

Parent Involvement in Early Literacy

Why reading with your child every night is not enough.

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January 8, 2013

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Parent involvement is the number one predictor of early literacy success and future academic achievement. However, according to [a 2007 report by National Endowment for the Arts](#), there are more literate people in the United States who don't read than those who are actually illiterate. How do we change that pattern for the future of our children?

PreK/Early Childhood Development Domains

Educators and parents alike know that preschool-age children need a lot of modeling to navigate through social/emotional, cognitive and gross/fine motor skills. Many experts in the field of education in the last decade have emphasized the importance of play-based curriculum and its vital role in developing a child's imagination and social skills. Learning to get along with others is modeled and developed throughout the preK years and a child's formative years through programs under the umbrella of SEI (Social/Emotional Skills): anger management, problem-solving and empathy skills. Kindergarten teachers are thankful for the beginning role that preK teachers play in this initial modeling and development. Fine and gross motor skills are honed through everyday preK learning activities such as cutting, drawing, sorting, painting, catching, throwing, kicking, hopping, jumping and writing one's name.

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Cognition Domain: Early Literacy Needs Today

However, recent preK research has focused specifically on cognition within early childhood development and on how parent involvement fits into preK literacy development. Past early literacy research emphasized the importance of daily adult/child reading time, as well as having 100 or more books in one's home, and its link to a child being academically ready and successful in kindergarten. Recent research has proved that reading as a stand-alone activity will not help children with pre-literacy skills (Phillips et al., 2008). Unfortunately, the latest research on parent involvement in early literacy has stressed that children need to be given more specific skills while being read to in order to be successful with early literacy skills (Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, M., 2005).

Parent Involvement: What Skills Need to be Part of a Daily Routine?

Parent involvement in early literacy is directly connected to academic achievement. Children need parents to be their reading role models with daily practice in order to navigate successfully through beginning literacy skills. According to research, parents should focus on the words on the page while reading with their preK reader (Evans, Shaw, Bell, 2000).

Here are some strategies for beginning and seasoned readers' literacy success:

- **Point to each word on the page as you read.** This beginning literacy strategy will assist children with making print/story/illustration connections. This skill also helps build a child's tracking skills from one line of text to the next one.
- **Read the title and ask your child to make a prediction.** Beginning and seasoned readers alike need to make predictions before reading a story. This will go a long way to ensure that a child incorporates previewing and prediction in his or her own reading practices both now and in the future.

- **Take "picture walks."** Help your child use the picture clues in most early readers and picture books to tell the story before reading.
- **Model fluency while reading, and bring your own energy and excitement for reading to your child.** Both new and seasoned readers struggle with varying pitch, intonation and proper fluctuations when they read aloud. Older readers will benefit from shared reading (taking turns).
- **Ask your child questions after reading every book.** Reading comprehension is the reason we read -- to understand. The new **CCORE standards** assessing U.S. children's readiness for the workplace and college ask children at all grade levels to compare and contrast their understanding of concepts. This takes practice. Help your child explain his or her understanding of any given story in comparison to another. Have your child share a personal experience similar to a problem or theme within a story. Higher-order thinking skills (critical thinking) are skills children are expected to use in both written and oral assessments in school. There is no way for a teacher to ask every child to use a critical thinking skill every day. Parents can.
- **Connect reading and writing if possible.** The connection between reading, writing and discussion should be incorporated with daily literacy practice. Have a young child dictate to a parent who writes in a journal or on a sheet of paper. Modeling the formation of sentences aligned with the words of a story is crucial for a child to begin making a neural interconnectedness between reading and writing. A child's process of drawing pictures brings his or her personal creativity toward the story. Sharing these illustrations of experiences and individual interpretations related to the sentence he or she has created on the page is yet another step toward this early balanced literacy approach.

Beginning and lifelong literacy is transformative and constantly growing. However, the process must begin when initially learning to read, and must be as intuitive to a child as when he or she learned to speak. This can happen through incorporating repetition, proper skills and modeling.

Parent Involvement: What Skills Need to be Part of a Daily Routine? Parent involvement in early literacy is directly connected to academic achievement. Children need parents to be their reading role models with daily practice in order to navigate successfully through beginning literacy skills. According to research, parents should focus on the words on the page while reading with their preK reader (Evans, Shaw, Bell, 2000). Here are some strategies for beginning and seasoned readers' literacy success: Point to each word on the page as you read. This beginning literacy strategy will assist in early reading experiences with their parents prepare children for the benefits of formal literacy instruction. Indeed, parental involvement in their child's reading has been found to be the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995). Furthermore, parents who introduce their babies to books give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout primary school (Wade & Moore, 2000). Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences on Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-8 years). In the case of a number of perspectives we see how the associated theory shaped what are now generally accepted maxims about literacy development. It was argued that most assessment at preschool and infant levels should be formative and should occur in authentic literacy contexts such as book reading, or early writing. The importance of observation as an assessment tool was emphasised. The involvement of parents in gathering assessment information was also highlighted. Parent involvement programs should have a strong early literacy component that guides parents and caregivers in providing early literacy experiences at home. Support for English Language Learners should be specified and provided in both the home language and English where feasible. Literacy development starts early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement. All the domains of a child's development, including literacy, are interrelated and interdependent. The more limited a child's experiences with language and literacy, the more likely he or she will have difficulty learning to read.