

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Make reading routines part of your child's back-to-school success plan!

The beginning of a new school year is a time to gather supplies and get organized. It's also a time to establish routines that help students do their best—especially when it comes to reading.

To help your child develop strong reading habits:

- **Set aside time for daily reading.** Kids who read at least 20 minutes a day (in addition to their regular homework reading) are more successful in school and develop larger vocabularies.
- **Make your routine special.** Read favorite books at the breakfast table. Visit the library every week and fill a bag with new books to read. Do whatever it takes to keep your child excited about reading!
- **Stick to a regular bedtime reading routine.** Allow time for getting ready for bed, reading a bedtime story and saying good night.



Talk about prefixes and suffixes to expand your child's vocabulary

Learning about prefixes and suffixes can help children comprehend new words in almost every subject. Remind your child that:

- **Prefixes appear at the beginning of words.** For example, the prefix *pre-* means “before.”
- **Suffixes are found at the end of words.** Words that end in *-able*, for instance, relate to “being able.”
- **Prefixes and suffixes are clues.** They can help students figure out the meaning of new words. For example, the word *predetermine* means “to determine before.” *Measurable* means “able to be measured.”

Together, have some fun with prefixes and suffixes. Can your child guess the meaning of *predate* or *excusable*? Can he name words with prefixes and suffixes for you to define?

Set limits on screen time

Too much recreational screen time is linked to problems with sleep, learning and socializing. So, if you relaxed screen-time rules over the summer, it's time to get back on track.

Experts recommend that parents:

- **Establish screen-free times**, such as during meals.
- **Set a technology curfew.** Make sure your child turns off screens at least one hour before bedtime.
- **Offer fun alternatives.** Suggest your child read, play outside or do a craft.



Retell fairy tales in unusual ways

Read a favorite fairy tale together. Then, ask your child to change the characters and details to create a new version of the story. For example, how would *The Three Little Pigs* differ if told from the wolf's perspective?



Help your child read fluently

Fluency is the ability to read smoothly, accurately and with expression. To improve your child's fluency:

- **Encourage her to listen** to an audio recording of a book while she follows along.
- **Reread favorite books.** Repetition of familiar books improves fluency.
- **Remind your child** to pause between sentences.



Share tips for writing assignments

Reading and writing are closely-related skills. But even great readers sometimes have a tough time with writing assignments. Good writing involves everything from understanding a subject to organizing thoughts, and checking spelling and punctuation.

When your child has a writing assignment:

1. **Have him talk through some ideas** before starting to write. Clear writing starts with clear thinking.
2. **Encourage him to take notes** or make an outline before writing.
3. **Offer positive feedback.** Be specific. Say, “I really like the way you’ve described what led up to this event.”
4. **Don’t criticize.** If your child thinks you always look for what’s wrong, he won’t want to share his writing with you.
5. **Remind him to edit his work.** He should check for any spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes.
6. **Be patient.** Good writing takes time!



Preview textbooks with your child

It’s exciting when your child gets her very first school textbook. When she brings the book home, preview it together:



- **Look for the author’s name** and the date of publication.
- **Read over** the table of contents.
- **See which chapters** look most interesting.
- **Look at pictures,** graphs, maps and other illustrations.

For lower elementary readers:

- *The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* by Cynthia Levinson. This moving story will teach children that they are never too young to make a difference!

- *My Kite Is Stuck! And Other Stories* by Salina Yoon. Vibrant illustrations and repetition make these silly stories about three friends a fun experience for early readers.



For upper elementary readers:

- *Bugs: A Stunning Pop-Up Look at Insects, Spiders and Other Creepy-Crawlies* by George McGavin. Learn about bugs’ growth cycles and more in this pop-up book.
- *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp* by Kathi Appelt. Follow two raccoon brothers on their mission to save Sugar Man Swamp.

Make reading aloud a special family time

Reading aloud as a family can strengthen your child’s vocabulary, improve reading scores—and allow everyone to enjoy books and reading together.

For successful read-alouds:

- **Read the book** yourself before you read it aloud. You’ll be more comfortable reading it aloud if you’re familiar with the text.
- **Read books everyone enjoys.** Your enthusiasm will show on your face and in your voice if you like the book.
- **Leave them wanting more.** Stop reading when the story becomes exciting and your child can’t wait to hear what will happen next.



Q: My child’s teacher wants students to “think critically” about what they read at home. How can I help?

A: All elementary students—even kindergartners—can practice critical thinking. After your child reads something, ask questions that help her analyze information. For example, “What happened in the story?” “Why did it have a happy ending?” “Does the book remind you of anything in real life?” “What did you learn from reading it?”

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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)*

