

Parents can help develop their children's literacy and numeracy every day

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is calling on parents to get more involved in their children's literacy and numeracy development so they can help contribute to their children's educational achievements.

"The everyday interactions and involvement of parents in their children's lives can make a vital contribution to children's learning and educational achievement," says ASG's Community Adviser, Ms Michelle Hunder.

"Sometimes parents forget what a powerful resource and environment the family is for children and it's up to them to assist with the development of their children's learning.

"Teachers, early childhood centres, and schools can't be held fully responsible for children's learning, they need family support to help children achieve their best.

"But ASG's Member parents report the major stumbling block for them is how to get involved with supporting their child's learning when their schedules are already crammed with family and work responsibilities," says Ms Hunder.

ASG, the nation's leading parent cooperative specialising in education benefits with the mission of supporting children and families has prepared this tip sheet showing parents the easy everyday ways they can assist their children's literacy and numeracy development. Sourced from ASG's research, and in association with expert advice and suggestions from its parenting information website, ASG's KidsLife, the tip sheet shows parents just how easy it is to support their children's literacy and numeracy in effective everyday ways that don't interfere with their busy schedules and are enjoyable.

Findings from a growing body of research supports the premise that parental involvement in children's learning can be positively related to educational achievement. Research also shows that the benefits are often increased incrementally the earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins and in instances where parents are more intensely and actively involved.

Opportunities to practise skills in literacy and numeracy help to enhance a child's knowledge and comprehension. ASG encourages parents to turn everyday activities into teaching opportunities. A child's everyday routine offers a great many opportunities to:

- learn and practise new words
- count how many
- compare prices
- decide how big
- attempt to problem solve
- recognise what colour
- predict what might happen next
- listen to sounds
- describe a scene
- play creatively, and
- learn by copying an adult.

Around the home

Meal time

- Describe the food you're eating together: the colour, shape, taste, and texture.
- Read recipes together and cook the food: quantity, volume, adding ingredients in order.
- Measure quantities: teaspoon, tablespoon, cup or weight measured on kitchen scales.
- Encourage your child to read out the ingredients while you mix or vice versa.
- Set the table, counting out knives, forks, spoons, and plates.
- Teach an older child how to use a kitchen timer or microwave.
- Wash, dry, and put dishes away sorting by size, type, colour, and shape.
- Experiment with drawing up a menu, recipe cards, orders for kitchen take-away.

Bath time

- Experiment with water measurement using different sized plastic containers.
- Wash half or quarter of the body or one of two legs, or arms, or ears, or alternate toes.
- Count off fingers and toes as you wash and dry between them.
- Move water using hands or feet and describing words: splash, wave, flow, gurgle, bubble, or drops.
- Provide a bottle of bubble liquid and count each bubble either before, or as it bursts.
- Guess which letter by drawing soapy letters on your child's back.
- Talk about water temperature: hot/cold/warm/warmer. Use this time to explain about taps, water levels, and safety.
- Make up silly rhymes about swimming, floating, washing, and drying.

Anytime

- Count clothes in the laundry basket. Count socks, buttons on clothing, steps to the letter box or the total number of chairs in your home.
- Play guessing games, rhyming games, ball games, board games, and charades.
- Have fun with a dictionary or thesaurus. Read out a word, try to guess what it might mean.
- Read quietly or read aloud – individually, together, as a family.

In the car

Toddlers and preschoolers:

- Use describing words for speed and direction, fast, slow, rapid, turning, slowing down. Use your voice to reflect speed, and try new words such as accelerating and reversing.
- Count the number of red cars, green cars, and yellow cars.
- Count trucks and buses.
- Look for street signs that begin with a particular letter.
- Listen to story tapes or CDs.
- Ask children to spot familiar landmarks and tell you something about them.
- Sing aloud in the car, encourage hand movements, clap, and beat time.
- Recognise symbols, traffic signs, and numbers on number plates.

Early primary:

- Challenge your child to spell their name by spotting a number plate or street sign that has the first letter, then the second and so on, until they have all the letters required for their name.
- Keep familiar picture books for long travel and ask children to read or tell you about the story.
- Spot something beginning with a letter of the alphabet. After five successful spots, change the letter.
- Count bus stops, train stations, traffic lights.
- Catch public transport so that you can discuss timetables and routes, and estimate times to reach your destination.

In the supermarket

Toddlers and preschoolers:

- Use size words such as many, few, bigger, less, heavier.
- Use describing words such as ripe, tinned, packet, frozen, or words such as delicious, fresh, healthy, junk, filling, sweet, sour or spicy.
- Write down the items needed and encourage your child to copy the letters from your list to their list.
- Count how many bottles, tins, and packets in the trolley.
- Count items by colour.
- Count pieces of fruit and total how many in the bag.
- Encourage children to help you carefully place items on the check out counter and name each item as they do so.
- Ask your child to tell you which aisle number you are currently in.
- Talk about volume and which containers hold more.

Early primary:

- Involve your child in making a list, or in writing the list for you.
- Let your child carry the list as you shop and read out as many product names as possible, ignoring pronunciation.
- Hand items to children before they are put in the trolley, and ask them to check the use by date.
- Ask your child to help you read the labels, for instance low-fat, polyunsaturated, high fibre, and take these opportunities to explain about healthy eating and nutrition information.
- Count fruit and match fruit to price signs.
- Involve your child in unpacking groceries and checking off items on the docket.
- Get your child to help you calculate items, for example, ask your child how many bananas they think you might need if everyone in the family ate one banana a day for a week.

Education Resources, including tip sheets, guides, publications and research are available as free downloadable resources from ASG's website: www.asg.com.au – Resources tab.

ASG's Education Program™ offers a unique, convenient, and proven way for people to plan for their children or grandchildren's future education. The program can be tailored to suit the needs and budgets of most families.

ASG's KidsLife parenting information website – www.kidslife.com.au – was launched in 2000 to help parents have choices in all the moments of parenting. With expert content from independent sources, KidsLife has helped 40,000 members who have valued the website as a trusted source of information.

ASG's *Parent Briefings* is a unique feature of the ASG's KidsLife website providing a 72-part series covering child development from birth to 18 years. Emailed progressively in line with the developmental age of the subscriber's children, ASG's *Parent Briefings* provides access to a quarterly PDF reference file for online viewing, saving or printing. Membership to ASG's KidsLife and the *Parent Briefings* feature is free.

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