

Raising Readers: Tips for Parents

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LITERACY CLINIC

Promoting a Love of Reading at Home for Students in Grades K-5

Elish-Piper, L. (2011). Promoting a love of reading at home. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 39(2), 52-55.

Having the “skill” to read is an important part of the equation, but it is not sufficient for developing life-long readers. The other essential ingredient is having the “will” to want to read. In this issue of *Raising Readers*, I offer a brief rationale for families promoting a joy of reading as well as strategies, activities, and routines to help children and teens become life-long readers who love to read.

Many of the struggling readers I have worked with over the years didn’t read for fun because they saw reading as a chore or an assignment. As a result, they avoided reading, only doing it when absolutely necessary. They then had less practice reading so they did not improve as readers, and they then enjoyed reading less because it was more difficult.

This cycle of the poor reader not reading
And then falling farther behind in their reading
while the good reader often continues to improve



as a result of the increased practice is referred to as the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986) because the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer” as readers. Therefore, it is important for all readers, including those who struggle, to read often both in and out of school. By reading with children at home, parents can build a love of reading and provide opportunities for reading practice which can contribute to reading growth and enjoyment.

While teachers can do a great deal to help students build their reading skills and to encourage them to develop a love of reading, parents and families play an important role in building life-long readers. With so many competing demands for children’s time, reading needs to become a habit. Families can give children the valuable gift of being a life-long reader, regardless of the child’s age or present reading skills. Just like eating healthy or exercising regularly, it is important to help children build their “reading health” so that they can become motivated, enthusiastic readers. The following fun and simple activities, strategies, and routines can help children build their interest and joy for reading, books, and learning.

What Can Parents Do To Promote a Love of Reading with Children in Grades K-5?



1. Set aside a family reading time each day or at least several times per week. Older children can read to themselves, and parents or siblings can read aloud to younger children. Make this a special time when family members relax and enjoy reading.
2. Give books or magazines as gifts for birthdays, holidays, or other important celebrations. Carefully consider your children's interests and reading levels to choose books or magazines that they will love.
3. Make regular trips as a family to the library. Most libraries provide special programs such as story times, book clubs, author presentations, and holiday events. Spend time browsing with your children for interesting books, magazines, DVDs, and other materials to check out and enjoy.
4. Audio books provide a great way for families to listen to books while driving or relaxing at home. By listening to audio books, the whole family can enjoy and then discuss books together. Ask the children's librarian for suggestions of audio books that will appeal to your family.
5. Start a 15 minute late-night reading routine at your home. Allow your children to stay up 15 minutes later if they read. Children can read independently or with their parents or siblings.
6. Most children enjoy reading series books because the characters become friends, and reading these books is easy, relaxing, and enjoyable. Some popular series books for elementary students include *Arthur* (Marc Brown), *Junie B. Jones* (Barbara Park), *Captain Underpants* (Dav Pilkey), *Magic Treehouse* (Mary Pope Osborne), *Harry Potter* (J.K. Rowling), *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Lemony Snicket), and *America Girls* (Valerie Tripp), and the Matt Christopher sports books.
7. Play word games together to build your children's interest in words. Some new word games are *Scrabble Flash*, *Blurt*, *Bananagrams*, and *Apples to Apples Junior*. You can also play favorites such as Hangman or online word games at <http://word-games.pogo.com/>.
8. Encourage your children to become aware of and interested in vocabulary words around them. Have each family member serve as the Word Wizard one day per week. That family member can choose an interesting word to bring to breakfast or dinner to share with the family. Post this word on the refrigerator and have each family member listen and look for it and report back the next day how many times they encountered the word. If a family of four does this activity four times per week, your children will be learning about over 200 interesting words per year.
9. Stash books and magazines where your children will be – in the car, in their bedrooms, and even in the bathroom.
10. Be a reading role model. Be sure your children see you reading for pleasure on a regular basis. If your children see you reading, they will begin to understand that reading is valued in your family.
11. Read comics, jokes, riddles, and puns together. Read the comics from the newspaper or joke books from the library. Humor websites for children are another fun resource you may want to read and enjoy with your children. Some excellent free websites that contain jokes, riddles, and puns are:
<http://kids.yahoo.com/jokes>
<http://www.azkidsnet.com/JSknockjoke.htm>
<http://www.jokesbykids.com/>
12. Plan a book swap with your neighbors, friends, or other family members who have children the same age as yours. Each family can bring books and magazines to recommend and trade.

Questions or Comments?

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