Early Childhood Literacy Development

By Lashon Fryer

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If you have a child who is an avid reader, more than likely, he will also do very well in school. And vice versa if the child has limited experience with books. Literacy development and school achievement have a direct relationship. In most cases, children learn to read and write in kindergarten or 1st grade and they continue to hone those skills until grade 4. After the 4th grade, a child's relationship with reading will begin to change, and instead of learning to read, the child will use reading to learn. At this time, the ability to read well is an important asset to the child. Parents, guardians and caregivers have the opportunity to put their child ahead in the "reading game" if they develop some form of early childhood literacy.

If a child is introduced to books and other resources that promote literacy during infancy and toddlerhood, she is being set up for success. Not only will reading open up a new word-filled world but it will also improve her language skills. Also, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, early childhood literacy has a common thread with social and emotional well-being, graduation, reduced grade retention and improved adult-life productivity.

Reading to a child during infancy will improve his language skills; the ability to speak well, in turn, plays an intricate part in the development of reading skills. The United Nation Children's Fund has stated that if a child does not receive such intellectual investment from birth to age 3, he may never reach full potential as a learner.

Parents can even begin early childhood literacy development while the child is still in the womb. According to Peter Jusczyk, a psychology professor at John Hopkins, a seed to learning language can be planted when the child is still in the womb. This practice will not only introduce the child to her mother's voice, but it also begins a ritual where the child learns the cadence of oral communication. When the child is born and the parents begin to read short books to her, they help strengthen her spoken communication skills. Parents will garner better results using books made of plastic and cardboard, as they are easier for a child to handle at the "grabbing" stage. (See References)

During the toddler years (or earlier if the child appears ready), a parent can introduce magnetic alphabet letters that can be placed on the front of the refrigerator. The magnetic alphabet letters can be purchased at any retail store such as Kmart, Walmart or Target. This will be an introduction to the alphabet, the sounding out of vowels and consonants, and the preamble to small combinations (for example, i-t, a-t, c-a-t).

Television viewing will prevent some children from reaping the benefits of early childhood literacy development efforts. In fact, children between the ages of 2 and 4 spend up to three hours a day in front of a television screen. Those three hours being wasted in countless households everyday could be better spent by the child in reading a book or having one read to her, drawing or painting pictures, or writing.

References