Kindergarten Reading

Dear Parents/Guardians,

 This year in Kindergarten we will focus a lot of our time on reading skills. We will particularly spend some time working on phonics and phonemic awareness skills to get every student reading. Students will also learn the terminology of phonemic awareness skills to better understand what they mean and why they matter. The end goal and my personal goal for every student, is by the end of the year, to be reading. Every student, at the beginning of the year, will begin in a different spot, but by the end of the year I hope to have them all reading.

 In the past, reading has been taught using a number of different approaches, including whole word/choral reading, whole language to balanced and so on. In simple terms, phonics is the ability to mix up or manipulate sounds. Whereas, phonemic awareness is the letter/sound correspondence. Both of these skills will be imperative for students in their reading development. Before being exposed completely to this, students will first understand the meaning of a grapheme (letter symbol for the phonemes), morpheme (smallest unit of language), and phoneme (sounds of the letters). It is important that students have prior knowledge before moving on. A final term I will be using that is associated with this, is Alphabetic Principle, which simply means the ability to recognize the graphemes and sound out the phonemes.

 Upon beginning reading books, there are two approaches I will use to help them achieve success. I will take a “bottom up” and “top down” approach. “Bottom up” simply means that students are given the skills to be able to read first (phonics, phonemic awareness etc). “Top down” simply means that students are given interesting texts to read and have freedom to choose what they are reading, as their skills fill in. I believe both are equally as important to the success of students as readers because it offers a balanced approach and comprehensive approach to achieving reading mastery. Phonics and phonemic awareness are tools, not programs. A final tool I will utilize for reading is called language experience. This involves the students dictating stories to me, having myself write and the student read back to me. This also all helps in development of vocabulary for students.

 I hope that every student grows tremendously this year through the program I have put together to teach reading. An effective and balanced reading program I mentioned above, which include: Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Comprehension and Fluency. In this very first year of school, we focus on three of those five areas heavily. This will equip each student with a great start in becoming a skilled and enthusiastic reader. If you have concerns or questions about your student is doing in class or how you could be a great help at home, please feel free to reach out to me!

 **Happy Reading!**

 Annika Schul