

Reading – Developing Positive Attitudes in Children

A Handout for Parents

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Overview

In the classroom, reading instruction typically focuses on specific *skills* such as sounding out words and building vocabulary. However, the development of positive reading *attitudes* is often overlooked. Children with positive reading attitudes tend to be willing to read, enjoy reading, become proficient, and become lifelong readers. On the other hand, children with poor attitudes toward reading may only read when they have to read, tend to avoid reading, and may even refuse to read altogether. A child's attitude toward reading may have a profound impact upon his or her overall academic progress.

Background

As children progress from early childhood through their school years, they develop strong likes and dislikes, including positive or negative attitudes toward reading. Parents may underestimate the critical role they play in the development and shaping of their child's reading attitude. For example, young children view their parents as experts. Therefore, the information and values that parents share with their children about the importance of reading can significantly affect the attitudes that children develop.

Parents are also role models for their children. By observing the attitudes that their parents exhibit—both verbally and nonverbally—toward reading, children will tend to develop and demonstrate similar attitudes. In addition, because children (particularly preschoolers) seek and desire approval from their parents, they tend to develop the attitudes and values that parents will praise and reinforce.

What Can I Do as a Parent?

- Provide a variety of reading materials in the home: This can include magazines, newspapers, books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference materials. Your children will be more likely to read for pleasure and to obtain information if there is reading material around.
- Let your children know how much you enjoy and learn from reading: Your excitement and interest in reading will transfer to your children. Just observing you read helps your children become aware of the value you place on reading.
- Read with and to your children: Young children as well as older children enjoy listening to stories read with and to them. Engage in joint storybook reading with younger children and older children who struggle with reading. Take turns reading a few pages. Also, consider setting aside a family reading time that is held on a regular basis. Each member of the family can read a portion of a book.

- Talk about reading materials with your children: Ask literal and inferential questions and have a conversation about the contents of the story. This can occur while you and your child are engaged in reading a story and also before you begin or at the completion of reading a story.
- Visit the library: Have your children select their own reading materials based on their individual interests. Frequently, a story time is offered at the local library, which can be a particularly enjoyable activity for young children.
- Acknowledge your child when he or she reads or shares information obtained from reading: Because children want to please their parents, your recognition and positive reaction will have a significant impact upon your children's desire to read.

Be aware of the many activities of modern society that compete for reading time—video games, television, sports, computers, etc. Parents today face a significant challenge to create a home and school environment that supports and instills a love for reading. However, your efforts will bring children the gift of a life-long habit of reading.

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