

Building a foundation for academic success: tips for preparing our littlest learners

September is BACK TO SCHOOL month, as well as International Literacy Day on Sept. 8th, and a lot of attention is focused on getting back into the swing of things with our older children. But let's not forget the little ones and the preparation we can give them from infancy to establish a foundation for academics and an enjoyment of learning. Children's language development grows rapidly from ages 1 month – 2 years, making this a prime time for introducing them to the world of books.

- Start reading with your child when they are infants; this is a wonderful bonding experience and a way to introduce new vocabulary and concepts.
- Read often and regularly – not just for bedtime! Limit a child's screen time and use books instead. Children love to be independent and read "on their own" - flipping the pages, manipulating flaps, and "reading" their favorite stories.
- Let your child help select the books; this helps them feel empowered and gives them a chance to make choices.
- Repeat favorite stories with your children when reading – while it may be boring to you, repetition is a key foundation to learning, gives children confidence that they can anticipate endings, and they can practice important reading comprehension skills (such as summarizing the story, pulling out key details from memory, organizing materials (sequencing) and more) when you ask them questions about the story. *You'll be amazed what they can share with you!*
- Get the whole family involved! Reading can help foster strong family relationships.
- Take regular trips to the library – now with many libraries going "Fine Free", there's even more of an incentive to take advantage of this free, local resource. Look up the calendar of programs and activities – there is so much to participate in at your local library; fun for the whole crew!
- Model the importance of reading in your own life – have a variety of print materials available (i.e. newspaper, magazines, books, maps, recipes, etc.) and encourage children to interact with them. Show them when you are reading directions, signs, their name, and more. Let them know that reading is all around them!
- Read about.... reading! Books such as "Lola at the Library" by Anna McQuinn, "Look!" by Jeff Mack, "How Rocket Learns to Read" by Tad Hills, and "Wild about Books" by Judy Sierra are just a few suggestions to get you started! Ask your local librarian for more!
- Numeracy skills can also be developed and supported with these ages groups – try "seeing numbers everywhere" and using flash cards or picture books to count objects (this strategy is proven to have greater effect on numeracy skills compared with counting actual objects).

For more information on local literacy resources for youth, contact the Family Reading Partnership www.familyreadingpartnership.org, the Village at Ithaca www.villageatithaca.org, or your local schools or libraries.

If you or someone you know struggles with reading or math as an adult, there are resources to help. Check in to your local Literacy Volunteers program or Adult Education classes for support – it is never too late to improve your ability to read, write or use math. To get started, check out Tompkins Learning Partners – 607-227- www.tlpartners.org or TST BOCES Adult Education – www.tstboces.org.

Tips adapted from: https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/raising-a-lifelong-reader-tips-for-reading-with-your-child?fbclid=IwAR2EC_xIJYQ7rniftAC-2ua96B6Gk_oY3i2BkBPIMUIzRSZsvrz61fghx5Q

Monthly Messages are brought to you by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department, a proud partner of The Community Coalition for Healthy Youth.

If you have further questions or comments about this message or would like information on how to become involved with the Community Coalition for Healthy Youth, please email kshanks@tompkins-co.org.

