

Facilitator notes for Reading Success at Home

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As parents, we want our children to be successful in school and ultimately in life. We want them to become readers, and we want to know how to best support their reading at home. As we help our children become independent readers, it is important that we still read to them for as long as they will allow us. We can read books that are at a much higher level than they can read, so we are expanding their knowledge of the world and their vocabulary which will help them on their own journey of reading.

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Our job is not to teach our children how to read, that's why we send them to school, but to help them catch a love of reading. As Emilie Buchwald once said, "Children are made readers on the laps of their parents." So, how do we do this? Well, it's really all about motivation. We are motivated to do those things that are fun, that we are interested in, and those we do well. As this cartoon shows, Dad knew how to motivate his son to want to read. We need to make reading at home a fun and positive experience, so that our children will be motivated to read. Just as we like to read books that we are interested in, children are no different. The best book is the one your child wants to read!

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So why do we care about reading anyway? Well, literacy is everywhere! We are surrounded by information that we need to make sense of every day so that we can navigate our way through life.

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Just think about all you have read today and will still read today. Mention some examples.

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We read for information, and hopefully also for enjoyment. What is important is not just that we are able to read the words, but that we understand what we are reading. How well we read is linked to many things... employment, wealth, health, civic engagement, volunteerism, reduced crime and so much more. In fact, it is the number one indicator of success for how well our children will do in school, and ultimately how well we will do in life!

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In grade 1 children can't wait to become readers - to crack the code, but by grade 3 a third of the class are already reluctant readers and don't like to read. As Jim Trelease says in his book, *The Read- Aloud Handbook*, "*We must take care that children's early encounters with reading are painless enough so they will cheerfully return to the experience now and forever. But if it's repeatedly painful, we will end up creating a school-time reader instead of a lifetime reader.*"

We all know someone like that who only reads when they have to. So, how do we help our children become lifetime readers? We have to make it fun! We have to find books they want to read. We have to read every day –it doesn't need to be for long - just 10/15 minutes a day of reading together can make a difference. And we can play word games. We will talk more about that later.

When we know how to read, it's hard to remember what it was like not to be able to read. I'm going to give you all a short story to read. You have a couple of minutes to go over it and then I'll ask someone to read it out loud. (Hand out story.)

Would someone like to read it out loud? No..? Would you like a bit of help? (Next slide)

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Try to figure out the title first. There are two different stories, so not everyone has the same one.

Sam. This is Sam. Sit Sam.

Tim. This is Tim. Tim sits.

What you had to do was decode the story to make sense of the words. When our children are reading and they come to word they don't know, what do we usually say? (People will say, "Sound it out.") Right, that seems to be our default strategy. The truth is, that is not how our brains work when we are reading, individually sounding out each letter. Also, more than 40% of the words in our English language can't be sounded out. So "sound it out" doesn't always work, as you have probably realised listening to your children's attempts to sound out words that aren't phonetic, like "any" and "once." We do need to know phonics, the relationships between letters and the sounds they make, but phonics alone just won't work for many words. So what else can we do?

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Another strategy we can use is to look at the pictures for clues to the words. Look at the pictures first and talk about what you see before trying to read the text. Just think about it, in

early readers, most of the page is a picture. We want our children to be using that visual information to help them make sense of the words. So don't cover the pictures! It is not cheating to look at the picture. It is what readers do - use all the information available to them to make sense of the words. As adults we still rely on pictures – putting furniture together from IKEA or building Lego...

Also, good readers guess! There are many “in-the-head” thinking strategies that we have to learn to use to make sense of the text. Reading is about thinking and understanding what we are reading. Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does the word look right?

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Let's read this story out loud together. 1-2-3...

_____ upon a time, an ___ lady lived all alone in a little _____ in the woods. She _____ the animals and _____ to them every day. One day she heard a loud _____ and all the _____ flew up into the _____. The lady knew _____ season had begun and she felt _____ sad.

Well done. You just did what good readers do. You guessed at the words you didn't know by thinking about what made sense based on what you know, and what sounded right. You used your knowledge about things and language to guess at appropriate words that made sense. Sometimes you had to skip and read on to figure out words, like “birds” and “hunting”.

What you just did, demonstrated many of those “in-the-head” reading strategies that our children need to build, so that they can make sense of text. We aren't born knowing how to do this. We are taught these strategies and, as parents, we can help our children remember them and use a variety of them. Once you have them, you aren't even consciously aware of using them. It just comes naturally, and that is how we want it to be for our children, but they have to do the work and it takes time and lots of practice and patience.

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Now that we know more about the Reading Processing System (the “in-the-head” thinking strategies) and what it is that we need to do to read, let's talk about how to choose “Just Right” books to read. These are the questions you want to encourage your children to think about when they are picking a book to read themselves.

1. Am I interested in this book? Do I even want to read it? The best book is the one your child wants to read.

2. Do I know what this book is about? We want them to be thinking about what they are reading, not just reading the words to get the book done. **We read for meaning.**

3. Do I know most of the words? Latest research shows that “Easy books are good!”

Richard Allington, a reading expert, says, “In order to be successful, children need to read with 98 percent accuracy, or higher.” That means they need to know most of the words in the book. If there are too many unknowns, then they can’t read fluently and they lose comprehension. This is why the books they are bringing home now are books with lots of repetition and patterns. They are building up their bank of **sight words**. Sight words, or high-frequency words, are commonly used words which students learn to recognize instantly “by sight” without decoding. Many of these words do not follow a spelling pattern, which can make them difficult to sound out and spell. They account for 50 to 75 percent of the words that appear in books, so it’s important for children to learn the correct spelling and to recognize the words instantly by sight. This allows them to concentrate more on meaning when they are reading without having to stop and decode each word. (We will talk later about how you can use games to learn sight words.)

Sometimes your child will choose a book that is too hard for them to read, so read it to them or with them, so they can still enjoy the story and understand it.

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Once they’ve chosen a book to read, before they start reading it, warm it up.

Let’s do a warm up together. I want you to spell out loud with me the word POTS, P-O-T-S

We are going to spell it out loud 5x and then I am going to fire a question at you and I want you to shout out the answer, don’t think about it. Okay, ready:

P-O-T-S, P-O-T-S, P-O-T-S, P-O-T-S, P-O-T-S

What do you do when you get to a green light? (People will say stop. Then you say, “Green Light”, and they all laugh).

Let’s try another one. I want you to spell the word SILK, S-I-L-K 5x and then I’ll fire a question at you and you shout out the answer.

S-I-L-K, S-I-L-K-, S-I-L-K, S-I-L-K, S-I-L-K

What do cows drink? (People will say milk, and you all laugh.)

That’s a brain warm up. When you are warming up a book with your child, you are setting them up for success. Talk together about the story first, so that they are thinking about what is happening in the story before they start reading it. Read the title of the book, and then talk about the main idea of the book. Look at some of the pictures and talk about what you see.

Predict what might happen. Talk about the meaning of difficult words. Get them curious about the story and thinking about it before they start reading it.

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For non-fiction or science/fact books, use what we call the **K-W-L**. Talk about what you both already KNOW about the topic. For example, if they chose a book about Owls. Ask them what they already know about owls and share what you know too. Then ask them what they WONDER or want to know about owls. Share something you wonder about too. After you've read a bit, talk about some of the new things you have learned. This strategy makes reading meaningful. We are reading this book because we want to learn more about something. This strategy is still used in high school.

If your child is very interested in a subject, they can probably read a higher level book about that subject because they already have a lot of knowledge about it.

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Now let's talk about how to read the book together. Usually we just expect our child to read to us and they can, if they have already practised the book. But, learning to read is like learning any new skill. We have to first build up our skills and our confidence before we can successfully do it alone. Just like when your child is learning how to ride a two-wheeler, you don't just put them on the bike at the top of the hill and say "Okay buddy, I'll pick you up at the bottom." They will likely wipe out, and never want to ride a bike again. It's the same with reading. We have to first help them build their skills and their confidence by encouraging and supporting them, so that they see themselves as readers and have the confidence to try it alone and be successful. (Remember how it felt when you were looking at that code story.)

So for beginning readers, reluctant readers, non-fluent readers, **read the book to them first**. It is not cheating!

Another strategy to try is **Choral or Unison** reading. You read together so they don't have to worry about the words they don't know and can focus on fluency and comprehension. You might read a page or two together, and then let them try it on their own. This strategy works well with older students too.

For younger students, **My Turn/ Your Turn** or **Echo** reading is a helpful strategy. You read the sentence or passage first and then they read the same sentence or passage. You are modelling how it should sound, stopping at periods and reading with expression. You may use your finger to track the words when you are reading, and encourage your child to do the same when he is

reading. Remember it is a smooth motion from left to right, don't stab at the words. Also, read the whole sentence first, not word by word, as this breaks up fluency and comprehension.

It's okay to read the same book many times. You might read it to them first, then read it together or model read it, then they might read it to you. These are supportive strategies that build fluency and confidence and help with comprehension and the enjoyment of reading.

Memorizing is part of the process! It is how we learn to do a lot of things.

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Now this is what is really going to change your home reading into a much more positive experience for both you and your child. When our children are reading and they make a mistake, miss a word, guess at a word, or mispronounce a word, what do we do? Usually we jump in much too quickly to correct them; the word is barely out of their mouths. We sound like the Taboo buzzer – eh, eh, eh, - no, no, no! How do you think that makes your child feel? Painful experience = reluctant reader.

There are two important things I want you to remember:

1. If it doesn't change the meaning let it go! Remember the fill-in the blank story we read. Some of you may have said she lived in a house, others may have said a cabin or a cottage. I didn't worry about that, as long as you were getting the meaning.

Confident readers guess based on what they know, what makes sense, and what sounds right. So if your child says - house for home or bike for bicycle, or bug for beetle – just let it go, for the sake of fluency, comprehension and enjoyment. You can always go back after and isolate the word and ask them what it is. Yes, we do want what they read to match the text, but what is more important is that they are using their strategies, connecting with their reading, and making sense of it. You don't need to correct every mistake!

If what they read doesn't make sense, or the meaning is changed, and they keep on reading, then you do need to say something. If some of you had said she lived in a rocket ship in the woods, I would have questioned you on whether that made sense.

This is where the second thing I want you to remember comes in.

2. Pause first before you say something to see if they will self correct. If they don't, then you need to **prompt**.

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This PAUSE thing is hard to do!

I want you all to put your hands on your legs. On the count of three, I want you to bring your hands up and lace your fingers together. Okay, see which thumb you have on top. Now let's do it again but put the other thumb on top. It just doesn't feel quite right. It's the same when we cross our arms or our legs.

PAUSE-PROMPT-PRAISE doesn't come naturally to most of us and we have to consciously work at doing it. When your child makes a mistake or gets stuck on a word, **pause** (Count to ten, bite your tongue,) just wait a second or two to see if they will self-correct. If they do, that's great, because it tells you they are thinking about that they are reading and then you can praise them for correcting themselves. If they keep on reading, which happens a lot, then you need to prompt them. In your package is a bookmark with 3 good questions to ask.

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1. Does that make sense?
2. Does that sound right?
3. Does that word look right?

Posing a question is much more positive than sounding like the Taboo buzzer!

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Let's look at an example to see how we can use these questions.

The sentence says:

The boy rode the horse.

Your child reads, "The boy rode the **house**."

You pause to see if they self-correct but if they don't, you ask, "Does that make sense? He rode the house?"

If your child reads, "The boy **rided** the horse."

You pause, and then say, "Does that sound right? Is that the way we talk? Do you say you rided your bike?"

If your child reads, "The boy **roped** the horse."

You pause first, then say, "Let's look at that word. Does that look right? Does that look like roped?"

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On the back of your bookmark you will see a number of strategies that we can use for figuring out a word we don't know. Your children are taught these strategies in school but it is helpful if you can prompt them using the same language and remind them what they can do when they get stuck on a word.

1. Look at the pictures. The pictures are there to give you clues to the words. Do not cover the pictures. Encourage your children to look at the picture to help them figure out the word.
2. Think about what word makes sense. Remember good readers guess. Encourage them to guess the word, by thinking about what they know and what would make the most sense.
3. Go back and read it again. Many times on a second read, your child will be able to figure out what the word is.
4. Look at the letter clues. Look at the first letter/last letter and think of a word that works.
5. Look for small words in big words. Break the word down into smaller chunks or words that they might know - like "go-ing"
6. Let them know that it is okay to skip a word and read the next few words because sometimes those words help you figure out what the word is – like "hunting season".
7. Flip the sound. This is when your child is trying to sound out a letter and he is saying the wrong letter sound, you can prompt him to try the other sound.

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As this chart shows, letters have different sounds and so if your child is sounding out "giant" and is saying a "g" sound instead of a "j" sound you can just say, flip the sound or try the other sound that letter makes.

We want to encourage our children to use a variety of strategies to figure out new words. If they are too dependent on phonics and sounding out, encourage them to look at the pictures and guess at words based on the meaning. If they tend to guess a lot and not pay attention to the letter clues, then encourage them to look at the text.

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Let's read this story again to see how letter clues help us guess words more quickly so we are able to read more fluently.

Once upon a time, an old lady lived all alone in a little cabin in the woods. She loved the animals and talked to them every day. One day she heard a loud bang and all the birds flew up into the sky. The lady knew hunting season had begun and she felt very sad.

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What is most important is that they understand what they are reading and it makes sense to them. If they are just reading the words without understanding them, then they can't enjoy the book or learn anything from it.

As this cartoon shows, reading is an active process and TV is a passive process. When we are watching TV, there is no brain activity. In fact, there is more brain activity when we are sleeping than when we are watching TV. When we read, we have to be actively engaged, visualizing, predicting and making meaning. Some children are excellent decoders and can read all the words but don't understand what they are reading. When you talk about it, they don't know what they have just read. Be sure to check that your children understand what they are reading even when they are reading well.

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We want to be talking about the book before we start reading it, while we are reading it and after we have read it. Make it a conversation, not a quiz. Talk about what is happening; get them to make personal connections, to predict what might happen next. Ask about the meaning of words. Ask their opinion and share yours too. If it's a non-fiction book, remember to talk about what new things you have learned from the book.

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Confidence is the key to success! When we do something well, we are more likely to do it, and the more we do something, the better we get at it. To help our children become lifetime readers, we need reading to be a joyful and meaningful experience. Make it fun, read often, have lots of patience. Be encouraging.

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Games are a great way to make learning fun. When kids are playing games, they don't even realize they are learning. It's a good way to learn those sight words. Let's take a look at what's in your package.

1. You have a set of word cards. This is a sample set of sight words you can expect your child to know by the end of grade 1. There are two cards for each word. You can play Memory or Concentration with these words. There are instructions in the package. Read the words to your child first. Playing a game is a fun way to practice seeing and saying these words over and over again until we know them.

2. You also have some blank word cards. As your child reads a book, you can use these cards to write down words that are new to your child. You can buy more cards at the \$ store. When you print the words, write in lower case letters. When we print in upper case letters, the shape of every word is the same – a RECTANGLE. When we print in lower case, words have distinct shapes and our brains recognise these shapes.

3. You can use the word cards or your child's word cards to play Roll-Say-Keep. Instructions are on the back. Place a word in each square, face-up. Read the words to your child. Then you take turns rolling the dice and have to read the word in the square of the number you rolled. If you get it right, you get to keep it and you put a new word in the square.

4. Word Tic Tac Toe is also a fun game. As you are reading together, you can print words you want your child to practice in the squares on the game sheet. When you are done, then you play X's and O's. You have to read the word before you get to put your X or O on the square. The goal is to get three in a row.

5. You can also play Roll, Pick a letter, Build a word. Your child has fun playing with the letters in the alphabet and is learning that we need vowels to make words. If you have magnetic letters at home, it's easier for them to move the letters around to make a word, rather than just writing them on paper. For younger children, play the first person to build a three letter word. Taking turns rolling the dice and picking a letter from under the number you roll. For older children, you can roll the dice six times each, choose six letters and see how many words you can make with those six letters.

Now it is time for you to practice what you have just learned with your child. Warm up the book with them, look at the pictures, talk about the story and read it to them. You can also try reading together or echo reading – you read a sentence first then they read the same sentence. Be sure to check that they understand what you are reading together. Try playing a game. They love the games and are learning while having fun.

Before you leave, I have a short five question evaluation I'd like you to complete. Your comments help me improve this workshop and make it more useful to parents, so I appreciate your honest feedback. Thank you for coming today. Now go have some fun with your child.