Elementary School • May 2022

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Weymouth Public Schools

Students get more out of reading print books

Many children enjoy reading online. However, studies show that there are some reading benefits that can come only from reading a printed book.

Fast-paced, digital media trains the brain to process information more rapidly and less thoroughly. Online readers are more likely to skim than to read for meaning. So when they are finished, they are able to answer concrete questions but they stumble on questions that involve deeper thinking.

A printed page does not change. Readers can take their time and turn back to refer to something they've just read. They are more likely to remember the story in chronological order and recall many more details.

Give your child plenty of opportunities to unplug and read some printed books this summer!



Source: K. Benson. "Reading on Paper Versus Screens: What's the Difference?" BrainFacts.org.

Spark imagination with storytelling

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 of 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.

Boost literacy with maps

Making maps can be a fun way to read and write. Have your child draw a map of your community that includes important places, like school, stores and friends' houses.



Give your child directions to move his finger around the map. Use words like *left*, *right*, *east* and *west* that explain which way to go. Then have him give you directions.

Pets make great listeners

When children have trouble with reading, they often feel self-conscious reading aloud. But it's important for them to practice so they can improve.



A family pet can be a nonjudgmental audience that will make your child feel at ease reading aloud. If your family doesn't have a pet, have your student read to a stuffed animal instead.

Set goals for summer reading

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

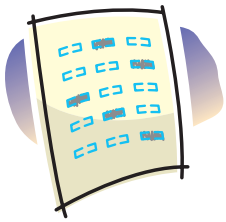


- **Read a certain number** of books or pages each week.
- **Read all the books** by a favorite author.
- **Read to learn** a new skill.
- **Read for a certain** amount of time each day.
- **Listen to an audiobook.**
- **Read a book** you wouldn't normally read.

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Strong reading skills improve test success

Students often have to tackle multiple-choice questions on tests. Reading the questions and answer choices carefully is essential. Share these tips with your child:



- **Notice key words,** such as *who*, *what*, *when* and *where*. Your child should also pay attention to words like *not* and *except* that can change the meaning of a sentence.
- **Think about the answer.** Before looking at the choices, your child should try to come up with the answer. Then, your student can read the choices carefully to see if an option matches.
- **Read every choice.** Even if your child sees the answer immediately, it's still important to consider all the possibilities. One answer may be more complete than another.
- **Eliminate wrong answers.** Crossing them off boosts your child's chances of selecting correctly among the remaining answers.

Promote reading as a summer activity

To keep your child reading over the summer, include it in fun summer activities. Show him that reading is enjoyable and never make it feel like homework.

To encourage reading:



- **Connect books** with summer activities—sports books for a summer league player 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.
- **Share favorite books** and magazines with your child.
- **Encourage a change** of venue. Read books at the pool, in a tent or at the park.



Q: I want to help my child think about what she reads. How can I do this?

A: To encourage thinking and strengthen your child's reading comprehension, ask questions such as, "What happened in the beginning of the story? The middle? The end?" "Why do you think the author wrote this book?" "What did you like or dislike about it?" "Can you teach me something you learned from the book?" "Does the book remind you of another one you've read?

Build writing skills this summer

The summer is a great time for students to start keeping a log. Your child could start a:



- **Research log** on a favorite subject.
- **Travel log,** to keep track of places and people encountered on the way.
- **Observation log,** by recording how something changes over a period of time.

For lower elementary readers:



- ***Uh-oh, Cleo*** by Jessica Harper. 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.
- ***Waiting Is Not Easy*** by Mo Willems. Piggie tells Gerald he has a big, special surprise for them to share—and Gerald just cannot wait!

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Running Shoes*** by Frederick Lipp. Sophy receives the most wonderful gift—a pair of running shoes—and is inspired to do great things.
- ***The Invention of Hugo Cabret*** by Brian Selznick. Meet Hugo, a young boy who lives in the clock tower of a busy Paris train station. When he's not making sure the clocks are on time, he's working on his secret invention.

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