

Steps to School

Your Source for Kindergarten Readiness in Durham County

Early Learning Newsletter Launches

Welcome to the fall edition of the *Steps to School* newsletter. This is the first issue of a newsletter that will help you prepare your child for kindergarten. Each issue will focus on a different part of early learning and include information, activities, events and resources. This issue focuses on early literacy.



Early Literacy is a Critical Skill

Early literacy is everything children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Developing literacy skills begins at birth through everyday interactions such as sharing books, singing songs and telling stories. Even early drawing, painting and picking up things can help your child's early literacy skills, because these activities help develop the hand muscles and coordination needed for learning how to write.

Children who do not participate in daily conversations or have books are most at-risk for reading failure while children who have had regular daily conversations and books excel once they enter school.

Adults—parents, grandparents and teachers—play a powerful role in preparing young children for future school success and in becoming self-confident and motivated learners!

Literacy Tips for Families

Parents and teachers are essential partners in a pre-school child's development of reading, writing and language skills. You and other family members can do the following activities at home to encourage pre-school literacy. Be a model for your child. Children learn that reading and writing are important when they see adults using these skills!

- **Read aloud with your child every day.** Talk about the stories you read to make them more meaningful to your child.
- **Spend time in conversation** with your child to develop vocabulary and knowledge of the world. Label what you see and explain how things work.
- **Play with language** to help your child listen to rhymes and letter sounds. Read nursery rhymes and other rhyming books. See how many rhyming words you can think of together: hop, top, bop, mop, lop, stop, drop and flop.
- **Teach your child about letters and words.** Notice words and letters in the world around you. Read cereal boxes and favorite snacks. Point out the letters in your child's name that you see in signs and billboards around town.
- **Encourage your child to draw and write** by allowing access to pencils, crayons, markers, chalk and a variety of paper. Activities to develop the muscle strength needed to be able to write successfully include: playing with play dough, tearing and crumpling paper, scooping and pouring, using Lego blocks, and sticking stickers. Help your child send a letter or write a grocery list.
- **Use your child's native language** when you talk, read, write, play and sing. This will create a strong sense of self and support your child's roots in addition to building a solid foundation of basic language concepts.

Source: Prepared by the Literacy Connection staff; U.S. Department of Education Early Reading First Program

Community Resources:

Durham County Library

(919) 560-0100

www.durhamcountylibrary.org

Offers books, programs and other reading resources at branches located throughout Durham.

Durham Literacy Center

(919) 489-8383

www.durhamliteracy.org

Helps teenagers and adults gain reading and writing skills, English language skills and educational credentials (GED).

El Centro Hispano

(919) 687-4635

www.elcentronc.org

Offers Spanish-speaking parents referrals to resources, advocacy, interpretation/translation, ESL classes, parent education and family literacy activities.

Welcome Baby Family Resource Center, Durham County Cooperative Extension

(919) 560-7341

www.welcomebaby.org

Provides parenting education and support to families with young children.

Autumn Book Recommendations:

Autumn Leaves

by Ken Robbins

The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree

by Gail Gibbons

Pumpkin Pumpkin

by Jeanne Titherington

Mouse's First Fall

by Lauren Thompson

Red Leaf Yellow Leaf

by Lois Ehlert

Leaf Man

by Lois Ehlert

Autumn Activity idea:

This is a project you can do at home after reading *Red Leaf Yellow Leaf* and *Leaf Man*.

Create Your Own Leaf Man or Animal

Materials:

Leaves

Acorns

Wiggle eye stickers, etc.

Heavy construction paper or cardstock

Glue

Directions: Glue materials to make your own *Leaf Man*, then record a story about where your leaf man has been.

Online Resources:

Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success, available at **Office of School Readiness Web site:** http://www.osr.nc.gov/Foundations/foundationsEarly_learningToDownload.asp

Stepping Stones to Literacy

<http://www.serve.org/SS/aboutss.php>

Get Ready to Read!

<http://www.getreadytoread.org/>

Reading is Fundamental

<http://www.rif.org/>

Come See for Yourself!



Durham Public Schools offers several great opportunities for parents and community members to see for themselves the many different educational programs offered in our schools.

Elementary Magnet Fair

Elementary Magnet and

Year-Round Schools

Saturday, Nov. 14, 9 am to 12 noon

Hillside High School



Showcase of Schools

Open Houses at All Schools

Between Nov. 15 & Dec. 15



Kindergarten Welcome Sessions

Jan. 12 & 19 and March 9

6:30-8:00 pm, Staff Development Center, 2107

Hillandale Road

For more information about these events, check www.dpsnc.net and tune in to Cable Channel 4. Questions? Call 919-560-3652.



Editors

The *Steps to School Newsletter* is a joint publication of Durham's Partnership for Children (919) 403-6960 (www.dpfc.net) and Durham Public Schools (919) 560-2000 (www.dpsnc.net/kindergarten), part of a collaborative Transition to Kindergarten Initiative.