Eight Tips for Reading with Your Child

Tip 1: Talk to the teacher

Learning to read can be daunting for both children and parents, especially if reading doesn't come easily to you, either. So don't be afraid to ask your child's teacher for help – after all, they're the experts!

If your child has a willing teacher, you could ask that they make a video demonstrating how to read with a child. If they can't make a full video, perhaps they could record a summary of all their other tips and tricks.

Tip 2: Don't go it alone

I open my classroom doors fifteen minutes early on Tuesdays and Thursdays and offer the space for parents to come in and read with their children.

Your child's school may be able to do this. If it's something they can't offer, perhaps instead, you could reach out to other parents to find a way to share reading tips and book recommendations.

Tip 3: Continue to read to your child

It's important to regularly read using the books the school sends home. But don't forget to continue to read to your child, too. The shared attention on a book, the exploration together of different worlds and words, the snuggling up – all of this has long-term benefits for your child. Let them enjoy you reading to them. If you're not a reader yourself, talk about the pictures together.

Tip 4: Ditch the reward charts

For children who feel frustration, boredom, anger, or embarrassment when reading, rewards in the form of transactions, like stickers or treats in return for a set amount of reading, won't help. Their reward needs to come from inside: the simple pleasure of reading, which a chart can't make happen.

Tip 5: Reframe the emotions

For people who love to read, somewhere deep in their memories are positive associations with books. Children haven't had long enough to let these experiences grow yet.

Use physical and sensory stimulation to help positive emotions grow. Examples include snuggling up with children in a duvet with hot chocolate and a tasty snack whenever they read their school book, and holding something tactile.

Tip 6: Piggyback on established memories

If there's something a child already loves – a favourite place, person or thing – try bringing books into this experience. If a child loves swimming lessons, try sitting in the observation deck beforehand with a book. If your child loves being on an outdoor walk, they could take a book.

Try altering the time of the day that you read. One of the biggest successes I had was when a father started arriving at school ten minutes early and reading with his daughter in his van.

Tip 7: Read with new people

Children could try taking their book on a visit to a favourite aunt or have a cool cousin read with them. Reading at home promotes familiarity with books and an interest in reading, so the person reading with them doesn't always need to be an expert in how to instruct and coach.

Tip 8: Utilise the Reading Record

Use the reading record for communication, not just documenting when reading has taken place. Rather than waiting for parents' evening, you could use the reading record to ask for advice, further reading, or clarification if there's anything you're not sure about.