Reciting and Reading Aloud

Even before children are proficient readers, they can recite aloud something that they have committed to memory. Encourage regular recitation. And just as in writing class neat formation of letters is stressed, during recitations proper enunciation is stressed. Although many modern educators do away with standards and rules to encourage greater participation among students, this abandonment of standards does not encourage participation, but laxity. Children that are aware of the standards before they begin are not discouraged in reciting. Rather they enjoy having something to work toward; to practice for. We should always in every subject strive to instill in our children the ethic of putting forth our best effort in every circumstance.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” -- 2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJ)

Reciting without stumbling and hesitating, and with proper enunciation; and when older, reciting with feeling or tone to match the mood of the piece, is the standard that children work toward in Oratory.

Material for recitation can be the facts of an aspect of some subject; poetry; or passages of history, literature or Scripture. Recitation begins in 1st grade or earlier with the alphabet and counting to ten or a hundred. Students can take the floor formally once a week or even daily as part of memorization drill. Even if it is only drill, the enunciation should still be precise. Recitation is a worthwhile exercise to continue throughout the grammar stage, with the length and the complexity of the passages or poetry increasing as the child increases in his skills. If the child doesn't recite according to the standards, do what would be done if they turned in a piece of writing with sloppy penmanship: give them a chance to do it again, paying closer attention to the details this time. Doing over does not have to mean the same as failure unless the child is made to feel that it is. In our homeschool, we prefer to remember that practice makes perfect, and doing again is one more chance to practice towards perfection.

Once a child has learned to read, give him regular opportunities to read aloud. At first his concentration will be on just decoding the words correctly. Even here, insist on correct enunciation. As the children become comfortable in decoding and reading more fluently, they may have a tendency to read in a monotone. Work on developing the skill of not reading in a monotone next. Have them mimic your example in short passages until they get the hang of it. Remember that they have roughly six years to get this down, so space increasing expectations of their abilities accordingly. As they get older and more practiced, you can have them work on reading with feeling, matching their tone to the mood of the passage, and so on. Older children benefit greatly by reading the history or literature read-aloud to their younger brothers and sisters, and Mom’s voice gets a rest mid-morning!

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