Dear First Grade Families,

 Your student is about to become a published author! Isn’t that so exciting? I know that these first graders have been working for an hour each day on their writing pieces. When the time is up, I have to practically beg them to stop. Their work ethic, stamina, and desire to do the best that they can do is astonishing. I am so excited to send the manuscript out this weekend. I am not sure when the books will come in, but this book will certainly be a keepsake for years to come.

 In ELA this week, we have been working on ending sounds. We already know how to make a new word by changing the beginning sound, and this week, we explored making new words by changing the ending sound. This is a tough concept for kids, and we have spent a couple of days on it. For example, I would ask them to say the word map. Then I would ask them to say the last sound, which is /p/. I then asked them to switch the /p/ to a /t/ sound. Then, they would say the whole new word, which is mat. This requires a lot of visualizing, concentration, and really knowing those letter sounds. You can certainly practice this at home with your student, but stick with using three letter words, such as cat to cap, cob to cop, bat to bag, etc. Students also have been writing up a storm. They chose their own pieces of writing to rewrite. Some samples are two pages long, and some are a couple of sentences. No matter what the length of the piece is, the student chose it because it was their best work in their eyes. The first grade also participated in their reading groups again this week, which was nice to have that time to work in small groups again. We also practiced using the strategy “look carefully at the whole word” on a story that was a level G reading. This is a tough reading level, but students were able to do it with support and reminders. I was certainly proud of them all! Students practiced their –est chunk as well, and they learned how to run the CD player for the Listen to Reading center. I was impressed by how careful, considerate, and talented they were with running the technology and taking care of the materials. We even worked on tracking when listening to reading because if you do not track or follow along with the words, how can you know when to turn the page! Next week, we will continue with learning these skills.

 In Math this week, students were assessed with their Common Formative Assessment on Unit 2. They worked on learning how to choose a strategy as well. This is a tough thing to do. You have to have strong number sense, know the strategies, know when to use them, choose one, and then solve the problem correctly. So, we have been focusing on counting on and counting back with subtraction. On Tuesday, we learned when to use either strategy. For example, if a problem was 20-19=? I would choose to count on because the numbers are close and it I would only have to count on to 20 instead of counting back 19. If a problem was 15-3=? I would choose to count back because it makes more sense to count back 3 spots, then to count on from 3 to 15 since the numbers are farther away. This logic is vital for students to develop. I think what blows my mind away is when the students look at me, solve a problem and can fully explain and defend their answer. That is a skill that needs to be nurtured because it will make them lifelong learners who pay attention to how they solve something and not just the answer.

 In Science we focused on our trout again! We are officially onto week 3 with the little ones, and their bodies have really changed. You can see their spine and bodies developing in their eggs. How cool is that? The class observes, describes, and writes about them every Friday, which is a lot of fun considering we have a class of authors. In Social Studies, we played jeopardy together about Martin Luther King Jr. and we compared and contrasted his time with our time now. Ms. Burkham, our librarian, was visiting us, and was completely blown away by the conversation that we had during our compare and contrast activity.

 Overall, we were busy, we worked hard, and we produced some amazing work. I could not be more proud of them; however, I manage to be even more proud as the year goes on. I am definitely excited for next week.

 I hope that you have a fun, safe, and warm weekend.

Ms. LaCasse

**Parent Reminders:**

* Report cards came out today. Please contact me if you would like to schedule a parent/teacher conference.
* Scholastic book orders were due today
* Early Release day on February 10th, 2015
* Don’t forget to check out our website! I posted some of the math videos on there that the kids love to sing too! <http://www.gesgrade1.weebly.com/>

**Classroom needs:**

Help! We desperately need the items below!

* Clorox wipes/disinfecting wipes
* Ziploc Bags (another brand and any size will be perfect)
* Expo Markers
* Socks (we use them for erasers for our whiteboards. We will take donations, just please make sure they are washed first!)
* Plastic Spoons