

At first 5S can feel a little alien...
but then it all begins to make sense!



What on earth are FABS, Web-neddays,
bin numerators, JustMe, Polly the
pull-down?

[Here is a little news link about what aliens might hear depending on their listening skills...](#)

What is it like to be in the shoes of 5S?

THERE ARE 5 THEMES!

THEME 1: QUESTIONS LEAD THE WAY



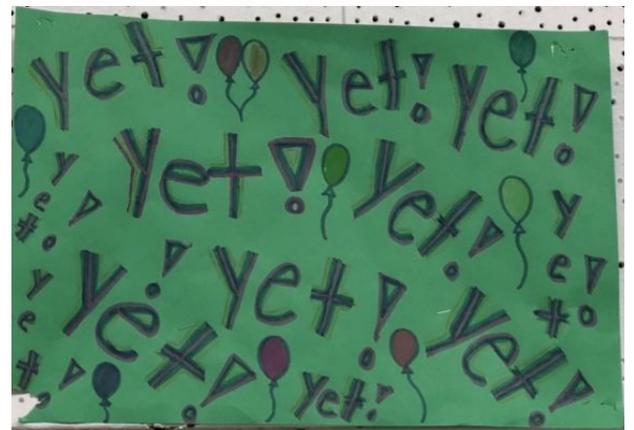
As was stated in the article, [The Art of Powerful Questions](#): in 5S we dig into questions because they can...

- deepen conversations
- Invite creativity and new ways of looking at the world
- Focus our research
- and inspire more thought provoking questions!

If we do not understand something, that does not mean we get upset with ourselves and others. It means there is a good chance some learning is about to happen. For this reason, we don't let confusion worry us.

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

We say, "I don't get it... **Yet!**"



2. LISTENING WITH CURIOSITY IS KEY!

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.” In 5S, we will practice this art all year, every day.



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. It takes more energy to see more than one side but it’s worth the effort. Much of our world’s beauty is bundled up in between glaring truths.

4. WHAT CAN BE COMMUNICATED WITHOUT WORDS?

In 5th 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. 5th graders need to pay attention to the impact of body language and tones of voice.



5. GETTING IN THE SHOES OF OTHERS: EMPATHY 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 silversmith, a crow, a table (Betty, Tabitha, Reggie) or a nemesis.

Why are these themes important?

In an NPR article called, *Want Change In Education? Look Beyond The Usual Suspects*, Anya Kamenetz said the following:

“Up to 70 percent of the tasks in most jobs are on track to be automated, leaving only the most creative, empathetic, technically fluent, collaborative work for humans... Students need to find motivation and meaning, and take a playful attitude that makes it safe to try and fail.

This sentence sums up what we are aiming for in 5S. We are not just gathering content and skills. We are listening, thinking, sharing, connecting and reaching for new understandings. AND our attitude must be playful. Studies have been done on the pivotal importance of PLAY.

PERFECT TIMING: 5th graders 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* environment: There will be more chances to shape projects to match their own interests. And just as 5th graders appreciate choice, they also benefit when expectations are clear and firm.

Systems and routines are comforting and they help students organize their time. With that in mind, 5S students will focus on the following:

- Getting 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!

One hot button topic throughout the lives of students is... Homework (a.k.a. P.S. Work)

Homework should *help your child* do the following:

- o connect what we do within the classroom to the outside world and actually get outside!
- o reinforce what we have studied during the day
- o stimulate and strengthen your child's brain and body and creativity
- o give your child a better understanding of his or her own learning style and a chance to explain his or her own thinking

Homework should **NOT** be stressful, boring or a waste of time

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 exchange ideas 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 burden

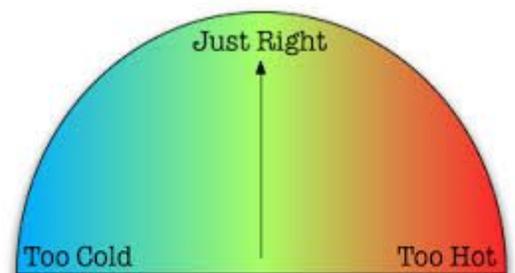
These skills will help a great deal as your child heads into the middle school and beyond

WORK HARD - NO STRESS - BALANCE

In room 302, we have a "Work hard, no stress" policy.



It's not easy; to be successful we must find the right balance. That is why we have the *Goldilocks Guide To Homework*. In 5S, homework is called P.S. Work - post-school work. P.S. Work should take *around* 45 minutes -



plus 20-30 minutes of reading. There are usually three parts: Main, math, and skills. The main assignment should take around 20-30 minutes, the math should take 10-15 minutes, and the skills/exercise should take 5-10 minutes. If your child is consistently speeding through assignments, then the work is not challenging or

thought provoking 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 important that your child becomes more aware of the questions or frustrations he or she has and can communicate 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 are confusing. Doing that might come as a relief, and it is an important skill unto itself.

If your child forgets to do the assignment 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 he or she forgot and what might prevent this from happening in the future. It will also help us tweak an organizational system your child might need.

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:

In order to help pay for 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:

We are in the midst of finishing Listening conferences- Fall/Winter conferences will occur in late November and early December. I will send you the dates once I have them.

CURRICULUM:

Please note a curriculum overview for all 5th graders in

Brookline [can be found here:](#)

Below is information specific to our Driscoll and our class.



Our science units are:

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

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

Social Studies:

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, Dr. Talukdar and Mr. Youkilis, are our supreme court.

The setting in U.S. history often takes place along rivers. That is why we have a river table in our room. For a good part of the year, our river table will become a model for a fictional Massachusetts colonial village along the Charles River.

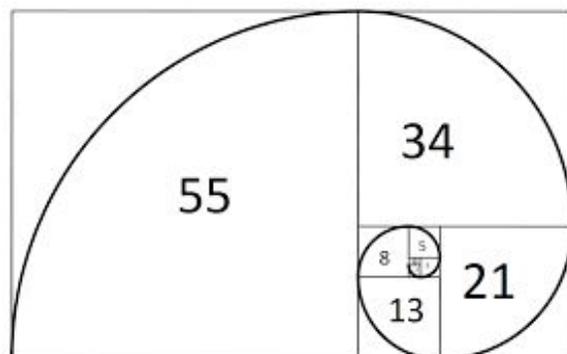
Math:

We will work so that students EXPLORE and COMMUNICATE new ideas and questions.

- What did you wonder?
- What did you notice?
- Now what do you wonder?

Our goals are to:

- observe patterns and relationships between numbers
- learn, efficient, logical ways to solve problems
- apply what we focus on in school to our lives outside of school
- show how much practice does help comprehension
- learn test-taking strategies - it does relieve stress and improve outcomes.
- improve communication of math ideas in writing- expressing ones reflections and problem solving strategies is a key part of math and science



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. We will have read aloud, book clubs, silent reading and paired reading. 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 (or a life). . 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, reviews, 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 words shine.



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.

That’s it for now. I hope this packet and other forms of communication like the FSC, webpage, emails and meetings help you feel connected and included in our class. We also hope you know that your input, questions and connections are appreciated. Time moves quickly so we want to make the most of it.

Sincerely,
Francesca Stark