

INDEPENDENT READING PRACTICE and Accelerated Reader

Purpose: Research proves that daily reading practice helps student improve fluency, increase vocabulary and context skills, and provide practice for reading strategies taught in the classroom. Surveys taken by ETS continue to report that students who read daily for at 30 minutes perform 100-200 points above their non-reading peers on the verbal SAT, the assessment for college entry. For students who are lagging behind their grade level peers in reading, daily practice is essential to boosting reading skills. Studies show that students who are reading 2 or more years below their grade level standard struggle to meet academic goals and are at risk of failing to complete high school. Reading is not only an essential academic skill, necessary for learning in science, mathematics and social studies, it is an essential life skill in modern American society. Our goal at Neelsville is to provide an environment that supports our expectation that all students will read at or above grade level before leaving Neelsville to enter high school.

**Every student at Neelsville Middle School
is expected to participate in independent reading practice
for a minimum of 30 minutes a day at home.**

Goals: Independent reading is monitored by Reading 6 and English 7 and 8 teachers using the **Accelerated Reader** program. Students select and read a book from their Zone. When the student has finished a selection, the student takes a Reading Practice quiz of 5, 10 or 20 questions. The multiple-choice quiz focuses on comprehension and retention of main story details-- who did what when, where or with whom. A student successfully completes the selection with a quiz score of 60% or higher. Each selection is worth a pre-determined number of points. Points are awarded to each student based on their quiz score. A student who scores 100% on the quiz earns 100% of the points; a student who scores 60% on the quiz, earns 60% of the points for that selection. A list of the independent reading selections- fiction, non-fiction, and biography - can be found on the Neelsville web site and in the Media Center. We currently have installed 9,887 titles on our list; that number increases periodically as new titles are purchased and installed throughout the year. Students are encouraged to select books on subjects of interest to them. Students are required to earn points as a portion of their Homework grade. At the end of the quarter the combined quiz scores are incorporated into the Formative Assessment category of the grade at of value of no more than 10%. At the start of the year each student will be given a goal chart that shows the ranges of points needed to earn a specific letter grade for the Homework Goal score. The ranges reflect grade level standards and are different for each grade.

Starting out:

Students will take the Standardized Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR). The STAR test is a short, 25 question, computerized assessment that measures reading vocabulary. It is given at the start of each school year and at the end of each quarter. The assessment yields two important scores for students and parents: grade equivalent (GE) and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD or Zone) The first score, GE, reflects the vocabulary level represented as a grade year and month; a student who scores a 6.3 has a reading vocabulary of a sixth grade student about half way through the year.

In The Zone:

The Zone score shows a grade level range from which it is recommended that students concentrate their reading practice. Zone selections reflect text that will be within the comfort level of the reader while still introducing new or challenging vocabulary. As the student progresses, the zone will change to reflect the increased skill level. The zone ranges can be very large. Students reading at the top of the scale, a GE of 12.9+, have a zone of 5.5 -12.9. It is not necessary for students to read at their GE to make progress; it is necessary for them to stay within their Zone. Students are expected to select materials and read within their Zone.

Monitoring progress towards Goals

Throughout the quarter, teachers will monitor the points earned and will report them to the parents at the interim and prior to the end of the quarter. Teachers often provide up to 4 interim dates for reporting AR quiz points within each quarter. The student's grade will reflect the progress towards meeting that goal. The final point count and comprehension scores at the end of the end of the quarter will be reflected in the grade. The interim scores may continue to be recorded on the progress sheet without a grade value. As a quarterly goal, the final deadline for earning points is established by the grade level teachers, announced at the start of the quarter, and set within the final week of the quarter.

Students are encouraged to print out their current points and quiz score report after they have completed the quiz for each new selection to take home to share with their parents.

Support for Reading

The Media center and teachers have a variety of materials and strategies for students who need support to reach their reading goals. Students may "guarantee" their points by completing a reading log as they work through a selection. The reading logs are available in every English and reading class. This active reading strategy helps students to select and remember important details as they read, as well as document daily reading practice. Students who complete the reading log take the reading practice quiz but receive 100% of the points for that selection regardless of the quiz score.

There is a wide variety of selections in the media center to support all readers from the struggling to the advanced readers. Some of the lower and mid-level texts have audio recordings that may be checked out through the media center or through reading or support teachers. Many teachers offer students time to complete independent reading when they have finished required class work during a period. Once a week the school stops for DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time during the advisory period. Students are encouraged to carry their independent selections throughout the day to take advantage of those moments. Students with emergent language skills may request peer reading partners in class or through the Counseling office.

Students who desire to read a selection not yet on the AR list should speak to their teachers about an alternate assessment **before they begin** a selection not on the list, especially if they need the points to meet their goals. While MCPS no longer allows extra credit opportunities, students who exceed their goals may receive recognition and/ or PBIS rewards for their exceptional efforts.

Each Fall, the Neelsville Reading and English staff off a Reading Knight, a evening of activities and information for students and their families. Please look for details about this event. Parents have the opportunity to hear about MSA skills for reading and even take an AR quiz on their favorite book. Information about your favorite student and how he or she is progressing using the AR program are made available.

Black Eyed Susan Program:

For the past seven years, Neelsville has taken part in the Black Eyed Susan program, a reading program sponsored by the media center. The MD Media Center Specialists select 10 books at five levels: picture books, grade 1-3, grade 4-6, grade 6-8, grade 9-12. Our media center supports the middle school level, with additional selections from the other levels. Students participate in the program by reading several selections. After completing each selection, students take the AR quiz for points. When they have completed the minimum requirement, by passing the AR quiz for least 3 books from a specific grade level set or all of the picture books, they are invited to vote for their favorite book in that grade level category. The votes are tallied from across the state and the authors of the winning selection for each category are awarded the Black Eye Susan Award. The students who participate are invited to a party at the end of the year to find out who the winners are. We encourage every student to participate. Because the selections for the middle school category sometimes fall below the Zone for our highest readers or may be of high interest to a lower reader, we suspend the "read in your Zone" requirement for these selections.