Dear Parents:

This week we finished Unit 7: Sing A Song – Paint A Picture. When we return from Winter Break we will begin Unit 8: WinterWeatherland in which we will learn more about winter and weather. In mathematics we have been learning how to measure using non-standard units. The students have also been comparing and ordering objects.

The students practiced so hard to prepare for the Winter Assembly. They performed for the entire student body on Thursday afternoon and for the public on Friday morning. We enjoyed this opportunity to perform in front of an audience.

They should have brought home a large envelope decorated with a reindeer whose antlers were made by tracing your child’s hands. Inside is a gift and card for your family.

The children should know most of the their alphabet letter names, shapes and sounds. During Winter Break, it is important that the students continue to practice their letter skills daily. Many times, children lose some of their skills when they are away from school, so daily practice is vital to retain what they have learned so far this year. Parental involvement is at the heart of student achievement, and you play a pivotal role in the education of your children. We want you to know that we appreciate your involvement and encourage your continued partnership as we enrich the academic experience for our students. We are great believers that education does not happen just at school.

Reading together is one of the best gifts you can give your child. This might be a wonderful time to visit the Humboldt County Library together to select some books to read.

While I am on the subject of Winter Break, I would like to encourage you to make time to read to and with your child during the two weeks of Winter Break. This will help to maintain the skills that they have been developing. I have sent home one of the new orange Read & Respond forms to be completed during break. It is due on Monday, January 4, when we return from Winter Break. I will then send home another Read & Respond to be done during the first week back that will be due on Friday, January 8.

Our Winter Break starts today. There will be no school from December 21 through January 1. School will resume on Monday, January 4.
App of the Week

All the kindergarten classes now have access to iPads to use in the classroom to supplement other student learning activities. We also realize that many families now have smart phones or tablet devices that can be used to enhance student learning at home. With that in mind we will be periodically making recommendations of apps that we have used that we want to recommend for parents to consider putting on their devices at home.

Our first recommendation is an app called LetterSchool. On the surface, LetterSchool may look like just a beautifully crafted handwriting game with a lot of flash and fun, but there’s a lot more to it. We’ll try to explain some of that here.

Kids hit school running
Learning how to write is a tremendous challenge for young children. They must visualize and reproduce a huge number of complex letter trajectories and memorize dozens of related phonics. Letter sounds must be associated with words and numbers with values. LetterSchool ensures that kids absorb all this knowledge as they develop the fine motor skills they need. This optimal preparation for handwriting gives them a head start upon entering school.

Variety increases retention
Each letter or number is practiced in four steps combining different learning approaches:
Intro: memorize the letter’s shape, name and sound
Tap: learn where to start, change direction and finish by tapping the dots on the letter
Trace: learn the letter trajectory by tracing it
Write: test your letter knowledge by writing from memory

Completing the silver level (blue menu) is a massive achievement by itself, but for best results, children should practice all the letters again after a while. This is where the gold level (orange menu) comes in, repeating the same four steps with a whole new set of games and a greater challenge. This extensive practice in two distinct levels ensures the child’s knowledge of letters and numbers will take permanent root.

Simple consistency works for every child
LetterSchool’s simple, consistent method guides the young player with strong clues that work for all children, regardless of their learning styles. LetterSchool is also ideal for children who reverse letters or numbers and children with special needs.

Visual instructions are easiest on the brain
LetterSchool does everything possible to simplify the learning process. Visual instructions are easier to process for a young child’s brain than verbal instructions. Research indicates that verbal instruction would be counterproductive, as they place an extra load on the working memory. That’s why LetterSchool makes exclusive use of visual information to demonstrate letters.