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PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN READING THROUGH THE NEWSPAPERS

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Many educators have long recognized the value in using the newspaper to reinforce reading/communication skills. Books and numerous magazine articles have been published on the practicality of the newspaper in the classroom. The daily newspaper lends itself to many interesting and effective activities in the classroom.

The use of the newspaper, however, should not be restricted to the classroom. There are many appropriate activities which parents can conduct at home with their children, using the local daily newspaper. When one considers the fact that sixty-one million copies of the newspaper are printed daily in the United States, it is obvious that many parents subscribe to reading materials which enter the home daily. Parents often ask: "What can I use at home to help my child in reading?" One excellent answer is—the daily newspaper.

Parents can capitalize on the many articles, columns, features and other items contained in the pages of the daily paper. What is needed, to make the newspaper a regular source of reading lessons that are both enlightening and entertaining, is a careful preview of the available items, with a thought for their possible uses. To become skilled at the previewing strategy, a parent might look at the kinds of ideas described in courses-for-parents which discuss lessons and learning in children's books. Some school personnel, working with librarians, have developed courses for parents, to acquaint them with the best in children's literature. This is an excellent idea, because parents who accompany their children to the library or purchase books at the local bookstores are then in a better position to guide their children in their literary tastes.

A similar course can be developed for parents on how to use the newspaper effectively in the home. Many schools have employed the USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading). This same type of program can be used with the newspaper after the dinner dishes are cleared, the TV set is turned off, everyone in the family reads the newspaper. Discussion should first take place concerning which part of the newspaper is read by each member of the family. Children should be encouraged to select different parts of the newspaper on different occasions so that a balanced reading diet can be effected.

What are some valuable activities parents can do with their children which tap the full potential of the newspaper? Here are six activities:

1. Picture Stories—Parents can ask their children to read a story in the newspaper. They can then suggest the children draw a picture to go with the story and to write a cutline (caption) to accompany the picture.

2. Vocabulary Notebook—Parents can encourage their children to keep a vocabulary notebook. Have the children select a word and write the definition of the word, cutting out the small section which shows how the word was used. Each word should be glued into the notebook as an example.

3. Party Fun—Parents can ask their children to plan a party for six or eight people. Ask them to make a shopping list of items in alphabetical order that they will need from the grocery ads in the food section of the newspaper. Children can be asked to classify these ads according to paper goods, confectionary, beverage, etc.

4. Circle the Headline—Children can be directed by parents to circle the words in the headlines that they know. Using these same headlines, parents can select some of the words and ask their children to supply a synonym or antonym for these words.

5. Map It—Parents can have children clip out articles from the newspaper that take place in various locations in the world. Have them attach the article to its location on a map.

6. Fact or Opinion?—Parents can ask their children to read an editorial on a subject of current interest. After they have read the editorial, ask them to underline all the facts with a green crayon and all the opinions with a yellow crayon.

Many newspapers throughout the country—particularly the larger ones—have employed consultants who serve as Newspaper In Education (NIE) coordinators. NIE coordinators plan workshops and develop collateral materials which help teachers use the newspaper effectively. In addition, some newspapers also publish materials specifically designed for children. The most popular is the "Mini Page" which is a weekly insert chock full of appealing items for children. The "Mini Page" is syndicated. Finally, in addition to syndicated material, the following is a sample list of newspapers which publish tabloids and other supplemental material for children:

The Arizona Republic
Phoenix, Arizona
(Weekly page material
written by staff)

Gazette Telegraph
Colorado Springs, Colo.
(Bimonthly tabloids)

The Bradenton Herald
Bradenton, Florida
(Dynamite Kids Page)

The Hartford Courant
Hartford, Connecticut
(Daily column of news
information)

