

With CSAP just around the corner, and also to foster good reading strategies in general, here are some research-based reading strategies to use at home with your child. Before reading a homework assignment, the newspaper, or even a magazine article for pleasure, have your child look at the title, any pictures, and captions that are available. Have him tell you what he already knows about the topic. Help him make connections to prior experience he has with this topic in his life. Discuss this background knowledge before he reads. Next, have him make predictions about what he thinks the article is going to tell about the topic, even if it is not specific. We can always predict that we will find out the who, what, where, when and how of a topic we read about. When we make predictions, we are more engaged in the reading in order to find out if we were right in what we thought the content would include. Setting a purpose for reading is also important. Before beginning to read, have your child look at the questions he will need to answer or the task the teacher will ask him to do with the information. Being aware of what he must know or be able to do after reading will help him find the key points more easily during reading. If he is reading for pleasure, you can set a purpose for him to tell you several key points the author makes or three new things he learned that he didn't know before he read the article. Setting a purpose for reading is key to aiding comprehension. It is also good practice to have your child determine the author's purpose for writing the article or story. Was it to persuade, inform or entertain the reader (P.I.E.)? These are the three most common reasons an author writes for his audience. If your child comes to a difficult word or term, have him reread a sentence or two before and after the word to look for clues to its meaning. This is called figuring out vocabulary in context. One last tip is to help him make inferences. This is an educated guess, based on the information given and his background knowledge. Often students are asked to infer meaning when purposely given partial information. This requires the student to analyze the information, add it to what he already knows from experience, think critically, and come to a conclusion. The preceding strategies are what skillful readers do, often without knowing it. It is a good idea to practice these skills when reading for academic purposes as well as for pleasure so that we can get the most out of what we read.

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