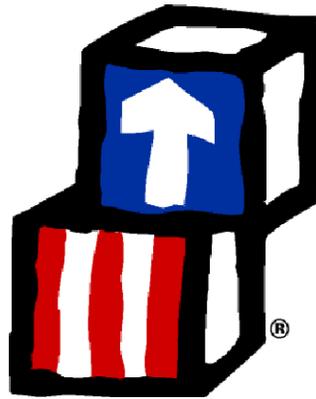




*Presents*

# Building Blocks



A quarterly informational newsletter for parents, grandparents, and caregivers of Head Start children.

## FALL/WINTER 2013

Carol Berray, Newsletter Editor  
Jennifer Colton, Assistant Editor

## Language and Literacy.....our 2013-14 Program Goal



The Leadership Team decided to make Language (listening and speaking) and Literacy (reading and writing) the Program Goal for all areas of Head Start in 2013-14! By doing this we will stay focused on the importance of language and literacy in all we do. Hopefully when you visit the classrooms and sites you will hear adults and children talking and listening, and you will see examples of children developing skills that will help them read and write.

As you know from your Teaching Teams, Family Advocates, Primary Caregivers, and Home Visitors your child is learning new things every day in the program. Do you also realize that your child is learning just as much, if not more every day at home? You are your child's 1<sup>st</sup> and most important teacher and we want to partner with you so that you are confident in building your child's language and literacy skills. This newsletter has many articles that will help you do that and ideas for websites or where to receive information.

There is a great deal of information in the news about children not performing at grade levels in school. Just last week information was released from the *2013 National Assessment for Educational Progress- 4<sup>th</sup> grade* that indicated 43% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders eligible for free/reduced lunches read below grade level; 15% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders NOT eligible for free/reduced lunch read below grade level. This means that 58% of children in 4<sup>th</sup> grade last year were reading below grade level in 4<sup>th</sup> grade! Another statistic says that children in 4<sup>th</sup> grade not reading at grade level are 6 times more likely to drop out of high school than those at or above grade level. Certainly this information means that school districts need to continue to work on teaching in the areas of language and literacy. BUT, it also means that we, as partners in your child's learning, need to do everything we can to develop language and literacy skills early. Did you know that 80% of your child's brain growth occurs before age 3 and 90% before age 5? This means that during these very important years your child is learning at an extremely rapid rate. Talking to/with your child, singing songs, teaching them rhymes and finger plays, reading books, providing them with paper, crayons, pencils and markers, from a very young age and are very, very important. Every time you do these things you are working on your child's school-readiness and helping him/her be ready to speak, read and write. You are even now preparing them to be able to read at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level when they are in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. This success is what we all want for the children!

As partners with you, we know that together we can make a difference for your child. Please let the staff know what supports you need to be your child's most important teacher and how we can help you to extend the learning from our program to your home!

*Bonnie Malakie, Director*



## Recipe for a Good Reader

Contributed by Pam Wadhams,  
Early Childhood Education &  
Disability Services Manager

*Adapted from: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, Educational Partnerships and Family Involvement Unit, Reading Tips for Parents, Washington, D.C., 2003.*

Your child may or may not be reading yet. However, like preparing for a big feast, it is never too early to gather the necessary ingredients. When you read daily with your child, try stirring in these five skills:

1. **Recognizing and using individual sounds to create words, or phonemic awareness.** Help your child to hear sounds in words and learn that words are made up of the smallest parts of sound, or phonemes.
2. **Understanding the relationships between written letters and spoken sounds, or phonics.** Teach your child the sounds individual printed letters and groups of letters make. Knowing the relationships between letters and sounds helps children to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and “decode” new words.
3. **Developing the ability to read a text accurately and quickly, or reading fluency.** Talk with your child about the story. Ask questions about what is happening. As your child learns to read, he / she must learn to read words rapidly and accurately in order to understand what is read. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. When fluent readers read aloud, they read effortlessly and with expression. Readers who are weak in fluency read slowly, word by word, focusing on decoding words instead of comprehending meaning.
4. **Learning the meaning and pronunciation of words, or vocabulary development.** Talk about new and “big” words. Children need to actively build and expand their knowledge of written and spoken words, what they mean and how they are used.
5. **Acquiring strategies to understand, remember and communicate what is read, or reading comprehension strategies.** Ask your child to retell you the story. Children need to be taught comprehension strategies, or the steps good readers use to make sure they understand text. Students who are in control of their own reading comprehension become purposeful, active readers.

Reading with your children daily and giving them practice specific reading ingredients will stir up a lifelong love of reading.

## Daily Literacy Activities



*Contributed by Cheryl Bartz, Batavia Site Coordinator*

Learning happens in many ways, especially in our day-to-day activities. Tasks such as cooking, doing laundry, running errands and surfing the Internet all provide learning opportunities that your family can embrace.

Here are 10 fun and easy ways to make literacy part of your family's daily life.

1. When making your grocery list, have your child write out the items you need to buy.
2. At the store, ask your child to count out the money to make the purchase.
3. Make it a habit to always read a story together at bedtime.
4. When cooking dinner, involve your children in measuring the ingredients. This helps them understand fractions and measurements.
5. Driving is the perfect opportunity to practice literacy. Read signs, billboards and license plates together, and show your children the proper way to read a map.
6. While on the Internet, make time to research something new that your family is interested in. Researching skills are important and help with reading and comprehension.
7. In the car, sing along to songs on the radio. Singing encourages learning patterns of words, rhymes and rhythms, and is strongly connected to language skills.
8. When playing a board game, read the instructions aloud to each other or count how many spaces to travel around the board.
9. Involve your kids when you pay bills. This will teach them strong financial skills early on in life.
10. Children follow by example, so ensure reading is part of your daily life too!

For more family literacy tips, activity ideas and Family Literacy Day® information, please visit:  
**[www.FamilyLiteracyDay.ca](http://www.FamilyLiteracyDay.ca)**

## **Family Community Partnership!**

**Pat McCall-Small, Family/Community Partnerships Manager**

Welcome to the start of a new program year to all families in both Head Start and Early Head Start. As we continue into the program year, you may hear wording such as Parent Involvement and Parent Engagement because it impacts the importance of your family within the program. You may have already heard about being your child's first teacher and how that impacts your child's learning as you engage them in many areas such as play, music, and dance, just to name a few. Included in this area are literacy and the importance of reading/ talking to your child/ren. There are so many studies around that shows the effects of reading to your child from infancy and how that impacts on their development, social and emotional growth as well as their academics when they enter public school. Below are just a couple of ways to engage in reading activities with your children.



Try this challenge during the week or on the weekend: Tell your children about your favorite book when you were a child. Talk about the character, setting, or problem of the story, whatever it was that made you fall in love with the story. This will trigger their enthusiasm for books and sharing their favorite story with you.



Plan a trip to your local Library and enjoy the day with your child, make it an adventure. While there sign up for a library card for yourself and your children let them explore the children's library area and enjoy the day.

There are so many activities you can do together besides what was mentioned, create your own adventure with your family and enjoy the fundamentals of reading.

## Making Healthy Smiles is a Family Project!

Laura Harvey, Health/Nutrition Manager

Good oral health habits make healthy smiles. These habits last a LIFETIME and keeping our mouth healthy is not just good for teeth and gums, either. Studies have shown that good oral health care improves overall health. Children are growing and learning and being as healthy as possible is important throughout these learning years.



### Start Early!

Practicing good oral health care during pregnancy makes certain that babies are born as healthy as can be! A mother's gums and teeth need special attention. Visiting your "dental home" for regular cleanings and following your dentist's recommendations play a key role in making certain your teeth are healthy and your baby is healthy, too!

Once your baby is born and before your child's first tooth appears (between 4-7 months) clean your baby's gums, tongue and inside of cheeks with a damp soft cloth to remove bacteria, especially before sleep and after feeding. \*Remember to never let a baby fall asleep with a bottle of milk or juice, if a bottle is used at bedtime, fill with water only.

Make an appointment and have your child visit the dentist around the age of 1 year to get an early start on healthy smiles. You can bring your baby to your dentist or contact a dentist in the area that is willing to take a peek at your baby's teeth. \*We do have lists available for you should you need assistance with securing a dental home.

Children need to see the adults that take care of them brush and floss, too. Make it a fun time activity that you do together. They will model the behavior of what they see you do, so help them brush and talk about keeping their teeth clean and healthy: Here is a poem you can teach them: I HAVE MY OWN TOOTHBRUSH THAT I USE TWICE A DAY, AND I'M LEARNING TO USE IT AS YOU SHOW ME THE WAY.

Children who begin to see the dentist at an early age will be ready to receive their dental exams, cleaning and fluoride treatments by 3 years of age. At this age children can visit the dentist up to 2 times per year for an exam and cleaning.

Don't forget that you need to follow these simple rules of visiting the dentist, too! All adults need to follow the guidelines of visiting the dentist at least once a year or more often to receive a cleaning and an exam!

Knowing how to make sure you and your family have healthy mouths and teeth will promote good oral health care for all of you!

The Affordable Care Act;  
*What it means for Children and Families.*  
Laura Harvey, Health/Nutrition Manager



Beginning in 2014, 48 million uninsured Americans will have opportunities for health insurance coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

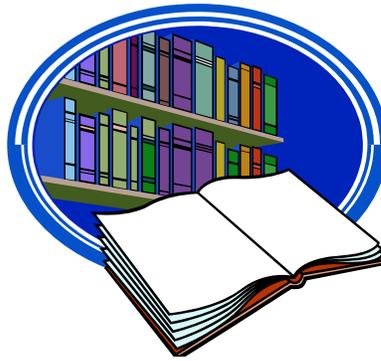
Health and School readiness begin long before a child enters a classroom setting. Health is a foundational aspect of children's ability to learn, develop and thrive. No one plans to get sick or hurt, but most people need medical care at some point. Children who have health insurance generally have better health throughout their childhood and into their teens. They more likely to get the treatment they need when they are sick or injured, receive shots to prevent diseases, get treatment for reoccurring illness such as ear infections and asthma, and get the recommended preventative care to keep them well.

Are you eligible for health insurance coverage? The New Health Insurance Marketplace is the place to find out information about how to apply for coverage, including Medicaid and CHIP. In addition to seeing a doctor when you are sick, you have access to PREVENTIVE CARE without a copayment or coinsurance even if you haven't met your yearly deductible. From mammograms and well-woman checkups to alcohol and tobacco counseling, a preventative health care helps you to stay healthy so that you can take good care of yourself and your family, and the children who are counting on you!

Open enrollment in the Market place started October 1<sup>st</sup> with coverage beginning as soon as January 1, 2014.

HERE ARE THE WEBSITES TO VISIT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT: (<http://www.healthcare.gov> ) or to find help in your area (<http://localhelp.healthcare.gov/>).





## *Thoughts on Reading*

from  
Carol Berray, Human Resources/Administrative Services Manager

Reading has always been a big part of my life. There were teachers in my family and books in my home. My first after-school job at the age of 16 was in the public library, a place that had already become a second home to me. I majored in Library Science in college. I am always in the process of reading a book for pleasure, in addition to the extensive reading I do for my job and to keep up with this world we live in.

My parents read to me from the time I was a very young child. I still remember my favorite books; the ones that fell apart years ago. I read to my own children and to my two nephews, starting when they were infants. My children kept all of their books in the “book box”; a wooden box similar to a toy box. For them it was a treasure chest of things to see and learn and into which they would dive to find just the right book to read before bed each night.

You can Google famous quotes about reading and literacy and find what hundreds of people have said about their importance. The one that speaks to me is:

“You may have tangible wealth untold;  
caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be.  
I had a mother who read to me”.

....Strickland Gillian





## Turn On The Music

Childhood obesity has become a major health problem for today's children.  
Child obesity rates have tripled since the 1970s, from 5% to 15%.  
And over 30% of our children are considered overweight.

Overweight and obesity are hard to treat. It's much easier to prevent weight problems.

Help your child live a long and healthy life - Turn on the music and dance with your children.

Dancing helps to promote a healthy weight for children.

### **ANIMAL DANCE**

Dance like a cat, bird, horse, elephant, snake, frog, bunny or bug.  
Take turns dancing like an animal - Guess which animal they are.

### **WIGGLE DANCE.**

Create your own dance- hop, hop, wiggle, wiggle. Slide and hop, Slide and hop.  
Let your children create their own special dance.

### **MARCHING BAND**

Turn on the music. March around the house. Wave small towels in the air.  
Pretend to play music – hit plastic containers with large spoons, shake containers with dry beans,  
or pretend to blow a horn. March around the table, couch, chairs, and beds.  
Dance and play with your child – you are your child's first and favorite playmate.



*Jackie DeMarco, Nutrition Specialist*

Article published by: *The Well Centered Child*  
Freddie K. Stewart, Training & Development Manager



This article has a bit of a **twist** to it!

*Want to make a **non – reader** out of your child , one who grows up to avoid books at all costs? If you follow these nine strategies, you're sure to succeed! ( On the other hand, if you want your child to be someone who loves reading, keep an eye out for all the **bottom lines**.)*

To make your child **hate** reading:

- 1. Become angry when your child doesn't recognize letters or sounds.** Scold your child, frown , or even sigh with exasperation whenever your child misidentifies a letter or sound. Then make him repeat the correct answer over and over.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Giving a warm, relaxed response to your child's interest in letters creates an atmosphere in which learning is possible.*
- 2. Ignore the skills your child already has. Don't build on them.** Take no notice when your child points out labels on cans. Street signs, or writing on the sides of the buses. Let the opportunity to talk about such symbols pass by.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Commenting on how well your child can recognize pictures and signs helps her realize she's a reader who can connect print and meaning.*
- 3. Quiz your child with meaningless questions when you read a story.** Put him on the spot instead of enjoying a conversation about the pictures and words. Make a pass – fail test out of every encounter with a book.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Talking informally about a story is part of the pleasure of being read to.*
- 4. Don't let your child interrupt or turn pages by herself as you read.** Keep control of the book and the pace at which you read it.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Being part of the process of reading helps your child gain confidence and understanding of how books work.*
- 5. Keep the TV on at all times.** Make sure your child spends most of day passively watching a glowing screen instead of playing. Turn on the TV to keep your child from making a mess.  
*But ...if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Having time for play and other real – life experiences helps children comprehend what they read.*
- 6. Once your child has learned to read, stop reading aloud to her.** Don' read aloud to a new reader. Limit the level of literature she enjoys to what she can read herself.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Reading aloud to your school – age child can increase her vocabulary and awaken an interest in more challenging books.*
- 7. Never let your child see you enjoy reading.** Don't read books, magazines , or newspapers in front of child. Read where your child can't see you so that he doesn't catch on that reading is a pleasure.  
*BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember: Seeing you read encourages your child to become a reader.*
- 8. Keep crayons, pencils, markers, and paper out of reach.** Make sure that materials for scribbling, drawing, and writing simply aren't available. Dismiss her marks on paper as "only scribbles."
- 9. Emphasize what is measurable, rather than what is meaningful.** Make your child anxious about how many letters he recognizes, the exact number of books he's read, and what reading group he's likely to end up in.

**BUT... if you want your child to be a reader, remember:** *Rich pleasurable experiences with the printed word will motivate your child to the very thing that enhances reading skills: Read. And read. And read some more.*

The following is an excerpt from a brochure published by ZERO TO THREE through the sponsorship of the Met Life Foundation.

## Learning Through Melodies and Movement

Music can be the spark that ignites all areas of development –intellectual, social and emotional, motor, **language and overall literacy**. In fact, music is a great organizer that helps the body and the mind work together. Young children are attracted to musical patterns and structure.

Music provides an opportunity for your child to interact with other children and loved ones in joyous ways. Because music is such a rich learning experience, the more children are involved with it , the more they learn.

### What to Expect



#### 0 -9 months:

- Babies are able to recognize familiar melodies long before they understand the meaning of words.
- In a kind of musical “conversation,” babies imitate the sounds of their parents through their own cooing and vocalizations. They wait for their turn and respond during pauses in the “dialogue.”
- Babies often respond to singing and talking by waving their arms, kicking their feet, and smiling. These are babies’ early and very significant communications about their thoughts. (“Daddy, I love this “Don’t stop.”) and feelings (“I’m so happy, Mommy. I love being with you”).
- Babies catch on quickly, picking up the patterns of movement that accompany songs and dances.



#### 9 –18 months:

- As soon as they’re able, children start to move to the beat .
- Making music together – sing – along, for instance – is a fun way for children of this age to connect to each other, and to learn about the patterns and sequences of the music and language in general.
- Children love to fill in the blanks of familiar songs: “Mary has a little lamb\_\_\_\_\_!”
- They love to explore all the ways they can make sounds with their own voices with objects. This is a great way for them to feel confident that that they can make things happen.



### 18 to 36 months:

- Music builds memory skills, as when a child learns to repeat the words of a song.
- Toddlers love to dance with each other, which reinforces both movement and socialization.
- Toddlers also dance with dolls and stuffed animals, imitating the kind of involvement they have with their own caregivers.
- Young children often make up songs to accompany their activities.
- Toddlers are quick to associate specific songs with specific activities and images. (For example, singing, "Goodbye Miss Tanya, we will miss you so ... "when picking a child up from her sitter). This ability to associate songs with activities means children are making a big learning leap. Now they better understand how things are connected and can use music themselves as a way to deal with transitions.

## "Miss Mary Mack , Mack Mack !"



### What You Can Do

- When you sing to your baby watch how he learns. Does he imitate you and eagerly wait for your next gesture and sound? Listen for how your toddler the ups and downs of the melody and even some of the lyrics.
- Music and dance go hand-and- hand. Dance with your child to a favorite recording. Make it more interesting by changing your movement when the music changes.
- Toddlers love to play circle games like "Ring Around the Rosy." It is especially fun when you invite one or two friends over to play.
- Play musical games with toddlers, like "Statue or "Freeze." Make a conga line through your living room with anyone who's around. Use your imagination.
- Music is a great way to make – everyday activities more fun and easy. Make up some songs about tooth brushing getting dressed and going to potty.
- When reading books that rhyme, "sing" the words. Stories can be made more musical with sound effects and instruments.