

ED457521 2001-11-00 Parent Support of Early Literacy Development. ERIC Digest.

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Parent Support of Early Literacy Development. ERIC Digest.

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This Digest is intended to help parents support young children's literacy learning. It

begins with definitions of literacy, then follows with suggestions for parent involvement in children's early literacy development. Additional resources for supporting young literacy learners are included.

DEFINITIONS OF LITERACY

Over the years, scholars from different disciplines have struggled to define the concept of literacy, but little consensual agreement has been achieved (Soares, 1992). The definition of literacy is often subject to historical, social, economic, political, and other forces. For example, in the Middle Ages, literacy was generally associated with the ability to speak, read, and write Latin, and only members of a few elite groups had access to formal education or to the Latin texts in which it was presented. By the 16th century, the invention and advancement of printing technology in Europe, and the growing use of languages other than Latin, resulted in an explosion in literacy levels, extending even to people of traditionally lower social classes, such as peasants and merchants (Heath, 1996). Literacy was no longer the possession of a few selected groups, but had become a means by which a broad spectrum of people could gain power and status.

In 1951, UNESCO defined literacy as the ability of a person "who can with understanding both read and write a short, simple statement on his every day life", and it revised this definition in 1978 as one's ability to "engage in all...activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his own and community's development." The change in UNESCO's definition reflects a change from a narrow set of behaviors in reading and writing to a broader sense of community functions including mathematics. In this Digest, literacy is viewed from a socio-psycholinguistic perspective, one in which literacy is more than the ability to read and write, but extends also to the use of oral and written language as well as other sign systems, such as mathematics and art, to make sense of the world and communicate with others (Berghoff, 1998; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1986; Heath, 1984; Halliday, 1975).

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EARLY

LITERACY DEVELOPMENTBased upon the perspective of literacy provided above, as well as upon recommendations from the National Reading Panel (2000) and from Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read (2001) we offer the following guidelines to help parents create a home environment that will support the literacy development of their young children:

1. Encourage children to use literacy in meaningful and purposeful ways, such as helping make shopping lists, drawing and writing thank-you notes, clipping coupons for

family use, and reading road maps to plan a trip together.

2. Visit libraries and bookstores frequently and encourage children to check out materials, such as toys, tapes, CD Roms, and books, from libraries. Participate in activities held by libraries and bookstores, such as story times, writing contests, and summer reading programs.
3. Set aside time for reading alone or together as a family every day. Read a wide variety of materials, such as books, magazines, signs, and labels, with and to children.
4. Keep reading and writing materials, such as books, magazines, newspaper, paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glues, and stickers, accessible to children so that they can make use of these tools in a variety of language activities. (High quality reading and writing materials are not necessarily expensive. You can find them at school and library book fairs, yard and garage sales, online bookstores or auctions, book-stores' on-sale sections, used or second-hand bookstores, and charity sales [i.e., Salvation Army and Goodwill]).
5. Read books with rhymes and play language games, such as tongue twisters and puzzles, with your children.
6. Practice the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.
7. Point out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning on labels, boxes, magazines and signs.
8. Keep a notebook, in which you, as the parent, write down stories which your children tell, so that the children see the connection between oral language and text.
9. Be a reader and writer, yourself. Children observe and learn from people around them.
10. Be patient and listen as your child reads books from school. Let your child know you are proud of his or her reading.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT YOUNG CHILDREN'S LITERACY LEARNING

1. Associations, organizations, and ERIC Clearinghouses



American Library Association-For Kids, Parents, and Public 1301



Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, # 403, Washington, DC. 20004



Tel: (202) 628-8410 or (800) 545-2433



<http://www.ala.org/publicpage/index.html>



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ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary & Early Childhood Education



Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, IL 61820



Tel: (217) 333-1386 or (800) 583-4135



<http://ericeece.org>



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National Center for Family Literacy



325 West Main Street, Suite 200



Louisville KY 40202-4251



Tel: (877)-FAM-LIT1



<http://www.famlit.org/index.html>



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Parents' Choice Foundation



1130 East Cold Spring Lane, Suite 211, Baltimore, MA 21239



Tel: (410) 532-0727



<http://www.parents-choice.org/>



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Reading is Fundamental, Inc.



1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20009



Tel: (202) 287-3220 or (877) RIF-READ



<http://www.rif.org/>



2. Book resources

Emerging Literacy: Young children learn to read and write edited by rothy S. Strickland, Lesley M. Morrow, published by International Reading Assoc., 1989. ISBN 0-87207-351-3

I Already Know How to Read: A Child's View of Literacy by Prisca Martens, published by Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-435-07226-9

Learning to Read and Write by Susan Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp, published by National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2000. ISBN 0-93598-987-0

Much More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing by Judith Schickedanz, published by The National Association for the Education of Young

Children, 1998. ISBN 0-93598-990-0

Parent to Parent: Our Children, Their Literacy by Gerald R. Oglan & Averil Elcombe, published by National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. ISBN 0-8141-3496-3

The Read-aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease (5th edition), published by Penguin Books, 2001. ISBN 0-14100-294-8



3. Periodicals

Parent News by National Parent Information Network <http://www.npin.org/pnews.html>

Parents and Children Together Online <http://eric.indiana.edu/www/indexfr.html>

Parents' Choice E-mail newspaper http://www.parents-choice.org/member_signup.cfm

Parent Talk Magazine <http://eric.indiana.edu/www/famres/ptalk/index.shtml>



4. Brochures

Born to Read: How to Raise a Reader by American Library Association
http://www.ala.org/alsc/raise_a_reader.html

Get Ready to Read! Tips for Parents of Young Children by International Reading Association, 1998. <http://www.reading.org/pdf/1017.pdf>

Helping Your Child Become A Reader by U.S. Department of Education, 2000.
<http://165.224.220.62/pubs/parents/Reader/index.html>

Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers by International Reading Association, 1999. <http://www.reading.org/pdf/1032.pdf>

Make the Reading-Writing Connection: Tips for Parents of Young Learners by International Reading Association, 1999. <http://www.reading.org/pdf/1038.pdf>

Putting Reading First by U.S. Department of Education, 2001
<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/partnershipforreading/publications/PFRbrochure.pdf>

See the World on the Internet: Tips for Parents of Young Readers-and "Surfers" by International Reading Association, 1998. <http://www.reading.org/pdf/1026.pdf>

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Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read, (2001). The Partnership for Reading: National Institute for Literacy; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and U.S. Department of Education.

Short, K. G., Harste, J. C. & Burke, C. L. (1996). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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