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Promoting French on a Daily Basis - Reading

e Reading allows a young child to start making connections between oral language (which is the child's linguistic starting point) and written language. In other words, this allows the child to understand that sounds correspond to letters. The child's brain then starts decoding the written language in a back-and-forth of sounds-letters and letters-sounds where the combinations of sounds become words, such as in "bain, main and pain." The same mechanism comes into play for young bilingual children, for example with "hat, cat, rat" in English.

Reading plays a special role in the bilingual language development of a young child, because the child usually lives in a society where one of the two languages is a minority language. Reading in the minority language (in French, for us) can give the child linguistic models and allow the child to experience situations that his/her surroundings or family circle can't offer. It's also a great way to eliminate mixing languages ("Sing me une comptine"), while enriching vocabulary.

Some Suggestions? Try the Activity Cards in GRANDIR CB^{MC}

Most of the cards in the GRANDIR CBMC resource suggest books that will enrich the proposed activity. Two cards are particularly well suited for reading with very young children. You can download them for free, at www.fpfcb.bc.ca, > Petite enfance > GRANDIR CBMC > Fiches d'activité.

- With the **Parler - Bruits en folie** card (from birth to 2 years old) - we associate various noises with words ("vroum, bang, plouf"). The card suggests several books, including one that I love: "Binou et les sons." When reading, make links with the child's world. "Binou aime la voiture qui fait vroum! Est-ce que tu as une voiture qui fait vroum?"

- On the **Parler - Lis-moi une histoire** card (from 2 to 5 years old) - several very simple tips are given to help children learn to read with hints from pictures. This is ideal for vocabulary and cognitive development. As for the suggested book, "La grenouille qui avait une grande bouche," the story is worth reading and... imitating together!

Read in Other Languages?

If it's another language with a Latin alphabet, the child will quickly recognize the mechanics of preparing for reading, such as opening the book in one direction, turning the pages to the left and reading from left to right and from one line to the next (especially if you make it a habit to follow the words with your finger). Later, the child will begin to notice the graphic details of writing, such as the spaces between words, punctuation, or the letters of his/her first name. These skills are transferable.

Nevertheless, back and support the French language. It's been established that the minority language must be compensated for during bilingual language development, since the child is less exposed to this language. If you are concerned about your child's proficiency in reading English, remember that all the child's surroundings strengthen English (street names, store names, displays at the supermarket, at the doctor's, etc.). ■



The 4 Rs in Action - Reading

ROUTINE > Establish a routine of daily reading with the Francophone parent. To promote the continual nature of reading, try to create a comfortable and attractive reading area where books are stored.

REJOICING > Show enthusiasm when you start reading. Read with intonation, and change your voice according to the characters. Use the scenes in the book to make games. "La petite souris se cache parce qu'elle a peur du chat. Où irais-tu te cacher, toi? En dessous du fauteuil? Vraiment? Viens, on va essayer!"

REPETITION > Reread the child's favourite book, as often as he/she wishes, during the same reading period or from one day to the next. Often ask the same questions about the story or pictures. Have the child tell you the story in his/her own words, but don't expect an exact or precise story. Choose books where words or sentences are repeated (this gives models). The repetition makes the child comfortable and contributes to his/her success.

REWARDING > Give the child tasks and praise him/her. "Peux-tu trouver Gaston et son avion? Bravo!" Ask the child to turn the pages. "C'est le moment de tourner la page! Merci!" Sharpen the child's sense of observation. "Où est le crocodile? Oui, il est là! Beau travail!"