

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools
Connecting Families and Schools

Make library trips an enriching part of your family's school year routine

Now that the hustle and bustle of a new school year has begun, don't forget about your public library! Regular family trips will help you keep your home stocked with wonderful things for everyone to read.

During your library visits, encourage your child to check out a variety of books and reading materials, including:

- **Books** related to things he's learning about in school.
- **Audiobooks.**
- **Biographies** about influential people.
- **Graphic novels** and comics.
- **Magazines** and newspapers.
- **Books** that are slightly above his reading level to read together.
- **Poetry collections.**
- **Nonfiction texts** about his hobbies and subjects that interest him.



*"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world.
Love of books is the best of all."*

—Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Decode unfamiliar words like a detective

Your child is stuck on a word and asks for help. "What does this say?" Now's the time to investigate and have a little fun! Suggest that she:

- **Sound it out.** How do the letters come together to make sounds? Be patient and encouraging as your child tries.
- **Reread the sentence or paragraph.** What comes before and after the word that's giving her trouble? What other word or words would make sense in its place?
- **Look for clues.** Are there hints in nearby illustrations or photos? Is the word—or any part of the word—similar to one that your child already knows? These are called *context clues*.

Fill your refrigerator with words

Is your refrigerator plastered with photos, art and more? Cover it with words, too! Add:

- **Letter magnets** so your child can spell out words.
- **A calendar** to help your child recognize days of the week.
- **Lists** of all kinds, such as shopping lists, to-do lists and weekly menus.
- **A "word of the day"** for you and your child to use and discuss.



Use wordless picture books for writing inspiration

Ask your child's teacher or the librarian to help you find a picture book with few or no words. Then, have your child write some text to go with the illustrations. When she's finished, read the story together!



Reread to boost fluency

Fluency is the ability to read quickly and easily. A fluent reader doesn't pause to decode words.

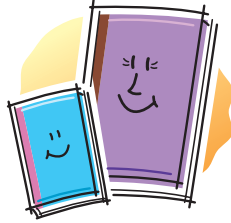
You can help your child become a fluent reader by encouraging him to read and reread favorite books. When he is familiar with the text—and when the reading gets a little easy—he doesn't have to focus on figuring out each word. Instead, he can focus on reading with speed and expression.



Spend quality time reading together

Set aside some time each day to read with your child. He will benefit from your involvement, and you'll enjoy each other's company! For the best results:

- **Select a time to read together** when your child is most receptive. Make it a part of the day that you both look forward to.
- **Talk about the books you read.** Ask your child questions that will get him thinking. "Do you agree with what the main character did?" "What do you think will happen next?" "Would you have ended the story a different way?"
- **Give an encore performance.** Your child may want to hear stories again and again—and that's good. The more he listens to a story, the more he can learn from it.
- **Admire other performers.** Listen to professional storytellers or go to story hours at the library. Try some audiobooks, too.



Immerse your child in reading

To show your child just how much fun reading can be, suggest that she put herself into the world in which her book takes place. Encourage your child to:

- **Get into character.** Have her read some exciting dialogue from the book out loud. Remind her to be dramatic!
- **Draw a map.** She can draw the area where the story takes place.
- **Design costumes.** She can sketch pictures of the type of clothing each character might wear.
- **Invite a character to dinner.** Help her plan a menu the character would like based on what she knows from the book.



Q: School just started, and I'm already worried about my child's reading skills. Is it too soon to contact his teacher?

A: No! The sooner reading struggles are identified, the better. The teacher is still getting to know your child, so your perspective is especially important. Working together gives your child his best chance

for success. Let the teacher know about your concerns and be sure to ask what you can do to support your child at home.

Ask questions to help your child find the right book

Learning how to choose a book is an important step for readers. When your child is deciding on a book to read, ask her:

- **Does the title** sound interesting?
- **Is the text** easy to read?
- **Do you like** the pictures?
- **Are you "hooked"** after reading the first few lines?

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Turtle's Race with Beaver*** by Joseph Bruchac and James Bruchac. Turtle burrows deep into the pond when winter comes. When she resurfaces, she finds that Beaver has moved in, and the pond is different.



- ***Penny and Her Song*** by Kevin Henkes. Penny is a little mouse with a song to share. Unfortunately, her family isn't ready to listen. What will she do?

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Dancing Home*** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta. Margie has finally convinced her classmates that she is 100% American. When her cousin arrives from Mexico, she worries the teasing will start again.
- ***The Universe of Fair*** by Leslie Bulion. Miller wants to explore the town fair by himself. However, he finds that responsibility is much more than he bargained for.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com