

Reading Matters

with spotlights on:
School Readiness
School Attendance
Summer Learning
Parent Engagement
Healthy Readers



Brought to you by:



Early Readers.
Future Leaders.
Pinellas Campaign for
Grade-Level Reading

PARENT PLEDGE



I PLEDGE
to send my child
to school every day
because I know
**EVERY
DAY
COUNTS!**

Learn more at
EarlyReadersPinellas.com



ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW

GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS...



ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

read well by the
end of third grade



MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

pass important
courses



HIGH SCHOOLERS

stay on track for
graduation



COLLEGE STUDENTS

earn their degrees



WORKERS

succeed in
their jobs



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reading proficiency by third grade is one of the most important predictors of high school graduation and career success. Reading proficiency is a standard reporting measure of a student's ability to show adequate reading achievement on the Florida Standards Assessment using state-adopted standards for each grade level. Third grade reading proficiency takes into consideration such skills as reading fluency, vocabulary, retention, comprehension, and reader motivation and applies those skills to reading complex passages.

Research shows that reading proficiency by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn: it is the gateway to every other subject and allows students to tackle the more complex subject matter they encounter in higher grades. Yet two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient readers, according to national reading assessment data, and the numbers rise for low-income students.

This challenge has significant and long-term consequences, not only for each child struggling with reading proficiency but also for our communities. If left unchecked, the next generation will struggle to succeed in a global economy, participate in higher education, or enter military and civilian service.

The National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was created to reverse this trend and work with local communities to find solutions using a collective approach. These include solutions that address the core factors impacting third grade-level reading proficiency:

- School Readiness;
- School Attendance;
- Summer Learning;
- Parent Engagement; and
- Healthy Readers.

In Pinellas County, the Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) and our partners have launched *Early Readers, Future Leaders* as part of the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. In the pages ahead, we'll shine a light on the core issues that influence grade-level reading, provide facts and tips, and unite our community with a simple message that **READING MATTERS!**

Together with our Board of Directors, funded agencies, and community partners, JWB is asking everyone to be part of the solution. Working collectively, we can improve the futures for all Pinellas County children!

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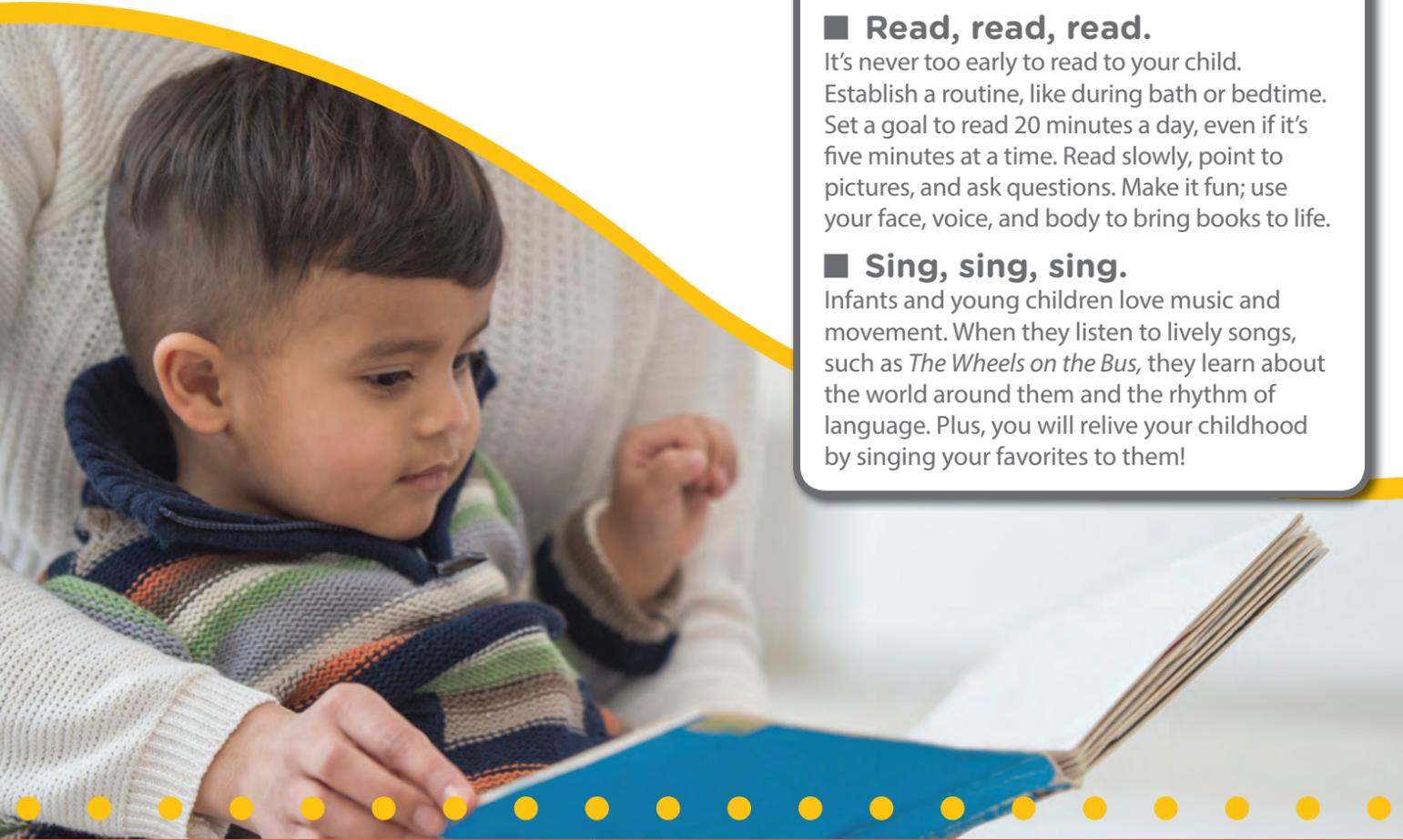
School Readiness

Learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten. Vocabulary development is particularly important. Infants absorb words, rhymes, songs, and images at amazing rates.

Parents play a huge role in helping their children enter school ready to learn. Also helping are childcare providers, preschools, pediatricians, and the broader community.

Access to quality childcare and early education is key. In addition, the timely recognition of developmental delays or health problems is also critical.

Learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten.



Readiness Tips for Parents

Parents are their child's first teachers. There are many ways moms and dads can help prepare their children for lifelong learning by building vocabulary and instilling a love of reading:

■ Talk, talk, talk.

Starting at birth—even while expecting—talk and describe what you are doing. Speak slowly, ask questions, and let your child see your face as you form words. Use facial expressions to grab attention.

■ Read, read, read.

It's never too early to read to your child. Establish a routine, like during bath or bedtime. Set a goal to read 20 minutes a day, even if it's five minutes at a time. Read slowly, point to pictures, and ask questions. Make it fun; use your face, voice, and body to bring books to life.

■ Sing, sing, sing.

Infants and young children love music and movement. When they listen to lively songs, such as *The Wheels on the Bus*, they learn about the world around them and the rhythm of language. Plus, you will relive your childhood by singing your favorites to them!

School Attendance

Every day counts in a child's first years of school. Starting as early as kindergarten, absences add up. Your child can fall behind even if he or she misses just one or two days a month.

Good habits start the very first month of school. These habits set the stage for good school attendance all year.

Being late or tardy can impact your child's education. Learning begins the minute the bell rings to start the school day.

Good attendance is an indicator of future success. Children who attend school regularly are more likely to read on grade level, be promoted on time, and graduate from high school.

Every day counts in the first years of school.

Attendance Tips for Parents

■ Know school policies.

Know the attendance policy for your child's school and keep a copy handy.

■ Establish regular routines.

Set a regular bed time and morning routine. Save time in the morning by laying out clothes and packing backpacks the night before.

■ Address health issues.

Allow your child to stay home only when he or she is truly sick. Manage chronic health conditions, such as asthma, and prevent lost learning time with regular dental and health exams.

■ Have a plan.

Develop backup plans for getting your child to school. Call on a neighbor, family member, or another parent.

■ Limit time out of school.

Avoid scheduling family vacations or appointments for your child when school is in session.



READING TIPS FOR PARENTS

Make it Start Early

- It's never too early, so start reading to your child at birth. Reading to your baby is a wonderful way to bond, and hearing words over and over helps build vocabulary.
- Talk to your infant or toddler to help build vocabulary. Point to objects that are near and describe them as you play and do daily activities.
- Use sounds, songs, gestures, and words that rhyme to help your baby learn about language and its many uses.
- Turn off the television and read to your baby; infants and toddlers need to hear language from human beings, plus you'll enjoy the bonding time together.



Make it Routine

- Establish a reading routine, like during your child's bath or bed time.
- Read every day. Set a goal to read 20 minutes a day with your child—even if it's 5 minutes at a time.
- Use every day opportunities to build your child's vocabulary and reading skills, like trips to the grocery store. Ask younger children to identify items by name or ask them to find things that start with a certain letter of the alphabet. Older kids can help read sale flyers and product labels.
- Have older kids read aloud while you're cooking dinner or folding laundry. Ask them to help you by reading a recipe, and encourage them to read to younger siblings.
- Make your own reading routine, so children see that reading is important. Set a good example by reading books, newspapers, and magazines.



- Books are magical; make them come alive when reading aloud to your child. Use your face, voice, and body to bring the book to life. Take turns acting out different parts of the book.
- Interact while reading. Point to pictures and ask questions like: *What's going to happen next?*
- Read your child's favorite book over and over again. Repetition is key, and your child will start to memorize words, songs, and rhymes.
- Spell F-U-N with family game night. Games like Scrabble, Taboo, and Pictionary help build your child's vocabulary and make learning fun.
- Find books that interest your child, spark his or her imagination, or are connected to something real in their world. For example, if your family goes to the beach, your child might enjoy a book on sea animals.

Make it Fun

- Keep lots of new or used books handy and within reach of small children. Create a quiet space in your home where your child can read, write, and draw.
- Keep newspapers and magazines around for older kids to read. Exchange books with other parents.
- Take children's books with you wherever you go; pack these to keep your child busy in car rides or at appointments.
- Visit your local library. Libraries offer a wide range of free reading activities, such as story time and summer reading programs. Plus, your child will love carrying his or her very own library card!



Make it Handy



Summer Learning

Students lose ground or slide academically during the summer months. This has a cumulative effect on a child's early school years, slowing progress toward third grade reading proficiency.

Engaging children in summer learning opportunities is the best defense against *summer slide*. Instead of a punitive or remedial summer school model, the best programs combine core academic learning with hands-on activities and meaningful relationships. Having access to books and interactive reading programs over the summer reinforces skills and supports learning that takes place during the school year.

Students lose ground or slide academically over the summer months.



Tips to Prevent Summer Slide

■ Enroll your child in a summer learning program.

The best summer learning programs or camps combine core academics, hands-on activities, arts, sports, technology, and meaningful relationships.

■ Read, read, read.

Get your child involved with a summer reading program that recommends a certain number of books to be read for recognition or reward at the end. Encourage your child to read every day, and read aloud to your child every day.

■ Visit your local library.

It's important that your child has access to books that peak interest and imagination over the summer. There's no better place than your local library, and your child will love carrying his or her very own library card!

■ Connect to online reading programs.

Online reading programs, such as myON®, provide access to digital books and match a child's interests and reading level to a recommended book list. Many are free or are available through the public school system.

Engagement Tips for Parents

■ Learning starts at home.

As your child's first teacher, start early and talk, read, and sing often. Set up routines and look for ways your child can learn in every day activities. Keep TV time limited; your child's early vocabulary depends on hearing your voice and seeing your face as you interact and play.

■ Learning continues at home.

As your child enters school, don't underestimate the learning that happens at home. Sit with your child as he or she does homework and talk about what was learned that day. Encourage learning when school is out of session, like holiday breaks and summer.

■ Set an example.

Let your child see you reading, and read to your child often. Show an interest in what he or she is learning and practice good attendance habits, so your child learns the value of education from you.

■ Parents know best.

You are the expert on your child. Because you know your child so well, you are in the best position to motivate, challenge, and support his or her learning experience.

■ Think quality.

When it comes to being involved in your child's education, think quality. As your child enters school, pick a day to volunteer in the classroom, have lunch together at school, or chaperone a field trip. If you're busy during a school meeting or activity, ask a family member or close friend to attend.

■ Keep connected.

Use technology to communicate with childcare staff and teachers, and visit the website portal for your child's school to keep informed. Get involved in PTA, PTSA and similar organizations to keep connected.

Parent Engagement

Moms and dads play the most powerful and influential role as their children's first teachers, since 85% of the brain is developed by age five. As their children's first brain builder, tech navigator, advocate, and coach, parents set the stage for success in the early years and early school grades.

Parents are in the best position to prepare their children for school, establish good school attendance habits early, and prevent summer learning loss. This type of engagement from an early age is linked to third grade reading proficiency and higher student achievement overall.

Parents are their children's first teachers.



Healthy Readers

A healthy child is ready to learn, and good health begins with the prenatal care a mother receives. Children who are on track in their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and verbal development are more successful learners. It's important that parents, caregivers, doctors, and teachers watch for signs of delays in these areas, so diagnosis and treatment can start early.

When a child's basic needs are met, good health follows. These include proper shelter, food and nutrition, and nurturing. From there, a child's good health continues by receiving proper medical, dental, vision, and hearing check-ups, along with treatment as needed. Access to consistent and quality healthcare plays a major role in grade-level reading and school achievement overall.

A healthy child is ready to learn!



Parent Tips for Healthy Readers

■ Get moving.

Physical activity helps kids pay attention and learn. Plus, it reduces the risk for chronic diseases such as childhood obesity and diabetes. Children are encouraged to be active for a minimum of 60 minutes a day.

■ Get unplugged.

Turn off anything with a screen. This includes TVs, computers, tablets, and gaming devices.

■ Take care of health issues.

Preventing or managing chronic health conditions keeps kids in school. Managing a child's asthma helps reduce absences; regular medical and dental care prevents lost learning time.

■ Early is key.

Prenatal care builds early brain development in infants, and social/emotional development is supported through play and interaction with parents. Screenings conducted early in a child's life catch developmental, hearing, and vision problems before they interfere with learning.

■ Provide healthy foods.

Nourish children inside so they flourish outside. Children who skip breakfast or do not have access to nourishing meals cannot concentrate and learn. Schools offer free or affordable meal programs that include breakfast and lunch; plus, many neighborhood recreation centers, churches, and summer camps offer free summer food programs.



Beyond the Classroom

Beyond the Classroom provides a variety of free online educational activities for students that encourages learning outside the classroom.



To learn more go to:

www.pcsb.org/beyondtheclassroom

Walk Through the Doors of Your Local Library...

DISCOVER THE WORLD

AND MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS!



Pinellas Public Library Cooperative

Our fifteen member libraries have books, services and events for everyone. Visit our website to connect to their calendars.

- Clearwater Public Library System
- Dunedin Library
- East Lake Community Library
- Gulf Beaches Library
- Gulfport Library
- Largo Library
- Oldsmar Library
- Palm Harbor Library
- Barbara S. Ponce Public Library
- Pinellas Talking Book Library
- Safety Harbor Library
- St. Petersburg Library System
- St. Pete Beach Library
- Seminole Community Library
- Tarpon Springs Library

pplc.us



Early Readers, Future Leaders

Pinellas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Partners

2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares • Alpha House of Pinellas County • ARTZ 4 Life
BayCare Health System • Bethel Community Foundation/Truancy Intervention Program
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay • Boley Centers, Inc.
Boys & Girls Club of the Suncoast • Bright House Networks • CAP/Union Academy NFC
CASA • Central Florida Behavioral Health Network • City of Clearwater
City of Dunedin • City of Largo • City of Pinellas Park • City of St. Petersburg
City of St. Petersburg Parks & Recreation/TASCO • Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce
Community Foundation of Tampa Bay • Community Health Centers of Pinellas
Cops 'n Kids • COQUEBS • Directions for Living • Dunedin Public Library
Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County • Faith-Based Literacy Program
Family Center on Deafness • Family Resources, Inc. • Florida Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
Florida Dept. of Health - Pinellas • Florida Dream Center • GA Food Services, Inc.
Girls Scouts of WCF • Girls, Inc. • GRAYDI NFC • Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services
Gulf Coast Legal Services • Healthy St. Pete Foundation • Healthy Start Coalition of Pinellas
High Point Community Pride NFC • InterCultural Advocacy Institute
James B. Sanderlin NFC • Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital
Junior League of Clearwater-Dunedin • Junior League of St. Petersburg
JWB Community Councils: North, South, and Mid-County • Largo Public Library
Lealman & Asian NFC • Literacy Council of St. Petersburg • Literacy Council of Upper Pinellas
Lutheran Services Florida • Martin Luther King Jr. NFC • Mattie Williams/Safety Harbor NFC
myON Reader/Julie & David Cole • Operation PAR • PACE Center for Girls, Pinellas
PARC • Parent Support for Education Council, Inc. • PEMHS
Perseve Vision Florida • Pinellas Community Foundation • Pinellas County Government
Pinellas County Homeless Leadership Board • Pinellas County Schools
Pinellas County Sheriff's/Police Athletic League • Pinellas County Urban League
Pinellas Education Foundation • Pinellas Park Chamber of Commerce
Pinellas Public Library Cooperative • Public Defender's Office - 6th Judicial Circuit
R' Club Child Care • Religious Community Services • Salvation Army • SEER Analytics
Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay • Sixth Judicial Circuit Court • Society of St. Vincent de Paul
St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce • St. Petersburg College • St. Petersburg Free Clinic
St. Petersburg Library System • Suncoast Center, Inc. • Tampa Bay Rays
Tarpon Springs Housing Authority • The Children's Home, Inc. • The Poynter Institute
UMCM Suncoast • United Way Suncoast • University of South Florida • WEDU • WeeREAD
WellCare • WorkNet Pinellas, Inc. • WUSF Public Media • YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg
YMCA of the Suncoast • Youth Development Foundation • Youth Development Initiatives



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