

Helpful Tips for Parents to Build Students' Literacy Skills

As schools remain closed due to national and state mandates in response to COVID-19, parents are challenged to provide academic support to students who are receiving instruction through various technologies. Students who are skilled in the areas of reading and writing are better equipped to navigate educational programming delivered through online instruction.

To ensure students of all ages and grade levels continually build their literacy skills, parents can assist this process by *employing the six language arts* when assisting students with new material and practice work. The six language arts are *listening, talking, reading, writing, viewing and visually representing*. Consistent, intentional use of all language arts engage multiple senses, which in turn, increases learning and retention of new content. Here's why each mode of language is important.



Listening skills are important to help students distinguish sounds, listen for pleasure and enjoyment, listen to understand messages and to listen to evaluate and comprehend messages received. Hearing is only one part of listening. Listening skills should be developed to assist students in monitoring and understanding spoken words more effectively.

Talking skills are important to promote higher level thinking. When students talk with others, they are able to exchange ideas, have their ideas validated, share their personal experiences and learn and refine effective communication skills.

Reading skills are important to interpret and make meaning of written words. Reading skills are developed through a systemic approach involving phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Through the reading process, students learn how to decode words and comprehend text.

Writing skills are important to get thoughts and ideas on paper, which is a great way to demonstrate comprehension of learned material. Writing is best developed through a five-stage process involving prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Moving students through each stage provides practice, which is necessary to become proficient writers.

Viewing is important to assist students in looking at visual images to activate and connect their background knowledge to what they are learning about. Viewing visual media may include DVD's, photographs, book illustrations, the Internet, print advertisements, etc. Adding viewing activities enriches the students' interaction with new material and provides a frame of reference that builds comprehension.

Visually Representing is important to help students communicate what they have learned using art, graphics and drama. Projects that involve charts, graphs, posters, illustrations, dramatizations and photographs promote critical thinking. When students are able to create a product that shows what they have learned, retention of the learned material is more likely to occur.