**Encouraging Good Reading and Writing**

Jonas Sauder

*Thought for today: Could you open school in September without… teacher? classroom? textbooks? desks?* ***library****?* Why?

ENCOURAGE GOOD READING

 a. Read high quality material to children in many settings: devotions, subject classes (even math!).

b. Introduce them to old books, new books, all types of books. Books to stretch them, books to

inspire, inform, challenge, books below and above their level.

 c. Invite children to share what they read. Show an interest in their reading.

 d. Use “real” books in classes.

A CLASSROOM LIBRARY should

1. Make age-appropriate, quality literature readily accessible to students in their formative years.
2. Provide additional resources for units of study in history, geography, science, health and Bible.
3. Provide a broad range of storybooks for the occasional or avid readers that help stimulate awareness, understanding, and appreciation for other people, places, and times.

BUILD A BALANCED COLLECTION

*Be sure the library includes books children should have access to but might not see elsewhere—books on Anabaptist history / biographies, local interest books, character building books.*

* 1. Biography: various levels, many kinds of people. Beware of the slant; all biographies have one.
	2. History & historical fiction: flesh out the story of events and times only “mentioned” in textbooks.
	3. Bible story books and Bible reference books: give perspective, background, and setting for the Bible.
	4. Poetry: anthologies, inspirational poems.
	5. Fiction: Truth is embodied in stories. Character qualities like honesty, compassion, submission and respect take on meaning to children as they see them in action. Stories are extremely effective and influential. Choose a variety carefully. Be sure the library collection is not mostly fiction.
	6. Nonfiction: books on all levels on animals, birds, insects, reptiles, fish, nature, human body

(eye, ear, skeleton, etc.), simple machines, weather, other countries & regions…

* 1. Magazine back issues: *Nature Friend, National Geographic* (choose the issues you accept)
	2. Maps & pamphlets
	3. Temporary collections: borrow from local library or from individuals. Follow a selection / screening plan. Keep master list and careful way of keeping track of books to return them in time.

USE THE COLLECTION (a small collection used well is more worthwhile than a large one that sits unused.)

1. Daily silent reading time (just after recess for 15 minutes).
2. Students keep list of #pages, titles and authors read. Challenge them to reach some cumulative goal.
3. Develop required reading list from which students must choose.
	1. for units of study
	2. for grade level
4. Have students share from their readings.
5. Assign book reports.
6. To manage, use cards, pockets and date due slips. Establish procedures & assign a librarian.
7. Keep the collection fresh and active.
	1. Rotate books on display.
	2. Offer incentives for reading books few have read if you’re sure they’re good.
	3. Discard unused books.

**Determining Literary Quality**

Some questions to ask, especially of story books.

Adapted from *Teaching Children* by Diane Lopez

1. Does the story itself catch and hold the interest of the reader?
2. Is the story timeless—can it be enjoyed regardless of the age in which it is set?
3. Is the story credible? Do the people speak and behave “for real”? Or did the author make them do and say what he / she wanted them to say?
4. Are the setting, culture, and factual background events painted with reasonable depth and accuracy?
5. Are the characters developed well and dynamic: changing as life unfolds in response to events and insights they gain?
6. Is the book well written, using language effectively?
7. Are the truths and values the book contains embedded in the story or are they tacked on by the author?

Some Direction for Censoring

Adapted from *Christian Education: Its Mandate & Mission* by Ronald Horton

Objectionable elements:

1. profanity
2. filth or immorality
3. violence
4. the occult
5. un-Biblical themes, tone, or world view

The above elements might be present…

1. to call attention to themselves
2. explicitly or implicitly
3. in a favorable or unfavorable light

A biblical approach to censorship approaches literature the way the Bible does. The Bible itself contains text or references to items (a-e above) which are best not read aloud, but are there for our instruction. There are examples to follow and examples to avoid. Evil, when present, is presented “in certain ways, for certain purposes, for certain effects.”

Of particular concern are books in which the whole tone of the book is subtly influential in fostering un-Biblical attitudes in the subconscious: attitudes that favor patriotism, materialism, secularism, or ethnic pride.