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**Parent Newsletters**

**This document contains text you can cut-and-paste into school newsletters. Provided by Cathy Duvall, Reading Recovery teacher leader at Fort Bend ISD in Sugar Land, TX, the activities can be edited and adapted as needed.**

* **Waiting games**
* **Reading aloud**
* **What can you say besides "Sound it out?"**
* **How does writing help my child be a better reader?**
* **Be a reading buddy**
* **Learning fun with the newspaper**
* **Talking = School Success? Yes!**
* **Reading around the house**

**Waiting games**

Waiting has become a part of our everyday lives. The next time you hear, “How much longer?” try one of these ideas to grow your child’s vocabulary with word games.

1. Start with a category such as insect words, long “A” words, food words, or sports words. Take turns naming items in the category; when the category is exhausted, begin a new one. example: ladybug, ant, spider
2. Try an alphabet search. One person names an object that begins with the letter “a.” The next person names something beginning with “b,” and so on.
3. Start with a simple word like “up,” and take turns thinking of opposites. example: down, left/right
4. Play the rhyming game. One person says a word such as “hot,” and the next person comes up with a word that rhymes with it such at “spot.” When there are no more rhyming words, start a new word.
5. Say a word and see if your child can tell you (or clap) the number of syllables in the word. example: watermelon - 4 or baseball - 2. Or you can ask your child to name a 2-syllable word, 3-syllable word, etc.
6. Say a word such as “tub.” Your child then has a say a word that begins with the last sound in your word (b: book). Now you have to say a word that begins with the last sound in your child's word (k: kite), for example.

**Reading aloud**

Did you know that the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children? Did you know that even after children learn to read, you should continue to read aloud to them? When you read aloud, you create background knowledge in your child, develop her vocabulary, expose her to new information, and provide her with a reading role model.

Get the most out of reading aloud by following these three tips:

1. If the book has illustrations or pictures, hold the book so your child can see the words and pictures while you are reading.
2. Take your time and don’t rush the story. Reading at an appropriate rate will help you read clearly – and allow for an enjoyable experience.
3. Don’t be afraid to stop reading a book if your child doesn’t seem interested. Have a backup selection ready so read-aloud can continue.

Texts to read aloud are everywhere, and many of them are free! Try reading aloud charts, letters, lists, magazines, menus, newspapers, posters, school notices, to name a few.

Consider a variety of books including alphabet books, chapter books, poetry, biographies, and informational books. Children can understand more-sophisticated and complicated books that are read to them than the books they can read alone. You can choose books for reading aloud that are a bit above their reading level; if they don’t understand something, you are right there to explain it. Reading aloud can be a time for relaxing, talking, and being together.

Here are a few ideas to get the conversation going during read-aloud:

* To help your child understand what you are reading ask, “Does that make sense to you?” or comment, “This part sounds important, I’m going to read it aloud again.”
* Encourage your child to think about the text by asking, “Do you think that could really happen?” or “What do you think the author wants us to learn?”
* Connect the story to other ideas. Discuss similarities between the story and a person or an event in your child’s life.
* Prediction is a great way to build comprehension. Ask, “What do you think will happen next?” or “Why do you think he did that?”
* Ask your child to retell small parts of the story to you.

Remember, the road to becoming a reader begins the day a child is born. You play an important role in your child becoming a successful reader and writer.

**What can you say besides “Sound it out?”**

There are many things you can say to help your child figure out a word. Being flexible in problem solving provides more information to allow the child to be successful.

To help a child use meaning (of the story or illustrations):

* Look at the picture to help yourself.
* Think about what would make sense.

To help a child use language structure (the way we talk):

* Does that sound right?
* Can we say it that way?

To help a child use information in print (the way the word looks):

* Look at how the word begins.
* Read the words up to the tricky word and start it.
* Say more of the word.
* Does that look right to you?

To help a child use two sources of information:

* Think about what would look right **and** make sense.
* Think about what would make sense **and** start like that.

A frustrated reader is a reader who is not going to take necessary risks to improve his skills. If your child is still struggling after 5-6 seconds, say the word. Praise the child’s attempt by saying:

* I like the way you tried to help yourself.
* You were nearly right.
* You noticed it wasn’t right. What did you notice?

A reader is like an athlete. The more a child reads, the better his or her reading becomes.

**How does writing help my child be a better reader?**

Writing is the reading process slowed down. Writing is a tremendous help to your child’s reading success. Write at home and on-the-go.

* Carry a small notebook and pencil and let your child see you use it to make a to-do list -- “Go by the bank, pick up dry cleaning, etc.” Get a notebook for your child to write in as well. She can make a list of favorite foods, ideas for the weekend, etc.
* Start a family journal. Keep a pad on the kitchen counter. Each member of the family can contribute by recording happenings -- the dog going to the vet, the weather being rainy, something happening at school, for example. At the end of the week, read aloud from the journal after dinner.
* Have family members send e-mails to your child. Your child can read them when he gets home for school, improving his reading skills, and then respond back, improving his writing skills. No computer? Then leave your child a note and have him respond with a note to you.
* Have your child write what he remembers about the day -- almost missing the bus, a new kid in the class, having pizza for lunch, going to the computer lab, for example. You’ll learn something about his day, and your child will have the opportunity to reflect on his day.
* This list-making game is never the same twice. Players have 45 seconds to write as many words as possible in a given category -- things that are red, for example. Then players, in turn, call off the words on their lists. If someone else has the word on his list, all players cross off the word. The player with the highest number of unique responses wins.

**Be a reading buddy**

* Be your child’s reading buddy. Set aside time to sit next to your child and read together.
* Read aloud to your child and continue to do so beyond the point when he can read independently.
* Find a series. Children who like one book in a series will probably enjoy others in the series as well.
* Read fiction as well as informational books about topics of interest to your child.
* Make reading purposeful. Link reading to activities you are doing like cooking or reading a menu.
* Use junk mail. Have your child find 10 words she likes and cut the words out and glue them on a piece of paper to read.
* Read books on the go. Place books in the car so children can read as you are running errands or traveling.
* Ask your child, “What’s the most interesting thing you read today?” Encourage conversations about what you and/or your child are reading.

**Learning fun with the newspaper**

Grab a newspaper, and try these activities.

* Matching game – Have your child cut out several photographs and their captions. Cut the photos and their captions apart and mix them all up. Matching the captions and the photos will improve reading comprehension.
* Scavenger hunt – Make a list of items in the newspaper such as a car ad, crossword puzzle, weather forecast, and have your child find and circle each one. This activity will build research skills as your child looks through the pages.
* ABC order – Help your child to find the names of 5-10 countries, states, or cities in the headlines or stories. Have your child copy each one onto an index card and then arrange the cards in alphabetical order. This activity not only practices the skill of alphabetizing, but also spelling and geography!

**Talking = School Success? Yes!**

Strong language skills can make your child a better reader, writer, and all-around student and **you** can buildthose skills just by talking to your child.

* During family conversations, ask your child questions that will require him to expand on his responses such as “What happened next?” or “Why do you think that is?” Questions such as these will teach your child to talk about events and to give an opinion.
* While engaging in everyday activities such as cooking or driving, narrate what you are doing. Hearing unfamiliar words in everyday settings will help your child to understand words in books. Example: “I need the *colander* so that I can drain the spaghetti.” If your child doesn’t know the word, explain: “This is a colander. Water drains through the holes.”

**Reading around the house**

Leaving short notes around the house can be fun for children and improve their behavior! A note complimenting your child such as, “Thanks for helping with the dishes,” or one that serves to remind your child--“Please hang me up. Signed, your towel"--can help her practice her reading. Look for unique places to put the notes, such as on pillows, by toothbrushes, on the cereal box, on the computer, etc. Your child will enjoy finding the notes and may even leave you one!

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