Stages of Reading Development and How to Help if Your Child Seems Stuck

I love, love, love reading with children. I have always been a reader, but when I got to grad school and learned the nitty-gritty of how kids learn to read, I absolutely knew that I wanted to help kids learn to become great readers. There are so many things we can do as parents to help our kids with this process. Take a look at this article to get a feel for the stages of reading development and what we can do to encourage learning to read: Reading Rocket Article for Parents

The most common place I see kids getting "stuck" is the process of sounding out words. This takes time to develop. If you are an older student and don't yet know the sounds the letters make and how to blend them together, you can feel frustrated very quickly. Of course, there are many reasons kids can have trouble. Sometimes they know the sounds but haven't spent enough time learning sight words or haven't been able to spend the time reading out loud or being read to. Sometimes they are lacking vocabulary. Sometimes (rarely) they can't make sense of the print on the page and don't have a "feel" for whether or not a word looks right and makes sense. Talk to your child's teacher about where the breakdown is happening and how you can work together to help your child make progress. If the problem is sounding out words, you can take a look at the free, printable resource on this page. Phonological processing and phonological awareness grows in specific stages, so if your child isn't making progress on the fcrr activities, consider dropping back a grade or stage or 2.

Remember, schools have intervention designed to provide extra support for struggling readers. I am on a team that meets weekly at each of my schools that reviews reading progress for all students. If your child is not reading on grade level, the team will recommend the right intervention to help! If intervention does not help, it may be that we need to discuss a special education evaluation. Also remember, reading is a developmental process and not all kids develop at the same rate! In some progressive countries, kids aren't even exposed to reading instruction until age 7 because any earlier is believed to be time needed for play and social skill development.

Finally, one last resource that you may not know about--Henrico County Public Libraries leveled reading books. Ask your child's teacher what F&P level your child is at. Then, go to the public library and ask any children's librarian for books at that level. They can direct you to all kinds of books that your child can choose from. Kids are more likely to read if they have a choice in what they get to read. It's important to try to choose books at their level to grow their speed and accuracy. "Their level" means the child is not reading perfectly at this level, but can read enough to not become overly frustrated.

Don't forget to read to your younger child every night! I miss the days of reading to my kids and I wish I had those days back. When you read to your child, you increase their attention span, vocabulary, and life experiences. It's also a great way to help them settle down for bedtime.

Don’t forget to build those comprehension skills by asking them questions about the story you’re reading: i.e.. how to you think Franklin feels? What do you think will happen next?

Happy Reading!