

PROCLAMATION OF THE “ALL OF EUROPE READS TO KIDS” PROGRAMME

We – the undersigned participants of the Inauguration of the First International Week of Reading to Children, jointly organized on June 1, 2011 in Cieszyn and Cesky Tesin by the “ABCXXI – All of Poland Reads to Kids” and “Every Czech Reads to Kids” Foundations, in cooperation with local authorities and cultural institutions, express our firm belief that the ability and passion to read is an essential condition for the comprehensive development of every human being, enabling a rise in the level of his/her education and competence, full participation in culture, as well as an improvement in the quality of both individual and social life.

Currently in Europe, approximately 20 percent of young people are functional illiterates, which is mostly a consequence of the lack of time devoted to children by parents and the prevalence of the electronic media. We believe that restoring or introducing the habit of reading to children at home and introducing it in all educational and child-caring institutions has become an urgent need if we are to prevent illiteracy and the cultural deprivation of our societies. Thus, we hereby appeal to all people, non-governmental organizations and institutions responsible for the education of the young generation to introduce and support programmes promoting daily reading aloud to children and adolescents.

20 minutes a day. Everyday!

So that reading is always a joy and never an obligation, punishment or boring experience!

Reading to children positively affects their emotional development and improves their language and thinking ability. It also fosters memory and imagination, improves attention span, deepens knowledge, aids learning, develops moral sensitivity, induces calm, strengthens self-esteem and helps to create intergenerational bonds between children and adults. The habit of reading a book every day is all too precious when the lack of time for children is prevalent!

Reading to children builds their rich inner resources and is the best vitamin for their comprehensive psychological, mental and moral development. It is also a vaccine against a variety of mass cultural threats. Reading is the cheapest way to raise a well-educated, cultured, good and happy person.

Children love reading. It merely depends on us, adults, if we manage to satisfy their natural need and willingness to listen to fairy tales and stories or lose them among the aggression and noise of commercials, computer games, electronic gadgets and the media.

Nobody is born a reader. We can raise a reader only by reading to a child for sheer pleasure. If we read to children, they grow to be readers – people who live wiser, better and even longer. Let's choose reading to children. Let's choose a good and happy future for our children and our societies! Let's read to our children every day – from their infancy through to adolescence. Let's create bonds and develop mental resources for our children. Let's develop the resources of Europe!

Anyone interested in joining the “All of Europe Reads to Kids” programme is kindly invited to contact the Foundation “ABCXXI – All of Poland Reads to Kids”: Tel.: + 48 22 648 3891(92); e-mail: europe@cpcd.pl and to visit our website www.AllofPolandReadstoKids.org

APPENDIXES

- A. Benefits of daily reading to children
- B. Results of research on the effectiveness of the programs “Reading Kindergartens” and “Reading Schools”
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- E. Examples of good practices
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A. Benefits of daily reading aloud to children

As the research and experience of reading families, kindergartens and schools confirms, daily reading aloud to children for pleasure:

- 1) satisfies their essential emotional needs - for love, attention, stimulation etc.
- 2) creates strong bonds between children and the adults who read to them
- 3) supports the psychological development of a child
- 4) raises self-esteem
- 5) teaches language, builds up vocabulary, enables fluency of speech
- 6) prepares for independent reading and writing
- 7) teaches independent thinking skills – logic, cause and effect and critical thinking
- 8) fosters imagination
- 9) improves concentration, promotes calm
- 10) exercises memory
- 11) allows children to acquire vast general knowledge
- 12) facilitates learning and helps to achieve success at school
- 13) teaches children values and enables them to recognize the difference between good and evil, as well as to develop moral sensitivity
- 14) develops a sense of humor
- 15) is a great pastime
- 16) protects them from addiction to television or computers
- 17) is a healthy escape from boredom, failure and problems
- 18) protects them from the dangers of mass culture
- 19) prevents antisocial behavior
- 20) creates a lifelong habit of reading and searching for knowledge

B. Results of the research on the effectiveness of the programs "Reading Kindergartens" and "Reading Schools"

C. Guidelines of the programs "Reading Kindergartens" and "Reading Schools"

D. Letters of invitation encouraging schools and kindergartens to join our programs

E. Good practices developed in the course of the campaign "All of Poland Reads to Kids" - examples and tips on how to do it

Universal rules:

- We must always read in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and delight over the child and the book
- It is good to consecrate one specific time during the day for daily reading
- When we read, we must always bear in mind the pleasure of the child – reading must not be a punishment or an obligation - the aim is to permanently associate reading with pleasure
- We must choose books which are interesting for children and appropriate for their age and stage of development, taking into account their reactions
- We must protect the child's sensitivity - we should not instill anxieties and fears
- We must adjust the amount of time spent on reading to the attention span of a child, perhaps starting with a couple of minutes, and then increasing the time period
- We should not force children to sit still – they can play while listening
- We should not leave children with a book alone once they know letters because this will discourage them from reading. Independent reading is still too difficult at this stage and a child loses the main attraction of reading, namely the closeness of an important person

At home:

- reading from the day of birth or even earlier, during pregnancy
- reading everyday
- arranging a fixed time dedicated to reading, e.g. before going to bed during the day and in the evening
- acquainting a child with a book as you would acquaint them with a toy (using books which will remain resistant to the experiments of little children)
- playing with a book as much as possible – talking about the pictures, finding letters and short words, inventing alternative endings etc.
- teaching children respect for books: we don't turn over the corners of the page or put a book on the kitchen table
- continuing reading even when a child can read alone
- taking books for trips/journeys and everywhere where you may have to wait longer (e.g. at the doctor's)
- reading to teenagers as well (a book often introduces conversation and enables bonding)
- it is possible to teach a child moderation and selected contact with electronic media such as TVs and computers only in the common space of the house

At kindergarten:

- arranging a fixed time for reading everyday
- inviting parents and interesting guests to read - conversation with them is also important
- books should be always interesting, can be chosen/brought in by children
- after reading it is important to discuss the book, play a game connected with it, draw pictures
- it is worth installing bookshelves in the classrooms
- not forcing children to sit still
- adjusting time spent on reading to the child's attention span

- adjusting titles to the level of child's perception
- removing the TV set from the room

At school:

- arranging a fixed time for reading everyday
- modes: 20 minutes of reading by a teacher during the entire day - or 10 minutes of reading by a teacher in the morning followed by 10 minutes at the end of the school day when everyone reads on their own, including teachers and school staff
- books to read should not be included in the compulsory canon, should be always interesting, can be suggested by children
- reading should not be graded, and the conversation which follows reading is important,. Optionally drawing can be introduced for younger children
- it is worth installing bookshelves in the classrooms.

During the national campaign:

- creating symbols for the campaign – for example a logo or a poster
- preparing criteria for the selection of good books
- preparing lists of recommended books for different age groups
- preparing educational-promotional materials: posters, brochures, bookmarks, sticks etc.
- creating a website for the campaign
- running humorous media campaigns (TV and radio commercials, the internet, outdoor campaigns)
 - finding media partners
 - registering volunteers to organize local reading campaigns
 - raising public awareness about national events through announcements on the website, by e-mail, in the newsletter
 - National Week of Reading to Children
 - Celebrating anniversaries - for example the birthday of Winnie the Pooh, as well as those of children's writers and poets (with games, presents prepared by the kids, birthday cakes)
 - Summer with a book, Winter with a book
 - Literary competitions which enable a chosen contemporary book for children and adolescents to be recognized and awarded
 - Competitions for the best organized reading campaign, the most effective book collection
 - Grand Finales – annual galas organized to express gratitude to volunteers and partners, creating prizes- statuettes, medals, diplomas commemorating involvement in the reading campaign
 - Organizing press conferences before major events

Programs and projects of the Foundation and its coordinators and leaders

- 'Since the age of three, make sure a book is always with thee' - a mayor of the commune presents every three-year-old with a book during an event attended by parents, grandparents, priest, invited guests and local media (inspiration from Scandinavia)
- 'Generations-Creations' – children from orphanages and seniors from universities of the Third Age attend concerts, exhibitions and plays together, participate jointly in art workshops and perform a play together at the end of the project
- 'Reading Heals' – reading to children in hospitals and hospices
- Organizing reading corners in visiting room in prisons
- 'Book Butterflies Clubs' - reading every week in a library to 2-5-year-olds
- 'My Baby's First Book' – a present for every newborn baby's mother.
- Educational activities of the Foundation:
 - educational conferences in the whole country concerning emotional needs, the importance of reading, teaching values etc.

- workshops
- training for mothers residing in prison with their small children
- recording the educational films: "How to Love a Child?", "Educating by Reading"
- writing of two books: "Guiding a Child into the World of Values" and "Educating by Reading"

F. Recommended Books

Jim Trelease – *The Read-Aloud Handbook; Hey, Listen to these Stories*

Mem Fox – *Reading Magic*

Paul Kropp – *Raising a Reader*

Caroline J. Blakemore and Barbara Weston Ramirez – *Baby Read-Aloud Basics*

Bernice E. Cullinan – *Read to Me. Raising Kids Who Love to Read*

Ben Carson and Cecil Murphey – *Gifted Hands*

Irena Koźmńska, Elżbieta Olszewska – *Wychowanie przez czytanie (Educating by Reading; W dzieckiem w świat wartości (Guiding a Child into the World of Values)*

Daniel Pennac – *Like a Novel (Comme un roman)*

Sue Palmer – *Toxic Childhood*

Daniel Pink – *A Whole New Mind; Drive*

Eric Jensen – *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*

G. Our commercials and videos to watch on the YouTube channel

<http://www.youtube.com/user/FundacjaCPCD>

Dad, Can You Read? - Tato, czy ty umiesz czytać?

Męskie rozmowy - Male conversations

Smoleń

Otoważ

Strychostrachy

Wspomnienia są blisko – Memories are close

Cała Polska czyta dzieciom -All of Poland Reads to Kids

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D. Letters of invitation encouraging schools and kindergartens to join our programs

Letter to kindergartens

Dear Teachers and Headmasters,

We cordially invite you to join the “Reading Kindergartens” program. It is a guaranteed, cost-free and easy way to better prepare children for the demands of school and life.

It is while in kindergarten that children are at the most crucial age for intensive learning about the world and developing a multitude of skills. At this stage, children learn language very intensively. Language is the main tool of obtaining knowledge, mastering thinking and social skills.

In this regard, daily reading by an adult is a very effective way of building up a rich vocabulary, correcting grammar and syntax without having to organize formal lessons, as well as improving a child's speech. If we read a lot and talk to a child, he/she will not need help from a speech therapist. Furthermore, by reading aloud, we bring up a morally good, thinking person with a broad imagination. When we read to children and then discuss problems mentioned in the book together, they learn to differentiate between good and evil. This is especially important in the contemporary world, dominated by materialism and aggressive mass culture. Needless to say, teaching children values such as respect, honesty, courage and solidarity should be a priority for parents, society and the country in the face of the growing demoralization of the young generation.

A passion for reading instilled in childhood is a vitamin for the mind of the child, which protects him/her from addiction to electronic media and from the bad influence of mass culture.

Nowadays, reading is far more important than it was in the past, because only a skillful reader can cope with the flood of information and knowledge which is characteristic for our times, and keep up-to-date with the changes in the fast-moving world. Unfortunately, children often grow up in an environment lacking in good language patterns, as parents spend very little time with their children; not talking or reading enough to them. Children do not play with their peers and grandparents as often then they used to in the past, and the opportunities to use language are now limited due the domination of computer games and TV, whose main tool is the image, not the word. As a result, children communicate using poor language, are unable to pronounce words correctly and do not understand the simplest texts and instructions. Therefore, they are not properly prepared to face the challenges of life and school.

Although a child's home is the most important place where a daily reading habit can be developed, the kindergarten should also provide the child with the opportunity to be read to everyday. Furthermore, the kindergarten can educate parents about the role of reading in the psychological, mental and moral development of a child. There is a certain paradox – we are investigating many ways, some of these very costly, which will facilitate the development of children, whereas we forget about reading - daily reading is an easy and investment-free way to achieve this goal. What is more, children love it!

If we want our children to become knowledgeable, cultured and well-educated adults , we should bring them up in an atmosphere of love for books - reading to them everyday for pleasure: at home, kindergarten and school. We cannot forget that the people we are raising now are the one who will soon be making decisions about the future of our country.

We invite you to visit our website www.allofpolandreadstokids.org, where you can find a report which highlights the effectiveness of our “Reading Kindergartens” program, as well as information about how to join it. 2300 kindergartens are already participating in the program. We also encourage you to read our new book “Educating by Reading”.

I am looking forward to our cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Irena Koźmińska,

President of the Foundation “ABCXXI-All of Poland Reads to Kids”

Letter to schools

Dear Teachers and Headmasters,

We cordially invite you to join the "Reading Schools" program. We direct our invitation at primary and secondary schools as well as technical and vocational schools. The core of the program is daily reading to students for pleasure. This is the best way to encourage children to read by themselves and to thus become true readers - people who are very keen on reading, learn easily and face the challenges posed by life more effectively. Bringing up children as readers is important for the whole society. Jim Trelease, the American propagator of reading to children wrote: "A nation that doesn't read much, doesn't know much. A nation that knows little takes wrong decisions - at home, at the market, in court at ballot boxes. The uneducated majority can outvote the educated minority- it is a very dangerous aspect of democracy."

According to the latest research by the Polish National Library, 56 percent of Poles have not read a single book in the course of a one year period. It is a major threat for our civilization and only we can prevent it.

Since reading is a basic tool of gaining knowledge, it is not possible to achieve success at school and continue learning without this ability. Unfortunately, more and more students admit that they do not like reading and read little as their knowledge of language is very poor. Aforementioned research revealed that 27 percent of pupils and students do not read at all! Contemporary children grow up in an environment which lacks good language patterns. Parents rarely talk and read to them. Instead, a child's everyday companion is a TV and a computer. However, the tool of visual media is the image, not the word, so such media does not teach language and does not provide us with an opportunity to practice it.

Language skills can be developed from early childhood by talking to children and reading aloud to them. A child, while listening to rich literary language, guesses the meaning of new words and idioms from the context in which they are placed, and at the same time also learns correct grammar and syntax, and is encouraged to read willingly on his/her own in the future. **If we want to live in a country of knowledgeable, educated people, we have to ensure that all children and adolescents know language and read for pleasure.** Not only should we encourage parents to read to their children - we should also encourage schools to support the development of language skills by allowing students to have daily contact with books. Research shows that literacy among children and adolescents is dropping, except in schools where teachers read to their students daily, for pleasure.

Some teachers are against reading to pupils at schools, claiming that it takes up the time they have to cover the core material outlined by the curriculum. However, completing the curriculum makes sense only if children understand the content of the lesson, are able to combine different pieces of knowledge and are motivated to learn. Even the best curriculum and teacher will not achieve results if pupils speak the language poorly, cannot think or concentrate properly, misbehave or are not interested in obtaining knowledge. Daily reading to children and discussion about books is the best way to teach children language, stimulate their interests, encourage to learn, improve their attention span. What is more, it brings visible changes to children's behavior - they calm down and are more reflective. Furthermore, an increase in moral sensitivity, a willingness to cooperate, a closer bond with the teacher and friendlier relationships between students can be observed. Daily reading is the cheapest and most successful way of increasing the level of education of children. It also helps to improve relationships at school.. **Reading aloud therefore supports the educational mission of the school!**

We invite you to visit our website www.allofpolandreadstokids.org, where you can find the report which highlights the effectiveness of our "Reading Schools" program and contains information about how to join it. 2500 schools are already participating in the program. We also encourage you to read our new book "Educating by Reading".

Yours faithfully,
Irena Koźmińska,
President of the Foundation "All of Poland Reads to Kids"