

Apr
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Reading Aloud: a Gift That Keeps on Giving

by Donna Bryant Goertz | Montessori Blog

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We know that one of the very best things any parent can do for their child's development in reading is to read aloud to the child. Over the years, many parents and former students have told us stories of their experience reading and being read to. What these stories tell us is that reading aloud together is far more than just a support for reading development; it can be a vital and deeply cherished time in which parents and children explore the world together through books and conversation. Here are a few of the stories we have heard.

- She was twenty and she told us that her mom had read aloud to her every night till she went off to university. The first time she came home for a visit her mom kissed her and said goodnight. "Wait," she said to her mom, "we can't go to bed till you read to me!" And so their custom continued, but over time it evolved into each of them alternating to read to the other from their current book.
- A mom told us she went to visit her son in the large house he shared with a couple of other college students. Her son had told her to be sure to bring along the book she was reading so they could sit together in the evenings and read as they had always done in their family.
- A mom of three children, five, eight and eleven years old, told me she read aloud to each of them every evening for half hour from their own book. I wondered that she could squeeze out an hour and a half a day for reading aloud. She said, "Are you kidding? Looking forward to that hour and a half devoted to reading and to devoting time to each child is what keeps me going!"
- Keeping reading aloud going all through the years at home gives parents a strong connection with their child in relation to all aspects of life. One mom told me that, to her eleven year-old's delight, she had just finished reading aloud Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which had provoked from her child a constant stream of questions on the history and lifestyles of the period, to say nothing of the vigorous vocabulary and the long and complex sentence structures. Her child had requested that they next delve into the Bible and Shakespeare to see how far they could get. Reading aloud is a powerful foundation for the study of art, history, current events and literature for middle school years and beyond.

- One dad, a doctor, told us he continued reading aloud to his daughter through middle school. He said he couldn't imagine how else he could have comfortably held the long, complicated discussions with her about life and character, love and relationships, that meant so much to their father daughter bond and her future as an independent adult making her way in the world. All those literary characters, situations and plots made it possible for him to broach subjects with her objectively and openly and made it possible for her to listen comfortably and take in just what she needed, when she needed it. He said reading aloud is much more valuable and more deeply meaningful in a parent child relationship than simple support for a child's reading level and love of books.

One last benefit of regular read-aloud at home: it supports the child's work at school. When parents continue reading aloud to their child two years above the child's own reading level, not only is family time filled with rich companionship and fine discussions, but also the child's mind is filled with appropriate subject matter for research and projects at school with work partners.



Donna Bryant Goertz, founder of [Austin Montessori School](#) in Austin, Texas, acts as a resource to schools around the world. Donna's book, *Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom* draws on her thirty years of experience guiding a community of thirty-five six-to-nine year-olds. She received her Montessori elementary diploma from the [Fondazione Centro Internazionale Studi Montessoriani](#) in Bergamo, Italy, and her assistants to infancy diploma from [The Montessori Institute of Denver, Colorado](#).