

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CHRONICLE

For SBCUSD Families and the SBCUSD Community

How well can your child read?

There's more to reading than sounding out the words and explaining what it's about

By **RANDY OLSON**

Your child is learning to read, but what do you do when they finally can? For most parents, the answer is simple: Have them read!

That's a great answer. There are many benefits to exposing your child to a wide variety of books and teaching your child to love books and reading. But focusing only on *what* and *how much* your child reads can actually limit their growth and make it more difficult for them to be successful in middle school and high school.

We've all heard the phrases "Learning to read" and "Reading to learn." They're frequently used to mark the dividing line between



readers and non-readers, but using them as a measure of reading ability can create a false assurance that as far as reading instruction and growth are concerned, your child has reached the end of the line and all they need to do

to continue to grow is to read more.

The problem is that it's not the end of the line and many children spend years in a kind of reading limbo where they're "reading to learn," but they're

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What's the formula for success? More work than you think

By **RANDY OLSON**

Many students think that if they just do everything their teachers ask and try their hardest that that will be enough for them to reach their *highest* college, career and scholarship goals. Unfortunately, for most students, school alone won't be enough.

At first, this seems rather shocking

because most people connect student performance to teacher and school quality and think that if students don't get to the very highest levels, then there must be something wrong with the school or the teachers--or both.

Schools and teachers, however, are only part of the equation for student success, not to mention equity.

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There's more to reading (cont.)

not really growing as readers. At least in the ways they should be growing.

When “reading to learn” is the end of the line, children don't move much beyond trying to understand what an author is trying to say and rarely think about how authors use language or its impact on their readers. So, children often go years without practicing this second kind of reading and it's no surprise that when they need it—usually for an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam in their junior or senior year—they don't have it. And by then, there's often not enough time to learn it and the highest exam scores are largely out

of reach. (Which can impact college admissions.)

And then there's the impact on your child's writing. Students who understand how authors use language—and why they make the choices they do—often begin using what they learn to become better writers. They practice the techniques they pick up from their reading until they've mastered them and those techniques can become tools they can use when they need them.

So, continue to have your child read—and read a wide variety of things—but also make sure that once your child knows how to read that

they from time to time focus not only on *what* the author is trying to communicate, but on *how* the author is communicating, *why* they are choosing the words and language they are using and its impact on the reader.

If you need help, ask your child's teacher how your child can develop these advanced reading (and writing) skills. They can give you questions to ask your child at home that your child will continue to develop once they have “learned to read.”

Randy Olson is a former district honors and Advanced Placement English teacher.

Parent leadership opportunities (cont.)

can thrive academic, socially and emotionally. They also help families to better understand the educational system and their role in it so they can become advocates not only for their own children, but all children.

Family Engagement Network

The San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools offers trainings and workshops for parents and families through their Education Support Services Department. The Family Engagement Network meetings and the yearly Parent Summit are hugely popular, but they have a variety of opportunities for parents and family members to connect with one another across districts and to build their leadership capacity. Many well-known parent and family leaders in the area got their start at SBCSS events and trainings.

National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement

This organization is for parents and family members who are ready to develop their understanding of



Ryan Berryman is the founder of San Bernardino Fatherhood, a non-profit that promotes the value of fathers and male caregivers.

family engagement beyond the basics. Though a national organization, their meetings and trainings are often virtual so participants can attend wherever they are. Plus, what they have to share can often be applied to schools or districts anywhere. It's a great way to establish connections outside of California and to see what's working in other states and in other districts.

Upcoming Family Engagement Workshops

The Family Engagement department offers a variety of workshops to help families keep track of their children's attendance and grades, offer support to one another, learn how to use technology, maintain their physical and emotional health, and learn how to keep their children safe.

At this time, all of the workshops and meetings are held virtually. Here's a list of current and upcoming workshops.

AERIES

African American Support Group

Computer Classes

Family Support Groups

Parent Health

Real Colors

Sheriff's Department Classes

For more information, see the [Family Engagement Calendar](#).