March 13th, 2014

**![MCj04174640000[1]]()**Dear 5th Grade FOCUS Parent

The COWS project was originally created as a meaningful project built around gifted standards and Gwinnett County AKS with the ultimate goal of empowering students to realize that they can make a difference and impact their world.

Your child has spent time researching needs within their school, community and throughout the world through the project we refer to as *C.O.W.S.* (***C****hanging* ***O****ur* ***W****orld at* ***S****tarling*). Each student has selected a cause he or she would like to impact and turned in their planning packet to Mrs. Asters, my substitute before Christmas break. Due to my delayed return to work, our time to schedule and conduct individual fundraisers, collections or campaigns is very limited. We have decided, instead, to host a *Read-a-thon* now through the end of April to raise money and awareness for all of causes these students selected.

This will involve each student seeking pledges (flat fees or donations according to time devoted to reading) from Starling families, friends and/or local businesses to raise funds to send to an organization currently working to impact the cause individual students have chosen.

Students may gain support using a paper pledge form (attached) or may rally support through social media. Connecting with friends and family on *Facebook*, *Twitter* or simply through e-mail blasts are all great ways to generate interest and support with parental guidance and permission, of course. We have created a class web site for collecting on-line donations directly to organizations whose links were provided to me by the students. We are also planning to have a station set up at the March 20th PTA meeting to share the site with parents and rally support for the students and their causes.

There are a few other technology-based ways for students to generate interest and get donations. Several students expressed an interest in creating individual web sites. *Weebly* is a very simple one we’ve used. On-line fundraising sites are also available, but many charge nominal fees and ask for personal information. I have investigated a few of these and *GoFundMe.org* is one that allows students to set up a page in a very few minutes to request support and donations. (I created a sample page in less than 5 minutes and it only requires a first and last name and an e-mail address.) The site processes donations through a secure account but does charge a minimal fee for the service.

Although participation in this event is the expectation, no “grades” will be given. Students have been assessed on the research/planning portion of the project based on the planning packets they already completed and turned in. Also, students do have the option of carrying out their original “plan” instead of participating in the *Read-a-thon* event. Students who participate will be rewarded for their efforts and prizes will also be awarded! I hope you will encourage your child to read to make a difference!

Sincerely,

Darlene Bartik