“HW: Read for 30 Minutes”

Most teachers want their students to read more, and most teachers assign homework each night for students to read for a certain number of minutes. Research shows that there is a direct connection between reading more and school success as well as a rise in test scores. So what’s the problem?

Reading Logs: The Tool That Backfires More Than Anything

I spoke with a parent a few weeks ago. She was sharing about her third-grade daughter’s evening routine. Her daughter’s homework requires that she read 30 minutes every night, record this reading on a “very thorough” reading log, and then write a “very detailed” book report. I asked this parent if she thought her daughter would read more if she didn’t have to fill out the reading log or write the book report. She didn’t hesitate. “Yes, definitely. She hates the book report and reading log.”

How do we as adults keep track of what we read? I keep a list in the Notes app on my phone. When I finish a book, I want to talk about it, not kill it. So why do we do this with students? Accountability. Grades in the gradebook. I get it, but it is backfiring - it is not encouraging students read more. It is actually doing the exact opposite: the reading log and the post-reading work we give students is preventing them from reading.

How Do I Know That They’re Reading?

For starters, you can watch them. And then you can talk to them. And then ask questions, but not THOSE kind of questions. “How’s it going?” “What do you like best so far?” “Tell me about your book.”

A VERY simple reading log is fine. One is included on page 3 of this newsletter. The area for reader’s response is intentionally small - in this space we want students to write something. You can also change it to “my three words” or “my five words” about what they read. Students will want to see how many books they have read throughout the year, so a reading log is a great place to do that. You can also have students reserve 5-10 pages of their reading notebook or writer’s notebook to record this information.

What About a Grade?

Once a week, ask students to write a summary. Use the grading criteria on page 4 of this newsletter. Make sure that students know these grading criteria before they write the summary. It is always a great idea to have students self-evaluate their work - they are usually harder on themselves than we are! I also love to ask students to write or create a review of a book. How often do you ask a friend, “I need a good book to read. Any recommendations?” This can be a paragraph (you can write grading criteria for this, too), a FlipGrid video (90 seconds), or just use an iPhone, iPod, or iPad to record a short video review. Giving options allows for differentiation and choice is empowering.


REMEMBER that the three most important things about reading is that students choose what they read, that you provide access to lots and lots of different books, and you give them time in school to read. Over and over again, teachers report that when these three conditions exist, students read. A lot. This also means that you don’t micromanage what they read by imposing rules about levels. Children are not a level, children are readers. Let them read.
**That’s (Not) Mine**  
*written by Anna King illustrated by Christopher Weyant*

If you know the book *You Are (Not) Small*, you will love this book! The same two characters face off, this time over a chair. Anyone with a sibling or who is a member of classroom knows this feeling: someone is in “your” chair and you want to sit there…even if you don’t want to sit there, you don’t your friend to sit there! The wife-husband author-illustrator team pair simple, economic text with fun, cheery illustrations.

**Read Aloud** for preK - 2  
**Independent Reading Level** early first grade (F & P Level F)  
**Genre** fantasy

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**Separate is Never Equal**  
*written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh*

In the summer of 1944, Sylvia Mendez, her two brothers, and her mom and dad moved from Santa Ana, California to Westminster, California. When Sylvia and her brothers tried to register for the local public school, they were told that they must go to the “Mexican school.” The Westminster school was clean with wide hallways and a playground. The Mexican school was basically a barn with an electric fence around it to keep the nearby cows out. Sylvia’s father, an American citizen like his wife and children, will not have it – his children are not going to an inferior school. So he files a lawsuit. Along with other families, the Mendez family wins their lawsuit, upheld by the governor of California, despite the local school board’s attempt at an appeal.

**Read Aloud** for grades 2 and up  
**Independent Reading Level** grade 5  
**Genre** narrative informational text  
**Awards** 2015 Pura Belpre Award, 2015 Robert Sibert Honor Book

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**Full Cicada Moon**  
*by Marilyn Hilton*

It’s 1969, and Mimi wants to be an astronaut. Her teachers can’t figure out why - she can be a homemaker, or a nurse, a teacher. Mimi also stands out because she is half Black and half Japanese. When her father accepts a job teaching at a university in Vermont, Mimi moves across the country from California to a new state, a new school, and new people who look at her because she looks different to them. Mimi insists that she wants to take Shop Class instead of Home Ec. After all, she cooks with both of her parents at home regularly. The school refuses her request - at first.

**Reading Level** grade 5 (F & P Level U)  
**Appropriate for** age 9 and up  
**Genre** historical fiction

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**Greeley Center Mission**

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

Name: ___________________________________ Week of ________________________  

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**At The End of the Week**

**My One-Sentence Summary (so far):**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

**My Rating (so far):**

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐
One-Sentence Summary Grading Criteria

Student Name ___________________________ Date ________________

POINTS EARNED _______/20

Possible 10 points for each one-sentence summary.

To earn 10 points for each sentence, you must include all of the following:

* One sentence summary is clear
* All important details are included
* Who, what, when, where, and why/how are included
* Details are in logical order
* Summary is objective – only facts and no opinions

One point is taken off for each of the following that is circled:

1. Main idea is unclear
1. Main idea is not specifically stated
1. Some important details are missing - incomplete
1. Ideas are in random order
1. Ideas are not in logical order
1. Summary is not objective – personal opinions are included
1. Summary is incorrect
1. Spelling, grammar, and/or conventions interfere with the readability of this summary.

Comments: