

FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

October 10, 2013

Dear 5th Grade Parents:

Hello! This week, I started as your child's Social Studies teacher. I am excited to be back on staff at Onekama School, and for the opportunity to get to know your child. I am committed to providing a challenging and comprehensive curriculum while supporting the unique aspects of each learner.

Each week, I will send home a letter outlining the topics we are covering in Social Studies, and letting you know about any upcoming assignments. Since the school year is already underway, we have *hit the ground running*. Here's a look at what we are studying in 5th grade Social Studies:

This week's topics included:

**WHY DO WE HAVE GOVERNMENT?
HOW IS OUR GOVERNMENT ORGANIZED TO LIMIT POWER?**

To start our unit, students examined the reasons people establish governments by imagining what our school, community, and country would be like without government or rules/laws. We studied the functions and powers of the three branches of government, and we discussed the process of how a bill becomes a law in order to explore the specific powers of each branch and checks and balances within the lawmaking process. Through classroom discussion and informational reading, students learned that some powers are given to our federal government and others are reserved for state governments or the people.

This week's vocabulary words:

Government, popular sovereignty, Constitution, Preamble, laws, rule of law, separation of powers, branches of government, legislative branch, executive branch, judicial branch, articles, checks and balances, veto, override, limited government

Students have notecards with the definitions to these words that they keep in our classroom. They will bring these home before any quizzes or tests to help them prepare.

There were no homework assignments this week.

I'm looking forward to a great year ahead with your child!

Megan McCarthy

FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

October 17, 2013

Dear 5th Grade Parents:

We had a good week in social studies class. Students are adapting well to my classroom, and I am sincerely enjoying getting to know each of them as students and as individuals.

Here's a look at what we are studying in 5th grade Social Studies:

This week's topics included:

FEDERALISM: HOW IS POWER DISTRIBUTED?

Through classroom discussion and informational reading, students learned that some powers are given to our federal government and others are reserved for state governments or the people. Classroom study this week focused especially on the process of amending the Constitution, and we examined the Bill of Rights, which is the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

This week's vocabulary words:

federalism, federal government, state government, amendment, Bill of Rights

Our Unit 1 TEST will be given on Monday. Students have a study guide that should be reviewed at home this weekend. Additionally, they have vocabulary cards for all of the major terms of this unit that should be studied.

Megan McCarthy

FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

October 24, 2013

Dear 5th Grade Parents:

We have had a great start to our time together in Social Studies! Students completed their first unit test on Monday. This required a good deal of at-home studying. I was pleased to see that the majority of the class took the assignment very seriously. The tests were sent home today and require a parent signature. Please ask your child to see the test if it hasn't yet been shared with you.

Our next unit is titled "Three Worlds Meet." Students will look at the historical and cultural influences of Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans, and they will examine how the interaction of these three worlds led to the creation of our unique country. We will begin with an in-depth look at the Native American cultural regions.

Here's a look at what we are studying in 5th grade Social Studies:

Big Ideas:

- At the time European explorers reached the Americas, American Indians had been living there for thousands of years.
- American Indians lived in several large cultural regions which included the Southwest, the Pacific Northwest, the nomadic nations of the Great Plains, and the Woodland peoples east of the Mississippi River.
- The climate and natural resources of these regions were quite different. Therefore, different cultures developed in the different regions.

We will be reading, discussing, researching, interpreting, and writing about each of the American Indian cultural regions. There were no homework assignments for this week, but we will have some assignments in the coming weeks which will allow students to share what they are learning. More details will follow for these assignments.

Megan McCarthy

FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

October 31, 2013

Dear 5th Grade Parents: Happy Halloween! Here's a look at what we are studying in 5th grade Social Studies...

This week's topic was:

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL REGIONS

We are studying the four main cultural regions of the Native Americans who were living in our country before the arrival of European explorers. These include Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, Eastern Woodlands, and Great Plains. We will remain on this topic for all of next week, too.

As a class, we conducted some preliminary research on each of these cultural regions. Using our textbooks as a resource, students worked in class to complete a chart describing the location, food, housing, art, traditions, and clothing of each of these groups. Students received a grade for completing their research charts.

On Friday, I presented students with details on their next big assignment. **Please see the attached guidelines for students' Native American Research Reports and optional extra credit assignment.** I am asking students to write a true report, and I will be walking them through the steps of the writing process. We will use index cards to take notes from multiple sources. We will write outlines, organize research, draft, edit, and publish. This will be a long process – and not necessarily an exciting one for students – but one that I hope you will agree is worthwhile. My goal, always, is to provide your child with the skills and knowledge he/she will need to be successful in middle school (and beyond).

Much of the work for the research paper will take place during class, but some writing may need to be finished at home. Your child has already been assigned a specific region to study. He/she may want to bring in some research on the region (books, printed pages from the internet, etc.) to help with the report, but most basic research will be supplied in class.

In past years, the Native American project was a diorama. I am still offering this assignment, but as an optional one for extra credit. Details are attached. This is meant to be a fun assignment. I have chosen research papers for our main grade because I believe we can use this topic as a vehicle to learn about research and writing skills.

The rough draft of the research report is due on Monday, November 11.

The final draft is due on Thursday, November 14.

The extra credit assignment (optional) is due on Monday, November 18.

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can always reach me via email – mmccarthy@manistee.org – or by calling the school.

Megan McCarthy

FIFTH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

November 6, 2013

Dear 5th Grade Parents:

It was a busy, busy week in 5th grade Social Studies, as we worked on gathering research and drafting our Native American Cultural Regions reports.

Students have been asked to write a traditional report. We spent a day discussing the steps of the writing process and working on pre-writing by developing a graphic organizer.

Next, we used index cards to take notes from multiple sources. Research was provided in class in the form of internet facts and library books. Some students chose to bring in additional research that they completed on their own.

On Thursday, we wrote outlines for our papers and organized our research according to subtopics. On Friday, we started drafting our reports. **Students' homework for the weekend is to complete the rough draft of their reports. The rough draft may be handwritten, and will not yet be graded, but all 5 paragraphs should be completed and ready to turn in on Monday morning.**

Next week, we will edit and publish our reports. I have reserved the media center so that students can type their reports at school.

In past years, the Native American project was a diorama. I am still offering this assignment, but as an optional one for extra credit. Details on the extra credit assignment have been given. This is meant to be a fun assignment. I have chosen research papers for our main grade because I believe we can use this topic as a vehicle to learn about research and writing skills.

The rough draft of the research report is due on Monday, November 11.

The final draft is due on Thursday, November 14.

The extra credit assignment (optional) is due on Monday, November 18.

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can always reach me via email – mmccarthy@manistee.org – or by calling the school.

Megan McCarthy