

August 20, 2010

Dear 4th Grade Families,

As hard as it may be to believe, there's no denying that August is drawing to a close and it's time to get back into school mode! I hope you are all as excited as I am about the upcoming year.

My summer was filled with plenty of reading, writing, biking, coaching baseball, playing softball, and golfing. The highlight of the summer, however, had to be last week: when I spent (with three other HW teachers) a week at Nueva Esperanza school in Guatemala. This is our partner school and my second year in a row there. This year's trip was even more magical and inspiring than last year's and you'll definitely hear more about it. For now, I'll just say that the first connection between that trip and our classroom is that we're going to be pen pals with their 4th grade class! Their students wrote their first letters while we were there and were so excited about it. (I'll show the class some video of their new pen pals writing to them.) We'll be writing back promptly, as they can't wait to hear from their new Winnetka friends!

In a broad sense, I try to integrate my loves and interests into the classroom and you will see that reflected in many of the things we do this year. I always encourage the students to do the same. Any personal interests and connections that students can weave into their learning makes for a much more rewarding, beneficial and memorable experience.

Now, for a quick look at this year. First and foremost, I'm very excited about writing this year. The week after school got out in June, many Winnetka teachers attended a three-day, all-day institute on Writer's Workshop from the fabulous people at Columbia University's Teacher's College. They work under the tutelage of reading and writing guru Lucy Calkins, and they brought some fantastic ideas to us. I can't wait to unveil a true Writer's Workshop in our classroom! Reading will also be prominent and daily.

Our big social studies units include North American geography and cultures (including the Maya civilization), African-American history, and Immigration. (For the first time ever, we are trying to coordinate an all-district 4th grade simulation experience to cap off the Immigration unit in the spring.) Current events will also be a regular topic.

Math is my favorite subject and we will be doing many fun and interesting things to go along with our curriculum there. We have some great units to explore in science this year – including Rocks & Minerals, Sound, Hydroponics and Life Structures. More specific and thorough information on all subjects will follow at Go-To-School Night on Thursday, September 16th (from 7-8 pm).

I will be in constant communication with you through my website, which will feature a daily (or near-daily) blog, homework listings, project information and more. Please see the attached the sheet for more information.

I look forward to seeing you all on the first day of school, September 1st. We're in Room 19, in the hallway two doors down from the nurse's office, next to Ms. Bulan's room.

I'll see you soon!

David Wartik

Dear Room Nineteen Students,

This is a special letter just for you. I know you may be disappointed that summer is almost over, but I am going to do my best to make sure that your last year at Hubbard Woods is a great one. We're going to learn and do so many interesting things this year.

However, most of that is down the road. We're going to spend the first few days of the school year building our classroom community. We'll get to know each other and talk about how we are going to work together to make this an awesome year.

I would like you to do three things for me to help us get the year started:

1. Think of **three** fun or interesting things you did this summer.
2. Think about the qualities that make someone a good student.
3. Think about the qualities that make someone a good teacher.

You may write these things down or just keep them in your brain. It doesn't matter to me. You **won't** need these things on the first day of school. That'll be too crazy a day. But make sure you have this stuff ready for Thursday or Friday.

I look forward to seeing you really soon! We're going to have a great year.

Class Website:
<http://www.mrwartik.com>

This will be the location of the daily homework, project listings, and more. Please check it out and bookmark it now. I have a feeling you'll be using it often!

Class blog:
<http://www.mrwartik.com/blog1011>

In October of last year, I started writing a class blog and posting photos and videos from the day/week. It was a big hit and so it's something I plan to continue this year. This ended up taking the place of my hard-copy Friday newsletter. Instead, there will always be a recap post at the end of the week, with the list of upcoming and important information. You can check out the blog now, although there's very little posted!

The site has a username and password you'll need to enter.

Username: 

Password: 

My email address:
room19@comcast.net

This will be the easiest way for you to reach me during the school year. You're almost assured of the quickest response time when you email me, although you should feel free to call the school and leave a voicemail if that's easier for you!

Open House:
Tuesday, August 31st - 10:00-11:00 a.m.

If you're interested in stopping by to say hello before school starts, I will be hosting visitors in the room at the above date and time. Feel free to come by, introduce yourself and check out the classroom!