

Getting a head start

Creating the best educational program for your keiki's learning years

During the first three years of your child's life you see just how much your child is growing. Their physical features are changing. They become more mobile by learning how to crawl, walk, and run.

However, did you know that your child is doing some amazing growing that you can't see?

Your child's brain goes through the most rapid growth and development

during the first three years. This fast rate of brain development gets even faster when your child has positive experiences.

What many parents don't realize is that the best educational program that prepares their child for school is affordable and accessible. That program is reading to their child everyday.

The first step in developing your "educational program" will be creating a literacy-rich home. Fill your home with a variety of things to read such as newspapers, magazines, books, and other reading materials. It doesn't matter if the reading materials are owned or borrowed, new or used. Just make sure there is a wide assortment of reading materials and that they are within reach of all family members. Make your literacy-rich home special by providing your keiki with his own special place to keep his books.

The next thing your "program" will need is implementation time. Reading to your child for 10 – 15 minutes a

day will broaden his or her world, expand his or her knowledge, increase his or her vocabulary, and introduce him or her to the joy of reading and being read to. Whether your child is a newborn or 3 years old, the more time you spend reading to him or her, the more you increase his or her potential to learn and succeed in school.

Finally, your "educational program" will need a model – someone to follow. When your child sees you enjoying reading, he or she is likely to follow your example. Turn off the TV, pick up a book, and talk to your child about the things you are reading.

By doing these simple things you become your child's first teacher and your home becomes his or her first classroom.



Here are some tips on how you can raise a reader

When reading to infants:

- Choose board, vinyl, or cloth books. These books have pages that do not tear and are easy for little hands to turn.
- Choose books with simple objects or faces. As baby gets older you can select books that have simple sentences and story lines.
- Offer books with soft, rough or bumpy textures to touch and feel.
- Point to the picture as you read the word.
- Move your finger across the word from left to right as you read it.

When reading to toddlers:

- Choose books that have repetitious text about familiar objects.
- Select books that rhyme.
- Choose books that involve activities such as counting, identifying colors, objects or letters.
- Have your keiki point to numbers, colors, letters and familiar objects.

When reading to preschoolers:

- Choose books about subjects that interest your keiki such as animals or trucks.
- Select books with topics that relate to your keiki's life such as toilet training or new siblings.
- Choose books that are interactive.
- Let your keiki select the books to read.
- Tell your keiki who the author and the illustrator is. Talk about what they do.

When reading aloud to keiki:

- Make faces and change your voice to bring the story to life.
- Relate the book characters and story events to your child's experiences.