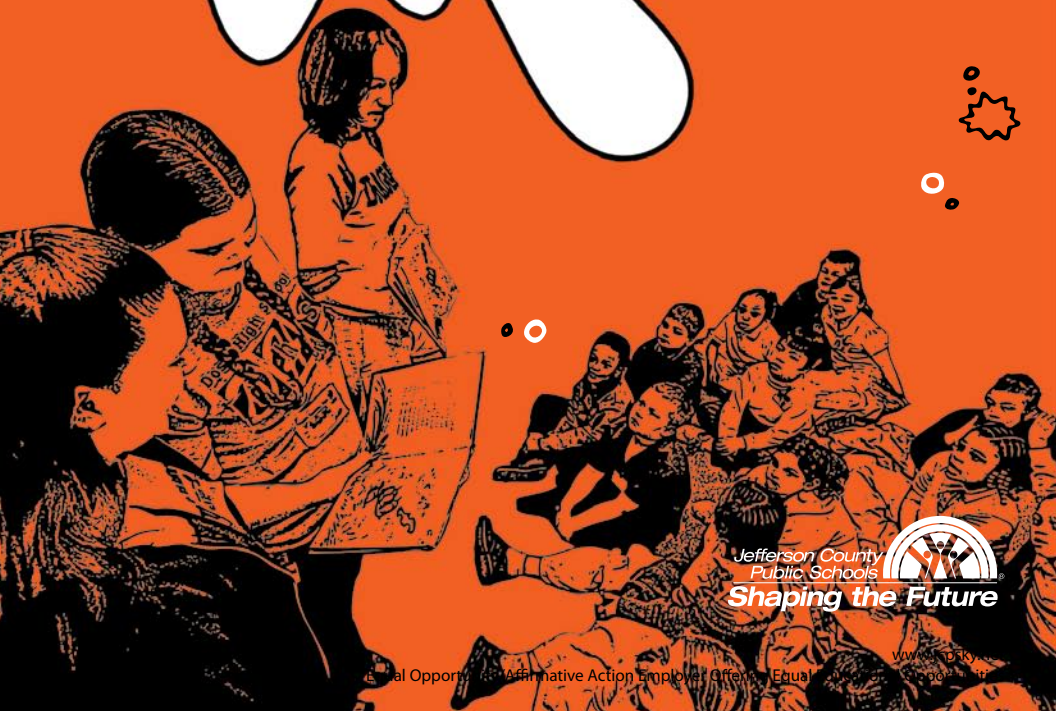


101 Simple Ways to Help Your Child With Reading



“ The more that you read,
the more things you will know.
The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go. ”

—Dr. Seuss



The Jefferson County Public Schools Communications and Publications Department acknowledges the help of district teachers and reading specialists in preparing this booklet.

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Jefferson County Public Schools

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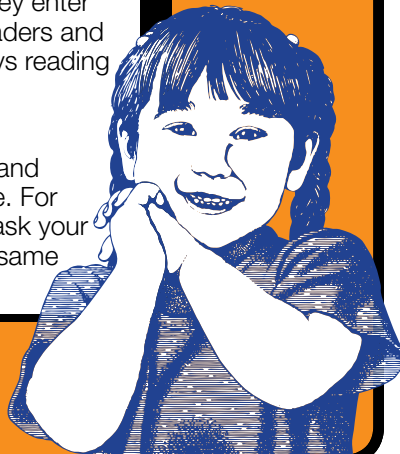
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Preschool

You may not be able to teach your preschooler how to read a book, but you can begin to teach how books work. For instance, just by pointing at the words as you read to your child, you'll teach him or her that we read from left to right in English. Here are some other ways to help prepare your child for the reading instruction that he or she will begin receiving in kindergarten.

- The best way to help your child is also the easiest: read to your child—every day if possible.
- Use books or blocks or anything else with letters on it to introduce your child to the alphabet. When children start kindergarten, teachers would like them to be able to recognize all uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Talk about the sounds of letters. For instance, you could say, "The word *mouse* starts with m. It sounds like mmm."
- Play simple games with letters. For example, you could trace a letter on your child's back and ask him or her to guess which one you traced.
- Take your child to the library. "Research shows that children who visit the library before they enter school begin to think of themselves as readers and begin to think positively about books," says reading expert Phyllis Hunter.
- Encourage your child to compare people and events in a storybook to his or her own life. For instance, if you read a book about a cat, ask your child if the cat in the story behaves in the same way as the family pet.







- Sing silly songs, recite nursery rhymes and poems, tell funny stories, and read rhyming books as well as books that repeat key phrases.
- Indulge your child when he or she wants you to read a favorite book over and over. Repeated readings help children learn about the structure and the rhythms of language.
- Point out that most stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Ask your child to draw what happens at each stage after you finish reading a book together.
- If your child seems bored with a book, put it aside and pick another—or go outside and play. Children should think of reading as a fun activity, not a chore.
- Encourage your child to look at a book and to use the pictures to tell you a story. This type of "reading" helps children get ready for real reading.
- Ask your child to tell you a story while you write it down on several pieces of paper. Then ask your child to draw pictures for the story and to read it back to you. This activity helps children understand that there's a connection between reading and writing.
- Teach your child how to write his or her first and last name.
- Make reading part of your child's bedtime ritual. "Cuddling beneath bedcovers while you spend time between book covers is a soothing way to end each day with your child," says Tresella Jagers, a teacher at Blue Lick Elementary.

Elementary School

Learning to read is no easy task. To become good readers, elementary students must learn letter sounds and understand how the sounds combine to make words. The students need to know that we read left to right and top to bottom. They need to build a large vocabulary and to understand the relationship between the written word and spoken language. And they need to be able to comprehend many different types of writing. Here are some ways you can help your child build these skills.








Kindergarten Through Third Grade

-  “Although the life of a parent is often hectic, you should try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time,” say researchers for the U.S. Department of Education. “But don’t be discouraged if you skip a day or don’t always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.”
-  When you find a part of a book that you like, stop and read it again. Tell your child why you like it. Is it the sound and rhythm of the words? The description? The dialogue?
-  Near the end of a story, ask your child to predict what’s going to happen next. Then ask him or her to point out two or three things that have already happened in the story that support his or her guess.
-  Ask your child to summarize a story when you finish reading it. Or you could simply ask your child what he or she liked best about the story and then encourage him or her to explain why.



“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”







—Margaret Fuller

-  In addition to reading together, practice letter sounds with your child.
-  When your child is reading and gets stuck on a word, tell him or her to skip the word and read the rest of the sentence. Then tell your child to go back and try to figure out the word again. Ask, “What word would make sense in this sentence?”
-  Sometimes you may want to tell your child to read ahead several sentences and then go back and try to figure out a difficult word. “This strategy encourages children to gather additional information and helps them build comprehension skills,” says Laura Mullaney, a teacher at Kerrick Elementary School.
-  You also can encourage your child to look for “chunks” when he or she is trying to figure out a word. Chunks can be root words or other familiar letter combinations. Many students already know what chunks are because it’s a term that teachers use.
-  After your child has figured out a difficult word, ask him or her to reread the sentence in which it appears. Sometimes kids are so busy figuring out words that they don’t pay attention to what the sentences mean.
-  If your child gets stuck on a lot of words when you read together, focus on building his or her vocabulary. Make a point to define unfamiliar words not only in books but also on signs, on television, on product labels, and wherever else your child sees them.
-  Make sure your child knows such letter combinations as th, cr, st, sch, bl, br, and fr. Spend a few minutes talking about how the combinations sound, practicing them, and reading words that include them.








"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

—Richard Steele

-  Volunteer to help with reading activities in your child's classroom and during reading-related family fun nights and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) events.
-  Watch for the warning signs of a struggling reader. A child who is at least halfway through the first grade may be struggling if he or she doesn't know letter-sound associations well enough to read most of the words in simple books, says reading expert Susan Hall. She also points out that a child may be struggling if he or she sounds out the same word every time it appears on a page or if he or she often guesses at words instead of sounding them out.
-  Of course, teachers watch for struggling readers in the classroom and notify parents of problems when they send home report cards and progress reports, but anytime you have concerns about your child's reading skills, talk to his or her teacher.
-  When your child starts reading simple stories without much help from you, ask him or her to play teacher by reading a story to your family. Many young children enjoy doing what they see teachers doing in the classrooms—reading a page and then turning the book around to show everyone the pictures.
-  Play word games with your child, such as Boggle Jr. (designed for ages 3 through 6) and Scrabble Jr. (designed for ages 5 through 8).
-  Besides reading, encourage your child to write as often as possible.





-  Give your child a kid-friendly dictionary, such as *Merriam Webster Children's Dictionary* or *Scholastic Children's Dictionary*.
-  "Turn on the closed captioning on the family TV set," suggests Mike Ice, a teacher at Field Elementary. "Ask your child to read aloud the words to his or her favorite show."
-  Ice also encourages parents to review Dolch word lists with their children. These are lists of frequently used words that are categorized by grade level (preschool through the third grade). You can find the words by doing a simple search for Dolch words on a Web search engine, such as Google. Several Web sites offer not only the lists but also free, ready-to-print Dolch flash cards (www.mrsperkins.com/dolch.htm, for example). A site that offers interactive Dolch flash cards that your child can view in your Web browser is www.msrossbec.com/sightwords.shtml.
-  Make a point to praise your child's reading efforts. Don't focus on mistakes. Offer praise every time your child finishes a book and every time he or she figures out a difficult word.
-  Build on your child's strengths, and build his or her confidence. For instance, if a child uses an illustration in a book to figure out an unknown word, praise him or her by saying, "Good readers use picture clues to help them when they read, just like you did. You are a good reader!"




"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

—Walt Disney





 Show your child the links to reading-related resources on the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Web site. On the homepage (**www.jcpsky.net**), click the Students link, select *Elementary*, and click *Homework Help*, *Practice Your Skills*, or *Tool Box*.


 Take your child to any branch of the Louisville Free Public Library to use his or her Student Power+Plus Library Card. Every JCPS student receives one.


Fourth and Fifth Grades

Here are some tips on how to help your child make the transition to fluent reading.

 If your child doesn't read with expression, accuracy, and speed, ask him or her to follow the words in a book as you read them. Then ask your child to read the same words aloud with you.


 When your child starts reading books that don't have many pictures, point out how the author uses words to help readers picture scenes in their head.


 Here's a quick and easy way to tell if a book is too difficult for your child to read: tell him or her to turn to any full page of text and begin reading. Ask your child to hold up a finger each time he or she comes across an unfamiliar word. If your child is holding up all the fingers and the thumb on one hand before the end of the page, the book probably is too difficult.


 If your child is reading a book that's challenging but not too difficult for his or her reading level, encourage him or her to finish it by offering to help with


unfamiliar words and with passages that he or she finds hard to understand.

 Ask your child to summarize the books that he or she reads. Summarizing boosts comprehension.


 To help your child get in the habit of reading for fun, encourage him or her to read a series of books. For instance, you might want to encourage your child to read the Boxcar Children series, which is written for ages 9 through 12.

 Talk to your child about the differences between certain types of books. For example, you could point out that many fiction books are fables or fairytales and nonfiction books are factual.

 Older elementary students may not admit it, but they often still enjoy having their parents read to them.

 Help your child understand how a story is structured by discussing characters, setting, plot, and theme when you read.

 Besides books, encourage your child to read kid-friendly versions of national magazines, such as *National Geographic Kids* and *Sports Illustrated KIDS*. Articles from these publications are available on the Web at **www.sikids.com** and at **www.nationalgeographic.com/ngkids/**.

 Make sure your child knows how to use a dictionary, an encyclopedia, and other reference books.

"What one reads becomes part of what one sees and feels."

—Ralph Ellison

- ❑ Use a tape or digital recorder to capture your child reading a favorite book. Offer to play the recording in the car when you and your child ride together. Some children may enjoy creating a small library of audio books they've recorded themselves.
- ❑ Talk to a teacher anytime you have questions or concerns about your child's reading abilities. Questions you might want to ask include "What text level is my child reading on?" "Does my child like to read at school?" and "What are some specific things I can do to help at home?"
- ❑ Take your child to any branch of the Louisville Free Public Library to use his or her Student Power+Plus Library Card. Every JCPS student receives one.
- ❑ Show your child the reading-related resources that are available through the JCPS Web site. On the homepage (www.jcpsky.net), click the *Students* link, select *Elementary*, and click *Homework Help*, *Practice Your Skills*, or *Tool Box*.
- ❑ Encourage your child to participate in reading programs during the summer.
- ❑ In addition to reading, encourage your child to write as often as possible.
- ❑ If your child is a budding creative writer or illustrator, check out *Stone Soup*, a national magazine available in print and online (www.stonesoup.com). Every issue consists of stories, poems, book reviews, and artwork created by children ages 8 through 13.

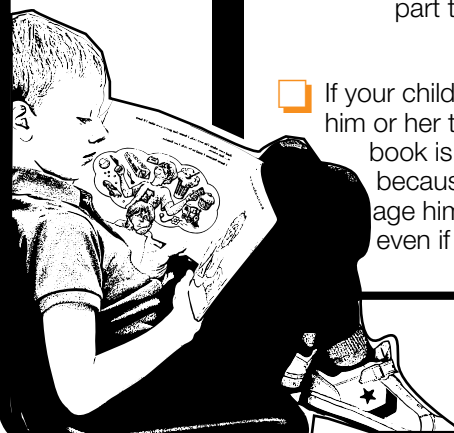
"I find television very educating. Every time someone turns the set on, I go into the other room and read a book."

—Groucho Marx

Middle School

Even if your middle schooler is already an excellent reader, you still can help him or her work on comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency (the ability to read without stumbling over words).

- ❑ Have a book chat with your child. "Always make a point to talk to your child about whatever he or she is reading," says Valerie Rueger, a teacher at Stuart Middle. "Ask questions. Engage the child in a real conversation about the story."
- ❑ Discuss unfamiliar words in your child's homework and reading assignments. Don't be afraid to admit you don't know or don't remember some of the definitions. Look them up together.
- ❑ If your child comes across a book or passage that he or she doesn't understand, encourage him or her to use strategies recommended by the authors of *Reading for Understanding—A Guide to Improving Reading in Middle and High School Classrooms*:
 - Reread the unclear part.
 - Ignore the unclear part and read on to see if it gets clearer.
 - Reread the sentence(s) before the unclear part.
 - Put the passage in a context you can understand. Try to connect the unclear part to something you already know.
- ❑ If your child seems bored with a book, encourage him or her to put it aside and pick another. If the book is a novel and your child can't put it aside because it's a homework assignment, encourage him or her to choose a favorite character—even if it's a minor one. When children identify





with a character, they become much more interested in reading and finding out what happens to him or her.

- ☐ If your child doesn't like to read, help him or her find books and magazines that focus on favorite sports, music, or other interests.
- ☐ Another strategy to use with a reluctant reader is to encourage him or her to read comic books and illustrated novels. Some parents worry that these publications are not "literary" enough, but many comics and illustrated novels written today have genuine literary merit, and even the ones that don't can serve as stepping stones to better books.
- ☐ Talk to your child's teachers about his or her reading skills on Parent-Teacher Conference Days and anytime you have concerns about his or her development as a reader. Let the teachers know you are willing to work with your child at home.
- ☐ Take your child to any branch of the Louisville Free Public Library to use his or her Student Power+Plus Library Card.
- ☐ Ask your child to read a few of his or her younger siblings' books to them. Encourage the older child to read the stories with a lot of expression.
- ☐ Ask your child to search online for instructions for jobs you want to do around the house (installing a faucet or planning a garden, for instance). Print the instructions, and ask your child to help with the project.



- ☐ Direct your child to Web sites that offer articles about his or her favorite music, sports, or hobbies.
- ☐ Talk to your child about the difference between fact and opinion in the information that he or she finds on the Web and in books, magazines, and newspapers.
- ☐ Encourage your child to join the staff of the student newspaper, the yearbook, or the literary journal at his or her school.
- ☐ You also may want to encourage your child to take world language courses and to join world language clubs at school. Students learn a lot about the structure of their own language when they study another one.
- ☐ Show your child the reading-related resources available through the Jefferson County Public Schools Web site. On the homepage (www.jcpsky.net), click the *Students* link, select *Middle School*, and then click *Homework Help*, *Practice Your Skills*, or *Tool Box*.



High School

Ideally, students develop solid reading skills by the time they get to high school, where teachers concentrate on content rather than reading instruction. But high school students still can learn how to develop good reading habits and how to make the most of their reading time.






- ❑ Encourage your teen to participate in reading programs at school. Many Jefferson County public high schools promote the 25 Book Campaign, which, as the name suggests, encourages students to read at least 25 books during the school year. Students who participate read about a million words, which helps “their vocabulary blossom and their knowledge base grow,” says High School Reading Specialist Dee Hawkins.
- ❑ Encourage your teen to keep a journal with notes on the books that he or she has read. This type of journal helps a teen “grow as a reader and thinker,” Hawkins says.
- ❑ She also suggests that parents share newspaper and magazine articles with their teens. “Oftentimes, these articles provide a chance for students and parents to discuss important issues as well as to practice reading skills,” she says.
- ❑ Show an interest in your teen’s reading habits. Every few weeks, you might want to ask, “What are you reading now?”
- ❑ High school students should be able not only to understand and analyze books but also to form and communicate an opinion about them. You can

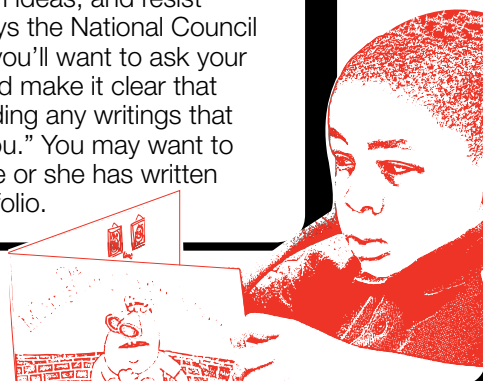
“A home without books is a body without soul.”
—Marcus Tullius Cicero

help your teen develop these skills by reading a few of his or her books and then discussing them with him or her.

- ❑ Whenever your teen sees a movie based on a book, urge him or her to read the book. Ask your child about the differences between the book and the movie.
- ❑ When your teen is reading a textbook, encourage him or her to look to see if there are questions at the end of the chapter and, if so, to read the questions first. This will help your teen identify the most important information when he or she reads the chapter itself.
- ❑ Another good strategy for reading textbooks is to read chapter headings and subheadings first to identify important information, to get a preview of the information that the chapter contains, and to get an overview of how the information is structured.
- ❑ Encourage your teen to join the student newspaper, the yearbook staff, and book clubs at his or her school.
- ❑ You also may want to encourage your child to take world language courses and to join world language clubs at school. Students learn a lot about their own language when they study another one.
- ❑ Encourage your child to use his or her Student Power+Plus Library Card at any branch of the Louisville Free Public Library. Every Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) student receives a Power+Plus Card, which offers access to a range of library services. Besides allowing students to borrow books, the card lets students use library computers; check out maga-

zines, videos, DVDs, music CDs, and audio books; and take practice tests for the SAT, ACT, and some Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

-  Encourage your teen to use the reading-related resources that are available through the JCPS Web site. On the homepage (**www.jcpsky.net**), click the *Students* link, select *High School*, and then click *Home-work Help*, *Practice Your Skills*, or *Tool Box*.
-  Ask your teen's teachers about his or her reading skills. Ask how you can guide your child's reading at home for college and career preparation.
-  Encourage your child to search for college reading lists on the Web. For example, a College Bound Reading List compiled by a Wisconsin library system is available at **<http://als.lib.wi.us/Collegebound.html>**.
-  Besides general reading lists, your child also might find one focused on a specific career. For instance, a Becoming a Veterinarian reading list is available at **www.cvm.uiuc.edu/asa/read.html**. An Education Studies reading list from Berea College is available at **www.berea.edu/educationstudies/suggestedreading.asp**.
-  In addition to encouraging reading, urge your teen to write. When he or she shares work with you, you should "rejoice in effort, delight in ideas, and resist the temptation to be critical," says the National Council of Teachers of English. "Maybe you'll want to ask your teen to read the piece aloud. And make it clear that you are always interested in reading any writings that he or she wants to share with you." You may want to ask your child to share pieces he or she has written for his or her school writing portfolio.



Family Reading Activities

- Hold a family reading night. "On Tuesday nights at my house, I turn off the television and everyone in my family reads," says Valerie Rueger, a teacher at Stuart Middle. "Kids learn that reading is important when they see their parents with books in their hands."
- Give the gift of reading. "Is your child's birthday coming up? Kids love getting gift cards from bookstores," says Rueger. "When children choose their own books, chances are good that they'll read them cover-to-cover."
- Read on the road. "On car trips around town, pop in an audio book. My kids are quiet as mice when I do this," Rueger says. "As we get close to our destination, I turn off the book and ask them what they think will happen next. I'm usually amazed at their predictions and their insights into each character."
- Start a family book club. Encourage everyone to read the same book on their own, and then spend an evening together discussing it.
- "If you have more than one child, try to spend some time reading alone with each one, especially if they're more than two years apart," say researchers at the U.S. Department of Education. "However, it's also fine to read to children at different stages and ages at the same time. Most children enjoy listening to many types of stories."
- "Go on a book hunt," suggests Blue Lick Elementary teacher Tresella Jagers. "Turn visits to the public library into a family scavenger hunt by challenging everyone to find a specific type of book—a story about cats or a book of poetry, for instance."



- Jagers also suggests that parents hold a reading slumber party or, if it's warm outside, "pitch a tent in the backyard, and give everyone a flashlight so you can read together while you camp at night."
- Hold a family game night, and play such word games as Boggle, Scrabble, and Upwords. Your family also might enjoy taking turns playing some of the many word games that are available on various Web sites. A directory of online word games is available at www.dmoz.org/Games/Video_Games/Word_Games/.
- If you want your home to reflect the importance of reading, make sure books, magazines, and newspapers are available throughout the house.
- "When you go vacation, let your child pick up brochures about places to visit," suggests Mike Ice, a teacher at Field Elementary. "Let your child help decide on places to visit by giving reasons based on the brochures."
- Make sure your child sees you reading for fun, and don't forget to get books for yourself when you take your child to a library or bookstore. "When parents are readers, their kids will be readers," said children's book author Jacqueline Woodson when she visited Thomas Jefferson Middle School.
- If your child is reading a play, you have an excellent opportunity to help him or her understand the text and to have some family fun. Just assign roles, and pass the book around so everyone can read their lines. You might be surprised to find out that you have not only great readers but also wonderful actors in your family.

Online Reading Resources

- The American Library Association recommends books for several ages and reading levels at www.ala.org/ala/librariesandyou/recomreading/recomreading.htm.
- *Between the Lions* is an award-winning PBS series designed to help young children learn to read. The Web site (<http://pbskids.org/lions/>) offers games and reading resources, including a curriculum for children ages 4 to 7.
- BJ Pinchbeck's Homework Helper (<http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck/>) provides more than 700 links to sites that help with homework.
- Book Adventure (www.bookadventure.com) is a free reading motivation program for children in kindergarten through the eighth grade. Children create their own book lists from more 7,000 recommended titles, take quizzes, and earn points and prizes.
- The Enchanted Learning Dictionary (www.enchantedlearning.com/DictionaryA.html) is a picture dictionary for young children.
- The International Reading Association offers downloadable brochures for parents (www.reading.org/resources/tools/parent.html). The association also offers a list of books that children throughout the United States have chosen as their favorites (www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices.html).
- The Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Web site offers links to homework help, practice tests, digital reference books, and other reading resources for every grade level. On the homepage (www.jcpsky.net), click the Students link and then select *Elementary*, *Middle*, or *High*.

- The Web site for the Kentucky Bluegrass Awards (<http://kba.nku.edu/>) offers information on Kentucky kids' favorite books.
- **Kidsreads.com** offers information on authors and books as well as reviews of the latest titles. **Teenreads.com** offers reviews of books for teens.
- The Louisville Free Public Library (www.lfpl.org) offers Web pages for children and teens. For information on the complete range of services available through the Student Power+Plus Library Card that every JCPS student receives, visit www.lfpl.org/powerplus/.
- The National Center for Family Literacy (www.familit.org) offers tips for parents of adolescents as well as tips for parents of young children in a section of its site called "Family Literacy & You."
- The National Council of Teachers of English (www.ncte.org) offers a parent/student section.
- Read Across America (www.nea.org/readacross/index.html) was created as a one-day event celebrating reading on Dr. Seuss's birthday, but it has become a nationwide initiative that promotes reading every day.
- Reading Is Fundamental (www.rif.org) offers an online section for parents that includes "tips and activity ideas to help you motivate your kids to read." The site also offers reading activities and games for kids, toddlers, and even babies.
- Reading Rockets (www.readingrockets.org) offers a wealth of reading resources, including an extensive section on how to help struggling readers. Reading rockets also has created Colorín Colorado (www.colorincolorado.org), a site in English and Spanish for families with children learning to read English.
- The Sesame Street Web site (www.sesameworkshop.org) features stories and games for preschoolers.

- Starfall.com offers books and games for beginning readers. "Children acquire reading skills through a long series of 'little steps,'" says the site, "so when your child reads, even a few words, BE VERY PROUD of them! It's truly a wondrous accomplishment!!!"
- StoryPlace (www.storyplace.org) provides a virtual library experience for preschoolers and for elementary students. A sister site called BookHive (www.bookhive.org) is a guide to children's books.
- The U.S. Department of Education offers an online booklet called Helping Your Child Become a Reader (www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/index.html) for parents of children from preschool age through age 6.



Let's Make Sure **Every 1 Reads**

Every 1 Reads is one of the most ambitious public education initiatives in the United States. The goal is to enable every student at every school in the Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) District to read at or above grade level.

The initiative was launched in September 2003 through a partnership between JCPS, Greater Louisville Inc., and Louisville Metro Government. Nearly \$8 million has been raised for **Every 1 Reads**, and more than 7,000 volunteers throughout that community have signed up to read one-on-one with a student for about 30 minutes a week.

Every 1 Reads volunteers are not professional educators. They are businesspeople, older students, stay-at-home moms and dads, and other caring community members who understand the importance of helping children develop reading skills. Since the initiative began, the number of JCPS students reading at grade level or higher has improved from 81 to 87 percent.

Every 1 Reads volunteers read with students at numerous locations, including schools and the sites of after-school programs, community organizations, and faith-based organizations. For more information, call **625-0004** or visit www.every1reads.com.



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