

IMPORTANT

August 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Reading is vital to your child's success. The amount of free reading done outside of school has been consistently found to relate to growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information. Additionally, students who read independently become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subject areas, and have greater content knowledge than those who do not.

This is why **independent reading (IR) is a cornerstone of the language arts curriculum.** During independent reading, students may read any material of their choosing (textbooks or other assigned reading does not meet this requirement) and are encouraged to pick material that is both enjoyable and challenging. Because this reading is essential, class time is dedicated each day to IR; however, students are also expected to extend that reading outside of class each night.

This brings me to the tracking of this reading. In the past, you have probably experienced some derivative of the reading log. Students log pages or minutes read, ask for your signature, and the teacher checks it for a grade. This is something I have used, convinced it was my job to hold students accountable for their reading. But I was wrong. *My job is to inspire students to want to read, so they continue to read when the log or the grade or the watchful eye of the teacher is no longer a factor.* In fact, all research indicates that reading logs or grades tied to independent reading decrease students' love of reading. Therefore, there is no independent reading log or grade in my language arts class. Instead, I will hold reading conferences with students, ask students to write briefly in an independent reading journal, and will do my part to encourage your student to fall in love with reading.

Although I do not require a log, I do require students read at least 25 minutes each night. This is homework, and the expectation is that the reading is given just as much priority as any other assignment. "I don't have time to read" is a common student mantra, and I know lives are busy. Your child may not realistically have 25 minutes each night for reading on top of other demands, but 15 minutes every night is better than no reading at all.

I cannot make your child read at home in any reasonable way. The only people who can carve out reading time for you children at home are you, their parents. This is hard, but it matters more than any other academic support you could provide. **Therefore, I ask for your help in this journey. Reading alongside your child, with your child, and talking to him/her about reading materials will do much to show your child how you value reading.**

Thank you for reading this letter. Please take some time to discuss with your child a reasonable reading goal for each night, where he/she will do this reading, and why it is imperative he/she does not skip independent reading homework. Please work together to complete the form on the back of this letter. Your child should return the paper to school by _____ .

Thank you for your help in raising a lifelong reader!

Ms. Heather Jeffers

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After reading the letter on the frontside of the page, please take some time to discuss the importance of independent reading homework with your child and make a plan for reading success.

Reading Success Plan

Directions: Students, it is your responsibility to fill out the plan below; however, you should make the plan alongside your parents, so they know how to support you.

1. When will you do your reading?
2. Where are good places for you to complete your reading?
3. What might keep you from reading each night?
4. How will you avoid being sidetracked by these things?
5. You must set a reading goal. The expectation of the Pleasant Valley School District is that you read 25 minutes each night. If you are a strong reader, perhaps your goal will be higher than that. Conversely, if you are a reluctant reader, your goal might be slightly less. Discuss with your parents what a reasonable reading goal will be. What is your reading goal?
6. Talk with your parents about what they can do to help you achieve your reading goal. What are some things they can do to support you?

Student: I, _____, understand the importance of reading and will do my best to read each night to reach my goal.

X _____

Parent: I, _____, have read the letter and discussed my child's reading plan with him/her.

X _____