

FACT SHEET



FSU Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy

Literacy, Bonding and School Readiness

Shared book reading speaks of love, the importance of the family unit, and a parent's commitment to a child's future. *

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RESEARCH

Early literacy does not mean teaching reading to infants and toddlers nor does it just involve books. Sensitive, responsive relationships with parents and caregivers are a vital component of the child's experience with reading and language.

Learning to read is essentially a social process. Sharing a book is more important than communicating information to a very young child. The successful development of emergent literacy skills is contingent on a secure attachment between the parent and child.

Early relationships influence young children's literacy development. The establishment of regular, shared reading routines is an outcome of a secure relationship between parent and child.

High quality shared reading occurs when children feel emotionally secure and are allowed to be active participants during reading activities.

Mothers of less securely attached infants engage in more discipline during shared reading activities than do mothers of securely attached infants, allow less exploration of books, and initiate fewer interactions by motivating, pointing at pictures, labeling, questioning or commenting.

A study examining the home routines related to literacy found that moms and babies with stronger attachments shared more time reading together than mother-child pairs with weaker attachments.

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RESEARCH

Parental involvement, such as shared reading, in a child's early learning experiences is a critical factor in a child's successful school achievement. Shared reading enhances language and literacy outcomes by strengthening the child's language skills, provides them with emergent literacy skills such as knowledge and awareness of spoken and written language, and encourages the enjoyment of books and reading activities.

Shared reading is the single most important activity for developing the technical skills needed to read and write as well as how to use those skills to enhance a child's thinking and reasoning abilities.

Shared book reading promotes literacy skills such as vocabulary development and conceptual knowledge of the written word.

Children who have few opportunities for shared reading experiences at home are at risk for later reading difficulties.

One study demonstrated that thirteen-month-old infants whose mothers were more verbally responsive during toy play spoke their first words – and their first 50 words – much earlier than children of mothers who were less responsive.

The social aspect of conversations between mothers and children matter most to vocabulary development during the second year of the child's life. The mother's responsiveness, and attention to the child help to reinforce communication and vocabulary development.

Researchers studying high school seniors found that early learning experiences such as being read to, learning nursery rhymes, and playing word and number games are good predictors of later reading ability.

*Whitehurst, G., & Lonigan, C. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development, 69*, 848-872.