

raising healthy **kids**

Helping Your Kids Grow Up to be Lifelong Readers

# RAISING KIDS WHO READ



We build strong kids,  
strong families,  
strong communities.



Plus de vie à la vie  
des jeunes, des familles  
et de la communauté.

YMCA



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Parts of the publication have been reprinted from Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner's *Your Family: Using Simple Wisdom in Raising Your Children* (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute). Copyright © 2003 by Search Institute.

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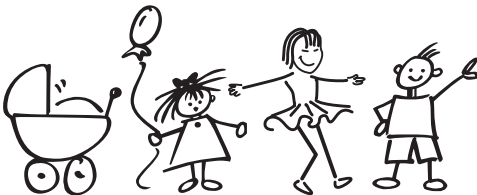
Funding for this booklet has been made possible by the National Literacy Secretariat, Social Development Canada, The Government of Canada and YMCA Canada. This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.





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## Rewarding Position Now Available!

Parents of five- to 10-year-olds needed for an extraordinary position. Primary caregivers and other caring adults should also apply.

Little experience necessary. Looking for everyday heroes and heroines with heartfelt desire to transform lives. Responsible for linking Developmental Assets with literacy, reading, and leading. On-the-job-training results naturally. Full benefits for both. to and with a child nearby. May start immediately, reading Give a child the gift of your time, attention, and whole-hearted presence as you celebrate great books together. Please answer the call!

# YOUR READING CHILD

As the parent or caregiver of a growing child between the ages of five and 10, you have the most important job in the world: raising a healthy, happy young person in the best way you can. Use this helpful guide to support you as you build assets and help your child become an enthusiastic reader.

***Raising Kids Who Read*** connects literacy—the ability to read and write—to the 40 Developmental Assets. Assets are the character qualities, experiences, and kinds of support that children need to thrive and grow into responsible, caring leaders. Reading is the most important skill children must master to succeed in school and later in life.

In these pages, you'll discover what you need to do to encourage your school-age child. Each section focuses on a particular asset category and highlights one book that's too terrific to miss. Additional "can't miss" books are listed at the end of each section. They come highly recommended and reflect the Developmental Assets in that section.

You'll find books about First Nations people and new immigrants, adventure stories and quiet seaside tales, African-Canadian stories, and lovely picture books for beginning readers.

Finally, you'll read helpful tips and answers to the question "How can I raise a reader?" Questions for reflection guide you as you think about how your all-important job is going. Charts and checklists offer an easy way to translate solid advice into effective action.

Before you read about the vital link between raising leaders and readers, take a look at the framework of 40 Developmental Assets for Middle Childhood, which make such a positive difference in your child's well-being.

*(For details visit Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets of Middle Childhood at [www.search-institute.org/system/files/40AssetsMC.pdf](http://www.search-institute.org/system/files/40AssetsMC.pdf))*





# SUPPORT

Sometimes heroes appear in the most unlikely places. Take Auntie Anna in ***Once Upon a Time***, a story set in rural South Africa. She spends her Sundays relaxing in a rusty old car, reading with young Sarie. When Auntie Anna and Sarie open a book together, Sarie discovers just how powerful words can be.

In school, Sarie struggles to read aloud. Her classmates tease and laugh at her. By unlocking the secrets of reading for Sarie, Auntie Anna saves her from failure and more teasing. She helps Sarie become a reader.

By the end of ***Once Upon a Time***, a little girl living in the middle of nowhere is heading somewhere—to the imaginary and real places that reading can take her.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Literacy—the ability to read and write—is essential for a child’s success in school and life. In ***Once Upon a Time***, Sarie is lucky to have her Auntie Anna step in when her tired, hardworking parents cannot. But, as the parent or primary caregiver, you are likely to be your child’s first and most important teacher.

So what can you do to make sure your child becomes a reader? Set aside time to honour the “Reading 3 Rs”—and turn your child into a reader and leader.

## CREATE READ-ALoud TIME

- Studies show that **15–30 minutes of reading time each day** makes a positive difference in a child’s school success.
- Parents and other caregivers enjoy **regular read-aloud sessions** with children, and this time can become an important part of everyone’s day.

## CHOOSE RECOMMENDED READING

- Look for well-written books with high-quality illustrations and uncluttered text.
- The library is an ideal source of free literature. Borrow plenty of good books, and visit often.
- Help your child apply for a library card. It is your child’s passport to new worlds.
- Ask your librarian to suggest titles. Think of that person as your personal reading coach.
- Buy books for your child when you can. Kids are proud of their own books. Library “used book” sales and school book clubs offer affordable choices.



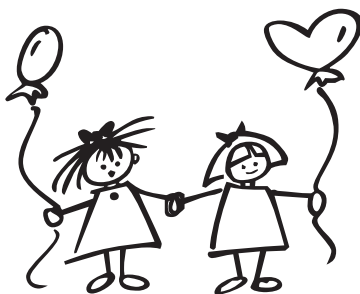
- Put books where kids can reach them (in the car, near the bed, next to the couch, and even in the bathroom).
- Set aside a shelf or container for your child's books. Make plenty of time to dive in together!

## BUILD CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Are you a reader? **Model a positive example** for your young reader with your own reading choices.
- **Enjoy bonding with your child** and making happy memories as you read together.
- **Talk about the books** you read. Help your child draw connections between them and the actual experiences you have together.
- As you read, **use drama in your face and expression in your voice**—and have fun!
- **Find high-interest books** that appeal to your child. The topics are as varied as your child's imagination: dinosaurs, ballet, castles, comic-book characters, and machines, to name a few. This motivates your young reader to do the hard work of “decoding” new words.

## ASK YOURSELF

- How comfortable am I with my silent reading habits and reading-aloud skills? Can I make time to improve them?
- What prevents me from reading to my child each day? How can I change my routine to allow more time for us to read together?
- What limits me from offering my child access to terrific books? How can I work around the barriers?



## TAKE ACTION

- Keep track of your reading habits for at least one week in the **Read-Aloud Record** below.
- Tally the minutes you spend reading with your child for pleasure.

### READ-ALoud RECORD (MINUTES SPENT READING ALoud EACH DAY)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	WEEKLY TOTAL

## DIVE IN!

Check out the following asset-rich books that illustrate the **support assets**:

Family Support \* Positive Family Communication

Other Adult Relationships \* Caring Neighbourhood

Caring School Climate \* Parent Involvement in Schooling

- **Everything on a Waffle** by Polly Horvath (Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2001).
- **Once Upon a Time** written and illustrated by Niki Daly (Farrar, 2003).
- **Something from Nothing** retold and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman (Northwinds, 1992).
- **Sophie's Masterpiece** by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Jane Dyer (Simon & Schuster, 2001).
- **There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom** by Louis Sachar (Random House, 1987).
- **Waiting for Whales** by Sheryl McFarlane, illustrated by Ron Lightburn (Orca, 1991).



# EMPOWERMENT

In *Music from the Sky*, it is summer in Nova Scotia. A young African-Canadian girl and her grandfather go off to find the perfect tree branch for carving a flute. She's not at all sure that they can ever make one that sounds like the flute she once heard. It was a "long, shiny silver flute sounding so pretty, just like music from the sky."

But Grampa knows better. Together they find a branch that is right for the job. "This isn't just any ordinary stick, you know." Grampa shows the young girl how to carve the branch with his "long, shiny silver knife"—as magical an instrument in his hands as the flute that will soon be in the girl's hands. And then the time comes for the girl to try it out. "What a sound! Now I'm making music... sounding so pretty... just like music in the sky."

Times may change, but in one respect children don't: They'll always value the feeling that comes from creating something of worth, and they thrive when they are valued by supportive grownups.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Some kids get what they need to become successful readers. Others, even before they enter school, are at high risk. What makes the difference?

In one study of a wide range of families, the parents all said they wanted "the best" for their young children, including success in school. When researchers observed and recorded everyday interactions in each family over several years, they discovered powerful predictors of children's future reading success.

Here are **three important factors** reading experts have identified in families whose kids experience success as readers:

- **Parents exhibit positive attitudes toward reading.** In towns that lack bookstores or well-stocked libraries, a child's "reading for pleasure" time may only add up to hours in a year, instead of hours in a week. Even so, parents can model a positive attitude toward reading by discussing books they read and letting kids know that reading is an essential life skill. Parents can also tell kids how much they admire their efforts to become readers, and children and parents can read and talk daily with each other.

- **Books are readily available.** Kids need an ever-present supply of books in order to become successful readers. At home, a book collection can beckon children from quiet corners where comfy seating and TV-free rooms make it possible to concentrate and enjoy books. Families can model the frequent use of books and other print materials as often as they use toothbrushes and toasters.
- **Children receive positive affirmations** of their efforts from parents and other caregivers. Grownups frequently “catch” kids being good. They praise children in specific terms, whether it’s complimenting a child’s decision to read, to work at decoding new words, or to make positive behaviour choices unrelated to reading. Parents give positive feedback to children every day, noticing each child’s best traits.

Negative comments that researchers call **prohibitions** have the powerful ability to discourage developing reading habits. In some families, twice as much criticizing or lecturing is the norm. Negative comments give children an “I-can’t-do-it” mindset. Over time, “negatives” poison. In contrast, “positives” empower, encouraging children to believe in themselves.

## ASK YOURSELF

- How would other people describe my attitude toward reading and books?
- How can I help shape my children’s reading attitudes and behaviours through my own actions?
- Do I give specific positive comments to my children about their reading skills and habits?



## TAKE ACTION

- **Brainstorm a list of positive comments** you can say to your child this week. In the chart below, write a plus sign (+) for each positive compliment you give your child. (“I like the way you drew your dog with floppy ears!” “You made a good choice!” “What a help it is to have you clean your room!”)
- **Monitor any negative comments you make.** Tally your criticism or prohibition with a minus sign (-). (“That was a dumb thing to do!” “Don’t talk with your mouth full.”)
- At the end of one week, have you made more “positives” than “negatives”? Remember that negative comments, even ones you consider minor, can cancel out positive feedback.

### A WEEK OF POSITIVES & NEGATIVES

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	TOTAL
POSITIVE COMMENTS (+)								
NEGATIVE COMMENTS (-)								

## DIVE IN!

Try these asset-rich books illustrating the **empowerment assets**:

*Community Values Youth* \* *Youth as Resources*

*Service to Others* \* *Safety*

- ***Becca at Sea*** by Deirdre Baker (Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press, 2007).
- ***Boxes for Katje*** by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Stacey Dressen-McQueen (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003).
- ***Music from the Sky*** by Denise Gillard, illustrated by Stephen Taylor (Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2001).
- ***On Sand Island*** by Jacqueline Briggs Martin, illustrated by David A. Johnson (Houghton Mifflin, 2003).
- ***Very Last First Time*** by Jan Andrews, illustrated by Ian Wallace (Aladdin, 1998).
- ***Ruler of the Courtyard*** by Rukhsana Khan, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie (Viking, 2003).



# BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

In *A Promise Is a Promise*, Allashua ignores her mother's warning not to go fishing alone on the sea ice. She doesn't believe the legend about sea-creatures who grab unprotected children. She soon learns otherwise.

When the Inuit girl escapes the clutches of the sea creatures, she finds herself on thin ice, indeed. The sea creatures free her on the condition that she sacrifices her brothers and sisters to them instead.

She tearfully confesses her mistakes to her parents. Convinced that their remorseful daughter has learned her lesson (and without any shaming or blaming), Allashua's parents are quick to offer her their support. They prefer problem-solving to punishment. These parents involve the whole family in outwitting the sea creatures.

Inspired by memories of tales and time in the Arctic, Robert Munsch and coauthor Michael Kusugak blend a traditional tale with a modern-day setting in a story as suspenseful as any TV show.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Has your child ever brought home a book that's just too hard for her to read? Some picture books, for example, may have reading levels of grade three or higher. How do you know whether it's realistic to expect your child to be able to read a particular book?

## FINDING THE "RIGHT" BOOKS

Here's how to choose a book that is just right for your new reader:

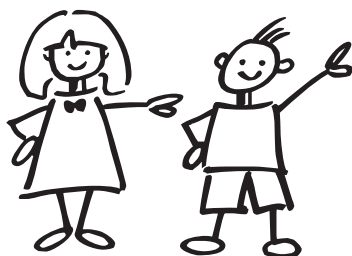
- **Can your child read a few pages of a story book with 95 percent accuracy?** Does she miss only one of every 20 words? Then the book is appropriate for solo reading.
- Does your young reader stumble on one in every 10 words? Then take turns reading the book together. **You can supply the words that are too difficult** for him to decode.
- Does your child trip over more than one in 10 words? To reduce any frustration, **read this book to your child by yourself.**



- New readers still need frequent breaks from the hard work of decoding print. **Have regular parent-to-child read aloud times** to help beginners focus attention on a book's meaning. This helps them develop a deep understanding of words.

By grade three, skilled readers have memorized 12,000 words in their “word banks,” while less-skilled students know only about half that number. Books hold *twice as many rare words* as the talk on prime-time TV or the conversations of college graduates. It's very important that children have opportunities from the earliest ages to read, read, read!

Elementary-age children also continue to build their vocabulary banks by listening to books read aloud to them or by talking about the stories they hear. How do you make sure read-aloud time is a priority at your house?





## READING AND THE MEDIA

Do computer and video games, TV, movies, and other forms of digital media cut deeply into your child's reading time? Try balancing screen time with an equal amount of book time. This will have positive benefits when you choose well.

Some good Web destinations include:

- [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/index-e.html)
- [www.tvokids.com](http://www.tvokids.com) and [www.tvoparents.com](http://www.tvoparents.com)
- [www.knowledgekids.ca](http://www.knowledgekids.ca)
- [www.robertmunsch.com](http://www.robertmunsch.com)
- [www.owlkids.com](http://www.owlkids.com)
- [www.cbc.ca/kids](http://www.cbc.ca/kids)
- [www.funbrain.com](http://www.funbrain.com)

The Canadian Paediatric Society and Media Awareness Network urge parents and caregivers to manage children's media use. Recommendations include keeping televisions, Internet-connected computers, and gaming equipment in family rooms, not in children's bedrooms.

Passive TV and video watching gobble up kids' free time. Children from two to 17 now spend more time in front of TV—an average of 25 hours per week in one study—than in any other single activity. To succeed in setting limits on children's screen time, parents must first look hard at their own media habits and make changes, if necessary.



### ASK YOURSELF

- Do my expectations match my child's age and stage in the reading journey?
- Am I careful not to compare the skills of one of my children with the skills of another?
- Do I set boundaries related to screen time? Does our family limit TV-watching to an hour or two per weekday?
- Do I supervise my child's media choices?

### TAKE ACTION

- Monitor your TV and video viewing habits for seven days.
- Note the number of hours you watch TV or videos in the **Daily TV/Video Record** below.
- What changes, if any, do you need to make? What limits do you need to set on your child's viewing habits?

#### DAILY TV/VIDEO RECORD (HOURS SPENT WATCHING TV & VIDEO DURING ONE WEEK)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	TOTAL HOURS





## DIVE IN!

Here are asset-rich books that illustrate the **boundaries and expectations assets** and promise a good read:

*Family Boundaries* \* *School Boundaries*

*Neighbourhood Boundaries* \* *Adult Role Models*

*Positive Peer Influence* \* *High Expectations*

- ***Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*** by Mo Willems (Scholastic, 2003).
- ***Officer Buckle and Gloria*** by Peggy Rathmann (G. P. Putnam & Sons, 2002).
- ***A Promise Is a Promise*** by Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak, illustrated by Vlyadana Krykorka (Annick Press, Ltd., 2003).
- ***Ramona the Pest*** by Beverly Cleary, illustrated by Louis Darling (Avon, 1968).
- ***Sallie Gal and the Wall-a-kee Man*** by Sheila P. Moses, illustrated by Niki Daly (Scholastic Press, 2007).
- ***Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear*** by Lensey Namioka (Joy Street Books, 1992).





# CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

In David Booth's charming collection of poetry, Paul Bunyan comes striding over the mountain, "the moon slung on his back." On another page, a poet makes a song out of First Nations place names: "Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Athabaska, Iroquois."

And later, a mosquito out for blood comes "winging / zooming and zinging / wickedly singing" over a child's bed. Finally, another poet writes that "Jeremy hasn't a roof on his house / For he likes to look at the stars." You'll find it all in *'Til the Stars Have Fallen*, one of many collections of poetry that deserve a place on your shelf and in your read-aloud rituals.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Ask someone for an example of a constructive use of time, and you're likely to get many suggestions—from fishing or playing field hockey to strumming a guitar or playing cards. But you're not likely to hear "reading poetry"—even though it rates as one of the best things you can do when it comes to turning a child into an able reader. If you think reading poems is a waste of time, think again!

## USING POETRY TO MASTER READING

Reading poetry increases children's confidence and competence. All the white space on the page that surrounds a poem increases new readers' willingness to dive in and tackle print. And the brief format increases their chances of success. Here's how:

- **Rhymes and strings of words beginning with the same sound** (as in busy buzzing bumblebees or she sells seashells) are just what children need to develop all-important phonetic awareness.
- Phonetic awareness is **the ability to recognize differences in the letter sounds** that make up words. It's the foundation for decoding print on a page.
- **Rich poetic language builds your vocabulary**, which leads to skillful reading.
- Poems give grownups and kids **chances to read expressively**. The rhythm and repetition invite chiming in or reading in unison.
- **Humorous poems invite laughter**.
- Last, but not least, poetry offers **mind-expanding ways of looking at the everyday world**.

Minutes set aside for reading poems aloud (or any other kind of literature) typically go down as a child's age goes up. Along with the time your child spends constructively learning a craft or a sport, practising a tune or a two-step, collecting rocks or autographs, make time for rhyme.

Remember, too, to bring all kinds of print into children's lives. Reading experts recommend that children be exposed to at least **100 books per year**—not likely if a child's book learning is limited to school turf!

Keep these other great print sources in mind:

- Board games
- Diaries
- Scripts for plays and puppet shows
- Grocery and "to-do" lists
- Song sheets
- Sports or hobby magazines
- Recipes
- Love notes and letter-writing
- Secret codes
- Nature journals
- Menus
- Maps and memos

They're all related to constructive uses of time, so keep the books and print coming!

## ASK YOURSELF

- Do we make **time for rhyme and poetry** at our house?
- How does our family carve out and spend **free time alone and with each other**?

## TAKE ACTION

- Keep track for a week in the chart below of the **ways your family uses its time**.
- Hold a **family meeting** to talk about changes family members would like to make. Your list might include:
  - **Fewer competitive activities**
  - **More creative pastimes**

- Scheduled **one-on-one times** between parent and child
- **Daily read-aloud and quiet reading times**

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME	TOTAL HOURS
SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, & SKILL-BUILDING	
OUTDOOR TIME	
CREATIVE/DRAMATIC PLAY	
UNSTRUCTURED FREE TIME	
ORGANIZED GROUP ACTIVITIES (YMCA, GUIDES, ETC.)	
HOBBY, COLLECTIONS, OR GAME TIME	
READ-ALOUD TIME & INDEPENDENT READING	
HOMEWORK & CHORES	

## DIVE IN!

Check out these asset-rich books that illustrate **constructive use of time assets** and promise a good read:

*Creative Activities \* Youth Programs*

*Religious Community \* Time at Home*

- ***Bubblegum Delicious*** by Dennis Lee, illustrated by David McPhail (Key Porter, 2000).
- ***Hannah's Collections*** by Marthe Jocelyn (Dutton Children's Books, 2000).
- ***Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*** by Paul Fleischman, illustrated by Eric Beddows (HarperCollins, 1998).
- ***The New Jumbo Book of Easy Crafts (2009)*** and ***The Jumbo Book of Crafts (1997)***, by Judy Ann Sadler, illustrated by Caroline Price (Kids Can Press, Ltd).
- ***Knock at a Star: A Child's Introduction to Poetry*** by X. J. and Dorothy M. Kennedy, illustrated by Karen Lee Baker (Little, Brown & Co., 1999).
- ***'Til All the Stars Have Fallen: A Collection of Poems for Children*** selected by David Booth, illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton (Penguin Books Canada, Ltd., 1989).





# COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

In *The Several Lives of Orphan Jack*, a 12-year-old leaves the orphanage with no family or fortune. Jack, however—rich in ideas and a love of learning—is bound to make a mark.

This lover of words tempts readers to dive into the dictionary, his favourite book, as he tussles with “turnips, trouble and trepidation.” This funny folk tale offers an enduring truth: there’s a place for any lifelong learner who has plans, ideas, and opinions worth sharing.

Unlike Orphan Jack’s world, Nicholas Allen’s world is asset-rich. In the popular book, *Frindle*, Nicholas is blessed with a loving family and a supportive community. A project inspired by an incident at school brings him fame and fortune.

Both characters enjoy an ongoing engagement with ideas. These critical thinkers have a commitment to learning that brings them rewards beyond their imagining.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Along with Nick and Jack, the dictionary is a “star” in these two stories. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of readers in grade three and above.

In order for children not to be “starved” for important words and imagined worlds even before they’re ready for a dictionary, they need to digest many more words and much sooner.

Most parents will do almost anything to keep their children from going hungry. Similarly, they must honour the importance of providing children with “food for thought” and stock up on good books. And not just any books will do. If the content is going to speak to kids, it’s got to be age-appropriate.

Grownups can see what appeals to beginning readers. In your child’s favourite book, notice these characteristics:

- Size of print
- Number of words per page
- Type of story that satisfies your child

Look for more of the same, and make it available until your young reader reaches the next ability level in reading.

## REACHING THE RELUCTANT READER

If your child avoids reading, try stocking up on the high-interest types of books that attract even the most reluctant reader:

- Joke and riddle books
- Comics and graphic novels
- Nonfiction books about your child's favourite subjects
- Hobby and sports magazines
- Humorous stories
- Celebrity and athlete biographies
- Beginner mystery stories
- "Best bets" that always turn your child on

## CHOOSING BOOKS FOR SPECIFIC OCCASIONS

Books make great gifts for birthdays, holidays, and other special times. Giving books shows that you value both the books and the recipient. Look for these essential elements when giving books as gifts:

- **Alphabet, counting, and concept books** encourage a child to make friends with facts, particularly the building blocks of language and our number system. High-quality books are more likely to draw readers back again and again, and boost kids' brainpower.
- **Wordless books** empower young children to use their own words as they mimic the reading ritual. Picture books also inspire older kids as they copy the story-telling format in their writing.
- **Bilingual books** are especially welcome by families whose first language is not English.
- **"Healers and helpers"** are books that explore a challenge or crisis. They remind kids that they're not alone in their fears or frustrations. These books give words to feelings children haven't been able to express.
- **Folk tales and fantasy, poetry and rhyme** enrich young imaginations.
- Books with a **multicultural range** of male and female characters expand children's global understanding and build empathy for others.
- Books like those listed here reflect **assets-in-action** and offer hungry minds a feast of words and images.

## ASK YOURSELF

Use the chart below to take an inventory of your child's home library.

- What kinds of books are missing?
- Am I providing a balance of different kinds of books that are too terrific to miss?

### OUR CHILDREN'S LIBRARY INVENTORY

NONFICTION, ALPHABET, COUNTING & CONCEPT BOOKS										
AWARD WINNING BOOKS—(APPEALING & HIGH QUALITY)										
"HEALER AND HELPER" BOOKS (CHALLENGES & FEELINGS)										
HUMOROUS BOOKS										
MULTICULTURAL/MULTIPLE ABILITY										
POETRY AND RHYME										
FOLKTALES AND FANTASY BOOKS										
WORDLESS BOOKS										
BILINGUAL BOOKS										
ASSET-RICH BOOKS										

## TAKE ACTION

- Create a **budget for books**. Trade books with friends. Shop at local booksellers and order through online stores.
- **Build a cherished book collection** for your family. Consider it an investment in your child's future.

## DIVE IN!

These asset-rich books illustrate the **commitment to learning assets**:

*Achievement Motivation \* School Engagement \**

*Homework \* Bonding to School \* Reading for Pleasure*

- ***Aha! The Most Interesting Book You'll Ever Read About Intelligence*** by Trudee Romanek, illustrated by Rose Cowles (Kids Can Press, 2004). For ages 8 and up.
- ***Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance*** by Ian Wallace (Groundwood, 1992).
- ***Frintle*** by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster, 1992).
- ***Oh, the Places You'll Go!*** by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1990).
- ***7 X 9 = Trouble*** by Claudia Mills, illustrated by Brian Karas (Douglas & McIntyre, 2002).
- ***The Several Lives of Orphan Jack*** by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Bruno St-Aubin (Douglas & McIntyre, 2003).



# POSITIVE VALUES

Leon and the fun-loving neighbours in his hometown ramble through the pages of ***The Thumb in the Box***, a novel for beginning readers. When the citizens of New Auckland ask for a simple water pump to put out fires, the government sends them an unneeded fire truck instead.

In a village with no vehicles whatsoever, the townspeople are not about to build a road or add a fire hydrant. They stay true to their values, but cause quite a commotion in the process.

A Member of Parliament who delivers the fire truck by barge looks on in astonishment as the townspeople dismantle it in the ocean. The uses to which they put various parts of the otherwise useless vehicle are creative.

Along with the laughs, the book paints a picture of a community with a shared vision, where caring and compassion are the order of the day. Here, everyone takes responsibility for each other's welfare.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

An important hallmark of this story is how naturally grownups and kids converse with and relate to each other. Sharing books gives real grownups and children a chance to do likewise. **Books offer a way for readers to preview situations** that call for honesty or restraint or caring—any number of positive values.

Without being dreary or preachy, books strengthen character. In fact, whether a book reflects a healthy, happy lifestyle or describes a very different reality, **parent and child can become explorers together** on a quest for greater understanding.

## EXPLORING DIFFERENT REALITIES THROUGH BOOKS

A grade five student may have the ability to tackle a novel like Deborah Ellis' ***The Breadwinner***, set in war-torn Afghanistan, on his or her own. However, it's the lucky child who gets to read it elbow-to-elbow with a caring adult. This particular bestseller has its share of searing images—of children harvesting human bones in a cemetery, for example. What a gift to have a grown-up to whom a child can express outrage and sympathy!

Parents and children can recognize their own positive values as expressed by the characters in certain stories they read and in contrast to the negative values of characters in other stories they share.



***The Secret Life of Owen Skye*** by Alan Cumyn is a laugh-out-loud-funny book for readers age 10 and up. It may raise some eyebrows because of the dangerous situations in which Owen and his brothers find themselves. Owen's older brother repeatedly tests boundaries and tempts fate, for example. What's a younger brother to do?

As Owen finds himself in one pickle after another—whether it's starting a brushfire while fiddling with matches or facing a beating by bullies—adult and child readers can compare their reactions and propose alternate solutions.

### ASK YOURSELF

- Do we make time to talk about the books we read, particularly right before and after reading time?
- Do I give my child opportunities to express feelings about the stories we read?
- Do I follow up on my child's questions for more information?
- Do I welcome questions from my child about values?

### TAKE ACTION

- Have you thought of ways to get more out of your shared read-aloud experience with your child?
- Use the chart on the next page to think about ways you can change your read-aloud time to make the experience even better.



**TIPS FOR GETTING THE MOST FROM READ-ALoud TIME**

**PLAY DETECTIVE**

PREDICT FROM THE BOOK COVER WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN  
 TAKE APART A LONG WORD TO FIND ITS "ROOT" AND DISCOVER ITS MEANING

**USE DIFFERENT VOICES**

TAKE TURNS READING ALoud ON EVERY OTHER PAGE  
 ADD DRAMA TO CHARACTERS' VOICES

**WELCOME QUESTIONS**

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE..."  
 "WHAT DOES THIS WORD MEAN?"

**VISUALIZE DETAILS**

IMAGINE THE CLOTHES CHARACTERS ARE WEARING  
 IMAGINE HOW A PLACE LOOKS AND SMELLS

**ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

"WHAT IF...?"  
 "WHY DO YOU THINK HE/SHE MADE THAT CHOICE?"

**RECALL AND RETELL**

"WHERE WERE WE WHEN WE ENDED LAST TIME?"  
 "WHAT'S YOUR VERSION OF THE STORY?"

**EXPRESS FEELINGS AND OPINIONS**

"WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?"  
 "WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART?"  
 "I FELT SAD WHEN..."

**CONNECT READING TO LIFE**

"THIS STORY REMINDS ME OF THE TIME WE..."  
 "LET'S EAT WITH CHOPSTICKS, TOO..."





## DIVE IN!

Asset-rich books that illustrate **positive values** and promise a good read:

Caring \* Equality and Social Justice \* Integrity

Honesty \* Responsibility \* Restraint

- **The Breadwinner** by Deborah Ellis (Groundwood/House of Anansi, 2000). For ages 10 and up.
- **Each Living Thing** by Joanne Ryder, illustrated by Ashley Wolff (Harcourt, 2000).
- **The Incredible Journey** by Sheila Burnford (Hodder and Stoughton, 1960).
- **Morning on the Lake** by Jan Bourdeau Waboose, illustrated by Karen Reczuch (Kids Can Press Ltd, 1997).
- **Roses Sing on New Snow** by Paul Yee, illustrated by Harvey Chan (Groundwood/House of Anansi, 1991).
- **The Secret Life of Owen Skye** by Alan Cumyn (Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2002). For ages 10 and up.
- **Stone Soup** retold and illustrated by Jon J. Muth (Scholastic Press, 2003).
- **The Thumb in the Box** by Ken Roberts, illustrated by Leanne Branson (Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 2001).





# SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

Meet Suki. She's a confident grade one child, heading off to her first day of school in **Suki's Kimono**. Suki decides to wear a kimono given to her by her *obachan*, or grandmother. She has already proudly worn it to a Japanese festival.

But Suki's two older sisters warn her not to wear it to school. It's not cool. And she'll be teased. She is determined to follow through with her plan, even in the face of her sisters' warnings. Suki is proud of her heritage, and she loves her kimono.

On the way to school, Suki lifts her arms and lets her butterfly sleeves flutter in the breeze. "It made her feel like she'd grown her own set of wings." It becomes clear that she is destined to fly.

Suki shows what it looks like to be rich in the 40 assets that kids need to thrive. As the story unfolds, this small child's choices and her strong character illustrate the assets that represent the category called Social Competencies.

As her sisters predicted, interpersonal competence is called for any number of times when the teasing, laughter, and comments of others could easily get the better of a first grader.

Here's a child who can skitter successfully between the present-day world of her playground and classroom and the traditional world she celebrates in the summer heritage festival.

When Suki's classmates are disrespectful toward her, Suki practises self-control. Resistance skills keep her from taking the bait, for instance, when someone calls out, "She's a bat!"

"Suki felt her cheeks burn, but she did not respond. Instead, she concentrated on sitting up straight and tall, the way her obachan always did." The story ends peacefully, and readers are just as glad as Suki that she triumphs.

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

Introducing your child to **memorable characters** like Suki is a way to widen your child's world. There are friends to be made, and a human circle to be expanded. You can make the introductions through the pages of great books. No matter

how isolated the place on the map your children call home, through good books they can travel across the planet. They can see the world through other eyes and be the wiser for it.

This story plays out against a backdrop of grownups who clearly play a role in developing Suki's resilient behaviour. She gets support from a loving grandmother, an accepting parent, and a teacher who claps at just the right moment, leading the way for others to stand up for Suki.

An important way you can show the same kind of support is to offer your child the right book at the right time.

### ASK YOURSELF

- Do I usually choose books that feature only characters of my child's gender (so-called "boy" books or "girl" books)? Every child deserves to read memorable stories with resourceful characters of both genders.
- What books have my child and I read together that build empathy and appreciation for others living with a disability, as in *How Smudge Came?*
- Does my child's literary world mirror the "real" one? Look for books that allow safe explorations of new ways of living.

### TAKE ACTION

- Talk to your child about the books you have read, together and separately, that feature characters whose colour or culture is different from your own.
- Fill in the chart on the next page with names of books you've read. Place a check mark next to each characteristic that applies. Look for books that provide your child with "missing links" to the larger world around you.



CULTURAL HERITAGE	BOOK TITLE
ABORIGINAL/FIRST NATIONS	
AFRICAN	
ASIAN	
CAUCASIAN	
EUROPEAN	
FRENCH/FRENCH-SPEAKING	
LATINO/LATINA/HISPANIC	
MIDDLE EASTERN	

## DIVE IN!

You'll enjoy these asset-rich books that illustrate **social competencies**:

*Planning and Decision-Making* \* *Interpersonal Competence*

*Cultural Competence* \* *Resistance Skills*

*Peaceful Conflict Resolution*

- ***How Smudge Came*** by Nan Gregory, illustrated by Ron Lightburn (Red Deer Press, 2003).
- ***The Jacket*** by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster, 2002). For ages 8 and up.
- ***Lights for Gita*** by Rachna Gilmore, illustrated by Alice Priestley (Tilbury House, 1994).
- ***The Party*** by Barbara Reid (Scholastic Canada, Ltd., 1999).
- ***The Streets Are Free*** by Kurusa, illustrated by Monika Doppert (Annick Press, 2008).
- ***Suki's Kimono*** by Chieri Uegaki, illustrated by Stéphane Jorisch (Kids Can Press, Ltd., 2003).
- ***The Thing about Georgie*** by Lisa Graff (Laura Geringer Books/Harper Collins, 2006).



# POSITIVE IDENTITY

Ten-year-old Bud wants to find family and a place to belong when he sets out on an amazing journey in Christopher Paul Curtis' award-winning novel ***Bud, Not Buddy***. Bud's memory of his mother, who had died when he was six, emboldens him to imagine a better future for himself. He remembers the books she read to him at night and "that no matter how long it took, she'd read until I went to sleep."

Having known such love, Bud can weather hardship. He can recognize the people who will love him, no matter what. At last, Bud finds himself among people who let him be himself: "All of a sudden I knew that of all the places in the world that I'd ever been in, this was *the one*. That of all the people I'd ever met, these were *the ones*. This was where I was supposed to be."

He tells the reader, "... something whispered to me in a language that I didn't have any trouble understanding. It said, 'Go ahead and cry, Bud, you're home.'"

## HOW CAN YOU RAISE A READER?

When a Canadian child in grade three can't "skim" across an ice rink on skates, it might be cause for surprise. But when the same grade three child isn't able to skim the words of a grade-level reader and understand their meaning, it is cause for *alarm*.

## WHEN READING IS A STRUGGLE

- **Take immediate action** when you recognize that your young reader is struggling. It's not acceptable (for either parents or teachers) to take a "wait-and-see" attitude. Reading experts agree that troubleshooting must begin as soon as possible.
- So much of a **child's success depends on the ability to do well** in school. Reading for meaning is a skill children must master in nearly every subject area. Too often, failure to master reading skills affects a child's sense of worth and, ultimately, positive identity.
- **Don't pretend that a child's reading difficulties don't matter.** Children who struggle are already likely to sense that they are "different." They may blame their struggle on their lack of intelligence or know-how. Actually, children with learning disabilities are often likely to be gifted in other areas. Many famous people claim this particular difference.

- Children deserve to know that their reading difficulties may be caused by the pattern of their brain activity, which changes when they perform reading tasks. It's not their fault!
- With proper diagnosis, kids can learn ways to overcome or compensate for learning disabilities. For example, **effective strategies include learning to match sounds with word segments** (small groups of letters).
- Among all the ways parents and caregivers can build positive identity in children, one of the most important is giving them what they need to become confident and capable readers.

## ASK YOURSELF

- Scan the checklist below. Do you recognize any difficulties or disabilities in your child's reading development?

### SIGNS OF READING DIFFICULTY



#### KINDERGARTEN

FINDS IT HARD TO GRASP THE CONCEPT OF RHYMING WORDS

HAS TROUBLE NAMING LETTERS OR BEGINNING SOUNDS OF WORDS

EXPERIENCES PROBLEMS RELATED TO SEEING OR HEARING

HAS DIFFICULTY FOLLOWING SIMPLE DIRECTIONS

#### GRADE 1

DOESN'T READ AT ALL BY THE MIDDLE OF GRADE 1

HAS DIFFICULTY PAYING ATTENTION

HAS DIFFICULTY FORMING PRINTED LETTERS

#### GRADE 2

RARELY NOTICES READING MISTAKES

DOESN'T READ GRADE-LEVEL BOOKS BY MIDYEAR

SKIPS OVER LONG WORDS AND GUESSES AT MANY

COMPLAINS READING IS "TOO HARD"

AVOIDS READING AND/OR WRITING

IS NOTICEABLY BEHIND PEERS IN READING/WRITING

#### GRADE 3

DOESN'T READ GRADE-LEVEL BOOKS BY MIDYEAR

HAS LITTLE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT'S BEEN READ

MISREADS WORDS WITH MULTIPLE SYLLABLES

MOST OF THE ABOVE DIFFICULTIES

## TAKE ACTION

Inform yourself. Visit these helpful **websites** for more information:

- All Kinds of Minds: [www.allkindsofminds.org](http://www.allkindsofminds.org)
- Bridges for Kids (Building Partnerships between Families, Schools & Communities): [www.bridges4kids.org](http://www.bridges4kids.org)
- Criteria for remedial reading programs: [wrightslaw.com](http://wrightslaw.com)
- Family education: [school.familyeducation.com](http://school.familyeducation.com)
- International Dyslexia Association: [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)
- Learning Disabilities Online: [www.ldonline.com](http://www.ldonline.com)
- Schwab Learning: [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org)

If your child has a **hard time learning to read** or you suspect a disability, do the following:

- **Speak to your child's teacher.**
- Make an **appointment with the school counsellor.**
- Insist on a **school assessment**, and follow through on the appointment.
- Schedule a **private evaluation with an educational psychologist** if you are not satisfied.

If your child's evaluation results in a **specific diagnosis** of learning disabilities, take steps to find:

- Approved, **well-structured reading programs**
- **Multi-sensory techniques** for teaching reading
- **School support** from individuals and groups
- **A tutor**

Kids with reading challenges need **parents' support**. They also need **physical and emotional outlets** like sports, creative activities, and other confidence-building activities to remind them of their self-worth.

All children, regardless of their abilities, benefit from daily read-aloud sessions. Once they begin to decode print, new readers need plenty of **time to read aloud to caring grownups**. Children deserve frequent reminders that they're loved, not for what they can or cannot *do*, but just for being themselves. They become part of a family that empowers them to choose and create their own positive future.

## DIVE IN!

Here are great asset-rich books that reflect **positive identity**:

*Personal Power* \* *Self-Esteem*

*Sense of Purpose* \* *Positive View of Personal Future*

- **Anne of Green Gables** by L. M. Montgomery (100th anniversary ed., Viking Canada, 2008). Challenging reading for ages 9 and up.
- **Bud, Not Buddy** by Christopher Paul Curtis (Delacorte Press, 1999). For ages 8 and up.
- **Cooper's Lesson** by Sun Yung Shin, illustrated by Kim Cogan, bilingual Korean/English text (Children's Book Press, 2004).
- **Omar on Ice** by Maryann Kovalski (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1999).
- **Scooter** by Vera B. Williams (HarperCollins Canada/Greenwillow Books, 1993).
- **The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee's Story** by Pegi Deitz Shea, illustrated by Anita Riggio, stitched by You Vang (Caroline House, 1995).

## BEST BETS

Your local library has the best “takeout” in town. In addition to asking a librarian for great book suggestions, check out the following resources:

- **Best Books for Children and Teens**, an annual publication of The Canadian Children's Book Centre, created by educators, booksellers, and librarians from across Canada; [www.bookcentre.ca](http://www.bookcentre.ca)
- **Canadian Children's Literature Service**; [www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/childrenliterature/005001-201.13-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/childrenliterature/005001-201.13-e.html)
- **Children's Picture Book Database**; [www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks](http://www.lib.muohio.edu/pictbks)
- **Cooperative Children's Book Centre**; [www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc)
- **A Guide to Canadian Children's Books in English** by Deirdre Baker and Ken Setterington (McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 2003).

## MORE STORIES TO READ AND SHARE

### SUPPORT

- ***Alfredo Flies Home*** by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Luis Garay, translated by Elisa Amado (Groundwood Books, 2007).
- ***Pink*** by Nan Gregory, illustrated by Luc Melanson (Groundwood Books, 2007).
- ***A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever*** by Marla Frazee (Harcourt, Inc., 2008).
- ***Lily and the Paper Man*** by Rebecca Upjohn, illustrated by Renne Benoit (Second City Press, 2007).

### EMPOWERMENT

- ***Maggie and the Chocolate War*** (Kids' Power Book) by Michelle Mulder (Second Story Press, 2008).

### BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

- ***Clementine's Letter*** by Sara Pennypacker, pictures by Marla Frazee (Hyperion, 2008).
- ***The Paper Bag Princess*** (25th Anniversary Edition) by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Michael Martchenko (Annick Press, 2005).

### CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

- ***38 Ways to Entertain Your Grandparents*** by Dette Hunter, illustrated by Deirdre Betteridge (Annick Press, 2002).
- ***Small Fry*** (poems) by Jaime Adoff, illustrated by Mike Reed (Penguin Canada/Dutton's Children's Books, 2008).
- ***Stella: Princess of the Sky*** by Marie-Louise Gay (Groundwood/Douglas McIntyre, 2004).

### COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

- ***38 Ways to Entertain Your Parents on Summer Vacation*** by Dette Hunter, illustrated by Kitty Macaulay (Annick Press, 2005).
- ***The Magic School Bus at the Waterworks*** by Joanna Cole, illustrated by Bruce Degen (Scholastic Press, 1988).
- ***The Girl Who Hated Books*** by Manjusha Pawagi, illustrated by Leanne Franson (Second Story Press, 1998).

## POSITIVE VALUES

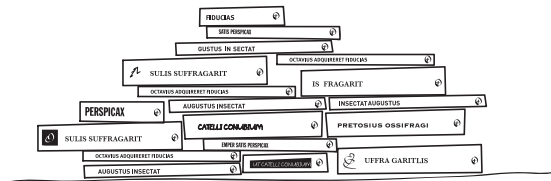
- **Mary Ann Alice** by Brian Doyle (Groundwood Books, 2003).

## SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

- **Those Shoes** by Maribeth Boelts, illustrated by Noah Z. Jones (Candlewick Press, 2007).
- **The Black Book of Colors** by Menena Cottin, illustrated by Rosana Faria, translated by Elisa Amado (Groundwood, 2008).

## POSITIVE IDENTITY

- **Jack's Talent** by Maryann Cocca-Leffler (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).
- **Odd Man Out** by Sarah Ellis (House of Anansi Press/Groundwood Books, 2006).
- **The Incredibly Ordinary Danny Chandelier** by Laura Trunkey (Annick Press, 2008).

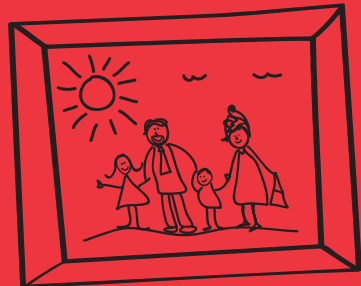


## THE YMCA IN CANADA

As the largest service provider to children and youth in Canada, the YMCA works each and every day to give kids the essential building blocks or assets they need. Our mission of supporting people in spirit, mind and body and fostering a sense of responsibility is integral to everything that we do—from good health and a healthy lifestyle to creating a sense of belonging and building lasting relationships.

Today, the YMCA in Canada works with over 1.8 million people of all backgrounds in over 250 communities through:

- **YMCA Health Fitness and Recreation**
- **YMCA Child Care**
- **YMCA Camping**
- **YMCA Employment Programs**
- **YMCA Education and Community Programs**
- **YMCA International Development**
- **YMCA Leadership Development**



raising healthy **kids**

Helping Your Kids Grow Up to be Lifelong Readers

# RAISING KIDS WHO READ



We build strong kids,  
strong families,  
strong communities.



Plus de vie à la vie  
des jeunes, des familles  
et de la communauté.

YMCA