Elementary School • December 2022

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Parkland School District

Help your child overcome reading struggles with five simple strategies

If your child is having trouble with reading, it can affect every school subject. Confidence is a key element of reading success, so help your child keep a positive outlook. Here's how:



1. **Avoid comparing your child** with others. Students develop reading skills at different rates—and that's OK. Help your child focus on strengths.
2. **Ask the teacher** for suggestions of how you can support your child with reading at home.
3. **Match goals** to your child's abilities, then plan small steps to meet them. Help your child brainstorm ways to overcome obstacles. Nothing breeds success like success.
4. **Create a reading routine** that your child finds enjoyable.
5. **Keep up-to-date** with your child's reading progress in school. Don't let problems escalate.

Have some literacy fun with a snowman!

There's just something about a snowman that seems to inspire writers. And December is the perfect time of year to check out one of these wintry titles:

- ***Sneezy the Snowman*** by Maureen Wright.
- ***The Greatest Snowman in the World!*** by Peter Hannan.
- ***Beware, The Snowman*** by R.L. Stine.
- ***The Case of the Sneaky Snowman*** by Carolyn Keene.

After sharing a few of these stories with your child, build a snowman together—either outside out of actual snow, or inside out of paper, cotton balls or marshmallows.

What kinds of adventures might the snowman have? Strengthen storytelling skills by asking your child to create and share a few snowy snowman tales with the family.

Don't let cold weather increase time spent in front of screens

Experts recommend parents set limits on children's recreational screen use. But it's easy to rely on screen entertainment when it's too cold to play outside.



Brainstorm and make a list of fun reading-related alternative activities. On cold days, have your child choose an activity from the list.

Story starters spark writing

To help your child practice writing, share irresistible story starters:

- **It's the year 2122.** What are your future relatives doing?
- **You're a space explorer.** What does your ship look like, and where are you going?
- **It is raining** cats and dogs—real ones! What do you do?



Regular attendance has a direct impact on reading skills

Research shows that missing school has negative effects on reading and learning. This winter, recommit to ensuring your child is in school on time every day. Then, begin 2023 with routines that support attendance. Stick to a regular sleep schedule and gather items for school the night before. Routines like these makes mornings easier and prevent tardiness.



Source: "Attendance in the Early Grades: Why it Matters for Reading," Attendance Works.

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Boost reading comprehension

Students need strong reading comprehension skills to do their best in school. And the older they get, the more complex school reading becomes. To boost understanding, encourage your child to:



1. **Read aloud.** This slows down reading and helps your child "process" words.
2. **Read to relax.** Encourage your child to read enjoyable books for fun.
3. **Reread.** Reading things more than once can help your child understand new concepts and learn new vocabulary.
4. **Supplement reading.** Look for interesting materials, such as news articles, related to what your child is learning in school.
5. **Discuss reading.** Ask your child questions that encourage thinking. "Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?"

Dictionary games strengthen vocabulary

A dictionary is an effective tool for building your child's vocabulary—especially if you make it fun to use. Either a printed dictionary or an online version will do the job. Take turns leading these games with family members:



- **Definition First.** Read only the definition of a word. Have players try to guess the word. The person with the correct guess gets to pick the next word.
- **Which Is It?** Find an unusual word in the dictionary. Say the word. Then, read two definitions: the correct one and a definition of another word. Ask players to guess the correct definition and to use the word in a sentence.



Q: Part of my second grader's homework is to read every day at home, but my child often refuses to do it. How should I handle this?

A: This is a concern to discuss with your child's teacher. Share your ideas about possible causes of your child's refusal. The teacher will have suggestions that make reading time easier, such as taking turns reading aloud. Work together to find strategies that will turn your child into an eager reader.

Bookmarks make reading special

Making bookmarks can get your child excited about reading. Plus, they make great gifts for friends and family. You'll need:

- **Construction paper** cut into long strips.
- **Colored pencils,** markers or crayons.

Have your child decorate each bookmark with pictures, photos or favorite quotes from books.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Mirror, Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse*** by Marilyn Singer. These poems based on fairy tales have a special feature. They can be read down the page or up the page for different meanings.



- ***Art and Max*** by David Wiesner. Max doesn't know what to paint. Arthur suggests that Max paint him—a suggestion that Max takes very literally!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Word After Word After Word*** by Patricia Maclachlan. A writer tells fourth graders that everyone has a story to tell—and together they discover how right she is.
- ***Romeow and Drooliet*** by Nina Laden. This clever adaptation of Shakespeare's classic *Romeo and Juliet* features a cat and dog as the star-crossed lovers.

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