Pleasant Hill Elementary School
Title I

Show your child strategies for reading different types of material

Reading a novel in language arts and reading a science textbook require different skills. When your child is reading to learn in a subject such as math, social studies or science, suggest that she use these strategies:

- **Before reading.** Even before she opens the book, have your child think about what she already knows about the topic. She can jot down a few notes to get her mind going.
- **During reading.** Your child should highlight, underline or write down important information. Have her write down questions she has about what she is reading.
- **After reading.** Encourage your child to summarize what she has read. If she is confused about something, have her go back and reread that section. Then, she can try to connect what she’s read to something she already knows.

Venn diagrams help your child make comparisons

Venn diagrams are graphic organizers that your child can use to clarify the similarities and differences she comes across while reading. All she needs is a pencil and paper. Then she should:

1. **Draw** two overlapping circles.
2. **Write** the similarities between the objects she’s comparing (such as two characters) in the overlapping section.
3. **Write** the differences in the sections that do not overlap.

Try biographical nonfiction

Many kids stick with fiction when choosing books at the library. But don’t overlook biographies and autobiographies! They’re exciting because the stories are true. Explain that to your child. Then ask, “Who would you like to learn about?” Look for books about that person’s life.

Thanksgiving offers literacy opportunities

Holidays can bring more than big meals and football games on TV. They can also offer you and your child a great chance to work on literacy skills together. You can:

- **Work on writing.** In the U.S., the pilgrims observed the first Thanksgiving because they were thankful for their survival in a new land. Have your child write a list of things for which he is thankful. Post the list.
- **Read the poem** “Over the River and Through the Woods” by Lydia Maria Child with your child. It tells the story of a Thanksgiving long ago. As a family, write a story or poem about your own holiday traditions.
- **Set aside some extra time** for reading aloud. Consider delaying bedtime over the holiday to allow for a longer reading time.

Language skills improve reading

Oral language, which is made up of speaking and listening, is a vital part of your child’s literacy development. Strong oral language skills go hand-in-hand with well-developed reading skills.

To hone your child’s oral language skills:

- **Build** her vocabulary.
- **Model** correct grammar.
- **Ask** questions and converse daily.
For lower elementary readers:

• **Are You Awake?** by Sophie Blackall. Edward isn’t ready to sleep. He’s curious about a lot of things! Despite his mom’s answers, the questions keep coming.

• **Flight of the Honey Bee** by Raymond Huber. Follow Scout, a honey bee, on her journey to find a flower full of nectar. This book includes many fascinating facts about honey bees.

For upper elementary readers:

• **I Am Jack** by Susanne Gervay. After Jack is bullied at school, he’d rather be anywhere but there. With the support of his family, he finds a way to prevail.

• **Happy Happy Clover** by Sayuri Tatsuyama. This story about a bunny’s adventures is told in comic-book style, which may appeal to reluctant readers.

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**Build your child’s vocabulary by teaching new words naturally**

You’re reading a book aloud and you come to a word your child doesn’t know. Should you stop, look up the word and give your child the definition? Experts say parents should try to explain the word naturally. For example:

- **Provide an easy-to-understand definition.** “Asphalt is the black stuff used to make roads.”
- **Give an example of how the word is used.** “The driveway at our house is made of asphalt.”
- **Suggest that your child use the word.** “I bet you can make up a sentence that includes asphalt. Go for it!”
- **Use the word repeatedly.** Over the next week and more, make a point of using the new word in conversation.

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**Ask questions to get your child thinking**

When you get your child to talk about what he’s reading, it boosts his memory, critical thinking and comprehension. Ask him the following questions:

- **Why did you select** this book?
- **What is it about?**
- **Where does the story** take place?
- **Who is your favorite** character?
- **What is the most interesting** part of the book to you?
- **What main idea** do you think the author was trying to get across?
- **What conflict** is important to the story?
- **Did you like** how the story ended? How would you have written it differently?
- **Does the story** remind you of other books you’ve read?

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**Simplify long pages of reading**

Textbooks require lots of reading. If your child is intimidated by seeing many words on one page, have him use a sheet of paper to cover part of the page. This way, he’ll focus on one paragraph at a time. As he reads down the page, he can move the paper down to uncover more paragraphs.

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**Q**: My child picks books that are too challenging. Then she gives up after one chapter. How can I help her make better choices?

**A**: Choose a few books that match her reading level. (She should be able to read a full page without struggling with more than about five words.) Then, let her pick from your selection of books. If she needs an extra boost to keep going, read part of it aloud. Consider taking turns reading to each other.
School success begins with reading at home

Fewer families than ever before are reading with their children on a daily basis. But reading with your child regularly can have the single greatest impact on her school success. Even 20 minutes a day can make a difference! Here's why:

- **Every academic subject involves reading.** Your child has to read in English, science, social studies—and yes, even math! Being able to read well—and read many different kinds of material—will make the difference between learning about a subject and understanding it.

- **Reading affects test success.** Your child has to read material to study for a test. And she also has to read and understand the directions just to take the test! Filling out an answer sheet incorrectly—or failing to show her work when it’s required—could be the difference between a passing and a failing grade.

- **What your child reads now will help her later.** Children who read (and are read to) are often exposed to more words, which gives them larger vocabularies. A strong vocabulary can benefit your child in advanced classes and on college entrance exams!
Simple strategies make reading exciting

Children who are strong readers find it easier to do well in other subjects, because so much of learning depends on the ability to read. But experts say that to improve reading abilities, children must want to read. Unfortunately, many children just aren’t interested.

To show your child that reading is rewarding:

- **Plan a field trip together.** Challenge your child to research attractions in your area, such as museums and parks. Then ask him to be your tour guide as he shares with you what he’s learned.

- **Give reading coupons.** Show your child that you think reading is special by giving him reading coupons. Some might be for an extra 20 minutes of reading with you. Others might be good for a trip to the bookstore or an extra visit to the library to check out books.

- **Introduce audiobooks.** This is a great way to show a reluctant reader how interesting books can be. Your child may enjoy listening to a book that you record for him, as he follows along.

- **Follow current events together.** Is there a developing news story that interests your child? Read the latest reports in the paper or online together.
Build vocabulary to strengthen reading skills

One of the best ways for your child to improve her reading and writing skills is to expand her vocabulary. Try these teacher-recommended strategies for boosting vocabulary:

- **Read, read, read!** This is the easiest way to build vocabulary. The more your child reads, the more new words she’ll encounter.
- **Examine the context of new words.** See if your child can figure out what a new word means by reading the text around it or looking at related pictures.
- **Keep a list of new words** and their meanings in a special notebook.
- **Use a thesaurus.** Encourage your child to look up synonyms (words with the same meaning) and antonyms (words with opposite meanings) for words she uses often.

- **Play word games.** Do crossword and other word puzzles together.
- **Learn the roots of words.** See how many words she can think of that contain the same root—predict, verdict, dictionary and dictate, for example. What do these words have in common? What does the root *dict* indicate? (It’s a Latin root word meaning say.)
Three ways to boost reading comprehension

As your child gets older, he will be expected to read and understand more complex text. He will transition from learning to read to reading to learn. To help your child, encourage him to:

1. **See the big picture.** Before reading an assignment, have your child think about what he will be reading. What is the title of the chapter or assignment? Does it offer any clues about the reading? He should look for other clues, such as subheadings, words in boldface or italics, pictures or graphs.

2. **Take notes.** Most good students take notes on what they read. Taking notes while reading will make it easier for your child to comprehend and remember information. It will also make reading active and engaging. Your child should write down the most important ideas in the reading assignment.

3. **Make connections.** The best way to remember new information is to relate it to something you have already learned. When your child finishes a reading assignment, have him answer questions such as: How is this topic similar to something else I have learned? What key ideas did I already know? What new information did I learn?

He should also write down any words he doesn’t know so he can look them up later.
Reading role models can motivate kids

Lots of factors have an impact on your child’s love of reading, but one of them may be closer than you realize. It’s an older sibling! Kids who see their older brother or sister reading for pleasure are more likely to seek out books themselves.

It’s not just that book-loving older kids model good reading habits. They’re also great resources when it comes to sharing books, suggesting new stories to explore and talking about literature.

To expose your child to reading role models:

• **Make reading a family affair.** Set aside a weekly reading time. Snuggle up on the couch, and read together. Include older siblings, cousins or friends.

• **Visit the library together.** After your younger child chooses his books, let him look in the “big kid” section while his sibling finds a new book. No older sibling? Explore the preteen section with your child anyway. Let him see all the bigger kids browsing the shelves and reading in the aisles.

• **Involve the babysitter.** The next time your teenage sitter comes over, ask him to bring along a book. Seeing how important reading is to the sitter may inspire your child’s interest in it, too!
Kids are never too old for read-aloud time!

Reading aloud is a great way to boost your child’s vocabulary, listening skills and problem-solving skills. And long after children have learned how to read, they still benefit from read-aloud time.

To keep it fun as your child gets older:

- **Select books you’ll both enjoy.** There’s nothing worse than finding yourself with 100 pages to go in a book you can’t stand. Ask the librarian for titles of chapter books with plenty of plot twists and interesting characters.
- **Select some books** that are a little too hard for your child to read on her own. Exposing her to these books is a great way to increase her vocabulary.
- **Set the stage each day.** Ask your child to summarize what you read yesterday. Together, imagine what might happen next.
- **Take turns reading.** If your child wants to read, you might alternate paragraphs, pages or chapters. Help her sound out words she doesn’t know.
- **Talk about what you read.** Ask your child questions. Has she ever faced a situation like the one in the book? Does she know anyone like the main character?
- **Close the book at an exciting point** so you’ll both want to read again tomorrow!

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Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut by Derrick Barnes (Agate Bolden). Winner of multiple awards, this is an uplifting story about a boy and the power of a simple haircut. The book’s rhythmic text and beautiful illustrations are perfect for read alouds. (fiction, lower elementary)

Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets by Kwame Alexander and others (Candlewick Press). Introduce your child to the beauty of poetry with this unique collection of original poems—each matched with a bold and intricate illustration. (poetry, upper elementary)

Stay: A Girl, a Dog, a Bucket List by Kate Klise (Feiwel and Friends). Astrid’s dog Eli is getting older, so she makes a list of activities for them to do together before he gets too old. This is a touching story of the love between a girl and her dog. (fiction, lower elementary)

Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly (Greenwillow Books). What happens when a group of sixth graders are brought together because of a bully’s cruel act? Find out in this award-winning book about bravery and friendship. (fiction, upper elementary)

Charlie and Mouse by Laurel Snyder (Chronicle Books). Voted one of the most distinguished books for beginning readers (Theodor Seuss Geisel Award), this story follows the hilarious adventures of two brothers. (fiction, lower elementary)

Bronze and Sunflower by Cao Wenzhuan (Walker Books Ltd.). Set in a rural Chinese village during the Cultural Revolution, this is the heart-warming story of two lonely children who become friends. Readers will learn about beauty, familial love and sacrifice. (fiction, upper elementary)

The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid by Jeanette Winter (Beach Lane Books). Learn how this famous architect overcame adversity and achieved her dreams in this picture-book biography. (biography, lower elementary)

Older Than Dirt: A Wild but True History of Earth by Don Brown and Michael Perfit (HMH Books for Young Readers). Learning about science is fun with this playful account of the Earth’s history. (nonfiction, upper elementary)

The Boy and the Whale by Mordicai Gerstein (Roaring Brook Press). A fisherman’s son discovers a whale tangled in his father’s only fishing net. Will he find the courage to set the whale free? This beautifully-illustrated tale teaches readers about compassion and empathy. (fiction, lower elementary)

Lucky Broken Girl by Ruth Behar (Nancy Paulsen Books). Ruthie is a young immigrant learning to adjust to her new life in New York when tragedy strikes. Follow her on a journey of heartbreak and hope. (fiction, upper elementary)
Windows by Julia Denos (Candlewick Press). Join a boy and his dog as they go on a neighborhood walk at dusk. The simple text and interesting illustrations will encourage readers to pay attention to all the little details around them. (fiction, lower elementary)

Impact! Asteroids and the Science of Saving the World by Elizabeth Rusch (HMH Books for Young Readers). Some asteroids are harmless, while others cause massive destruction. Follow scientists as they investigate all things to do with asteroids. The accompanying photos will make science come to life! (nonfiction, upper elementary)

Princess Cora and the Crocodile by Laura Amy Schlitz (Candlewick Press). Princess Cora is overscheduled and desperately wants a day off. When she trades places with a naughty crocodile, complete chaos ensues! (fiction, lower elementary)

Wishtree by Katherine Applegate (Feiwe1 & Friends). Red is a wise old oak tree who watches over the neighborhood. When a new family moves in, he discovers his true purpose. This best-selling book confronts prejudice and celebrates kindness. (fiction, upper elementary)

Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask About Having a Disability by Shane Burcaw (Roaring Brook Press). Author Shane Burcaw suffers from a rare disability. In this refreshingly candid book, he answers 10 frequently-asked questions about his life. Readers will learn that people with disabilities aren’t so different after all. (nonfiction, lower elementary)

The Girl Who Drank the Moon by Kelly Barnhill (Algonquin Young Readers). A loving witch raises an enchanted girl in this nontraditional fairy tale about love, sacrifice and magic. Winner of the Newbery Medal, this best-selling book takes readers on a whimsical fantasy journey. (fairy tale, upper elementary)

Noodleheads See the Future by Tedd Arnold and others (Holiday House). Join the wacky Noodlehead brothers as they head off on their latest adventure. Young readers will enjoy the simple text and comics-inspired illustrations in this hilarious graphic novel. (fiction, lower elementary)

Muddy: The Story of Blues Legend Muddy Waters by Michael James Mahin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers). This award-winning picture book tells the story of blues musician Muddy Waters’ rise to fame. His struggle, determination and hope will inspire readers. (biography, upper elementary)

All Around Us by Xelena Gonzalez (Cinco Puntos Press). A young girl and her grandfather take a walk and explore the circles all around them. But circles are more than just shapes. They are also symbols of how we are all connected. (fiction, lower elementary)

How to Be an Elephant by Katherine Roy (David Macaulay Studio). Learn about the family dynamics in a typical African elephant herd. Filled with scientific research, interesting facts and gorgeous watercolor illustrations, this educational book will delight animal lovers of all ages. (nonfiction, upper elementary)