**Lights, Camera, Fourth Grade!**

Dear Parents,

My name is Christina Ciolino and I am your child’s fourth grade teacher this year. I am accompanied by Gina Keenan. Together we are going to create and provide a caring and nurturing learning environment to help your child grow academically, socially and emotionally throughout the course of the year. It is my goal to provide individualized instruction to help your child reach his or her maximum potential in the fourth grade. We strive for creating an environment filled with kindness, respect, a sense of responsibility and an enthusiasm for learning. I want each child to love learning as much as I do and enter the classroom with a sense of enthusiasm each day, just as I know I will be doing!

We will begin the year with two Classic Novels selected especially for the fourth grade. We will dive right into “The Black Stallion” and “Zlateh the Goat and other stories.” We will analyze these books in depth using a variety of strategies and involve the students in many different activities. We have created in depth units which promote deeper thinking to help develop critical thinking skills. Your children will work on providing text evidence to support their answers, responding to text dependent questions and closed reading skills.

Our Language Arts program will be enhanced through the SRA Imagine It! Program. All of the stories in each unit evolve around a central theme. These central themes allow students to expand their perspectives on a universal theme. Students will be able to relate what they have read to their own personal experiences and expand upon them. In addition, students will be able to take part in the research process and dive into a concept full force. The program also places a strong emphasis on student inquiry and enables them to develop stronger comprehension skills and become more fluent readers.

The Writing program will focus on the development of ideas, organization techniques, vocabulary usage, and strengthening grammar and spelling abilities. Each week your child will be focusing on developing our units’ specific genre. We will focus heavily on argument writing, informative writing and narrative writing throughout the year. Your child will develop their writing skills by analyzing mentor pieces, informational articles and by successfully completing graphic organizers to aid them in the writing process. Your children will also work on expanding their vocabulary through incorporating mature phrases and words into all of their daily writing pieces this year.

For our Spelling program this year I will use the Wilson Just Words program. This program focuses on the spelling structure of words. The students will participate in a variety of different learning activities, which will be presented in a multisensory approach. These activities will teach word patterns, prefixes, suffixes, base words and the six common syllable types. Each week the Spelling words will consist of words in two separate categories: high frequency and phonetically regular words, which will follow the weeks spelling patterns. The high frequency words will be sent home on Fridays’ and should be reviewed throughout the week. This testing style allows us to ensure that students have mastered the actual spelling rule and have not just memorized how to spell a particular word. This program will allow the students to develop confidence in spelling words and create better phonemic awareness. The children will be able to become stronger spellers, readers and writers as a result of mastering these phonemic skills.

This year we will continue to use the Math in Focus - Singapore Math Program which is aligned with the Common Core State Standards. This program places emphasis on a conceptual understanding, skill development, strategies for problem solving, building better attitudes towards math and Meta cognition that allows students to become better problem solvers. Through the use of many math manipulatives and games we aim to approach Math in a fun and exciting way as well as present the information using a variety of strategies. Bar models are commonly associated with this program and will continue to be used during Math instruction. Bar models enable children to have a visual representation of word problems which leads to a symbolic solution of complex problems. Bar models will allow your child to translate word problems into a mathematical equation and helps take the confusion out of not knowing where to start on a complex problem. I am eager to continue their Math education with this program!

I am excited to introduce our fourth grade Science Program. Laurel Hill will be continuing to use the Harcourt Science Program to guide your child through the scientific world around them. This program will be adapted to meet the new Next Generation Science Learning Standards. The Science lessons will allow the students to learn through discovery and support their findings with evidence in many different written pieces. We will start the year off with a nutrition unit and then make our way through three additional units: Life Science, Physical Science and Earth Science. Our Science studies will begin with a school-wide Nutrition unit where they will learn about the importance of eating healthy, balanced meals as well as creating a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle for themselves. We will continue to discuss the importance of a healthy diet throughout the year with our healthy food choices project (please see attachment for more information). Science will be very hands on topic during the school year with labs completed for each unit to help students visualize and experiment for themselves with many topics. Students will complete several projects both in the classroom and at home to further their understanding on the various units.

Your child will walk next door into Mrs. Cardosantos’ room for Social Studies. There, your child will be submersed in the history of New York State. During Social Studies instruction your child will work in collaborative groups and the evaluation of primary documents will be used often. Children will explore historical records and maps to further their understanding of a topic. During our geography lessons your child will be studying New York State as well as the regions of the United States.

Your child will be required to complete several current events during the course of the school year in both Science and Social Studies. This enables students to become well rounded and informed as we discuss topics that affect us each day. Completing these assignments will allow your child to fully engage in conversations in regards to these topics in class. Your child is encouraged to use various media resources including, newspaper, television, the Internet, and magazines.

In addition to the general curriculum, we will be incorporating some more in depth reading pieces known as Exemplar Texts, into Science, Social Studies, Math and Reading this year. Exemplar Texts are pieces of literature ranging from poetry and fiction to scientific journals and historical documents that demonstrate a wide range of reading and text complexity which are appropriately selected for each grade level. Exemplar Texts are used in correlation with our everyday curriculum units.

Homework will be assigned Monday through Thursday. Although homework is not generally assigned on Fridays I encourage your child to read each night. In addition, projects and other small assignments may be assigned on Fridays or may need to be worked on during the weekends for completion. Your child will copy his or her homework down each day in their agenda book. Please encourage your child to read nightly for at least 20 minutes. This will allow your child to develop their fluency skills, and reading comprehension skills. Each week a weekly reading contract will be sent home for you and your child to sign and return. I encourage you to view the nightly homework and alert me of any concerns your child is having with completing the assigned work. You can find out any homework assignments for the night by viewing our homework web page which can be found on our class website. Contact me at anytime with questions or concerns regarding homework.

Parent Involvement with your child during the school year and in the classroom is an integral part of your child’s education. I encourage you to review your Childs homework assignments with them on a nightly basis and to stay informed on what is occurring in the classroom by viewing our website regularly. There will be many opportunities for you to join our classroom throughout the school year. I always welcome your ideas, comments and concerns. Please feel free to contact me whenever you feel it is necessary. Communication through email and phone calls will be answered in a timely fashion. You can reach me through the school at **631-751-1154** or through email at **cciolino@laurelhillschool.org**. I will be sure to keep you updated during the year of important events, field trips and events that require parent involvement. Your cooperation during the year is crucial to a successful school year! I cannot thank you enough for all of your time and assistance.

I am looking forward to an exciting and adventurous school year. I look at each child as an individual who has something unique to offer our classroom, the school, our community and even the world. I want each child to not only succeed but to become the best person they can possibly be! I view the school year and my interactions with your children as a continuation of my growth as a teacher and as a person. I know that your children will teach me just as much as I teach them and I look forward to the new memories and lessons we will form this year! I cannot wait to get to know you and your children throughout the school year.

Warmly,

Christina Ciolino