

## **Tis' the season for learning!**

### ***10 family literacy tips and activities to warm the winter holidays***

Winter holidays provide an excellent opportunity for families and friends to spend time together learning and practicing literacy skills.

“During the holidays, why not take time to sing, read and learn together during the cold wintry nights,” says Margaret Eaton, President, ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation. “It’s a great chance to improve literacy skills and practice for Family Literacy Day.” On January 27, 2010, families and communities across Canada will participate in Family Literacy Day. Established in 1999 by ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation and Honda Canada, this national initiative encourages Canadians to spend at least 15 minutes enjoying a learning activity every day.

ABC CANADA offers the following activities to encourage family literacy over the holidays and throughout the winter months:

- 1. Make a list, check it twice:** As a family, write out lists together – wish lists to Santa, shopping lists or even New Year’s resolutions!
- 2. Watch a book:** Many classic holiday stories have been adapted for the big screen. Read these stories with your kids first, then watch the movie equivalent; *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* are classic favourites.
- 3. Signed, sealed, delivered:** Do you have a stack of holiday cards that need to be posted? Ask your family to help you write out greetings and addresses.
- 4. How many shopping days left?:** When shopping for gifts or holiday party supplies, ask your kids to count out the change required to make your purchase. You can practice numeracy skills by keeping track of spending before you reach the cash register.
- 5. Sing for literacy!:** Bring out the karaoke machine for the family to sing Christmas carols or classic winter-themed songs. Singing encourages learning patterns of words, rhymes and rhythms, and is strongly connected to language skills.

**6. Dear Grandma:** The holidays are a great time to write a letter or email to a loved one. Have everyone in your family contribute at least one paragraph on what they have accomplished over the last year.

**7. Holiday scavenger hunt:** Create a list of holiday and winter- related items around your home. Give the list to your family and have them find all the items on the list.

**8. Jack Frost nipping at your nose:** On cold winter days, snuggle by the fire with a good Christmas book and a cup of hot chocolate. Don't forget the marshmallows!

**9. Make reading a key ingredient:** Following a recipe is a great way to practice reading, comprehension and math skills. By baking holiday cookies or cakes, you can get the whole family involved.

**10. Start a family game night:** Get your family together and play a game like Scrabble® or Monopoly® so you can practice spelling and counting! Make it a weekly event.

*This article originally appeared in the December 2009 issue of Capital Parent Newspaper*