

baby NEWS

Information for parents and caregivers of children ages 0-2

January 2010



Capital District
Child Care Council

Early Language and Literacy Skills in Infants and Toddlers

Early language and literacy skills begin at birth, not traditional reading and writing as with older children, but the emergent skills needed before children learn to read and write. These skills are the early puzzle pieces that form the bigger picture of literacy.

Infants are pre-wired at birth to communicate. During infancy, brain development is occurring at the fastest rate of a person's lifetime. Early caregivers play a critical role in the development of communication skills of infants and toddlers. Infants communicate their needs through cries, expressions, and movements. They quickly discover that parents and caregivers "translate" this communication and respond to their needs.

Emergent literacy refers to everything that children have learned about communication, verbal and non-verbal language during early development. It includes all the experiences that children have had with conversations, stories, books and print right from birth. It is a cognitive skill that develops simultaneously with social and emotional development. It is also dependent upon relationships.

Infants and toddlers build language by practicing simple songs and rhymes, doing finger plays, taking turns, and sharing conversations. Songs and stories that contain rhyming, alliteration, rhythm and repetition will hold a child's attention and help them practice language.

Help a child build literacy skills by:

- Engaging children in conversation. Revisit the day's activities and allow them to interpret and tell their own version.
- Whenever possible, use the child's home language.
- Display photos to highlight daily events, family and friends, add to daily conversation and help children anticipate what comes next.
- Allow babies to physically explore books and look at and recognize familiar stories.

Books for babies should meet certain criteria: they should be readily available, made of cloth and cardboard, and represent the diversity of the child.

Make these super cute, super easy cloth books out of old blue jeans. See other side for instructions.



- Have conversations about books to encourage children to share their thoughts.
- Be sure that reading experiences are a part of the daily schedule.
- Allow toddlers to write and draw, make books, and share their own stories.

Language and literacy skills will develop within the context of a responsive, caring relationship with a parent or caregiver.

The stronger the emotional bond, the stronger the child's motivation for learning. Since competency in communication, language and literacy, develops through adult interactions—there is never a set curriculum. Caregivers must set the pace by following the child's lead and interests.

Strategies for fostering early language and literacy including maintaining a loving and supportive environment for infants and toddlers that is print-rich and uses words and pictures to help communicate new ideas and language. Real

life photos help children build knowledge of the world around them. Allow children to explore books through their whole body, even if mouthing them will eventually ruin them. Never hesitate to read the same book over and over again, as children enjoy all forms of rhyme and repetition. Babies will let you know when they are ready to choose another story.

Infants and toddlers work hard to explore and discover their new world. They depend upon special people in their lives to help them to understand as they observe daily events and learn simple stories. The majority of their learning occurs through everyday interactions and routines with caring adults. Babies use these experiences to make meaning of their life and their family culture. When babies bravely explore safe environments that were planned just for them, caregivers help children become their own storytellers.

Simple to Make Baby Book



Supplies:

Old jeans (or pants), felt or fabric scraps (cut into shapes such as birds, cars, squares, circles), fabric glue, needle, thread, scissors.

Instructions:

1. Cut about 7 inches up from the cuffs of jeans, leaving about a half an inch to an inch seam allowance for the "book binding."
2. With the finished hem of the pant cuff to the right side, glue or sew fabric shapes to the center of the cut piece of denim.
3. Finish the book by cutting a long piece of the jean's side seam and position over cut side of the cuff. Secure pages together by sewing (using outdoor quality thread) or glueing the side seam into place forming a loop at the top.
4. Embellish with buttons, scraps, etc, and check often for safety. Be sure that all materials are safe for babies.

*for no-sew instructions & more book ideas,
call Wendy Sullivan at 426-7181 x352*