

# INFS 431

# LITERATURE AND SERVICES FOR

# CHILDREN

Session 12 – Promoting Reading for Children

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2014/2015 – 2016/2017

# Session Overview

Reading promotion is designed to generate and sustain children's interest in reading. For us in Africa where reading is not part of our culture it is especially important to get children interested in reading to grow up to become lifelong learners. A child's contact with books is at three levels. These are the home, the school and the library. Reading promotion takes several forms. There are activities that are designed to promote reading in the home, the school and in the library.

# Session Objectives

By the end of this session, the student should be able to:

- Understand the importance of reading promotion especially in Africa
- Identify the key challenges to reading in our parts of the world
- Understand the requirements for reading promotion
- List the activities that may be undertaken to promote reading at home
- Identify the responsibility for reading promotion in the school
- Describe how reading may be promoted in the public/community library

# Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the Session are:

- Topic One: Requirements for Reading Promotion
- Topic Two: Factors that Make it Necessary for Reading Promotion
- Topic Three: Promoting Reading at Home
- Topic Four: Promoting Reading in the School
- Topic Five: Promoting Reading in the Public/Community Library

# Reading List



Topic One:

# REQUIREMENTS FOR READING PROMOTION



# Pre-requisites for the Promotion of Reading

There are certain pre-requisites for the promotion of reading.

- These include
  - provision of books and the environment;
  - provision of time to read;
  - provision of opportunity to talk about what has been read;
  - provision of specific activities that will stimulate reading.

# Provision of Books and the Environment

For children to develop and sustain the habit of reading,

- need for the availability of regular and varied supply of reading materials
  - lack of these may result in a relapse of the habit that have been acquired.

Similarly,

- absence of a conducive atmosphere for reading will not help sustain the habit of reading
  - Solitude, good lighting, good ventilation, comfortable seating



# Provision of Time to Read

It is important to set a time for reading

- If time is not made available for reading,
  - the child's reading activities may be haphazard
  - may result in loss of interest in reading.
  - a regular time for reading helps children learn to make time for reading

# Provision of Opportunity to Discuss what has been Read

Providing opportunity for discussing what the child has read goes a long way to help sustain the habit of reading.

- Children are likely to stop reading if they know that nobody is interested in what they are reading.
- Discussing what children read with them offers the opportunity
  - to monitor what children are reading
  - how they are reading.
- You are, therefore, able to correct false or wrong impressions they get from books they read.

# Provision of Specific Activities to Sustain Reading

Laying out specific activities to be undertaken during reading helps to sustain interest in reading.

- Varying activities in the reading exercise will help children to read for longer periods without becoming bored and distracted.
- Activities include
  - setting work based on what has been read;
  - encouraging children to write their own stories;
  - reading to the child; and
  - letting the child also read to the parent or adult involved in the reading activity of the child.

Topic Two:

# **FACTORS THAT MAKE IT NECESSARY FOR READING PROMOTION**

# Introduction

There are four main factors that militate against reading.

- These are
  - socio-economic conditions;
  - economic activities of parents;
  - educational background of parents;
  - the cultural background of children

# Socio-economic Conditions

Poverty in the home will not make it possible for parents to buy books for their children when they can scarcely find food for the home.

- Books under such circumstances are considered a luxury that cannot be afforded.
- Again living conditions at home may make it impossible to create the ambience that is required for reading.
- For example,
  - children who live in compound houses or
  - live with the extended family
- may face the problems of
  - noise-making,
  - poor ventilation,
  - poor lighting, and
  - lack of a writing table and chair to use for reading activities.

# Economic Activities of Parents

Parents who work in high profile organizations are always on the move

- They hardly see their children
  - to share quality time with them and
  - to monitor what they are reading or
  - take part in their reading activities.

Similarly,

- transportation problems with traffic congestions compel parents to leave home early and come home late
  - leaving children to contend with household chores that
  - leaving them with little or no opportunity to read.

# Educational Background of Parents

The educational background of parents plays a significant role in inculcating the habit of reading in children.

- It is universally acknowledged that children whose parents are educated tend to acquire the habit of reading.
- The parents recognize the need for reading and, therefore, tend to keep books in the house.
- Conversely, children whose parents are not educated tend not to acquire the habit of reading because their parents are not interested in education.
- They, therefore, hardly keep books at home nor do they read for the children to recognize the need for reading.



# Cultural Background

Reading is an alien culture to us in Africa. Children, therefore, do not naturally take to reading.

- As a result many children find it difficult to acquire the habit of reading.
- Children in Western countries naturally take to reading because it is part of their culture.
- Parents and teachers in our parts of the world encourage children to read textbooks.
- Very little or no premium is put on reading for leisure.
- Parents will buy textbooks readily more than they will buy storybooks for their children thereby
- encouraging a culture of utilitarian reading.

Topic Three:

# PROMOTING READING AT HOME



# Introduction

- It is imperative that facilitators of reading in children,
  - teachers,
  - parents and
  - librarians,
- should promote the habit of reading by children.
- This is based on the fact that when a child reads one book and develops a taste for reading, he would want to read on.
- the child will likely relapse in the acquisition of the habit of reading
  - If there is a break
  - follow up with other books and activities do not come
- Again, when a child learns to read and continues to read he develops his reading speed and is able to transfer that reading speed to other texts.

# The Need for Reading Promotion at Home

- Important for parents to promote reading at home
  - prepares the child for the reading that he or she will be doing when he or she starts school.
- Important for parents to read to their children because
  - children use what they hear to make sense of the world and
  - to understand what is happening in the world around them.
- Books, therefore, become a springboard for children and parents to discuss real life experiences and to clarify issues.

# The Need for Reading Promotion at Home(Cont.)

- When parents read to children they see values like
  - courage,
  - honesty
  - loyalty
- played out in the stories that have been read to them and
- They realise that they can share in those values.
- By reading to them children build up a store of memories of the warmth and closeness of their early life which
- They also pass unto their children.
- The child also hears what reading sounds like, and he carries that echo in his head as he himself reads alone.

# The Need for Reading Promotion at Home(Cont.)

- When parents read to children they are assured that
  - they are loved,
  - they are important,
  - they are safe and secure.
- It also tells children that the parents are always there for them and they care for them.
- Again when children are read to they are able to understand more complex books than when they read on their own.
- Until children are 10-12 years old they enjoy what they hear better than when they read on their own.

# The Need for Reading Promotion at Home(Cont.)

- So reading aloud to them creates the desire to read in them.
- It also creates a bond of love between parents and child
- Becomes part of the family's heritage.
- Children should also be encouraged to read aloud to the family.
- By reading aloud events from the story can then be related to everyday life.

# Activities to Promote Reading at Home

To encourage children to read, there are a number of activities that must be undertaken.

- **Firstly** it is important to keep a library or collection of books in the house
  - buy or borrow from the library for your children.
  - Use their interests and hobbies as a starting point in gathering reading materials for your collection.
  - The books should be read to them and not just kept for the sake of keeping books.



# Activities to Promote Reading at Home(Cont.)

- **Secondly**, leave all sorts of reading materials –
  - books
  - magazines,
  - colourful catalogues
  - brochures
- in conspicuous places around the house.
- For example in the hall, you can have a box or basket of books
- by the arm chair so that books would be within easy reach.

# Activities to Promote Reading at Home(Cont.)

- **Thirdly**, choose books that your child likes
  - focus on what attracts your child's attention;
  - that will make him more interested in the reading activity.
- For example, if your child likes cars, get him books that have pictures of cars.
- The child will have something that he can relate with and so he will show more enthusiasm for reading.
- Read a short selection aloud or simply bring more information on the same subject.

# Activities to Promote Reading at Home(Cont.)

- Let your child see you reading for pleasure in your spare time.
  - It would make your child to begin to emulate you.
- Take your child to the library regularly and explore the materials there together.
  - Let the librarian suggest books and magazines your child might want to enjoy.

**Set a special time for reading so that it becomes a habit.**

- **Habits they say are hard to break.**
- **Once the child knows that there is a specific time for the reading activity, he or she will be anticipating the activity so he is always prepared for it.**
- **He or she will not allow anything else to interfere with that routine.**
- **This special time for reading should be outside the time set for school work in the house.**
- **Such a time may be 20 minutes before the child goes to bed or just after dinner;**
- **or whatever fits into the normal routine of the household.**
- **Even 10 minutes of free reading each day can help improve the child's skills and habits.**

## **Read at bedtime for pre-school children.**

- **It helps them to sleep easily.**
- **A poem or nursery rhyme or a short story is appropriate.**
- **Read the same book over and over again.**
- **Read to the child for 15 minutes.**
- **Children's attention span is limited so care should be taken not to read for too long else the child's attention and focus will shift to other things and it will be difficult to get the child back to the reading activity.**

## **Talk about the story as you read to the child.**

- **If the story is set in the city talk about how the pictures of buildings look like those in your locality.**
- **If it is about a dog relate it to a dog in your area.**
- **In the course of reading if the child does not understand anything explain it.**

## **Get others to read to the child.**

- **This is to assure the child that other people also enjoy reading so**
- **the child will grow up to understand that reading is an integral part of everyday life.**
- **In this instance encourage older siblings to read to their younger brothers and sisters.**
- **Older siblings enjoy showing off their skills to their admiring younger siblings.**

## **Present reading as a purposeful activity;**

- **a way to gather useful information for say**
- **making paper airplanes;**
- **identifying a doll or**
- **stamp in your child's collection; or**
- **planning a family trip.**
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## **Play games that are reading related with the child.**

- Get spelling games played with letter tiles or dice; or
- board games that require the players to read spaces, cards and directions.

## **Read aloud to your child.**

- This is particularly important for a child who is discouraged by his/her own poor reading skills.
- The pleasure of listening to the parent reading may restore the child's enthusiasm for books and reading.
- Let your child read aloud to you an exciting passage in a book, or an interesting titbit in the newspaper or magazine, or a joke in a joke book.
- When they read aloud don't expect them to get every word right.

Many children and by extension parents too, see reading as a serious activity.

- Treat your child/children to an evening of laughter and entertainment using books.
- A joke book; a story told in riddles or a funny passage read aloud can reveal another side of reading.
- Extend the child's positive reading experiences.
- For example,
- if your child enjoyed a book about prehistoric animals follow up by taking him/her to a natural history museum.
- Or to the zoo if he/she is fascinated by a book read about wild animals.



Give other special incentives to your child to encourage him/her in reading.

- For example
- You can allow the child to stay up an extra fifteen minutes to finish a chapter he/she is reading.
- You may promise to take the child to a movie of the book he/she is reading when he/she finishes reading it.

# Activities for busy parents

For parents who are busy:

- Put books in places where your child will be; for example, in your car, near the child's bed, among the toys in the toy box etc.
- Carry books along to the clinic or to places where you are likely to wait for some service.
- While waiting, you can read to your child.
- At the clinic for example, reading to a fretful child can soothe him or her.

Not all reading takes place within the covers of a book.

- As you drive let your child read road signs to you.
- This will help to expose the child to different language experiences since
  - road signage and advertising billboards cover a varied range of activities.

This activity will help you to correct the child's pronunciation as well.

- Again let them read recipes to you as you try your hands on new recipes.
- At the restaurant, let them read the menu;
- Let them read labels on items.

In short parents should not miss countless spur-of-the-moment opportunities for reading during the course of the family's busy day.

- Get tape recordings of books for your child to listen to.
- Tape recordings of books are done by professional performers or authors of books themselves and
- They tell the story in a dramatic fashion.

# Using television to promote reading

The parent must use every opportunity that presents itself to read to the child.

- Watch television shows based on children's books
- Afterwards get the book that has been featured on the show for your child.
- The child is more likely to read what has been shown on the television.
- Find out about the television programme that your child loves to watch and watch with him or her.
- Find out its educational value and find out if the child understands what he or she is watching.
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Build linkages between television shows and books.

- For example a television news programme that featured an oil spill somewhere
- showing birds and other animals trapped in the oil
- offers opportunity for the child to learn about endangered species in the environment.
- get books from your local library or you can buy books on different kinds of animal species.

In using television to encourage reading parents must be mindful of the time spent in watching television.

- Therefore parents should limit the child's TV viewing
  - to make time for other activities like reading.
- Never use TV as
  - reward for reading or
  - punishment for not reading.
- Such an exercise would be counter-productive.

# Promoting reading through special occasions

Parents can use special occasions to introduce children to books.

- For example, instead of clothes and food,
  - buy a book as birthday gift.
  - Give books to children as Christmas presents.
- You can make a rainy day book
  - Put some few sheets together and when it rains
  - Let your child draw how the environment looks like after the rains.
- After that pick a book that shows a rainy day at a place and how it looked like that day.



- For parents who take their children to other places for vacation,
- get them to read books about the places where they are planning to spend their holidays.
  
- As you can see from the discussion above there are numerous activities and various contexts within which reading promotion can take place at home.

# Topic Four: PROMOTING READING IN THE SCHOOL



# Introduction

- Children spend a greater part of their young years in school where the school offers by far the greatest opportunity for contact between children and books.
- Reading promotion is, therefore, important in the school.
- In the advanced countries there are reading teachers who teach children how to read.
- In our parts of the world, the reading period, if there are any at all on the time table is for only 40 minutes.
- Usually it is left to the English teacher to use his discretion as to what to use it for.
- In order to promote reading, the reading teacher should use about 30 minutes to talk about what has been read.
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# Responsibility of the School Library

- Our parts of the world library periods on the time table are not often utilized.
- This leaves the school library with the greatest responsibility to promote reading among children.
- A survey of teachers and school librarians in the UK about their perceptions of what role the school library should play revealed that they both agree that:

- The school library should stimulate and encourage reading.
- It should create independent learning.
- The school library is set up to entice children into the habit of reading for delight.
- It is also to create a bridge between childhood reading and adult reading.
- It is also to support the studies of children with accurate information.

To promote reading in the school,

- The school library should create the necessary conditions that will encourage children to read.
- These include:
  - congenial atmosphere and a
  - wide variety of books.

In terms of a congenial atmosphere

- There should be easy chairs in the library;
- The floor should be carpeted to mute footsteps
- That way the children can have a relaxed atmosphere for reading.

- There should be fewer rules
- we do not want to recreate the oppression of the classroom
- Children have to behave in a particular way in the classroom or face the wrath of the teacher.
- Again in the library children must be allowed to choose their own books
- Unlike the classroom where teachers prescribe what should be read.

In terms of materials or books,

- There should be materials on peace, war, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy etc.
- There should be popular magazines,
- There should be audio visual materials, including
  - disks, tapes, Audio CDs, VCRs and VCDs, video games etc.
- Books in the library must be pleasant and attractive to look at.
- Old, dirty and worn out books must be weeded out.
- New and attractive books must be added to the library's collection on a regular basis.



Displays should be mounted to draw attention of children to little read books.

- Displays can focus on particular themes or contemporary issues e.g. indiscipline in the society.
- Neglected books can be shelved under captions
- For example:
  - science fiction,
  - detective and mystery stories,
  - historical fiction, etc.

The school library should be taken to other parts of the school.

- Through posters and other materials on new books,
- On notice boards and
  - In the classrooms
  - In the Dining hall
  - In the Assembly Hall

## Reading guidance may be provided

- List of selected books which each class may be given at the beginning of the academic year.
- Children should be made to understand that it is expected that they will select from the list and read throughout the academic year.
- By so doing it will prompt them to read.
- Individual children may be asked to tell stories about what they have read.
- It will prompt other children to read and also talk about what they have read.

Topic Five:

# PROMOTING READING IN THE PUBLIC/COMMUNITY LIBRARY



# Introduction

In advanced societies, a library will be found in every community.

- The public library provides regular, varied and adequate supply of reading materials for all levels of the community free of charge.
- Thus the public library ensures that members of the community are able to sustain their reading habit.
- The public library promotes reading in order to help children acquire and sustain the habit of reading which will lead them to become lifelong learners.

# Atmosphere for Reading

The children's library must first create the right atmosphere for children to read.

- It means that the library has to provide the material and the congenial atmosphere that will make it possible for children to read.
- In terms of atmosphere
  - the children's library should have well decorated surroundings,
  - good ventilation,
  - good lighting system.
  - There should be attractive posters and guides
- Variety of comfortable furniture –
  - round, square, triangular tables and chairs should be provided.
  - Armchairs, couches, and even kitchen stools.
  - Toys and other equipment that will be of interest to children.
- This is to create an atmosphere far different from the classroom environment

# Activities to Promote Reading in the Public Library

The library encourages reading to children particularly those in the age range of 4 to 7 years.

- You need to read picture story books to them.
- For these pupils,
  - look out for materials that are colourful and that portray shapes.
  - The text when it is read must sound pleasant to their ears,
  - Use rhymes and stories that are repetitive etc.

You need to bear in mind that the attention span of children is short so the material chosen should not have long text.

- Choose a book that you yourself enjoy reading to read to the children.
- Read the material several times to yourself.
- This allows you to spot the items that you may wish to shorten or elaborate on.

- Before you begin reading to the children make sure the pages of the book can turn easily.
- If there are issues in the book that you think will generate interest,
- bring those issues out first and discuss it with the children before you read the general story to the children.
- In that way they are able to relate the discussion to the story they have read or you have read to them.
- Don't hold books to your chest when reading to the children.



Let them sit in a relaxed manner.

- More often than not use mats.
- The reader sits on a low chair so that the children may be nearer to him or her.
- Children find it difficult to sit quietly and listen so you will have to crave their attention.
- When children notice that you are sitting down quietly and looking at them, they stop talking.
- When you find a child talking while you are reading, stop and look at the child in a friendly manner.

- If it becomes necessary, use a rhyme or play a little game to get their attention.
- Give the title and author of the book you are reading to them.
- If they find it interesting they will like to read more of the author's books.
- Start reading in a soft, low tone.
- As they keep quiet you can raise your voice to the normal voice level.
- As you read let your tone sound like the tone in the story.

- Having finished reading don't ask children whether they enjoyed the story or not;
  - let them ask questions or
  - narrate the actions of some of the characters or
  - dramatize the story.
- For older children you can
  - encourage them to keep a dairy of the books they have read.
  - Let them write an imaginary letter to the author of the book.
- All these are to find out how they have enjoyed or understood the story.



# References

