

November 29, 2007

Dear First Grade Families,

Beginning this week, all First Graders will receive a reading packet as homework on Thursdays. The packets will contain a self-chosen book or books, a reading log and a response sheet. The children will follow the system outlined below for choosing their books:

The Bookmark System

We have designed a two-level bookmark system, which will support “just-right”* book choice, encourage students’ love of literature and facilitate communication among teachers, parents and students. Children will be selecting books from the classroom library and choosing bookmarks that correspond with their choice. For example, when choosing a “just-right” book to take home and read, a child will also select a bookmark that reads, “**This is a book I can read by myself.**” Some books are almost within a child’s grasp, but as they work on decoding, they often lose key points in the story. This will be indicated by the bookmark, “**This is a book we can read together.**”

This system encourages children to take home books that interest them from a range that is accessible to the individual child. At the same time, they are developing their understanding of which books they should be reading on their own and which should be shared with you. Teachers will work with children to review their choices and to make necessary adjustments along the way. The goal is to have children pick “just-right” books more often than not. We will encourage children to challenge themselves so that they are constantly moving forward and stretching themselves as readers.

This is what the color-coded bookmarks indicate:

This is a book I can read by myself.	<i>This yellow bookmark should accompany a “just-right” book.</i>
This is a book we can read together.	<i>This green bookmark should accompany a book in which the child requires some support to read accurately and understand. While she/he might be able to figure out most of the words, in general the child seems to be losing the story as he/she reads. Some behaviors which indicate a “read-together” book:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Stopping and starting; staggered reading</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Encountering more than five unfamiliar words on a page</i><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inserting words that change the meaning</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ <i>Not recognizing mistakes that change meaning</i>❑ <i>Unable to retell in a way that is accurate and makes sense</i>
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What happens after reading?

Reflecting and Talking About Books

After they have read a book, we hope children will reflect back on whether or not their choices were accurate: *Was I able to understand this book on my own? Was it a "just-right" book, or could I have used some help? Did I end up needing help from someone?* Obviously, they also should be reflecting upon the story, the characters, making connections, etc.

Most importantly, we encourage you to take part in this "after reading" time. Help your child decide what type of book this was for her/him. Engage him/her in conversations about the book: help her/him make connections, etc.

The Reading Log

Please note that children will also begin bringing home Reading Logs in which they will record each book's title. Additionally, using crayons or colored pencils, they will note what type of book choice it was by coloring a yellow or green dot in the correct box. This log will serve not only as a record of books read, but also as a record of the book choices your child is making.

The Book Bag

Books will come home in your child's book bag every **Thursday**. Please return the book bag, along with all books and bookmarks and the reading log on the following **Monday**.

All steps in this process, including bookmark choices and reading logs, will be thoroughly gone over in class. Your child is the expert! Please do not hesitate to ask us questions as we move forward together.

Happy Reading!

The First Grade Teachers