

**Takeaways:**

- Teaching early literacy skills is a complex task, which requires both knowledge and emotional responsiveness: it *is* rocket science.
- Among the critical elements which must be taught – from infancy onward – are
  - Oral language, especially vocabulary
  - Concepts of print and the varying roles it can play
  - Understandings of genre (such as stories, shopping lists, poems)
  - Phonological awareness: ability to hear different sounds inside a word
  - Sound/letter relationships
  - Word reading by decoding, analogy and sight
  - Reading fluency: accuracy, pace and expressiveness of reading
  - Composition: the ability to write.
- Literacy development begins in infancy: it must start with families and in early care settings.
- Accordingly, schools should develop strong ties to families and communities, including community organizations, specifically around teaching literacy.
- Social and emotional learning should be embedded in all the work done in schools and with families
- Research shows that child care providers typically do not implement practices that promote literacy growth, but providing just 10 hours of professional development significantly improves practice.
- Practices of both schools and early care organizations should be better aligned with what research shows to be effective practice in literacy development.
- New York City does not have a cohesive early care system, making progress on literacy and professional development more challenging.
- Retaining early childcare professionals who have received professional development and become excellent teachers requires a career pipeline that offers them adequate pay as well as opportunities to continue to develop professionally and take on more leadership and responsibility.
- The expansion of Community Schools may address some of these issues.

**Action Strategies to Consider:**

- Provide additional funding to a range of programs that serve children from zero to 8, including home visits, development of simple tools or apps for families, and wrap-around services.
- Build out the early childcare infrastructure, including a comprehensive database, to create a unified system that communicates across organizations and city agencies.
- Devote more time and resources to professional development around literacy in both schools and early childcare settings, including developing “master teachers” who teach literacy skills to children and also build the instructional capacity of fellow teachers.
- Provide greater parity on both pay and benefits for early childhood professionals in community settings with teachers in the school system.
- Fully fund Quality Stars, the NY State rating system for early education.