

Dear Parents,

Can you believe that it's the second week of school already? This week fifth/sixth grade students are doing their About Me Speeches. It's been so much fun getting to know your children as they give their speeches.

This week we shared our goals with the class. Each student came up with a goal for themselves that they want to accomplish this year in language arts. Some students want to become better spellers. Other students want to become better readers or read more. Still other students want to become better writers. One student wants to learn how to write mysteries. Another student wants to become better at brainstorming topics to write about. Make sure to ask your child what their dream for the school year is in language arts!

Another exciting thing we did this week in language arts is we learned about reading workshop. Every other day for the remainder of the school year, with the possible exception of a couple special units, your student will get to participate in reading workshop.

Reading workshop is a well researched student centered way of teaching reading. Reading workshop begins with a whole class mini lesson on either a reading strategy/skill or literary elements/ literary techniques. This is usually accomplished through a read aloud. After this mini lesson students will have thirty minutes to read. During this quiet reading time students may read independently, with a partner, or with a small group of students if they are reading the same book. In the beginning of the school year, I will spend most of my time circulating throughout the room to answer questions and help students during quiet reading time. As students learn the reading workshop routines, I will be able to teach mini-lessons to groups of students as needed and hold reading conferences.

During reading conferences I will be talking to students about the book they are reading to check for comprehension in addition to doing assessments to check for reading fluency. What I learn about where students are as readers will help me determine what reading strategies and skills I need to teach students in small groups during quiet reading time. After quiet reading time, students will have about ten minutes to share with the class about books they are reading which may take the form of formal book reports or informal sharing.

This week I also introduced book reports. Your fifth/sixth grade student will be required to read and do book reports on six chapter books before Christmas break. Of the six required books, two of them must be from my classroom library of good literature or another piece of good literature I approve. The other four books can be any chapter book at your child's reading level. Please note that chapter books don't have to be a certain length. Two of the book reports must be a summary of the book in essay format. The

remaining book reports can be presented in any way. The first book report is due October 1st. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about this assignment.

Finally, since we all know that the best way to get better at something is to practice I have assigned your students the ongoing homework assignment to read for thirty minutes each day outside of school. Since this is new for students, please ask your child if they remembered to read for thirty minutes each day, especially if they are a reluctant reader.

Last but not least, please look for a spelling list to come home next week with your child. Each week we will go over the new words on Monday and then it will up to your child to study their spelling words outside of class before the test on Friday.

If you have any questions or concerns about reading workshop, book reports, spelling or anything else please do not hesitate to drop me an e-mail. I typically check my e-mail before school, at lunch, and after school.

Sincerely,

Katie Befort