Mrs. Wilson's Fourth Grade Newsletter

Service, Veteran's, Essay

A few years back parents prompted the fourth grade service project toward support of veterans and those in military service. When I asked our local VFW Hall what we could do to support them, they responded, "Please participate in our essay contest." So that's what we do.

This week fourth graders create a cluster for prewriting work (getting ideas and organizing) and write rough drafts for the VFW annual essay contest. Students will also work on catchy starts and endings that feel complete. These rough drafts, along with Contest Entry Forms are due back to me on Friday. I'll return rough drafts to students by scanning corrected drafts for return electronically or hard copy on the 23rd. This leaves the final draft portion to be completed independently. This last part, along with entry into the VFW contest is encouraged and optional. Parents, feel free to help with spelling, punctuation and presentation. I would like final drafts back to me by Tuesday, October 27. This allows time to make copies, attach permission forms and send as a group to our VFW contact. Let me know if your child will refrain from the contest or you'd rather submit the final draft and entry form on your own (note, entries must reach the VFW by 10/31, see form for their address).

This begins our year-long focus on support for men and women who serve our country through military service. We typically lead the school in a Veteran's Day Assembly (I'll figure that out) and visit the long term care unit at the VA hospital (we'll write letters instead). I have faith we will find additional ways to show our support and gratitude in the months ahead.

Reader's Workshop, Journey's Unit:

This week fourth graders begin a Reader's Workshop Unit focusing on books with the theme of "Journeys". Reader's Workshop is an approach to reading based on incorporating student selection in the ready process. A variety of books are offered with a range of reading levels. Students participate in whole class lessons that model skills and concepts using a picture book. Next, students read their chosen text and practice the skill independently. Later, students reflect with others who are reading the same book. They will learn new vocabulary, summarize, analyze setting and character, infer and identify theme while providing details from the text to support their thinking. Students read independently, in a pair or with a small group. Each group will create weekly goals for reading. Some students might need to devote their 20 minutes of just right reading towards their Reader's Workshop book. Some groups will finish their books before others and may read more than one book.

Many of our zooms will revolve around small group reading and discussion. Thank you for having your children at zooms. Attendance is strong! This is vital for rich discussion and small group interaction.

Nuts and Bolts

Thursday's schedule and checklist of tasks includes a list of work to be turned in during the Friday pick up/drop off. When I correct assignments I leave post-it notes in some folders that list any missing pages. That's pretty much all I do. I choose to focus my energy on teaching, instead of hunting down late or not done work.

How this translates in my gradebook is a challenge. If I count missing work as 0% many grades would show as failing. That would not accurately reflect student work or ability. If I count missing work as neither helping nor hurting, many grades would show as excellent, despite many assignments not done. That would not accurately reflect student work or ability either. I don't have a perfect solution, simply share my dilemma. Oh, I guess the solution is having work turned in… if not on time, the following week. Not sure where your child stands? Look to the Thursday schedules for lists of work that is due each week and/or scan corrected and returned work for that post-it note. Thank you for your on-going support.