



Who wants to be a reading millionaire?

Research tells us that if young children are to flourish in school, there is no better platform than sustained daily reading with their parents, says **Alex Quigley**

only once or twice a week. It is easy, given our busy lives, to think that we do not have time to support robust reading habits outside of the classroom. How then do we help parents and caregivers to provide a wealth of reading experiences at home?

It is clear from research evidence in the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) guidance report "Working with parents to support children's learning" that "promoting the development of reading habits" is of huge value. The EEF offers the handy "pause, prompt and praise" strategy to guide parents when listening to their children read.

It is such small, actionable guidance that can build the requisite confidence necessary for regular reading.

This guidance is similar to other reading strategies for parents – but also teachers and teaching assistants – such as the Peer guidance for shared reading (from the EEF "Preparing for literacy" guidance report):

- Prompt the child to say something about the book.
- Evaluate their response.
- Expand their response by rephrasing or adding information to it.
- Repeat the prompt to help them learn from the expansion.

It is with such helpful, accessible nudges that we can support the vital act of daily reading and help our pupils to become reading millionaires. ■

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that reading to and with children is a great thing. We know from ample research evidence that reading to children before they get to school really matters, and how much they go on to read can determine school success and much more.

Clearly, then, we want every pupil we teach to be a reading millionaire: to read millions of words inside and outside of the classroom.

New research from the US, entitled "When children are not read to at home: the million-word gap" – by, among others, Jessica Logan, assistant professor of educational studies at the Ohio State University – reveals in stark terms the differences between young children who are not read to at home and their reading-rich peers.

Using data on 60 books commonly read to young American children, the researchers calculated that parents who read one picture book with their

child daily offered exposure to 78,000 words a year.

The researchers found that those children who are never read to have been "exposed to only 4,662 words through book reading by kindergarten entry, compared with 296,660 words if read one book each day and 1.5 million words if read multiple books per day".

Of course, reading to children offers much more than some numerical snapshot of words on the page. When reading picture books and story books, we go far beyond simply the quantity of words read from the page.

As the researchers state, it is crucial to recognise that reading with young children requires "responsive, contingent and emotionally supportive conversations".

It is clear that if our pupils are to go on to flourish in school, then there is no better platform for them than to become reading millionaires, as early as possible, with sustained daily reading.

A quarter of parents (26 per cent) in the US study reported reading to their child