

# Helping your Child to Read

Learning to read is the most important thing your child will do in the primary grades. A child's reading skill affects everything else they do in school, and one of the most effective ways you can help your child learn to read is to read aloud to them.

**Reading aloud models reading.** Children can see simple things such as which way a book is held and that text is read left to right, and they can pick up more sophisticated things, such as reading with expression in the voice, or the rhythm and tempo that punctuation gives to a piece. They also learn vocabulary and pronunciation, and can observe different reading strategies in action.

One thing many people don't realize when reading aloud to children is that **their oral comprehension level is much higher than their independent reading level.** As such, you shouldn't hesitate to read books to them that they can't yet read on their own. Indeed, jumping beyond the same old children's books gives them variety and a glimpse into the rich world of reading that's waiting for them.

**A text-rich environment is also important.** If reading is something that children associate only with school work, they will struggle to become proficient readers. If reading is something done for pleasure, outside of school, then the child will quickly surpass expectations. If the adults in a child's life can be observed reading, if books are part of the home environment, if you cultivate a culture of reading in your home, then reading is something that your child will naturally embrace. If books are foreign objects to your child, they won't have confidence interacting with them, and they will naturally resist what is unfamiliar to them.

**What do we read to children?** Books is the obvious answer, but a deceiving one. There are a variety of mediums that fall under the umbrella of literacy. Newspapers, manuals for new toys, comic books, web pages, all of these count. Exposure to the written word is what's important. If a child is interested in reading something, we need to encourage their interest rather than trying to steer them into narrow avenues. But going back to books, in addition to anything the child shows an interest in on their own, here's a short list of books that students seem to like: *The Magic Treehouse*, *The Littles*, *Encyclopedia Brown*, *Harry Potter*, and anything by Beverly Cleary or Gordon Korman.

**Sources of books:** School library, our classroom, public library, Scholastic book order, the Internet (almost any classic book such as *Tom Sawyer* is available for free).

*"A room without books is like a body without a soul." - Cicero*