



Special Connections

A newsletter connecting our Special Kids, Families and Schools

Helping Children to Love Reading

By Gretchen Hallett M. Ed.

Of all the things parents can do to reinforce learning, helping children learn to love reading may be the most important.

Reading is the foundation of a successful education. Children improve this important skill by reading, and reading, and reading some more. As a parent or family member, you can help children to learn to read and to love reading by reading to them. Children practice and enjoy reading by using 'The Shared Book' concept.

The Shared Book concept was developed several years ago by researchers and educators in Australia. They were very concerned that their students were not reading to the expected levels. Instead of looking at what was not working, they focused their attention on what successful readers were doing right.

They found that most successful readers came from homes in which books and reading were a part of everyday life.

The most significant factor that successful children had in common was the experience of being read to or the 'bedtime story'. Sharing a book with a parent or family member is a proven way to increase a child's reading and love of reading.

What is a 'Shared Book' experience?

An adult and a child (or children) sit close together while they share in the reading and rereading of favorite stories, rhymes, poems, and songs.

Children learn that reading is a pleasurable and memorable experience. Rather than learning to read through sounds and sight words, this experience introduces children to reading through reading.

Some steps to help you enjoy a 'Shared Book' with your child.

Step 1

Get close together.

Begin by showing the cover of the book and talking about what this story might be about based on the title.

Read the author's name and talk about why he might have written this book.

Read the illustrator's name and discuss the pictures in the book.

Talk about the colors used and ask the child to tell you what they think about the characters based on the pictures. Talk about how they think the book will end.

The aim is to involve children, stir their imagination, and get them to want to read the story.

Read the story straight through, with as few stops as possible.

Step 2

Re-read the story to the child.

Now the child can participate in the reading with you.

You may ask questions about ideas and information as you read the book. Ask the child what they think will happen next as you read.

Discuss the pictures in more detail based on what you learn as you read the words.

Bring the story to life for the child.

Step 3 Independent Reading

Now the student reads or retells the story to you.

Continue to talk about the main ideas and ask questions.

When choosing books to share, look for stories that have rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.

You set the example. Children who see their parents reading usually grow up to be readers themselves. Actions speak louder than words. Talk with your children about why you are reading – perhaps for information, or you may be reading just for fun.

Reading aloud to children of all ages is one of the best ways to help them develop a love of books. It can also be a very special time to spend with your family.

When we read to children...children become better readers.

Gretchen Hallett, M Ed, currently provides training to school districts across the country in Family Support as a Success For All Educational Specialist. She got her start working with Fred Rogers in Mr Roger's Neighborhood as the voice of Daniel Stripe and Tiger. She was the Public Relations Director for Better Homes and Gardens magazine. Prior to her current position, she was Director of Parent Involvement in Polk County, Florida. Gretchen believes parent involvement is essential to a child's successful education.

Cy-Fair ISD

Should you have any questions regarding your child and/or special education services, you may contact the Diagnostician or High School Support Specialist at your child's campus.

There may be times when you need to contact the district's special education office.

The contact information is as follows:

Jane Flinn, Director of Special Education
10300 Jones Road, Houston TX 77065
Phone: 281-897-6416
Fax: 281-897-6403
Email: jane.flinn@cfisd.net -or-

Nadine Fidler, Assistant Superintendent
Phone: 281-897-6416
Fax: 281-897-6403
Email: nadine.fidler@cfisd.net

ChildFind

The Cy-Fair ISD provides support services for students with disabilities residing within the district. Through Child Find efforts, eligible children, birth to 21, may be identified for needed services. Anyone who has a child or knows of a child who may qualify for services should call the Special Education Department (281-897-6400) or the child's home campus for information.

Education Service Center

The state of Texas is divided into 20 regions served by Education Service Centers. Our Education Service Center is Region 4 and is located in Houston. Region 4 has staff trained in special education who may be a resource to parents. The telephone number of the special education department at Region 4 is 713-462-7708.

"The next issue in November will deal with special need trusts, guardianship and SSI."

Prioritize From the Parent Perspective

By: Ginger Sewell

For many of us the transition from summer vacation to school starting is less than a gentle one. Suddenly everything seems to be a top priority as we rush from one activity to another. This causes us to enjoy our children less. It is helpful for our children to see us schedule our lives, as well as theirs, effectively as well as efficiently. To do this there are two things we need to think about. First, we need to set some personal goals. Then we need to prioritize our activities based on those goals. What do we want our children to learn and to remember about their childhood and school experiences?

Ginger Sewell is the parent of a young adult with a disability and a former Director of Special Education. Currently an educational consultant, she is the recipient of both the Parent of the Year and Professional of the Year awards from the Learning Disabilities Association

It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend

by Richard Lavoie

It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend will empower you to step in and assist your child with practical solutions to their social skills problems. Every learning disability has a social component. These children are often ridiculed or ostracized for their differences. A successful social life is immeasurably important to a child's happiness, health, and development. Rick Lavoie has provided practical strategies to help learning disabled children navigate the treacherous waters of their school, home and community and achieve social success in his book, *It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend*. His bestselling PBS videos, including *How Difficult Can This Be?: The F.A.T. City Workshop*, and his sellout lectures and workshops have made Rick one of the most popular and respected experts in the field.

Perhaps the most important component of this book is the author's compassion. It comes through on every page that Rick feels the intensity with which children long for friends and acceptance, the exasperation they can cause in others, and the joy they feel in social connection. *It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend* offers proven methods and step-by-step instructions for helping the learning disabled child through almost any social situation, including choosing a friend, going on a play date, conducting a conversation, reading body language, overcoming shyness and low self-esteem, keeping track of belongings, living with siblings, and adjusting to new settings and situations, surrounding a wide variety of learning disabilities, including ADD and other attentional disorders, anxiety, paralinguistic, visual-spatial disorders, and executive functioning.