

Parents, Children and Reading

Suggestions from *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the Report of the National Commission on Reading

Reading begins in the home. Before they ever go to school, children acquire knowledge that lays the foundations for reading. They learn about object, events, thoughts, and feelings and they develop the language skill and vocabulary to express ideas and describe their experiences. As parents, you play a crucial role in laying this foundation because you are your children's

- ✓ Guides through a vast and unfamiliar world of people, places, and things.
- ✓ First teachers about how to express ideas with words and what words mean
- ✓ Partners in learning about the fascinating world of written language
- ✓ One enduring source of faith and encouragement that they will become good readers.

Once children are in school, their parent's expectations, and the experiences provided by their parents, continue to influence how much and how well children read.

Helping Your Children Become Good Readers

Most children will learn *how* to read. Whether they will become *good readers* depends in large part upon your help and encouragement. As a parent you can:

- ✓ Help your child acquire a wide range of knowledge.
 - Go on shopping trips, walks in parks, visit zoos, museums.
 - Build common and uncommon knowledge.
 - More knowledge will help build understanding.
- ✓ Talk with your children about their experiences.
 - Help your children learn new words as they talk about their experiences.
 - Talking about experiences helps with understanding and will help your children's understanding when they read.
- ✓ Encourage your children to think about events.
 - Talking about events helps your children to reflect on that experience and helps them give good descriptions and complete stories. This will help with an understanding of how stories are written and again help to improve understanding while reading.
- ✓ Read aloud to your children.
 - Reading aloud is probably the single most important activity you can do to encourage your children's success as a reader.

Benefits of reading aloud are greatest when you encourage your children to identify letters and words and talk about the story and the meaning of words.

- ✓ Provide your preschool children with writing materials.
Writing is an important way for your children to learn about letters and words.
- ✓ Encourage your children to watch TV shows that have educational value.
Watching TV programs that teach about reading and language can have a positive effect on your children's learning. You can help them learn by asking questions about the shows and relating what they see to other situations and experiences.
- ✓ Monitor how much TV your children watch.
Watching up to 10 hours a week of quality television can have a slightly positive effect on your children's achievement including reading achievement. However, as TV watching increases a negative influence can be seen on your children's school work. Most children who watch 20 or more hours of TV a week don't do well in school.
- ✓ Monitor your child's school performance.
Participate in any reading programs that your children's school offers. This will allow you to get a good idea of how your children are doing in school and how you can help them become better students.
- ✓ Encourage your child to read independently
The amount of reading your children do outside of school influences how well they will read in school. One of a parent's top priorities should be to encourage their children to spend more time reading.
- ✓ Continue your personal involvement in your child's growth as readers.
Set a good example by reading newspapers, magazines and books. Suggest reading as a leisure activity and make sure your children have time for reading.