

Reading

What an exciting time a year it is to promote literacy in your home. Print awareness is an important part of early childhood literacy and young children should associate reading and writing as an important part of daily life. Parents can model the importance of literacy by having newspapers, magazines, and books in the home. Parents can also model the importance of literacy by reading at home. When your child sees you reading a cookbook, reading holiday cards, using the phonebook, or reading the Sunday newspaper, you are being a literacy role model! It is vital that your child makes a connection of the importance of literacy in the home so your child will know the significance of being able to read, write, and communicate.

During the holiday season, many families send cards of good cheers to friends and family! Use this time to model literacy in your home by reading holiday cards to your children and letting your children open the cards. Take time to let your children describe what they see on the card. Encourage them to expand their thoughts when describing what they see. While sending out your own cards, ask your child if there is anyone he would like to send a holiday card to. Encourage your child to write their name on the inside of the card. Use these moments to promote the importance of reading and writing.

The days have grown shorter now and winter is knocking on our door. It will be too dark and too cold to spend evenings playing outside; use the extra indoor hours reading aloud to your child. Reading a book to your child helps build your child's vocabulary, promotes print awareness, and promotes reading as an enjoyable activity! Make it fun! While reading, use silly voices, retell a story using puppets, or read in a fun place! Let your child join in the reading. If your child does not read, let him tell you the story by explaining the picture. Remember to pause and ask questions while reading aloud to your child. Also, answer any questions your child may have.

Some fun activities you and your child can do to promote literacy in the home include...

- Reading aloud by the fireplace
- Creating books from pictures in magazines, cards, or family pictures
- Writing stories that your child dictates to you or write stories about your child
- Visit story time at your library or family bookstore
- End each night with special one on one time reading your favorite seasonal books

Encourage literacy in your home by talking and reading with your children. If you have any questions or want to learn more about early childhood literacy and school readiness, please contact Project S.E.E.D at 601-266-5163. Project SEED is a collaborative initiative between the Hattiesburg Mayor's Council for Early Learning Opportunities and The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies. Project SEED is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families (Grant # 90L00134/01).

Alicia Westbrook, M.S. Early Intervention and Elizabeth Beavers, M.S. Special Education