

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Don't forget about reading when making family New Year's resolutions

A new calendar year offers an opportunity to think about the past and set goals for the future. This includes family reading goals.

Take time to talk with your child about books or stories you've enjoyed together in the past year. If the books are nearby, look through them. Have your child choose his three favorites. Ask, "What was the best part of this story? Why?" Or, "What is your favorite picture in this book?"

Next, discuss future reading plans. Are there ways you can refresh or improve your reading habits? Could you read more often? Could you read new things together, such as children's magazines? Could you listen to some audiobooks in the car?

Build daily reading time into your family's schedule and make 2020 your family's best year ever for reading exciting materials!



"Reading brings us unknown friends."

—Honoré de Balzac

Take time to talk about prefixes and suffixes with your child

Help your child learn to look for easily recognizable parts of a word. Teach her that when a word starts with a certain prefix or ends with a particular suffix, she will get a clue to the word's meaning.

- **A prefix is at the beginning** of the word. Adding a prefix to a word changes its meaning. Common prefixes are *bi-*, *hemi-*, *un-* and *in-*. Together, learn what they mean.
- **A suffix is found at the end** of the word. It often tells the part of speech, which will help your child understand how that word is being used. Common suffixes are *-tion*, *-ize*, *-able* and *-er*.

Read and write about science experiments

Hands-on learning is a fun way for your child to strengthen his reading and writing skills.

Look online for simple science experiments you and your child can do at home. Then, read the directions, gather materials, write predictions and conduct the experiment together. Have your child take notes on the outcome.



Encourage your child to use a dictionary

When your child isn't sure of what a word means or how to spell it, help her look it up! She can use a dictionary online or one in book form.

Show your child how the dictionary includes the word's definitions, its part of speech and other forms of the word.



Enjoy the benefits of the library as a family

Libraries are wonderful places for children to learn. To enjoy everything the library has to offer:

- **Help your child** get his own library card.
- **Schedule regular visits.** Try to go at least once every two weeks.
- **Explore a new section** of the library each time you visit.
- **Sign up** for fun children's activities.



Thinking aloud improves comprehension

One major factor in understanding what you read is *thinking* about what you read. When your child thinks as he reads, he's more likely to connect the story to other things he knows.

Help your child strengthen his comprehension skills by modeling these “think-aloud” strategies:

- **Discuss the book.** Connect it to an experience your child understands. “This story reminds me of the time when”
- **Talk about books** with similar settings, characters or themes. “What other books that we’ve read does this story remind you of?”
- **Help your child** make a connection between the story and something similar that may be happening in the real world. By talking about your thoughts on the book, you’re helping your child learn to make these important connections himself.



Challenge your child to be a book critic

Suggest that your child keep a list of all the books that she has read. She should include the title of each book and its author. She can also create a rating system. Encourage her to write a short review of each book, as well.

Offer your child sentence starters to help with her reviews, such as:

- **I really liked this book** because
- **My favorite part** of this story was
- **I wish the author** would have

Help your child compile her reviews into a “Book Reviews” notebook. Keeping track of completed books will give your child a sense of accomplishment.



Q: My child gets frustrated when he struggles to read a word. How can I help?

A: Suggest that he become a reading detective. He can look for clues, such as chunks of the word that he recognizes or nearby pictures. You can also discuss similar words he knows. Sometimes it helps to reread

the sentence or to skip the troublesome word and keep reading. Then say, “What word would make sense there?”

Use magazines to create poems

Encourage your child to create a collage poem. Follow these steps:

1. **Help her cut** out a variety of words and phrases from old magazines.
2. **Have her arrange** the words into a poem and glue them onto a piece of construction paper. Remind her that poems don't always need to rhyme.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Stalling** by Alan Katz. Even though it's time for bed, Dan has plenty of things to do. He devises several ways to stall bedtime for just a few more minutes.
- **Stars** by Mary Lyn Ray. It's easy to forget the beauty of stars. But this book inspires readers to imagine and appreciate them.



For upper elementary readers:

- **Moon Runner** by Carolyn Marsden. Mina is nervous when she must start track at school, until she discovers that she loves it—and excels.
- **Stars in the Shadows** by Charles R. Smith, Jr. In 1934, the Negro League's All-Star East-West Game was played. This book provides all the fascinating details.

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The 2019-2020

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Book List

Recommended Books for Elementary School Children

We Are Family by Patricia Hegarty (Tiger Tales). This detailed picture book with short rhyming text introduces young readers to different kinds of families who have one big thing in common: unconditional love. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Paper Wishes by Lois Sepahban (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). A young Japanese-American girl and her family are forced into an internment camp after the attack on Pearl Harbor. An engaging story about survival and love offers a personal perspective on American history. (*historical fiction, upper elementary*)

Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles by Patricia Valdez (Knopf Books for Young Readers). Dynamic illustrations and text tell the story of a pioneering female scientist and how she turned her passion for reptiles into a career. (*biography, lower elementary*)

The Book of Boy by Catherine Gilbert Murdock (Greenwillow Books). Winner of multiple awards, this thrilling tale takes readers on a suspenseful medieval adventure, where nothing is quite what it seems. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

The Fox on the Swing by Evelina Daciute (Thames & Hudson, Inc). Readers will encounter unexpected details and a satisfying surprise in an award-winning tale about happiness and friendship. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Merci Suárez Changes Gears by Meg Medina (Candlewick). Winner of the 2019 Newbery Medal, this story follows a young girl as she enters sixth grade and experiences difficult challenges with her friends and family. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

All that Trash: The Story of the 1987 Garbage Barge and Our Problem with Stuff by Meghan

McCarthy (Simon & Schuster). Filled with comical illustrations and facts about recycling, this is the true story of a ship full of trash that traveled over 6,000 miles. (*nonfiction, lower elementary*)

Camp Panda: Helping Cubs Return to the Wild by Catherine Thimmesh (HMH Books for Young Readers). In this award-winning book with stunning photos, readers get an up-close view of pandas and wildlife conservation. (*nonfiction, upper elementary*)

The Adventures of Otto: See Pip Flap by David Milgrim (Simon Spotlight). With

simple vocabulary and illustrations, this silly story about a robot who tries to teach his friend how to fly will entertain young readers. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

The Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson (Arthur A. Levine Books). A mystery takes readers on a journey through time and explores issues of race, bullying and identity. (*fiction, upper elementary*)



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Mommy’s Khimar by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (Salaam Reads). An award-winning book with colorful illustrations and lyrical text introduces readers to a young American Muslim girl who loves her mother’s beautiful headscarves. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Elvis Is King! by Jonah Winter (Schwartz & Wade). In this illustrated biography, readers will learn about music legend Elvis Presley’s rise to fame. (*biography, upper elementary*)

Feel the Beat: Dance Poems that Zing from Salsa to Swing by Marilyn Singer (Dial Books). Celebrate music and styles of dance with this engaging picture book poetry collection. (*poetry, lower elementary*)

Wet Cement: A Mix of Concrete Poems by Bob Raczka (Roaring Brook Press). This collection of clever poems gives readers a new and exciting way to experience poetry. Through arrangement and form, each poem becomes a “word painting.” (*poetry, upper elementary*)

Say Something! by Peter H. Reynolds (Orchard Books). This powerful picture book encourages children to speak up and speak out. Everyone can make a difference in the world—just by making their voice heard. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Front Desk by Kelly Yang (Arthur A. Levine Books). Follow Mia and her parents as they work together in a motel. This award-winning book, loosely based on the author’s childhood, examines issues of immigration and social justice. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

Benji, the Bad Day, and Me by Sally J. Pla (Lee & Low Books). When Sammy has a horrible day, his autistic brother knows just how to make him feel better. This is a beautifully illustrated, sweet story about feelings and family. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Amal Unbound by Aisha Saeed (Nancy Paulsen Books). A young Pakistani girl dreams of continuing her education, but is forced into

indentured servitude. Find out how she overcomes her circumstances with strength and dignity. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

From the Heart of Africa: A Book of Wisdom by Eric Walters (Tundra Books). A collection of wise African sayings and bold full-page illustrations will inspire readers of all ages. (*fiction, lower elementary*)

Road Trip with Max and His Mom by Linda Urban (HMH Books for Young Readers). Max goes on an exciting adventure with his mom after returning

from a weekend at his dad’s house. This chapter book offers a loving look at family life after a divorce. (*fiction, upper elementary*)

Flow, Spin, Grow: Looking for Patterns in Nature by Patchen Barss (Owlkids). Clear illustrations and rhyming text introduce young readers to the world of patterns. (*nonfiction, lower elementary*)

National Parks of the USA by Kate Siber (Wide Eyed Editions). An award-winning science book, filled with fascinating facts and breathtaking illustrations, takes readers on a tour of America’s national parks. (*nonfiction, upper elementary*)

