

# Parents as Allies in Children's Education

"How can I help my children learn to read and write?"

Parents who ask this question can become valuable allies—all we need to do is encourage them to take active roles in helping with their children's education. In particular, parents can be especially helpful in conveying to children the idea that there are good reasons for learning to read and write.

The following are some of the ideas my colleagues and I have suggested to parents in our community, ideas that they say have worked well for them and that they have enjoyed using:

- 1. Be a role model for reading**
  - Let your children see you reading different materials for different reasons and encourage them to do the same.
  - Join a book club.
  - Give your children books or magazine subscriptions as gifts
  - Visit the library on a regular basis.
- 2. Read to your children every day**
  - Find a quiet spot.

Choose interesting material.

Encourage your children to read to you, to each other and to other members of the family.

- 3. Provide opportunities for listening to audio tapes and for watching selected TV programs**
  - Encourage your children to listen to recordings by authors or storytellers.
  - Make your own recordings of your children's favorite selections.
  - Allow your children to select from the program guide appropriate TV programs for viewing. Their viewing time may constitute one full evening a week, or one or two programs each night. Ask for a written schedule showing times, channels and selected programs. (Make it a rule that they have to vary the times and /or channels.)

## **4. Provide opportunities for reading**

- Collect simple recipes and allow your children time to do some cooking.
- Always leave lots of notes for your children. Place them on the fridge door or in their lunch boxes. Sometimes it's fun to leave notes about tasks and included promised rewards for tasks that are completed. An example might be: "please clean your rooms when you get home from school. When you're finished we'll all go out to eat at the shopping center this evening."
- Play board games that encourage reading or word play.

## **5. Be a Role model for writing**

- Allow your children to see you writing every day for different reasons, business and pleasure.
- Be positive. Don't overemphasize errors in your children's grammar, punctuation or spelling.

## **6. Provide opportunities for writing**

Set up a writing corner. Have a good selection of materials available. Vary the paper (lined and unlined) by size, color, texture and shape.

- Purchase blank books or make your own by sewing pages together. Wallpaper scraps make good covers.
- Encourage your children to share what they've written.
- Encourage your children to proofread what they've written.
- Provide an incentive for your children to write by typing out some of their writings. If possible allow them to use a typewriter or word processor themselves.
- Encourage your children to keep a special diary for private writing where they can freely express feelings

and opinions. Promise them you will respect their privacy.

- Keep a communal journal when traveling as a family so all the members can write about what they see and discover.
  - Have your children assist you in writing out grocery lists. If you children come with you when you go shopping have them check off items as you pick them out.
- 7. Encourage the writing of letters**
    - Encourage your children to write thank you notes for presents received.
    - Encourage your children to write to grandparents and other relatives and friends.
  - 8. Encourage Creativity**
    - Encourage your children to rewrite TV commercials— or make up new ones.
    - Encourage your children to perform commercials or plays that they've written.
    - Encourage your children to illustrate their writing—start a file of pictures, photos, illustrations and cartoons for you children to use in illustrating their writing. (Such a file can be great tools in helping to motivate the reluctant writer.)

Above all let your children know that reading and writing are meaningful activities. It's true that we learn to read and write for practical reasons, but it's also true that reading and writing are tremendous sources of enjoyment.