Math—A State of Mine

May 15, 2001

Dear Parents:

As you know, your child has been involved in an integrated technology and math project for the last eight weeks between the fourth grade students in Mrs. Fincher's fourth grade and the Math 6 students in Mr. Fincher's class. The purpose of this project was to help students understand that mathematics was developed by real people to help them explore and explain the world around them and that they, too, are mathematicians. The focus was exploring mathematical history by researching key figures in the various branches of mathematics. Other objectives were for the students to understand their mathematician's mathematical developments and see the application of that mathematics to their world.

In the ten sessions that the students have been together, the students have been introduced to and practiced many skills connected to their mathematics study. The skills are:

- Prewriting using graphic organizers and navigation page layout
- Generating secondary questions embedded within the primary questions.
- Researching information using a variety of electronic and print databases.
- Following the writing process, with a stress on content and editing.
- Researching a known historical figure from a variety of sources.
- Judging the validity of the information found and resolving conflicting details.
- Translating above grade level information and defining unknown vocabulary words.
- Using data to support suppositions and inferences.
- Explaining concepts in language understandable to peers.
- Paraphrasing and summarizing.
- Citing sources and granting of permission for usage was taught.
- Developing and connecting information non-linearly.
- Cooperatively working with one or two partners to develop a joint project.

In addition to all of the higher order work, students had to pay attention to the myriad frustrating details required to develop a project for the web. These included using style sheets to define appearance, choosing colors, creating appropriate titles and file names, watching download times, successfully working on the same page without deleting their partner's work... For the students, the list seems to go on forever sometimes, especially the day before the project is due.

This site is **their own work**. The content, language construction, links and the graphic design are the students' and, as such, represent their current level of functioning. Before the site is fully published to the web, we are asking you and your child review the site your child and partner(s) have made and then critically evaluate their work using the attached parent/student rubric. The site is at http://www.asijonline.net/math. After the parent/student rubric has been returned, along with the permission slip, the teachers will clean up the sites, link them, and then post them. At that time, we will give back our teacher evaluation.

The students in both classes have worked hard, somewhat akin to carp swimming upstream at times, but we both feel that their hard work shows. It is just amazing to us that nine-to-thirteen year olds are capable of doing what they are doing, when you consider in all our collective heydays we were reading out of textbooks and doing fill-in-the-blanks. It has been an interesting, and rewarding, pilot project for us.

Sincerely,

Bridgette Fincher
4th Grade

Derrel Fincher
6th Grade