

Dear CRICKETS and families,

Hello to new and returning CRICKETS. We hope you are enjoying your summer vacation. We have been enjoying ours, and are busy planning for the upcoming school year and look forward to seeing you in September.

Our classroom emphasizes individual research, student choice, cooperative small group projects, and first hand exploratory experiences with teacher guidance and support, while traditional lectures and teacher directed activities are de-emphasized. This places a great deal of responsibility on your child, as he/she is required to plan how portions of each day will be spent. The CRICKETS team is at once a unique opportunity and a serious responsibility for the student who undertakes it. The more effort each student puts into the learning experiences, the more all benefit from it. Your child's individual willingness to exceed minimal requirements, work independently, share ideas with others and work in cooperative groups will determine their success. All activities are designed to foster responsibility, creativity, curiosity, and cooperation.

This cooperative spirit also extends to the parents who are directly involved in their child's learning. Whether it is accompanying us on field trips, mentoring a robotics team, visiting the classroom, attending student led conferences, reading this letter with your child, or reviewing your child's work or goals weekly, parents are vital to our students' success and we welcome your participation in any way you are comfortable.

Our first unit of study will focus on watersheds. This unit gives students many opportunities to develop their understanding of how water moves through and across the land, and how human activities impact the availability and quality of the water. During this unit students will have the opportunity to visit Mystic Aquarium to take part in workshops, and to canoe/kayak part of the Pawcatuck River. More details on these trips will be sent home in September. In October, we will study the Presidential election. Also in October we will begin the FIRST Lego League project. Once we begin this project, students will be conducting a research project, developing a presentation on their solutions and building and programming a LEGO robot. They will participate in a regional tournament later in the fall. The challenge theme and related research project requires students to investigate current issues facing our modern world, and brings the reality of science and technology to students on a hands-on level. This year's theme is Climate Connections, which asks students to explore the earth's past, present and future climates and the links between science, people, resources and communities.

As you prepare for the new school year, we thought it might be helpful for new and returning CRICKETS to receive a list of school supplies needed to begin the school year.

- Pencils, pencils, and more pencils (keep some at home too!)
- Pens (blue or black)
- White lined filler paper for 3 ring binders (several packets for home and school)
- Five 3 ring binders (1 inch size)
- 10 to 15 notebook dividers
- Colored pencils
- Highlighters
- Graph paper
- Box of tissues
- Memory stick/thumb drive

Throughout the school year, your child will also need several project display boards. It may be easiest to purchase these now to have on hand when they are needed. As you purchase backpacks, please remember that backpacks with wheels do not easily (if at all) fit in lockers, and we do not have space in the classroom for them.

To help new students transition to our team, each new student will be paired with a buddy. Your child's buddy will introduce him/her to practices and procedures special to our team and work with him/her during the first few weeks. We invite new and returning CRICKETS and their families to stop by, say hello, and possibly meet your buddy on Wednesday, August 27. Please feel free to visit this informal gathering in our classroom any time between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

Relax and enjoy the last few weeks of summer vacation. We anticipate a wonderful year and look forward to catching up with returning CRICKETS and meeting our new team members.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Derry
Natalee Denard