

August and September 2009

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome back to school! I am looking forward to getting to know each of your children and you!

Our Language Arts programs work to improve our students' writing skills. We will be following the Step Up to Writing procedures. We will begin with webs and outlines, working through drafts and editing to arrive at final drafts. We will also be reviewing grammar and sentence structure.

The vocabulary text for Language Arts is Vocabulary Workshop from Sadlier-Oxford. We will study each unit of 20 words for two weeks, with periodic reviews of prior units. We begin each unit on Monday, with a pre-test on the first Friday and a final test on the second Friday. Students are expected to make flash cards for each vocabulary word and use these cards in their studying. It is important for the vocabulary words to become part of each student's working vocabulary. Please help your favorite 6th, 7th, or 8th grader to pronounce and use the vocabulary words.

Our Literature program is based on novels and/or non fiction writings. We began the year by discussing and writing about each class' the assigned book: 6th grade read *The Black Pearl* and 7th grade read *Summer of My German Soldier*. Seventh Grade has now begun *Shabanu*, a contemporary story of a young Pakistani girl's life in the Cholistan Desert. Sixth Grade is beginning *A Bone from a Dry Sea*, parallel stories of two young girls, one is prehistoric and the other is contemporary.

Monthly Book Projects are assigned on the first day of each month. Each student is asked to select and read a specific type of book. In September, the students are asked to find a fiction book. When finished reading, a project is specified and due by the last class day of the month. All students are expected to keep their monthly book with them to read when they have finished other assignments. Please encourage your favorite student to select a book from the library. The variety of books to choose from at our public libraries is unbeatable!!!

Please mark a special date on your calendar: Wednesday, February 10. The middle school will be visiting the "Tutankamun and the Golden Age of the Pharos" at the de Young Museum and the Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco! It will be an exciting day; however we must arrive at school by 7:45 and will not return to Good Shepherd until 5:00. The Good Shepherd athletics schedules will plan around this trip, but please keep these times in mind while planning any outside commitments for your favorite 6th, 7th or 8th graders.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the Back to School Barbeque and Back to School Night.