

THE LAST WORD

Fostering a Love of Reading

Kelly Hayes

I always knew reading was something I wanted to foster in my home since I knew many of the benefits—bonding with your child, language development, empathy, and emotional awareness. After welcoming children into our family, kids' books have flooded our home; you can find them everywhere, on a shelf in the family room, scattered in a playroom, in bedrooms, and in the car.

Reading is part of our daily routine. While books are always accessible, we make sure to take time each evening to curl up with a few books before bed—something simple but consistent during the days that often become so busy.

But I would have to say, my kids became most excited about books and reading through our local library's storytimes. After having my first baby, I quickly learned what a welcoming place the library was for little ones, even if they were colicky and not so quiet! Soon, I found myself driving all over town to find storytime that fit our schedules, and our personalities! We quickly became connected to Ms. Sharon, who always brings enthusiasm and fun to her storytimes. My kids, now eight, six, and four continue to reference the library as "Ms. Sharon's Library."

Through our time at the library, we have discovered not only new books but additional resources for learning and fun. Our family is currently deep in the Harry Potter series. While the reading level is a bit challenging for some of us, we listen to the audiobooks while following along with the books that we also check out at the library. I hope my children's love for books and reading will only continue to grow! &



Kelly Hayes is a former speech-language pathologist and stay-at-home mom; she lives in Green Bay, WI, with her husband, their three readers Millie, Greta, and Simon, and two dogs.

Got a great, lighthearted essay? A funny story about children and libraries? Books and babies? Pets and picture books? A not-so-serious look at the world of children's librarianship? Send your Last Word to Sharon Verbeten at childrenandlibraries@gmail.com.