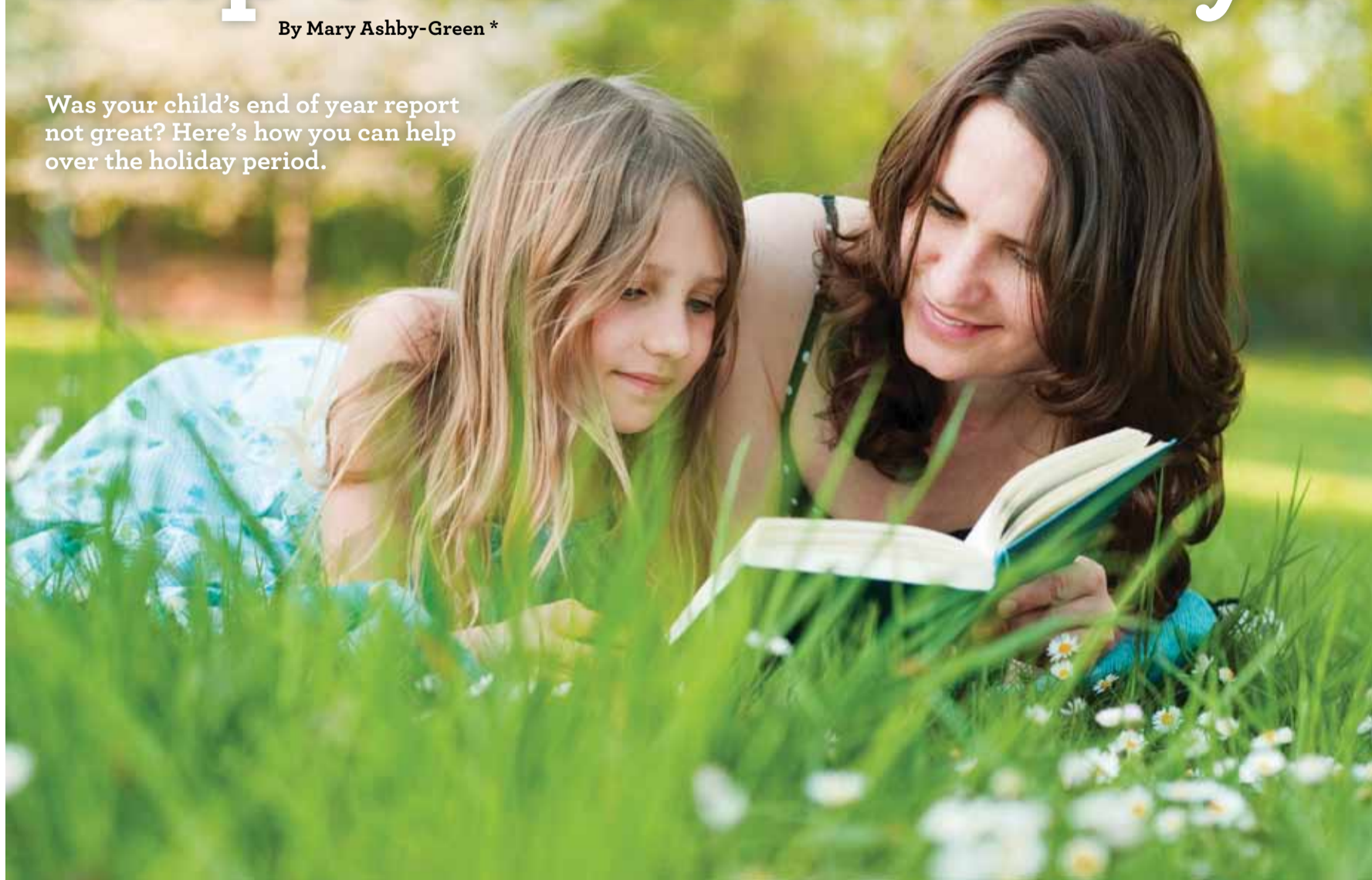


help over the holidays

By Mary Ashby-Green *

Was your child's end of year report not great? Here's how you can help over the holiday period.



On the whole, teachers who gravitate to tutoring have a special interest in working with children with difficulties. They like the challenge of finding ways to rebuild the child's self-confidence, and they also like the challenge of problem solving your child's reading needs. It's not a quick fix, but many parents report that the 6-12 months of tutoring changed their children's attitude to learning and to themselves.



It's the end of the school year and with it comes Christmas and the school holidays – and school reports. For some, they bring news which makes you relax and take a break from the focus on your child's education; but for others, it's not good news and your child is not meeting the national standards.

It's easy to be consumed by doubt and worry when your child has a problem, and reading ability is one of the greatest sources of anguish for parents.

what are your options?

You may be able to give them some help at home. You may be thinking you'll get them reading every day in the holidays and get them up to speed before school starts in the new year, but with the freedom from the normal routines, homework is not going to be very appealing – especially if your child is unwilling.

is tutoring worthwhile?

On the whole, teachers who gravitate to tutoring have a special interest in working with children with difficulties. They like the challenge of finding ways to rebuild the child's self-confidence, and they also like the challenge of problem solving your child's reading needs. It's not a quick fix, but many parents report that the 6-12 months of tutoring changed their children's attitude to learning and to themselves.

how to choose a tutor

You want your child to gel with the tutor and to be motivated to going each week. I have found that the best guide is to ask yourself, "Would I like to spend time with this person?" If you feel that you'd be

comfortable, then your child probably will too. You have to trust yourself because someone may have the right qualifications or have been great with someone else you know, but may not be right for your child.

Talk to other mothers who have had their child tutored and get recommendations. Teachers at school don't tend to be the best source for this information because they are not working in the 'out of school' sphere.

change your beliefs, change your life

I now work in the field of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) where I look at the child's underlying beliefs that are limiting them. It may be something traumatic that sets up a block, or something simple like freezing when they realise they cannot do the things other children seem to do easily. The fear of being laughed at or looking stupid causes children to feel critical and negative about themselves, and they start to close themselves down. Releasing those blocks 'clears' them to be able to learn easily and confidently.

what's working well for my child?

Focus on what's working for your child – when we are worried about our children, we can get tunnel vision about who they are and all we see is the problem.

Over the holidays, make the decision to consciously see the other aspects of them and become involved in different activities with them.

- 1 teach them a new physical skill, like swimming, skateboarding, bike riding, water skiing, trampolining, gymnastics, tennis, etc
- 2 teach them how to bake and cook
- 3 create an art space for painting, sculpting, pottery, drama, plain old-fashioned drawing and cutting
- 4 have a concert night with readings, poems, sing-a-longs
- 5 get them involved in music – it doesn't always mean they have to play an instrument. You could download music or go to concerts in the park.
- 6 play games – spot the difference, quizzes, trivial pursuits, jigsaw puzzles

It's more challenging, but you'll also feel more empowered if you can help your child experience themselves as more than 'someone with a reading problem'.

It's easy to parent a straightforward child. The child who doesn't fit the 'norm,' who struggles, who finds life difficult –these are the children that make you learn things you never wanted to find out. These are the children who make us grow, both as a parent and as a person.

** Mary is a former Acting Principal, who specialised in teaching children with learning and behavioural difficulties. Today, she trains teachers in Jolly Phonics, and she works individually with children who have anxiety about learning, using her NLP training. For more information, go to www.phonics.co.nz*