

## How can oral language and reading help my child's writing?

Talking to your child and reading books can improve their writing. It sounds too easy doesn't it. But how?

Strong oral language is central to any writing programme. Students need to be able to explain their ideas verbally before they can commit them to paper. As a parent, you can help by discussing in seemingly ridiculous detail what you can notice around you. Ask lots of questions. For example; Can you describe what you saw to me if I was blind? What was it like? Imagine I was from another country/outer space explain what this is?

Wonder alongside your child to encourage their curiosity in the world around them. For example: I wonder why rain falls from the clouds, I wonder why the moon is still out during the day time, I wonder why there are no insects in winter. This shows your child that you too are learning. Research your wonderings together, yes that mystical device you hold in your hands also holds the answers to your wonderings 😊

Take photos and send them along to school if they are writing about a topic. Having a photo of their favourite place, what they did over the holidays, how they created a masterpiece helps them explain and add detail to their writing.

Read, read, read. Children become better authors by reading a variety of different books, discovering different topics, ideas and places. Start a 'wow' words book/poster. Whenever you come across a word you both love write it down. Display it somewhere. Make it look funky and cool.

Take this idea a step further and discuss how authors gather their ideas both from their own imaginations and from other authors' writing. As you read and explore written text, write down sentences and phrases that you just love. Put them up on display. Talk about how they could change them and make their own. Notice how they have used sentence structure and punctuation to add detail and interest. Some gems I've come across recently include:

...bodies shivering like they were standing in Antarctica. - Natasha Yr 8.

Summer always smelled like heat, the ocean, and the spines of old books. - Patricia McLachlan.

My heart was gone as I saw the rolling ten-foot waves, I was about to jump into. Riley Yr 10

So with wriggly macaroni legs, prickly with goose bumps, I would stagger back onto the beach. – Gavin Bishop

My heart thumping along with the bass of the music, like a beaver's warning call with the slapping of its broad tail against the water. – Abby Yr 11

It's as if I'm in a movie, a sea of vaguely familiar faces gaze over me. – Willow Yr 11

Include your own child's wonderful sentences to this collection. Encourage them to write sentences of their own modelled off the fabulous ones they find in books. Maybe even write some of your own to add to the collection. This bank of ideas will allow them to begin to feel comfortable and confident as young authors, thus allowing the transfer these into their written work.

The more we discuss the world around us with our children and explore books together hunting for the jewels of the written word, the more they grow to love literacy.

Share the written treasures you find with one another. What a great excuse to email their friend with a sentence they love and want to share. Even better with their own sentence that they wrote modelled off one that they found and loved.

Most of all have fun with it. I have coloured window chalk and we put a bank of ideas all over our windows. Then children just need to look up for inspiration.

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