

Family Reading – It’s Time to Share

Ready!

- This unit is designed to help parents and grandparents understand the concepts of family reading. In the process participants will be introduced to ways to strengthen their families’ reading and literacy skills. They will also discover how to help children develop a love of learning and a love of reading.
- This unit is intended to be used with intergenerational family members and child care providers.
- Read or review the article “Family Reading” at http://www.arfamilies.org/family_life/parenting/Motivate/family_reading.asp
- Read through the teaching suggestions that follow and customize them to your personality, objectives and the group you will be teaching. You may trim certain questions in order to fit your time slot. You may choose to make your own abbreviated outline to teach from or to highlight key points in this teaching guide.
- With some groups it may be useful to hand out copies of the web unit for them to take.

Grab!

- Take a copy of all worksheets for each participant.
- If you plan to evaluate the session, take a copy of the evaluation for each participant.

Go!

[Pass out activity pack as participants enter the room.]

Take a moment and think back to when you were a child.

[Pause for a moment]

Do you remember a family member, or someone who cared about you, taking the time to read to you? Write down the name of your childhood favorite story or book.

[Pause for writing]

Was reading important to you and your family?

[Pause for response]

Research tells us that it is important to pass a love of reading on to our children. So, today, we are going to discuss ways to assist families and child care providers develop the skills needed to pass on a love for reading. Talking sensitively with infants and small children to prepare them to become readers is key. Long before a child has any idea about the alphabet, parents can prepare children to read. The most important way to prepare them is to talk with them. This draws children into active interaction. What do you think would be some good conversation starters?

[Pause for responses and possible discussion]

Another key to passing on the love of reading is to fill your life with learning. Keep the books that you most love in places where you can use them. Check good books out of the library for you and your children. Use books, magazines, and educational websites to continue learning. Talk about the things you are learning. What are some other ways you could continue learning?

[Pause for responses. Some suggestions may be to take a class at the local college, join a civic league or community service group.]

Another way to pass on a love for reading is to make reading fun for your children. Let your children select books from the library. Read to your children regularly. Read to your children in fun places – maybe the attic or a closet or a favorite rocker. When we read to our children, we can bring excitement and fun to the story. When a child wants to linger on a page, we can take time to talk about the words, pictures, characters, etc. Be careful not to turn reading into a forced activity, children may resist. If we make reading fun they will seek it. What are some of your ideas on making reading fun?

[Pause for response]

When passing on our love for reading we must remember to give our children choices. They like to be involved in making decisions for their lives. What are some ways you think we can give our children choices when reading?

[Pause for discussion. You may mention: We can help them find the right section at the library and then let them pick out books. We can let them pick the books that we will read to them at bedtime. We can let them turn pages. We can let them guide us to what they are interested in.]

Make times and places for learning. Maybe once a week you can make an outing with your children to an interesting place such as a museum, historic site, a business, or any place new and interesting. Can you think of an interesting place to take your children?

[Pause for response]

We also show our love of reading when we make a place in our homes for books, bookshelves, and other learning materials. The child who grows up seeing and experiencing the adventure of reading and learning is likely to develop in to a rich love of learning. As we close, let's once again remember the person that influenced each of us as children to enjoy reading. What are the things that concerning reading you learned as a child that you continue today?

[Pause for reflection]

How can you pass this enjoyment onto children in your life? Let's look at some handouts to determine if we are including simple things to promote literacy as parents and child care providers.

[Review handouts with class. At the end of the session guide participants to the website www.arfamilies.org]

Original work by Kris Elliot

Simple Things Families Can Do to Help with Literacy Skills

Handout #1

- Read to and with your children for 30 minutes every day. It is very important to read out loud to your children before they start school. Help your children to read with you. Ask them to find letters and words on the page and talk with your children about the story.
- Talk with infants and young children before they learn to read. Talk with your children all day long, using short, simple sentences. Talking with them even before they can speak will help them later when they learn to read and write.
- Help your children to read on their own. Reading at home helps children do better in school. Have lots of children's books in your home and visit the library every week. Help your children get their own library cards and let them pick out their own books.
- If your child has a developmental delay, your child may find reading frustrating. Have books on tape in your home. Borrow or buy a tape player that is easy to work. If you cannot find recordings of your child's favorite books, you or a family member could make recordings of them for your child to listen to while looking at the books.
- Help your child to see that reading is important. Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Make sure your children have time in their day to read.
- Set up a reading area in your home. Keep books that interest your children in places where they can easily reach them. As your children become better readers, make sure that you add harder books to your collection.
- Give your children writing materials. Children want to learn how to write and to practice writing. Help them learn by having paper, pencils, pens, or crayons for them in your home. Help your children write if they ask you. If your child has a special learning or physical need, regular pens and pencils may not be the best choice. Ask your pediatrician or people who work with your child at school or at the child care center to suggest other writing materials your child can use.

- Read and write with your children in their native language. Practicing their first language will help your children learn to read and write English.
- Talk with your children as you do daily activities together. When you take your children places, talk with them about what you are doing and ask them questions. If your child cannot hear, use whatever form of communication your child usually uses.
- Ask your children to describe events in their lives. Talking about their experiences makes children think about them. Giving detailed descriptions and telling complete stories also helps children learn about how stories are written and what the stories they read mean.
- Restrict the amount and kind of TV your children watch. Watch educational TV programs with your children that teach letter sounds and words or give information about nature and science.
- Keep track of your children's progress in school. Visit your children's classrooms to learn how your children are doing in school and how you can help your children become better students. Ask about the school's reading program and where your children need help.
- Become a learning partner -reading tutor to a child in your neighborhood or from your local elementary school. Volunteer to read with or to a child for 30 minutes a week for at least eight weeks. Take the child to the library to get him or her a library card.
- Help start a community reading program. A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program.
- Offer to volunteer as a reading tutor or serve as a community contact/coordinator for the program.
- Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! materials.

Simple Things Grandparents, Seniors, and Concerned Citizens Can Do to Help with Literacy Skills

Handout #2

- Become a learning partner/reading tutor to a child in your neighborhood or from your local elementary school. Volunteer to read with or to a child for 30 minutes a week for at least eight weeks. Take the child to the library to get him, or her, a library card.
- Start a community reading program. One good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! project. Volunteer to serve as a tutor or a community coordinator. Contact your local senior centers, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office, Foster Grandparents Program, retirement homes, and other community groups to recruit tutors. Work with local schools to set up matches between community members and children.
- Ask your public librarian how you can help at your local library. Offer to volunteer after school in the children's section, reading stories or helping children pick out books. Offer to develop a program or support an existing summer reading program at the library.
- Encourage community businesses and nonprofit organizations to help support community reading programs. Establish contacts by visiting local businesses and organizations. Encourage them to donate supplies and to allow their employees time off to volunteer in local schools.
- Develop a monthly program at your library, school, or community center in which seniors discuss their oral histories with children. Speak with local retirement homes and senior centers to enlist seniors who would be willing to tell children a highlight of their life stories. Arrange for a location where the program can be held, and advertise it.
- Be supportive of school, community, and state efforts to meet high reading academic standards. Let your neighbors know the importance of reading and meeting the President's AMERICA READS CHALLENGE. Make an effort to stay informed about your local school's reading programs and current issues.

Simple Things Child Care Providers Can Do to Help Literacy Skills

Handout #3

- Read to infants even before they are able to talk. Make books part of your one-on-one time with babies. Although they don't always understand exactly what you are saying, babies love to listen to voices. Over time, babies will associate pleasant feelings with books and reading.
- Set up a reading area. Create a colorful or cozy space where children can read or you can read to them. Make sure the area is well lit and that interesting books are placed where children can easily see and reach them. It is more important that it is well defined and that children feel comfortable using it. Plan time when children can look at books on their own.
- Read to children every day. Read with small groups, share illustrations, and change your voice to make stories come to life. Also, read one-on-one with children when they ask you to or when you want to share a book. Use these times to encourage children to talk about the story and characters and to share their ideas.
- Encourage volunteers to read with children. Identify children who need extra help in reading and contact volunteer groups at nearby colleges, high schools, community organizations, religious groups, businesses, or senior centers. Include children with special needs. In addition to reading with volunteers, children can draw pictures about the characters in the book or make up stories of their own. After listening to the child's story, volunteers might print or type the story for the child to keep.
- Read with children about their native culture. Children often respond well to stories about their own cultures. This practice also exposes other children to cultures different from their own. In addition, offer books without words so children can make up their own stories to go with the pictures.
- Encourage families to read with children. Support family reading times by allowing children to borrow books overnight or for a few days. Also, encourage families who speak languages other than English to read with

their children in their native language. This will help children learn to write and read English as well.

- Teach children rhymes, songs, and poems. Make up stories about children in the group and include their names in familiar songs. Ask families to help you learn songs, poems, and stories in the children's home languages.
- Talk with young children about their own lives. Make a special effort to talk with infants and babies. Responding to their cooing and babbling as if you understand them helps them learn about language. As children grow older, encourage them to join you in conversation and be interested in what they have to say. Giving details, descriptions, and telling stories not only helps children learn how stories are written and what they mean, but it also builds vocabulary and communication skills. Do not focus on correcting grammar; instead, model correct grammar yourself.
- Plan a field trip to the library. Contact your local library to arrange a guided tour that explains how children can use the library. Learn about the library's services for young children. Ask about bilingual story times, special story hours for child care programs, and workshops for caregivers. Discuss how children and families can obtain and use their own library cards.
- Help start a community family reading program. A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Consider inviting families to attend reading and parenting discussions. Make sure these gatherings are held at a time when family members can attend. When necessary, send information home about these programs in the family's native language.
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- Help start a community family reading program. A good way to begin is to help set up an America Reads Challenge: READ*WRITE*NOW! program. Consider inviting families to attend reading and parenting discussions. Make sure these gatherings are held at a time when family members can attend.

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Please answer the following questions in order to help us know whether this session was helpful to you.

1. This workshop gave me specific ideas that will be helpful to me.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

2. I think this session will help me be a better family member.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

3. I am glad I attended this workshop.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Comments or suggestions: