

# **SCIENCE NEWS! - December 2009**

**Portfolios** - Whew! We finished our first trimester and the student work has been amazing. We are taking some time to stop, reflect upon our learning, and set some goals for the next trimester. This is done by using our Learning Portfolio process. The students have kept all of their work for the past trimester and are adding it to their portfolio of science work from previous years. They will soon be bringing their portfolio's home to have a Student-led Conference with you, their parents. I can't emphasize enough how important it is for you to look at their work and listen to their reflections. The students have a lot of self-awareness and self-motivation, and part of the process involves asking for help from you, as their parents, and me as their teacher in specific areas. It is my goal that this process provides for you a way in which to talk with your child about how their year is going, both academically and socially, to celebrate all the excellent work they have done, and to work as a team to address their areas of growth. For the most part, they know what they need to work on, they just need our support. So, please keep an eye out for the portfolio's coming home the first week of December!

**Science Fair** – Yes, it's that time again! The students have been brainstorming different ideas for their science fair projects this year and have turned in a draft of their proposal. I have gone over these proposals, and have given them feedback on their process. I have sent home a schedule with due dates for the rest of the trimester, and I have extra copies if you would like one for the refrigerator; just ask! The science fair project is a large part of their grade this trimester, most of which is based on meeting the due dates on the schedule, so please help your student remember to check it!

**How To Help Your Student!** – I am asking your help as parents to monitor two things in your child's backpack: 1) the homework assignment book, and 2) the science section of their binder.

- **Assignment Book** - I have them write the homework down every day, with a due day and date. If they do not turn in an assignment, I will write "NTI" or "not turned in" in their planner. They should also show you a "Missing Assignment" slip that you need to sign. If you wait to see it on RenWeb, it will be too late to turn it in for credit. They only have one day to turn in missing work with an "It's Not Late" pass, so it is critical that you help your student to look at their planner every night. In that way, they won't have

any late work, and if they do, they will be able to turn it in in a timely manner so they get credit for it.

- **Notebook Table of Contents.** A student's science notebook is that section in their binder where they keep all their science work. When a student receives papers back, they are to update their Notebook Table of Contents, which is where they calculate their grade. This is their "wake-up call" if they missed an assignment or did poorly on a quiz. Then the papers need to be put into their science section, in order of the page number on the Table of Contents, so that the student can find it again. The work they do in class and on homework assignments is what is covered on the tests and quizzes, so we use this material to review. It is critical that papers are filed on a daily basis, or else they may be lost in a "folder of death" or that bottomless pit that students call a backpack! Being organized is also part of their grade, so checking this on a weekly basis will really help them be prepared for notebook checks.

As always, if you ever have a question or concern regarding your student's progress in science, please don't hesitate to call or email me. I firmly believe it is easier to deal with small issues in a timely manner, rather than waiting.

Take care!  
Ms. Garske

P. S. I am in real need of a wet-dry vacuum for the Science Lab! If anyone would be willing to donate a small amount to the cause, I would be eternally grateful (and so would Mr. Valdemar!). I saw a three-gallon canister model, 5 hp at Orchard Supply for around \$60. If you see a better price, please let me know. Thank you, again, for everything.