

Mr. Miller's Classroom Handbook:

The ABC's of...



Also visit our website at www.griswoldschoolk.weebly.com

This handbook reflects practices during a typical school year. Please note the * (asterisk) in some headings of areas that have been modified and addressed in other communications, including the district reopening plan. See any related notes below each section. Any other changes will be addressed in future communications.

Aa

Absences If your child needs to miss school, please remember to call the office at 860-828-6336 - informing us as to why your child is absent.

Attendance Attendance is very important! Your child's progress, both academically and socially, is greatly influenced by daily participation. This includes arriving to school on time!

Assessment We conduct formal and informal assessments throughout the year. The formal assessments are conducted in November, February, and June. We also informally assess skills during the first weeks of school as a baseline to learn what students know. The three assessments are conducted using our district assessment. Teachers are provided substitute coverage during these formal assessments. This helps to focus on one student at a time and to provide a quiet testing environment. The same assessment is given to each child individually and is done in a fun and stress free manner.

Bb

Behavior Management I believe that children will thrive in a structured and predictable environment where they feel safe and loved. Students respond well to high expectations with positive recognition and praise. We all must show respect. Children must be friendly to every member of the classroom community. I teach students that life is about choices and I expect them to "make good choices". I strive for consistency and start

the school year with clear expectations. Children are taught to use caring language to tell each other how they are feeling. If a problem occurs I expect the children to “use their words”, talk and listen to each other, and try to come to a resolution. Many times they are able to work out problems without my intervention. If that is not possible they should bring the issue to my attention. **I will share specific classroom strategies and systems I implement in K-4 during Open House.**

Backpacks  Children should come to school with a backpack **and** folder every day. The backpack should be large enough to fit a folder and library books. The folder is to put notes going home and returning to school. Each day when children arrive, they are asked to check their backpack for mail and other important papers. This is a way to set students up for individual responsibility for years to come.

***Birthdays**  Birthdays are important to children. With many food allergies in our classrooms, we want to ensure all students can participate in birthday celebrations. We will sing and celebrate each child on their special day. As an option, families are welcome to purchase an inexpensive book, toy, game, or puzzle to donate on behalf of your child’s birthday. You can ask your child what item or book they would like to have in our classroom. *Another option can be to send in a non-edible ‘goodie’, such as stickers, pencils, or party toys for each student to take home. You can contact me if you would like to explore other options as well. FYI: It is our school policy that invitations cannot be handed out in class. A class list with addresses will be made available a few weeks into the school year.

***Items, such as ‘goodie-bags’ will not be dispersed and sent to other homes.**

Breakfast  Research shows that children who eat breakfast learn better than those who don’t, so please make sure your child is eating a healthy breakfast each day. **Snack will be scheduled mid-afternoon and should be allergen free and easily consumed.** A water bottle is also a good choice. Water fountains are also available.

Bucket Filling  Have you filled a bucket today? All Kindergarten classrooms use the bucket filling philosophy to promote respect and empathy towards others, as well as positive self-esteem. As students move through different grade levels, activities may include: read alouds, role-playing, filling a classroom bucket, certificates, and creating classroom rules.

Cc

Calendar  Important school and district dates can be found via the Griswold School website under Calendar and News and Events.

***Celebrations**  We will have a Halloween, Winter, Valentine's, and Spring celebration during the school year. We will have some fun activities on these days. Information will be sent home prior to the date.

***Special Celebrations will be modified this year.**

***Centers**  Centers is a common term in primary age classrooms. It is usually a time when students are engaged in a variety of tasks, both play and academic. In K-4, Centers time is broken into two parts: Learning Centers and Free/Play Centers. Students typically participate in a Learning Center (e.g., math center, reading center, art center, etc) and then choose a Free/Play Center (e.g., LEGOs, blocks, kitchen, dollhouse, playdoh, rice bin, etc). The Learning Center is directly related to new learning or practice and extension of existing learning. At this time, students are working on a variety of tasks. This may be a verbal activity, a partner or small group game, an academic project, such as stamping or cut and paste, or it can be an Art center project. These art centers are not a "fun craft" but rather to extend an area of learning while helping your child develop fine motor skills, problem solving skills, organizational skills, learning how to follow written and picture directions and developing a sense of pride in their work. The Free/Play Center is just as important, as this will be a time for students to practice social skills and explore and discover new learning through play. We are fortunate to have a variety of materials to support this essential part of our school day.

***Centers will be modified this year – play, art, and other creative opportunities will still be an important part of our school days.**

Communication  Communication between school and home is vital to your child's success. It's very important to me that you are aware of what is going on at school. Throughout the year I try to send periodic newsletters to keep you informed of some of the things that we are doing in class. Talking with your child and asking about their day is your primary means of information. It will help their communication skills grow and give you information about our jobs and lessons. I will also give you an opportunity to share your email address. If you need to contact me, you may send a note to school, call or email. If you are sending a note please remind your child to put it in my mailbox when they arrive. I

check my email daily, but often at the beginning and end of the school day. **If it is important that I read the message right away, (especially changes in transportation, etc) you should send a note or call the school.**

Griswold School - 860-828-6336 - My Email- jmiller@berlinschools.org

Concepts About Print or C.A.P.  Concepts about print include awareness that: print carries a message; there are conventions such as directionality (left to right, top to bottom), differences between letters and words, distinctions between upper and lower case, punctuation, and books have some common characteristics (e.g. author, title, front/back). We will work on C.A.P all year in Kindergarten and it is a part of our K-assessment.

Conferences  Griswold School hosts two parent/teacher conference days during the school year. However, you or I may request additional conferences throughout the year if needed. During the first conference (Nov./Dec.), the main focus will be on social and emotional development and readiness for Kindergarten. At the second conference (March), I will mainly focus on academic development. We will also revisit any areas that we were watching for growth and progress.

Confidentiality  The privacy and well-being of students is to be protected. If you have an opportunity to volunteer in the classroom, please respect the privacy of our class. Conversations and parent observations of other students should remain confidential.

Dd

Dismissal  If your child needs to leave school before the regular dismissal time, you must go to the office to sign him/her out. **A note or phone call to let us know of this early dismissal is appreciated.** Our secretary will call for your child to meet you at the office. If you are picking up at the end of the day you will wait outside the “recess” door located near the playscape. We work hard to ensure all students get to the correct spots at the end of the day. **Any changes in the ‘usual routine’ should include communication with the office staff via note or phone call.**

Ee

Extra Clothes  We have extra clothes in the nurse’s office if your child has an accident, gets wet, dirty, etc. If your child needs to change, the school nurse will provide your child with the appropriate clothing. These clothes need to be washed and returned to

school as soon as possible for any other students who may need them. **If needed frequently, we can discuss if there's a need for you to pack extra clothes in your child's backpack.**

Ff

***Field Trips**  We will be going on field trips during the school year that are both fun and educational for the children. Permission slips will be sent home in advance informing you of all the details regarding the trip. Please return permission slips and money as soon as possible once they are sent home. We will request parent volunteers to chaperone field trips. We can only take 2-3 volunteers on each trip. If you are available to chaperone please write that on the permission slip. If you are not selected for the first trip you will be given priority on the next.

Gg

Goodbyes  Saying goodbye at school can be very emotional for both you and your kindergartener. Try to send your child off with a smile and a wave, along with the reassurance that you will see them after school. Remember, even distressed children settle very quickly once you're gone. Give a quick hug. Most often once you are out of sight your child settles and is ready to begin their day. Resist the urge to return if they cry, as this will only prolong the situation. **Please don't feel guilty about leaving your child with me if they are crying. Trust that they will be shown concern and compassion from the moment they enter my room.**

Guided Reading/Small Groups  We work to reinforce a variety of skills and goals through small group work beginning early in the school year. Small reading groups begin in the middle of the school year and continue through the end of school. These groups may be focused on a specific level text and guiding the readers to the skills needed at that level or could be a group focused on skills that will help at all levels. Because children become so excited about reading once they realize that they CAN do it, I know they will be thrilled to share their stories with you. Please set some special time aside for you and your child to share books together. Encourage your child to share their reading with other family members as well.

Hh

Habits of Mind  During the school year, you and your child will learn about various Habits of Mind. They are a set of 16 ‘habits’ – work skills and problem solving strategies – that are an important part of social and emotional growth. In Kindergarten, we focus a great deal on persisting, managing impulsivity, and listening to others with understanding and empathy. As students progress through Griswold School these will be an important part of their social and emotional learning.

Health  Please let me know of special circumstances that may affect your child (i.e. medications that may make them sleepy, a death in the family, etc.) Also, please let the nurse and me know of any allergies your child may have, especially food allergies.

***Halloween**  Kindergarteners are the only students allowed to dress up for Halloween during the school day. We will have a fun filled day with games/activities and a parade around the school. Parents are welcome to join in the fun.

***Special Celebrations will be modified this year.**

***Holidays Around the World**  During the month of December we will learn about many different holidays and customs. We will learn about Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Saint Lucia’s Day, and Las Posadas. Please talk with your child about your family traditions and beliefs. If your family celebrations include other holidays, let me know so it can be included in our curriculum. It would be great if you could come to school and share a holiday custom or tradition with the class.

***School visitors will be limited.**

***Homework**  It is so important for children at this age to hear fluent readers. Please **read to and with your child** for about 10 minutes every night. Make sure throughout the week this reading includes your child’s library book. The first half of the year the children will bring home Letter Tile and Math Packs. This includes an assignment for each content area that should be completed a few times during the week. Later in the year your child will be bringing home “sight word rings,” red dot reading books and/or Guided Reading books. At times your child may be given an oral homework assignment. These assignments are meant to provide families with some insight to our learning through fun

and engaging games – while providing your child with extra practice and reinforcement of skills.

*The plan is for these activities to become part of our in-class literacy and math blocks versus ‘at-home’ activities.

Ii

***Illness**  The question of when to keep your child home from school is often a difficult one, especially when the decision may affect your work schedule. It is important however, to keep your child home if he/she is ill – definitely if a fever and/or vomiting. This helps them feel better more quickly and prevents others from becoming ill. Children function more effectively in the classroom when they are healthy. The school handbook or nurse can clarify any policies regarding student illness.

*Please see other important information and symptoms in the reopening documents.

Independent Reading  Because children learn to read by reading, they need plenty of opportunities to read independently. Remember that children begin to read by memorization, looking at the pictures, and creating or retelling the story. This even includes work with wordless books. By giving the children time to read both at school and at home, we can work together to provide a literature-rich environment and life-long love of reading.

Jj

Journey  This year is sure to be an incredible journey for your child and I am so glad that I can share it with you and your family. We will cross many milestones together and face many new challenges. With your help, we can make this year a journey that your child will cherish for the rest of his/her life.

Kk

Kindergarten Readiness  There are many things you can do to help prepare your child for Kindergarten. Please look through all the information coming home during the first month of school for some great ideas. Remember, if all else fails.....just be positive!

Ll

Letter Sounds  As adults we forget (or at least very rarely think about) that each letter we use in speech and writing has its own sound. It is an important skill for all children to recognize upper and lowercase letters and be able to articulate each individual *sound* for the letters. This includes those difficult short vowel sounds. Later in the year we begin to isolate beginning and ending sounds as well as use these sounds for our writing. It is important that as children are working, we help them hear and write what they hear, not provide traditional spelling patterns. Their writing might look like: {rit=write, ran= rain, sumr=summer, got=goat, crisms=Christmas} This type of writing will provide a smooth transition into the first grade curriculum.

***Library**  We will visit the Library once a week. Please make sure to read the book to your child during that week and send it back for the next library class. Students are not allowed to take a new book out if they do not return the old book. Children will often say, "Mom/Dad forgot." I encourage the children to accept that they forgot their book and can bring it tomorrow. "Everyone forgets something sometimes!" This is a great way to teach the students independence and responsibility. If a book is lost or damaged, we will ask that you pay the replacement cost.

***Library will be held in the classroom. I will find out more about book borrowing to share ASAP.**

***Lunch**  Students will be eating lunch in the Griswold cafeteria. You can prepay for lunch via MySchoolBucks, accessible through www.berlinschools.org. Each day students will sign up for what they will be having or if they have brought their lunch from home. Please talk with them about their choices ahead of time to expedite the process.

***Lunch is currently to be held in the classroom.**

Lost and Found  We have a lost and found at Griswold School. I encourage you and your child to check it regularly for any missing items. Please label your child's removable clothing such as jackets, coats, sweaters, hats and sweatshirts with their first and last name.

Mm

Mailing List  Please join the email mailing list. I would like to try throughout the year to send out mailings as reminders of important dates, to ask for parent help or involvement

and make you aware of upcoming events. Don't worry if you do not have an email account, I can send home a hard copy with your child.

Money  Money is difficult for children to keep track of. Whenever you send money with your child (e.g., lunch, field trip, scholastic book club, etc.) please put it in a sealed envelope or baggie that is labeled with your child's name, room number (K-4), and **what the money is for**. This will help ensure that all money sent to school is accounted for.

Nn

Newsletter  I will send home a newsletter several times during the year. It is very important that you read the newsletter so that you can keep your child prepared for classroom events. The newsletter will contain information about our classroom activities, schedules, and events for the week. It will also include an overview of lessons along with activities and questions that you can discuss with your child to reinforce learning at home. This will also be available on the website.

Nurse  We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful nurse and nurse's assistant on staff here at Griswold. Mrs. McCormack and Mrs. Ballargeon are here to tend to minor scratches and scrapes, as well as sudden illnesses, and to administer medication. **All medications are to be brought to the nurse by a parent with the appropriate paperwork, not sent in with a child.** Please be sure your contact information is kept up to date in the event that Mrs. McCormack needs to get in touch with you. For VERY minor needs, band aids and such, "Dr. Miller." will take care of it in the classroom to avoid leaving the class during our valuable time together.

Oo

***Orientation**  Orientation to the classroom, Griswold School, and the wonderful staff here will happen gradually during the first few weeks of school. An important part of this process is our **traveling books**. Through these books children learn school staff members as well as each other's names, extend stories and share their own and friend's work with you. These will travel to your home periodically throughout the beginning of the year. Please read them together with your child, add a brief comment on the comment pages and return it to school the following day.

***Traveling Books will most likely be 'digital' this year.**

***Open House**  The Griswold School Open House is held one evening during September. **This is for adults only.** I encourage you to attend because I will be discussing the academic expectations for kindergarten in more detail and providing information that you will need to know in order to have a successful year. **See the school calendar for details.**

***Open House might be held as a virtual event. More information will be shared.**

Pp

Phonemic Awareness  Phonemic Awareness is the awareness that words are composed of small sounds and children will develop the ability to manipulate these sounds. Kindergarteners will do lots of work with phonemic awareness and it is a large piece of the District assessment. These skills are often taught and learned through singing different songs together in school. I encourage you to sing these songs together with your child and be playful with language and songs.

Qq

Questions  Many of you are new to Griswold this year, I am sure that you'll have some unanswered questions. After you read through this document, as well as the school handbook and other paperwork, please feel free to contact me at anytime if you have any questions or concerns. I will gladly address them - that's what I am here for!

Rr

***Recess**  Recess is an important part of the day for children to play outside and during poor weather conditions to enjoy free choice play indoors. This is a time for children to develop additional social and motor skills, expand friendships to students in other classes and develop life long skills in problem solving, turn taking, and being a good friend in group activities and games.

***Recess will still be a part of our school day! The reopening plan shared some modifications.**

Red Dot Reading Books  These are small texts that we work with in the classroom. They are used in a variety of ways such as reinforcing curriculum, sight word acquisition,

fluency, tracking, and phonemic awareness. These should have a special spot at home where they are kept and reread throughout the year and saved for summer reading as we transition into first grade.

Restrooms  A restroom is located in our classroom. Students are allowed to use it as necessary. I do require students to ask permission to leave to use the rest room, but since there is only one bathroom, they may have to wait sometimes. I do expect them to use it in an appropriate manner. No ‘fooling’ around in the bathroom.

Rest Time  Each day of school, students will have a brief time to rest in the classroom. We ask that students bring in a towel to rest on, which will stay in their cubbies. We turn the lights off, turn on relaxing music, and expect students to ‘rest’ quietly for about 10-15 minutes. We do not expect students to sleep at this time. As we progress, this time will turn into an optional quiet reading or free-choice writing time. We will bring towels home periodically to be cleaned and returned.

***Room Parent(s)**  I will ask for 2-3 parents to be the Room Parents. The job of the Room Parent is to coordinate celebrations and activities by asking other parents to contribute, and to seek volunteers when needed. Being a room parent is a great way to be involved in your child’s school life. Please let me know if you would like to be one of our Room Parents. I will have a sign-up available at Open House.

***I will communicate more about this area as we move forward together.**

Ss

***Scholastic Books**  A couple times throughout the year, students will be able to order from the Scholastic Book Club. The Scholastic book club is a great way to help foster your child’s love for reading and to help their home libraries grow. I have used online ordering in the past, which works very well. Please look for more details once we get the school year in full motion. **We also have in-school Scholastic Book Fairs, which are typically held during October, March, and June.**

***Book fairs might be held virtually. More information will be shared.**

School Supplies  Griswold School will supply everything your child needs for the year. The only thing you need to buy is a folder for their backpack. If your child doesn’t

have a folder, I will supply one on the first day of school. Please don't send any supplies in with your child, but feel free to keep supplies in a work area at home.

Show and Tell/ Sharing  This is a time in our schedule that children have the opportunity to share about something that is important to them. At Griswold School we use an "Expanding Expression Tool" kit that teaches children the necessary skills to describe an item thoroughly and therefore increase their expressive vocabulary. We have Sharing throughout the school year. I will send home a class schedule after the first few weeks of school. Please help your child pick out something that is interesting and special to them.

Please help them prepare to share the information about the object: What group does it belong to? (fruit, toy, etc) What does it do? Where did you get it? What do you do with it? What does it look like? (color, size, shape,) What is it made of? Where did you get it or where does it come from? Why is it special to you? What else would you like us to know about it?

***Snack Time**  Snack will be scheduled for the afternoon. Students can bring a water bottle (if desired) and a quick, healthy, and easily consumed snack. Water fountains are always available for student use as well. Snack will last for about 10-15 minutes. Refer to the district snack policy for information about limiting allergens in classrooms.

***Water Bottles are needed – students will be able to fill them, but not use the water fountain in our room. The reopening documents addresses more information about modifications to the allergen policy.**

***Special Classes**  The students will attend a special class each day; these include Art, Music, Gym, and Library. Please make sure students are prepared for these classes. They will need to return library books on Library day and wear sneakers/appropriate clothes on gym days. You should have received a magnetic schedule during the 'meet and greet'.

***Specials will be held in the classroom. P.E. will be held outside as long as the weather permits. A magnetic schedule will come home during the first week of school.**

Tt

Take Home Folders  Take home folders are the folders that should be in your child's backpack and will travel with them to and from school every day. This will be your number one means of communicating with me this year.

Any notes, transportation changes, snack money, etc, should be sent to me inside the Home/School Folder. I ask children to check their folder daily when they arrive into school; please ask your child for this folder each day as it may also contain notes from me, completed school work, etc. **Be sure to empty the folder on a daily basis and return it back to school each day.**

Tardy  If you bring your child to school after the beginning of the school day, you will need to walk with them to the nurse for a late slip and to sign them in. It is very important that your child arrives on time so that they can get settled in and ready for the day.

Toys  Bringing toys to school or wearing lots of extra jewelry and necklaces is discouraged because they distract the children from learning and take up lots of space in backpacks. **Your child should leave personal items at home – with the exceptions of sharing days.** Our classroom is filled with items to keep us busy; recess supplies are also available for them to play with. Toys and jewelry that get lost, break, or end up on my desk can result in very sad feelings!

Transportation Changes  If your child's transportation for any given day changes, please alert me by sending a note in your child's take home folder or by calling the school office. If you choose to send a note, please be sure it includes your child's first and last name, the date, the day, and your signature. **If a child fails to bring a note and is supposed to do something different from the normal schedule, the change will not be permitted** (i.e., your child is normally a bus rider, but **thinks** he/she is getting picked up but does not have a note, the child will be sent home on the bus).

Transportation Tag  **Please have your child wear the backpack tag the first weeks of school.** It helps us know where he/she is going if they forget. It also helps the bus driver know the drop off address. If the tag is lost, you can make a new one. After about a week or two, the students learn the routine and do not need the tags.

Uu

Unique  Each child is unique and special! They enter our classroom with different skills, personalities, experiences, backgrounds, and learning styles. My goal is not to make each child alike, but to foster their individual strengths and help each child develop to his or her fullest potential, academically, and socially. The two most important elements that I hope to instill in your child are a positive self-concept and a love for learning.

Vv

***Valentine's Day**  On or around Valentines Day we will have a class celebration. I consider this to be a day of friendship and kindness. This will include fun activities, and the exchange of Valentines for our classmates. Valentines are a great opportunity for students to practice writing their classmates names. I ask each child to participate and have one Valentine for every child in the class. A list will be made available. Thank you in advance for including everyone - we do not want any hurt feelings.

***Special Celebrations will be modified this year.**

***Visitors**  All guests, including familiar faces, must sign in and get a name tag in the school office. Griswold welcomes and encourages family involvement. It is important to remember that while this may seem inconvenient to frequent visitors, it is the goal and responsibility of the school to create a safe environment.

***Visitors will not be permitted in the classroom.**

***Volunteers**  I strive to utilize volunteers in our classroom on a daily basis because I believe your involvement in your child's education is essential. By expressing an interest in your child's education, you are encouraging their success in school! Many adults work full-time and are unable to come in on a weekly basis. I encourage you to volunteer to be a "Mystery Reader" for the class or come into class if you have a day off and are available. I am very flexible with the schedule and there is always more to do with another set of adult hands. If you would like more information about how to become a volunteer, please let me know. I begin to contact volunteers a few weeks into the school year.

***Visitors will not be permitted in the classroom. There will be opportunities to help at-home in many ways.**

Ww

Websites  Most information you may need is available on our district and school website www.berlinschools.org. We also have a separate website dedicated to our kindergarten team. You can access this website at www.griswoldschoolk.weebly.com. This website gives information about our curriculum. Each teacher also maintains a communication page to share newsletters, pictures, and other classroom information.

Wish List  If you would like to donate a box of Kleenex, baby wipes (great for student cleaning), or Seventh Generation/Green Works cleaning products, it would be greatly appreciated. **As always, this is optional.** You may also support Griswold School in other ways. We collect Box Tops all throughout the school year. You can sign up for free programs like registering your Stop and Shop card or shopping through a specific web site portal that gives financial benefit to our school. Amazon Smile is another option to help our school as well. We also have an ink and cellphone recycle program for homes or businesses. Watch for these programs in Parents Club notices or on the school website.

Xx

X-ray  Yes, even X has its own sound and can be tricky for little ones to articulate. They can tell me “x, like in box, fox and x-ray”! We also pretend to open a can, which makes the /x/ sound.

Yy

You  Please remember that you are your child’s first and most important teacher. No one can influence your child’s life in the way that you can.

***Younger Siblings**  We love younger siblings but they should not be brought to school when you are planning to volunteer in the classroom. This not only allows your full attention to be focused on the class, but also allows for some special time between you and your Kindergartener. Special days like Halloween and the end of the year picnic are perfect times for your other little ones to get a sneak peek at kindergarten!

***Visitors will not be permitted in the classroom.**

Zz

Zz Zz Zz Zz  Please make sure that your child gets plenty of rest each night. Setting and keeping a consistent bedtime helps them to be alert and ready to learn each day.