

Reading Workshop at Ocean Avenue:

Reading workshop at Ocean Avenue is founded on the belief that the secret to becoming a good reader is to read a lot. Good readers bring flashlights to bed and snuggle with a book before "lights out". Good readers find text everywhere in the environment, from the cereal box to the movie marquee. Good readers generally like to read. If you walk into any classroom in our school, you will see children reading a variety of texts. You will notice leveled libraries so that children can select "just right" books. Throughout the year, reading celebrations abound, from Mystery Readers to Reader's Theatre. Our school truly is a community of readers.

Our teachers understand and believe that reading is a skill which requires practice. Just as a child learns to swim by swimming, children need to read in order to get better as readers. There is a tremendous volume of research that shows a very strong correlation between the amount of time spent reading and a child's progress as a reader. Our teachers have learned best practices in the teaching of reading through our training with the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* at Columbia University and our training with Fountas and Pinell. Our teachers worked side by side with Project staff developers over the course of the years, attended professional development workshops and participated in weeklong summer institutes. The teachers plan together, support each other in the teaching of reading and share ideas and best practices. They developed a comprehensive yearlong curricular calendar for kindergarten through Grade 5 which outlines units of study in the teaching of reading based on the Common Core Standards. These units of study build across the year and from one grade to the next. The Principal also participated in on-going professional study through the Principal's Institute at Columbia University and work with Irene Fountas, learning and sharing ideas about how to support excellent teaching and learning.

Reading instruction unfolds as teachers establish the conditions in which children learn to read, assess what the children can do, and then teach children to take one step and then subsequent steps forward as readers. During Reading Workshop, children learn from direct and explicit strategy instruction (mini-lessons), opportunities to read independently and in

partnerships, small group-guided reading and strategy instruction, and from individual conferences.

During Reader's workshop, children begin with direct instruction where the teacher demonstrates a strategy. Students may be asked to turn to their partner during the guided practice portion of the lesson. Students will then be sent off for the heart of the workshop, independent practice. It is important to remember that children develop at different rates, and through Reading Workshop, each child's reading needs are addressed. Children will be working in "just right" books, using the tools they are practicing. During the independent practice, the teacher has the opportunity to meet individually with students for conferences or pull small groups for strategy instruction. Finally, students are asked to move back to the meeting area for a whole class meeting and an opportunity for the teacher to re-emphasize the teaching point of the lesson. The teacher does this by having children talk about and show the work they did during their independent reading time. Many children develop a deeper understanding of the mini-lesson after hearing their peers talk about their writing.

Reading Workshop is not the only time that children have the opportunity to develop and put their reading skills to use. Our children read across the day. In addition to Reading Workshop, the components of our balanced literacy framework include read alouds with accountable talk, shared reading, guided reading, phonics/word study, interactive writing, small group instruction, and Writing Workshop.

As parents, you play an essential role in helping your children lead a readerly life. Make reading an important activity in your household. Delight in your children's reading! Read aloud to them, and have them read aloud to you. Let your children see you reading and show them that reading matters to you. We appreciate your help and support in helping to make Ocean Avenue a vibrant reading community.