How Parents Can Help Foster a Love of Reading Without Using a Reading Log

This year at Overlook, students will NOT be asked to complete homework assignments including filling out a reading log in order to keep track of their reading. They will not be asked to get a signature in their folder proving that they have read that night and they will not be asked to read for a specified number of minutes each night. Teachers may suggest approximate amounts of time however.

This does NOT mean that students are not expected to read outside of school. It is our hope that throughout the course of this school year, all of our students will find ways to make reading a daily part of their lives. One of our greatest goals for this school year is to ensure that every child becomes or remains a lifelong reader. However, we do not believe that filling out a reading log each night or staring at a clock for twenty minutes is the best way for children to become or remain lifelong readers. Students will not benefit from the reading they are doing if they are more focused on watching the clock or waiting out their 20 assigned minutes than they are focused on what they are actually reading.

In fact, there isn't any research that shows any increase in primary students' achievement that is tied to homework. Students who are assigned homework do not progress any faster in reading or show any increase in math performance. In addition, homework often creates conflict within families and between home and school. This does not support learning and can actually make daily reading, the strongest influence on achievement, feel more like a chore and less like a recreational activity.

So, if families are not supporting their child's work by supervising homework and reading time, how can they help ensure their child reads outside of school? Here are a few ideas:

- Create sacred time during the day or at night where everyone in the house is reading. When everyone in the house is reading, students will be more likely to WANT to read. Creating the conditions for reading allows everyone to find more success in their own reading. I know that we are all incredibly busy, but imagine how powerful even 15 minutes of everyone in the house reading could be!
- Read alongside your child. All children love doing things with their parents and I know that parents are eager to find things to do with their child. Finding time to read next to each other can make reading a special time that everyone can look forward to.
- Read books with your child. One of the greatest things about reading is being able to discuss what you are reading with others. By reading the same books that your child is reading, you can provide your child with opportunities to have the kinds of discussions that will motivate your child to keep on reading.
- Make sure that your child sees you reading. Even when your child is not reading, if he or she sees you reading they will know that reading is something that you take joy in and that you make sure to make time for. This creates the kind of culture of reading that motivates students to find ways to become readers themselves (even outside of school).
- Take your child to the library. Books are expensive! And kids can go through books quickly. There is no need to buy your child every book that he or she wants to read. Taking trips to the local library can provide your family with access to incredible books and also access to librarians and other resources that can help guide your child towards even more books.

- Ask your child about the books he/she is reading. The more kids talk about the books they are reading, the more they will want to keep reading! Knowing that there are people at home who are interested in what they are reading and what they have to say about that reading, can sometimes be the push that children need to keep on reading through the touch parts of a book. Even if a child is not enjoying a particular book, you can learn a lot about a person as a reader, and they can learn a lot about themselves, by discussing what it is they do not like.
- Read in both your native language and English. For families who are fortunate enough to have multiple languages spoken in the home, please continue to share books in your primary language. Children are able to learn multiple languages side by side and becoming literate in both languages is an asset.
- Read in the "moments in-between". Some days, finding twenty minutes to devote to reading is just not possible. If students feel like they must read for twenty minutes in order for it to "count", they are likely to just not read at all when they feel they don't have time. Sometimes, the best places to find time to read are in the moments in-between other things. Waiting at the dentist's office, waiting for a sibling in the car, before their friends come over, these are all possible moments to read. When we start to "sneak" in more reading, we are often surprised at how quickly we are working through books.
- Help your child to use online resources to locate new books that are similar to books he/she has loved in the past. Finding good books to read can be the hardest part of being a reader. We are lucky to live in a world that has lots of incredible resources to help people find good books. Many of the books that I read are suggestions that I see online or that friends direct me to.

Throughout the year, we will be working to build a culture of reading and a community of readers at Overlook. In my experience, this is the greatest way to bring students into a reading life outside of school. Extending this reading culture and community outside of the school walls can have huge benefits.

If at any time you have concerns about your child's reading habits, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, Mrs. Grey our librarian, our reading specialists Mrs. Armstrong and Ms. Blazek or me for help. We know that when we form a powerful partnership with families, we can do amazing things for our children.

I look forward to a year filled with reading!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Wheeler