

Reading Aloud for Young Children's Enrichment

Why are so many children deficient in the skills that are critical to school readiness? Children's experience with books plays an important role.

Many children enter school with thousands of hours of experience with books. Their homes contain hundreds of picture books. They see their parents and brothers and sisters reading for pleasure.

Other children enter school with fewer than 25 hours of shared book reading.

There are few if any children's books in their homes. Their parents and siblings aren't readers. Picture book reading provides children with many of the skills that are necessary for school readiness: vocabulary, sound structure, the meaning of print, the structure of stories and language, sustained attention, the pleasure of learning, and on and on. Preschoolers need food, shelter, love; they also need the nourishment of books.¹

Children start to gain awareness of printed words and that they have meaning when parents point out words in books and on labels and signs. Children start to use visual and context cues to understand words, such as seeing the word "milk" on the milk container as a grandmother explains that she is pouring milk on the cereal. Over time, children learn the letters of the alphabet. Eventually, they connect letters to speech sounds. While often parents feel like their child "suddenly" learns to read, the child is actually building on years of informal and playful engagement with adults.



Contact Durham's Partnership for Children, to volunteer, and to receive reading materials, driving directions to centers, and other information. Volunteer (s) need to be, enthusiastic, lively, outgoing, and able to **CAPTURE YOUNG CHILDREN'S MINDS!**

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¹ Grover J. Whitehurst, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

FACT Birth to age five are by far the most important years for every child's social, intellectual and emotional growth.