

Fremont Open Plan

Parent Participation Handbook

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Parent Participation Handbook
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1. *Why is Parent Participation so essential to a student's success?

What Research Says About Parent Involvement

Many research studies support what teachers instinctively know: Students do better academically and socially when schools build positive relationships with their families.

Here are several studies that explore the critical school-home connection:

- Regardless of family income or background, students whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to have higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.

Henderson, A.T., and K.L. Mapp. 2002. *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

- The most accurate predictors of student achievement in school are not family income or social status, but the extent to which the family creates a home environment that encourages learning, communicates high yet reasonable expectations for the child's achievement, and becomes involved in the child's education at school.

National PTA. 2000. *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Service, 11-12.

- When parents are involved at school, the performance of all the children at school, not just their own, tends to improve. The more comprehensive and well planned the partnership between school and home, the higher the student achievement.

Henderson, A.T., and Nancy Berla. 1995. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education, 14-16.

Parent Participation is critical to supporting the hands-on and flexible learning environment at Fremont Open. It is important to note that our basic commitment is to meet curriculum requirements as defined by the Modesto City School District. As an alternative school, the process by which the standards are taught, enhanced, and assessed at Fremont Open Plan is what makes our learning environment unique.

Parent Involvement enhances every aspect of the educational system at Fremont Open Plan. With parental support, dynamic learning takes place in small groups. Parents share their skills, talents, and life experiences to enrich learning activities. In addition to classroom participation, home support (homework, correcting, prepping materials), parents play major roles in areas such as committee involvement, fund-raising, field-trip support, activity coordination, after-school groups and many other much needed support activities.

2. *How your support makes learning happen

○ Reading, Literature, and Language Arts

Fostering a love for reading and writing is a key focus for teachers and parents from kindergarten through sixth grade. Your presence in the classroom enables small group learning and one on one support. Then, every child has individual help and encouragement on their journey to becoming a confident reader and writer.

As children progress through the grades, they are encouraged to discuss their thinking about their reading using reading strategies. Beginning in second grade, Writer's Workshop encourages children's written expression, and each teacher works with parents on how to support children as they encounter problems. As researchers, we first pose questions to students, but ultimately want our students to strive to answer their own questions.

○ Mathematics

Our math curriculum is fully articulated from kindergarten through sixth grade. Much of our mathematics curriculum takes a hands-on developmental approach, which makes it easy to integrate into other subject areas.

Bring your energy and ideas to mathematics learning, and watch the childrens' enthusiasm grow. Teachers introduce new math concepts to the class, and parents reinforce those concepts within small groups or one-on-one with a child. As you observe how each child grasps a concept, you'll learn what works best for each child. You are encouraged to think of creative ways to get that light bulb in a child's head to switch on. You'll see it happening!

○ Science

Science activities and experiments are natural areas for parent involvement. Science is taught in a thematic way, encompassing literature and other subjects. Parents with scientific expertise are encouraged to lead small group experiences

within any area of science. We've flown kites, used our senses, investigated snails, and experimented with electric circuits, salmon eggs, plants and cow eyeballs...the list goes on. Our Upper Dept. students shine in their science fair projects in May.

- **Social Studies**

Social science is an awareness of the world outside the classroom, near and far. Parents and extended families are a rich source for teaching children about the many cultures and traditions that are present in our school and beyond.

Ways to contribute to our social studies curriculum are by sharing family heritage, a great book of knowledge, your travels, your occupation, hobby, or an expert that can come in to teach us more on a topic.

Underlying the academic curriculum for social studies is an ongoing emphasis on teaching children **social interaction skills** to help them succeed in the present and in the future. As a parent, you can teach by example, as well as adopt the problem solving language that our school uses. At school, you might want to support classrooms with social skills training during morning meetings or during buddy times between departments.

- **Music, the Arts, Clubs and More Enrichment**

We have many extensions to our program that make Fremont Open Plan unique. Beyond the amazing fieldtrips and social events, we offer music (strings and band) for our 4th-6th graders. We have an arts committee that organizes a theme each year and brings in new art and art experts from our community to our students. We also have a school wide play put on by the parents and students every other year; as well as successful groups that meet and sometimes compete such as our Odyssey of the Mind teams.

- **Special Events:**

FOP Picnics: We have a beginning of the year picnic to welcome new families and celebrate the start of school. We also conclude the year with a whole school picnic to conclude our year. It is always held at a community park.

Fall Walk: Each Fall, FOP takes a school-wide fieldtrip to a nearby park. We rotate the theme and park location each year for four years. Students are in groups with their cross-age buddies and experience hands-on science and a nature hike all organized by our parents.

Harvest Parade: In celebration of the fall harvest, students come dressed up on the 31st of October and enjoy walking in a parade on campus. This is a whole school event.

Genre Days: We cannot forget about Genre Days, which are four days planned around an exciting theme in which all K-6 students are taught by each of our staff members. Parents support or lead in all of these groups.

Peace Assembly: In December, our school takes time to teach and reflect on the idea of peace. The staff picks a theme for the year and the students perform on stage with song and music. All our welcome back to the classrooms after for a peace feast.

Open Mic- Nights: An idea arose for the need to have more opportunities to let our students perform in front of an audience. Open Mic-Nights were the answer. Students sign up for the opportunity to sing, dance, tell jokes, read poetry etc. and perform at a local restaurant in front of a FOP audience.

Parade of Lights: Modesto plans for a fun filled night in the winter, in which groups decorate a float around a theme. FOP has created amazing floats of light to participate in this event each year.

Mini Courses: The day that parents plan and truly shine is our annual Mini-Course Day. In the spring, Parents lead a course of instruction of their interest or talent and students sign up for them. We have had courses which include tie-dye shirt making, bee keeping, cooking, yoga, Native American storytelling, mosaic stones and soccer ...to name a few.

*There are many other ways to support your classes; needs arise all the time. If you have a great idea to enrich the program for all or just your class, don't hesitate to tell your teacher. Many great experiences and new ideas originate from our parents!

3. *Committees

Fremont Open Plan relies on our parents working together to address school wide needs. There are opportunities for everyone to get involved. Some committees are created for a specific task, while other committees work throughout the school year to support ongoing needs.

Committee members are recruited in the classrooms, PAG meetings, through our e-mailings and our Link. Please keep an eye towards these requests for help, and when a need matches your interests, please inquire from our Whom to Contact Guide.

FOP COMMITTEE LIST :

Sunshine Committee: to recognize FOP families and staff in times of joy and sorrow.

Buddy Families: Organize matching of new families to established “buddy” families to welcome and familiarize with all aspects of program. Members will help answer questions.

Social Committee: Organize FOP social events...such as Fall picnic, Harvest Parade, end of year BBQ, and some fundraiser nights at local establishments, support Friday Mic. Nights and Parade of Lights.

Classroom Head Parent: Helps recruit and maintain volunteer schedule, organize special events, support field trip organization, helps to keep organization at parent station in the classroom.

Arts Committee: Coordinate organized art activities within the classroom, including visual and performing arts. This can include purchasing supplies and/or contacting resources within FOP and community. Locate outside performing artists for a whole-school assembly. This has been constructed into an annual “ARTS WEEK”. But, the committee can work on ideas throughout the year.

Theatrical Production: Organize a musical or drama production (every other year). This includes script selection, recruiting parents, and all facets of putting on a production.

Directory: Collect directory information forms, input using a suitable database for printing and distribute.

Fund Drive: Requests and tracks direct fund drive pledge contributions from FOP families. (Each family gives \$125 per child) Work with Treasurer.

Link Editors: Solicit articles through e-mail and Tuesday folders from FOP families, students, parents and teachers. Edit and prepare layout. Arrange for printing.

Web Site Editors: Help maintain updated website. Help teachers post happenings, links, pictures and projects on their classroom pages.

School Bulletin Board Designer: Keep school bulletin board in main hallway updated with pictures, information, events, and student work from departments. Coordinate with photographers from each department.

Tour Committee: Work with Fremont Principal and office staff to publicize enrollment and maintain Kindergarten waiting list. Schedule, coordinate and lead tours. Organize and hold PAG meeting for prospective parents. Participate in lottery drawing for K enrollment. Attend Kinder. nights to help answer questions. Schedule and guide transition tours.

Election Committee: Seek nominations from general membership for executive officers. Confirm with nominees, prepare, distribute and collect ballots, count votes and report results to PAG and community.

Mini Courses: Organize school-wide Mini-course day; solicit parents and community members as teachers; manage the budget; schedule courses; schedule students; trouble shoot on mini-course day.

Public Relations: Establish and maintain ongoing communication within the community regarding FOP's educational philosophy and program through distribution of information and contact with local media. Work with Tour committee chair to identify and attend pre-Kindergarten information nights.

Parent Education: Arrange for speakers, give trainings on philosophy, language, social skills, working with children, parenting issues or child development. Maintain parent resource library.

T-Shirt Committee: Coordinate with printer to develop color and style options; collect orders through Tuesday Folders.

Special Projects: Use building or other expertise on one-time projects such as building outdoor benches, cement stage, small storage for classroom etc.

Fundraising: Work with social committee and treasurer. Come up with ideas for social fundraising nights in community, items that can be sold that tie in to philosophy; ie, recycled bags, jog-a-thon, and script, family nights at site to generate funds.

Community Awareness: Help keep the community aware of Open Plan through an on-going education effort. This committee sends representatives to Modesto City Board meetings as part of the educational effort and reports back.

Photography: We need people willing to take pictures of school wide happenings during our school year as well as special projects, e.g., public presentations, calendars, yearbooks, etc. Pictures are burned on a cd for each dept or committee needs.

Executive: Leads the FOP community through goal setting, communication and guidance of by-laws and philosophy. Executive committee plans agendas and runs PAG meetings monthly. They collaborate with staff in order to best lead the FOP community to keep committees, parent participation, and budget running smoothly.

4. *Whom to Contact Guide

If Your Question/suggestion is: _____ Then Contact:

About School wide issues, school policies, personnel.....principal

About your child, other children at school, dept. happenings.....teacher

To leave a message for a teacher.....school secretary
#

About volunteer time in the classroom.....head parent /
teacher

About fundraising, scrip information.....Exec. Treasurer

Program budget, expenditures, and reimbursements.....Exec. Treasurer

Open Enrollment, school tours, Alumni information.....Tour committee lead

Field Trip info., schedules, responsibilities.....teacher / head parent

How to get more information about committees.....Exec. Vice President

Link Bulletin information, suggestions, submissions.....Link Editor

To add ideas to the agenda of a Board meeting.....Exec. President

About attending Parent Advisory Group meetings..... Any PAG member

About concerns, suggestions, requests regarding PAG meetings..... President or VP

About PAG meeting minutes.....Exec. Secretary

About the Parent Handbook or Parent Volunteer Guide..... Exec President or VP

Ideas for opportunities for publicizing our program.....Public Relations lead

If you would like to request money for a project.....Exec. Treasurer

About what is happening in the classroom.....Read your Tues. Notes,
attend PAG monthly meetings, keep volunteering.

NOTE: The names and numbers of the current school year's Executive Board Members, Classroom Head Parents, and Committee Leaders are listed in the school Directory. The Directory is distributed several months after school begins. If you have a need before then, please contact your teacher or ask your Classroom Head Parent how to contact the appropriate person.

5. *Parent Participation Agreement:

○ Basic Participation Agreement

Each family will work 1 hour per week per child enrolled in Fremont Open Plan. Classroom participation work is needed first and foremost. After school, take home projects and committee work should be filled after positions in the classroom are filled. Class field trips may require additional time.

Parents are expected to attend your Hopes and Dreams conference, evening class meetings as scheduled by their child's teacher, reporting conferences, and PAG meetings once a month. Each family must also sign up for at least one classroom or committee job.

When unable to attend on a scheduled workday, parents must contact the school and leave a message with the office letting us know who can substitute in your place. Please make every effort to switch a day with someone or ask another family member to fill in for your spot. Cancellations are difficult on classroom planning.

○ TB Test

A negative Mantoux TB test for any adult working in the classroom must be on file in the school office. This is valid for four years in the state of California. Our school nurse will post a free TB offering to support parents to meet this requirement.

○ Parent Contribution and Budget

Our school offers an exceptional balance of real world enrichment, field study, creative curriculum, and social training. We could not offer this to your children without the funds that each family contributes to have a working budget. Each year our families contribute \$125.00 per child for the year. We greatly depend on these funds from each family that have chosen this program. Contributions are collected in the black boxes in each department.

○ Exemptions from participation requirements

PAG executive members and teachers will work with each family to help them find a way to contribute time and funds to our program. If a family cannot meet participation requirements because of financial need or family emergency, they may petition the parent advisory group for an exemption for a set time. A meeting with the family will be set to see how our community can offer support, set up a payment schedule or use a fundraising option and help them to be a part of the school community.

○ Non-compliance

Volunteer schedules and committee work will be communicated to the PAG executive committee. Any family that has not fulfilled their responsibilities will be contacted by PAG and given two weeks to fulfill their requirements. If the family still does not begin to fulfill their requirements for participation, they shall be asked to attend a conference with the PAG president and teachers involved.

○ Chaperone and supervision

When in the classroom or as a chaperone on a trip, each parent is to be a role model of language, follow school rules, and attentive to children at all times.

Keep in mind that:

1. Children learn best when they are active participants. Ask them questions to get them thinking.
2. Children learn best when they relate to what they're learning.
3. Children learn best when they are responsible for decision making.
4. Children learn best when they use all their senses.
5. Children learn best with choice.

○ Workday procedures:

- *Be present and ready to work
- *Be aware of your scheduled time
- *Sign in and sign out at the office
- *No smoking, drug or alcohol use of any kind
- *Use Cell phones outside of the classroom
- *Conversations with other adults should be held outside of the classroom

It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. When our members all find a place to contribute, there is nothing we cannot do to enrich the life of a child!

6. * Meetings and Communication

P.A.G. BOARD

Fremont Open participation requires that each parent or family member work at least one hour per week usually by volunteering for classroom jobs and projects, or serving on committees and boards. Each classroom has a list of positions that are normally filled by parents volunteering at the first class meeting of the year. There are also many committees that need staffing, and our Parent Advisory Group which needs members. Please see the current vice president for the [description of the positions and duties of Board Members](#) if you are interested in running for a elected position on our PAG Exec. Board.

Each position filled by a parent keeps our school strong and running smoothly! Whatever your strengths and talents are, there is probably a need that matches perfectly. Think about what you do well, or what you really enjoy doing, and don't hesitate to volunteer. This generous giving of time and talent by the parents is a major factor in what makes our school, and our children, successful!

PAG MEETINGS

The Parent Advisory Group of Fremont Open Plan meets once monthly on the second Tuesday. The time is at 6:30pm. and is held in the cafeteria. Childcare is provided for \$1 in order to afford an opportunity for all interested parents to attend. The agenda of the meeting is sent home in advance. All the business of the Parent Advisory Group is conducted at these meetings and decisions are voted upon by those that have attended three consecutive meetings. Every Fremont Open parent is welcome to attend these meetings. You may also present an item for the agenda by calling the Board President or head teacher. Your attendance ensures that your voice is heard in the community.

COMMUNICATIONS

Tuesday Folders

A Tuesday Folder goes home with your child each week. The folder contains the Weekly letter from your child's department, general school flyers, announcements, letters from the Principal, the *Link*, monthly cafeteria menus, etc. In addition, some teachers include your child's class work, homework, art, etc., for your review. Make sure that you receive the folder each Tuesday. Read the contents carefully, initial the front of the folder, and return the folder to school with your child on Friday.

Red dot communication is a term used throughout our school which means that we make every effort to send home one copy of communication per family and that it travels with the youngest child enrolled in our program. This is to reduce the amount of paper used by our school. Return any papers that require your signature or authorization, orders etc., in the Folder.

Tuesday Times and Tie Dye Newsletters

Each week, your teachers put out communication in their *Tuesday Times*. This will include important happenings in your department. The *Tie Dye* is located on the back of your *Tuesday Times*. This is written by parent leaders who keep the community updated on upcoming events, philosophy, calendar dates, and important news in our FOP community.

Website and E-mail

The Information on the Fremont Open plan website is important to the smooth functioning of the school. It is updated regularly by staff and PAG volunteers. It includes important notices about homework, projects, meeting dates, events, classroom notices regarding field trips, items needed in the classroom, notices about fundraisers; registration information; and our philosophy. The website address is fremontopenplan.com

The classroom website that is linked is www.fopupper.weebly.com

We also make every effort to e-mail and use the FOP Facebook site to get news and communication out. This is an effort to reduce paper use and get quick response to needs.

*****Please keep all communication about children confidential and all communication positive.**

The Link

Our newsletter, called the Link is distributed every two months and comes home in your Tuesday Folder. It includes class columns that tell the school community, the District Superintendent and the School Board about the activities in each class; columns, letters or articles from the community at

large; and reports from the Principal, Head Teacher and Executive Board President, as necessary. Deadlines for the Newsletter are e-mailed and posted several weeks in advance.

Class Meetings

The information shared during class meetings is vital. Your attendance is expected. Class meetings may be called at any time by the teacher. The frequency of class meetings is at their discretion. Time, location and agenda are determined by the teacher - your input is always appreciated and needed. If attending a particular class meeting is impossible, ask a friend to take notes and review them promptly.

Fremont Open Plan Directory

The Fremont Open Plan Directory is published as soon as possible after the start of school in the fall. It contains listings of: teachers and their home addresses and phone numbers; Executive Board and committee members; class coordinators; and an alphabetical listing of every family in the Open community with home addresses and telephone numbers, including names of children enrolled at Washington Open. In addition, the Directory has a listing of possible substitutes for each classroom, a 'phone tree' for the entire community for last minute emergency communications, and a listing of parents' work days.

Parent Station and Parent Boards

Each classroom has a bulletin board or wall for posting class work schedules, field trip schedules, sign-up sheets for activities, etc. Check it for new information when you are in the classroom.

The Parent station will have a to-do list for the day in which volunteers can check off as they accomplish working with students, making copies, putting together activities etc. Each department also has a hanging black mailbox in which any communication or commitment monies to PAG may be placed.

Conferences / Hopes and Dreams / Progress Reports

There are three designated grading/progress reporting times designated throughout the school year. We start the year setting goals in our Hopes and Dreams conference. This is a short conference in which we listen to what both parents and students would like to accomplish for the year. We get to know you and your child a bit better in this meeting.

Progress report forms and conferences with the teacher vary depending on the department. Your teacher will inform you of what the practices are in his/her classroom. Each department does collect student work in a portfolio to discuss progress. A continuum of reading skills is used throughout k-6 to show how your child is progressing. This is made from developmental stages in reading and the Common Core Standards. Remember you can approach your teacher at any time with concerns about your child's progress.

Community Bulletin Boards

We have a community board in our main hallway that highlights the exciting learning opportunities that are happening in our program. We regularly post reminder notes by each classroom door of upcoming events happening in our program and community.

School District Board Meetings

The Modesto City School District Board of Education holds their meetings at the District offices. Time, dates, and locations of the meetings may be obtained through the District office. District Board meeting agendas are posted at school sites throughout the District.

Tours

Prospective Family Tours: We do hold up to four prospective parent tours in the winter in which parents walk through and visit classrooms. We ask that they attend a mandatory Language with Children Training and a Philosophy Meeting before they sign-up on our waiting list to attend Fremont Open Plan. They are chosen through a lottery drawing. (Please see the by-laws for more information.)

Parent and Student Transition Days: We do offer a day for parents and a day for students to experience the department that they will be moving to in the fall. On that day, they “move up” and get a chance to see what new expectations and experiences are to come.

7. *Language and Discipline with our students:

We spend the first six weeks of school working on procedures in the classroom and practicing through teacher and student modeling. Some skills and procedures will take an extensive amount of time to internalize. Listening at group and working independently are skills that need lots of practice and reinforcement. Just as we do not learn reading in one year, some skills do take longer to master.

We use Common Language:

- 1. Reinforcing : “I’ve noticed...”**
- 2. Reminding: “ How can we...?”**
- 3. Redirecting: “Susie, hands in your lap.”**

Positive ways to Motivate:

Limits define, but we need to motivate to head in the right direction. Cooperation is still a choice. Do not step in to do it for them.

“What are we supposed to do when we line up... Re-train if necessary.

Give choices if needed. “Now you have two good choices. What will you try next time? Good, I’m sure you will handle it fine.

Encouraging Cooperation:

“ Your area looks great today.”

“Good job, cleaning out the paint brushes completely.”

“Your helping out makes a big difference.”

“Thanks, I appreciate your thoughtfulness.”

Encouraging Independence:

I think you both can work this out. Do you remember our plan for sharing? Good job, I knew you could do it.

Well, try it again, I'm confident you can figure it out on your own. If you still aren't sure after 5 minutes, I'll be happy to help.

Encourage Improvement:

Some behaviors take lots of practice. Focus on effort and process.

Encourage every time they do it the right way. Notice that it is improving.

“I can see that you had more to tell me today in your writing, today. Let's see if you can remember where some of your periods go in your writing.”

Logical Consequences of Behavior:

We use a Time Out in our classrooms. This is not used for punishment, but as a place to Take a Break and gain controls. We have all practiced taking a break and discussed that at times when we are not able to be in control or follow a rule, we need a peaceful place to gather our thoughts and relax our bodies.

We use Loss of Privilege and You Break it You Fix it. Privileges are opportunities to be autonomous and reliable. If we are showing that we can not be responsible with expectations, we limit access and practice what is expected again. We match a consequence directly to an inappropriate choice. If a child made a mess on the table with paints and walked away. They are redirected to clean again.

Problem Solving: Students are learning to accept differences, speak their needs calmly when they have a problem, and build friendships with all. We role play many situations and use of kind language.

“I statements” are used which helps students to solve problems on their own.

Whenever possible, have students solve their own problems through language. Use this context to lead students to solving a problem.

I feel _____ when you _____ because _____, so I would

like it if next time _____.

Communication with Limits:

1. Go to the action
 2. Simply give students the information they need to make the acceptable choice.
 3. Come down to a child's level and use a soft voice.
-
- Students are capable of solving problems on their own. Children should be given choices and allowed to learn from the consequences of their choices. Children learn self-control, responsibility, independence and cooperation. There is less limit testing.
 - Children beliefs are largely determined by what they experience with their senses. What they see, hear, feel, and touch determines how they think things are.
 - Our words should match our actions consistently.
 - Do not ignore a rule that is being broken, Being lenient in fact teaches them to not follow a rule.
 - Strong willed children conduct research in their heads. They require a lot of hard data to be convinced that we really mean what we say. When they hear us say Stop. They are thinking... Or what? What will happen if we don't? They know how to find out.

Guidelines for firm limits:

1. Keep the focus on behavior
2. Be direct and specific
3. Use your normal voice
4. Specify consequences if necessary
5. Support your words with action

* For those that ignore: Try checking in...

“Did you understand what I said?”

“Were my directions clear?”

“Tell me in your words what you heard me say?”

*for Upset Times:

“I think we both need a little time to cool down. Have a seat at the back table. We'll talk about it at our next break.”

8. *Academic Choice in Open Plan

Academic choice is a powerful piece of Fremont Open Plan. In the past, Open Plan used choice to guide all learning. Today, we use choices in our program differently because we need to teach our state's and district's standards first. But this is still an integral piece of our program. .

Naturally children have a need to control their world and sometimes each other. While being careful to maintain our authority as teachers, we need to build choice into our program. As much as children need control, they also need to know that there are strong adults in charge who will guide them, set limits, and keep them safe. We've resolved to provide students with more choices in their learning and more opportunities to make decisions. However, we are not a program in which students can choose to do whatever they want all the time.

We need to maintain our teaching goals of meeting standards. Yet give students opportunities to answer their own questions. Process becomes more important than product.

There are two guiding questions that help us think through this balance:

Why am I doing what I am doing?" and...

"Is this something that I have to do or could the children do it?"

***So, what does Choice look like in Open Plan?**

Academic Choice is a way to structure lessons and activities.

When teachers use Academic Choice, they decide on the goal of the lesson or activity, than give students options for what to learn and/or how to go about their learning in order to reach the defined goal.

Morning Meeting: Children take turns choosing the daily greeting, making up their own greetings, and leading the news and announcements portion of the meeting.

Sitting and sharing: Children choose where to sit next to learning partners, and what to share, and on whom to call for questions and comments.

Work time: Children could be choosing between topics at a center, which book they want to read, which animal they want to research.

Materials: are sometimes specific to the goal and at other times are more open for students to work with. They may choose colored pencils, crayons or markers to finish a drawing. They may select from a list of supplies to create an invention or game.

***Within all classrooms we have shared rooms and shared spaces. Choices are a constant in our program and we need to train our students to make appropriate choices that follow the structure of our classroom and the rules that we've created. It can be seen in different parts of our day in different ways throughout each department.

***Benefits of Academic Choice**

1. It supports children's intrinsic motivation to learn

They become highly engaged and productive. They're excited about learning and sharing their knowledge.

2. It encourages children to learn from each other

Academic Choice gives children opportunities to consult each other about their work, see each other's finished products, and talk with each other about how they achieved their final result.

3. It draws on different strengths, abilities, and interests

Having choices allows children to work from their areas of strength and personal interest.

4. It maximizes children's learning

The planning, working, and reflecting process mirrors how children naturally learn. It allows them to generate their own goals, actively interact with materials, and make sense of their experiences.

9. CLASSROOM RESOURCES FOR PARENTS:

***Working with Writers**

How do I conference with a students and what do I say?

To conference with a child means simply to sit down with each child and talk about what they are writing. There is a wonderful book called How's it Going by Carl Anderson that is all about conferencing. Here are some ideas from this resource.

Don't read all of what the child has written. Instead, simply have the child tell about it and ask how is it going.

"What is the story going to be about?" It often helps students to talk a story out.

"Whose point of view is the story from?"

Use conferences as a time to have students try something new; for example, using a dictionary or a word chart.

Always leave a conference asking a child to try something, whether it be reworking the lead, adding stronger more vivid verbs or using a thesaurus. Make sure they have something that they need to be working on!

Work on writers workshop- Date everything!!!

1. Read your piece to your editor
2. editor tells what sounds good and asks questions
3. talk together about ways to improve your piece
4. editor then looks at the writing and makes suggestions
5. author not the editor makes changes
6. editor initials the paper

Part One of a Writing Conference

Invite Students to Set the Agenda by asking a question such as:

How's it going?

What are you doing today as a writer?

What do you need help with today?

Questions that Nudge Students to Say More:

Could you say more about that?

What do you mean by...?

Questions that Grow out of our Knowledge of What Good Writers Do

Have you planned out where your story is going?

What kinds of changes have you made?

Questions about a Student's Decisions

Why did you pick these places to [add-on]?

Why did you decide to [structure your draft this way]?

Part Two of a Writing Conference

As in anything new we teach, we want to go through the steps of demonstrated, shared, guided and independent. The following is an example of how that might look within a conference.

Teacher / Parent demonstrates, on student's paper, how to put in punctuation on a couple of sentences. Then,

Teacher / Parent and child try putting in a couple of punctuation marks together.

Next, the teacher / parent watches while the student tries it on his own.

Finally, encourage the student to continue putting in the punctuation on the rest of the paper. Check back later to see how it went for him.

Part Three: Specific Praise

The following are just a few of the aspects you might praise in a child's writing:

- specific detail
- a great beginning or an effective ending
- use of a description or example
- the way it makes you feel something

This specific praise will reinforce the things you want your students doing in their writing. It will also be a motivation for students to keep writing and trying new things.



Writing Workshop: The Process of Publishing

As much as possible, turn the task of publishing over to students. The following is a checklist of steps you might have students walk through in order to publish

PUBLISHING CHECKLIST

- Does my writing makes sense?
- Are there any parts that aren't clear?
- Does my writing leave you with any unanswered questions?
- Did my words paint a picture in your mind?

*Working with Spelling

When students are first learning to spell, they use inventive spelling. You will notice your child starting to use the correct spellings of sounds taught in school. Our rule of thumb is this. If your child is working on word work, spelling lists for a spelling test or a final draft for others to read; they need to work on correcting their spelling. We teach students many strategies to spell well and how to use spelling resources to correct their spelling. They may need support at times.

If however, the student is writing a first draft and is focused on process, ideas and structure, they should be free to not let spelling be the primary focus for this task. Have the student skip lines on first drafts, so that editing their spelling later becomes easier.

*Working with Readers

A. STRATEGIES TO BECOME A BETTER READER

Before Reading

Predict what the book is about from the title.

Set a purpose for reading. Ex. *I am going to read this book because I want to learn more about animals.*


Take a *picture walk* through the book. Ask, *What is happening in the pictures?*

During Reading

- **Visualize** - make a movie in your head just like you do when listening to a story.
- **Question** - think about the story, asking yourself who, what, when, where, why, how.
- **Clarify** - understand new words - figure out words using print strategies
 - Use finger to point under each word to keep track of where you are reading
 - Use beginning sounds to figure out words
 - Use ending sounds to figure out words
 - Use pictures on the page to help figure out a word
 - Use word chunks (group of letters in a pattern like _ack, _ight)
 - Look for a smaller word within the word
 - Read to the end of the sentence. Sometimes the word that makes sense pops right up!
 - Reread the sentence or passage to increase understanding
- **Make predictions** - "What happens next?"
- **Make connections**
 - What other story is like this one? (Text to Text Connection)
 - Have you felt the same away as a character in the story? Did something similar happen to you? (Text to Self Connection)
 - Does it help you think about something in real life not directly connected to you? (Text to World Connection)

After Reading

- **React** - What did you think of the story?
 - How did it make you feel?
- **Summarize**
 - What was most important in the story?
 - Retell what happened in a few sentences.

B.  PARENT PAGE Giving a Comprehension Check using DRA

Basics: Students will read a text usually aloud to you, unless you are testing silent comprehension. You keep track of the errors they say aloud and mark them

On your assessment sheet. Then you ask them comprehension questions

And record if they were correct or not.

Goals: 3rd graders: Level 38 by the end of the year

4th graders: Level 44 by the end of the year

What is counted as an error?

How do I Mark the error?

1. If the student leaves out a word
2. If the student substitutes a word for another
3. If the student mispronounces the word
4. If the student Repeats- it is NOT an error
5. If the student Self Corrects – it is NOT an error.

Prep Steps:

1. Pick a student from the Comprehension Reading List that has not been tested this month.
2. Find what level you need to test them using this list.

Ex: Levels 30-44 in fiction and nonfiction.

3. Pull that level reading sheet. (One paper teacher copy to record on and one student copy in a plastic sleeve.) There are ___ titles in each folder. Put an X on the Comprehension Reading List if they are testing for Fiction or Non-Fiction.

What to do and say with the student:

1. Say, "I am going to check your comprehension today." "You are going to read some text out loud to me and answer questions about what you read." "Give your best." "This is not timed." "You can also use the text if you need it for the questions."
2. Read the intro at the top to the student. Have them read the title and ask them what they think will happen in the text.
3. The student holds a student copy in the plastic sleeve, while you record their responses on the teacher copy of the same text.
4. They read first for a running record: This is when you record any errors they make on your copy.
5. Then ask them Comprehension ?'s:

For each question mark:

- + = all correct
- = part of the answer, but not enough
- = not correct

***If you are unsure if their response is correct- record what the student says aloud and the teacher will determine if it is correct.

Total the results on the bottom of the sheet: How many errors / how many questions missed.

Basics: Fluency is the flow and rate of your reading. If you read too slowly, you tend to lose comprehension. Fluent readers phrase with _____ appropriate pitch, stress and phrasing. Later they work on expression.

Goals: 3rd graders: 100 wpm 1st tri. ~ 110 wpm by the end of the year
4th graders: 110 wpm 1st tri. ~ 125 wpm by the end of the year
5th graders: 130 wpm 1st tri. ~ 150 wpm by the end of the year
6th graders: 150 wpm 1st tri. ~ 160 wpm by the end of the year

Prep Steps:

4. Pick a student from the Fluency Check List that has not been tested this month.
5. Find what level you need to test them on the Fluency Check List.
6. Pull that level reading sheet. There are multiple titles in each folder. (any title will do.)

What to do and say with the student:

1. Say, “We are going to work on your fluency rate today.” “That means we are checking to see how quickly and carefully you can read this text in a minute.”
2. Give the child a goal. Example: Point to the word that is the 125th word in the text and tell them to put their mind on reaching this word for a goal.

3. Say, "I am going to give you 1 minute to read this quickly, but as carefully as you can." "You'll have two tries today."
4. Have the student look over the text and ask them to point out any words that look tricky. Ask them if they know a strategy to figure out that word. We can chunk it into parts, sound it out, or use clues in the sentence to help. If time is short, give them the words.
5. Let's begin- set the timer for one minute. The student reads aloud quickly. Count on your fingers or record on your paper how many errors the student made.
6. Calculate: How many words did they read total? _____
 - i. How many errors did they make? _____
 - ii. Subtract the number of errors from total words = wpm. (words per minute)
 - iii. Record their best of two efforts.
 - iv. Have Students graph their results.

D. Buddy Reading Strategy

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>What is the strategy?</u>	<u>Steps to do:</u>	<u>Why we do this as readers:</u>
Picture walk	Look at the title, pictures, heading, graphs, and diagrams in the text.	Turn the pages. Look at the pictures and headings. Think about what the text might be about.	We do this before we read because it helps us make predictions later.
Prediction	A smart guess about what the text is about.	Think about the pictures. What did you notice? Make a guess.	We do this before reading to get ready to read. It warms up our brains.
Set purpose	Why we want to read the text. What we are trying to find out.	Think about your picture walk and predictions. What are you wondering about?	We do this before reading. This helps us focus our brains.
Clarify	Look for words that are hard to read or that we don't understand.	When we were reading, which word was hard to read? For which word did we ask for help? Which word we didn't understand?	We do this after reading, so that the next time we see this word we will be able to read and understand it.
Ask questions	Ask questions about things that happened in the text. Ask questions about parts of the text a kindergartner might find tricky.	Ask questions using the words what, when, where, why, who, and how. What are your wondering about?	We do this after reading because it helps us understand the text better.
Visualize	Draw or visualize a picture of the most important part of the text.	Think of the most important part of the text. Draw or describe a picture that shows this part. If the text is fiction, tell what happened at the beginning, middle, and end of the story, or the problem/solution. If it's nonfiction, tell the topic of the text and the most important information.	We do this after reading to remember and understand the text better.
Summarize	Telling what the text is about in a shorter way.		We do this after reading because it helps us remember the text better.

Parent Handbook- Signature Form

I have read and/or reviewed the contents of the Parent Participation Handbook.

X _____
Parent / Guardian Signature

Print Parent / Guardian's Name _____

Name of Student(s): _____

Name of Child's Teacher(s): _____

*Please return to your current classroom teacher.