

*Exploring the Effectiveness  
of a Classroom Website*

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### Abstract

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As I began to think about myself as a teacher, I wondered how parents would view my teaching, and how I could effectively communicate the events in the classroom with them. This inquiry explores the effectiveness of parent-teacher communication via the Internet. My inquiry project is a reflection of the data collected from parents, students and teachers regarding the effectiveness of this form of communication compared to a classroom newsletter.

## **Context**

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I conducted my Inquiry Project in State College Area School Districts' Ferguson Township Elementary School. This project explores the effectiveness of parent-teacher communication process via the Internet.

Our class is comprised of twenty-two unique second grade students. There are twelve females and ten males in our class, two of whom are new to the school district and the state of Pennsylvania. One student is involved in the learning support program and reading response to intervention at a first grade level. Three additional students attend reading response to intervention, but do so at a second grade level so they attend at different times. Depending on the concept of the math lesson, we have about half of the class who can work independently and half who need additional guidance. Overall, the uniqueness of the individual needs and personalities of the class make our classroom community more diverse as learners. Inside our classroom, instruction can be differentiated easily to better accommodate a student when needed, but parents very often do not see the differentiation.

Through a survey sent home, I asked parents, "Are you able to access the Internet from a home computer?" The results of that survey showed that every student who completed the survey is able to access the Internet from a home computer (Appendix B). The five students who did not return the survey are believed to have access to the Internet from home based on class conversations.

As a pre-service teacher, I am curious about increasing parent participation and making them feel part of the classroom and their child's education. I fear the judgments and criticisms that are typical of first year teachers. I know that if I can get parents' trust and support, my classroom dynamic will be all the better. This being said, I intend to conduct my inquiry on

finding the most effective way to communicate with parents. In addition, I intend to survey the degree to which parents utilize the communication that is available.

In my classroom, the primary means of communication with parents has been through a biweekly Friday newsletter that gives parents a sense of what's been happening in our classroom. The newsletter provides an overview of the last two weeks in school, explanations of student work or mathematical thinking, and questions that parents could ask their child. Parents tend to communicate through hand written notes or e-mails. Prior to my inquiry, our classroom website only had a link to my mentor's email address.

### **Wonderings and Questions**

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WONDERING:

**In the age of technology, how effective is a classroom website in providing ongoing parent communication and what affect does it have on the relationship between the parent, student and teacher?**

QUESTIONS:

**Does a classroom webpage strengthen parent- student communication?**

Children often have a hard time communicating with parents when asked the question, "What did you do at school today?" Through this inquiry, I hoped to uncover the typical "nothing" response by looking into how parent-student communication changed with the implementation of a classroom website. I wondered if the pictures and student work provided on the website would help create conversation leading to stronger parent-student communication. While researching this topic, I came across an article that said, "parents feel it is important and meaningful to be a part of children's education, but find they participate less with school functions due to a lack of communication"

(Flores, 2001, pg. 4). This strengthened my desire to want to uncover the most effective form of communicating if not for the parent-teacher relationship, than for the parent-student relationship.

**How often do parents read the information that gets sent home? Is a classroom newsletter more convenient for parents?**

I wondered if parents preferred the classroom newsletter to an updated classroom website. I was interested in seeing if parents would be able to get themselves into a routine of checking the website in order to eliminate the paper newsletter.

**What aspect of the classroom website do parents find most beneficial?**

When thinking about the type of information that is included in either the newsletter and classroom website, I am curious as to what aspect of communication parents find most helpful. Is their commonality between what teachers and parents believe to be most useful?

**How can a website increase homework assistance and differentiation?**

When considering the range of student abilities within my classroom, I was interested in seeing if a classroom website could provide the extra assistance to students who might need it and, at the same time, enrich assignments for students on the opposite end of the spectrum. I wonder to what degree does a teacher need to get involved in this process. If I offer helpful links will each student find an activity that is developmentally appropriate?

**Data Collection and Analysis**

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For my inquiry project I used a wide variety of surveys in order to evaluate individual parents and students. I selected surveys as my primary means of data collection because I felt that

surveys were an easy, concrete and convenient way to sample parents.

Prior to beginning my inquiry project, I generated a tentative plan to help guide me through this inquiry process (Appendix R). Included in this baseline plan was an overview of the ways in which I would be collecting my data. These outlines provided the framework for investigating upon my wonderings.

I began my data collection on March 4<sup>th</sup> by sending home an initial letter to parents explaining the upcoming information I would be asking of them (Appendix A). I asked parents to please fill out the attached survey (Appendix B) to help me better understand how they feel about the current communication in our classroom and seventeen of the twenty-two surveys were returned. After reading over the information, I had a general idea of how the majority of parents felt about the current communication in our classroom. Using a copy of the survey to record, I used a tally system to evaluate each question on the survey. When all seventeen surveys were tallied, I went through and counted up the total for each answer and calculated the percent for each answer (Appendix M).

Over the next week, I began activating the classroom website. In order to learn how to use the software, and ensure that I was following the district rules, I met with Ferguson's Instructional Technology Specialist, Helen Quinn. In addition to providing training on website development, Helen also provided several names of colleagues who have reputable classroom websites. After our meeting, I began creating the first few pages for the website. Starting off small, I completed the home page, special schedule, teacher background information and a list of activated links related to our areas of study (Appendix L (L.1., L.2., L.3., L.16.)).

In order to make parents aware of the changes, I created a step-by-step tutorial utilizing one of the math links listed on the webpage (Appendix C). For homework, students were asked

to follow the steps leading them to our newly updated classroom website, practice math skills and return the parent feedback slip provided.

I also collected data from students regarding the website homework assignment by asking them to circle a happy face to represent the answer 'yes' or a sad face meaning 'no' (Appendix D). Having the survey completed in school provided feedback from the entire class.

During the week of March 17th, I focused on activating pages that informed parents of the happenings in our classroom pertaining to every subject. While in school, I allowed students time to create a classroom artifact using Kid Pix on a volunteer basis. Several examples of the updated pages can be seen in Appendix L: (L.6., L.7., L.8.).

In the computer lab on April 4th, I had students exploring fact and opinion links that were listed on the webpage. This gave students a chance to see the website in school and I was hoping this excitement would go home to their parents as well. I showed them the photo slide show from our recent field trip (Appendix L: (L.15.)) and mentioned an opportunity for extra work over the weekend. Students could create their own dinosaur using one of the links provided and tell me about it on Monday, April 7th for a chance to earn an extra sticker.

On Tuesday, April 8th, I sent out the second parent survey (Appendix G) to assess the progress over the past month. On Wednesday, twelve surveys were returned and again I collected the data by using tallies, comparing percentages and typing the quotes on my computer.

Wednesday was also the day I asked students to complete their second survey (Appendix H). Like the first student survey, most of the questions were yes or no. The results can be found in Appendix P. I created a chart to keep track of students who asked if they could type something to go on the website (Appendix K). In addition, I noted whether they made changes from their original document based on the website publication. For example, if a student asked for real

spelling while typing on the computer, I considered this a display of extra effort toward the website postings.

The last aspect of my data was based on a student response. One student shared the fact that she studied her spelling words on the website because her mom had lost the list of words. After hearing this, I decided to ask the rest of the class if anyone else used the website to study last night. I quickly recorded the names of the students who responded they had (Appendix J:).

### **Explanation of Findings: Claims Supported by Evidence**

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*Claim 1: Parents prefer a classroom website to a classroom newsletter as a means for classroom communication.*

The results from the first parent survey showed that parents were generally pleased with the biweekly newsletter that was coming home. Across the board, parents found the newsletter to be helpful and admitted to having read all letters that were sent home. In addition, 88% said that the newsletter provides enough information. However, in response to the question that asked parents if they would be interested in visiting a classroom website for more frequent communication, 88% answered “yes” (Appendix M).

In addition, the website also showed favoritism on the second parent survey. Eight of the twelve parents who returned the survey had recently visited the website. Half of those who responded had visited the website at least once a week for more frequent communication (Appendix P). When parents were asked, “After having the website available to you for a few weeks now, would you prefer having a hardcopy newsletter or the use of the website?” Eighty-three percent of parents preferred a classroom website to a classroom newsletter (Appendix P). When justifying their response, a parent said, “Website, and I am a die-hard paper fan!! There’s just so much to explore and it can be so much more current!” One parent wrote, “Once I get into

the habit of checking that site weekly, it is easier for me to see that and be ready to comprehend/absorb what I need to when the time is right.” Another responded, “I can check in more frequently.”

My evidence proves that even though parents were content with the newsletter, they prefer the website because the information is current and extensive.

*Claim 2. Through technology, students can be involved in the parent-teacher communication process.*

Part of my wondering was in seeing how students can be more involved in the communication process and evidence has shown that through a classroom website the communication process can change from a dyad to a triad. The second student survey, Appendix P, showed that 73% of students have visited the website from home and 91% have enjoyed looking at the classroom page. When asked which aspect of the classroom website was most beneficial to students, 35% were in favor of the website links. One student provided an additional comment saying, “I had so much fun on the website!”

“In a recent poll among community leaders, 70% believe that encouraging involvement is the most effective way to improve education” (Roberts, 1999) as cited in (Flores, 2001, pg. 15). When students were completing their online homework parents responded by saying, “We enjoyed doing the games together and I think it made the assignment fun!” (Appendix N).

The last piece of evidence that supports this claim is from the second parent survey. When parents were asked, “Has your son or daughter commented about the website?” several parents provided additional examples. One parent said, “She can’t wait to look at it and share with us.” Another parent noted, “She told me about the things that are on it- asked me to check it

and she wanted to check it too.” One survey said, “I get more elaboration on all things from the site.” The last quote from a parent that I will share is, “I know I am over the top with this- but, if there was a daily update, I would check it everyday! Not only for just wanting to know, but it helps with communicating about daily life with my daughter when you know about what happened during the day.” This proves that the newsletter that used to only be shared between parent and teacher, can now be enriched by using the website to engage students.

*Claim 3. An updated classroom website increases the degree to which parents feel connected to the classroom.*

Prior to the implementation of an updated classroom website, ten out of fifteen parents replied to “rarely” or only “sometimes” feeling connected to our classroom. The other two parents abstained from this question. Half of the parents said that it frequently provides avenues for communication, while the other half, said only sometimes. A few of the additional comments that were provided on the survey were to make the newsletters, “more frequent” and to provide, “upcoming plans in the classroom. Not just what you already did, but what is next too.” (Appendix M).

Davenport states, “As more and more parents have access to e-mail and the Internet, schools and teachers are increasingly finding that using technology communication tools can play a vital link in increasing parental involvement (2004, pg. 54). Through this process, evidence on the second parent survey has shown that ten parents responded that they have felt more connected to the classroom since the updated website. Seventy-eight percent of parents responded that conversation has increased since the implementation of a classroom website. (Appendix P).

I feel the connection has been made stronger because of the degree to which information is available on the website. Appendix L shows the variety of topics covered online. A newsletter can't offer all that the webpage is able to reveal. For example, Appendix L.5. provides information about what parents can expect to be coming next and Tobolka's action research project provided evidence that, "electronic communication improves students' interest in their coursework and provides their parents with more knowledge about daily class activities" (2006, pg. 24).

One parent sent this statement in an e-mail after spending time looking at the website, "When you have a child that doesn't share much about her day, it is a great way to take a look at what's happening myself and give me something in which to start a conversation. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!" (Appendix I)

*Claim 4: An updated classroom website can be an additional resource for parents, students and teachers.*

I have found that students have been able to use the website as a back-up plan when papers have been misplaced. For example, four out of twenty-two students used the classroom website to study for a spelling test (Appendix J).

This resource is also beneficial to teachers and parents because of the excitement that stems from being able to use technology. I have found that the website motivates students to work harder. On the first student survey, seventeen students said that they would like to write for the webpage and, ninety-five percent of students said they would work harder if they were aware that their work could go on the webpage for others to see (Appendix O). The next time I

collected student data, fourteen out of twenty-two students posted work on a volunteer basis, and of the students who posted work, 79% showed an extra effort in writing (Appendix K).

Parents saw this excitement and responded to it on the homework letter survey. The survey revealed that 81% of students were able to complete the task as assigned and 100% of parents found the assignment beneficial and would enjoy having more homework assignments like this activity (Appendix N). One parent said, “He enjoyed doing homework on the computer.” Another wrote, “This was great! We did addition and subtraction from 0-20. I love the new classroom website- we will refer to it regularly- thanks! Well done!”

When the students were asked to provide feedback on the homework assignment, all but one student said that they enjoyed, or would have enjoyed, having their homework on the computer. The entire class agreed that their parents would be inclined to go to the webpage to see their work if it was posted on our website (Appendix O).

When extra homework was offered over the weekend, fourteen out of twenty-two students were inclined to complete it (Appendix F). The website can be a classroom tool to connect life at home to life at school.

### **Reflections and Future Practice**

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This inquiry project has deeply affected my beliefs on parent-teacher-student communication. I have seen first hand how important communication is and, I now have an understanding of what parents find important and helpful. In my classroom next year, I will apply my inquiry to a new set of parents and students by creating an updated classroom website filled with pictures, reminders and information pertaining to the events in the classroom. It is my hope that family members will visit the website on a weekly basis and become informed on what our class is doing daily.

I still wonder if there is a relationship between the parents who frequently visit the webpage and the students who struggle or excel in certain academic areas. Also, I would like to continue the process of trying to uncover how homework can be differentiated through the implementation of a classroom website.

Although the website will be in place for my primary means of long term communication, I will still send home short newsletters reminding parents of the website and only telling the most crucial of news in case someone falls behind in checking the website. Through this inquiry, I have found that Flores was correct in saying that, “Parent involvement means family involvement; parents do not have to come to school to be involved” (2001, pg. 8).

## **APPENDIX**

- A: Letter Home to Parents**
- B: Parent Survey 1**
- C: Homework Letter 1**
- D: Student Survey 1**
- E: Student Comment 1**
- F: Extra Homework 1 and Results**
- G: Parent Survey 2**
- H: Student Survey 2**
- I: Parent Response 1**
- J: Website Support Access 1 and Results**
- K: Student Work Posted 1 and Results**
- L: Evidence of the Classroom Website**
- M: Parent Survey 1 Results**
- N: Homework Letter 1 Results**
- O: Student Survey 1 Results**
- P: Parent Survey 2 Results**
- Q: Student Survey 2 Results**
- R: Inquiry Brief**
- S: Annotated Bibliography**

### **Appendix A: Letter Home to Parents**

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Dear Parents,

One of the roles of being a PDS intern is to complete an Inquiry Project. The Inquiry Project provides an opportunity for interns to create questions or “wonderings” which will, in turn, help interns gain new understandings, analyze data and create changes to better his/her teaching practices and classroom atmosphere. I have chosen to focus my Inquiry Project on how teachers can effectively communicate with parents.

Please fill out this survey to help me understand how you, as parents, feel about our communication from our classroom. This survey, as well as others, will help me better understand how technology affects parent/teacher/student relationships. This survey should only take a few moments of your valuable time and I appreciate your participation in this data collection. If you have any questions or additional comments/suggestions please feel free to contact me via phone or email. All surveys will remain anonymous.

Thank you in advance!

Miss Golding  
Meg32@scasd.org  
724-825-1025

**Appendix B: Parent Survey 1**

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Directions: Please circle the response that best fits your answer and return the survey by Thursday, March 6th.

**Do you read the classroom newsletters?**

Yes                      No

**Do you find the classroom newsletter to be helpful?**

Yes                      No

**Does the newsletter provide enough information pertaining to the events in the classroom?**

Not at all      Rarely                      Sometimes      Frequently

**Do you feel connected to the events in your son or daughter's classroom?**

Not at all      Rarely                      Sometimes      Frequently

**Does the classroom newsletter help initiate conversation with your child?**

Not at all      Rarely                      Sometimes      Frequently

**Is there anything that you feel would be helpful to add or elaborate on within the newsletter?**

**Are you able to access the Internet from a home computer?**

Yes                      No

**Would you be likely to visit a classroom website for more frequent communication?**

Yes                      No

**Would it be helpful to have access to a link on the website that provides homework assistance?**

Not at all      Rarely                      Sometimes      Frequently

**Is there anything that you feel would be helpful to provide on a classroom webpage?**

**Any additional comments or questions:**

## Appendix C: Homework Letter 1

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Dear Parents,

Our homework for tonight is a little different and might require some assistance. Miss Golding is currently updating our classroom website and has uploaded some links that you and your child might enjoy. The students have been exposed to this activity already today so hopefully they will be able to do most of it on their own. On Thursday, the students will be completing another timed addition math test so this activity should provide additional practice and could improve scores in time or accuracy. Please follow the steps below and spend some time practicing addition facts. There is a slip for parents to complete regarding this activity. Thanks!!

Mrs. Cowan and Miss Golding

1. Open your Internet browser to the Ferguson Township Homepage  
<http://www.scasd.org/fergusontownship/site/default.asp>
2. Please click the “Staff” link on the tool bar and select “Cowan, Cindy, 2nd Grade” from the list.
3. At this point, you should see the following screen:



4. Click the link titled “Helpful Links”.
5. A list of several links should appear. Please select the first link titled “Math Playground” from the list.

### Math Playground

<http://www.mathplayground.com/index.html>

6. The website looks like the picture below on the right. The activity we would like you to try for homework is pictured on the left called “Just the Facts”.



## Appendix D: Student Survey 1

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Student Survey #1

3/20/08

KEY:  =YES  =NO
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1. Did you enjoy having your homework on the computer last night?



2. Did you look at any other links on the classroom homepage?



3. Would you like to write or share your projects on the webpage?



4. Would you work harder if you knew that your project would appear online for others to see?



5. Do you feel comfortable using a computer?



6. Do your parents normally help you with your homework?



7. Were you able to complete the homework on your own last night?



8. Do you think your parents would go to the computer to see your work?



**Appendix E: Student Comment 1**

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April 4, 2008

- "I shared the website with my cousin last night. It was so cool and my favorite part was reading about the teachers." (Morning Routine)

**Appendix F: Extra Homework 1 and Results**

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April 7, 2008

Student	Extra Dinosaur Homework (Website Activity) 4/7
1	
2	X
3	
4	X
5	X
6	X
7	X
8	
9	
10	X
11	X
12	X
13	X
14	X
15	
16	X
17	X
18	
19	
20	
21	X
22	X
Results	14/22- 64%

## Appendix G: Parent Survey 2

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Dear Parents,

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the surveys that have been sent home. The feedback I'm getting is so helpful in understanding how you, as parents, feel about communication. Over the past weeks, I have tried to incorporate the suggestions that you offered in the first survey. Your feedback is directly related to the items and information posted on the website. One of my goals was to see if I could get students more involved in the communication process. In posting pictures and student work, I've heard more excitement toward the website. Your child has volunteered his or her time to be part of the site. All feedback is helpful, so if your child has told you something about the website, please pass it along.

Thanks for your time and support!  
Miss Golding

1. Have you visited the classroom website in the last week?

No                      Yes

2. How often do you check the website?

Not often              once a week              2-3 times a week              daily

3. Do you feel more connected to your son or daughter's classroom experience since the updated website?

Not at all              Rarely                      Sometimes              Frequently

4. Has your son or daughter commented about the website? If yes and you would be willing to share these comments, please do.

No                      Yes

Comments:

5. What do you find most helpful or beneficial to you? (ex: math help, the evidence of student work, news and announcements...)

6. What is the least helpful aspect of the website?

7. Does the classroom website help initiate conversation with your child? (If possible be specific.)

Not at all   Rarely                      Sometimes                      Frequently

8. Is there anything else that you would like to see added to our classroom page?

9. After having the website available to you for a few weeks now, would you prefer having a hardcopy newsletter or the use of the website? Explain.

Hardcopy newsletter

Website

10. Has your son or daughter explored any of the links provided on the classroom website for extra practice? (If possible be specific.)

Not at all   Rarely                      Sometimes                      Frequently

Any additional comments:

## Appendix H: Student Survey 2

Student Survey #2

4/8/08

KEY:  =YES  =NO
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1. Have you visited the classroom website from home?



2. Do you visit the website more than once a week?



3. Have you created something for the website?



4. If you have created something for the website, have you checked to see if it was posted?



5. Have you told others (parents, friends) to visit our website?



6. Have you used any of the classroom links offered on the website from home?



7. Do you enjoy looking at the website?



8. Is there anything that you would like to see on the website?

9. What is your favorite part of the website?

\_\_\_ About the teacher

\_\_\_ Student work

\_\_\_ Picture slideshow

\_\_\_ Links

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Any additional comments?

## **Appendix I: Parent Response 1**

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Date: April 9, 2008 1:24:04 AM EDT

To: meg5013@psu.edu

Subject: Classroom Website

Hi Miss Golding,

I've completed the survey XXXX brought home about the classroom website. I wrote a note, but my handwriting is awfully messy so I just wanted to reiterate my comments. For some reason, I didn't realize all of the great things you've been doing with the classroom website. I completed your initial survey and was very excited about your inquiry. Especially because I was so disappointed that the classroom website was non-existent before you did something with it. I answered your current survey truthfully but want to make sure I tell you that had I known the site was so great and updated regularly and so forth, my answers would be different. (I tried to make additional comments next to each answer to reflect that.) THANKS for all of the work you are putting into the website. When you have a child that doesn't share much about her day, it is a great way to take a look at what's happening myself and give me something in which to start a conversation. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

On a personal note, since you are so interested in the classroom website, and I'm sure technology in general, check out my classroom's podcast newsletters. Every month I have a new group of 5 students report what's been happening in our classroom. They're great to watch and my students' parents love them. Maybe you could do an end of the year podcast for the website with the whole class?!?! I would love to send some of my 6th graders to XXXX's 2nd grade classroom to help- what fun! I have subscribed to them so they are automatically delivered to my iTunes and then synced to my iPod Touch. My students especially love watching themselves on that! Here's the [link](#). Enjoy!  
:) XXXX XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXX's Mom

## Appendix J: Website Support Access 1 and Results

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Student	Website Spelling Word Access (April 11, 2008)
1	
2	
3	
4	X
5	X
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	X
13	
14	X
15	
16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
Results	4/22- 18%

**Appendix K: Student Work Posted 1 and Results**

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Recorded April 11, 2008

Student	Student Work Posted on Website	Displayed Pride in Work by Asking for Real Spelling and Editing Work
1		
2		
3	X	
4	X	X
5	X X	X X
6		
7	X	
8		
9	X	X
10		
11		
12	X	X
13		
14	X	X
15	X	X
16		
17	X	X
18	X	
19	X	X
20	X	X
21	X	X
22	X	X
<b>Results</b>	<b>14/22- 64%</b>	<b>11/14 (posted work)- 79%</b>

\* Two Symbols (X X): Two pieces of work but not part of percentage total

## Appendix L: Evidence of the Classroom Website

L. 1.

L. 2.

L.3.

**SPECIAL SCHEDULE**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
 P.E. (9:40 - 10:20) *Remember your gym shoes!	 LIBRARY (2:00 - 2:40) *Remember your books!	 NO SPECIAL	 ART (1:50 - 2:30)	 MUSIC (11:40 - 12:20)

L.4.

L.5.

### Read Aloud

Miss Golding is finishing up the third tale of "My Father's Dragon" by Ruth Stiles Gannett. We have enjoyed hearing about the adventures of Elmer Elevator and Boris the dragon. Boris returned Elmer to his home in Nevergreen City safely, and was looking forward to returning to his family in Blueland. The flight to Blueland was long and Boris needed to stop and rest in a safe area. Even though the farmer was sure he saw a blue demon, Boris was able to hide and safely flew the rest of the way to Blueland. Once there, he discovered that people have captured his family inside their cave and were planning their attack. Boris overhears the conversation and heads back to Nevergreen City to get help from Elmer. Will he make it back in time to save his family? Ask your child for daily updates as we finish up the book this week.

**Wondering What's Next...** Mrs. Cowan will be reading "Andy Buckram's Tin Men" by Carol Ryrie Brink starting Wednesday, April 9. Please read along if you would like and check the website for chapter updates.

L.6.

### What Writing Looks Like in Room 21....

Once there was a girl named Ming,  
 Who liked to play pong ping,  
 She fell down a well.  
 And said come Dell.  
 And that was the end of Ming.

By Rachel C. and Alexis

Limerick by Rachel C. and Alexis



L. 7.

## Story Writing...

**Can I have a stegosaurus mom? If I had A stegosaurus...**

I would ride it into stores. **No! We would get sued.**

It would scare the president. **No! We would get arrested.**

It would rack the leaves for us. **No, no, no, mom yelled.**

I guess I will never have a stegosaurus.

*By Jason Z.*



"Can I Have A Stegosaurus Mom" by Jason Z.

### The Time Machine

One day my Mom took me to a science museum. I walked around a while, then suddenly my eyes caught sight of something, it was a time Machine. I walked over, and without thinking I hopped in. When the door opened, I was in the middle of the Cretaceous Period. And there in front of me was a baby Brachiosaurus. The baby was the size of a truck. Suddenly it started talking. It said its name is Eddie. He said to come down he wasn't going to eat me. It was getting late. But I couldn't go home because the time machine was broken.

L. 9

Here are our current spelling words. Please practice these words at home and don't forget to review our Forever Spellers list below. The Spelling Review will be Friday, April 11.

## Spelling Words

called  
just  
where  
most  
know

## Bonus Words

opinion  
conservation  
recycling

### Forever Spellers

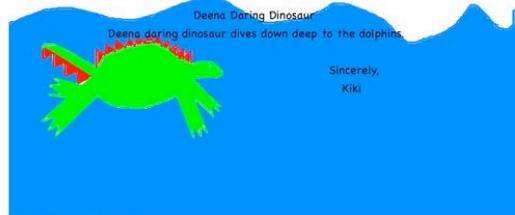
all	will	into	its	way
what	each	has	people	find

L. 8.

## Friendly Letter Writing...

March 28, 2008

Dear Jack Prelutsky,  
Thank you Jack Prelutsky for inspiring me to write alliterations and poems. I love writing now. I do some poems too but I like alliterations better. Do you like alliterations better than poems? One of my favorite books of yours is: My Parents Think I'm Sleeping. My friend and I made a book of alliterations. Here is one of our alliterations:



Friendly Letter by Kiki

March 28, 2008

Dear Dr. Ryan,

I am writing a letter to you because our class will write letters to you. Thank you for coming to our school and showing us everything. We enjoyed you with us and teaching us all of the things you know. I want to really know about the prehistoric lizard. Did it really have wings?

L. 10

### Our Classroom Update:

As you could tell from the papers your child brought home last week and one of our bonus words, we were learning about symmetry last week. We practiced creating symmetrical images using Kid Pix software and reflecting around a horizontal, vertical, and diagonal line. Students were looking for symmetry in objects around the room and trying to find where the line of symmetry, or line of reflection, would be placed. We introduced the idea that objects can have more than one line of symmetry and we will continue to practice this skill at various points throughout the remainder of the year as a review.

Although our new math unit has begun, you and your child can continue to look for shapes and symmetrical objects around your house. In addition to symmetry, your child has become an expert at rectangular arrays. He or she should be able to look at a rectangle and describe it using in terms of rows and columns. Within those arrays, your child should be able to explain how the array could be made into an equal half, third or fourth if possible. This provided students will begin understanding of fractions. The attributes of shapes, or properties of shapes, will continue to be practiced in room 21. Like everything else, we will continue to do our best within the classroom to provide your child with the skills needed to be a life long mathematical thinker.



## L.11.

Addition or Combining Problems:

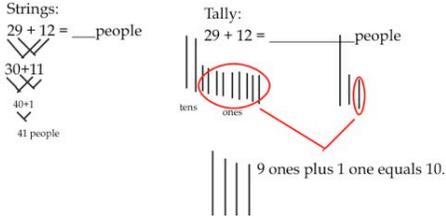
- Draw a picture
- Start with the larger number and count on the smaller number
- Use cubes to count out each number before adding them together
- Add on using the 100 chart
- Strings
- Vertical Method

$$\begin{array}{r} 22 \\ + 8 \\ \hline 30 \end{array}$$

- Use a tally (Long tally for a ten and smaller tally for ones)

Combining Story Problems

A class of 29 students is going on a trip to the science museum. There are 12 adults going with them. How many people are going on the trip?



## L.13.

### Student Paleontologist Report:

After the long process of collecting letters from Peggy Paleontologist and sorting through the evidence she gave us, we think we have determined our mystery dinosaur. Before we tell you our dinosaur species, here are the facts that we used to help us...

Our Dinosaur facts:

- Found in Montana
- lived during the Cretaceous period, about 110 to 100 million years ago
- Carnivore
- 10 feet long
- 5 feet tall
- bipedal dinosaur (walked on two legs)
- footprint is 1 foot long
- 5- inch curved claw on its second toe
- had a stride of 20 feet so it must have been running
- stereovision

After sorting through the evidence we believe our dinosaur is DEINONYCHUS... If you still aren't convinced, here is what our student paleontologist have reported.



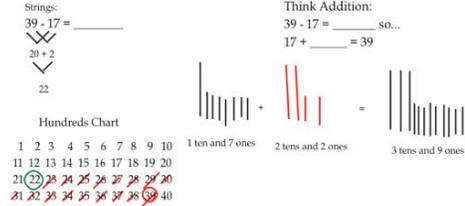
## L.12.

Separating Strategies

- Count Backwards
- Fingers
- Round to the nearest ten. (take care of extras.)
- Count on
- Vertical
- Tallies
- 100 Chart
- Strings

Separating Story Problems

Close your eyes and imagine what is happening in this story problem: Yesterday at the park, I counted 39 pigeons. When a big dog walked by, 17 of them flew away. How many were still there?



## L.14.

### Wonderful World of Nature

Dear Parents,

We will be starting our new unit on Monday, April 14th. In this unit, students will gain skills in observing, classifying, comparing and recording information about plants and animals in their natural environments.

In the plant unit, students will be exposed to the process to the properties of living and non-living things. They will gain an appreciation of how plant life is influenced by changes in the environment. Students will learn that even though plants grow all over the world, not all of them are suited to every environment or habitat. In addition, students will study how people use plants in their daily lives.

In the animal unit, students will learn that these creatures play an important role in maintaining the balance of nature. Students will explore the similarities and differences among mammals, birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles. Through this unit, students will learn about basic needs (food, water, protection, shelter) that all animals have in their daily lives.

We will also be celebrating Earth Day by looking into ways that we can help protect the earth. I have included a poem that we will be sharing in class the week of April 14. Please feel free to talk about things that your family does, or can do, to help protect the earth. If you have any books that you would like to share related to this unit please feel free to send them in with your son or daughter.

L.15.

L.16

## Around the Room



## Shaver's Creek Field Trip



## Mrs. Cowan, 2nd Grade

Home > Staff > Mrs. Cowan, 2nd Grade

### Who Invited Pests???

What are pests? Visit this link to find out cool facts about pests and play some games.

<http://www.pestworldforkids.org/home.asp>

### Fact and Opinion

In writers workshop, we will be looking at statements and deciding if the statement is a fact or an opinion. This website will provide additional practice on this often challenging concept.

<http://pbskids.org/arthur/games/factsopinions/>

### Fact and Opinion 2

<http://www.quia.com/q/24723.html>

### Fact and Opinion 3

<http://www.quia.com/pop/12709.html>

### Math Playground

This website is full of great games that will help your child as a math thinker. Select activities that will be best for

## Appendix M: Parent Survey 1 Results

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Directions: Please circle the response that best fits your answer and return the survey by Thursday, March 6th.

**Do you read the classroom newsletters?**

Yes (17/17- 100%)                      No (0/17- 0%)

**Do you find the classroom newsletter to be helpful?**

Yes (17/17- 100%)                      No (0/17- 0%)

**Does the newsletter provide enough information pertaining to the events in the classroom?**

Not at all                      Rarely                      Sometimes                      Frequently  
(0/17- 0%)                      (0/17- 0%)                      (2/17- 12%)                      (15/17- 88%)

Comment: "I miss going into her classroom"

**Do you feel connected to the events in your son or daughter's classroom?**

Not at all                      Rarely                      ↔                      Sometimes                      ↔                      Frequently  
(0/15-0%)                      (2/15-13%)                      (1/15-7%)                      (7/15-46%)                      (1/15-7%)                      (4/15-27%)

**Does the classroom newsletter help initiate conversation with your child?**

Not at all                      Rarely                      Sometimes                      Frequently  
(0/17- 0%)                      (0/17- 0%)                      (8/17- 47%)                      (9/17- 53%)

**Is there anything that you feel would be helpful to add or elaborate on within the newsletter?**

Comments:

- "Not Really"
- "The homework assignments, in case it's misplaced, maybe extra credit and practice assignments."
- "The newsletter has been very informative and helpful! In addition to curriculum information, it would be nice to hear about day to day events and things that are developing socially in class."
- "The newsletter could be emailed- I think it would be as useful and more cost efficient."
- "More frequent"
- "Perhaps a heads-up on the upcoming read aloud books so parents can read along and discuss."
- "Upcoming plans in the classroom. Not just what you already did, but what is next too."

**Are you able to access the Internet from a home computer?**

Yes (17/17- 100%)

NO (0/17- 0%)

**Would you be likely to visit a classroom website for more frequent communication?**

Yes (15/17- 88%)

No (1/17- 6%)

Maybe (1/17- 6%)

Comment: "Especially if it pertains to the current units."

**Would it be helpful to have access to a link on the website that provides homework assistance?**

Not at all  
(3/16- 19%)

Rarely  
(3/16- 19%)

Sometimes  
(7/16- 19%)

Frequently  
(3/16- 19%)

Comments:

- "Maybe at a higher grade, but not in second grade."
- "Not at this grade level"

**Is there anything that you feel would be helpful to provide on a classroom webpage?**

Comments:

- "Information on the current unit; areas being discussed; suggestions of supplemental activities; suggestions for additional teaching methods (math)."
- "Daily schedules, helpful hints for homework"
- "Field Trips, PTO Events, Special Events"
- "Pictures of activities in the classroom- or of centers"
- "What kids liked and disliked thru the day"
- "Pictures of classroom activities, updates on all lessons and/or group activities. Links to websites that could be helpful to kids."
- "Overview of upcoming activities in class."

**Any additional comments or questions:**

- "The best parent-teacher-student communicating occurs in the classroom! Providing an occasional opportunity for that to happen is ideal."
- "Loving the tour of America- really opened up a world for him and lots of places to visit. Loving dinosaurs- he teaches Dad and I something new everyday. Thank you!"

## Appendix N: Homework Letter 1 Results

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### **Please submit:**

1. Was your child able to complete this assignment?

Yes (13/16 – 81%)

No (3/16 – 19%)

2. Do you feel the activity was beneficial for your child?

Yes (16/16 – 100%)

No (0/16 – 0%)

#### **Comment:**

- “+ + listed next to answer”

3. Would you be interested in having more activities like this for homework?

Yes (16/16 – 100%)

No (0/16 – 0%)

#### **Comment:**

- “+ + listed next to answer”

### **Any additional comments:**

- “He enjoyed doing homework on the computer.”
- “XXXXXX loved it!”
- “XXXXXX was able to log-in and figure out the directions without my help.”
- “XXXXX enjoyed this activity and this website. It might be helpful to include a log sheet so that she could record her scores.”
- “We enjoyed doing the games together and I think it made the assignment fun!”
- “This is great! We did addition and subtraction from 0 – 20. I love the new classroom website- we will refer to it regularly- thanks! Well Done!!”
- “The timed cards wouldn’t show on the screen, but we found a few other things to do. It looked like a neat site.”
- “He wanted to do more games but we couldn’t find anymore that seemed in his ability range. He did play some with geometric shapes and patterns and some puzzle games- then dinosaur stuff, etc. ... Loved it!”
- “She was very distracted by the clock and trying to find the numbers on the keyboard. Her first attempt disappointed her to tears (I think she had higher expectations after practicing in class!) So we left her alone and explained she could try over and over. Her highest score was 9/1 and she was pretty proud!”
- “It is very helpful to me to see exactly what types of things she is doing in the classroom and (in this case) provide an accessible substitute for her.”

## Appendix O: Student Survey 1 Results

Student Survey #1

3/20/08



1. Did you enjoy having your homework on the computer last night?



(21/22- 95%) (1/22- 5%)

2. Did you look at any other links on the classroom homepage?



(10/22- 45%) (12/22- 55%)

3. Would you like to write or share your projects on the webpage?



(17/22- 77%) (5/22- 23%)

4. Would you work harder if you knew that your project would appear online for others to see?



(21/15- 95%) (1/15- 5%)

5. Do you feel comfortable using a computer?



(22/22- 100%) (0/22- 0%)

6. Do your parents normally help you with your homework?



(13/22- 59%) (9/22- 41%)

7. Were you able to complete the homework on your own last night?



(13/18- 72%) (5/18- 28%)

8. Do you think your parents would go to the computer to see your work?



(22/22- 100%) (0/22- 0%)

Comments: "add pictures"

## Appendix P: Parent Survey 2 Results

---

1. Have you visited the classroom website in the last week?

No (4/12- 33%)

Yes (8/12- 67%)

Comments:

- "But I will now!"

2. How often do you check the website?

Not often

once a week

2-3 times a week

daily

(6/12- 50%)

(4/12- 33%)

(1/12- 8%)

(1/12- 8%)

Comments:

- "Will be more now!"

- "I would daily if homework was posted. Otherwise, maybe weekly."

3. Do you feel more connected to your son or daughter's classroom experience since the updated website?

Not at all

rarely

Sometimes

Frequently

(2/12- 16%)

(0/12- 0%)

(6/12- 50%)

(4/12- 33%)

4. Has your son or daughter commented about the website? If yes and you would be willing to share these comments, please do.

No (4/12- 33%)

Yes (8/12- 67%)

Comments:

- "She can't wait to look at it and share with us."

- "He was very excited to share all the pictures with me and his dad!"

- "Just genuine excitement"

- "Fact and Opinion Level 1 is too predictable/ likes upper level"

- "Likes to explore the dinosaur links and math games."

- "XXXX is very excited when homework requires her to access something from her classroom's website. She also just likes to look at it. She loves it!"

- "She told me about the things that are on it- asked me to check it and she wanted to check it too."

- "Tricked me about having homework on Friday so he could go to the dinosaur link!"

5. What do you find most helpful or beneficial to you? (ex: math help, the evidence of student work, news and announcements...)

3-pictures

1-links

6-student work

4- news and announcements

1- spelling words

2- math

Comments:

- “The math help is great- he loves playing the game. The pictures during the day generated a lot of conversation between us.”
- “Pictures of field trip etc. (good conversation starter, prompts XXXXXXXX to share about who his friends are in the class.”
- “XXXXXX was very excited to show us her story on the website.”
- “We will start using this as a tool now.”
- “I love the pictures!”
- “I love the student work!”

**6. What is the least helpful aspect of the website?**

1- “Special schedule because I know it!”

Comments:

- “I don’t think any of it isn’t helpful, just different parent/kids prefer different aspects of it.”
- “Nothing, it’s all great!”

**7. Does the classroom website help initiate conversation with your child? (If possible be specific.)**

Not at all (2/9- 22%)	Rarely (0/9- 0%)	Sometimes (2/9- 22%)	Frequently (5/9- 56%)
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Comments:

- “She shares about the work she has done.”
- “He loves to explain every picture!”
- “XXXXXXXX was really excited looking together at the pictures. (I heard extra tidbits that I didn’t hear the day of the field trip.”
- “Only because I didn’t know, it will now!”
- I get more elaboration on all things from the site.”
- The one time we were on it together, it did.”

**8. Is there anything else that you would like to see added to our classroom page?**

- “More pictures of kids in the classroom.”
- “About different math problems you did as a group.”
- “Homework? I love the spelling words on it!”
- “I know I am over the top with this- but, if there was a daily update, I would check it everyday! Not only for just wanting to know, but it helps with communicating about daily life with my daughter when you know about what happened during the day.”

**9. After having the website available to you for a few weeks now, would you prefer having a hardcopy newsletter or the use of the website? Explain.**

Hardcopy newsletter  
(2/12- 16%)

Website  
(10/12- 83%)

### Comments:

- "Less paper to deal with."
- "Less paper! (Although I may need a reminder email to check the website!)"
- "Maybe a small reminder to go there and get in the habit, or part of a homework assignment is to go there to find a clue or keyword or pick something- that may train us!"
- "Once I get into the habit of checking that site weekly, it is easier for me to see that and be ready to comprehend/absorb what I need to when the time is right."
- "I can check in more frequently."
- "Website, and I am a die-hard paper fan!! There's just so much to explore and it can be so much more current!"
- "Save trees."
- "A letter from the teacher is always nice... but website."

10. Has your son or daughter explored any of the links provided on the classroom website for extra practice? (If possible be specific.)

Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently
(2/10- 20%)	(2/10- 20%)	(4/10- 40%)	(2/10- 20%)

### Comments:

- "Dinosaurs, all of them."
- "He loves to check out all the links!"
- "Math"
- "Math links"
- "The dinosaurs"
- "Rarely → Frequently But only because we just started to go on the website. I'm sure he will when we make it more of a regular thing."
- "She would do more if I gave her my laptop more often."
- "Yes! This is an awesome supplement. Helpful and fun all at the same time."

### Any additional comments:

- "We haven't really gotten in the habit of checking the site this year but we appreciate the chance to access information about the class online."
- "Keep up the good work!"
- "Love it! Looking forward to checking it out more myself and with XXXXXXXX! I'm sure it's a lot of work to put together/maintain. Thank you so much. It's a great tool to stay connected!!"
- "I just spent time of the site tonight and it's FABULOUS!! If I had known about the site, I would answer the questions on the survey very differently."
- "I think the website is fantastic, XXXXX is proud of her classroom page and it is a very helpful tool for me, aside from a few boastful reasons too. You have done such a nice job with the website. Thank you!"
- "I didn't realize there was so much on there now! It is great! I love it. It is neat to see what everyone is doing in the room and on fieldtrips. Thanks. I also love to learn more about the teachers- just interesting to know about your families and your interests. It makes you "real"- that is a great thing!"

## Appendix Q: Student Survey 2 Results

Student Survey #2

4/8/08



1. Have you visited the classroom website from home?



(16/22- 73%)



(6/22- 27%)

2. Do you visit the website more than once a week?



(5/22- 23%)



(17/22- 77%)

3. Have you created something for the website?



(15/22- 68%)



(7/22- 32%)

4. If you have created something for the website, have you checked to see if it was posted?



(6/15- 40%)



(9/15- 60%)

5. Have you told others (parents, friends) to visit our website?



(13/22- 59%)



(9/22- 41%)

6. Have you used any of the classroom links offered on the website from home?



(16/22- 73%)



(6/22- 27%)

7. Do you enjoy looking at the website?



(20/22- 91%)



(2/22- 9%)

8. Is there anything that you would like to see on the website?

- "Haiku"
- "A slideshow about our classroom"
- "Routine"
- "Dinosaur Websites"

- "Yes, I want to see the slideshow."

9. What is your favorite part of the website?

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| ___ About the teacher (2/20- 10%)  | -Window into the Classroom (1/20- 5%)          |
| ___ Student work (1/20- 5%)        | -About the Teacher and Student Work (1/20- 5%) |
| ___ Picture slideshow (2/20-10%)   | -Dinosaur Website (1/20- 5%)                   |
| ___ Links (7/20-35%)               | -About teacher, slide show and links (1/20-5%) |
| ___ Other: more writing (1/20- 5%) | - All (2/20-10%)                               |

10. Any additional comments?

- "I had so much fun on the website!"
- "Fun!"
- "It's Awesome!"
- "I really like the dinosaur part of the website."
- "The website is just right."

**CONTEXT**

I will be conducting my Inquiry Project in State College Area School Districts' Ferguson Township Elementary School. This project explores the effectiveness of parent teacher communication process via the Internet.

Our class is comprised of twenty-two unique second grade students. There are twelve females and ten males in our class, two of whom are new to the school district and the state of Pennsylvania. One student is involved in the learning support program and reading response to intervention at a first grade level. Three additional students attend reading response to intervention, but do so at a second grade level so they attend at different times. Depending on the concept of the math lesson, we have about half of the class who can work without assistance and half who need additional guidance. Overall, the uniqueness of the individual needs and personalities of the class make our classroom community more diverse as learners. Inside our classroom, instruction can be differentiated easily to better accommodate a student when needed but, parents very often do not see the differentiation.

**RATIONALE**

As a pre-service teacher, I am curious about increasing parent participation and making them feel part of the classroom and their child's education. I fear the judgments and criticisms that are typical of first year teachers. I know that if I can get parents trust and support, my classroom dynamic will be all the better. This being said, I intend to conduct my inquiry on finding the most effective way to communicate with parents. In

addition, I intend to survey the degree to which parents utilize the communication that is available.

My mentor currently sends home a biweekly Friday newsletter that gives parents a sense of what's been happening in our classroom. The fact that the newsletter is after the fact though, keeps parents delayed in the information that could be helpful while their student is experiencing these events. The newsletter provides an overview of the last two weeks in school, samples of student work or mathematical thinking, and questions that parents could ask their child. Email is another form of communication in our classroom as well as the occasional note from a parent. The families that are new to our school district don't seem to be having difficulty but other parents has expressed some concerns about the content of the class.

At parent teacher conferences in the fall, several parents expressed concerns about the Math Investigations program that is used in the district. This particular program creates a lot of apprehension because it is far from the traditional math program that generations before had been taught. My mentor has always welcomed parents to observe in our classroom but volunteers are only requested on field trips and holiday celebrations. Because parents are not regularly present in our classroom, I think the website will provide a window into our classroom through photos and updates.

My mentor teacher has such a well-respected reputation with the school district that no one would ever question her work ethic, but this isn't true for those just beginning their teaching career. I know that daily updates to a website can be time consuming and time is not always something new teachers have to spare. Through this inquiry, I hope to

see to what degree a website has to be developed for parents to utilize it to its fullest potential.

### MAIN WONDERING

What is the most effective way of providing ongoing parent communication and what do they want to see?

### SUB-QUESTIONS

- How often do parents read the information that gets sent home?
- What information would parents want to see more or less of on the classroom website or newsletter?
- What makes a parent and/or student more likely to visit the classroom page?
- How can a webpage increase homework assistance and differentiation?
- Is there a relationship between the parents who frequently visit the webpage and the students who struggle or excel in certain areas of school?
- What is the most beneficial to a parent, a classroom newsletter or an updated website? Why?

### TIMELINE

February 16, 2008

- Gather books, journal articles, websites and other resources for the annotated bibliography
- Gain the ability to be a site manager of Cindy's site

February 23, 2008

- Meet with Helen Quinn to talk about the rules and responsibilities of updating a webpage
- Training with Helen on the computer software

February 26, 2008

- Update Inquiry draft and submit to PDA
- Generate a parent survey and student survey

March 1, 2008

- Send home the first survey and gather the data once returned

- Update the website and create the normal “Meet the Parent” links and school reminder links
- March 8, 2008
- Survey parents to see if they have visited the webpage
  - Provide homework that has students working on their own home computer
- March 15, 2008
- Introduce Flat Stanley to the website
  - Have students write for the website
  - Send the survey home to see if there have been any changes since these additions were made
- March 22, 2008
- Survey students to see if they will do their homework via the Internet
  - Call random homes to find out how helpful or not the web has been
- March 29, 2008
- Survey students to see if they enjoy the classroom website and how often they visit the website.
  - Add pictures to the website to see if students or parents visit more often
- April 5, 2008
- Survey to see parents would like to see anything in additional to what is already covered on the website covered.
  - Begin to write the paper and gather data
- April 12, 2008
- Finish the paper
  - Begin to prepare for my presentation
- April 26, 2008
- Present my inquiry project to peers

### DATA COLLECTION IDEAS

I plan to use a wide variety of both parent and student surveys during my inquiry. I need to first find out how accessible computers and the Internet is in the homes of my students. I will monitor the assignments that get returned to school to see if the homework help provided on the website is making a difference in the quality of work returned. I plan to view and talk with other teachers who currently have an active classroom website for tips and ideas for improvements. I intend to complete phone interviews with a few parents of random selection from our classroom.

## **Appendix S: Annotated Bibliography**

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Bauch, Jerold P. "Applications of technology to linking schools, families, and students." (1998): 1-10. ERIC System. Penn State University. 11 Feb. 2008.

"Parent involvement is considered one of the most powerful means for improving schools and for increasing the satisfaction of parents and the community" (225). This article is not the best in providing the most recent technology information but I was amazed by how available this technology was ten years ago. I couldn't believe that for as long as we have been aware of this technology, still not every teacher is taking advantage of it. Another interesting example that this article used, was in comparing how in school, teachers could be having their students communicate across the world with other students about their school day but the teacher often forgets to update the parents who live only a few streets away. This article won't be the most helpful in gathering data or comparing research but it does provide some powerful quotes.

Brenda Power (1999, October). Strengthen your parent connection. *Instructor* (1999), 109 (3), 30-31. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from Education Module database. (Document ID: 989446901).

This short informative piece determined that newsletters are the key to effective parent-teacher communication. The author recommends that in the busy hustle and bustle of the school day teachers often tend to slip on their newsletters as the year goes on and the solution to this problem is teamwork. Brenda recommends teaming up with other teachers at your grade level and taking sections of the newsletter to share the responsibility. She is convinced that less is more when it comes to newsletters and it's not beneficial to provide student work examples. There is a section in the article providing examples of newsletter topics.

I plan to use this in finding the balance between parent communication through the newsletter and the Internet. I would agree that a short and sweet newsletter is most likely to be read, but I argue that some parents will still want to know more. I hope that this might help me find a balance between providing both avenues for communication. I plan to shorten Cindy's newsletters once the website provides more information. In my opinion, this will ensure that the majority of parents will at least be receiving the most important information.

Cerra, C., M.Ed., & Jacoby, R., Ed.D. (2006). *Homework talk! The art of effective communication about your child's homework*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book does a wonderful job of providing examples of meaningful homework assignments with clearly written expectations for parents. It is designed in a question-answer format but also provides parent homework surveys and helpful tips for teachers. It provides organizational tips that would be helpful in gaining student responsibility in the upper elementary grades.

This will provide the parents prospective of various homework assignments. I plan to post these tips and suggestions on the website to help parents who may struggle with getting their child focused during homework. I might also use the survey about how difficult or simply the current homework level is for their child. I wonder how our homework could be better differentiated to meet individual's needs.

Darby Tobolka (2006). Connecting teachers and parents through the internet. *Tech Directions*, 66(5), 24-26. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 1256051501).

Darby's research states that, "parental involvement was not only positively correlated to academic success, but also took precedence over household income as a determiner of student success." Another quote that can be used from this article is, "The result of my action research project suggest that electronic communication improves students' interest in their coursework and provides their parents with more knowledge about daily class activities." This teacher underwent the same process that I am about to start. After getting tired of sending note after note home to parents who seem to never receive them, this teacher decided to try something new. Instead, she created a user-friendly web page and sent out weekly e-mails.

Although I am unsure of what grade this action research project took place in, the quotes will be very beneficial for my own project. I do not intend to send weekly personal e-mails home though and that was a major part of her research. This is a great source for ideas, but it neglects to provide the surveys or samples of the data collection.

Diffily, D., & Mossison, K. (Eds.). (1996). *Family-friendly communication for early childhood programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

"Parents and teachers can work together to ensure a rich environment that stimulates children's cognitive, motor, and social development both at home and at school" (31). Finding the time to fit every activity or lesson in to the school year is a difficult task. Often teachers have created ways to streamline their subject objectives in order to save time and meet the required standards. The same can be true with homework and parents. I'm not planning on sending lesson plans home for parents to teach but if you clearly communicate your expectations of a worksheet you send home, parents might be more likely to assist.

According to this book, many of the ideas I have for my inquiry project could be expanded upon with the ideas included in the text. Parents are looking for avenues into their child's school day because it increases the communication between parent and student. If the teacher helps in listing areas for conversation fewer "What happened at school today." "I don't know" conversations will exist. This book provides examples that I can use in deciding what and how to communicate with parents.

Flores, Jayne, and Pj Karr-Kidwell. "An internet web-site to enhance communication with school personnel and parents." (2001): 1-68. ERIC System. US Department of Education. 11 Feb. 2008.

Although this isn't an issue in my current school district that doesn't mean that the next school I work in won't fit this category. This article is changing the school dynamic by introducing a school wide web site to increase communication and answer common questions that parents might have. I seem to take for granted the fact that most schools have a district web page, a fairly nice one at that. This particular school did not prior to conducting this project. Included in the document are several pages of references and an appendix with images of the entire finished website.

The research provides many quotes that will be beneficial in writing and reporting on my own data. "An internet web-site allows administration to communicate with parents at home and work, along with being able a great source for communication between parent and teachers" (8). This will extend my inquiry to looking at a more district wide view of the importance of communicating through technology.

Guinane, M. (n.d.). "*www.EffectiveClassroomCommunication.com*" *The Key to Using Technology to create Strong Parent-Student-Teacher Communication* (Monograph). Retrieved February 7, 2008, from Central Pennsylvania Holmes Partnership Elementary Professional Development Schools Web site:  
[http://www.ed.psu.edu/pds/04teacher\\_inquiry/teacher\\_inquiry\\_2007.html](http://www.ed.psu.edu/pds/04teacher_inquiry/teacher_inquiry_2007.html)

Although we share the same first name, yearlong student teaching experience in 2nd grade and goal of promoting parent teacher communication through a classroom website, our inquiry direction is actually quite different. Molly Guinane was questioning how successful her teachers current website is in communicating with parents. She was interested in the amount of time that was spent on the daily updates compared to the amount that parents actually appreciate what the page has to offer. Molly's inquiry project will be beneficial in seeing the prospective of an active classroom website while I work to bring our webpage to life. Seeing that it is an entire inquiry paper, this will be an excellent resource in comparing her research with my own data and generating ideas for surveys questions.

After reading through her project and data collection, I became aware of one parents hesitation in providing photos and school locations on the website. One particular parent was concerned for her child's safety since the school location; room number and child's name could be linked to a photograph of that student. This viewpoint will be something that I will have to continue to remind myself as I think of other improvements for my site.

Harniss, M., Epstein, M., Bursuck, W., Nelson, J., & Jayanthi, M. (2001, July). Resolving homework-related communication problems: Recommendations of parents of children with and without. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 17(3), 205-225. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from Professional Development Collection database.

This article is about a national survey of parents of children with and without disabilities in hopes to gain an understanding on the parent-teacher communication process specifically related to homework. It goes on to detail the responsibility of the role of the parent, student and teacher. The parent is responsible for reminding the child to complete the homework. The student is responsible for transferring the homework from school to home and vice versa. The teacher is expected to clearly define expectations for students before they are sent home to complete their independent practice. The surveys showed that many parents, especially in parents with struggling students, say that the teacher communication often comes too late. The results said that communication is a result of a problem rather than an avenue for success. In addition, information is provided for the amount of time spent on homework and how parents often don't know how to help their child with homework because the teacher's expectations aren't clearly set.

I plan to use this article while conducting research for one of my sub-questions involving homework and the parents who are more likely to seek the communication resource. Will I find my lower achieving students appreciating more communication more than students who are meeting the 2nd grade benchmark? I think the connection to disabilities will help in comparing the data that's collected. Also, having one student in learning support means that this student spends a lot of her time out of the classroom during the day. This being said, the communication that goes home to all of the parents might not be specific enough for that child's needs.

Johnson, D. (2000, September). Teacher web pages that build parent partnerships. *Multimedia Schools*, 7(4), 48. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from Professional Development Collection database.

Johnson wrote this article from the perspective of a concerned parent who wasn't made aware of her son's struggle in school until it was too late. She was saying that the teacher has the advantage of seeing how twenty some other students handle a problem to be able to compare students achievement and parents often only see one student's work and don't know if it's meeting the grade level bench mark or not. This article provides four tips for designing a web page with a purpose. The four listed are to provide a general description of the classroom: to provide a general outline and timeline of the units covered, provide specific information about individual units an projects and provide real-time information about the progress of individual students. Like many other sources I found, this too is specific to students in the upper grades but she said that at the very least every teacher should have his or her contact information, class rules, and expectations, with a link to the building calendar. This is something that can be applied to any grade level.

Ken Bird (2006, February). How do you spell parental involvement? S-I-S. *T.H.E. Journal*, 33(7), 38-42. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from Education Module database. (Document ID: 989446901).

Bird takes a different spin on parent communication through the Internet. Using a web-based program called Student Information System, SIS, parents are able to log on and access the data on their student's attendance, grades, evaluations and general activities.

This new form of communication might be difficult to implement in the short time that I will be conducting my inquiry project; it is good to know where the technology is headed. This will hopefully prevent parents finding out about problems that students are having after it is too late to get help.

Knowing that this is the direction education is heading, it seems that being familiar with website development is now more important than ever. I will not be utilizing this in the primary grades seeing that students don't often receive grades or skip class but it prepares parents for the technology available for them as their students get older.

Marla Davenport, B J Eib. (2004, May) Linking home and school with technology. *Principal Leadership*, 4(9), 54-56. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from Education Module database. (Document ID: 637129181).

This short article provides an upper grade level approach to classroom websites. It says that students are the ones most common to not like the websites as they get older because they feel adults know too much of what happened that day at school. It also stated the importance of having communication in a variety of languages, which was something that I had neglected to consider. That isn't something that I wouldn't be able to take into account on a daily basis. I plan to use this resource as a supportive tool for reasons to go paperless. This article said that often papers and newsletters don't make it home to parents and it allows the school to save on paper, printing and copying costs.

Pritchard, A. (2007). *Effective teaching with internet technologies*. London: Paul Chapman.

Pritchard captured teachers who have been using technologies to improve their instruction practices. Included in this book, are several examples of teacher websites and teacher resources that could be linked to my classroom website. Although some of the focus is on teaching with technology, a few chapters provide very valuable information with photographical images to support visual learners.

Raese, R. (1997). *Internet.edu: A sourcebook for educators*. Arlington Heights, IL: IRS/SkyLight Training and Publishing.

This resource is set up in the question answer format and provides everything you would need to know about dealing with the Internet. Although a little outdated, it provides detailed instructions on how to create links and active classroom websites. It also provides lesson plan ideas for how teachers can incorporate technology in their own daily lessons.

I plan to only use this book as a resource when I am having difficulty getting links to work or creating an aspect of the web page. It wouldn't be something to read from page to page but to answer any questions when problems come up.