

READ THE WORLD TO YOUR CHILD

By TAN XIN HUI

Parents are always striving to give the best for their children to make sure their kids are living a stable and happy life. For a stay-at-home mom, S.P. Kee, reading with her 6-year-old son is their perfect bonding time that she specially prepared for her little one.

The journey started when Kee received her first picture book from her Taiwanese friend when her son was one. "The book was a second-hand book which was read by my friends' child before she gave it to me", she said. Since then, Kee started looking for more picture books and practised 'Reading to Child' with her son, a reading concept that is popular in many countries.



In 2017, Kee started to share her thoughts on Facebook Page 'We Read To Our Kids' about what she gained from reading to her child. "That was when I started researching more about the concept of reading with children using picture books, but I could not find any social platform or website that is related to this reading culture especially among Malaysians. It was the reason I created the FB page.", explains Kee. Over the years, Kee's Facebook page has gained nearly 7,500 likes and it has become a comforting zone to guide first-time parents who are interested in 'Reading To Their Child'.

TOP: Kee's husband has always been her best support in what she practices which is 'read to kids' at home. PHOTO S.P.Kee

Left: Kee has shared her reading experiences with six-year-old son through Facebook Page 'We Read To Our Kids' since 2017. PHOTO S.P.Kee



Ke allow the children to choose their favourite reading materials. PHOTO S.P.Kee



WHAT IS A PICTURE BOOK?

Picture book, by the name of it we can already guess that it is a book that consists more visuals than words. "The book speaks through the pictures", said Kee. "A great picture book does not only educate but also tells a story from a child's perspective."

Kee talked about her reason behind recommending picture books for children's reading session. "I think picture books can develop the kid's aesthetic appreciation, language skills, and also contribute to their cognitive improvement, especially when the story is interesting, it brings joy to both parents and child", she said.

Kee suggests that parents should choose picture books accordingly. "For example, if your child loves dinosaurs, you can choose a story that has

dinosaurs as the main characters", she added.

The other method that should be considered is the age factor. "kids before three years are more likely interested in familiar activities, such as eating, bathing, father, mother, pets, and others. After they three, they start developing interest in the stories and they start gaining knowledge-based content at the age of four to five."

There are also some type of picture books with no words and Kee suggested allowing the kids to read it when they are able to understand the pictures by themselves. Reading is always better to start earlier. Even babies can start reading by exposing them to clothes or board books.

Kee introduced her son to picture books since he was one and a half-year-old then she let him read a lot of picture books until he was five-year-old. "When the picture books do not meet his needs as he grew up, I will add other reading materials, such as science books, storybooks, and even comics", she said. "I suggest parents choose their native language to read with kids."

There's more in choosing the picture book too, Kee shared that parents can join the reading parent groups virtually or face to face to gather helpful recommendations. They can also refer to the ranking of the 100 best children's books, and the books that are awarded internationally, such as Caldecott Medal Awards Book List.

Bookstore to buy picture books in Malaysia

Chinese Picture Book (Price Range: RM20-60) Bookstore:

- Books Kinokuniya Malaysia
- KL Commercial Book
- Citè Book Garden
- Love Community PUJ Bookstore

English Picture Book (Price Range: RM20-100) Bookstore:

- Books Kinokuniya Malaysia
- MPH
- BookXcess





Perpustakaan Kuala Lumpur. PHOTO S.P.Kee

Ways to get picture books at low cost

1. **Public and private libraries that can be reached within an hour**
2. **E-book services from the National Library of Malaysia**
3. **'Interlibrary' service among families through Kim's Facebook page, 'We Read to our kids':**
 - **Registered family can exchange books with each other.**
 - **Registered parents can use Google Map to find other nearby parents to exchange books.**
 - **Parents can rent a book from other parents with RM1 if they don't have any book collection to exchange.**
 - **There are currently 260 exchange points in Malaysia.**

HOW TO START "READING TO YOUR CHILD" SESSION

As much as parents might want to hurry their little ones to win at the starting point, Kee reminded that parents must have the right concept of 'Reading to Child'. "We do not want to just teach them to read and learn words, but the main purpose is to develop their interest in reading until they become good readers", she said.

Kee added, there are three major No's when parent read to kids such as Do No Point And Read, No Forcing and No Preaching. She advice parents should start the first step of reading to their child for at least 15 minutes every night before bed, in a comfortable, quiet space without any disturbance. "Don't force your child to continue reading if they leave halfway, you may try again the next day", she explained.

"Parents can actually fix a reading routine with their child for 15 minutes everyday. For working parents that are only able to accompany their child during the weekends, please try to spend that time reading to your kids", she advised.

When children start asking for a longer reading session with parents or require multiple times reading in a day, parents have to likely satisfy their needs.

According to Kee, reading to your child not only brings the joy of reading but also creates a bond between the child and the parent. "You can still have reading session with your child even when they are able to read alone. Reading session should be continued until children complete their primary school", Kee explained.

A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY

Reading to children among Malaysians is an atmosphere that has gradually improved due to the active promotion on picture books, but it is still not enough to achieve the proper routine of reading to children as a culture in the community. "We still have a long way to go", Kee said.

Kee started her journey in sharing and promoting the reading session with children through her Facebook page with four other mothers who joined her. "There are five of us now writing and sharing our personal experiences and recommending picture books in the page", she said.

"We are not experts in child psychology, just some ordinary mothers who are willing to pay attention and explore the knowledge in reading to our kids, and share it with other parents", she says.

For now, besides writing articles, these five caring mothers still continue their enthusiasm even during the pandemic by having some online talk sessions to communicate with other parents.



Kee shared that parents play an important role in encouraging their children to become good readers. PHOTO S.P.Kee

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recommendations
from S.P Kim:**



PART 1



PART 2