The Key to Early Literacy?

You want your child to become a confident reader and develop a love for reading early in his life. What is the best way to accomplish this goal? The number one activity that supports literacy development is reading to your child every day. Researchers have found this to be the most effective way to teach your child to love reading and want to be able to read by himself.

Researchers from the Global Family Research Project have conducted a study that revealed seven ways families effectively support their children’s early literacy skills. When your family uses these seven proven ways to support your child’s early literacy skills, he is on the path to becoming a reader and a writer and being ready to start school when he enters kindergarten.

Seven Research Based Ways Families Promote Early Literacy

You can include the “seven ways families promote early literacy skills” in your child’s daily routines by using some ideas listed with each activity.

1. Families have many ongoing conversations with their children every day.

Talk with Me Baby encourages family members and caregivers to talk, read and sing with babies and young children throughout the day every day. Research shows that the single strongest predictor of a child’s academic success is not socio-economic status, level of parental education, income or ethnicity, but the quality and quantity of words spoken to the baby in the first three years of life.

These conversations or “Serve and Return” interactions help develop language skills as well as supporting social and emotional development. Interactions with responsive caregivers and family members create and strengthen the areas of the brain that connect language and literacy skills. Singing, talking and reading with your baby, toddler and preschooler set the foundation for their early literacy skills.

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2. **Families create literacy-friendly environments in their homes.** Include books, songs and nursery rhymes in your child’s daily routines. **Spend time daily** reading to your child. Create a **reading and writing area** with books and drawing or writing materials appropriate for your child’s age.

3. **Families make reading enjoyable.** Make a comfortable reading area in your home with lots of different types of books and reading materials. You can check books out from your local library or purchase books at a thrift store or garage sale. On special occasions, give your child books as gifts. Read outside or go to a park and read. Make a tent out of blankets and read in the tent. **Make reading with your child** a daily ritual or part of her bedtime routine and it will become the highlight of your day as well as her day.

4. **Families have high expectations for their child’s learning.** As a parent, you **set the stage for your child’s learning**. When you provide lots of experiences and activities to support learning at home, this shows him that you value learning and are there to help him. Using daily routines and activities as learning opportunities, such as talking about the colors of his clothes as you help him get dressed, allows him to learn essential words and concepts that support literacy all day.

5. **Families communicate with their child’s teacher.** Whether your child goes to child care, preschool or kindergarten, **make sure to talk with his teachers** to find out about your child’s day or activities he did in school. This helps you stay informed about his social development and academic progress.

6. **Families use home languages.** If your family speaks a language other than English at home, talk and **teach your child in your home language at home.**

7. **Visit the library.** **Before going to the library**, talk about the purpose of the library and what he may see or do during the visit. The library is **an amazing place for children**! Having all of those different kind of books in one place is exciting. Watch your child and note the type of books he finds interesting. Check out different types of books for his age level and some **nonfiction books** on animals, cars or other topics he may find interesting.
March is Read Aloud Month, time to remember the importance of reading aloud to children. As a parent, you start reading to your child at birth and continue even when she can read herself. When she learns to read, continue to read together taking turns reading every other page or reading the dialogue of certain characters. Reading to your child helps you bond with your child and shows her that you value reading. Hearing books read is one of the best ways for your child to learn new words and increase her vocabulary as well as learn early literacy skills.

Make reading with you part of her bedtime routine. Snuggling together with you reading to her is a relaxing way for your child to calm down and fall asleep. When running errands or waiting for appointments, have several books that you can read together while waiting for an appointment or riding on a bus. Use audio stories to play in the car while driving or just tell her one of her favorite stories as you drive. Read street signs and business signs that you pass and ask her which signs she may be able to read (recognize) such as fast food restaurants or stores you frequent.

In the grocery store, read posted signs and food labels as you shop. In restaurants, read the menu or the kid-friendly activities on the kids’ menu to her. When you are cooking, read labels or recipes to her. While doing laundry, read the labels on the detergent and other laundry supplies. This lets your child know that reading is important in all areas of life and exposes her to different types of words. Integrating reading into your daily routines and having a special reading time each day, will help your child learn early literacy skills and make for many enjoyable memories for both of you.

5 Tips for Parents

In addition to reading a book with a child at bedtime, here are five tips from Read Aloud 15 Minutes you can use “on the go” to make sure your children are reading aloud for 15 minutes a day.

1. Running Errands

A visit to the doctor’s office, nail salon, or beauty parlor can be a great time to grab a magazine and have your child point out the words they know and learn some new ones.

2. Cooking

Have your child read aloud to you in the kitchen from a book or a recipe or from the labels on the products you are using. You can also have them spell out the different ingredients you are using.

3. Grocery Store

Have your child read them aloud and spell out the fruits and vegetables they see in the produce aisle.

4. Restaurant/fast food

Take advantage of the menus at a restaurant and have your child read them aloud. Also, be sure to check out the bags and containers provided by fast-food chains, as many have kid-friendly content that you can read aloud.

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Apr. 15 is Income Tax Day. If you haven’t already begun to do so, it’s time to start preparing your taxes. If your child is enrolled in child care or you have home care for a child under age 13 and you work or are looking for work, you may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). EITC is a benefit for working parents with low to moderate income. If you are paying for child care while working or looking for work, you can claim the Credit for Child and Dependent Care Expenses on your tax return. In order to qualify, you must file a tax return even if you are not required to file or do not owe any taxes. The Internal Revenue Service offers nine points to consider when filing your tax returns that will help you when filing for EITC. For more information, see Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses.

Please note: These laws may change for 2019.

5 Tips for Parents

5. Car or bus

Skip the movie on the DVD player in the minivan, replace it with a book and have your child read to you. If you ride the bus, bring a book along or encourage your child to look for words they know on buildings, billboards, street signs and bumper stickers.