



Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment for Your Children

By Educator Barnes – June 8, 2019

Last month, I wrote the piece, "[Parents, Have Your Children Caught You Reading.](#)" A comment from a reader caught my attention.

When I go into a home and don't see a bookcase with books in it, don't see any magazines or newspapers and no printed materials anywhere, I get to thinking that there's some serious illiteracy going on 'up in here'. Sorry, that's just the way I roll.

The aim of my piece was to reach out to parents and encourage them to partner with their children's teachers to get their children to read. This reader made a significant point. How can parents be literacy role models when they don't have the resources? This is a barrier I have faced throughout the majority of my career.

For most of career, I have served in schools where the majority of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. If parents have to choose between paying the bills and buying books, I understand why parents choose to pay the bills. Even with these struggles, I assert parents can still provide a literacy-rich environment for their children and be their literacy role models.

When I was a young kid, my parents did not have much money. Despite this fact, I still had books and educational resources in my home. My parents knew the importance of providing an environment that supplements the school environment. Parents can do this without going broke or spending money at all. It is frequently said, "a closed mouth doesn't get fed." Although my parents' financial situation did improve, my parents were never too prideful to ask for help or to seek out the resources available.

Here are some ways to provide a literacy-rich environment for free:

1. **Ask your school.**

Currently, I'm an elementary librarian. Part of being a librarian is weeding out books. Some books are removed because they are damaged. Other books are removed because of lower readership. Books could be removed because the library is being redesigned or downsized. Books are weeded each year. If the librarian does not have anyone to give the books, those books are recycled. Classroom teachers do the same. Between your school's librarian and classroom teachers, parents should be able to get books their children can keep at home.

2. **Obtain a library card.**

Library cards are free. These cards allow you to check out various types of materials. Literacy is more than reading. It also includes listening, writing, and speaking well. From the library, children can check out DVDs, CDs, books, audiobooks, or online books. All of these resources can help improve literacy.

3. **Attend community events.**

There are free community events throughout the year. I take my children to as many as I can. At all of these events, there are three items my children typically get for free: books, pencils, and candy. I can do without the candy, but I guess the candy draws children to the table where they can get free books.

4. Collect free pamphlets and newspapers.

Some newspapers are free of charge. If you see those while you are out in public, grab one. If a child is not old enough to read the paper, parents can read an article or two to their child. My children love pamphlets. If I'm traveling or in a waiting room, I can take one of those free booklets or pamphlets. Those pamphlets have words with supporting images to improve literacy.

Limited finances can be a barrier to buying literacy resources. This limitation does not prevent parents from providing a literacy-rich environment especially when parents can obtain literacy resources for free.