



Issue One

# Supporting Early Learners

published by

**Partners in Learning**

## Dear Parents,

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at [learningtoread@telus.net](mailto:learningtoread@telus.net) or visit our website [www.readwritewithkids.com](http://www.readwritewithkids.com) to view other resources.



**Bev DeMonyé** has wide experience as a preschool, primary and intermediate classroom teacher and in teaching children requiring support. She has a Master's Degree in Literacy and a Diploma in Special Education. Bev has also taught in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.



**Gloria Gustafson** has taught at all elementary levels as a classroom teacher and has experience working with parents and teachers as a District Consultant. She has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education and has taught in the Faculty of Education and in Field Programs at Simon Fraser University.

## This series of ten newsletters covers the following topics:

- Issue One: Reading to Children From the Beginning
- Issue Two: Reading with Children as They Learn to Read
- Issue Three: Children Reading on Their Own and Getting Better Every Time
- Issue Four: Phonics Plus
- Issue Five: Understanding and Learning from Reading
- Issue Six: Becoming a Writer
- Issue Seven: Becoming a Better Writer
- Issue Eight: Learning About Numbers
- Issue Nine: Behaviours That Make a Difference for Learning
- Issue Ten: The ABC's of Preventing the Summer Slide

## Reading to Children From the Beginning

Sharing the joy of reading on a daily basis helps children develop a love for books, reading and learning. Reading to babies and toddlers is one of the best ways to introduce them to the world of books. Children discover that reading is an enjoyable learning experience and become readers for life!

Reading out loud to children introduces new words, ideas and information. Talking with children before, during and after reading helps develop listening and speaking skills. This type of talking also improves depth of understanding.

Reading out loud provides a natural way for children to learn about:

- holding and caring for books
- covers, titles, authors and illustrators
- how pictures and words tell a story or provide information
- letters, words and sentences
- where to start reading: reading left to right and from top to bottom
- rhyme and the flow of language in books
- the many types of books such as fiction, story, information and poetry books



## Tips for Reading to Children

- Read daily to your child when you have time to enjoy it.
- Be playful, enthusiastic and expressive as you read books you and your child are interested in.
- Children love to have favourite stories read over and over again. When children no longer have to concentrate on the plot, they naturally focus on the flow of language and start memorizing some words and phrases which is a beginning step in learning to read.
- Reading titles and looking at pictures before you read helps to captivate your child's interest and develop predicting skills.
- Encourage your child to retell the story using the pictures as prompts.
- When reading a fact book ask your child what was the most interesting thing they learned.
- Demonstrate a sense of curiosity as you are reading using prompts such as: *I wonder why . . . Isn't this interesting . . . This makes me think about . . . or Wow . . .*
- Share ideas, feelings and thoughts to help your child make connections between their own life experiences and what you are reading.
- Encourage your child to visualize and act out parts of the story to help the stories come alive.
- Use your finger to track words as you read. This reinforces reading left to right, top to bottom and helps develop the idea of matching the spoken word to the printed word. Sometimes children want to take responsibility and do the finger tracking themselves. Using bookmarks and pointers vary the tracking process.
- Reading material can be at various levels of difficulty: from very easy picture books to books with a lot of print. It is amazing how much children can enjoy and understand what they hear long before they read.



Issue Two

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## Reading With Children As They Learn To Read

When children start learning to read, they benefit from reading out loud to parents. Ten to twenty minutes a day provides amazing results when help and support is one-on-one! This can:

- promote a sense of partnership between you and your child
- provide the necessary practice for your child to develop confidence and move forward in reading
- stretch your child's reading skills
- motivate your child to take on new reading challenges
- inspire a life-long love for reading



## Tips for Supporting Children When They Read Out Loud to You

- Be encouraging, supportive and celebrate your child's reading successes.
- Short, enjoyable reading sessions are far better than overdoing it and risking a struggle or creating a negative experience.
- Some children like to read to themselves or to a favourite stuffy or toy before reading out loud to a parent. This helps to relieve the pressure of a performance situation.
- Readers use a combination of phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read. They also use their own background knowledge to figure out words they don't know. You can support your child by making the following suggestions:
  - *look at the pictures and make a good guess at the word*
  - *try sounding out the word*
  - *look at word parts*
  - *use the first letter as a clue*
  - *read the sentence again and think about a word that would make sense*
- If your child is stuck on a word allow wait time. Don't be too quick to help! Children need time to think through options. It is okay to remind them to use one of the above suggestions or simply tell them the word to avoid unpleasant frustration.
- Point out and show how commas, periods, question marks and exclamation marks help us read with expression and fluency.
- If your child starts to struggle, try taking turns reading line by line or page by page. Another option is to try unison reading or reading out loud together. It may be that this book is better to be enjoyed as a read aloud book.

### Choosing Books

Help your child choose reading material that is not too difficult. Just like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the reading material should be just right: **not too easy, not too hard, but just right**. Use the following three steps to help your child decide on a **just right** book.

**Step One:** Parent estimates or counts off about 100 words.

**Step Two:** Your child starts reading and every time they are stuck on a word have them put up a finger. If they go beyond five fingers then the text is too difficult. Assure your child that it won't be long before this book will be **just right**.

**Step Three:** Encourage your child to find something easier and follow step one and two again.

**Don't forget** children's librarians are happy to help you and your child find **just right** books.



Issue Three

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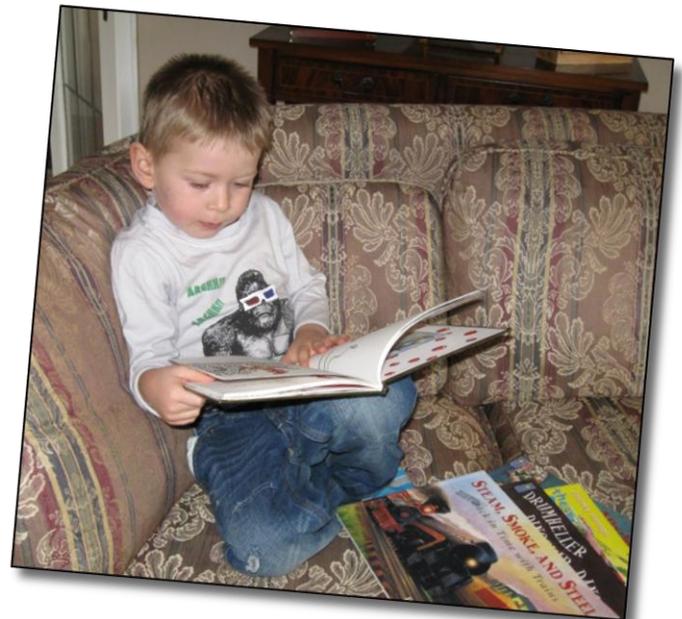
## **Children Reading On Their Own & Getting Better Every Time**

There comes a time in the process of learning anything when practice is critical. This is true for adults and children. Think about learning to ski, skate, play tennis, hockey or golf and you will recall that without practice you don't make very much progress.

Children who read on their own become better readers every time they read. They develop instant recall or recognition of a growing number of words and expand their background knowledge. They become quick and accurate at using phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read as well as making predictions from their own background knowledge to figure out words they don't know. The hours a child spends reading on their own provides the necessary practice needed for building a solid base for future reading success. It leads to feelings of confidence and a readiness to try something harder.

Reading on their own also improves spelling. Every time a word is read there is a better chance the child will be able to spell the word correctly or recognize that a word they have written doesn't 'look right' and needs correcting.

When choosing text for independent reading it is important that it is not too difficult. Your child should be able to decode or recognize almost all the words without help.



## A Plan That Encourages Children to Read On Their Own

**Read the story out loud to your child.** This is an opportunity for children to hear how the text is supposed to sound and for you to talk about difficult words and confusing ideas. Encourage your child to share their thoughts to what is being read.

**Provide struggle time for your child.** Let children have time to read on their own. At this stage many children will mouth the words or mumble. Over time this disappears and they naturally start reading silently to themselves. This step provides children independent time to figure out unknown words using phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read, as well as their own background knowledge to figure out words that would make sense.

**Let your child read the story to you.** When children come to a word they can't read right away, give them a few moments to figure out the word on their own. Encourage with phrases such as:

- ***I'm glad you realized that word didn't make sense.*** This means your child recognizes their error which is the first step to self-correction. This strategy is called monitoring.
- ***I like the way you went to the beginning of the sentence and tried again.*** This means your child is using other known words and the rest of the sentence as clues to figure out an unknown word. This strategy is called using context.
- ***You did a good job of sounding that word out.*** This means your child is matching letters and letter sounds. 50% of our words are phonetic. This strategy is called phonics.
- ***You looked at parts of the word and were able to figure the whole word out.*** This means your child is using the structure of words. They can see little words in big words or they can break the word into smaller parts. This strategy is called word structure or structural analysis.
- ***It was a good idea to look at the picture to see if it would give you a clue.*** This means your child is able to take advantage of illustrations which provide clues to what words your child can expect to come across in their reading. Children naturally look at pictures for clues and you will see your child doing this. This strategy is called using context. The clue is in the picture rather than the words.
- ***That was a good guess but that is not what the word is.*** This means your child understands what has been read and is able to predict a word that would make sense. Either tell your child the correct word or suggest they try one more time paying attention to the first letter of the word. This strategy is also called using context and background knowledge.

**This plan can be used to help your child read books on their own. It is not unusual for children to want to reread such books again and again. It feels so good to be successful!**



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## Phonics Plus

### Phonics

Children who are just learning to read use phonics or sounding out to figure out what words say.

Phonics involves:

- knowing the letters of the alphabet
- learning the sounds that the letters usually make
- matching the letters to their sounds
- learning how to blend or put together letters to sound out a word
- rhyming to build word families (eg. **cat, bat, mat, rat, sat**)
- changing letters to make new words (eg. **cat** to **rat** to **ran** to **run**)

Your child can learn these skills in a fun and playful way. Sing the alphabet song, play with magnetic letters, use alphabet puzzles or cards and/or make a personal alphabet book.



## Word Families

Once your child has learned the alphabet letters and the matching sounds they can begin rhyming, reading, printing and spelling words such as:

- mat rat sat bat cat fat hat; can fan man pan ran van; ham jam tam ram; cap tap map nap; mad fad sad had; bag rag tag wag
- bed red fed led; set get yet pet wet let net met jet; ten den hen men pen; beg leg keg
- big dig jig rig wig; dip hip rip tip sip lip; win tin bin pin fin; did hid kid lid; hit bit fit kit pit; rib fib
- dog jog hog fog; got not pot rot lot hot; mop pop hop top; fox box; cod nod sod
- but nut cut hut; cub tub rub; sun fun bun run; bug dug jug tug; cut hut; cup up; hum sum

## Word Beginnings

Children become confident at this stage and quickly start using a variety of word beginnings to change words such as **hut** to **shut**. Other common beginnings are:

- pr- tr- fl- bl- cl- sm- sk- str- spl- th- ch- sh- gr- wh-

## Word Endings

More word families can be built using endings such as **-ack** to make **back, sack, rack, black, shack, stack**. Other endings to try are:

- -ack -aw -ay -ad -ain -ir -or -all -ur -ank -ash -ate -ain -ake -ale -ame -ell -eat -est -ill -ing -ice -ick -ide -ine -ight -ock -ore -uck -ump -unk -ing -ung -ong -ang -ank -ail -eed -out -ink -ore -ine
- Many of these words can be further expanded using -s, -ed and -ing. For example: **jump, jumps, jumped** and **jumping**.

## Besides Phonics

Children also learn to read by using the following strategies.

**Memory:** When children see words over and over they are better able to recall them quickly and easily when they come across them in new reading material.

**Clues from Text:** Pictures and diagrams give children clues to what words they might come across as they read. They are able to predict or guess what word would make sense within a sentence.

**Background Knowledge:** Children who have been read to and have had many rich experiences are able to draw on this knowledge to confirm ideas and words they encounter in their reading.

**Word Structure:** Children are fascinated with words and word parts. As they read they build their reading vocabulary by becoming aware of the structure of some words such as compound words (**upstairs**), contractions (**can't**) and little words inside big words (**story**).

**Have fun with activities and games that use words. The more children read and work with words the better they will read, write and spell. Celebrate their confidence as word builders and take time to enjoy reading books together.**



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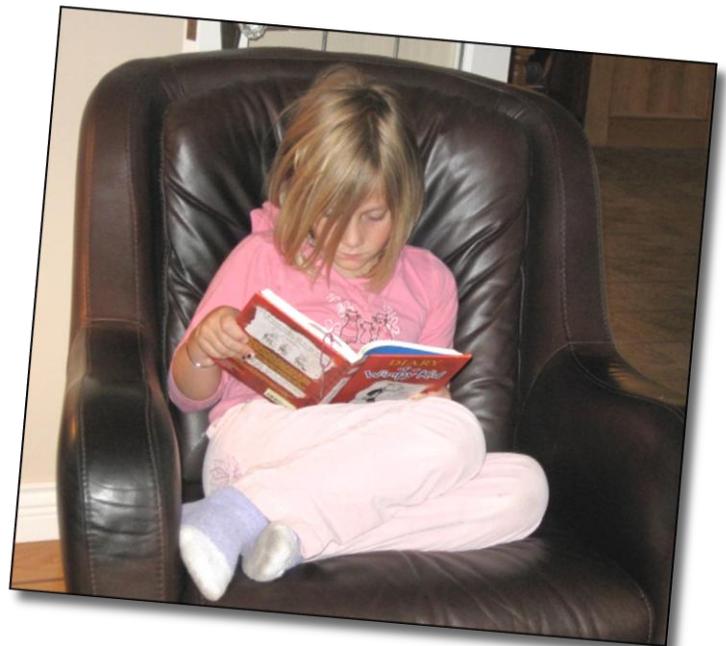
## Understanding and Learning From Reading

Reading comprehension is a developmental process. It begins from the time very young children notice print around them and continues as they learn to read. In fact, reading comprehension is a life-long skill and applies to: story books, information books, nursery rhyme books, magazines, electronic text, graphic literature such as comic books and cartoons, environmental print such as street signs and other print we use in our daily lives. Comprehension and understanding of text is the foundation of enjoying and learning from what we read. You can help your child develop reading comprehension using the suggestions on the following page.

When I read on my own I can:

- make connections and predictions
- ask questions
- use self talk
- visualize or make mental pictures

This helps me to enjoy reading more and it helps me to understand what I am reading.



**Before Reading** discussions and questions motivate and orient children to the story or topic. This stimulates the process of bringing to mind what they already know and have experienced. Suggestions include:

- Discuss organizational features such as: title, cover picture and table of contents. Have your child predict what the story might be about or what they might learn.
- Take a 'picture walk' through the book before reading. This is simply looking at and discussing pictures, diagrams, headings and captions to get an idea of the plot or information.
- Watch for unusual phrases or words and help your child understand them ahead of time.
- Tell your child why you chose a particular book to read to them. It might be because the story book has a theme such as 'sharing' and you want to discuss sharing with your child. Or it might be an information book about something you know your child is currently interested in. This demonstrates to children that we often have a purpose when we choose books.

**During Reading** discussions and questions offer opportunities to explain, expand and focus the reading experience as you go. A common question parents ask is: *How often should I stop during a read-aloud?* Our best advice is to make sure your child knows it is okay to ask you to stop and explain words or something they find confusing. We find that sometimes children want to just listen to the story for enjoyment. At other times, they want to stop and discuss and discuss and discuss! Do what works best for you and your child. At first you can take the lead and make comments or ask questions. You will be surprised at how quickly your child will get the idea and start making their own comments and asking their own questions. Prompts include:

- *This is an unusual word. Do you know what it means?*
- *If I read the sentence again can you guess what this word means?*
- *This part is confusing. What do you think the author means by this?*
- *This is an interesting fact. I didn't know this.*
- *Why don't you close your eyes while I read and tell me what pictures you see in your head?*
- *Does this remind you of something, or someone, a past experience, another book or a movie you have seen?*
- *What do you think will happen next? or How do you think the story will end?*
- *I wonder about . . . or This makes me feel . . .*

**After Reading** discussions are an opportunity to reflect and respond to what was been read. What do you want to take away and remember? Has it changed the way you think? Do you want to learn more? Prompts include:

- *If you had been the author how would you have ended the story?*
- *Would you have solved the problem in the same way?*
- *Has this ever happened to you? What other connections can you make?*
- *What was your favourite part? Why?*
- *What was the most important or most interesting thing you learned?*
- *Can you tell me how this story began, what happened in the middle, and how it ended?*
- *Would you like to learn more about this?*



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## Becoming a Writer

Think about when your child started to talk and how delighted you were when they first tried to say 'Mommy' or 'Daddy'. You accepted all attempts, continued to model how to say words correctly and celebrated each success. It took time for your child to move from babbling to saying first words, then stringing several words together and eventually being able to carry on a conversation. In fact, it took several years.

Learning to write is very much like learning to talk, both are developmental. The process of writing begins when children scribble, draw and pretend write. Next they begin to print letters and use combinations of letters or words to label and print words that are important to them. Eventually they learn to spell many words correctly and write simple sentences or even short paragraphs. This is an incredible and fascinating journey that takes place over a period of approximately three years.

Parents can support this journey by:

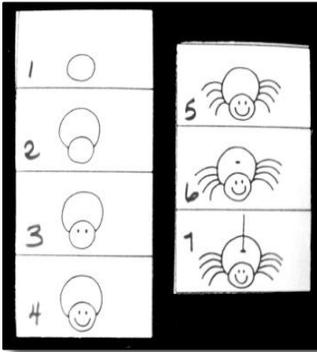
- promoting a positive attitude that your child is a writer and can write
- displaying writings and drawings to celebrate your child as an author and illustrator
- creating a writing space and providing materials (chalk, slates, markers and white boards)
- showing that writing is used in everyday life: calendars, shopping lists, cards, emails
- using prompts such as:

*What is happening in your drawing? Tell me more about it.*

*Let me show you how to write a sentence to go with your drawing.*

*Can I show you how to spell that word?*

The following activities take advantage of children wanting to draw and write what is personally important to them.



**My Turn; Your Turn Drawing:** This is a great activity to help your child draw. Look for simple pictures that can be broken down into steps such as the example shown. Fold a piece of paper in half and draw the first part on one side. Then have your child copy what you have drawn as a first step on the other side. Continue using the language: *It is my turn, now it is your turn.* until the picture is completed. The purpose of this activity is to encourage children to hold crayons and pencils correctly, improve strength and mobility of fingers, help develop hand-eye coordination and experience success in drawing something they are interested in. This activity can be expanded by adding a word or sentence to go with the picture.



**Alphabet Books:** Help your child create their very own alphabet book by using personal photographs, their own drawings and pictures from magazines. Make a collection for each letter of the alphabet and glue them on to letter sized paper. We find it works well to insert each page in a plastic paper protector and collect the pages in a binder. Throughout this activity you can promote oral language by discussing the pictures and how letters and letter sounds match. By adding labels and sentences, you will help your child see that letters make up words and words make up sentences. This is a long term project; enjoy it over a period of time.



**Frame Books:** Frame books are used as a scaffold to help children write a book of their own. Collect pictures such as the one on the left that show things your child can do. We like to use small photo albums that hold one picture per page and then write a sentence to go with the picture. This picture was used in a book called: **I Can.** Each page had a picture and a sentence such as: *I can slide. I can ride my bike. I can help make my bed. I can ski. I can help with the dishes.* Other ideas for frames or sentence starters are: *I like . . . This is my . . . I see a . . . Red is for . . .* Children enjoy reading these books again and again.



**Possible Sentences:** Use a photograph of your child doing something they really liked. Talk about the picture and what was happening. *What are you doing? Where are you? What made it fun?* Together make a list of words to go with the picture. Then make up possible sentences to tell about the picture using some of the words on the list. Next decide on one good sentence to go with the picture that can be written down. At first you can do the printing for your child. It won't be long before your child will be willing to do some of the printing and will want to add more sentences. When you are finished, try reading the word list and the sentence or sentences. Children love to make a book of these pages, put them in a binder and read them over and over.



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## Becoming a Better Writer

Early learners grow as writers when they write often, receive lots of encouragement and have one on one support. This helps them become better writers every time they write. We believe parents can support their children's writing through '**gentle guidance**.' We use the term '**gentle guidance**' to remind ourselves that it is important to set realistic expectations and acknowledge that writing is hard work and improvement is made in small steps. We need to be mindful that children at this age can only stay with a difficult task for a short period of time. It is important that children begin to see themselves as authors who can enjoy and use writing to communicate.

Two of the most powerful '**gentle guidance**' tools you can use to support your child are making reading and writing connections and talking and writing together throughout the writing process.

### Making Reading and Writing Connections

- Children who hear and read well-written stories with correct grammar and interesting sentence and story structures develop a sense of what sounds right. This 'sense' will help them when they tell you or write their own stories.
- You can help your child develop knowledge about story structure by talking about what happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story. Talk about what the problem was and how it was solved, the characters and how they related to each other and the setting which is where and when the story took place.
- Learning to spell is a natural process from invented spelling to conventional spelling. The best way to encourage conventional or correct spelling of words is through reading. Every time children see a word spelled correctly, the visual image of that word is imprinted in their memory. This leads to being able to spell the words correctly or the recognition that words need correcting. Learning to spell is developmental just like walking and talking. Relax! Your child will get there.

- Reading to children allows them to hear and learn sophisticated vocabulary they can use in their conversations and writing.
- Read and enjoy a descriptive passage with your child. Try having them close their eyes and make a picture in their mind. Explain to your child that adding details and interesting words are tools that real authors use to help readers create better mind pictures. You can encourage your child to add colour, size, shape or feeling words so their sentences are more descriptive and make better mind pictures.  
For example: *See my house.* might become: *See my blue house with the pretty flowers in the garden.*

## Talking and Writing Together Throughout the Steps of Writing

**Prewriting:** Thinking about a topic and gathering ideas and information

- talk about the topic, learn about the subject, make a list of ideas, draw a web or diagram of ideas or facts or use a picture as a springboard for discussing what your child might want to write about

**Organizing:** Possibilities include lists, diagrams, charts, poems, drawings with labels, sentences and paragraphs

- simple stories need a beginning, middle and end
- information writing needs a main idea with supporting details

**Drafting:** Getting it down the first time

- talk it through first and use probing questions to get your child thinking before they write
- discuss with your child where descriptive words or details could be added

**Revising and editing:** Greatest learning occurs when we work on a draft to make it better

- use the two stars and a wish approach. That is, tell your child two things you really like about their writing and one thing you wish they would change. The wish could be a spelling correction, a grammar correction, adding a more interesting word or detail or combining two short sentences into a longer sentence using connecting words such as *and*, *but*, *then*, *now* or *so*. Some days your child can handle more than one 'wish' and some days they can't handle even one. Do what works best for you and your child.

**Proofreading:** Checking for spelling, punctuation and grammar

- good writers proofread as they write and then again after making a final copy for sharing

**Publishing or Sharing:** At this age young learners publish in many ways to share their writing. They love to see their work displayed.

- family sharing is an opportunity to have your child's writing honoured and celebrated
- writing can be illustrated and collected in booklets for rereading
- technology offers early learners many exciting opportunities. Explore and take advantage!





Issue Eight

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## Learning About Numbers

**Counting, the vocabulary of numbers, number sense, measuring and seeing patterns** are all important for young children.

**Counting:** Take advantage of every day, real life experiences. Examples are:

- Meal times: *How many carrots do you have left?*
- Calendar countdowns: *How many sleeps until Halloween?*
- Toys: *Let's count your toys as we are putting them away.*
- Walking, skipping and hopping: *How many hops is it from the kitchen to your bedroom?*
- In the car: *How many red cars can you see on the way to the store?*
- Clocks and watches: *How many hours will it be until we go to soccer practice?*
- Money, laundry and doing dishes provide excellent sorting and counting experiences.



Rulers, number puzzles, games, magnetic numbers, dice, cards, computer games and dominoes provide counting experiences.

**The Vocabulary of numbers:** Real life materials and situations help children develop the vocabulary of: one more or less, equal to, add to, take away, subtract from, patterns, how long, heavy, tall, heavier, lighter, the same, yesterday, today, tomorrow, soon, later, next, morning, hours, minutes pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies, toonies, circle, square, triangle, rectangle, over, under, beside, near, far, left, right, bigger, smaller, usually, never, always and sometimes.

**Number Sense:** This means children learn to use, understand and manipulate numbers which provide the foundation for addition, subtraction and later multiplication and division. Even though children may be able to count to 50 or 100 with ease, they often lack what is referred to as number sense or an understanding of what the numbers stand for and how they can be used.

- With a collection of objects such as Lego pieces help your child understand that a number such as 6 can be shown by adding 1 piece with 5, 2 pieces with 4 and so on. Later they can learn that this can be represented by an equation such as:  $2 + 4 = 6$ . Use a variety of objects and eventually use the same process to develop a sense of minus, times and division.
- Dice, dominoes, coins and card or board games are fun ways to develop number sense concepts such as 8 is more than 4 or how much do you have to add to 6 to get to 9.

**Measuring:** A fun way to begin measuring activities is to use invented measuring devices such as ribbons, sticks, plastic containers or boxes. For instance using a ribbon, help your child find things in the house that are either shorter or longer than the piece of ribbon. Later children can use real measuring devices such as rulers, measuring tapes and cups as well as scales. Examples of other playful activities include:

- Measure your children's height asking questions such as *Who is taller? Who is shorter? Who is the tallest in the family?* This can also be done with toys such as stuffed animals, cars, dolls or blocks. These toys can be put in order of shortest to tallest or lightest to heaviest.
- Using the fruit bowl, talk about the biggest apple, the smallest apple and two apples that are similar or the same in size.
- Make dishwashing fun! *Which glass holds more, the least or the same amount of water?*
- Children love to play with containers during bath time. *How many little cups of water does it take to fill up the bucket?*
- Let your child play with canned goods. *Which can is the heaviest? Which is the lightest? Which two cans are similar? Which cans are the same?*
- Using blocks of the same size ask: *How many blocks does it take to cover the area of a placemat, the coffee table or their desk?*

**Patterns:** Shapes, colours, designs and groups of numbers that repeat over and over are called patterns.

- Help your child recognize or identify patterns on wallpaper, in tiles, on fabric and in nature. Talk to your child about what the pattern is so they can begin to describe the particular traits of a specific pattern and make predications and generalizations.
- Make patterns with your child using objects such as dice, blocks or Lego pieces  
*big, big, small* and then repeated  
*yellow, brown, green* and then repeated  
*circle, square, rectangle, triangle* and then repeated.



Issue Nine

# Supporting Early Learners

published by

**Partners in Learning**

## Dear Parents,

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at [learningtoread@telus.net](mailto:learningtoread@telus.net) or visit our website [www.readwritewithkids.com](http://www.readwritewithkids.com) to view other resources.

## Behaviours That Make a Difference for Learning

These suggestions come from parents of young children who have participated in our parent education workshops. They say this is **What Works**:

### To help children take pride in a job

- verbal comments such as: *well done, awesome, great job*
- give them a job that is important to them
- display pictures and written work that is well done

### To help children organize and care for belongings

- make time for cleaning up **with** them and not **for** them
- provide organizing helpers such as containers and hooks
- create a “Friday Box” where things that aren’t put away go in the box until Friday
- catch them in the act of caring for belongings and praise them
- avoid immediately replacing lost or broken items

### To help children complete jobs

- use incentives such as special activities
- have your child’s full attention before asking them to do something
- remove distractions such as TV and electronic games and devices
- make it game-like as in “beat the clock”
- be relaxed about exactly how a task might be done. *You can do it this way or that way – you’re in charge.*

### To help children start a job when asked

- show or demonstrate and then do the task with them just to get started
- jobs have to be done before leisure activities such as screen time or playing
- use prompts such as: *How about if you do your job while I do my mine.*

### To children get along with others

- participate in activities at the local library or community centre
- plan family activities such as crafts, baking, gardening
- let them plan an afternoon of activities with a friend
- teach and practice manners on a regular basis
- provide feedback on past and present experiences to develop empathy and social understandings: *What went right? What went wrong? How can you do things differently next time?*
- provide time for unstructured play

### To help children be a good listener

- use your child's name to get their attention
- make eye contact when you talk to them
- show your child how you are a good listener
- keep instructions short and to the point
- ask your child to tell you what they are going to do – *What is step one?*

### To help children use time wisely

- have fun with timers and stop watches to develop an understanding of time
- use daily and weekly family schedules
- check periodically to see if they are accomplishing a task and encourage them as they go
- use sentences such as *Soccer is in one hour.* so children develop a sense of time

## Age Appropriate Home Activities

Help with meal planning, grocery shopping, making meals and snacks, setting the table, baking, making their bed, cleaning their room, putting toys away, organizing belongings, dressing themselves, choosing what to wear, separating clothes for the wash, folding clothes from the dryer, simple yard work, cleaning out the car, taking out the garbage, recycling and feeding pets.



I am learning to start and complete tasks. I am proud of myself!



Issue Ten

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## The ABC's of Preventing the Summer Slide

**A** is for **alphabet**. Children love to create a personal alphabet book using photographs and magazine pictures. Words or short sentences to go with the pictures can be added.

**B** is for **bedtime**. Establish bedtime routines to help the day end on a pleasant note. Consider letting your child keep their light on for an extra 10 minutes provided they are looking at books.

**C** is for **connections**. Encourage your child to make connections between what they are reading and their own lives by asking questions such as: *What does this remind you of?*

**D** is for **decoding** or figuring out words. Children recognize words from memory, sounding out or phonics, and using clues from pictures, diagrams and other words on the page.

**E** is for **eating** healthy foods. Talk to your child about healthy food. Children learn about nutrition when they are involved in the planning and preparing of meals and snacks.

**F** is for **feelings**. Children can learn about being sad, tired, excited, angry, content, happy, surprised, irritated and afraid through the characters in books who experience these same feelings.

**G** is for **games** and puzzles. What better way to promote the oral language skills of listening and speaking and the learning skills of perseverance and dealing with a task that is a bit difficult. Children also learn the social skills of taking turns and being able to cope with not always winning.

**H** is for **helping**. Use the *I Do, We Do, You Do* learning formula. Show children how to do something, do it with them and then provide lots of practice opportunities for them to do it on their own.

**I** is for **interactive reading**. Conversations before, during and after reading help young children interact and make sense of what they are reading or hearing. This works for screen time as well.

**J** is for **juggling** time. Include children in decisions about daily routines so they learn how to prioritize time and create a balance between work and play.

**K** is for **knowledge**. Help children connect new knowledge to what they already know or have experienced.

**L** is for **labelling**. When children are drawing they can be encouraged to tell you words to add as labels for their pictures. Parents or children can do the printing.

**M** is for **measuring**. Have fun with measuring tapes, calendars, clocks, timers, scales, thermometers, odometers, pedometers and coins so children learn through real life experiences how to measure. Cooking and baking provide wonderful opportunities to learn about measuring!

**N** is for **numeracy**. Real life materials and situations help children understand numeracy words: more, less, some, longer, heavier, lighter, taller, shorter, same, equal, add, subtract, take away.

**O** is for **oral language**. We learn and share information through speaking and listening throughout our lives. Helping children become respectful speakers and listeners are important life-long skills.

**P** is for **practice**. To become confident and competent with any skill requires lots of practice.

**Q** is for a **questioning** mind. Prompts such as: *I wonder why? How does that work? and Can you tell me?* encourage children to develop a sense of curiosity about the world around them.

**R** is for **reading**. Children need to be read to, supported to read books they are struggling with and lots of opportunities to read on their own.

**S** is for **spelling**. Nothing improves spelling more than reading because each time children see words spelled correctly it reinforces correct spelling.

**T** is for **talking**. Speaking skills can be encouraged by using prompts such as: *Tell me more about that. Can you explain that? What else can you tell me about that?*

**U** is for **unique**. Each child's learning journey is unique. Children learn at different rates and in different ways.

**V** is for **visiting**. Explore what is available in your community for optional learning experiences.

**W** is for **writing**. Postcards, emails, journals, travel notes, shopping lists, party planning, family messages, thank you notes, schedules of chores, photo albums with labels or anecdotes are fun ways to demonstrate that writing has a purpose and is enjoyable.

**X** is for **eXercise**. Exercise is vital for good brain and body functioning.

**Y** is for **you and helping out**. Contributing to the chores of family life helps children develop self-worth, self confidence and self-esteem.

**Z** is for **z-z-z-z**. Children require different amounts of sleep. Make sure your child gets enough. No one functions well when tired!