

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Vancouver Public Schools  
Connecting Families and Schools

## Promote reading as a summer activity

To keep your child reading over the summer, treat it like a fun summer activity. Let it be something she can do whenever she feels like it. Show her that reading is fun—and never make it feel like homework.

To encourage reading:

- **Connect books** with summer activities—sports books for a summer league player, for instance, or camping books for a camper.
- **Let your child stay up** past bedtime when a book is just too good to put down.
- **Help your child find** a series of fiction or thriller books. These page-turners hook kids into a reading habit.
- **Share favorite books** and magazines with your child.
- **Encourage a change** of venue. Read books at the beach or pool, in a tent or at the park.
- **Watch a movie** based on a children's book. Then read the book together and discuss the differences between the two.



### Reading can lead to test success

Students often have to tackle multiple-choice questions on tests. Putting their reading skills to work can help. Share these tips with your child:

- **Read each question carefully.** Your child should notice key words, such as *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*. He should also pay attention to tricky words like *not* and *except*.
- **Think about the answer.** Before looking at the choices, your child should put the answer in his own words. Then, he can see if an option matches what he was thinking.
- **Read every choice.** If your child thinks he sees the answer immediately, he should still consider all the possibilities. One answer may be more complete than another.
- **Eliminate wrong answers.** Even if your child doesn't know the right answer, he may recognize wrong answers. He should cross them off to boost his chances of guessing correctly among the remaining answers.

## Build thinking skills with analogies

Expand your child's thinking skills by practicing *analogies*, comparisons between pairs of words that have a relationship with each other—like *dog is to fur as bird is to feather*.

Have your child fill in the missing word in these analogies:

- *Sand is to beach as \_\_\_\_\_ is to the North Pole. (snow)*
- *Fly is to airplane as \_\_\_\_\_ is to car. (drive)*
- *Good is to wonderful as \_\_\_\_\_ is to terrible. (bad)*



## Conversations strengthen vocabulary

Talk with your child as you do your daily activities together. Ask her questions. It's one of the most important ways to help her build a strong vocabulary. And that's part of building a strong reader!



## Set goals for summer reading

As summer approaches, encourage your entire family to set some reading goals. Family members could:

- **Read a certain number** of books each week.
- **Read all the books** by a favorite author.
- **Read to learn** a new skill.
- **Read for a certain amount of time** each day.



## Encourage your child to keep a summer log

Summer is a great time for your child to start keeping a log. All she needs is an empty notebook and a few ideas to get started. Here are some suggestions:

- **A research log.** Have your child pick a subject she loves, such as skateboarding. Over the summer, she can research and write about it. What are some cool skateboard tricks? Who holds records for skateboarding?
- **A travel log.** Each time she goes somewhere special—whether it's far away or close to home—your child can keep a record by taking photos, drawing or journaling. What did she see? Who did she meet? What did she think about what she saw?
- **An observation log.** Suggest that your child observe something over a period of time, such as a summer vegetable as it grows. Or, she can pick something to describe in detail, such as a bug or an animal.



### Use the five W's to ask questions

When you discuss a story with your child, ask him about the Five W's: Who? What? When? Where? Why? These questions help readers focus when they read and retell a story.

For example, ask: *Who* is the main character? *What* is the story about? *When* does it take place? *Where* does it happen? *Why* did the characters make certain choices?



### For lower elementary readers:

- ***Uh-oh, Cleo*** by Jessica Harper (Putnam). Uh-oh! A minor accident sends eight-year-old Cleo to the doctor for stitches. This amusing story is a good introduction to chapter books.

- ***Ike's Incredible Ink*** by Brianne Farley (Candlewick). Ike sits down to write a story and decides to make his own ink. But before he can make it, he'll have to collect just the right ingredients.



### For upper elementary readers:

- ***Running Shoes*** by Frederick Lipp (Charlesbridge). Sophy receives the most wonderful gift—a pair of running shoes—and is inspired to do great things.
- ***Storyteller*** by Patricia Reilly Giff (Wendy Lamb Books). When young Elizabeth goes to live with her aunt and uncle, she discovers fascinating stories about the past.

## A storytelling game develops imagination

When children tell stories, they practice using their imaginations. They learn to play with words and structure their thoughts. As a family, try this storytelling game:

1. **Select five words** that have no connection to each other, such as *dragon*, *song*, *tree*, *happy* and *confused*.
2. **Write the words down** and post them for all to see.
3. **Have each player** create a story that includes all the selected words. The story must make sense but it can take any form—drama, comedy, fairy tale, etc. Make sure each player includes a title and conclusion.
4. **Have family members** tell their stories, then vote for the best one.



**Q:** My child gets frustrated when she can't read unfamiliar words. What can I do?

**A:** When your child comes across an unfamiliar word, have her read it slowly to identify the sounds of the word. Then ask, "What word would make sense in the story?" A guess based on context may be correct.

Giving her time to figure it out lets her feel more in control of her reading process. Be available for your child when she needs help.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

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