

This summer, kids urged to discover books & bonds

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Calcutta: Two schools have encouraged students to use the summer break to cultivate reading habits, while another has urged them to spend quality time with family members and visit relatives to strengthen personal bonds.

School heads said holiday assignments should go beyond academics and offer opportunities for students to read, reflect and learn from real-life experiences, as a significant part of education takes place outside the classroom.

At Sri Sri Academy, students of Classes III to VIII have been asked to read at least one book during the vacation. Mahadevi Birla World Academy has instructed students in the junior section to read one story each in English, Hindi and Bengali.

Many children are unlikely to pick up a book on their own unless encouraged to do so, which is why the school has also provided a suggested reading list, said Nupur

Ghosh, vice-principal of Mahadevi Birla World Academy.

Teachers often integrate the reading activity with classroom assignments to reinforce learning and discussion.

At Sri Sri Academy, students will be required to review the book they read upon returning from vacation.

Each child will receive a worksheet where they can write about their favourite character or imagine an alternative ending to the story. The exercise is aimed at fostering creativity as much as reading, said Gargi Banerjee, principal of Sri Sri Academy.

Schools say encouraging children to read remains a challenge. Books gifted during prize distribution ceremonies often remain untouched, while even book vouchers meant to promote reading have not always achieved the desired response.

Metro had earlier reported on a school where a large number of book vouchers distributed at



the annual prize-giving ceremony went unredeemed. The vouchers were introduced to encourage students to browse through books and choose titles of their interest, but only a few students used them.

With fewer children reading for pleasure, schools often have to make reading a mandatory activity or weave it into the curriculum, a teacher said.

Mahadevi Birla World Academy

organises an annual festival centred on a book, with various activities planned around it.

"We recreate scenes and images from the book across the school. Students who have read it connect with those settings and, at times, with the characters. That encourages many of them to read more," said Ghosh.

The current students belong to a generation that is used to screens; they have to be trained to read, she said.

Reading is a learned skill. The eyes have to be trained to move from left to right across a line and then return to the left for the next one. Until that happens, many children rely on their fingers to track the text as they read, said Ghosh.

Julien Day Group of Schools has urged students to use the holidays to connect with family members and relatives, rather than growing up in silos.

"We want children to understand that it is not just a transactional relationship that they share

with their parents, where all their needs and luxuries are provided for. Human qualities like empathy, sensitivity and understanding have to be inculcated," said Terence John, director of education and development, Julien Day Schools in Calcutta, Howrah, Ganganagar and Kalyani.

"The instruction to the teachers is not to burden children up to Class VIII with holiday homework. They have to be allowed to relax and bond with family. Not everyone will go on a vacation, but they should be encouraged to share light moments," said John.

Sharing helps children open up to adults around them.

"There is a decline in social skills of children that could impact the mental health of students as well because their emotions often remain pent up inside them," a teacher said.

At Julien Day Schools, the students will have to prepare short notes about their visits and support them with pictures, said John.