

# THE ANCHOR



The vision of Sarah Smith Elementary is a community where learning is a passion, excellence is achieved, and dreams are realized.

An International Baccalaureate World School

**November 16, 2015**

## **Hello Sarah Smith Community -**

A special thanks to Nicole Stout, Annie May Mueller, and Tiffany Tynan for organizing and implementing the recent Reflections art event on behalf of the PTA. There were approximately 230 entries and the culmination was an awards ceremony held on October 22, 2015 to recognize the entrants and those who received first, second and third places in each category.

Thank you to Wynne Harpenau, Laura Troup and the dedicated team of volunteers for a very successful Fall Festival. The weather was beautiful and everyone enjoyed a fun-filled day of activities and socializing. This event takes an incredible amount of work...thanks to everyone who had a part!

Due to the efforts of our PTA co-presidents, Elizabeth Cox and Yeshi Quarterman and to the tireless work of our former PTA co-president, Mandy Lecompte, the artificial turf project at the primary campus has been completed. Thanks to everyone who had a hand in seeing this project through to the end and to the parents and friends of Sarah Smith who participate in the Read-a-thon which helps to make projects such as these possible.

The Sarah Smith Education Foundation's Annual Campaign is underway. As you know, this is a very important event for the support of our school's curriculum programs. The SSEF provides the funding for items such as International Baccalaureate, Great Books and teacher training. Without your contributions to the SSEF, we are not able to offer such "above and beyond" resources to our students and teachers. If you haven't made your contribution to the SSEF, please do so in order for us to maintain the levels of programs we offer at Sarah Smith. Thanks to Abigail Landt and Shannon Kilborn for their leadership in this year's annual campaign.

## **Focus on Early Literacy –**

Throughout the past few months an Early Literacy Committee, comprised of teachers and administrators, has worked to craft an Early Literacy Plan specific to the needs of Sarah Smith. The research-based plan includes a clear scope and sequence for phonics instruction, handwriting, assessments in the five areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), sight word development, and process writing. The work of this team has been vertically aligned so that teachers in grades K-2 are aware of what students in each grade level should know and be able to do. This work will guide literacy instruction to help ensure students are achieving at appropriate levels. A team of teachers in grades 3-5 will begin the work soon on a similar task for their grade levels.

## **Math Exemplars –**

As many are aware, Sarah Smith teachers embarked on a systematic problem solving approach for the 2014-15 school year which is being used by teachers in grades K-5. The problem-solving approach involves selecting an appropriate strategy, providing reasoning and proof for the function of the problem, communicating the methodology and solution, making mathematical connections and providing appropriate mathematical representations.

In order for students to be scored as "experts" on the scoring rubric in the area of problem solving, they must chose an efficient strategy and use it appropriately to progress towards a solution. If necessary, the students must appropriately make adjustments to the strategy or correctly chose an alternate strategy to

solve the presented problem. There must be evidence of analyzing the situation in mathematical terms and extending their prior mathematical knowledge.

### ***A Featured Program funded by the Sarah Smith Education Foundation –***

The Sarah Smith Education Foundation provides powerful support for the “quality of academics” at our school entirely through your generosity. There are several programs we are able to offer, above and beyond what Atlanta Public Schools covers, through your support of the Foundation.

As has been shared in previous editions of “The Anchor”, one of the school improvement goals for the 2015-2016 school year is to improve literacy, specifically in the areas of early literacy – phonemic awareness and phonics. Thanks to the generous support of the SSEF, teachers have been able to participate in training to hone their instructional skills in these critically important areas. Throughout the coming months, teachers will continue to participate in training with our consultant, Brenda Fitzgerald, in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. The feedback regarding the courses has been excellent; the training will have a strong impact on reading and literacy instruction at Smith.

### ***Staff Feature –***

Each month two staff members are randomly selected and profiled in “The Anchor.” This gives you an opportunity to know a little bit about the wonderful faculty and staff members working with your children every day.

#### **Allison Shepard – Art Teacher**

Birthplace/Hometown – born in Manhattan, Kansas; hometown – Atlanta, Georgia

Education – The University of Georgia, Dual emphasis on Studio Visual Arts and Performing Arts

Personal – Married with triplets; Lived in Europe while in elementary school as her father was in the Army.

Mrs. Shepard enjoys acting, singing and providing private art lessons.

Claim to Fame – Has sung with professional bands in Atlanta and Jacksonville, FL. Performed for Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown as well as on stage at Radio City Music Hall in NYC. Worked with The Dali Lama, creating intimate event spaces for His Holiness, for the different lectures he conducted at Emory University.

Favorite Quote – “The Earth without art would be Eh...” (Author Unknown)

#### **Terry Abromitis – Fifth Grade Teacher**

Birthplace/Hometown – Hackettstown, NJ

Education – Bachelor's in Communications – Penn State University; Master's in Education – Drexel University.

Personal – Running, traveling, softball, theatre, dance.

Claim to Fame – Ms. Abromitis choreographed her senior class play, “The Pajama Game.”

Your Principal,

Ken Proctor, Ed.D.