Hello Awesome Squad Members,

I enjoyed seeing many of you at the open house last Thursday. I’m continually struck by how many wonderful things I have to share about each of my students. I’ve been putting in 70+ hour weeks writing curriculum and completing assessments, but I am going to make an effort to devote more time to calling parents. It’s uplifting to talk about all of the growth and positive things going on in our room.

I am in the process of finishing up most of the beginning of year assessments. I will be sending the results home as I finish grading them. In general I will communicate the results of several types of assessments throughout the year. Most of the assessments are self-explanatory, but one that I will be using throughout the year for math and language arts use the AIMSweb program and require some interpretation. The assessment consists of probes that are analytically scored and compared to national norms. Students take a similar difficulty-level test throughout the year and are expected to make regular progress towards a set goal. All assessment data is entered into a program that creates a table showing progress. I will be using AIMSweb to monitor math computation skills (addition, subtraction, mulitplcation, and division), general math skills associated with the fourth grade curriculum, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing fluency (how quickly students can write on a particular topic). These are not stand-alone assessments of a student’s ability in a particular subject, but are helpful because it allows me to compare student growth towards other students in our class, the district, and the nation. I have set a goal of achieving approximately the 95th percentile nationally for each assessment. The graph I send home will have your child’s and data points documenting growth. A dotted line shows projected future achievement and a solid line shows the growth needed to meet benchmarks by the end of the year.

I am still in the process of setting up our class website, but my goal is for it to be our main method of communicating what our classroom is doing with you and the world. I would like for every student to have a page on the website to share information about themselves and showcase their work. It would contain a biography of the student, his/her interests, and samples of his/her work. I am fully aware of the dangers of sharing information on the Internet, but I think that giving our class experience using this increasingly important tool will prepare them for what the future will bring. Students will have time during the day to upload data on their webpage. Students will only be able to work on webpages during school hours, and I will strictly monitor the contents of their pages. All of the pages that they create can be password protected so that only you have access to them. The google drives the district is creating for each student will be an important tool for creating these pages. They can create media at home, put it into the drive and then post it a school. If you haven’t done so, please fill out the district permission letter for the google drive. I can send home another one if needed.

I am also working very hard to fundraise for our classroom reef system. I’ve emailed almost a hundred companies and organizations. I’ve gotten several good leads but so far I have only raised 25 dollars. I know that many of you have shared that you are willing to personally donate money. I appreciate that you want to help, but Miss Camacho (Garden Hill’s principal) requested that parents not donate personal funds for this project. This said there are many things you can do to help. I am in contact with the Decatur area reef club and will have a booth representing our class at their annual convention this Saturday. I will share information about our class and hopefully collection some donations. If you are interested, I encourage you to come. There will be many interesting marine aquarium-related booths and the event sponsor promised me that he would find cool jobs, such as cutting up coral frags, for any students who come. The event is from 12-4 PM at Millikin University (see attached flyer) this Saturday. If you’re interested, please contact me and we can arrange transportation details.