The Four Most Important Ways Parents Can Accelerate Their Son's and Daughter's Reading and Writing

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1. Provide opportunities for your child to become a reader/writer.

- Parental expectations utterly shape how much children read/write in the home. The amount of time a family spends around literacy and literate events (reading/writing) are key! Parents determine what is important to children.
- Read aloud to your child EVERY DAY. When your child is young (birth-5 or 6 years) read picture books aloud. Begin reading chapter books aloud to your child in the first grade.
- The more books your child "reads", the better he/she is able to read. The more your child "writes", the better he/she is able to write.
- Provide time for your child to read throughout the day
  While you prepare meals; while you drive the car; on the bus ride to school; every reading opportunity counts!
- LIMIT television, electronic games, etc.
- Foster your child's reading attitude by being excited about whatever he/she is reading. Do not discount materials that you do not value but your child is interested in (ex: newspapers, comics, etc.).
- Refrain from making reading/writing schoolwork (ex: "you have to read now").
- Create a family reading time (ex: after breakfast on the weekends), when all family members can read for a time and discuss what they are reading.
- Be a reading role model. Let your child SEE YOU READING!!!
- Give books for birthdays, holidays, etc. When your child asks you what you want for your own gift, tell him/her you want a book!
- Write notes to your child daily and send them in lunch boxes or leave them in places you know your child will find them. Ask your child to write you back and when he/she does make a HUGE deal about it (even if it is a scribble)!!!
- Encourage your child to write to the manufacturer of a product he/she loves, a famous person, favorite author, even the President! Many times your child will receive a response.

2. Create a Reader's/Writer's Identity for your child.

- Help your child see him/herself as a reader no matter what his/her present reading/writing ability is. Even if your child is a resistant reader, refer to him/her as a particular reader. For example: If your child says something like "I hate reading" respond with something like "You are a particular reader, you are always reading _____."
- It is very important how your child sees him/herself in reference to reading/writing. You do not want your child to think of him/herself as a "bad" reader/writer. If your child says something like "I hate writing or I am not good at writing", respond with something like "You are the kind of writer who writes stories first in your head." "Now we can work on putting them on paper."

3. Instill in Your Child a Positive Attitude Towards Work.

- People have two different attitudes about work. You are either born smart or how well a person does is determined by how hard you work. When children feel that how well they do is determined by how hard they work they will better understand the relationship between work and (school) success.
- Discuss your own personal work and projects at home. Let your children know and see how hard you work particularly on challenging and difficult tasks. Discuss your children's work at home as well.
- Create an image in your child that he/she is hardworking. "I see that you had to try this problem more than once before you could get it." Praise his/her efforts, not just test scores/final grades.
- Be astonished when your child does not truly do his/her best work. "Is this your best?"

4. Parental Expectations Matter Tremendously.

- "What you expect from your child (ren) is what you will get."
- Act as though you can't imagine that he/she would do a poor job on their work.
- Expect more. If your child can read/write 3 pages, he/she can read/write 9 pages.
- Above all else, impart to your child that he/she is capable of doing amazing things as a reader/writer!

Additional Resource for Parents

Calkins, Lucy, Lydia Bellino, *Raising Lifelong Learner: A Parent's Guide* (Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1997)