

DEAR FAMILIES,

On behalf of the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association, we would like your help in one of the most important projects we've ever undertaken — helping young children learn to read. We all know the important role that reading plays in school and in life. We are now finding that the single most important activity for laying the foundation for literacy and learning to read is reading aloud to children, especially during the pre-school years.

Reading begins in your home as you play the role of your child's first and most important teacher. While having fun as you read to your child, you are “teaching” the basic concepts your child needs in order to understand people, objects, events, thoughts, and feelings. You are also helping develop the language and literacy skills your child needs in order to express these concepts. Included in this booklet you will find some helpful hints for choosing books for children and for reading aloud to children.

While reading aloud from your child's favorite storybook is a wonderful way to spend quality time together and to lay the foundation for language, literacy, and reading, there are a number of other ways you may help your child. You're helping your child when you:

- talk with your child and share stories, ideas, and information through conversation
- let your child see and hear you read and follow directions
- write the words for a picture your child draws
- ask your child to help you make lists and/or keep records
- read a note, memo, or letter you are writing to your child
- let your child see you reading for pleasure and/or business
- point out to your child that you are reading the ingredients or contents of a package or a container
- read signs to your child
- share greeting cards with your child

As you can see, there are many opportunities, throughout the day, for reading to your child. Take advantage of these opportunities and help your child get a head start on learning to read.

CHOOSING BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

■ Birth to One Year

- Durable, “chew-proof” books made of cardboard or cloth with clear, colorful, realistic pictures
- Books of nursery rhymes

■ One to Three Years

- Board and cloth books with pictures toddlers can name
- Mother Goose books
- Books that contain “fun-sounding” words and sentences
- Books that contain words and sentences that are repeated over and over
- Books about familiar people and things such as families, babies, animals, toys, food
- Books that ask children to do something such as “Pat the bunny”

■ Three to Five Years

- Predictable books such as “Brown Bear, Brown Bear”
- Books that contain rhythm and rhyme
- Books that encourage children to have fun playing with words and sounds
- Books that contain a simple storyline or plot
- Books that contain a small amount of print per page; more space devoted to pictures
- Books that focus on children's interests
- Books that are appropriate for the children's vocabulary
- Books that contain pictures that are clear, colorful, and realistic
- Books that you, the reader, will enjoy as well
- Story length that matches children's attention spans

■ Primary School-Age

- Books that contain bright, realistic pictures
- Books that contain more print per page than before
- Books that contain plots that are more involved
- Books about less familiar people and things, such as astronauts, children from foreign lands, experiences they've never had
- Story length that matches children's attention spans

TIPS FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN

■ Begin reading to your child soon after he/she is born.

Remember, children are never too young to spend time with books and have someone read to them, or tell them stories about pictures on a page.

■ Set aside a special read-aloud time each day.

Just before naptime and/or bedtime seem to be especially good times for reading aloud. Young children enjoy “reading” and splashing in the tub with plastic or vinyl books.

■ Remember to make read-aloud time a “snuggle” time

Snuggling together as you share a book with a child is important in many ways.

■ Have a variety of books available for your child.

- Remember to include non-fiction books as your child gets older.
- Choose books about topics your child may be curious about such as “how” or “why” things happen.
- Consider making your own “books” by using photographs, pictures cut from magazines, or pictures you and/or your child draw.

