

Dr. Toughlove's Back to School Reading List

Do you know a child who either recently has or will soon be returning to school? Dr. Toughlove has compiled her Top Eleven list of suggested books to read aloud to children, aged 4-8 years. Enjoy!

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi

A girl named Unhei arrives in America from Korea and has to go to a new school. When she gets on the school bus and is asked what her name is, the kids on the bus mispronounce her name. After that experience, Unhei, which means grace in Korean, decides she wants to select an American name. This beautifully illustrated story is a touching book about living in a new land while maintaining ties to the traditions and customs from your home land.

Everything in Its Place: A Story of Books and Belonging by Pauline David-Sax and illustrated by Charnell Pinkney Barlow

In this book, the protagonist, Nicky, toggles between her school and Cathy's Café, which is a restaurant owned and operated by her mother. At school, Nicky is a shy introvert who spends her recess period re-stocking returned books at her school library. Cathy does look out the window longingly at her noisy schoolmates who are playing soccer, jumping rope and playing hopscotch.

This book provides an opportunity to share guidance and strategies to youngsters who may be shy about interacting with their peers, particularly in new situations. Conversely, children who are outgoing can talk about how they can reach out to a shy youngster. A great book for a child starting school in a new setting.

Jamal and Me by Carol Franks-Randall

Jamal and Me is a story about a boy named Jamal, who used to live in a city has moved to the suburbs. He is lonely and feels misplaced in his new school. His teacher Miss Iceburg, thinks he is nothing but trouble and wants him sent to another school. His loving but firm Principal, Dr. Toughlove, comes to the rescue. A wonderful book to help kids talk about being the “new kid” and teach compassion and empathy.

Sorry Grown-Ups, You Can’t Go To School! by Christina Geist

This book presents a hilarious twist on the anxiety some kids feel about going back to school. In this book, Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa and the family dog all want to go to school. They get dressed in their new sneakers and put on their new backpacks. The grown-ups don’t seem to understand that they can’t come to morning meeting or play with friends at recess. They are told by the protagonists, Lady and Buddy, that school is ONLY FOR KIDS AND TEACHERS! A fun, role reversal book that can be enjoyed by kids and adults alike.

On the First Day of Kindergarten by Tish Rabe

This delightful book using the “Twelve Days of Christmas” theme to describe many of the activities kindergarteners engage in during their first few weeks of school. If your child loves repetitive songs, cheerful illustrations and is entering kindergarten, this book is an

absolute must. Although it is geared for youngsters entering kindergarten, it could be read to a preschooler as well.

How to Get Your Teacher Ready by Jean Reagan

Anyone who knows Dr. Toughlove, knows that she is a big fan of Jean Reagan's How to book series. All of the books in this series are whimsical and charming, and ***How to Get Your Teacher Ready*** is no exception. This time, the unnamed protagonist provides a how to list with everything from making sure the teacher buttons up her smock, to preparing for the holiday concert, to getting ready for field day. Lee Wildish's illustrations serve to enhance Jean Reagan's words and the result is laugh out loud funny. A back to school must read aloud for primary-aged children.

David Goes to School by David Shannon

Dr. Toughlove is a David Shannon fan, especially his David series. David is known for being a rascal, and in many cases doing things he shouldn't be doing. Kids and adults can enjoy David's antics in school, and remind children what NOT to do in school. Fortunately for David, the adults around him love him in spite of his questionable judgement. A hilarious book for preschoolers as well as primary-aged children.

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate

This book is ideal for a child entering kindergarten or preschool. Miss Bindergarten is preparing for the first day of kindergarten while her students are busily getting ready to come to school. The characters are represented by the twenty-six letters of the alphabet

(Adam Krupp wakes up. Brenda Heath brushes her teeth. Christopher Beaker finds his sneaker and so on.....p. 2-3). The students are all animals, so in addition to the delightful rhymes, the children can learn the names of some animals they might not be familiar with. All in all, a charming book that children will probably request be read to them again and again.

The Teacher from the Black Lagoon by Mike Thaler

Ready to laugh out loud? In this hilarious story the protagonist imagines that his new teacher, Mrs. Green actually is a green dragon. Of course, she also has big teeth and a long tail. Mrs. Green has ferocious breath and can turn a kid into a pile of aches at his desk. Jared Lee's colorful and captivating illustrations depict the protagonist's wild imagination in a highly entertaining way. This book makes a great adult read aloud as well as a good book for an emergent reader to learn to read.

The Pigeon HAS to Go to School! by Mo Willems

In true Mo Willems fashion, this hilarious book continues the adventures of the Pigeon book series. The Pigeon is incensed that he has to go to school – because after all, he already knows everything.....well almost everything. Mo Willems's simple yet engaging illustrations, use of speech bubbles, wit, and humor engage readers every time. A fun favorite for Mo Willems fans.

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

The Day You Begin shines a spotlight on the challenges associated with being the “new kid” at school. It is a touching story about how children feel different from their peers for a variety of reasons and encourages youngsters to be brave enough to share their stories even when they feel like an outsider. Angelina, one of the protagonists in the book says, “There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you until the day you begin...to share your stories” (p. 24). This book encourages children to talk about times when they were the “new kid” and offer ways to help newcomers feel welcome and included. A beautifully illustrated, charming book.