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Sincerely,
Karen Haag

Build Up Reading Time

How can students read tests for 90 minutes when they can't read something they enjoy for 90 minutes? To help students prepare for the reading marathon, I created Build-Up Reading Day. In some schools, we read in school every other Friday starting with 15 minutes, then 30 and build to 90. In some schools, we assign Build-Up Reading Time as a homework activity. Of course, finding time in school works better, but either assignment boosts the number of minutes students read.

According to Dr. Cecil Mercer at Florida State, children who score in the 40th percentile on standardized reading tests read less than 2 minutes per day ALL DAY - even if he added up the minutes read in and out of school. Children who score in the 90th percentile read about 20 minutes per day in school and 20 minutes per day out of school. If children read 120 minutes a day, they will likely score in the 99th percentile. It's only fair to share these statistics and design a program that encourages students to try to read longer periods of time.

Build-Up Reading Day is intended to encourage students to go for the 40 minutes of reading inside and outside of school. Students can manage reading 40 minutes per day, especially if we give them 20 minutes to read in school. Students can report up to 120, but after that it becomes a useless competition. As a result of implementing Build-Up Reading Day, we found it not only builds endurance, it builds confidence. In addition, children share "good-reads" with one another and solutions for the problems that occur when they try to read such long periods of time. Overall, interest in reading increases.

Schools Go School-wide with Build-Up Reading Days

During the Friday Literacy Block, *every other week beginning in January*, children brought their book bags, a snack, a drink, and a pillow at some of the schools I worked with. The kids found comfortable places in their classrooms to read. The first week, they read 15 minutes, then 30, then 45, then 60 until finally, classes built up their independent time to at least one 90-minute day. The rest of the days, students read a regular amount of time.

Choose Individual Extended Reading Days



If your school can't afford to build reading time on Fridays, students can choose a "not-busy" day to build their reading stamina at home. I write this choice next to their name on a chart I keep in the classroom (below). Every week I ask students to report in and tell me how many minutes they read on their day. Some of my kids admit they didn't read longer than 3 minutes. Some read 90-120 minutes regularly.

Most students build up to 45 pretty quickly, but getting past 45 is very difficult. I know because I put my name on the chart along with theirs. I share how many minutes I read on my Build-Up Day with them, too. We talk about what keeps us from reaching our goal of 90 minutes: it's not easy to find time, it's hard to get in "the reading zone," my family interrupts me, etc.

Talk Through Problems and Solutions

We offer solutions to one another. Turn off the television one day a week. Use headphones. Whisper read at first until you fall into the reading zone. Explain to your family what Build-Up Reading Day is and ask them for their support: arrange a mutually acceptable time, create a space at home that's private, ask family members to fend off interruptions.

Falling asleep is the number one problem reported by reluctant readers once they make the choice to read. Tell them it's okay to read in a noisy place. My son is an avid reader and he reads with the TV on. So does my mother! To make it easier, I suggest students find a comfortable spot that works *for them* by trying out different spaces to see what works best.

Collect 3 Levels of Reading Materials

For making Build-Up Time work, each student must have a bookbag of reading materials ready at any moment. When working out, I exercise several muscle groups. The same is true for building reading muscles. Reading 3 levels of books improves fluency, knowledge of vocabulary, and the ability to use reading strategies. So, students collect a novel, a nonfiction book, and alternate, easier, reading materials as well as challenging texts. They read comic books, magazines, graphic novels, poetry books, picture books, and newspapers. During sustained reading time, the reader can switch back and forth among them. When taking tests, students switch back and forth between genres so Build-Up Reading Time introduces them to this concept.

To make it fun, I encourage readers to bring a snack or water to their spot. Just because they can't have food during tests does not mean they should not have it when practicing. Anything that makes the sessions more enjoyable will accomplish my goal: read more.

Making sure I ask students how many minutes they read during their Build-Up Day reminds them that I consider this gift to themselves important. Recording their minutes along with mine on a chart recognizes that we're in this together and it's not easy. Reporting their minutes to their parents on their progress reports reinforces that I want them to read every day and pick one day a week to build reading muscles.

Steps for Build-Up Reading Time Lesson

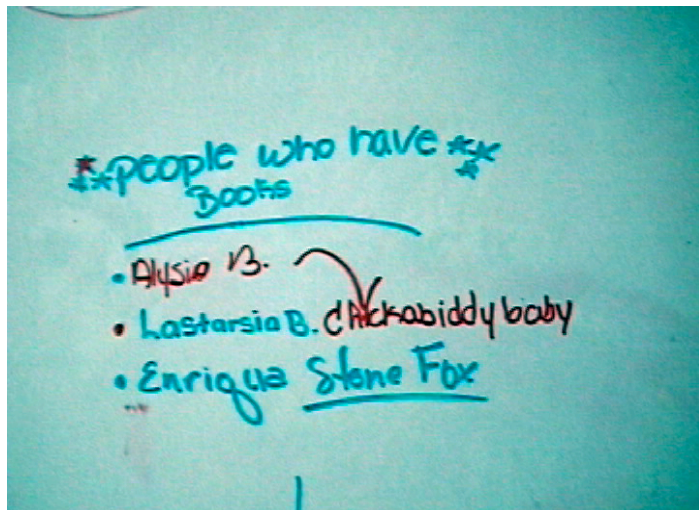
1. **ENGAGE:** Share your reading bookbag with your students. Select an easy book (magazine, catalogue), a just-right book (a novel you're reading), and a challenging book (a hobby book you're learning, an educational theory book.) Tell children that at any one time, you might switch between 3-5 reading selections.
2. **TEACHER EXPLAINS:** Challenge students to read one day per week for as long as they can. Ask them to set a day. Tell students that they will be reporting the longest number of minutes they read in one sitting each week. Presumably, this time will be on the day they selected to practice.
3. **CREATE BOOKBAGS:** Give students a plastic bag or book box. Give them time to select 3 books from the classroom or school libraries. Tell them they must read a novel and a nonfiction book. Books they are reading for assignments count. In addition, they can choose graphic novels, newspapers, poetry books, *Weekly Readers*, and comics from home or school - up to 5 selections.
4. **READ:** (Set a baseline.) Ask children to close their eyes and picture themselves reading or were read to. Further, ask them to remember the time they read the longest. Have them picture the time they just got absorbed in a book, didn't get up, and just kept reading. Ask students to recreate that feeling and find a place in the classroom to read for 15 minutes.
5. **EVALUATE:** Ask students to self-report how many minutes they read during the 15-minute time. Teacher records baseline on the record sheet and students record on their sheet (below).
6. **STUDENTS EXPLAIN:** Ask students to Think-Pair-Share these questions: What is the purpose for creating a Build-Up Reading Time Day? What is each child's responsibility?

Build your reading muscles!

Name	Building Day	base	low				
Brandon Burton	Saturday	68	70				
Connor Dyle	Saturday	low	24				
Rafaela Hampton	Monday	68					
Clayton Johnson	Sunday and Monday	70	75	24	30	35	40
Michael Jiro	Sunday & Friday	70	75				
Erinna Linn	Sunday	63	60	72			

Saturday	68	60	77	1 hour	2 hour	3 hour
Saturday	68	70	75	8 hour 15 min	2 hour	2 hour 15 min
Saturday	68	60	35	1 hour 15 min	2 hour 15 min	2 hour 20 min
Friday	68	20	1 hour	15 min	20 min	30 min
Thursday	68	1 hr	2 1/2	30 min	25 min	30 min
Wednesday	68	2 hr				

Close-up of Build-up Reading Chart: look at the difference in minutes.



One day I came into my room and found a note scrawled on my whiteboard. "We took these books home. Hope it's OK." That is SO the point. I took a picture of it.

Collaboration Corner

Tamara Beaver invented the idea of recording build-up reading times in our data notebooks. I've attached her recording chart. I took it another step and created a sheet so that children can view their progress. Please tell me how you took the idea another step!

Build-Up Reading Day Teacher Record

	Students' Names	Baseline Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
1.						
2.						
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28.						
29.						
30.						

Build-Up Reading Day Student Record 😊

Record the longest number of minutes you read in one sitting during each week.

Month	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
September				
October				
November				
January				
February				
March				
April				

Build-Up Reading Day Student Record 😊

Record the longest number of minutes you read in one sitting during each week.

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September				
October				
November				
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February				
March				
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