

## Great Readers Use What They Know

Dear Family Members,

As adults, what we know about the world is based on our personal knowledge and the experiences we've had. When we want to learn something outside our own life experiences, we must find a connection to that knowledge in order to gain understanding. The same is true for children. As they grow, children build their own individual knowledge banks. The teacher's job is to not only help expand those banks, but also to help children put to work what's already there. When we teach children how to make connections between what they know and what they read, we build their confidence. This, in turn, helps children add new deposits into their knowledge banks, allowing them to learn even more. In Unit 3, your child will practice using his or her own experiences and knowledge in order to become better readers.

### **Strategies that we will focus on in Unit 3 -**

#### Making Connections

Making connections allows a reader to get the most out of his or her reading. Readers draw connections between what they read and their prior experience, giving the text meaning. As children understand more texts, they begin to make connections to other texts they have read, so each new reading experience builds on the last. By constantly expanding their personal knowledge banks, children learn more about the world, allowing them to connect what they read to what they know about their environment.

#### Activating Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is what we know about the world - from our prior experiences to pictures we've seen in books we've read. Readers start thinking about what they already know about a topic before they even open a book, and then they continue to use what they know to understand the text inside. Learning is also a communal experience. By sharing their background knowledge with others, children expand their own.

#### Building Vocabulary and Concept Knowledge

We can't understand new concepts without knowing the words that describe them. Children may preview a book with a picture walk, and may predict words they might see in a text. They may use background knowledge or word parts to figure out an unfamiliar word. As readers use these strategies, they become more confident and competent.

#### Making Inferences

Readers are like detectives: They are constantly looking for clues. Children can learn to use picture clues, context clues, and their own mental images to figure out implied meanings, unfamiliar words, and story details that are not directly stated.

A great way to follow-up at home is to talk to your child about what is going on in the world around them: Invite your child to share what he or she knows about a topic. Visit places in the community that build on your child's personal experiences. You can even make inferences together based on things you see in the world around us.

Thank you for supporting your child at home!

Sincerely,