

Irrawaddy Inquirer

"ONCE A WADDLE, ALWAYS A WADDLE"

From Mrs. Ritter and Ms. Vallecorse

November 2015

Contact Us - Mrs. Ritter: lritter@csaschool.org AND Ms. Vallecorse: svallecorse@csaschool.org

REMINDER: When emailing with the teachers, please make sure to add both of them into the email.

Important Dates

- 11/10- Parent Council meeting @ CSA 6:00pm
- 11/21- CSA Education Foundation's HUG Day!
- 11/21- CSA spirit wear day
- 11/24-11/28- Thanksgiving Break-NO SCHOOL for students
- 12/8- 12/11- Santa's Secret Shop- more info to come!
- 12/17- Save the date! Navigator Christmas Concerts (families need only attend one show but students perform at both 9:30 am and 2:00pm)
- 12/19 - Christmas Party

Scholastic Book Order

November is a time where many people begin thinking about holiday shopping. If you are planning to order books for a holiday gift and would like your order to be a secret, please let us know and we will arrange a secret pick up time with you!

Also, if you would like some book recommendations for your learner please let us know and we would be more than happy to help!

Upcoming Learning Targets

Here are some highlights in the skills our learners are working on this month in our academic workshops:

Reading: Our readers are focusing on studying characters and making predictions about how they will solve problems based on their inner character traits, focusing on reading with expression, and identifying the beginning, middle, and end of a story, as well as the problem and solution.

Math: Our mathematicians are digging deep into building their foundational understanding of place value and recognizing, for example, that a ten is equal to 10 ones. Students, according to their level of math experience and exposure, will be working to identify values of digits, write numbers in different ways, and compare numbers of varying values.

Writing: Our writers are focusing on rereading their writing in order to check for punctuation and capital letters where needed, adding adjectives and describing words to their writing, and adding interesting details for their readers to their writing pieces. We've also been encouraging writers to try out different strategies we can pick out from mentor texts to help give length to writing pieces.

Thanksgiving Break

During the week of November 24-28, there is no school for students and for many of you, that week may involve celebrating with loved ones and spending time reflecting on all you're thankful for. Whether you celebrate Thanksgiving or not, we encourage you to use that week to spend time as a family, making memories, looking for learning, enjoying a good book, playing, laughing, and sharing gratitude for one another. We'd love to hear about any trips, unique experiences, or traditions you may start or continue. We hope you lean on the "MATHO", keep on using those reading logs, practice putting on that outdoor gear, but mostly cherish your time together.

We want to take the opportunity to extend our thanks and gratitude to each of our families. Your day-to-day preparations, sacrifices, and efforts to bring your child here, and to choose CSA in general, does not go unnoticed and we thank you for your continued commitment. From sending in classroom supplies and party donations, working collaboratively to plan events with Parent Council, answering emails, touching base at carpool, etc. we have so much to be grateful for from our families. Thank you for all you do as parents both inside and outside of the classroom!

Homework Policy

Adapted from CSA "Homework Handbook" and "Navigator Homework Suggestions for Practice and Repetition"

CSA is committed to providing a well-balanced education that supports the natural growth and development of each child while allowing their inherent goodness and intelligence to emerge. We understand that this would not be possible without a strong partnership between our parents and teachers. We first suggest that families become familiar with the "homework assignments and recommendations" that are located on the www.csaschool.org website. Listening, one of the first steps on the "homework" assignments, fosters respect and establishes open communication about new pieces of learning. Parents should talk about learning and the world around them on a regular basis. Although learning happens all the time, it is important to establish routines in your home that allow time for structured practice of the learning that has occurred at school. Make reading, practicing math skills, as well as playing outside part of this daily routine. Playing outside is important to our physical well-being. Children need to move to learn.

It is recommended that Navigator students, with the support of an adult, spend time each day being read to and reading to someone, spend time practicing basic number concepts, and spend time with learning integrated into their daily living. This could include activities like reading a favorite book, playing board games, and helping to measure ingredients while cooking dinner. Navigators have brought home just-right book bags that can be exchanged as needed, as well as a monthly choice-board of learning activities. These are meant to help enhance, review, and even extend learning from the classroom at home. Time spent practicing learning skills at home needs to be positive and productive. Do not continue if your child is overwhelmed, not in the right frame of mind, or the work is not being understood. Additionally, find the time and routine that works best for your family. Maybe right before bed works, or maybe first thing Saturday morning yields better engagement. Please contact teachers with questions, concerns, or for recommendations of more targeted skills to work on.

Outdoor Attire

Oh this lovely Michigan weather! We've got a back-and-forth with our temperatures lately and phew does that cold air sneak up! Please be sure to check weather forecasts and make sure your learner is sent with appropriate outdoor gear each day.

Physical movement is critical to learning and we take advantage of recess outside as often as possible. We closely monitor the temperature and wind chill to make decisions for the health and safety for all students but this is a day-to-day and sometimes even minute-to-minute basis with the ever-changing Michigan weather we all know and love. Except in cases of extreme temperatures or pouring rain, we are outside for recess and students should be prepared with the right attire.

Extra hats and gloves can remain in lockers just in case the day's weather calls for it. As boots start to become more usual morning dress, please be sure to send a change of shoes to wear during the school day. Warmer dress applies for carpool times where we are on the curb at pick-up as well. For girls wearing skirts, for example, on days when maybe snow pants aren't necessary but tights just don't cut it, feel free to send a pair of cover-up pants (whether leggings or sweatpants or something) so those poor bare legs are warm. Leggings are **NOT** part of uniform or dress code for the school day, but are permissible for outside. Likewise, boots are not within uniform guidelines and students should have an appropriate pair of shoes each day. Email with any questions!

Label, label, LABEL all outdoor gear as well. We get lots of gloves and hats that are very similar and get mixed up. We also HIGHLY recommend that students practice putting on their gear, especially as December approaches and snow gear becomes a regular necessity. Practice building speed and independence so precious recess minutes aren't lost to dressing for the weather. Thank you for your support!

Character Corner

In this section of our newsletter, we will share information regarding our character education program including character traits, social protocols, emotional language, and related concepts like manners and kind acts. Although we might highlight specific concepts here, we will continue to discuss and practice all components naturally throughout the year. We encourage you to use these ideas and language at home in order to help reinforce and connect it to the classroom!

Last month, we observed a blend of new and existing friendships taking shape, with a noticeable rise in comfort and connection among students. This familiarity, much like a close-knit family, brings a mix of highs and lows, successes, and challenges. In Navigator, these dynamics can sometimes lead to impulsive behaviors like physical altercations or hurtful words. To address this, we're focusing on integrating Hurtful and Helpful Habits into our daily routine, helping students understand their actions and learn to intervene before conflicts arise.

Dr. William Glasser, a respected psychiatrist, introduced the concept of Choice Theory, which explores why we behave the way we do. He explains that replacing external control (the 7 hurtful habits) with internal choice and caring habits (the 7 helpful habits) is key to building healthier interactions. We've shared a page that outlines these habits for your reference.

Relationships are central to a fulfilling life. Every day, we're surrounded by personal and professional connections, and it's crucial to nurture them positively. Dr. Glasser emphasizes that using external control often leads to temporary solutions, a lack of accountability, and weakened relationships. By focusing on helpful habits, we tap into internal motivation, make thoughtful choices, take responsibility, and strengthen meaningful relationships. This is what guides our efforts to support students in navigating their friendships in the classroom.

In our discussions, we can't focus on helpful habits without also addressing hurtful ones. We emphasize these key habits during class meetings, when resolving conflicts, and through storytelling. For example, in *Those Shoes*, the protagonist makes the difficult but kind choice to give away a cherished pair of shoes to someone in need. Our habits are reflected not only in our words but also through body language and tone. Often, how we respond to others and challenging situations reveals these habits. Hurtful habits typically stem from anger or jealousy, while helpful habits thrive on kindness, cooperation, and encouragement.

In the classroom, helpful habits might look like:

- Students cheering each other on during activities (encouraging)
- Helping peers finish challenging tasks (supporting)
- Using rock-paper-scissors to make decisions or allowing everyone a say (negotiating differences)
- Trusting and respecting teachers by following directions

To extend this conversation at home, try minimizing or replacing any hurtful habits with caring ones, as this sets an example for your children. While we all fall into hurtful habits at times, taking a step back and addressing issues later shows that mistakes can be addressed and learned from. Fostering internal motivation, and using words and positive reinforcement rather than external rewards (like "if you do this, then we'll do that"), helps instill these habits. Additionally, reflecting on these interactions can give your child concrete examples of the outcomes of their choices and how they affect relationships.

A Guide to the Helpful and Hurtful Habits

The goal is to replace hurtful habits with helpful habits in order to build positive and meaningful relationships.

Helpful or Caring Habits	Hurtful or Deadly Habits
Supporting	Criticizing
Encouraging	Blaming
Listening	Complaining
Accepting	Nagging
Trusting	Threatening
Respecting	Punishing
Negotiating Differences	Rewarding to Control

