



Five Tips for Raising a Reader

Early literacy skills are one of the most important factors in determining a child's success in school, and adults play an important role in encouraging children's literacy skills. Yet often there is confusion about what is involved in fostering early literacy skills. "What better time to talk about the importance of early literacy skills than October, which is National Book Month," shares Laura Walters, executive director of the Literacy Council of Wake County, a Wake County SmartStart partner. "A child's first five years provide tremendous opportunities to encourage literacy skills and foster a lifelong love of reading, both of which have the potential to place a child on the path to success in school and life. And, daily routines present numerous opportunities for adults to promote early literacy skills."

Anna Troutman of Wake County SmartStart and Laura Walters of the Literacy Council of Wake County offer these five simple ways to start your child on the road to reading even before your child can read to himself.

- Read aloud to your child. Reading aloud should start from birth. Choose a variety of books to read from, and read aloud daily. The more words your child hears from the beginning of life, the more expansive your child's vocabulary will be.
- Attend age-appropriate storytimes with your child. Check out your public library for storytimes, puppet shows, craft activities and author programs for children. Storytimes reinforce the concept of reading being enjoyable. While you are at the library, borrow books to read aloud to your child at home.
- Have books in the house. Keep books in the kitchen, the bedrooms and the playroom. Keep the children's books at your child's eye level so she can easily see and reach them. Stocking your house with books sends the message to your children that you value reading.
- Encourage reading by being a reader. Read a book or newspaper while your child is in the room. Show your child that reading is enjoyable and useful. When a child sees a parent reading, the child will emulate that behavior.
- Encourage conversation with children, even before they speak. Point out letters and words on signs. Describe to your children what you are doing when you are busy. Talk about the weather when you are outside or traffic when you are in it. All of these interactions encourage pre-literacy skills.

[Anna Troutman](#), Wake County SmartStart Director of Program Coordination and Evaluation, is a locally-recognized leader who works in partnership with local agencies to develop activities to achieve the goals, objectives and outcomes of Wake County SmartStart's strategic plan. Created in 1996, Wake County SmartStart works to ensure children, birth to 5, are prepared for success in school and life. The organization does this by collaborating with community organizations to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of child care settings, provide preventive health and early intervention services and offer family support services. [The Literacy Council of Wake County's](#) Project LIFT, funded by Wake County SmartStart, encourages pre-literacy skills in children, birth to 5, and strengthens literacy skills in caregivers.

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