

Early Words

Language and literacy
training initiative

**Coloring a Child's World
With Literacy Experiences**

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With Literacy Experiences

Contributors to Curriculum Development

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Materials Adapted from the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children Every Child Ready to Read @ your library® program.

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Session Objectives

By the end of this session you will:

- Understand the importance of language and literacy development for later school achievement.
- Understand the six early literacy skills important for literacy acquisition.
- Understand milestones of literacy development between birth and age 5.
- Understand ways of supporting children's development of the six early literacy skills.
- Learn simple activities that can be used in preschool settings.
- Learn ways to foster the early literacy skills through positive book reading experiences.

Reflective Activity

What kinds of things are you doing right now to help prepare the children you work with to learn to read (or to be ready to learn to read)?

What is working? What has been enjoyable?

What is not working so well? What has not been enjoyable?

Is there anything that you have heard is important (more than what has been mentioned so far), but you have not yet tried to incorporate into your preschool routines? Why not?

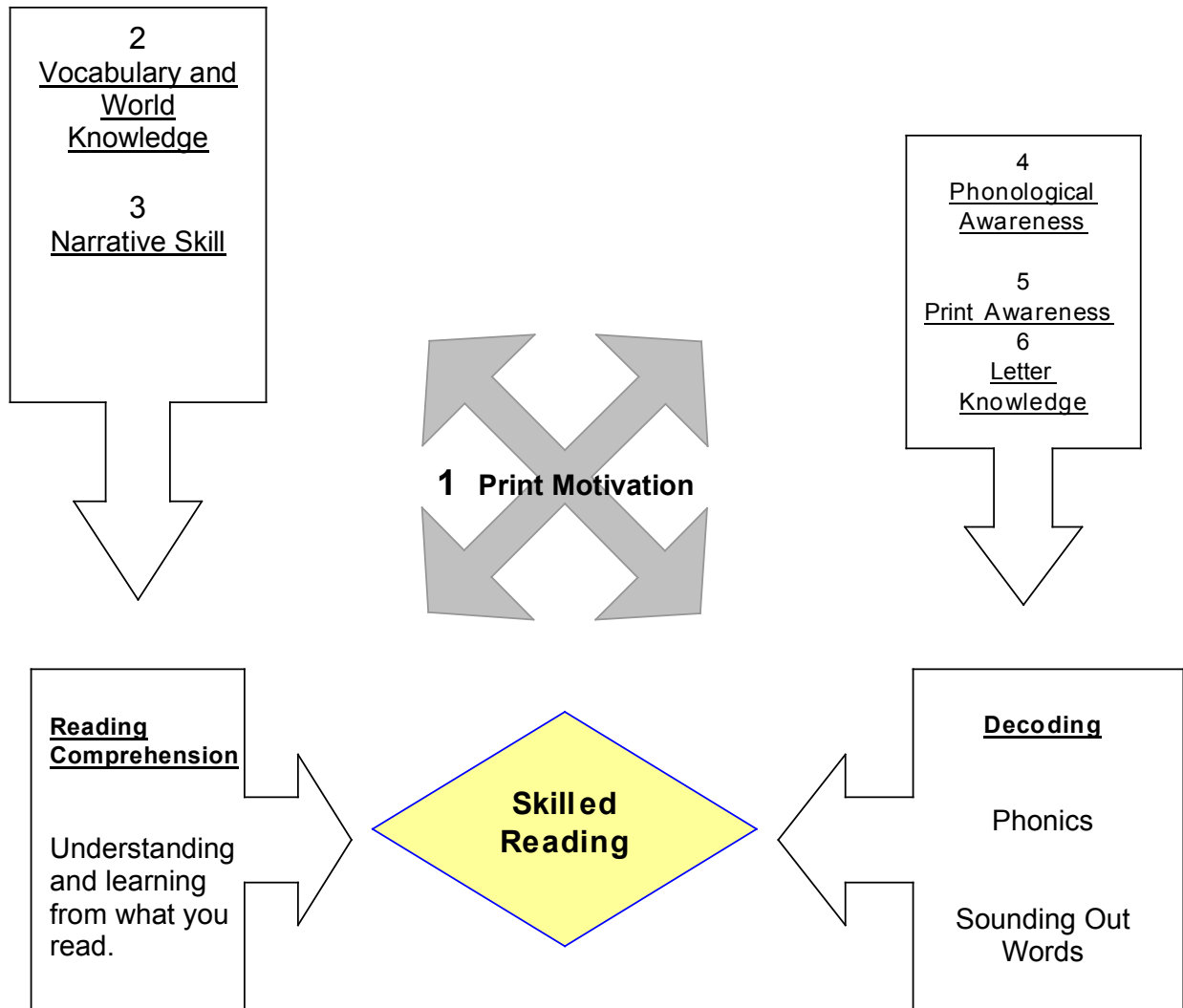
Reading Assertions True or False

1. _____ Children who grow up in quiet homes, with less conversation, have an advantage in learning to read.
2. _____ Reading is not a natural process. It does not emerge naturally.
3. _____ Children learn more from books when parents are allowed to read the story without interruptions.
4. _____ Children should be read to as soon as they can understand the story.
5. _____ Most reading difficulties can be prevented.
6. _____ Children who ask lots of questions while reading a book miss out on the meaning of the story.
7. _____ Stopping to talk about the illustrations in a book confuses children and impedes their comprehension of the story.
8. _____ Children benefit most from the opportunity to use reading worksheets and flashcards that teach words and sounds.
9. _____ Singing songs and saying nursery rhymes as babies prepares children for reading.
10. _____ Children who have been read to a lot before entering school learn to read, more easily than children who do not.
11. _____ Regardless of your native language, research shows that it is best to read to a child in English.
12. _____ Children learn a richer vocabulary from reading children's picture books than talking with adults.
13. _____ Parents promote children's literacy by creating a school-like setting in their home.
14. _____ Most children who have difficulty in reading have trouble rhyming words.

Six Skills (or Components) of Early Literacy

1. **Print Motivation**
The desire to explore books, to read, and to learn to read.
2. **Vocabulary or Word and World Knowledge**
Understanding the meaning of words. Connecting words to objects, events, or concepts in the world.
3. **Narrative Skill**
Ability to understand and tell stories.
4. **Phonological Awareness**
Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds.
5. **Print Awareness**
Understanding of how a book or a piece of writing “works.”
6. **Letter Knowledge**
Letter identification.

How Do The Six Skills Contribute to Skilled Reading?



Print Motivation

Print Motivation: What is it?

Print motivation is the desire to explore books, to read, and to learn to read. A print motivated person finds books and reading fun, interesting, and fulfilling.

Children who are print motivated are excited about learning to read and will be more likely to persist and succeed when they encounter difficulties or stumbling blocks.

Print motivation feeds itself. The more a child has positive experiences with books, the more motivated he or she will be to seek out additional book and reading experiences.

Print Motivation: What does it look like?

Print motivation can be fostered from birth. When children have access to books and explore books with adults on a regular basis, they are more likely to become print motivated.

Print motivated children want to hear more. They want to hear the story again (and again, and again, and again). They want to check out more books from the library than you have room in the book bag.

Print motivated children want to know how to read. They want to know how to write. They want to learn to write their own names. They want to see their words in print (whether you write them or they write them).

To develop and maintain the motivation to read children need to:

- Appreciate the pleasures of reading
- View reading as a social act to be shared with others
- See reading as an opportunity to explore their interests
- Read widely for a variety of purposes from enjoyment to gathering information
- Become comfortable with different types of writing (i.e. fiction, non-fiction, poetry)

Print Motivation: What can you do?

Have fun with children with books, with writing, with words!

Demonstrate your own enjoyment of reading.

Create positive memories by reading special books at certain times of the year (at the holidays, after a snow storm, after a lost tooth, when the first flower emerges).

Begin reading books early. Infancy is the best time to begin reading to children.

Make book-sharing a special time between you and the children. Get comfortable and cozy whenever possible.

Let children pick out books they want to read or have read to them. Read to children on an individual basis throughout the day to insure that children's personal interests are explored.

Scatter books throughout the environment, block area, dramatic play area, changing table, etc.

Get their interest before you start a book. Say things like, "Do you want to hear a SCARY story?" even when it isn't scary. When they read it and say, "Hey, that wasn't scary!" Tell them how brave they must be.

Stop a book right at an exciting moment and tell them you will have to finish it later.

Give them clues about a book you are reading and see if they can guess what book it is or what it is about.

Read in a variety of places, outside under a special tree, under the stairs, in a card board box, or lying under the table. Read in a variety of ways, lying down, swinging on a swing, standing up, waiting in line, try a chapter book at nap time as kids are settling down.

Point out characters feelings in the book. Ask them if they have ever felt that way. Children need to be able to relate to the story.

Try activities based on the story. Draw it out, cook it out, and build something from the story. Most importantly, try to get the children to relate in some way to the story and make it part of their own experience.

Get The Story Behind the Story

When reading new books to children, see if you can find out more about the author or why the book was written.

For instance, Holly Hobbie, author of the Toot and Puddle books, created a series of dolls for girls (Holly Hobbie dolls) that were very popular about 30 years ago. Find out why she switched from dolls to cute pigs.

Marc Brown, author of the Arthur books, hides the names of his children (Tolon, Tucker, and Eliza) in all of his Arthur books. Find out what motivated him to start doing this. See if the children can locate the names.

Share the interesting tidbits, stories, or motivations with the children.

Adult Resources

Hall, S. [Straight Talk About Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years.](#)

Schickedanz, J. [Much More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing.](#)

Trelease, J. [The Read-Aloud Handbook.](#)

Public Library Association. www.pla.org/preschool.htm

National Center for Family Literacy. www.famlit.org

Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. www.ciera.org

Vocabulary and World Knowledge

Vocabulary and World Knowledge: What is it?

Understanding the meaning of words.

What is the definition of a “flower”?

What is the difference between a “flower” and “flour”? How are the two words similar?

Connecting words to objects, events, or concepts in the world.

Learning the meaning of one word can lead to learning the meanings of a number of other words and the relationships between those words.

When you learn about a flower (the plant), you also might learn about a variety of flowers and plants, herbs, roses, tulips, pansies, bulbs, fruit trees and so forth.

As children develop Vocabulary, they are also developing World Knowledge – an understanding of how the world works, what is in the world, and so forth.

When children have more Vocabulary and World Knowledge, they can more easily...

- Make predictions about the words they are reading (decoding).
- Apply their knowledge of the world as they try to understand what they are reading (reading comprehension).

Vocabulary and World Knowledge: What does it look like?

Even very young children learn words very quickly. It is estimated that from about 2 years on, a child learns approximately 9 – 12 words each day.

Younger children (3 years) are active learners. They need to physically touch or explore something in order to learn the words that go along with the object or experience. At this age, trying to “teach” children about something can be a very frustrating experience. However, by providing lots of experiences and lots of words to describe those experiences, new words and new knowledge will be learned.

As children get older (4 and 5 years), they can learn new words and about new things if they can see something related to the topic (actual objects, a picture in a book, etc.). This learning from books or learning from talking about things can build on or extend to the words and concepts children are learning from their experiences.

Although children learn language at an astounding rate, it can take a number of encounters with a word before a child knows the “real” meaning of a word. Try to keep in mind that even when children sound like they know what they are talking about, their understanding of a topic or concept may be very different from reality.

When children are very young, they may use a single word for all related objects. For instance, “truck” may be used for all vehicles (even bikes!).

Children may replace a word for an object with a different word that sounds similar but has a completely different meaning (calling a cabin in the woods a “cabinet”).

Children may combine two words together to create a word to describe a concept (saying “last day” for “yesterday”).

Amazingly, as adults, we often understand exactly what children are trying to talk about (i.e. children are great communicators!). Mistakes, like these, give you an opportunity to talk about words – how they are similar, how they are different, what they sound like, what they mean, and so forth. In fact, children who are talked to and read to more frequently show more word and world knowledge.

Vocabulary and World Knowledge: What can you do?

- Talk about the meaning of words with children as they come up in conversation.

Children will be most likely to listen to you talk about the meaning of a word when the word has come up in naturally occurring conversations or when the word relates to something of interest to the child (what kinds of “vocabulary” words can you think of that relate to dinosaurs or princesses).

“It’s funny, the word ‘flower’ means two things. It can mean the pretty flowers growing outside in the garden. Or it can mean the stuff people use to make cookies or bread.”

Children don’t need to know that the two words are spelled differently, but understanding that there are two meanings to a word will enhance their understanding of words and the world.

- Model your own interest in words.

Did your mother or a teacher ever tell you to look something up in the dictionary? Do you still look things up in the dictionary? Or on-line?

When you show children that searching out the meaning of words is something that adults like to do, you are encouraging them to take an active role in their own word and world learning.

- Help children learn about the world.

Take children places (to the zoo, to a restaurant, on the bus, to the river front, to the park, to a hospital). Talk about what you are seeing and what you are doing.

If your program allows children to watch TV, be certain that you watch with the children and talk about what is happening and why. Encourage children to watch “educational” TV shows (such as Nature on OPB or the Animal Planet channel) rather than typical cartoon.

- Read both fiction and non-fiction books to children.

Reading books can be a fabulous way to help children develop word and world knowledge. Books contain **words** that children (and even adults) have never heard before. Books can “take” children (and even adults) to places or **worlds** they have never been before.

A good book can motivate children to want to learn more about a particular event, object, or animal in their world.

ACTIVITIES

- Cook with children.
- Plant and care for seeds with children.
- Visit a farm.
- Visit a construction site.
- Visit a museum.
- Look in the newspaper for free concerts or performances and take the children to them.
- Consider the following list of sites/experiences. Can you take your group of children to visit them? If not, how could you recreate the site/experience in your classroom? What could you add to the dramatic play area? What books could you read? What information or pictures could you find in magazines or online? Who could come to visit and talk to the children?

For instance, if you cannot go to a farm or a community garden, could you create a small garden in the yard? A container garden? You could dig worms with the children or compost leaves and the veggie or fruit scraps from meals. You could ask a children's librarian to help you find stories and books about gardening or farming. You could invite someone from a community garden or a local nursery to come and talk about growing things. You could start a gardening journal with the children to track and describe how things are growing.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Art Studio | • Arts and Crafts Shop |
| • Bakery | • Bank |
| • Barber Shop/Salon | • Campsite |
| • Dance Studio | • Daycare Center/Preschool |
| • Dentist/Doctor's Office | • Fast-Food Restaurant |
| • Fire Station | • Garage Sale |
| • Garden Shop/Florist | • Gas Station |
| • Hospital | • Laundromat |
| • Library/bookstore | • Grocery store |
| • Mechanic/Automobile Service Shop | • Post Office |
| • Print/Copy Shop | • Space Museum/Observatory |
| • Sporting event | • Hardware Store |
| • Clothing/Shoe Store | • Theatre/Auditorium |
| • Travel Agency | • Veterinarian's Office |
| • Video Rental Store | • Wildlife Sanctuary/Aquarium/Zoo |

Narrative Skill

Narrative Skill: What is it?

Narrative Skill is the ability to understand and tell stories or describe events.

Most stories have a predictable structure. There is a beginning, a middle, and an ending. In a story, we learn who the characters are, what they do, and why they do what they do.

Narrative skill helps children learn to read because when children understand “story structure,” they can better predict what will happen in a story. This helps when children are trying to read a story and when children are trying to understand what they just read (reading comprehension). When children do not understand a story, narrative skill can help children know what kinds of questions to ask in order to reach understanding.

Narrative Skill: What does it look like?

Young children (approximately 3 years old) can describe what happens during frequent events (What happens at lunch time? What happens when you go to McDonalds?). These “event scripts” are an early form of narrative skill. As children get older, they gradually add more details to their scripts.

You may also hear young children use story phrases such as, “once upon a time” or “the end.”

Early on, children can tell stories about events that directly relate to their experience. As children grow older, they start to imagine and tell stories about things they have not experienced.

Narrative Skill: What can you do?

- Ask children to describe their weekend or what happened over vacation. When children describe past events, they are telling you a story. You can ask prompting questions to help children remember to include details and pertinent information.
- Ask children for descriptions of, or stories to go along with, their pictures. Write down the story (or narration). Try to resist the temptation to make the phrase or story sound better. Ask the child if he/she would like to add anything to his/her picture or story.
- Invite children to “show and tell” with special items brought from home. It can be difficult for young preschoolers to sit through a “show and tell” session involving the entire class. However, when individual children bring something from home, you can invite them to share it with the group during a circle or group time. Again, ask prompting questions to help children create a “narrative” about their special item.

- Act out stories with children.
Encourage children to act out stories with puppets or dress up clothes. Some children will become very interested in creating a “show” or “movie.” They can create shows of their own stories or act out a story from a familiar book.
- Use flannel or magnet boards to tell stories.
Make your own flannel boards and stories or purchase ready-made “flannel boards” or “magnet boards” and story characters. Allow children to participate in the telling of the story and the placement of the flannel pieces. Leave the flannel board and stories pieces out for children to explore during a choice or free play time.
- Read books and talk about books.
Talk with children about the books you are reading. Ask questions about what happened and why.

When reading a book, stop at a suspenseful moment and ask what the children think will happen next.

Talk about how the story relates to events in the lives of the children with whom you work.

Wordless picture books with detailed pictures, but few or no words, allow children to make up their own versions of a story.

ACTIVITIES

- **Build a Story**
With your whole group or a couple of children, create a story a little bit at a time. Each day or once a week, ask for the next piece of the story. Record what the children say in their words. Ask questions about new events or characters that are introduced. Help children see how a story builds connections between what happened previously and what is being written.

Build a couple of stories over the course of the year and see how their narrative skill of the children changes. When the story is “finished”, type it up and publish it for the families in your program. Invite families in for a “book launch.”
- **Add On To Favorite Stories**
What happened the day after Max visited the Wild Things? What else did the five little monkeys do? With the children, write Part II of their favorite books. Record what the children say in their words. Ask clarifying questions (Why did he do that? How did that happen?). Ask the children to help illustrate the sequel. “Publish” the story for the children to take home or post the story and pictures in the room.

Adult Resources

Champlin, C. Storytelling with Puppets.

Hunt, T. Puppetry in Early Childhood Education.

Kohl, M. Making Make-Believe: Fun Props, Costumes, and Creative Play Ideas.

Sierra, J. Flannel Board Storytelling Book.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness: What is it?

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds.

Phonological awareness is an auditory (listening) skill rather than a visual (seeing) skill. You don't have to know or see the letter D to know that "dog" starts with the /d/ sound.

Phonological awareness comes before "phonics." In order to understand phonics, a person must know the kinds of sounds a language makes (phonological awareness), be able to identify the letters of the alphabet, and then link the two together.

Phonological Awareness includes...

Awareness of rhymes.

The dog in the bog got lost in the fog.

Awareness of syllables:

Oatmeal: Oat/Meal

Butterfly: Butt/er/fly

Awareness of phonemes (the smallest speech sounds):

Dog: D/aw/g

Fun: F/uh/n

Awareness of the sounds that words start or end with.

Dog starts with a /d/ sound and ends with a /g/ sound.

If you take away the D sound and add a F sound, the word becomes Fog.

When, children are more aware of the sounds that words make and have played with or explored those sounds, they can more easily...

- Grasp that sounds can be represented by letters.
- Decode (read) words.
- Spell words.

A Few Definitions

Phonological Awareness: The awareness that language is made up of different types of sounds. The sounds may be little pieces of words (phonemes) or bigger chunks of words (syllables).

Syllable: Pieces of spoken words that contain vowel sounds (e.g. syl-la-ble).

Onset: The beginning sound(s) of a syllable. For instance, the Onset of “dog” would be the /d/ sound. The Onset of “shout” would be the /sh/ sound.

Rime: The part of a syllable that includes the vowel and the letters/sounds that come after the vowel. The Rime of “dog” would be “og” and the Rime of “shout” would be “out.”

Phoneme: The smallest pieces of sound in a language. Changing a phoneme in a word can change the meaning of a word. For instance, when you replace the /b/ sound in “bat” with a /c/ sound the word becomes “cat.”

Phonemic Awareness: Awareness of phonemes in language. Children who show phonemic awareness are able to play with the sounds in words (changing “bat” to “cat” and back again). Notice how phonemic awareness does not include linking sounds to a specific letter of the alphabet.

Grapheme: The letters of the alphabet that correspond to phonemes. Some phonemes are represented by individual letters (b, t, m, s). Some phonemes are represented by multiple graphemes (th, sh, igh).

Phonics: Awareness and understanding of how graphemes are linked to phonemes. For example, understanding that “b” goes with the /b/ sound or that any spoken word can be written with specific letters that correspond to the sounds in the word.

Phonological Awareness: What does it look like?

Research has shown that even tiny babies seem to recognize when speech sounds are correctly organized and when they are mixed up.

Children as young as 1 year are able to hear and repeat syllables in words. They mimic the pattern of language and the sounds of words.

Two- Three- and Four-year-old children may notice and point out when two words sound the same. Children at this age can memorize and recite rhyming songs and poems. The rhymes and sounds start to help them remember the songs and poems.

Four- and Five-year-old children may be able to tell you what sound a word starts with (e.g. “The word ‘bat’ starts with a /b/ sound.”). At this age, children appreciate a rhyming story, rhyme, or riddle (i.e. They will find a story funny because of the rhyme, not just because the story is funny).

Phonological awareness does not develop “naturally” (as does walking or talking).

Children need to have lots of experiences with different words (those that rhyme and those that do not) in order to “see” (become aware of) the **sound** similarities and differences (as opposed to just being able to see the differences in the **meanings** of words).

Generally, children who are learning two languages at once or who are learning a second language have greater phonological awareness. In their language learning, they are required to sort language sounds and notice similarities and differences on a daily basis in order to separate the two languages.

When asked to rhyme on their own, children may make lots of mistakes. They may come up with a rhyming, nonsense word rather than a real word. They may claim two words rhyme, when they do not. This is normal. Even the act of trying to find a rhyme shows that children are becoming aware that language and words can be broken down into smaller sounds.

Phonological Awareness: What can you do?

- Play with words!

Have you ever heard a word that made you laugh (hullabaloo, snickerdoodle)? Enjoy words with children. Show children that words can make adults smile or laugh too.

Pay attention to when children are noticing words. Explore the words with them.

A child's name is always a good place to start when looking for word sounds. “Hey, Mmmmacaroni, your favorite food, starts with the same sound as Mmmolly, your name.”

- Sing all kinds of songs (rhyming songs, silly songs, rhythmic songs).

Songs and music can provide a “natural” way for children to explore the sounds of words. Songs stretch out some sounds or run quickly over other sounds. Songs can help to emphasize ways in which sounds are similar (rhyming) or different.

Clap along with the song. You can clap along with the beat, with each word, or with the syllables in the word. Distribute other noise and rhythm makers (shakers, rhythm sticks, maracas, or tambourines) for some variety.

- Name Sounds.

Children's names are very familiar and important to them. The letters and sounds of a child's name are among the first letters and sounds a child typically learns.

In a circle or group time, use shakers or rhythm sticks and to tap out the syllables in each child's name.

When children are being released from one activity to another (story time to snack, lunch time to nap preparation), release individual children by saying their name and clapping the syllables.

- Recite rhyming poems.

What do you suppose?
A bee sat on my nose!
Then what do you think?
He gave me a wink,
And said, “ I beg your pardon,
I thought you were the garden.”

Miss Mary Mack, Mack Mack
All dressed in black, black, black.
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,
All down her back, back, back.

Add hand and body movements to rhymes to make them fun!

Clap along with rhymes. You could clap at the beginning of each phrase, at the beginning of each word, or for each syllable.

Rhyming poems and songs don't need to make sense. In fact, the nonsense words created in these rhymes tend to get the giggles going!

Willowby, Wallowby

Willowby, Wallowby Woo

An elephant sat on you.

Willowby, Wallowby Wee

An elephant sat on me.

The rhyme has more variations such as:

Willowby, Wallowby, Wary, an elephant sat on Mary

Willowby, Wallowby, Wuzzle, an elephant played with a puzzle

Willowby, Wallowby, Woo, an elephant went to the zoo.

Willowby, Wallowby Weetah, an elephant ran with a cheetah.

Bicky Bye

B-A-Bay

B-E-Bee

B-I Bickey Bye

B-O Boe

Bickey Bye Boe B-U Boo

Bickey Bye Boe Boo.

T-A Tay

T-E Tee

T-I Tickee Tye

T-O Toe

Tickee Tye Toe, T-U Too

Tickee Tye Toe Too

Substitute other letters for tongue twisting fun!

- Read Rhyming Books.

There are literally hundreds of books for children available at your local library that feature rhyming words and phrases.

ACTIVITIES**• I Spy**

I spy something that starts with an “M” sound (make the Mmmm sound).

Do you see it?

I spy something that starts with a “B” sound (make the “buh” sound”).

Do you see it?

Harder: I spy something that ends with a “T” sound.

Do you see it?

Repeat with other letter sounds. This is a good activity for waiting (for the bus, in line, on a walk).

• Hearing and Describing Sounds

Activities that encourage children to hear and talk about sounds help them acquire the skills to recognize subtle sound differences and the vocabulary to describe those sounds. These skills can help to lay the groundwork for listening for and identifying differences in the sounds of language (Hohmann, 2002). Encourage children to identify or describe the sounds they hear outside, inside, at rest time, while on a walk, while listening to music or other recording.

Record each of the children saying a short statement and then play a game to see who can recognize whose voice. Record sounds in the neighborhood and see if children can identify them.

• Track Poems, Songs and Rhymes

Keep a list of the poems, songs, and rhymes that the children have learned (post the list in the classroom for some print awareness). Return to songs and rhymes occasionally throughout the year. Use your knowledge of the rhymes the children have learned when playing other rhyming games with children or when just pointing out rhymes in language.

• Rhyme Substitutions

When reciting familiar rhymes with the children, substitute a non-rhyming word in place of the regular rhyming word (Jack and Jill went up street...). When the children stop you, ask what is wrong. See if anyone can identify that the substituted word does not rhyme. If not, explain to children that the poem does not sound right because a different word was used AND the poem does not sound right because the new word does not rhyme. Ask if anyone can think of other words that rhyme.

- **Noticing Alliteration**

Alliteration (when the first sounds of words are similar – wee , willie, winkie or by, baby, bunting) is another characteristic of language sounds that children will start to notice. As children start to notice the sounds of the language and can identify the initial sounds of words (i.e. Silly starts with the /s/ sound), you can start to talk about alliteration.

When you first talk to the children about alliteration, clap out the syllables (a – llit – ter – ation). It's a long word! The children should enjoy learning and saying it.

When you find “alliterative” phrases (silly, Sally), ask the children what would happen if you changed the first sound of each word (milly, mally). Let the children suggest the sounds you should use in the changes. See if the children can make the changes on their own (i.e. “What would happen if we changed the /s/ sound in silly, sally to a /m/ sound? Can anyone do it?”).

Adult Resources

Adams, M. Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum.

Blevins, W. Phonemic Awareness Activities for Early Reading Success: Easy, playful activities that help prepare children for phonics instruction.

Beaton, C. Playtime Rhymes.

Hohmann,, M. Fee, Fie, Phonemic Awareness: 130 Prereading Activities for Preschoolers.

Notes/Ideas:

Print Awareness

Print Awareness: What is it?

Understanding of how a book or a piece of writing “works.”

- That the symbols (typically in black) on a page or sign have meaning. That they are words.
- That the series of symbols (letters) on the front of a book is the title and, likely, the name of the author and illustrator.
- That a book has a front and a back, a top and a bottom.
- That we turn the pages of a book from right to left, but we read words from left to right (Note: This applies to English. Some languages are printed and read in different directions.).
- That we start at the top of the page (or paragraph) when reading.
- That we read the words in a book (rather than “reading” the pictures).
- That books and other written materials are sources of information.
- That people use books and other written materials to help them in their daily lives (writing and using lists, looking things up, enjoying a story, reading the newspaper, figuring out which bus to take, etc.).

When children come to school with an understanding of how print (books, other written materials) works, they are more likely to be ready to learn other things about reading.

Imagine you were going to a new place and needed to look at a map. Now imagine you didn't have the foggiest idea of how to use a map. It would take you a while to learn how maps work before you could even start to figure out where you were going.

The same applies to children who have an awareness of how print works. They can skip the first step (how does this thing called a book work) and move right into exploring the pictures, the story, the details and the printed words.

Print Awareness: What does it look like?

Print awareness can look like pretend reading. Beginning as early as 18 months of age, children will imitate or pretend to read. Initially, the book may be upside down or the child may turn the pages the “wrong” way. You may be able to hear the child use a “reading voice” while pretending.

Gradually, children will hold the book properly, turn the pages one at a time, and even run their fingers along the print as though they were reading it.

Children may recognize familiar signs in their neighborhood, such as McDonalds or the Stop signs. This is called environmental print.

You may see children point out some printed words and then “read” them. A child may insist that he is reading the words correctly, even though you know that they say something different.

As children become older and more aware of print, you will see them using print in their play – reading a book to a baby doll, taking your order while playing restaurant, pretending to write a letter. When you look at what a child has written, you may just see marks on the paper. However, these are not just scribbles, but rather evidence that the child is becoming aware of print and how it works.

Print Awareness: What can you do?

- Model how you use print in everyday life.

Make a list with the children before gathering supplies for a project. Review the list with the children every so often as you collect the items.

Include the children when you look up something in the phone book, or on the Internet, or when you have written a note to send home to parents. Look at a map with the children before going on a walk or a field trip.

- Point out print in the environment.

Point out common signs (stop, yield, no parking) on walks or field trips.

Point out how nearly all packaging (candy bars, food boxes, milk containers, etc.) has print that helps people identify what is inside.

- Read books.

When reading a book with children, point out the title, the name of the author and the illustrator. Occasionally, run your finger along the text as you read (particularly when words repeat or are otherwise interesting).

Let the children hold the book and turn the pages while you read. You may have to ask them to wait to turn the page until you have finished reading the words. This is OK. The experience will help children understand that reading is more than just describing the pictures.

Read the book in a mixed-up manner and see if the children can correct you. Hold the book upside-down, try to read the book from the back to the front, and so forth. Be silly, have fun!

- Make books with the children.

Make books about field trips or topics of interest to the children (dinosaurs, trucks, birds, etc.).

The process of making a book will help children learn the parts of the book and the way in which a book is written (the story goes from front to back, the writing goes from left to right, the title goes on the front cover).

Make book-making materials (paper, tape, children's scissors, markers, crayons) available for the children to explore on their own.

ACTIVITIES

- **Read books that highlight print or characters writing.**
- **Make Signs or Labels**
Make signs for the room. Encourage the children to decorate the signs. Place labels on items the children use often (bookshelves, doors, cubbies, etc.). Change the signs periodically (remove previous signs as you put up the new signs).
- **Post Directions**
Using simple words, pictures, and photographs, make signs which provide directions for common activities (washing hands, painting, gluing, preparing to go home). Post the signs where children can "read" them as they do the activity. For instance, directions for gluing might include with words or pictures, 1) put on a smock, 2) put newspaper on table, 3) take out glue, paper, supplies, 4) have fun!, 5) close up glue, 6) put away supplies, 7) clean up table, 8) hang up smock.
- **Stay In Touch**
Involve the children in writing letters or emails to friends and family or writing thank you notes to classroom visitors.
- **Classroom Reports**
Get in the habit of documenting the special activities you do with your children (take pictures, collect children's artwork, ask children to comment on an activity). After the activity is complete (field trip, teachable moment, project, curriculum topic), create a poster sized "report" of the activity or event. Include descriptions of the event, what happened, what the children did, what the visitor did or said, and so forth. Decorate report posters with photographs, children's artwork, etc.

When the report is complete, read and review it with the children during a group time before hanging it on the wall. That way the children can “read” the report with their parents during drop-off and pick-up times.

- **Recipe Cards**

Write out frequently used recipes (for playdough, making juice from concentrate, pancakes, etc.). Use large print and simple pictures reflecting each step for the recipe. Encourage children to “read” the recipe as they help you make it.

There are many books that include references to recipes and cooking. Some books (Pancakes for Breakfast by dePaola or Sun Bread by Kleven) include recipes with the book.

- **Encourage Pretend Play Related to Print**

Add items to the various play areas in the classroom or environment to encourage print exploration. Possible themes include: post-office materials (rubber stamps, a mailbox, envelopes, old letters), a restaurant (take-out menus, receipt books, play money), or a grocery store (empty food boxes, play money, a shopping bag or cart). Each of these themes could include pens, pencils, and paper for writing letters, taking orders, or making shopping lists.

Other print related items include magazines, catalogs, newspapers, telephone books, travel brochures, junk mail, store coupons, calendars, greeting cards, ticket stubs, and business cards.

- **Cool Words**

You can purchase “refrigerator poetry” for kids. Each poetry set comes with a series of magnetic words that can be mixed up and put together in many different ways to create short sentences or poems. The children’s versions include words with large type and words that relate to children’s lives. These sets generally are available from bookstores and some toy stores. While the children may not be able to read the words now, by creating poems with you, they will be learning about how printed words work.

Create your own “refrigerator poetry” with printed words and adhesive magnets (available from craft stores). You can also write words on felt to be used with a felt or flannel board.

Adult Resources

Bloom, C. A. Playing With Print: Fostering Emergent Literacy

Notes/Ideas:

Letter Knowledge

Letter Knowledge: What is it?

Letter knowledge involves...

- recognizing and naming letters of the alphabet,
- recognizing similarities and differences between letters,
- recognizing that there are upper- and lower-case letters, and
- recognizing that specific sounds go with specific letters.

Letter knowledge is a very common school readiness skill. Most kindergarten teachers expect that children will “know their letters,” by the time they enter kindergarten.

Children who know their letters and understand that letters make sounds are better prepared to “crack the code” (figure out the letter-sound relationships that become words). They understand that specific letter symbols can result in specific words and can start to predict the letters in words with some success.

Letter Knowledge: What does it look like?

Young children quickly learn the alphabet song, although they are primarily learning it as a song rather than understanding that the song refers to a list of letters.

By the age of four, most children will start to show an interest in their letter(s); especially the letters in their name. They may even recognize letters from their names in environmental print.

Mark says, pointing to the M on the McDonalds sign, “There’s my letter, Mama.”

Four- year olds will may also start to show an interest in writing their names. It can be easier for young children to begin to write their names using all capital letters, as lower-case letters typically require greater fine motor skill.

By the age of five, many children have expanded the letters they recognize and write to include letters in words that are familiar or meaningful to them.

Susan likes to write notes to bring home to her parents that say, “I love you, mama (or dada).” She now recognizes and can write the letters S, U, A, N, I, L, O, V, E, Y, M, and D.

Although even young children can be trained to recognize and write all the letters in the alphabet, understanding of the function or purpose of those letters comes from meaningful experiences producing the letters (signing one's name, writing notes to people, etc.).

When children start to write their letters, the letters may be upside down or backwards. When writing their names or a word, the letters may be all over the page. They may skip letters or only write their favorite letters. They may just make marks on paper and claim the marks are letters. All these "mistakes" are quite normal. Some "mistakes" such as letter direction even last into the first few years of elementary school. Any effort a child makes at writing should be encouraged.

Amalia has learned that her name has three A's and so she spells her name:

A A A M L I

Letter Knowledge: What can you do?

- Talk about letters in the environment that relate to children's names. Point out when a child's name is written on something (a card, a name tag, a list, the child's backpack).
- If you are doing a "Letter of the Week," start with the letters that are meaningful to the children (the first letters of their names), rather than using the typical "ABC" order.
- When helping children learn to write their names, try to find descriptions of the letters that relate to their world or include a short catchy rhyme. This will help remind children how to write the letter.

For example:

A: A mountain with a line through it.
 M: Up-down, up-down, stop
 Z: Zig-zag-zoo
 O: A circle.
 Q: A circle with a tail
 R: A line with a bump and a leg

- Make writing materials available for play and exploration. Children need experiences with writing materials on a regular basis in order to find writing letter interesting.
- Make it fun!
 If letter writing becomes a chore or something the child has to do before he or she can do something fun, the child may lose the motivation to learn.

Integrate letter writing into meaningful activities or things that children like to do. Some children like to play school. Other children want to be involved when you write notes to parents or other teachers. You may be able to reach other children by pointing out the letters in the names of cars or trucks, the names of the popular princesses, and so forth.

Early Words Language and Literacy: the Oregon Professional Development Program.
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- Read alphabet books.
Recently, authors of alphabet books have become quite clever in how the alphabet is presented. Alphabet books often combine letter recognition with letter sounds and rhyming. Ask a children's librarian for help finding some "fun" alphabet books or look for some of the books on the next page.

ACTIVITIES

- **Cool Letters**

Magnetic letters on the refrigerator or other metal surface can be fun for children to explore and to create words.

- **Alphabet Songs**

The "ABC" song is not the only one! There are other versions of the alphabet set to music. Carol King sings "A, Alligators All Around" on Really Rosie. John Lithgow sings "A – You're Adorable" on Singin' In The Bathtub. These CD's can be checked out from the library. While singing the songs, you can encourage children to form the letters with fingers or bodies or you could point out the letters as you sing them on an alphabet poster or magnetic letters.

- **Letter Collections**

Using magazines, newspapers, junkmail, and catalogs, cut out letters with the children. It may take children a while to figure out the boundaries of each letter (where a letter starts and stops). Cutting out letters will give you an opportunity to talk about the letters (their shapes, their boundaries, upper- and lower-case letters, etc.). Ask children for their ideas of what the letters could be used for (sorting, letter books, labels, signs, etc.).

As you are out in the world, look for letters that catch your fancy (on signs, posters, sculpted letters, etc.). Think about starting your own collection of three dimensional and printed letters to share with the children.

- **Letter Shapes**

Talk with children about the shapes of letters. Look for things with similar shapes in the world (A hose might look like an "S", a bowl has the same shape as an "O").

Ask children to create the letters with their fingers or bodies. Encourage children to work together to create the shape of a more complex letter. Take pictures of the children as they are making their letter shapes. Create a poster of the pictures, documenting the finger or body alphabet.

- **Sign-In Sheets**

Most child care establishments have a place for parents to sign children in and out. Create a sign-in sheet just for the children. On a computer, using a large-size font, make a list of each child's name and a line next to their name. Each day when a child arrives, encourage him/her to sign in (don't worry about the sign-out). If the child does not want to sign his or her name, you could encourage him or her to draw a picture next to the name.

Date the sign-in sheets and save one from each month. Notice how children's writing and letter knowledge changes and develops over time. Use your collection of the sign-in sheets as documentation of letter knowledge and fine motor development when you prepare for parent-teacher conferences.

- **Letter Books**

If you do a "letter of the week," create an alphabet book with the children with a page for each letter of the alphabet. Remember, you don't need to start the book with the beginning of the alphabet. Start with the letters that are meaningful to the children in your group (the beginning letters of their names, the letters they notice in the environment, etc.).

Use cut out letters, photos of letters, photos of children whose name starts with a particular letter, or pictures of things that begin with the letter. Keep the pictures or words specific to the children's experiences (foods they eat, things they play with, activities they do on a regular basis, their pets or family members). Laminate the pages if possible.

Create a new book with each new group of children (each time you restart letter of the week). That way, the book is always meaningful or relevant to the children in your group.

Create letter books with each child with a page for each letter of the child's name. Again, use cut out letters, photographs, and so forth to decorate each page. Laminate the pages if possible.

Notes/Ideas:

Reading Books With Children Can Do It All!

You may have noticed that each suggestion page includes the suggestion that you read to children. Simply reading at least one book to the children in your care each day can help to ...

- **Build Print Motivation.**
A good book can make children want to hear more books, spend more time with books, explore more books, and eventually learn to read books on their own.
- **Build Vocabulary and World Knowledge.**
Through reading and discussing books, children can learn about the meaning of words and learn about their world.
- **Build Narrative Skills.**
The more a child is exposed to books, the more that child will understand how a story is structured and will incorporate that structure into the stories he/she creates and tells.
- **Build Phonological Awareness.**
There are oodles of books with rhymes as well as books with playful words and expressions.
- **Build Print Awareness.**
Every experience between a child, an adult, and a book, helps a child learn how books and written language work.
- **Build Letter Knowledge.**
Books can provide fun, interesting, and “painless” ways for children to learn their letters.

Finding The Great Books To Read With Children

- Talk to a children's librarian at your local library.
Children's librarians are extremely knowledgeable about books for children. A children's librarian can help you find books that will match the age of the children you work with, the children's characteristics, and their interests.
- Attend a story time at your local library.
Check out the books the children have enjoyed when they become available. You can get a schedule of story times online at <http://www.multcolib.org/mcl-hrs.html> or by calling your local library (branch information and phone numbers printed on the back cover of this booklet).
- Take a small group of children to the library!
On a "low" enrollment day or a day when you have extra coverage, take a small group of children to the library. Allow each child to select a book or two (if you know you always check out the same number of books, it will be easier to know how many books you still have to locate when the due date rolls around).

You may be able to do some editing while at the library ("Are you sure you want this book? It has lots of words and almost no pictures."). Better yet, if you have time, you can read a couple of books to the children while at the library as part of the selection process.

Bring the books back to your program and try to read them together. It's likely there will be some hits and some misses. Happily, the hits can be renewed and the misses can be returned to the library for different books.

- Find book lists created by other people or organizations.
There are several book lists developed by the Multnomah County Library available online: <http://www.multcolib.org/kids/booklists/> Libraries across the country often post their booklists on the Internet.

New York Public Library: www.nypl.org/branch/kids/gloria.html

An on-line search of "book lists for young children" results in several helpful options. Newspapers and magazines occasionally publish reviews of good books for children or lists of books about a particular topic.

Remember, just because an "expert" has selected a particular book doesn't mean that it will be a good book for you to read to children. Use the lists as a resource and then read the books that work for you.

Suggested Books for Early Literacy Skills Development

Print Motivation

Author	Title
Burton	Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel
Cronin	Click, Clack Moo
De Paola	Strega Nona
Gilman	Something From Nothing
Hassett	Cat Up A Tree
Keats	The Snowy Day
McMullan	I Stink
Rathman	Officer Buckle and Gloria
Scieszka	The True Story of the Three Little Pigs
Shannon	Duck On A Bike
Slobodkina	Caps for Sale
Viorst	Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Vocabulary

Author	Title
Angelou	Kofi and His Magic
Berger	A Whale is Not A Fish: and other animal mix-ups
Henkes	Chrysanthemum
James	Dear Mr. Blueberry
Lobel	Great Blueness and Other Predicaments
Lobel	The Rose In My Garden
McCloskey	Make Way For Ducklings
Ray	All Aboard!
Steig	Doctor De Soto
Trinca & Argent	One Woolly Wombat
Waber	Ira Sleeps Over

Print Awareness

Author	Title
Brown	Arthur Writes a Story
Cabrera	Old Mother Hubbard
Cronin	Click, Clack, Moo
Cronin	Giggle, Giggle, Quack
Eastman	Are You My Mother?
Henkes	Lilly and the Purple Plastic Purse
Lawrence	This Little Chick
Miller	Where Does It Go?
Shaw	Sheep in a Jeep

Narrative Skills

Author	Title
	<i>Wordless picture books, with detailed pictures, but few or no words, allow children to make up their own versions of a story.</i>
Degen	Daddy Is A Doodlebug
DePaola	Pancakes For Breakfast
Feiffer	Bark, George
Kalan	Jump, Frog, Jump
Lewis	Lot at the End of My Block
Lexau	Who Took The Farmer's Hat?
Mayer	A Boy, A Dog, and A Frog
Mayer	Frog Goes To Dinner
Rathmann	10 Minutes till Bedtime
Rathmann	Goodnight Gorilla
Root	One Duck Stuck
Weitzman & Glasser	You Can't Take a Balloon Into The Metropolitan Museum
Wells	Bunny Cakes

Phonological Awareness

Author	Title
Cameron	"I Can't" Said The Ant
Crebbin	Cows in the Kitchen
Edwards	Clara Caterpillar
Edwards	Roar: A noisy counting book
Falwell	Turtle Splash
Fox	Boo To A Goose
Kirk	Miss Spider's Tea Party
Opie	Here Comes Mother Goose
Jackson	I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie
Schwartz	Busy Buzzing Bumble Bees and Other Tongue Twisters
Shelby	Potluck
Sloat	Farmer Brown Shears His Sheep: A yarn about wool
Sturges	I Love Trains
Seuss	Fox in Socks
Walton	So Many Bunnies
Wood	Silly Sally

Letter Knowledge

Author	Title
Base	Animalia
Ernst	The Letters Are Lost
Flanagan	Wish and Win: The Sound of W
Hudson	Afro-bets ABC Book
Joyce	ABC Animal Riddles
Lyne	A, My Name Is
MacDonald	Alphabatics
Martin	Chicka Chicka Boom Boom
Paul	Everything To Spend The Night
Sierra	There's a Zoo In Room 22
Walton	So Many Bunnies