

Irrawaddy Inquirer

"ONCE A WADDLE, ALWAYS A WADDLE"

From Mrs. Ritter and Ms. Vallecorse

December 2015

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

Important Dates

- 12/8-12/12**- Santa's Secret Shop- Open Shop daily 3-4pm
- 12/16**- Report Cards go home
- 12/17**- Save the date! Navigator Christmas Concerts (families need only attend one show at 9:30am or 2:00pm; students perform at both; formal concert wear)
- 12/29**- Christmas Party!
- 12/22-1/2**- NO SCHOOL- Christmas Break
- 1/5**- School resumes

Cold Weather Gear

As the weather is getting colder, students should be bringing a coat, snow pants, hat, boots, and gloves to school every single day for recess and carpool. Teachers check for the wind-chill and radar daily before recess and we will go outside unless the windchill is below zero. To ensure students are adequately prepared, girls that wear skirts can bring in pants to put on underneath for recess and carpool and students can even leave their gear in their locker. It is important for students to be prepared for the daily changes in Michigan's weather. Please label all of their gear. Please ensure your child knows that they must wear a coat outside as weather is colder.



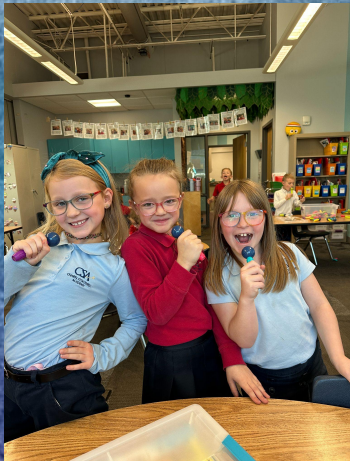
Upcoming Learning Targets

This month, our learners continue to work hard during academic workshops! Here are some of the skills we're working on:

Reading: Readers continue to work on tracking the strong feelings of characters throughout a story, paying close attention to where changes may occur. From there, readers can make deeper connections such as considering things a character learned in a story, using clues from what a character may say and do to show feelings and changes, and how to apply that to their own lives. We may also begin getting familiar with non-fiction texts.

Writing: Writers continue to explore authors as mentors, looking for inspiration from different writers to try in their own work. For most, adding detail and stretching out stories is a goal and then beginning to work on editing will be a goal from there. For newer writers, editing may look more like including more sounds and remembering finger spaces in words. For more experienced writers, this may look like beginning to use basic editing marks.

Math: Mathematicians will continue to review place value and addition/subtraction fluency, while jumping into our geometry unit. Learners will be introduced to or review identifying shapes and their attributes and look at how shapes can fit together or be broken apart.



Christmas Concert

Be sure to save the date for the Navigator Christmas concert on Tuesday, December 17. This will take place in the Gym and last approximately half an hour-45 minutes. There will be two performances and students perform at both shows. Families need only attend one performance at either 9:30am or 2:00pm. This holly-jolly day will be a Christmas spirit-wear day. For the concert, think more formally festive attire (this is where girls can wear dresses, sometimes boys sport a bow tie, nice sweaters, etc.). Please consider accessories that won't block or distract from other students during the concert. As we get closer and work on our staging with Mrs. Yamaguchi, we will share which side of the stage our class will be on so that you can choose seats more accordingly.

Please also note that there will be bake sale items available for purchase after the concerts. Due to extremely severe allergies throughout the school, all bake sale items must remain in the concessions area ONLY. Thank you for your help and support in keeping many learners safe, included, and comfortable for their performances!

Uniform Policy Reminders

It's that time of year when uniforms often need some refreshing and new sizes. As winter gear becomes a more common necessity as well, we tend to see an increase in straying from the uniform guidelines. With that, as a school-wide initiative, we are sending out some uniform reminders. Please take some time to review the reminders below and make any adjustments needed. Please see the CSA Family Handbook for the full description of the uniform policy. If you have questions, we are happy to provide guidance, or you can always follow up with Leadership directly. Thank you for helping to maintain a core piece of CSA's mission.

Shirts: Solid colors in white, light blue, or red. Undershirts must be solid white.

Socks/Tights: Must be solid white or solid navy blue.

Shoes: Dress shoes are allowed in the following solid colors: brown, navy, or black. Tennis shoes are allowed in the following solid colors: black, white, navy, and grey. Gym shoes can be any color but must have non-marking soles.

Sweaters/Cardigans/Vests: Must be solid navy blue. Sweatshirts are only for spirit wear days.

Hair accessories: Must be red, light blue, navy blue, white, brown, or black.

Leggings are not permitted except as extra layers for recess or carpool. Pants must be navy blue.

Christmas Party

Our Christmas party will be on Friday, December 19. This will also be a Christmas spirit-wear day, but this can be more festive and less formal. Party day is the time for things like light-up necklaces or reindeer antlers, not concert day. Keep an eye out in your email for a sign-up genius link for party volunteer opportunities and donations. Please plan to send in all non-perishable items no later than Friday, December 12 so that we have time to take inventory or make purchases as necessary. Perishable food items may come the morning of the party.

December Learning Extension Choice Board

Coming home soon is the December Learning Extension Choice Board. As a Navigator unit, we've updated the choices with some fresher ideas and also, to reflect our reading lessons in beginning to study nonfiction texts. As always, these options are meant to provide rich and engaging opportunities to extend learning at home, should you and your learner choose any of the (hopefully) fun options.

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.

With routines becoming more consistent and students now understanding classroom expectations, we're seeing an increase in their sense of responsibility as they embrace their roles as learners. This growth allows us to push forward in developing work ethic in a more authentic and meaningful way. At its core, work ethic is about putting in effort and sustaining it, ultimately leading to a sense of pride in a job well done. In our classroom, this focus is grounded in the strong relationships we've built. Now, we're beginning to see the payoff from the time invested in fostering a positive community. When we encourage students to dig deeper or stretch their understanding of a concept, they recognize that it comes from a place of belief in their abilities. Likewise, when we address unfinished or low-effort work, it's not out of criticism but because we hold them to high expectations and want them to take pride in their efforts. It's incredible to witness the shift when students move from feeling criticized to taking ownership of their work, understanding they are in control of their effort, and striving to reach their true potential.

In class, we're emphasizing the writing process, particularly revising and editing, to show that even strong work can be improved. The focus on rewriting teaches them that quality often requires multiple attempts. We're also integrating cross-curricular projects, many of which are displayed in the hallway or classroom, as visual reminders of what effort and perseverance can achieve. As midterms and CSRs approached, we had students reflect on their own efforts and set goals for Term 1—a way to encourage them to develop a plan to work towards something meaningful. Additionally, we're connecting the idea of work ethic to friendships and positive relationships, emphasizing that true friendships require effort from both sides to solve conflicts and meet each other's needs.

We strive to collect photos and quality work examples, capturing and sharing examples of their work, creating a portfolio that showcases their developing work ethic. However, it's important to note that work ethic is not about achieving perfect outcomes. Instead, it's an internal drive that pushes each student to do *their* best, which, in turn, brings a sense of accomplishment. Outcomes may vary—sometimes it's a flawlessly completed assignment, other times it might be an unfinished project that took an intellectual risk. The focus is on individual progress, not comparison to peers.

In our classroom, we define “quality work” by asking questions like, “Is this your best effort?”, “Did you take the necessary time to complete it?”, “Is there anything you can improve?”, and “Are you proud of it?”. We display examples of quality work to celebrate how it can look different for each student, with some working on neatness, others advancing in math, and some mastering sight words. The goal is personal growth, focusing on the journey rather than the product. As students' work ethic strengthens, so will the quality of their work. We celebrate effort at every step and encourage you to do the same at home—celebrating effort over outcomes. This approach not only nurtures intrinsic motivation but also lays the groundwork for the growth mindset, a concept we'll be exploring in more depth soon!

“If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.” – Martin Luther King Jr.