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**Story Time “Porte Porte Boro Hoi” (Grow with Books)**

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Story Time ‘**Porte porte boro hoi’** is a Bengali term and it means Grow with books.

Recently it is noticeable that the young learners are less encouraged to read books. They are more engaged with electronic devises, newly popular social media etc. Book reading is a long term habit which doesn’t just happen. It is a skill that must be nurtured from a very early age and is the prominent gateway to the critical thinking capacities. Once children know how to read they still need help, gentle coaxing and support to reach their full potential as readers. Our children need help to develop their ability to read so that they can comprehend subjects better at school.

Children start their journey becoming a reader the day is born and continuing through to the end of third grade. Very early, children begin to learn about the sounds of spoken language when they hear their family members talking, laughing, and singing, and when they respond to all of the sounds that fill their world. They begin to understand written language when they hear adults read stories to them and see adults reading newspapers, magazines, and books for themselves.

From several decades of research, we have learned a lot about how children learn to read and write. This research tells us that to become more skilled and confident readers over time, children need lots of opportunities to:

• Build spoken languageby talking and listening

• Learn about print and books

• Learn about the sounds of spoken language

• Learn about the letters of the alphabet

• Be read to read on their own

• Learn and use letter-sound relationships and be able to recognize words when they see them

• Spell and write

• Develop their ability to read quickly and naturally

• Learn new words and build their knowledge of what words mean

• Build their knowledge of the world

• Build their ability to understand what they read

Bangladesh Shishu (Children) Academy is the only government organization in Bangladesh who work with children with mental, physical, cultural and educational concerns. It has 64 branch offices all over the Bangladesh. Shishu (Children) Academy library is regularly offering different types of library based educational program. To develop the reading habit among children the Shishu Academy started a new initiative in collaboration with British Council Bangladesh in 2017. Story Time; Grow with books is a bilingual program for students of primary and secondary level for developing their reading habit both in Bangla and English. The program has run in 64 branch libraries of Bangladesh Shishu (Children) Academy. Shishu Academy has their public facing library operations from all the districts and runs under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh Government.

To create enlightened citizens the children should be provided with all branches of knowledge. In developing democratic values, patriotism, national consciousness and welfare books can act as the best medium for children. Through the bilingual reading program the organization engages a good number of young starters in reading multicultural story books in the international language English and the Mother tongue Bangla language. This will help acquire both language skills among young learners. We know that reading helps with vocabulary expansion, improves memory and cognitive skills and promotes stronger analytical and thinking skills. Also, reading is fun – and it is one of the useful ways of learning a language by developing four main core skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening among young learners.

For the total development of children and to encourage curiosity we need to allow them to read more than just text books and provide them with enough opportunities to read as they wish. To increase the reading habit there needs to be enough books in their mother tongue. Before anything it is to be remembered that the motivation should come from family, schools and institutions like this. The parents and the teachers can also change their attitude to reading and reading habit.

Engaging children in reading books, especially to give them opportunity to develop language proficiency through reading story books, is very important not only for their benefit, but also to have better engagement with the library point of view.



**Process:** There were two different sets of books for primary and secondary level participants. Each child reads any six books from the collection (minimum four books from their own language Bangla and two books from English). Each participant gets a logbook and a poster to record their learning from the story book along with a set of stickers which they use to keep records. At the end of the program they submit their logbook and poster for assessment of their reading. There are some funny and interesting characters on stickers which attracts children more.

**Awards and Assessment:** Participants from both levels get a certificate after completing six books. The logbooks they submit are a tool for assessment and based on their writing and expression about the books they read. The best ten participants from both groups will get a certificate and special prizes.

Participants from the primary section don’t need to sit for an assessment test. They submit the logbooks where they will record their learning. Certificates and prizes will be given based on the logbook.

Participants from the secondary level sit an assessment test and the prizes and certificates will be given depending on the scores. The British Council will offer the assessment test with the support of Bangladesh Shishu Academy. The assessment will be done by the British Council.

The initial competition will be at the district level. One top scorer will be selected from each group from each district who will compete in the divisional level. After the divisional competition the best reader can be selected in the National level.

**Participation and Timeline:** Shishu Academy engaged around 10,000 participants from all over the country. The project will end in June 2018.

