Home Activities for Early Reading Skills

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Dear Parents,

During the school year, your child is working with his (or her) teacher getting ready to learn to read. Some of the skills your child is practicing are listed:

- ✓ *to learn about and tell stories*
- ✓ *to express his/her ideas more descriptively*
- ✓ *to listen for sounds in words,*
- ✓ *to learn the letters of the abc's,*
- ✓ *to learn the sounds of the abc's,*
- ✓ *to begin to put sounds together to make words, and*
- ✓ *to begin to remember some words simply by looking at them.*

This book can hopefully help give you some ideas of games and activities you can do with your child. These games will help your child be ready for the challenge of reading and writing in Grade 1. Choose a couple of games to play, and enjoy the fun you can have! Your child's teacher can give you ideas on the best activities for your child to play. It will be great for you and your child to practice!

Remember: The best time you can spend with your child is to read stories with him or her, and to talk about what you read. Have Fun!

Thank you and Good Luck!

Steve MacCormack
Language and Literacy Teacher

P.S. I would like to thank Darci Burns of the Hansen Institute for Language and Literacy. She provided us with the work of J. Bolden from 2003, from which we received many ideas for the activities in this booklet.

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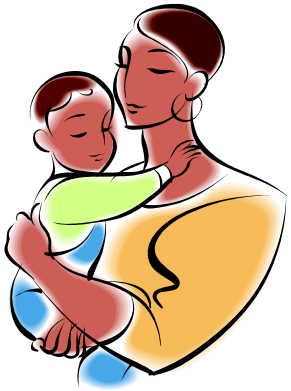

Talking with your Child

***Talking with your child helps to give the language skills needed to be a good reader!**

*You can teach your child about your lives and the world.

*You can help your child build a good, trusting relationship with you as you talk.

* * * * * *

From the time when your child is small, s/he is ready to listen to you and to learn from you. You can speak with your child in a way that will help your child ***understand what is happening in your world****. You can also help your child to* ***learn about language so that s/he will be more ready to learn to read*** *when the time comes.*

These are some of the ways you can speak with your child to help develop language and to build your relationship with your child.

It takes practice to be a good language teacher for your child. Try to practice and have fun. Your child will love you to do it!!

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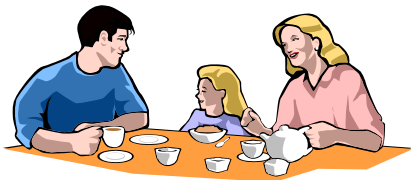
- **Talk about your day –** Tell your child a 'story' about your day. Speak about everyday activities like **where you went, your lunchtime, people you met,** or **shopping.**
- **Talk about what you are doing now –** Your child can watch and listen as you tell about the **everyday activities** you are doing now (like **making a meal**). You can talk about the ingredients in a recipe, how you put them together, and how you cook them **as you do it**.
- **Expression in your voice –** Use a lot of expression as you speak. This will help your child to be interested in what you are saying.
- **Speak slowly and clearly –** Try to make yourself easy to understand as you speak.
- **Eye contact –** Try to look eye-to-eye with your child in a comfortable way. It will make your communication more fun and comfortable.
- **Vocabulary –** 1. Tell your child about new words you might have heard. 2. Also ask your child if s/he learned new words today. 3. Use different words from the usual words (you might say **giggle** instead of **laugh**).
- **Ask your child to talk about his day –** Let your child tell you about parts of the day that were **important, funny, sad,** or **interesting.**
- **Answer questions –** Try to explain or describe your answers to your child instead of using one word (like **yes/no, sit,** or **now**).
- **Model –** Give your child an idea about a good way to tell you something (like **You could say…. 'I was speeding on my bike' instead of 'I went fast'**).
- **Expand –** Add to something your child tells you to make it clearer. (If a child says **'I went in'**, you could say **'Oh, you mean you went *into the school today*.'**)



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Story Reading

***A child needs to develop a life-long love for reading.**
***A child needs to be read to be to by adults who love reading themselves!**
*A child needs to have practice in reading the words and sentences in a story **fluently** and **naturally**.

* * * * * *

*To really help your child develop a love for reading, you should try to read with your child **each night** for **15 or 20 minutes**. As you read, you can talk about the stories you are reading. These are ideas you can talk about as you read!*
Fun practice is very important for you and your child!

- **Expression in your voice –** Use a lot of expression as you read a story. This will help your child to be interested in the story.

- **Interesting words –** Talk about interesting words in a story that are new to your child. A word may **sound funny** (like **sensational**); it may be a **new way to say an easy word** (like **explained** means **said**); or it may be a **new thing/idea** (like **unicorn**).

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- **Character/Setting/Events –** Talk about **Who** (**Characters**) is in a story; **Where & When** (**Setting**) the story happens; **What is the Problem** in a story; and how the Problem gets **Solved**.

- Talk about parts of a story that are **interesting** to you, your child, and your life.

- **Echo Reading –** Let your child read along with you when s/he is able to say parts of the story.

- **Repeat Reading –** Read a story more than once, as long as it is interesting and fun for your child.

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Letter Names

*A child should be able to recognize and name letters – **capital** and **lower-case** - automatically, without spending much time or energy.
*If your child can name letters easily, s/he can spend energy learning other reading-related jobs.

* * * * * *

These are some activities you can do with your child. Choose 1 or 2 of these activities – ones that seem fun – and do them with your child 3-4 days each week (Your child's teacher can help you make the materials or show you how to do the activities).
Fun practice is very important!

- ✓ **Glue Letters -** Make letters using **white glue** or **glitter glue**. Your child can practice saying the name of the letter as s/he runs across the letter with the first finger. Use the hand s/he writes with.

- ✓ Make letters on the kitchen table using **shaving cream** or **whipped cream**. Your child can practice saying the names of the letters as s/he makes them (This can be a messy game!)

- ✓ **Sand Writing -** Put **sand** or **salt** in a baking tray. Your child can say the name of the letter as s/he prints the letter in the sand/salt. Use the hand s/he writes with.

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- ✓ Play **Letter Bingo, Letter Memory,** or **Letter Go Fish**. (Sometimes, teachers have these games that can be copied for you.)

- ✓ **Flash card practice –** Make **flash cards** from index cards. Your child can name the letters s/he knows. If your child is stuck on a letter, say the name, have your child repeat the name, and go to the next one.

- ✓ **'Tick-Tock'** – Time your child as s/he practices saying the names of the letters from **flash cards**. Your child will try to beat his time from the day before. Keep a scoreboard to show progress over a period of 2 weeks (your child may not do better each day, but over time s/he will).

- ✓ **'Moose' –** The letters that your child knows are put on a **popsicle stick** in a can. One popsicle stick also says 'moose'. You and child pull the sticks and name the letters. When someone pulls 'moose', your scores are added up, and you play again.

- ✓ **Letter Checks –** Say the names of letters. Your child can write the letters on a **piece of paper** or a **dry erase board**. Use colorful markers to make it more fun.

- ✓ **'Mystery Letter' –** Put **magnetic letters** in a bag. Your child puts his/her hand in. S/he feels the shape of the letter and names it (use capital and lower-case letters).

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The First Sounds of Words

*A child needs to be able to hear the first sound (also called the initial sound) in common, everyday words. This listening skill is a very important first step toward hearing all of the sounds in words in the process of reading.

*If your child can hear the first sounds in words, s/he can begin to hear other sounds of words. Eventually, this will help your child to blend sounds together when your child begins to read.

***Help your child to listen for the first sound in a word. Try not to tell the correct answer if s/he is not sure. The more your child can 'hear' the first sound as s/he says it, the better it is.**

Make sure you say the ***first sound of a word, instead of saying the letter that the word begins with.**

* * * * * *

These are some activities you can do with your child. Choose 1 or 2 of these activities – ones that seem fun – and do them with your child 3-4 days each week (Your child's teacher can help you make the materials or show you how to do the activities).

Fun practice is very important for you and your child!

- ✓ **Glue Letters -** Make letters using **white glue** or **glitter glue**. Your child can practice saying the ***sound*** of the letter as s/he runs across the letter with the first finger. Use the hand s/he writes with.

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- ✓ Make letters on the kitchen table using **shaving cream** or **whipped cream**. Your child can practice saying the ***sounds*** of the letters as s/he makes them (This can be a messy game!)

- ✓ **Sand Writing -** Put **sand** or **salt** in a baking tray. Your child can say the ***sound*** of the letter as s/he prints the letter in the sand/salt. Use the hand s/he writes with.

- ✓ **Initial Sound Memory –** You can use a store-bought Memory game, which uses pictures, or you can set use a set of picture cards. Your child matches pictures that have the same first sound (like a picture of a 'cat' and a 'car').

- ✓ **Initial Sound Bingo –** Bingo cards can be set up with pictures. Your child is given a sound, and s/he puts a chip on a picture that begins with that sound (for **/s/**, a chip goes on a picture of a 'star'). Make sure you say the sound **/s/**, instead of the letter 's'.

- ✓ Use a stack of **picture cards**. Your child can group together pictures that have the **same first sound**. S/he can make different piles for different sounds.

- ✓ **Magazine Treasure Hunt –** You and your child can search through a magazine or newspaper ad for pictures that begin with certain sounds. When your child finds 5 or10 pictures for each sound, s/he wins.

- ✓ **'Odd One Out' –** Have 3 or 4 pictures. One picture does not begin with the same sound. Your child finds the picture that is 'the odd one out.'

- ✓ **Feeling Bag –** Put a mystery toy or object in a bag. Tell your child the first sound of the object. Your child can then guess what it is from the first sound and its shape.

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The Sounds in a Word

*A child needs to be able to hear all of the sounds in words. This ability is called **phoneme awareness**.

*The ability to hear these sounds will help a child to blend sounds together as s/he begins to read simple words.

***These activities do not involve the letters of the alphabet. The activities only involve listening to the sounds that make up a word.**

***Phoneme Awareness** is more of a language ability than a reading skill, but it will really help a child as s/he begins to read.

* * * * * *

These are some activities you can do with your child. Choose 1 or 2 of these activities – ones that seem fun – and do them with your child 3-4 days each week (Your child's teacher or the safety net teacher can help you make the materials, show you how to do the activities, and the kinds of words to use).

<u>These activities may take some practice to understand and to do easily.</u>

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Fun practice is very important for you and your child!

- ✓ **'Say It Slowly' –** Say a word, very slowly – sound by sound (**'c—aaaa—t'**). Your child listens to the sounds and tries to decide the word.

- ✓ **'Catch and Say' –** Say a word. Pretend to 'throw' the word and your child 'catches' it. Then your child can let the word out – one sound at a time – as s/he lifts one finger for each sound s/he says. For example, for the word **'sat'**, your child will lift a thumb as s/he says the **/s/-sound**, the first finger while saying the **/a/-sound** and the next finger for the **/t/-sound**.

- ✓ **'Say It and Move It' –** Set up an index card with 2 or 3 squares drawn next to each other. Use 2 or 3 bingo chips as markers and place one above each square. Say a word. Your child should repeat the word. Your child will move a chip into each square and say each sound of the word. After the final sound, your child can say the whole word.
  For example, s/he would say the sounds **/m/-/a/-/t/> 'mat'**

- ✓ **'Egg Drop' –** Use an empty container from a dozen of eggs. Cut out a set of three cups. Use bingo chips as markers. Say a word. Your child should repeat the word. Your child will place a chip into each cup as s/he says each sound. After the final sound, your child can say the whole word.

- ✓ **'Take Away A Sound' –** Say a word. Your child should repeat the word. Then tell your child to say the word without the first sound. You could use these words – 'Say **top**. Now say **top** without saying **/t/**' (the answer is **op**).

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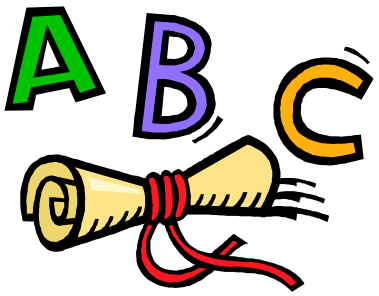

Teaching Sounds and Letters

*We know that a child needs to learn the sounds of the letters to be ready to read.
*A child needs to learn the consonant sounds and the vowel sounds (*a, e, i, o, u)*. The short vowel sounds are most important at this time.

* * * * * *

These are some activities you can do with your child. Choose 1 or 2 of these activities – ones that seem fun – and do them with your child 3-4 days each week (Your child's teacher can help you make the materials or show you how to do the activities).
Fun practice is very important for you and your child!

- ✓ **Glue letters & Sand writing –** Make letters using **white glue** or **glitter glue**. Your child traces the letter and s/he can say '**S** says **/sss/**. You can also use **sand** or **salt** in a baking tray to trace.

- ✓ **Letter-Sound Bingo –** Set up **bingo cards** with **letters** instead of numbers. Play with bingo rules. When your child puts a chip on a letter, s/he has to say the sound of that letter.

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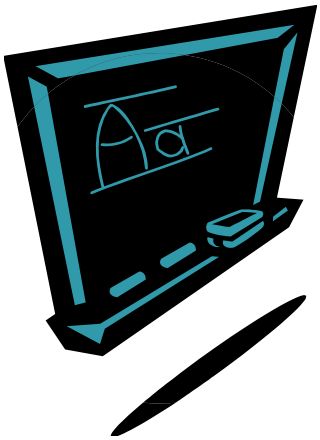
- ✓ **Letter-Sound Go Fish –** Use a deck of **letter flash cards** and play 'Go Fish'. Your child can either ask for letters and s/he gives the sound at a match (or the other way around).

- ✓ **Flash Card practice –** Use a deck of **letter flash cards**. As your child sees each letter, s/he can say the **name** of the letter, the **sound** of the letter, or **both** the sound and letter.

- ✓ **Sound Checks –** Say a sound of a letter, and your child will write that letter on an index card or a white board.



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Reading Words Using Sounds and Letters

*As a child begins to read, **one job** s/he needs to do is to blend the sounds of the letters into words.
*These kinds of words can be made of a consonant- vowel-consonant pattern. This is called a **C-V-C word** like **'mop'** or a **C-C-V-C word** like **'stop.'**
***These kinds of words are not the only kinds of words that a child needs to be able to read well, but they are very important.**

* * * * * *

These are some activities you can do with your child. Choose 1 or 2 of these activities – ones that seem fun – and do them with your child 3-4 days each week. (Your child's teacher or the safety net teacher can help you make the materials or show you how to do the activities). ***Your child's teacher can provide you a list of words.***

Fun practice is very important for you and your child!

- ✓ **'Tap and Sweep' –** Show a word, which has a consonant-vowel-consonant **(CVC)** pattern. A word like 'sat' is an example. Teach your child to 'tap' each sound by pointing to each letter. As your child 'taps' the final sound s/he 'sweeps the sounds together' (your child says **/s/ - /a/ - /t/ > 'sat'** as s/he points to the letters).

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- ✓ **'I Spy' –** Use a set **CVC-words** placed on the table. Say "I spy a word that says 'mop' ", and your child must find and read that word.

- ✓ **Bingo** – Set up a bingo card with **CVC-words**. Play with bingo rules. When your child puts a chip on a word, s/he must read that word.

- ✓ **Memory –** Set up a memory game with **CVC-words**. When your child gets a match, s/he must read/tap out the word.

- ✓ **'Tick-Tock'** - Time your child as s/he practices about 10 reading cards with **CVC-words**. Your child will try to beat his time from the day before. Keep a scoreboard to show progress over a period of 2 weeks (your child may not do better each day, but over time s/he will).

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