

October 18, 2007

Dear Parents,

Thank you for the great start to our school year. It is evident that many of you are working with your children in an effort to ensure success. As most of you know, reading is a main focus at our school. We appreciate all the assistance and encouragement you give your children in this area.

As we teach reading, our main goal and purpose is to teach a child to read so that he or she understands (comprehends) what is being read. Without understanding, there is really no purpose to reading. Therefore, if a student is simply calling words without attending to the meaning, true reading has not actually taken place. Speed reading is not the goal. The reason we time students' reading pace is because research has shown that the more fluent a child reads the better his/her understanding. The first goal of reading is to learn to call the words (phonics), understand what is written (comprehension), and apply that understanding (thinking skills). It is important that as parents you understand there are many levels of reading skills, and children develop at different levels and at different times. Please do not dwell on the speed at which your child calls words. Spend time encouraging your child to talk about what he/she has read. Ask your child specific questions about the story....what color was the car?....where did the mother go?.... Also, ask your children questions that foster their own thoughts....how else could the story have ended?.....what would have happened if the story had ended differently?....

Thank you for your time and concern about your child and this very complicated process called reading. We want you to understand as much as possible, so we are all working together. Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

Lynn Elementary School