

Ten minutes reading each night could be the difference

"Reading is the backbone of all learning," stated Tom Ramautarsingh, chairman of the Holy Cross Parents Association, in his opening remarks to the people in attendance at the recent Holy Cross parents meeting held to discuss children's reading problems.

Many children have difficulty coping with other subjects because they have not adequately mastered language skills.

There are various schools of thought to explain why some children are slower readers than others, pointed out Irene Chalupka, Primary Consultant with the Halton Separate School Board.

Physical maturity—which

occurs at different ages with different children—is the main prerequisite. A child's eyes must be developed well enough for him to clearly see small print; his hearing must be developed to enable him to distinguish between speech sounds. This lays the groundwork for cognitive skills.

Some neurologists claim that it is possible that a child's brain may not be ready to handle the reading process until the age of eight, nine or even ten. It is necessary for the corpus callosum, the area of the brain which allows the left (verbal) and right (non-verbal) hemispheres of the brain to be fully developed before a child is physically capable of reading, Chalupka explained, adding that a child

should be able to learn to read at his own pace, not necessarily in step with his peers.

Even prior to this point in maturity, the child's environment plays a major part in his attitude towards reading.

To describe what can happen psychologically to a child forced to learn to read before he is ready, Chalupka quoted Bond and Tinker: "Inability to cope with assignments produces frustration which leads to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, insecurity, and perhaps even rebellion. Such a child is likely to develop an attitude of indifference to reading. He may even come to hate reading and all persons

connected with reading activities."

There are ways parents can gradually prepare a child for the task of reading, as outlined by Holy Cross principal Barry Gowan, who showed a film-strip entitled "Learning to Read".

To exemplify proper speech habits, parents should talk to their pre-schoolers normally, avoiding baby talk. It is also important that children are given a chance to express themselves, which enables them to become familiar with the vocabulary. Word games are educational, in a fun way.

Books should be introduced at an early age. Bedtime stories give a toddler a positive impression of books, and a child's interest is aroused if he sees a family member reading. Take a trip to the library and choose well-illustrated books for your youngster.

School-aged children should be encouraged to read to their parent, and to take care of books. A child feels less intimidated by the printed page if they are assured that mom or dad will help them with difficult words.

One parent at the meeting suggested that spending 10 minutes each evening listening to a child read from his school reader would give his parents an indication of his progress while preparing him for the following class.

Of course, the more experiences a child of any age has had, the easier it is for him to conjure up images in his mind which give meanings to words.

In conclusion, the group felt the most effective method of preparing a child for reading is by exposing him to words, printed and verbal. Perhaps it won't be easy to interest your child in books in view of the competition: television. TV may help a youngster how to talk, but only books can teach him how to read.

Said Tom Ramautarsingh, "TV is dominating the lives of our children so much that the feel for language, the respect for things of the mind, the need for conversation and dialogue are sadly lacking and hence are creating illiterate human beings."



THERE'S ENJOYMENT in reading as these four students at Holy Cross Separate School, Robert Sales, Pat Stoyes, Jessie Ramautarsingh and Hermanda Galvao, will tell you.

Mum's the word

One type of local farmer produces a commodity more delicate than eggs and more changeable in wholesale value than pork chops—that's the greenhouse owner.

Frank Van Ofwegen is one of the many private businessmen in Halton Hills who make their living growing plants. Some produce a variety; Van Ofwegen specializes. His four, 100-foot-long greenhouses, situated at the rear of his Norval home, exclusively house chrysanthemums.

A native of Holland who has been working in greenhouses all his life, Van Ofwegen had a good background knowledge of horticulture which enabled him to sensibly choose the chrysanthemum family to rear when he established his own business 11 years ago.

chemical fertilizer, Osmocote, consisting of potash, nitrogen and phosphoric acid, is used also.

After the tiny sprouts are planted in the constant 60 degree temperature greenhouse heated by a furnace Van Ofwegen tries to "create the same natural conditions that they would have outside," during different seasons.

To simulate sunshine, light bulbs are turned on above the plants to encourage growth. When they attain a certain size, they are shaded by sheets of plastic to induce budding. Before flowering, unnecessary buds are removed from the lower stems, resulting in the development of a perfect, round cluster of blossoms.

Hoses with tiny holes six inches apart are used for watering.

Because mums grow quite tall, the graph-like wire rack which is divided into separate sections for each plant is moved higher as they grow, to keep the stems straight.

Insecticides are sprayed to destroy the bugs which damage the blossoms.

At one time each of the stages in the development process of a plant can be seen, because Van Ofwegen's 20 units or rows of chrysanthemums are planned so that a certain volume of flowers are in bloom at certain times. This prevents a wasteful excess of stock.

Van Ofwegen plants extra mums three months ahead of

special occasions, such as Mother's Day, to prepare for the increase in demand.

Most of his three and a half acres annually produced are sold to wholesalers, although the public are welcome to come and choose bunches to buy and he supplies some of the local florists.

Area greenhouse farmers gather with wholesale buyers bright and early at 6 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 7 a.m. Wednesdays and Fridays at the Ontario Flower Growers' Co-Op at Dixie Road and Highway 401, to do business.

Samples of the flowers are displayed on a lock, abling the buyers to compare, and a highly competitive auctioning process follows.

"Prices change a lot," said Van Ofwegen, adding that an equivalent bunch of flowers sold last week for \$1. was worth \$2.25 just before Mother's Day.

"If you want top price, you have to grow top quality," said Van Ofwegen, who seems to be holding his own despite the competition, long working hours and the rising cost of production—especially the fuel used for the greenhouse furnaces, which increased in price from 15 cents a gallon to 35 to 40 cents a gallon in two units, he remembered.

But Ofwegen prefers to "be his own boss" in his own family business.

"I enjoy working with my husband and I love the flowers," said Rita Van Ofwegen. "It's our life."



PROUDLY DISPLAYING A BOUQUET of multi-colored chrysanthemums is Frank Van Ofwegen, who specializes in this durable, versatile flower. His four greenhouses in Norval house 20 varieties in a rainbow of hues.

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