

Reading together

Schools focus on teaching kids how to read. With Power Lunch, the focus is on motivating kids to want to read. Why? Because students who are motivated to read are on a direct path to higher overall achievement and success inside and outside school.

How do you motivate kids to want to read? Make it fun! When something is fun, kids are more motivated to do it. Try these tips and strategies for making the time you spend reading together joyful.



Read aloud to your student

Reading aloud helps kids develop comprehension skills and listening skills, expands their vocabulary and world knowledge, provides a model of fluent, expressive reading, and helps them recognize what reading for pleasure is all about.

Decades of reading research has shown that the single most important thing you can do to help your student become a strong reader is to read aloud to him or her. Here's how you can make reading aloud fun:

Be an active reader

- Preview the book: Point out and talk about the title, author, illustrator, and book topic before reading
- Pace yourself: Use rhyme, repetition, and pauses in a book to full effect
- Look for a hook: Point out an item hidden in the illustrations or a favorite topic or character
- Add drama and sound effects: Be a ham and change your voice and facial expressions
- Ask age-appropriate questions as you read and give your student time to think and answer
- Encourage your student to predict what will happen next
- Move a little: Some books are bouncy!
- Make mistakes on purpose as you read aloud and let your student correct you
- Read it again (and again!)

Question, read, question

Research has demonstrated that the most effective read-alouds are those where kids are actively involved asking and answering questions and making predictions, rather than passively listening. This engagement makes reading fun! Try the “question, read, question” strategy with your student:

- Make reading a discussion by starting with a question: “What do you think this book is about?”
- Pause to give your student time to answer. Listen to the answer.
- Read a bit and ask another question: “Why did he do that? Where’s the balloon?”
- Listen to the answer and respond to your student’s ideas and input.
- Read a bit more and ask yet another question.
- Repeat as necessary.
- End with a question: “How did you like it? Was the book (poem, chapter) about what we thought it would be about? Does this story remind you of anything else? What should we read next?”

Many kids don’t get many opportunities to have in-depth conversations with adults, which means they’ve spent less time learning to interact and analyze on a deeper level. Discussing books with your student as you read them together provides much needed practice for developing these important social and thinking skills and can help build reading comprehension abilities.

The fancy name for these conversations is *dialogic reading*. It basically means having a conversation with your student about the book you are reading together, while you are reading it. It means asking questions about the story, content, or illustrations; exploring your student’s answer and the book together; and making connections to the world.

Don’t go overboard with this technique. You don’t want to ask so many questions that you and your student lose track of the story! Or that your student starts to see your questions as frustrating interruptions.

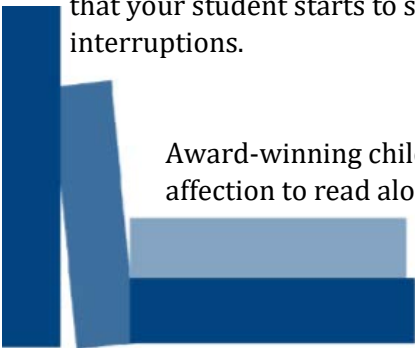
Prompt conversation with open-ended questions

Prediction: What will happen next?

Connection: What does this remind you of?

Retelling: What happened?

Analysis: Why did this happen?
How did he feel?



Award-winning children’s author Katherine Paterson says, “It is a sign of wonderful love and affection to read aloud to someone . . . we should never stop reading aloud.”

Please remember that your student is not required to read aloud to you. For those students who are just learning to read or struggle with reading, having them read aloud may not help them associate reading with pleasure. If your student is interested in reading aloud, do what feels comfortable for both of you. This may mean taking turns reading the pages, having your student take on the voice of specific characters, or alternating paragraphs, stanzas, or sentences with you. Having fun is key to instilling a love of reading!