Baby Rhyming Time

BY

Linda L. Ernst

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Preface

It is never too early to start creating learning experiences for children. This long-known truism is now a scientifically documented fact. Continuing scientific and medical research demonstrates how important very early childhood—birth to 24 months—can be. Those who work with children now know that it is important to help children develop early literacy skills before they can learn how to read and write. Exposure to activities like rhymes, actions, and simple stories during these crucial months can have a significant positive impact on how easily a child ventures into the world of reading.

Short interactive story times for young children and their caregivers are one of the best ways to promote early literacy. In these programs the traditional rules of story time are relaxed for those who do not yet understand "proper" story time behavior, such as sitting still. Materials reflect the shorter attention spans of the participants, leaning more towards action rhymes, brief stories, and songs that allow for repetition. The programs in *Baby Rhyming Time* focus on infants (newborn to 12 months) and young toddlers (12 to 24 months). The term "caregiver" here refers to the adult accompanying the child at the program.

Baby Rhyming Time provides both a conceptual framework and proven effective, fun programming activities and resources. It is also designed to familiarize librarians with resources, concepts, and terminology important for understanding early literacy development. Readers will learn about current research data on brain development and language acquisition, how to work effectively and sensitively with young children and their families, and how to support early literacy throughout the library. Also covered are topics that have attracted great interest in recent years, such as using manual signing to communicate with the preverbal child, using movement to assist brain development, and the importance of play in young children's lives.

Throughout the book, examples show how the ideas discussed really work. The section on how to relate to caregivers offers specific suggested phrases. The chapter on books includes tips on how to use the books and ideas for

themes that might be considered. Programming for infants and toddlers should be both practical and solidly based in knowledge and research about how children learn and how best to serve their needs. The ultimate goal is always to help the baby and the adult caregiver successfully explore the world of language together. The books, rhymes, games, music, and activities highlighted here also facilitate mutually satisfying literacy experiences for the adult and child at home. Everyday life and routines are the first environments where learning takes place.

As fields of study concerning the very young child increasingly overlap and converge, librarians and educators must expand their knowledge beyond the traditional boundaries of their own professions. Librarians may be called upon to teach parents and caregivers, educators may need to develop more in-depth knowledge of biological development, and parents want to know it all. The more knowledgeable those who work with children become about child development, the greater the potential for productive networking, grant sharing, partnerships, and data collection among different agencies and organizations— all to the benefit of the very young.

Organization

Part I, "Baby Rhyming Time Basics," lays out the fundamentals behind programming for infants and toddlers. Chapter 1, "Understanding How Baby Learns," introduces the reader to information on child development and how the brain works, especially in the first 24 months. Chapter 2, "Meeting the Cast," discusses the unique needs of different types of families and outlines the presenter's role. Chapter 3, "Setting the Stage," looks at how the library as a whole can support early literacy, examining topics like facilities, collections, staffing, partnerships, and seeking additional funding. Chapter 4, "Finding Answers: Baby Rhyming Time FAQ," addresses fundamental questions about how to undertake programming for young children. Chapter 5, "Creating Successful Story Times," delves deeper into the specifics of a baby rhyming time program from beginning to end, including how to strike a balance between energetic and quieter activities and how to avoid overstimulating the audience.

Part II, "Baby Rhyming Time Programs," offers ideas and resources for infant and toddler story times as well as full-fledged programs. Chapter 6, "Books That Work," offers up an annotated selection of books that both entertain and educate young children. Chapter 7, "Rhymes and More Rhymes," details suggested actions and finger plays for both classic and less familiar rhymes. Chapter 8, "Music That Works," emphasizes the importance of sound and rhythm for young children and lists excellent recordings, music books, and other music resources. Chapter 9, "Great Programming Enhancement Ideas," covers many other elements that could be incorporated into a successful program for infants and toddlers: games, puppets, balls, flannel boards, bubbles, and more. Chapter 10, "A Dozen Ready-to-Go Programs," contains a dozen full

scripts for programs and a dozen detailed outlines that can be adapted to fit a particular situation. Chapter 11, "More Programming Ideas," provides a jumping off point for brainstorming by listing books by topic and rhymes by type (tickling, stretching, etc.). Chapter 12, "Handouts, Displays, and Signs," guides the reader in creating effective and eye-catching visuals.

The accompanying CD-ROM features audio recordings of most of the rhymes included in the book—look for the ⓒⓓ icon next to the titles mentioned in the text. It also includes a selection of handouts and signs that can be reproduced as is or edited to fit particular needs.

In addition to the positive benefits for the child, offering early childhood programming can help create a relationship between the family and the library from the start. A caregiver who comes to the library for a Baby Rhyming Time program has an opportunity to learn about the many other services the library has to offer. An infant or toddler who participates in Baby Rhyming Time programs learns to see the library as a fun and educational place to be, an attitude we can hope will persist for a lifetime.

Acknowledgments

A book such as this can only be created with the help of countless people willing to share their knowledge and expertise. All of the children's librarians and early childhood educators around the world who share the stories, rhymes, and songs in the public domain through the oral tradition, along with other adults who have kept these alive for new generations, deserve heartfelt thanks.

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I am ever so grateful to Nancy Stewart of Friends Street Music for her willingness to share materials from *Plant a Little Seed, Little Songs for Little Me* and *Baby Rattle & Roll* along with her patience and guidance of my first-time recording experience. Christine Roberts of Nurturing Pathways showed me a different way to use action rhymes and movement and for that I thank her.

My thanks to Jane Cobb of Vancouver, British Columbia, author of *What'll I Do with the Baby-O?*, Tess Prendergast, and Kathryn Lee for their enthusiasm and willingness to exchange ideas across the border.

I also need to extend thanks across the waters and acknowledge the members of the Australian Library and Information Association Children and Youth Services listserve (otherwise known as "aliaCYSS") for their willingness to exchange ideas and resources. An additional thank you goes to the Children's Team at Launceston Library, Tasmania, Australia, for permission to include their program for mixed ages; Zoe Lewis and the Adelaide Hills Council Library Service in South Australia for allowing the *Baby Bounce & Rhyme* booklet Web site to be included; and Narelle Adams and the Parramatta City

Council Information and Library Services in New South Wales Australia for use of "Bibs 'N' Books" materials.

Since children's librarians around the world have the same amazing characteristic of exchanging ideas and materials great effort was made to give credit where credit is due. Acknowledgments can also be found in the text for specific contributions. My apologies if any omissions were unintentionally made.

On practical matters, thanks to Carole Woodard whose skill in indexing makes this text more accessible.

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Finally, this book is dedicated to all those who bring joy into our lives, especially my faithful friend, Buddy.

Introduction

With all there is to do, expanding the traditional role of the library to include infants and the very young child may seem like a low priority, but programs for the very young offer many benefits for all concerned: the child, the caregiver, and the library.

- Since research has shown children begin life already learning, story times provide quality stimulation for brain growth and development.
- Offering infants and very young children a positive experience that they can repeatedly share with their caregivers helps children build a foundation for learning and success in the future.
- By regularly bringing the very young to the library, the adult establishes a pattern of using the public library. As the child grows, the library develops into a place of lifetime learning.
- Reaching out to non-traditional library users through non-traditional library services helps parents prepare their children to succeed.
- By offering programs for the very young, the library becomes a place where families with very young children are accepted and infant, toddler and preschool behavior is understood and tolerated.
- Programs for the very young are another way of showing that the library is a useful and positive place, thereby gaining community support for both the specific programs and the library in general.
- The library shows itself worthy of being "invited to the table," along with early childhood educators, health departments, etc., for discussion and interaction with local, state and federal governments evaluating the importance of programs for early childhood development and education.

In examining the history of library services for children, Virginia Walter sees three elements that have remained constant throughout: (1) the concept of child as reader, (2) outreach to the unserved or underserved, and (3) a renewed commitment to accountability and managerial excellence (Walter, 2001). Story

time, originally designed to introduce schoolage children to literature, has broadened to include children under the age of five. The socializing and entertainment elements are no longer enough; education and role modeling have now supplemented them.

Early literacy skill development has become a component of story time, supported by the Public Library Association/Association for Library Services to Children initiative and research that led to the creation of the "Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library" program. Story time has developed to the point of becoming, as Lynn McKechnie of the University of Western Ontario Information and Media Studies explains, an "information ground" (McKechnie, 2004). McKechnie discovered through observing actual story times, interviewing participants, and examining research in the field, that many things were happening in story times for the very young. Participants informally exchanged a wide variety of information, the presenter and participants read aloud to children, children developed physical and social skills, and early literacy skills were encouraged and developed. Behaviors once deemed disruptive really indicated the children's involvement with the stories, rhymes, and people around them. Story time has become an essential component of library service to children preschool-age and younger.

Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading states that the "single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (Anderson, et al., 1985: 23). Research has documented that children's development is impacted by all that is around them from birth (see Chapter 1). Taking time to share a story creates an intimate connection and bond between child and adult. Reading aloud teaches vocabulary, grammar, and dialogue in an enjoyable manner and the lessons can be easily repeated at any time. Being read to can encourage the very young child to become the best that he or she can be.

In today's economy, the budget more than likely is tight. Public money must cover an enormous range of community needs. Private grants and foundations can sometimes help support public library services, but may not be available to everyone. However, time and money spent developing programs and outreach for the very young are well worth it. Such programs bring nontraditional users into the library, make children and their caregivers aware of books and the library, demonstrate that public libraries and their services are free, reach out to those who need library services the most, and help build a supportive clientele for the future.

Sharing Information

Sharing information is one of the things children's librarians do very, very well. Our field has grown to include knowledge of not only children's literature but also

- child development (for example, determining age appropriateness when selecting story time materials),

- brain research (for example, understanding what is happening to an infant's mind when the child is sung to or touched),
- socialization (for example, understanding how sharing nursery rhymes and stories can strengthen the bond between adult and very young child),
- communication (for example, using alternate forms of communication, such as sign language, to help preverbal children communicate).

Encouraging exchange among these various fields of study nurtures the scientific research and data we need to support the importance of our programs, enriches us with information and experiences, and helps build unified support for children's success. Elements of all these fields are included in *Baby Rhyming Time*.

Why story time for the very young? Because it is an early literacy learning experience that just happens to be a lot of fun for everyone!

Resources

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