August 27, 2014

Dear Parents,

Reading is the foundation of all learning, and it is one of my goals this year to ensure that your child becomes an avid, lifelong reader. You play a major role in helping your child reach his or her potential. Research in the area of child development has found that most of a child’s intellectual development takes place outside the classroom. This means that children spend a great deal of time with their first and most important teachers – their parents. Indeed, as parents, your involvement in your child’s learning experiences will have much to do with how well your child succeeds in school and in later life. By working together, I believe we can all help your child become the best person possible – socially, emotionally, and academically.

I am writing to introduce you to the independent reading program and to offer suggestions for ways you can nurture a love of reading in your child. Each child should be reading independently on his or her level. One part of the reading grade for each quarter will be based on the number of pages read each quarter. At the fifth grade level, in order to obtain an A+ on this portion of the grade, students must read 10 one hundred page books which amounts to 1,000 pages. For example, if a student reads a book with 250 pages, it will count as 2.5 books. For students that are unable to read at that level, a grade will be calculated based on the number of pages read. At the end of the quarter an independent reading grade will be calculated as follows:

100%: 1,000 pages, 90%: 900 pages, 80%: 800 pages, 70%: 700 pages, etc.

With all of life’s distractions – hundreds of television channels, video games, megamalls, etc. – it is especially hard for today’s child to choose reading as the preferred activity. Here are some ways that you can help create a literate environment in your home:

* Be a model reader. Let your child see you read. Read newspapers, magazines, and books of all types. Point out interesting things you read. Discuss words that sound playful. Comment on the way a writer uses language. Ask your child questions as you read. Read to your child often. A child is never too old to be read to. Reading aloud not only allows your child to hear your voice, explore the beauty of language, and learn how to be expressive, but it provides an incredible bonding experience.
* Make regular trips to the library. Get a library card for your child. Help your child select books. Examine the covers together. Read a few lines from each book. Read the synopsis. Look at the pictures. Let your child see that you take reading seriously. Allow your child to choose the books he or she reads.
* Let your child read to you. Compliment your child on his or her reading skills. Ask general comprehension questions, but don’t turn it into a lesson. Reading at home should not feel like school.
* Provide a range of reading materials. Fill your house with fiction and nonfiction. Check out books from the library that echo subjects and themes being taught in school. Even if your child only flips through the books, he or she will learn to turn to books for information.
* Use reading as a reward. Allow your child to turn the light out fifteen minutes later than usual if he or she spends the time reading in bed. Reward your child for helping you with a chore by reading to him or her for fifteen minutes.

Reading – like playing an instrument or excelling at a sport – is a skill that improves with practice. Research shows that children who read daily – whether it’s newspapers, magazines, or books – are more likely to do better in school and become readers later in life. Let’s work together to ensure that this happens for *your* child.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Miller