Today’s piece is prepared by David Higgins, MD, based on a story from The New York Times, entitled “Pediatrics Group to Recommend Reading Aloud to Children From Birth”.

[www.nytimes.com/2014/06/24/us/pediatrics-group-to-recommend-reading-aloud-to-children-from-birth.html?\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/24/us/pediatrics-group-to-recommend-reading-aloud-to-children-from-birth.html?_r=0)

The story discusses a new AAP policy directing pediatricians to encourage parents to read aloud to their infants at every visit, starting at birth. The article emphasizes that such reading enhances communication skills during the first 3 years of life, an important stage of brain development, and highlights policy claims that children of lower SES are read to less and that screen media compete with reading for attention., The article includes references to several high-quality peer-reviewed studies. The journalist quotes experts, including an unreferenced suggestion that if children in lower SES and minority racial groups were read to more, then schools would have to provide less remediation for these kids later in life. At the end of the article, the author mentions practical steps to promote reading including Reach Out and Read (a national organization that fosters provision of books to low-income families) and the Too Small to Fail initiative (a joint effort between a nonprofit group and the Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton Foundation that is working to improve early child literacy.

The body of research supporting the benefits in effecting this new AAP policy is prodigious and compelling. However, pediatricians who read this article may not be aware that research also finds that parents must engage their children early in life in an interactive manner when reading and speaking to improve their child’s later academic performance. Parents must be taught not only to read to their child, but how to do so. The following resources may help:

**RESOURCES ON LITERACY PROMOTION IN CHILDHOOD**

* Policy Statement - Literacy Promotion *American Academy of Pediatrics* <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/06/19/peds.2014-1384>
* Promoting Early Literacy *Clinton Global Initiative partnership among AAP, Reach Out and Read and Scholastic Inc.* <http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Business,-Medical,-and-Non-Profit-Partners-Launch-New-National-Effort--at-CGI-America-to-Help-Close-the-Word-Gap.aspx>
* Literacy Toolkit *American Academy of Pediatrics – multiple-resource kit for pediatricians and families* <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Literacy-Toolkit/Pages/default.aspx>

And that’s today’s Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!