

higher levels of DHA had more mature sleep patterns, with more quiet sleep at night, and more wakefulness during the day. Breastfeeding mothers can pass DHA to their infants by consuming oily fish, flax seed, flax seed oil, and spirulina. Kids can get DHA from an increasing array of omega-3 fortified foods including milk, eggs, and juice.

Pump it Up: Iron

Numerous studies link restless legs syndrome to low levels of stored iron, so kids with iron deficiencies may be at higher risk for disturbed sleep. "Iron is needed to create dopamine, a neurotransmitter. In fact, dopamine-enhancing medications have been used to treat RLS symptoms, so RLS may be helped by adequate iron intake," says registered dietician Pam Schoenfeld of Reinvent Your Diet, LLC in Morristown, New Jersey. Good dietary sources of iron are beef, liver, green leafy vegetables,

legumes, and fortified cereals. Since excess iron can be harmful, Schoenfeld recommends having iron levels checked before starting a high-iron diet or iron supplements.

There are a few dietary don'ts, as well: Anything containing large amounts of caffeine and sugar should be avoided, especially in the evening. So a cola beverage, with 65 grams of sugar and 57mg of caffeine per 20-ounce bottle, will do your child no favors come bedtime. Some children are energized by a large meal; if yours is one of them, dinner should be served well in advance of lights out.

"Even with an excellent diet, children still benefit from a consistent bedtime and a regular bedtime ritual, like reading a book with a parent," says Gromer. Combining healthy sleep habits like these with proper nutrition can lead to more sweet dreams for the entire family.

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Participants must be employed by a school district within Tulsa County. This workshop is recommended for fourth- through eighth-grade teachers.

Registrations are limited and must be received by Feb. 21, 2015.

Mr. Henry's Books is a program of the Tulsa City-County Library, sponsored by the Tulsa Library Trust, made possible by a grant from the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation.



REGISTRATION FORM

Registration Fee \$10

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BY LAURA RAPHAEL, MA, MLIS, YOUTH LIBRARIAN, SOUTH BROKEN ARROW LIBRARY

all aboard to reading success!

USING EARLY LITERACY STATIONS IN YOUR HOME

Did you know that everyday places and activities with your kids can be a kind of school?

Your kitchen can be a classroom; a trip to the grocery store, a seminar; a corner in the living room, a learning space; and the bathtub, an excellent opportunity for developing reading skills.

How?

Librarians and other educators have at least a thousand suggestions (seriously, just ask us!), but they all boil down to five simple activities you should try to share with children at least once a day: reading, writing, talking, playing and singing.

This can range from singing “This is the way we wash our toes...” to the tune of “Mulberry Bush” when you are giving your child a bath (SINGING), to taking dictation for thank-you notes for birthday gifts (WRITING), to reading a favorite book upon waking and sleeping (READING), to building up a stack of blocks for your child to knock down (PLAYING), to describing, step by step, how you are preparing dinner (TALKING).

You can incorporate all of these learning activities both easily and informally, without lesson plans or curriculum maps.

But if you're looking for something slightly more struc-



A CHILD TRACES THE LETTER "O" USING A YARDSTICK AT AN EARLY LITERACY STATION AT THE SOUTH BROKEN ARROW LIBRARY.

tured to help your preschool children develop into successful readers, consider creating “early literacy stations” – also called “learning centers” – at home.

Early literacy stations are often used in actual classrooms.

They can also be easily adapted for home use because they are, essentially, just dedicated places for learning – particularly as related to the early literacy activities of reading, writing, singing, playing and talking.

How can I incorporate early literacy stations in my home?

Some possible early literacy stations you can use at home include:

- **Mystery Bag.** Create a “mystery bag” with small items, including books and toys. (Don't buy these – just use items you already have.) Ask your child to take items out one at a time. Talk about the items and ask questions about each one.

- **Reading Corner.** If you don't have a place already dedicated just to books, consider making a reading corner. Keep a few of your child's favorite books to look at and “read” on his or her own (looking at pictures is an important precursor to reading) or for you to read aloud.

- **Messy Station.** For a one-time messy station, get a can of shaving cream and spray a thin layer on a table. Draw different letters or pictures in the shaving cream. This is a fun way to work on writing.

It's up to you if you want to keep your stations up all the time, or to assemble once a week for up to 15 or 20 minutes at a time. Remember, you are the “teacher” of your school, so you get to decide.

Why use early literacy stations?

First, don't feel like you have to use early literacy stations. By simply reading aloud to your child

continued next page



WHAT DOES AN "EMERGENT" READER LOOK LIKE? LUCIE SHOWS US AT AN EARLY LITERACY STATION RELATED TO READING. SHE KNOWS HOW TO HOLD A BOOK CORRECTLY, TURN THE PAGES, AND PAY ATTENTION TO THE WORDS AND PICTURES ON THE PAGE.

every day, you are doing what research says is the very best thing to develop young minds for reading.

But some parents find it helpful to plan early literacy stations because it provides structure for them and their children. Think of stations as a physical reminder of the five skills (reading, writing, playing, singing, and talking) you should be engaging in with your child every day.

Another great reason to use stations is that many schools, pre-school to kindergarten, use stations for all kinds of learning. By using stations at home, you are preparing your children for something they will likely see in school.


What else should I know about early literacy stations?

The best early literacy station of all is the library. Visit any of our 24 locations to find new books your child will love, to attend fun and interactive story-times, and to meet supportive librarians who love to work with parents and kids alike.

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