

## Helping Children Become Good Readers

By Kathy Coffman  
Teacher  
NIU Campus Child Care

Every parent wants their child to become a good reader. The most important step to this lifelong skill is to continue to read stories/books to your child.

“Stories have tremendous power. They reach children’s hearts and minds and help them understand themselves and the world in which they live.”\*

Picture books read at home and at school focus on important stories in your child’s life. Picture books for young children “carry the story so well that even a pre-reading child can follow along.”\*\*

When books are read, your child equates the characters to themselves emotionally. As they mature, they also begin to learn basic important pre-reading skills. Some of which are:

- Learning to follow the written word from left to right and top to bottom. The reader points to the words being read.
- Learning to recognize a specific letter or letters in print. By helping your child point to one specific letter found numerous times on any give page.
- Sight reading. The adult points to rhyming and/or repetitious words, and tells the child what the words are. It is best to start with basic two or three letter words. Sight reading isn’t necessarily a phonics way of reading, but is reading by viewing the word; like viewing a picture and then relating the meaning from it. Surprisingly, your child is already a sight reader (environmental reading). Most children can read the McDonalds logo, and other popular business signs.
- The ability to follow the sequential order of events that occur from the beginning to the end of a story. This occurs after being read to regularly, and creates logical ways of organizing time.

It is most important to remember that your child will only develop these pre-reading skills as their interest in books increase; after being read to becomes a reoccurring and pleasurable experience, and as they mature. Every child develops an interest in ‘reading’ at their own personal rate, and pushing them into reading can have a negative and long lasting effect.

If you are wondering about finding great picture books for reading, look no further than your local library, and even the NIU Founders Library. Children enjoy finding their own books, and look forward to habitual library visits. Some libraries will even give children a library card once they can print their own name.

Below is a list of just ten of my favorite picture book authors:

Norman Bridwell  
Eric Carle  
Ezra Jack Keats  
Dr. Seuss

Marc Brown  
Donald Crews  
Leo Lionni

Margaret Wise Brown  
Kevin Hankes  
Mercer Mayer

Furthermore, reading to and with your child creates a quiet, warm time that helps to ensure a positive parent/child bond. Based on previous bedtime reading with my own children, I now count this as some of my favorite memories.

\*Stephanie Feeney and Eve Moravik, *Children's Literature*, Young Children, Sept. 2005, p.20

\*\*Betty Coody, *Using Literature with Young Children*, Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1973, p. 6