## **Ogden Elementary School**



875 Longview Avenue Valley Stream, NY 11581 www.hewlett-woodmere.net/oes/ 516.792.4700 Dina M. Anzalone, Ed.D. *Principal* 

Elizabeth A. Murray Assistant Principal

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Dear Families of "Soon-to-Be" Fourth Graders,

We are all aware of the importance of shared-reading experiences. This summer we would like to provide your child the opportunity to share his or her growing competence with reading. We will be posting a suggested list of summer reading titles to our Ogden Website, including lists of leveled books in different genres as well as magazines and websites to promote independent reading. In addition, we will be sending home the book, *Fourth Grade Rats* by Jerry Spinelli with your child to share with you. Please join us by making this the "Summer of Reading as a Family."

The book is about how a young boy deals with making difficult decisions, and is able to find the courage and determination to overcome obstacles. We selected it because it has a special message that will evoke strong emotions and hopefully, thoughtful dialogue at home. We believe that when children read and discuss books that speak to important issues, they have a better understanding of their role in the school community.

Please make the reading of this wonderful book a family affair. It is a gift from our Ogden family to yours, but the true gift will be the time you spend together with your "soon-to-be" fourth grader. We hope these sharing times are full of warmth and good feelings and I encourage you to become a partner with us as you read and discuss this very relevant story.

Your child's book will be sent home in a plastic baggie. This is to help protect and store the book. It will also serve as a reminder to return both the book and the baggie to Ogden on your first day of school. Please use the attached pages, "Let's Discuss" to guide you as you discuss the books major themes: peer pressure, courage, and determination. In September, you will be invited to join your child at a special breakfast where we will share our thoughts and understandings of the book. The meaningful conversations that come about will launch us into an exciting year of reading and writing. I wish you a wonderful summer filled with good weather, happy memories and enjoyable reading. See you in September!

Sincerely,

Dina M. Anzalone

Dina M. Anzalone, Ed. D.

Nam	e: Date:
	Summer Reading Assignment for Incoming Fourth-Grade Students
	Fourth-Grade Rats by Jerry Spinelli
	<u>Let's Discuss</u>
1.	The very first sentence we hear Suds say in this novel is: "I wish I was still in third grade" (p.1). What does this tell you about him right from the start? How is he feeling? Why?

2.	In chapter two, Suds did a pretty good job of defending his elephant lunch box and peanut butter sandwich after Joey made fun of it. Yet by the time they leave the lunchroom, he does wonder to himself "if anybody was looking at my lunch box" (p. 9). Discuss the power of peer pressure in this scene. What is it about Joey that makes him seem like an expert on how big kids should act? Do you think that Joey is a bully?

3.	Fourth Grade Rats explores the idea that there is a little bit of sadness in growing up. Suds thinks, "I always thought when you grew up, stuff like bikes and bubble gum just sort of disappeared from your life. You didn't want them anymore. They got replaced by cars and coffee and all. I never thought you actually had to give them up, whether you were ready to or not" (p. 21). In what ways do Suds' parents help him keep a little bit of his early childhood alive and safe at home? Why are these routines and traditions so important? Do you or your family do anything special at home to relieve the stress of school?

4.	How do you think Joey feels when his mother forces him to apologize to Suds—in front of both moms—for urging him "into the rat stuff" (p. 77)? Mrs. Peterson claims that Joey "has dropped out of the rat race and has rejoined the human race." Do you believe that Joey has really changed, or is he putting on an act in front of his mother? Why do you think this?
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