



Santa Barbara School Districts

Book Corner

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Instilling the Joy of Reading in Your Child

Americans are reading less than ever, according to a recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts. Given the increasing tendency to schedule our children with activities, lessons of all sorts, play dates, and sports, fewer children are cultivating the life-long habit and joy of reading. What can a parent do to successfully encourage their child to read? Following are strategies and resources to help you instill the joy of reading.

The first thing you can do is to set a good example by letting your children see *you* reading for pleasure. Generally, children who grow up with books in the home and with parents who read frequently become good readers themselves. It is never too early to start reading to your child. Put baby books made of cloth in the crib with your infant. They will love to look at the pictures (and you may extend that nap time for a few extra minutes for an added bonus!). Make good literature available to your child. Lots of it! You do not necessarily need to buy a lot of books to achieve this goal. Though it is nice to have your own personal collection of favorites, you can also obtain a wealth of great reading material at the school and public library. Librarians are well-versed in both the old-time favorites as well as the hottest new titles and series. If it is difficult for you to spend time at the library to find books on the shelf, browse the online catalog from home. You can place a free request "hold" on children's books through the public library online catalog. When the books become available, you will receive an e-mail to pick up the books at the circulation desk. It's so simple!

During the pre-school years, read to your child every day. As your child grows older, continue reading together, asking your child to read to you, while you continue reading more advanced books to them. Make it part of your daily routine. Your child will love this special time with you and they will see that reading is a pleasurable activity.

There are so many wonderful books available! If you do not know what to select for your child, other than the tried and true titles from your childhood (an excellent place to start), ask a children's librarian or a bookstore clerk to help you. Both are excellent resources. It won't take long for your child to develop likes and dislikes. Keep trying new genres and ideas until you discover one your child likes. Don't be troubled if your child wants to hear the same book several times a day! Children love repetition and find it comforting to hear a book over and over. (I still remember—word for word—the text of a favorite book I thought I was "reading" aloud to my mom every night when I was three years old.)

In the next column, I will recommend books for various ages and provide some excellent online resources for children's literature. In the meantime, read, read, read!

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