

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Summer reading programs can give students' reading skills a boost

Have you looked into your library's summer reading program yet? In addition to being fun, these programs can help children keep their literacy skills sharp over the summer months.

Summer reading programs typically:

- **Provide a safe environment** for readers of all ages to socialize and connect with others.
- **Offer literacy-rich experiences.** For example, children may do art projects, form book clubs and meet authors.
- **Encourage the enjoyment** of all types of reading materials—from magazines to graphic novels and audiobooks.
- **Build good habits,** such as visiting the library often. After a summer filled with literacy events, your child will know that reading new things makes life more interesting!



Expand thinking with Alphabet Words

Alphabet Words is an engaging game that can help children build cognitive skills. To play:

1. **Create a game board.** Have your child draw a line down the center of a sheet of paper and write the letters A through M down the left side, and N through Z down the right.
2. **Pick a theme,** such as *food* or *animals*.
3. **Ask your child** to write one word next to each letter on the game board. Each word must match the theme and begin with that letter—*apple* for A, *bagel* for B, etc.
4. **Offer hints** if your child gets stuck. For the letter *I*, you might say, "Something sweet that is on a cake (*icing*)."
5. **Tally up the number of words** your child has on the game board. Then, challenge your child to beat that score.

Erase common reading excuses

- **"I don't have time."** Rearrange your child's schedule to include time for reading.
- **"It's too hard."** Ask the teacher to help you find books written at your child's reading level.
- **"It's no fun."** Combine reading with enjoyable experiences. If your child likes dinosaurs, read a book follow up with a visit to a museum.



Pets make great listeners

When children struggle with reading, they may feel self-conscious about reading aloud. But it's important for them to practice.

A family pet can be a nonjudgmental audience that will make your child feel more at ease reading aloud. If you don't have a pet, suggest reading to a stuffed animal instead!



Boost vocabulary with games

This summer, introduce your child (and yourself) to one new word a day.

- **Select a random word** from a print or online dictionary. Have family members take turns guessing the definition.
- **Search online for** "word of the day" websites or apps. Share the word each day and see who can use it in a sentence.
- **Read a news article** aloud. Choose one unfamiliar word and look it up. Challenge family members to use it in a conversation.



Promote reading with irresistible books

Summer is a great time for you and your child to read the same book—and have fun discussing it, too. But if you're worried that your child will reject this idea, prepare in advance.

Make a list of books with enticing elements. Then let your child pick what you'll read. Include choices that have:

- **Humor.** Young readers giggle at pictures and wordplay. Older kids understand jokes that play out through dialogue and scenes.
- **Personality.** Look for main characters who are similar to your child in feelings and experiences.
- **Excitement.** Reluctant readers like short chapters with lots of action. Even the first paragraph should be fascinating!
- **Originality.** Sometimes a book's cover or illustrations can draw readers in. Stand-out topics (like "Gross bugs!") attract readers, too.



Start planning now for summer reading

Develop a summer reading plan to keep your child's reading skills school-ready:

- **Stock your home** with a variety of reading materials linked to your child's interests. Ask the librarian for recommendations.
- **Make a list of new places** for your child to read—at the park, in the bathtub, at a sibling's soccer game.
- **Combine reading and food.** Plan to serve a meal related to the theme of a book. Or, go on a reading picnic.
- **Involve friends.** Help your child plan a reading party or a book swap.



Q: I want to help my child improve reading comprehension. How can I do this?

A: One way to boost reading comprehension is to ask questions about what your child is reading. Ask your child 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 and why? Can you teach me something you learned from the book?*

Stop the 'summer slide'

Studies have shown that children who read four to six books over the summer tend to avoid the loss of academic skills kids experience when they're not in school.

Encourage your child to read this summer, but don't make it seem like a chore. "It's summer, and you get to read what you choose! I'll even let you stay up late if a book is so good you can't put it down."

For lower elementary readers:

- **Jasper John Dooley: Star of the Week** by Caroline Adderson. It's Jasper's week to shine—but nothing is going according to plan. Will he be able to get back on track with the help of his family and friends?
- **Cinderella's Stepsister and the Big Bad Wolf** by Lorraine Carey. In this fairy-tale twist, Cinderella has a third stepsister, who is not as evil as the others!



For upper elementary readers:

- **Pay It Forward** by Catherine Ryan Hyde. Trevor receives an assignment to do good deeds for three people—who must pay those good deeds forward to three more people.
- **Pie** by Sarah Weeks. Alice's aunt died and left a secret (and popular) pie crust recipe to her cat. She also left her cat to Alice. Now the town is going pie crazy!

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