Bridging the Gap—Literacy

Some ways to help with reading assignments For Parents
What is reading?

Reading is much more than knowing letters or recognising words.

Reading is

☆ Making meaning from what you see
☆ Making links between what you read and what you already know
☆ Using meaning to learn new things
☆ Evaluating what you’ve read

Readers not only do these things, they know how they do it.
What do good readers know about reading?

They know:

☆ Why they are reading.
☆ What they hope to get out of reading.
☆ What they are reading will make sense.
☆ That what they read will link, or change, or add to what they already know.
☆ That they need to make judgements about what they’re reading—not everything you read is right or complete.
☆ That people write from different points-of-view.
☆ To look for the cues and support the author gives them.
☆ How to use such things as titles, illustrations, maps and headings to help them understand what they are reading and to store the information.
☆ That different authors from different cultures may write differently.

Good readers also know about language.

They know:

☆ There is a difference between written and spoken language.
☆ How written stories or reports or explanations are organised (once upon a time... First sift the flour... In 1814, American whalers...).
☆ How ideas are represented by words.
☆ How words are constructed into sentences.
☆ How letters are used to represent the sound and the meaning of words.
Good readers know about themselves.

They know:

- Their own strengths and weaknesses.
- They have to be persistent.
- They have to solve problems.
- They have good reading strategies.
- They need to adapt and develop new strategies.
- To use different reading strategies for different tasks.

Above all good readers are confident.
What do good readers do?

Good Readers:

☆ Understand the task.
   In a school, that means understanding what the teacher:
   - Wants them to do,
   - How they want them to do it, and
   - How a task forms part of what they know.

☆ Give their reasons for reading.
   In school, that means knowing:
   - What they want to know, and
   - What they need to know.

☆ Thinks about what they already know about a topic.
   They use this to:
   - Help them understand as they read,
   - To make links with what they know, and
   - To think about what they need to find out.

☆ Solve any problems they meet as they read.
   They decide when:
   - They understand and when they don’t
   - To re-read or when to read on,
   - To read slowly and when to speed up, and
   - To ask for help.

☆ Make judgements about what the passage told them and what it didn’t
   And then decide what they still need to know.

☆ Weigh-up whether or not they have been successful.

Good readers find enjoyment and reward in reading.
What can I do to help?
You can help at several important stages.

☆ Talk with your children about reading assignments. Check whether they understand what they have to do and why?

☆ Before your child begins to read, talk to them about the content of the text to be read.

☆ Look through the book, or passage before beginning to read. Remind them of things they already know about the topic.
  - When readers read they make meaning. They link what they have learned with what they already know.
  - Ask questions about what the author is saying.
  - Ask questions about those links.

☆ Help them plan for reading. Together, make up some questions to ask during reading.
  - Talk about what parts might need to be read slowly and carefully.
  - How should I approach this next bit of reading?
  - What if I don’t know much about the topic?

☆ Talk about the information that can be gained from
  - The Illustrations
  - The diagrams
  - The headings
  - The table of contents.
Talk about words that might cause difficulty.
When I’m reading what do I do if:
- I don’t know a word.
- I can’t locate the specific answer to a question.

Working out unknown words—try this

☆ What makes sense here?
☆ What sounds starts it?
☆ Are there base words, prefixes, suffixes or endings that I know?
☆ Keep reading and thinking to try to work it out
☆ Use these ideas last
  - Someone’s help
  - Dictionary
  - Skip it

How will the assignment be assessed?
How will I show what I understand?
When I’m finished what should I do with the information?

When the task is completed talk to them about what they learned. Praise them when they’ve done well.
Be positive. Ask questions like
- What didn’t I understand?
- What’s the best thing I learned today?
- Why?
- What can I do better today than I could yesterday?
Did the assignment stimulate any further questions eg
- I’d like to know a little more about .....?
- What will I do about this?
Ask yourself these questions.....

☆ What do I already know about this topic?
☆ Why am I reading this?
☆ What did I need to know?
☆ How is this chapter organised?
☆ How do the illustrations etc. help?
☆ How can I organise the information I get?
☆ Do I understand what I'm reading?

Yes! Great!!!

No! What am I going to do about it?

What could I do?

I could
☆ Focus on the writer’s message by
  • Looking for signalling words
  • Looking at the pictures and diagrams to see if they help give the information to read the text
  • Using another strategy
  • Rereading
☆ Look up words not clear to me
☆ Get another book
☆ Ask for help
☆ Take a break, I'm tired.

☆ Was I successful? How do I know?

Success.
Learning to read is like learning to play a sport....

You need to have knowledge of the
☆ Aims of the game
☆ Rules by which it is played
☆ Skills which let you play the game

Above all you need
☆ The practice.
☆ The instruction
☆ The encouragement and
☆ The opportunity to develop this knowledge