

THE FAITHFUL READER

How Do I Help Parents and Families to Help Students?

As Catholics, we believe that parents are the primary educators of their children. The challenge as teachers is that while this is true, parents are not necessarily educators. So when we ask them to read with their children or send homework home, we cannot expect that parents know our Teacher-Ese, “new math” or decoding strategies.

If we want parents to work with their children at home, we must use the same method that we use with students: we must show, tell, and model HOW to read with your child, what decoding strategies to use, and so on.

For example, if you are sending a bag of books home, include in the bag a bookmark with some tips or a bookmark - see page 3 of this newsletter. “Sound it out” doesn’t work for most words, so students need more strategies to help them decode words.

Also, parents may want to cover the pictures of decodable or early readers, when we as reading teachers know that the pictures help us to ‘read’ and comprehend. Kindly remind parents not to cover the pictures. In addition to the bookmark and your regular conversations with parents, it can be helpful to share these tips at Curriculum Night, Open House, or a school-wide Literacy Night.

If a student is struggling with an aspect of reading, don’t just send home an extra worksheet or a (dreaded) packet. Just like you would do in the classroom, prioritize one skill that the student needs to work on. If it’s sight words, start with seven words. Put them on index cards and put them in a Ziplock bag or on a ring. Send home specific but clear instructions of how to practice the words. “Student should say the word within three seconds. If not or they try to sound it out, they haven’t gotten it yet. “Heart” words are words you must learn by heart and can’t be sounded out like *does*, *want*, or *said*.”

When sending home directions, be clear and succinct. Some parents have a law degree but no knowledge of the early stages of reading. Some parents may not be confident in their own reading abilities. All parents need clear directions on what to do and how to do it.

Whenever possible, whatever you send home should be something the child needs - all homework should be...

- necessary
- differentiated
- able to completed without parent assistance

Coming in March: How do I plan small-group instruction?



FAQ

Is there anything I should not send home for parents to help?

I wouldn't send anything overly complicated home with any child, but that seems obvious.

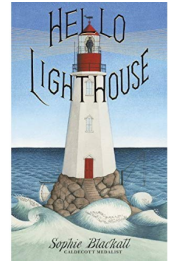
I wouldn't recommend sending fluency practice at home and ask the parent to time the child. This does a few things. It can encourage the child to read fast because the timing part breeds competitiveness. Competitiveness is not bad, but the goal is not speed, the goal is fluency. It can also cause the parents to put undue stress on the child if they are 'chasing' a number.

Fluency is best helped with reading - lots of reading. Have the parent read aloud to the child, have the parent and child take turns but alternating paragraphs or pages, or have the child read aloud. Also, listening to audio books is a great thing to do in the car - or anywhere - and it serves as a model of a fluent reader.

Book Recommendations

***Hello, Lighthouse* written and illustrated by Sophie Blackall**

This 2019 Caldecott Award winner is a beautifully illustrated book that makes for a great read aloud. It tells the story of an unnamed lighthouse keeper, his wife, and (spoiler alert!) their newborn child. The gorgeous illustrations show the keeper doing his daily routine of writing in the log, maintaining the lamps, and sometimes having to rescue sailors who have gotten caught in a storm. The ending shares a glimpse into the modernization of this craft.



Lexile Level Lexile 510, 2nd grade

Interest Level Kindergarten through fourth grade

Genre fiction picture book (the last two pages about lighthouses is informational text)

***Front Desk* by Kelly Yang**

Mia Tang is a fifth grader who just arrived in California from China. When her family arrives, her parents both find work at a motel that another Chinese immigrant, Mr. Yao, owns. After working long hours for Mr. Yao, Mia's parents decide to buy the motel. What comes next is 24/7 work by Mia's parents, whose hands are raw and who are exhausted. Mia is in charge of the front desk even though she is just a fifth grader. The family cares for the guests who are paying to stay long term. This group ends up forming an informal family of sorts who look out for each other. Mia wants desperately to be a writer, and her teacher nurtures this skill. Mia's mother is not so convinced.



A great book to study immigration in the U.S. today.

Reading Level Lexile 640, 3rd grade

Appropriate for grades 4-6

Genre fiction (based on the author's true story -she went to college at age 13!)



Andrew M. Greeley
CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Greeley Center Mission

We are Catholic educators who challenge Catholic schools to be excellent because they are essential in preparing students for the future.

FIX-IT STRATEGIES

To Figure Out
a Word...

Look at the pictures.



Skip the word
and read on.



Reread the sentence.

The cat is black.

Use a word that
makes sense.



Look for where the
word was read before.



Look for little words
in big words.

cat

Look at the first letter.
Think of the sound.

cat

Predict a word and
check it by looking at
the letters.



Ask a partner.

