

Friday, September 25, 2009

Dear Parents:

This week we finished our second week of our 5 Senses unit. This was a week of reading. Your child should have brought home at least 3 little books. The Big and Little Book was My Left and Right Book. The Kinderfriends book was What Smells? The Phonic Reader was See What We Can Do. We also read the story of The Gingerbread Man. Many of our center activities were about this story. In class, we used balance scales to determine which of two objects was heavier. We also used tubs of water to find out if objects would sink or float. You might want to try this at home.

I would like to tell you about **Story Telling and Retelling (STaR)**. This part of the program is designed to increase children's experiences with books and help them learn literacy and comprehension skills through a structured exposure to stories. I first read to them while pointing out simple story structure. By asking questions, I seek to build their listening comprehension strategies. On the second day of the story, I guide the children in retelling and critiquing the story while focusing on characters, setting, illustrations and plot. I hope to promote a life-long love for reading. Children who have experience with books have better oral language skills, are more interested in literacy and are better prepared to learn to read.

Your child has been bringing home little books to keep and build a personal library. They have brought books by Barbara Saul, who taught at Pine Hill. They have brought the Kinderfriends book home too. So far, they have brought two wordless books that they tell their own stories about. The homework every night is to "read" for 20 minutes. Please take time to listen to your child "read" their little books to you. You might also want to ask them to tell you the story of The Gingerbread Man using the stick puppets that they made at school this week.

Reading begins with storytelling. By telling stories, children develop a sense of story structure. They learn that there is a beginning, middle and an end. We call this sequencing. Students learn about characters. As they tell you their stories in their wordless books, ask them to think about what the children on the page are saying and doing. The next storytelling concept is setting. Ask your child to tell about where and when the story is taking place.

Last Friday's note explained about **reading logs**. The child should record (*as best they can*) what books he/she has read or been read on the big lines. The adult should also sign. It is permissible to write on the back. Please make sure that your child returns them completed each Friday. The amount of reading done and the number of reading logs returned will determine your child's homework grade on his or her report card.