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Literacy Milestones: Should My Child Be Reading?

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In today's fast-paced education world, it can often feel that children must make a switch from learning to read to reading to learn. In truth, the transition from learning to read to reading for information should occur simultaneously. It is important for both educators and parents to remember that children enter school with different levels of exposure to the printed word and each child will reach literacy milestones at different times.



Preschool children ages 3-4 should begin to...

- identify familiar signs/labels (e.g., grocery store sign).
- participate in rhyming activities and identify some letter-sound combinations.
- understand that print carries a message and attempt to use letters to represent meaningful words.
- enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks and make attempts to read and write.

Children age 5 (Kindergarten) should...

- enjoy being read to and retell simple stories including a beginning, middle, and end.
- recognize letter-sound combinations and begin to match print to spoken words.
- identify rhyming words, beginning sounds, and that print is read left-to-right and top-to-bottom.
- sound like readers when playing or pretending.
- begin to write letters of the alphabet, some words, and stories with some understandable parts.

Children age 6 (First Grade) should...

- read some materials out loud with ease.
- sound out major sounds in a word when trying to spell.
- identify an increasing number of sight-words.
- decipher new words using letter-sound combinations, parts of words, and the context of a story.
- use several strategies such as re-reading, looking at the pictures, making predictions, and asking questions for help when reading a story.

Children ages 7-8 (Second Grade & Third Grade) should...

- begin to gain meaning from reading by connecting new information to what they already know.
- recognize several words by sight and begin to read more fluently.
- continue to use decoding skills to sound out unfamiliar words.
- begin to read in meaningful phrases instead of word-by-word.

It is important for parents to know that some children begin to read fluently and for meaning in earlier grades. In addition, some children will read "on grade level" whereas others may read books geared for older children. Research has shown that children can be working hard to decode unfamiliar words and understand the meaning of a text at the same time. Children also benefit from learning reading comprehension strategies through middle school, such as decoding long, unfamiliar multisyllabic words and using clues from the text to understand new words. No matter the level of proficiency, children benefit from reading instruction in the early grades and into the teen years.

Sources:

"Literacy Milestones" by Andrea DeBruin-Parecki, Kathryn Perkinson, and Lance Ferderer. Retrieved 1/19/2017 from www.readingrockets.org.

"Reading Milestones." Retrieved 1/19/2017 from www.pbs.org.

"The Myth of Learn to Read/Read to Learn" by Laura Robb. Retrieved 1/20/2017 from www.teacher.scholastic.com.

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