

Literacy Development

from Birth to Age Three



For more information on family literacy, please contact us



www.nwt.literacy.ca



NWT Literacy Council

Literacy Development **from Birth to Age Three**

Based on the Nipissing Developmental Screen

March 2011

Literacy Development from Birth to Age Three

The NWT Literacy Council has developed this booklet to help parents and other caregivers understand children's literacy development at different ages and stages, and how they can support it.

The first three years of their lives are very important in children's development. During that time, children's brains develop at an amazing rate. Parents and other family members have a key role to play in early development.

We used to think that literacy development belonged mostly in school, when children learned to read and write. Now we know that the foundation for literacy development happens much earlier – some people say it starts in the womb. It happens through children interacting with adults and older children. It happens through their play. And it happens through their experiences with literacy resources such as stories, songs, rhymes, crayons and paper.

Early literacy development is not about learning to read in a formal way...

- It's about helping children make sense of their world by developing strong oral language skills.
- It's about valuing the home language and culture as the building blocks for literacy development.
- It's about providing lots of different experiences for children to help them explore literacy, for example reading, singing, storytelling, dancing, doing crafts, going out on the land, spending time with Elders, etc.
- It's about providing lots of positive interactions for young children with adults and older children.
- It's about providing an environment for children that is rich in literacy resources.
- It's about modeling language and literacy for young children to copy.

It's important to remember that all children are unique. They all develop at their own pace, so ages and stages are only a general guide.

2

months



Talk to your baby about everything around you.

Talk to your baby in your first language.

Babies...

- Absorb the sounds and rhythms of the language around them.
- Recognize and respond to their parents' voices.
- Make a variety of sounds, like coos and gurgles.
- Like to be held close and cuddled.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Talk, sing, say rhymes or make up songs so that your baby can hear the sound and rhythm of your voice.
- Play lullaby music to calm your baby.
- Tell or read stories to your baby.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Tell your baby stories from your own life and experiences, especially in your first language.
- Sing or play music like lullabies to calm and relax your baby.
- Look at and sing lullabies in books.
- Say simple rhymes.

Simple Baby Rhyme

The Moon is Round

The moon is round,
as round can be.

Two eyes, a nose
and a mouth

Like me!

4 months



Babies like books with strong contrast like black and white or bright colours.

Babies...

- Respond to sounds, especially people's voices, and like their parents' voices the most.
- Like to look, reach and touch things.
- Are ready to begin looking at books.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Hold your baby close and talk to your baby face to face.
- Respond to your baby's sounds and actions by smiling and talking so that your baby knows you're listening.
- Clap your baby's hands together and play rhyming games.
- Use stories and songs to create quiet time for your baby and make her feel safe and secure.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Make a family book and show your baby the pictures.
- Read easy to hold board books or soft cloth books to your baby.
- Listen to children's CDs that have fun rhymes and songs on them.
- Show your baby books that have large, clear pictures of familiar objects.
- Go to a family literacy rhyming program.



6 months



Babies enjoy repetitive stories and rhymes and especially love action rhymes.

Babies...

- Will begin to use repetitive sounds, like 'ma', 'ba', etc.
- Like to listen to the same songs and rhymes over and over again.
- Like to look at big, bright pictures.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Imitate your baby's sounds, like a conversation.
- Name objects in pictures or things around the house.
- Tell the same stories, rhymes and songs over and over again.
- Let your baby hold and touch books (don't worry if she chews them!)

Tips to support literacy development...

- Give your baby cloth books, board books and bath books that she can chew on.
- Babies like books with different textures that they can touch.
- Babies enjoy repetitive rhymes and stories because they like familiar things.

Action Rhyme

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream.

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream.

9 months



Create a special book
about your family
for your baby.

Babies...

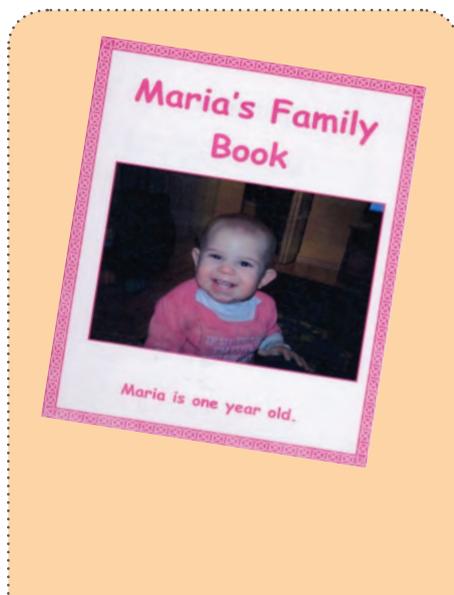
- Can follow simple instructions like clapping hands.
- Are able to match actions to words.
- Like to hold books and try to turn the pages and lift the flaps.
- Enjoy books with short sentences and simple pictures.
- Enjoy action songs and rhymes.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Teach your child fingerplay rhymes like “Pat-a-Cake”.
- Can make your baby her own book, using pictures of familiar objects from magazines or family photos.
- Can make reading a part of their every day routine.
- Read animal books and make animal sounds too!

Tips to support literacy development...

- Make homemade books, with familiar pictures or photos for your baby.
- Make up rhymes and stories using your baby’s name.
- Read books that encourage your child to make animal noises.
- Read lift the flap books to your baby.



12

months



Make reading
a part of your
every day routine.

Babies...

- Are able to understand several words that people use often.
- Are starting to recognize body parts.
- Like rhythmic stories that hold their attention.
- Like books with simple pictures and short sentences.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Use simple language and short sentences like 'big dog'.
- Take your child for a neighborhood walk. Look and talk about all the things you see and hear.
- Let your child hold the book and turn the pages.

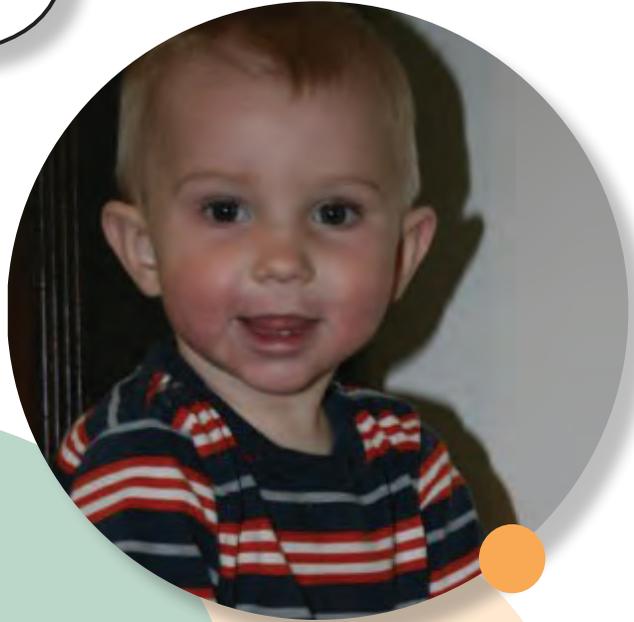
Tips to support literacy development...

- Read simple books about the body and body parts.
- Develop a routine for your baby that includes singing, reading and playing.
- Sing or say action and bouncy rhymes.
- Talk or point out things around you. Encourage your child to name the familiar things that you point out like ball, dog, phone, etc.
- Talk to your child about everything around you. Talk about the sky, the weather, the traffic, colours, people, etc.
- Set aside a special time for reading every day!

Daily Routine (Example)

- AM: Breakfast
Time to get dressed!
Playtime (dancing, singing, rhyming, walks)
- PM: Lunch
Visit parent-child program or visit with friends.
Supper
- Evening: Bath time
Reading and cuddling time
Bedtime!

15 months



Let your child explore different crafts like colouring, play dough and finger painting, and talk about what she has created.

Toddlers...

- Respond to their own name.
- Can sort things by lining them up, stacking them or making shapes.
- Understand simple instructions.
- Can do some crafts, paint, play with play dough.
- Love to pretend play!

Parents / Caregivers...

- Can try to understand baby's speech and actions.
- Talk to your child about the things she is doing.
- Let your child scribble with large crayons or chalk and talk about what she draws or writes.
- Help your child learn about caring.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Read books that encourage your child to make animal sounds or other noises.
- Read books, sing songs and say rhymes about doing things.
- Read books about loving and caring.

Play Dough Recipe

- 1 cup flour
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1 pkg unsweetened Kool- Aid®
- 2 tbsp cream of tartar
- 1 cup boiling water

1. Mix flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a medium bowl.
2. Dissolve Kool- Aid® in boiling water
3. Add boiling water and oil to dry ingredients.
4. Stir 3 to 5 minutes.
5. When mixture forms a ball and is cool enough to handle, place on flat surface.
6. Knead until smooth.
7. Put in a plastic bag and refrigerate.

18 months



Let your child explore.
Play games with
your child.

Toddlers...

- Point to pictures of familiar objects and match similar objects.
- Are beginning to ask “what’s that?”
- Can say five or more words and understand new words every day.
- Are becoming active and want to be independent.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Talk to your child about her world, eg. the things you see, hear and do.
- Play games to help your child learn new words.
- Leave books out so your child can play with them.
- Let your child explore books, turning the pages and choosing the pages they want to read.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Use stories that you make up that include your child in them.
- Read books about letters, numbers, colours and opposites.
- Read pictures and books of familiar things to develop your child’s vocabulary.
- Create a craft box or space for all of your craft supplies.
- Save things like toilet paper rolls, egg cartons, boxes, etc.

Games

Hide and Seek

Peek-a-boo

Ball Rolling

Where’s the...?

2 years



Read, sing and say rhymes that your child can move to.

Toddlers...

- Are starting to combine words into simple sentences.
- Like to sing songs.
- Like to play sorting games.
- Like sharing storybooks with people.
- Learn new words every day.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Teach your child songs by singing often and by leaving out words of songs so that your child can finish them by themselves.
- Encourage your child to do things by herself.
- Hold your child close when you read together.
- Begin to teach colours and numbers to your toddler.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Read books about sorting.
- Read, sing and say rhymes that your child can move to.
- Read books about being independent.
- Play and sing action and marching rhymes.
- Have fun with crafts with your toddler – draw, paint, glue and use stickers.

Marching Rhyme

The Grand Old Duke of York

The grand old Duke of York,
He had ten thousand men;
He marched them up to
the top of the hill,
And he marched them down again.

And when they were up, they were up;
And when they were down,
they were down,
And when they were only half-way up,
They were neither up nor down.

2 1/2 years



Encourage your child to write and draw everyday.

Toddlers...

- Are learning to describe things 'big', 'red', etc.
- Are learning to do puzzles by themselves.
- Like dressing up and playing different roles.
- Like writing and drawing pictures, painting and stickers.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Ask your child questions about what you're buying at the store and let your child respond.
- Let your child help sort things like laundry.
- Encourage your child to write and draw everyday.
- Name your child's feelings.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Make homemade books with your child's writing and drawings.
- Read books about sorting and comparing.
- Read books about feelings and ask your child to act each one out.

Homemade Finger Paint

1/2 cup cornstarch

3 Tbsp. sugar

1/2 tsp. salt

2 cups cold water

food coloring

1. In medium saucepan, mix all ingredients.
2. Cook over low heat 10-15 minutes.
3. Stir constantly until thick.
4. Remove from heat & cool.
5. Add food colouring.
6. Cover tightly to store.

3 years



Let your child read to you. They can look at the pictures in a book and tell you the story.

Toddlers...

- Like to talk about what they did during the day.
- Are learning the letters of the alphabet.
- Like to play with others but need help to take turns, share and cooperate.
- Like books and stories and can turn the pages by themselves.

Parents / Caregivers...

- Talk about what you and your child did during the day.
- Can play guessing games 'where's the...?'
- Set aside a special time for reading as part of your child's daily routine.
- Help your child to hold a pencil or crayon properly.
- Ask questions about the book you are reading.

Tips to support literacy development...

- Read books about your child and her world.
- Read books about independence and responsibility.
- Play dress-up with your child and act out a story.
- Make crafts together.
- Let your child fill in the blanks when you read to them.

Questions to ask your child when reading

What happens next?

Who is that?

What are they doing?

Where is the...?

How many are there?

Acknowledgements

The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit organization that supports literacy development in all official languages of the Northwest Territories.

For more information on Supporting Literacy Development at Different Ages or Stages, or any of our work, please contact:



NWT Literacy Council

Box 761
5122 48th Street
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6
Phone: (867) 873 9262
Fax: (867) 873 2176
Toll free in the NWT: 1-866 599 6758
nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca

A special thank you
to the babies and families of the NWT
for allowing us to use their photos.

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the NWT Literacy Council and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. The project is also funded in part by the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment through the Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund from HRSDC.



NWT Literacy Council



(867) 873.9262
Toll-free 1.866.599.6758
Fax (867) 873.2176



nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca
www.nwt.literacy.ca



Box 761
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6