

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Westview Elementary School
Mr. Alan Buttimer, Principal

Rereading and revising are critical steps in the writing process

Your child has finished writing an essay or book report. “I’m done!” he proclaims. Not so fast. Part of the writing process involves reading and editing. To help with these important steps:

- **Offer to read or listen to the report.** Give lots of compliments—and a little constructive criticism, if necessary.
- **Encourage a new perspective.** Challenge your child to look at his paper as if he were the teacher. What would he suggest be added, removed or changed? What would he leave just as it is?
- **Supervise revisions.** Encourage your child to improve the report. Watch—and celebrate—as it goes from rough draft to final version!



Source: S. Peha, “The Writing Process Notebook,” Teaching That Makes Sense, niswc.com/revising_writing.

“She read books as one would breathe air, to fill up and live.”
—Annie Dillard

Enjoy synonyms, antonyms and family time

Here’s a way to work on *synonyms* (words with the same meaning) and *antonyms* (words with opposite meanings) with your child while spending quality time together. You and your child should each take a piece of paper divided into three columns. Then:

1. **In the first column,** describe yourselves in positive terms. For example, “I am ... kind, generous.”
2. **In the second column,** write a synonym for each word. “I am ... nice, giving.”
3. **In the third column,** write antonyms for each word in the first column. “I am not ... mean, stingy.”
4. **Exchange pages.** Read about each other. Then play the game again—this time describing the other person. What similarities are there in the way you and your child describe each other? How does your child see herself? How many different synonyms can you each think of for various traits?

Literature circles enhance reading

If your child takes part in a literature circle at school, you may wonder what that is. Literature circles are like book clubs. They give kids the opportunity to participate in group discussions about books.



To build on what your child is doing in his literature circle, read the same book and ask him questions to start a conversation, such as, “What do you think of that character’s decision?”

Old favorites provide hints for choosing new books

If you’re looking for a book your child will love, start thinking about her favorite things. Favorite author? Maybe he or she has written something new. Favorite hobby? Look for a how-to book. Favorite food? Read together about how to prepare it.



Be a fluency role model

You are building your child’s fluency just by reading together.

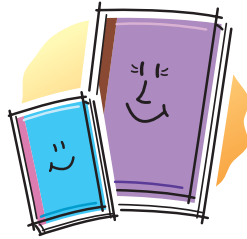
When you read smoothly—with emotion and enthusiasm—you show that effective reading is similar to talking. It flows with ease. Your child can also hear fluent reading on audio books or at story time at the library.



After you’ve modeled fluent reading, have your child practice by reading aloud to you.

Everyday conversations can boost your child's vocabulary

According to research, the conversations that children have with their parents have great influence on the children's vocabularies—and their reading skills. The more you talk with your child, the more new words she learns. When she is familiar with a word, she is more likely to recognize it when she reads.



For example, find something new to mention at the grocery store. "These mangoes are ripe." Then provide more details. "Mangoes are delicious. They're green or red on the outside and orange or yellow on the inside. Mangoes are sweet, juicy and even a little slimy. Where do you think mangoes grow? Let's try one at home." See if your child can find *mango* on the receipt. Chances are the word will become unforgettable!

Source: "Building Your Child's Vocabulary," Reading Rockets, niswc.com/conversations_vocabulary.

Challenge your child with analogies

Standardized tests sometimes examine how well kids understand *analogies* (comparisons of different, yet related, things). For example, *leg is to foot as arm is to hand*. Working on analogies builds important vocabulary and thinking skills. Try this example with your child: "*House is to builder as pie is to what?*" (Baker.)



Source: "Analogies," VocabularySpellingCity.com, niswc.com/practice_analogies.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Zip, Zip ... Homework*** by Nancy Poydar (Holiday House). Violet can't wait to have homework. Finally, the day comes when she's given an assignment!
- ***Finding Wild*** by Megan Wagner Lloyd (Alfred A. Knopf). Wild can be found in all kinds of places, from deep in a forest to the side of a mountain.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Girls Who Rocked the World: Heroines from Joan of Arc to Mother Teresa*** by Michelle Roehm McCann and Amelie Welden (Aladdin). Learn all about a number of remarkable women who have shaped the world's history.
- ***Because of Mr. Terupt*** by Rob Buyea (Yearling). Seven fifth-grade students start their school year, each bringing a unique perspective to Mr. Terupt's class.

Spice up your regular reading routines

Reading with your child every day is one of the most important things you can do to help her learn. But you don't have to always do it the same way! To build your child's excitement about reading:

- **Find new reading spots.** Pick unusual places to read, such as in a fort your child builds with pillows in the living room.
- **Read as a team.** Have your child follow words with her finger while you read aloud. Or take turns reading sentences or paragraphs.
- **Plan a performance.** Choose a favorite passage and help your child master reading it aloud. Gather an audience to admire her skills!



- **Celebrate reading success.** When you reach a goal (such as 100 reading minutes in a week), do something special!



Q: How can I tell if a book is too challenging for my child?

A: Stay in touch with the teacher about your child's reading level. This will help when choosing books to read. You can also try the "five-finger rule" to assess a book's difficulty. Have your child read a full page. Hold up one finger each time he struggles with a word. If all five fingers are up by the end of the page, save that book for later.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

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