

Building Readers[®]

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Connellsville Area School District

Summer family reading nights keep skills sharp until fall

Is there one night a week when your family has extra time together? If so, consider making it a family reading night.

Decide how to make the event fun. Maybe you'll all wear pajamas and read in bed. Perhaps your family will camp out with flashlights in a homemade fort. Maybe you'll pack up a couple of books and read outside. Or your family can try something new each week.



Everyone should bring fun reading materials. Remember, you can read aloud to children of all ages—or have your child read aloud to you. No one is too old for a good story!

“The road to knowledge begins with the turn of the page.”
—Unknown

Match materials to reluctant readers' interests

Some kids would rather spend their free time this summer doing anything *but* reading. If that's how your child feels, try combining reading with activities he loves. For example:

- **A child who enjoys art** can draw a story after reading it. Did the book describe how the characters looked? What they wore? Encourage your child to note details. Another idea is to create a “brochure” for the book. Include illustrations and a description of the story.
- **A hands-on child** might enjoy trips and tasks related to books. Read about dinosaurs, and then visit a museum. Read a cookbook, and then prepare a meal. Or follow directions in a craft magazine.
- **A social child** can read aloud to younger siblings or neighbors. He might even read to an elderly relative or friend. Children can receive so much positive feedback during this activity that reading becomes a favorite hobby.

Source: Evelyn Porreca Vuko, *Teacher Says*, ISBN: 0-399-52997-7 (The Berkley Publishing Group, www.penguin.com).

Scan, then share, scary stories



Your child asks to check out a book of scary stories at the library. What should you do? Experts say some scary children's stories like *Hansel and Gretel* may help kids face—and overcome—normal fears. But that's not always the case. Some books are too frightening, graphic or negative. Scan the book quickly and use your best judgment. And if you say yes, offer to read the stories together.

Source: Patti Jones, “Should Kids Read Scary Stories?” Parents, www.parents.com/fun/entertainment/books/should-kids-read-scary-stories/?page=1

Promote reading with lists



Looking for a way to sneak reading into your child's day? Use lists more often. For example, rather than asking your child to do her chores, make her a list of jobs. Or plan a scavenger hunt, and give each player a list of items to find.

Fill this summer with books



No more pencils, no more books? No way! According to research, kids may lose some of their “word smarts” if they don't keep reading over the summer. So make a point of surrounding your child with words this summer. Too hot to go outside? Visit the library and suggest a few good titles to help your child while away the afternoon. What could be nicer than a cold drink and a cool book?

Source: Beth M. Miller, Ph.D., “The Learning Season: The Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement,” The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, www.nmefdn.org/uploads/Learning_Season_FR.pdf

Stop reading problems before they start

According to a new international study, when a child starts to fall behind in reading, teachers' first step is to ask parents to get involved. But there's no need to wait until your child's teacher tells you that your child is falling behind. You can:

- **Read to and with** your child every day.
- **Make sure your child** sees you reading regularly.
- **Talk to your child** about what you are each reading.

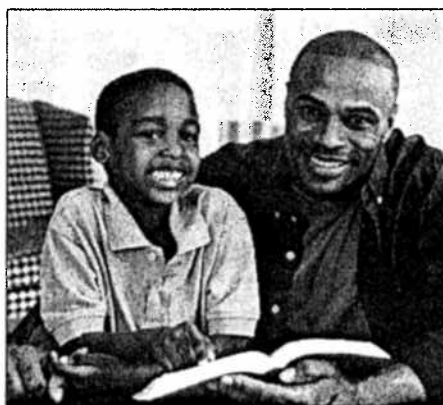
In addition to keeping your child on track, regular reading activities with your child will help you spot any possible problems in plenty of time to work with teachers and prevent them from becoming serious.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, "Teacher Strategies to Help Fourth-Graders Having Difficulty in Reading: An International Perspective," <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009013.pdf>.

Reading aloud with your child teaches vocabulary

Every time you read to your child, you have a chance to teach new vocabulary words. How? By choosing books that are:

- **Just above your child's** reading level. They will contain new words your child can learn. Reading with feeling will help your child understand them.
- **Fun for your child** and you. Then it's natural to read with enthusiasm—and for your child to stay interested.
- **Related to familiar topics.** Your child's background knowledge will make it easier for him to add new information and vocabulary.



Getty Images

- **Filled with patterns.** Younger kids like to guess what's coming next, such as a rhyming word or a predictable plotline.

Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D. and Gerald E. Schumm Jr., D. Min., *The Reading Tutor's Handbook*, ISBN: 1-57542-052-X (Free Spirit Publishing, www.freespirit.com).



Q: I want to help my child think about what she reads. How can I do this?
A: Good for you! Helping your child think about reading materials will also help her understand them. Ask questions such as,

"What happened in the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?" "Why do you think the author wrote this book?" "What did you like or dislike about it?" "Can you teach me something you learned from the book?"

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



For lower elementary readers:

Last Day Blues by Julie Danneberg (Charlesbridge Publishing). Mrs. Hartwell's students are worried about how much she'll miss them over the summer. What can they give her to remember them?

Crazy Like a Fox: A Simile Story by Loreen Leedy (Holiday House). Rufus the fox leads readers on a simile adventure. Suddenly similes (comparisons of two unlike things, often using the words *like* or *as*) are fun!

For upper elementary readers:

A Whole Nother Story by Dr. Cuthbert Soup (Bloomsbury). Follow Dr. Cheeseman, his three children, their psychic dog and a sock puppet named Steve, all on the run from the CIA.

White Star: A Dog on the Titanic by Marty Crisp (Scholastic). Twelve-year-old Sam befriends a dog on the doomed Titanic voyage. When tragedy strikes, they work to survive together.

Start a summer book club



If your child would enjoy a summer book club, now's the time to get organized. Talk with other parents about the idea. How many kids will be in the group? Will you read one kind of book or a variety? Where—and how often—will you meet? Who will lead the meetings? Once the planning is done, let the fun begin!

Source: "Book Clubs," KidsReads.com, www.kidsreads.com/clubs.

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