

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools

## Add a bit of excitement and creativity to your elementary schooler's reading time

Artistic activities develop your child's imagination and can keep reading interesting. To add some excitement to your child's reading time, encourage him to:

- **Draw pictures** of characters from his favorite book.
- **Draw a map** of where the plot takes place. Ask him to include as much detail as possible.
- **Design a comic book** based on one of his favorite books. He can draw a comic that lays out the major events in order, or he can write a completely new tale. What other adventures might the characters have?
- **Make up a song** about book characters. For example, what would the three little pigs sing while building their different types of houses?



## Play a guessing game to teach the power of adjectives

Boost your child's language and description skills by playing "stuffed animal mystery." Here's how:

1. **Gather a few of your child's stuffed animals** and put them in a pillowcase.
2. **Have your child choose one animal** from the pillowcase and describe it to you—without showing you what she picked.
3. **Encourage your child to use description words**, such as *furry*, *strong*, *tiny* and *smooth*. Remind your child that these words are called *adjectives*.
4. **Guess which stuffed animal** your child has selected and congratulate her on all the great words she used.
5. **Switch roles** and describe an animal to her.

## Make a big difference in just a few minutes each day

Plan to get in at least 15 minutes of family reading time each day. You can:

- **Listen to audiobooks** while exercising or doing chores together.
- **Bring reading material** with you everywhere you go. Pull out a book whenever you have to wait somewhere.
- **Tuck your child into bed** with a story or book chapter.
- **Read a story** aloud during breakfast, lunch or dinner.



## Encourage your child to look up new information

Make your child the official family fact checker. If you need to double-check a recipe, ask him to read it to you. If you're curious about the capital of Bulgaria, show him how he can look it up. He'll boost his research skills and confidence at the same time!



## Get organized with word webs

Word webs can help your child see how words and ideas are connected.

Have your child put a concept, such as *space*, in the center, then draw lines that link to related words, like *galaxies* and *exploration*.

Then your child can link those words to others to create a visual diagram of their relationships.



## Mealtime talk leads to school success

Mealtime never has to be boring. With a little imagination, it can be a time for the whole family to have fun together and learn. Involving kids in interesting discussions can help them improve their reading, listening and speaking skills.

During mealtime, have family members:

- **Give book reports.** Share plots, characters and your opinions about what you're reading.
- **Take turns selecting a topic** to talk about. Or, place an interesting object in the center of the table to spark discussion.
- **Turn old maps into place mats.** Refer to the maps when you are talking about places in the news.
- **Play Did You Know?** Have each person at the table write three facts on index cards. Take turns drawing and reading the cards. Discuss the information that you learn.



## Learning more about authors can build your child's interest in reading

When your child reads a book, ask her who wrote it. What information is provided about the author? Reinforcing that books are written by real, regular people may make her want to try writing herself.

Help your child:

- **Research the author.** Have her learn about the writer's life. How does it relate to the book, if at all?
- **Write to the author** (check to see if the author has a website, or send letters to the publisher). Keep in mind that not all authors always respond.
- **Imitate the author's style.** Have your child try to write a story in the author's style—humor, short sentences or a certain point of view, for example.



**Q:** The teacher says my child needs to become a more **fluent reader**. How can I help him with this?

**A:** A *fluent* reader progresses through material with competence, confidence and feeling. Fluency makes it easier for your child to understand material. To increase fluency, make sure your child reads often (even if it's the same material repeatedly). When you read aloud to him, model fluency by reading with clarity and expression.

## Ask friends about books

As kids get older, their classmates become great sources of reading recommendations. Your child can ask his friends, "Have you read any cool books lately?" When kids read the same books, they can discuss them, which builds reading comprehension skills.



## For lower elementary readers:

- ***See What a Seal Can Do*** by Chris Butterworth (Candlewick). Seals may look lazy lolling on a beach, but they're very active animals. Learn about seals and their lives underwater in this beautifully illustrated book.



- ***Goldie and the Three Hares*** by Margie Palatini (Katherine Tegen Books). After being chased by the Three Bears, Goldilocks lands in the Hares' house for a new adventure.

## For upper elementary readers:

- ***Spork*** by Kyo Maclear (Kids Can Press). Spork doesn't fit in with either the forks or the spoons in the silverware drawer. What *can* a spork be used for?
- ***Almost Super*** by Marion Jensen (Harper). All members of the Bailey family get a superpower when they are 12—and they are prepared to use their powers to save their world!

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