

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Thomas E. Kerns Elementary School

Build your elementary schooler's literacy skills by encouraging pleasure reading

When children read often for pleasure, they strengthen their reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling skills, grammar and background knowledge.

To promote reading for fun:

- **Suggest books you enjoyed** when you were young. Or, look for other titles by authors whose books your child has enjoyed.
- **Help your child find friends** who like to read. Encourage them to discuss books they enjoy. They could even start a book club.
- **Keep a supply of books** and articles on subjects that interest your child available all around your home.
- **Connect books and food.** Many adults enjoy reading at bookstore cafés. Create your own café at home. Bake a yummy treat, put out an array of reading materials, sit down with your child and spend some time snacking and reading.



A personal dictionary boosts vocabulary

Children are constantly seeing and hearing new words every day. How will they ever be able to remember them all? Suggest making a special dictionary to help.

Encourage your child to:

1. **Staple several pieces of paper** together to make a small notebook.
2. **Write down new or unfamiliar words** in the notebook. If the word appears in a printed text, have your child finish reading before moving on to the next step.
3. **Look up the words and add their definitions.** Consider including pictures to help illustrate the definitions.
4. **Review the dictionary regularly** and watch vocabulary grow!

Try a fall word game challenge

Play an autumn-themed version of a classic word game. To start, have your child think of a fall word—but not say it out loud! Then, your child should:

1. **Draw an outline of a pumpkin** and draw a line for each letter of the mystery word under it.
2. **Ask other players** to take turns guessing letters in the word. Your child should write the correct letters in their spaces. For each incorrect guess, add an eye, nose or mouth to the pumpkin until it's a jack-o'-lantern!



Explore many types of books

Learning about different types of writing makes reading more interesting. Together, search a library website to find at least one:

- **Mystery.**
- **Autobiography.**
- **Book of poetry.**
- **Historical novel.**
- **Science fiction tale.**
- **Reference book.**



Reading discussions strengthen comprehension

Children at all reading levels benefit from talking about what they read.

To start conversations:

- **Ask questions** about what your child is reading. What does your child think about it? Why?
- **Read the same material** as your child so you can have more in depth discussions about plot, characters, etc.



Enhance reading skills *and* math success

Did you know that reading skills can help with math assignments? When students have word problems for math class, they need to be able to deconstruct the text in order to understand what they are being asked to do.

To support math success, make sure your elementary schooler:

1. **Reads and understands the text.** Together, review key terms in math problems. For example, what do *increased*, *fewer than* or *difference* mean?
2. **Identifies what needs to be answered.** Encourage your child to read word problems carefully several times to understand what students are being asked to solve.
3. **Creates and solves the equation.** What elements of the question need to be added, subtracted, multiplied or divided to obtain the requested information?



Teachers can help you set reading goals

To best support your child's reading development, ask the teacher to help you set some goals. Ask about:

- **Reading level.** *Is my child meeting expectations for the grade? What kinds of reading materials are best? How can I tell if a book is the right level? How can I help my child strengthen reading skills?*
- **Reading habits.** Many teachers expect students to read for a certain amount of time each day. By working as a team (perhaps by maintaining a regular reading time), you and your child's teacher can instill the reading habits that lead to academic success.



Q: My elementary schooler has a journal but doesn't want to write in it. What should I do?

A: Journals are great for building reading and writing skills, but some kids don't want to write about their daily activities and feelings. They may respond to prompts.

Suggest your child start entries with sentences, such as: *If I could design a school, I would _____. If I could have one superpower it would be _____. If I wrote a book, it would be about _____.*

Encourage frequent writing

Reading and writing go hand in hand. To support writing efforts:



- **Let your child** try to fix writing errors before offering to help.
- **Comment on** what you like about the writing.
- **Encourage your child** to share writings with family members.
- **Save your child's writings** and find ways to display work.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***Itsy Mitsy Runs Away*** by Elanna Allen. Itsy Mitsy despises bedtime, so she decides to run away. But first, she must pack!
- ***Awesome Autumn*** by Bruce Goldstone. From the leaves turning color to days getting shorter, autumn is full of action!



For upper elementary readers:

- ***Grandmothers' Stories: Wise Woman Tales from Many Cultures*** retold by Burleigh Mutén. Enjoy a collection of folktales from countries all over the world, including Senegal, Germany and Japan.
- ***Johnny Appleseed: The Legend and the Truth*** by Jane Yolen. Go beyond the legend of Johnny Appleseed and learn the true story of John Chapman.

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