

Students and Parents/Guardians,

Please read the following information and mark it up with questions, underline important points, etc. It is meant to be an overview/guide to help you understand how to be involved as the year goes on. It will hopefully all make more sense as students get familiar with the routines. Please initial each section after reading with your child/parent.

Homework Overview

Students will carry a planner to and from school each day. We will work together in class to learn how to use this as a tool for organization, keeping track of assignments, and communicating with parents. The weekly newsletter will give you information about each week's studies and events. ____

Students will have time in class each day to do their assignments and some reading, and are also expected to read at least 30 minutes each night. Sometimes this book will be complete student choice, sometimes a specific genre, or sometimes a book the whole class or a small group is studying. The expectation is that students work towards reading a variety of genres and a balance of nonfiction and fiction. When looking for balance we consider level, length, challenge, etc. Students can check out books from the class, use personal books and the library. ____

Students should record all reading in the reading log and share what they read with a parent/guardian each day. They should ask the grown up to initial the log after it is filled out accurately. This builds in accountability for reading work, interaction with parents about the school day, as well as record keeping for students. ____

Reading homework is the only homework that will typically be assigned. You can see topics of study in the weekly newsletter and if you want to work at home on things like studying vocabulary or improving spelling, as the year goes on you will find a glossary of words in the back of the Literature Notebook and a list of spelling words in the front and back of the Writer's notebook. ____

What should you expect to see?

Students prepare work for their books in the Literature Notebooks and will get to share about the book in a reading conference. To prepare for this reading conference work, students will have time in class to prepare sticky notes so that while they are actively reading, they can mark literary elements/points of interest. They will have time in class each day to mark text with stickies and write comments on them, though they are welcome to do this at home as well. ____

When a student first brings a book home, you will see sticky notes in the front cover with the titles: tension, mood, character, theme, vocabulary, sharing, confusion/question, and figurative language/author's craft. As each day passes you should see stickies marked throughout the book and comments and page numbers on the notes. It is important that the sticky notes are added as the student reads and not at the end after reading. ____

Students will also write a reading contract in their planner. This shows the reading goals/what page the student plans to read to each night until the book is complete. The general rule is about 25-30 pages per night/30 minutes for a book at the student's level. Depending on the level, interest, skill level, and speed everyone will be a little different. If a student is unable to read 25 pages in 30 minutes, ask these questions: *Did you choose to read in an area where you can focus and enjoy the book/pay attention? Is there just enough new vocabulary but not so many unfamiliar/challenging words that you can still comprehend the book? Is the book at the right level for you?* ____

The next day after the book is completed, class time should be used to write a brief summary of the book while it is fresh and before a new book is checked out. Details of conference preparation are in the front cover of the Literature Notebook. When this work is completed, it should be turned in for teacher feedback. Lessons in class will help students understand conference expectations. ____

On most work in the notebooks, you will see a check system for feedback as well as comments. A check with a circle around it means it is complete, just a check means there's more to do/it's incomplete, and a check with a "c" next to it means to make some corrections. Students can revise the work and turn back in again. Please ask your child to bring home their notebooks and share with you. ____

What should you expect to hear?

Students should be able to tell you about the book they are reading. They should be able to sum up what they've read, tell you about the characters, the setting, connections and questions they have, predictions, reactions, etc. Reading aloud with family members is still a really helpful activity! It is a great time to enjoy a story together, talk about a book, try new vocabulary words with some help, and work on expressive, fluent reading. ____

Conversation starters

Parents often tell me that when they ask questions of their children, they don't hear much in response. Sometimes you might ask, "Did you do your homework?" and "Do you have homework?" and get simple answers of yes and no. Here are some other ideas to help you discuss learning and see what your child is working on. ____

What are you reading about? Show me the book you checked out. Why did you choose this book?

What other books does it remind you of?

Show me your reading log and explain how you fill it out. /Show me your log and what you've read so I can sign it for you.

Tell me about the sticky notes you prepared.

Share a passage you thought was really interesting, beautiful, compelling, etc.

Show me your reading contract in your planner. Have you been keeping your contract?

What genre is the book you chose? Why do you think so?

What new/unfamiliar/challenging word did you read today? What do you think it means? Can you guess the meaning by reading around the word in context?

What are you learning about in social studies?

What books are you reading in class?

Show me your planner and tell me about your day so I can sign it for you.

Have you read this week's newsletter? Let's read it together.

What is something you have a question about?

Share a poem that you have added to your Poetry Anthology. Why did you choose it? How does it feel? Why did you illustrate it the way you did?

Show me an assignment you feel proud of. ____