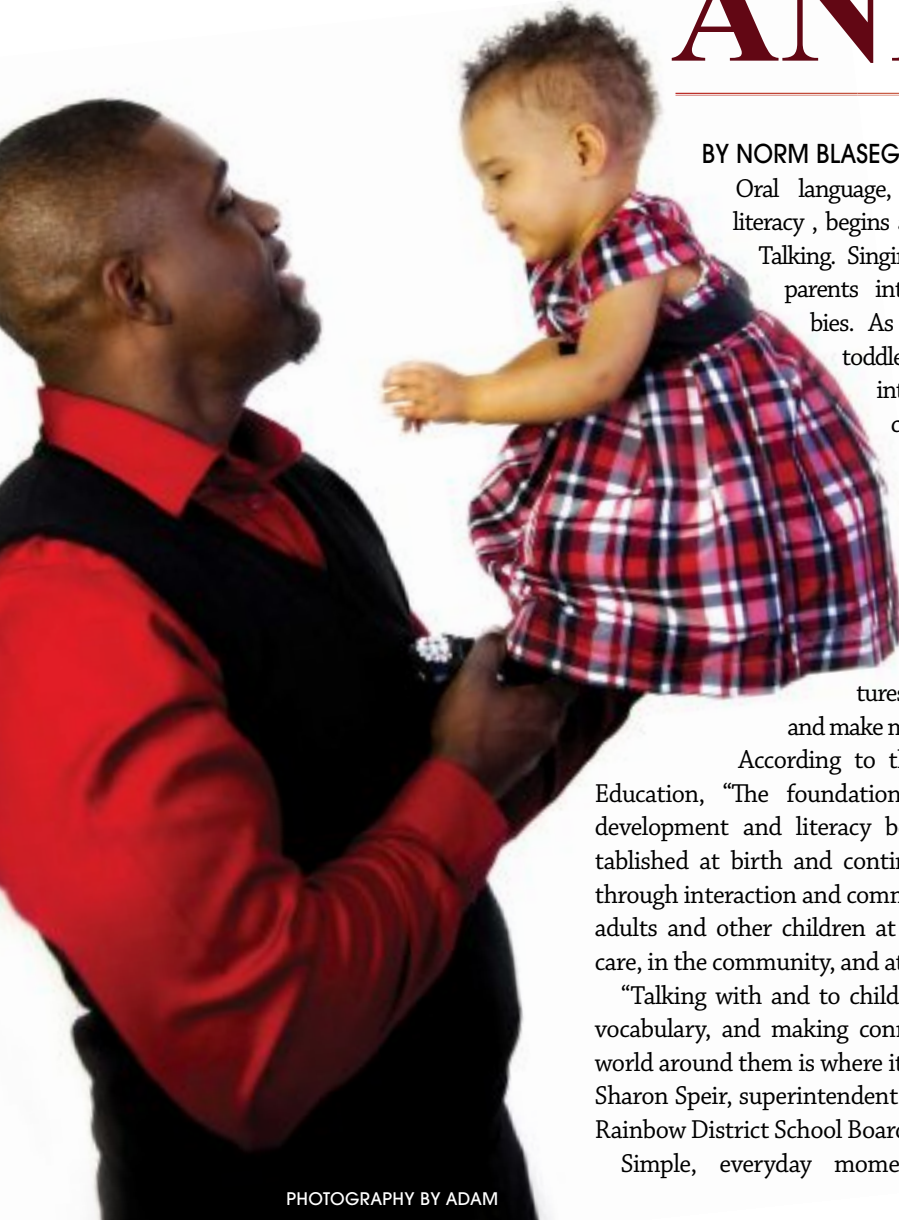


# Parents, children AND BOOKS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM

BY NORM BLASEG

Oral language, the basis for literacy, begins at birth. Smiling.

Talking. Singing. This is how parents interact with babies. As babies become

toddlers, the level of interaction increases. Pointing.

Describing.

Explaining.

Children recognize

letters, make

sounds,

associate pictures with words,

and make meaning.

According to the Ministry of Education, “The foundations of language development and literacy begin to be established at birth and continue to be built through interaction and communication with adults and other children at home, in child care, in the community, and at school.”

“Talking with and to children, developing vocabulary, and making connections to the world around them is where it all starts,” says Sharon Speir, superintendent of schools with Rainbow District School Board.

Simple, everyday moments encourage

literacy: making a list; following a recipe; making sense of print in the environment. Books also play a critical role in literacy development. The importance that parents place on books and other forms of literacy has a powerful impact.

“As role models, parents instill values in children,” says Speir. “When they introduce books at an early age, they demonstrate this is something they think is important.”

When parents enjoy books with children, it builds a positive relationship between children and books.

“There’s nothing we can do in school that can replace the special bond that is created when a child reads a book on a parent’s lap,” says Speir.

The bond between children and parents is more powerful than the bond between children and technology.

Rainbow District School Board recommends parents make reading a regular part of the daily routine. Choose a quiet environment, slow things down, create a comfortable zone, and warm up to a good book.

When we read with children, we develop in them, at the earliest of ages, a love for the written word. ■

*Norm Blaseg is the director of education at Rainbow District School Board.*

## LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Here are some tips from Sudbury’s BestStart that help to build a positive relationship between you, your child and books:

**Start early:** Introduce books to babies. Share books when they wake up, during bath time, and just before bed. Keep a variety of books in the diaper bag.

**Read often:** If children see parents enjoying books, they will also develop a love for reading.

**Look at the pictures:** Sharing books involves more than reading the words. Explain the pictures, describe the images, and talk about what’s happening on each page. Make connections.

**Don’t give up:** Babies like to hold books, chew books, and throw them around. It’s important to remember that baby is developing a relationship with the books.

When baby loses interest in the story, talk about the photos.

### Above all, have fun!

For more on literacy development, visit [rainbowschools.ca](http://rainbowschools.ca) and click on “Parents” to access BestStart information on building language and literacy at home.

Parents can also download a series of literacy tip sheets for reading at home produced by Rainbow District School Board and its parent involvement committee with funding from the Ministry of Education Parent Engagement Office.