

Engaging young children: what do I do if my mentee...

...doesn't want to read or can't concentrate?

If your mentee does not like to read or is struggling with reading, that's okay! They can benefit just as much from listening to you read aloud or from doing other activities with you. Try these strategies:

- Mix up the time: give time limits or break the session into timed sections, e.g. "we can chat for 10 minutes and then let's read, and then we can play a game for 5 minutes at the end."
- Use your Read Ahead journal: play hangman, draw, use vocabulary or scenes from the book to enhance learning and engagement.
- Make conversation related to what you're reading. For example, start reading, but then take a break from the book to talk about a topic that's come up in what you've started to read.

...keep switching books?

Your mentee may be having trouble finding something that interests them and/or something that's at the right level for them. Try these strategies:

- Talk more about what they like to do and books that have interested them in the past. See if you can find a book that matches those interests. Ask your Program Coordinator for book suggestions.
- If your mentee is struggling with reading, start with lower level picture books to build their confidence first before moving on to higher level material.
- Suggest books that you liked as a child--your modeled interest may pique the interest of your mentee!
- Encourage your mentee to ask their friends, teachers, or others for book recommendations. Your Program Coordinator may also have suggestions.

...says they don't want to be in Read Ahead?

First of all, don't take it personally! Then take these steps:

- Talk to your mentee to try and find out why; for example, is it because they are a struggling reader and are feeling shy or embarrassed about reading with you? Or perhaps they just don't like being pulled away from their class when their friends are going to recess?
- Based on what you find out from this conversation, work with your mentee and your Program Coordinator to brainstorm ideas for making the program more fun for your mentee that address their specific concern.
- Try some of these new strategies. If your mentee continues to express unhappiness, bring it to the attention of your Program Coordinator.

...is already a great reader?

Remember, Read Ahead benefits children in many ways, not just in reading skills. The individualized time and attention you provide is most important! Plus, good reading skills are a great jumping off point for a strong relationship built through reading and discussing increasingly complex books and themes. Try these strategies:

- Expand upon the material you're reading to develop your mentee's critical thinking skills. Make connections between the book and your mentee's life.
- Introduce other activities like learning and practicing new words, writing responses in your journal, and discussing bigger themes.