



SUNSET
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Parent and Family Engagement



Launching young readers!

Reading Rockets

Reading with Your Child

By: **Bernice Cullinan, Brod Bagert**

With this overview, learn why reading aloud to children from an early age is so important, and how to make it a motivating and meaningful experience.

There is no more important activity for preparing your child to succeed as a reader than reading aloud together. Fill your story times with a variety of books. Be consistent, be patient, and watch the magic work.

It's no secret that activities at home are an important supplement to the classroom, but there's more to it than that. There are things that parents can give children at home that the classrooms cannot give.

Start young and stay with it

At just a few months of age, an infant can look at pictures, listen to your voice, and point to objects on cardboard pages. Guide your child by pointing to the pictures, and say the names of the various objects. By drawing attention to pictures and associating the words with both pictures and the real-world objects, your child will learn the importance of language.

Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the existence of printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become a part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.

Even after children learn to read by themselves, it's still important for you to read aloud together. By reading stories that are on their interest level, but beyond their reading level, you can stretch young readers' understanding and motivate them to improve their skills.

It's part of life

Although the life of a parent is often hectic, you should try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.

If you have more than one child, try to spend some time reading alone with each child, especially if they're more than 2 years apart. However, it's also fine to read to children at different stages and ages at the same time. Most children enjoy listening to many types of stories. When stories are complex, children can still get the idea and can be encouraged to ask questions. When stories are easy or familiar, youngsters enjoy these "old friends" and may even help in the reading.

Taking the time to read with your children on a regular basis sends an important message: Reading is worthwhile.

One more time

You may go through a period when your child favors one book and wants it read night after night. It is not unusual for children to favor a particular story, and this can be boring for parents. Keep in mind, however, that a favorite story may speak to your child's interests or emotional needs. Be patient. Continue to expose your children to a wealth of books and eventually they will be ready for more stories.

Talking about stories

It's often a good idea to talk about a story you are reading, but you need not feel compelled to talk about every story. Good stories will encourage a love for reading, with or without conversation. And sometimes children need time to think about stories they have read. A day or so later, don't be surprised if your child mentions something from a story you've read together.

Remember when you were very young

It will help, however, if we open our eyes to some things adult readers tend to take for granted. It's easier to be patient when we remember how much children do not know. Here are a few concepts we adults know so well we forget sometimes we ever learned them.

- There's a difference between words and pictures. Point to the print as you read aloud.
- Words on a page have meaning, and that is what we learn to read.
- Words go across the page from left to right. Follow with your finger as you read.
- Words on a page are made up of letters and are separated by a space.
- Each letter has at least two forms: one for capital letters and one for small letters.

These are examples of hieroglyphics.



Imagine how you would feel if you were trying to interpret a book full of such symbols. That's how young readers feel. But, a little patience (maybe by turning it into a puzzle you can solve together) is certain to build confidence.

Advertise the joy of reading!

Our goal is to motivate children to want to read so they will practice reading independently and, thus, become fluent readers. That happens when children enjoy reading. We parents can do for reading, what fast food chains do for hamburgers... ADVERTISE! And we advertise by reading great stories and poems to children.

We can help our children find the tools they need to succeed in life. Having access to information through the printed word is an absolute necessity. Knowledge is power, and books are full of it. But reading is more than just a practical tool. Through books we can enrich our minds; we can also relax and enjoy some precious leisure moments. With your help, your children can begin a lifelong relationship with the printed word, so they grow into adults who read easily and frequently whether for business, knowledge, or pleasure.

Adapted from: Helping Your Child Learn to Read. (1996). Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.