

Fostering a Love for Reading

By Heather Grocott

It is so important for children to grow up within an environment that promotes a positive rapport toward reading. After all, reading is a huge aspect of our culture and a key life skill that we all need. Not only is reading a survival skill, it also enhances imagination, relieves stress, and provides us with entertainment and enjoyment. The trick is to encourage children to **love** reading!

Most of the time in school, children learn isolated reading skills and often associate reading with work, not pleasure. As a result of this, they sometimes lose their desire and willingness to read. Fostering a love for reading really does begin with a child's daily routine and/or schedule, their day-to-day activities, and most importantly, their family and home environment.

First and foremost, reading must begin at an early age. Children should not only be read to as infants and toddlers, but should be able to touch, see, and explore books of their own. As children grow and develop, reading at home should be a consistent every day activity that the whole family experiences. The following tips will help start a great routine of reading within your household:

Important Steps Parents Can Take to Promote Reading

- Expose your child to books as an infant
- Demonstrate how important reading is and how much you appreciate it by reading in front of your child – you must set the example
- Establish a time of day when everyone in the family reads
- Create a reading nook in your child's bedroom – this also encourages your child to take care of his/her books
- Never throw books away – if they are no longer needed, try to donate them to someone in need
- Read to your child. Set a time or routine where you read aloud to your child, even if they are older. Reading a chapter from a chapter book each night is a great tradition and a nice way to spend quality time together.
- Allow your child to make book choices
- Never set limits to reading
- Allow your child to read to you – even if your child does not know how to read, encourage them to “read” their favorite book to you. This enhances language development and accesses early reading skills.
- Expose your children to a variety of types of print
- Sign your child up for a library card
- Visit the local library and attend different community events
- Create a “log” or list of books your family has read for everyone to record all of the books the have read
- Visit sites (such as art museums, farms, etc) that your children may read about in their books
- Expose your child to fiction and non-fiction books

The Power of Reading

It is also critical to understand that reading should not be an isolated activity. “Reading” involves more than picking up a book and speaking the words on the page. Reading must also encompass understanding, development of knowledge, and connections in one’s mind to previous knowledge.

When reading with your child, think of the experience as a process with a beginning, middle, and end, just as all good books have. At the beginning of your experiences (**before** reading), as your child asks questions such as:

- What do you think this book is about? Why do you think this? (also known as predicting)
- Which book would you like to read today? Why?
- Where would you like to read this book?
- What do you see on the front and back covers?
- Skim through the pages – does this book look interesting to you?

At the middle of your experience, or **during** reading, try the following:

- Ask your child specific questions about the text
- What do you think will happen next?
- Ask your child to restate or re-tell some key elements of the book
- If your child is able to read, share the reading with them (take turns reading page by page)
- Encourage your child to use the pictures to help them understand and/or sound out words

As you finish reading the book with your child (**after** reading), generate a discussion or set time for an activity related to the book:

- Does this book remind you of something that has happened to you?
- Did you enjoy this book? Why or why not?
- Did you have a favorite part to this book?

Reading can be a Challenge

Learning how to read and/or fostering a love for reading can be a challenge. Remember to celebrate your child’s accomplishments in reading in a way that is meaningful to them. Praise and encourage your child. And most of all, allow the gift of books and reading to empower your child!