

Reading Practice

Students at Fairfield are encouraged to read any books they choose. This is called Independent Reading (i.e., reading done *independently* of school requirements for one's own purposes). Independent Reading cannot be graded or scored in a classroom. We hope all students will read independently for enjoyment, but we can't go home with them every night and force them to do it. If we did, it wouldn't be *independent* reading. Independent Reading is the responsibility of students and parents.

Teachers, however, must help students master the reading skills outlined in the state core curriculum. Mastery of these reading skills requires focused and consistent reading practice beyond what is possible during the school day. Just as music teachers expect students to practice playing their instruments outside of class and coaches expect players to practice their skills after school, language arts teachers expect students to practice reading at home. Students, therefore, can reasonably expect to be assessed and evaluated based on their completion of this at-home reading practice. Such assessment may take many forms, and different teachers will assess students in different ways, but all of them ultimately require students to illustrate their comprehension of the books that they read and earn class credit (points) for doing so.

Thus, reading that a student *chooses* to do is Independent Reading. Reading that a student is *assigned* to do is Reading Practice. This is an important distinction that has been lost, buried in the painful quest for points that many procrastinating students seem to undertake during the last week of every term. Language Arts teachers are sometimes accused of discouraging a love of reading by requiring students to read. This is an unfair accusation comparable to accusing a music teacher of discouraging a love of music by requiring students to practice playing it.

While it is a happy event indeed when assigned reading is also enjoyable, this cannot be guaranteed by teachers or expected by students and parents. At Fairfield we will, however, make every reasonable effort to ensure that assigned reading allows for at least some degree of student choice, and it is our hope that Independent Reading and assigned Reading Practice can be one and the same for most students. In the simplest terms, we want students to enjoy reading even when they are assigned to do so. Our ultimate goal is for students to read often!

But many of them don't. And despite our best efforts and most fervent encouragement, some of them never will. This, however, does not mean that we will simply not require them to. All students at Fairfield Junior High School are required to practice reading regularly, both in class and at home. No exceptions. Students who do not practice reading regularly cannot expect to earn any grade higher than a *B* in a Language Arts class, and that is providing they do everything else to perfection. Yes, reading is *that* important!

Ultimately, the consequence for not reading is much graver than missing some points in an English class.

Read!