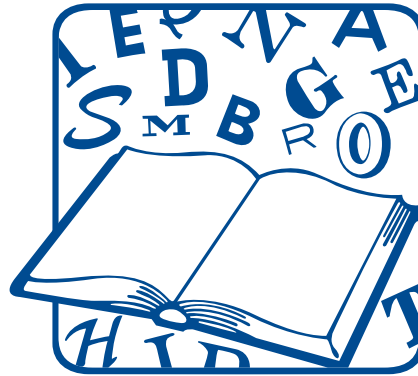


PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ♦ Summer 2010

It's Summertime: Get Ready...Set...and Read!

Summer offers many unique opportunities to weave literacy into everyday activities with your child. Beach trips, swimming in a pool or family barbecues provide ideal opportunities for conversation, book reading and looking at letters – skills that will help your child become a reader and writer later in life. Try some of these tips for making your young child's summer full of literacy fun.



- 1) **Be a reader yourself.** When you read newspapers and books and write letters and lists, you show your young child how reading and writing are useful. By demonstrating why reading and writing are important, you will motivate your child to become a reader and writer.
- 2) **Set aside a consistent time each day for reading aloud.** Choose a read-aloud time that fits your family's summer schedule, and stick to it every day. Your baby, toddler or young child will look forward to this special time together.
- 3) **Connect read-aloud choices to summer activities.** Read your child a book about the beach, such as "Sea, Sand, Me!" before or after a beach trip, or read "The Very Lonely Firefly" after your child discovers fireflies at a family cookout. When you read and discuss books about things your child has experienced, you help him learn important vocabulary and extend his understanding of experiences.
- 4) **Check out summer programs at your local public library.** Many feature special story times, singalongs and puppet shows during the summer. These programs offer fun opportunities for your child to expand his language- and literacy-related skills.
- 5) **Look at letters and words as you enjoy summer activities.** As you walk to the park, point out stop signs and letters in street signs. When you visit the local pool, point out the list of pool rules. Let your child draw and write with chalk on the sidewalk. By drawing your child's attention to print and letters, you teach her about specific letters and words while pointing out the many uses of print.
- 6) **Take books along on outings.** Pack some board books in your beach bag or picnic basket, and bring a stack of books on long car rides. You and your child can enjoy books together anywhere you go this summer.

(This information was provided by PBS Parents. Visit them online at <http://www.pbsparents.org>.)

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY FOR MOTHERS AND TODDLERS SPONSORED BY MU

The Department of Communication Science and Disorders at the University of Missouri seeks mothers and toddlers (36 months or younger with a diagnosis of autism) to participate in a study on child-directed speech. The study's purpose is to improve understanding of the nature of the speech and language parents use with typically developing toddlers and toddlers with autism. Mothers and their children will participate in two sessions lasting about one hour each. During the sessions, mothers and toddlers will be videotaped at home as they play, read books and go about their normal routines. Participants will receive a small gift at the end of each session to thank them for participating. To learn more about the study, e-mail Kathy Brady at childlangstudy@missouri.edu, or call the MU Child Language Lab at 573-882-7428.

A Missouri Family's Story

By Naty of Joplin, Mo.

I am the proud mother of three beautiful children: two boys, ages 10 and 6, and my beautiful 3-year-old girl. My daughter was born with Down syndrome, and her overall health has been good (with the ups and downs of cold seasons). We moved to Missouri in October 2008 from Queens, N.Y. At first I was worried because I didn't know what to expect from the agencies that offer early intervention in the state of Missouri. When I got in touch with the service coordinator, it was a pleasant surprise because she was very helpful in letting me know what our options were. The people who have worked with my daughter have been a great help in improving her daily life skills, and the team has been very understanding of her needs.

One of the biggest problems I've had with my daughter is getting her to keep her tongue inside her mouth with her mouth closed. Her speech therapist taught me facial massages I could do in order to strengthen the muscles in my daughter's face. Thanks to that, we have almost accomplished our goal. My daughter has days when she decides it's funny to play with her tongue, but for the most part she has learned how to keep her tongue inside her mouth.

We have also had trouble with her communication. Before, if I didn't understand what she wanted, there would be a tantrum. My daughter started to learn basic signs, and the providers gave me a pamphlet with the signs she was learning. It has been a great improvement! Now she is able to let me know her needs in a more appropriate manner.

I truly believe that First Steps (and other early intervention programs) makes a huge difference in the lives of children with special needs and their families.

Backwards Watercolors



YOU'LL NEED:

- White paper
- Paintbrush
- Water
- Markers

DIRECTIONS:

Have your child apply water to paper with a paintbrush, covering the entire sheet. Then, have your child draw and color on the wet paper with markers. The colors will run and mix to create a great-looking picture!

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