

Teaching toddlers to read

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A lot of kids come home from school turn on the TV, and play video games. One Bay Area [organization](#) is trying to change that habit.

A new pilot program is teaching older kids to read to toddlers. Their story is What's Right with Tampa Bay.

Nine-year-old Kilah Mincy loves reading to her friend, 4-year-old Valeria Smirnov.

"I hope when I read to her, she will start to learn the words and be able to read bigger books," Kilah says.

Kilah is part of a new pre school book program called "leaf"—literacy empowers all families. The early learning coalition of Sarasota County started it to encourage older siblings to read to their younger brother, sister, or friend.

"Siblings have a tremendous influence on their younger children on their younger siblings. They look up to them they want to be like them so having the older siblings modeling reading and the love of reading and all that goes into that can have an tremendous influence on the younger children," said executive director of the Early Learning Coalition.

Kids are introduced to the program at school, where they can check out pre-school books through the media center.

"I think it's a great idea. It helps the little kids. It helps their minds," says student Danthony Pete.

"It can help the little kids learn more even before they grow up," said student Elive Velasu.

Janet says the program helps at any age.

"With younger children, it's not so much about them reading, it's about them hearing words. With the older children it's about opportunity for them to practice their skills."

"It's also quality time that the siblings have with the older children have with the younger children," says Janet.

Quality time that can have a lasting [bond](#) and change their lives for the better.

The brain mostly develops from birth to age three for learning. The early learning coalition hopes the program will help jump start kids on their way to literacy.

