

**For immediate release**

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### **Parents Can Help Improve Their Children's Reading Skills at Home**

*August 4, 2003—Austin, Texas*—How well children learn to read directly affects not only how successful they are in school but how well they do throughout their lives, according to the U.S. Department of Education. As students get ready to head back to school, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) offers ways parents can improve children's reading skills at home.

“Children gain a tremendous advantage in school when adults read with them, talk with them about what they are reading, and assist them with homework,” said SEDL program associate and reading expert Marsha Loyd. “When children learn to read, they have the key that opens the door to all the knowledge of the world.”

Loyd says spending at least 30 minutes each day reading to and with children builds reading skills. Reading the daily newspaper is one way parents can help their children learn to read that doesn't cost anything but time. Just looking at the pictures and pointing out the print to children shows them the importance of using the newspaper as a tool for learning, she adds. As they read, parents can ask their children about their perspectives on an article.

Even if children aren't able to read, just seeing print in a book, a newspaper, or other reading source will improve children's reading skills more than just watching television. To improve their children's reading skills, Loyd suggests parents:

- 🕒 tap into what a young child already knows through print found in a child's natural environment, including logos, labels, road signs, and billboards. Point out printed words at home and other places like the grocery store. Children can use environmental print to get a jump-start on the literacy process.

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- ⌚ show children that reading is important by reading aloud newspaper columns and magazine articles that parents are already reading for themselves as children are playing or doing chores.
- ⌚ take children's books and writing materials whenever they leave home with their children to run errands or go on a family vacation.
- ⌚ limit the amount and type of television they and their children watch and spend more time reading books with their children.
- ⌚ talk to their children, point to objects that are nearby, and describe the objects during playtime and daily activities. Discuss new words. Having a large vocabulary gives children a great start when they enter school.
- ⌚ spend as much time listening to their children as they do talking to them.
- ⌚ read a child's favorite book over and over again.

SEDL is an Austin-based nonprofit corporation that operates research, development, and dissemination programs focused on improving school performance; strengthening reading, language, mathematics, and science education; integrating technology into teaching and learning; involving family and community in student learning; connecting disability research to practice; and supporting policy development through research.