

# Help your teen build literacy skills

For students in middle and secondary grades

Keep in mind that your interest, involvement and support will help to improve your teen's achievements and success. The following are suggested activities that you and your teen can do at home.

## Model reading and writing

- Have your teen see you read and write. Children learn best by example.
- Relate reading to your every day life. For example, you can read magazines, newspapers, catalogues, menus, TV Guides, internet, crossword puzzles, maps and guides.
- Write letters to your teen. Compliment her when she has done something well. Use cards and notes to let her know how proud you are of her accomplishments.
- Ask your teen to write letters, shopping lists, invitations and to-do lists.
- Help your teen find a pen pal from another province, state or country. Be creative.

## Help your teen develop literacy skills with everyday activities

- Read, watch, listen to and discuss newspaper articles, television and radio news coverage, journals and magazines. (An article beside the breakfast bowl can do wonders to the usual "mundane" conversations.)
- Prepare shopping lists together and compare prices, sizes and brands. This is a great way to use the

weekend flyers to find the "best" deals.

- Look at advertisements together and estimate how much money you can save if you buy different brands. For example, compare prices of clothing at different department stores or sports equipment at stores for sporting goods. This is also a great way to teach your teen about finding good prices.
- Collect coupons and see how much you can save.
- Play logic math games, or work with a calculator and the computer.
- Enjoy baking together. Let him choose a recipe and then make it together
- Graph a variety of data, perhaps on family gas consumption, time spent watching television, time spent on the Internet or time spent listening to CD'S and other music. Discuss the graph.
- Discuss the environment with your teen. Ask her to monitor the use of electricity or help with the gardening or recycling programs.
- Play spelling and language games—like Scrabble, Boggle or Trivial Pursuit—and look for the correct spelling and meaning of words.
- Encourage your teen to read independently. He can read magazines, newspapers, comic books or anything of his choice.
- Develop a sense of responsibility with your child by assigning regular chores. For example, setting the table, emptying the dishwasher, cleaning her bedroom, laundry, dusting and cooking preparations.

- Together, decide on a good location for homework—not in front of the television!

### **Turn trips and family vacations into learning opportunities**

- Take your teen to museums, planetariums, art displays, concerts, sporting events, and on family vacations. Discuss what you see and what you like.
- Keep a diary, journal or log together and share reflections with your teen. Think about creating a family journal, scrapbook or photo album when on family vacations. Use funny captions or anecdotes above photographs to remember family events.
- Visit bookstores and the public library regularly to find materials for pleasure reading.
- Subscribe to magazines and newspapers and read together.
- Go on shopping trips and encourage your teen to estimate grocery total and the required change. This is more fun when shopping for personal items like CD's or clothes.

### **Ten ways to stay connected with your teen**

As your teen becomes more independent, you may find that you're spending less time together. Here are some ways you can stay in touch with your teen.

- 1) Find interests you share and activities that you can do together.
- 2) Keep up-to-date and involved with your teen's activities. Show your

interest by asking about her basketball game, trip to the movies or shopping at the mall.

- 3) Go out and eat together or buy your teen's favorite snack. Remember, the way to a teen's heart is through food! Listen to what your teen has to say.
- 4) Show an interest in your teen's music. Find out who his favorite artists and what his favorite songs are. What does he like about them? Listen to the radio station that your teen listens to. Find out what he likes about that particular station.
- 5) Show an interest in your teen's friends and encourage them to get together at your house. Make their visit to your home fun and interesting.
- 6) Help your teen understand the different stages of life by visiting friends and family members of all ages.
- 7) Make sure that your teen knows that she can share her problems with you. Help her benefit from your successes and mistakes.
- 8) Read together as a family and discuss what everyone is reading. Remind your teen that sometimes adults have "homework" to do as well (i.e. reading reports, doing performance appraisals, etc.). This will allow him to see the connection of reading to real life.
- 9) Keep track of your family successes in an annual journal. This could be a scrapbook, picture album, etc.

