

Adults Play a Pivotal Role

Reading is infectious! More and more families are taking the time to read together, and this is a key to helping our students succeed in school. We adults play a pivotal role. All of us - parents, stepparents, grandparents, extended family members, community volunteers, and faith community leaders – can create opportunities every day to bring words and pictures into the minds of the young people in our lives. This helps their brains develop, and that in turn helps them to learn new things more easily. Here are five tips for success:

- 1. Read to your baby.** Your baby (or grandbaby) loves to be held and to hear the sound of your voice. Start reading aloud every day as soon as your baby is born. Eventually you will notice that the infant's eyes will light up when looking at a picture. Your words and soothing tone of voice will actually stimulate healthy brain development. Believe it or not, after a few short years when kindergarten begins, your child will be able to thrive because of early reading. Before and after naptimes are great options for reading.
- 2. Head to the library.** Your local library has fun resources and programs for all ages: toddlers, preschoolers, elementary age kids, teens and adults. Visits to the library will help your children discover that there is a safe, pleasant place for them to relax and discover new worlds through interesting books and magazines. If there are no public libraries in your area, local school libraries can be a great alternative.
- 3. Make reading at home a family habit.** Kids tend to do better when there are regular routines at home, and making reading part of your family routine will help them to see reading as a normal part of everyday life. Some families read stories at dinnertime or just before bedtime. The more books and magazines you have around home, the more likely your child will be to pick up something and read it. By the same token, the more they see you reading, the more likely they will be to pick up the habit.
- 4. Cook with your child to help develop an appetite for reading.** Learning to read and follow recipes can be fun, especially if the end results taste good! Think of involving your children in all the steps: writing the grocery list, calculating prices at the grocery store, reading labels for nutritional value. Some families compile family cookbooks or recipe boxes. Making up recipes – soups or cookies, for example - can be a fun way to learn what flavors go well together in addition to a creative way to use leftovers. Children can help record the recipes.
- 5. Be silly: sing songs, tell stories, and make up rhymes.** Kids love silly rhymes and songs. They also love stories about all types of things. Telling stories helps stimulate creativity; for example, animals can be characters with their own voices and opinions. Making up rhymes with your children can happen anywhere and helps kids to learn that words can be fun.

If you have a child in your life, pick a time next week – and every week - to do something together related to reading. Creating time and space in your life for reading pays off in the long run by helping kids to succeed in school and in life.