

*Especially for parents of young children!*

# Homespun Fun

*Literacy Learning Experiences*

Everyday family life is filled with moments when you can spark your baby's interest in talking, reading, and writing. Make your home a place where he can learn the joys of books, stories, and conversation!

## What is the practice?

Chances to share books, babble and "talk" to others, play fingerplays, and enjoy sound and word games help babies build skills they need to learn to read, write, and talk. We call these different kinds of activities **literacy-rich home experiences**.

## What does the practice look like?

An infant snuggles in an adult's lap as they share a picture book. An infant and parent laugh as they play peek-a-boo. An infant in a highchair at the dinner table listens to her older brothers chat about their day at school. An infant draws swirls with his finger in a puddle of pudding or yogurt. These are just a few of the literacy-rich experiences you might see in households in your community.



## How do you do the practice?

Babies benefit from experiences that create interest in reading, talking, and writing. These should be activities that your child finds fun and interesting, but don't overdo it! A few highly interesting activities are better than too many not-so-interesting things to do.

- Published and homemade picture books, ABC books, talking books, photo-album books, and the like are all great bets for building a baby's interest in stories.
- Read to your baby any time she seems interested. Find favorite books and let her touch, point, show, and babble as you share them together.
- Play lap games and fingerplays together. Sing nursery rhymes and made-up songs with your child.
- Talk to your child while you are changing diapers or cooking meals. Include your child when you talk with other people. Ask simple questions like "What do you think about that?" It isn't important that your child understand what is being said. The important thing is making your child part of the activity.
- Let your child try finger drawing with pudding, yogurt, and fingerpaint. Involve your child in activities like watching you make a shopping list or write a note or letter.
- Encourage your child to play with alphabet toys that make sounds when shaken or dropped.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child try to communicate with sounds or hand motions?
- Does your child know the words that "come next" in a story or nursery rhyme?
- Does your child show interest in trying to draw with his or her fingers?

# Take a look at more touch-and-feel play

## *Reach for Reading*

Susan became interested in books and other reading matter not long after she was able to reach for and hold things with both hands. Looking at pictures of familiar things and having mom or dad read stories to her are just a couple of the reading activities she enjoys. Susan's parents want to support her interest in books and reading. They make sure she gets to play with reading materials every day. They give Susan easy access to board books, cloth books, homemade picture-album books, magazines, talking books, and other reading and storytelling materials in their home. Mom and Dad watch for chances to use Susan's interests as they read to her, tell her stories, and have her become as involved as possible in these activities.



## *All Kinds of Writing*

Landon, age 14 months, has grown very interested in watching his mother draw and write. Mom tries to find all kinds of ways for Landon to join in these activities. She encourages him to try to "write" on his own. He may only be able to scribble, but he loves "writing with Mom." She lets him use crayons and markers while she is writing a note or making a shopping list. She lets him draw with finger paints in the bathtub before having a bath. He gets to scribble with big pieces of chalk on the sidewalk outside their house. He even "types" on the family's computer. As Landon does any of these things, Mom talks about what he is doing. She asks questions that help keep him involved in all kinds of pre-writing activities.

## *Tried-and-Tested Fun*

Infants like David, who is blind, and Sarah, who cannot hear, still enjoy traditional lap games, nursery rhymes, and fingerplays. These activities let babies listen to sounds and words, interact with their parents and other people, express wants and needs using gestures and sign language, and learn the basics of taking turns in conversations. Both David's and Sarah's parents involve their children in lots of these kinds of play. As they play together, the parents talk about everything that is going on. They use simple words, signs, and sentences that David and Sarah have learned and understand.

