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Building a Foundation for Reading and Writing: Birth through Preschool

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According to the Partnership for Reading (2003), there are five basic principles that help preschoolers learn to read and write. To become good readers, children need to be given a lot of chances to practice these principles: *talking and listening, print and books, sounds in spoken language, the ABCs, and reading aloud*.

Talking and Listening

Children already know a lot about *talking and listening* by the time they are a year old. They recognize the sounds and rhythm of words, and they know which words are important to them. Children learn a great deal by listening to family members talk. Children who have many interactions and conversations with adults are much more likely to be strong readers.



Print and Books

It is important for children to learn about print and books and understand the ways that we use print. For example, very young children may not be able to read yet, but they can learn the right way to hold a book, to turn pages one at a time, and to read words from left to right (Partnership for Reading, 2003). It is critical for children to learn that print is all around them and a part of everyday life. They will see print not only in books, but also in magazines and newspapers and on signs and labels—just to name a few.



Sounds in Spoken Language

Children notice characteristics of spoken language long before they enter school. They begin to hear that some words rhyme, that words make up sentences, that some words start with the same letter, and that words have parts called syllables. When children begin to understand these things, they are increasing their phonological awareness—the ability to hear and work with the sounds of spoken language.



Children also begin to notice that words are made up of smaller, separate sounds. When they understand this, they are developing their phonemic awareness skills. Research shows that a child's ability to learn to read depends on the strength of his/her phonological and phonemic awareness skills.

The ABCs

The ABCs are important for children to know. Most children entering school know how to sing the alphabet song. Their ability to recognize the shape and name of each letter and how to write it improves their ability to read.



Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is one of the most important things a parent can do when helping his/her children learn to read. Reading aloud gives children a chance to hear what reading should sound like. They can hear the different tones their parents use to show voice in reading. They can see and feel the excitement and enthusiasm in their parents' voices as they read. Reading aloud to children helps them learn more about written language, vocabulary, and print.





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Tips



- Read aloud to children several times a day.
- When you are reading to your child, allow him/her to actively participate. Let him/her point to pictures and words and help turn the pages.
- Have books in every room of the house.
- Label things around the house such as cabinets, appliances, lamps, furniture, doors, etc.
- Talk to children and encourage them to communicate, whether it be gurgles from a baby or questions from a 4-year-old.
- Have lots of ABC activities such as magnets for the refrigerator, foam letters for the bathtub, and puzzles.
- Allow children to look through magazines and newspapers.
- Let your children see you reading.



Resources:

National Adult Literacy Database. (2006). Retrieved March 31, 2008, from <http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/child/toc.htm>

The Partnership for Reading. (2003). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from <http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/>

Even Start Family Literacy Program. (2008). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/index.html?src=mr

National Parent Information Network (NPIN). (2008). Retrieved March 26, 2008, from www.npin.org

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