

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Pulaski County Schools
Amy Polston, Elementary Supervisor

Reading inspiration grows all over in April

Spring is a great time to read about and enjoy nature with your child. Share books that explain the natural world, then supplement your reading with fun “hands-on” activities. Take walks together and discuss what you see.

Your child may see a beautiful flower and ask about it. Use this “teachable moment” to discuss flowers and bulbs. Follow up your outside adventure by visiting the library to research more about plants.

Then plant bulbs or flower seeds in your garden or house. Watch them grow. Write daily observation notes about their growth. You will be growing flowers, learning and creating memories all at the same time.



Hemera

Source: P. Rillero, “Doing Science with Your Children,” ERIC Clearinghouse for Science Mathematics and Environmental Education, www.ericdigests.org/1995-1/science.htm.

“It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading.”

—Katherine Patterson

Differentiate between types of nouns

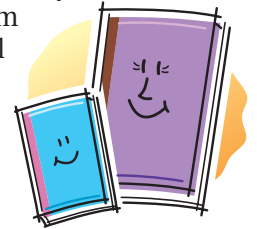
Children learn about nouns in school. You can reinforce this at home by explaining that a noun is a person, place, thing or idea. Some nouns are “proper nouns,” which means they name something specific and are capitalized (such as *Patrick* or *Idaho*). To practice these concepts:

- **List various nouns** and have your child say whether they’re common or proper nouns. For example, *dog* (common), *hat* (common), *Mississippi* (proper), *plant* (common) and *Dr. Seuss* (proper).
- **Look at a children’s magazine** with your child. Challenge her to find several examples of people, places, things, ideas and proper nouns.
- **Read a story aloud** and have your child listen for nouns. She can raise her hand when she hears a common noun, and stand when she hears a proper noun.

Source: L. Sunley, *Fun With Grammar: 75 Quick Activities and Games*, Scholastic.

Family performances enliven poetry

Whether your family already appreciates a good poem or not, this activity will help bring poetry to life. Visit the library together and check out several books of poetry—both silly and serious. Then challenge everyone to memorize and recite one poem per week. Plan a special performance, and be as creative as you’d like. Set a poem to music. Act it out. Or say it quickly. Enjoy yourselves!



Source: “Enjoying Poetry,” FamilyEducation, www.familyeducation.com/whatworks/item/front/1,2551,1-24357-9605,00.html.

Reading mission: Find mistakes!

Mistakes aren’t fun—unless you’re catching them! Challenge your child to find mistakes when she reads. She might see them in the newspaper, on signs, or in notes you write. You might even make a mistake on purpose to see if your child can find it!



Talk with your child’s teacher now about summer reading

Summer is the perfect opportunity to build reading skills, especially if your child struggles with reading. Before school lets out, however, talk with the teacher about reading ideas. What is your child’s reading level? How should it affect reading choices? Does the teacher recommend particular titles? Which activities will help your child do his best next year?



Turn sight-word practice into a game

“Do you want to practice reading sight words?” you ask your child. “No thanks!” he says. Try asking, “Want to play a game?” instead. Then try this version of “memory”:



- **Write 40 sight words** (basic words that kids use often, such as *cat*, *orange* and *school*) on index cards. Put each word on two cards. You’ll have a total of 80 cards.
- **Let your child arrange the cards facedown** on the floor or a table. No one should be able to see the words.
- **Take turns flipping over two cards at a time.** Read each word aloud. If one of you finds a match, keep the cards and take another turn. Otherwise turn them back over.
- **When all the cards have been matched**, see who has the most. Make new cards when your child has learned the words!

Source: M.A. Edwards, “Sight Words Memory Game,” Education.com, www.education.com/activity/article/memorygame_kindergarten/.

Use questions to stimulate critical thinking

It’s important for children to think critically when they read because it boosts understanding. So next time your child picks up a book, ask questions such as:

- **What do you think** the cover says about the book? What do you think it might be about?
- **Does the story** make sense to you? If not, which parts are confusing? Does it remind you of anything you’ve ever read or experienced?
- **Do you like** how the author wrote the book? Why or why not? What would you change about it?
- **What was the book about?** How would you summarize



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it? Would you recommend it to other kids?

Source: “Helping Your Child with Reading and Writing: A Guide for Parents,” Ministry of Education (Ontario), www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/parentGuideLit.pdf.



Q: The teacher says my child struggles with phonics. What does this mean?

A: Put simply, phonics teaches the relationship between letters and sounds. For example, *b* sounds like “buh.” This helps kids sound out words. Ask the teacher how you can help at home, such as by reviewing the alphabet and the sounds letters make. Your support will make a real difference.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Examples strengthen book reports

Your child is writing a book report, and she has a lot to say! “I didn’t like this book. It was scary.” Or “I liked the main character because he’s kind.” These opinions are fine—as long as your child supports them with examples. “The main character, Leo, does nice things for others. He makes sandwiches for homeless people and walks dogs at the animal shelter.”



For lower elementary readers:

- ***The Purple Kangaroo*** by Michael Ian Black (Simon & Schuster). What are you thinking of? A monkey says he knows! His wild, silly guess will keep readers giggling.
- ***AlphaOops! The Day Z Went First*** by Alethea Kontis (Candlewick). Z is tired of always being last—but rearranging the alphabet isn’t quite as easy as A-B-C.



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Are You “Normal”?*** by Mark Shulman (National Geographic). What goes best with peanut butter? Chocolate? Jelly? Something else? This irresistible book has answers from kids across the country.
- ***Spilling Ink: A Young Writer’s Handbook*** by Ellen Potter and Anne Mazer (Flash Point). Two children’s authors encourage kids to write—and enjoy it! Their approach is cool, funny and inspiring.

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