

September 11, 2007

Dear First Grade Parents,

There have been some questions and concerns about why and how students are learning to read. There have been particular questions about the re-reading of passages and books and about learning to read non-sense words. Below is an explanation to help in your understanding.

First grade students are often asked to read the same passage or book many times. The reasoning behind this comes from how children learn to read. As a child learns to read, he or she often begins reading each word individually and sometimes with much struggle. Re-reading a passage or book allows a child to become more automatic when reading these words. This means that he or she is not struggling to “figure out” the word. As the child becomes more automatic, he or she is able to read the words as groups in phrases. Therefore, the reading becomes much more smooth and natural. This re-reading of passages and books also increases students’ comprehension. With repeated readings of a text, a child is better able to retain and understand what he or she has read.

Also, children are not learning to read non-sense words without purpose. Children are learning the sounds of those non-sense words so they can read larger multi-syllable words as their reading of the real words increases. Most of the first grade reading text is made up of only one and two syllable words and basic sight words – example: (sight word –the), (one syllable words - horse, bell), (two syllable words - tractor, pumpkin) etc. As children’s reading develops, they have to be able to code all of the sounds of larger words – example: fantastic – if this word were divided into all three syllables, it would look like this – fan / tas / tic. We teach reading by teaching the children to chunk parts of words in an effort to read the whole word. As you can see by the word “fantastic” if you break it apart – ‘fan’ would be a real word; however, ‘tas’ and ‘tic’ would be considered non-sense words. We teach non-sense word recoding so that as children’s reading ability grows so does their word power. Being able to read the non-sense words is very important as a part of the total reading skill. This is a skill that is assessed on Dibels.

Children are being required to learn at a more accelerated rate than ever before. The state and federal government dictate what is taught in school and at what pace it is taught. Lynn Elementary complies with the guidelines set forth, and we strive to provide the best well-rounded education for all students. Thank you for your concern and support of your child and the school. By us working together, our students are sure to have a bright and successful future.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact us. Thanks!

Sincerely,

Sara Ritter, Principal

Magen Alsup, Reading Coach