IDEAL

Excel²

Extraordinarily **C**ommitted to **E**nrichment in **L**anguage & **L**iteracy

Beyond Letters, Colors, Shapes, and Numbers

The academic concepts of letters, colors, shapes, and numbers are being taught at younger and younger ages. Many adults focus on teaching these kinds of academic concepts because they are easily taught and associated with school success. Children learn them quickly because of the praise they receive. Too often a child may know colors, letters, and numbers but lack the robust language skills needed for reading comprehension.

The message of the book *Einstein Never Used Flashcards* can be advantageous to providers, teachers, and families alike. While we know that developing language and literacy is important, we can remind one another that drilling letters or memorizing the alphabet will not accomplish reading comprehension. *To develop literacy, we must* **read with children**, **tell them stories**, **listen to them**, **talk to them**, *and* **learn with them**. As the authors of *Einstein Never Used Flashcards* put it, "What children need from adults is time, not tricks."

Check out these links for additional information:

- Edutopia: The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure
- Teach Me to Talk: Beyond Colors, Letters, and Numbers
- Raising Wildflower Kids: Why I don't teach shapes, colors, letters or numbers

Ideas for expanding vocabulary beyond letters, colors, shapes, and numbers:

- Read stories from children's literature with your child and discuss what you **think happened before** the story and **what will happen next**.
- Set up areas to do crafts together, such as coloring, cutting, and pasting, and **use movement** to enhance language as you narrate what your child is doing.
- Cook with your child to **help them learn math**.
- When playing with your child, **describe objects using a variety of attributes** (e.g., *little truck*, *garbage truck*, *fast truck*, *loud truck*, rather than *blue/red/yellow truck*.)
- **Teach the verb** or action word that is associated with the object you are labeling (e.g., "The dog is *jumping*," "I am *picking up* the blocks.").
- Model language by **thinking out loud** – be sure to include verbs such as *think, assume, feel, wonder*, etc.
- With older children, grab natural opportunities to **expand the ability to use language for thinking**. Expose your child to new experiences to find problems to solve – helping your child learn to think critically and generalize skills – more easily applying the technique to new situations.

Indiana Department of Health

Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education