

WHY READ TO BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN? RESEARCH SUMMARY

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Early Literacy - "Raising Readers- The Tremendous Potential of Families" Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader - July 1999. U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/startearly/>

Key Ideas:

- According to Research, parents have a lasting impact on their child's reading skill and literacy. There is a relationship between reading regularly to a child and that child's later reading achievement. (National Research Council, 1998)
- Children develop most of their capacity for learning in the first three years of life, when their brains grow to 90% of eventual adult weight (Karoly et al, 1998)
- As parents talk, sing and read to children, the children's brain cells are developed. Existing links among brain cells are strengthened and new cells and links are formed (Shore, 1997)
- Many pediatricians believe that a child who has never held a book or listened to a story is not a fully healthy child (Klass, 1998)
- A child develops language skills long before being able to speak. The child also develops literacy skills long before being able to read (National Research Council, 1998)
- Cooing, singing lullabies, reading aloud to a baby, toddler or preschooler stimulated children's developing minds and helps build a base for literacy skills. Counting, number concepts, letter names and shapes, associating sounds with letters, interest in reading, and cooperation with other children are all relevant to learning to read (Wells, 1985)
- Positive parental attitudes toward literacy can help children become more successful readers. (baker, 1995)
- Enthusiasm about books and reading can be shared between a parent and child and deepen the child's interest in learning to read (Snow & Tabors, 1996)
- Children who learn from parents that reading is fun may be more likely to sustain efforts to learn to read when the going gets tough (National Research Council, 1998)
- Less than half (48 % of U.S. parents read or share picture books daily with their children ages 1-3. One in six parents said they do not read to their child at all. (Young et al., 1996)
- The more education a mother has, the more likely she is to read to her child. (Educational Testing Service, 1995) 77% of children whose mothers have a college education were read to every day, while only 49% of children whose mothers had a high school education were read to daily (National Household Education Survey, 1996)
- 46% of children in poor families were read to every day, compared with 61% of children in families living above the poverty line. (National Household Education Survey, 1996)
- There is very little difference in reading to a child if the mother works or does not work outside the home.
- Families with a working father and an at-home mother spent an average of 22 hours/week directly engaged with their children under age 13. Dual-income families' parents spent 19 hours/week, single mothers spent 9 hours/week (Hofferth, 1998)
- The size of a young child's vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading - preschoolers with a large vocabulary tend to become proficient readers (National Research Council, 1998)

- Children's vocabulary can be greatly enhanced by talking and reading with parents. The vocabulary of the average children's book is greater than that found on prime-time television (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988)
- Number of words heard at home per hour by 1 and 2 year olds learning to talk:
Low income child -620 words : Middle-income child-1,250 words: High-income child 2,150 words
- Number of words heard by age 3:
Low income child -10 million: Middle-income child 20 million: High-income child 30 million
Hart & Risley, 1995)
- The biggest obstacle to literacy is the scarcity of books and appropriate reading material (Needleman et al. , 1991)
- Parents who are given books and "prescriptions for reading" by their children's pediatricians are 4 times more likely to read and share books with their young children. Mothers receiving welfare are 8 times more likely to read to their children when provided with books and encouragement (Needleman et al., 1991)
- **Hours of reading by age 5:**
 - 30 minutes daily = 900 hours:
 - 30 minutes weekly = 130 hours:
 - Less than 30 min. weekly = 60 hours
- **Television viewing by children ages 3 to 5** is an average of 13.5 hours per week. (Hofferth, 1998)
- Parents serve as both teachers and role models of reading (National Research Council, 1998) Adults pass on to children their own expectations about education and achievement. (Fingeret, 1990) Parents who value reading are more likely to turn off the television, visit the library, and give books as gifts. (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998)

Relevance to Profession:

- Day Care Providers and educators have an enormous impact on the mental development of young children because they have them in their care
- Day Care Providers and educators must stimulate the pre-literacy skills in children in their programs and develop programs to ensure that these issues are addressed
- Day Care Providers and educators must inform parents about the parents' impact on their child's mental development, and inform them about how the Day Care is stimulating their child's mental development

Recommendations:

- Give the child rich language experiences throughout the day. Talk with the Infants and young children frequently in short, simple sentences. Tell stories, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes or poems and describe the world around them to expose them to words. Name things. Make connections. Encourage your child's efforts to talk with you
- Read aloud to children for 30 minutes daily beginning when they are infants.
- Set up a special place for reading and writing. A reading corner filled with lots of good books can become a child's favourite place. Keep writing materials such as crayons, markers, paints, brushes and different kinds of paper in a place where children can reach them.
- Visit the public library.
- Encourage parents and family members to read to children.