

# Mentor Tips: GROWING READING POTENTIAL



Reading Mentor Vertina Watson (Kirkland & Ellis) with Keymora Mayo at Marie Reed Community Learning Center

Reading Mentors are providing the most valuable element to crack the code of reading for under-served students: they are *there*, reading with their student partners, one-to-one, once a week! This sets the stage for a student to recognize the value in reading. However, there are some common issues that Reading Mentors encounter that may act as stumbling blocks to the success of a reading session. Here are a few ideas about moving beyond the tough spots:

**it's too hard!** Reading Mentors need to be ready to guide the reading session to optimize the pair's time together. That means spending time with the right book, and reading in the most accessible way. If the book is too difficult, offer a compromise.

*"This book doesn't seem to be working for us. I'm worried that you are not having fun reading. Would you like me to take a turn reading it to you, or should we go find a book on the carts that is better for us to read"*

**i don't get it!** Spoken language is different from book language. Students need to recognize the differences, and be able to understand the written word. Reading aloud to your partner will help with recognition of textual differences, so when reading solo, the student will be familiar with written phrasing and sentence structure and comprehend the story.

*"The children in the book live on a farm; imagine what that might be like! When the author writes about "slopping" the pigs, it means the character is feeding his pigs. That's not a phrase you hear every day when talking to your friends, is it?"*

**i can't do it!** Here's a quote that sums up the importance of what the Power Lunch Reading Mentor offers a student:

*"Although research and experience have demonstrated again and again that phonics knowledge and skill are essential for learning to read, there is also considerable evidence that reading development depends on a wide range of connected text, the development of fluency, and the growth of vocabulary, knowledge and reasoning. Thus, it is wise for all students, even those having extreme difficulty with phonics, to read books they find interesting, learn the meanings of ever more difficult words, and continue to acquire knowledge."*  
-- Chall and Popp, 1996

This is where the mentor steps into a valuable role. While not a teacher or tutor, you have the opportunity to introduce the student to a broad range of interesting material, to chat about it, to extend the conversation to the larger world, and to embrace the new vocabulary that is added to the student's "toolkit" forever.

\* Adapted from *The Source: A Curriculum Guide for Reading Mentors* from Just Read Florida.