

5<sup>th</sup> grade should not  
feel alien...



What is it like to be in the shoes of  
students in room 302?

THERE ARE **5** YEARLONG THEMES

## I. QUESTIONS LEAD THE WAY

In 5S, we do *not* say, "I don't get it. We say, "I do not get it... YET!"

As was stated in the article, [The Art of Powerful Questions:](#)

*A powerful question*

- *generates curiosity in the listener,*
- *stimulates reflective conversation,*
- *is thought-provoking,*
- *surfaces underlying assumptions,*
- *invites creativity and new possibilities,*
- *generates energy and forward movement,*
- *focuses inquiry,*
- *stays with participants,*
- *touches a deeper meaning,*
- *and evokes more questions!*



## 2. LISTENING AND CURIOSITY ARE KEY! In fact, they are the keys

In an article called, *Willing To Be Disturbed*, the author Margaret Wheatley says, "We have the opportunity many times a day, everyday, to be the one who listens to others - curious rather than certain... When we listen with less judgment, we always develop better relationships with each other. It's not differences that divide us. It's our judgments about each other that do that. Curiosity and good listening bring us back together."



### **3. IT TAKES MORE GRAY MATTER TO DEAL WITH GRAY MATTERS**

In other words, one must have flexible thinking to deal with situations that are not so black and white. The beauty of the world is bundled up between the layers of simplicity and complexity.

### **4. WHAT CAN BE COMMUNICATED WITHOUT WORDS?**

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we study birds and we study animal behavior (humans too), We will learn to recognize and learn from the intricate language that is communicated without words. 5<sup>th</sup> graders need to see how powerful body language is in animals- including their own behavior.



### **5. GETTING IN THE SHOES OF OTHERS (perspectives) LEADS TO LEAPS OF LEARNING AND DEEPER CONNECTIONS**

All the subjects we study will be more meaningful and will make more sense if we are willing to try on new shoes – even if the shoes belong to a table (Betty, Tabitha, Reggie), a silversmith in 1775, a crow or a nemesis.

## WHAT IS THIS YEAR ABOUT?

This year is about having more **RESPONSIBILITY**:

**5<sup>th</sup> graders are pre-teens.** They are becoming more independent while at the same time better able to see their connection to and impact on the world. 5S students will be given more responsibility to take care of *their* classroom, work, classmates, and community. There will be more chances to shape research projects to match their own interests, learning styles and hopes for their world. And just as 5<sup>th</sup> graders appreciate choice, they also benefit when expectations are clear and firm.

Routines and organization are particularly comforting and important now. Even though students are older and can do more, they also have big changes happening (cognitively, physically, etc.) and these changes can be distracting. Thus in 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will spend time on the following:

- Arriving to school early enough to get settled and ready
- Reading and listening to directions
- Planning time wisely so time is well spent on assignments in class and home
- Maintaining an organized binder, backpack, desk and classroom
- Making sure to understand the assignment and having the materials necessary to complete what is required at home and school
- Learning study skills such as highlighting key text, taking notes, asking thought provoking questions, communicating ideas, and taking movement breaks!

### Homework (a.k.a. P.S. Work)

**Homework should *help your child*. It should do the following:**

- connect what we do within the classroom to the outside world
- reinforce what we have studied during the day
- stimulate and strengthen your child's brain
- give your child a better understanding of his or her own learning style and a chance to explain his or her own thinking
- It should not be stressful. It should not be boring

## And for parents... homework should not be stressful (or boring for that matter)

It should...

- give you a sense of the kind of work we are doing
- give you an opportunity to talk about school
- help you have a better sense of your child's progress or needs
- help you set up systems that make homework positive rather than a battle.

These skills will help a great deal as your child heads into the middle school and beyond

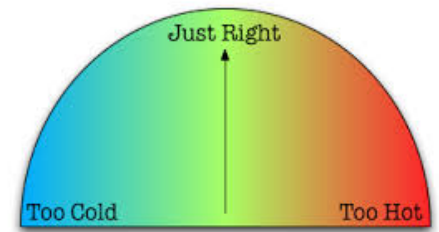
### WORK HARD - NO STRESS - BALANCE

In room 302, we have a “Work hard, but no stress” policy.

To do that, we must find the right balance. That is why we have the *Goldilocks Guide To Homework*. Homework (P.S.

Work) should take around 45 minutes - plus 20-30 minutes of reading. There are usually three parts: Main, math, and

skills & exercise. The main assignment should take around 20-30 minutes, the math should take 15-20 minutes, and the skills/exercise should take 10-15 minutes. If your child is consistently speeding through assignments, then the work is not challenging enough. If the work becomes painstaking and is consistently taking more than one hour, then adjustments must be made.



The *only* way we can solve problems that happen after school is if we know where the confusion occurred. It is very important that your child becomes more aware of the questions or frustrations he or she has and can articulate them. Instead of worrying about not being able to complete the problem, he or she should attempt to figure out what is possible and then write down parts that were confusing. Doing that might come as a relief, and it is an important skill unto itself.

If your child forgets the homework or leaves a book group book or journal behind, please do not rush around trying to get it. This causes stress and is counterproductive to our no stress policy. Your child should write a note explaining (in detail) why the homework didn't get done and what he or she plans to do to get it done.

The only kind of stress we like is when people stress the positive. It's helpful to know when things are going well. If your child finds a particular kind of assignment clear, fun, or inspiring we should know. We can keep that information in mind for future projects. And, if you have memorable discussions or see progress happening at home, it helps us to know this too.

## CLASSROOM FUNDS:

To pay for the five binders students use this year, and to help defray the cost of field trips and other expenses for our 5th grade classes, we are asking each family to contribute \$65. Please make checks payable to The Driscoll School. Also note, there will be an additional \$230 cost for the Farm School in May or June. Scholarships are available. You will receive more information about that in the spring.

## FALL CONFERENCE SIGN-UPS:

I will send you the fall conference dates on PTC Fast in October.

**Please note the lilac colored curriculum overview for all 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Brookline. Below is some information specific to our class.**

## Social Studies

**In room 302 we are focusing on the following essential ideas:**

In order to understand our government and how it emerged, we must pay attention to the tension between *individual rights and the common good*. *This tension is something we can see throughout our country's history and within the walls of our classroom.*



*We will begin the year by looking at our three branches of government how it connects to the laws in our classroom. 5S students are our legislative branch, I am the executive branch and our principal and vice principal, Ms. Cook, Ms. Driscoll and Mr. Youkilis, are our supreme court.*

The plot of history often has its setting along rivers. Note: That is why we have a river table. For a good part of the year, our river table will become the Charles River, where a great deal of history has taken place.

# Science

Our science units are:

- Recycling and Environmental Protection
- Birds and Animal Behavior
- Light & Optics,
- Sound
- Astronomy/Moon (short unit)
- Introduction to Adolescence



Note-taking, expository writing, conducting experiments, and research techniques are all woven into our science units. Again, field trips and guest speakers will be part of our curriculum. The art of questioning will be key as we delve into each of the science topics we'll explore.

## Language Arts –

**Reading:** Please see the attached graphic that explains some of the terms and skills students will be learning this year. We in 5S will be reading every day. Students are expected to read at least 30 minutes every day. Yes, every day. You will see they will be read to, they will read in groups, they will read alone and in pairs. It is like Green Eggs and Ham... they will read in the rain, and on a train and in a house and with a mouse, etc.

## Writing

**“I need to write to find out what I’m thinking.”** Larry Gelbart, a successful comedy writer (*Tootsie*, *M.A.S.H.*) was asked why he continued to write even though he had achieved fame and money. He said, **“I need to write to find out what I’m thinking.”** That quote is true for many of us.

Learning to write well is one of the most difficult and fulfilling parts of school. It is not easy to take a myriad of ideas, revelations, feelings and questions and get them down onto a piece of paper. On top of that, writers need to organize their thinking, and then make sure grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and neatness have been considered. It is no wonder so many students resist it. On the other hand, once ideas start to flow, writing can be one of the most satisfying parts of a day. Not everything we write in the 5th grade will have to be revised, but at all times there will be something the class is working on that will take more than one draft. There will be a wide variety of writing projects. Students will be expected to write poetry, stories, essays, instructions, news, lists, and letters. They will write by hand and on the computer. The bulk of all writing is rewriting. It is rarely easy but so gratifying when the words shine.



## MATH

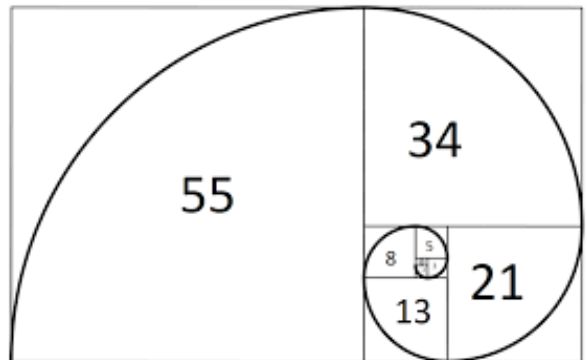
We will work so that each student becomes someone who likes to EXPLORE math.

We want students to...yes... like math and feel good about trying and not knowing... yet. We want students to be efficient mathematician who are confident in their own to find solutions.

Students will further develop their ability to make logical choices while choosing a strategy for problem solving, and we will focus on how to communicate reasoning in a clear and specific format. Most of all, we will focus on students applying what they learn to their lives outside of school so they see how important and interesting math is.

We will also focus on:

- m Test-taking strategies - it does relieve stress and improve outcomes.
- m Math writing and reflection; articulation of math thinking
- m Memorization of math facts
- m Extensions in math



## Farm School:

Farm School: In late May or June, we will head to the Farm School for 3 days and 2 nights. The Farm School is in Athol, MA, (Yes, Athol is its name). In any case, farm school is a place where students can work the land and take home the cultural history, vital experience and personal identity that farms nurture.

### 7:00 That's it. You will be dismissed if...

- o you think it's time to leave or you might fall over
- o you are feeling a bit odd being at school this late at night



A USEFUL GRAPHIC FROM FOUNTAS AND PINNELL  
TO DESCRIBE THREE MAIN AREAS WE WILL FOCUS ON AS  
WE LOOK AT A VARIETY OF TEXTS

