



The Gift of Loving Books

One of the greatest gifts a parent can give a child is the love of books.

Being able to read will dramatically increase a child's opportunities for success and pleasure in life. You can encourage your child to love reading by:

- * Reading aloud to your child;
- * Listening to your child read;
- * Encouraging your child to participate in reading-related activities;
- * Sharing an interest in reading with your child;
- * Giving your child lots of praise for reading;
- * Having interesting books and reading materials in your home.

Keep Reading Together!

Children of *all* ages benefit when their families make reading a part of everyday life.

Too many adults stop reading with children once they can read on their own. Author Jim Trelease wonders "why?" in his book, *The Read Aloud Handbook*:

Reading aloud is a commercial for reading ... Think of it this way: McDonald's doesn't stop advertising just because the vast majority of Americans know about its restaurants. Each year it spends more money on ads to remind people how good its products taste. Don't cut your reading advertising budget as children grow older.

Reading aloud to children helps them develop and improve literacy skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening. And since children listen on a higher level than they read, listening to other readers stimulates growth and understanding of vocabulary and language patterns.

Reading with older children is also a good way to sustain emotional bonds between you and your child at a time when many

kids are beginning to see their parents as hopelessly "uncool." Choose books, magazines, poems or anything else that interests your child and read it together. The material may give you a chance to talk about issues that are hard to bring up on your own. At the very least, you may improve your relationship with your child by spending time together.



The old saying "Do as I say, not as I do," doesn't work for reading. If your kids see you reading for fun, they are much more likely to read themselves. In 2001, the National Education Association

did a study in which more than half (51 percent) of students who answered the survey said that the only things their parents encouraged them to read were school-related books. If parents encouraged them to read for pleasure, students were more likely to read and to read more difficult books.

Adolescence is all about gaining independence and finding a sense of self. But one safe way of doing that is through reading about other adolescents and their struggles to make sense of growing up. Encourage your children to keep reading and watch as they gain the skills they need to be truly independent.



Raising Readers

Reading is Fundamental (RIF), a children's and family literacy program, provides tips for nurturing growing readers:

- * Notice what interests your children and then help them find books about those things.
- * Respect your children's choices. There's nothing wrong with series fiction (like *Goosebumps* or *The Babysitters' Club*), if that's what keeps a young reader turning the pages.
- * Check up on your children's progress. Listen to them read aloud, read what they write, and ask teachers how they're doing in school.
- * Go places and do things with your children to build their background knowledge and vocabulary.

Teaching Reading

Is reading a priority at your child's school? How do you know if your child is receiving high-quality reading instruction?

Here are some action steps for elementary and middle schools to ensure that every child can read at grade level. Take this list to your child's school and ask, "What actions are you taking to help my child read well?"



A school with high-quality reading instruction does the following:

- Assesses each child's developing reading ability and determines appropriate interventions.
- Promotes independent reading, at least 30 minutes a day, by providing students and parents with specific reading assignments, age-appropriate reading lists and home assignments linked to class work that involve family members.
- Supports high-quality professional development for teachers in research-based instruction.
- Emphasizes a school-wide focus on literacy, including allocating extended blocks of time to reading and writing in the early grades.
- Finds ways to increase one-on-one reading between children and adults by recruiting volunteers.
- Teaches children whose first language is not English to read in their native language if learning materials and proficient teachers are available.
- Encourages parents to stay involved in their children's education.
- Contacts local libraries, literacy groups, houses of worship, businesses and community members to provide children with high-quality, after-school and summer learning opportunities that support and encourage literacy development.



Need a Good Book?

Studies show that American students stop reading for pleasure as they reach middle school. This means that students begin to limit their vocabularies and stop working on fluent reading skills.

As a result, student scores on standardized reading tests fall dramatically in the middle and high school years. Families can help students regain their motivation to read and improve their reading

performance by encouraging older students to try something new.

Check with your local library, or the library media specialist at your child's school, and encourage your older child to try one of the books voted among the best of 2001 by a large group of middle school readers. The International Reading Association provides a list of "Young Adult Choices" each year. Titles may be found at www.reading.org/choices/yac2001.html.

Family Reading Activities

Post this page on your refrigerator for easy access to everyday learning ideas!

For Children of All Ages

News You Can Use

Take the Sunday newspaper and have your kids divide it up and "report" on different sections. Summarizing the news will sharpen their reading-comprehension skills.



Use the newspaper to build vocabulary. Have kids compete to find the most four-syllable words or to find a word for which no one knows the meaning. Then you can all look up the word in a dictionary.

Listen Here!

Get books on audiotape and listen to them together in the car. The readers are often professional actors who make words come to life. You can get tapes for free at the public library, and there are a growing number of stores that rent them.



SCHOOL BOOKS

When your child is assigned a book to read for school, sit down and read the first part aloud together. This will demonstrate to your child that you think homework is important.



Reading Night

Turn off the television for one night a week and read aloud as a family. Take turns allowing each family member to choose material—and don't criticize if they choose

things like song lyrics or books you don't particularly like. Kids will be more willing to read as a family if they feel that their preferences are respected at least part of the time.

Did you know?

About two thirds of Boys & Girls Club professionals participating in B&GCA's 2001 National Education Summit identified reading as the area of greatest academic need among Club members. These staff view greater parental involvement as a major need to help young people be more successful in school.

Source: B&GCA Survey of 2001 National Education Summit Attendees



Reading Planet

Search for good books. Keep track of favorite books on a personal bookshelf. Write and illustrate stories. Create a reading clubhouse with friends.

All this is possible on the Reading Planet Web site from Reading is Fundamental (RIF).

This colorful site helps kids of all ages choose high-quality books and organize them on their own bookshelf. With clear directions and categories, it is easy for kids to find fun literacy activities and do the activities themselves or with friends.

It also offers tips on activities that parents and other adults can do to help children and young adults become strong, interested readers.

Visit www.rifreadingplanet.org.

SPOTLIGHT: Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest Indiana

Reasons to Read

Reading is an everyday activity at the Katherine House Unit of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest Indiana. Club members enjoy professional storytellers telling fantasies, volunteers reading favorites aloud and older children reading to young children.



The Club started to focus on reading when it became clear not everyone had the reading skills they needed. At a Club sleepover, teens took turns reading a page aloud to a group of younger children. One teen ran out of the room quite upset as her turn to read neared. Club staff discovered she was unable to read and designed a program with the dilemma of that young woman in mind.

“Children want to be able to read,” explains Bertha Payne, Director of Operations, “and sometimes they need special attention to move ahead.”

Reasons to Read is an academic enrichment program designed to link reading and success for Club members ages 8 to 12. Club members and their families sign up for a 10-week program, and every week there’s a different activity to encourage reading.

In the first week, Club members visited the local library and signed up for library cards. They also visited local bookstores where they enjoyed special story hours and a discount on new reading materials. In another week, guest readers visited the Club. Guests shared why reading is

important in their professions and demonstrated their own reading skills by sharing a favorite story with the group.

Some of the featured readers have included a local artist, radio announcer, labor leader, banker, attorney and actress.

“Kids are excited about reading when you make it fun,” says Ms. Payne. “Our challenge is to make it fun, interesting and meaningful.”

Families are involved, too. They are encouraged to have reading materials in the house, read aloud with their children and read themselves.

For more information, call (219) 887-2020.

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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA

National Headquarters
1230 W. Peachtree St., NW
Atlanta, GA 30309-3447
(404) 487-5700
bgca.org

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Collaborative Communications Group
Design and Production:
Janin/Cliff Design, Inc.