Family Reading

Reading can open worlds of enjoyment and learning for both adults and children. A love of learning is one of the greatest gifts any parents can give their children. There are simple things parents can do to help their children develop a love of learning and a love of reading. Talking sensitively with infants and small children prepares them to be readers. Long before a child has any idea about the alphabet, parents can prepare children to read. The most important way to prepare them is to talk with them. This draws children into active interaction. Talking is not the same as blabbering. A parent who talks at a child will make the child frustrated. The most effective approach is to follow the child's lead. When a baby coos, we coo back. When a child experiments with words, we repeat them back. We play peekaboo and laugh with the child. When a child is tired, we let them rest. When a child wants to play, we find a way to play with them that they enjoy. Our sensitive response to them teaches them to interact with us.

**Fill your life with learning.** Keep the books that you most love in places where you can use them. Check good books out of the library for you and your children. Use books, magazines, and educational web sites to always be learning. Talk about the things you are learning.

**Make reading fun for your children.** We can let our children select books from the library. We can read to them regularly. We can read in fun places - maybe the attic or a closet or a favorite rocker. When we read, we can bring excitement and fun to the story. When a child wants to linger on a page, we can take time to talk about it. We can name the characters on the page of an illustrated story and invite the children to point to them. If we turn reading into a forced march, children will resist it; If we make reading fun, they will seek it.

**Give children choices.** Children like to be involved in making decisions for their lives. We can help them find the right section at the library and then let them pick out books. We can let them pick the books that we will read to them at bedtime. We can let them turn pages. We can let them guide us to what they are interested in.

**Make times and places for learning.** Maybe once a week you can make an outing with your children to an interesting place such as a museum, historic site, a business, or any place new and interesting. For example, visiting a site where a new house is being built and asking the contractors or craftspeople to tell about their work can open vistas. (Be sure to have safety in mind.)

We also show our value for learning when we make a place in our homes for books, bookshelves, and other learning materials. We can keep an encyclopedia (electronic or hard copy) handy. The child who grows up seeing and experiencing the adventure of learning is likely to become a lifelong learner.
Applications:

What are your best memories of learning and reading as a child?

What are the things that you are still interested in learning about? What are you doing to support that learning? (Talk with experts, get books, do web searches, etc.)

Think about each of your children.

What is each child’s favorite book?

What things does each child enjoy learning about?

What kind of learning adventure does each child prefer? ( outings, web sites, etc.)