

March 26, 2020

Dear Families,

Whether your child is an emergent Kindergarten reader or a fluent 5th grade reader, or anything in between, one of the best things that you can do to support your child during this time of remote learning is to read with your child on a regular basis. Many of your children had the opportunity to check out a bunch of library books before leaving the school building, and we sent home “black and white” books with many of the younger children. Your teachers will also be providing guidance about books, and are rolling out some digital platforms (Epic or A to Z or Raz Kids) over the course of this week and next, to help you access a variety of titles for your child. In addition, the Brooklyn Public Library has many books available for online check out, as well as a wealth of other resources (scroll down to the bottom of this message for more info from the BPL) and a great resource for identifying books of interest: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/online-resources/novelistplus-k-8>

There are two really valuable ways to read with your child, regardless of their age:

- Reading a chapter book aloud to your child continues to be important, starting in Kindergarten and continuing through the later elementary and middle school years. In doing so, you not only expose your child to vocabulary, sophisticated sentence structure and background knowledge that they may not yet have, but you provide a context for authentic book discussion, which promotes higher-level comprehension.
- Regular opportunities to read orally are also important for all elementary school children, regardless of their level or overall reading proficiency. Oral reading promotes good reading habits by emphasizing accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and metacognitive awareness, a.k.a. “self-monitoring.”

Some things to look for when your child reads orally:

Accuracy:

- A just-right book for independent reading is one in which a child reads 98% of the words correctly. If a child is reading a book at 90% accuracy or above, that book may be appropriate for “instructional reading”--reading with an adult by one’s side.
- Errors may include misreading a word, adding or deleting a word, or reading words out of order.
- When reading with your child, all errors should be gently corrected: point to the word or line and say something like, “Take another look at that part,” or “Try that again.”
- If you find that your child is making lots of errors, read that book to your child, and choose a different book for them to read independently.
- With books that are still challenging for a child (they are not reading at 98% accuracy), it is appropriate to support them with the book (provided they are interested and motivated) and then to have them re-read/practice the book several times, until they can read it accurately and fluently (see next point).

Fluency: Fluent reading is the link between accurate reading and comprehension. When a child is reading fluently the reading is:

- Smooth, with phrases in meaningful chunks,
- Expressive, with the tone of voice matching the meaning of the words,

- At an appropriate pace: not too fast or too slow. If a child is reading too slowly, the sentences are difficult to hold in one's working memory, and this impairs comprehension. If a child is reading too quickly, the child may not be actively processing the meaning of the text.
- We often use the shorthand "reading with a storyteller's voice" as an intuitive way to explain what fluent reading means. Practicing re-reading a book with a storyteller's voice is a great things to do.

Self-monitoring: An important skill for independent reading is the ability to monitor one's reading for both accuracy (checking that the words one says are the words that are actually on the page) and for understanding (does this make sense to me? What questions do I have? What am I wondering?). If a child is catching and correcting their own errors, or re-reading with greater/changed expression in their voice, those are indications that your child is self-monitoring.

Comprehension: When a child reads accurately and fluently, the pieces are in place for comprehension. Simple tasks such as asking a child what happened in the book will give your child opportunities to express their understanding. If a child is not able to clearly express their reading, re-reading is probably a good idea! Adults do this, often, as well, particularly whe coming back to a book after a hiatus of when reading something with new or challenging content.

If you have questions, please write to me on Edsby.

Best,
Vanessa
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