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### **IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LITERACY**

One of my favorite things to do is snuggle up and get lost in a good book, don't get me wrong, Netflix is a close second! While I understand that the enjoyment of reading may not be on others' lists at all, I also understand that the ability to read is one of the most important skills acquired at school. A study conducted by the University of Sussex actually showed that reading reduces stress by 68%, and it helps people sleep better by relaxing muscles and reducing tension (Cory Armes, M.ED., 2022).

Over the years the teaching of reading has ebbed and flowed. You may have heard about the reading wars surrounding the best way to teach children to read. The reading wars can best be described as the dispute between the teaching of letter sounds in words (phonics), and the teaching of whole words by encountering them in text (whole language). Now, most recently, the science of reading has made the headlines.

The science of reading is based on over 20 years of research around the study of how the brain learns to read, and the methods for teaching reading that have proven to be effective (Evan-Moor, 2022). There are five essential reading components that need to be explicitly taught to our students: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In the Berlin Area School District we accomplish this with the new reading materials from Amplify that were adopted in the 2021-2022 school year for grades K-8.

However, the best foundation for early literacy skills begins before children even start school. While reading and speaking with young children remains the number one method to begin exposing young children to rich language, there are many activities you can try while running errands. I have fond memories of driving with my young children and calling out random things we would see while they called out rhyming words. Actually, most of the times what they called out were not actual words, but they did rhyme. For example, I would say, "dog," and I may hear, "mog," which is perfectly fine because they were learning sound patterns. Another version of a rhyming game is to work together to think of all of the words that rhyme with "mat", and if you happen to have a piece of paper and pencil, writing those words can be the foundation for young children to see those sound patterns.

While these simple activities only take minutes at a time, you are providing your child with the gift of early literacy skills and the love of reading, leading to their academic success. If you would like to learn more activities to begin building early literacy skills please feel free to contact me at the Berlin Area School District, or type in your search bar; early literacy activities to do at home, the possibilities are endless!