Dear parents and caregivers,

I introduced our class blog to the students this week. They seem very excited and got a big kick out of looking at other third grade blogs from California, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. This letter will explain how the blog will be used to support the students' learning, along with details about the steps I take for Internet safety.

One of the primary goals of the blog is to increase the school/home connection by providing families with a window into the class’ activities. The blog also “opens” the class to an audience of peers from around the world who have similar blogs. This provides students with a sense of authenticity for their reading and writing.

Below are some of the educational benefits that blogging provides:

• Students have an authentic audience for their writing and their ideas, and that has an impact on the quality of their work.
• Students revisit and reflect upon the lessons when they read the posts on the blog. The learning doesn’t stop when the chapter or unit ends - commenting keeps the learning alive.
• Students learn keyboarding, how to navigate around the Internet and how to present digital information in a variety of ways.
• Students have opportunities to participate and contribute to an online community.
• Students practice a letter-writing form when they comment.
• Students learn about geography by tracking our visitors and sharing comments with our blogging friends around the world.

Since one of the main goals of the blog is to take our learning beyond the classroom walls, it is very important that we use the Internet appropriately and safely. I am the only person who can add anything to the blog, and all comments must first be approved by me before appearing on the site. Below are some additional precautions I take to ensure a safe learning environment: (These guidelines are always available on the blog page “Blogging Guidelines.”)

Blogging Guidelines

• Student work and photos will only be identified by first names. All comments should have first names only.
• Parents who leave comments are asked not to use last names either. (Please post comments as “Jimmy’s mom” or “Megan's grandfather”, etc.)
• All comments submitted have to be approved by Mr. Salsich before they are included on the blog. Inappropriate or sloppy writing will not be approved.
• Proof read your comments carefully. Students should have a family member check for spelling mistakes before submitting a comment.
• Only Mr. Salsich has access to post things on the blog. Later in the year, when students begin to write and type blog entries, they will go through edits and revisions before Mr. Salsich posts them.

• Always write in full sentences and words – no “text talk” please!

Of course, the best way to get an idea of the blog is to visit it! The address is: http://jmsalsich.edublogs.org/ The “About Us” page on the top menu has some short videos about blogs in general and RSS feeds if you want to subscribe.

I’ll be teaching the students how to comment tomorrow, but if you want to get a head start with them, I’m attaching a “How To Write a Good Comment” form. There is also a page on the top menu all about commenting.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Jonah Salsich