

WHITE RIVER SCHOOL
102 Pine Street
White River Jct., VT 05001
(802) 295-8650
Sheila Powers, Principal
www.hsdvt.com

September 2, 2016

Dear Families:

I am sending home a letter about the first unit in our math program, Bridges. I also included a letter about our phonics program for you to read when you have a chance. Hope to see you next week at Open House on September 8.

We have had a good first week in school. We're gradually working our way toward our regular schedule. This week these are some of the things we have been doing:

- We greeted each other in a friendly way each morning.
- I have read aloud several stories, including *First Day Jitters*, about a teacher who is nervous to go to school on the first day!
- We practiced how to line up, and make transitions many times throughout the day.
- We practiced having a fire drill and a clear the halls (lockdown) drill.
- We started using some math manipulatives, and a calendar-focused time called Number Corner.
- We began to talk about our three White River School rules and what they look like and mean across school settings (I will begin using color squares next week—more info to come about that)—be respectful, be responsible, and be safe.
- We began quiet time—a few minutes of calm, independent choice time to decompress after recess and before our afternoon a few times a week.
- We discussed the rules for using recess equipment as well as many of the materials in our classroom.
- We created pictures and a sentence showcasing something each of us is looking forward to in first grade this year (which is a nice lead-in to why those WRS rules matter so much!).
- We began having a daily reading time.
- We created September self portraits. It will be lots of fun to compare these to end-of-year self portraits in June.

One routine we have begun is Morning Meeting. Morning Meeting is the beginning to the school day. It is a way to build community, set a positive tone, increase excitement about learning, and improve academic and social skills.

Morning Meeting usually takes about 20 minutes. First thing each morning after everyone arrives and settles in, our whole class gathers in a circle. We begin by greeting each other. Every day, your child hears his or her name spoken by a classmate in a friendly way.

Next, a few students will share some interesting news or a story about something they've done, followed by conversation with the class. (Students will be able to share soon. So far I have modeled this routine.) I will try to teach how to ask questions and make comments that show you are listening, and how to share just a bit but leave room for questions. Sharing time helps students listen carefully, think about what they hear, form good questions, and learn about each other. When children share, they have a chance to feel that their ideas are valued and that the other children care. Soon I will send home a note with your child's "sharing day"; this will be the day that they can share something about themselves every week. It is not a show and tell or a time to bring in toys.

After sharing, there is sometimes an activity for the whole class. We might sing or recite a poem or play a math game. The activity time helps the class feel united as a group, reinforces academic skills, and helps the children learn how to cooperate and solve problems.

Finally we read the morning message, which helps students think about the day ahead. Sometimes I use this time to review and practice reading, punctuation, or some other skill.

I know you have had oodles of paperwork to fill out recently. I hope you don't mind filling out one more for me (see next page).

--Amanda Ehret

Parents:

Please fill out the contact information below for my records and return it as soon as possible. I know you've had a lot of forms to fill out recently. This one is just for me to be able to get in touch with you when I need to. Thank you!

Amanda Ehret

Please fill out and return as soon as possible. Thank you!

Student _____ Parent / Guardian name(s): _____

Email address(es): _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Work phone(s): _____ Ext. _____

Is it okay to call you at work if it's not an emergency? Yes / No

What time of day is best to reach you by phone?: _____