**First Graders are Fantastic!**

**Important Reminders -**

**Uniform:** As the weather is getting cooler, please make sure you write your child’s name on all red sweaters. If they happen to be misplaced, names inside clothing makes it easier for us to return clothing back to you. Also, there is a **Lost & Found** in the cafeteria by the school store, and one in the staff room by the first graders’ lockers. Please check the lost & found for missing items. Additionally, please make sure your child is wearing sneakers or rubber-based shoes. We go outside twice a day and students have PE daily. The proper shoes are imperative for safety reasons and eliminate distractions in the classroom.

**Library:** We have library on Wednesdays. Please help students remember to return their library books on Wednesday so they may check out new books.

**Family Fridays:** Please feel free to pop in on Friday mornings from 8am to 8:10am. We always welcome families into the classroom, however if you wish to speak one-to-one with us, please schedule a conference or a phone call since our main priority at this time is greeting all of the students to ensure a successful Friday.

**Important Dates –**

**Tuesday, December 17th:** SK – 2nd grade Math Meet-Up in the Lower/Middle Library from 7:30am to 8am.

**Monday, December 16th:** 'Tis the season for goodwill, and our school has volunteered to show its community spirit by supporting local families for the holidays.

CSOV's 7th grade is continuing with its annual Adopt-a-Family program, which supports the Culmore Family Resource Center, a local organization that partners with families in need.

If you would like to participate in our Adopt-a-Family project, please visit the following website for the sign-up genius <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0949ACA9283-culmore13/14083062>.

**Tuesday, December 17th:** First Grade Annual Polar Express Day. You are invited to wear your **pajamas** to school and bring your favorite snuggly to celebrate Polar Express.

**Wednesday, December 18th**: Field Trip to Mary Riley Styles Public Library –We will be leaving school at 8:30am and returning around 10:00am. The library is closed to the public until 10:00am, so we will have our own personal tour of the library as well as story-time with the librarian! **Please let me know if you would like to chaperone!**

**Thursday, December 19th:** First grade holiday party at 2:30pm. Please contact Anais for more details.

**Friday, December 20th:** Winter concert at 10:30am. Noon dismissal. Winter break begins.

**Monday, January 6th:** First day back from winter break.

**Look at all we’ve learned! –**

**Pictures**

This week I discovered there is a 500 picture limit for viewers of my shared folder, so it seems you all have been missing out on a lot of pictures that I have been posting and could see from my screen! My apologies, and I will work on finding a new way to get the rest of the pictures to you!

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B3s_OUk45AJ0bjBxdDVlZXJrU2c&usp=sharing>

**Social Studies**

Students are enjoying our study of Italy.  I have heard many of them talk to one another about wanting to visit Italy this year – so my apologies if the students are asking you to plan a trip at home!  This week, we looked at gondolas, a fascinating transportation method used primarily in Venice.  Students compared and contrasted gondolas to transportation they were familiar with (half canoe and kayak and half taxi!).  Then, students created their own gondolas using a variety of materials from the classroom (paper, aluminum foil, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, etc.).  Due to the enthusiasm around the Italy unit, we will continue talking about Italy for a few weeks after the Winter Breaks and then we will be studying Africa.

**Science**

This week we began our states of matter unit by discovering what happens when you add salt to ice. Students conducted an experiment with multiple variables, giving them the opportunity to think critically, and make a thoughtful hypothesis. Students added varying amounts of ice to three different ice cubes and compared the melting process. As they watched the results, we had a competition to see who could melt an ice cube the fastest using only their bodies. Students thought of creative ways to melt the ice such as squeezing the ice, shaking the ice, and rubbing the ice between their hands. We then discussed what states of matter we saw as the ice transformed, and what caused the transformation.

**Readers Workshop**

This week we began our third unit of Readers Workshop by categorizing the books in our library by fiction and non-fiction. Students compared the language, structure, and images in the fiction and non-fiction books to determine text features of both. We discussed that non-fiction books are informational and teach us as we read, while fiction books are written to entertain the reader with an engaging story.

At home, please encourage your child to read informational books. They can read about anything that interests them – whether it is hockey, snakes, panda bears, firefighters, etc. You can talk with your child about the many features of informational texts, such as headings, labels, photographs, captions, bold print, etc. Also, you and your child can discuss the differences between informational books and story books. As an extension, you can have a discussion with your child about whether some books, such as magic school bus, are considered informational or story books. (They are informational because they teach you things you do not know, but is Mrs. Frizzle a real person or a fictional character?)

**Writers Workshop**

**Math**

We began this week reviewing our subtraction facts, and then learning the “count-back” strategy, which is helpful when subtracting numbers 1, 2, or 3. Students played a subtraction probability game with spinners, subtraction 1, 2, or 3 from a larger number and guessing what number they would land on the most.

Next week will be our last week of subtraction. The following week we will be looking at ordinal numbers contrasted with the concept of numbers. After winter break, we will be jumping into addition and subtraction for numbers up to 20. We spent so much time on numbers 1 to 10 because the concepts of composing and decomposing numbers up to 10 are key for students to be successful with the higher numbers. For example, when adding or 11 and 9, students will use their number bonds to break the 11 into a 10 and a 1, adding the 1 to the 9, making it 10 +10.

At home, you can be helping your child by asking them, “Have you seen any good math lately?” We will be reflecting on this question in class, mostly during morning meetings and closing circles. Math is all around us and it is important that students are cognizant of this fact.