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**New Literacy Campaign Gives Parents Tools to Help Children Read**

*Reading BrightStart! Initiative Targets Critical Early Years*

**Jacksonville, FL (October 7, 2014) —** [Nemours Children’s Health System](http://www.nemours.org/welcome.html) today launched [Reading BrightStart!](http://www.readingbrightstart.org/), a new website for parents of children birth-5 that helps all young children find a path to reading success. This national effort is part of Nemours BrightStart!, an innovative program that develops and researches language and reading readiness tools, processes and curricula for children from birth to age 8.

The new national effort is aimed at improving language and literacy, the strongest single predictor for becoming a healthy adult. The free website offers parents and caregivers evidence-based tools to recognize the warning signs for inadequate reading readiness and help their children develop the language skills necessary to read. Early reading failure can be a major child health problem and lead to disruption in child development in academic, cognitive, social, behavioral and emotional domains.

“Learning to read is one of the most important milestones in life, but it is not a skill kids acquire overnight,” said Laura Bailet, PhD, Operational Vice President of Nemours BrightStart!. “Parents need to engage with their child, starting from birth, in a way that builds a strong and healthy brain for future reading success, through evidence-based knowledge and tools. Waiting until kindergarten to start this process can put kids behind in learning to read.”

More than 30 percent of children enter kindergarten without the language and early literacy foundation needed to be successful. Most struggling readers who fail to catch up by third grade will remain behind in reading for the rest of their schooling and may suffer other cognitive, social, emotional, and even physical challenges as a result. Without intervention, deficits in early literacy can lead to reading challenges or even reading failure later on.

“Reading struggles can affect every part of a child’s life, but especially a child’s health and behavior,” said Michael De La Hunt, MD, division chief of psychology and psychiatry at Nemours Children’s Clinic in Jacksonville. “Often we see children with depression, anxiety or misdiagnosed ADHD, when the actual problem may be reading challenges.”

In a meeting sponsored by the White House later this month, [Reading BrightStart!](http://www.readingbrightstart.org/) will be among the innovative interventions discussed for improving language and literacy in young children. The initiative helps empower parents to help their children become strong future readers by weaving fun activities into their everyday routines during the critical infant, toddler, and preschool years. The content builds on Nemours BrightStart!’s nine years of success in developing and researching unique early literacy programs and tools. Four content categories will be featured: Reading Skills by Age (Milestones and Warning Signs); Articles for Parents; At-Home Activities; and Recommended Books. The website’s centerpiece is a Preschool Reading Screener for 3- to 5-year-olds. Previously tested through research with 4,000 diverse parents, this screener gives parents an accurate snapshot of their child’s prereading skills. A customized action plan will help them prioritize important activities and recommended books. Monthly newsletters, social media, and frequent content updates will keep parents engaged over time.

The initiative includes tools and resources that set the foundation for reading success:

* **Oral language.** The ability to understand spoken language and speak clearly to communicate with others; contributes to comprehension and enjoyment of reading and allows your child to relate stories to his or her own experiences.
* **Letter knowledge.** Recognizing and naming of letter names and letter sounds, along with general understanding of how print and pictures are processed differently.
* **Phonological awareness.** A specialized type of listening skill that help children identify parts of words and syllables.
* **Beginning writing.** Learning to read and write are interrelated. Children need fine-motor skills and eye-hand coordination for controlling writing tools, understanding that we can show our thoughts through drawing and writing, and the ability to write letters that represent sounds in words.

Tools and resources available to parents through the initiative include online assessments to ensure that a child is meeting literacy milestones for his or her age group, reading action plans tailored to each child’s needs and ideas on engaging activities for both kids and parents to encourage reading readiness.

To learn more about language and early literacy development and find the tools to help foster reading success in children, go to [www.readingbrightstart.org](http://www.readingbrightstart.org).

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Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the [Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children](http://www.nemours.org/locations/nemours-dupont.html) in Wilmington, DE, and [Nemours Children's Hospital](http://www.nemours.org/locations/nch.html) in Orlando, FL, along with major pediatric specialty clinics in Delaware, Florida, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Established as [The Nemours Foundation](http://www.nemours.org/givingtonemours/whygive/whoweare.html) through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours offers pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy and prevention programs to all families in the communities it serves.