

What the Experts Say

Reading

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CONCERN

Approximately 90-million Americans have low or inadequate reading skills. Almost two-thirds of American children read below grade level.¹ Children from economically disadvantaged families are much more likely to be poor readers. Failure to read at grade level can lead to frustration and low self-esteem. Poor reading ability is linked to school drop-out, teen pregnancy, lower paying jobs, and repeating the cycle of financial hardship in the next generation.¹

Poverty, lack of adults reading aloud in the home, lack of print materials, and fewer words being spoken in the home negatively impact children's ability to learn to read. Sadly, since the 1980s there has been little improvement in the number of children entering kindergarten with the language skills necessary to learn to read. Approximately one-third of children in the US enter kindergarten without the basic language skills needed to learn reading.² As a result, children struggle to learn these pre-reading skills in kindergarten through 1st grade and are often still behind by 4th grade. One of the most important ways children learn to read is by having stories read to them. However, a significant percent of preschool children have never had a story read to them at home – 15% of Hispanic, 7% of black, and 4% of white.² Although experts recommend reading to children daily, less than half of children under five years old are read to daily by their parents. Factors that reduce the odds of parents reading to their children include: poverty or low-income, minority status, and English as a second language.^{2,3}

Despite poorer statistics for low-income and minority families, 44% of white, non-poor parents also do not read to their children daily. These numbers indicate the need for universal strategies to promote parents reading to their children.³ Children who lack rich language environments at home are slower to learn to read. Language development is a predictor of reading achievement. By four years of age, children from low income families have heard 20 million less words than their higher income peers, placing them at higher risk for not reading on grade level (reading failure). This is evidenced in that the typical middle class child enters kindergarten able to identify 22 letters compared to the typical low income child who can identify only 9 letters.⁴ With education and encouragement, parents of children who are at high risk for reading failure can be given easily implemented strategies to support their child's reading.

Parents often ask teachers how they can help their preschool child prepare to be successful in school. Parents of any socio-economic, cultural, or ethnic/racial background can improve outcomes for their children when given information, and resources about literacy development, and in particular, encouragement to read to their child. Increasing the number of parents who read daily to their children can positively affect our nation's statistics on school readiness and school success.²

RESEARCH

Reading ability continues to develop throughout a lifetime, but the most important years for literacy development are the first eight years. Parents lay the foundation for children to learn literacy skills long before children begin to formally read and write. All aspects of parenting contribute to a child's success in school including consistent routines, parental warmth and responsiveness, and teaching social-emotional as well as literacy skills.⁵ Reading to children is an activity that touches on all of those areas. When parents read aloud to children they are promoting language and literacy development, strengthening the parent-child bond, and enhancing parent-child interaction.³ Ideally, parents should begin reading to their infants and continue to read even after the child has learned to read independently.

Research provides substantial evidence that early experiences affect brain development and cognitive and social-emotional outcomes. Many factors in children's early lives can be changed to positively impact the trajectory or path of their learning and school success if parents are provided the knowledge and skills they need. Readiness to learn in school broadly includes physical, cognitive and social-emotional well being as well as specific experience with activities that promote language development such reading, talking, and listening.⁶ Parents also help children prepare for school success when they provide emotional security^{5,7} and learning activities such as reading books to children. Children who feel safe and loved can focus on learning academic skills.

Differences in the development of literacy skills in children from varied socio-economic backgrounds are not simply the result of the parents' occupation or income. The key factor is the presence of or lack of literacy activities in the home, such as shared reading. Early parent involvement in literacy activities predicts later reading success above and beyond other factors such as intelligence, economics, or remedial reading later in elementary school.^{8,9} Studies of twins have found that while genetic factors account for some of a child's ability to read, a family environment that promotes reading and includes shared reading has a substantial influence on early literacy skills and later reading performance.^{10,11}

In addition to daily reading activities, other factors in the home appear to be associated with reading achievement. They include:^{8,12}

- The language spoken in the home is the language used in tests that assess the children's reading.

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- A large number and variety of reading materials are available in the home (i.e. books, magazines, and newspapers).
 - Children receive books as gifts.
 - Adults in the home model reading as functional, pleasurable, and enjoyable.

Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy is the term used to describe young children's developing literacy skills prior to formal schooling. These emerging skills are precursors to actual reading and writing. Emergent literacy is a process. It develops over time and is fueled by the child's natural curiosity and need to communicate and understand the world. Children learn two types of emergent literacy skills on their way to becoming a reader – *language comprehension skills* and *word recognition skills*.^{9, 13-15}

Language comprehension skills

- Oral language skills
- Receptive language
- Story comprehension

Word recognition skills

- Print concepts
- Letter recognition
- Writing – scribbling; letter-like marks; invented spelling

When parents read to their child they engage in many activities that promote emergent literacy skills. Language comprehension skills are enhanced during parent-child shared book reading. Reading aloud is the best activity to meld enjoyment, vocabulary gains, and increased book and print knowledge.

Word recognition skills include phonological awareness (awareness of sounds) and letter/word awareness. Parents increase phonological awareness when they recite nursery rhymes, read poems, sing songs, and play finger games. The earlier parents begin reading to their children, the more quickly the children develop phonemic awareness (understanding letter sounds). Parents teach letter awareness by pointing out letters and words in books and in the environment, helping the child write his name, reading alphabet books, and playing together with alphabet blocks and puzzles. Parents increase children's word recognition skills when they encourage children's writing either by commenting on the child's pretend writing or by modeling writing (i.e. child's name, grocery list, letter to teacher). When the same book is read over and over, children often begin noticing the words. This is especially true when parents point out letters, words, and multiple occurrences of the same word.⁹

Strategies to Promote Emergent Literacy

Researchers widely agree the one most important activity for building literacy skills is reading aloud to children.^{2,5, 12,16,6,17,12,4} Children who are read to from an early age learn to enjoy books and reading, have larger vocabularies, and more easily acquire reading skills when they reach school age than peers who are not read to.^{2,3} Reading aloud to children has been shown to increase both expressive language (speaking) and receptive

(understanding) language in toddlers and to improve reading scores and verbal performance in elementary students.¹ Adults can use a variety of strategies to promote early literacy:

- **Adult modeling** – Adult reading material around the house or classroom enhances children’s literacy skills. When children see their parents, teachers, and other important adults in their life reading for enjoyment or information, they are more likely to become readers themselves. Children get the message that reading has pleasure and rewards.¹² Children learn to value reading when they see adults reading books, magazines, recipes, writing grocery lists, checking sales and prices in the newspaper, and reading instructions for putting things together. Getting the child involved in these day-to-day reading and writing tasks is powerful. Creating a time when the TV is off and everyone (both parents and children) is quietly looking at, reading, or writing, a material of their choice demonstrates to children that parents value reading.

Shared reading – Shared reading is the term used for an interactive adult-child activity that promotes both literacy and social-emotional development.^{3, 18} Shared reading is more than simply reading through a book from cover to cover. It includes both reading aloud and conversation about the words, pictures, and story. The conversation may include questions and comments from either party including predictions about what might happen next, thoughts and feelings the book invokes, and how the characters or story relates to the child or adult. Talking about the book and the pictures in addition to simply reading the book enhances children’s language development.¹⁷ Shared book reading during toddlerhood increases knowledge of print concepts and book knowledge by age four, oral language at age five, and reading comprehension at age seven.¹⁶ Shared book reading requires cooperation and conversation between reader and child. Adults not familiar with shared reading techniques may incorrectly believe that each reading session with a child must consist of reading the book word for word and cover to cover. Since that is what mature readers do, elements of shared reading may seem counterintuitive to adults. Shared reading encourages children to be active rather than passive participants in story time. Some elements of shared book reading include:

- **Reading the same book over and over** – When children hear a story again and again they are better able to understand relationships of characters and sequence of events. They eventually memorize the book and can pretend to read it.
- **Stopping in the middle of a book to look back or talk** – When the child turns back to an earlier page to make a comment or ask a question, it creates an opportunity to expand the conversation.
- **Encouraging the child’s comments and questions** – Both parties can share their personal reaction to a story.
- **Asking questions specific to the story or pictures** – Adults can ask questions to encourage engagement such as, “Where’s the bunny?”

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- **Asking open-ended questions** – Adults such as “What do you think about that?” or “What do you think happens next?”
 - **Encouraging the child to make predictions and relate their own experiences and feelings to the story.**¹⁹
 - **Describing and labeling pictures** – Some research has suggested this technique is associated with the greatest increases in vocabulary and print awareness for younger children or children with smaller vocabularies.¹⁵

Shared book reading is highly correlated to receptive vocabulary. It exposes children to more complex and varied language than they hear in play, routine care giving, or television.¹⁰ Words heard on television or movies do not have the same impact as words heard during book reading.⁴ There is some evidence that children who show high interest in books and reading watch less than 2 hours of television daily and have parents who enforce TV viewing rules.¹⁵

Although talking together is also an important means of increasing children’s vocabulary, sharing a book is a very different type of adult-child language interaction because the story and the book are *decontextualized*. That is, they are removed from immediate time and place.¹³ This removal from the concrete here and now requires the child to practice higher level brain functions of imagination and abstract thinking. During shared book reading children are exposed to narratives, vocabulary, sentence structure (syntax), story structure, and basic print concepts not normally used in day-to-day conversation. More frequent shared reading is related to increased receptive vocabulary, verbal maturity, and knowledge of print concepts.¹³ Books expose children to advanced language forms and new words and words they do not hear in daily conversation. Having heard a ‘big’ word in the past makes it easier for the child to decode it when he comes across it during later formal reading instruction. As children gain knowledge, skills, and experience through shared reading with a caring adult, they move from just looking at the pictures to being interested in and looking at the print. Shared reading provides opportunities for the adult to monitor how well the child is learning concepts and vocabulary through questions and interactive dialogue.⁸

- **Dialogic reading** – Adults promote children’s active involvement in reading when they use dialogic reading. Dialogic reading is a dialogue or conversation between an adult and child during shared book reading. It is a type of reading in which the child becomes the storyteller and the adult is an active listener who asks questions, adds information, and prompts increasingly sophisticated descriptions from the child. As the child becomes more skillful in storytelling, the adult moves from simple labeling to open-ended questions described above.²⁰ Adults who encourage children to take an active rather than passive role during shared

reading improve both language and emergent literacy skills. As the adult expands on the child's dialogue, the child uses more mature words and sentences. The child improves in use of vocabulary, syntax (the order of words in a sentence or phrase/the rules or patterns of language), semantics (word meaning or differences between word meanings), pragmatics (conventions of reading text/understanding how language is used in books), and in the social skills of language such as turn taking in a conversation.⁸

Teachers and parents can be trained in dialogic reading. In both middle class and low-income families, children make the greatest gains when both parent and teacher are trained in this method and it is occurring in both home and school.²⁰⁻²² This was best demonstrated in a study of low-income 3-year old children, their day care teachers, and parents. They were divided into 3 groups. Group 1 teachers engaged daily in small group dialogic reading sessions. Group 2 children had dialogic reading sessions with both their teachers and parents. Group 3 children (control group) had small group play sessions while the others were involved in the dialogic reading sessions. Not surprisingly, after six weeks of the intervention, the most gains in emergent literacy skills were made by the Group 2 children – those whose parents and teachers both used dialogic reading with them. Following are the techniques taught to parents and teachers to engage children in dialogic reading.²⁰

- Label nouns
- Label attributes and functions
- Take turns
- Ask who, what, and when questions (avoid yes-no or where questions)
- Follow answers by the child with questions
- Follow the child's interests
- Encourage multi-word expressions
- Describe story and picture structure
- Ask open-ended questions
- Expand what the child says
- Repeat what the child says
- Help the child with answers as needed
- Praise and encourage
- Have fun

Dialogic reading has also been shown to increase emergent literacy skills in children even when the sessions were done with unfamiliar researchers. When researchers used this approach in one-on-one sessions with low-income children, the children in the intervention group made significantly higher gains in both standardized language assessments and in children's spontaneous language when looking at books compared to children who did not receive the intervention.²³ When adults practice dialogic reading techniques that elicit active responses from children, they can significantly enhance language development.

One goal for parents is to become more sensitive to their child's developing abilities. For example, they know to wait until their child can label a picture and have sufficient vocabulary before asking higher level questions that require descriptive statements from the child. Middle class parents tend to engage in dialogic reading type activities more often and their children are more likely to

engage in talking during book reading than low-income families.²¹ Training low-income parents in dialogic reading techniques might be a factor in closing this gap.

- **Supportive adult behaviors** – Various adult behaviors for reading to children have been identified and studied in recent decades to determine how children are best able to gain emergent literacy skills. Following is a description of adult behaviors that support children’s emergent literacy.^{16, 21}

Adult behavior	Description	Example
Label	Naming an object or action in the picture	“There’s the duck.”
Comment	General talk about the picture or story	“She is going in the house”
Expansion	Elaborates on what child said	Child: “Doggie” Parent: “That’s a red dog.”
Pointing request	Expected response is pointing to something.	“Show me the monkey.”
Yes/no question	Has one answer; requires yes/no or head nod.	“Do you see her milk?”
Simple what/who questions	Can be answered with noun/label.	“Who is that?”
Directive	Giving directions to the child	“Turn the page.”
Imitative directive	Labeling followed with a request for child to imitate	“That’s a giraffe. Say, giraffe.”
Attention-getting	Using specific words to gain the child’s attention	Saying the child’s name “Look at this.”
Feedback	Praising or correcting child’s response	“You’re right. He is the Daddy.” “No, that’s not a kitty. It’s a cow.”
Animating	Using voice inflections to pretend with the story; making the pictures talk	“Someone’s been eating my porridge” in a squeaky baby bear voice.
Imitating	Repeating what the child said	“Yes, a ball.”
Relating	Connecting a picture or story line with the child’s experience.	“Remember when you went swimming?”
Function or attribute question	Expected answer is an attribute or action.	“What is she doing?”
Open-ended question	Non-specific request for description, information, or about the child’s feelings.	“Tell me more.” “How would you feel if that happened to you?”
Reading the book	Response not required. Child listens while adult reads.	

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- **Reading styles** – Researchers describe three styles of parent reading:¹³
 - *Describer* – Similar to the lower levels (eg. Labeling nouns or attributes) of the dialogic reading techniques, the adult describes and labels pictures, words, or letters.
 - *Comprehender* – Similar to the higher level dialogic reading techniques, the adult focuses on the story meaning and encourages the child to make inferences and predications as they read.
 - *Performance oriented* – The story is read uninterrupted with discussion before and after.

The research evidence indicates different styles of adult reading may be more or less appropriate for children with different abilities. In one study, parents were trained to use one of the three styles while they read with their preschool child for 6 weeks. Children who initially had lower vocabulary skills made more gains in both vocabulary and print skills when the describer style was used. Children who started with higher level vocabulary skills made more gains when the performance oriented style was used. The describer style appeared to provide the most overall gains in both vocabulary and print skills for children.¹³

Researchers have found that mothers and fathers use similar styles in reading to their children. Both mothers and fathers varied their style based on child's age but not on gender. Both used more labeling, animation, directing, and attention getting with toddlers and more questioning, feedback, and imitating with preschool-age children. For the older group, questioning, feedback, and imitating adult behaviors were associated with higher language scores in the children while simple labeling was not. Parents were not likely to use the technique of relating the story to the child's own experience, missing out on an important method to increase children's language comprehension.¹⁶ This suggests children would benefit when teachers explain specific shared reading techniques with parents. Parents could be encouraged not only to read to their children frequently, but also to use an appropriate reading style depending on their child's developmental level.

- **Adapting to children's developmental level** – It is important that adults know children's level of emergent literacy skills and adjust how they read to the child accordingly. This is based on Vygotsky's concept of *zone of proximal development* which is the gap between what a child can do with assistance and what they can do independently. Knowing where a child is in his reading ability, then supporting him to take steps toward the next level using one of the methods described above will be most effective for a child. Reading to children may be most effective when adults understand the child's level of development and uses a reading technique that supports and challenges the child at their level or zone of proximal development.¹³

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- **Environmental print** – Environmental print is the term to describe print found in children’s immediate environment. It includes logos and signs, food packages, labels, billboards, street signs, and product marketing materials. Children often begin to “read” environmental print of their favorite cereal or fast food restaurant long before they recognize letters or are able to read. Environmental print teaches children pre-reading skills, the joy and function of reading, and about the world around them.^{24, 25} Parents and teachers can encourage development of literacy skills using environmental print. When parents notice their child’s interest in environmental print and point out labels, signs, or logos, they are teaching essential elements of reading.²⁵ Noticing and learning from environmental print can easily be incorporated into daily routines:²⁴
 - Pointing out and talking about logos, signs, and labels seen during the course of each day.
 - Playing guessing games while walking or in the car (e.g. parent says, “I see a sign that’s red and white and starts with an S. What is it?”).
 - Counting the types or colors of cars and trucks seen.
 - Cutting out coupons of favorite foods together and allowing the children to help find them in the grocery store.
 - **Indirect instruction** – Indirect instruction, child-directed center time, promotes emergent literacy skills. In kindergarten classes, researchers found that children moved from simply recognizing a logo to being able to read the word in a sentence when teachers provided indirect instruction. That is, they provided literacy props in a learning center (i.e. coupons for food, pretend food, money, and cash register, and writing materials, etc. in the housekeeping center), but not direct instruction on how to use the materials. The teachers asked the children to bring the coupons from home and talked about some ways people use them, but did not provide activities or instruction directly related to the coupons. In the center, the children used their imagination and the props to create grocery shopping and other play scenarios. Children who used the environmental print in center activities made gains through natural and enjoyable learning – because they actively constructed their own knowledge in an engaging activity.²⁵ Results of the use of indirect instruction was compared with classrooms in which teachers provided direct instruction on environmental print or teachers neither used direct instruction nor provided environmental print materials in centers. Children in the comparison classrooms did not achieve the gains made by the children in the indirect instruction group. In fact, children receiving direct instruction on environmental print from their teachers made no more gains than the children receiving no instruction or materials at all!²⁵ This study emphasizes how important it is for teachers themselves to understand and then share with parents

that young children learn more when they have materials to construct knowledge and time to explore them.

- **Home-school literacy connection** – Clearly, the interaction between home and school is an important component for preschool children to acquire literacy skills. Young children’s literacy develops in the context of their experiences. With home and childcare being the largest part of most children’s time each day, both must be supportive of habits, activities, and beliefs that promote emergent literacy.²⁶ Schools and teachers positively impact child outcomes when they encourage parents to read to their children. Teachers recognize the importance of their students being read to at home and are in a position to make a difference in both quality and quantity of home reading by providing information, support, and regular communication about literacy to parents. Literacy skills can be improved when schools participate in a home involvement program. One such program for kindergarten and first grade students and their families is called Fast Start. The Fast Start program improved reading skills for students, with parents and children reporting greater frequency and enjoyment of the home reading time. Teacher interaction with parents was the critical element in the success of the program. Teacher activities included:²⁷

- Inviting parents to observe shared reading in the classroom.
- Sending home newsletters about literacy.
- Making frequent personal contact with parents.
- Providing reading logs, books, songs, and poems to families.
- Providing specific instructions regarding reading at home and encouraged parents to read with, talk to, and listen to children.
- Emphasizing a simple and informal home reading time of 10 -15 minutes in the family daily schedule.

In a similar study, teachers reached out to hard-to-reach parents to promote family literacy by inviting them to become more involved and by listening to parent suggestions.²⁸ Here again, teacher involvement was a key factor in promoting family literacy with hard to reach or low-income parents. Teacher-school activities included demonstration of shared reading, a lending library, a reading tip sheet, inviting parents into the classroom to observe, and home visits. Because teachers often come from different neighborhoods and cultural backgrounds than their students, the personal contact during home visits resulted in improved understanding of families. Teachers gained awareness of the child’s home environment and used that information to tailor the home literacy information and instructions based on each family’s strengths and needs. Teachers were more sensitive with families and avoided making negative assumptions about hard to reach or low-income families.²⁸ Teachers understood such families also have high expectations for their children. Teacher persistence and creativity were also important to increase family literacy for this group.

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- **Library use** – Recent research indicates that not only families, but communities and in particular, libraries, contribute to children’s success in school. Families are more likely to promote literacy in the home if they understand emergent literacy and are given guidance on reading to their children. Libraries play an important role by providing a variety of reading programs, hosting educational events, and making books available to families.²⁹ The National Center for Educational Statistics, looking at the link between libraries and children’s 4th grade reading skills, found a strong, positive correlation between the children’s reading scores and libraries’ circulation and between attendance at library reading programs and 4th grade reading skills.³⁰ In looking at children’s library book circulation state by state, those states with higher circulation (more books borrowed) were also the states with higher reading scores for 4th grade children. And conversely, four out of five states with lowest reading scores for 4th graders also ranked in the bottom half on children’s library book circulation.³⁰ This evidence suggests that local libraries can be an important resource for families.
 - **Reach Out and Read** – The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has increased its focus on early literacy in recent years. *Reach Out and Read (ROR)* is a non-profit children’s literacy organization founded by pediatricians and early childhood educators to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric well child care visits. Doctors and nurses are trained to provide parents with advice on reading aloud and to give age and culturally appropriate books to each infant and preschoolers at routine checkups.^{2,4} Studies have shown *ROR* to be evidenced-based and cost effective. Parents who received *ROR* were significantly more likely to read to their children daily and to have books at home. Children who were part of the program increased their vocabulary.² This held true even with low-income families with low levels of parental education.¹ *ROR* is effective because parents tend to trust pediatricians.^{2,4} Key components of the program are:
 - The program is offered from infancy through 5 years.
 - Physicians explicitly link parent reading aloud to child’s school success – a goal all parents have for their child.
 - The message to parents that reading aloud is important is repeated at each doctor visit.
 - Parents get positive feedback from their child as the child enjoys and requests being read to, especially if, by 1 year of age, the child has been read to regularly and there are books around the home.
 - The nationwide program purchases books in bulk at a discount to give to pediatricians.
 - Reading is promoted for both English and non-English speaking families by providing books in multiple languages.

ROR has been effective with Hispanic immigrants, a population whose literacy rates are lower than other ethnic groups.^{2,3} For example, children of Hispanic

immigrants are twice as likely to fail 4th grade reading assessments than White children.³¹ *ROR* was implemented with Hispanic immigrants in which the majority of children (67%) spoke predominately Spanish in the home, most of the parents (84%) preferred that their children read both English and Spanish, and only 20% of parents reported reading something for themselves (book, magazine, newspaper) at least 3 days per week (indicating a low parental literacy). For this group, Mexican immigrants had lower adult literacy rate, were less likely to speak both English and Spanish in the home, and less likely to share books with their children than immigrants from other Latin American countries.³¹ At well child checkups, the pediatrician wrote a prescription for parents to read to their child 10 minutes per day and a pediatric resident described “dialogic reading” to them and gave the child an age and culturally appropriate book. Results found that *ROR* was successful in increasing parent-child shared reading in Hispanic immigrant families, particularly Mexican immigrant families who were the most vulnerable.

Reading and Special Populations

Activities, experiences, and opportunities that promote emergent literacy skills are important for all children.³² Whether challenges exist due to language, culture, or special needs, providers can work with parents to promote reading strategies and activities individualized to family and child needs. When parents read to their children, the interactions should be pleasurable and at the child’s developmental level. When the parent is sensitive to child’s developmental level and adjusts reading accordingly, the child is more likely to have fun and less likely to be bored or frustrated.⁹

- **English as a second language** – Parents are more likely to use their native language when reading to children.² Children who are learning English as a second language more easily learn English reading and writing if they are already familiar with the joy of reading, vocabulary, and literacy concepts in their primary language. Mastery of home language is a predictor of literacy for bilingual children.^{8, 12}
- **Children with special health care needs** – Children with special health care needs (CSHCN) are often delayed in gaining emergent literacy skills, especially in low-income families. Parents of CSHCN are less likely to engage in frequent shared book reading because medical activities consume much family time, parents may think the child does not enjoy having a story read to them, and parents are unsure how to share a book with their child with special health care needs. The last reason most often predicts less parent-child reading. Practitioners can help parents by providing information on shared book reading techniques and even teaching parents to incorporate shared book reading into routine medical activities. Pediatricians and other providers working with parents can discuss reading and promote literacy activities specific to the child’s needs in more complicated medical cases.¹⁸

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- **Children with developmental delays** – Children with language delays are less likely to listen to stories being read, engage in commenting and questioning about the book, and have adults point out words or letters to them.⁸ However, children with language delays need experience in practicing the same emergent literacy skills, but often need more support from both teachers and parents.³² Incorporating shared reading can also benefit parents by helping them address sleep problems often experienced by children with developmental delays and other special needs. Providers can help reduce parental stress and simultaneously increase parent-child literacy time by letting parents know that bedtime routines that include a bedtime story reduce in-bed crying and the length of time it takes to fall asleep as well as increase cooperation at bedtime.³³

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Get to know families and build on their strengths to promote their children’s literacy development.
2. Provide information on parent’s role in developing children’s emergent literacy skills.
3. Provide specific instructions on shared/dialogic reading, using environmental print, children’s development of vocabulary and print awareness. Individualize the information.
4. Invite parents to observe “Shared Reading”. Explain the techniques used such as talking about the pictures, re-reading, predicting, and pointing out letters and words.
5. Provide information on and encourage use of their local library.
6. Encourage parents to read in child’s home language. Help parents find picture books in their native language.
7. Provide a variety of reading materials through a lending library or share books and materials they can keep.
8. Provide copies of books, songs, or poems that are specifically selected for child’s individual interests.
9. Explain importance of following child’s lead, being aware of child’s level of development, and keeping it fun when reading at home.

RESOURCES

Reach Out and Read (ROR) National Center <http://www.reachoutandread.org>

Provide parents with information on your local library and school library.

02-D3 – Choosing Books

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Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING – PARENTS LAY THE FOUNDATION

02-D2a

Parent Messages (see *Experts page 2*)

- Parents set the stage for their child to become a good reader in the infant-preschool years.
- Family activities that enhance emergent literacy include reading children’s books together, adult modeling of reading and writing, and consistent nurturing routines.
- Including reading time in the daily family schedule promotes literacy.

Parent Skills:

1. Includes family reading time in the family daily schedule.
2. Models reading and writing.
3. Makes reading together a time of warmth and positive attention for child.

READING – PARENTS LAY THE FOUNDATION

02-D2a

Dear Parents,

Becoming a good reader starts long before I learn to read and write in school. Family routines, feeling loved, and learning social skills like taking turns, will get me ready to read. When we read together regularly, all of those things happen at once and I learn pre-reading skills. I learn new words. I learn that printed words have meaning. I learn that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end.

I learn that reading is important when I see you read a street sign, grocery list, recipe, or newspaper. This makes me want to read too! I see that reading is fun when we share a good book. Let’s have time each day when the TV is off and the whole family is looking at books, magazines, or newspapers.

Thanks,

Your child

Warm and positive attention at story time creates a positive parent-child bond and leads to a love of reading that lasts a lifetime.

LEYENDO – LOS PADRES PONEN LAS BASES

Queridos Padres,

Volverse un buen lector comienza mucho antes de que yo aprenda a leer y escribir en la escuela. Rutinas familiares, sentimientos de amor, y aprender habilidades sociales como el tomar turnos, me ayudaran a estar listo para la lectura. Cuando nosotros leemos juntos regularmente, todas estas cosas pasan al mismo tiempo y yo aprendo habilidades previas de lectura. Yo aprendo nuevas palabras. Yo aprendo que significado tienen las palabras impresas. Yo aprendo que las historias tienen un principio, un intermedio y el final.

Yo aprendo que leer es importante cuando yo los veo a ustedes leer una señal de tránsito, una lista de mercado, recetas, o el periódico. Esto me hace querer leer también! Yo veo que leer es divertido cuando compartimos un buen libro. Permitamos tener tiempo cada día cuando la televisión esta apagada y la familia completa esta mirando libros, revistas o periódicos.

Gracias,

Su Hijo

Calida y positive atención al tiempo de historias, crea un apego positivo entre padres e hijos y conduce a un amor por la lectura que perdurara por largo tiempo.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING – PRE-READING SKILLS

02-D2b

Parent Messages (see *Experts page 3*)

- Pre-reading or emergent literacy skills begin developing as early as infancy as parents read, talk, and sing to their child.
- Parents help children develop language comprehension skills when they read story/picture books together.
- Parents help children develop letter sound and word recognition skills when they sing songs, tell nursery rhymes, read alphabet books, participate with blocks and puzzles, and involve children in writing.

Parent Skills:

1. Reads and involves child in emergent literacy activities daily beginning in infancy.
2. Sings songs, does nursery rhymes and poems with child.
3. Involves child in writing for a purpose such as grocery list, child's name, letter to relative.
4. Points out pictures, letters, and words in books, other printed material, blocks, puzzles, etc.

READING – PRE-READING SKILLS

02-D2b

Parents,

Children learn pre-reading skills (**emergent literacy skills**) long before they can read and write. These are skills that come before reading - much like crawling comes before walking. Parents are the most important factor in a child learning these skills. Parents can help their children learn these skills starting from the time they are babies:

- **Language skills:** When parents and children read books together, children learn new words and how sentences and books go together. Children also learn to understand and remember stories.
- **Word skills:** After you read a book several times, your child will begin noticing the words and not just the pictures, especially if you point to the letters and words. Try ABC books, blocks, and puzzles. Children also learn the sound and look of letters and words when parents sing, tell nursery rhymes, talk, and write (child's name, a grocery list).

Children who learn these skills in the early years at home will do better in school.

LEYENDO- HABILIDADES DE LECTURA PREVIAS

Padres,

Los niños aprenden habilidades de lectura previas (**habilidades literarias primarias**) mucho antes de que puedan aprender a leer y escribir. Estas son habilidades que vienen antes de leer como gatear viene antes de caminar. Los padres son el factor más importante en un niño que esta aprendiendo estas habilidades. Los padres pueden ayudar a sus niños aprender estas habilidades comenzando desde el tiempo cuando están bebés:

- **Habilidades de lenguaje:** Cuando los padres y los niños leen libros juntos, los niños aprenden nuevas palabras y como frase y libros van juntas. Los niños también aprenden a entender y recordar historias.
- **Habilidades de palabra:** Después de que usted lee un libro varias veces, su hijo podría empezar a notar las palabras y no solo las imágenes, especialmente si usted le señala las letras y las palabras. Intente con libros de ABC, bloques y rompecabezas. Los niños también aprenden el sonido y a mirar las letras y las palabras cuando los padres cantan, dicen poemas de cuna, hablan y escriben (el nombre del niño, la lista del mercado).

Los niños que aprenden estas habilidades en los años tempranos en casa, lo harán mejor en la escuela.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING – LITERACY IN THE HOME

02-D2c

Parent Messages (see *Experts pages 3,10*)

- Factors in the home can help a child become a good reader and lead to school success.
- Parents help by having a variety of reading material in the home, giving children books as gifts, and modeling reading.
- Adjusting to child's developmental level makes reading time more pleasurable for both child and parent and leads to greater gains in pre-reading skills for the child.

Parent Skills:

1. Reads same book over and over if child requests.
2. Allows child to choose book and makes reading time pleasurable and relaxed rather than forced.
3. Gives child books as gifts (or asks family members to).
4. Ensures a variety of books and other reading materials are part of child's life/home.
5. Accesses community and school resources to gain books and reading material.

READING – LITERACY IN THE HOME

02-D2c

Parents,

There are several things you can do at home to help your child become a good reader:

- Read together as part of the daily routine. (*Key factor in later reading success.)
- Let your child see you reading. Have a variety of reading materials for the whole family such as books, magazines, and newspapers in the home.
- Make sure children sometimes receive books as gifts.
- Take books with you on trips or to appointments.
- Adjust to your child's level. Your child will be less likely to be bored or frustrated if you fit your questions and comments to what your child can understand.
- Make reading time calm and fun. Let your child choose which book to read. Early on it's okay to just talk about the pictures or read just part of the book.
- Read the same book over and over. It helps your child notice the letters and words (and not just the pictures).

LEYENDO – LITERATURA EN LA CASA

Padres,

Hay muchas cosas que usted puede hacer en casa para ayudarle a su hijo a que se convierta en un buen lector:

- Lean juntos como parte de la rutina diaria. (*Factor clave de éxito para leer después)
- Permita a su niño observarlo leyendo. Tenga una variedad de materiales de lectura para toda la familia tales como libros, revistas y periódicos en la casa
- Asegúrense de que el niño reciba libros como regalos.
- Lleve libros con usted para los viajes y las citas.
- Ajústese al nivel de su niño. Su niño va a estar menos dispuesto a aburrirse o frustrarse si usted se ajusta y a lo que su niño pueda entender.
- Haga la hora de lectura calmada y divertida. Permita a su niño elegir que libro va a leer. Hacer esto temprano esta bien, tan solo hablar de las figuras o leer solo una parte del libro.
- Lea el mismo libro una y otra vez. Esto le ayudara a su hijo a reconocer las letras y las palabras (y no solo las figuras).

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

**READING – SHARED BOOK READING – EARLY SKILLS
02-D2d**

Parent Messages (see *Experts pages 4-8*)

- Children learn more with shared book reading than simply reading a book cover to cover.
- Developmentally appropriate shared book reading techniques increase child’s emergent literacy skills and enjoyment of books and reading.
- Use more direct and lower level skills for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers with language delays.

Parent Skills:

1. Allows infant or toddler to look at the book, touch, or manipulate pages at own pace.
2. Uses adult behaviors or techniques that enhance early literacy development such as labeling pictures, commenting on the action in the pictures, expanding on child’s sounds or words, asking child to point, asking simple questions, and animating voice.

READING – SHARED BOOK READING – EARLY SKILLS 02-D2d

Shared reading includes both reading aloud and talking about the words, pictures, and story. This increases a child’s early literacy skills more than simply reading the book from cover to cover. During shared reading, both the parent and child talk and listen. For infants, toddlers or children with language delays, you can do the following to increase early literacy skills:

Label pictures: “There’s the duck.”

Comment: “I think the duck looks surprised.”

Expand on what child says: Child points and says “Doggie”. Parent says “Yes, that’s a red dog.”

Ask child to point: “Can you touch the elephant’s nose?”

Ask simple what/who/where questions: “Where is the dog’s tail?”

Animate (change your voice): “Someone’s been eating my porridge!” in squeaky baby bear voice.

When your child can easily do these early skills in shared reading, ask your teacher for the next tip on preschool skills in shared book reading.

LEYENDO – COMPARTIR LIBROS PARA LEER – HABILIDADES TEMPRANAS

Compartir la lectura incluye ambos, leer en altavoz y hablar acerca de las palabras, figuras y la historia. Esto incrementa las habilidades literarias tempranas de los niños más que la simple lectura de principio a fin. Durante la lectura compartida ambos padres e hijos hablan y escuchan. Para infantes, jóvenes y niños con retardos del lenguaje, usted puede hacer lo siguiente para incrementar las habilidades literarias tempranas:

Marque las figuras: “este es un pato.”

Comentarios: “yo pienso que el pato se ve sorprendido.”

Amplíe lo que el niño dice: El niño señala y dice “perro”. Los padres dicen “Si, ese es un perro rojo.”

Dígale al niño que señale: “Puedes tocar la nariz del elefante?”

Pregúntele preguntas simples como que, como, cuando: “Donde esta la cola del perro”

Animaciones (cambia la voz): “Alguien se ha estado comiendo mi sopa!” en voz chillona de bebe.

Cuando su niño puede hacer fácil estas habilidades tempranas en la lectura compartida, pregúntele a su profesor por la siguiente ayuda para habilidades de los preescolares entre los libros de lectura compartida.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

**READING – SHARED BOOK READING – PRESCHOOL SKILLS
02-D2e**

Parent Messages (see *Experts* pages 4-8)

- Children learn more with shared book reading than simply reading a book cover to cover.
- Developmentally appropriate shared book reading techniques increase a child's emergent literacy skills and enjoyment of books and reading.
- Preschoolers make more language comprehension and word recognition gains when adults use open-ended comments and questions.

Parent Skills:

1. Allows child to take lead in talking about and looking at the book.
2. Is sensitive to child's skill level and adjusts.
3. Uses techniques to enhance literacy development such as providing feedback, expanding on child comments, asking open-ended questions, encouraging predicting, relating story to child's experiences and feelings, and pointing out words and letters.

READING – SHARED BOOK READING – PRESCHOOL SKILLS 02-D2e

Shared book reading includes both reading aloud and talking about the words, pictures, and story. The parent and child take turns talking and listening. When parents use shared reading, children learn to use more mature words and sentences, which help with learning to read:

- **Ask who/what/when questions:** "What is she doing?"
- **Give praise (or correct):** "That's a good thought." "I don't think she's the Mom. Let's look back at the other page and see."
- **Ask open-ended questions:** "What do you think about that?" "Tell me more."
- **Relate the story to the child's experiences and feelings:** "Remember when you went to the park?" "How would you feel if that happened to you?"
- **Expand on what the child has said:** "That's right, it's an alligator. They are reptiles."
- **Point out words that appear several times:** "This says "Brown Bear". Let's find those same words on another page."
- **Predict:** "What do you think will happen next?"

LEYENDO – COMPARTIENDO LECTURA DE LIBROS – HABILIDADES DEL PREESCOLAR

Compartir lectura de libros incluye ambos, leer en voz alta y hablar acerca de las palabras, figuras y la historia. El padre y el niño toman turnos para hablar y escuchar. Cuando los padres usan lectura compartida, los niños aprenden a usar palabras y frases más maduras que les ayudan a aprender a leer:

- **Haga preguntas que/quien/cuando:** "Que esta haciendo ella?"
- **Déle elogios (o corríjalo):** "Ese fue un buen pensamiento." "Yo no pienso que sea la mamá. Miremos la otra página y veremos."
- **Haga preguntas abiertas y cerradas:** "Que piensas tu acerca de eso?" "Dime algo más"
- **Relacione la historia con experiencias y sentimientos del niño:** "Recuerdas cuando tu fuiste al parque?" "Que sentirías si eso te hubiera pasado a ti?"
- **Amplíe lo que el niño ha dicho:** "Eso esta bien, es un cocodrilo. Ellos son reptiles."
- **Señale palabras que aparecen varias veces:** "Aquí dice Oso Café". Vamos a buscar esas mismas palabras en otras páginas."
- **Prediga:** "Que piensas tu que va a pasar después?"

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING –MAKES KIDS SMARTER THAN WATCHING TV!

02-D2f

Parent Messages (see *Experts page 5*)

- Shared book reading has a positive impact on brain development.
- Higher level brain functions are used during book reading than during TV watching.
- Shared book reading increases vocabulary, verbal maturity, and word recognition skills.

Parent Skills:

1. Ensures daily time for shared book reading.
2. Limits child's exposure to TV/electronic media and turns them off during reading time.

READING – IT MAKES KIDS SMARTER THAN WATCHING TV!

02-D2f

Parents,

When parents and children read and talk about books together, children use high level thinking skills such as imagination and abstract thinking. They also hear and learn more new words than while watching TV. This is because:

- Books use words that are not common in day-to-day talking or on TV.
- Reading can be at the child's pace. You can stop and re-read parts or all of the book at the child's request.
- Parents can answer questions, and relate the story to the child's experiences.

Knowing more words makes it easier to learn to read later in elementary school. When parents and children share and talk about books, children have a better vocabulary, speak more maturely, and know more about written words.

The less the TV is on; the more a child will be interested in books and reading. Help your child do well in school - - - more shared book reading and less TV!

LEYENDO – ESTO HACE NIÑOS MAS INTELIGENTES QUE LOS QUE VEN TELEVISIÓN!

Padres,

Cuando los padres y los niños leen y hablan acerca de los libros, los niños practican habilidades elevadas de pensamiento tales como la imaginación y el pensamiento abstracto. Ellos también escuchan y aprenden nuevas palabras, más de las que aprenden mientras ven televisión. Esto es por que:

- Los libros usan palabras que no son comunes en la conversación del día a día o en la televisión.
- La lectura puede hacerse en el espacio del niño. Usted puede parar, volver a leer partes de el libro como el niño lo requiera.
- Los padres pueden responder preguntas y adaptar la historia a las experiencias del niño.

Conocer más palabras les permitirá aprender y leer más en la escuela elemental. Cuando los padres y los niños comparten y hablan acerca de los libros, los niños adquieren mayor vocabulario, hablan más maduros y conocen más acerca de escribir palabras.

Lo menos que la televisión este prendida, el niño se interesara más por la lectura y los libros. Ayúdele a su niño a desempeñarse bien en el colegio....Mas lectura compartida de libros y menos televisión.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING – ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT

02-D2g

Parent Messages (see *Experts page 9*)

- Environmental print refers to signs, logos, advertising, and other print children see.
- Toddlers begin to recognize and say environmental print messages, especially those that represent something they like or have frequent exposure to.
- Parents can help children gain pre-reading skills through techniques that capitalize on child's natural curiosity and desire to learn.

Parent Skills:

1. Plays guessing games about sign/logos/words while driving in the car or walking.
2. Names the makes, types, or colors of cars and trucks child sees.
3. Cuts out coupons of favorite foods and allows child to be involved in finding the items at the store.
4. Points out letters and words in the environment.

READING – ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT

02-D2g

Environmental print refers to the words and logos that children see daily in the world around them. Even young toddlers are able to “read” their favorite cereal box or fast food restaurant sign long before they recognize letters and words. As children “read” the print and signs around them, they are learning pre-reading skills and the joy of reading. Parents can capitalize on this normal curiosity and desire to learn by noticing and encouraging children's interests in environmental print.

1. Play guessing games in the car or walking. (“I see a red sign with an S. What is it?”)
2. Name the makes, types, or colors of cars and trucks you see.
3. Cut out coupons of your favorite foods together, take them to the grocery store, and let your child help find the items.
4. Read the signs of stores you go to. Point out letters as your child learns them.

LEYENDO – IMPRESOS DEL MEDIOAMBIENTE

Impresos del medio ambiente se refiere a las palabras y los logotipos que el niño ve diariamente alrededor de él. Aun niños pequeños son capaces de “leer” su caja de cereal preferido o el letrero de su restaurante preferido de comida rápida mucho antes de que ellos reconozcan letras y palabras. Como niños al “leer” los impresos y los signos alrededor de ellos, significa que están aprendiendo habilidades previas de lectura y que disfrutan la lectura. Los padres pueden capitalizar esta curiosidad normal y decidirse a aprender promoviendo y dándose cuenta del interés de los niños por los impresos en el medioambiente.

1. Practiquen juegos de seguimiento en el carro o al caminar. (“Yo veo un aviso rojo con la letra S, que es esto?”)
2. Nombre las marcas, los tipos o los colores de los camiones que usted ve.
3. Recorten cupones juntos de las comidas favoritas, lleve estos al supermercado y permítale a su hijo ayudarle a encontrar estos productos.
4. Lea los avisos de los almacenes donde usted va. Señálele las letras como su niño las aprende.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

**READING –GO TO THE LIBRARY
02-D2h**

Parent Messages (see *Experts page11*)

- Parents can promote early literacy skills by taking children to the library. Visits to the library can help children gain a love of reading.
- There are resources and services at the library for both children and adults.

Parent Skills:

1. Makes visits to the library a part of family routine.
2. Inquires about and participates in children’s services such as story time.

READING – GO TO THE LIBRARY

02-D2h

Parents,

The library is a great place for children of all ages. Many libraries have an area designed just for children. Your local library may even have a children’s program with story time, music, and puppet shows. Libraries help children learn to enjoy books at a young age and develop a lifelong love of reading.

When you go to the library, you are showing your child that books and reading are important. If you think your child is not old enough to care for a library book at home, you can still enjoy visiting the library. Find a comfortable chair or corner to sit and enjoy a book or two, or sit in for the children’s story time.

Make family visits to the library a part of your family routine.

Most libraries have many services for adults too such as computer and Internet access.

LEYENDO –IR A LA BIBLIOTECA

Padres,

La biblioteca es un gran lugar para los niños de todas las edades. Muchas bibliotecas tienen áreas especialmente diseñadas para los niños. Su biblioteca local puede también tener programas para niños como tiempo para cuentos, música o show de marionetas. Las bibliotecas le ayudan a los niños a aprender y a disfrutar libros a una temprana edad y a desarrollar un amor de por vida por la lectura.

Cuando usted va a la biblioteca, usted le está mostrando a su niño que los libros y la lectura son importantes. Si usted piensa que su niño no es lo suficientemente grande para interesarse en llevar un libro de la biblioteca a casa, usted puede todavía disfrutar la visita a la biblioteca. Encontrar un asiento cómodo o una esquina para sentarse y disfrutar de uno o dos libros o sentarse para el tiempo de cuento para los niños.

Haga visitas con familia a la biblioteca como parte de las rutinas de familia.

Muchas de las bibliotecas tienen servicios para adultos tales como computadores y acceso a Internet.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING – CHECK OUT LIBRARY BOOKS
02-D2i

Parent Messages (see *Experts page11*)

- Higher reading scores in elementary schools are associated with greater rate of library book borrowing in a community.
- Having a larger number and wider variety of books in the home is associated with enhanced literacy skills.
- Libraries are a good resource for both adults and children.

Parent Skills:

1. Makes family library trips a part of monthly family routine.
2. Obtains a library card. Checks out books for both child and self.
3. Involves child in caring for, keeping track of, and returning library books.

READING – CHECK OUT LIBRARY BOOKS

02-D2i

Checking out library books helps your child learn to be responsible while learning the joys of books and reading. The library provides a large variety of books for children of all ages. Teach your child that library books are borrowed and special:

- Have your child sit with you to write the titles on a list.
- At home, have your child help you find a special box or place to keep the books.
- Show your child the little pocket in the front that lets us know it's a library book.
- Mark the book's due date on your calendar. Let your child help remember to return the book on time.

Your child will enjoy choosing books, bringing them home to read, and taking trips to the library. Make family visits to the library a part of your family routine.

Research – In communities with high rates of borrowing library books, children have better reading scores in elementary school.

LEYENDO – PRESTE LIBROS DE LA BIBLIOTECA

Prestar libros en la biblioteca le ayuda a su hijo a aprender a ser responsable mientras aprende, disfrutando de los libros y la lectura. La biblioteca le provee una gran variedad de libros para niños de todas las edades. Enséñele a su niño que los libros de la biblioteca son para préstamo y especiales:

- Tenga a su niño sentado con usted y escriba los títulos en una lista.
- En casa ayude al niño a encontrar una caja o un lugar especial para tenerlos.
- Muéstrelle a su niño el pequeño bolsillo en la carátula que nos permite saber que es un libro de la biblioteca.
- Marque la fecha de entrega del libro en su calendario. Permítale a su niño ayudar a recordar a tiempo la devolución del libro.

Su hijo disfrutará el escoger libros, traerlos a casa para leerlos y hacer viajes a la biblioteca. Haga visitas con la familia a la biblioteca como parte de las rutinas familiares.

Investigación – En comunidades donde se tienen altos índices de préstamo de libros de las bibliotecas, los niños tienen mejores niveles de lectura en escuelas elementarias.

Quick Card for Teacher Reference

READING IN YOUR FAMILY'S LANGUAGE

02-D2j

Parent Messages (see *Experts page 12*)

- Reading to children in the family's home language prepares them to become readers of English later.
- Children benefit from shared reading techniques in any language. They learn word and story concepts and a joy of reading.
- Most libraries provide books in Spanish.

Parent Skills:

1. Reads daily to child.
2. Seeks books in native language by using the school, library, or other community resources.
3. Uses age appropriate shared reading techniques either in home language or English.

READING – IN YOUR FAMILY'S LANGUAGE

02-D2j

Parents,

Read to your child in your native language. Teach them the joy of reading, build their vocabulary, and talk about what you are reading in your native language. When children enjoy books and speak their home language well, they can more easily learn to read and write in English too.

All the strategies that are good for English speakers are also good for families that speak other languages. Use shared book reading techniques. Look at the pictures and talk about them. Read to your child daily. Go to the library. Even if you don't check out books, you can enjoy them with your child there. Most public libraries have a collection of children's books in Spanish. Ask the librarian to help you find them.

LEYENDO – EN EL IDIOMA FAMILIAR

Padres,

Léale a su niño en su lengua nativa. Enséñenle a ellos la alegría de leer, de construir su vocabulario, y ha hablar de lo que esta leyendo en su lengua nativa. Cuando los niños disfrutan los libros y hablan su lengua maternal bien, ellos pueden aprender más fácil también a leer y escribir en ingles.

Todas las estrategias que son buenas para los que hablan ingles son también buenas par alas familias que hablan otras lenguas. Use las técnicas de libros compartidos Mire las figures y hable de ellas. Léale a su niño diario. Vaya a la librería. Aun si usted no presta libros, usted puede disfrutar allí con su niño. La mayoría de las librerías públicas tienen libros en español. Pregúntele al librero para que le ayude a encontrarlos.