



READING, WRITING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS BEGIN AT BIRTH!

A child's reading success in school starts with positive language and literacy experiences that begin at birth. From the time they are born, children are learning language and other important skills that will help them to learn to read. From day one, parents and caregivers can talk, sing, play and read to babies.

Parents and caregivers should take time every day to read to babies and toddlers and to talk to them about the story and pictures. It's okay to read a book again and again. Conversations between parents and children are one of the best ways to help children learn new information and new words. Children need to have many opportunities to talk their parents, friends and family - not just to listen to others talk. Parents and caregivers can respond to children, even if the children are not using words yet. Parents can respond to babies by imitating their sounds and facial expressions; then the baby begins to learn about taking turns in conversation. Talk to babies and toddlers about what they are doing now and about what they are going to do next.

Singing songs and reciting rhymes helps to develop listening skills and a sense of rhythm and rhyme. Singing slows language down so that children can hear the different sounds and parts of words. Clapping along to the rhythm in a song helps children to hear the syllables in words. Singing songs and reciting rhymes helps babies and toddlers learn to use new words when they are repeated many times. Repetition helps children's brain development by creating strong connections between brain cells. Later on, these strong connections will strengthen a child's ability to read, write and communicate more effectively and successfully.

Opportunities to scribble and draw and to play with play dough help to develop a toddler's eye-hand coordination and exercise the muscles necessary for writing later on. Giving babies objects to grasp or shake (e.g. rattles, shakers) helps to develop these muscles.

It is never too early to develop these pre-reading and writing skills in children. Reading success at school begins at birth! By talking, singing, reading and playing with children from the time they are born, parents are helping their children to develop the necessary skills for reading, writing and communication later in life!

Activities Parents Can Do with their Babies and Toddlers to Help Develop Communication Skills

- Read with your baby/toddler every day! Visit the library too!
- Look into your baby/toddler's eyes when you talk.
- Use your baby/toddler's name when you sing to her.
- Respond to your baby's cries. Give words to your baby's cries. e.g. "You're hungry!"
- Sing songs and rhymes that have actions (e.g. Head and Shoulders).
- Dance with your baby/toddler.
- Talk about what you see and what you hear with your baby.
- Play dumping games by letting your baby/toddler fill/empty a container. Say "in", "out" and "dump".
- Give your baby things to grasp and reach for like a rattle or shaker.
- Play ball with your baby/toddler. Say, "My turn", "Your turn."

If you are concerned about your child's speech and language development, call the Language Express Preschool Speech System at **1-888-503-8885 / 613-283-2742**. A speech-language assessment can identify your child's strengths and needs, and can help you prepare your child for success in communicating, reading and writing. For more information, visit: www.language-express.ca