Motivate the reluctant reader
For parents of primary and junior school students

What is a reluctant reader?
There is no universally accepted definition of the term reluctant reader. Children who are or become reluctant readers can do so for a variety of reasons. Their reluctance may occur because of limited prior learning experiences, low self-esteem, stumbling blocks to their growth as readers and a host of other reasons.

Broadly speaking, reluctant readers often fall into three categories:

1. Dormant: they like to read but often don't have time or don't make time for reading.
2. Uncommitted: they do not like to read but may read in the future.
3. Unmotivated: they do not like to read and do not ever expect to like to read.

How do parents turn reluctance into motivation?
- Celebrate and be proud of your children's successes in reading- books come in all sizes, shapes and forms
- Continue to read to your children every day, regardless of their age, and let them choose what to read.
- Encourage your children to read and write letters, postcards, e-mails, lists, and messages.
- Leave notes and riddles around the house for them to find.
- Read some of the books and other materials that your children enjoy so that you can share reactions and pleasures together.
- Browse together in bookstores, and through library collections or magazine racks.

What types of reading material can we show we value to encourage them to read more?
We need to widen our definition of both literacy and what it means to read. We can expose our children to a variety of reading materials and opportunities outside of books. Other types of reading materials could include:

- instructions, labels, recipes, ingredient lists on packages
- billboards, advertisements and commercials
- newspapers, magazines
- posters, greeting cards and signs
- street maps, timetables and schedules
- brochures and pamphlets
- instructional manuals and rules for games
- DVD liners (movies) and CD liners (music)
- song lyrics
- charts, tables, diagrams, figures

How can the Internet be used to help motivate readers?
There are a lot of resources to help with reading that can be found online. Here are some suggestions:

Websites:
*Most public libraries allow patrons to access online databases, ebooks, and audio books with their library card

Mississauga Library- http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/library

Brampton Library- http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/library (access to Tumblebooks)

Caledon Library- http://www.caledon.library.on.ca/

Starfall (Learn to read with phonics) http://www.starfall.com/

Guys Read (Web based literacy program for boys) -  http://guysread.com/

Premier (Talking Word Processor/Predictor)
http://www.premierathome.com/
(see handout for more information)

Databases
See Peel Library Services brochure for how to access from home (example: Pebble Go)

What kinds of books can arouse curiosity to read?
Every child has his or her own personal tastes and interests. Parents can help reluctant readers by tapping into these interests and providing them with opportunities and materials to pursue their interests and make their own choices. Books fall into two common categories:

Fiction – mystery, science fiction, fantasy, romance, adventure, war, historical, poetry, graphic novels, comic books, etc.

Popular Authors and Series:
Rick Riordan- Percy Jackson series
Louis Sachar- Marvin Redpost, Holes
Beverly Cleary- Ramona series
Sara Pennypacker- Stuart series, Clementine series
Mary Pope Osborne- The Magic Tree House

Non-fiction – atlases, information books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, craft books, cookbooks, instruction manuals, games books, and (auto)biographies, graphic novels, etc.

What are some practical and effective strategies parents can use in their homes to encourage reluctant readers?
Reading aloud helps children, especially those who are discouraged by their poor reading skills, become more confident. The pleasure of listening to you read may help them rediscover the joy of reading. Remember these points:

- read aloud often to, and with, your child regardless of his/her age
- read in your first language if English is your second language

- let your child select the reading material and support his/her choices
- use visual clues found in the reading material to help them make meaning

Keep in mind the following points:
Reading can be found and experienced in lots of places. Here are some ideas:

- Public libraries (Mississauga and Brampton)
- Art Galleries
- Theatre (Rose Theatre, Living Arts Centre, and Lorraine Kisma Theatre for Young People- LKTYP, etc…)
- Board Games
- Movie nights (read the book first and then discuss how the movie is different from the book)

This tip sheet was originally prepared by Wendy Bowker, Vice Principal, and Maxine Miller Vice Principal. Updated by: Fatma Faraj, Teacher-Librarian, Paula daSilva, teacher and Krista Harris, teacher.