



Toolbox

Independent Reading Is Not an Independent Effort

Adapted from Barbara Moss and Terrell A. Young's *Creating Lifelong Readers Through Independent Reading*

Passion for reading is caught, not taught. It is parents who most often instill a love of reading in their children.

Independent Reading: A Collaborative Effort

We all know the importance of independent reading. Independent reading is

- A critical component of a quality reading program
- A powerful accompaniment to skills instruction
- An opportunity for students to practice reading skills
- A chance for students to self-select a wide range of reading materials (trade books, magazines, newspapers, etc.) of interest to them
- Class time during which students are on task and accountable for their reading
- An organized systematic program that involves the classroom, the school, and the community



Moreover, independent reading provides students with the opportunity to get lost in books—to be so engaged in reading that they lose track of time, of place, of everything but the power of a text to transport and change them. Repeated experiences that involve true engagement with books help

students develop a love of reading that may last a lifetime.

However, independent reading is *not* the sole responsibility of you—the teacher. Independent reading is a collaborative effort among many people, including parents.

The Role of Parents

One of your most important responsibilities is to help students catch the desire to read. Some students achieve this on their own, but a great many do not. Virtually all students can benefit from the enthusiasm, interest, and expertise of an adult who knows children's books. Parents or caregivers who themselves read and have books in the home provide powerful reading models for their children. Heightening students' awareness of the exhilarating possibilities of print can acquaint them with the joy of literature and provide them with a love of reading that may last a lifetime.

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Toolbox

Independent Reading Is Not an Independent Effort (continued)



Even the best teachers need parental support if they are to achieve the goal of creating engaged independent readers. Parents should be active partners in the independent reading program and participate regularly in the reading lives of students. Successful programs provide frequent and structured opportunities for parental involvement.

You can establish parental involvement by inviting parents to

engage with their children in activities related to independent reading. Teaching parents how to read aloud, how to do paired reading with children, or how to listen to children's read-alouds provides concrete ways for parents to support and extend students' reading development. Providing parents with the tools to set up home libraries and work with their children to select appropriate reading materials for independent reading are also key components in teaching parents how to help their children become lifelong readers (see p. 380 for reproducible).

Organized, systematic efforts to make independent reading central in the lives of students in and out of school are essential. Such experiences can create students who want to continue reading after the bell has rung—students who “read like a wolf eats,” as Paulsen (2007) describes the ravenous hunger for books that drives book lovers.



DIGGING DEEPER

For more great tips on independent reading, check out these resources:

- Traci Gardner, “Daily Book Boosts,” ReadWriteThink.org
- Elfrieda H. Hiebert and D. Ray Reutzel, *Revisiting Silent Reading: New Directions for Teachers and Researchers*, International Reading Association
- Michelle J. Kelley and Nicki Clausen-Grace, *R⁵ in Your Classroom: A Guide to Differentiating Independent Reading and Developing Avid Readers*, International Reading Association
- Michelle J. Kelley and Nicki Clausen-Grace, “R⁵: The Sustained Silent Reading Makeover That Transformed Readers,” *The Reading Teacher*, October 2006
- Barbara Moss and Terrell A. Young, *Creating Lifelong Readers Through Independent Reading*, International Reading Association
- Nancy Padak and Timothy Rasinski, “Is Being Wild About Harry Enough? Encouraging Independent Reading at Home,” *The Reading Teacher*, December 2007

Reference

Paulsen, G. (2007). *About Gary Paulsen*. Retrieved July 17, 2007, from www.randomhouse.com/kids/catalog/author.pperl?authorid=23384&view=sml_sptlight



Toolbox

Reproducible

Creating Your Home Library

Every family should have a home library; it demonstrates to children of all ages that books matter enough to have an honored place in the home. A home library can help you encourage your child to choose reading and to discover the joys and pleasure of reading from an early age. A home library can build a strong foundation for reading, which has lifelong benefits for your child both in and out of school.

A home library requires two things: space and reading materials. The following pointers can help you create a home library that you and your child will enjoy.

Creating the Space

- Find a space for the library. It can be in your child's bedroom, in a small corner of your living room, or in another small area.
- Create a book storage area. Books can be stored on bookshelves, on brick and board shelves, in baskets, or on plastic crates or stacking cubes.
- Create a place for your child to sit and read if you have room. Child-size chairs or beanbag chairs and a good lamp can create a cozy space for reading.

Stocking the Collection

- Help your child select books or other reading materials for the collection. Books can be purchased inexpensively through school book clubs or book fairs, through local library or yard sales, and online at sites like Book Closeout (www.bookcloseouts.com). For younger children, provide sturdy board books.
- Virtually any kind of reading material can become part of the home library. Newspapers, magazines, song books, catalogs, pamphlets, and almanacs are just a few of the kinds of print materials that children can enjoy.
- Give books or magazine subscriptions as birthday and holiday gifts.
- Understand that the quality of the collection is more important than the quantity. Include books that children love and will read over and over. Provide books at a variety of reading levels.
- Involve your child in creating their own books that can be added to the collection. Your child can write and illustrate his or her own stories in blank books that can be purchased inexpensively, or on construction paper that you bind with staples, tape, or string.
- Have your child demonstrate pride in his or her books by creating decorative bookplates for their books. On the bookplate he or she can write "From the library of _____." These can then be glued into the front cover of each book. Or your child can decorate the inside cover or title page with his or her name.

Displaying the Collection

- Display books with covers facing out. Group books together by your child's favorite topics. Put books for younger children on the lowest shelves.
- Display favorite objects next to books if there is room. For example, you might place seashells collected at the beach next to a book on oceans.
- Assist your child in alphabetizing books by author or arranging books by genres. This helps organize the collection and provides practice in important skills.