

Principal's Corner

What a wonderful year we've had at West Side School! It has been a special privilege for me to get to know all of the children, and to watch them learn and grow this year.

Some parents have asked about ways to help their children continue to learn and maintain the skills they've developed this year. Summer is a terrific time for parents to be involved in their children's learning—without the pressures of homework, early bedtimes, or rushing around to after-school activities.

The easiest way to keep your child learning and maintaining skills during the summer is through reading. I will be discussing this topic with parents at a workshop on Tuesday (6/16), but I thought I'd share a few ideas in this column.

The most important ideas to think about when encouraging reading are **comfort, choice, and interesting content**. Comfort for a reader means that the text is simply not too demanding. A book is comfortable when **very few** words have to be "sounded out" so the reader reads smoothly and can concentrate on getting meaning and information from the text. The important thing to remember is that people get better at things when they practice a lot---and they are more inclined to practice something when it is not frustrating and when it gives them pleasure. So, allow your children to read "easy" books independently this summer. This will help them develop positive reading habits now that will be important for their future success.

The second idea that helps to promote reading is **choice**. Parents can promote reading by giving their children the freedom to choose what they want to read, including magazines, comic books, and joke books. Many children prefer nonfiction, so just helping them find out what interests them can promote reading. Take your children to the library and bookstores and give them time to browse. A very wise person once said, "If a kid doesn't like to read, he hasn't found the right book yet."

Finally, an important idea to think about this summer is **interesting content**. There is so much information in the world, that there is simply not enough time to explore it all in school! One of the greatest things you can do for your children is visit the nonfiction and biography section of your library or bookstore and browse through the illustrated books. (picture books) In the past ten years or so, there have been thousands of incredibly interesting picture books published about every possible topic in the world! Find a few that your children find interesting. Then carve out time every day (as much as possible!) to read aloud **to** them. The more background knowledge children have about the world and how it works, the more successful they will be in school. Just read, relax, and learn together. I promise, it will be time your children will remember forever.

I wish you an exciting, fun-filled summer with your children--- and some quiet time to read and learn together.

All the best,

Lynn Herschlein