

*Dear Parents:*

Our class is about to embark on an author study of Patricia Polacco. We've chosen Patricia Polacco because her books combine humor and drama in a unique way. In addition, most of Polacco's books are based on stories from her own family, leading to the theme of our author study — the interest and importance of family stories.

Polacco's books are published in a picture book format, but most of them are best appreciated by older elementary school-aged children (ages 8 and up), who will be able to uncover and understand the complexities in her deceptively-simple stories.

As a class, we will focus on five of Polacco's books during our author study: *My Rotten Red-Headed Brother*, *My Ol' Man*, *The Butterfly*, *Pink and Say*, and *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. Students also will be asked to read other Polacco books (available in our classroom's Author Study Center) during daily silent reading time so they can expand their knowledge of Polacco's writing and artwork. We also will encourage students to take home these books in their "Book in a Bag" kits.

After reading each of our five focus books, we will do classroom activities so students can deepen their understanding of the stories that Polacco tells. We also will be looking in each book for clues about Polacco herself, adding them to our poster about Polacco. Toward the end of the author study, students will go to the Media Center and work with the media specialist on researching Polacco's life. (This will accomplish the dual goal of having students find biographical information about Polacco and learning some basic research skills). Students also will be studying Polacco's artwork during art class; one assignment will ask them to do an illustration in Polacco's style.

Students will each have a notebook in which they keep track of their response to Polacco's stories. They also will be asked to use the notebook for various at-home assignments during the author study. Each student also will be required to complete a final project. A list of possible ideas for the final project is attached to this letter. Before starting on their final project, students should talk with me to have their project approved. We're hoping to have an "Author Night" in which students will share their final projects with parents and other family members. Stay tuned for more details!

I am very excited about doing this author study project, where students will learn many things, such as noticing an author's writing style, finding clues to biographical information in an author's books and learning to make connections between books and their own lives. I hope the author study highlights the importance of family stories for students, and also helps persuade them that reading is an activity that is both fun and personally fulfilling.

Thanks for your support of our author study!