



Dear Parents:

This year I am using an exciting method of instruction called ***Four Blocks*** and I want to tell you all about it! There are four components of reading that I will teach every day. Because I recognize that all children learn differently, I know that I must find ways to reach children no matter what their strengths and weaknesses might be. I have made a commitment to do all that I can to ensure that ***ALL*** of our students will be good readers and writers. I believe that children who are competent readers and writers will be better, happier students and citizens. I want to ask that you play an important role in helping me with the development of your child this year.

There are four basic ways that students have always learned to read. Usually a teacher (or a school) would choose one of those methods in hopes of reaching most of the students. The Four Blocks model, however, allows us to teach all students by teaching all four methods of reading instruction every day. The Four Blocks model has been used throughout the country for the past decade. It has proven to be quite effective for schools that implement it.

Here is a brief overview of each of the four blocks:

Working with Words Block

This block allows students to explore words, word families (patterns), spelling and explicit phonics instruction. This block includes studying high frequency words from the Word Wall. These words will be displayed on our wall all year for students to use as a resource for their reading and writing. We expect students to spell correctly these commonly used grade level words in their writing. We will use movements such as cheering, writing, and chanting the spelling of the words. (The brain loves rhythmic sounds!) We will also build words using manipulatives such as letter tiles.

Guided Reading Block

During this block, we ***focus on reading comprehension skills*** – those strategies that help readers make sense out of the print on the page. We also work on fluency – the smoothness with which we read text aloud. Varied grouping formats will be used including whole class, small flexible groups, and paired reading. The teacher starts by teaching a comprehension strategy, including vocabulary instruction, to the entire group (Before Reading). Next, the students are guided through the reading of the text (During Reading). Finally, the entire group is brought back together to discuss what they have learned. (After Reading)

Self Selected Reading Block

Students have the opportunity to choose books on their independent reading level during this block. They select books that they are comfortable reading on their own and practice reading using strategies independently that they are learning. The block begins with the teacher modeling what good readers do by reading aloud to the class. Next, students read independently for about 20 minutes. During that time, the teacher will have individual conferences and listen to designated students read aloud. This time helps the teacher evaluate each individual student's growth in reading and it is a special one-on-one time for students. At the end of the block, a few students each day will share what they have read. This block motivates students to select books on their level and to read for pleasure – a lifelong goal of teachers.

Writing Block

During this block, students will learn to think about and use their knowledge of phonics in their own writing. Along with applying phonics, they will have an opportunity to practice handwriting, to learn about the writing process, grammar, and the mechanics of good writing. Every day, the teacher begins by modeling what good writers do as they write. Students will be encouraged to write the words from the word wall correctly and to record the sounds that they hear in words (“stretching it out”). On certain days, students will learn to edit and publish their work. They will learn to

organize their thoughts using a graphic organizer. Students will be invited to sit in the Author's Chair to share their work. It's truly surprising what an impact this block has on reading! Sometimes the first text a child learns to read is his own!

As you can see, we will be very busy this year. We believe that children learn to read by reading real books and writing stories. You may not see your child bring home as many dittos or worksheets, but please feel confident that your child is working hard in class to become a confident independent reader and writer.

Did you know that research supports that the single most important activity for building knowledge for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to your child? How can you help? Talk about books with your child. Ask what he/she has read in class today. Read to them and listen as they read to you. Let your child see you reading and let them know that you value reading. Get a library card and take them to the library. Seeing their parents as readers and writers really makes an impression on children. Make reading time during the elementary school years a wonderful special time in your child's life. Becoming a lifelong reader is a valuable goal.

For more information, please visit our school website:
<http://208.183.128.3/read/>

Sincerely,