



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Making Reading a Family Affair

PATTY RITCHIE November 10, 2014

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It goes without saying that children who spend time reading at home—whether alongside their parents or on their own—are ahead in classroom. In addition to succeeding at school, children who live in homes that focus on reading benefit in other ways too, as studies have shown they have longer attention spans, higher levels of self-confidence, better vocabularies and of course, a love of books.

November marks National Family Literacy Month, a time when schools, libraries and other organizations focus on promoting reading together as a family. If you're looking to make books part of the daily routine in your home, here are some suggestions:

Track Progress Together: Is your child at an age where he or she can read a longer book on their own? If so, have each member of the family pick a book, and then set a special time every week—dinner time, the weekend, etc.—when you share details on what's happening in what you're reading.

Create a "Book Nook": Creating a special space inside your home where reading is the focus can make children more excited about books. In many cases, it can be as easy as adding a bookcase stacked with their favorites and a comfy chair.

Share Your Favorites: Many books today's parents read as children are still popular. Make a special trip to your library to pick up your favorites, then read them alongside your child.

Set a "Reading Night": It's a good idea to set one night aside during the week as a "reading night." Even a small amount of time can make a big difference. For example, if families read together for twenty minutes per week, that's nearly 18 hours of bonding—and learning time—per year.

Read, Then Watch: Many classics and more recent storybooks have made their way to the big screen. Get your children excited about seeing their books come to life by reading first and then watching the movie version of the story.

As a lifelong book lover, as well as a member of the State Senate Select Committee on Libraries, I know how important promoting literacy is. This year, I was thrilled to be able to secure \$148,000 in special funding to help enhance services at libraries our region. As a result of this support, more than 50 libraries and two library networks received the aid they need keep up with demand and improve their offerings and programs for patrons.

As state lawmakers prepare to head back to Albany in January for the 2015 legislative session, please know that I will continue to work to advocate for our libraries as well as other programs that help to promote learning. I hope you'll do your part too, by making reading a priority in your home.