

# Leading the Way to Early Literacy

*Simple, everyday things we do with young children can help them become successful readers and writers when they enter school. These easy-to-follow suggestions can help adults lead the way to successful literacy development.*

**Talk with Your Children.** From the moment of birth, children respond to the language that surrounds them. The more adults talk to children the better! Talking to children helps them learn that language is fun, children can do it well and using words gets results.

**Read with Children Every Day.** Reading boosts children's knowledge about their world and their vocabulary. It introduces them to the mechanics of literacy like turning pages and reading from left to right. Find regular times each day to read to your child – at bedtime, waiting for dinner, in the park. These warm, peaceful moments will build children's positive associations with reading.

**Share the World of Print with Children.** Our world is filled with print – in signs, labels, menus, magazines and books. Point out familiar letters and words like the “exit” sign in a store or the “stop” sign on the street. Adding a child's printed name and their comments to their drawings can also add meaningful print to their day.

**Repeat, Repeat, Repeat!** Repetition helps young children form and maintain important brain connections. Repeating familiar phrases like “time for snack” and “let's go to the park”, reading the same bedtime story night after night and practicing a new nursery rhyme throughout the day all help lay the foundation for literacy.

**Surround Children with Books.** Children love having a variety of books! Books don't have to be expensive. Purchase them at yard sales and thrift stores or borrow them from the library. Let children make their own books from photographs and drawings. Get children involved in choosing their books on subjects that interest them.

## **Give Children Experiences with Writing.**

Encouraging children to write – even with pretend writing scribbles – helps children realize that written words “stand for” spoken words. Children enjoy having a variety of writing tools at their disposal – different kinds of papers, crayons, markers and pens. Encourage children to tell stories, write them down and then read them back.

## **Give Children Real Experiences in Their World.**

Personal experience is crucial in finding meaning in words. Having a rich variety of experiences will introduce infants and young children to people, objects and actions they will meet later in print. Conversations about these experiences, reenacting them in pretend play and writing stories all help create foundations for meaning – a key component of literacy.

**Help Children Tell Their Own Stories.** Stories children tell give adults insights into children's understandings and insights. Storytelling gives children a chance to think about the sequence of the beginning, middle and end of a story, to build new vocabulary words and to begin to understand the boundaries between fantasy and reality.

**Model Reading and Writing.** Children love to imitate adults who are important to them. Seeing these adults talk to communicate ideas, read to gain information or enjoyment, and write to remember things and share experience with others will all motivate children to try these same behaviors.

**Show Your Appreciation.** Nothing encourages literacy better than responsive attention from a significant adult. Giving a child your attention, repeating positive experiences, expanding on a child's ideas and showing your support for their attempts will help you lead the way to literacy.

