

Sep 15 2014 : The Times of India (Bangalore)

IDEAS FOR BANGALORE - Reading on the wall: Go to books

SruthySusan Ullas@ timesgroup com

Inspiring a habit: How many children are hooked to books today? If kids from middle class families show little interest in reading due to other temptations like TV, underprivileged kids do not have access to anything except textbooks. NGOs are trying to solve the this by providing poor kids with reading material. However, drawing the attention of all students to books seems difficult. TOI looks at the huge challenge parents and teachers face in inspiring the young to open books Rich kids not interested in reading, poor lack books

The sounds of plates clanking and children shouting fill the air as midday meals are served in the verandah of the Government Kannada Higher Primary School, Jakkur Layout. Amid this cacophony, Manasa and her friends are submerged in library books even as a teacher reminds them not to drop food on the books.

Ten-year-old Manasa could only identify alphabet till a library opened in her classroom. Today, she is hooked to books. "Give them colourful, engaging books and their natural curiosity will get them to flip a few pages. It is all about exposure to books," says Ashok Kamath, chairman, Akshara Foundation, one of the NGOs striving to get children to read books.

If video games and TV shows are blamed for children from middle class families not showing interest in reading, lack of books (other than textbooks) is the problem in poorer households.



Read the article and share your views on [TOI Social Impact Awards: Reality check on education ? in school, but are they learning?](#)

“One could argue that many schools have libraries. But do they have librarians?”

One of the ways to circumvent the problem is providing library in each classroom. We have tried it in around 350 schools in the state. There is easy accessibility. Teachers can keep an account of children borrowing books and there is also some pressure from peers to read,” Ashok said.

The NGO also tried to get chai and kirana shops to display books. Thanks to the effort, Jennifer A, a class 8 student of a government school, picked up a book instead of a kite at a kirana shop in a slum in Satya Nagar last week.

Azim Premji University's Kathavana, a children's literature festival, takes a different approach. “We are looking at use of folklore as it connects with children and the community from which they hail,” said Shailaja Menon, faculty, language and literature, Azim Premji University .

She says monotonous language classes in schools also contribute to children's aversion to reading.

That's where storytelling comes in, says Suzanne Singh, chairperson, Pratham Books. “Storytelling engages everyone. It lights up the imagination and helps in different interpretation. It is a magical way of connecting,” she said. Storytelling and related activities are an integral part of the NGO's efforts to inculcate reading habit among children.

Echoing her view, Vikram Sridhar, a professional storyteller, says, “Once I narrated a story to a child. He went back and read the book in two regional languages as his parents hail from different states. The child could appreciate it in both languages.”

Besides, there are not enough children's books in many regional languages, says Suzanne. “We have very few exclusive children stores or space in libraries,” she adds.

“Parents should spend time with their children in reading books. It should start as early as possible,” says Umesh Malhotra, CEO of Hippocampus Reading Foundation.





“ When we started, these children had not seen any books apart from textbooks. We began with books with lots of illustration. And it clicked.

Jagdish Babu | AGASTHYA FOUNDATION

“ It is high time we reactivated the department of public library in a big way. We need to crack the access problem.

Ashok Kamath |
CHAIRPERSON, AKSHARA FOUNDATION

“ Storytelling engages everyone. It lights up the imagination and helps in different interpretation. It is a magical way of connecting
Suzanne Singh |
CHAIRPERSON, PRATHAM BOOKS

“ Parents should spend time with their children in reading books. It should start as early as possible
Umesh Malhotra |

CEO, HIPPOCAMPUS READING FOUNDATION

21,874

schools with library

THE BIG PICTURE

350

schools in state have libraries in classroom, thanks to Akshara Foundation

21,996

Lower primary schools in Karnataka

Source: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan & Akshara Foundation

INITIATIVES ABROAD TO INCULCATE THE READING HABIT

BOOKSTART

Free book packs are given to newborns, toddlers and preschoolers in the UK to develop a love of reading. Bookstart, the first national bookgifting programme in the world, believes reading brings about family bonding. Started by an independent charity in 1992, Bookstart now runs on a public-private partnership. There are different book packs for different age



DEAR TIME

Schools in the US have a DEAR time, when students 'drop everything and read'. Teachers tell the students they can pick any book of their preference and read it silently at their desk. The programme is aimed at inculcating the reading habit among young students. Besides,



SILENT READING

Schools in the West designate special period for students to read silently. Developed over 35 years ago, the Sustained Silent Reading programme believes that students learn to read by doing so constantly. Over the years, it has become a



groups and they are delivered via dedicated public services professionals, including health visitors and teachers. It has separate book packs called Bookshine or Booktouch for kids having hearing difficulty or visual impairment.

the country has a month-long celebration of reading that reminds people to make it a priority in their lives. April 12 is recognized as DEAR day in honour of American author Beverly Cleary.

common practice in the West. Research shows that SSR changes the children's attitude towards reading, and improves their vocabulary and writing skills.

[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)
Copyright © 2010 Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. All rights reserved.
Site best viewed in 1024 * 786 resolution