

# BUILDING READERS®

Vancouver Public Schools

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

## Everyday activities offer engaging opportunities for reading

To encourage your child's interest in reading, incorporate it into some of her favorite activities. For example:

- **Visit local sites of interest,** then read a book about area history to find out more. What additional information can your child learn about your town?
- **Talk about foods you love.** What would be fun to make? Let your child pick a recipe from a cookbook to follow together.
- **Watch or play sports together.** Then find books and articles about famous athletes, statistics and training tips.
- **Go for a walk** and bring a nature guide. How many flowers, animals, bugs or trees can you both identify?
- **Start a craft project** that requires following instructions. Let your child read the directions and take charge of the craft.



### Build vocabulary with dictionary games

Strengthen your child's vocabulary by having some fun with the dictionary. Start by showing him how a dictionary works: The entry word is in bold letters. It's followed by one or more definitions and perhaps a sentence or phrase that includes the word.

Then, take turns leading these games:

- **What's the Word?** Read just the definition of a word. Have the other player or players try several times to guess the word. If no one can guess, then tell the word.
- **Guess the Definition.** Find an unusual word in the dictionary. Say the word. Then read its definition and the definition of another word. Ask the players to guess which is the correct definition for the word you read.

## Stay in touch with your child's teacher throughout the year

You can best support your child if you are aware of his reading progress. Ask his teacher questions about his success in reading, such as:

- **Is my child** progressing as expected?
- **What are my child's** biggest strengths and challenges with reading?
- **How can I help** my child at home?



### Improve your child's reading skills by reading aloud

Even if your child is able to read on her own, she will still benefit from being read to. When you read aloud with your child, you can:

- **Build enthusiasm** for the story you're reading.
- **Expose her** to new words and discuss their meanings.
- **Learn more** about her interests.



### Context helps give words meaning

When your child encounters a new word while reading, show him how to figure out its meaning on his own. Suggest that he:

- **Consider** its beginning and end. Does it have a prefix or suffix he knows?
- **Finish the sentence.** He can look for clues in the rest of the sentence, then try reading it again.
- **Notice pictures.** Do they offer any hints about the story?



## Use journals to encourage creativity

Keeping a journal is a great way to practice reading and writing skills. There are lots of ways to journal. If your child doesn't know what to write, give her a notebook and suggest she try:

- **Drawing.** Many children enjoy sketching things they see or imagine. Then have your child add stories or simple captions to accompany her drawings.
- **Reviewing.** What does your child think of books that she reads? Would she recommend any titles to others? Why or why not?
- **Recording.** Your child might like to keep track of the weather, books she reads or facts she collects.
- **Creating memories.** Let your child glue favorite pictures and mementos into the notebook—complete with her notes about them. This will be fun to read and remember in the future!



## Three steps to stronger research skills

Does your child need to research something for a school assignment? Share these steps to simplify the process:

1. **Define the task.** Help your child figure out exactly what he needs to research. By narrowing in on key words to search for, your child's research will be more focused.
2. **Use reliable sources.** Together, determine if a source is appropriate and factual. Websites that end in .gov or .edu are generally reliable sources.
3. **Take notes.** Whether your child writes key facts on index cards or on a piece of paper, keeping track of information—and the source he got it from—will help him stay organized. A good understanding of how to conduct research will come in handy for the rest of your child's academic career.



**Q:** My child is not very sure of herself when she reads aloud. What can I do to help build her confidence?

**A:** Encourage your child to keep practicing! Read to and with your child every day to help her with any difficulties. Help her understand what she reads by encouraging her to ask plenty of questions. Talking with your child every day is also a great way to build her language and vocabulary skills.

## Motivate your child with points

Is your child a reluctant reader? Turn reading into a game. Assign points for each book or story he reads. Offer small rewards for every few book points he earns. He may start out reading for rewards, but chances are he'll soon discover that reading can be fun, too.



## For lower elementary readers:

- **Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds** by Robert Burleigh. Burleigh uses poetry and narratives to tell the story of Jackie Robinson, who broke through major league baseball's color line in 1946.
- **The Library Gingerbread Man** by Dotti Enderle. The Gingerbread Man runs away from his home at the library, causing the librarian and several book characters to chase after him.



## For upper elementary readers:

- **Doo-Wop Pop** by Roni Schotter. Elijah Earl keeps to himself—until the school janitor helps him and a few other shy students form their own musical group.
- **A Movie in My Pillow: Una película en mi almohada** by Jorge Argueta. This collection of poetry is the poet's reflection on his life after he moved from El Salvador to San Francisco.

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