

## **So...How Can I Help My Kid Study for Reading?**

By: Jaysen Gold M.Ed.

I so very much appreciate you asking that question, I get it all of the time at Parent Teacher Conferences. Reading is hard to study for at home, simply because reading instruction and assessment is all based on being able to think deeply about what you've read. It's my job to steer the thinking into the direction of "The Big Test," and to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. With that in mind, the better question a parent can ask is, "how can I help my kid *practice* for Reading class type thinking at home."

There are so many studies—particularly one out of Northwestern University in 2007—that say reading for 20 minutes a night creates all kinds of mental gains in a student. That's the first step in practicing for reading class. I would add that students shouldn't spend that 20 minutes reading what they would consider "boring," leave that up to me; home should be a safe haven for a child, that also goes for reading.

So 20 minutes a night is the start. There are several questions that you could ask your kid about what he or she reads as well that would greatly increase his or her productivity in our work here at Gold Records:

### **FOR FICTION**

--What was your story basically about?

--Why do you think the author did what he or she did in this paragraph?

--Why do you think the author put the main characters in [insert setting here] instead of something like [insert setting here].

--Why did the character eventually end up [insert action here].

--"Wow! That's a big word/phrase, what do you think it means? (student uses context clues to figure its meaning out)" ... "Let's see if you're right! (parent looks it up at dictionary.com)."

### **FOR NONFICTION**

--What was that article you just read mainly about?

--I'm really intrigued about what the author said about [insert a main point here] how did the author describe it?

--Based on what you read, what conclusion can you draw about [insert main point here]?

--Dang! That's a big word/phrase, what do you think it means?

--Why do you think the author brought up what he or she did in that paragraph/section?

--Why do you think the author thinks [insert something that the context suggests the author thinks]?

-- If you were to sum up the author's view about [insert topic here], what would it be? Why do you think that?

-- What's the main argument that the author is making? How does he or she back up that claim?

### **Comprehension Conversations Vs Petulant Probing**

In school, the aforementioned questions would be from teacher to student. As much as I as their teacher try to make questions about reading conversational, due to grading and high stakes, it's very hard for me.

You however have a HUGE leg up on me. YOU can make these kinds of questions conversational. This type of reading practice works best when parent and kid use these questions as conversation starters, not as probes. This practice may still work if you have a question and answer session, but it will feel too much like school for the reluctant reader and he or she will eventually shut off. You can make your kid *love* reading by reading the same piece with them, and following the reading time up with a comprehension conversation.

### **But What About Writing?**

Writing and reading are very much aligned. There are many things that the state of Tennessee requires your kid to do in his or her writing. I'll take care of that stuff, here's what you can practice with them at home.

#### **For Fiction Writing:**

Have them write stories with a beginning, middle, and end that contains a plot, people talking, some kind of huge action in the middle, and a resolution to that action at the end. Free writes are *great*, but the state will have students take an event from an already written story and expand it, or expand the ending.

#### **For Nonfiction Writing:**

When you are in a grocery store, ask your kid's opinion about something. Explain to him or her that the process of him or her explaining an opinion to you is the same process used in writing argumentative pieces. When appropriate, perhaps have your kid write down his or her argument for why allowance or screen time should be increased. This mimics what we do in class as it relates to argumentative writing.

When you need help putting something together, or ask how a room gets cleaned, explain to your kid that *that* is the process of explanatory writing. You could have your kid teach one of his or her siblings about cleaning rooms, or mowing lawns, or some kind of other chore by way of a written document. This mimics what we do in class as it relates to explanatory writing.

Some key terms you could review with your kid that we use frequently in class are: *thesis statement, formal vs. informal writing, body paragraphs, intro paragraphs, writing prompts, text evidence, claims, take a stand, and paragraphs.*

### **Some Closing Remarks**

You have so much power at home to develop a love of reading and writing. Reading and writing at home should not be torturous. It's perfectly fine to let kids read what they *want* to read-- a subject matter that they actually *enjoy*! The same goes for writing!

I can't do that all of the time as a teacher, but as a parent trying to find review opportunities, you for sure can. Thank you so much for being willing to be my partner in developing a love of reading and writing in your kid, anything you need—you know how to contact me.

Happy To Be Your Reading and Writing Co-Teacher

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