

TALKING IS TEACHING | COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Building a Home Library Builds Strong Futures

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Think for a moment about a favorite book you had as a child. Does anyone remember a title? *(Pause for a moment and encourage individuals to share some moments of being read to as a child. Offer suggestions such as Doctor Seuss books, Goodnight Moon, or perhaps a poem that you remember).*

Now think about the person that you associate with the special book. Are they still living? Do you have special memories of them spending time with you enjoying books? Perhaps it was a teacher, a parent or neighbor.

For many of us, we have a very physical reaction when we think back to our childhood and the time a book was shared with us by a parent, grandparent, teacher, or loved one. Our eyes may become misty; we may have some goose bumps. Perhaps it reminds us of feeling safe and loved. Enjoying books together creates strong emotional attachments and builds wonderful long-lasting memories. For those who may not have strong memories of being read to as a child, you now have the opportunity to give your little one something incredibly important that will stay with them long after they grow up and leave your home.

Did you know that a study showed the number of books in a child's home is a better predictor of the level of education that child will attain than the education level of the parent? Even having just 20 books in your home can significantly impact how far your child will go in school! In homes in which the adults aren't good readers, the mere fact that books are present and accessible for children can have a profound impact. **Most importantly, just taking a little time to sit down together to look at and talk about books has been shown to increase a child's vocabulary when they enter school.**

Closing the 30 million word gap that exists between children who are spoken to often at home and those who are not has become an incredibly important task that we here in Tulsa are taking seriously! A child who grows up in a home in which words are spoken frequently to them will enter school having heard 30 million more words than a child growing up in a home in which words are spoken to them infrequently or harshly. Does anyone visit a clinic that gives books at check-ups? Where do you go to?

Raise your hand if you've been to the Eiffel Tower. Raise your hand if you know what the Eiffel Tower looks like! *(If a preschooler raises hand, you may even ask him/her to describe it)* Raise your hand if you've been to an African Savannah. Raise your hand if you can name 3 animals that you would find on a safari to an African Savannah.

Much of the information we know comes from pictures and books that we've seen over our lifetimes. Of course, we can watch programs on television and visit museums and such, but

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through books, you have the ability to transport your child to any place on Earth! We are realizing that children learn better when new concepts are discussed with them by a loving adult...they don't learn nearly as well when they simply watch something on TV. Using a book as a springboard of ideas can be instrumental in giving your child a bigger picture of the world around them!

It also introduces them to "rare" words we don't commonly use in our day-to-day conversations. For example, in the book, Guess How Much I Love You, it reads, "Then Little Nutbrown Hare had a good idea. He *tumbled* upside down and reached up the tree trunk with his feet." We might use the word "rolled" if we were explaining his action, but by using the word "tumbled," the author of the book exposes children to a new vocabulary word and gives them context clues to understand the meaning of the word.

Of course, enjoying books with a baby looks differently than sharing books with a toddler or preschooler. Even though a baby can't yet say words, he is hearing everything you say and is storing words in his brain...he'll continue to listen intently to you and before you know it, he'll be trying to say these words back to you. Many of you may think your toddler doesn't enjoy books right now, but a toddler enjoys the process of picking a book, independently turning pages, and often doesn't even look at pages in order. Don't let this frustrate you. Instead, enjoy interacting by pointing to pictures and naming what you see, ask questions about the pictures and be ready to enjoy the same book OVER AND OVER AGAIN! This is how a toddler learns best! Often the process is more important than the end game...toddlers rarely want to sit for an entire story...they would much rather exert some control, and you can often expand on the image that you are looking at together by describing it with words and relating the image to something in the child's life. For example, if you see a picture of a fish, you could first prompt, asking, "What is this?" Then, expand by saying, "You're right! Look at that big, shiny goldfish. Can you say goldfish?" You can further ask questions such as, "Do you remember seeing a shiny goldfish?" You may need to help them..."Your cousin has a goldfish at his house. Do you remember feeding it? We looked at the big fish when we went to the zoo together. Can you tell me what other colors of fish you can think of?"

It's helpful to remember the mnemonic, **PEER** for this process: **P**rompt ("What is this?"), **E**valuate ("You're right!" Or "That was a great guess!"), **E**xpand ("It's a big, red ball") and **R**epeat.

For preschoolers, they often have fun reciting a much loved story to you, or perhaps you can ask them to look at a picture and tell you how a character is feeling, or what they think will happen next. The goal is to have the child become the storyteller!

All children love to rhyme and fill in the blanks when it comes to books, so if you're reading a favorite such as Mr. Brown Can Moo, you may start a sentence and let your child fill in the blank. For example, "Mr. Brown can Moo, how about _____?" (*You!*)

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Our local libraries are great resources for books for all ages, and if you haven't been in a while, you may be surprised at the changes you'll find! Our librarians would love for every baby in Tulsa to obtain their own library card and there are no fines charged on children's books these days, so you don't need to stress about a misplaced book that may fall under the bed. One great idea is to have the same tote bag available that goes back and forth to the library. Once a book is enjoyed together, it's placed back in the tote bag, and it's ready to be returned at your next visit.

We'll ask next time we're together if anyone discovered a new library close to their home or had an opportunity to visit! *(Ask parents to share their favorite Tulsa library...Central, Rudisill, Martin)*

Find a time that you can start this book sharing habit, if you aren't already doing it. A couple of books before bedtime works well for many families as a nice transition to sleep. For some, handing a little book to busy hands during diaper changes can be a huge help, and for others, normally wasted time riding in the car or bus can be enjoyed by keeping a few books handy in the diaper bag. Time spent enjoying a book with your little one is always time well spent! Enjoy opening some windows to the world for your little ones this month.