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Dear Parents,

Let's face it: school days can be chaotic. There's the morning hustle to get the kids awake, dressed, and off to school. After-school activities flood the afternoons: sports, language programs, and classes on computer coding (yes, that's a real thing now). Trying to tackle homework amidst cooking dinner and settling sibling arguments fill the evenings. Oh, and let's not forget the dilemmas and distractions of raising a child in the digital age—the perils of parenting in a world with YouTube are endless!

Schools desire parent involvement not because they want to add to your already hectic schedule, but because studies have shown that students are more successful when there is a strong connection between home and school. Creating a supportive and positive learning environment at home fosters knowledge, sparks curiosity, and builds self-confidence.

This parent guide will not burden you with more tasks and to-do lists; rather, it will empower you with useful tools, meaningful advice, and resourceful activities to help you create opportunities for learning in the moments that make up your everyday life.

Not every activity in this book needs to be completed. Choose what works best for you and your family. Take small steps. Live in the moment with your child. If you do that, you will naturally create a learning environment that will connect your home and school beautifully and seamlessly.

Let's Read!

Ready to Read → Your child is now an independent reader! The transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” has been made. Your child is thinking deeper about texts. Characters are analyzed. Plots are summarized. New words are dissected. While your child will be given reading assignments from the teacher, it is important to encourage reading for pleasure at home. Here are some ways to foster a love of reading and strengthen close-reading skills.



There's Something About a Series

Series are quite popular with the third-grade crowd. Many children find comfort in series such as Judy Moody, Captain Underpants, or The Littles. They grow to love the characters and the familiarity of settings and plot sequences. There are excellent nonfiction series, as well. Children often love the colorful photographs and real-life stories found in fact-based books. Reading a series with your child is an excellent way to bolster reading skills at home. Here are some things you can do to get serious about series.

1

What to Read?

Talk with your child. Ask if there are any series she's already heard about and would like to read. Take a trip to the local bookstore or library to browse different series. Read reviews online together. Ask friends and family members. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Suggested Series

Fiction

- *Fablehaven*
- *The Humphrey Series*
- *The Olympians*
- *Secrets of the Manor*
- *Stink*
- *Zita the Spacegirl*
- *Zoey and Sassafras*

Nonfiction

- *Disgusting Critters* by Elise Gravel
- *Junior Genius Guides* by Ken Jennings
- *Ordinary People Change the World* by Brad Meltzer
- *Photicular* by Dan Kainen
- *True or False* by Scholastic
- *Up Close* by Heidi Fiedler
- *Weird But True!* by National Geographic Kids

2

Let's Shake on It!

Devise a plan that accommodates both you and your child's busy schedules. You may agree to read a certain number of pages a day or per week, separately or together. Make a pact, and shake on it!

3

Time to Talk

Meet with your child to discuss what you read. These don't have to be “formal” meetings. Discuss your books over breakfast each morning. Or, one evening each week, take a stroll under the stars and talk about the book.

Nifty Nook

Create a place *just for reading*. Find a quiet corner or spot in your home, and have your child help you create a book nook. It can be as simple as providing a comfy blanket, a pillow, and a basket full of books, or it can be as complicated as creating a hideout canopy using sheets, a Hula-Hoop, and rope. Nifty nook ideas are abundant on the Internet.



Dig Deeper

When discussing books with your child, don't just ask "What was your favorite part?" or "Did you like it?" Instead, ask questions that will get your child thinking. Then, require him to use evidence from the text to back up his claims. Here are some sample questions.

- What is the author trying to tell us? Why do you think that?
- What is the main idea of the text? How do you know?
- How would you summarize the story in your own words?
- How does this book relate to your own life?

Popcorn Party

Many famous and popular children's books have been made into movies. First, read the book. Next, make some popcorn. Then, watch the movie! Have a post-movie discussion in which you and your child compare and contrast the book and the movie.

Viva Variety!

Variety is the spice of life! Be sure your child has easy access to many different texts, both fiction and nonfiction. You never know what he might like best!

- biography and autobiography
- classics
- fairy tales
- fantasy
- historical fiction
- humor
- mysteries
- myths
- poems
- science fiction



Members Wanted!

If you're feeling ambitious, work with your child to start a local book club. Have a monthly meeting at a local park or bookstore. Encourage everyone to bring questions and talking points about a particular book.



Time-Saving Tip

Do a quick search online to find specific questions about a particular book. Teachers, publishers, and parents will often post great in-depth, text-dependent questions.



More Than Just Books

It is important for children to read texts of *all* types. Ask your child to read you the recipe while you are cooking. Have her read you the directions off a map app while in the car. Ask her to read the game instructions aloud on family game night. If you're really up for a challenge, you can have her read assembly instructions to you while putting together a piece of furniture.