Elementary School • February 2026

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

South Point Local School District

Give your elementary schooler practice examining and evaluating information

Elementary school students are developing analytical thinking skills, learning to examine and evaluate information instead of simply accepting it. To reinforce your child's higher-level thinking skills:

- **Look at a news headline** together, then read the full article. Discuss whether the headline did an effective job of reflecting the story's main point.
- **Talk about *fact*** (established truth) and *opinion* (a person's belief). Ask your child to tell you whether a statement is *fact* or *opinion*, and why.
- **Look for bias.** Read a passage and look for words that show strong, emotional viewpoints. Discuss how that language might be trying to influence the reader's opinion.
- **Encourage deeper thinking.** "How might workers be affected by this new policy? What are the pros and cons?"

Three factors boost motivation to read

Getting students excited about reading can be a challenge. If you want your child to read more, but you're not sure how to help, focus on these three factors:

1. **Confidence.** It's important for children to feel good about their reading experiences. Talk about your child's reading successes and encourage practicing by reading aloud.
2. **Choice.** Children are more motivated when they get to pick what they read. Take regular trips to the library with your child. Visit several sections (such as fiction, nonfiction and hobbies) and let your child choose what to check out.
3. **Interaction.** Model strong reading skills by reading aloud to your child on a regular basis. Have family discussions about books and articles you read.

Write a special poem together

Celebrate Valentine's Day with your child by writing a haiku together. A haiku is a Japanese form of poetry that has just three lines, and focuses on a single image or moment.

The structure is simple:

- **First line—**Write five syllables. *A small paper heart.*
- **Second line—**Write seven syllables. *A chocolate candy treat.*
- **Third line—**Write five syllables. *A sweet, warm feeling.*

See how many poems you and your child can create together!

A dictionary game builds your child's vocabulary

Open a dictionary to any page. Have your child point to a place on the page without looking. Then, try to define the word closest to where your child pointed. Take turns being the pointer and guesser.

Reduce your child's reading anxiety

If your child is showing signs of stress when it comes to reading, here are effective ways to reduce the anxiety:

- **Read to your child** every day to foster a love of reading.
- **Take turns reading** aloud. Start with one sentence at a time.
- **Extend your child's bedtime** by 30 minutes on weekends to read.
- **Look for audiobooks** of challenging books so your child can listen and read along.

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Reading and math are a recipe for success

What simple daily activity allows your child to practice reading and math skills at the same time? Cooking! And it's something you can enjoy doing together. When you prepare a dish:

- **Take turns reading the recipe.** Ask your child to read the list of ingredients aloud while you collect them.
- **Let your child measure.** Teach your child how to read and use measuring cups and spoons.
- **Use math terms.** Say things like, "We need to *add* sugar," "Let's *divide* that into *quarters*" or "That's *half* of what we need."
- **Make more—or less.** Take a recipe and double—or halve—it. Do the math together. How many people will it serve?

Descriptive words make writing interesting

People, places and things come alive when writers use descriptive words. Here's a fun way to give your child practice writing sentences that paint a picture:

1. **Write a short sentence** on a piece of paper. "The plane flew through the sky."
2. **Ask your child to make** the sentence more descriptive by adding *adjectives* (words describing nouns) and *adverbs* (words describing actions).
3. **Have your child use** a thesaurus to replace some of the original words with more interesting, descriptive words.
4. **Have your child read** the new sentences out loud. "The massive silver jet zoomed through the brilliant blue sky."

Q: I want my elementary schooler to enjoy reading but digital devices and video games are constantly competing for attention. What should I do?

A: It can be difficult to tear children away from digital devices to read—especially when there are so many entertainment options available. Place limits on recreational screen use. Keep irresistible reading materials around the house such as magazines and graphic novels. You can also look for reading materials based on your child's favorite shows or games.

Introduce historical fiction

Spark an interest in social studies by introducing your child to historical fiction. Ask your child's teacher or your local librarian to suggest books that:

- **Present** time periods accurately.
- **Are set** in real places.
- **Teach** the facts.
- **Include** helpful pictures.
- **Avoid** misconceptions.

For lower elementary readers:

- ***In the Trees, Honey Bees!*** by Lori Mortensen. Learn some interesting facts about the daily life of a honey bee in this beautifully illustrated, informative book.
- ***I Stink!*** by Kate and Jim McMullan. In this audiobook, the sounds of jazz and the city accompany a garbage truck as it eats trash while people sleep.

For upper elementary readers:

- ***Joe and Sparky Go to School*** by Jamie Michalak. When a yellow school bus arrives at the zoo, Joe Giraffe and Sparky Turtle hop on—and their adventure-filled field trip to school begins.
- ***Tales for Very Picky Eaters*** by Josh Schneider. Children who are picky eaters will love this collection of stories with titles such as "The Tale of the Slimy Eggs."

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