

Choice is Best

FLJ Dec, 2013 John T. McMahan III

Reading literacy has so many subsections that you can indulge yourself in just the right niche in where your family can share in different methodologies to help your child become the best reader they can be. One of the most important things you can do as a parent and I would advise teachers the same thing is to include **choice** as one of the very best practices that you can involve yourself in. This best practice can be shared between teachers and parents when children enter into their formal education but before that time, parents can cultivate the best practice of **choice** at home with their child.

What I mean by **choice** is allowing there to be deep conversation about what interests each child and collectively build and examine curriculum within that thought. Children from birth on are regularly learning things from their parents and build upon these information gathering moments and begin to create their own interests while having daily interactions and conversations with mom and dad. Some of these beautiful conversations are had at the dinner table at lunch time and supper table at night. These family moments which at one time were the hallmark of Americana, occur less often in today's society due to divorce and in many cases both mom and dad working crazy hours and these family connective times being less organized and managed. These family times at the afternoon and evening tables allow children and parents to discuss daily events, help children clarify their thoughts and may lead to exciting debate over a number of subjects. These family discussions allow for your child to be an active participant in subjects that interest them which may lead to children conversing deeper into the family conversation. This also allows your child to feel like they are an integral cog in the family machine and that their opinion matters, even at a young age.

These introductory conversations and interactions the family has is also a way for parents to introduce different subject matter to their children that they believe would be interesting and critical for future learning. During these new conversations, children collect the subject matter in their brains and as continual conversation over time occurs, create folders of interest and will chat about issues and topics they determine as interesting. If you as a parent make yourself available to hear about your child's new found interests, amazing learning can be created by these discussions of new discoveries. This may be a book you read to them, or something that happened at T ball practice, a crayfish they found in the creek or simply a video you shared about a tornado that occurred in Kansas. This is our first glimpse of student led instruction which is one of the main ingredients to higher learning when your child enters school. These student led moments with mom and dad may excite learning and lead to unbelievable discussion around the supper table. As we know, when kids are interested in a topic of conversation, they will want to talk about it more and in our internet age, will discover and search for more meaning to that topic on their own.

This is a win-win for family literacy and interconnectedness. These discussions activate learning as you ask them genuine questions on these topics that interest them and take the time to listen deeply to their answers or their philosophies on their particular interest. You may have a follow up question that will ignite a deep conversation about, let's say tornadoes that could include the entire family around the dinner table. You can ask them "How" questions and "Why" questions.

Choice may be the critical component to allow your child to extend their reading literacy opportunities while having excellent conversations with them around the dinner table or simply on a car ride to the grocery store. These initial family interactions and conversations may prove to be the first great learning experiences your child has and you as a parent get the honor and the privilege to not only be your child's first teacher but also all the while, continuing to always be the lead teacher.