



**BabyRead Columns  
In  
*The Journal*  
Seneca, SC  
(Chronological Order)**

**2021  
(July - December)**

**2021 Journal Column  
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## *Early communication with infants*

We all understand that infant communication is very important because it is how babies let parents, and other caregivers, know what they need.

- “It is important to respond consistently to a baby’s cues (crying, fussing, facial expressions and sounds) to help build a connection. Your responses may include feeding, a diaper change, swaddling, smiling, talking or simply picking up your child.”



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CAREN  
VON HIPPEL

- “The foundation for success in school and throughout life is created in infancy through supportive, responsive interactions with parents and caregivers.”

- “While the earliest forms of communication allow your child to express his needs, they are also the foundation for

relationship development with parents and caregivers.”

### **WHAT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN DO**

- “Right from birth, talk and read to your child. This helps her to connect with you and gets her started on the path to learning language.

- Before your baby can talk, play sound games with her. If she babbles, babble back!

- If you think your child is trying to say a real word, say it for him, and see if she agrees that you’ve said the right one. “Young children know what words mean before they can say them.

- If he says “wabbit,” don’t criticize him. Just say the word correctly, “Yes that is a rabbit.”

- Read, read, read to your child. Read every day to your child. Reading and talking are the keys to helping your child develop the pre-literacy skills he needs to be successful in school.

- Education is a wonderful path out of poverty. Getting a good education requires that parents talk and read with their babies and toddlers regularly. Reading every day is the goal. A good education is the road to a good job.

- “Help your child to hear and say the sounds of language by reading books together, singing songs and learning nursery rhymes.” Babies and toddlers love “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and “Five Little Monkeys.” Do finger plays with rhymes like “The Itsy Bitsy Spider.” Go to the internet for lots of ideas.

- “To help build your child’s vocabulary, describe objects with lots of details. But use short sentences! “Look at how soft your diaper is.” “See the yellow, long banana.” “Doesn’t that red apple look delicious to chew.” “I am making lasagna. First I am boiling some water, and then I will add the noodles.” Or, “I will microwave the noodles and ...” Even if you are a quiet person, it is important to talk to your child about what is happening to her and the world around her.

- “If you are concerned that your child has difficulties with speech, talk with your child’s health care provider.”

Quotes taken from a parent website.

**BABYREAD’S MISSION** is to raise the literacy level in Oconee County by encouraging moms/caregivers to read daily to children from birth. This prepares children for success in school and in life. Readers read with mom/caregivers in person at town or school libraries. For more information, contact our president, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at [babyread@charter.net](mailto:babyread@charter.net) or (864) 643-8083, [babyread.org](http://babyread.org).

## *Johanna, David, Maria, Kathleen and Alex: A BabyRead family*

David is an active 2-year-old who loves his books. Johanna signed him up for BabyRead before he was born! She knew the importance of reading, but felt she might not be as disciplined about reading to her newborn as she should be. When he was born, Johanna and Alex already had two daughters, 7-year-old Marie and 5-year-old Kathleen, so she was a busy mom.

Being a member of the BabyRead family for the past three years has benefited the entire family far beyond Johanna's expectations. Not only does

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JANICE  
GARCIA

David love books (at Christmas when he was only 22 months old, he was more excited about his new books than the toys!), but the girls have become much more

interested in reading. During the pandemic lockdown, they were so excited to receive BabyRead's gifts of books and magazines. At 6, Kathleen is being tutored twice a week in reading by another BabyRead volunteer. It is unusual for BabyRead to tutor a school-age child in reading, but Kathleen attended kindergarten online because of the pandemic. It was a struggle for her and her mom to learn online, and Kathleen grew to dislike school. Serendipitously, at the beginning of this past summer, BabyRead had a volunteer with an education background looking to tutor a child. It was a no-brainer to put them together. Johanna and Kathleen were delighted.

As is often the case in BabyRead, Johanna and Kim, the BabyRead family reader, have become friends. Johanna had recently moved to Walhalla to join her husband, Alex. When she signed up, she also thought that joining BabyRead would give her an opportunity to spend time with another woman, which it did, to her delight. This connection has been especially helpful during the months when activities were so limited due to the pandemic. This past spring, Johanna and her three children met with Kim at South Cove County Park for a wonderful time of reading outside and then going on the swings.

Before school started, Marie would read to her siblings at random times during the day. Now that school has begun, reading is more of a bedtime activity for the children. However, while the girls are in school, David often chooses his own books and "reads" them to Johanna, pointing out the pictures and making the animal or other appropriate sounds — "choo-choo-oo-oo" is often heard throughout the house.

David will be one of our "oldest" BabyRead family members, graduating only when he enters school!

**JANICE GARCIA** is a BabyRead volunteer.

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No October 2021 column

## *Simple interactions with babies forecast success*

Parents can do such simple things to help their baby get ahead academically.

- “Did you know that how you talk and read to your baby now can sharpen their academic skills later? What you as a parent do now with your baby prepares your child for being successful or for struggling in kindergarten.”

- “Reading, playing and talking with your baby or toddler are fun ways to bond and activities many parents do. But did you know that current research finds that simple activities like these can also help your child later on?”



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- “Researchers at Purdue University studied more than 1,300 families and followed their children from 1 month to age 15. They evaluated how mothers and caregivers interacted with their little ones when they were 6, 15, 24 and 36 months old. Later, the scientists analyzed the children’s math and vocabulary skills by looking at achievement scores.”

- “Results showed that moms and caregivers who provide more stimulating and responsive interactions with their babies and toddlers, during the first three years of life, had children who performed better on both math and vocabulary assessments. Examples of stimulating and responsive parenting include regularly talking to a child, reading a book to a child regularly (every day is best), providing positive and constructive feedback and responding to a child with a warm regard. What’s the bottom line? Spending time with your baby now can pay off big time years down the road.”

- “The study also found that children who had less stimulating or responsive interactions with caretakers or mothers performed poorly in mathematics later in life. Having high-quality interactions appear to buffer against this effect.”

### **SERVE AND RESPOND**

There is also research that demonstrates that spending time with your baby or toddler reading, talking and playing contributes to healthier social and emotional functioning later in life. Research shows that reading, talking and playing with your child results in fewer temper tantrums and better social interaction with peers.

Why talk to a baby who does not yet understand or speak a language? Because your baby is talking to you from the very first moment of birth by kicking and crying. Your child understands a great deal more of what you say to him/her than your child can speak. “Serve and respond” is the educational jargon for what parents naturally do when they spend time with their baby. Your baby does something — e.g., kick or cry (the serve) — and then you respond by what you say or do. These daily interactions are critical.

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## *Do masks delay speech and language development?*

During this period of the coronavirus, with no end in sight, many of us are wearing masks indoors. Just as children are taught to sit with a seatbelt, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that children by age 2 can and should be taught to wear masks since safety is key, and masks reduce the transmission of COVID-19.



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“Does wearing a mask delay speech and language development?” During the first few years of life, children are rapidly developing communication skills. Whether by smiling, cooing, babbling, pointing or saying their first words, children are communicating... Children watch the faces, mouths and expressions of the people closest to them.”

“However, there is no known evidence that the use of face masks interferes with children’s speech and language development or social communication,” said the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. “Plus, children get plenty of face time at home with family members... Consider that visually impaired children develop speech and language skills at the same rate as their peers. In fact, when one sense is taken away, another may be heightened.”

### **HOW DO BABIES LEARN TO COMMUNICATE?**

“Babies are hard-wired to communicate. From day one, they watch their loved ones’ faces and mouth movements. They listen to them talk ... and attempt to interact with their parents and caregivers. Each milestone builds on another.

Parents and other family members can encourage this development by talking, singing, playing, reading and engaging their baby in numerous other ways every day. The more language a child is exposed to — and the more undivided attention a parent or caregiver can give to a child as they feed them, bathe them, change their diapers, push them in a stroller or play outside with them — the better the child’s communication skills will likely be.”

Again, there is no known study that use of a face mask negatively impacts a child’s speech and language development. In addition to watching faces, children “watch gestures, hear changes in tone of voice, see eyes convey emotion and listen to words.”

“By providing dedicated time to converse with your child without screens or other interruptions — e.g. at bath or dinner time — children should reach their expected milestones.”

*(Quotes from [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org), American Academia of Pediatrics, August 2021)*

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