

September 2010

Volume 6, Issue 1

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Reminders:

- ☞ **September 8th**
Early Dismissal, 1:30
- ☞ **September 9th**
Open House, 7:00 PM
- ☞ **September 17th**
Entertainment Book
Money Due
- ☞ **September 22nd**
Early Dismissal, 1:30
- ☞ **September 25th**
Midterms Go Home
- ☞ **September 30th**
Marvelous Mustangs
@ 8:40, SAC Meeting
@ 12:00
- ☞ **October 1st**
Flag Raising, 8:30
- ☞ **October 6th**
Early Release
- ☞ **October 7th**
PTA Meeting and
Performance by
Second Grade, East
Ranch

Merrill Road Elementary

Mustang Matters

Information from Administration

Ms. Gray & Mrs. Bartley

The year is off to a great start! The “seeds” are planted and are being “fertilized” each day. Please know that your child is in wonderful hands. We are so pleased that your child is a part of our “growing” environment!

We want to say a big “thank you” to all of you. We appreciate your support during the transition into a new school year—morning arrival, dismissal, checking in, classroom volunteers, illnesses, and more. Know that our every action is to ensure the success of all students. We really do believe that Merrill Road Elementary is “A Good Place to Grow”.

As you may have experienced, our morning arrival and afternoon dismissal is a very busy part of our day! We have been so very fortunate to have the assistance of the Zone 2 Traffic Officers from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Please make sure you take the time to thank them for all of their efforts in keeping our students and their families safe! Parents - please remember to use the crosswalk at Merrill and Hartsfield Roads if you are choosing to park across the street and walk to campus. It is imperative for your safety and the safety of your child(ren) that you cross at an approved crosswalk.

Also, remember if you are choosing to walk your student into the building in the morning, you must stop by the main office for a “Visitor's Badge.” We have also been reminding our students daily on the morning news so that they are learning to be responsible for their own safety, as well. Please encourage your child and applaud them when they remind you to stop by and sign in!

This is going to be a great year! These are special times for you and your child. Consider every opportunity or new experience a teaching moment. You'd be surprised at how the small things have such a positive impact on his or her education.

Extraordinarily Yours,

Jennifer T. Gray

Cynthia Bartley

Jennifer T. Gray, Principal

Cynthia Bartley, Asst. Principal

The Counselor's Corner

Ms. Kathy McQueen

The 2010-2011 school year is here, and we are off and running on a “tree”-mendous growing experience! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to our Merrill Road Elementary School family. I am Mrs. Kathy McQueen, the Guidance Counselor. As a Guidance Counselor, my goals are to assist our students to develop their strengths, to promote personal/social growth and to overcome barriers to academic achievement. Moreover, I will work with you, your family, our school and our community to collaborate with our stakeholders to help ensure a positive learning environment for your child.

So...let's plant seeds for the enrichment of the students at Merrill Road Elementary School! Please do not hesitate to call if I can be of any assistance. I look forward to working with you and your child(ren)!



Check out our website at
www.duvalschools.org/merrillroad

A Spotlight on Second Grade Writing

What's Meeting the Standard? – Narrative Writing

As your child is starting the year off, you may ask yourself, “Does my child’s writing meet the standard?” In second grade, our students are learning to take their narrative writing to the next level. They will learn how to get their reader interested, with engaging beginnings. Students will also learn ways to add details and create characters within their stories. Second grade stories will have endings that provide a sense of closure for the reader. All of these key elements will be taught in your child’s Writer’s Workshop.

What do these elements look like?

Engaging Beginnings – Clearly defined beginning, capturing the reader’s attention

Details – Create descriptions that give the reader a clear picture of events and settings

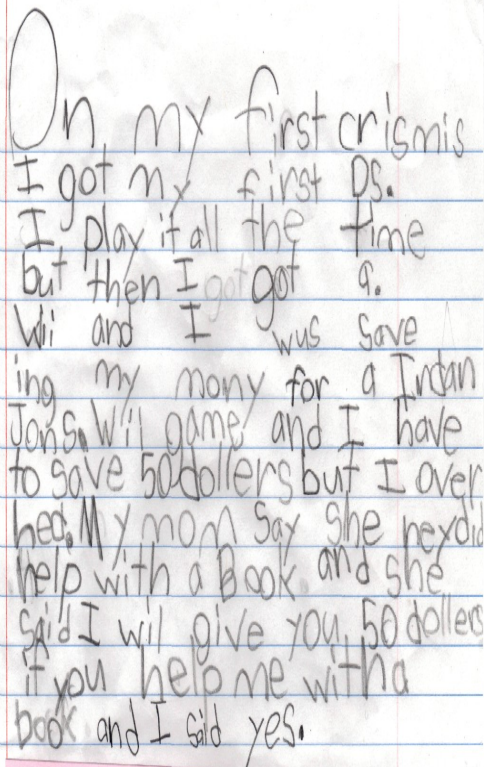
Characters – Complete and believable characters; including dialogue to share characters thoughts and feelings

Endings – Provide a sense of closer; bring the story to an end

Writing a Narrative that meets the standard goes beyond just writing a story, it must include these key elements. As the year progresses, your child will learn these elements to include when he/she is writing a story. You will see his/her stories come alive! Ask your child to share his/her writing with you. Have your child show you how he/she added these elements to meet the standard.

Score Point 2—This beginning of the year piece is **working towards the standard.**

The student is telling a story; the events are sequenced; and there is a beginning, middle and end with limited details.



Score Point 5
End of the Year Goal

The Football Piñata

Ding Dong! The doorbell rang. **Engaging Beginning**

I ran quickly to the door to see who it was, I opened it and SURPRISE!!!

It was all my friends! Here for my birthday party! “Come in!” I excitedly shouted. “Come in and have some fun!” **Characters**

Right now I had messy hair and dirty shirt. I can’t believe my mom let me dress like that!

After a while I thought the time was coming. And it was

The piñata. The football piñata. “I think it’s time for the piñata guys.” I said in a wonderingly way/ “let’s go into the garage everyone slowly said “pe-ew!”

Like all garages, they’re stinky, but ours is really stinky! I think its **Details** because theres cat food all over the floor, or because my dad left open a can of stinky paint. At that moment something caught out eyes. It was hanging from the ceiling. We looked up and saw a piñata the shape and colors of a football. **Details** “We are going in order from youngest to oldest for who goes first on hitting the piñata.” my mom explained. **Dialogue** “Now everybody get in line!” We all got in like from youngest to oldest. After that mom shouted “go!” My brother

struck the piñata hard three times. Now there was a tiny hole in the piñata. Now it was my turn.

I struck the tiny hole on the piñata so hard that a jolly rancher fell **Details** out. I dropped the candy into my bag. I’m the first one to get candy! I hit the piñata again. This time I think I hit the weak spot. I hit the piñata on the same spot. Now there was a gigantic hole in the piñata. We all hit the piñata three times each until it was my sisters turn. With one mighty strike she split the piñata in two. Candy, tons of candy (and little toys) exploded out of the piñata and fell to the floor. We all picked up the goodies and dropped them into our bags. “That’s a very good hit, Jenny!” my mom extcamed. “Now lets go have some cake and open some -” **Details** All of a sudden there was a big “YEAH!” That was the sound of us rushing to the dining room. “but I didn’t finish my sentence!” my mom called. “Oh well.” It was a really great day. At the end, my mom and my friends sang “Happy Birthday to you” to me Then you know what’s next.

Cake and Presents! **Provides Closure—Ending**

Nurturing in Progress

Grade Level Highlights

Pre-Kindergarten We want to welcome all our new and returning friends to our Pre-K program. We have 3 classes of preschool students ranging in age from 3 to 5 years old. All of our students are placed through Child Find. Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities. This process includes screening and evaluation designed to *locate, identify, and refer as early as possible* all young children with disabilities and their families who are in need of Early Intervention Program or Preschool Special Education services of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). **For more information you may contact Child Find at 348-7789.**

Kindergarten In Reading, the students will be learning how to compare and contrast stories we have read in class. Kindergarten students will begin to learn the importance of noticing important details in stories. This skill will help them to retell the stories that they hear or read. Kindergartners will also be introduced to discussing books, partner reading, and literacy centers. In writing, students will learn to find topics for stories they write. Teachers will instruct kindergartners how to use pictures to tell stories and how to tell stories in the correct sequence of events. In Math, kindergartners are going to discuss the importance of being able to count and strategies to use for counting objects. By the end of September, Kindergartners will have discussed the importance of: the calendar, writing numbers, and showing the same number of objects in different ways.

First Grade Welcome back to school! We hope the students are as excited as the first grade teachers are to begin another wonderful year at Merrill Road! Over the next few weeks, your child will be learning how their new classroom works with rituals and routines. These rituals and routines are important to ensure a smooth year, so please talk with your child about them to help further their understanding. The rituals and routines are being established for Reader's and Writer's Workshop, Math Investigations, Skills Block, walking in the hallway, using the restroom, and eating in the cafeteria. Also during this time, pre-assessments will be given to help inform their teacher of current levels and help guide the instruction they will need in order to be successful in the classroom. Please plan to join your child's classroom at Open House on September 9th at 7:00. There you will learn more about what your child is doing and will be doing in first grade. The expectations are set high for these young students; but with teamwork between your child's teacher and you, we can help your child exceed these expectations!

Second Grade When you visit our school, you will notice displays of student writing on many of the bulletin boards and inside the classrooms. Students at Merrill Road Elementary write every day during Writer's Workshop. After children are introduced to an opening mini-lesson, they have an opportunity to try the specific skill or strategy taught that day during work time. Teachers meet with individual and small groups of children to help them improve their writing and take it to the next level. During the closing, the class talks about how things went in writing that day and how they may improve their pieces in the future.

We are starting this year off with narrative stories (fictional or personal) in which the children will learn to include key elements to meet the standard. At the end of second grade we expect these young writers to go beyond just writing a story. Their writing should have an engaging beginning, details, characters and a sense of closure to make their story really come alive. Ask your child to share one of their stories with you and see how these elements enhance their narrative writing and help them continue to "grow" in second grade this year!



Box Tops, Pop Tops, and Campbell Soup Labels

Did you know BOX TOPS and CAMPBELL SOUP LABELS give back to our school directly? Clip, tear, or cut and return them to your child's teacher.

Simply POP those TOPS off your beverage cans, as well as labels off your soup cans, and be a part of helping everyone who relies on The Ronald McDonald House.

Each of the items above are collected on the first Friday of each month!

**When everyone helps,
everyone wins!**



**Merrill Road is
"A Good Place to Grow!"**

Nurturing the Environment with Safety & Discipline

The SCOPE team is working hard to maintain a safe, civil, orderly, productive environment. Thank you for your support at home. Our goal is for all students to continuously exhibit appropriate behavior here at school. We look to you to assist us in this matter. Please remind your child of his/her class rules, as well as, the common area expectations. It will ensure a great year for us all.



Voice Levels

- 0 Silence
- 1 Whisper
- 2 Conversation
- 3 Presentation
- 4 Outside

School-wide Attention Signal

Give me five! (open palm in air)

1. **Stop what you are doing**
2. **Empty your hands**
3. **Eyes on the speaker**
4. **Mouth on silence**
5. **Hand raised**

Show Your School Spirit!

Friday is Spirit Day! On the first Friday of each month, PTA will also recognize students. So, have your child wear their RED Mustang Spirit Wear! Let's show our school spirit!

Let's Celebrate!

We're an "A" School!

Did you know that our school is an "A" school? We obtain our grade from our sister school, Don Brewer Elementary, as that is where our Kindergarten through Second Graders attend upon completion of Merrill Road.

Way to go!

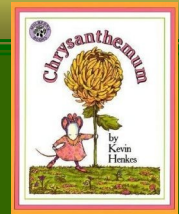


Flag Raising

We celebrated our first Flag Raising on Friday, September 3, 2010. It was a beautiful day and the children had a great time!

Book of the Month

Chrysanthemum



Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes is one of the all-star books of the children's literary world. Kevin Henkes' title character is a cute little mouse with a very big name. Chrysanthemum loves her name, and can even spell it, but when she goes to school, she is mercilessly teased by a group of nasty little mouselets who use her name as an excuse to pick on her.

Chrysanthemum goes home each night to her caring and concerned parents, who tell her she is winsome and winning, and although Chrysanthemum is reassured that she is the center of her parents' universe, her parents' concern doesn't solve the problem. Finally, at school, Chrysanthemum meets a fabulous new music teacher whom all of the mouse children adore. Ms. Twinkle is a ray of sunshine, and when she produces a musical play, Chrysanthemum is chosen to be a daisy.

When Chrysanthemum confides in her teacher about the way the other children are teasing her, Mrs. Twinkle restores Chrysanthemum's confidence, and makes her the envy of all her peers.

From the Media Center...

Ms. Sharon Merritt



Find the right BOOK for YOU!

Students now have an additional reading resource to help them locate exciting books tailored to their own interests or school assignments. Through a joint partnership between the Florida Departments of Education and State, and Lexile-developer MetaMetrics, "Find a Book Florida" aims to encourage students to consistently read throughout the year by helping them locate books they'll be challenged by and enjoy.

This free, online book search tool allows students to build personal reading lists that will best complement their reading ability and interests from a growing database of fiction and nonfiction titles. Using Lexile measures, "Find a Book, Florida" makes it easier for students and families to select the right books and then locate these selections at their local public library.

You can access the book search by visiting their website, <http://florida.lexile.com>

What an excellent resource for children and families! Be sure to check it out!

Check It Out!

Reading Is Fundamental

<http://www.rif.org>



For All Ears

Read aloud to your children, even after they've learned to read on their own and are attending school. Young readers enjoy listening to many books that they can't yet master and teenagers like to hear old favorites. Encourage kids to describe the pictures or take turns reading aloud with you. Even though kids may also read books in class, spending additional time reading their favorite literature with you is also important.

Be sure to check out Jacksonville Public Library's website for a wonderful variety of resources to benefit you and your child(ren)! Click on <http://www.jpl.coj.net/kids/> and surf the wonderful recommended websites for preschool, fun & games, reading, online resources, places to see and things to do. In addition, there is a homework section that even offers online help! All you need is your library card.



Here are a dozen tips for nurturing your growing readers:

1. **Read with your children at least once every day.**
2. **Make sure they have plenty to read.** Take them to the library regularly, and keep books and other reading materials in their reach.
3. **Notice what interests your child,** then help find books about those things.
4. **Respect your child's choices.** There's nothing wrong with series fiction if that's what keeps a young reader turning the pages.
5. **Praise your children's efforts** and newly acquired skills.
6. **Help your child build a personal library.** Children's books, new or used, make great gifts and appropriate rewards for reading. Designate a bookcase, shelf or box where your children can keep their books.
7. **Check up on your children's progress.** Listen to them read aloud, read what they write and ask teachers how they're doing in school.
8. **Go places and do things with your children** to build their background knowledge and vocabulary, and to give them a basis for understanding what they read.
9. **Tell stories.** It's a fun way to teach values, pass on family history and build your children's listening and thinking skills.
10. **Be a reading role model.** Let your children see you read, and share some interesting things with them that you have read about in books, newspapers or magazines.
11. **Continue reading aloud to older children** even after they have learned to read by themselves.
12. **Encourage writing along with reading.** Ask children to sign their artwork, add to your shopping list, take messages and make their own books and cards as gifts.

Merrill Road Elementary

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"A Good Place to Grow!"

PTA Membership

PTA needs your support. Your \$6.00 membership supports many of our after school programs, such as Family Fun Night, Literacy, Math, Science & Technology night. There will be a special drawing during Open House on Thursday, September 9th. Make sure you turn in your membership envelope with a raffle ticket to enter to win one of these prizes: 2 Jaguar Tickets (Jags vs. Broncos on Sept. 12th), \$25 Outback Restaurant Gift Certificate, \$30 AMC Movie Gift Certificate with a Family of 4 Fun Pack, or a Subway 6-foot long sub!

For the next 7 weeks, there will be a drawing on Monday mornings for one lucky student to win a special prize. Today's winner came from Ms. Harris' class! Our First Membership Drive has only been running a week and we are already at 24% participation school wide! We also just signed up our 27th Grandparent, which means we will receive the "Grandparent Award" Great job!

A special thanks to the families who have already joined our PTA!

PTA is Sprouting!

Show Your Spirit!

The 1st Friday of every month is Spirit Day. Show your spirit by wearing a MRE T-Shirt or Hoodie. The PTA Spirit Wear order form has already been sent home with your child. If you need another form, you can stop by the front office. Youth T-Shirts are \$10 and Youth Hoodies are \$20. Adult T-Shirts are \$12 and Adult Hoodies are \$25. Not only will you be showing your spirit, but you will be helping to support many PTA sponsored events this year. Children showing their spirit on Spirit Day will receive a little treat by PTA!



Room Parents Needed!

Our teachers are one of our most precious resources. However, they need your support as well. You could be vital to our PTA and our children by becoming a Room Parent. 30 minutes, a few days a week, in or out of class is significant. Join us for our Room Parent Meeting September 24th at 9:00am. If you can't make this meeting, please let your child's teacher know you would like to be a Room Parent and our Room Parent Coordinator, Kenya Cole, will contact you and get your Room Parent package to you immediately. Your child will remember your support!

Sunshine Math Graders Needed!

If you are interested in being a Sunshine Math Grader, please come to our Room Parent—Sunshine Math Grader Meeting on September 24th at 9:00 AM in the cafeteria. Sunshine Math takes very little time, but your help will make a huge difference! Everything you need to grade and record the results will be provided for you during the meeting. If you are unable to attend, but still want to participate, please let your child's teacher know immediately. Sunshine Math kicks off September 27th for First and Second Graders. Kindergarten and Pre-K students start in January.

Children who participate will receive an award or medal, as well as the possible opportunity to participate in the "Math-Off" at the end of the year! This program is completely optional and does not affect your child's grade, but it does enhance his/her mind! Please join us for our meeting and become a Sunshine Math Grader.



Branches of Information

Children should not arrive to school prior to 7:50 unless they are enrolled in Extended Day.

If the orange flag is out, children should remain with their parent.

Extended Day Hours

6:45-7:50, 2:45-5:45

School Hours

8:15-2:45

Tardy slips are written at 8:15.

If a child is late, he/she should come to the front office with his/her parent.

Cafeteria Information

Breakfast Cost

Full Price—\$1.00

Reduced Price—\$.30

Lunch Cost

Full Price—\$1.50

Reduced Price—\$.40

Please keep track of whether your child has lunch money or not. If he/she does not have money, he/she will not be given a hot lunch.