Dear families,

In developing our homework plan for this year, first grade is aligning with a school wide philosophy of moving away from worksheets and other assignments that have little impact on student achievement. Instead, we are focusing on *nightly reading accompanied by meaningful conversations before, during, and after reading*. The research linking reading performance to time spent reading every day is clear and abundant. In this spirit, we are asking that every child/family devote at least 15 minutes per night to reading and discussion. In addition, we will suggest other activities related to our math, social studies, and science goals in our biweekly newsletters. These will be fun, engaging things you may choose to do as a family in order to reinforce and enrich what we learn at school.

Attached you will find a list of questions that you can ask before, during, and after reading any text. We strongly recommend that you use this document to help you guide your child toward deeper understanding as he/she reads. Strong comprehension is critical to every child’s literacy development and ultimate success in school.

Another factor in reading improvement is the difficulty of texts that students read. Children make more growth as readers when they read books that are mostly within their control but have some opportunities for problem solving; in other words, books that are not too easy or too hard. While there are benefits to reading easy books (learning sight words, improving fluency) and hard books (increasing vocabulary, developing perseverance), children benefit most from reading “good fit” books most of the time. Here is process for choosing a “good fit” book:

1. Choose a book that you think you will enjoy.
2. Read the first two pages.
3. Hold up a finger for each word you are not sure of or do not know.
4. -If there are just 0-1 words you don’t know, the book may be too easy.

-If there are 2-5 words you do not know (depending on how many words are on the page),

 it is likely a “good fit” book.

-If there are more than 5 words you don’t know, the book is probably too hard.

It is our hope that you will support and adhere to the first grade homework plan. Although it may seem simplistic, reading nightly and having rich discussion about what you are reading is invaluable to your child’s academic success. It should also be a great opportunity for your family to enjoy time together and avoid the frustration that sometimes comes with the more typical homework used in the past. Please let us know if you have any questions.

 Sincerely,

The First Grade Team