

Reach Out!

A Center Linking College and Community Mentors with Children and Teens

Joy of Reading

Introduction

As many of you know, Ann Arbor Scarlett children shared a few years ago in a Harvard-sponsored study that they rarely read for enjoyment. Most said they do not like reading.

There is much we can do to try to intervene and to model a love for reading!

Whatever strategy you and your child might agree upon, stick with it for at least 6 weeks, tackle it like an exercise/diet program, keep track of progress, etc.

We hope that this very “quick and dirty” guide helps you and your mentee to learn about reading and to think about strategies and fun projects you might enjoy together, and that it prompts you to get some help as you need it!

Try to work with your child’s parents or grandparents to help them model and share a love for reading, whether of novels, magazines, cook books, travel books, sports articles in the newspaper, stories about animals or history or current events....

Remember, reading unlocks the door of knowledge and should be a cherished pastime!

Keep your eyes peeled for visiting authors. Often they visit local book stores.

You might take your child to such an event. And check out local “story tellers.”

Check out poetry, too! The Ann Arbor Neutral Zone Teen Center has several “poetry slams” each year. Maybe you and your mentee can start writing poetry and share with *Reach Out!*

Find books of poems to share.

Show mentees how poetry and stories can evolve into films, movies and even lyrics for songs. Maybe you would like to write lyrics for a song or a script and storyboard for a movie!

1. Levels of Reading

Like all learning, we can boil down to three basic levels of reading.

- Independent: know most words, comprehend most meaning, easy/fun
- Instructional: don’t know some words, do not comprehend all, need help/not fun but can enjoy “meaning” with help

- Frustration: don't know most words, cannot comprehend much, not fun and hard —“I feel dumb”

2. *Reading for Fun/Recreation*

Must have books at Independent Level. There are TONS of great books called “high interest and low readability.” Find out your child's interests.

Talk to our Scarlett Librarian: Anne Colvin, colvin@aaps.k12.mi.us

Try to help children get “hooked” on an author or series.

Show your interest by also reading and then sharing books!

3. *You Read Aloud for Fun and Recreation*

You also might choose a book or series with your child and you read a chapter every week to him or her. Read with expression! Many of our children were NOT read to joyfully as little ones. They have NOT seen adults and older children enjoy reading for pleasure.

You can have your own little book club —and share that this is common for people of ALL ages! Note: you must genuinely enjoy the book you read to children. Harry Potter and Michigan Chiller are examples of books adults seem to enjoy even more than children!

4. *Language Arts Teachers/Assigned Books*

Talk to or email your child's teacher. Get the book list.

Start reading the book to/with your child. Talk about the characters, plot, facts, etc. You may also be their secretary and write down for them the things they want to remember about it, or answers to the questions teachers posed about the chapter/book. You might have them do a concept map of characters/plot/setting, or draw about it, or do an outline about it. Refer to Learning Styles as you can when suggesting a strategy like above.

5. *Reading Aloud*

BEWARE! Levels of Reading Aloud can be different from our silent reading. We can feel very exposed trying to read out aloud something at even instructional or independent levels. We may not know proper pronunciations of words, we may not follow punctuation, and we are focusing on out-loud reading and not reading for meaning.

And some of us just aren't good at or don't like to read out loud. It can be very exposing to us/children. Have you ever read something with sweat on your brow, heart beating fast, and not knowing a thing about what you read after doing it? Lots of “school reading” may have put children through this. Let them read out loud when they want to.

6. *Newspapers, magazines, comics, etc.*

Be careful of the content, but you can also share what they are reading in this genre.

Talk about content, share what you are reading —current events going on are full of things to openly share and discuss with children and help them connect to community, state, national, and world events. Go to a bookstore and check out newspapers and magazines. Discuss the wide range of things you can learn about just in this area!

7. *Decoding the Written Word*

There are many “tools” that we use to figure out unknown words. Some of us use several of these tools, others are very hooked on one or two. It is good to know about all of them and then to develop the tools that best fit you!

Phonics

Phonics is all about sounding out words; works well for words that can be sounded out and follow basic phonetic rules. Reminder that there are always exceptions to phonetic rules —and some words we just cannot “sound out.” Prerequisites are knowing letters, possible sounds, letters often combined to produce blends or other sounds, knowing what consonants and vowels are, awareness of various sounds those vowels can make alone, with another vowel, or based on placement in a word.

A great strategy is to create “word families.”

- We can change the beginning consonant, blend or digraph to a root (“at”: fat, slat, brat, flat, that —exception what).
- We can take a root word and substitute the ending (bad, band, bat, back —exception bar).
- We can learn about various “endings” on words, like “ing,” “ly,” “ed,” “s/es/ies,” and flip to adding prefixes to words, like “un,” “re,” “dis.”

There are many rules that phonetic learners will want to know about, too. The important thing with rules is to always show examples and non-examples. Example, “i before e except after c like ceiling.” Then when “ei” show up and sound like a “long A” as in “weight, freight, sleigh.”

Structural Analysis

Structural analysis works great when we can break bigger words down into smaller “chunks” or syllables. Sometimes those smaller chunks will let us use some phonetic rules and principles, and other times we can also see some sight words we know in combination with some endings or prefixes. This tool is like breaking down a puzzle into parts —remarkable broken down to re-mark-able, transformation broken down to

trans-for-ma-tion. We can also look at root words and add suffixes or prefixes. Or play with compound words! This can be a fun strategy—but like all others, can fail us, too!

Sight Words

Sight words are those words we have seen plenty of times and we have committed to memory. We see them and we just know them. Often we try to help readers pick out words that they see often in a book or class that they struggle with that can't be easily "sounded out" or broken down by "structural analysis." Depending on their learning style, these methods may help.

1. Write the word down on a flash card. On the back of the flash card, write the definition of the word in your own words . Also write the word in the context of a statement similar to what you are studying where you find the word.
2. Create a simple list of the sight words you are struggling with in a chapter , book, class, or lecture. Work with your mentor to talk about the words and to come up with definitions and examples of using the word that make sense to you and your life (auditory). Have your mentor write these down for you on your outline.
3. With the outline of words you need to learn to read and understand, start writing down lots of examples of using them. Always include definitions of the word; then apply to what you are learning and continue with sentences of other times you might use it in your oral language or in your writing.

Context Clues

We all come to words that we just don't know when we are reading. If there are just a few of those words in a page, most of us skip them and we don't miss the gist of what we are reading and comprehending. When a word stops your flow of reading, your eyes act like a magnet and go back to that "unknown word," or you get your mind off the meaning of what you are reading and stuck on that unknown word—you have to deal with it!

Look at the statements before and after the sentence with the unknown word. Can you get a sense of what the word might be? Try adding a little phonics if you can, like reading the sentence and making the beginning, middle or ending sound of the unknown word. It may click! Or try some structural analysis if you can see a few ways to break apart the word into chunks you know. When all else fails, most adults substitute a word that will make sense in that context and sentence or paragraph and we just move on. For your own sake, write the stinker word down and later on ask someone what it is, what it means (definition), and for a few examples of how it might be used. Or, you might add it to a flash card so you can commit it to memory as a sight word.

Whenever you are working with decoding skills, know that you have many tools to try! Figure out the tools that best fit your learning styles. Strive to write words, say words aloud, and use words in written sentences a lot. This helps your brain remember them and put them into your brain's bank of known words. Always take meaning words and

add sentences to define them and/or use them in multiple ways. That way you don't just decode the word but also have examples in your brain for meaning of the word.

Read, read, and read some more! Like any skill or ability, the more we read, the better we get at it. And we pick up more and more words that we know by sight, along with a treasure chest full of knowledge about these words in our complex brains. Besides reading text heavy or school kinds of books, try hard to pick up the habit of loving to read for fun and recreation. You can pick up a book and go into your own "movie" anytime! You can pick up a book and travel anywhere you want to in the world! You can even go back in time with historical fiction, go forward in time with fantasy and science fiction, or meet people who are long since dead or others still alive by reading their autobiographies or biographies.

Write! As we read a lot of others' writing, we gain skills and insights into the craft of writing. We will acquire abilities to structure sentences in many ways, to formulate paragraphs with topic sentences and supportive details in creative or get-to-the-point approaches, and to become much better writers ourselves. Try keeping a journal. Take up writing short stories. Or maybe you'd like to write poetry or song lyrics. Pick a friend or family member who lives far away and start writing them snail-mail letters.

Speak — Tell Stories! There is a great saying that "what we think, we can tell. What we tell, we can write down. What we write down, we can read and share with others as they can read our thoughts and stories." Take the time to share stories about how your day has gone, to describe where you have gone on an outing or vacation, to ponder and share your hopes and plans for your future, to recount a funny or traumatic experience, to re-tell a movie or story you have read, to share what you learned from a lecture or a class textbook reading. Sometimes it is fun to have a recorder or secretary — a mentor or friend who writes down what you share! If you have a grandparent or older person in your life, have them share stories about their lives and tape them or write them down. These are precious to share with others and to keep so that you have a little more of your personal "history"!

Reading, speaking and story-telling, and writing go together hand-in-hand.