

LEARNING ON THE GO – Talking and Learning at Dinnertime

Welcome back to school and Learning On The Go - a monthly column by the Healthy Start Council with tips for parents to help young children develop early literacy skills. To become good readers in school, children need to talk and listen a lot starting at a very young age. Reading skill is built on this awareness of spoken language, which children gain through conversations with adults and other children. Conversation is most beneficial to literacy development when it involves what experts call *decontextualized language* or simply put, talk that goes beyond the here and now like talking about past events, future events or fictitious events. The family dinnertime is a great opportunity for this type of interaction when parents relate childhood stories, young children share what happened in day care and older children tell of their plans for the next day.

The importance of families having this time together will be celebrated on Monday September 26th with national ***Family Day: A Day to Eat Dinner With Your Children***. Make this a special day with your children: take them out to eat, pick up a quick meal, order a pizza or prepare dinner together. The important thing is to talk and listen to one another without distractions like television or phones. Log on to the ***Family Day*** website at www.casafamilyday.org to find easy recipes for inexpensive meals and enter a drawing for a year's worth of free meals. For more information and resources on early literacy, contact Healthy Start at 728-KIDS or healthystart@parentingplace.net.