

Friday, December 4, 2009

Dear Parents:

On Monday, we began a three-week unit of study in our class called *Dinosaur Discoveries*. We will be investigating how dinosaurs lived and what the world was like during the time of dinosaurs. This unit is designed to expose children to both fact and fiction, stimulate problem-solving abilities, enhance imaginative play and self-expression through literacy events, and expand their concept of time. The children seem to have a natural curiosity for dinosaurs.

The Read Aloud Book was If The Dinosaurs Came Back and the link book was How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight? The Kinder Friends Book was the little yellow book called Dinosaurs. The Barbara Saul book this week was also called Dinosaurs. The Phonics Library book was Nat at Bat. The Word and Picture books were I See A (Playground) and I Like (Rainbows). In mathematics, we have been learning about shapes.

This week we met two Alpha Friends. The first was Hattie Horse. She taught us about the shape, name and sound of the letter "Hh". Your child brought home some workbook practice pages that were about identifying, writing and drawing things that began with the letter "Hh". Then the Alpha Friend Andy Apple visited us. Andy Apple represents the short vowel sound for letter "Aa".

Now that the children have been introduced to a vowel sound, they can begin to make consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. By using the Alpha Friend letter that they have already learned; s, m, r, b, t, n, h and a, they can form words such as sat, mat, rat, bat and hat as well as ran, man and tan. Our Phonics Library book this week was a big change, instead of wordless books; their book now has words that your child should be able to sound out. Watch as your child reads Nat At Bat and see if he/she is sounding out the words as he/she reads them. This is a big step forward!

I have been sending home a lot of little books for your child to practice his/her reading skills with. Your child should have a nice little library of books! If you have not been keeping the books such as the Word and Picture Books and the Phonics Library books, now is the time to start collecting them. These books provide many opportunities for children to practice at home what they have learned at school. The more times your child practices, the greater probability that they will learn the concept. Remember the saying, "Practice makes perfect"? Each time your child reads one of these books; he/she can put it on his/her weekly reading log.

Calendar notes: We will be singing in the Winter Assembly Friday morning, Dec. 18.

Quick Click: 7 Ways to Build a Better Reader for Grades K-2

Try these easy steps to bolster your child's reading skills.

Make reading part of your child's world. Read books with her and to her, aiming for a total of 30 minutes of book-sharing time each day. Also incorporate reading into everyday activities. Post a chore list on the refrigerator, ask her to read signs as you drive, and play board games like Scrabble Junior.

Take turns. When he is ready to read to you, start by taking turns. You read one page, he reads the next, and so on.

Ask deeper questions. Help her build [comprehension skills](#) by asking questions about the story, such as why she thinks a character did something and what may come next. Talk to her about which books are her favorites and have her try to explain why.

Be patient. Wait quietly as your child tries to sound out a word he's unfamiliar with.

Help her when she needs it. If she makes a mistake but is close, quickly repeat the word correctly and let her continue without interrupting the flow. If she guesses wildly on a word, help her get the right meaning from the context of the sentence. Answer questions about the meaning of words, but don't drill her on vocabulary words as you read.

Read different-level books. It's okay if he chooses an "easy" book to read. Reading a familiar favorite is a good confidence booster. Read more advanced books to him to introduce new words and challenging stories.

Praise her. Learning to read smoothly is hard work and might frustrate her at times. Encourage her by praising her efforts, paying attention when she wants to read, and making your reading time together fun.