

# BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD

## YOUNG CHILDREN



### TALK ALL THE TIME

- ▶ Introduce new vocabulary words.
- ▶ Label items, describe meanings of words and point to words when you read.

### MODEL READING AND WRITING

- ▶ Have books/magazines/newspapers you like to read around the house.
- ▶ Let your child see you read. Talk about what you are reading and writing – a letter, an email, a grocery list.

### READ ALOUD EVERY DAY

- ▶ Point to the words as you read to show that words are read left to right.
- ▶ Feel free to read aloud something you want to read (like a magazine or a novel).
- ▶ Read together taking turns with words or pages.
- ▶ Ask questions, make predictions about what will happen and review what happened.

### PROVIDE BOOKS THAT ARE INTERESTING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

- ▶ Nursery rhymes, story books and informational books
- ▶ Longer stories or “easy to read” chapter books

### START “WRITING” EARLY

- ▶ Set up a writing area. Have writing materials accessible.
- ▶ Have your child help you make a list or leave messages.
- ▶ Cut words and pictures out from boxes (e.g. cereal) and use to make a shopping list.
- ▶ For less mess, try a Magna Doodle toy or a tablet drawing program.
- ▶ Let your child dictate a story or a letter.

### PLAY TIME CAN SUPPORT LITERACY TOO

- ▶ Pretend play contributes to literacy skills. Use clothes, play dishes, empty boxes and other materials you have in your home.
- ▶ Turn-taking games help develop back-and-forth communication.
- ▶ Minimize screens. Choose educational DVDs or shows (e.g. Signing Time, PBS Kids).
- ▶ Audio books are a great way for children to look at books while hearing words.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** Building literacy skills doesn't have to be expensive. Check out your local public library, yard sales, second-hand stores, BuyNothing and other community groups for free or low-cost books. Cardboard boxes make great building blocks and toy kitchens.



**Boston Children's Hospital**  
Down Syndrome Program