

## PRESCHOOL LITERACY

### Strategies to Help Parents Encourage Reading in their Children



According to research your baby starts on the road to becoming a reader on the day your child is born and first hears the sounds of your voice. Every time you speak to your child, sing to your child, and respond to the sounds that your child makes, you strengthen your child's understanding of language. With good role modeling from parents your child will become excellent readers.

To understand the connection between a child's early experiences with spoken language and learning to read, you might think of language as a four-legged stool. The four legs are talking, listening, reading, and writing. All four legs are important: each leg helps to support and balance the others.

*"The ages between birth and age 5 are the foundation upon which successful lives are built." - Laura Bush*

This pamphlet contains activities that parents can use with their children to strengthen their language skills and encourage their love of reading.

#### 1. Talk to and listen to your child

Engage in meaningful conversation with your children about what is happening in their daily routines and lives. Talk about upcoming events and past experiences. Relate new experiences to past experiences.

***For example:*** *When picking your child up from child care, notice what happened that day, ask the teacher questions about daily events. In the car, engage your child in conversation about their day by asking specific questions about what you observed. The beginnings of the conversations may include "Tell me about your field trip?" What was your favorite game outside today?*

## 2. Read with your child often

Make a regular routine of reading to and with your children. Have favorite books or visit the library and check out books with your child.

*For example: During reading activities predict what might happen next in the book. Talk about pictures. Let your child "read" the book to you.*

*Relate the story to experiences the child had. Let your child turn pages, repeat words, point to letters and look for details in pictures. While reading with your children, let them turn the pages, make comments or ask questions about the print such as "Look, there is the letter that your name starts with!" or "Can you find a letter that starts with your name?" Pause during the reading to talk about the story and pictures.*

Parents, next to hugging your child, reading aloud is probably one of the most positive and longest-lasting experience that you can give to your children.

## 3. Let your child see you reading

Read the newspaper, books, signs, directions, etc in front of your children.

*For example: When cooking, talk to your child about reading recipes, or directions on the box or package, read directions out loud to the children.*

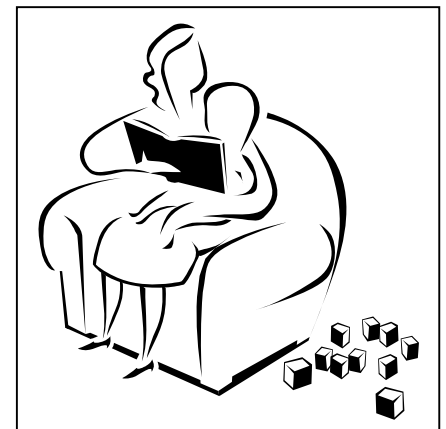
## 4. Read in a special place

Children like to read and be read to. We encourage you to be creative when you are looking for a special place to read. It may be an old cardboard box or under a blanket.

*For example: Have a basket of books and soft cushions for children to sit and read, away from distractions. Read with your child whenever possible.*

## 5. Hold your child close

A child's first relationship with parents and caregivers really do



matter. During the first months and year, the groundwork is being laid for all aspects of the child's future development.

## 6. Singing, reciting nursery rhymes, and doing finger plays develops language

Music is a language builder. Music, which contains repetition and melodies, encourages reading. Traditional nursery songs are easy to teach and children love to sing them.

*For example: Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Eensy Weensy Spider, Twinkle*

*Twinkle Little Star, Ring Around a Rosy, If You're Happy, Yankee Doodle Dandy and many others.*

**7. Talk about the story**

Parents and caregivers need to talk with their children to reinforce their children's language skills.

**For example:** *Make predictions "What do you think will happen next?" Ask questions and make correlations "Do you know another story with a bear in it?"*

**8. Read your child's favorite books over and over**

Repetition of the same book may increase your child's interest in reading. Children learn repetition by hearing the same story over and over and "pretend to read" by reciting their favorite book.

**For example:** *Make up a new ending. Change the names in the story. You may want to interject a child's name to encourage participation and to highlight your child. This makes children feel special and can build self-esteem in children.*

**9. Connect words to objects in everyday living**

Engaging the children in everyday conversation will build the vocabulary of children, which will result in strong readers and writers.

**For example:** *Point out store names and signs, call attention to advertisements, etc. Show shapes and colors and ask children to identify them. Take every opportunity to practice the children's counting skills to improve math and reasoning skills. Teach children to identify their body parts and to name them*

**10. Visit the library often**

Parents, preschool teachers, and caregivers need to schedule regular visits to your local library. Make sure that your children possess a library card when they are developmentally ready to handle this responsibility.

**For example:** *Libraries offer more than books, they are places of learning and discovery for everyone.*