

# THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LINK

A newsletter for parents about what school library programs have to offer.

[www.theschoollibrarylink.com](http://www.theschoollibrarylink.com)



## The School Library Link to Creating Independent Readers

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The beginning of the school year is a great time to reassess how well we are doing at encouraging independence in our young readers. Being an “independent reader” is a two-fold process:

- 1) Our children must become *proficient* readers (with their skills in decoding and understanding words) and
- 2) They must become *enthusiastic* readers (voluntarily seeking out new and interesting forms of reading).

If children aren't proficient, they won't become confident readers. It is very easy to get discouraged if the act of reading is too difficult. Proficiency only happens with practice, practice, practice. However, if children aren't *enthusiastic* readers, their motivation to read on their own just isn't there. Without enthusiasm, practice doesn't happen. Where classroom and reading teachers teach children *how* to read, school librarians teach children *why* to read; enthusiasm for reading then supports proficiency, and that's where the school library comes in.

A school library is truly a wonderful place to foster enthusiasm for reading in children. It is



unlike a bookstore and unlike the public library in that regard. Each school library collection is developed especially for that school's population in mind. School librarians spend many hours collecting professional reviews, reading books, analyzing their student population, and especially listening to their students to find and purchase the books that will foster enthusiastic reading in their students. In that sense, no two school libraries are alike. School library collections are created and changed to fit each student population. We want students to go to their school library and say, “Hey, that's *just* what I was looking for!”

### Supporting Proficiency in Children

There are many ways that parents can support their child's reading proficiency.

- 1) Read aloud to your children often. Reading aloud should begin in the toddler years, so that children hear more words, see pages turning, and notice that a story accompanies those words. Older children benefit from being read to as well. Children can learn new

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vocabulary, listen to how parents use inflection to tell a story, and most importantly, witness reading being modeled by their most important adult.

- 2) Help your child find books they can read easily without getting frustrated. Following the “Five Finger Rule” is a good practice. If your child reads a page in a book and more than five words on the page are difficult, then that book is probably too hard for them to read comfortably.



novels, and nonfiction are three genres that often get reluctant readers excited about reading. They also seem to attract the statement “That’s not real reading.” Anything your child reads enthusiastically will help them read more, and then read for life.

- 3) Let your child attempt something “too hard” every once in a while. Many times carrying home that Harry Potter novel just feels good, even though it may be violating the “five finger rule.” Experimentation in reading choices is part of the process, and it helps your child begin to figure out what they like to read, what they can read, and how to work up to that big book that all the other kids are reading.

### Fostering Reading Enthusiasm

Parents also play a big role in giving children freedom to get excited about books.

- 1) Encourage children to read whatever *they like*. Pleasure reading should be just that: pleasurable. If your child begins a book and doesn’t like it, give him or her the permission to put it down and find one they do.
- 2) Withhold judgment about books you may not care for, but that your child is really excited about. Humorous fiction, graphic

## Web Sites to Help Parents Raise Independent Readers!

“Helping your Child Become a Reader,” a booklet by the U.S. Department of Education  
<http://1.usa.gov/bw9cwl>

Scott Foresman Family Times Reading Booklets,  
<http://bit.ly/pELuC9>

Links to Reading and Literacy Skills,  
<http://1.usa.gov/b9oZn7>

Breaking the Sound-It-Out Barrier,  
<http://bit.ly/pqiCre>

Succeed to Read,  
<http://www.succeedtoread.com/>



**Watch for the next issue: *The School Library Link to Picture Books for All Ages***