

Parents' Choice and the 4Cs of Learning



I've been following the Parents' Choice blog: [Read More. Play More. Learn More](#) recently via Twitter. The [Parents' Choice](#) Foundation was established in 1978 as a nonprofit guide to quality children's media and toys. You may have seen their round labels of recommendation on toys, but they also review books, audiobooks, DVDs, music, magazines, television shows, videogames, websites and software -- including mobile apps for kids. You can use their online [product finder](#) to search for their award winners by type of product, the age of the child for which the product is designed, and more.

But their blog caught my attention because the title echoes philosophies of Children's Services at Monroe County Public Library: reading is a key to learning, children learn through play, and learning is fun! Our Summer Reading Game is designed to promote these concepts, and now as children head back to school we find ourselves thinking more about essential skills and knowledge for children. Traditionally, essential skills have been described as the 3Rs: Reading, (w)Riting and (a)Rithmetic. But as a recent post to the Parents' Choice blog reminded, essential skills for the 21st Century include the 4Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

These are skills that the library promotes as well through programs and spaces that provide children with the opportunity to be creative and work collaboratively. We invite kids to think critically about what they have read and to communicate their thoughts with us by sharing a [Kids' Review](#). But my favorite way that we support the development of communication skills is at our "Ask Questions Here" desk. How many places do children have an opportunity to tell someone what they want to read or find out, and have that communication translated with a specific book, movie or other item that satisfies the expressed interest? The communication often requires some dialogue prompted by questions of our own: "What types of animals are you interested in?" or "Are you looking for pictures of real circus clowns, or do you want to find out how to make your own clown costume?"

Oh how I sympathize with the shy child who comes up to the desk, face turned to their parent's leg while the parent urges: "Tell the Librarian what you want." (As a child, I was too shy to ask the grocery store clerk where the ketchup was and would return home without it claiming they were all out. Of course, my mom knew better. "Did you ask anyone where it was?" she would inquire and send me back again.) So I will often gently ask: Are you looking for a book or a movie today? Can you tell me a word that you remember about it? And my colleagues and I will go to great lengths to search out the requested item. We want so much to reward the brave inquisitor, for we know that what starts with a question can lead to learning; and we know the ability to ask a question can foster greater communication; and we desire to empower your child with these skills.

Posted by Lisa C. on August 11, 2011

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