



The Power of the Read-Aloud: Fact Sheet

“Children exposed to lots of books during their early childhood will have an easier time learning to read than those who are not.”

—Dr. HENRY BERNSTEIN, Harvard Medical School

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud daily, beginning as early as six months of age (2014). As noted in the AAP policy: “those 15-20 minutes spent reading with a child can be the best part of the day. It’s a joyful way to build child-parent relationships and set a child on the pathway to developing early literacy skills.”



“Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they will eventually require for learning to read.”

(Adams, 1994)



Children who are routinely read to day in and day out—and immersed in rich talk about books and the various activities in which they are engaged—thrive. Children with less exposure to books and talk may face learning challenges in school and beyond.

(AAP, 2014; Bernstein, 2010; Cunningham & Zilbulsky, Needlman, 2014)



The brain develops faster than any other time between the ages of zero and three. Because of this, it’s important to foster literacy during the early stages of life. There’s real opportunity in providing parents with books and encouragement to read to their children regularly, sing with their children, and engage their children in conversation—all of which prepares our next generation to be successful in school.

(Phelan, 2011)



Educators and parents alike should feel a sense of urgency, as experiences with books and reading aloud strengthen the neural systems. These systems, which underlie auditory perceptions, attention, and language, develop rapidly during the first five years of life.

(AAP, 2014; Cunningham & Zilbulsky, 2014)



Create a “reading culture” inside the home: cozy places to nestle with books; reading routines throughout the day; dinner table discussions about what family members are reading—including all the different print materials that pour into the house every day. Talk with children about their interests, plan trips to the library, and find books that will support and extend what interests your children most. Make books their first go-to resource

References

- Adams, M. (1994). *Beginning to read: thinking and learning*. MIT Press. American Academy of Pediatricians. (2014). Policy Statement.
- Bernstein, H. (2010). *The importance of reading to your child. A Parent's Life*. Harvard School of Medicine.
- Cunningham, A., & Zibulsky, J. (2014). *Book smart: How to develop and support successful, motivated readers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Dickinson, D., McCabe, A., & Essex, M. (2006). Cognitive and linguistic building blocks of early literacy. In D. Dickinson & S. Neuman (Eds), *Handbook of early literacy research*. (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Mol, S., & Bus, A. (2011). To read or not to read: A meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(2), 267–296.
- Needlman, R. (2014). How a doctor discovered reading. In L. Bridges (Ed.), *Open a world of possible: Real stories about the joy and power of reading*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Neuman, S., & Celano, D. (2012). Worlds apart: One city, two libraries and ten years of watching inequality grow. *American Educator*, 36(3), 13–23.
- Phalen, E. (2011). *Reach Out & Read*. Retrieved from <http://www.reachoutandread.org/about-us/our-organization/national-center-leadership/>.