

Parent Topics

Help Kids Have Healthy Minds, Healthy Mouths

(NAPSA)—The National Education Association (NEA) revs up more than 45 million readers—young and old—every year through Seuss-tastic events that encourage children to be in the company of a good book.

This year, NEA is encouraging children to pick up a book AND a toothbrush.

Why encourage brushing? Here's a statistic that may be a surprise to many: American students miss more than 51 million hours of school every year because of oral health problems. That means a loss of critical instruction time—especially in early grades where reading skills are an important focus and one of the building blocks of future learning.

“NEA’s Read Across America has been successful in cultivating a nation of readers because we help kids see how much fun reading can be,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel.

How Educators Are Helping

NEA, the leader in advocating for children’s literacy, is teaming up with Renaissance Dental through its award-winning Read Across America program to deliver a very important message: $2 \times 2 + 20 =$ good oral health and literacy habits.

What’s the reason behind this equation? Asking children to brush for two minutes, two times per day, plus read for 20 minutes each day, allows for a daily total of 24 minutes focused on good oral health and reading skills. And that allows parents and educators to help children address oral health and reading.

Here’s what parents can do to help foster a love of reading—and good oral hygiene:

- Boost oral care through books. As kids read and learn about the benefits of good oral hygiene, attitudes about brushing



For learning that kids can really get their teeth into, parents make sure their youngsters pick up a book and a toothbrush every day.

and flossing will improve. Try sharing titles like the Dr. Seuss classic “The Tooth Book,” or titles like “Make Way for Tooth Decay” and “Open Wide: Tooth School Inside.”

- Make the trip to the dentist a more positive experience with books. Titles featuring familiar characters can help relieve the anxiety often associated with visiting the dentist and get kids used to the idea of regular dental checkups.

- Find a fun short poem and teach kids to recite it in their heads as they brush. Rhyming verse can be an effective timekeeper when it comes to helping kids brush for two minutes twice a day!

“By making twice-daily brushing and daily reading parts of a child’s regular routine, we can start to instill good habits early on,” said Rob Mulligan, president and CEO of Renaissance Dental.

Learn More

You can find further facts at www.nea.org and www.RenaissanceDental.com. For more about NEA’s Read Across America and how you can get involved, visit www.nea.org/readacross. For more on the link between oral health and literacy, check out <http://2min2x.org>. You can join in on the conversation at @NEAMedia and #neareads.