



Supporting Early Learners

published by

Partners in Learning

Dear Parents,

This complimentary newsletter has been written for parents whose children are just beginning their Kindergarten year. Keep in mind the following guidelines:

- little people have little attention spans
- reading aloud develops vocabulary and builds background knowledge
- take time to relax and enjoy shared experiences
- children learn through play & activities that are personally important to them
- conversations promote good listening and speaking skills.

Partners in Learning believes that children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work in partnership to provide supportive learning environments.

Bev DeMonyé has wide experience as a preschool, primary, and intermediate classroom teacher and in teaching children requiring support. She has a Master's Degree in Literacy and a Diploma in Special Education. Bev has also taught in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

Gloria Gustafson has taught at all elementary levels as a classroom teacher and has experience working with parents and teachers as a District Consultant. She has a Master's Degree in Elementary Education and has taught in the Faculty of Education and in Field Programs at Simon Fraser University.

We look forward to the 2010/2011 school year and working with parents and children again. Please see the last page of this newsletter for a description of the four newsletters **Partners in Learning** will publish during the coming school year.

Have a wonderful year!



Bev Gloria

The ABCs of Supporting Early Learners



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A is for **alphabet**. Children need to know upper and lower case letters and be able to match them. Children love to create a personal alphabet book using photographs and magazine pictures.

B is for **bedtime**. Keep to an established bedtime routine that includes a read-aloud and time for children to look at books on their own before lights are out. This helps end the day on a pleasant note.

C is for **connections**. Children are most interested in reading and writing about themselves and what is of interest to them. This varies from child to child and over time. Children need to make connections between their real life experiences and what they are reading, viewing, and writing. Prompts such as: 'Does this remind you of . . .?' encourage the making of these connections.

D is for **decoding** words. Children figure out words as they read by recognizing words from memory, sounding out (phonics), and using prediction clues from pictures, diagrams, background knowledge, and sentence structure. Good readers use these as a set of collective tools to decode words.

E is for **eating** healthy foods. The Canada Food Rules are a great starting point. Children can be involved in planning and preparing meals and snacks. Don't forget the water!

F is for **feelings**. Feeling charts with pictures help children become aware of what they are feeling and why. Children feel: sad, tired, excited, angry, content, happy, surprised, irritated, afraid and so do the characters they read and write about.

G is for **games** and puzzles. What better way to promote oral language (listening and speaking), social skills (taking turns and coping with not winning), and learning skills (perseverance and learning to deal with a task that is a bit difficult)!

H is for **helping**. Develop independence using the 'I Do, We Do, You Do' learning formula. We show children how to do something, next we do it with them, and then we provide opportunities for them to do it on their own so they get good at it. This develops confidence and self-esteem!

I is for **interactive reading**. Conversations before, during, and after reading help young children make sense of what they are reading or hearing. This works for viewing television as well.

J is for **juggling** time. Children can be included in the decisions of daily routines so they learn how to prioritize time and create a balance between work and play. Good work ethics begin early.

K is for **knowledge**. New knowledge is based on making connections to what we already know or have experienced. Previewing titles and illustrations before reading makes prior information available to build on.

L is for **labelling**. When children are drawing they can be encouraged to tell us words to add as labels for their pictures. Parents or children can do the printing. Labels are everywhere!

M is for **measuring**. Have fun with measuring tapes, calendars, clocks, timers, scales, thermometers, odometers, pedometers, and coins so children learn through real life experiences how we measure. Cooking and baking provide wonderful opportunities!

N is for **numeracy**. Real life materials and situations help children develop the vocabulary and understanding of: one more or less, equal to, add to, take away, subtract from, counting, patterns, how long, how heavy, how tall, how much, heavier, lighter, the same, yesterday, today, tomorrow, soon, later, next, morning time, lunch time, evening, night, pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies, toonies, circle, square, triangle, rectangle, over, under, beside, near, far, left, right, bigger, smaller, usually, never, always, and sometimes.

O is for **oral language**. We learn and share information through speaking and listening. Children need adults to model and teach them how to be respectful speakers and listeners.

P is for **practice**. Learners need practice with support as well as lots of independent practice to become confident and competent. Just like learning to ride a bike: skills, understandings, and practice are all necessary.

Q is for a **questioning** mind. Prompts such as: 'I wonder why?' 'How does that work?' and 'Can you tell me?' encourage children to develop a sense of curiosity about the world around them.

R is for **reading**. Children need to be read to, support to read books they are struggling with, and lots of opportunities to read on their own. Take advantage of environmental print in the home and on the road.

S is for **spelling**. Nothing improves spelling more than reading because each time children see words spelled correctly it reinforces conventional spelling. Learning keyboarding skills and spelling computer games are a fun way to provide spelling practice.

T is for **talk**. Listening and speaking skills can be encouraged by using open ended prompts such as: 'Tell me more about that.' 'Can you explain that?' 'What else can you tell me about that?' 'That is so interesting.' and 'I don't quite understand.'

U is for **unique**. Each child's learning journey is unique. Children learn at different rates and in different ways. Learning is hard work and they need our understanding, patience, and support.

V is for **visiting** what is available: libraries, museums, school districts, and community centres offer options for learning. Visit www.amphi.com/~psteffen/prireading.html as it provides an index of reading sites for primary grades with direct links to each one.

W is for **writing**. Postcards, pen pals, journals, keyboarding skills, travel notes, shopping lists, party planning, family messages, thank you notes, schedules of chores, photo albums with labels or anecdotes are fun ways to demonstrate that writing has a purpose and is enjoyable.

X is for **eXercise**. Exercise is vital for good brain and body functioning. Cross-over exercises are those that include arms and legs crossing over the midline. These types of exercises help both sides of the brain to get ready for learning.

Y is for **your** job; my job. Age appropriate jobs for children include: making a sandwich, preparing a simple breakfast or snack, setting the table, making their bed, putting toys away, organizing belongings, dressing independently, tying shoelaces, separating clothes for washing, folding clothes. Contributing to family life helps children develop self-worth, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

Z is for **z-z-z-z**. Children require different amounts of sleep. Make sure you and your child get enough. No one functions well when tired!

Upcoming Partners in Learning Newsletters

There will be two fall issues about Language Arts with a focus on reading.

There will be two spring issues about the writing process.

Each issue will share practical suggestions to support children's learning in the home environment and include a regular section on numeracy, questions parents often ask, and recommended resources.

You are welcome to email us at learningtoread@telus.net if you have any questions you would like us to address in future issues.

Our Workshops

We offer three workshops during the school year:

- Supporting Preschool Learners
- Supporting Kindergarten Learners
- Supporting Grade One Learners

Each workshop can be presented as a parents-only workshop **or** as a workshop with parents and children attending as co-participants. Please contact us at learningtoread@telus.net for further information.



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Please make cheques payable to Gloria Gustafson and mail with this form to: Gloria Gustafson, 12225 Gardiner St., Surrey, BC, V4A 3C3. Issues will be emailed to you in October, November, February, and April.