

Building Brain Power

Why me?

YOU are your child's first teacher. Children learn to read and write LONG before they start school. They actually begin this process during infancy.

The typical middle-class child enters first grade with 1,000 to 1,700 hours of one-on-one picture book reading, whereas a child from a low-income family averages 25 hours.

Children's books contain three times more rare words than we use in normal conversation. Children have a difficult time reading and understanding words they have not been exposed to before. Being exposed to rare words is just as important as knowing the letters of the alphabet. Even when children have strong familiarity with the alphabet and the sounds letters make, they will come across words where the pronunciation is not easily predictable.

Research is continually showing that early learning experiences are linked with later school achievement, emotional and social well-being, fewer grade retentions, and reduced incidences of juvenile delinquency and that these outcomes are all factors associated with later adult productivity.

What can I do?

Read to your child every day – Experts recommend 20 minutes a day.

However, it does not need to be 20 consecutive minutes. Keep a book in your diaper bag, in the car, and every room of your house. Books come in handy when you are waiting at restaurants and the doctor's office for entertaining your child.

Keep reading FUN! – Read only when your child is in a good mood and ready to listen. It is more important for your child's experience to be positive than it is for it to be long.

Read books that interest your child – Visit the public library for books on things that your child likes. Don't forget non-fiction books which are rich in new vocabulary words!

Read everything – Point out words on signs, in magazines and on cereal boxes. Tell your child what the words say.

Read about their favorite characters – Many children's TV shows and films are based on books or have been turned into books.

Give books as gifts – Include a book as a birthday or Christmas presents. Ask your family and friends to do the same. Children's books can be purchased for a few cents at yard sales, second-hand stores and at book sales.

Read to your child 20 minutes a day!

Research has shown that there is nearly a 90% probability that a child will remain a poor reader at the end of the 4th grade if the child is a poor reader at the end of the 1st grade.

Knowledge of alphabet letters at entry into kindergarten is a strong predictor of reading ability in 10th grade.

35% of children in the U.S. enter public schools without the skills necessary for learning to read.

(Carnegie Foundation Report, *Ready to Learn, A Mandate for the Nation*, 1991.)

67% of American 4th graders can't read at the fourth-grade proficiency level; and 33% score below the basic competency level.

(Carnegie Foundation Report, *Ready to Learn, A Mandate for the Nation*, 1991.)

Many states, including Arizona and Texas, use 4th grade literacy scores to predict how many jail cells they will need in 10 years.

(*Forbes* magazine 12/2010)



Mengle Memorial Library
324 Main Street
Brockway, PA 15824
<http://menglelibrary.org>

This project has been partially funded with federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

6 Early Literacies

Print Motivation

a child's interest in and enjoyment of books and reading

- ❖ Choose books your child enjoys. Have your child repeat words or phrases.
- ❖ Read slowly and clearly when reading to small children

Phonological Awareness

the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words

- ❖ Choose books with rhyme, rhythm, or animal sounds.
- ❖ Say the sounds of animals in pictures, and encourage your child to imitate you.
- ❖ Read nursery rhymes and rhyming books, emphasizing the rhyming words. When re-reading rhyming books, leave out the second rhyming word. Let your child say it.

Vocabulary

knowing the names of things, feelings, concepts, and ideas

- ❖ Choose books with words not used in daily conversation; non-fiction books have a lot of unique words. Explain unfamiliar words. (**Do not** replace it with an easier one.)
- ❖ Talk with your child about the pictures in books. Add information and ideas to what your child says based on what you know.

Narrative Skills

being able to describe things, to tell events in order, and to retell stories

- ❖ Choose books that tell a cumulative tale and have a natural sequence (a clear beginning, middle and end).
- ❖ Re-read books so that your child can become familiar with the story. Have your child retell it to you. Have your child draw pictures and tell you what is happening.
- ❖ Ask open-ended questions (ones that cannot be answered with yes or no).

Print Awareness

print has meaning, knowing how to handle a book, and noticing print all around

- ❖ Choose books that have writing as part of the story or the pictures.
- ❖ Research shows that 95% of young children's visual attention is directed at the pictures. Run your finger under the title of the book or under repeated phrases. This helps your child notice that in English we read from left to right, top to bottom.
- ❖ Let your child turn the pages of the book. Hand your child the book upside down. If he does not turn it right side up, help him turn the book and say "Oops, we can't read it that way! Let's turn it around."

Letter Knowledge

the same letters can look different, have different names and are related to sounds

- ❖ Choose books with shapes or Alphabet books.
- ❖ With any book, point out a letter. Trace a letter from the title with your finger and have your child do it. Look for the letter of your child's first name in your book.
- ❖ When you talk about letters, say the name of the letter as well as a sound it makes. Young children can hear the sound of the letter most easily when it is at the beginning of the word.

