

RAISING READERS

We all want children to grow up to be readers, and we really do know what children need to be ready to have formal reading instruction in kindergarten and first grade. We can raise readers by following these steps.

1 Talk with children throughout the day every day – The larger a child’s vocabulary is the easier it will be for them to learn how to read in elementary school. Talk all the time – at home, at child care, outside, inside, in stores, in the backyard, at the table, everywhere. Ask questions and listen for the answers. Listen and expand the conversation.

2 Read to your children (including infants) – The best way to grow a child’s vocabulary is reading books every day many times a day from the time they are babies. Let children see you read. Snuggling with children while you read sends the message that reading makes us feel loved and safe. Those feelings will transfer to a love of books. Act out stories to bring them even more alive.

3 Have books at home – The presence of books in the home has a greater influence on a child’s level of education than does the parents income, nationality, or level of education.” (Literati- “This Is Your Child’s Brain On Reading”)

4 Ask older children to read to younger ones – The older children will be proud of their skills. The younger children will want to read like their older brothers, sisters, or friends. (Reading is Fundamental – “Helping Your Children Become Readers”)

5 Go to the library together – Get a library card. Find all kinds of books. Attend story hours and other programs for children.

6 Give children books about their special interests – Do they like animals, sports, or magic? Surprise them with books or magazines about their favorite interests or activities. (Reading is Fundamental – “Helping Your Children Become Readers”)

7 Rhyme and sing –

Rhyming is an important pre-reading skill. Rhymes and songs grow a child’s vocabulary in fun ways. Rhymes teach the sounds of letters in appropriate ways. The old nursery rhymes may seem old fashioned, but children love them and learn so much from hearing and repeating them.

8 Give children experiences – (and it does not have to be an expensive trip to Disneyland). Children learn from being out in their world – a walk around the neighborhood, going to the park or a grocery store, seeing a sunset, a trip to a zoo, hearing a musician, and so much more in their communities. WHY? Children learn from doing and hearing adults describe and discuss what they are all doing. Remember – a rich vocabulary is the foundation for later reading success.

9 Have a print-rich environment – A print-rich environment is one where children interact with many forms of print – shelves labeled with a picture and a word for what goes on the shelf, objects in the space labeled (door), children’s names on their cubbies, and signs. It also is showing children the recipe when you cook or the ingredients written on a box or container. (Kadlic and Lesiak, 2003).

10 Please don't – There are things people do that may be appropriate for older children but are NOT appropriate to do with young children. We want children to want to learn to read when the time is right and not see reading as boring.

- Do not give children worksheets or flashcards. Children learn from eating an apple not coloring one.
- Do not teach young children how to write letters. Many four-year-olds who have large vocabularies and have enjoyed hearing many books read will start to write their names on their own.
- Do not do "letter of the week." Children do not learn letters in isolation (one at a time). They learn them by seeing them in their world and in books.

For information about how to create a space that raises readers, please call Idie Benjamin at idieb@cccwny.org or 914-761-3456.