

## **COMMON PARENT QUESTIONS ABOUT SUMMER READING**

### **How can I help my child find a book that is appropriate?**

The “age” appropriateness of a book depends both on the reading level (the difficulty of the vocabulary and syntax) of the book and the appropriateness of the content.

First, help your child find a book that is suitable for his or her reading level. We have done some of this for you by offering lists. The level at which your child should generally be reading for pleasure is called his or her “independent level,” the level at which he or she can read without teacher or parent help. On this level he or she recognizes 95% of all the words and comprehends 90% of the material. The reading level at which your child’s school reading program should be planned is at what is called the “instructional level.” At this level, your child recognizes 90 out of 100 words and comprehends at least 75% of the material. Your child also has a “frustration” reading level, the level at which a child recognizes less than 90% of the words, and his or her comprehension is less than 75%.

You can informally discover your child’s reading level by a simple rule, known as the “five-finger rule.” As your child reads a page aloud, or “aloud” to himself, he or she puts down one finger for each unknown word. If he or she puts down five fingers for one page (approximately 100 words), the book is probably too difficult for your child to read unassisted. You might want to read the book aloud with him or find another book with an appropriate independent reading level. Feel free to break this rule occasionally, if your child is fascinated by a particular book or author that at first may seem too hard. Interest is a great motivator.

The question of suitable content is a more complicated matter, and it is best solved by honest talk with your child. Our best advice is that you read any questionable book yourself!

### **How do I encourage my child to finish books he or she has started?**

As adult readers, we all know the experience of picking up a book, reading a few chapters, and putting it down again, bored or offended or just plain confused. Young readers will have the same reaction, and learning when to persevere with a book is part of the reading process. If you notice that your child is not finishing any books, strongly suggest that he or she finish the next book as children need to “feel” the experience of moving beyond the boring bits of a book and getting to the good parts. Try to find out what the problem is, and if the book seems too hard, you might want to get an audio version of the book and let your child follow along in the text.

### **How can I become productively involved in my child’s summer reading?**

You can encourage your family to read by trying to set aside time when the family can read together, or by establishing a set time for reading aloud or silently each day. Some families have suggested that long car rides are a good time for a family to read

a book aloud together or to listen to a book on tape. You might try dividing a book in parts and reading it as a play together. Grandparents can also be a good source of encouragement! A student at one school once said that every year his grandmother asked for his summer reading list, read the required books, and wrote letters to him about the books! Don't be embarrassed to do what young adolescents might consider "hokey" attempts to encourage reading.

You can help improve your child's reading comprehension by taking turns reading aloud ("paired reading") and talking about what you are reading as you go. Other techniques that improve reading comprehension are predicting and comparing. You can casually ask your child what he or she thinks will happen next in a book, or if he or she has ever known anyone like the character in the book. Such questions are natural for regular, engaged readers.