

The Rewards of Reading
by Sharon Moritz, Principal
G. T. Norman Elementary School

March was Reading Month. The students at G. T. Norman Elementary read MORE than 15,000 books during the month of March. Their incentive to read that many books was to see Mr. Vander Goot, Assistant Principal, KISS A PIG and that they did!! The enthusiastic students gathered on the front lawn at Norman Elementary and cheers went out as Mr. Vander Goot kissed that pig! We focus on reading EVERYDAY at our school, but it is great to challenge students to work towards a goal to see JUST how many books they CAN read during a month!

Here are some ideas to give you as parents some ideas how YOU can help your child at home with reading.

The Rewards of Reading. You know how important it is to read your children. Children whose families read with them do better in school. And the bonds that you make with your children when you read with them help them feel loved, comforted, and secure. Like most families, you want to read with your children, but somehow days can go by without you sitting down with them and opening a book. The key is to make it a priority. Here are several suggestions to help your children improve their reading skills.

Fifteen minutes a day can change their lives. You may be surprised to know that educators recommend just 15 minutes a day of reading, as a minimum. Like exercise, of course longer sessions are even more beneficial.

Always have a book on hand, no matter where you are. Keep a small book in your purse or have books in a book bag that you keep in your car. Make sure that you and your children always have something to read when time is available.

Focus on their interests. Reading with you should be for pleasure, so get books from the school or our public library that features characters or topics they're really interested in. It doesn't matter if they're reading a book about NASCAR or NASA – either way, they're reading!

Ask them questions while you're reading. Everyone is a better “listener” when they know they're going to be asked questions about what they're listening to. Don't make it a test, but do keep their interest going by asking them questions about what's being read. Get their brains working. Don't just ask who the characters are. Instead, ask questions like “Why do you think he did that?” “What would you do if you were in that situation?” or “What do you think will happen next?”

Be a patient listener. It can be difficult listening to your children struggle while reading. But think how terribly important it is that they succeed. Don't jump in and finish the sentence for them, no matter how slowly they're reading. Instead, encourage their efforts and let them see that you're proud they're reading, and not annoyed that it's taking so long.

Get everyone involved. The more people who read with your children, the more they'll see that reading is important. Talk with the other adults and older children in your household and let them know that reading with each child is going to be a daily activity, and that you need them to participate.

But first...Kids make time for a lot of extras in their day. So do parents. TV shows, computer games, and going online can eat up surprising amounts of time. Read first-before the computer goes on or a favorite TV show comes on.

There's something special about owning a book. Libraries and garage sales offer "well loved" books for sale, often for as little as 25 cents. Keep spare change on hand so you can pick up some great reads for your children when you see a sale. When birthdays or holidays come around, make sure there's always a good book wrapped up and waiting.

Yes, you're busy. Yes, your children are, too. But reading with your children really needs to be part of your day, every day! Fifteen minutes a day is a small investment that will generate enormous rewards!