

Curriculum

1. What is the curriculum this year?

Language Arts Curriculum: Reading is taught in whole class lessons, guided reading groups, small flexible groups, and individual conferencing. Wellesley has a core curriculum for reading which includes a genre study, author study, etc. Reading lessons often integrate the science and social studies units. Writing is taught through writer's workshop, which includes focused lessons. I decide which lessons to teach based on the needs of the current students. Also included in our language arts curriculum: Wellesley's core curriculum, DEAR, reading response journal, book reports/reviews, nonfiction books, Have-A-Go/Word Study (spelling), Writer's Workshop, personal writing journal, author study, poetry, cursive writing.

2. Math Curriculum: Programs: Wellesley Math Learning Goals are achieved using the 2nd edition of *Investigations* by TERC **Strands:** **Problem Solving and Communication **Number Sense and Operations **Patterns, Relations, and Functions **Geometry and Measurement **Data, Statistics, and Probability.

3. Science: Fair Testing, Insects, Sound

Social Studies: City of the Month, *Time for Kids*, Russia, Boston

Social Competency: (Open Circle) Cooperative classroom environment, Self-esteem and positive relationships, Solving people problems

4. How is my child challenged? Each student comes to 3B with different strengths. I work with each student to set goals for academics and behavior. Your child should know what his/her goal is in each area. For example, a child who is a proficient reader may be working on character development while a child who is a developing reader may be working on context clues. A child who is proficient at solving simple addition problems will begin to solve complex addition problems. The expectations are different based on the child's level.

Homework

*****Please remind your child to use a pencil to complete his/her homework and to use a clean piece of white-lined paper. This is the policy for most written assignments. If your child is drawing a picture, s/he may use drawing paper and crayons.**

1. How often is homework assigned? Third graders have homework Monday through Thursday night. Homework is not given on religious holidays, weekends, or school vacations. The children are also expected to read daily for at least 20 minutes. They are required to fill in their reading log Monday through Thursday night. Children should read from a chapter book 3 or 4 nights (out of 7) a week.

2. How much time should be spent on homework? I tell the children to spend at least 30 minutes on their homework but I do not want them to watch the clock. I realize that this can be tricky. I give the time limit more for parents than for the children. If your child has spent 30 minutes on the homework but hasn't completed it, that's fine with me as long as they have really worked during those 30 minutes. If your child wants to work more than 30 minutes, that is also fine with me. There are times when a child does not complete class work so s/he has some extra homework. I expect them to do the assigned homework during

the 30 minutes and the class work after that time. If your child finishes his/her homework early, I expect that s/he will read or do something else educational.

- 3. How much help should I give my child?** I tell the children that they should not ask for help until they have tried the assignment themselves for at least 5-10 minutes, unless they need you to read the directions to them. 98% of the time the assignment is related to classwork and I have gone over the directions in class before sending it home. I always ask the children for questions about the assignment. If your child consistently comes home and does not understand the directions please tell her/him that s/he needs to let me know that. I am happy to work with your child at the end of each day to make sure s/he understands the assignment.
- 4. How long should I let my child work on an assignment?** If your child is engaged in an activity I would let him/her work on it as long as you want. If your child is frustrated but insists on finishing, I would tell him/her that s/he can work for another 15 minutes and then it's time to read (go to bed, eat dinner, etc.). I do not let the children work for hours on assignments in class and they shouldn't be working for hours at home (unless they are working independently and without frustration).
- 5. What happens if homework is not turned in on time?** It depends. Children do miss recess to complete homework if the homework is needed for that day. If the child has done the work but forgotten it, I may just have him/her bring it the next day. If the child consistently forgets or doesn't do the homework, s/he misses recess and a note may go home.
- 6. Why do you give homework?** I give homework for four reasons: **1)** to reinforce a concept we are working on in class **2)** to give children another opportunity for challenge and extension **3)** to give parents an opportunity to work with their children on 3B topics (i.e. editing a writer's workshop piece, playing a math game), **4)** to develop good homework habits (neatness, punctuality).
- 7. How important is homework?** Homework is important because of the reasons listed above. I realize that there are times when homework is not completed due to extenuating circumstances but I do not consider soccer or piano practice one of these times. Homework is a priority and your child needs to take responsibility for completing it on time.
- 8. Do you grade homework?** Effort given to homework assignments is evaluated on the Progress Report under Work Ethic. I also take homework assignments into consideration when I give your child his/her academic grades.
- 9. How much parental involvement do you expect?** I expect that parents will provide a time and a space for their child to do homework. Homework is a priority and it's important that the children understand this. I expect that parents will ask their child if s/he has completed the assignment and if s/he has given it his/her best effort. You might ask, "What would Ms. Byrne say if she saw your work? Would she ask you to add anything?" If you do not think your child has done his/her best effort, you have two choices. You may just let it go and I'll deal with it in class. Or you may sit with your child and go over the homework with him/her. Either is fine with me.
- 10. Do you ever require parental involvement?** There are times when your child will bring home an assignment that s/he has to complete with an adult. These assignments are usually math games, writing pieces which need editing, read aloud books, or special projects that

require a trip to the library.

- 11. What should I do if my child is confused about a homework assignment (or if I am confused)?** If you or your child are confused by an assignment there are a couple of things you can do. If it's math, please check the Student Handbook which will show you what we're working on in class. If it's not a math assignment, ask your child what we did in school today that might relate to the homework. If your child really has no idea, please have them call another student in the class. If the homework seems too hard for your child and s/he has really given it a good effort, please ask your child to write me a note saying that s/he needs to meet with me about the homework.
- 12. What happens when my child is absent due to illness?** If your child misses a day or two of school due to illness I usually have them complete the missed work when they return to school. If your child has a sibling or neighbor at Sprague, you can arrange for him/her to stop by at the end of the day to pick up work for your child.
- 13. What happens when my child is absent due to a family trip?** If your child plans to miss school due to a family vacation, I usually have the child read during the trip. It is too difficult to try to send classwork on vacation as much of the work includes group interaction and discussion.

Evaluation

- 1. How do I know how my child is doing?** There are two Progress Reports and two parent conferences scheduled during the school year.
- 2. How often does work come home?** Your child will bring home some work during the school year but we keep a lot of it in class to prepare for our portfolios for conferences. So about four times a year, right around the time of conferences and progress reports, your child will bring home a stack of work. I use this system because your child needs to view all of his/her work before choosing pieces for the portfolio.
- 3. How do you evaluate classwork?** I use a variety of informal assessments to evaluate the children. I take notes on their conversations during group work, I ask them questions and record their thinking, I read with them, and I conference with them about their work. I also use formal assessments for the core academic areas. At the end of math units I give an assessment to evaluate the children's progress and I also meet with the children individually to test their problem solving, communication and computational skills. Science and social studies activities are evaluated based on participation and written/oral communication of learning.
- 4. What are portfolios?** Your child keeps a portfolio of his/her work during the school year. Four times a year, before conferences and progress reports, the children look at all of their work from that time period (i.e. September to November) and they choose pieces for their portfolio. Your child may choose a piece based on achievement, effort, growth, etc. Your child may also complete a self-assessment form about a piece.
- 5. How are conferences organized?** 3B's conferences include the parents, the child, and me. The child shares his/her portfolio with the group and I make comments as needed. Parents have the option of speaking privately with me during the last ten minutes of the conference.

The children are well prepared for the conferences and there is nothing I will say to you that I wouldn't say with them in the room. On rare occasions when there is a sensitive social or academic area to discuss, I will have notified both you and your child that I need to speak with you privately.

- 6. Why are children included in the conferences?** I believe that children are responsible for their own learning. I want the children to understand this so I involve them in every aspect of evaluation. I want them to always think about what they know and what they need to do to learn more. When they share their portfolio with you, they are sharing what is important to them about their learning. They know their strengths and they know their goals. When children participate in the conferences, they realize that we are all (parents, teacher, student) on the same team.

Social

- 1. How often does my third grader see the children in other third grade classrooms?**
3B has lunch recess with the other third grades 4 days a week and another recess 4 days a week.
- 2. What are the rules of the classroom?** The classroom rules are the same as the school rules which are based on HEART. **H**-helpful **E**-effort towards excellence **A**-accept and appreciate **R**-respect and responsibility **T**-teamwork
- 3. How do you discipline the children?** Usually a child will lose recess and/or write a note of apology for a discipline issue. If a child consistently has discipline issues, I will call the parent and sometimes request a conference.
- 4. What is Open Circle?** Many classrooms at Sprague use the Social Competency program. The program works on: creating a cooperative classroom environment, building self-esteem and positive relationships, and solving people problems. We meet once a week for about 25 minutes.

Nuts and Bolts

- 1. How often do classroom newsletters go home?** The children write a newsletter about once a month. We will also have some video newsletters this year in the form of podcasts. I write occasional newsletters about specific topics such. On Fridays when the children do not write a newsletter I will send home a "3B Update" with any important information. I also try to update the website with important information and send out a "Newsflash" to alert you to check the website.
- 2. What does my child do for Star of the Week?** On Monday, your child brings in photos, artwork,, hobbies, etc. which are displayed on a bulletin board for the entire week. Your child shares with the class on Friday afternoon. Some students like to bring in something special on Friday which may not be appropriate to leave in school for the whole week (baseball uniform, musical instrument, valuable items). (List of dates is in your child's homework folder.)
- 3. What are the guidelines for the Estimate Jar?** Everyone uses the same jar from the

classroom. Your child brings home the jar on Friday, fills it, and returns it by Wednesday. Your child should not know how many items are in the jar. (List of dates is in your child's homework folder.) You do not need to fill the jar to the top. The jar should be filled with one type of item (shells, rocks, Lifesavers, etc) and not a combination of items. Your child may bring in an item to share with the class or not. For example, some children fill the jar with their baseball card collection. When we're done counting the cards, the child brings them home. Another child might bring in erasers and when we're done counting, the child gives them out to the class to bring home.

- 4. What goes in the Estimate Jar?** Items should be small but not too small. I recommend using nonfood items however you may choose to fill the jar with **wrapped hard** candy. No unwrapped edible food is allowed in the jar (so you can put uncooked pasta because we won't be eating it).
- 5. What is City of the Month?** Your child will be responsible for researching one city during the school year and then presenting that city to the class. (List is in your child's homework folder.) There will be more information about this at the end of September.
- 6. How often do you have snack and recess?** We have snack every day and recess four days a week. **PLEASE** give your child a snack every day. I encourage **healthy** snacks. Candy and soda are not permitted during snack time.
- 7. Should I send in a treat for my child's birthday?** 3B is having nonfood birthday celebrations this year. Your child does not have to do anything on his/her birthday because we celebrate each child's day in a special way. However some children still like to do something special of their own. You may choose to send in a nonfood treat (such as pencils, etc.) or your child may choose to make something for the class to celebrate his/her birthday (such as bookmarks). Your child may also choose to have a guest reader on his/her birthday.
- 8. What are Outloud Birthday Presents?** On your child's birthday, we sit in a circle and give your child compliments to which s/he responds "Thank you." The compliments are recorded on paper and kept in your child's portfolio.
- 9. What volunteer opportunities are available for me?** We have many parent volunteers throughout the year. Some people make a monthly commitment while others prefer to sign up for opportunities as they arise. I will explain this further at Open House.