

School not the only place for kids to learn

Everyday, we send our kids off to school hoping they will learn something – anything - and develop into knowledgeable successful adults. And while we deal with the daily details of that thing called life, we sometimes forget to encourage learning at home.

Parents are a child's first teacher. Even after they've started school, there are still several opportunities for learning as a family. Kids look up to their parents and mimic many of the daily routines. Spending just 15 minutes a day with them can go a long way to help children develop a love of learning and improve their literacy skills.

In honour of Family Literacy Day, happening across Canada on January 27, 2012, here are some fun activities to do at home as a family to make learning fun for everyone:

- Establish a night to enjoy activities such as puzzles, crosswords or board games. Switching the activity each week keeps the enjoyment level high.
- The brain is like a muscle – if you don't use it, you lose it. Getting active can help strengthen the mind, so play hide-and-seek, tag or catch outside with your children.
- Use your imaginations by creating stories together. You lead with the first sentence and then go back and forth building on the story. Your child uses their imagination and creativity while together you create a living story. Do this while completing chores to help time pass faster!
- Together, act out the family's favourite book by reading a page together and then acting out what was written. If the kids have friends over, they can engage in this activity and then put a play on for their parents when they are picked up.
- Still waiting for the lasagna to cook in the oven? Read together while you wait! Pick up a book, magazine or newspaper and open up a world of possibilities.

All of these activities can be done after dinner, outside in the backyard or before you go to bed. By the time they're done, you'll be surprised how short 15 minutes really is! Spending time doing learning activities at home is crucial. Practicing these activities will help develop a love of learning for both parents and children, and help to develop important literacy skills.

While we may not think of it, most of the time spent at home can be seen as a learning activity between you and your child. Even time spent doing the dishes, eating dinner or having a bath can all have a focus on learning without you noticing.

For more information, including literacy tips and activities and event listings, please visit www.FamilyLiteracyDay.ca.

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