

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Springfield School District

Fill the shortest day of the year with seasonal fun and learning

December 21 is the winter solstice—the day with the fewest daylight hours of the year. Learning about this astronomical phenomenon together can strengthen your child's:

- **Reading skills.** Help your child research online why there is so little daylight on this day.
- **Vocabulary.** List words like *orbit, equator, hemisphere, celestial*, etc. Challenge your child to put them in alphabetical order, then find and write their definitions.
- **Observation skills.** Have your child go online to research the sunrise and sunset times in different parts of the country. Ask him if he notices any patterns.
- **Oral language skills.** Since it gets dark so early, share stories around a flashlight “campfire” after dinner. You can read a family favorite aloud, or let family members take turns telling spooky stories.



Have a consonant scavenger hunt

Consonant blends—the sounds that two consonants make when combined, such as *st* and *br*—can be tricky for young readers to grasp. To help your child practice these blends, send her on a scavenger hunt.

1. **Write a variety of blends** on index cards. Each blend should go on its own card. Here are a few suggestions: *bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, gr, pl, sc, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw* and *tr*.
2. **Hand your child a card** and have her practice saying the blend. Brainstorm a few words that begin with that sound.
3. **Ask your child to find** as many things in your home as she can that start with that blend. (If she has the *bl* card, she could find a *blanket*, a *block* and a *blender*.)
4. **Repeat these steps** with a new letter blend!

Boost your child's reading skills with news articles

Here's a fun way to help your child stay informed and practice the skill of summarizing:

Cut the headline off a news article before giving it to your child to read. After he reads the article, ask him to create a headline for it. Is the headline he wrote similar to the actual one? Compare and find out!



Pay attention to textbook pictures

Textbook pictures can give students a clearer idea of what a chapter is about by adding to the information in the text. Before your child reads a chapter, have her look at the pictures and ask herself:

- **What does the picture show?**
- **What details are there?**
- **Why do you think** the authors and editors included this picture?



Have your child try graphic novels

Graphic novels—books that use pictures and words to convey their stories—offer more than just entertainment. Many address relevant and complex social issues. They cover and encourage interest in many types of literature, like mystery, fantasy and historical fiction.

Help your child find a graphic novel he'd like to read. For suggestions, talk to the librarian or check out www.ala.org/rt/gncrt/awards/best-graphic-novels-children-reading-list.



Five strategies to support struggling readers

If your child is having trouble with reading, it can create challenges in all of his classes. Your child's confidence is a key element in his reading success.

To inspire a positive outlook:

1. **Plan small steps** to overcome struggles. Make targets realistic. Match goals to your child's age and ability so he can experience success.
2. **Create a reading routine** that your child will enjoy.
3. **Keep up-to-date** with what's happening in school. Address problems before they grow.
4. **Ask your child's teacher** for to suggest ways you can help out with reading at home.
5. **Recognize your child's strengths.** Avoid comparing him to others.



A strong vocabulary helps in all subjects

Teachers assign vocabulary words in almost every subject because they help students understand what they read, learn more and succeed on tests. To study vocabulary words, suggest that your child:

- **Make crossword puzzles** with the words to practice their spellings and definitions.
- **Make flash cards** and use them to quiz herself throughout the week.
- **Draw a sketch** that connects the word to something that is personally meaningful to her.
- **Play charades** with words. One player acts out the definition while others guess the word.
- **Challenge herself** to use as many vocabulary words as she can in conversations throughout the day.



Q: My child doesn't *dislike* reading. He simply prefers to watch television instead. What can I do?

A: Sometimes parents unwittingly encourage watching TV over reading. Where is the most comfortable place in your house? It may be the room where the TV is. Encourage your child to read by giving him a few essentials: interesting things to read, good lighting and a quiet, comfortable place to read, like an inviting pile of pillows.

Ways to promote writing

When your child writes regularly, she'll be building her reading skills, too. To encourage the writing habit:

- **Suggest that your child** keep a journal.
- **Display her best writing.** Hang it up or post it on the refrigerator.
- **Give her a box** of writing supplies with pens and special paper in her favorite colors.



For lower elementary readers:

- **Rosie Revere, Engineer** by Andrea Beaty. This rhyming story is about a young inventor named Rosie. Inspired by her aunt, who built planes in WWII, Rosie sets her sights on the skies.



- **Henry's Heart** by Charise Mericle Harper. Learn how a heart works, including its important role as a muscle and what makes it beat extra quickly.

For upper elementary readers:

- **Love, Amalia** by Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta. Amalia has a special relationship with her Abuelita. Abuelita always knows the right thing to say and do.
- **Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School** by Mark Teague. When Mrs. LaRue sends her dog Ike to obedience school, he is not happy. He writes her letters to convince her to let him come home.

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