

Read-2-Me™

**An early literacy / parent education program
for parents and their 3- to 5-year-old children**

Note that this is an abridged version of the curriculum.



Read - 2 - Me

**An early literacy / parent education program
for parents and their 3- to 5-year-old children**

written by

Veronica Goei, Executive Director

and

Katie Stokes-Guinan, Director of Programs and Quality Control

Grail Family Services
2003 E. San Antonio Street
San Jose, CA 95116

www.gfsfamilyservices.org



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What are Pre-Reading Skills?	3
Program Goals & Objectives	5
Your Role as Program Facilitator	6
Curriculum Overview	8
Week 1	9
Welcome	9
Pre-Reading Skills Activity	10
Learning About Books	11
Facilitator Reads Aloud	12
Families Read Together	13
Singing Time	14
Family Activity	15
Resources	16

Introduction

The Read-2-Me Program is an early literacy / parent education program designed for parents and their three- to five-year-old children.

Brain Development in Young Children

Recent research on brain development has brought to light convincing evidence regarding the importance of providing a stimulating environment for children in the first years of life. The brain of a young child is plastic and flexible, responding well to outside stimulation. It is more open to learning from enriching influences than a fully mature, adult brain. This means that a child's "early experiences have a decisive impact on the architecture of the brain, and on the nature and extent of adult capacities." (Shore, 1997) Unfortunately, this also leaves children vulnerable to developmental problems if their environment lacks nurture or is especially impoverished during the early years.

What Read-2-Me Will Do

Research has shown that early language and literacy development begins in the first years of the child's life and is extremely connected with the child's early experiences with books. The Read-2-Me Program takes advantage of the influential role that parents play in their children's lives and guides parents to take an active role in providing their children with early literacy experiences. This is vitally important because "early interactions don't just create a context, they directly affect the way the brain is wired." (Shore, 1997) By helping children to develop foundational skills for mastering reading, writing, and language, parents become effective partners in their children's early education.

Although "learning continues throughout the life cycle, there are 'prime times' for optimal development – periods during which the brain is particularly efficient at specific types of learning." (Shore, 1997) Most of these "prime times" occur before children even enter school, making it all the more important to engage children and parents during these early years in activities that will stimulate the development of pre-literacy skills. The Read-2-Me Program exposes children to books and other printed material, and engages families in a variety of activities to develop pre-literacy skills. Furthermore, parents are

provided instructions for continuing to engage their children in activities that develop pre-literacy skills at home.

The Read-2-Me Program will not teach children how to read. The three- to five-year-old children attending this program are not developmentally prepared to be involved in a formal reading instruction such as that offered at an elementary school. The Read-2-Me Program activities will stimulate pre-reading skills in a comfortable environment for both parent and child. It is extremely important that facilitators understand this point and are able to communicate it to parents. Parents that force children into reading when they are not ready could have an extremely damaging and long-lasting effect on the child's future academic life.

Children with well-developed language skills, finely tuned listening skills, and a strong understanding of the concepts of print are well on their way toward creating a strong foundation for learning to read. The Read-2-Me Program will provide parents with the basic tools and opportunities to do the best possible job in supporting their children's early literacy development.

Need for the Read-2-Me Program

Student performance on standardized testing in reading and writing in East San José is significantly below grade level. A majority of parents in the Mayfair community do not speak English, have limited formal education, and in many families, both parents work full-time. Families served by GFS programs are primarily immigrants, new to this country and in many cases unaware of the important role they are expected to play as partners in their children's early literacy education. These factors complicate the ability of families to support their children's school readiness activities. However, residents of the East San José community have expressed a desire to learn new ways to support and encourage their children to learn. The Read-2-Me Program responds to this need by helping children develop pre-reading skills and by turning parents into effective partners in their children's education.

What are Pre-Reading Skills?

Pre-reading skills are skills that children need to master *before* they can learn to read. Pre-reading skills support the learning of reading, and children who have mastered pre-reading skills have an easier time learning to read. Many pre-reading skills are learned during the first few years as parents and other caretakers talk, read, and listen to children.

Developing a child's pre-reading skills is not the same thing as teaching a child to read. However, developing a child's pre-reading skills will assist the child when she begins to learn to read. Pre-reading skills include mastery of language, listening skills, understanding of the concepts of print, matching skills, rhyming skills, attention span, and memory, among many others.

Although there are many skills which are important for children to master before they learn to read, the Read-2-Me Program focuses specifically on three: language skills, listening skills, and concepts of print skills. The Read-2-Me Program considers these three pre-literacy skills to be the most foundational for preparing children to learn to read.

Listening skills : Before children can learn to speak, they must learn to listen. Children must fine-tune their listening skills to enable them to differentiate between words that sound alike (bin and pin), and also to recognize the different sounds within each word (h-a-t, sh-e). Ways to develop good listening skills include talking with children, reading to children, sharing rhymes and poems, and singing songs together. Parents can speak clearly and enunciate different sounds to help children recognize sounds in context.

Language skills : Children who have lots of experience with spoken language learn to read more easily. As children develop their vocabulary, they are able to more easily identify written words that they encounter. Children can develop language skills by hearing and joining in conversations with adults and with other children. Listening to poetry and different types of stories helps children develop vocabulary, as does having parents and other caretakers explain new words and concepts to them. Children should be challenged to name things they see in their environment to stimulate their ability to use a variety of words in an every day context.

Concepts of print : Many things that adults do automatically when they read – such as holding a book upright, reading from left to right and from top to bottom, turning pages, looking at pictures to get meaning, understanding who the author and illustrator

are, etc. – need to be taught to young children. In addition, adults already know that the title of a book tells us something about what the story will be about, but children need coaching to recognize this link. Learning such concepts of print is important to transition children into becoming readers. Parents can do many things to ensure that children have a good understanding of the concepts of print. For example, when reading to children parents can follow the words with their fingers to help children learn that print goes from left to right and from top to bottom. Children can be invited to turn the pages of the book to take them through the book in the correct order. Before opening a book, discuss the title of the book, and read the names of the author and illustrator to help children see that these are important aspects of a book.

Program Goals & Objectives

Goal #1: Increase children's interest in reading at an early age

- Children will increase time spent looking at books by themselves
- Children will increase their frequency of asking parents to read to them
- Children will listen to a complete short story

Goal #2: Strengthen children's pre-literacy skills

- Children will improve their language and listening skills
- Children will identify that a book has a title, author, and illustrator
- Children will be aware that print is read from left to right and from top to bottom

Goal #3: Increase parents' participation as partners in their children's early literacy education

- Parents will identify basic pre-reading skills
- Parents and children will complete suggested pre-literacy skills activities together
- Parents will increase their skills for reading, talking, and listening to their child

Your Role as Program Facilitator

As a facilitator of the Read-2-Me Program, you will be working directly with children and their parents. The curriculum will provide you with specific directions on how to successfully accomplish this dual role. As you implement the curriculum, there are three important areas for you to consider: people skills, curriculum implementation, and working with families. Following are a list of some of your tasks in each of these three areas.

People Skills

- Stay relaxed and have a sense of humor. Don't be afraid to laugh at your mistakes. Don't be afraid to make small adjustments to your plans if circumstances warrant.
- Create a comfortable, calming atmosphere for your participants through set-up of the room and through your demeanor.
- Be open and respectful of differences.
- One of your roles is to motivate families: to read, to do the at-home assignments, to take a leadership role within the program, and more.

Curriculum Implementation

- Understand that the program is as much for the parents as it is for the kids. Be sure that you work with both parents and children to enhance their understanding of pre-literacy skills and the importance of reading at home.
- Be sure to follow the curriculum as it is written. This will allow for consistent evaluation across sessions and across facilitators.
- Be prepared! Have your materials set up ahead of time, make sure you know the curriculum, and visualize yourself successfully implementing the program.
- Be resourceful. Make the most with what you are given.

Working with Families

- Recruiting families to the program and reminding them to come is important.
- Remember to communicate your message to both the parents and the children.
- Encourage parents to take a lead role while participating in the program. Always be on the lookout for potential group facilitators.
- Encourage families to participate in and benefit from other GFS programs.

Preparing for the Program

Being well-prepared to implement the program is an important key for success. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-30 minutes early in order to set out books, arrange places where families will sit with their children, and look over the day's lesson plan to familiarize yourself with it. In addition, you will need to be sure that you have enough materials for any activities you will be conducting with the families. Taking the time to fully prepare yourself before families arrive will assure smooth implementation of the program to maximize learning and enjoyment. Try to find pillows, blankets, or carpets for parents and children to sit on. Or ask families to bring their own small pillows, blankets, carpets, or towels to sit on.

Evaluating the Program

Evaluating the impact the program is having on the families you serve is very important. As part of the materials you will find a pre- and a post-evaluation tool for the parents and a pre- and post-evaluation tool for the children that you will need to complete at the beginning and end of the program.

Curriculum Overview

Each week of the Read-2-Me Program, with some exceptions during the last week to allow for the graduation, follows the same structure.

I Welcome / Check-in (5 min)

Facilitator welcomes children and parents; participants introduce themselves and answer a brief question regarding favorite food, animal, toy, etc.

II Pre-Reading Skills Activity (10 min)

Facilitator implements short pre-reading skills activity to engage children in the program and teach parents activities for developing pre-reading skills.

III Learning about Books (5 min)

Facilitator highlights a concept of print to teach children how to handle books and to recognize various features of books. Parents receive instruction on how to reinforce this lesson with their children.

IV Facilitator Reads Aloud (15 min)

Facilitator reads a pre-selected book to parents and children, modeling reading techniques and offering parents suggestions to enhance the ways they support their children's pre-literacy development.

V Parents & Children Read Together (10 min)

Facilitator encourages parents and their children to select a book to read together. Facilitator offers suggestions to parents for better supporting their children's pre-literacy development.

VI Singing Time (10 min)

Facilitator leads participants in singing a song or chanting a poem or rhyme.

VII Family Activity (5 min)

Facilitator provides families with a suggested activity to be done at home.

W e e k 1

I Welcome

5 min

Materials:

- Comfortable places for families to sit

Topic: Foods we like

Welcome families to the program. Invite parents to find a place to sit on the floor with their children, forming a semi-circle around the facilitator. Parents should sit right next to their children. Greet each child individually and encourage each to respond verbally.

Introduce yourself to the group. State your **name** and a **food** you like.

Ask parents and children to introduce themselves, saying their names and a food they like. (Note: do not ask the children to state their “favorite” food, as the concept of “favorite” is still too advanced for many 3- and 4-year-olds.)

Ask for a child to volunteer to begin the activity, and have his/her parent(s) follow. Acknowledge each response as much as possible.

Facilitator Tips



- Make eye contact with each child and parent when you talk to him/her.
- Speak clearly, articulating each word.
- Encourage participants to take turns.
- Give hesitant children time to respond. If a child will not respond, let the child know that you will skip him/her for now, but come back to hear his/her response after listening to the other children.
- Encourage parents to participate actively during the program.

After completing the sharing time, give a brief overview of the program, explaining the program’s structure.

Facilitator Talk



To children:

“Every week we will first introduce ourselves, and then we will sing a song. After singing time, I will read a story to you and after the story I will ask you to tell me what you liked about the story. Then you and your parents will choose a book and read it together. After reading we will play a pre-literacy skills game.”

To parents:

“Every week we will do the same types of activities in the same order. This consistency is very helpful for kids between 3- and 5-years of age. It helps them feel secure and predict what will happen next.”

II Pre-Reading Skills Activity

10 min

Materials:

- Four distinct and interesting pictures (see appendix I)

Activity: Picture Memory

Explain that now you are going to play a game.

Show families a picture that is visually interesting and has multiple things going on in it. Ask them to look at it very closely for about 15 seconds. Then put the picture away and ask the children to answer questions about what they saw in the picture.

Ex: What was the woman doing? What color was the boy's shirt? How many dogs did the family have? What was the girl eating? What was the man carrying?

Repeat this exercise with three or four different pictures. Encourage the parents to ask some of the questions. Encourage the children to talk as much as possible.

Explain to parents that this activity works on memory skills, focusing skills, and language skills, all of which are important pre-literacy skills. Encourage them to try this activity at home with their child.

Facilitator Talk



To children:

"Now we are going to play a game and I need you to pay very close attention to what I am going to show you. Look closely at this picture. Look at what the people are doing. Look at the colors of their clothes. Okay, now I am going to hide the picture and I will ask you questions to see how much you can remember about the picture."

To parents:

"Look closely at the picture with your child. Help your child to notice as many details as possible. This game helps the children with their memory, their ability to focus, and their language skills and you can easily play it at home with any picture out of a book or magazine."

Materials:

- Book

Topic: Books are Special

Pick up the book that you will be reading out loud during Facilitator Reads Aloud time (see section IV). Explain to the families that books are very special. Explain that it is very important that we take care of books and treat them well so that they stay nice. Remind families that books are special and therefore deserve to have their own special place in our homes. Explain the parents the importance of modeling for their children how they care for books and how they put books in a special place. Demonstrate for the families how you care for books and keep them in a special place.

**Facilitator
Talk**



To children:

“Books are very special and we need to take good care of them. See how nicely I turn the pages of the book? This is because I don’t want the pages to rip. Is it okay to write on our books? No, that’s right, we do not write in our books. And when we are finished with a book, where do we put it? We put it back in its place so that it will stay safe.”

To parents:

“Talk with your children about how special books are. Teach them to treat books well and model this for your children. Find a special place for books in your home. When children throw or otherwise mistreat a book, remind them that books are special and must be cared for.”

IV Facilitator Reads Aloud

15 min

Materials:

- Book (for read aloud time suggested book list, see appendix A or B)

Before the program begins, select a book from the suggested book list to read aloud. Read the book before participants arrive to become familiar with the story.

When it is time to read aloud, pick up the book you are going to read. Show children that the book has a front cover and a back. Read the title out loud, and comment on the fact that a title gives us an idea as to what the book will be about. Read the name of the author and state that the author writes the words in the story. Read the name of the illustrator, and state that the illustrator draws the pictures in the book.

Then begin reading, modeling good reading techniques for parents.

Facilitator Tips



- Make eye contact with participants as you read.
- Alter your voice to reflect the characters and moods in the book.
- Read at an appropriate pace and with sufficient volume so everyone can hear and understand what you are saying.
- Display pictures to participants as you read out loud.
- Ask questions as you read to keep participants engaged in the story.
- Explain big words that children may not understand.
- Encourage the parents to also participate in commenting on the book as a way to demonstrate this behavior for their children.

After reading, ask each participant state what part of the story he/she liked. (“What part of the story did you like?”) Ask one child to volunteer their opinion first, then have his or her parent(s) follow. (Note: do not ask the children to state their “favorite” part of the story, as the concept of “favorite” is still too advanced for many 3- and 4-year-olds.)

If a child is shy and has difficulty stating a part of the book he or she liked, you can try skipping that child and then coming back to him or her later after other children have answered. Another option is to have the child tell his or her parent(s) what part he/she liked, as this might make the child feel more comfortable. If a child is still having difficulty answering, you can phrase the question to elicit a yes/no answer, such as “Did you like the part when the children played in the ocean?” Ultimately, if a child is too shy to even answer a yes/no question, do not dwell on it for too long but to move on and hope for a better response from the child in future weeks as he or she becomes more comfortable.

V Families Read Together

10 min

Materials:

- Variety of books

Place a large variety of books in the middle of the semi-circle and ask the parents and children to select one book to read as a family. Each parent should read a book to his or her child.

Encourage parents to read the title (name) of the book to their children before beginning to read, and to allow the child to ask questions. If a family finishes their book before the time is up, encourage them to select another one to continue reading.

Always be mindful that you might have a parent that is illiterate. Mention to the group that if parents don't know how to read they can describe the pictures to their children and comment on what they can see.

VI Singing Time

10 min

Materials:

- Lyrics to song (see appendix C or D)

To the parents, pass out lyrics to a simple song that you plan to sing. Ideally, you should choose a song that most people already know because it is a common part of the culture. It is also wise to pick a song that has hand or body motions that go along with the words.

Teach the song to the group by singing one line at a time and having them repeat the song back to you. When the group is ready, everyone should sing the song out loud. If there is time, sing the song 2 or 3 times.

Facilitator Tips



- If there is even one person in the group who is not familiar with the song, be sure to teach the song to everyone before singing it as a whole group.
- Teach the song by singing one line at a time, and having the participants sing the line back to you. Do this two or three times until everyone knows the words.
- Then invite the participants to sing the song all together.
- Help parents to feel comfortable about singing out loud, even if they feel they can't sing very well.

Explain to parents that singing songs builds language and listening skills. Encourage parents to find time every day to sing a song with their children.

Facilitator Talk



To children:

"Now we are going to sing a song. Who likes to sing? Me too! This song is called '[title of song].' Does anyone know this song? Good, those who know it can help me teach it to the others."

To parents:

"Singing songs is a great way to share a fun time with your child as well as to develop language and listening skills. Every week we will sing a different song after our welcome time. I encourage you to sing a song every day with your children. Make it a habit during bedtime, bath time, or another time that convenient for you. Don't worry if you can't sing well; the important thing is to enjoy the time together."

VII Family Activity

5 min

Materials:

- None

Ask parents to read to their children for 15 minutes every day and to find a special time when they can play the Picture Memory Game that was done during this session. Tell the parents that every family that reads a book during the week and will be willing to share what they read next week you will give them a small prize.

Facilitator Tips



- Make sure you give clear instructions for the assignment
- Read the responses of the parents to ensure that parents are fully understanding the assignment
- Encourage parents to ask questions about the assignment
- Remind parents that the program is only once a week and in order to ensure that their child develops the necessary skills, early literacy activities need to be repeated on a regular basis

Send families off with the following message to keep in mind: **“Reading well is the foundation of all learning. Children who read well, learn well.”** Ask the parents and children to repeat the message with you.

R e s o u r c e s

Print Resources

____ (2001). Reading Tips for Parents / Consejos prácticos para los padres. U.S. Department of Education.

Shore, Rima (1997). Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development. Families and Work Institute: New York.

Online Resources

Born to Read: How to Raise a Reader – a program of the American Library Association
www.ala.org/alsc/raise_a_reader.html

National Center for Family Literacy
<http://www.famlit.org/>

Parents as Teachers
patnc.org

Zero to Three
www.zerotothree.org