

The 7th Annual Family Engagement
LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

welcome!

we will begin
shortly...

**Ohio Statewide
Family Engagement Center**

For Every Child, Every Family, Every School

Early Literacy and Kindergarten Readiness Resources

Dr. Kristin Farley, Literacy Specialist



MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO



OVERVIEW

1. Importance of early language and literacy
2. Resources and professional support
3. Family engagement

WHO'S HERE

PAUSE AND CONSIDER

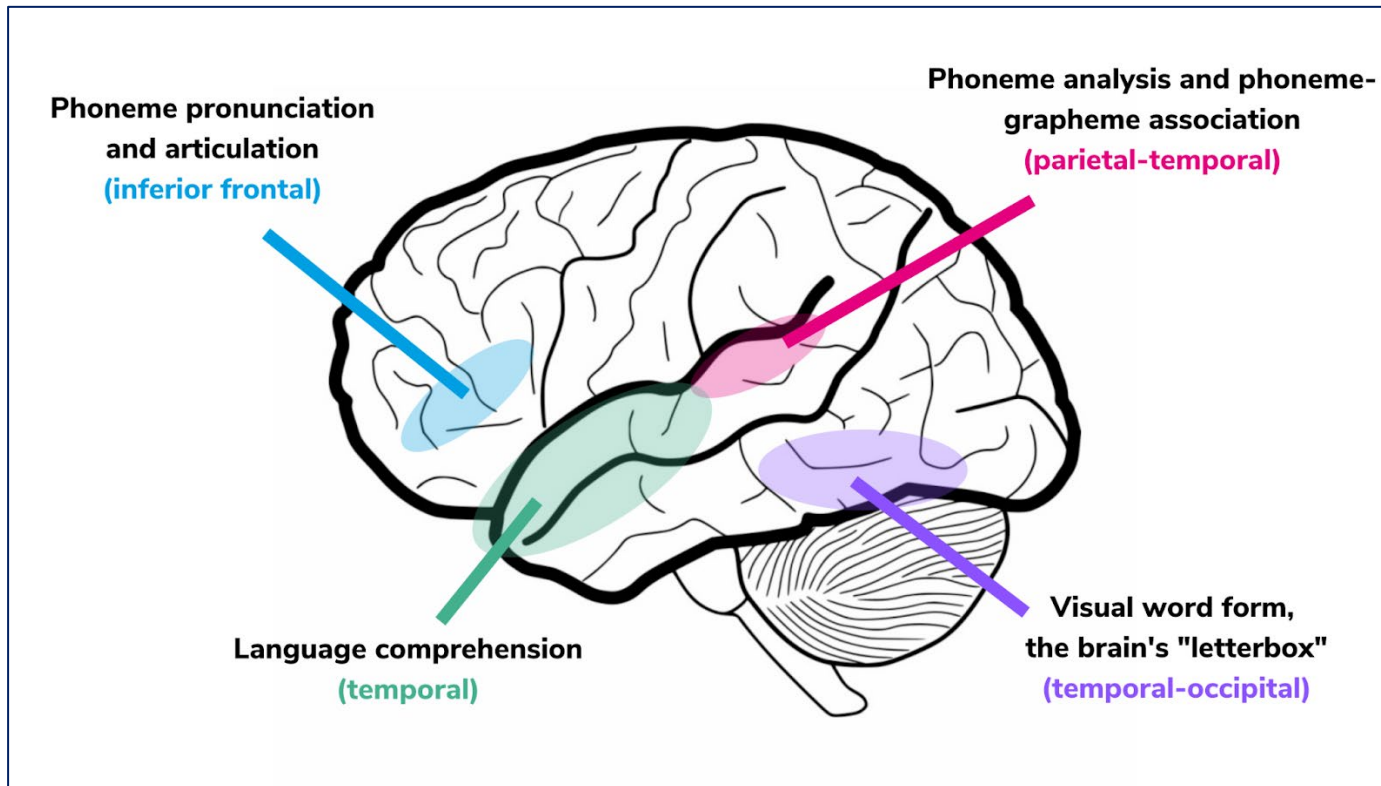
At what age did you learn to read?

When should parents start preparing their child for kindergarten?

What factors or skills contribute the most to kindergarten readiness?

EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- Birth-five is critical for language and literacy development.
- Language is the foundation for later reading.



LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Children ready for kindergarten are more likely to have:

Proficient
reading skills

Higher
graduation
rates

Better health

Higher-
paying jobs

Lower
incarceration
rates

*Regardless of parent education, job, or economic status

DCY SHORT & LONG TERM GOALS

Ohio aims to be the best place in the country to start and raise a family and DCY has outlined the following goals to become a leading state (e.g., top 10 in the country across 3 program areas):

Goal #1:

Maternal & Infant Wellness

Reduce the Rate of Infant Mortality (per 1000)

BASELINE

(CY22)

7.1

MOST RECENT

DATA

(released March 2026)

6.4* preliminary

SHORT-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2027)

6.0

LONG-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2029)

4.4

Goal #2:

Early Care & Education

Increase the Percentage of Children Demonstrating Readiness on the KRA

BASELINE

(Autumn
2022)

35.4%

MOST RECENT

DATA

(released June 2026)

44.8%

SHORT-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2027)

48%

LONG-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2029)

60%

Goal #3:

Children Services, Kinship, Foster & Adoption

Reduce the Rate of Children Entering Foster Care (per 1000)

BASELINE

(FFY22)

3.3

MOST RECENT

DATA

(released March 2026)

3.52

SHORT-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2027)

2.0

LONG-TERM

GOAL

(SFY 2029)

2.0

SUPPORTING PARENTS

- Resources for supporting their child's language and literacy development *from birth.*



LET'S TALK!

What resources do you provide to families about language and literacy development?

How do you share these with families?
At events, mailings, targeted distribution, etc.?

SCIENCE OF READING



The Science of Reading and Early Literacy

Science of Reading

A large body of research that informs how we teach reading. Research spans several decades and multiple disciplines. Findings identify five essential pillars for reading.

Early Literacy

Early literacy skills include learning about letters, sounds, and how print works. These skills begin developing before birth as the brain forms new pathways specific to reading.

Pillars of Reading

- Phonemic awareness: hearing and playing with sounds in words.
- Phonics: connecting letters and sounds to spell words.
- Vocabulary: the words we use to communicate with others.
- Fluency: automatically recognizing words and reading with expression.
- Comprehension: understanding written text.

Language

Early language skills are the foundation for learning to read! Children have to understand spoken communication in order to make sense of the words they read.



SCIENCE OF READING

Early Literacy

Alphabet knowledge

Learning about letter names, shapes, and sounds is a critical foundation for reading and writing.

Playing with sounds

Hearing and separating sounds in words is the most important skill for learning to read and spell.

Understanding print

Reading from left to right and from top to bottom of the page are fundamental to reading and writing.

SUPPORTING INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Talk and encourage children to imitate speech sounds.
- Describe what you see and do to develop language skills.
- Sing songs and play rhyming games.
- Read books together. Point to the words as you read.
- Share stories and ask questions.
- Expand on children's short responses or vocalizations with complete sentences.

SUPPORTING PRESCHOOLERS

- Have frequent conversations and take multiple turns in each conversation.
- Play games like "I Spy" to build vocabulary.
- Point out letters and words in the environment.
- Talk about books you and your child have read. Connect them to real life events.
- Play rhyming games and match words that start with the same sound.
- Write a grocery list or send a postcard.

WEBSITE

Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy



LANGUAGE AND LITERACY PARENT GUIDES

INFANT & TODDLER LANGUAGE



Birth-1 year

- Coo, smile, and copy sounds or faces
- Begin to know the names of familiar things
- Respond to caregivers' voices
- Say first words around 8-12 months

1-2 years

- Use short sentences with 2-4 words
- Pretend to read and ask you to read
- Follow simple directions
- Know around 50-100 words

2-3 years

- Speak clearly so others understand
- Enjoy reading, repeat parts of favorite books
- Ask for help and say what they need
- Know around 500 words

What to do if you're worried about your child's growth

- Use the Sparkler app to complete the ASQ questionnaire



Scan QR code to download the Sparkler app
Use the access code OH to register after downloading.

- Talk to your child's doctor about your concerns
- Call Help Me Grow to ask about your child's growth: 1-800-755-GROW (4769)



TIPS FOR TALKING WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Play with your child

Play together and talk about what you or your child are doing, such as clapping hands or rattling toys.

OTHER READING ACTIVITIES

Songs and play rhyming games.
Storytime at the local library.
Look at pictures and describe them as you read together.
Read real-life stories that connect to the

up for free books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library



WEBSITE

Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy



PRESCHOOL READING & LANGUAGE



3 - 4 years

- Ask and answer questions
- Try to read and write
- Tell you a story from memory
- Use location words, like *inside*, *above*
- Vocabulary grows to around 1500 words

4 - 5 years

- Use words for past, present, and future
- Read and write some familiar words
- Blend words together, like: bed+time = bedtime
- Name and write some letters
- Vocabulary grows to about 2500 words

TIPS FOR PRESCHOOL READING SKILLS

Talk with your child

Give them chances to respond. Ask questions and build on what they say. Keep the conversation going.

Read with your child

Read with fun voices, talk about the pictures, and ask questions. Point out letters and new words.

Play with your child

Play together and try different roles. Use new words and act out what they mean.

CONVERSATION TIPS

- Ask questions about the characters after reading a book together.
- Play games like "I Spy" that use descriptions.
- When you're in the car or on a walk, talk about what you see and ask your child questions.
- Talk about books when you're out together. This connects books to real life.
- Talk about other places you see words, like road signs, stores, and packages.

OTHER READING ACTIVITIES

- Sing songs and play rhyming games.
- Ask your child to help write a grocery list.
- Read recipes out loud while cooking together.
- Go to storytime at the local library.
- Write and mail a letter to someone special.
- Match words that start with the same letter.
- Sign up for free books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.



WEBSITE

Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy



PROFESSIONAL GUIDE



PARENT LITERACY GUIDES

What professionals need to know

Birth-5 years is a critical period for language and literacy growth. Early language and literacy skills promote kindergarten readiness and positive outcomes later in life, making it important to develop these skills early. This guide will help you use the parent literacy handouts and talk to families about the importance of talking and reading with their children from an early age.

PURPOSE OF GUIDES

- Help parents support their children's language and literacy growth.
- Suggest ways to build language and literacy into routines with no extra time required.
- Provide guidelines for expected language and literacy skills at each age.
- Offer resources if parents have concerns about their child's progress.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Provide handouts to parents based on child's age.
- Discuss the importance of building early language and literacy skills.
- Model language and literacy practices.
- Help parents sign up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.
- Look for warning signs that a child could need additional support.
- Support families through the referral or intervention process, if necessary.
- Help parents download the Sparkler app to complete the ASQ and find activities to do with their child at home.



Scan QR code to download the Sparkler app

Use the access code OH to register after downloading.



WARNING SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

- *Infant not cooing or babbling
- *Child not responsive to caregiver
- *Few or no books available
- *Limited vocabulary
- *Disinterested in books or reading
- *Unable to form simple sentences
- *Does not follow basic directions
- *Speech is difficult to understand
- *Extended periods of screen time
- *Unable to carry on conversations
- *Answers are off-topic

Website

[Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy](https://www.dcy.ohio.gov/early-literacy)



BOOK LISTS

FRIENDSHIP

Nugget and Fang
Tammi Sauer & Michael Slack

A Color of His Own
Leo Lionni

The Cool Bean
Jory John & Pete Oswald

All Are Welcome
Alexandra Alessandri

Mabel Wants a Friend
Ariel Bernstein & Marc Rosenthal

Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away
Meg Medina & Sonia Sanchez

I Forgive Alex
Kerascoët

The Invisible Boy
Trudy Ludwig & Patrice Barton

Little Taco Truck
Tanya Valentine & Jorge Martin

Strictly No Elephants
Lisa Mantchev & Taeun Yoo



My Three Best Friends and Me, Zulay
Cari Best & Vanessa Brantley-Newton

Sourgrass
Hope Lim & Shahrzad Maydani

Something Beautiful
Lita Judge

We Disagree
Bethanie Deeny Murguia

My Best Friend
Julie Fogliano & Jilliam Tamaki

Be a Bridge
Irene Latham, Charles Waters, & Nabila Adani



Scan this QR code for
more book lists!



Department of
Children & Youth

FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

Families Are Different
Nina Pellegrini

We Waited for You
Cindy Chupack & Emily Hamilton

A Is For Always: An Adoption Alphabet
Linda Cutting & Leonie Little Lex

A Mother for Choco
Keiko Kasza

Mama's Waves/Daddy's Waves
Chandra Ghosh Ippen & Erich Ippen Jr.

Families Change
Mary Gallagher & Julie Nelson

I Wished for You: An Adoption Story for Kids
Marianne Richmond

Adoption is Both
Elena S. Hall & Lara Norris

How I Was Adopted
Joanna Cole & Maxie Chambliss



You Weren't With Me
Chandra Ghosh Ippen & Erich Ippen Jr.

*Just Because I Was Adopted: A Story About
Adoption and Forever Love*
Dr. P. Shiroma

*Delly Duck: Why a Little Chick Couldn't Stay
With His Birth Mother*
Holly Marlow & Suzy Garland

*Kids Need to be Safe: A Book for Children in
Foster Care*
Julie Nelson & Mary Gallagher

*Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster
Care*
Jennifer Wilgocki, Marcia Wright, & Alissa Geis



Scan this QR code for
more book lists!



Department of
Children & Youth

BOOK LIST GUIDES



BOOK LISTS

Books to guide your child through big and small moments



The Power of Books

Reading books with your child is more than just a fun activity—it's a powerful tool for helping your child through big and small events in life.

Books can help children celebrate new friendships or family traditions. They can also help children cope during stressful or scary times.

Young children often don't have the words to explain what they're feeling. Seeing a character go through something similar helps children feel less alone and gives them the words they need.

Use the book lists to find books that match what your child is experiencing. Have conversations and talk about your feelings together.

Tips for Choosing and Reading Books

- **Ask questions-** Point out what the characters in the book are doing and feeling. Ask your child if they feel the same or different.
- **Relate-** You might be experiencing the same thing as your child. Tell them how you feel and compare your feelings.
- **Skim-** If the book has lots of text or seems too long, just read some of the words or talk about the pictures.
- **Practice-** Try out activities the characters use to cope or show their feelings in a healthy way.

Click or Scan:

Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy



TOPICAL BOOK LISTS

What professionals need to know

Reading books with children is a powerful tool for helping them understand the world around them. This is particularly important during major life changes as young children often do not have the language they need to express their feelings or understand their emotions. This guide will help you talk to parents about reading books to support their child through exciting and difficult moments.

PURPOSE OF BOOK LISTS

- Provide a set of topic-specific books that are developmentally appropriate.
- Address a range of life events, including common topics (e.g., friendship) and challenging situations (e.g., death and grief).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Provide appropriate book lists to parents and caregivers.
- Walk through the book together, highlighting meaningful moments.
- Suggest questions or conversation starters that help the child relate to the characters and express their feelings.
- Prompt parents and caregivers to share their own experiences with their child.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to help their child practice the same strategy a character used.
- Model how to skim lengthy text for younger children. Suggest wordless books and model how to tell a story through pictures.
- Remind parents that most of these books-and more-are available at the library free of charge.

BOOK LIST TOPICS

- Friendship
- Starting School
- Foster Care and Adoption
- Confidence
- Death and Grieving
- Kindness
- Disabilities

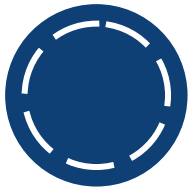
Multi-lingual texts, wordless picture books, and additional topics available.

Website
Department of Children and Youth: Early Literacy



 Department of Children & Youth

IN THE CHAT



Current topics

Alphabet and Rhyming
Confidence
Death and Grief
Feelings
Foster Care and
Adoption
Friendship
Kindness
Starting School
Wordless Books



Future topics

What topics would you like to see added to the book lists? Share your ideas in the chat!



DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY OF OHIO



THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

Book guide

Read and talk with your child to build their early reading skills! Research shows that a child's brain is 80% developed by age three, so read and re-read often. Use this guide to look for ways to talk with your child and extend their fun even after the book ends!

FUN FACTS

- Did you know that trains have been used for over 200 years? They carry people and supplies all over the country every day. The fastest train can travel nearly 300mph!
- The little blue engine has *confidence* that she can help the train. *Confidence* means she believes in herself!

TALK ABOUT IT!

Talk to your child and ask questions, even if they only respond with coos or say 1-2 words. Respond and repeat answers back in full sentences.

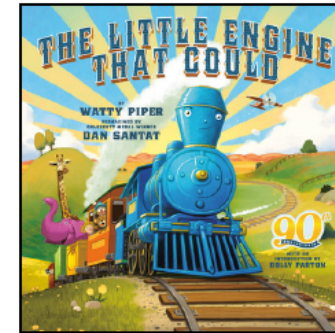
- How many cars can you count on the train? What colors are they?
- What animals or toys would you carry on the train?
- Have you ever tried to do something that was really hard? How did you do it?
- How do you think the toys felt when the other engines wouldn't help them?
- Can you think of a time when you helped someone else? How did you help them?

WEBSITE

<https://www.ohioimaginationlibrary.org/>



STRETCH THE STORY!



Keep talking about *The Little Engine That Could* even after the story is done! Here are some fun things you can try at home:

- As your child works on a hard task like crawling or stacking blocks, encourage them with the train's chant, "I think I can!"
- Line up trains, cars, animals, or other toys your child has. Help them count how many toys you have and name each one.
- Tap out the rhythm of the chant, "I think I can!" Try your own chant and rhythm, and have your child tap it out with you. Make the chant go faster or slower and have your child follow your speed.
- Search for extra materials to build your own train. Use materials like empty cereal boxes, toilet paper rolls, or other objects you find.
- Create your own story about helping others. What is the character's problem? How can you help solve it?
- Draw a picture of a train. Choose your favorite color and label it with words like *train*, *engine*, or *caboose*.

From the book *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper © 1930. Published by Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. The Little Engine That Could, I Think I Can and all related titles, logos and characters are trademarks of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

SCENARIO

- You are taking a walk with a five-year-old through a neighborhood or park. As you walk, how can you engage the child and support their kindergarten readiness skills?
- Now consider: what if the child was only three years old?

KINDERGARTEN READINESS



Kindergarten Readiness

WHAT IS KINDERGARTEN READINESS?

Kindergarten readiness is all about helping your child build the skills they need for school.

WHEN SHOULD I START BUILDING THESE SKILLS?

It's never too early to start! Talk and read to your child from birth for healthy brain development.

Why is Kindergarten Readiness important?

Children's brains are changing quickly during their first five years. This is a prime time to help your child develop healthy brain connections that will help them read, count, build friendships, and learn about the world. Children who are ready to start kindergarten are more likely to be skilled readers by third grade and graduate high school compared to children who are not ready for kindergarten.

How can I help my child be ready for kindergarten?

Kindergarten readiness includes knowing letters and sounds, numbers, and shapes. It also includes problem solving and social skills, like sharing and following simple directions. To help build all of these skills, talk to your child often and ask questions. Point out letters, numbers, and shapes you see, such as store names and addresses. See which toys sink or float in the water during bathtime. You can build skills during daily routines with your child without needing extra time!





KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Activities at home

Talk about print

Print is everywhere! Point out letters on road signs and match them with sounds. Look for numbers and shapes like address numbers above rectangular doors or square windows.

Solve problems

Ask questions to help your child think of new ways to solve a problem. Show them how you would do it! Try thinking out loud to help them hear how you solve your own problems.

Role play

Pretend play with your child to help them learn about feelings. Act like you are excited, sad, or angry and show your child how to share your feelings in appropriate ways.

ACTIVITIES

- Go for a walk and collect leaves, sticks, or other items. Compare their shape, color, or size.
- Put together a simple puzzle to work on solving problems and sitting still.
- Read books and write together to name and write letters.
- Make silly faces in a mirror. Talk about your emotions with each face you make.
- Play "I Spy" with letters and sounds. Look for objects that start with the same sound or letter.
- Play games with simple rules and help your child take turns.
- Sing songs and read favorite books together. Ask questions and connect to your child's life.
- Cook a meal together! Help your child read the recipe and measure ingredients.

RESOURCES

For more activities you can do at home, download the Sparkler app for free!



Scan QR code to download the Sparkler app

Use the access code 04 to register after downloading.

Enroll your child in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio for free monthly books!



[WEBSITE](#)

[DCY: Kindergarten Readiness](#)



KINDERGARTEN READINESS CARDS



KINDERGARTEN READINESS CARDS



KINDERGARTEN READINESS CARDS

Birth to School Readiness



Readiness starts at birth

Many people think that children start getting ready for kindergarten around four or five years old, but they actually start learning the minute they're born! Babies are always noticing new things and trying to make sense of the world around them. The good news is that simple, everyday activities can have a big impact on how your child grows.

Small, daily actions

Families can practice kindergarten skills, like learning about letters, numbers, sharing, and taking care of their own needs, anytime and anywhere. The Kindergarten Readiness cards have tips and fun activities that you can enjoy with your child during everyday routines, such as bathtime, riding in the car, waiting in line, or taking a walk.

It's never too early or too late, so check out the Kindergarten Readiness cards for a new activity to try today!

Using the cards

Each Kindergarten Readiness card begins with an easier activity and adds more challenging ones to try as your child grows. Choose any card to start with and do the first activity. If it's easy for your child, go to the next one.

- **Talk-** Take turns talking and listening to your child. Even babies answer with sounds and smiles!
- **Repeat-** Try activities more than once. This helps your child learn new skills and get ready for what comes next.
- **Connect-** Connect the activities to your child's life. This makes learning meaningful and exciting.
- **Read-** Read books and look at pictures together often! Name pictures or skip some words when books are long.

Website

[DCY Kindergarten Readiness](#)



KINDERGARTEN READINESS CARDS

What professionals need to know

Kindergarten readiness begins the day children are born as they learn about language, numbers, and the world around them. Parents can do simple things during daily routines to help develop skills in language, literacy, math, science, social skills, and movement.

PURPOSE OF CARDS

- Support children's kindergarten readiness skills from birth through age five.
- Suggest ways to build kindergarten readiness activities into daily routines with no extra time or cost required.
- Promote small, everyday interactions with children that set them up for lifelong learning.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Provide cards to parents and caregivers. Look through them together so you can answer their questions.
- Encourage parents to hook the cards to a diaper bag, keychain, or purse so they see them and remember to use them frequently.
- Discuss the importance of building kindergarten readiness skills.
- Model language, literacy, math, and science practices.
- Model ways to build children's physical skills.
- Emphasize that parents can build skills during routine parts of the day.
- Direct parents to the DCY website for more Kindergarten Readiness activities and resources.
- Help parents download the Sparkler app and sign up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.

WHY KINDERGARTEN READINESS MATTERS

Children who are ready for kindergarten are more likely to:

- Learn to read sooner.
- Be proficient readers by third grade.
- Graduate high school.
- Have higher-paying jobs.
- Have better physical and mental health.

Website

[DCY Kindergarten Readiness](#)



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CHOOSE A LENS

- Choose one of the following lenses and consider the resources shared. How would you use these materials? What barriers do you foresee to using these?
 - Parent
 - Educator
 - Literacy Specialist
 - Family Engagement coordinator
 - Program or district leader (principal, superintendent)

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Explain the importance of language, literacy, and kindergarten readiness.
- Help parents use the Sparkler app and enroll in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.
- Provide handouts and practice activities together.
- Observe children's language skills and model conversations.
- *It's never too early or too late to start!*

Download the Sparkler app and use the code OH to register.



<https://www.helpmegrow.org/ASQ>

EARLY LITERACY WEBSITE



<https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/families/early-care-education/early-literacy>

- Science of Reading handout
- Parent language and literacy handouts and guide
- Book lists
- Launch Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio site for book guides

KINDERGARTEN READINESS WEBSITE



<https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/families/early-care-education/kindergarten-readiness>

- Birth to School Readiness
 - Kindergarten Readiness handout
 - Flipbook and accompanying guides
- Family Resources
- Tip Sheets (Talk, Read, & Sing Together!)

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