

Encouraging Early Literacy in the Home

Early Literacy Suggestions for Families with Infants and Toddlers

Oral Language

Talk and sing to your infant as you perform your daily tasks with him/her. (Changing diapers or clothes, during feeding, taking a walk...)

Listen to your infant when they babble. Echo their sounds back to them. Let them lead the “conversation.”

Engage your toddlers in conversations. Ask questions that can't be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No.” Ask them to describe things in their environment (animals, toys, places...)

Recite nursery rhymes and finger plays to infants and toddlers. They will enjoy the rhythm and rhyme while they are exposed to early phonemic awareness (hearing the sounds in words) activities.

Sharing Books

Begin to share books with infants as soon as possible. They particularly enjoy books with pictures or photographs of people, animals, and familiar objects. Cardboard and plastic books allow infants to experience the books more fully with their senses without destroying them. (Infants enjoy grabbing and tasting books.)

Point to pictures and label familiar items.

Consider making your own book with photographs of familiar faces.

Let older babies and toddlers turn the pages.

Ask questions while reading the book. Find concepts, ideas, and objects in the book that are relevant to your child. Engage your toddler in conversation around these things.

Find opportunities to include books throughout your child's day. Have books in the car; bring them to the grocery store, doctors' office, and park... Create naptime and bedtime rituals that include several storybooks.

Early Literacy Suggestions for Families with Preschool Children

Oral Language

Engage your child in open-ended conversations. Ask questions that allow her to describe her experiences, thoughts, artwork, etc. “Tell me about...” or “How did you make”

Take your children to new places such as, playgrounds, parks, post office, museums, local shops, etc. Experiencing the world around them will make books more meaningful and relevant to their lives. Discuss what they experienced after the trip.

Play simple word games. Children enjoy rhyming; give them a clue about a word you are thinking of and then tell them a word that rhymes with this mystery word. Ex. “I am thinking of a color, and it rhymes with “bed.” (Red) Families can also introduce letter sound concepts with the following game: “I am thinking of a word that starts with a “b” sound and it is a toy that bounces. (Ball)

Writing and Reading

Offer children many opportunities to draw using markers, crayons, and colored pencils.

Encourage children to dictate words about their drawings. They can be collected and bound into a simple book. Read their words back to them several days or weeks later.

Show children the many ways we use print in our daily lives: shopping lists, advertisements, newspapers, street signs, and birthday invitations...

Create a writing box filled with paper, marking pens, stickers, hole punch, etc., to entice your child to draw/write.

Visit your local public library regularly. Get your child his/her own library card. He can borrow children's books, magazines, and books on tape. Public libraries are a community's most important literacy resource. Attend the special children's events they offer.

Read, read, read. There is nothing you can do that will increase your child's early literacy more than reading aloud to your child daily.

Discuss the books that you are reading to your child. Ask them to show you his favorite part. Interrupt the story and ask why she thinks the story's character did a particular action. Ask your child to predict or guess what will happen next in the story.

Early Literacy Resources for Families

National Child Care Information Center: www.nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/parentsproviders

This site offers many links to early childhood literacy resources for parents and early childhood educators, including books, publications, websites, and television programs.

The Early Literacy Project: www.earlyliterature.ecsd.net

This Canadian website offers background information on early literacy research as well as strategies for encouraging early literacy. It also provides a wealth of links to other relevant websites.

Zero to Three BrainWonders: www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders

This Internet resource describes early development and answers frequently asked questions. It provides many literacy tips for parents and caregivers.

Reading is Fundamental Inc.: www.rif.org

Reading is Fundamental offers activities, tips, bilingual resources, and much more.

Mailing address: 1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20009

Toll Free Phone Number: 1 (877) RIF-READ

Other Resources for Children's Books:

American Library Association/Association for Library
Service to Children
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
1-800-545-2433

The Children's Book Council
www.cbcbooks.org/index
12 W. 37th Street 2nd Floor
New York, New York 10018-7480
1-212-966-1990

U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C., 20202-0100
1-800-USA-Learn