



2009-2010 Handbook

Monte Vista Elementary School 3211 Monte Vista Boulevard Northeast Albuquerque New Mexico 87106

Dear Parents,

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with some information about our expectations for the 2009-2010 school year. You will want to keep this handy to refer to throughout the year. We also have a website. You can find our website at alauer06.home.comcast.net/alauer06. The site includes homework and forms you can download, as well as children's art, and current notes from us. You can also find a link to our website on Monte Vista Elementary's website (<http://www.mves.aps.edu/>) in the upper left hand corner of the page.

We would like to tell you how much we are looking forward to working with your child this year. There are many factors involved in the education of your child. One of the most important elements is that of communication and cooperation between school and home.

Parent-Teacher Communication and Cooperation

Your child should bring to school EVERY day his or her homework folder. The folder will serve as a tool to transport homework, graded papers, and/or school notes and notices to and from school.

Inside the homework folder you will also find the "communicator". The communicator is a piece of lined paper with a heart in the bottom corner that we will use as an ongoing note between home and school. Each morning, we will check your child's homework folder to see if you have added a question, comment, or concern to the communicator. Either Amy or Trish will respond to you via the communicator, a phone call, or email. An example follows:

Date Message

9/27 Amy and Trish, We lost the permission slip for the field trip to the zoo. Will you please send us a new one? Also, do you need any more drivers? Beth Arnold

9/27 Beth, We'd love for you to drive to the zoo. Thank you. You will find a new permission slip with today's papers. Please be at school by 9:15.

You may also choose to email us in place of the communicator at misterido@yahoo.com (Trish) and lauer@aps.edu (Amy). Please be sure that both Amy and Trish are included on the email. You may also call Monte Vista Elementary at 268-3520 although it is very unlikely you will get through to either of us. In that case, you'll have to leave a message. **Please use the communicator or email as your main way to communicate with us.**

The monthly calendar (found on the back of the communicator) is our means to document student behaviors. Children will assist in this documentation process by marking their own monthly calendar on a daily basis. A happy face,

star, or small picture signifies a good day in the classroom with good choices made by your child. A teacher note signifies a behavioral concern on a particular day. PLEASE check your child's calendar EVERY night and initial each day as it comes. Should there be a note about a behavioral concern, we expect you to talk to your child about it and offer solutions or alternatives to the choice they made.

Please check your child's homework folder each evening and empty it of all but the communicator and homework that needs to be graded. Please do not leave stamped (graded) work or old school notifications in the folder. It is very important that you act as a positive role model in this process of responsibility for your child.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

In an effort to stay true to developmentally appropriate education, we will be striving to work as one large multi-age class where your child will receive instruction and work with first and second grade peers during the bulk of his or her day.

Multi-age classes are created when children of different ages and grade levels are intentionally combined to realize academic and social benefits. At the end of each year, the older students move on to the next grade and a new group of students enters at the lower grade. This provides the opportunity for students to spend more than one year with a teacher or team of teachers. Though multiage systems vary, many elements remain constant. Multi-age classes include at least a three-year age or a two-year grade span (Pardini, 2005). Students in multi-age classes remain with the same teacher or team of teachers for more than a year. Finally, the classroom is created for philosophical rather than monetary reasons (Goularte, 1995).

There are numerous benefits of multi-age education. One of these is the effect from peer modeling. According to Vygotsky (1978), a child's level of potential development can be enhanced by more capable peers. Modeling also benefits the older students when social behaviors are involved. Katz (1995) found that self-regulatory behavior improves when older students need to remind younger students of the classroom rules. Further, when older children 'teach' newly learned skills to younger classmates, they strengthen their own understanding of these skills (Goularte, 1995).

Another benefit to students in a multi-age classroom is the increased similarity of their classroom to the real world. A larger age span is more reflective of the child's society outside school. When children interact outside of schools, in families, neighborhoods, ball teams, and scout troops, they are not divided by age. Multi-age education traces its philosophical roots to the guiding principles of early childhood education, which stresses the importance of developmentally appropriate pedagogy. Emphasis is placed on the child rather than on the curriculum.

Throughout various parts of the day we also employ inclusion. This means that children in more than one grade, with and without special needs are combined into one community of learners. Inclusion is a term, which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend if he or she did not have a disability. Support services are brought to the child, for example, through cooperative teaching, rather than move the child to another environment such as a resource room. Proponents of inclusion favor the diversity that is created in inclusive settings as well as incidental learning about acceptance, belonging,

and community.

A multi-age/inclusion class provides a setting where everyone can learn-- not only from the teachers, but also from one another. Cooperative learning, a skill needed to succeed as an adult, will be emphasized. Our goal is for the students to help each other to be their best and come naturally to accept each other's differences.

We have also studied the work of Howard Gardner. Briefly, Gardner separates intelligence into eight/nine areas: linguistic, musical, logical/mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist. We use this knowledge about the theory of intelligences as we plan for teaching. Our goal is to find our students' areas of strengths and weaknesses and then work to see each child's strengths enhanced and weaknesses improved.

Albuquerque Public Schools has created a link for parents to review the Educational Standards that we will be covering during the school year. Please visit the website at ww2.aps.edu for more information. We will also be providing information about three different curricula we will be using in the classroom throughout the school year via our website or through our newsletters.

Parent Volunteers

We love having parents help in the classroom. Please let us know if you want to help on a regular basis, or if you simply want to stop by and lend a hand. Below are a few of the ways in which you can be of assistance:

- Small Group Instruction (committees)
- Reading Groups
- Field Trips
- PTA Committees
- Friends of the Library
- Tutoring
- Sharing any expertise or special interest with the class

PTA Room Parents

We need three to four volunteers to sign up with the Monte Vista PTA as a "Room Parent". A room parent acts as a liaison between our classroom and the PTA, recruits volunteers for events like the Mercado, Staff Appreciation Luncheons, Jog-a-thon, or Art and Dessert Night, and helps plan classroom parties. Please let us know if you are interested. If you have any questions about being a room parent, feel free to contact the PTA Volunteer Coordinator, Michelle Fox, at 804-0596 or chellefox@hotmail.com.

Absences or Tardiness (to be included in ways to help at home)

Make sure your child arrives at school on time. If your child is tardy, he/she must sign in at the office first to obtain a pass before coming to class. The first bell rings at 9:00 followed by a second bell at 9:04. Children are considered tardy after 9:04.

If your child is going to be absent you MUST contact the office. If you do not, your child's absence will be marked "unexcused". Please do not send us a note or email excusing your child's absence. The office must be the ones to excuse any absence. No student will be released early unless they have been signed out in the office. The office will then call for your child. Repeated tardiness, absences, and early releases will result in contact from APS' Truancy office where they will follow up and bring forth consequences, if necessary.

Homework

We believe in the need for nightly reading. Through the years, we have seen amazing growth in motivation and achievement from children who read with their parents every night. Please find the time to make reading together a part of your daily routine. It is important that the habit of daily reading be evident to your child. Reading Logs will be sent home every Monday and are due back one week later. Please fill them out completely and help your child with the comprehension or reading strategy activity on the back. If you lose a Reading Log, you may go to our website and download a general reading log there.

We also ask that our students participate in a nightly writing program. Your child will be assigned a specific day of the week to turn in the nightly writing notebook. Each week when the notebook is turned in, we expect three written entries. These entries can be anything that your child wants to write about. For example, a description of an event like a visit to the park, or helping to set the table can be the trigger for the evening's writing assignment. It is important that your child do the writing. Fight your desire to correct or change the "inventive spelling" your child does. These attempts at writing the sounds in a word are our evidence of his/her growth as a writer. If your child wants you to help him/her sound out a word you can help by "tapping" out the word. The writing should include an illustration, but keep in mind that this is a writing assignment, as opposed to an art activity. Please limit the amount of time per day spent on this job to no more than fifteen minutes.

Monte Vista uses a math program called Investigations. Math assignments are aligned with daily lessons, however; not every lesson includes a homework assignment. Each week you should look for several assignments. Math homework is due the morning following the assignment of the lesson. Be sure to check the homework folder each day for math homework. We also send a packet of math homework home each Thursday. The packet aligns with the NM State Math Standards and is due one week after you receive it.

Spelling and Timed Math Tests

Spelling tests are each Thursday. You will need to help your child study for these tests. We will send home a list each week for your child's study purposes. A strategy we use in class to help prepare for spelling tests is to look for patterns in the lists. For example, if all of the words end in "ake" then have your child memorize this pattern and then add the initial consonant sound to each individual word. Points for spelling tests will be based on the number of words per test. We have three different lists of spelling words. The entire class takes list A. Second grade students (and some first grade students) should be ready for list B, and a few others may be ready for list C. Let us know if you think your child is ready for a more difficult list. We will also let you know if we feel your child is ready for the addition of the next list. Students are expected to use upper and lower case letters correctly on spelling tests.

Timed math tests will be given every Friday. They will include basic addition and subtraction math facts. These tests will be sent home for you and your child to practice together. We encourage making flashcards to help your child learn these math equations.

Snack

We encourage that you pack a healthy snack in your child's backpack everyday so that he or she has something to snack on during the day. Proper

nutrition is a big factor in a child's readiness for learning. If you would like to send a bulk snack as a classroom reserve, it would be appreciated. Sometimes students forget to bring something or do not have the resources for a daily snack. Thank you!

Lunch

We eat lunch every day except Wednesday at 11:55. Our Wednesday lunchtime is 11:25. Wednesday lunch will be in our classrooms. If you want your child to buy lunch you can send money in advance for your child's account. The cafeteria manager will stamp your child's hand when you need to send more lunch money. The cafeteria manager also has information about free and reduced rates for lunch. Please don't send in food that needs to be heated. We will not be able to heat up food.

Pull-outs

Your child's P.E., Computer Lab, and Library days and times will vary throughout the semester. We will send home a notice every trimester indicating your child's specific pullout times. **Children are required to wear sneakers for P.E. class.**

Treasure Box/Classroom Store

The treasure box is used every Friday to recognize positive behavior in the classroom. It is full of goodies (small toys, pencils, candy, etc.). We can ALWAYS use donations for this cause. New or gently used items are welcome.

Scholastic News and Weekly Take-Home Readers

Every Wednesday you will find a book inside of your child's homework folder. This book is for your child to keep. The books are leveled for the first or second grade. There is a book for every week of the school year (36 weeks=36 books). They will become harder and more challenging as the year progresses and as your child's reading ability improves. On the back of each book, there is a section called "Phonics for Families". You will find information about sight words included in that particular book as well as other reading skills and strategies. We recommend reading this section and using its suggestions when you and your child read the book together. These books can be great tools to support your child's literacy.

Your child will also receive his or her own copy of Scholastic News most Wednesdays. These are leveled as well, increasing in difficulty as the year progresses. There is always an activity on the back of the Scholastic News related to that specific issue. We also recommend that you work with your child to read and complete these activities.

The Weekly Take-Home Readers and Scholastic News are resources for you and your family. Please consider them as grade-level reading material to assist your child's literacy. **Neither one of these resources is due back as homework however, you are more than welcome to use and record them on your child's Reading Logs.**

Five-Dollar Classroom Donation

On the supply list, we asked for a 5.00 donation to the classroom. This money is used to pay for Scholastic News magazines, traveling trunks from the Maxwell Museum, field trips, and science committee supplies. Your donations are GREATLY appreciated as it means less out of pocket expense for us. If you'd like to contribute to this cause, please be sure to send your donation with your child in a sealed and clearly labeled envelope. Also, if you can afford to

contribute more than \$5.00, please do so. There are some families who are not financially able to contribute. Thank you!

Birthdays

We do not mind celebrating birthdays in the classroom. You may send *cupcakes* or a healthy alternative with your child. However, if your child is having a birthday party outside of school, PLEASE be sure that everyone in the class is invited or, if you prefer to invite just a few of the children, discretely pass out those invitations outside of class so that no one feels left out.

WAYS TO HELP AT HOME

1. READ! READ! READ! Either you or your child can do the reading. It is important to let your child know that reading can be fun and exciting--something to share! It is also important to model your love of reading in front of your child.
2. Review your child's homework before returning it to school. Praise for a job well done is essential; just as giving immediate feedback to correct mistakes helps solidify learning.
3. Review your child's graded work each time the homework folder is sent home. Go through the folder and empty it of graded or stamped work, and notifications. Only homework to be graded, and the "Communicator" should remain in the pocket folder when you return it to us each morning.
4. Encourage your child to study spelling words. Your child will take a spelling test each Thursday. Although we will spend some time studying spelling lists in class, your help at home is necessary.
5. Help your child to assume the responsibility for returning notes, library books and homework on time.
6. Be involved and take an active interest in what your child does at school. All children want to do well and make their parents proud. When they know you care, it makes a big difference.

Thank you!

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