



SUPPORT FOR EARLY LEARNING & FAMILIES

July - August 2011

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I was thinking about this newsletter and the focus on literacy, I thought about my mom and grandmother reading to me. As a young child, I was fortunate to have books and to have loving adults that took the time to read and who valued education. This legacy of reading continued with my children. I have no idea how many hours I read to my kids, but enough to memorize many of the books!

I think we always knew reading was important, but it's only been in more recent years that the research has helped us understand why. Today, we have research that links reading and literacy to long-term academic achievement, and to developing loving, caring relationships. But maybe even more important is the bond that is created when a trusted adult becomes a child's first teacher. This experience can open a young mind to exotic locations, animals that they have never seen, introduce other people and families that are unfamiliar to the young reader. You see, reading makes huge things possible. And it opens up the world for children in ways that would not be possible without reading.

Literacy involves more than reading. When you visit the Early Learning Center at the new Vancouver Community library, you'll see literacy expanded in many ways through a multitude of fun, interactive, imaginative, and creative play experiences. They still have books and so much more.

In this newsletter, you will find a number of local and national resources in

support of ready and literacy.

Zero to Three

Reading Rockets

Reading is Fundamental

Reach Out and Read

Whenever possible, read to a small child and talk with them about the wonderful world waiting for them in a book.

"The more you read the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you'll go."

Dr. Seuss

"I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"

**Debbie Ham**

Director of SELF

## READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN

Why is Reading Aloud to Young People So Important?

The Importance of Early Literacy and Early Intervention

Borrowed from Reach Out and Read

Children who live in print-rich environments and who are read to during the first years of life are much more likely to learn to read on schedule.

Reading aloud to young children is not only one of the best activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills; it also builds motivation, curiosity, and memory.

Early language skills, the foundation for reading ability and school readiness, are based primarily on language exposure - resulting from parents and other adults talking to young children.

Research shows that the more words parents use when speaking to an 8-month-old infant, the greater the size of their child's vocabulary at age 3. The landmark Hart-Risley study on language development documented that children from low-income families hear as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers before the age of 4.

Books contain many words that children are unlikely to encounter frequently in spoken language. Children's books actually contain 50% more rare words than primetime television or even college students' conversations.

The nurturing and one-on-one attention from parents during reading aloud encourages children to form a positive association with books and reading later in life.

Reading aloud is a proven technique to help children cope during times of stress or tragedy.

Reading difficulty contributes to school failure, which increases the risk of absenteeism, leaving school, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy - all of which perpetuate the cycles of poverty and dependency.

20% of U.S. workers are functionally illiterate.

More information about reading aloud to children

## THE LIBRARY'S EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Celebrating the Library's Early Learning Center!

The new Downtown branch of Fort Vancouver Regional Library opened on Sunday July 17th to a record crowd. Much anticipated was the Early Learning Center, designed specifically for learning and interaction experiences for children birth through age six. The Center is a hive of activity from the time the doors open in the morning until closing time. Families and children are welcome to explore at any time. Reports from children as young as three and as old as ten have all agreed that the Center is really cool! Early childhood programs with groups of children can reserve a time to visit the Early Learning Center by contacting Ruth Shafer at rshafer@fvrl.org. Please make an appointment for any groups of children! Groups of adults are also welcome to make an appointment to view and explore the center, by contacting Jacquelyn Keith at jkeith@fvrl.org.

If you have been to the Center recently, you will notice that in the three hanging rings in the Resource Area, there is a display of artwork from the Washington State University-Vancouver Kindergarten Class that visited the Center in June. The library is looking for original artwork from children (birth-6) that can be displayed in the rings. The artwork does need to be on large sheets of paper as the display area is hanging from the ceiling. In addition to artwork, the library would like to add items to the enclosed cases in the Love Talk Play resource wall. These items could be any items of interest to young children or could be something children have created. Artwork and display items can be submitted from early childhood programs or families. If you are interested in submitting something for display, please contact Jacquelyn Keith at jkeith@fvrl.org or 360.699.8818.

## SPOTLIGHT ON EARLY LITERACY

As more and more focus is directed at school readiness and helping children be ready and successful in kindergarten, supporting early literacy is recognized as critical. According to Reach Out and Read, "reading aloud to young children is the single most effective thing parents can do to help prepare their children to succeed in school." Families and early learning programs can partner together to provide lots of meaningful interactions with books, language, songs and rhymes to support skills young children will need later in school. When reading to young children, here are some tips:

Read every day-make it part of the routine

Have fun while reading-play games, talk about the pictures, share stories

Choose books that children can relate to-connect the story to other experiences they have had

Read as much or as little as you have time for-a few minutes is okay!

Involve the child in the experience-turning pages, pointing to pictures, asking questions

Visit your local library-for additional resources, books, learning kits, story time and more

For more tips or information, visit Reach Out and Read or Love. Talk. Play.

Parents can also check out a simple list from Get Ready to Read to see if your home is helping to promote early literacy: