Digging Deeper into Books with your Child

Challenging our young advanced readers does not need to be only about reading harder books. These young minds have lots to learn about thinking deeply when reading and some of the best materials for teaching deep thinking are short picture and chapter books.

Below are some things you can do at home to encourage your child to delve into deeper levels of understanding and thinking about the books you share together.

- Always read the book aloud modelling fluent, expressive reading. Read in unison. Have your child read to you. Take it in turns. Take on a character.
- Discuss the text with your child. Use guiding questions. Do not provide answers or ask questions that have a “yes” “no” response. Encourage your child to elaborate and support their thinking with evidence from the text.
- Have your child articulate his/her understandings of the text by using textual support. (e.g., What in the story makes you say that? That's an interesting idea…. Show me an example in the book. Where did you get that feeling?)
- Engage in proper dialogue about the meaning of the story (e.g., In the story I noticed that......Do you think that might be important in the overall meaning? Did you notice any words that supports that idea about the story, character etc?)
- Discuss various ideas about the intention of the story. What do you think the author means by that? Why do you think the author included that? How did the author convey the big ideas?
- Discuss colorful words.
- Look for and identify patterns, such as rhyming or repetition, rhythm, story structure that repeats or is circular.
- Study the illustrations and notice the details and how they relate to the words.
- Talk about characters feelings, words, actions and motives.
- Have your child make connections to their own lives, to other texts and to the real world.
- Talk about author’s purpose and craft. Why did the author choose to do it this way? What is the effect? How does it enhance the reader’s enjoyment of the story?
- Look for themes, big ideas. Compare books with similar themes.

Reading several books by one author is one way to lift your child’s understanding of how to build background knowledge, identify author’s craft, and analyze literary elements when between and within texts. Once your child has read two books, ask him/her to draw and write about what they notice. How are the books the same and how are they different?

Another way to challenge your child is by exposing him/her to new genres and teaching them how to read these genres. Compare a new gene to a book that they have read. How is it different? What are some of the features in a book of this genre?
Gifted Readers Like...

A classic study by Dole and Adams (1983), surveyed gifted students, to elicit their perceptions of the most important attributes of good reading materials. A summary of those findings is included here:

- Sophisticated beginning-to-read books
- Nuanced language
- Multi-dimensional characters
- Visually inventive picture books
- Playful thinking
- Unusual connections; finding patterns and parallels within and among books
- Abstractions and analogies
- A blend of fantasy and non-fiction
- Extraordinary quantities of information about a favorite topic
- Books about gifted children