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*Listening, learning,  
and living together:  
it's the science of life.*

## Reading to Children for Better School Preparedness<sup>1</sup>

*Sarah Elrite and Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

Many parents today start planning for their children's college education funds when those children are still in diapers. Yet there's another investment parents should consider that could have a significant impact on their children's entire educational experience...even when they're still in diapers-reading.

Research has shown that reading to your child at a young age is not only beneficial to your child but to you as a parent as well. One of the first and most immediate benefits is spending some quality time with your child every day. An academic benefit is that reading with your child helps them to be better prepared when they enter a formal school environment. Reading together for 20 minutes a day can make a difference in your child's language, grammar, and reading skills as they get older.

Reading certain types of books will also help children build their cognitive skills. For example, folktales and fables help children learn to make predictions and gain decision-making skills. Fantasy books are great for generating questions for discussion. Books about families help children learn to relate their reading with personal experience of their own.

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Here are a few tips to help you and your child form an enjoyable and educational reading relationship. First, set a specific time each day that you read together. Second, try to choose a variety of books on different subjects, but be sure to keep your child's likes and dislikes in mind. When selecting picture books, select a variety of artwork. Also, use expression or different voices when reading dialogue to make the story interesting.

So, the next time you think about cuddling up with a good book, cuddle up with your children too. Help your children develop a love of books by beginning a story tonight.

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