

READING, THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

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What's the difference between a business tycoon and a prison inmate? Sorry, this isn't a joke; there is no punch line. You could probably mention several differences between successful businesspeople and convicts, but I'll bet you wouldn't think of one of the most important a love of reading.

Some years ago a national study was made of highly successful business people. It revealed that one of the primary things successful businesspeople have in common is a love of reading. They varied widely in the amount of formal education attained (some had several college degrees, others hadn't finished high school), but they were all avid readers. Furthermore, they attributed much of their success to the wide knowledge and habits of inquiry obtained from reading.

On the other hand, a study of prison inmates found that 80% were functionally illiterate. It's not a matter of lack of intelligence, however. Many of the convicts were just as intelligent as the business leader group. The difference, I believe, is that the convicts didn't have the opportunity as children to develop that love of reading which is so crucial to success in later life.

The implications of these studies are obvious. We must instill a love of books and reading in children if they are to become competent, successful, civilized adults. Furthermore, as adults, we should continue to read widely.

Your public library can be an important element in helping children develop a love of reading. The library contains thousands of children's books especially selected for their high quality. Furthermore, the library has staff trained in helping children learn to love reading. Special children's programs such as the summer reading club help children strengthen their reading skills and have great fun at the same time. The library also has books for parents on how to help children with their reading and other learning activities.

Not only does the library help children learn to love reading, it helps adults as well. Here in Texas, it costs about \$25,000 a year to keep one convict in prison. If we had spent a little more money on library children's programs twenty years ago perhaps our prison population wouldn't be so large and costly today. Perhaps if we spend a little more money on libraries today we can save ourselves both money and grief in years to come. And as business people, we can become more successful thru reading. That's what the library is all about.