READING MATTERS

The research indicates that children are more interested in reading and are more likely to view the reading experience as enjoyable, when the socio-emotional climate is positive. These children are also more likely to develop a predisposition to read frequently and more broadly in later years. It was interesting to note that parents who believe that reading is a source of entertainment have children with more positive views about reading than do parents who emphasize the skills aspect of reading development at home.

What can you do to encourage your children to read?

1. Scout for things your children might like to read. Use their interests and hobbies as starting points.

2. Leave all sorts of reading materials including books, magazines, and colorful catalogues in conspicuous places around your home.

3. Notice what attracts your children's attention, even if they only look at the pictures. Then build on that interest; read a short selection aloud, or simply bring home more information on the same subject.

4. Let your children see you reading for pleasure in your spare time.

5. Take your children to the library regularly.

6. Present reading as an activity with a purpose—a way to gather useful information for, say, making paper airplanes, identifying a doll or stamp in your child's collection, or planning a family trip.

7. Encourage older children to read to their younger brothers and sisters. Older children enjoy showing off their skills to an admiring audience.

8. Play games that are reading-related e.g. spelling games played with letter tiles or dice, or board games that require players to read spaces, cards, and directions.

9. Perhaps over dinner, while you're running errands, or in another informal setting, share your reactions to things you read, and encourage your children to do likewise.

10. Set aside a regular time for reading in your family, independent of schoolwork—the 20 minutes before lights out, just after dinner, or whatever fits into your household schedule. As little as 10 minutes of free reading a day can help improve your child's skills and habits.
11. Read aloud to your child, especially a child who is discouraged by his or her own poor reading skills. The pleasure of listening to you read, rather than struggling alone, may restore your child's initial enthusiasm for books and reading.

12. Encourage your child to read aloud to you an exciting passage in a book, an interesting tidbit in the newspaper, or a joke in a joke book. When children read aloud, don't feel they have to get every word right. Even good readers skip or mispronounce words now and then.

13. On gift-giving occasions, give books and magazines based on your child's current interests.

14. Set aside a special place for children to keep their own books.

15. Introduce the bookmark. Remind your youngster that you don't have to finish a book in one sitting; you can stop after a few pages, or a chapter, and pick up where you left off at another time. Don't try to persuade your child to finish a book he or she doesn't like. Recommend putting the book aside and trying another.

16. Treat your children to an evening of laughter and entertainment featuring books! Many children (parents, too) regard reading as a serious activity. A joke book, a story told in riddles, or a funny passage read aloud can reveal another side of reading.

17. Extend your child's positive reading experiences. For example, if your child enjoyed a book about dinosaurs, follow up with a visit to a museum.

18. Not all reading takes place between the covers of a book. What about menus, road signs, food labels, and sheet music? Take advantage of countless spur-of-the-moment opportunities for reading during the course of your family's busy day.

**What won't work?**

- **Nagging.** Avoid lecturing about the value of reading and hounding a child who is not reading. Your child will only resent it.

- **Bribing.** While there's nothing wrong with rewarding your child's reading efforts, you don't want your youngster to expect a prize after finishing every book. Whenever possible, offer another book or magazine (your child's choice) along with words of praise. You can give other meaningful rewards on occasion, but offer them less and less frequently. In time, your child will experience reading as its own reward.

- **Judging your child's performance.** Separate school performance from reading for pleasure. Helping your child enjoy reading is a worthwhile goal in itself.

- **Criticizing your child's choices.** Reading almost anything is better than reading nothing. Although you may feel your child is choosing books that are too easy or that treat subjects too lightly, hide your disappointment.
• Reading at any level is valuable practice, and successful reading helps build confidence as well as reading skills. If your differences are simply a matter of personal taste, respect your child's right to his or her own preferences.

• **Setting unrealistic goals.** Look for small signs of progress rather than dramatic changes in your child's reading habits. Don't expect a reluctant reader to finish a book overnight. Maybe over the next week, with your gentle encouragement.

• **Making a big deal about reading.** Don't turn reading into a campaign. Under pressure, children may read only to please their parents rather than themselves, or they may turn around and refuse to read altogether.