Reading to Young Children for Emotional Competence

What is your earliest memory of reading? Did it involve reading independently, as part of story time, or perhaps on someone’s lap? Positive early literacy experiences can have a powerful impact on children’s behavior and wellbeing. Not only do these practices help with academic school readiness, they can also help children develop their social and emotional competence. When primary caregivers read to young children, the practice creates positive emotional associations with reading, builds the parent-child relationship, and helps children to form connections with the world around them.

Brains are built over time, and a substantial proportion of the brain is constructed during the early years of life.¹
– Harvard University

It is never too early to start reading to a young child. Babies enjoy the warmth and closeness of being held on a parent’s lap, as well as the sound and rhythm of their caregiver’s voice. They learn to show interest by looking at books, smiling, kicking or even grabbing and chewing on books. Harvard University stresses that, “the development of healthy brain architecture is influenced by consistent, ‘serve and return’ interactions between young children and their primary caregivers.”² A book is a tool for parent-child engagement, which supports the growth of the baby’s brain.

Zero to Three recommends creating a reading routine to buffer difficult daily transitions. Try reading before bed, when dropping off baby at day care, and/or at mealtimes. Listening to a caregiver’s voice as they read aloud can help soothe and relax the child.

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Young children can lose focus and become distracted before a book is complete. Anticipating this brief attention span can help caregivers start with brief literary input and build in duration as interest and engagement increase. Zero to Three suggests various strategies to capture the child’s attention:

- Allow the child to hold the book and turn pages
- Durable books are recommended, especially those made of cloth, vinyl or board books
- Take a, “picture walk” through the book, looking at pictures and seeing the story they tell
- Use voices or puppets to bring the story to life

For English learners, reading in their first language(s) has powerful benefits. The practice reinforces the fact that the family’s home language is a strength. When parents read to their children in the shared language, they build on that strength and cultivate their role as an academic resource for their children, independent of the parent’s English language skill level.

As summarized by Colorín Colorado, research shows that children’s first-language literacy is strongly correlated with pre-reading, reading and writing skills in their learned language. Exposing the developing brain to language supports future linguistic development and academic skills. Parents can foster a, cognitive foundation in their young children by speaking to their children, including reading aloud, in their home language.

Whatever the technique, be prepared: when a book becomes a favorite, the child will want to read it over and over again.

### Resources
- Why Is It Never Too Early to Read With Your Baby
- Booklists and Recommendations by Age for Parents
- Multilingual Preschoolers

### Sources
2. Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience

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**2019 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference**

Earlier this month, the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning partnered with the Pennsylvania Strengthening Families™ Leadership Team, Pennsylvania Children’s Trust Fund and Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers State Office at the Center for Schools and Communities to offer the 2019 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference. From across Pennsylvania, 248 family support professionals attended this 3-day event. The conference included 21 workshops, four meetings, four institutes and lots of collaboration.

Conference attendees enjoying lunch and networking with each other.
Keystone Scholars Program

Babies born in Pennsylvania in 2019, as well as those born in 2018 in Delaware, Elk, Indiana, Luzerne, Mifflin or Westmoreland Counties, are eligible to receive $100 from the Pennsylvania Treasury. The money is for costs related to post-secondary education. More About Keystone Scholars Program

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers Advocacy Leadership Webinar Series
Join PAT national center’s advocacy webinars about evidence based home visiting and learn more about the policy climate and advocacy efforts. If you have any questions, contact Lisa Foehner, director of advocacy.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness: Supporting Young Parents and Their Children
Wednesday, July 24 | 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

PAT New Supervisors Institute, August 1-2, 2019
Are you a PAT supervisor who has been in their role for fewer than 18 months? You may be interested in attending the New Supervisors Institute offered by PAT National Center on August 1-2, 2019 in St. Louis, Mo. Space is limited. Register for the Institute

Parents as Teachers

Using Penelope? Need Help?
Penelope Q & A sessions are available upon request for all PAT Affiliate programs in Pennsylvania. Contact Alexia Brown for more information or to schedule a session.
Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children’s Trust Fund grantees and the Strengthening Families leadership team.

Karen Shanoski  
Family Support and Community Engagement Director  
(717) 763-1661, ext. 139

Rijelle Kraft  
Family Support Managing Coordinator  
(717) 763-166, ext. 221

Alexia Brown  
Family Support Technical Assistance Coordinator  
(717) 763-1661, ext. 146

Katherine Noss  
Family Support Coordinator  
(717) 763-1661, ext. 104

Jennifer Esposito  
Family Support Data Coordinator  
(717) 763-1661, ext. 161

Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers at Center for Schools and Communities

Children’s Trust Fund

Strengthening Families

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities  
275 Grandview Avenue  
Suite 200, Camp Hill, PA 17011  
(717) 763-1661  
www.center-school.org

Safe Kids Corner

Trunk Entrapment Prevention for Little Kids

Little kids have endless energy, stamina and imagination, and they are always looking for a fun place to play. Here are a few tips to prevent trunk entrapment.

Preventing Trunk Entrapment Tips

- Make sure to lock your vehicle, including doors and trunk, when you are not using it. Keep keys and remote entry fobs out of children’s sight and reach.

- Teach kids that trunks are for transporting cargo and not safe places to play or hide.

- Show older kids how to locate and use the emergency trunk release found in cars manufactured after September 1, 2001. Very young children will not have the strength or ability to open the release bar. Young children should never be in a trunk.

- Keep rear fold-down seats closed and locked to help prevent kids from climbing into the trunk from inside your car.

- If your child is missing, get help and check swimming pools, vehicles and trunks. If your child is locked in a car or trunk accidentally, get him or her out as quickly as possible and dial 911 immediately. Emergency personnel are trained to evaluate and check for signs of heatstroke.

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