June 2019

Dear Parents and Students,

 Welcome to Healthy Learning Academy’s 5th grade class! My name is Mr. Becker, and while I’ve gotten to know many of you over the past two years, I’m excited to learn more about you and see how much we can accomplish together!

 While relatively new to HLA, I spent 14 years teaching 4th and 5th grade at Alachua Elementary School, and developed two very important beliefs about teaching. First, I believe that every student is capable of learning. Second, I believe that in order to be successful, teachers and parents need to work together to ensure that students perform to their optimum level. Parents, I look forward to working with each and every one of you to make sure that your children receive the best education possible, and are given the skills to be successful, productive members of society.

 Being able to read and communicate effectively is essential in our daily lives, and, because of this, we will continue to build upon the skills introduced in 4th grade. I hope to integrate reading skills in social studies and science, but, to truly be effective, I ask that we set aside a minimum of 20 minutes each day to read at home. Reading aloud will help with fluency and voice expression, as well as open a dialogue that will benefit comprehension. Attached to this letter, you will find a reading log that needs to be completed over the summer. I ask that students complete one summary per month (two total summaries) on a grade-appropriate chapter book of his/her choice. Reading summaries will be due the first week of school for a grade and “Becker Bucks.”

 In addition to reading often, it is imperative that we continue to work on math facts over the summer. To be successful in 5th grade, students need to be able to recall basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. While there are many helpful websites, the biggest piece of advice that I can offer is to invest in flash cards. Everything we do in 5th grade is dependent upon students knowing their multiplication facts (up to their 12’s), whether it’s division, factoring, or simplifying fractions. Flash cards are relatively cheap, and the repetition will ensure memorization. With some practice over the summer, students will find the transition between 4th and 5th grade to be much smoother.

 I believe it is my job to prepare students not only for 5th grade, but for 6th grade and beyond. Therefore, you may see an increase in homework assignments this year. Math and spelling will be assigned daily, and there will be occasional assignments in vocabulary, social studies, and science. Please know that homework is not “busy work.” It reinforces and expands upon what was taught in class, and prepares students for testing. In addition, it can be used as an excellent way to review before a test. Homework is expected to be neat, and turned in on-time. All assignments, except spelling, can be typed.

 To further guarantee success beyond the 5th grade, we will learn essential skills, such as highlighting and note-taking. We’ll read class novels, write research papers, and do experiments. We’ll write stories, design Science Fair projects, and get our hands dirty in the garden. Most importantly, however, we’ll do all of this while having fun in a safe and supportive atmosphere. We will work together to become a team that celebrates our successes and learns from our failures. I spent my time at Alachua Elementary being a disciplinarian, and I do expect my students to be responsible and mature young adults. However, if students do their jobs, and always put forth their best effort, they will be showered with praise, and find the best reward is the pride they feel at being successful.

 Once the school year starts, you will begin to receive a weekly copy of “The Becker Bulletin” to keep you informed of homework assignments and classroom news. However, you can always reach me at jbecker@hlacharter.com should you have any questions or concerns. Working together, I know that we will have a great school year. Have an amazing summer, and know that I am looking forward to seeing each and every one of you in August.

-Mr. Becker