An extensive body of research indicates that the foundation for future academic success is laid in a child’s first years. Kids who have rich early educational experiences are much more likely to stay in school and achieve high levels of academic attainment.

Unfortunately, many of our kids often start school less prepared than other children and do not catch up during the primary grades. For instance, the much-discussed “achievement gap” between Latino students and their non-Latino peers actually begins before children even enter kindergarten and persists throughout the K-12 years.

We know that we can make a difference! With suitable early parenting and encouragement, cognitive enrichment, and healthy home and school environments, we can help all kids develop the language, social and analytical skills they need to succeed in school.

To achieve that goal, the Hispanic Federation developed Pathways to Academic Excellence, a culturally-competent educational seminar series that enables parents to actively support their children’s education. The early childhood version of Pathways instructs parents/caregivers on learning activities and techniques that they can use at home to enhance their children’s literacy skills. Below are some of the ways that Pathways helps create a path to academic success for our families:

- Assists parents/caregivers in enhancing their children’s literacy skills through language-building activities and exercises.
- Increases knowledge throughout the community on the importance of early childhood literacy.
- Formulates innovative ways for parents to work with their children and the school system to overcome social and academic challenges.
- Provides resources that facilitate and promote reading and learning.
- Markets and disseminates information so that parents are both aware of early childhood literacy methods and are motivated to use it.
- Examines behavioral change in the family household through outcome evaluations.

It is imperative that parents get involved early in their kids education. That is the premise that Pathways is built on. If we can learn to pay more attention to our parents and focus their attention on what they can do to help their children achieve academic excellence, then we can ensure that every child is provided the foundation they need to succeed.
The Benefits of Storytelling

Storytelling is a great tool for language learning. Telling stories to children provides them with a purpose for their listening as they want to find out what happens next; they want to find out the meaning of a story. Children who hear stories on a regular basis usually develop good reading and language skills that will be a benefit all through their lives.

Storytelling develops visual imagery skills, as children must visualize what they are hearing as opposed to looking at illustrations in a book.

Stories provide the time and encouragement needed to develop awareness of the language. In stories, you often find the same characters, situations and emotions repeating themselves, developing, extending and reinforcing new ideas and new vocabulary.

While listening to stories children learn sequencing, determining the beginning, middle and end of the story.

While listening to stories children can use their imaginations, make predictions or come up with new endings.

Storytelling also builds a sense of community and family. As parents, grandparents and other relatives tell the stories of their lives, children learn about their family, their culture, about the world, and how they fit in. Stories can also be a great way to teach life lessons. We are much more likely to keep our hands off the stove when we remember the story about Aunt Elsa burning her hand instead of just hearing, "keep your hands off the stove. It's dangerous!" Or about the time big sister Maria cut her finger and had to go to the hospital, and mom and dad and all her brothers and sisters went with her.
Six ways parents can encourage conversation

1. **Maintain Eye Focus**
   Lets your child know you are interested in what he/she has to say and offers positive reinforcement

2. **Ask Open-Ended Questions**
   Keeps conversation on topic while introducing the idea of forming thoughts in conversation

3. **Offer Personal Insights**
   This can demonstrate active listening skills. Your child will soon learn to do this too, and will help build vocabulary

4. **Suggest Activities**
   Encourages further conversation in a playful atmosphere

5. **Set Aside Conversation & Activity Time Each Day**
   This is “together time” your child will look forward to. Your child is guaranteed your undivided attention

6. **Incorporate Your Family Culture**
   Fosters a sense of pride and belonging
Objective 2

Learn about language development including speaking and listening characteristics (milestones) of 3-5 year old language learners


3 years old

Presenter points to make:

At the age of 3, your child...

• understands most of what is said and 75 percent of speech is understandable
• speaks in complete sentences of three to five words
• matches pictures to objects
• learns by doing and through the senses
• understands concepts of "now," "soon," and "later"

Tips for Parenting 3-Year-Olds

No longer a toddler, your 3-year-old takes in knowledge about himself/herself and the world around him/her.

• Transitions are difficult at this age. Provide warning of changes so your child has time to shift gears, i.e. "We’re leaving in 10 minutes."
• Rituals are important. Household routines and schedules give your 3-year-old a sense of security.
• Point out colors and numbers in the course of everyday conversation and use words to describe, i.e. "You’re wearing your blue shirt" or "We made six cupcakes."
• Provide lots of sensory experiences for learning and developing coordination (sand, mud, and finger paints, puzzles), while enhancing language development and vocabulary.
4 years old

- uses a 1,500-word vocabulary; speaks in relatively complex sentences ("Mommy opened the door and the dog ran out.")
- understands words that relate one idea to another — if, why, when
- continues to learn through experience and the senses
- understands, mostly, the difference between fantasy and reality
- thinks literally; starting to develop logical thinking
- begins to grasp that pictures and symbols can represent real objects

Tips for Parenting 4-Year-Olds

Silly, imaginative, and energetic, your child loves to try new words and new activities.

- 4-year-olds crave adult approval. Provide lots of positive encouragement.
- Play word games to develop his/her growing vocabulary; overlook his/her fascination with "naughty" words.

5 years old

- speaks fluently; correctly uses plurals, pronouns, tenses
- very interested in words and language; seeks knowledge
- understands and names opposites
- uses complex language

Tips for Parenting 5-Year-Olds

Your cooperative, easy-going 5-year-old loves to play and that’s how he/she learns.

- Let your child know what to expect from an upcoming event or activity so they can prepare. Avoid springing things on them.
- Help them recognize their emotions by using words to describe them: "I see you’re angry at me right now."
Fingerplays, Action Poems, Songs and Nursery Rhymes

Hands on Shoulders

*Follow the actions described in each line*

Hands on shoulders,  
hands on knees.  
Hands behind you,  
if you please;  
Touch your shoulders,  
now your nose,  
Now your hair and now your toes;  
Hands up high in the air,  
Down at your sides, and touch your hair;  
Hands up high as before,  
Now clap your hands, one-two-three-four!

My hands upon my head I'll place,  
Upon my shoulders, on my face,  
At my waist and by my side,  
Then behind me they will hide.  
Then I'll raise them way up high,  
And let my fingers fly, fly, fly,  
Then clap, clap, clap them--  
One - Two - Three!  
Now see how quiet they can be.

My Toothbrush *(A self help rhyme)*

I have a little toothbrush  
I hold it very tight  
I brush my teeth each morning,  
And then again at night

Head and Shoulders

*Touch each body part with both hands and follow the action described.*

Head and shoulders, knees and toes  
Knees and toes, knees and toes  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes  
Make your feet go stamp, stamp, stamp.  
Nose and elbows, feet and waist  
Feet and waist, feet and waist
Nose and elbows, feet and waist
Make your hands go clap, clap, clap.

If You're Happy (or Sad)

Traditional Song

If you're happy and you know it clap your hands
clap 2 times
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands
clap 2 times
If you're happy and you know it then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands
clap 2 times
If you're happy and you know it stomp your feet...
...tap your head
...jump up and down.
any action that is appropriate
Variation: substitute sad for happy with appropriate actions.

This is the way...

This is the way we wash our hands,
wash our hands, wash our hands.
This is the way we wash our hands
So early in the morning.

Substitute:
...Brush our teeth
...Comb our hair
...Give a hug etc.

Where is Thumbkin?

Where is Thumbkin?
Here I am. here I am.
How are you this morning?
Very well I thank you.
Run and play. Run and play.
Where is Pointer ...Tall finger ...Ring finger...Pinky ...the whole family?

Los Pollitos (Spanish)

Improvise a tune for this song / rhyme.

Los pollitos dicen: pio, pio, pio.
Cuando tienen hambre; cuando tienen frío.
La Gallina busca, el maíz y el trigo.
Les de la comida, y les presta abrigo.
Bajo sus dos alas acurrucaditos
hasta el otro día duermen los pollitos.

Open, Shut Them
Traditional fingerplay

Open, shut them, Open, shut them,
Give a little clap.
Open, shut them, Open, shut them,
Put them in your lap.
Creep them, creep them, creep them, creep them,
Right up to your chin, chin, chin
Open wide your little mouth
hesitate
But do not put them in.

The Alphabet Song
Tune: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

A-B-C-D-E-F-G
H-I-J-K-L-M-N-O-P
Q-R-S T-U-V
W-X-Y and Z
Now I know my ABC's
Next time won’t you sing with me

La Canción del ABC
Tono: Brilla, brilla estrellita

A-B-C-D-E-F-G
H-I-J-K
L-M-N-N
O-P-Q-R-S
T-U-V-W
X-Y y Z
Ahora sé mi abecedario

Moon Song
By Rafael Lara-Alecio y Beverly Irby
Tune: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Look at the moon over the sea
A-B-C-D-E
Making night light as day
F-G-H-I-J
Beautiful moon shine on me,
K-L-M-N-O-P
Sing lovely moon, singing your night song to me
P-Q-R-S-T
Sing before you say your good-bye
U-V-W-X-Y
Shine down brightly, sing merrily
Z-Z-ZZZ
Beautiful shining over the sea!

Canción sobre la Luna
By Rafael Lara-Alecio y Beverly Irby
Tono: Brilla, brilla estrellita

A-B-C D-E
Mira o a luna con el
F-G-H-I-J
No olvides tus botas
K-L, M-N-N-O
No olvides que la luna es una o"
P-Q-R, S-T
Brinca adentro del cohete
U-V-WXY
Ahora estoy alegre
Z-Z-ZZ
a la luna, zumbando es mi meta
Dime que piensas de mí

Tu Nombre
Por: Bevery J. Irby and Rafael Lara-Alecio

Si tu nombre empieza con __,
Empieza con __, empieza con __,
Si tu nombre empieza con __,
¡Levántate por favor!

If your name begins with __,
Begins with __ begins with __,
If your name begins with __,
Stand up please!

Por: Bevery J. Irby and Rafael Lara

Tune: Do you know the Muffin Man?

Si tu nombre empieza con __,
Empieza con __, empieza con __,
Si tu nombre empieza con __,
¡Levántate por favor!

If your name begins with __,
Begins with __ begins with __,
If your name begins with __,
Stand up please!

Por: Bevery J. Irby and Rafael Lara

Big and Small
(do actions to the words)

I can make myself real big
By standing up straight and tall
But when I’m tired of being big
I can make myself get small

Soy Alto, soy Bajito
(haga lo que las palabras sugieren)

Me agrando, estiradito
y me acurruco, pequeñito
soy alto cuando me estiro
soy bajito cuando me achico

Por: Bevery J. Irby and Rafael Lara

Colors

Me gusta el color anaranjado, me gusta muchísimo
Me gusta el color anaranjado, es calentísimo
También me gustan los dulces anaranjados, los gatos anaranjados
La pintura anaranjada, los crayones anaranjados
El anaranjado es el color que necesito
Lo digo con ardor; con entusiasmo lo repito
Puedes quitarme el azul, el rojo, el amarillo y el morado
Pero hagas lo que quieras, no me quites el color anaranjado

Por: Pam Shiller y Rafael Lara

Froggie, Froggie
(This rhyme is told to console a child)

Sana

(Por: Beverly J. Irby)

Froggie, froggie, little froggie’s tail
If you don’t heal today
Tomorrow’s another day

(Sana, sana colita de rana
Si no sanas hoy, sanaras mañana
Sana, sana colita de rana
Ten un besito para hoy y mañana
Si no sana ahora,
sanaré dentro de un rato

Por: Pam Shiller y Rafael Lara Alecio

I like orange, I like it a lot
I like orange, I think it’s hot
Orange candy, orange cats
Orange balls and orange hats
Orange crayons, orange paint
Isn’t orange quaint
Orange is a color that I like the best
I say it with zeal, I say it with zest
You can take away blue, purple, red, yellow too,
Just don’t take the orange, whatever you do!
My Family
By Beverly J. Irby and Rafael Lara-Alecio

My daddy likes to read a book
My mother likes to cook
My brother likes to bounce a ball
And baby sister likes to crawl
As for me, it’s hard to say
I guess I mostly like to play

Mi Familia

A papá le gusta cocinar
A mamá le gusta caminar
A mi hermano le gusta cantar
A mi hermana le gusta bailar
Y a mi gusta por la mañana nadar

Peas and Honey
Traditional

I eat my peas with honey,
I’ve done it all my life.
It makes the peas taste funny,
But it keeps them on my knife

Miel y Guisantes
Adaptado por Rafael Lara-Alecio

Como con miel mis guisantes,
Aunque tienen extraño sabor.
Es más fácil comer guisantes pegados al tenedor.

After My Bath
Traditional

After my bath oh why,why,why
Do I rub, rub, rub, til I’, dry, dry dry?
Dry two hands, ten fingers, ten toes,
Two little legs and one wet nose,
If I were a dog it would be so great,
All I’d have to do is shake, shake, shake

Después de Baño
Adaptado por Beverly J. Irby

Después de mi baño
Yo intento, intento, intento,
Secarme con una toalla hasta estar seco, seco, seco
Secarme las monos, los dedos, los pies,
las dos peinas y la nariz
Sharing books with your children is a wonderful experience. These tips are from the website of the national office of Reading Is Fundamental, Inc.  

Tips for Reading with Your Child

Here are a few things to keep in mind when you read:

Plan to read for about 20 minutes. Younger children may have short attention spans, and may not be able to sit for the whole 20 minutes.

Look over the book before you read it. If you are familiar with the story, you will read it better. If you are familiar with the illustrations, you will be able to point out interesting or humorous things.

Make sure you and your child are comfortable. Sit close enough so your child is able to see and hear what you are reading.

Start with the cover. Read the title and the author's name. Talk about the cover and answer questions children have before you begin reading.

Read with feeling. Read slowly and change your voice for different characters. The more expressive you are, the more you will hold your children's attention.

Reading is not a race! Take your time reading, point to interesting pictures in the book, and give the children time to explore the book with you.

Let the children join in. If the story lends itself to sing-alongs or chants, encourage your children to participate as you read.

Adapt the story to the needs of your children. It's okay to leave out words or tell the story in your own words if the story seems too long.

Finish the story. Children like a sense of completion. If the book is too long to finish in one sitting, pick a logical point to stop and finish it during your next read-aloud time.

Make the story meaningful to your children. Help the children relate to the story and
Research says:

**At age 3, the child...**

- draws circular objects and begins to understand that symbols represent real objects
- attempts to "read" what he has scribbled or drawn
- talks about drawings, reads his/her marks and discovers hidden meanings through the interest shown by other people
- names, reinterprets and renames his/her drawings in order to respond to the interest of others
- shows interest in telling stories about his drawings

**What parents can do:**

**Age 3:**

- Ask your child questions about his scribbles, drawing or writing and write them down for them
- Let your child know you are proud of everything they create, like hanging pictures in prominent places
- Experiment to find what kind of writing tool your child is comfortable with. Some children find thicker crayons or markers easier to use in the beginning. Some children require grip cushions for comfort.

- begins to make horizontal lines, and draw people
- begins to tell more elaborate stories or work out problems with drawings
- may change or stop altogether if writing task becomes too difficult

**What parents can do:**

**Age 4:**

- Encourage children to hold a crayon in a natural way. By letting the skill develop gradually they will be more relaxed and the grip will likely be just right.
- Slowly introduce pencils. (Thick pencils may be a first good start)
- Let your child learn at his own pace. Preschoolers who are forced to read and write
before will initially progress faster than their classmates, but studies have found this advantage is short lived.

- Talk and read to your child as much as possible. This will further develop his communication
- Use lots of caution when correcting mistakes.

**At age 5, the child...**

- can draw a picture and write a one-word label for the picture. He now begins to see himself as a writer
- can read what they have written and enjoys sharing stories with an “audience”.
- uses what they know about letters and sounds to write messages using “invented spelling”, (uses mostly consonants in their writing, inserting vowels come later) *invented spelling* helps child practice the letter-sound relationships needed for reading
- can create a bank of words that they write frequently and spell correctly such as;
  - their own name
  - family member names
  - pet names
  - words commonly seen in notes and cards from friends and family, such as “mom” “dad” “to” and “I” “love” “you”.