



Children's Books

Reading For Character: Why Books Teach Children Good Life Lessons

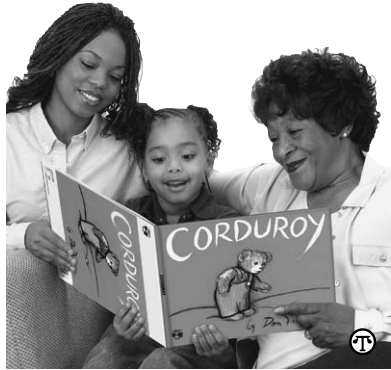
(NAPSA)—Parents have long used enduring fairy tales and fables—such as *Cinderella*, *Pinocchio* and *The Ugly Duckling*—to teach young children life-long lessons about how to treat others.

Confirming what caregivers have instinctively suspected for years, recent research actually supports using good books to teach character values. In fact, combining reading instruction with character development has been proven to raise children's reading and writing scores, while also improving their behavior and social skills. This ten-year research project has been used to help create a new program for schools, called *Voices Reading*, published by Zaner-Bloser, a publisher of language arts and reading resources.

The program aligns award-winning children's literature with important character development themes. The experts behind *Voices Reading* explain why this is a valuable approach:

- The most compelling moments in the lives of young children are the challenges and opportunities associated with their social relationships. Good books should provide children with content worth reading and discussing—without running away from the tough issues children may face.

- Because of bullying, teasing and other disruptive behaviors in school, many children have an extremely difficult time focusing on academic tasks if they haven't yet developed social skills. Therefore,



it is critical that children are formally taught character development skills at an early age—beginning as early as kindergarten.

- Effective books address a universal theme for character development, such as freedom. An example is *Freedom Summer*, an Ezra Jack Keats book-award winner by Deborah Wiles. A particularly poignant illustration of how reading can encompass character development, *Freedom Summer* captures two boys' experiences with racism—and how their friendship defied it—following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

To help young learners make significant gains in interpersonal skills while also improving reading comprehension and writing, parents can visit their local public library to find a wide selection of good books that incorporate relevant life lessons. Educators and caregivers can visit www.zaner-bloser.com to learn more about *Voices Reading* and the research behind the program.