

# ELEMENTARY edition

A PUBLICATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS

## How to raise a reader

Reading is inarguably the most important skill children will learn during their elementary years. In fact, every academic subject relies heavily upon students having a solid foundation in reading. When children learn to read well, the rest of their learning comes easier. With education and practice, children can learn to read and eventually transition to reading to learn—as well as reading for fun.

Research has shown that reading with your children for even a few minutes a day can help them learn basic reading skills more quickly. Unfortunately, finding the time to read can be a challenge with so many things competing for kids' attention, including extra-curricular activities, round-the-clock children's television stations, and even portable computers and DVD players.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children's use of TV, movies, and video or computer games be limited to no more than one or two hours per day. By following this guideline, parents can help their youngsters find more time to read. Here are some other suggestions to incorporate reading into your daily lives. Before you know it, you'll have to pry books out of your children's hands at the dinner table.

**Encourage by example.** If parents want children to have good manners, it's important that parents display good manners themselves. The same can be said for raising a reader—reading should be for everyone, not just the children. When parents and the rest of the

family read regularly—for enjoyment, for information, or to perform a task (e.g., following a recipe, programming the DVR from instructions)—they are being positive role models and showing that reading relates to all areas of life.

▶ To help make reading second nature for your family, make sure there's a wide variety of reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.) available throughout the house.

▶ Also, bring a bag full of reading materials with you so you and your child can read during down times while waiting for appointments or between scheduled activities.

▶ Try setting a specific reading time (right after dinner, before bed, or Sunday mornings) when everyone in the family reads. Kick it up a notch by hosting a reading marathon where everyone in the family is challenged to read a minimum number of pages or books over the course of a month. Offer prizes such as a gift card to a bookstore.

▶ Use your child's teacher and librarian for book ideas. Often the key to inspiring a reluctant reader is to find a book that interests them. Better yet, find a series or author that a child

likes and encourage him/her to read them all (or most).

**Read aloud.** Whether your household is made up of beginner, novice, or expert readers—or even all three—reading aloud all types of materials, from the newspaper to poetry, can help everyone learn about written language, the world around them, and the connections between spoken and written words. Additionally, reading aloud introduces listeners and readers alike to new vocabulary words and ideas. Early education experts say that reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for reading success. Need help finding the time to read aloud?

▶ Read aloud as a family by saving a half hour before bed or try reading aloud during breakfast—it could be from a book, magazine, or the day's newspaper. Family members should choose their own age-appropriate reading materials when it's their turn to read aloud. Be sure to offer help to new readers so they don't get discouraged.

▶ Host a family book night where everyone votes on a book to read and then takes turns reading aloud by paragraphs or pages.

▶ Make reading a game. Once a

week challenge everyone in the family to find an interesting, far-fetched, or wacky article online or in the newspaper. At the end of the week have everyone read their article aloud. Then vote on which family member found the most interesting or bizarre story—don't forget to award the winner with a zany prize.

**Make reading fun.** It helps to get children to think of reading as a useful, fun activity—not a chore. "Finding the right book or topic can turn a reluctant reader into an avid reader," says a librarian with The New York Public Library. "The key is finding books or magazines that are emotionally engaging and relevant to their lives."

▶ Target children's interests. If your child enjoys sports, there are any number of sports-related books (fiction and nonfiction), sports magazines, and even articles on the Web available to read. Maybe you have a comic-book lover at home. Try introducing him or her to age-appropriate graphic novels. These books have illustrations and text, often with sophisticated visuals and storylines. Is your child a budding musician or a music fan? The amount of music-related reading material is unlimited—musician/band biographies, song lyrics, books about instruments, music history, etc. If your children need help channeling their interests into reading materials, ask your local librarian or bookstore clerk for advice.

▶ Play book-into-movie critic. Read a book as a family then rent the movie based on the book. Discuss whether the book or movie was better and why.



# Partners in Reading: Parents, Students and Schools

Reading skills are the foundation of learning throughout a child's education. Teachers use class time to build and strengthen those skills, but parents can assist in the effort by encouraging reading at home. Each year, Schalmont elementary schools hold a variety of events that make it easier for parents, students and schools to become partners in reading

## Reading: The Earlier, the Better

All three Schalmont elementary schools offer a preschool story hour for children who aren't yet old enough to enter kindergarten. "The program helps children build early language and early readiness skills. It also helps children get familiar with the school and meet some upcoming classmates and teachers," said Colette McKelvey, a speech therapist.

McKelvey helps run story hour at Mariaville and Woestina. At these two schools, preschool story hour involves the school librarian, Jane Azzaro, reading a few theme-related stories and McKelvey following up with a language-related, hands-on project. The project helps build early language skills such as following directions and recognizing colors, shapes, textures, and sizes.

Parents' partnership in the effort to build reading skills extends beyond just bringing their preschoolers to story hour. The participants can take home bags of books for parents to read with them at home. "The bags provide suggestions and activities – all prepared and ready to go," said McKelvey.

## An Opportunity for Reward, Relaxation

Sometimes the schools turn opportunities for reading into a fun competition. Woestina has celebrated Parents as Reading Partners Month for many years. In this program, participating parents and students read together each day and keep track of how much time they spend reading on a special calendar.

"We want students to see that both their parents and the school value reading," said Woestina Principal Shari Lontrato. "Everybody likes the program, especially the parents, and the kids get a little competitive."

Prizes are awarded based on students' reading calendars. In each class, the student who reads the most for a week is recognized and can participate in an ice cream party at the end of the month. The class with the highest total reading time can earn a pizza party. This year, the second-graders came in on top with 7,751 minutes of reading in the month.

"It's really hectic in households. This program gives parents some quiet time with their children. Reading together also makes children more apt to read on their own," said Lontrato.

## Inspiring a Lifelong Love of Reading – and Writing

Jefferson students recently received a lesson on writing from James Preller, the author of more than 80 books for elementary children. He spoke about what a writer does, where ideas come

# mark your Calendar

## May

- 1 Mariaville – Bingo Night
- 4-8 Grade 2 Swim Program
- 4 Woestina – Walk for Hunger, 3 p.m.
- 5 Mariaville – Staff Appreciation Breakfast, 8 a.m.
- Woestina – Staff Appreciation Luncheon
- Jefferson – Grades 4/5 Concert, 7 p.m. @ HS
- 6 Mariaville – Book Fair Preview
- 7-8 Mariaville – Book Fair
- 7 Woestina – Kindergarten Screening, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- 8 Woestina – Wacky Night, 6-8 p.m.
- 11-15 Grade 2 Swim Program
- 11 Board of Ed. Meeting, 7 p.m. @ MS LGI
- 12 Jefferson – PTO meeting, 7 p.m.
- Mariaville – PTO Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- 13-15 Woestina – Book Fair
- 13 Jefferson – Grade 2 "Informance," 7 p.m.
- Woestina – PTO Meeting, 6 p.m.
- 19 **SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE, 6 a.m. – 9 p.m. @ HS**
- Hockey Association Cookout, 1 – 7:30 p.m. @ HS
- 22-25 **NO SCHOOL – Memorial Day**
- 26 Board of Ed. Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- 27 All – Grade 5 Friendship Games
- 29 Mariaville – PTO Ice Cream Social, 2 p.m.
- Mariaville – Science Fair, 7 p.m.

## June

- 3 All – Grade 6 Orientation, 6:30 p.m. @ MS
- 4 Jefferson – DARE Graduation, 9:30 a.m. @ HS
- 8 Board of Ed. Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- 10 Jefferson – K-3 Field Day
- 12 Jefferson – Grade 3 Flag Day Assembly
- Mariaville – Yearbook Distribution, 2 p.m.
- Woestina – Talent Show, 1 p.m.
- 16 Woestina – K-5 Field Day, 9 a.m. – Noon
- School Picnic & Volunteer Reception, Noon – 3 p.m.
- 18 Jefferson – Grades 4/5 Kickball Tournament
- 22 Board of Ed. Meeting @ MS LGI, 7 p.m.
- Elementary Report Cards Distributed
- 23 **Elementary ½ Day of School**
- Woestina – Grade 5 Graduation, 9:30 a.m.
- 24 **Elementary ½ Day of School**
- Jefferson – Grade 5 Moving Up Ceremony, 9:30 a.m. @ HS
- Jefferson – PTO Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
- Mariaville – Grade 5 Moving Up Ceremony, 7 p.m.
- Woestina – Grades K-4 Moving Up Ceremony, 10 a.m.
- 25 **LAST DAY OF SCHOOL**

from, how an author works with an idea, and how writing comes from life experiences. The author's visit was coordinated by the In-school Programs Committee and paid for by the Jefferson PTO, which has helped bring in several published authors over the years.

"The opportunity to have authors speak about their writings and relate them to work in the classroom is a huge benefit for our students. They see that authors go through the same process of struggles and successes that they do," said Bini.

A parent could build off of such an activity in many ways. One way might be to take a student to visit the library or a book store to find the author's books. Another way might be to read the books with the student or, for independent readers, just ask the student what the books are about and which parts are his or her favorites. A parent could also ask a student to share recent writing projects and then, as a reader of the student's work, offer positive feedback.

These are just a few of the ways in which Schalmont parents, students and elementary schools can be partners in reading. For more ideas, contact your child(ren)'s teacher and/or school librarian.

Don't forget to sign up to receive the latest elementary school news through Schalmont's School News Notifier at

[www.schalmont.org!](http://www.schalmont.org!)

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Jefferson Elementary  
355-1342  
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Assistant Principal, Beth Bini  
Mariaville Elementary  
864-5411  
Principal, Brian Hunt  
Woestina Elementary  
887-5600  
Principal, Shari Lontrato  
Schalmont Central School  
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