

FAMILY BULLETIN

A newsletter for parents, families and care providers from
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Early Literacy: A Foundational Approach

by Theresa Gereluk, Child Care Consultant for PacificCARE in Port Alberni, BC

Oral Language, the foundation for early literacy, involves communicating *with* your child, talking *to* them, singing *to* and *with* them using rhymes, finger plays and oral stories.

• **Turn off background noises:** TV, radio, CD players, etc. It is extremely important for children to clearly hear a human voice!

• **Studies have shown through PET scans** that different parts of the brain are stimulated when a human voice is speaking and when a voice on the TV is speaking. When the human is speaking, and especially if it's singing and there are movements with it, the brain lights up like a Christmas tree. When a TV is on, the brain is on "auto-pilot" - lacking stimulation because there is no "give and take" conversation.

• **Books and reading materials should be everywhere in your house.** Adult books and children's books, magazines, newspapers, and where children can see them being used.

• **Special story times set aside each day.** Children do well with routines, so if they can count on having a story after lunch and before bedtime then it helps them know where they are in their day. Spontaneous reading is great also, there's always time for a story or two! (Short stories or books about a song are a great quick way to have a story).

• **Different kinds of books:** cloth, plastic, cardboard, very small pocket size, easy to fit into their laps, larger books and big books. All have their place.

• **Buy books on subjects that are familiar with children:** eating, getting dressed, bath-time, family, playing, friends, animals.

• **Children enjoy books with simple** illustrations or pictures that are close to the real item.

• **Children enjoy looking for something** - like having to lift up a flap. Where's Spot? is a good example.

• **Children also enjoy having a book with a repetitive phrase or word** and learn quickly when the words rhyme.

• **Fiction/non-fiction** - including photographs and pictures

• **Make books with your children.** Cut pictures out of magazines and mount them on a piece of paper. (Black paper makes the pictures stand out if they're quite colourful.) Put the pages in a plastic sheet protectors and your book will last a long time.

Remember, if you enjoy reading, your child will follow your lead!

SINGING THROUGH THE DAY

by Betsy Mann

Taken from Child & Family Canada
www.cfc-efc.ca



Children start hearing and responding to sounds before they are born. In fact, even in the first few days of life, they recognize their own mother's voice. After all, they've been listening to her talk for months.

Connections have already been made in their brains that will help them understand and speak, but in the next few years, they need lots more opportunities in a way that's fun for everyone.

"Baby talk"

Adults all over the world seem to have a special way of talking to babies. When they are little, we make our voice higher, use simple words and sentences, speak more slowly, pause between sentences, and repeat the same phrases over and over, often in a sing song tone of voice.

This kind of "baby talk" gets infants' attention because it fits with their ability to hear higher pitched sounds better than lower pitched sounds. Babies understand more easily what people are talking about when adults use simple words and repeat them often. Simple words, repetition, lilting tone... that could be a description of many children's songs. Indeed, songs have a special place in communication with babies, from playtime to bedtime, and they continue to be important as children grow.

Rhythm, rhyme and repetition

Music and songs develop listening skills, an essential part of communication. In songs, rhythm and

rhyme make the important words stand out so that they are easier to hear. Also, because many songs have a chorus that is repeated several times, children get a chance to practise and therefore remember words and whole sentences.

Emphasize the rhythm

Rhythm is what first attracts young children to music and songs. Maybe it reminds them of the beat of their mother's heart, probably one of the first sounds they heard. You can emphasize the rhythm by bouncing a baby on your knee or by clapping and swaying with older children. If you feel like it, why not dance together!

Make songs active

Songs that include gestures and movement allow children to join in, even before they can say the words. Take the song "Head and shoulders, knees and toes." At first, you will move your baby's hands to point to the different parts of his or her body. Later, your little one will participate by imitating your hand and body movements. Then gradually, he or she will be able to add more and more words until finally you're singing along together.

Making up new songs

One way to get children's attention is by using their names in a song. You can also make up new words for familiar songs to accompany your routines and activities. For example, when it's time to leave a friend's house, try singing "Time to leave, say good-bye" to the tune of "Frère Jacques". Some children find moving from one activity to another very stressful. A made-up song like this can help by changing the mood and by giving the signal for what will happen next.

Valentine's Day Crafts and Fun

Valentine Cards



Children can make a very special Valentine card by collecting white, red and pink construction paper, stickers, paper lace doilies, glitter, markers, paint and anything else that can be glued down. Kids can use their imaginations to cut out hearts, paint or draw on folded paper of any size. Then add a verse inside the card, sign it, and send it to a friend.

Valentine Jello



Prepare any size package of red Jello®. Pour into small paper cups and refrigerate. After it has set, remove from cups onto a small plate. Decorate with small dabs of whipping cream and red hot or red sprinkles.

Heart-shaped Krispie Treats



Use a favourite marshmallow krispie treat recipe. Fill heart-shaped molds with the mixture, pop out, wrap in red plastic wrap and tie with white or pink curly ribbon. For a colourful addition, add red, pink, and white sprinkles.



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