

Debunking Three Big Myths about Teaching Your Child to Read.

Copyright ©2009 Cathy Puett Miller. All Rights Reserved.

As a parent, in our information-dense society, you may be confused:

How do I know what to trust? Which is a sales pitch and which is valid?

How do I tell the difference between truth and misinformation, facts and hype?

Nowhere are those questions more important, or more frequently posed, than on the subject of our children learning to read.

Myth #1: Earlier is always better. We see ads for fix-all programs, computer games that “give your child an advantage”, and even preschools who are sitting three-year children at desks under the guise of “getting them ready for school”. In contrast, the world of research tells us that there is a developmental spectrum which children need to pass through before they are ready to read. Each child hits her “ready to read moment” at a slightly different time. You child can become a “parrot” before then but, if she is pushed into a part of the spectrum she isn’t ready for (socially, cognitively, emotionally, physically), she won’t learn the concept behind that parroting. More importantly, ignoring parts of the spectrum can later negatively impact your child’s abilities *and* motivation to read.

Myth #2: But he’s just a baby . . . he’ll get enough learning once he goes to school. Over the past 10 years particularly, extensive research in the area of neuroscience has given us a clear understanding of the potential for learning during the first 3-5 years of age. It is greater than at any other time. Your child’s developing brain creates strong connections whenever someone plays and interacts with him using language. Those connections make it easier for him to learn to read when the “time is prime”. As you’ll see in Myth #3, that’s not a license to flashcard your child incessantly or drill him on concepts he may not be ready for.

Myth #3: Rigorous, structured lessons are the best way for any child of any age to learn.

The truth is that young children learn differently than their older, more mature counterparts.

“Learning happens everywhere in a young child’s life, and play is the optimum learning environment. Learning at this age should not look or feel “academic.” Think about how your baby learned to walk. Did someone just show her pictures of people walking, telling her how to move one foot in front of the other without showing her, or did someone say, “well, it’s time for you to walk so you need to do it”? We laugh because we know that’s certainly not true. Getting reading to read is no different. “Only when proper foundations are established through repeated and varied concrete experiences can we expect young children to grasp higher-level skills.”

Author, Cathy Puett Miller, has written *Anytime Reading Readiness* to address these very issues and to help every family with a young child find what is just right for your child, in the short and long term. Her book contains simple, easy-to-implement concepts from the experienced voices of authentic experts, both in the worlds of research and practical experience.