

READING

Page One in the Book of Success

Reading is important. Reading is fundamental. Reading is exercise for the brain.

When it comes to our children, we hear it all the time, but do we take it for granted? When considering an elementary school for our children, do we inquire about the reading curriculum? Do we look for an elementary school with a superior reading program? After all, as long as my child can read, what does it matter whether a school's reading curriculum is superior or average? And what's the difference anyway?

A lot, it turns out. In fact, these questions (and the right answers) are absolutely essential to your children's academic success, not to mention everything else in life for which strong academics prepare them. The Spencer Foundation (www.spencer.org), a private foundation which invests in education research for the purpose of improving education practices, released the results of a study recently on the impact of reading programs and practices at the elementary school level. Here's what they found:

- Reading has cognitive consequences that extend beyond its immediate task of lifting meaning from a particular passage. Furthermore, these consequences are exponential over time, spiraling either upward or downward and carrying profound implications for the development of a wide range of cognitive abilities.
- Very early in the process of learning to read, children who experience greater difficulty in breaking the spelling-to-sound code, are exposed to fewer reading passages and eventually wind up with material in front of them too difficult for them to comprehend.
- The combination of deficient "decoding skills", lack of practice and difficult materials results in unrewarding early reading experiences that in turn lead to frustrations, distractions and developmental delays in skills like word recognition which should become automatic.

When word recognition is delayed, comprehension is severely hindered, and when reading for meaning is difficult or impossible, unrewarding reading experiences multiply, and the child either avoids reading altogether or reads without meaningful comprehension - either way, a recipe for failure in school and beyond.

Choosing an elementary school with a substantive investment and belief in imparting superior reading skills is the best way to prevent your child from becoming stuck in the damaging cycle of unrewarding reading experiences. The principal and teachers at Woodcrest School, a private K-5 elementary school in Tarzana, believe that development of such skills should start in Kindergarten. The Kindergarten teachers at Woodcrest use a fun, rhyme-based program with an emphasis on comprehension, corrective reading and reading mastery. Kindergarten students also participate in the Accelerated Reader[®] program, an online supplemental program that rewards children for exploring new levels

of reading. Woodcrest also recognizes reaching achievement with a quarterly school-wide reading awards ceremony.

At Woodcrest School, your child will learn to read in Kindergarten, *understand* what she's reading, be able to talk about it and have an opinion about it. And almost as important - your child will learn to love reading. The act of reading every day, with high standards, helps students in nearly every aspect of their young lives. A prolific reading habit will improve quality of life over time. Call Ms. Paglione, principal and chief advocate of Woodcrest's amazing reading program, to schedule a school tour, including the new library and media center. (818-345-3002)