

In the spotlight of “Celebrating Literacy” this week: first grade, second grade and high school Business Tech classes.

### **STRUCK BY LIGHTNING: COLLABORATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL-**

Every week Mrs. Curtis’s first grade students are playing with **lightning** ... and their parents are joining in ... with Lightning Words Homework. At the beginning of each week, students are timed on reading a list of 25 first grade CVC words (consonant, vowel, consonant) (words like: rag, pen, bit, job, bell, fun). This list is then sent home in a chart with five words across and five words down with the request that Mom and Dad spend some time with their child as he/she reads the words from top to bottom and across ... “as fast as lightning”. At the end of the week, Mrs. Curtis again checks to see how long it takes each student to read the list in order to assess if there is increased automaticity. This home/school partnership provides students extra practice in \*reading fluency and is contributing to an overall improvement in students’ decoding skills. Because the pattern of the weekly words has been CVC, students have been able to generalize their knowledge of letter-sound combinations. The next phase of playing with lightning is to introduce nonsense words, which will give students an additional challenge and provide Mrs. Curtis an effective way of assessing their decoding and phonic skills.

\* Reading fluency at the word level is the ability to read quickly, smoothly, easily, and with expression. To read fluently, a reader must understand how the symbols on the page (the letters) are related to the sounds of the language, how those sounds are blended together to form words, and what the words mean.

### **BUILDING BLOCKS: CONNECTING LETTERS AND SOUNDS -**

There is a “Sound Wall” in Ms. Gray’s second grade classroom that students use as they go about the business of reading and writing. It isn’t the only tool used by second graders to help them explore and practice letter/sound correspondence, but it is the one that is readily available at all times for all students.

The “Sound Wall” helps students know the sound or sounds that are represented by each letter or letter combinations and how to pronounce and/or spell words. When is it /ai/ instead of /ay/? The “Sound Wall” reminds students that they sound the same!!! Ah...yes ... /ai/ is found at the beginning or middle of a syllable ... Never used at the end of a word ... while the /ay/ spelling is always found at the end of the word or syllable. Is this word spelled with an /i/ or an /e/? Oh yes... the pattern is on the “Sound Wall”. The “Sound Wall” supports students in monitoring their own work and being independent as they read and write in class.

Knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and phonological awareness skills are the basic building blocks of literacy learning and are strong predictors of how well students learn to read and write.

### **NOW and FUTURE: WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW -**

Mrs. Lyons’ Business Tech classes provide students in grades 10, 11, and 12 with opportunities to learn and practice some

of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are recognized as essential for their future success in school, at work, and as citizens. With the explosion of both technology and easy accessibility to information, young people need to know how to work collaboratively, think critically, solve problems, and be well versed in digital literacy. Mrs. Lyons's classes are designed in order to provide each student individualized and sequential instruction as well as hands-on training.

Although students move through the curriculum at their own pace, each is expected to show competency in his/her grasp of electronic skills and to understand that being successful in business requires knowledge of finance, communication, marketing, advertising, and human resources. Embedded within the classes for all students is work experience in the form of contributing to the 2016 Yearbook. As students return to school in early January, this project becomes more relevant as they now must be mindful of and respond to the demands of real-life deadlines, hone their photo shop editing skills, and put into practice their understanding of the five components of business.

**"Literacy** is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. The ability to **read, write, and communicate** connects people to one another and empowers them to achieve things they never thought possible. **Communication and connection** are the basis of who we are and how we live together and interact with the world." International Literacy Association (2015)

