

THE LOVE OF READING

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Parents have many opportunities to influence the architecture of their child’s brain, beginning with the prenatal period. During pregnancy, a baby’s brain is developing at an alarming rate and storing information for future use. Introducing literacy during this time can help establish habits that contribute to attachment and is a vital part of their child’s overall development. Talking, singing, playing music, and reading books to baby are examples of early literacy activities mom can do while she is pregnant.

Literacy is the foundation of communication, socialization, reading, writing, and future school success. Early literacy is particularly important for children who are already at risk. Risk factors may include; coming from a low-income family or single-parent household, not having a parent who completed high school, or living in a household where the primary language is not English. (Rathbun & McFarland 2017)

According to the FY 21 Home visiting report, 67% of families report reading to their children daily. (New Mexico Home Visiting Annual Outcomes Report Fiscal Year 2021)

Home Visitors can support and demonstrate how to incorporate the love of reading into a family’s daily routine. They can encourage and provide resources to help equip families with the materials and information they need to establish early home literacy habits that can help pave the road for their child’s school readiness and success.

Early literacy development is about learning sounds, words, and language which can be incorporated into everyday life. Singing, drawing, talking, and playing games are a few examples that involve parental interaction and engagement and do not require a lot of effort or planning. Engaging in these activities with young children is positively associated with an increased motivation to learn, social-emotional skill development, and persistence with difficult tasks. (Yienger, 2016) Children learn best through everyday routines that may include family meals, bath time, or shopping. Many parents are not aware that doing things like writing a to-do list, washing dishes, sorting laundry, or talking about the day ahead involves using skills that young children need to learn to read and write.



NMAIMH

Competencies Addressed

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

- Infant/Young Child Development & Behavior
- Infant/Young Child & Family-Centered Practice

WORKING WITH OTHERS

- Building & Maintaining Relationships

DIRECT SERVICE SKILLS

- Observation & Listening



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As a home visitor, you have many opportunities to point out the daily routines where families can incorporate early literacy activities. Through these shared daily routines and activities, families are supported in developing and maintaining a secure attachment with their child. Positive parent/child interactions will create a bond that impacts how the child interacts with others and how they form relationships, which can play a part in their school readiness. (Yienger, 2016)

A dilemma that home visitors often encounter is that interactive media is everywhere. It is rare to find a home that does not have a tv, laptop, smartphone, or iPad. These devices are quickly replacing the more traditional toys as sources of entertainment and learning. Interactive media refers to digital and analog materials, including software programs, apps, streaming media, e-books, the internet, and other forms of content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults. (National Association for the Education of Young Children & Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at St. Vincent College, 2012). As these games and apps are found in and outside of the home it is important to stress that careful, intentional, and developmentally appropriate use of these tools with young children should be at the forefront of the conversation between a home visitor and the family.

REFERENCES

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QUESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How do you talk with families about judiciously selecting apps and programs for their kids that promote literacy?
2. What strategies do you use when visiting with families about the importance of monitoring their child's screen time?
3. What does your home visiting curriculum recommend on the the use of technology in early literacy development?



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