

September 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year! Monroe Township School District prides itself on providing a preeminent education grounded in current educational research. We work diligently to ensure the needs of all learners are met. I would like to provide you with an overview of the K-3 Language Arts program in an effort to help you support your child's literacy development at home.

Our program embodies a balanced literacy approach. We employ a workshop model that introduces students to concepts and skills through mini-lessons, then engages them in practice through independent, small group and partnered work. Flexible grouping is used to ensure all students are appropriately challenged.

- ✓ **DRA2** (Developmental Reading Assessment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) assesses a student's oral reading fluency and comprehension. Teachers listen to a student read a passage, then the students answer questions about the text. This assessment tool provides teachers not only with a reading level, but also a comprehensive picture of students' strengths in reading and the areas for growth.
- ✓ **Readers Workshop** has students engage in a mini-lesson focused on a particular reading strategy or skill. They briefly practice, and then move into small group, partnered, or independent work. Students' DRA2 scores are used to identify areas of strength and target skills in need of development. Independent reading at his/her own level is the cornerstone of Readers Workshop. To promote literacy development at home, students should engage in reading at their level. This can be done both independently and with a parent or other fluent reader.
- ✓ **Writers Workshop** also focuses students through a mini-lesson. Students then engage in sustained writing. Over a period of time, they work through all stages of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Teachers meet with small groups of students to target specific skills, and also conference one on one with students to help develop their writing. Students also practice handwriting and work with technology during Writers Workshop.
- ✓ **Word Study** (Words Their Way) combines spelling, phonics and vocabulary. Students are assessed through a developmental spelling inventory, which identifies their level. They will then study "features" through "sorts" of words. Students progress through developmental stages by learning features and patterns as opposed to memorizing words. Your child will be assessed on his/her mastery of a particular feature, not necessarily whether or not he or she recalls the spelling of the particular words in the sort. The words in the sort should be reviewed at home, but it is important to be able to transfer the knowledge to new words.

The best way to develop literacy skills is by daily, sustained reading. We encourage you to reach out to the Monroe Township Public Library for a variety of titles that will interest your child. If you have questions or concerns about your child's reading or writing skills, please reach out to his/her teacher. I am also here to answer any questions you have regarding our Language Arts program. Thank you, and have a wonderful school year!

Sincerely,

Kelly F. Roselle, Ed.D.