

Chalkboard

Guest Author- **Dr. Don Rose**, Gentry Intermediate School Principal

The good news is another year is in full swing. You will not have to work hard to figure out what is happening in the Gentry Intermediate School. We will stay focused on the three “Rs” which are reading, writing, and arithmetic. Before you get too upset, I know writing and arithmetic do not start with an “R”; however, they are still a part of the 3 Rs addressed at Gentry Intermediate School.

All Arkansas schools must have an Arkansas Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) on file with the State Department of Education. Our school improvement plan has only changed to help us be more focused on literacy and math. Most of the professional development time for the year helps in the areas of literacy and math. All the new staff was trained in *Writer’s Workshop* so they can be as prepared as the rest of the staff in teaching writing across the curriculum.

Gentry Intermediate Students continue to perform well above the state average on both the Benchmark Exam (CRT) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (NRT). All third through fifth graders took both tests during the 2004 – 2005 school year. Gentry’s students continue to stay well above the minimum adequate yearly progress established by the state.

Parents are always asking what they can do to help their children score well on the state test. Everyone wants to know the “secret” for success. The answer is the same as the school’s focus on the ACSIP.

Reading is one third of the secret. Children must be proficient readers. We ask the children to read at least one AR book a week and make at least 85% on the AR test for that book. All children who did this were proficient or advanced on the state testing. Of course children may read as many books as they would like. They are also allowed to read books that are not AR books. Some of the teachers will allow them to answer questions or do a report to get credit for non-AR books.

Another third of the secret is written response. Children must understand what they read and be able to write answers to specific questions concerning what they read. It is very important that they answer the question that is asked of them and not just write a beautiful paragraph. All the children have weekly experience in writing open response answers.

Math is the final part of the secret. Children must be able to perform all types of math procedures. It is also very important they are able to explain, in written form, their understanding of the math principles used in the solution. All of our children have weekly experience in writing answers to math open response questions. Ask your children questions about the math they are doing. Have them explain to you the steps they are using and why they decided to use that process. Let them know how important math is to daily life.

Now you know the secret. Please share it with everyone you know. Please encourage your children’s reading. Discuss with them the books they are reading and help them make connections in their writing. Connections can be made with other books the children have read. Connections can be made to things that have happened to them. Finally the children can make connections to things that they have observed in the world

around them. Children who are good readers and writers will be successful in their life long learning.

Thank you for your support of our school and your children. If we all continue to work together we will have successful students. Please come to all the events at our school whenever you are able. Many things are happening throughout the year including parent-teacher conferences, parent nights, and grade level programs.