

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Help your child get the most benefits from digital reading

While technology is an important part of education today, reading on a screen does not provide all of the same benefits that reading a traditional book does. When children read text on a tablet or computer screen, they tend to:

- **Skim** the text instead of reaching a deep understanding.
 - **Abandon** specific strategies that improve reading comprehension.
- But learning to read with technology is important to students' success. To support your child:
- **Review** reading strategies and encourage her to use them when she is reading on a screen. For example, she can take notes and summarize what she reads.
 - **Show** her how to find answers to questions or definitions of difficult words while she's reading.



Recharge your child's reading habits

January is the perfect time to assess your child's reading progress. It may be time to increase the level of difficulty or variety of his reading materials.

To help your child improve his reading habits:

- **Recommit** to a regular reading time. Make sure he sets aside time every day to read.
- **Challenge** your child to increase the amount of time he spends reading or the number of books he reads. Have him set new goals and help him reach them.
- **Introduce** advanced reading materials gradually. Read them together first so you can help if your child has any difficulty or questions.
- **Lead** by example. Show your child how much you enjoy your reading time.

Read up on the weather

Check out the weather page of your newspaper (or a weather website) for an activity that combines reading and science. Have your child read today's forecast. Does it match the current conditions? What's the forecast for tomorrow and the rest of the week?

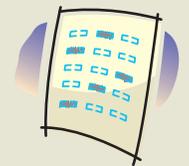


Focus at first on simple words, like *cloudy* and *rainy*.

Then, introduce and practice more challenging words, such as *forecast* and *predict*, or even *Celsius* and *Fahrenheit*.

Practice reading directions

To succeed on tests, your child must understand what he reads—including the directions. To give him practice:



- **Play board games.** Have your child read the directions before you play.
- **Read homework directions** together. What words are used often? Practice any that give your child trouble.

Consider characters' feelings

To help your child get a feel for main characters, suggest that she make a "mood chart." Have her write down two details from each chapter:

1. **The main character's** mood.
2. **The reason** why the main character may have felt that way.



Encourage your child to notice how the character's mood changes throughout the book.

Boost your child's decoding skills

After learning the sounds that letters make, the next step in reading is *decoding*—figuring out written words. Readers decode a word by sounding out each of its letters and blending them together.

To help your child improve her decoding skills:

- **Show her a word.** Point to each letter from left to right, saying its sound. Then, say all the sounds together to pronounce the word.
- **Play word games.** Write words on index cards. Take turns selecting a card and decoding the word. Make a sentence using the word.
- **Have a treasure hunt.** Hide words written on slips of paper throughout your home. Then, have your child find the slips and decode the words.



Check out book suggestions from teachers and kids

Having trouble finding a good book for your child? The International Literacy Association can help. Visit www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/reading-lists. There you'll find "Choices" reading lists. They include book suggestions from teachers and children.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion** by Mo Willems. Trixie and her family are on their way to Holland—but her favorite stuffed animal Knuffle Bunny is accidentally put on a plane to China!
- **Lissy's Friends** by Grace Lin. When Lissy is lonely at lunch, she makes a paper crane. And soon she has a whole collection of origami friends.



For upper elementary readers:

- **The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate** by Jacqueline Kelly. Growing up in Texas in the 1900's, Callie Vee was expected to learn to cook and sew, but she wanted to learn about science!
- **Hothead** by Cal Ripken, Jr. and Kevin Cowherd. Connor loves baseball, but his temper puts his game at risk. In order to win, he must overcome his anger.

Handwriting Day celebrates the 'write' stuff

January 23 is National Handwriting Day. That's because on January 23, 1737, John Hancock was born. According to the legend, Hancock had problems with writing as a youth. The ink from his quill pen was always dripping and creating a mess. After years of practice, he became more proficient—as seen in his signature on the Declaration of Independence.

To help your child celebrate penmanship, have him:

- **Practice his signature.** See if he can add flourishes to his letters, like John Hancock did.
- **Choose a favorite saying** by Hancock or another famous person and write it in his best handwriting. Post the saying in your home.
- **Read a book** written in "handwriting," like Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. Ask your librarian for other suggestions.



Q: My child's teacher says we should work on "sight words" at home. What does this mean?

A: Sight words are written words that readers see often, such as *I, me, dog, open* and *school*. Becoming familiar with them is important because it makes reading easier. Ask your child's teacher for a list of sight words. Then use homemade flash cards (with simple pictures at first, if you wish) to help your child practice reading them.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3302

www.parent-institute.com

The 2018–2019

BUILDING READERS®

Book List

Recommended Books for Elementary School Children

Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes (Agate Bolden). Winner of multiple awards, this is an uplifting story about a boy and the power of a simple haircut. The book's rhythmic text and beautiful illustrations are perfect for read alouds. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets by Kwame Alexander and others (Candlewick Press). Introduce your child to the beauty of poetry with this unique collection of original poems—each matched with a bold and intricate illustration. (*poetry, upper elementary*)

Stay: A Girl, a Dog, a Bucket List by Kate Klise (Feiwel and Friends). Astrid's dog Eli is getting older, so she makes a list of activities for them to do together before he gets too old. This is a touching story of the love between a girl and her dog. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly (Greenwillow Books). What happens when a group of sixth graders are brought together because of a bully's cruel act? Find out in this award-winning book about bravery and friendship. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

Charlie and Mouse by Laurel Snyder (Chronicle Books). Voted one of the most distinguished books for beginning readers (Theodor Seuss Geisel Award), this story follows the hilarious adventures of two brothers. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Bronze and Sunflower by Cao Wenxuan (Walker Books Ltd.). Set in a rural Chinese village during the Cultural Revolution, this is the heart-warming story of two lonely children who become friends. Readers will learn about beauty, familial love and sacrifice. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid by Jeanette Winter (Beach Lane Books). Learn how this famous architect overcame adversity and achieved her dreams in this picture-book biography. (*biography, lower elementary*)

Older Than Dirt: A Wild but True History of Earth by Don Brown and Michael Perfit (HMH Books for Young Readers). Learning about science is fun with this playful account of the Earth's history. (*nonfiction, upper elementary*)

The Boy and the Whale by Mordicai Gerstein (Roaring Brook Press). A fisherman's son discovers a whale tangled in his father's only fishing net. Will he find the courage to set the whale free? This beautifully-illustrated tale teaches readers about compassion and empathy. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Lucky Broken Girl by Ruth Behar (Nancy Paulsen Books). Ruthie is a young immigrant learning to adjust to her new life in New York when tragedy strikes. Follow her on a journey of heartbreak and hope. (*fiction, upper elementary*)



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Windows by Julia Denos (Candlewick Press). Join a boy and his dog as they go on a neighborhood walk at dusk. The simple text and interesting illustrations will encourage readers to pay attention to all the little details around them. *(fiction, lower elementary)*

Impact! Asteroids and the Science of Saving the World by Elizabeth Rusch (HMH Books for Young Readers). Some asteroids are harmless, while others cause massive destruction. Follow scientists as they investigate all things to do with asteroids. The accompanying photos will make science come to life! *(nonfiction, upper elementary)*

Princess Cora and the Crocodile by Laura Amy Schlitz (Candlewick Press). Princess Cora is overscheduled and desperately wants a day off. When she trades places with a naughty crocodile, complete chaos ensues! *(fiction, lower elementary)*

Wishtree by Katherine Applegate (Feiwel & Friends). Red is a wise old oak tree who watches over the neighborhood. When a new family moves in, he discovers his true purpose. This best-selling book confronts prejudice and celebrates kindness. *(fiction, upper elementary)*

Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask About Having a Disability by Shane Burcaw (Roaring Brook Press). Author Shane Burcaw suffers from a rare disability. In this refreshingly candid book, he answers 10 frequently-asked questions about his life. Readers will learn that people with disabilities aren't so different after all. *(nonfiction, lower elementary)*

The Girl Who Drank the Moon by Kelly Barnhill (Algonquin Young Readers). A loving witch raises an enchanted girl in this nontraditional fairy tale about love, sacrifice and magic. Winner of the Newbery Medal, this best-selling book takes readers on a whimsical fantasy journey. *(fairy tale, upper elementary)*

Noodleheads See the Future by Tedd Arnold and others (Holiday House). Join the wacky Noodlehead brothers as they head off on their latest adventure. Young readers will enjoy the simple text and comics-inspired illustrations in this hilarious graphic novel. *(fiction, lower elementary)*

Muddy: The Story of Blues Legend Muddy Waters by Michael James Mahin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers). This award-winning picture book tells the story of blues musician Muddy Waters' rise to fame. His struggle, determination and hope will inspire readers. *(biography, upper elementary)*

All Around Us by Xelena Gonzalez (Cinco Puntos Press). A young girl and her grandfather take a walk and explore the circles all around them. But circles are more than just shapes. They are also symbols of how we are all connected. *(fiction, lower elementary)*

How to Be an Elephant by Katherine Roy (David Macaulay Studio). Learn about the family dynamics in a typical African elephant herd. Filled with scientific research, interesting facts and gorgeous watercolor illustrations, this educational book will delight animal lovers of all ages. *(nonfiction, upper elementary)*

