

## A Message From Mr. Burleigh

February 8, 2013

Hello Hillcrest Families,

I hope this letter finds you happy and healthy as we pass the midway point of the school year. My expectation is that all students at Hillcrest learn every day and at high levels. We believe, as a school, that students need to be proficient with basic skills in all subject areas. In addition to these foundational skills, our major goal is for students to develop the thinking and communication skills needed to problem solve, cooperate, and apply new learning in order to excel as they grow. I know we work hard to help kids make progress every day at Hillcrest, and I also know that kids make more progress towards their potential when families support, from home, the work we are doing at school. I hope this letter provides some basic ideas and information to help you and your child work together outside of school to enhance what they are learning at Hillcrest. When we work together our kids can learn, think, and achieve at the highest levels. Thank you for supporting your child's education and the work we do here at Hillcrest each day. It truly is, "...a great day to learn."

As always, if you have any questions please feel free to contact me or your child's teacher at 425-335-1545.

Below you will find reading scores for your child and suggestions for helping at home in reading, math and writing.

**READING:** There are many aspects to being a good reader. Good readers can figure out new words through sounds, contexts, and even picture clues. Good readers can read and understand not only what is happening in the story, but also what the characters may be feeling or experiencing along the way. Good readers read at a rate that is fast enough to help the story flow for understanding and makes the reading experience more enjoyable for the student. And, of course, good readers read a lot. At Hillcrest we measure reading progress with a few different tools, but the one you have probably heard about before is called DIBELS. We give this assessment to all students three times a year. The key component we measure with DIBELS is how many words a student can read correctly in one minute, also known as Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) rate. This information helps us identify students who are on, or above, grade level or who need some extra support. This is where you come in...

When kids read fluently, they tend to do well in school, and when they don't it is a big roadblock for success in all areas. Below you will find your child's current DIBELS ORF rate and the goals for each grade level. I hope you will use this information to help your child increase his/her reading rate as needed. One good strategy is to read the same piece of short text (like a page out of a chapter book) each day during the week with a timer. Have your child attempt to beat their score each day. For more ideas on how to work with your child, please contact your child's teacher or attend our Rockin' Reading Night on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Your Child's ORF Score: September \_\_\_\_\_ January \_\_\_\_\_**

### Grade Level ORF Goals (Words Correct Per Minute):

GRADE	SEPTEMBER	JANUARY	JUNE
KINDERGARTEN	Kindergarten DIBELS does not include an ORF component.		
FIRST	N/A	23	47
SECOND	52	72	87
THIRD	70	86	100
FOURTH	90	103	115
FIFTH	111	120	130

**MATH:** Our school has shown tremendous growth in student achievement in the area of math over the past couple of years. This is due to great instruction from our teachers, excellent training for staff, and collaboration between our teaching teams. It's also due to the hard work and effort kids at Hillcrest put in to learning and practicing math every day. We have many practice strategies and tools kids use, but the one you can easily take advantage of to help your child is IXL Math. I assume you know about this program already, so take this as a reminder that IXL allows you to create practice opportunities for your child at grade level. In addition, it also allows you to go backwards in the grade level practice so that your child may be able to fill in gaps in their math understanding from previous years, or to go ahead in grade levels to challenge your child to see what is coming next.

I cannot emphasize enough what a great tool this has been for our students and encourage you to work with your child's teacher in identifying specific goal areas for your child to practice or for reinforcing concepts that are currently being taught in class. Please use this tool on a weekly basis to help your child in math. (FYI... most kids really enjoy working on IXL!) 😊

**WRITING:** Writing is probably the key skill students need to use with confidence and clarity in order to excel in the work world they will be entering. It also tends to be one of the most challenging for kids. How can you help? If you have a child who is willing to do some regular writing at home, that would be an outstanding help. However, we don't want to make it a chore or a battle for the kids at home, which then turns them off to writing because it's seen as a requirement instead of a cool communication tool.

Here are a couple of simple ideas that you can try that will help... Have conversations with your child that last for more than a few moments. Often, kids don't speak in organized, detailed conversations but when we ask them to write at school we expect them to be detailed and organized in their writing. If you can help your child practice clear communication through regular family conversations and storytelling, your child's writing will improve. And, of course, it's a fun way to connect as a family without the pressure of completing an assignment.

Another good idea, along the line of what I mentioned above, is to have your child tell you a story or share about a topic they are interested in. While he/she shares, you can write what they are saying. If you practice "scribing" what your child says, it's a good way for him/her to step back and read their own thoughts. You might be surprised how many changes they will want to make on their own when they read your record of their words.

The bottom line is to make oral and written communication a priority in your home. Use big words and challenge your child to use them too. Make it fun and you will be impressed with what your child will be able to do.

Thank you again for supporting Hillcrest and your own child's learning. If you have any questions about what I've written here, about the report card, or about anything else, please contact our office and we will direct you to the right person to help. I'm proud to be the principal at Hillcrest and appreciate our students and our collaborative community.

Sincerely,

Steve Burleigh

Principal, Hillcrest