RING MOUNTAIN DAY SCHOOL

MS Science January 11, 2008

Dear Middle School Families,

I hope that you all had a restful holiday. Thank you very much for all your gifts and warm wishes for me and the best gift ever, is the warm welcome and the excitement students all share when they came back to school. Stepping into the New Year, we will continuing to explore topic of genetics and heredity, topics that intrigues all of us; and we will be exploring different human systems in the next coming weeks, as the last topic of Biology towards the end of the semester.

Report cards will be coming out February 1st, in order to promote self-responsibility, students' current grades will be posted in the science room and students have developed their "secret codes" in order to keep their grades private. In the grade book, I have also included participation grades, which is calculated by how well students participate in discussions, lab presentations and other activities. They all started with an 80% and it will go up or down by points depending on students' actions. It has been quite effective as a classroom management tool and most students are very eager to get one more participation point by contributing in class, helping me with cleaning and paying close attention in class.

In science we have been learning about DNA and its structure. The 7th and 8th grades learned about how DNA made RNA and how RNA makes proteins. The 5th and 6th graders built models of an animal cell from scratch. Some of the models were truly amazing such as edible cell cakes and muffins, as well as an illustrated cross section of a cell made of Jell-O and other ingredients. All classes extracted DNA from fruits and vegetables such as Kiwi, Mandarin, and broccoli. We also have been viewing films on the possibility of human cloning and the technology of cloning. It was an eye-opening topic. We discussed how to separate facts from fiction and also the hidden moral and ethical issues that the topic brings; we also talk about what kinds of policy or government control has to be put in place in order for human cloning to be legal. Talking about science and policy making help students gain insight on new technologies that might have interfere with nature (and the whole movement of organic food) and how technology can save many lives and at the same time be potentially dangerous.

Currently, we are learning about heredity and constructing our own family pedigrees. Students always find the topic of dominant and recessive genes fascinating such as brown eyes are dominant over blue, green and hazel eyes. One "byproduct" of constructing family pedigree of different

recessive traits is that students will have to find time to know about their families and relatives. I think it would be a good exercise for all students since we just came back from our break and hopefully got to see some of their families.

I am looking forward to share more good news with you all in science and see you in school.

Sincerely,
Ms. Lee