



Each New Year our family practices the tradition of making "new year's resolutions." We plan individual goals such as "keeping my room clean," but we also set a family goal such as "saving money for a charity." If you haven't already made a family goal this year, I challenge you to talk together and decide as a family to set both individual goals and a "family goal." And if you are having trouble coming up with new goals, a good suggestion might be **family literacy!**

A friend sent this internet article to me and it reinforces the importance of reading.

Research Shows that Brain Connections Improve with Reading Practice

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=121253104>

We all know that reading is important, but what this study proved is that reading actually improves brain function. Research has shown that reading changes the capabilities of the brain. Reading on a regular basis strengthens the connections within the brain and improves the "brain highways." Think of the brain as a map of roads. When the roads are not traveled very often, passage is slow and difficult. When the roads are passed on a regular basis, travel is much easier.

Students who read improve the white-matter connections essential to learning, according to research by scientists at the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Researchers scanned students' brains, and then enrolled struggling readers in an intensive reading program. Researchers again scanned students' brains, this time after 100 hours of reading practice, and found the training improved "not just their reading ability, but the tissues in their brain."

So although time is limited and there are so many other distractions at home, challenge your family to make a reading goal a priority in your home for 2010!

"Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it."

--**Thomas Fuller, English historian**