

Choosing books

Empowering students to choose their own books helps them fall in love with reading. Students are much more likely to read and engage with books that they choose. And when they choose books that interest them, their motivation to read grows.

Learning to make choices is also an important life skill. Choosing your own book may not seem like a big deal, but it is really great for your student to have the decision-making practice and to understand the consequences of choices.



Here are a few strategies to help you help your student find great reads:

Ask your student how he or she finds new books to read. Talk about the art of looking for a book. Does your student take the time to truly go through a book and not just cast a glance at the cover and then make a decision? What titles or types of books has your student enjoyed in the past? What authors or series does your student like or love? What is it about the story or characters or information that your student likes most?

Model how to navigate the Power Lunch book carts and talk about where you find the books you like. Show your student how to browse. Ask your school coordinator for help finding particular genres, themes, or titles.

Guide by interest, not reading level. High interest is what matters. Limiting choices of reading materials to a certain level takes purpose and joy out of reading. Some students may be hesitant to choose something they perceive is “not their level.” You can remind them that the books you read aloud or read together can be anything from *Green Eggs and Ham* to *Captain Underpants* to *Guinness World Records*. Does your student have interests bigger than the book cart? If you would like to supplement Power Lunch reading with books from your home or the library, talk with your school coordinator.

Preview a book to make sure it isn’t beyond the intellectual, social, or emotional level of your student. Some books are sad or scary or a little too grown up for some students. When you preview the book together—reading the back cover or inside jacket flap—address any topics or issues of concern up front with your student. Work with your student to evaluate any concerns and listen to your student’s own values and opinions.

Focus on what it takes to choose good books: time, patience, and trial-and-error. It is okay to spend time looking at lots of books, choosing one, and then abandoning it after a few pages. Use a not-so-great selection as an opportunity to understand more about student preferences.

Find out what books others like. Check out the reading recommendations of other Power Lunch reading pairs. Ask your school coordinator to show you where they are displayed in your school. Look too for books in the Power Lunch book cart that include a “Reader to Reader: Look Who’s Reading” card to indicate who has read the book and enjoyed it.

Students might also find special notes by Reading Mentors, community members, teachers, or students tucked into select books that offer book love for the title. Encourage your student to participate in leaving book ratings and book love notes and to write book recommendations using the handout in your student's Power Lunch folder. Building a community comfortable talking about their favorite books can help make it easier for your student to choose books.

Encourage your student to try out a new genre. Don't pick out a specific book but provide a handful of options for your student to explore and choose from. Suggest options that provide students with both "windows" (windows into the worlds of others) and "mirrors" (reflections of your student).

Be prepared for surprises. You may have preconceived ideas about what you think your student will be interested in reading. Girls like to read about video games just as much as boys do. And many boys are interested in baking and cooking. In general, kids are very curious about the world and books are an excellent way for them to find answers, make discoveries, and try on different identities.

Letting your student make book choices shows that you trust your student to make good choices. That will lead to trust in your book recommendations—and in you.

Books available at Power Lunch

Everybody Wins DC strives to provide a wide selection of developmentally and culturally appropriate books for Power Lunch reading session. If you think a certain genre or topic is missing from the book cart or that titles need to more diverse to provide windows and mirrors for students, please let your school coordinator know. Generally, on Power Lunch book carts you will find:

- **Picture books (fiction and nonfiction):** Picture books are a wonderful way to share rich language, complex images, and sophisticated ideas with students of all ages.
- **Early readers:** These illustrated titles are a good bridge to more text-heavy chapter books.
- **Chapter books:** A step up from early readers, chapter books offer more complex stories.
- **Middle grade novels:** Written with readers age 8 to 12 years old in mind, middle grade novels offer deeper exploration of themes and emotions.
- **Nonfiction:** Nonfiction books introduce your student to a new world of information and help to build essential background knowledge. Feel free to explore just certain aspects of nonfiction titles such as the pictures and captions, charts and graphs, or chooses certain topics from the table of contents.
- **Biography:** Biographies reveal to students how real-life people overcame obstacles in their own lives.
- **Bilingual titles:** Bilingual books support second language and expand cultural awareness
- **Poetry:** Short and accessible, poetry is a great way to highlight the fun you can have with words.
- **Graphic novels:** Using both words and pictures graphic novels invite readers to explore pictures and text together for a rich reading experience. Graphic novels are a format, so you'll find graphic novel memoirs, graphic novel history, graphic novel fantasy, and more!
- **Book series:** Beloved characters in new stories and an author's familiar writing style can be reassuring to readers.

Saving your place

It may not be possible to finish a book in one reading session, or even in two or three sessions. Your school coordinator will provide your student with a bookmark to save your place in your book and keep the book reserved for you and your student. When you come for your next reading session, you will find the book waiting for you and your student to continue your reading adventure!