August 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians,

 Once again, welcome to the 5th grade! 5th grade is an exciting time as children embark upon new adventures in the world of learning. At JGEMS, our goal is to prepare all students for middle school, high school, and college. This is a year of important transitions, as well as one in which new skills are accelerated. I hope to make your child’s learning experience a fun and exciting one, and to instill a love of learning that will last throughout your child’s years of schooling.

 I have put together a handbook of information to help you and your child become familiar with expectations for this school year. Please take a day or two to read through this information, then sign your name on the line below. At the end of our first week, I will ask each student to show me his/her signed handbook. You may want to keep the

handbook in a special place so that you may refer to it throughout the year.

 I am looking forward to working with your child this year and helping him/her achieve his/her full potential. Through the remainder of this document, I will share some of our classroom policies.

 Sincerely,



Parent/Guardian Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
Student name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*(Please sign that you have read and understand this packet.)*

How parents can help make this a successful year!

 So much happens in 5th Grade! It is extremely important to keep in mind that we all build on small successes. Each child will progress at his/her own rate, acquiring skills, as he/she is developmentally ready. Maintaining each child's self-esteem and building a secure foundation for future growth will always remain a priority in our 5th grade classroom. Here are some ways you can help:

* Celebrate your child's successes, no matter how small they may seem. This will keep your child enthusiastic about learning and proud of his/her work!
* Ask your student what he/she has learned and is studying in class! Invite them to TEACH you something new!
* Read with your child everyday, if possible. Take turns reading to each other! The more your child is exposed to language, the easier it will be for him/her to incorporate new skills in reading and writing in the classroom. Please remember to have your child record all reading in his/her reading log (your child will receive this log in class).
* Share your personal experiences as a 5th grader with your student!
* Encourage responsibility and independence at home in your own creative ways!

Parent/Teacher Relationship

 I believe that a healthy parent-teacher relationship is necessary for maximum school success. If we work together as a team, your child will reach his/her full potential. Throughout the year I will communicate with you through notes, telephone calls, nine-weeks reports, and parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, I encourage you and your student to take advantage of a free subscription to Remind101, which is a text-messaging service that allows me to text message students and parents with important information including reminders and announcements. You will be receiving information on how to subscribe to this service in a separate document. I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at any time. The best way to contact me is through e-mail at **tvicinus@wcpss.net**. You can also call me at the school and leave me a voicemail, send me a note, or write in your student’s planner. I am available for conferences by appointment regarding your child’s progress.

Room Parent & Volunteers

In addition to school-wide events, there is a LOT that goes on in 5th grade including an over-night field trip, Batik Week, 5th Day celebrations, graduation, etc. We will need a lot of support from you! If you are interested in becoming a room parent, please let me know asap ☺. More information for chaperones and volunteers for events will be sent home prior to the events. We often use sign-up genius to organize these events. Please note that all volunteers must be registered with WCPSS. You can register at any WCPSS school.

5thDay

On the fifth day (or around, if it falls on a weekend) of each month, fifth graders will celebrate “FIFTH DAY”. On these days, fifth graders will unite to celebrate positivity and collaboration. They often receive a small treat donated by parents. Each month will usually have a different theme.

Human Growth and Development

This will be taught at the end of the school year to coincide with our human body unit in science. A parent informational meeting will be held closer to that time.

Changes in Transportation

 If you plan to pick up a child that normally rides the bus, or you wish for your child to ride a different bus than usual, you must send a written note (signed and dated). Please do not rely on your child to tell me this information; children often have a lot on their plate and may forget. If no written note is received, your child will be sent home by his/her usual method of transportation (this is school policy).

Planners/Weekly Communication Folders

 Your child will have a daily planner that he or she will write homework, assignments, and due dates in each day. Please take the time to go over assignments with your child and **initial your name** in the small box for the correct day (this is a great communication bridge between school and home). The SIGNING OF PLANNERS IS CONSIDERED A HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT. I may also use the planner to write quick notes and/or explanations for a sad face (behavior problems).

  A weekly communication folder will be sent home each Monday and needs to be returned first thing Tuesday morning. This folder will contain both school and classroom related information, as well as graded assignments. I encourage parents and students to **thoroughly look though each document and graded assignments**. I ask that you keep graded assignments at home in a safe place. Please remember to SIGN and DATE the sheet in the folder.

Homework/Assignments

 I believe that homework is necessary for practicing skills that have been learned or for enriching the classroom experience. In many cases, homework is simply classwork that was not finished. I try to give ample time in class for the completion of most assignments, however all students work at different paces and some will need to finish at home.

If a student is struggling on homework, I encourage him/her to put forth effort and TRY. Students should be spending no more than 50 minutes in fifth grade. If you notice it takes them longer, please contact me asap. 5th graders are still children and need to play and have fun!
 Homework may be assigned Monday-Thursday. Homework is due the morning after is it assigned. Homework must be done at home, and not as I am checking for completion!

All assignments must be turned in. If an assignment is missing, the student will be encouraged to use his/her lunchtime as a “working lunch”.

 Students will have the opportunity to earn "homework passes" throughout the year. A homework pass may be used to extend an assignment's due date (one day per homework pass.) I encourage students to save their homework passes in case they forget an assignment or have a legitimate situation, which prevents them from completing their work. Students will not be allowed to call home if they forget their work - *organization is the key to success!*
 Incomplete homework will be documented and students will be required to “move their name” on the classroom discipline board and pay a classroom “fine” (see checkbook management system).

 Homework is a time to connect with your child and see how they are growing as learners. Please take the time to review homework, discuss what he/she has learned, and help in areas of weakness.



Grading

 All assignments need to be completed as if they would be taken for a grade. Students should always present their highest effort. We follow the standards based grading system for Wake County. As a general rule, a level 1 shows that a student has not met proficiency and needs continued support. A 2 shows that students are working towards proficiency, but still needs support from a teacher. A level 3 demonstrates meeting proficiency. A 4 shows students are working on **above grade level** material with success. A 4 does not mean 100%. Please note that not all assignments have level 4 opportunities.

 Graded papers will be sent home in the Monday Communication Folder. If a grade does not meet “on grade level” expectations, parents will be asked to sign the assignment and return it to me. I will take the time to review this objective with your child, and ask you to do the same.

Classroom Management/Discipline

 Establishing good classroom discipline is essential to each child’s success, confidence, and well-being. Every child should feel that the classroom environment is safe and secure; free from all threats of physical or emotional harm. In addition, it is important that each child learn to develop self-discipline and good work habits, to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to think independently. For these reasons, the discipline plan I have chosen has several components.

 • First, children will learn the purpose of classroom rules and develop the idea that our classroom is a community focused on teamwork with the common purpose of learning, growing, and becoming friends. Our classroom rules will protect each student’s right to safety and respect, as well as outlining the responsibilities that each child has in maintaining class order. Here are the rules that each child will have to follow in the classroom: SOAR at all times!
**1. Be Respectful - of yourself, your classmates, and your teacher.**

**2. Raise your hand to ask questions or provide an answer.**

**3. Read and follow directions.**

**4. Try.
5. Be productive and manage time wisely.**


 Expectations for All Students

**1. Complete all assignments and turn them in on time.
2. Be responsible for recording important test dates, homework assignments, and WGI events in Student Planner.
3. Return all documents/notes from parents by deadlines.
4. Keep homework, notebooks, and desks organized and clean.
5. Come to school on time and be an active participant in our classrooms.
6. Demonstrate acceptable classroom behavior at all times.
7. Come to school on time, prepared with all materials and ready to learn.
8. Always do your best and BE YOURSELF!**

**Our classroom checkbook system will also be integrated into our behavior management system. Students and parents will receive a separate letter explaining this system in detail.**

Positive reinforcement **will also be used in the classroom.**

***1. Treasure Chest***
 When students are “caught in the act” of performing a random act of kindness or exhibiting one of the 6 pillars of character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship), they may be rewarded by selecting a small prize from the treasure chest **or** choosing to deposit money into their classroom checking account. Please consider donating small items to our treasure chest ☺

***2. Chain of Encouragement***
 In order to promote classroom unity and teamwork, the class will work toward a common goal. Every time students receive a compliment (individual or as a class) they will be rewarded a link (paper) to add to our classroom compliment chain. Once the chain hits the floor, the class will receive the reward that is voted on by the class (extra recess, ice cream, no homework day, game time, etc.)
 Other ways to receive a link: receiving a great report from specials teachers, showing growth mindset, every student completes homework assignment, being “caught in the act”, quiet transitions between lessons.

***3. Positive feedback***
 On assignments, I will provide feedback, either written or orally, to the student. On randomly chosen assignments/quizzes/tests, I will reward students money credited to account who demonstrate proficiency.

Cooperative Learning

 I believe in cooperative learning in the classroom. Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small groups use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught, but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.
 I often place students in mixed ability groups so that they may help each other during the learning process. Research has shown that all students do better when they are allowed to discuss and defend their ideas as they learn. Working in small groups also helps students learn valuable social skills they will need throughout life. While cooperative learning is beneficial, it is also fun.

Absences

 Regular school attendance is critical to the learning process. When your child is absent, he or she misses valuable instructional time. Please send a written note of explanation whenever your child is absent. A doctor’s note may be required. State law and school policy requires us to code each absence as lawful (excused) or unlawful (unexcused). Excused absences include illness or injury, doctor’s appointments, death in the immediate family, religious observance, and educational opportunities. Unlawful absences include out-of-town trips, missing the bus, and family vacations. (For a complete list, visit the WCPSS website or refer to handbook).
 Students are required to make up work missed during *any* absences. However, some activities will be difficult or impossible for students to make up (such as group work or group presentations). Therefore, your child may be given an alternate assignment.

Classroom Library

 Our class maintains a classroom library consisting of over 300 books that vary by genre, topic, and level. Additionally, there is a resource section of our classroom library that can be used for projects and assignments. I encourage students to make use of our classroom library accountable independent reading time.
 I invite several students to serve as "librarians" to help me monitor the collection.

Food and Celebrations

***Working Snack***
 I am aware that students need “brain juice” to ensure they are working to their fullest potential! Your child will be allowed to bring a HEALTHY SNACK to school to eat during WORKING SNACK (10 minutes). Instruction will not stop during this time and students must continue to work during snack time. Therefore I ask you to be mindful of the types of items you are sending. No junk food, candy, or soda is acceptable! We will have our working snack in the morning before lunch to keep our brain juices flowing! Students are allowed to keep water on their desk.


***Birthdays***

 If you are interested in having a SMALL birthday celebration for your child in school, I ask that you inform me at least a week in advance. You are invited to eat lunch with your student on his/her special day and/or provide ***store-bought*** goodies for the class during snack time. All food must be commercially prepared. Please keep in mind that we may have students with food allergies, so items must be approved before being given to students.

Student/Parent Handbook

 The Student/Parent Handbook is filled with helpful information about WCPSS and JGEMS policies and procedures designed to make this year a huge success. Please take the time to read and discuss this information with your child.

Parent Volunteers

 I invite you to help in the classroom if you are able! Having parents involved in the classroom shows students that you value education and what happens in the classroom! We are always looking for parents who are willing to help with keeping the classroom organized, taking students to the library, and planning class parties. If you are interested in donating your time, please contact me or fill out a volunteer form. All volunteers must be registered with WCPSS (each year).

Text Messages from Ms. Vicinus
In an effort to have the most effective communication possible, I have set up a way to send group text messages to parents and students. I will continue to send e-mails to the addresses provided, but I know text messages are often read more frequently than e-mails. Remind101 is a free website/app that allows me to send quick reminders to those who have signed up for this free service. No phone numbers are ever exchanged and individual text messages cannot be sent, nor can replies be sent to me. Please note that standard text messaging rates though your mobile provider applies. Please see separate handout for information on signing up.

Our class is on the Web!

 Our class has a home on the Internet! We have a class webpage to keep communication open between parents, students, and me. The classroom blog is an excellent way for everyone to stay connected! I may also display student work, list our honor roll, and other awards on our page. Students and parents are encouraged to visit the web page to keep up-to-date on classroom events and make use of several resources helpful for 5th graders. Our web site is located at <http://vicinuseagles.weebly.com>.

 Again, I look forward to teaching your child and working with you to ensure he/she becomes a successful 21st century learner. Please never hesitate to contact me with comments, questions, or concerns!