



Issue Three

# Supporting Early Learners

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**Dear Parents,**

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at [learningtoread@telus.net](mailto:learningtoread@telus.net) or visit our website [www.readwritewithkids.com](http://www.readwritewithkids.com) to view other resources.

## **Children Reading On Their Own & Getting Better Every Time**

There comes a time in the process of learning anything when practice is critical. This is true for adults and children. Think about learning to ski, skate, play tennis, hockey or golf and you will recall that without practice you don't make very much progress.

Children who read on their own become better readers every time they read. They develop instant recall or recognition of a growing number of words and expand their background knowledge. They become quick and accurate at using phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read as well as making predictions from their own background knowledge to figure out words they don't know. The hours a child spends reading on their own provides the necessary practice needed for building a solid base for future reading success. It leads to feelings of confidence and a readiness to try something harder.

Reading on their own also improves spelling. Every time a word is read there is a better chance the child will be able to spell the word correctly or recognize that a word they have written doesn't 'look right' and needs correcting.

When choosing text for independent reading it is important that it is not too difficult. Your child should be able to decode or recognize almost all the words without help.



## A Plan That Encourages Children to Read On Their Own

**Read the story out loud to your child.** This is an opportunity for children to hear how the text is supposed to sound and for you to talk about difficult words and confusing ideas. Encourage your child to share their thoughts to what is being read.

**Provide struggle time for your child.** Let children have time to read on their own. At this stage many children will mouth the words or mumble. Over time this disappears and they naturally start reading silently to themselves. This step provides children independent time to figure out unknown words using phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read, as well as their own background knowledge to figure out words that would make sense.

**Let your child read the story to you.** When children come to a word they can't read right away, give them a few moments to figure out the word on their own. Encourage with phrases such as:

- ***I'm glad you realized that word didn't make sense.*** This means your child recognizes their error which is the first step to self-correction. This strategy is called monitoring.
- ***I like the way you went to the beginning of the sentence and tried again.*** This means your child is using other known words and the rest of the sentence as clues to figure out an unknown word. This strategy is called using context.
- ***You did a good job of sounding that word out.*** This means your child is matching letters and letter sounds. 50% of our words are phonetic. This strategy is called phonics.
- ***You looked at parts of the word and were able to figure the whole word out.*** This means your child is using the structure of words. They can see little words in big words or they can break the word into smaller parts. This strategy is called word structure or structural analysis.
- ***It was a good idea to look at the picture to see if it would give you a clue.*** This means your child is able to take advantage of illustrations which provide clues to what words your child can expect to come across in their reading. Children naturally look at pictures for clues and you will see your child doing this. This strategy is called using context. The clue is in the picture rather than the words.
- ***That was a good guess but that is not what the word is.*** This means your child understands what has been read and is able to predict a word that would make sense. Either tell your child the correct word or suggest they try one more time paying attention to the first letter of the word. This strategy is also called using context and background knowledge.

**This plan can be used to help your child read books on their own. It is not unusual for children to want to reread such books again and again. It feels so good to be successful!**