Dear Parents,

Say the word "homework" to any group of students and the odds are that their eyes will roll, sighs will be heard, and shoulders will slump. Parents, however, have a different reaction—supportive, sometimes confused, or frustration. Parents, rightfully so, can be concerned about the amount of homework, the quality of homework, the equity of different teachers’ expectations, and so forth. What follows are some points to address these concerns and give you a better understanding of our homework philosophy and guidelines.

The Fairfax County Public Schools homework policy states, "All students are expected to complete homework assignments." Each school develops common practices to make sure teachers have similar expectations while supporting their personal professional style. At Island Creek Elementary, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Grade 1-3 - 30 minutes per week.
- Grades 4-5 - 1 hour per week.
- Grade 6 - 2 hours per week.

In addition, we expect all students to read and/or be read to, 20 minutes each night.

Please keep in mind that if your child is spending more than these suggested time limits, on a regular basis, you need to contact your child’s teacher.

Homework is a way for students to practice skills introduced in the classroom or a chance to expand knowledge, through research, application or reflection. It is not intended for drill or punishment. The purpose of homework is to extend and reinforce learning.

You will find that homework reinforces what children have already learned in class. Teachers do not use homework to teach new information. If we ask children to do work they haven’t already practiced, then they get frustrated and no learning takes place. There is no truth to the assumption that more homework makes better students. Good homework results in better time management and study skills and continued development of what is happening in the classroom.

Parents help their children develop skills for learning and complete homework assignments by following the following suggestions:

1. Provide space for doing homework and a specific time for study.
2. Provide books and opportunities to read.
3. Read to or with your child.
4. Provide the tools to aid learning.
5. Maintain communication with your child’s teacher and regularly check the class blackboard site.

Thank you for being our partner in education.

Susan Z. Owner
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**Special Events:**
- **January 20, 2009:** 6th Grade Field Trip to Building Museum
- **January 22, 2009:** 7:30-8:15 am Writer’s Block, 3:15-4:15 Helping Hands
- **January 29, 2009:** 7:30-8:15 am Writer’s Block, 4th Grade Field Trip to National Symphony
- **January 30, 2009:** 7-8 pm Night of the Arts Concert, Gym
Check-it Out at the Library

Virginia Readers Choice (VRC)

VRC encourages young readers to become better acquainted with contemporary books with outstanding literary appeal. Each year ten books are selected for primary grade students to vote on. This school year the books are:

- Bad Boys Get Cookie! by Marjorie Palatini
- Duck at the Door by Jackie Urbanovic
- The Great Fuzz Frenzy by Janet Stevens
- I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track by Joshua Prince
- Library Lion by Barbara Knudsen
- Little Lost Bat by Sandra Markle
- Mammoths on the Move by Lisa Wheeler
- Once I Ate a Pie by Patricia MacLachlan
- Stars Beneath Your Bed by April Sayre
- Wolves by Emily Gravett

ICES students in the primary grades will vote in February for their favorite VRC book.

Library Staff:
Jill Woodall,
Librarian
Debi Poole,
Library Assistant

December Library Happenings

It has been a busy and fun time in the library this month. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- All 5th grade classes visited the library to review reference resources and participate in an assessment as part of the Global Awareness & Technology Research Project. Reference interviews began this month and will continue into January.
- Kindergarten, First and Second grade students are learning about the Virginia Readers Choice books. They are making connections and comparing and contrasting fiction and nonfiction text.
- Mr. Stillions 3rd grade class has been learning about and using print encyclopedias to find facts about animals.
- Ms. Cromwell’s 3rd class has been reviewing and using text features in dictionaries.

Stay tuned for more library happenings!

Thank You for supporting the ICES sponsored Barnes & Noble fundraiser on December 1st!!

6th Grade Book Club

The next meeting of the 6th Grade Book Club is January 15th at 7:30AM in the library. We are reading One False Note by Gordon Korman. New members are encouraged to attend. See you there!!

Library Catalog

You can access the Island Creek library catalog from home: http://libcat.fcps.edu/uhthin/cgisirs/s/00/57/49?user_id=429WEB
Mrs. Valent’s second grade class performed reader’s theater for their classmates. The first group did it on pajama day.

Mrs. Markon’s fifth grade class, directed by Mrs. Kraft, performed for parents on Veteran’s Day.

The preschool students enjoyed a Preschool Pajamas Pancakes Pizza Party on Friday, December 19. Check out those pancake relay racers!

Students in 4th grade experience crafts and games on Colonial Day.
MESSAGE FOR PARENTS OF CURRENT 5th GRADERS

Effective July 1, 2006, all students in Virginia must receive a booster dose of Tdap vaccine prior to entering sixth grade, if at least five years have passed since the last dose of tetanus toxoid-containing vaccine (DTP, DTaP, DT or Td).

Please check your child’s immunization records carefully. If your child is required to have a Tdap booster, please do not delay in getting the immunization. The Tdap booster can be obtained from your child’s physician. Immunizations required for school also are available at the Fairfax County Health Department at no charge. Students receiving immunizations at the Health Department must be accompanied by an adult, and students should bring their immunization records to the Health Department with them.

Documentation must be provided to the school office. This documentation can be a copy of your child’s immunization record, or a note from your physician listing the date of their Tdap booster shot. If your doctor will not administer the shot until your child’s 11th birthday, we need a note from the doctor so stating. Sixth graders cannot begin school next year without documentation.

Please contact Gail Acker, the school public health nurse, at 703-704-6100 or gail.acker@fairfaxcounty.gov, if you have any questions.

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NIGHT OF THE ARTS CONCERT

On Thursday, January 29, 2009, musicians from Island Creek’s Beatmasters, Chorus, and intermediate and advanced Orchestra and advanced Band will perform in the gym at 7:00 PM. The musicians have been working hard to bring you a variety of musical selections. All are invited to attend.

SCA GIVING TREE

Thanks to all who donated items to the SCA Giving Tree. Lots of hats, coats, scarves, gloves, mittens, etc. were collected and donated to a local charity.

SCA SPIRIT DAY

SCA Spirit Day will be Crazy Hat and Hair day on Friday, January 16.