



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children



## Why Reading Is Vital to Babies of All Ages

- Successful readers have 1,000 hours or more of literacy experiences prior to starting school, including demonstrations, shared storybook reading, literacy play, alphabet games and songs, phonemic awareness activities and explorations of letters and print.. -- Cunningham, P.M., & Allington, R.L. (1994). Classrooms That Work. New York: Harper Collins College Publisher.)
- By age three, children can understand why people read, how people read and care for printed materials. -- Brrckmayer, J. (2000). The role of public libraries in emergent and family literacy. Zero to Three, 21, 24-29.
- Children who have limited contact with books before beginning school tend to associate reading with “rote learning, and possibly failure.” – Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice, co-director of Reach Out and Read at Boston City Hospital Outpatient Pediatric Clinic, in Boston Globe article “Hospital Encourages Reading.”
- Book sharing routines familiarize children with the question and answer format to help prepare them for school. -- Needlman, R., Fried, L., Morley, D., Taylor, S., & Zuckerman, B. (1991). Clinic-based intervention to promote literacy. American Journal of Diseases of Children, 145, 881-884.
- The benefits of reading aloud including building vocabulary and background knowledge, establishing the reading-writing connection, exposing children to a wealth of experiences outside of their own, stimulating imagination, stretching attention spans, nourishing emotional development, encouraging compassion, reshaping negative attitudes into positive ones, introducing textures and nuances of the English language rarely heard on TV, and acting as an advertisement for learning to read. – Jim Trelease (author of the best-selling Read-Aloud Handbook). Schwartz, D.M. (1995). Ready, set, read – 20 minutes each day is all you’ll need. Smithsonian, 25, 82-91.
- Adults with poor reading skills may be too embarrassed to read to their children, perpetuating a pattern that can negatively influence a young person’s academic success, whereas children whose parents read to them regularly are more apt to be ready to read when they enter school. “The literacy level of the child’s mother is the best predictor for academic success,” which backs up Patricia Thompson’s (Hartford resident) belief that she must master reading so that her daughter will have a better chance to succeed in school. – Carl Guerriere, executive director of the Greater Hartford Literacy Council, in the Hartford Courant article, “A big boost for literacy,” December 10, 2000.

# Language and Reading Development

## **What do young children need to learn to love language?**

Before entering formal education children should:

- Have more than 1,000 experiences with books, alphabet games, storybook reading and activities.
- Enjoy books and language and see the purpose of reading.
- Have been included in conversation and treated as successful speakers and listeners.
- Have engaged in playtime that employs symbols (acting out roles, designing stories and using props).
- Be exposed to print and writing in their daily life.
- Understand how to handle books and know that print moves left to right.
- Have been read to by an adult who supports the child's view and creativity during the reading aloud.

## **Pre-literacy in child care and preschool:**

Young children in child care and preschool benefit significantly from:

- Being read to aloud and being asked to be active participants in the reading.
- Understanding that print carries a message.
- Engaging in reading and writing attempts.
- Identifying labels and signs in their environment.
- Understanding that there is a connection between letters and sounds.
- Linguistic awareness games, nursery rhymes and rhythmic activity. (Phonemic awareness, a powerful predictor of later reading success, is found in traditional rhyming, skipping and word games).
- Letter sound matches and some letter identification.
- Temporary invented spelling to represent written language.

## **Early care and education teachers can:**

- Share books with children, including Big Books and model reading behaviors.
- Talk about letters by name and sounds.
- Establish a literacy-rich environment.
- Re-read favorite stories.
- Engage children in language games.
- Promote literacy-related play activities.
- Encourage children to experiment with writing.

## **Parents are key to ensure love of language and curiosity in daily life.**

Parent and family members can:

- Read and re-read stories with predictable text to children.
- Encourage children to recount experiences and describe ideas and art that are important to them.
- Visit the library.
- Talk with children and engage them in conversation, give them the names of things.
- Provide opportunities for children to draw and print, using markers, crayons, and pencils.

Books have more language than television – TV programming for children has less than 1,000 words. Vocabulary is 5,500 to 32,000 words in first grade.

The number of words read in a year by a middle school child who is an avid reader might approach 10,000,000 compared to 100,000 for the least moved reader.