Department of Children & Youth

The Science of Reading and Early Literacy

Science of Reading

A large body of research that informs how we teach reading. Research spans several decades and multiple disciplines. Findings identify five essential pillars for reading.

Early Literacy

Early literacy skills include learning about letters, sounds, and how print works. These skills begin developing before birth as the brain forms new pathways specific to reading.

Pillars of Reading

- Phonemic awareness: hearing and playing with sounds in words.
- Phonics: connecting letters and sounds to spell words.
- Vocabulary: the words we use to communicate with others.
- Fluency: automatically recognizing words and reading with expression.
- Comprehension: understanding written text.

Language

Early language skills are the foundation for learning to read! Children have to understand spoken communication in order to make sense of the words they read.

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SCIENCE OF READING

Early Literacy

Alphabet knowledge

Learning about letter names, shapes, and sounds is a critical foundation for reading and writing.

Playing with sounds

Hearing and separating sounds in words is the most important skill for learning to read and spell.

Understanding print

Reading from left to right and from top to bottom of the page are fundamental to reading and writing.

SUPPORTING INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Talk and encourage children to imitate speech sounds.
- Describe what you see and do to develop language skills.
- Sing songs and play rhyming games.
- Read books together. Point to the words as you read.
- Share stories and ask questions.
- Expand on children's short responses or vocalizations with complete sentences.

SUPPORTING PRESCHOOLERS

- Have frequent conversations and take multiple turns in each conversation.
- Play games like "I Spy" to build vocabulary.
- Point out letters and words in the environment.
- Talk about books you and your child have read. Connect them to real life events.
- Play rhyming games and match words that start with the same sound.
- Write a grocery list or send a postcard.

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