

## LANGUAGE AND READING GUIDELINES

The following article is an excerpt from our Parent Handbook. Please refer to the General School Policies section of the handbook for more information and similar content.

The development of language—spoken, written, and read—is essential to successful living. Here are some ways to help your child in this area:

1. The child from 0-6 years is in a sensitive period for language, which means he will pick up all language around him. *Watch what you say!* Remember, you are an example of how to speak, so provide a grammatically correct example and one that is rich with a great variety of vocabulary.
2. Increase your child's vocabulary by naming things around the house and talking to your infant/toddler as you complete different processes and tasks. If your child is gesturing towards a spoon, say "you want the spoon, here you go". If your child brings something to you to be opened, vocalize their request by saying something like "would you like your bottle to be opened?". Use predictive speech so he can anticipate what will happen next. Ex. "I am going to wipe your bottom, it may be cold on your skin!" or "You seem sleepy, let's go to your room so you can take a nap" You can also describe your child's emotions, "Oh! I can see that you are very upset. I see big tears rolling down your cheeks. It's okay." or "Look at that big smile! You are so happy to see daddy."
3. As your infant/toddler begins vocalizing and exploring the different things their voices can do, encourage this by repeating sounds and words back to them. Use 'Parentese', not baby talk which is nonsensical. Parentese is different from baby talk as it involves elongating words, slowing down your speech, and using a *slightly* higher pitched voice. However, it does not involve any 'dumbed down' or baby language. This helps your child copy your mouth movements and replicate speech. Most adults talk way too fast and far too much for infants and toddlers to comprehend. Use simple, clear sentences and, above all, talk *slowly*!
4. Include your child in family discussion and social conversations as often as possible. Dr. Montessori strongly encouraged parents to bring their children into society. Take your child to the market with you, let him hear your discussions with the butcher or the shopkeeper and speak to him about your shopping list. Let him be around as many conversations as is possible and appropriate. The more linguistic models a child has, the more expansive his speech may become.
5. Expose your child to the vocabulary of foreign languages at this time, especially if one parent speaks a different tongue. "The only language men ever speak

perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!" (Montessori).

6. Read to your child as often as possible. Do not stop reading once your child learns to read for himself/herself. Explain the meaning of unfamiliar words that he may encounter.
7. Read poetry with your child. Whether 2 or 12, your child will enjoy appropriately chosen poetry. Expose them to various rhyming patterns and a great variety of vocabulary. Poetry is the richness of language!
8. Read for yourself. Let your child see that reading is something interesting and enjoyable to do. We have a list of suggested Montessori-based parenting books which may be of interest to you in the section entitled "Recommended Books on Discipline and Child Rearing".
9. Provide appropriate reading material for your child. Nature magazines can be of interest, for example, "OWL", "Clubhouse Junior", "Highlights", and "Cricket" for preschoolers.
  - a. True stories are a must for children under six. Young children devote their energy to sorting out the world around them, exploring, ordering and classifying their real environment. Make-believe or fantasy stories confuse this important work.
  - b. Stories about other children, true things, family life, and animals are appropriate for preschoolers. Fairy tales should be introduced at age 6 or older. At this age, children have laid their groundwork in reality and can now explore these 'imaginary' characters. Children ages 6-14 should also be exposed to true stories of geography, history, music, famous people, etc. as well.
10. Put a limit on screen time! Children who spend great amounts of time on electronics miss out on social contact and communication with family and friends. The period of 3-6 is considered the "social embryo". It is a CRITICAL time for your child to learn how to properly interact with others through grace and courtesy and be part of a community. If they miss out on this interaction and instruction during this period, they will be at a loss.
  - a. Please be careful what your children are watching, so they are not exposed to violence, fantasy, and unnatural family relationships. Make sure that your child is exposed to programs that are consistent with your family values. If it says PG-13, he should not be watching it. Even many

PG programs are highly inappropriate for your child. Most of the Disney Channel shows are too mature for children in our program.

- b. As we encourage you to limit your child's screen time, we also ask you to limit your own. Your children are only young for so long, please make the most of this time to truly connect with them. When you are distracted by electronics, you may still be physically present with your child but emotionally you are gone. Children have become used to their precious parent time being interrupted, without apology or permission, by electronics. Therefore, creating the sentiment that the child must compete with these inanimate objects for their parents' attention or simply resign themselves to the shared attention. Our children need and deserve our full attention when we are with them
11. Tell them stories from your past. This helps introduce the child to a narrative structure with a beginning, middle, and end. Additionally, children love to hear about their parents as children and learn more about their family.