Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I have gone over the classroom letter with my child.

Please check **ONE**:

\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for Ms. Peterson to share photos/videos of my child, samples of

 his/her work, and any other projects on the class website.

\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT give my permission for Ms. Peterson to share photos/videos of my child,

 samples of his/her work, and any other projects on the class website.

**Behavior communication**

I will be able to send you your child’s behavior sheet via email through our behavior management system, ClassDojo. Please clearly print your email address below and I will be happy to send you their behavior tracker. *This will be in addition to the daily behavior notification that I need you to sign on a daily basis.*

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Survey questions**

Please answer the following questions about your child to help me get to know them a little better.

1. What does your child like to do in his or her free time?

1. Does your child like to read? If so, what kind of books does your child enjoy?
2. How does your child feel about math? About reading?
3. Which form of communication would you prefer? \_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_ Written note
4. What are your goals for your child this year?
5. Would you be interested in volunteering if there is a need in the classroom? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_