

## Plant the Literacy Seed and Read!



When a family receives the diagnosis that their child has a hearing loss, an outpouring of emotions may be experienced. Uncertainty can easily be fueled by navigating special education systems and regardless of the age of diagnosis, this can be over-whelming. We all want our children to succeed, and families/caregivers are hungry to have access to the tools and resources to best support their child with hearing loss. However, a family likely has one of the most important tools they need in their toolbox in their own homes – books!

Books have the power to whisk you and your child away to a magical place and let your imagination run wild. Books have a way of bringing a pause to busy lives and allow the information you receive to be intentional. Help foster your child's language, literacy, and vocabulary development by filling your shelves at home with books and carving out a time to read.

Studies indicate that deaf and hard of hearing children need to hear a word multiple times before they begin to understand and use it correctly. Therefore, repetition is critical for comprehension. Often, this requires you to read a favorite book over and over until the spine starts to fall apart. Consider your child to be a seed and for them to grow, you need to fill them with food (language), water (access to auditory information) and sunlight (repetition). It's never too early to begin taking care of your 'seed' by making sure reading is a part of your daily routine.

It's best to find a time in your day when your child will be engaged in a book, and you won't have many interruptions. Choose books with topics your child is interested in. **Expand their knowledge by using vocabulary they aren't familiar with.** Pick books that focus on emotions, to allow for conversations about feeling to take place naturally. If you can't seem to fit in reading throughout your day, make it a priority to add reading into your bedtime routine. Let your child guide you on what they would like to read and bring your patience since it may be the 10<sup>th</sup> time you've read that book that week! Encourage your child to talk about what they are reading and how the story relates to your lives.

Reading can happen anywhere and at any time – at home, in the car or waiting at the doctor's office. It's never too young, or too late, to instill the love of reading in a child.

Lastly, as our deaf and hard of hearing children grow and develop their identity, immerse them in literature featuring deaf or hard of hearing characters. Knowing that over 90% of our deaf or hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents, they often are the only ones with hearing loss in their families. **Fill your personal library with books where the characters on the page use amplification, hearing technology or visual modes of communication.** You are guaranteed to see your child's eye light up when they see children on the pages who look just like them!

Plant the reading seed with your child from a young age, so as they grow, so will their passion for books.

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