

Parents and Reading Committee

The ARA Parents and Reading Committee exists to ...

- Promote family literacy
- Assist parents in helping their children be more fluent, strategic, and motivated readers
- Offer appropriate literacy activities for children
- Assist Local Councils in developing and meeting their objectives

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

— *Emilie Buchwald*

What does NCLB say about parents and reading?

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) stresses shared accountability between schools and parents for high student achievement, including ...

- expanded public school choice and supplemental services,
- local development of parental involvement plans, and
- *building parents' capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children's academic achievement.*

Three decades of research about family literacy practices provide convincing evidence that children in "literacy-conscious" families have significant advantages in school.

- They are 18% more likely to recognize all letters, count to 20 or higher, and write their name by age 5.
- They are 20% more likely to read or pretend to read storybooks by age 5.
- They are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% on primary reading tests.
- They are more likely to score Proficient on 4th-grade literacy assessments.

*“One of the problems I found in teaching first grade
is the wide difference in preparedness for reading
that children exhibited from the first week of school.
I could usually guess which children had parents who
spent some time reading to them. They knew how to
handle books, they liked stories, they knew how to
listen actively, they had well-developed vocabularies,
and they were eager to begin reading by themselves.”*

*-- Ann Moulton Johnson,
teacher and author*

Students with involved parents are more likely to attend school regularly, earn high grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs, pass classes, earn credits, be promoted, graduate and go on to postsecondary education ... *no matter what their income or background.*



Children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more when schools, families, and community groups ***work together*** to support learning.



Even school age children still spend 70% of their waking hours outside the school setting. Schools and families need to recognize this tremendous learning opportunity.

**Schools *can't improve*
without the help
of parents.**



"Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow; his name is today."

— Gabriela Mistral

Parents benefit, too!

Involved parents develop:

- greater confidence in dealing with parenting issues and school issues;
- higher expectations of their children; and
- a greater likelihood of enrolling in continuing education to advance their own schooling.



"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

— *Frederick Douglass*

Why Don't Parents Get More Involved?

One study found that only 14% of elementary school Parent Centers are used “very frequently.” According to parent surveys, the top four reasons parents fail to become involved are:

▶ “I don't have time.”

▶ “I don't know what to do.”

{I'm not a teacher/I've never had any educational training/I don't want to do something wrong.}

Studies consistently show that, when schools and teachers tell parents specifically, step-by-step, what they can do to help their children do better in school, parents will try their best to do it.

▶ “I don't know why it's important.”

Almost all parents know that education is important to their children's success in life... but all too many don't understand that they, as parents , are also their children's first and most influential teachers—whether they want to be or not! The research actually suggests that parents simply don't realize the influence—and, therefore, the responsibility—they have in their children's education.

▶ “I don't speak English.”

Non-English speaking parents feel at a disadvantage in supporting their children's school work, and may have significantly different cultural norms and expectations that can affect the way they interact with schools and teachers.

Identifying the barriers is the first step to overcoming them!

And sometimes we are our own worst enemy!

According to surveys of school personnel ...

- Many of us still tend to see the parental role as *passive and home-based* – when in fact many parents are interested in more active roles.
- We often *fail to invite parent participation* in addressing school concerns, creating an atmosphere of “unwelcome.”
- We frequently organize “parent events” with more attention to *our own convenience* than to the needs of at-risk parents.

Involving parents isn't JUST a good idea . . . IT'S PART OF OUR JOB!

Title I, as reauthorized by NCLB in 2001, **defines parental involvement** as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student learning.

Schools must actively promote programs and activities to ensure ...

- ▶ that parents play an *active, integral role* in assisting their child's learning *at home and in school*; and
- ▶ that parents become *full partners* with teachers and school decision-makers

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

— Jacqueline Kennedy

Parents need to know what teachers know.

Learning to read is hard work – a learned skill, not a “biological awakening.”

Becoming a reader involves the development of important skills, including learning to:

- ▶ *use and listen to oral language*
- ▶ *listen to and respond to stories*
- ▶ *recognize and name the letters of the alphabet*
- ▶ *connect sounds to letters to figure out the "code" of reading*
- ▶ *recognize common words easily and automatically*
- ▶ *learn and use new words*
- ▶ *understand what is read or heard*

Parents need to know how to set appropriate expectations.

Realistic parental expectations – neither too high nor too low – are associated with high performance on cognitive tasks. Parents need to know that ...

- ▶ Preschool and kindergarten teachers set the stage for reading with critical early skills.
- ▶ First, second, and third grade teachers build fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills that children will use every day for the rest of their lives.
- ▶ Learning to read takes more practice than children get during the school day.

Parents need to believe, "I can do this!"

Teachers can help build parents' confidence about family literacy by teaching them to ...

- ❖ *share conversations with their child at meal times, in the car, and other "together" times.*
- ❖ *read to and/or with their child daily. Even parents who are not confident readers can be good listeners - and can usually help their child read primary- and intermediate-level text.*
- ❖ *take time to read "ordinary" text together -- cereal boxes, recipes, billboards, the sports page, and the comics ALL COUNT!*
- ❖ *advocate for their child by staying informed of his reading progress and assisting his teacher in his learning.*
- ❖ *be a reader and writer! Children learn values and habits from the people around them.*
- ❖ *keep books in the home. Home libraries consisting of "bargain books" and frequent visits to the public library help to create a climate in which family literacy can thrive.*

"I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library."

— Jorge Luis Borges

Bargain Books on a Budget

Library sales, garage sales, thrift shops – Encourage parents to look for books in these familiar settings.

Online books -- just download, print, and assemble

- ▶ Reading a-z – You can download 30 of their books for free! More than 1,200 books in 3 languages, with lessons, worksheets, and more than 1,500 flashcards.
- ▶ Learning Page – With free membership, you can download "Ewe Books" and "Mini Books" for more advanced readers at no charge. Some are available in Spanish.
- ▶ **Reproducible Books** – Reproducible blackline masters of easy books
- ▶ *Decodable Little Books* and *Little Books* by Christine E. McCormick
- ▶ *Sight Word Stories* and *More Sight-Word Stories* by Gloria Lapin
- ▶ *Stories for the Classroom and the Home* by Gloria Lapin
- ▶ *Beginning Reading for Older Students: 30 Reproducible High-Interest/Emergent Skills*
- ▶ *Fun Phonics Mini-Books* by Linda Ward Beech
- ▶ *26 Interactive Alphabet Mini-Books* by Mary Beth Spann
- ▶ *Reading Success Mini-Books* – Word Families , Vowels, Consonants , Sight Words
- ▶ *Keep Books ®* and *Libritos Míos* – 25¢/book from The Ohio State Literacy Collaborative

Reread, Reread, Reread! Make parents aware of the benefits of rereading favorite books.

*Family reading is more than just phonics,
vocabulary and comprehension.*

Encourage parents to use family reading time to focus on “the four As” –

*Attention, Appreciation,
Affection, and Acceptance*

– instead of “stressing out” over “the three Rs!”

"Really good literature spans every age group. Many of the best stories for children were written for adults, and children happened to like them. A word of caution—don't try to read aloud a book that you dislike or find boring. Just as enthusiasm is contagious, so is indifference. It's hard to fool children."

*-- Ann Moulton Johnson,
teacher and author*

Do Family Literacy Initiatives Really Make a Difference in Parent Behavior?

Recent studies of multicultural groups of low-income families participating in direct family literacy interventions found:

- ▶ 32% more intervention parents read to their child at least three times a week.
- ▶ 15% more intervention children owned more than ten books.
- ▶ Intervention parents were six times more likely to name reading books to their child as a favorite family activity.

Five Great Ways to Fail!

- ▶ Think of just one person as the “main” parent involvement person at your school.
- ▶ Think of parent involvement as something that only happens when parents are in your school building.
- ▶ Communicate with parents using ONLY newsletters, memos, newspaper articles, TV, other mass media. Person-to-person contact is much more effective for creating and changing attitudes – conferences, workshops, home visits, Open House, phone calls.
- ▶ Keep on thinking that children from 'broken' or 'disadvantaged' homes do not have the benefit of parent involvement. The extended family these children often have is amazing ... parents, step-parents, foster parents, grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, neighbors, family friends. We need to enlist the support of this network!
- ▶ Write parents off as apathetic and lazy when they fail to show up for programs you provide for them at school. The vast majority of parents want to help their children. We need to walk a mile in their shoes, respect what they already do to help their children, find out what they really need, and issue genuine invitations.

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work . . .

IN THE HOME:

- ▶ Remember why parents say they are not involved: don't have time, don't know what to do, don't know why it's important, don't speak English.
- ▶ In conferences and written communications, recognize and praise what parents are already doing to help their child.
- ▶ In conversations with parents, don't be afraid to share experiences you have had with your own children – it gets you out of your "expert role" and helps parents see you as a fellow parent.
- ▶ Enlist parents' help in sponsoring a "No TV Week" to encourage family reading and other literacy activities at home.
- ▶ Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires talking with someone at home.

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work . . .

AT SCHOOL:

- ▶ Remember the 3 "F"s for success—Food, Families, Fun.
- ▶ Provide child care for younger children.
- ▶ Offer incentives (door prizes, raffles, etc.).
- ▶ Get DADS, GRANDFATHERS, UNCLES, and OLDER BROTHERS involved with projects that call on their strengths.
- ▶ Try an “after-hours” read-in at school with parents, kids and local drop-in celebrities.
- ▶ Set up a parent center in your school stocked with resources to help parents and at-home learning activities.
- ▶ Write for parents at a 4th to 6th grade level . . . just in case.

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work...

IN THE COMMUNITY:

- ▶ Set up a program with local family physicians, clinics, and hospitals for contacting expectant mothers. Provide books and parenting materials before the baby is born.
- ▶ Work with other social service agencies that help parents.
- ▶ Remember that hard-to-reach parents can often be reached through their churches.

Link Parents to Powerful Sources of Information

There is a wealth of information for parents who want to help their children succeed ... if they know where to look for it!

Public libraries usually carry current issues of parenting magazines.

School Parent Centers should be stocked with pamphlets and brochures from organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), Reading is Fundamental (RIF), and the U. S. Department of Education (USDE).

Internet websites with information and tips about family literacy and other parenting issues include:

- ▶ <http://www.reading.org/InformationFor/Parents.aspx>
- ▶ <http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html>
- ▶ www.nncc.org
- ▶ <http://www.literacyconnections.com/Parents.php>
- ▶ www.parentinstitute.com/educator/resources
- ▶ <http://www.readinga-z.com/samples/index.html>
- ▶ www.learningpage.com
- ▶ <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents>
- ▶ <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids>
- ▶ <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp>

"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

— Walt Disney

The Reading Mother

You may have tangible wealth untold:

Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

Richer than I you can never be —

I had a mother who read to me.

—Strickland Gilliland

Acknowledgments

- ▶ “Eight Ways Parents Can Promote Reading at Home.” Marilyn Lopes. [www.nncc.org]
- ▶ “Family Environment and Family Literacy.” Melanie Kadlic & Mary Anne Lesiak. From Early Reading and Scientifically-Based Research Implications for Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs. National Association of State Title I Directors Conference. February 2003. [www.ed.gov]
- ▶ “I Had a Mother Who Read to Me.” Ann Moulton Johnson. *Ensign*, Feb. 1977, 76.
- ▶ The Parent Institute. [www.parentinstitute.com]
- ▶ Parental Involvement in Learning: Outcomes of Parent Involvement, Parental Involvement in Learning, Schools and Parental Involvement. National Institute for Literacy.[www.nifl.gov/nifl/facts/parental.html]
- ▶ www.literacyconnections.com
- ▶ www.readingrockets.org