Methods of Teaching Early Literacy

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Contents

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About the Book

Methods of Teaching Early Literacy is an open educational resource (OER), which means it is **free** to access online and that it is available under an open license which allows you to adapt the material for your needs, so long as you appropriately credit the authors and this original work. We hope that having access to this book will support the development and lifelong learning of teachers across Iowa and the world.

The book is based on longstanding and current research in literacy instruction, theories, and methods. It focuses on teaching early literacy in PreK-3 grades by applying an integrated multidisciplinary, 21st-century literacy approach to literacy instruction in the early grades while centering diversity and equity. Unlike static textbooks, this text provides a multi-modal, accessible way to engage with the content and interactive elements to deconstruct the meaning of the text.

In addition to the main text, educator resources and content to support preservice teachers are integrated throughout.

Introduction

We made this book because we wanted preservice teachers to have free access to information about early literacy development and instructional methods. When students have to purchase books, they often return them and lose valuable reference information. With this open access resource, preservice teachers will be able to turn to the information in this book whenever they need to. Another advantage of open access is the ability to update and edit the book easily.

Our approach

Our approach to this book was as an introduction to the topic of early literacy development. This book is targeting pre-service teachers who are taking their first literacy methods courses. Therefore the scope is a wide view of literacy topics instead of a deep dive into literacy development. We anticipate pre-service teachers will continue their coursework in literacy, deepening their conceptual knowledge. At the same time, we included topics that are not often included in early literacy texts such as technology, family literacy, supporting diverse students and multicultural literacy.

The content

The book begins by exploring multiple definitions of literacy with varying perspectives. Literacy is explored through the critical literacies' framework as a human right and a meaning-making experience involving digital tools and technologies through the lens of new literacies. The second chapter explores the foundations of literacy instruction. In subsequent chapters, each literacy component is further developed and discussed with concepts, strategies, and reflective practice. One chapter focuses on trauma-informed instruction, dyslexia, ELL, culturally relevant pedagogy, and multicultural literature. Lastly, we introduce disciplinary literacy for young readers. While we recognize that these are not the only topics that could be introduced in an early literacy textbook, we chose to focus on the topics we felt were essential for pre-service teachers to begin their study of early literacy.

Chapter 1. What is Literacy? Multiple Perspectives on Literacy

Constance Beecher

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." – Frederick Douglass

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#oembed-1*

[Download Tar Beach – Faith Ringgold Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

Keywords: literacy, digital literacy, critical literacy, community-based literacies

Definitions of literacy from multiple perspectives

Literacy is the cornerstone of education by any definition. Literacy refers to the ability of people to read and write (UNESCO, 2017). Reading and writing in turn are about encoding and decoding information between written symbols and sound (Resnick, 1983; Tyner, 1998). More specifically, literacy is the ability to understand the relationship between sounds and written words such that one may read, say, and understand them (UNESCO, 2004; Vlieghe, 2015). About 67 percent of children nationwide, and more than 80 percent of those from families with low incomes, are not proficient readers by the end of third grade (The Nation Assessment for Educational Progress; NAEP 2022). Children who are not reading on grade level by third grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of school than their peers who are reading on grade level. A large body of research clearly demonstrates that Americans with fewer years of education have poorer health and shorter lives. In fact, since the 1990s, life expectancy has fallen for people without a high school education. Completing more years of education creates better

access to health insurance, medical care, and the resources for living a healthier life (Saha, 2006). Americans with less education face higher rates of illness, higher rates of disability, and shorter life expectancies. In the U.S., 25-year-olds without a high school diploma can expect to die 9 years sooner than college graduates. For example, by 2011, the prevalence of diabetes had reached 15% for adults without a high -school education, compared with 7% for college graduates (Zimmerman et al., 2018).

Thus, literacy is a goal of utmost importance to society. But what does it mean to be literate, or to be able to read? What counts as literacy?

Learning Objectives

- Describe two or more definitions of literacy and the differences between them.
- Define digital and critical literacy.
- Distinguish between digital literacy, critical literacy, and community-based literacies.
- Explain multiple perspectives on literacy.

Here are some definitions to consider:

"Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society." – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

"The ability to understand, use, and respond appropriately to written texts." – National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), citing the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

"An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society." – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Section 203

"The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

– Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), as cited by the American Library Association's Committee on Literacy

"Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." – Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy (2007). Literacy in Everyday Life: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NCES 2007-480)

Reflection Questions

Which one of these above definitions resonates with you? Why?

New literacy practices as meaning-making practices

In the 21st century, literacy increasingly includes understanding the roles of digital media and technology in literacy. In 1996, the New London Group coined the term "multiliteracies" or "new literacies" to describe a modern view of literacy that reflected multiple communication forms and contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity within a globalized society. They defined multiliteracies as a combination of multiple ways of communicating and making meaning, including such modes as visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, and gestural (New London Group, 1996). Most of the text's students come across today are digital (like this textbook!). Instead of books and magazines, students are reading blogs and text messages.

For a short video on the importance of digital literacy, watch The New Media Literacies.

The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE, 2019) makes it clear that our definitions of literacy must continue to evolve and grow (NCTE definition of digital literacy).

> "Literacy has always been a collection of communicative and sociocultural practices shared among communities. As society and technology change, so does literacy. The world demands that a literate person possess and intentionally apply a wide range of skills, competencies, and dispositions. These literacies are interconnected, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with histories, narratives,

life possibilities, and social trajectories of all individuals and groups. Active, successful participants in a global society must be able to:

◦ participate effectively and critically in a networked world.
◦ explore and engage critically and thoughtfully across a wide variety of inclusive texts and tools/modalities.
◦ consume, curate, and create actively across contexts.
◦ advocate for equitable access to and accessibility of texts, tools, and information.
◦ build and sustain intentional global and cross-cultural connections and relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought.
◦ promote culturally sustaining communication and recognize the bias and privilege present in the interactions.
◦ examine the rights, responsibilities, and ethical implications of the use and creation of information.
◦ determine how and to what extent texts and tools amplify one's own and others' narratives as well as counterproductive narratives.
◦ recognize and honor the multilingual literacy identities and culture experiences individuals bring to learning environments, and provide opportunities to promote, amplify, and encourage these variations of language (e.g., dialect, jargon, and register)."

Socio-cultural context refers to the idea that language does not exist in isolation and is closely linked to the culture and society in which it is used and taught. Activities that can raise awareness of socio-cultural context include using stories from different countries, analyzing newspaper headlines, and looking at slang and idiomatic language.

Learning Activities

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#h5p-28*

In other words, literacy is not just the ability to read and write. It is also being able to effectively use digital technology to find and analyze information. Students who are digitally literate know how to do research, find reliable sources, and make judgments about what they read online and in print. Next, we will learn more about digital literacy.

Important terms

- **Malleable**: can be changed.
- **Culturally sustaining**: the pedagogical preservation of the cultural and linguistic competence of young people pertaining to their communities of origin while simultaneously affording dominant-culture competence.
- **Bias**: a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others, usually resulting in unfair treatment.
- **Privilege**: a right or benefit that is given to some people and not to others.
- **Unproductive narrative**: negative commonly held beliefs such as "all students from low-income backgrounds will struggle in school." (Narratives are phrases or ideas that are repeated over and over and become "shared narratives." You can spot them in common expressions and stories that almost everyone knows and holds as ingrained values or beliefs.)

Literacy in the digital age

The Iowa Core recognizes that today, literacy includes technology. The goal for students who graduate from the public education system in Iowa is:

> "Each Iowa student will be empowered with the technological knowledge and skills to learn effectively and live productively. This vision, developed by the Iowa Core 21st Century Skills Committee, reflects the fact that Iowans in the 21st century live in a global environment marked by a high use of technology, giving citizens and workers the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions as never before. Iowa's students live in a media-suffused environment, marked by access to an abundance of information and rapidly changing technological tools useful for critical thinking and problem-solving processes. Therefore, technological literacy supports preparation of students as global citizens capable of self-directed learning in preparation for an ever-changing world" (Iowa Core Standards 21st Century Skills, n.d.).

NOTE: The essential concepts and skills of technology literacy are taken from the International Society for Technology in Education's National Educational Technology Standards for Students: Grades K-2 | Technology Literacy Standards

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The following section is an adaptation of Digital Literacies and the Skills of the Digital Age by Cathy L. Green, used under a CC BY 4.0. license.

Literacy in any context is defined as the ability " to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society" (ICT Literacy Panel, 2002). " When we teach only for facts (specifics)… rather than for how to go beyond facts, we teach students how to get out of date " (Sternberg, 2008). This statement is particularly significant when applied to technology literacy. The Iowa essential concepts for technology literacy reflect broad, universal processes and skills.

Unlike the previous generations, learning in the digital age is marked using rapidly evolving technology, a deluge of information, and a highly networked global community (Dede, 2010). In such a dynamic environment, learners need skills beyond the basic cognitive ability to consume and process language. To understand the characteristics of the digital age, and what this means for how people learn in this new and changing landscape, one may turn to the

evolving discussion of literacy or, as one might say now, of digital literacy. The history of literacy contextualizes digital literacy and illustrates changes in literacy over time. By looking at literacy as an evolving historical phenomenon, we can glean the fundamental characteristics of the digital age. These characteristics in turn illuminate the skills needed to take advantage of digital environments. The following discussion is an overview of digital literacy, its essential components, and why it is important for learning in the digital age.

Literacy is often considered a skill or competency. Children and adults alike can spend years developing the appropriate skills for encoding and decoding information. Over the course of thousands of years, literacy has become much more common and widespread, with a global literacy rate ranging from 81% to 90% depending on age and gender (UNESCO, 2016). From a time when literacy was the domain of an elite few, it has grown to include huge swaths of the global population. There are several reasons for this, not the least of which are some of the advantages the written word can provide. Kaestle (1985) tells us that "literacy makes it possible to preserve information as a snapshot in time, allows for recording, tracking and remembering information, and sharing information more easily across distances among others" (p. 16). In short, literacy led "to the replacement of myth by history and the replacement of magic by skepticism and science."

If literacy involves the skills of reading and writing, digital literacy requires the ability to extend those skills to effectively take advantage of the digital world (American Library Association [ALA], 2013). More general definitions express digital literacy as the ability to read and understand information from digital sources as well as to create information in various digital formats (Bawden, 2008; Gilster, 1997; Tyner, 1998; UNESCO, 2004). Developing digital skills allows digital learners to manage a vast array of rapidly changing information and is key to both learning and working in the evolving digital landscape (Dede, 2010; Koltay, 2011; Mohammadyari & Singh, 2015). As such, it is important for people to develop certain competencies specifically for handling digital content.

ALA Digital Literacy Framework

To fully understand the many digital literacies, we will look at the American Library Association (ALA) framework. The ALA framework is laid out in terms of basic functions with enough specificity to make it easy to understand and remember but broad enough to cover a wide range of skills. The ALA framework includes the following areas:

- finding,
- understanding,
- evaluating,
- creating, and
- communicating (American Library Association, 2013).

Finding

Finding information in a digital environment represents a significant departure from the way human beings have searched for information for centuries. The learner must abandon older linear or sequential approaches to finding information such as reading a book, using a card catalog, index, or table of contents, and instead use more horizontal approaches like natural language searches, hypermedia text, keywords, search engines, online databases and so on (Dede, 2010; Eshet, 2002). The shift involves developing the ability to create meaningful search limits (SCONUL, 2016). Previously, finding the information would have meant simply looking up page numbers based on an index or sorting through a card catalog. Although finding information may depend to some degree on the search tool being used (library, internet search engine, online database, etc.) the search results also depend on how well a person is able to generate appropriate keywords and construct useful Boolean searches. Failure in these two areas could easily return too many results to be helpful, vague, or generic results, or potentially no useful results at all (Hangen, 2015).

Part of the challenge of finding information is the ability to manage the results. Because there is so much data, changing so quickly, in so many different formats, it can be challenging to organize and store them in such a way as to be useful. SCONUL (2016) talks about this as the ability to organize, store, manage, and cite digital resources, while the Educational Testing Service also specifically mentions the skills of accessing and managing information. Some ways to accomplish these tasks is using social bookmarking tools such as Diigo, clipping and organizing software such as Evernote and OneNote, and bibliographic software. Many sites, such as YouTube, allow individuals with an account to bookmark videos, as well as create channels or collections of videos for specific topics or uses. Other websites have similar features.

Understanding

Understanding in the context of digital literacy perhaps most closely resembles traditional

literacy because it is the ability to read and interpret text (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006). In the digital age, however, the ability to read and understand extends much further than text alone. For example, searches may return results with any combination of text, video, sound, and audio, as well as still and moving pictures. As the internet has evolved, a whole host of visual languages have also evolved, such as moving images, emoticons, icons, data visualizations, videos, and combinations of all the above. Lankshear & Knoble (2008) refer to these modes of communication as "post typographic textual practice." Understanding the variety of modes of digital material may also be referred to as multimedia literacy (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006), visual literacy (Tyner, 1998), or digital literacy (Buckingham, 2006).

Evaluating

Evaluating digital media requires competencies ranging from assessing the importance of a piece of information to determining its accuracy and source. Evaluating information is not new to the digital age, but the nature of digital information can make it more difficult to understand who the source of information is and whether it can be trusted (Jenkins, 2018). When there are abundant and rapidly changing data across heavily populated networks, anyone with access can generate information online. This results in the learner needing to make decisions about its authenticity, trustworthiness, relevance, and significance. Learning evaluative digital skills means learning to ask questions about who is writing the information, why they are writing it, and who the intended audience is (Buckingham, 2006). Developing critical thinking skills is part of the literacy of evaluating and assessing the suitability for use of a specific piece of information (SCONUL, 2016).

Creating

Creating in the digital world makes the production of knowledge and ideas in digital formats explicit. While writing is a critical component of traditional literacy, it is not the only creative tool in the digital toolbox. Other tools are available and include creative activities such as podcasting, making audio-visual presentations, building data visualizations, 3D printing, and writing blogs. Tools that haven't been thought of before are constantly appearing. In short, a digitally literate individual will want to be able to use all formats in which digital information may be conveyed in the creation of a product. A key component of creating with digital tools is understanding what constitutes fair use and what is considered plagiarism. While this is not

new to the digital age, it may be more challenging these days to find the line between copying and extending someone else's work.

In part, the reason for the increased difficulty in discerning between plagiarism and new work is the "cut and paste culture" of the Internet, referred to as "reproduction literacy" (Eshet 2002, p.4), or appropriation in Jenkins' *New Media Literacies* (Jenkins, 2018). The question is, what kind and how much change is required to avoid the accusation of plagiarism? This skill requires the ability to think critically, evaluate a work, and make appropriate decisions. There are tools and information to help understand and find those answers, such as the Creative Commons. Learning about such resources and how to use them is part of digital literacy.

Communicating

Communicating is the final category of digital skills in the ALA digital framework. The capacity to connect with individuals all over the world creates unique opportunities for learning and sharing information, for which developing digital communication skills is vital. Some of the skills required for communicating in the digital environment include digital citizenship, collaboration, and cultural awareness. This is not to say that one does not need to develop communication skills outside of the digital environment, but that the skills required for digital communication go beyond what is required in a non-digital environment. Most of us are adept at personal, face- to-face communication, but digital communication needs the ability to engage in asynchronous environments such as email, online forums, blogs, social media, and learning platforms where what is written may not be deleted and may be misinterpreted. Add that to an environment where people number in the millions and the opportunities for misunderstanding and cultural miscues are likely.

The communication category of digital literacies covers an extensive array of skills above and beyond what one might need for face-to-face interactions. It is comprised of competencies around ethical and moral behavior, responsible communication for engagement in social and civic activities (Adam Becker et al., 2017), an awareness of audience, and an ability to evaluate the potential impact of one's online actions. It also includes skills for handling privacy and security in online environments. These activities fall into two main categories: digital citizenship and collaboration.

Digital citizenship refers to one's ability to interact effectively in the digital world. Part of this skill is good manners, often referred to as "netiquette." There is a level of context which is often

missing in digital communication due to physical distance, lack of personal familiarity with the people online, and the sheer volume of the people who may encounter our words. People who know us well may understand exactly what we mean when we say something sarcastic or ironic, but people online do not know us, and vocal and facial cues are missing in most digital communication, making it more likely we will be misunderstood. Furthermore, we are more likely to misunderstand or be misunderstood if we are unaware of cultural differences. So, digital citizenship includes an awareness of who we are, what we intend to say, and how it might be perceived by other people we do not know (Buckingham, 2006). It is also a process of learning to communicate clearly in ways that help others understand what we mean.

Another key digital skill is collaboration, and it is essential for effective participation in digital projects via the Internet. The Internet allows people to engage with others they may never see in person and work towards common goals, be they social, civic, or business oriented. Creating a community and working together requires a degree of trust and familiarity that can be difficult to build when there is physical distance between the participants. Greater effort must be made to be inclusive , and to overcome perceived or actual distance and disconnectedness. So, while the potential of digital technology for connecting people is impressive, it is not automatic or effortless, and it requires new skills.

Learning Activities

Literacy narratives are stories about reading or composing a message in any form or context. They often include poignant memories that involve a personal experience with literacy. Digital literacy narratives can sometimes be categorized as ones that focus on how the writer came to understand the importance of technology in their life or pedagogy. More often, they are simply narratives that use a medium beyond the print-based essay to tell the story:

> Create your own literacy narrative that tells of a significant experience you had with digital literacy. Use a multi-modal tool that includes audio and images or video. Share it with your classmates and discuss the most important ideas you notice in each other's narratives.

Critical literacy

Literacy scholars recognize that although literacy is a cognitive skill, it is also a set of practices

that communities and people participate in. Next, we turn to another perspective on literacy – critical literacy. "Critical" here is not meant as having a negative point of view, but rather using an analytic lens that detects power, privilege, and representation to understand different ways of looking at texts. For example, when groups or individuals stage a protest, do the media refer to them as "protesters" or "rioters?" What is the reason for choosing the label they do, and what are the consequences?

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#h5p-30

Critical literacy does not have a set definition or typical history of use, but the following key tenets have been described in the literature, which will vary in their application based on the individual social context (Vasquez, 2019). Table 1 presents some key aspects of critical literacy, but this area of literacy research is growing and evolving rapidly, so this is not an exhaustive list.

Table 1. Key Aspects of Critical Literacy

Key aspect	Example
Reading includes the everyday texts students encounter in their lives, not just books assigned at school.	Students write down the messages that they see in public, take photographs of graffiti or signs, or collect candy wrappers to bring to class.
Diverse students' knowledge (coming from the classroom and the children's homes) (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006) and multilingual/modal practices (Lau, 2012) should be used to enhance the curriculum.	Invite children to bring and share meaningful objects, stories, and language from home.
Students learn best when learning is authentic and connected to their lives.	Provide a wide variety of texts in the classroom to represent children from many different backgrounds.
Texts are never neutral but reflect the author's social perspective. On the flip side, the way we read texts is not neutral either.	Maps are based on selections of what to include and exclude. Putting north at the top and Europe at the center implies that those regions are more important.
Critical literacy work focuses on social issues, including inequities of race, class, gender, and disability, and the ways in which we use language to form our understanding of these issues.	O'Brien (2001) asked children to analyze a catalogue promoting Mother's Day. They discovered that the mothers in the photographs were all youthful (age), White (race), well-dressed (class), and able-bodied (disability).
Literacy practices should be transformative: Students should be empowered to investigate issues that impact them and then to engage in civic actions to solve problems.	Students take photographs of trash in their local park. They interview people in the neighborhood about the park conditions, and then they create a slideshow to present at a city-council meeting.

An important component of critical literacy is the adoption of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. One definition comes from Dr. Django Paris (2012), who stated that Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) education recognizes that cultural differences (including racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, sexuality, and ability ones) should be treated as *assets* for teaching and learning. Culturally sustaining pedagogy requires teachers to support multilingualism and multiculturalism in their practice. That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literary, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling.

For more, see the [Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Framework](). The framework helps educators to think about how to create student-centered learning environments that uphold racial, linguistic, and cultural identities. It prepares students for rigorous independent learning,

develops their abilities to connect across lines of difference, elevates historically marginalized voices, and empowers them as agents of social change. CR-S education explores the relationships between historical and contemporary conditions of inequality and the ideas that shape access, participation, and outcomes for learners.

Reflection Questions

1. What can you do to learn more about your students' cultures?
2. How can you build and sustain relationships with your students?
3. How do the instructional materials you use affirm your students' identities?

Community-based literacies

You may have noticed that communities are a big part of critical literacy – we understand that our environment and culture impact what we read and how we understand the world. Now think about the possible differences among three Iowa communities: a neighborhood in the middle of Des Moines, the rural community of New Hartford, and Coralville, a suburb of Iowa City:

"4th Street Downtown Des Moines" photo is by Dsmspence, CC BY SA 3.0.

"New Hartford Iowa Library" photo is by Jazzlisp, CC BY SA 4.0.

"City Center Squire" photo is by American007, CC BY SA 3.0.

Reflection Questions

What kind of signs might you see? How easy would it be to find and visit a library? Where can children access books? Is there a bookstore? Do the schools have large libraries?

You may not have thought about how living in a certain community might contribute to or take away from a child's ability to learn to read. Dr. Susan Neuman (2001) did. She and her team investigated the differences between two neighborhoods regarding how much access to books and other reading materials children in those neighborhoods had. One middle-to-upper class neighborhood in Philadelphia had large bookstores, toy stores with educational materials, and well-resourced libraries. The other, a low-income neighborhood, had no bookstores or toy stores. There was a library, but it had fewer resources and served a larger number of patrons. In fact, the team found that even the signs on the businesses were harder to read, and there was less environmental printed word. Their findings showed that **each** child in the middle-class neighborhood had **13** books on average, while in the lower-class neighborhood there was **one book per 300 children**.

Dr. Neuman and her team (2019) recently revisited this question. This time, they looked at low-income neighborhoods – those where 60% or more of the people are living in poverty . They compared these to borderline neighborhoods – those with 20-40% in poverty – in three cities, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Los Angeles. Again, they found significantly fewer books in the very low-income areas. The chart represents the preschool books available for sale in each neighborhood. Note that in the lower-income neighborhood of Washington D.C., there were no books for young children to be found at all!

Now watch this video from Campaign for Grade Level Reading. Access to books is one way that children can have new experiences, but it is not the only way!

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#oembed-2

Learning Activities

What is the "summer slide," and how does it contribute to the differences in children's reading abilities?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#h5p-33

The importance of being literate and how to get there

"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope" – Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary-General.

Kofi Annan, Special Envoy from the Joint United Nations, and Arab League to Syria, speaks to the press about the mission in Syria (July 11, 2012, photo by Jean-Marc Ferré, CC BY NC ND 2.0).

Our economy is enhanced when citizens have higher literacy levels. Effective literacy skills open the doors to more educational and employment opportunities so that people can lift themselves out of poverty and chronic underemployment. In our increasingly complex and rapidly changing technological world, it is essential that individuals continuously expand their knowledge and learn new skills to keep up with the pace of change. The goal of our public school system in the United States is to "ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live." This is the basis of the Common Core Standards, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). These groups felt that education was too inconsistent across the different states, and today's students are preparing to enter a world in which colleges and businesses are demanding more than ever before. To ensure that all students are ready for success after high school, the Common Core State Standards established clear universal guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts from kindergarten through 12th grade: "The Common Core State Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

Explore the Core!

Go to iowacore.gov and click on Literacy Standards. Spend some time looking at the K-3 standards. Notice how consistent they are across the grade levels. Each has specific requirements within the categories:

- Reading Standards for Literature
- Reading Standards for Informational Text
- Reading Standards for Foundational Skills
- Writing Standards
- Speaking and Listening Standards
- Language Standards

Some states follow the Common Core as written, and some states (like Iowa) have their own version. See more at www.corestandards.org

Learning Activities

Download the Iowa Core K-12 Literacy Manual. You will use it as a reference when you are creating lessons.

Next, explore the Subject Area pages and resources. What tools does the state provide to teachers to support their use of the Core?

Describe a resource you found on the website. How will you use this when you are a teacher?

Video Examples

Watch this video about the Iowa Literacy Core Standards:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=195#oembed-3

Key Takeaways

- Literacy is typically defined as the ability to ingest, understand, and communicate information.
- Literacy has multiple definitions, each with a different point of focus.
- "New literacies," or multiliteracies, are a combination of multiple ways of communicating and making meaning, including visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, and gestural communication.
- As online communication has become more prevalent, digital literacy has become more important for learners to engage with the wealth of information available online.
- Critical literacy develops learners' critical thinking by asking them to use an analytic lens that detects power, privilege, and representation to understand different ways of looking at information.
- The Common Core State Standards were established to set clear, universal guidelines for what every student should know after completing high school.

Resources for teacher educators

- Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework [PDF]
- Common Core State Standards
- Iowa Core Instructional Resources in Literacy

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Chapter 2. Foundations of Early Literacy

Sohyun Meacham

"No one is born a writer; literacy is a peculiar mode of being, but I was all about stories from a very early age, before reading." – Rebecca Solnit

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Keywords: print concepts, phonological awareness, oral language development, phonemic awareness, phonics

Children need to know so much more than the ABCs in order to read books in English (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013). Many caregivers and teachers tend to focus too much attention on letter names and letter sounds when it comes to teaching their children to read. Even in countries where they do not speak English as their first language, they often start with teaching the ABCs to their young children if they want to teach them English as a second language. However, knowing the names and sounds of the letters is just part of learning how to read in English. Let's say children successfully decode the word *don*, a fairly easy word to decode. It is entirely possible that they do not understand what it means, as it is not a frequently used word among young children. The word *don*, which means "to put on," is known by fewer than 40 percent of American children by the end of grade six in the United States (Biemiller, 2010). The bottom line of reading is comprehension (Shea, 2016), understanding what you read. The most important foundation for reading is *oral language development*, because it can help children make meaning out of reading in English.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how alphabet knowledge, print concepts, phonological awareness, and oral language development are foundation for literacy development.
- Define alphabet knowledge, print concepts, phonological awareness, and oral language development.
- Define phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Distinguish phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics.
- Explain how phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension work for reading.

(All learning objectives in this chapter are aligned with InTASC standard #4: Content Knowledge)

The emergent literacy stage

You might observe children pretending to read, even before they start formal reading instruction. Perhaps they might hold a favorite book like *Hush Little Baby* by Sylvia Long upside down while making up their own story. Before children are able to say recognizable words, they might hold a book just like you do while cooing or babbling. These pretend behaviors with books are considered by educators to be part of emergent literacy. Sulzby and Teale, who first used the term *emergent literacy*, explained the concept:

"Emergent literacy is concerned with the earliest phases of literacy development, the period between birth and the time when children read and write conventionally. The term emergent literacy signals a belief that, in a literate society, young children – even 1- and 2-year-olds – are in the process of becoming literate" (1996, p.728).

Therefore, you can observe the process of children's literacy emerging, including the aspects of oral-language development, phonological awareness, the print concept, and alphabet knowledge.

Before reading is taught formally, children have to know the language that they are trying to decipher. Oral language is not just knowing the meaning of words. It involves the grammar that combines the words correctly. It means having appropriate language for different social contexts, such as school or a party. Let alone understanding the meaning of a word, just being able to say its smallest part, like the phoneme /m/ in *Mom*, is something that takes a newborn baby a long time, hearing it repeated by caregivers, siblings, and neighbors. It is a long journey to

acquire the sounds used for the first language and learn to distinguish them from foreign-language or animal sounds. Oral language is an important foundation for future reading development.

Important terms

- **Alphabet Knowledge**: The knowledge of letter names and sounds. It involves recognizing, writing, and identifying the names and sounds of the letters in the English alphabet.
- **Print Concepts**: The awareness of how print works to convey a message
- **Phonological Awareness**: The awareness of how various sound structures of speech work in a language
- **Oral Language Development**: The development of skills and knowledge used for listening and speaking. It is an important foundation for reading comprehension and writing.
- **Phonemic Awareness**: A subcategory of phonological awareness which focuses on the individual phonemes
- **Phonics**: An instructional approach that teaches the letter-sound relations
- **Fluency**: The ability to read with accuracy, automaticity, natural prosody, and stamina
- **Vocabulary**: The words that are understood and used
- **Comprehension**: The understanding of what is read by decoding and meaning making

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Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is "the ability to pay attention to, identify, and reflect on various sound structures of speech… Phonemic awareness is a subcategory of phonological awareness and refers to the ability to identify and reflect on the individual phonemes" (Johnston et al., 2015, p.58). A phoneme is the smallest audible unit of any language, not only English. Simply explained, phonemes refer to individual sounds. For example, *pen* consists of three phonemes: /p/, /e/, and /n/. Phonological awareness is an important foundation for future formal reading instruction, in which children will decode all of the individual sounds in a word and blend them together to make meaning out of the word.

Learning Activities

Making compound words is a fun phonological-awareness activity that you can do with the children when you are driving in the car for a short distance.

Say, "What word do you get if you put the words *sun* and *flower* together?" If the children answer, "*Sunflower*," you affirm them and ask another question: "That's right, the word *sunflower* consists of the words *sun* and *flower*.

How about the words *air* and *plane* together?" There are many compound words such as *basketball, cowboy, doughnut,* and *inchworm.* Whenever you bump into compound words in a book that you are reading aloud with the children, you can use the opportunity as a teachable moment.

Inch by Inch, written by Leo Lionni, would be a good context for you to talk about *inchworm* as a compound word.

Rhyming words

Attention to rhyming words also contributes to phonological awareness. When two different words end with the same sound, as in s*chool* and *cool*, we call them *rhyming words.* Dr. Seuss's classical children's book *Hop on Pop* presents a great number of pairs of rhyming words. Pairs such as *cup-pup* and *house-mouse* with humorous illustrations give you and the children fun moments to laugh together. *Mouse* and *house* are written in phrases: "Mouse on house," on the verso page, is natural and not so surprising; however, "House on mouse," on the recto page, is unnatural, impossible, and surprising. The illustration is humorous. The spelling patterns of these word pairs (*cup-pup, hop-pop*, and *mouse-house*) have identical endings. There are other rhyming words that end with different spellings. For instance, *fox* and *socks* are rhyming words whose endings are spelled differently. Reading Dr. Seuss's book titled *Fox in Socks* would be a good context for mentioning this fact.

Learning Activities

Syllable counting by clapping and identifying words with the same beginning (or ending) sound are other ways for you to assess and train children in phonological awareness.

Ask them, "Which word sounds longer, *caterpillar* or *ant*?" Then you can clap four times for *caterpillar*, as there are four syllables. *Ant* needs only one clap because there is one syllable in the word.

When you count syllables in words, do it only by listening and talking, not by looking at the spellings.

Phonological awareness training should not be based on visual images or spelling but on sound. You can use some clip-art images, though, when you do syllable counting or identifying words with the same sound. For example, display images for *mop*, *hop*, and *top*; then show the children a map. Ask the children which word in the first group (*mop*, *hop*, and *top*) has the same beginning sound as *map*.

Print concepts

Oral language development and phonological awareness do not necessarily require written texts. However, print concepts, alternatively called *concepts about print* or *print awareness*, do involve them. They do not necessarily refer to sound and letter correspondences. Print concepts refer to the awareness of how print works to convey a message. The directionality that the written text flows is one of the print concepts for a language. English text is read from left to right, whereas Arabic and Hebrew flow in the opposite direction. The concepts of spaces between words and knowing the roles of authors and illustrators belong to print concepts. There are many more print concepts, such as how to hold a book and turn a page correctly. Basically, print concepts are acquired over time through all of the read-aloud experiences that children have from the first day of their lives. While you might not need to explicitly teach them all of these concepts, during a read-aloud you can say something like, "The author of this book is Donald Crews. The author is the person who writes the words. Donald Crews actually drew the pictures too, so he is also the illustrator."

Alphabet knowledge

Alphabet knowledge includes both letter names and letter sounds. Knowing what sound each letter makes is essential for decoding, as children will need to blend the component sounds to say a word. However, knowing the letter *names* can help children communicate with their caregivers and teachers who are giving them formal reading instruction. There are many alphabet books of different types which can help you teach letter sounds and names. One type just identifies words that start with each letter, accompanied by illustrations for them. Elizabeth Doyle's (2015) *A, B, See!* and Suse MacDonald's (1986) *Alphabatics* are great examples of this type. In *Alphabatics*, the letters do acrobatics on the verso pages. Then the letters turn into things that start with those letters on the recto pages. For example, the lowercase *n* turns upside down in four steps on the verso page. Then it becomes a nest on the opposing recto page. You can simply say the name of the letter and explain the word that begins with the letter. Then add what sound that letter makes. "The name of the letter is *N* (pronounced 'en'). The word *nest* starts with the letter *N*, which sounds like /n/." There are other types of alphabet books that have more narrative, with themes or information, such as *Miss Bindergarten Takes a Field Trip with Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate (2004), Tasha Tudor's (2012) *A is for Annabelle*, and David McLimans's (2006) *Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet*. You and the children can create an original alphabet book as a project. As reading and writing are developed simultaneously, you don't need to wait until the children master reading to make one.

This section has discussed the emergent literacy stage, which is the one before formal reading instruction takes place. In the next section, the early literacy stage will be explained as the one that follows the emergent stage. During formal reading instruction in the early literacy stage, concepts such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency become more important than alphabet knowledge or print concepts. Vocabulary and comprehension are still important, though, and are taught more explicitly.

Video Example

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Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=140#h5p-38

Reflection Questions

- What can you do to promote young children's emergent-literacy development?
- How can your oral language support young children's literacy development?

The early literacy stage

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[Downlaod The Big 5 Overview Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

Comprehension is the bottom line of reading

Once children start formal literacy instruction at school, they learn to pay attention to the sounds in a word. They analyze the individual sounds, then they put the sounds together to make the word. Once children understand this system, we try to help them automatize the process so they can read fluently. Fluent reading with adequate speed can help children focus more on the meaning of the text. Since the bottom line of reading is comprehension, all of the discrete skills emphasized in formal literacy instruction (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary) should have the child's meaning-making success as their aim. Therefore, this chapter will show you how to focus on meaning-making and comprehension while you tutor them in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Vocabulary

Let's start with vocabulary. There are three kinds: receptive, productive, and sight-word. *Receptive vocabulary* is the words whose meanings are understood. When you read a sentence or listen to someone speaking, you can make sense out of it because you have an adequate receptive vocabulary. *Productive vocabulary* is the words that can be readily used to generate speaking and writing. Even if you understand some difficult or fancy words when you see them, you may never use them for your own speech or writing: so they are not in your productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary develops earlier than productive vocabulary. *Sight-word vocabulary* is the volume of printed words that are recognized without a decoding effort. A large sight-word vocabulary would seem to be helpful for reading fluency, but it's useless if the reader doesn't know what the words mean. Early literacy development is comprised of teaching children to understand and use vocabulary words in reading and communicating.

Word selection for vocabulary teaching should be intentional. Sometimes there are words in children's picturebooks that adults don't even know. Words like *lackadaisical* and *languid* in Eric Carle's (2002) *Slowly, Slowly, Slowly, Said the Sloth* could be unfamiliar to caregivers, particularly to non-native speakers. It might not be a good idea to focus on your own difficulties in selecting the words to teach. Instead, focus on the words that are useful for the children you teach. When you pre-read a book before introducing it to the children, choose just two or three vocabulary words, because you don't want to spend the whole read-aloud time teaching vocabulary.

While vocabulary teaching *can* be fun, there are many other fun conversations that you can have with the children about other aspects of a book. When choosing the words to teach, then, think about three points. First, consider the usefulness of the words in the children's everyday lives. See if the children can use them easily in a conversation. See if you can also increase their exposure to these words in other contexts. *Driver* would be a good vocabulary-word choice from Mo Willems's (2003) *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. While it might not be a difficult word for you, it might be new to the children whom you teach, and it is a useful word for the children's everyday conversations. Second, consider the concreteness of the words. As a general rule, focus on more concrete ones, which will be more useful to the children. Third, consider the amount of repetition in the book of the target words. If they appear multiple times, the child will see them in different contexts, which is helpful for learning nuances. You can also look for opportunities to teach some important homonyms (e.g., the verb *hide* meaning "keep out of sight" and the noun *hide* meaning "animal skin").

Reading aloud is a great context for children to learn vocabulary in. They can see the words and hear them when you read them aloud and when you talk about the story. Then you can explicitly teach child-friendly definitions for the target words, asking the children to repeat the words and use them in sentences, or act out their meaning.

Fluency

Fluency is reading with accuracy, automaticity, natural prosody (e.g., intonation), and stamina. More succinctly, fluency means reading like you talk. When you hear children reading "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?" with good fluency, *brown* should have a higher tone than *bear*; and the children will take a short breath before saying "…what do you see?" On the other hand, reading with several awkward pauses and unnecessary repetitions like, "Brown…brown bear, brown,…brown bear, what do…ya,…you see?" does not sound like how you talk in English.

Making connections between oral language and reading is significant for fluency development. When you or another fluent reader reads a book to the children, it is an opportunity for them to perceive connections between oral language and the text. They can hear you demonstrating the intonation, rhythm, and flow of the sentences written in the book. Another important way to develop children's fluency is to let them read easy books lots of times. For instance, if a child's Guided Reading Level for instruction is H, books at levels C and D would be good fluency builders.

Again, reading aloud is a great context for building children's fluency. You can informally assess their ability when they read aloud to you. They can hear their own reading, which is immediate feedback to their ears. When a book is relatively easy according to the children's reading ability, they can feel the rhythm and flow of the language better, which reinforces the connection between oral and written English. So, if you see 7-year-old children grab *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* once in a while, you don't need to discourage them just because their instructional level is at the Junie B. Jones books. Encourage them to read the text aloud. You can use some prompts for dialogic reading to talk about topics like healthy eating or the life cycles of different insects and animals.

Phonics

Phonics relates sounds to letters. It relates phonemes, the smallest sound units of a language, to graphemes, the letters or letter combinations that produce those sounds. For instance, *f* is the grapheme (symbol) for the phoneme /f/ (sound), as in the word *fat*. While this letter-sound connection is straightforward, many grapheme-phoneme relationships are more opaque. For instance, the letter *c* (not *k*) is the grapheme for the phoneme /k/ in the word *cat*. Moreover, there are multi-letter graphemes, such as the 2-letter grapheme "ph" for the phoneme /f/ in the word *phone*, and the 3-letter grapheme "igh" for the phoneme /ai/ in the word *night*. As there are many difficult letter combinations like this found in English phonics, it makes little sense to say phonics instruction should be completed in a short period of time. Rather, it should take place over a long time, so children can observe patterns in how sounds correspond to letters in simple/short words as well as complex/multisyllabic ones.

The simple letter-sound correspondences in themselves are insufficient to enable children to grasp the meanings of long words. Multisyllabic words usually consist of multiple meaningful parts. In terms of understanding, it is less useful for a beginning reader to break a long word like *unrealistic* down into phonemes than to break it into meaningful chunks like un-real-ist-ic. Perhaps a child below 2nd grade might not need to deal with too many multisyllabic words in their process of learning to read. However, observing patterns within words and sorting words into different families, like the -um family (hum, chum, gum, and glum), and the -am family (ham, jam, and clam), can help children process parts of words in bigger chunks and later deal more easily with longer words with multiple meaningful parts.

Children gradually become aware of the smallest parts of their language having meaning, called **morphemes**. There are two types of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes.

A stand-alone word such as apple is a free morpheme. When free morphemes appear with other morphemes attached to them, they are the base or root word. Bound morphemes serve grammatical morphemes or derivational morphemes. Grammatical morphemes signal grammatical information such as number (e.g., cat vs. cat**s**), tense (e.g., walk vs. walk**ed**), and possession (e.g., Xavier vs. Xavier**'s**). They are always suffixes in English. Derivational morphemes make a new word by being attached to root morphemes, which change the meaning (e.g., from happy to **un**happy; from sing to sing**er**) or can change the syntactic category (e.g., from beauty to beauti**ful**). They can be prefixes or suffixes. Most grammatical morphemes are mastered during early childhood, whereas derivational morphemes are studied in the later school-age years (Pence Turnbull & Justice, 2016). Learning these morphemes during early and later childhood substantially increases vocabulary size. How excited the children are to figure out the meaning of a word they never saw before by deciphering the meaning units that they already know!

Phonemic awareness

To explain phonics, I used the term *phoneme* several times. Again, a *phoneme* is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It does not bear any meaning itself. However, it can make a huge difference when you replace one phoneme in a word with another. When you replace /k/ in the word *cat* with /b/, you make a totally different animal. Replacing *c* with *b* in the word *cat* relates to phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness was briefly explained under the umbrella of phonological awareness. Phonological-awareness training on bigger word parts (at least syllable-size) should take place earlier than phoneme-level training. For instance, *door* and *knob* make the new word *doorknob*, which is an example of phonological awareness at the word level. This is easier than putting the phonemes /p/, /e/, and /t/ together to make the word *pet*. Perhaps children might even be able to skip phoneme-level instruction in learning to read long words if they know how to analyze patterns within words. The focus of reading instruction should be on meaning-making, which is the big picture of literacy development.

Learning Activities

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An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
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Key Takeaways

- Alphabet knowledge, print concepts, phonological awareness, and oral language development are foundational skills to develop at the emergent literacy stage.
- Oral language development at early ages is the most important foundation for later reading comprehension.
- Vocabulary, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension are five pillars for the early literacy stage.

Resources for teacher educators

- [Resources for Oral Language Instruction](#) from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- [Information about Phonics and Decoding](#)
- [Phonics resources](#)

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Chapter 3. Phonological Awareness

Nandita Gurjar

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark." – Victor Hugo
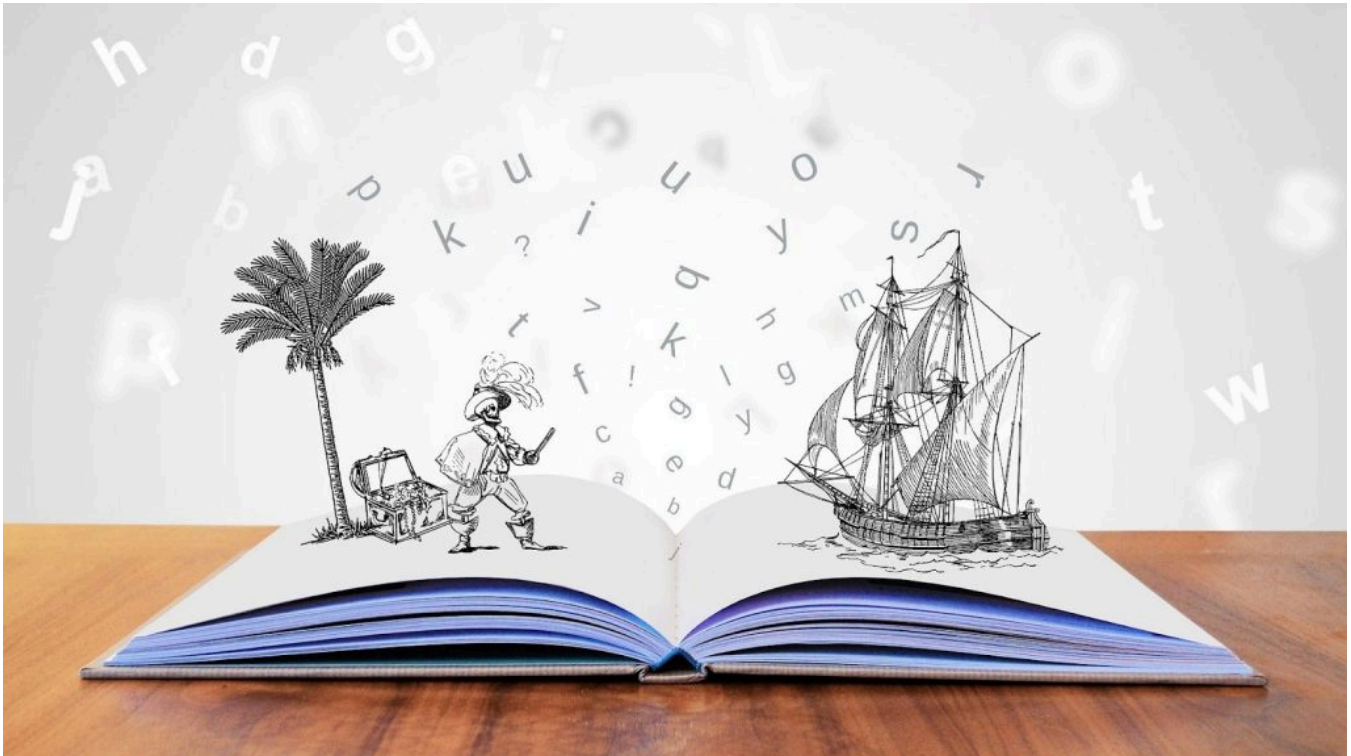
Figure 1: "Storytelling" by Tumisu is in the Public Domain

Keywords: phonological awareness, phonemes, graphemes, syllables, onset, rimes, short vowel sounds, long vowel sounds, hearing and recording sounds assessment

Phonological awareness is a foundational skill for children as it is one of the core components of reading, along with phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Consequently, preservice teachers must be prepared with strategies for facilitating phonological skills development in

K-3 children. State standards provide benchmark expectations and guidance for preservice teachers to plan activities that facilitate specific literacy skills development.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the developmental progression of phonological awareness (InTASC Standard #1).
- Define phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonemes, graphemes, syllables, onset, rime, short vowel, and long vowel sounds (InTASC Standard #4).
- Distinguish between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness (InTASC Standard #5).
- Describe effective phonological development strategies (InTASC Standard #8).
- Design a lesson to develop phonological awareness in PreK-3 children (InTASC Standard #3 & #7).

Iowa Core State Standards (Please check your state standards)

Phonological awareness falls under the foundational standards of literacy.

Iowa Core Standard for Phonological Awareness: Kindergarten Benchmark Expectations (RF.K.2)

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- Recognize and produce rhyming words.
- Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.
- Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words.
- Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.* (This does not include CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/)
- Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

Iowa Core Standard for Phonological Awareness: 1st Grade Benchmark Expectations (RF.1.2)

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.
- Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.
- Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.
- Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

A hum and productive clamor can be heard as children excitedly work in small groups with volunteers! Children are heard clapping the names of their favorite characters into syllables in one group; another group is seen playing a limerick rime game, while the third group is using their fingers to segment sounds of their favorite animals and then jumping over the number of spaces equal to the number of sounds in a word. All these indicate different ways the class is authentically engaged in building phonological awareness or awareness of sounds in the oral language!

Video Examples

This video explains the difference between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=333#oembed-1*

[Download Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

This video demonstrates the difference between phonemes and letters:

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[Download Letters vs Phonemes Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is a set of auditory skills related to hearing sounds in spoken language. It is an umbrella term indicating an awareness of:

- units of spoken sounds such as syllables, onsets, and rimes;
- individual sounds (phonemes) of the spoken language.

Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish and manipulate phonemes. It consists of:

- identifying initial and ending sounds;
- identifying medial vowel sounds;
- substituting, adding, or deleting sounds to make new words;
- segmenting sounds;
- blending sounds.

What is the difference between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness?

Phonological awareness is a broader term encompassing awareness of larger and smaller spoken language units. It consists of manipulating both the larger units (syllables, onsets, and rimes) and smaller units (phonemes). Children may work on identifying syllables, onsets, rimes, and phonemes. For example, they may clap to syllables, say the rhyming word, or identify the beginning, medial, or ending sound.

Phonemic awareness falls under the umbrella of phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness consists of distinguishing and manipulating the smallest units of spoken language (phonemes). In phonemic-awareness work, children can practice identifying and manipulating initial consonants, medial vowels, and ending phonemes, and segmenting, blending, and counting phonemes.

Why develop phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness is the most important predictor of early reading ability (Carroll et al., 2003). Cartwright and Duke (2019) used the metaphor of "driving" to show what happens during reading, and to "drive" home the importance of phonological awareness. They noted that phonological awareness skills are the tire treads that help the vehicle move forward on the road. Therefore, it is essential to focus on developing phonological awareness in preschool and early elementary children through various means, as listed below.

Assessing phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is assessed through tasks like the following:

- **phoneme deletion**: a phoneme is deleted from a spoken word, for example, /k/ from the *cat*.
- **phoneme addition**: a phoneme is added to a spoken word; for example, /d/ is added to *love*.
- **phoneme substitution**: a phoneme is substituted for another, for example, /m/ for /k/ in the *cat*.
- **phoneme counting**: tap the number of phonemes in the spoken word: /k/-/a/-/t/ (3).
- **phoneme segmentation**: break a word into its component phonemes: /k/-/a/-/t/.
- **syllabication** or dividing multisyllabic words into syllables: base-ball, choc-o-late, rain.
- **onset** and **rime segmentation** in spoken words: *c* is the onset and *at* is a rime.
- **rhyming words**: *cat* and *hat.*

What is the difference between a letter and a phoneme?

A letter is a visual representation of the sound it makes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in spoken language. For example, six has three letters but four phonemes (/s/-/i/-/k/-/s/). A letter or grapheme such as *s* may make different sounds (phonemes) depending on the word. For example, the letter *s* makes different sounds in *snake* and *treasure*.

Important terms

- **Phoneme**: the smallest unit of sound in the spoken language. For example, "dog" has three phonemes: /d/, /o/, and /g/. Listening to phonemes in speech requires auditory discrimination. Phonemic awareness (awareness of individual sounds) requires the hearing ability to identify, distinguish, and manipulate individual sounds in speech. Listening to lullabies and nursery rhymes develops awareness of the sounds of a particular language in children.

- **Morpheme:** the smallest unit of meaning in a language. For example, "cat" is one morpheme, a single unit of meaning. Adding an "s" (a bound morpheme) to "cat" changes the meaning from a singular (cat) to a plural (cats) with two morphemes. See the phonics PowerPoint in Chapter 4 for types of morphemes. The reference to a morpheme is made to distinguish it from a phoneme.

- **Graphemes**: the letters representing the smallest unit of sound in the spoken language. The phoneme /d/ is written with a grapheme d. The phoneme /f/ can be represented with the graphemes- f or ph. Writing requires encoding phonemes into graphemes.

- **Syllable**: a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants. For example, nan-di-ta (3 syllables) or dog (1 syllable). See Jack Hartman's video given in this chapter for syllable practice.

- **Onset**: the letter(s) representing the initial consonant sound before the vowel in a syllable or one-syllable word. For example, "C" in "cat" is an onset, and "d" in "dog" is an onset.

- **Rime**: the letters representing the medial vowel and final consonant(s) in a syllable or one-syllable word. For example, "at" in "cat" is a rime, and "og" in "dog" is a rime.

- **Short vowel sounds**: the short vowel sounds are usually found in (C)VC, (consonant)-vowel-consonant, words where the medial vowel has the short vowel sound, for example, the /a/ sound in *cat* or *apple*.

- **Long vowel sounds**: the long vowel sounds consist of words where the a, e, i, o, or u say their name. These words often have vowel teams or the letter *e* at the end, as in CVVC or CVCe words, for example, *rain* and *rake*.

Theory of developmental progression of phonological awareness

Children's developmental progression of phonological awareness occurs in 3 stages (Goswami & Bryant, 1990):

1. syllable awareness,
2. onset and rime awareness,
3. phoneme awareness.

Rhyme and alliteration are key in acquiring phonological awareness (Chard & Dickson, 1999). However, children first become aware of syllables in speech (Liberman, 1973). This is followed by the perception of onsets and rimes. Last comes their awareness of individual sounds. The ability to divide words into syllables develops before their ability to segment words into individual phonemes (Liberman et al., 1974).

Development among Dual Language Learners

Dual Language Learners' (DLL) performance in one language directly correlates with their performance in the other, according to Cummins' (1979) **linguistic interdependence** hypothesis. Therefore, strong first-language skills help children develop their second-language ones. Specifically, leveraging their native-language literacy and prior knowledge helps DLLs develop phonological awareness in the second language.

It should be noted that DLLs differ in their developmental progression by language and skill due to various factors (Lopez, 2012):

- similarities between the languages,
- degrees of proficiency in the languages,
- the quality of adult input,
- cultural expectations,
- verbal memory, and
- personality.

The implications for the facilitation of children's developmental progression are as follows. Read rhyming books and invite parents to share read-aloud picturebooks from their cultures.

Also, leverage the children's native languages in playing rhyming games, clapping syllables, and breaking up words into onsets and rimes. Lastly, practice breaking words up into individual phonemes. Segmenting, blending, and counting phonemes usually come toward the end once children can produce rhyming words and are already aware of syllables, onsets, and rimes in spoken words.

Forty-four phonemes of the English language

The video below demonstrates 44 phonemes of the English language.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=333#oembed-3

Phonological development strategies

Our phonological development strategies are based on the Iowa Core benchmark expectations. Please refer to your state standards. The Iowa Core foundational standards for kindergarten focus on the following: demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes). The following tasks show the understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.

Recognize and produce rhyming words

1. Read books with rhyming words.
2. Listen to lullabies and nursery rhymes.
3. Play rhyming games.
    1. Finger rhymes and jump rope rhymes are some ways to have fun while building phonological awareness!
    2. Have fun with rhyming riddles!
4. Use word families to create rhymes.
5. Do picture sorts with rhyming words.

Video Example

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=333#oembed-4

[Download Picture Sorts Video Transcript \[DOC\]](#)

Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words

- Move your body to count syllables to make it fun and engaging! *[Let's Learn About Syllables | Jack Hartmann](#)*
- Play syllable games: [Syllable games | classroom strategies](#)
- Clap syllables in haiku poetry: [Haiku poem interactive](#)

Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words

1. Play the *Chunks* game with onsets and rimes to make new words. Break the onset and rime apart, and then recombine them. For example, *c* is an onset, and *at* is a rime; *d* is an onset, and *og* is a rime.
2. Have children hold up CVC letter cards to say the [onset and the rime](#).
3. Break the [onset and rimes](#) in digraph words apart, and put them together again, accompanied by movement and music.
4. Working with [blends](#) to break them apart into onsets and rimes with music and movement is fun for the children!

Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.* (This does not include CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/)

1. Identify some words to segment into individual sounds. Identify the initial sounds in

3-phoneme (CVC) words.
2. Identify the medial vowel sound in 3-phoneme words.
3. Identify the ending sound in 3-phoneme words.

[Segmenting and blending sounds](#)

Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words

1. Play verbal riddles by [adding, deleting, or substituting sounds.](#)
2. Starting with letter titles, add and substitute phonemes to make new words.
3. Pattern a board game on *Chutes and Ladders* to move up or down based on giving the correct response.

Learning Activities

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=333#h5p-32*

Adapting for diverse learners

- Leverage children's native language to build phonological awareness. For example, children can segment words into phonemes using their native language.
- Based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, present information to students in multiple ways, with visuals, video, and audio. This is especially important for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Engage students in authentic learning experiences such as experiencing music, poetry reading, and dance from different cultural groups to hear the sounds and rhythms of different languages.

- Provide students with options and multiple ways of expression to assess their achievement of the learning outcomes. They may showcase their learning through written, audio, or video formats.

Technology integration and professional development resources

- Explore online games related to phonological awareness.
- Read literacy blog posts for ideas on technology integration.
- Explore phonological development lesson plans and interactives.
- Engage in literacy professionals' Twitter chats such as #ILAchat and #NCTEchat.
- Listen to literacy podcasts (*Book Deserts, Cult of Pedagogy*, etc.).
- Explore professional literacy educators' TikTok and Instagram pages to see how they leverage technology to make learning fun and engaging in small bites!
- Listen to recorded stories and explore educational websites.
- Explore pertinent digital games and apps focused on developing phonological awareness.

Integration across content (science, math, social studies)

- Count syllables using spoken words related to science, math, and social studies.
- Use spoken words related to science, math, and social studies to play rhyming games.
- Use spoken words related to science, math, and social studies to count and segment phonemes.

Guardians as partners in literacy

- Encourage guardians to sing family and cultural lullabies to their children at home.
- Encourage oral storytelling at home. Relatives may pitch in as well. Have them think of folktales, fables, or other cultural stories.
- Encourage siblings to play rhyming games or makeup jump rope rhymes.

As metacognition is an important skill to develop in preservice teachers, here are some discussion-based reflection questions.

Discussion-based reflection questions

- Think back to your memorable literacy experiences in early childhood. Make a T-chart in your notebook. On the left, list school, home, and community literacy practices. On the right, explain their role in your literacy development. Share and discuss your chart with your peers.
- What do you recollect about your school literacy practices?
- What were some memorable books that were read to you or that you read; traditional songs or lullabies that were sung to you or you listened to; and any other family or cultural literacy practices such as oral storytelling of folklore that you experienced?
- What were some community literacy practices that you experienced growing up? How did these practices build your phonological awareness?
- What role did these literacy practices play in your overall literacy development?
- How does the progression of phonological development in children inform your lesson planning?
- What are some of the ways you would develop phonological awareness in diverse children?
- How would you differentiate and personalize phonological awareness strategies for children with hearing or speech disabilities?

Key Takeaways

- Phonological awareness is an auditory skill. It involves manipulating units of sound in the spoken language.
- Rhyme and alliteration are key in developing phonological awareness.
- Syllable awareness develops first.
- Onset and rime awareness develops next.
- Awareness of phonemes develops last.
- Read rhyming books.
- Sing lullabies and jump rope rhymes.
- Clap, count, and segment syllables, onsets, rimes, and phonemes.
- Build on students' first language and home literacies.

Resources for teacher educators

Blending games:

- Blending and segmenting games

Phoneme segmentation games and activities:

- Phoneme segmentation games and activities
- Segmenting
- Phoneme segmentation fluency
- Reading Rockets resource on diagnosing phonological awareness difficulties from child's, parent's, and teacher's perspectives and how to help

Teaching resources:

- Phonological Awareness [Slide deck]
- Effectiveness of Early Literacy Instruction: Summary of 20 Years of Research [PDF]
- Early childhood literacy narrative (see details below)

This potential assignment is culturally relevant and considers varied literacy practices situated in multiple cultural contexts while integrating technology. It honors cultural and community literacy practices. For example, I grew up in the oral storytelling tradition. My phonological awareness developed as a child when I heard my grandmother tell me Indian folktales, fables, legends, and myths.

Learning Activities: Early childhood literacy narrative

Purpose of the assignment: Identify early literacy practices.

1. Please identify your childhood school, home, and community literacy practices. Reflect on how they impacted your early literacy development. Prepare a multimodal media presentation to showcase your findings.
2. Please reflect on early childhood literacy experiences to identify significant school literacy practices, home literacy practices, and community/cultural literacy practices.
3. Investigate the contribution of literacy practices to early literacy development. Please reflect on how these literacy practices contributed to your early literacy development.
4. Create a multimodal presentation with visuals, photographs, audio, and video.

Why is it relevant for future educators?

Metacognition is a reflective activity encouraged in teacher-education programs. By reflecting on one's prior literacy practices at home, at school, and in the community, we can take future actions to promote positive literacy practices while honoring cultural and home literacies.

How to do it?

Storyboard your ideas. Sketch a visual representation of how they flow. Make notes and write a script for the audio and video. Choose a technology platform to create your early-literacy narrative. Select pertinent supporting visuals, photographs, videos, and hyperlinks to develop your multimodal narrative. Multimodality involves using more than one medium to express yourself. You may explore Prezi, iMovie, or another technology platform.

This is the rubric to evaluate the assignment. Encourage students to self-evaluate using this rubric.

The rubric of Early-Literacy Narrative

Criteria	Proficient	Developing	Novice
Ideas	Brimming with fresh and original ideas focused on identifying the school, home, and community literacy practices and their contribution to the literacy development of the author.	Somewhat addresses all parts with interesting and focused ideas covering school, home, and community literacy practices.	Does not address all parts, with many details missing, and is not focused.
Organization	The piece is well-organized, with effective grabbers, transitions, and conclusions. Addresses all parts of the prompt.	Somewhat organized with effective grabbers, transitions, and conclusions, with room for improvement. Somewhat complete.	No evidence of an organizational structure. Incomplete areas.
Voice	Authentically infused with the author's identity, personality, and creativity in its design and composition.	Somewhat infused with the identity, personality, and creativity of the author.	The presentation is not infused with the author's identity, personality, or creativity.
Word choice	Concisely composed, with effective word choices, strong verbs (that show, not tell), and vivid vocabulary to create memorable moments.	Somewhat concisely composed with effective word choices.	Not concisely composed. Exhibits redundancy.
Sentence fluency	Flows smoothly.	Reads/flows somewhat smoothly, with some room for improvement.	Does not read/ flow smoothly. Has choppy or run-on sentences.
Conventions	Polished and edited, with attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Somewhat polished and edited.	Not polished and edited, with several errors in conventions.
Presentation	Visually appealing, with supporting visuals, videos, and hyperlinks.	Somewhat visually appealing, with supporting visuals, videos, and hyperlinks.	Not at all visually appealing and lacks multimodality.

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Chapter 4. Phonics: Breaking the Code to Words

Constance Beecher and Emily Hayden

"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island." – Walt Disney

Chest of books photo is by [Katrina_S from Pixabay](#)

Keywords: decoding, phonics, phonemes, graphemes, morphemes, consonants, vowels

Iowa Core State Standards (Please check your state standards)

Phonics falls under the foundational standards of literacy.

Iowa Core Standards for Literacy

Phonics and word recognition. RF.K.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.
- Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.
- Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).
- Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

RF.1.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.
- Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
- Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
- Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
- Read words with inflectional endings.
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

RF.2.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

Learning Objectives

- Define, understand, and apply phonics concepts and terminology for K-3 learners (InTasc Standard #1)
- Identify effective phonics instructional strategies (InTasc Standard #3)
- Define, understand, and apply phonics strategies for decoding unfamiliar words (InTasc Standard #4).
- Become familiar with Iowa Core Foundation Skills Phonics and Word Recognition

- Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.
- Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels.
- Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.
- Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.
- Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

RF.3.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

- Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes.
- Decode words with common Latin suffixes.
- Decode multisyllable words.
- Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

During word-study time in Ms. Hradecká's first-grade class, you can find three busy homogenous groups. Children are grouped with others who are working on the same level of phonics principles. She follows Bear et al.'s (2008) "*circle-seat-center*" routine (p. 70). While Group 1 is doing a teacher-directed word-study lesson in a *circle*, Group 2 is working on literacy activities in *centers*, and Group 3 is doing word games and activities independently at their *seats*. After 10-15 minutes, the groups rotate. Group 2 joins the teacher, Group 3 moves to the centers, and Group 1 returns to their seats.

For more on the word study lesson in this classroom, see the article, "Word Study: Learning Word Patterns" by Diane Henry Leipzig on the Reading Rockets website.

What are decoding and phonics?

Decoding

A critical component in word recognition is the ability to decode them. For children to accurately perform this skill, they must understand the alphabetic principle and know letter-sound correspondences. When students make the connection that letters signify the sounds that we say, they are said to understand the purpose of the **alphabetic code**, or the "alphabetic principle." Letter-sound correspondences are known when students can provide the correct sound for the letters and letter combinations. Students can then be taught to decode, which

means to blend the letter sounds together to read words. **Decoding** is a deliberate act in which readers must "consciously and deliberately apply their knowledge of the mapping system to produce a plausible pronunciation of a word they do not instantly recognize" (Beck & Juel, 1995, p. 9). Once a word has been accurately decoded a few times, it can be recognized without conscious thinking, which is a more efficient kind of word recognition.

Phonics

The instructional practices teachers use to teach students how letters (e.g., i, r, x) and letter clusters (e.g., sh, oa, igh) correspond to the sounds of speech in English is called **phonics** (not to be confused with phonemic awareness). For example, a teacher may provide a phonics lesson on how "p" and "h" combine to make /f/ in "phone," and "graph." After all, the alphabet is a code that symbolizes speech sounds, and once students are taught which sound(s) each of the symbols (letters) represents, they can successfully decode written words, or "crack the code."

Important terms

Phonological awareness (Chapter 3) is an umbrella term referring to basic knowledge and skills with the sounds of a language. Phonemic awareness is the phonological-awareness skill that focuses on the individual sounds in words. Phonological awareness skills include more than individual sounds. Some examples are:

- Counting the words in a sentence as it is spoken aloud.
- Identifying and creating rhymes.
- Counting the number of syllables in a word.
- Putting compound words together.
- So, phonemic awareness is a phonological-awareness skill, but not the only one.

For a longer summary of the aspects of phonemic awareness and phonological awareness go to this article "Phonics Terms That Every K-2 Teacher Should Know" At Learning at the Primary Pond.

Why decoding and phonics?

In 1997, the U.S. Congress asked the Director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in collaboration with the Secretary of Education, to bring together a national panel of reading experts, now known as the "National Reading Panel." Their mission was to assess the existing research-based knowledge about the effectiveness of various approaches for teaching children to read. The Panel's findings were presented in a report entitled *Teaching Children to Read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* You can read the entire report [of the National Reading Panel for more details.](https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=216#h5p-1)

The Panel reviewed hundreds of research studies. One of the clear findings was that in order to become strong readers children must develop:

- phonemic awareness,
- phonics skills,
- the ability to read words in text in an accurate and fluent manner, and
- the ability to apply comprehension strategies consciously and deliberately as they read.

The Panel found that many difficulties in learning to read were caused by poor phonemic awareness, and that systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness directly improved children's reading and spelling skills (you learned about phonological and phonemic awareness in Chapter 3).

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=216#h5p-1

The evidence for the importance of phonemic awareness is so strong that the Panel recommended that *systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness* should be taught to

all children starting in preschool. Importantly, the Panel found that preschool children could easily learn phonemic awareness when the instruction was presented in an age-appropriate and entertaining manner. It is important to note that the Panel found that children in preschool and early elementary school who had difficulty understanding that the words in oral language are composed of smaller speech sounds that are linked to the letters of the alphabet were highly at risk for reading disabilities. These children often had trouble with tasks like counting the number of syllables in words or finding rhyming words ([Reading Rockets](#)).

Download and keep this [phonics cheat sheet [DOC]](#) for reference.

Basic phonics terms

See the link in the call-out box for a comprehensive glossary of phonics terms. Here are some of the big ideas:

Phonemic awareness is about the INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS of words.

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in spoken language. For example, the word "cat," can be broken up into the sounds /k/ /a/ and /t/. Each of those 3 sounds is a phoneme, so phonemic awareness = awareness of phonemes (the individual sounds). Some phonemic-awareness skill examples are:

- Hearing the word *top* and saying the beginning sound: /t/.
- Hearing the word *dog* and breaking it up (segmenting) into these three sounds: /d/ /o/ /g/.
- Hearing the word *pan* and substituting the /f/ sound for the /p/ sound to get *fan.*
- This *does not* include linking these sounds to their written form, which is phonics.

Graphemes are written letters that represent one sound. The *m* in *man* is a grapheme. The *ch* in *beach* are also a grapheme.

Morphemes are the smallest parts of a word that have meaning or influences the meaning of a

word. The word *beautiful* has two morphemes (beauty) and (-ful). Adding the suffix -ful) to the word (beauty) changes the meaning of the word, yet the new word is still related to the old one.

Consonants and Vowels

As you know, the English alphabet has 26 letters, which can be divided into two groups: consonants and vowels. The letters are often represented by C or V for consonant or vowel.

In English there are 5 vowels: *a, e, i, o*, and *u*. Vowel sounds are considered LONG VOWELS when the sound matches the name of the letter (e.g. the *a* in *cake*). SHORT VOWELS are harder to define. For example, the short a's in *hat* and *can* could sound different, depending on the speaker. These sounds are also pronounced differently in different parts of the country!

Any alphabet letter that is not a vowel is a CONSONANT.

- [Phonics definitions and glossary A-Z Phonics](#)
- [Phonics Terms That Every K-2 Teacher Should Know](#) from Learning at the Primary Pond

Each school district will most likely have selected curricula which will include phonics instruction, or word-study methods. However, here are some basics on how to teach decoding and phonics.

Teaching decoding and phonics

Explicit and systematic instruction

Research supports instruction that is **explicit** and **systematic**. *Explicit* means that letter-sound relationships, or phonics skills, are taught directly to students (instead of being presented indirectly through reading aloud). *Systematic* means that teachers follow a sequence of skills from simple to more complex, including frequent reviews of those skills.

For more information, read the brief from the International Literacy Association: *[Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction [PDF]](#)*.

Phonics strategies

Students need many opportunities to work with words, including letter and word sorts, decoding games, read-alouds and shared reading, and their own reading. Success with phonics is enhanced whenever children can attach meaning to the words they decode, such as during supported comprehension activities like read-alouds and shared stories. The more opportunities children have to encounter and manipulate letter sounds and words, attaching meaning to them, the more pathways they can develop for knowing words.

Word-decoding skill begins with explicit phonics practice. As the video above explained, the 26 letters in the English alphabet make 44 sounds for words. Not all sounds are spelled in the same way, as in the example of the /s/ sound, which can be spelled with one *s* as in *sand*, 2 s's as in class, a c as the first sound in circle, or ce as in face. It gets even trickier when we start thinking about combinations of consonants, such as ph, which makes the /f/ sound in phone; or combinations of vowels and consonants, such as ough, which can be long o in though, short o in ought, or short u plus /f/ in tough. If you are curious about why we have so many spellings for sounds, you can check out this video: [Why is English Spelling So Weird?](#)

Beginning phonics

Reading standards at each grade level provide a specific sequence for teaching the letter combinations that make up the sounds in words. This is called a "scope and sequence," and it is the guideline you follow to make sure your instruction is based on the progressive development of skills that addresses the children's gaps in knowledge.

Here are some examples of scopes and sequences for phonics instruction:

- [Keys to Literacy \[PDF\]](#)
- [Reading Street \[PDF\]](#) (Pearson)
- [New Jersey Department of Education \[PDF\]](#)
- [University of Florida Literacy Institute \[PDF\]](#)
- [Reading Universe \[PDF\]](#) (Barksdale Reading Institute)

Phonics instruction in kindergarten starts with learning letter-sound correspondences for consonants, and for the sounds of short vowels and the most common long vowels.

Lessons will typically include the most common digraphs (*ch, sh, th, wh*, and *ck*). Because

kindergarteners may be losing teeth and still developing articulation, they may not be able to produce these sounds perfectly – but they can still learn them.

Phonics activities can start with basic letter sorts – separating consonants from vowels, for example. Magnetic letters are very useful for this, and are readily available in many schools, but letter tiles or even paper cut-out letters can be used for all of these activities. The point is to provide letters the children can move around, rather than relying on writing alone. Being able to actually move the letters in a concrete way is an important way to establish early learning, before proceeding to the more abstract act of writing (Clay, 2005).

To learn more about when kids learn different consonant sounds, see this Speech-Sound Development chart [PDF].

If purchasing sets of magnetic letters or letter tiles, be sure to examine the ways the letters are formed. If they use stylized letter forms that are different from the fonts in most reading series, they may be confusing for young children. For example, the letter g may be written as g, or the letter a may be written as *a*.

Early sorts for young children

Provide an assortment of letters and a tabletop or surface to sort on. Baking sheets from home can also work. Before teaching, pre-select groups of letters based on what sorts you will ask the children to do. Re-mix the letters between sorts. The following sorts progress from easier to more challenging:

- For children still working on letter recognition, ask them to separate letters with tails, such as *y, g, p*, from letters without tails, such as *c, o, e, s*. Ask them to separate tall letters such as *k, l, t* from short ones such as *c, o, e, s*.
- Separate capital letters from lower-case ones.
- Match capital letters with their lower-case forms.
- Separate consonants from vowels.

In kindergarten, children learn consonant sounds, short-vowel sounds, and the most common long-vowel sounds. Once the children are familiar with these basic sounds, they can begin to build words.

Building words with moveable letters:

Before teaching, pre-select letters based on the words you will ask children to build.

- Guide the children to make the simple word at: (short /a/, consonant /t/).
- Ask them to add a letter to the front of at and guide them to read the new word they have made.
  - Example: "Find the s. Add it to the beginning of at to make a new word. What word did you make?"
- Ask the children to take off the first letter and replace it with a new letter, making a new word.
  - Example: "Now break off the s so you only have the word at again. Find the m. Add it to the beginning of at to make a new word. What word did you make?"
- Continue removing the first letter and replacing it with new letters to make new words like *cat* and *bat*.

In 1st grade students learn the common consonant digraphs *sh*, *ch*, and *th*. The *sh* digraph makes a consistent sound as found in the words *she* and *shoe*. The *ch* digraph can make different sounds, such as in the words *chair*, *character*, and *chef*. The digraph *th* is a little tricky, because in some words it is voiced (the vocal cords are vibrating) and in other words it is unvoiced (like whispering). Try this: Place your first two fingers lightly on your adam's apple. Say "the." Notice that your throat vibrates slightly as you make the *th* sound: it is voiced. Now try the same experiment while saying "thumb." This time there should be less vibration, because the *th* in *thumb* is unvoiced. Try other words containing *th* to see which ones use the voiced *th* and which ones use the unvoiced th.

Students in 1st grade also learn common vowel combinations and the sounds they make, such as *ea* as in *team*, *ee* as in *seed*, *oa* as in *boat*, and *ay* as in *play*; and they learn the silent-e pattern as well as the common inflectional endings –*ed*, –*ing*, and the plural -s.

2nd and 3rd grade and beyond

When students are in 2nd grade and above, they should be learning to decode multisyllable words. Phonics lessons on decoding longer words should emphasize common syllable-division patterns and point out rules about syllables in English.

To decode long words with multiple syllables, children need a strategy for dividing them into manageable parts. They can then apply their knowledge of syllable types and letter-sound associations, and blend the decoded syllables back into whole words. This is where fluency is important – children need to be able to say these syllables quickly to understand what they are reading.

Learning Activities

> An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
> https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=216#h5p-2

Learning Activities: Assessment

The state of Iowa requires specific testing for literacy. Required Student Assessment.

School districts can choose any approved universal screening instrument, and they will have a set schedule for testing.

It's helpful to do some formative testing (remember that teachers use formative assessments as a quick aid to guide their instruction. Here is the Department of Education (DOE)'s guidance on Formative Assessment.

You can use letter recognition and letter-sound knowledge inventories to document what sounds the children know, and to better place them into groups for instruction. This example from Macomb Intermediate School District is a quick way to assess children's early phonics knowledge.

Key Takeaways

- In order to become strong readers children must develop phonemic awareness, phonics skills, the ability to read words in text in an accurate and fluent manner, and the ability to apply comprehension strategies consciously and deliberately as they read.
- Research supports phonics instruction that is explicit and systematic. Explicit means that phonics skills are taught directly to students (instead of being presented indirectly through reading aloud). Systematic means that teachers follow a sequence of skills from simple to more complex, including frequent reviews of those skills.

Resources for teacher educators

Games and Activities

- Games are a great way for children to practice phonics. You can even create phonics games to send home. See this article from Scholastic to start, and you can find many more examples by searching on the internet.
- The Florida Center for Reading Research. A team of researchers and teachers at FCRR collected ideas and created Student Center Activities for use in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. The activities are designed for students to practice, demonstrate, and extend their learning of what has already been taught, sometimes with teacher assistance and sometimes independently. Students can complete the activities in small groups, pairs, or individually (description from website).

Word Study Resources

- Highline Public Schools Kindergarten Word Study Guide. OER Commons.
- Highline Public Schools First Grade Word Study Guide. OER Commons.
- Phonics progression chart from Reading Foundations Progressions. Phonics by Liberty Public Schools.
- Words Their Way resources, presentations, and materials from Dr. Bear.
- Parts of the chapter were adapted from Steps to Success: Crossing the Bridge Between Literacy Research and Practice by Maria S. Murray licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

Professional Resources

- Dr. Bear's 2018 presentation on Word Study [PDF]
- Common syllable division patterns (charts at Reading Rockets)
- Sound-spelling pattern chart from Florida Center for Reading Research
- Try this Quizlet on phonics concepts.

  ◦ Password: LitEd3115

- Dr. Gurjar's [Slides on phonics](#).

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[Phonics Terms That Every K-2 Teacher Should Know](#).

[Findings of the National Reading Panel | Reading Rockets.](#)

[Phonics: In Practice](#) | Reading Rockets

Chapter 5. Supporting Literacy Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom

Sohyun Meacham

"Reading should not be presented to children as a chore, a duty. It should be offered as a gift." – Kate DiCamillo

Photo by cottonbro studio on Pexels

This chapter discusses approaches for promoting young children's literacy learning in classrooms. Shared reading is one such practice. This chapter will begin by presenting the dialogic and Whole Book approaches as strategies for shared reading. The dialogic reading approach, originally developed by Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998), is a research-supported strategy for shared reading in early childhood classrooms. The Whole Book Approach of Lambert (2015), used at the Eric Carle Museum, enriches the dialogic approach by encouraging investigation of the designs and para-text aspects of books as well as the text and illustrations.

Selecting appropriate texts for developing readers and writers is an important part of instructional decision-making. Hence, the second part of this chapter will discuss quality picturebooks for supporting literacy learning in the early childhood classroom. Children's interests as well as their reading levels should be important factors to consider in selecting picturebooks for instruction, guided reading, and independent reading in the classroom. Running Records (Clay, 2017) will be explained as an assessment process for determining the appropriate text levels for individual children in the classroom.

The third part of this chapter will discuss other educational materials to be added in print-rich learning environments in the classroom. While there are so many methods and materials for early literacy classrooms, this chapter only discusses

Learning Objectives

- Describe Dialogic Reading. (InTASC Standard #4)
- Create a read aloud lesson plan for a picturebook using CROWD prompts. InTASC Standard #7)
- Describe the Whole Book Approach. (InTASC Standard #4)
- Analyze a picturebook using the Whole Book Approach. (InTASC Standard #4)
- Select quality picturebooks for a child considering the child's interests and reading ability. (InTASC Standard #2)
- Identify educational materials that can enrich children's reading experiences. InTASC Standard #8)

several of them. Knowledge and insights gained in this chapter can help readers find some other creative methods and materials to enrich their children's literacy learning.

Dialogic reading

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=281#oembed-1*

[Download Dialogic Reading Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

There are good readers and poor readers. How do we know if our child is a good reader? When our child says the words in the text accurately? When they can read fast (with automaticity)? When they read like they speak in a regular conversation (with appropriate prosody)? While these indicators might give us confidence that our child is a competent reader, some doubts may still linger. Do we really know that our child is understanding the text when they say the words correctly? Many times, we wait until our child finishes saying the last word of a portion of text; then we ask about what they read. Then the child will briefly retell a couple of sentences as a summary of the text. We ask some probing questions to prompt them to elaborate about some details. This still might not convince us that our child made deep meaning out of the text.

Good readers check whether they understand what they read. They do it not only after reading but also while reading. When a sentence makes little sense, or if they get distracted, they reread it. When they are unsure of the meaning of a certain word, they look at the context to figure it out. They go back and search for information that they need in order to make sense of the current portion of text.

Good readers might do these comprehension checks silently in their brain, whether they are reading silently or aloud. Perhaps none of it is articulated. While the accuracy and speed of your child's oral reading can give you an idea if they are a struggling or advanced reader, it is hard to determine their level of comprehension (Dougherty Stahl et al., 2019).

CROWD

Teachers regularly think aloud when instructing students, not only for reading but also for other subjects such as math and science. When they read aloud with the children, they do it interactively. The CROWD prompts designed by Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) are a useful strategy that can guide you in thinking aloud during reading by having a conversation about a book with your children, especially when they are young. C is for Completion, R for Recall, O for Open-ended questions, W for Wh questions, and D for Distancing.

Completion prompts

A **completion prompt** is when you ask your child to complete the blank parts of sentences. You read sentences aloud, leaving one or two words blank for your child to say. To be able to do it, an emergent reader child needs to be able to decode the word(s) or take a guess from the context. The illustrations are helpful when the child is just beginning to decode words. If the word to complete is the name of something in an illustration, your child can examine the illustration for a clue. In *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, written and illustrated by Eric Carle (1969), an egg is lying on a leaf, as seen in the pages below. The illustration portrays the description very clearly. You can read the sentence "In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a …" with rising pitch at the end that exhibits your anticipation of hearing their reading of the final word "leaf."

This is a friendly and welcoming way for you to introduce your child to reading if your child hasn't yet had formal instruction. Choose completion words intentionally. As mentioned before, a word that can be guessed from the illustration is a good candidate. Words that appear in the title or are repeated throughout the book are other good candidates. These words are mostly ones that are keys for comprehending the story. Rather than choosing random words, choose ones from the content that is essential for comprehension. "On Friday, he ate through five oranges but he was still…" in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* would be a good example for word completion, because the blank is a key word that is important for comprehending the story. The word hungry, which goes in the blank, appears in the title and is repeated throughout the book. Although decoding the two-syllable word in an isolated context could be daunting to beginning readers, when it is in the title and repeated on multiple pages of the book, your child will find it fun and easy to come up with the word. Another candidate for a completion word is one that rhymes with another before it. Also, sight words, simple CVC words, and target vocabulary words that your child has already learned would be good completion words.

Recall prompts

Recall prompts check if the children are comprehending and remembering the story. For instance, in Laura Vaccaro Seeger's (2015) book titled I Used to be Afraid, the main character talks about what she used to be afraid of. If you use the things she says as recall prompts, your children will mention spiders, shadows, the dark, making a mistake, change, being alone, and the like, which they will remember from the pages you have read together.

Completion words and recall prompts focus more on literal comprehension than inferential comprehension. Literal prompts are concerned about the information that is explicitly available in the text. Usually there is one right answer for a literal prompt. Many adults ask their children about a name, size, color, or the shape of an object on a page, which are literal prompts. For instance, on one of the pages of I Used to be Afraid, "What color is the shadow on this page?" would be a good literal prompt focusing on the color of an object. While many adults use this type of prompt, literal prompts are insufficient to assist your children in fully comprehending what's going on in the story and developing higher-order thinking. **Inferential prompts** are recommended for this purpose. These prompts ask the children to take a guess about what will happen based on the information given in the text. A question like "Why do you think this girl is not afraid of shadows anymore?" can help your child make a connection between the illustration they see on the page and shadows. Making an inference, a child might say, "She thought that shadows were monsters before. Now she thinks that she can play with the shadows making hearts or something. A heart shape is not scary." Inferential prompts are more open-ended than closed-ended, so they can elicit multiple reasonable answers.

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions aim to help your child give an answer of more than one word, in contrast to closed-ended questions, that call for a yes or no. A question like "Where do you think the freight train went after this page?" at the end of the book *Freight Train* by Donald Crews (2003) would be truly open-ended. There is no correct answer to this question. Therefore, your child can come up with a creative answer. It is important to design open-ended questions that can support your child's comprehension of the book. For instance, the wordless picturebook titled Truck by Donald Crews (1997) does not tell a story but only shows one by its illustrations. The main element of the story is a red truck that travels through cities and the countryside. On the page where the back door of the truck is slightly open, you can spot several boxes of bikes. You can ask an open-ended question like "Where do you think the cargo of this truck will

be unloaded?" Your child has to study the illustration carefully and comprehend it to give a relevant response such as a store that sells bikes.

Wh questions

"Wh" questions are used to help children focus on story details. These are questions beginning with the word When, Where, Who, What, Why, or perhaps How. Conversations about what the characters are thinking or the "where" of the story can be initiated with prompts that ask for these details. Say for example, "What do you think Swimmy might be thinking on this page?" when you read Swimmy by Leo Lionni (2017). Say "What do you think the train is passing by?" when you read *Freight Train* by Donald Crews (2003). Then listen carefully to what your child says so you can take the conversation deeper. When your child responds, ask why they think so.

Wh questions can also include inferential prompts that support your child's comprehension of the story. When you read Inch by Inch by Leo Lionni (2018), the inchworm is threatened by a nightingale. You can ask, "What do you think the inchworm will do to save his life?" Your child needs to understand the concept of measuring, while still being creative, to respond to your prompt.

Distancing questions

The purpose of distancing questions is to give your child an opportunity to make connections between the story and their own life experiences, so they will grasp a message they can take away from the book. For instance, when you read Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell (2019) aloud with your child, you can ask, "What animals did we see when we visited the zoo?" Meanwhile, Eric Carle's (1969) The Very Hungry Caterpillar provides a good context for a conversation about a stomachache. When you are talking with your child about the book, you can refer to their own stomachaches, thereby providing a personal point of reference for the vocabulary word. This conversation will confirm whether your child understands the word. Other words used for stomachache can be mentioned to build a semantic network for growing your child's future vocabulary.

The CROWD prompts are useful facilitators for interactive read-alouds with your children. It is possible you are concerned that the frequent interruptions from dialogic reading will interfere with the children's comprehension of the story. While it is impossible to totally avoid some

deviations from the story, using the CROWD prompts can make the dialogic reading experience more effective and efficient.

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=281#h5p-23

Dialogic reading with the Whole Book Approach

Dialogic reading can be deepened with the **Whole Book Approach** (Lambert, 2015), as explained in this section, as this approach helps us to dialogically explore the design of the book as well as the text and the illustrations. The Eric Carle Museum proudly introduces their Whole Book Approach for reading picturebooks with children. The museum curates and exhibits children's picturebooks, emphasizing the quality of the illustrations. Thus, in their library the order of the books is based on the illustrator's last name. This is different from the majority of other children's libraries, which sort by the author's last name. Megan Dowd Lambert, who has worked with the Eric Carle Museum for almost twenty years, published a book titled *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking about What They See*. This book clearly presents the Eric Carle Museum's Whole Book Approach, which is an approach that helps us appreciate the illustrations and design quality of picturebooks as well as their story.

The Whole Book Approach emphasizes interactive reading aloud during reading times. Instead of reading aloud to children, Lambert (2015) explains that we should read aloud with them. In this way you invite your child into an active conversation with you about the text, illustrations, and design of the book. The Whole Book Approach guides you to pay attention to the jacket, cover, trim size, endpapers, front matter, and typography of the picturebook that you read with your child(ren). In addition, this approach says that it is worth mentioning even the barcode location of a well-designed picturebook.

Soh's two children grew up with Eric Carle books. She read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* over and over to both of her children from when they were born. One day her first-grade child Jimmy was reading *The Very Quiet Cricket* (Carle, 2021). Soh and Jimmy had not yet talked about the author or illustrator of the book, as it was a quick reading time after breakfast while he was waiting for everyone else to get ready for school or work. Almost at the end of the book, he asked, "Wait a minute, was the author of this book Eric Carle?" Soh asked him, "Oh, you think the author of this book was Eric Carle?" Jimmy said, "Yes, the illustrations look similar to Eric Carle's (1969) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. And the title sounds similar, too: The Very Something Something."

As a matter of fact, *The Very Quiet Cricket* was a leveled-book version, adapted from Eric Carle's (1997) original one. To make it look similar to the other books in the series, the page orientation had been changed from landscape to portrait. Also, the font sizes were much bigger than in the original. Because of these changes, the written text grabs your child's attention more than the illustrations or book design. These are things you can talk about with your child. Lambert writes about the landscape orientation of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* below:

> "Eric Carle's (1969) famed *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* adopts a landscape orientation because this shape best echoes the form of the caterpillar itself. Furthermore, the horizontal shape of the book bespeaks the page-to-page journey of the caterpillar as it makes its way through the foods lined up on the successive pages. It's a small leap for children to realize that most picture books about journeys adopt the landscape orientation because of the horizontal form's visual implication of movement through time and space in conjunction with the page turns." (Lambert, 2015, p.6)

The Very Quiet Cricket is similar to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* in terms of Cricket's journey. Cricket keeps moving forward (to the right in the book's design), encountering various insects. He could not make any sound for a while. Finally, when he meets a female cricket at the end of the story, he is able to chirp naturally. The portrait orientation of this leveled-book version loses the effect of inviting readers to come along on Cricket's journey. Meanwhile, the leveled-book version added some scientific information about crickets that the original version did not have, targeting older children. Jimmy said he preferred the leveled book because he "figured out that only male crickets can chirp" at the end of the book.

Jon Muth's (2002) *The Three Questions* contains a deep message. This book might be somewhat difficult for preschoolers and kindergarteners to fully grasp the meaning of. On the Scholastic Book Wizard page, the Guided Reading Level of this book is M, meaning it is at the 2nd-grade instructional level for children in the United States. This book is based a Tolstoy's short

story called "Three Questions." The original story is based on a certain king's three axiological questions: 1) Who are the right people to listen to? 2) Who should be avoided? and 3) What is the most important thing to do? Jon Muth tweaked this story, replacing the king with a boy called Nikolai, who asks three similar questions: 1) What is the best time to do things? 2) Who is the most important person? and 3) What is the right thing to do?

This book has a message that an adult can also appreciate, because it provides guidance that is valuable for adults and children. Tolstoy explains the correct answers to his questions below:

> "Remember that there is only one important time and it is Now. The present moment is the only time over which we have dominion. The most important person is always the person with whom you are, who is right before you, for who knows if you will have dealings with any other person in the future? The most important pursuit is making that person, the one standing at your side, happy, for that alone is the pursuit of life."

The quality of the book is not just found in its message. The aesthetic quality of the illustrations and design of the book are worthy of deep analysis. The peaceful watercolors used in these illustrations create a contemplative atmosphere that leads us to ponder the three essential questions of Nikolai and his friends.

Muth (2002) changes the sizes of characters on some pages. For instance, Pushkin the dog is smaller than Gogol the monkey on one page; then Pushkin becomes bigger than Gogol on the next page. This is when Pushkin points out that a coconut is about to fall on Gogol's head! Talk about this with your child by sharing what you noticed: "Oh, I just noticed that Pushkin became bigger than Gogol on this page. On the last page, Gogol was bigger. Why do you think the illustrator drew them different sizes like this?"

Speaking about size, different sizes of words create special meanings. As Laura Vaccaro Seeger (2015) said, "The great thing is that kids know that the bigger the word is the louder their voices should be, and vice versa." When a character says "Sorry" with a small font size located in a tiny word bubble, readers feel the apology is sincere (Lambert, 2015, pp. 44-45). Moreover, the typography can create other effects such as a soundtrack and darkness:

> "Jerry Pinkney's nearly wordless Caldecott Medal winner, *The Lion & the Mouse*, incorporates various intraiconic, onomatopoeic sounds (owl hoots, the sounds of a jeep driving through the African savannah, and, of course, squeaking mice and a lion's roar). This creates a text that functions something like a soundtrack, which allows readers to immerse themselves in the setting he's created." (Lambert, 2015, p. 47)

Play and the Whole Book Approach

Playfulness with books is another important aspect of the Whole Book Approach. There are many books that invite your child to play, with cut-out holes, embossed objects, blinking lights, or maybe real sound effects. These features encourage you to interact with your child while reading. Research has found that children's language development is strongly associated with their caregiver's or teacher's use of pretenses and engagement in play with them (Gest et al., 2006; Kontos, 1999; Meacham et al., 2014). Books can be considered to be a type of toy (Roskos, 2021). Pretend that your finger is the very hungry caterpillar eating through the holes in the food in Eric Carle's book. Make a heart with your child's hand and yours on the page where the protagonist makes a big heart shadow with her hands in Laura Vaccaro Seeger's (2015) book I Used to be Afraid. Encourage your child to feel the embossed cobweb and spider with their fingers in *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle. Count all the pigs you can find on a page of Anthony Browne's *Piggybook.*

The Whole Book Approach involves your aesthetic appreciation of the book that you read aloud with your child, as it emphasizes the illustrations and book-design features in addition to the story. However, the bottom line is to engage your child in interactive and playful reading, observing many features beyond the written text. By doing so, you are educating your child to wholly comprehend the book created by the author, illustrator, and publisher.

Using quality picturebooks and readers

While the Whole Book Approach can be applied to any reading moments in classrooms, choosing quality picturebooks can ensure many conversation topics for dialogic reading with children. Consider choosing picturebooks with notable awards for children's books, as they involve many experts in the fields as judges. The Randolph Caldecott Medal and Theodor Seuss Geisel Award are arguably the most notable awards that parents of young children look for if they are interested in enhancing their children's reading through quality picturebooks.

The Caldecott Medal

The Caldecott Medal is well-known as an indicator of quality picturebooks published in the United States. The medal is given annually to the picturebook with the most distinguished illustrations, and others may be selected for the Honor level. The illustration-focused selection

criteria for the Caldecott Award include these: artistic technique; pictorial interpretation of the story, theme, or concept; appropriateness of the illustration style to the story, theme, or concept; delineation of plot, theme, characters, setting, mood, or information through the pictures; and excellence of presentation for a child audience. It may be noted that this award does not focus on the pedagogical intent (Association for Library Service to Children, 2020), although the high-quality illustrations and illustration-text connection as recognized by the Caldecott Medal can be useful for young children's learning. Neither is popularity a part of the selection criteria, although the Caldecott-Medal books and Honor books tend to become popular.

Many illustrators have won the Caldecott Award multiple times. David Wiesner, who illustrated *Flotsam, The Three Pigs*, and *Art & Max,* won the Medal three times and the Honor designation three times as well. Jerry Pinkney, who illustrated *The Lion & the Mouse* and *Noah's Ark*, is also a six-time Caldecott winner (one Medal and five Honor Awards). Jerry Pinkney's son Brian Pinkney won two Honor Awards. Therefore, the Pinkneys together have won eight Caldecott Awards, but Maurice Sendak, the legendary author-illustrator who created *Where the Wild Things Are*, won eight Caldecott Awards by himself!

A notable illustrator with two recent Medals is Sophie Blackall. Her latest one was awarded in 2019 for *Hello Lighthouse*; in 2016 she won it for *Finding Winnie: The True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear.* The quality of these two books, with detailed micro-illustrations, has something to do with Blackall's arduous research work. They are aesthetically pleasing to adults and children. *Hello Lighthouse* is classified as historical fiction, while *Finding Winnie* is nonfiction, based on real history. To write *Hello Lighthouse*, Blackall "visited several (lighthouses), climbing spiral staircases, poring over (lighthouse) keepers; logbooks, and gazing happily out lantern room windows" (Blackall, 2018). It took her one year to complete the illustrations for *Finding Winnie*, because she did extensive research about the period from the time a baby bear was named "Winnie" by Captain Harry Colebourn to the time Winnie was donated to the London Zoo, and grew to be the beloved Winnie the Pooh of children's books. Blackall spent a whole week just drawing a precise map of the London Zoo for the pages of *Finding Winnie* (Rich, 2016). In terms of style, Blackall chose Chinese watercolors in both books to depict the nostalgic stories with delicate, warm, and luminous illustrations.

The Geisel Award

The Geisel Award uses Dr. Seuss's last name. Therefore, it honors Dr. Seuss's works, which have long been enjoyed by beginning readers. The Geisel Award is "given annually to the author(s)

and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year" (Association for Library Service to Children, 2019). This award is not as widely known by parents as the Caldecott Award, perhaps due to its shorter history. The first Geisel Award was announced in 2006. As it focuses on the aspect of helping young children learn to decode, it could naturally make you think of the types of children's books that appear as leveled books, basal readers, and simple readers.

Beginning readers with excellent plots, sensibility, and rhythm that can be helpful for young children's reading experiences become candidates for the Geisel Award. While the target age for the Caldecott Medal is up to fourteen, the Geisel Award focuses on pre-K through grade 2, when the children usually begin formal reading instruction. Although the text quality is primary among the selection criteria, quality illustrations that "function as keys or clues to the text" (Association for Library Service to Children, 2020) are required. The detailed selection criteria shown below reveal how the text quality is designed to motivate the children and advance their reading ability:

> "Subject matter must be intriguing enough to motivate the child to read... New words should be added slowly enough to make learning them a positive experience. Words should be repeated to ensure knowledge retention. Sentences must be simple and straightforward... The illustrations must demonstrate the story being told. The book creates a successful reading experience, from start to finish. The plot advances from one page to the next and creates a 'page-turning' dynamic." (Association for Library Service to Children, 2020)

Mo Willems's (2013) *A Big Guy Took My Ball*, which received a 2014 Geisel Honor Award, exhibits all of these criteria. The book starts with a small number of words per page (fewer than 5 on most). There are only 5 pages with more than 10 words among the total of 57 pages. Some of the lengthier pages are followed by ones with fewer or no words, encouraging a "page-turning" dynamic. The word "big," which appears in the title, appears 20 times among the total of 205 running words in the book. If some variants of the word, such as "bigger" and "biggy" are included, there are 23 appearances of this word, 10% of the total running words. This repetition helps children remember how to read it. If your students are in the very beginning stage of learning to read, they can be invited to sound out only this word during your read-aloud with them. In addition, the repetition of this word in different font sizes can be considered a rhythmic component of the story, which can stimulate your children to change their voices when they read it. The author-illustrator Mo Willems has three Caldecott Honor and seven

Geisel Honor Awards. Although *A Big Guy Took My Ball* was not recognized by Caldecott, it still conveys quality illustrations that can delight your children.

Again, beginning readers are still considered picturebooks. Not too different from the Caldecott selection criteria, the Geisel Award emphasizes connections between the text and illustrations. Therefore, as you can imagine, there are picturebooks that are recognized by both awards. Laura Vaccaro Seeger's (2007) *First the Egg won the Honor* designation by both Caldecott and Geisel in 2008. This concept book artistically delineates the concept of transformation in nature by joining story and pictures together in the examples of the chicken, frog, flower, butterfly, and human. Vivid primary colors are textured meticulously and skillfully in Seeger's oil-on-canvas illustrations. On every other page is a die-cut to make you and your children curious about what comes between the seed and flower or the caterpillar and butterfly. When you read the book, you will gradually learn that when you see a new thing, it will become something else once you turn the page, like from an egg to a chicken. From the caterpillar page, you anticipate that it will become a butterfly; but you still have curiosity regarding what will be in between. The small caterpillar-shaped die-cut will be part of something that is on the verso page when you turn it over. It is still exciting to guess, although you know you will see a butterfly on the recto page. The in-between stages of transformation, such as a sprout or a chick, are not narrated but only illustrated, which invites your and your children's input. In fact, the text and pictures are equally necessary for the readers to understand the transformational process. The Whole Book Approach introduced earlier informs you about how to fully appreciate picturebooks by looking at both the text and illustrations.

A further comment about the text of *First the Egg* – it reads like a poem with a somewhat structured format. In terms of how the words flow, "first the XXX, then the XXXX" is repeated seven times throughout the book, which makes seven interesting sound clusters, most of which have seven syllables. A syllable count of the entire book yields the pattern 7-7-7-11-7-7-7. This does not follow any traditional poetic format, such as limerick, haiku, or sonnet. However, the rhythm in this book will really sound like a song to you and your children. You might want to add a melody and make it a real song with them.

There are more illustrators who have achieved both the Caldecott and Geisel Awards. In addition to the aforementioned ones, a Caldecott Medal awardee named Jon Classen won a Geisel Honor with his *I Want My Hat Back*; and Grace Lin, a Caldecott Honor awardee, also won a Geisel Honor with her *Ling & Ting: Not Exactly the Same*! If your children have started their formal instruction, you might want to pay attention to these author-illustrators for a while.

Considering children's interests and reading ability when selecting picturebooks

The previous section talked about quality picturebooks by looking at the Caldecott, Geisel, and Pura Belpré children's literature awards. The selection criteria for these awards are similar to what many children's literature scholars advise for choosing picturebooks. They suggest picturebooks that use precise vocabulary, figurative vocabulary, dialogues, and rhythmic language. If the text explains in too much detail or sounds preachy, it should raise a red flag. The illustrations should be able to establish the setting, define and develop the characters, establish moods, reinforce the written text, provide differing viewpoints, extend and develop the plot, and provide interesting subplots and details aside from the main storyline. Unique styles and creative use of visual elements such as lines, shapes, colors, textures, and composition are also important things to consider in recognizing a well-illustrated book (Young et al., 2019).

Now you know what makes a quality picturebook. The next question could be whether your child will be able to read the book independently or need some adult guidance. Is the book too difficult or too easy? For this question, a conversation about children's **reading levels** and **leveled books** will be useful to us. Because of caregivers' questions regarding their children's reading ability, publishers curate or develop leveled-book series, organizing picturebooks by text difficulty. These series are convenient for instructing children to read. However, packaged readers are insufficient in themselves to fully prepare your children to read because they limit the readers' choices and access to complex texts. In addition, collections of readers do not necessarily emphasize quality illustrations. Luckily, these days there are online resources that provide the reading levels of high-quality picturebooks. If you are curious about the level of a certain book, websites such as [Scholastic Book Wizard](#) and [Lexile](#) will be useful to you.

Reading level guidelines

While there are several different leveling systems, the Guided Reading Level System from A to Z (or Z2) is one of the most frequently used ones in the United States. Levels A to D are for kindergarteners, E to J for 1st graders, and K to L for 2nd graders, although there are some variations in these ranges based on children's individual differences, or the opinions of publishers or scholars.

The Lexile system is another well-known book-leveling system. By using Lexile's Quick Book Search, you can find the Lexile measure of the text difficulty of a book you are interested in. For

instance, if you look up a book titled *Dishy-Washy* by Joy Cowley (1997), you will see 220L for the Lexile rating. Joy Cowley is a New Zealand author who has written an abundance of books for children. She has her own beginning reader series. As she is a beloved children's book author, it is possible that your home library already has many books by her. Lexile measures between 160L and 310L are similar to Levels D and E of the Guided Reading Level System in terms of difficulty. These are suitable for late kindergarten to early 1st grade, although your actual decision should depend on the child's reading ability.

There are many book-level-correlation charts that you can find by online searches. The Guided Reading Level and Lexile almost always appear in them. Here is an abbreviated chart for children from pre-K to 2nd grade:

Grade	Guided Reading	Lexile
K	A	BR70L-10L
K	B-C	BR404-160L
K-1st	D-E	160L-310L
1st	F-G	300L-450L
1st	J	430L-530L
2nd	K	510L-620L
2nd	L	530L-810L
2nd	M	530L-850L

In the above table, "BR" in a code denotes "Beginning Reader." In addition, "AD" is another code attached to some Lexile measures that you may want to know about. It denotes "Adult Directed." This code is affixed to a book if it is best shared as an adult-led read-aloud. An example of this is Eric Carle's (2021) *The Very Quiet Cricket*, whose Lexile code is AD490L. Finding the number 490L in the above table, you can determine that your children can independently read and understand this book at around 1st grade. However, "the content may be geared towards younger children," and the Lexile website says this book is appropriate for ages 3-5 (MetaMetrics, 2020). According to the Scholastic Book Wizard, the Guided Reading Level of this book is J, and the appropriate grade levels are indicated to be PreK-K and 1st-2nd (Scholastic Inc., 2020). In reality, this book is read to younger children in many U.S. families. The small board-book format of this book is considered to be especially suited for babies' hands in the U.S. culture. It does not mean that your children should not read this book during first

grade. As a matter of fact, the font size of *The Very Quiet Cricket* is much bigger in the reader's version than the original version because the text is the primary focus when your children are learning to read.

You might want to have some conversations with your classroom children regarding the differences between the original version and the reader's version. For one thing, the reader's version is in portrait orientation, whereas the original is in landscape. The reader's version does not have the chirping sounds that your children can actually hear with the board-book version. However, the reader's version contains more information regarding crickets, which can help your children make connections between this fiction story and factual information about crickets' sounds. For instance, Soh's son Jimmy was glad to learn something new when he read the reader's version in first grade: female crickets are unable to chirp; only male crickets chirp.

Knowing a picturebook's Guided Reading Level or Lexile level is not the end of the matter, as you have to match the picturebook with your child's reading ability. If your child is making more than one error in every ten words when they read a book orally, it may be too hard. That is a reading accuracy of roughly 90% or below. On the other hand, if they are missing one or fewer in twenty words, it is a text they can read independently. This means an accuracy of roughly 95% or above. As they progress, choosing text levels they can read with between 90 and 95% accuracy, and providing your guidance, is a good rule of thumb. Running Records (Clay, 2017), a reading-assessment guide, can assist this process.

Administration and use of running records

Running Records is a method for analyzing children's reading performance during their oral reading, systematically documenting their reading accuracy, miscues, self-corrections, and reading strategies. You can select any text consisting of 100 running words or so (100-200 words) to administer Running Records. Usually authentic texts with cohesive stories or informational texts are recommended. Ask the child to read orally, then start coding how the child reads each word. While there is an official Running Records form provided in Clay's (2017) book for you to fill out, you can just quickly grab an empty sheet of paper to start coding during the child's oral reading. Make a coding mark for each word as the child reads it and make a return swift after each line of text. If a word is read correctly, simply write it with a check mark (✔). Miscues such as substitutions and omissions are marked over the word with a horizontal line between. For instance, if the child says horse for house (substitution), write horse over the line and house below it:

horse
house

If the child does not say anything for house (omission), mark a dash over the line and house below it:

____–____
house

If the child inserts a word that is not there (insertion), write it over the line and a dash below:

house
–

Self-correction is not considered an error. Whether you initially marked a word for substitution, omission, or insertion, simply add /SC after the marking for it. For instance, if the child says chicken for hen, but then corrects it, , write /SC after the error code:

chicken/SC
hen

Repetition is not considered an error either. Just draw a line above the repeated segment and put an R. For multiple repetitions, a numerical superscript can be used. If you end up telling the

word to the child for an omitted or substituted word, mark a T for Told on the bottom next to the word. The example below means that the child said again for across and you corrected the child's miscue:

    Again
Across/T

For each miscue, you determine what type of cues that the child used from among semantic (meaning-related), syntactic (grammatical), and graphic (graphophonic, not illustration) cues. This will be valuable information that can assist you in making instructional decisions for the child. After the child's oral reading and your marking are complete, you calculate the accuracy rate, error rate, and self-correction rate using the numbers of total running words (RW) and errors (E). The formula for calculating the accuracy rate is 100 – (E/RW X 100). If the total running words were 152 and there were 18 errors, the accuracy rate is 88.16%. This means that the child is making more than one error in every ten words. The text that the child read is frustrating. You might want to suggest an easier text. In addition, the self-correction rate is the ratio of self-corrections to the total number of errors and self-corrections [SC/(E+SC)]. This indicates the degree to which the child is monitoring his/her reading. All the information you gain from Running Records can be used for text choices as well as monitoring progress because you can administer Running Records with each child as often as time permits.

Reading levels are a guide, not a rule

You should not be too strict about book levels. Your children's interests should be an important factor in choosing book topics as well. Your children's interests can often override their reading level, because they will be motivated to read more when they want to know what they are reading about. To tell a story from Soh's husband's childhood, his interest in sports helped him develop his reading ability. Although he is currently a literacy professor who reads and writes about children's reading and writing all the time, during his primary grades he struggled with reading. However, he and his father enjoyed watching football games together, he recollects. In his hometown of Canton, Ohio, the Pro Football Hall of Fame town, even high-school football games were a big deal. He started reading sports magazines to learn all about his favorite players and games. Those magazines were not published for beginning readers. He was eventually able to read them easily, while still in primary school, which helped make him an advanced reader. An implication from this story is that we do not need to discourage our children when they

choose to read picturebooks or other texts about topics they are interested in, even though the text difficulty is above their reading ability at the moment.

Make regular trips to a bookstore or a library with your children and have book-choice conversations. In doing so, you can get to know their interests. Not only topics, but genres, authors, illustrators, and even particular illustration styles can be things you ponder together in choosing the books they like to read.

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=281#h5p-20

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=281#h5p-40

Enriching reading with other educational materials

Choosing a theme for a unit is popular in many classrooms and families as a means of making the children's reading experiences more integrated and educational. This approach selects related picturebooks to read for a week or a month. Transportation is a frequently adopted topic. Taking this approach, you might curate picturebooks about transportation so your children can learn and think more deeply about this topic for a while. Popular nursery rhymes and folk songs such as "Down by the Station" and "The Wheels on the Bus" can be sung, of which picturebook versions can be acquired. You might do an author-illustrator study on Donald Crews or Byron Barton, whose works include many different forms of transportation. In addition, many transportation toys such as replica cars, trucks, airplanes, riding toys, and trains with tracks can be provided side by side with the picturebooks.

Providing real objects relevant to picturebooks creates ostensive learning environments, which are optimal contexts for learning vocabulary. Ostensive learning environments allow you to point to real objects that your children can experience with their senses (Pence Turbull & Justice, 2017). While picturebooks provide visual information about vocabulary words that you are trying to teach, if you juxtapose real objects with the illustrations, there is a much higher chance that your children will retain the words.

A reading experience with *Hooray for Birds!* by Lucy Cousins (2018) could be enriched by going bird watching with your children. If there is a tree that you can see through your classroom window where many different birds visit, you can point to those birds and have some fun conversations with your children, making connections between the book and the birds you see.

> "What is the yellow and gray bird with black on its head? Do you hear it sing fee-bee? That's my favorite bird."

> "Oh, I know. A black-capped chickadee! We saw black-capped chickadees in *Hooray for Birds!* Do female black-capped chickadees make that sound too? Female crickets don't make chirping sounds. Only male crickets do."

This comment was prompted by our previous reading of an information page added to the reader version of *The Very Quiet Cricket* by Eric Carle. After this conversation, Soh's son Jimmy and Soh did some research about the songs that male and female black-capped chickadees sing. They found that both genders sing the fee-bee song, although females rarely sing louder than males (Goodwin & Podos, 2013). "Males … sing the fee-bee song, primarily during the breeding season, when they use it to protect territory and to attract females" (Weisman & Ratcliffe, 2004, p. 536). This story of self-motivated research on black-capped chickadees shows an inquiry-based approach that many science educators endorse (Ansberry & Morgan, 2010).

Questions that your children bring up can be an effective medium for integrating and enriching the reading experience. When your children read a book, they might murmur something out loud. It might be a sign that they are pondering or inquiring about something that they read. Be a good listener and support your children's inquiry-based learning. You might be able to remind them of some books that you read with them before. It is possible that you can find some other books or online resources that your children can get their answers from. Children's questions often indicate their interests, suggesting future choices for books.

Puzzles and board games

There are many other types of educational materials related to the topic chosen for a thematic unit, such as puzzles and board games. Children see puzzles and board games as play and fun. This doesn't necessarily mean that reading picturebooks is not playful. I mean that even reluctant beginning readers can see reading-related puzzles and board games as play, and incorporating them will enrich the children's reading experiences.

Many puzzles use illustrations from popular picturebooks. Among them, puzzles using illustrations from Leo Lionni's (2017) *Swimmy*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* were our family's favorites. Floor puzzles easily engage all of a classroom's children.

Some puzzles are made from just one word. These puzzle pieces can be broken into phonemes and graphemes to teach phonics. Many industrious teachers create their own puzzles using illustrations from the picturebooks that they read with their children. These teacher-created materials can be useful for particular purposes such as vocabulary instruction, phonics instruction, and play that enriches the overall integrated learning about the chosen topic.

Board games are another type of educational materials frequently used with young children. There are many board games that use the themes, characters, and/or illustrations of popular picturebooks. A board game named Let's Feed the Very Hungry Caterpillar is an example. Eric Carle's (1969) popular *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* supplied its motif. Incorporating the familiar illustrations, the game is designed to teach basic concepts such as counting, days of the week, and the butterfly's life cycle, as put forward in the picturebook. The playing pieces, in the shape of the Very Hungry Caterpillar, go around the board from fruit to fruit. When a piece "stops to eat," it collects a butterfly puzzle piece. Each player has a butterfly puzzle like the illustration in Eric Carle's book. The first player to collect all five pieces wins the game.

Your children can be encouraged to develop their own original toys and educational materials inspired by the picturebooks that they read. Comprehension of the picturebooks goes deeper during this process. You can actually purchase books, puzzles, and board games that are blank (Barebooks.com). While children can make them from scratch using construction paper or miscellaneous materials found at home or purchased, the commercially sold blank books, puzzles, and board games make final products that are more professional looking and durable. No matter what materials you use, the design process is equally significant in engaging you and your children in multiple rich conversations about the story of the picturebook.

Puppets, figurines, and other toys

Last but not least, puppets, figurines, stuffed animals, and dolls for your children's imaginative play can enrich their language and literacy learning. If they are characters from the children's favorite picturebooks, they can retell parts of the stories they read while they are pretending. Merchandized puppets, figurines, stuffed animals, and dolls from many picturebooks are available for purchase, although you can also create them with your classroom children. Using them is an effective way to help children retain sophisticated vocabulary words and sentences from the picturebooks, which supports their language and literacy development.

In early childhood classrooms, teachers often invite the children to participate in teacher-guided role plays, using stories from picturebooks. Children can certainly play without adult guidance, and their play can be very complex and sophisticated, providing a significant context for learning. However, adult-guided play ensures the use of advanced words and sentences, as well as literary elements such as plot, setting, and characters. The adult can assume different roles, such as play leader, co-player, stage manager, director, and onlooker (Enz & Christie, 1993; Roskos & Neuman, 1993). Costumes of characters from picturebooks are another prop that adds a new dimension of richness to your classroom library. By wearing costumes, your children can more deeply understand and empathize with the characters.

Music as an educational resource

Music can be another effective way to support young children's literacy learning.

Give it your all.
Give it your all.
At Christmas we give,
So give it your all.

Every now and then, Soh finds herself singing the refrain from Pete the *Cat Saves Christmas* (story and song by Eric Litwin, illustrations by James Dean), especially around Christmas time. The melody and words that were meant for young children stuck with her too. Soh realizes that she is humming the song while driving without any music in the car. It is associated with a pleasant feeling as she hears her son Jimmy's somewhat husky singing voice in her mind. This song has warmed Soh's heart for many years since she first heard it.

Jimmy was not much into reading when he first started kindergarten. His reading level was far

below his older sister Sabina's at that age. He was not able to read the beginner-level books independently, which was not surprising, because neither Soh nor her husband had given him any formal reading instruction. (They hadn't taught Sabina either, but she was still able to read the beginner-level books independently when she first started kindergarten.) Jimmy was the youngest child in his kindergarten classroom, which worried Soh even more. She recalls that the question of whether Jimmy would be successful in his first year of school never left her mind during his first semester in kindergarten. As reading is one of the primary accomplishments that kindergarteners are supposed to achieve in U.S. schools, Soh strove to increase Jimmy's interest in it. Around Christmas time, she purchased the *Pete the Cat Saves Christmas* book with a song CD from the Scholastic Book Fair. She started playing the CD in her minivan, where she usually played songs and stories for the kids. Soh had many CDs for Jimmy and Sabina, because she felt that playing the music and stories while they were driving made them feel her love. While both children loved the song, Jimmy's excitement about all the Pete the Cat books knew no bounds. When other people asked about his favorite books, he answered without hesitation, "I love Pete the Cat books!"

Another catchy refrain from Pete the Cat was "I'm rocking in my school shoes," from *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes* (story and song by Eric Litwin, illustrations by James Dean). The story depicts all the fun things that Pete the Cat does in his school: reading, eating, playing, singing, painting, adding, and writing. Jimmy collected all the Pete the Cat books and adored them. *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* triggered Jimmy's curiosity about the meaning of the word groovy. After learning the word, Jimmy and Soh had fun moments giggling about his groovy "outie" belly button. *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* is a Geisel Honor Book, which means that it is recognized as being a high-quality reader that can help children develop their decoding ability. Jimmy loved repeating "My buttons, my buttons, my four groovy buttons. My buttons, my buttons, my four groovy buttons" from the song. When he was reading the book independently, he still sang those lines just like on the CD. This relates to what research suggests regarding fluency development (Rasinski, 2014).

Thanks in large part to the Pete the Cat series, Jimmy has developed a very positive feeling about school in general. Last night, during our bed-time conversation, Jimmy told me that he loves school. He added that he loves reading, math, and playing football with his buddies. Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes is relatable to Jimmy's school life. It's not necessarily Jimmy's shoes, but his everyday accomplishments that have helped him feel good about school; but the contribution of the Pete the Cat songs to Jimmy's positive attitude about school is undeniable.

Research on the use of music when teaching literacy

There are many research studies that favor the use of songs in literacy education. Montgomery & Smith (2014) found that song-based picturebooks can provide children with increased opportunities for repetition with authentic episodes of rhyming, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. Many researchers (e.g., Peynịrcịoğlu et al., 2008; Rainey & Larsen, 2002; Wolfe & Hom, 1993) encourage the use of familiar melodies as aids in recalling text. Phonological awareness, which is an important foundation for later reading development, is defined as sensitivity to the phonological structure of words (Torgesen et al., 1994). One activity performed to increase phonological awareness is to sing a song. Because of the many reasons written above, songs are frequently used in foreign-language teaching (Batdi & Semerci, 2012; Şevik, 2012; Şevik, 2011).

Meanwhile, there is some controversy in the professional literature over the use of music as a part of reading instruction. For example, one seminal study on reading instruction warned about the use of music tapes as follows:

> "In tape-assisted reading, students read along in their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book on an audiotape. For tape-assisted reading, you need a book at a student's independent reading level and a tape recording of the book read by a fluent reader at about 80-100 words per minute. The tape should not have effects or music." (Armbruster et al., 2003, p.24)

However, this warning is for a very particular context designed for fluency building. Therefore, it should not discourage the use of songs and music for other contexts of reading instruction. Again, using songs is beneficial for helping children learn to decode, particularly through developing the following skills: rhyming (Bolduc, 2009; Dege & Schwarzer, 2011; Herrera et al., 2011), syllable segmentation (Bolduc, 2009; Dege & Schwarzer, 2011; Gromko, 2005; Overy et al., 2003), onset/rime practice (Herrera et al., 2011), blending (Dege & Schwarzer, 2011), and phonemic awareness (Bolduc, 2009; Gromko, 2005; Overy et al., 2003).

There is a reason in this section for citing all of these research studies to support the use of songs in reading development. As music is often taken for granted by laymen, a discussion about music may not sound convincing or may just sound preachy. I wanted to emphasize that using songs to develop reading ability is research based. Getting back now to this article being an everyday conversation with parents, let me say that songs really help us build positive relationships with our children because reading and singing together enhances our engagement with them (Montgomery, 2012). Music has the ability to communicate social and affective

information as it creates a feeling of "being together in time" (Overy & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009, p. 499). Certainly for me, music creates a feeling of being together with my children in time, which motivates me to communicate more with them. This also promotes more communication among us in general, which supports our children's language development.

Reflection Questions

- What can you do to facilitate interactive read-alouds with young children?
- How will you select books for a child who is reluctant to read?
- Which method of teaching early literacy was most memorable to you when you were observing other teachers?

Key Takeaways

- CROWD prompts are useful facilitators for interactive read-alouds with children.
- The Whole Book Approach asks that you engage with children in interactive and playful reading, observing many features beyond the written text.
- Picturebooks can be selected based on awards and recognition received, or thematic ties to learning goals.
- Questions that children verbalize can be used to guide inquiry-based learning. Prompt children to connect information from one book to another you have read together.

Resources for teacher educators

- [Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read Aloud with Young Children](#)
- [Dialogic Reading: Having a Conversation About Books](#)
- [Running Record Assessment Tips (Reading A-Z)](#)
- [25 Activities for Reading and Writing Fun](#)
- [Make it Meaningful: Emergent Literacy in the Kindergarten Years \[PDF\]](#)

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Chapter 6. Vocabulary

Constance Beecher

"Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic." – Albus Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows*
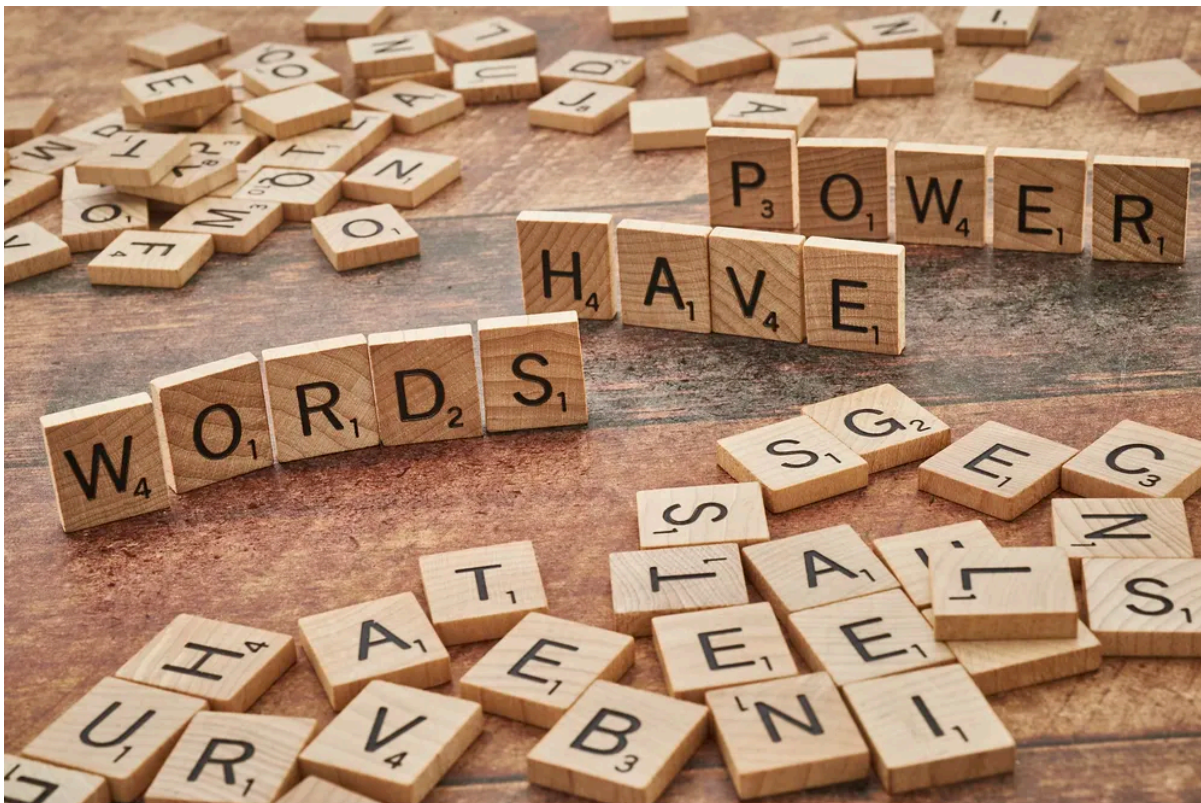
"Words have power" from Rawpixel is licensed CC0.

Keywords: oral and written language, indirect vocabulary, direct vocabulary, structured word analysis

Iowa Core Standards

Iowa Core Standards include vocabulary across reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The Iowa Core states: "**The vocabulary standards** focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases." (Iowa Core English Language Arts, 2022, p.8)

The K-5 standards define what students should know and be able to do. These are backwards mapped from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. Therefore, if students meet the grade-level standards at each grade, they will be ready for college or career training. The Anchor Standards for vocabulary are as follows:

Vocabulary acquisition and use

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the role of vocabulary in reading, writing, listening and speaking (InTasc Standard #4).
- Describe the role of vocabulary in language development (InTasc Standard #1).
- Assess vocabulary knowledge to personalize instruction (InTasc Standard #6).
- Describe effective vocabulary instruction strategies and apply them to Iowa Core Standards (InTasc Standard #8).
- Differentiate and personalize instruction to Dual Language Learners and students with special needs (InTasc Standard #2 & 3).

Language standards K-5

[Download the Iowa Core Literacy standards](). In the table of contents, you will find Language Standards for grades K-5. As stated, "the language standards offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications."((Iowa Core English Language Arts, 2022, p.35) Vocabulary standards are found in both the Writing and the Language standards for K-5 (and 6-12).

For example, "d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic." (Writing.4.2) (DOK 3,4) is a writing standard.

And "4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies. (Language.1.4) (DOK 2) is a language standard.

Video Example

Watch this video of a teacher teaching vocabulary through a read-aloud: what strategies does Dr. Wright say she will use to teach the vocabulary words?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=273#oembed-1

Did you see them all?

Reflection Questions

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Why focus on vocabulary?

Extensive research on literacy development is clear – vocabulary knowledge is a major player in the game of reading (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

Vocabulary knowledge predicts kindergarten readiness, and third-grade reading. Children who know a lot of words easily learn new words, while children who come to school knowing fewer words may struggle to catch up (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). When children already know a word, it is easier for them to decode it using their phonological skills. Researchers Hart and Risley (1995) found that the number of words that children heard in the home before attending kindergarten predicted how many words they knew and how fast they could learn new words.

Vocabulary knowledge affects reading skills in several ways:

- supports comprehension of words that children are decoding;
- helps children recognize words more quickly while they are decoding;
- supports phonological awareness, and
- increases child's understanding of content instruction.

Learning new words is a part of a child's language development, and it is important for both oral language and written language. Children need to be able to understand (receptive language) and communicate to others (expressive language).

This is illustrated in the table below:

	Receptive Language	Expressive Language
Oral Language	Listening	Speaking
Written Language	Reading (decoding + comprehension)	Writing (handwriting, spelling, composition)

These abilities do not develop at the same pace. Children usually understand words before they can use them correctly. This is especially true for children who are developing English or children at risk for developmental delay.

Researchers suggest there are three levels of vocabulary understanding. It is not as simple as knowing a word or not knowing a word. Children can either 1) have no knowledge of a word; 2) be acquainted with it (have been exposed to it); or 3) have an established knowledge of it, whereby they can give a definition.

Reflection Activity

In the chapter on Phonics, you learned about morphemes, which are the smallest units of meaning in words. The ability to identify prefixes and suffixes, and to understand how they change word meanings, also impacts vocabulary development. In English, our letters do not perfectly represent the sounds of words, but meaning across words is often represented by morphemes:

Sign	Signal
Nature	Natural
Bomb	Bombardment
Deport	Deportment

Early readers may learn simple morphemes like *s* for plural and *ed* for past-tense words. It is not until second or third grade that children begin to master the more complex ones. It is important to teach students about word parts so they can work out the meanings of unfamiliar words and grow their academic vocabulary.

It was previously thought that younger children should not be introduced to morphology, but

current research suggests it benefits phonological awareness, spelling ability, and vocabulary (Bowers, 2020).

How to teach vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the five essential components of literacy instruction.

Recall The 5 essential components:

1. phonemic awareness,
2. phonics,
3. fluency,
4. vocabulary,
5. comprehension.

Vocabulary is the study of word meaning

- Students are not required to know how to spell or even read a word accurately to study vocabulary, as the focus is on word meanings.
- Vocabulary "sets the ceiling" on student comprehension.
- Vocabulary is taught *in the context* of stories or non-fiction texts and *explicitly within word-study lessons.*
- Children learn implicitly from purposeful conversations and read-alouds.

Indirect vocabulary learning

Children learn most words indirectly, through everyday interactions in discussions and exposure to books. This happens in three ways:

- They engage daily in oral language – primarily discussion with adults.
- They listen to adults reading to them.
- They read on their own and pick up meaning from the text.

Direct vocabulary learning

Although a lot of vocabulary is learned indirectly, some vocabulary should be taught directly. Direct instruction helps students learn difficult or unfamiliar words that are not part of their everyday experiences. This is done in interactive **read-alouds** and word-study lessons.
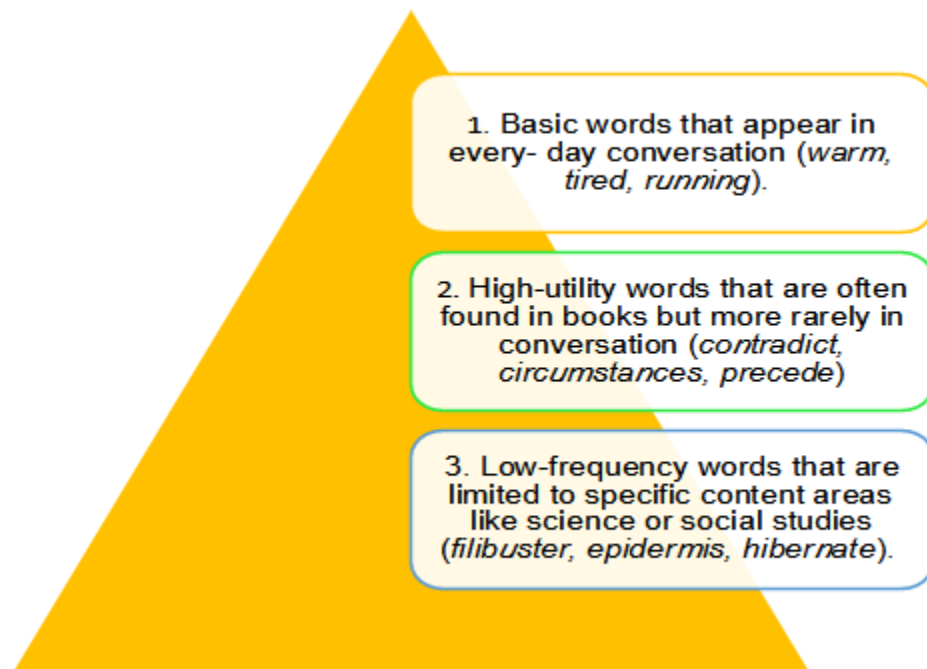
See this example from *Read, Write, Think*: "Word Study with Henry and Mudge"

The direct instruction of vocabulary includes:

- Teaching the specific words that are important to the students' content learning or understanding of a particular text (fiction or non-fiction).
- Teaching students general word-learning strategies that they can apply to a variety of words, such as analyzing parts of words (e.g., root words).

Choosing words to teach

In the book *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, by Beck, McKeown and Kucan, (2013, 2nd ed) the authors suggest a three-tier framework for considering which words to teach:

1. Basic words that appear in every-day conversation (*warm, tired, running*).

2. High-utility words that are often found in books but more rarely in conversation (*contradict, circumstances, precede*)

3. Low-frequency words that are limited to specific content areas like science or social studies (*filibuster, epidermis, hibernate*).

Teachers should spend the majority of vocabulary-instruction time on tiers two and three. However, students who are learning English (English Language Learners or Emergent Bilinguals) may need instruction in tier-one words.

Text talk

Beck et al. (2013) propose a teaching sequence they call "**text talk**." Researchers Manyak et al. (2014) adapted that sequence for their multifaceted vocabulary-instruction project and suggest the VP Model for introducing target-word meanings:

1. Present the word in the context in which it appears in a text (whenever possible): "The attendants *insisted*…"
2. Provide a kid-friendly definition: "*Insist* or, in the past tense *insisted*, means someone tells you strongly that you have to do something, like,
   'My mother *insisted* that I do my homework before watching TV.' "
3. Provide multiple examples of use: "I might say, 'Our coach *insisted* we run the play until we got it right.' Or, 'I was hot, but my sister *insisted* I close the window.' Or, 'His mother *insisted* that he clean up his room before his friend came over.' "
4. Prompt student use: "Think of all the things that your parents *insist* that you do. Who can share one? Make sure that you use the word *insist*, like, 'My mom *insists* that I…' "
5. Show and briefly discuss a visual image: "Look at this picture. Who can explain why I am showing you this picture for the word *insist*?"
6. Conclude with a thought question and/or a quick interactive activity:

   ◦ *Thought Question:* "Do you think it is better for your reading when a teacher *insists* that you read challenging books or when you can choose any books you want? Try to use *insist* in your answer."
   ◦ *Interactive Activity:* "OK, ready for a little quiz? I am going to say a sentence. If someone in the sentence insisted on something, say *insist*. If not, don't say anything. My dad's boss told him he had to work late, even though my dad didn't want to. My teacher let us choose what we wanted to do for P.E. (Manyak et al., 2014, p.16)."

Learning Activities

Researchers Manyak et al. (2014) suggest using a weekly formative assessment such as a cloze activity. Cloze informal assessments are created by either selecting a passage and deleting the target word, leaving a blank for the student to fill in, or by creating a word bank and example sentences with blanks to fill in.

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Structured word analysis

Because the English language is so extensive, we can never hope to teach all the words our students should know. Another approach is to teach word learning strategies, or **structured word inquiry** (sometimes shortened to SWI). This is similar to how we teach phonics in word study, but instead of focusing on the sounds of words only, we focus on the meanings of **root words** and **morphemes**. Importantly, we can teach children a strategy to find out word meanings by using this analysis.

Primary-grade students can begin by adding common prefixes and suffixes to short words.

- *jump, jumps, jumped, jumping, jumper*
- *read, reread, reader, nonreader, reading*

They can also learn about compound words.

- *bathtub, airplane, baseball*

Next, students can learn word parts, and word families.

Video Example

Hear from the experts! Sue Hegland talks about morphology from the beginning.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=273#oembed-2

Just like other types of inquiry, students can research words they encounter or are curious about. It is fun to explore root words and find all the related words.

Here's an example with the English word "act." Find more examples on the English hints website page about word families:

			or	actor	
in	trans			tion	action
		act			inaction, transaction
in	pro			ive	active
					inactive
					proactive
re				react	

Once you see these words together, you realize how many words you already know!

Multiple meanings, connotative and denotative meanings

Another aspect to teaching vocabulary is understanding that words can express more than their technical meaning, and sometimes have multiple meanings.

Words have a denotation meaning that we think about as the "dictionary" meaning. For example, "gray" is a color that is a mix of black and white.

The connotation on the other hand, is all the meanings that can be ascribed to the words – these come from cultural references. What other meanings come to mind when we think about "gray"? "Gloomy" and "cloudy," but also "ambiguous," right? "It's a gray area."

Video Example

Here is a video with a brief explanation by Bloom Edu:

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https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=273#h5p-12

Some words have more than one meaning, and we usually know which one is correct by the context of the text we are reading. We understand that if we use the word "yard" in a sentence about measuring ("I bought three yards of fabric"), it is different than if the sentence mentions the outdoors ("We played in the yard"). Students must be taught that if a word doesn't make sense in the context, there might be a different meaning they should investigate. Multiple-meaning words can also be referred to as **homonyms** – words that have the same spelling and pronunciation, but different meanings. For example, someone might talk about how a person is very bright, and a student might be thinking about how a person could be bright like the sun.

A good resource for examples of homonyms is yourdictionary.com. Other word categories like **homophones** (that sound the same but have different meanings, like *ant* and *aunt*) can also be tricky. Download this infographic from yourdictionary.com [PDF] for a quick visual guide.

Learning Activities

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https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=273#h5p-10

Using technology

The National Council of Teachers of English encourages teachers to work with students to explore and engage across a wide variety of tools and modalities. Technology can be used to actively learn and explore vocabulary – and students often find it motivating.

Dalton (2008) and colleagues completed a large study of the role of vocabulary in comprehension, especially for struggling readers, and they outline 10 strategies for using technology to teach vocabulary, including:

- Use technology to create visual displays that show the relationships of words in texts. For example, use a Wordle to create a word cloud from a text. Then discuss the theme and frequently occurring words.
- Go on a digital field trip! Create a digital version of a vocabulary field trip using the free online program called *TrackStar* (trackstar.4teachers.org). The field trip involves selecting a topic (such as weather) or location (like Alaska) and having students observe and record important words as they read books and other materials.
- Play online games and visit fun websites like Vocabulary.com and Flocabulary.
- Read digital texts which have hyperlinks with definitions of words.

We can't teach students all the words they will need to know, but knowing how to use online tools and resources is part of being a strategic learner.

Including diverse learners

For English-language learners and emergent bilinguals, being able to use their first-language knowledge to develop their English vocabulary is key (Adesope et al., 2010). Online dictionaries, like Wordsmyth Comprehensive Dictionary Suite, can support multiple languages.

Another resource is the language translator available in the web browser. The value of a translator is that it supports learning words as they occur naturally in authentic text and allows students to view bilingual versions of a text side by side so that they can use their first-language knowledge to develop their English vocabulary. You can paste text into the translator field, select the input and output languages, and view the translation (see Babelfish, Google Translator, and Bing Translator). You may also download a toolbar extension that translates any webpage automatically. Although these tools are not always correct or sensitive to dialects, they are a good place to start.

Key Takeaways

- Children who know a lot of words easily learn new words, while children who come to school knowing fewer words may be at a disadvantage in learning to read independently. When children already know the meaning of a word, it is easier for them to decode it.
- Teaching specific words is important to the students' content learning or understanding of a particular text (fiction or non-fiction). This should be done with teaching students general word-learning strategies that they can apply to a variety of words, such as analyzing parts of words (e.g., root words).

Resources for teacher educators

- **How to use morphology to teach vocabulary**
- See this article at *Reading Rockets* for Manyak et al.'s complete recommendations: **Four Practical Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction**
- Chapter 6: Meaning Vocabulary Presentation
- Developing Vocabulary through Poetry Presentation

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Chapter 7. Fluency and Comprehension

Nandita Gurjar

"Some books are so familiar that reading them is like being home again" – Louisa May Alcott in *Little Women*

Figure 1: Reading as a comforting experience. (Source: "This image " by Elf-Moondance is in the Public Domain)

Keywords: word recognition, re-reading, predicting, summarizing, self-monitoring, think-aloud, echo reading, choral reading, shared reading, guided reading, read-aloud, partner reading, recorded reading, word walls, readers' theater

Comprehension: Kindergarten standards

Key details

- With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about the key details in a text.
- With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
- With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Craft and structure

- Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
- Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).
- With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

Integration of knowledge and ideas

- With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
- With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Range of reading and text complexity

- Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
- For other grade-level comprehension standards, see Iowa's standards here.

Fluency

Kindergarten

- Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade

- Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
- Read on-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.
- Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

A student can be seen reading laboriously, trying to sound out every letter while reading. For the word "*he*," the student sounds /h/ and /e/, getting confused about what word that might be. It happens with *"laugh," "night," "here," "her,"* and "*she*" as well. The student's inability to recognize high-frequency words automatically by sight and their lack of pattern recognition leads to a frustrating experience in reading. When the teacher asks comprehension questions about the story, the student does not remember much of what they just read. This demonstrates how a lack of fluency impacts reading comprehension in children. This chapter presents research-based strategies for building fluency and comprehension in children.

Comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and phonological awareness form the five components of reading. They work together to support proficient reading, whereby children read with purpose and understanding.

Example Video

Comprehension is understanding. Understanding the elements of a story helps children to comprehend the story. The following video demonstrates the elements of a story.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=291#oembed-1*

[Download Parts of the Story Video Transcript [DOC]](https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=291#oembed-1)

The role of motivation in reading

Motivation and engagement are also crucial for skilled reading (Kamil et al., 2011; Wigfield & Asher, 1984). You can motivate readers and engage them through the following steps:

1. Have goals and a purpose for reading (Guthrie & Hummenick, 2004).
2. Engage children in applying their knowledge of reading strategies (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).
3. Have children self-regulate their reading processes (Clay, 1991).
4. Leverage children's interest in a topic (Wigfield & Asher, 1984).
5. Provide them choices about what to read (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).
6. Engage them in dialogic conversations, peer discussions, and so on.
7. Have various authentic classroom reading experiences to cultivate joy: shared reading, read-aloud, guided reading, and independent reading experiences. Invite guardians and role models to read aloud. Connect with authors through a video-conferencing platform.
8. Model and explicitly teach the required skills systematically to scaffold and support developing readers.
9. Have one-on-one reading conferences with children (Cunningham & Allington, 2016).
10. Provide a print-rich environment with various genres of books and materials in digital and print-based formats. Send home books to read to siblings and parents.

The science of reading

The **science of reading** is based on interdisciplinary research from linguistics, education, psychology, and neuroscience. The science of reading emphasizes empowering children with problem-solving decoding strategies rather than having them use clues to guess words. Reading involves **orthographic mapping**, which is a process of connecting sounds (phonemes) in the oral language to letters (graphemes) or letter sequences (patterns) to permanently store words in our long-term memory. For example, /c/a/t/ — C a t

Orthographic mapping

Figure 2: The process involved in orthographic mapping

Orthographic mapping applies phoneme-grapheme association, pattern recognition, and automaticity in word recognition to decode words. Practicing sight-word (high-frequency words) recognition, reinforcing the alphabet letters and sounds, and working with word families through word sorts and word work (making words) all scaffold orthographic mapping. Systematic, explicit phonics instruction with continual "review and repeat" cycles helps children develop fluency. Follow the structured literacy guidelines to support learners having reading difficulties.

Our brains can attend to only a few things at a time. If most of the children's attention is focused on decoding words, it is hard for them to simultaneously apply their background knowledge to make connections while reading (linguistic comprehension). According to the National Reading

Panel (2000) study, if a text is read laboriously, it will be difficult for children to remember what has been read and relate the ideas to their background knowledge.

Therefore, children must become fluent in decoding words and making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections, applying their background knowledge, vocabulary, native-language-literacy knowledge, knowledge of the target language's linguistic structure, and verbal reasoning to develop reading comprehension.

The Simple View of Reading

Gough and Turner (1986) proposed that reading comprehension (RC) is the product of decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC).

Building upon Gough and Turner's work, Scarborough (2001) conceptualized skilled reading as a braid of fluent word recognition and simultaneous language comprehension.

The strands of word recognition consist of phonological awareness, decoding (knowledge of alphabetic principle, phoneme-grapheme correspondence), and sight word recognition. The word recognition strand is increasingly automatic.

On the other hand, the language comprehension strand is increasingly strategic and consists of background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge.

According to the **Simple View of Reading**, children need both word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension to read proficiently, as shown in the example below.

Video Example

This video explains the simple view of reading and what it means for meaning-making in students:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=291#oembed-2*

Download Simple View of Reading Video Transcript [DOC]

Fluent word recognition

Fluent word recognition depends on phonological awareness, decoding skills, and sight-word recognition. Fluent word recognition requires developing **automaticity.** Phonological awareness is an auditory skill and is developed by manipulating sounds. Students' decoding skills develop from explicit and systematic phonics instruction. Sight-word recognition occurs when high-frequency words are recognized automatically and effortlessly. Sight words may not lend themselves to being easily decoded and are learned after abundant exposure, for example, "does," "she," "he," "here," and so on.

Language comprehension

Language comprehension depends on background knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. Language comprehension is **strategic** and requires knowing the background information about the topic, having the vocabulary and syntax, and applying verbal reasoning.

What is fluency?

"Fluency is the ability to read most words in context quickly and accurately with proper expression" (Cunningham & Allington, 2016, p. 46). The expectation is for students to read on-

grade-level text with **purpose and understanding**. Also, fluent reading aims for students to read on-level text accurately with **proper expression** at a **comfortable**, **appropriate rate** upon successive readings.

What is fluent reading?

Fluent reading (Rasinski, 2003) is being able to:

- quickly and automatically identify the words;
- read in prosody (in phrases and not word by word), and
- read expressively as if speaking.

There is a misconception that fluency means being able to read fast. This view is reinforced by standardized fluency assessments of student progress (such as Dibels), where students are timed on how many words they can read within a minute. The focus on speed reading detracts from the importance of making connections, resulting in a lack of reading comprehension. Therefore, it becomes essential to have students practice expressive reading at a comfortable pace with purpose and understanding. Readers' theater and oral poetry reading leverage authentic, meaningful engagement that taps students' creativity while developing their reading fluency.

What is comprehension?

Comprehension is synonymous with understanding. It is the ability to derive meaning from the text. Meaning-making requires understanding the pertinent vocabulary and background knowledge of the topic. Comprehending the text also requires knowing the text structure (organization of the text) and text features.

The text features include the table of contents, headings, subheadings, captions, glossary, index, diagrams, maps, labels, charts, graphs, and tables. Informational or nonfiction text has features depending on the discipline or content. For example, a social studies text will have maps, whereas a science text will have diagrams.

Some text features are common across content areas, such as a glossary, index, table of contents, headings and subheadings, tables, charts, and graphs. Comprehending informational text requires close attention to these features, understanding the content-area vocabulary, and background knowledge of the discipline.

A narrative text is often organized in a descriptive or problem-solution structure with a beginning, middle, and end. The narrative text is categorized into personal narrative or fictional narrative.

Personal narratives

Personal narratives can be autobiographies, journals (dialogue journals, diaries, simulated journals), memoirs, biographies, and poetry (bio-poems, where am I from, 6-word memoirs, etc.). Children in PreK-2 can be guided in writing diamantes (diamond-shaped opposite poems), limericks (rhyming poems), and cinquains (five-line poems). Bio-poems can be modified for PreK-2 grades.

Fictional narratives

> Narrative and informational texts can have one or more of the following **text structures** (**text organization**) :
>
> - problem-solution
> - description
> - chronological/ sequential/process
> - comparison/ contrast
> - cause and effect

Fictional narratives or stories have literary elements such as setting, characters, plot (problem, events, solution), and theme or main idea. Fictional narratives come in the following genres: realistic fiction (contemporary), science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and traditional literature (myths, fables, and folktales). Understanding fictional narratives necessitate paying particular attention to literary elements. This instruction can be approached through think-aloud and dialogic reading. Retelling stories with their beginning, middle, and ending parts reinforce their structures in children's minds.

Dialogic reading

Dialogic reading is especially pertinent for oral-language development and comprehension. Dialogic reading is done by conversing about a book with children using the CROWD+HS questions and PEER+PA dialogue. You may explore Iowa Reading Research Center's interactive-reading guide and the CROWD and PEER bookmarks.
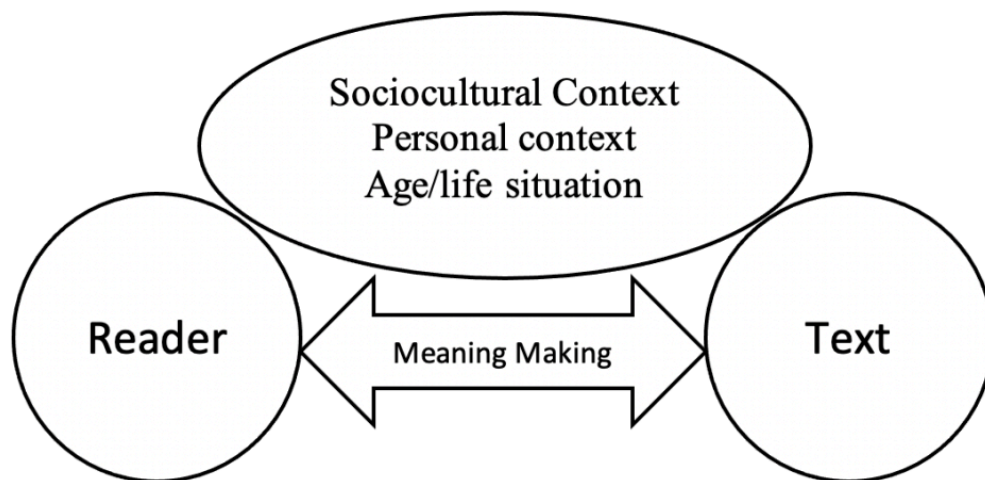
Figure 3: Rosenblatt's theory of text transaction with reader, text, and the context

Rosenblatt (1994) believed active reading is a transactional process between the reader and the text. Reading requires active engagement with the text. The task (reader's purpose) also plays a role in constructing meaning from the text. As a child reads, they make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. Making connections and associations facilitates comprehension. The child's language, culture, life experiences, and prior knowledge influence the process.

The socio-cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978) plays a role in meaning-making. Children may read the same book yet derive different meanings from it based on their life experiences. Children's meaning-making is influenced by their socio-cultural context, life situation, knowledge of the topic and vocabulary, language, culture, and the unique progression of their literacy development.

One implication for the classroom instruction of younger readers is that some of them may come with limited background knowledge due to their life experiences and limited access to books at home. It is, therefore, essential to fill those gaps in knowledge through various means to facilitate their reading comprehension. Having various reading and writing experiences across content areas supports the building of this background knowledge.

The reader may read for either an efferent or an aesthetic reading purpose. Efferent reading is for gaining information. Most nonfiction text is read with an efferent purpose in mind. Narrative text may also be read to gain information to be able to retell.

Aesthetic reading is mainly for the enjoyment of the text. Independent reading time should be for aesthetic purposes, where children are reading to enjoy books. They should not be required to do a book report/related book activity during independent reading time.

Learning environments promote fluency and comprehension

A print-rich learning environment is essential for promoting literacy in children. Young children see print and understand that it communicates meaning. A classroom can be made into a print-rich learning environment by creating a word wall containing high-frequency words.

Other ways to add to a print-rich learning environment are to display relevant anchor charts and student work samples in the classroom. Displaying student work samples allows them to take pride in their work and builds their self-confidence and self-esteem to see adults acknowledge it.

Stock classroom libraries with digital and print-based children's literature in various genres that represent student identities and provide windows into other worldviews. Wordless picturebooks are excellent tools to ignite imagination and creativity. Every classroom should have some to address the needs of English-language learners (dual-language learners). Wordless picturebooks leverage the background knowledge and home literacies of the students.

Inviting parents to come to class to read multicultural or traditional literature of their choice builds the home-school connection. It creates a welcoming learning environment where children's cultural and linguistic identities and cultural heritage are celebrated. Sending books home to read to parents and siblings builds community and home literacies.

Celebrating learning through literacy events creates a joyful, affirming, positive environment of collaboration and mentoring through a school-community partnership. The community comes together to share and celebrate their cultural heritage, language, and culture through reading and writing activities.

Print-rich and inclusive learning environments

Creating a word wall

Start by selecting a few high-frequency words based on student needs. Gradually add words to the wall.

High-frequency word recognition and vocabulary words that sound alike but have different meanings (such as "hear" and "here") can be written on the word wall.

Utilize the word wall in your instruction. You may make a riddle, or a game and bring attention to a word during reading and writing time.

Selecting children's literature

Select a variety of [high-quality](#) print-based and digital texts in various genres based on student interests. Take an interest inventory at the beginning of the year. Have books on various topics, such as pets, farm animals, sports, princesses, etc. Also, have poetry, science fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, traditional literature from different cultures, and nonfiction texts in digital and print-based formats. Ensure access to easy, just right, or challenging books to address the needs of all students in your class.

Choose texts that provide mirrors and windows (Sims Bishop, 1990) to create a print-rich environment for the students to interact with. Mirrors reflect the realities of students' lives, while windows offer an opportunity to consider other perspectives and broaden their horizons by learning about other contexts.

Reading and writing experiences across content areas

Provide a variety of consistent reading and writing experiences throughout the day, such as shared reading, read-aloud, guided reading, independent reading, and writer's workshops. Incorporate literacy activities across the curriculum in science, social studies, and math so children can see the literacy connections while reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing.

Fostering inclusivity to build fluency and comprehension

Fostering inclusivity directly correlates with lowering anxiety (the affective filter) in dual-language learners. If learners are anxious, it interferes with fluent reading and comprehension. Providing the option of reading silently or with a peer lowers anxiety, especially for second-language learners.

Providing comprehensible input suited to the developmental and linguistic abilities of dual language learners and using visuals and other multimodal sources promote comprehension

in English Language Learners (ELLs). Respecting the silent phase of the second language (Krashen, 1982), acquiring dual-language learners, and providing comprehensible input promote oral-language development in children. Modeling provides examples for dual-language learners to follow.

Provide a safe, nurturing environment with a low affective filter (lower children's anxiety due to new cultural and linguistic contexts) where mistakes are necessary for learning. Errors are seen as opportunities for growth and learning. Exploration, experimentation, and iterations cultivate critical thinking, creativity, imagination, and innovation.

Creating a sense of belonging and celebrating diverse identities by welcoming everyone to bring their whole selves and diverse perspectives to the learning process will build self-esteem in children and foster inclusivity, upon which fluency and comprehension can be built.

Strategies to promote fluency

Readers' theater

Reader's theater is a play with dialogue where the actors orally read their parts written in a script. Readers' theater is a powerful, authentic way to build fluency in children while engaging them in meaningful activities. It capitalizes on oral reading with expression by allowing the children to play the roles of characters in the story. It first requires comprehending the story and the characters' traits to be able to role-play them. Using the voice and tone of the characters, the children read with intonation, pauses, and expression as needed. It is a fun, engaging way to build fluency!

Watch this reader's theater as an example on YouTube: Reader's Theater: Building Fluency and Expression.

To implement this fluency-building strategy, look for books with lots of dialogue. You may introduce children to the readers' theater by choosing simple books with numerous dialogues to build their reading confidence. For example, *Little Red Hen* has several characters with multiple dialogues. Therefore, it makes for a great readers'-theater experience for young children.

Spoken-word poetry

Spoken-word poetry is performed poetry. The performer uses their voice and gestures to convey strong emotions through the verse. Amanda Gorman's poem *The Hill We Climb* can be utilized for spoken-word poetry. To implement this activity in your class, generate a list of topics with the students, or provide them with a choice of topics they may feel passionate about. Plan writing workshop times for the students to write, revise, and polish their writing. When they are ready, they may practice reading their poem with a peer. Volunteers may share their spoken-word poems with the whole class.

Echo reading

Echo reading is when the teacher models reading a line expressively, and the students repeat it after the teacher. The teacher reads a line, and the students repeat it, echoing the teacher. Therefore, this reading approach is called "echo reading." Echo reading develops fluency as the teacher models reading with expression for the students.

It is the most scaffolded approach for guiding the cadence (musicality of the language) of the language and developing reading fluency. Every language has a different rhythm and cadence, with unique intonation and stress patterns. Echo reading is beneficial for English Language Learners to familiarize them with the pronunciation of words and the intonation/stress patterns of the language.

To implement echo reading, the teacher generally reads the text, pointing to each word in the line to reinforce the one-to-one correspondence between the written and spoken words, and has the children repeat. Shared reading experiences such as echo reading also reinforce the concepts of print and sight-word recognition for young learners.

Sometimes, the teacher claps and sways to the rhythm while reading a sentence, and the children repeat each sentence while copying her movements. Having the children repeat just by listening without the print has the benefit of developing phonological awareness and listening skills. Each teacher needs to consider their own contextual needs and make their own judgment calls about how to implement a particular strategy.

Choral reading

Choral reading is when the teacher and student read together in chorus. To do that, the teacher must first model reading and then have the printed text available at each student's desk.

You can use poems in reading practice sessions to develop fluency. Have the students pair up with one another to practice choral reading together, thereby scaffolding each other's reading attempts, then bring the whole group together for a class choral reading.

Another technique is to have the students join at repeated refrains in a book. For example, in the book *5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*, the children can read in unison: "*No More monkeys jumping on the bed*!" Choral reading makes for an enjoyable reading experience.

Repeated reading

Repeated reading builds fluency. Children's favorite books make the best texts for repeated reading experiences. Each time the child reads it, they may notice something they didn't see before, enhancing their comprehension. Repeated reading also improves sight-word recognition and oral reading skills. Ensure that your students have access to easy books during independent reading time. They need consistent independent-reading time, as it allows exploring books based on their interests while re-reading their favorite books for enjoyment develops their fluency.

Repeated reading enhances children's confidence in reading. The children may record reading their favorite book on Flipgrid after a few repeated reading sessions with peers or family. Encourage them to read to their teddy bear (or plush toy), siblings, peers, guardians, and relatives.

Lack of access to books can be addressed by various initiatives such as book deserts through various statewide programs in which you may get involved. The disparity in book access can be addressed by neighborhood little-library initiatives. Bring a book, take home a book, and spread community and home literacies!

Recorded reading

Recorded reading materials can be listened to anytime and anywhere as long as children can access a device. There are several celebrity read-aloud programs available. Storyline online is

a platform that offers virtual read-aloud by celebrities. They update their collection of books periodically to attract kids. There are recorded reading videos by characters from children's TV shows on the Internet.

Read-aloud (reading to students)

Read-aloud provides modeling for fluent, expressive reading while instilling joy and comfort in the reading experience. Children develop listening comprehension while listening to read aloud. Read-aloud has innumerable socio-emotional and cognitive benefits. This NPR article and podcast provide parents with guidance about making reading aloud to their kids a warm, bonding experience while making them better readers.

Reading aloud enhances phonemic awareness, one of the literacy building blocks in young children. Teachers and guardians model expressive reading while reading aloud and facilitate building children's vocabulary. Additionally, reading aloud provides access to a text that children might not be able to read on their own and helps them process life and difficult issues through dialogic conversations. With the help of adults, children negotiate meaning. Further, reading aloud builds children's background knowledge. Through think-aloud and pertinent thought-provoking questions, read-aloud scaffold meaning-making. This PBS article provides the beneficial effects of reading aloud.

Reading aloud involves planning and preparation. First, consider how you would like to introduce the book, author, and illustrator: how would you connect the children's prior knowledge to the topic? At what points would you ask strategic think-aloud questions without interrupting the story? What are some relevant questions focused on predicting, visualizing, monitoring comprehension, summarizing, and/or evaluating? What story elements (characters, setting, plot, and theme) would you discuss and how? How would you make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections? You may choose to discuss certain aspects of the book in depth depending on the cognitive and affective development of the children.

Shared reading (reading with students)

As the name suggests, shared reading involves a reader sharing a text with an audience. A teacher, for example, reads from a "big book." In PreK-2, the children sit on a rug while the teacher reads and points at words with a pointer. Pointing demonstrates the one-to-one correspondence of written and spoken words. Shared reading also improves students' sight-

word recognition and concepts about print, such as reading moves from left to right and return sweep to the left to continue reading.

Shared reading builds fluency by modeling expressive reading with voice changes for different characters. It cultivates joy from reading by making it a pleasurable experience where children participate by chiming in at certain spots.

It also supports story comprehension by building a schema for the story structure, with beginning, middle, and end, highlighting the story elements of character, setting, plot, and theme through strategic, thought-provoking questions.

Independent reading (reading by students)

Independent reading by students supports fluency. Motivation plays a huge role in creating independent readers. The students can be motivated by bringing in a variety of texts based on their interests and providing them with choices in reading and writing. There is no follow-up activity or book report to be written on books the children read. Children engage in independent reading for fun and enjoyment. Research (Cunningham & Allington, 2016) shows that the significant motivators of students for reading are teachers' read-aloud and the students having an independent reading time with books of their own choice.

The purpose of independent reading is the enjoyment of the text. Students should get a consistent independent reading time of at least 20 minutes each day. Teachers must consider how to implement independent reading in their classrooms, including logistics such as when students would select their books for the independent-reading time. What procedures are there already in place to make independent-reading time efficient?

Guided reading (reading by students)

Guided reading is reading by the students under the supervision and guidance of the teacher. Texts are provided at the student's instructional level. (At the correct instructional level, the word accuracy rate is 90-94% – that is, in a passage of 100 words, the reader makes no more than 10 errors, and the comprehension is 60% or better.) The teacher selects developmentally appropriate book sets. The students read while the teacher listens and makes pertinent observational notes to put in each student's file.

Fountess and Pinell (2012, 2018) note that guided reading supports differentiated instruction

and leads to independent reading. Teachers can provide the children with individualized support through guided reading in small groups.

To implement guided reading, teachers form flexible, homogenous groups based on the instructional needs of the students to guide and model the skills that the students need help with. It involves assessing the needs of the children through various literacy assessments. Students practice the particular skill they need under the teacher's guidance while the rest of the class works at centers or their desks on their literacy skills. It involves building procedures into the daily schedule. Guided reading builds literacy skills, including fluency and comprehension.

Rasinski (2003) and (Rasinski & Padak, 2013) recommend developing fluency through fluency-development lessons with the following instructional routine. This routine can be completed within 15-20 minutes:

1. **Read aloud** a short poem or interesting passage several times. Help the children comprehend difficult words during the discussion.
2. Do a **choral reading** of the poem or passage as a class several times, assigning different parts for the children to take. The children should have copies of the text.
3. Do at least three **partner readings** of the poem or passage, taking turns reading.
4. Ask for **volunteers to read** the poem or passage to the whole class.
5. Have the children **choose 2-3 words** from the poem/passage to add to their personal dictionary.
6. The children take home the text. They are encouraged to **share their reading with a parent or guardian**.

Strategies to promote comprehension

Early print awareness reflects children's understanding that print conveys meaning as they explore it in their environment with parents and guardians. Toddlers and preschoolers depend on social clues and physical context to read print (Goodman, 1986). Gradually, they learn directionality, letter names, and the correspondence between letters and sounds to make meaning of the written symbols and words.

Video Example

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=291#oembed-3

Adults play a considerable role in promoting understanding of the text by reading aloud and having children interact with the print in their daily lives. Children develop a story schema through read-aloud with a beginning, middle, and end. They also get exposed to different text structures and features through consistent, shared reading experiences. Furthermore, read-aloud develops vocabulary and prior knowledge to enhance linguistic comprehension.

Guardians and teachers can promote reading comprehension by:

- Reading a variety of narrative and expository texts aloud.
- Choosing books that introduce children to unfamiliar topics, complex syntax, and sophisticated words (Paratore et al., 2011).
- Encouraging children to elaborate, clarify, and reason as they discuss stories (dialogic reading).
- Engaging children in various reading experiences, such as independent reading, shared reading, guided reading, and read-aloud.
- Making consistent time for a daily read-aloud or shared reading and independent reading.
- Building children's vocabulary by exploring word meanings: Have children illustrate the vocabulary (sketch to stretch), write synonyms, antonyms, and a sentence, or draw a graphic organizer like the Frayer model [PDF]. The Frayer model can be modified to have a combination of words and pictures. Children can also explore vocabulary in their surroundings. Understanding vocabulary supports children's comprehension.

Understanding narrative text elements

Narrative texts have a story structure with a beginning, middle, and end. Narrative texts have the following story elements:

Setting

Setting indicates when and where a story takes place. To develop an understanding of the setting, explore how the **illustrations** and **word choices** in the story contribute to the feeling of the place and time.

Characters

There are major and minor characters in a story. Students can analyze and describe the **traits** or qualities of the characters through their appearance, words, and actions; they can compare the characters using a Venn diagram or examine how the characters evolved from the beginning to end in longer texts such as chapter books.

Plot

The plot involves the **problem**, **sequence of events**, and **solution** of the story. A plot diagram looks like a horizontal line where the story is introduced. Then the problem is introduced, followed by an escalation of conflict, also known as the sequence of events, until the climax of the action. Finally, the graph looks like a downhill line, representing the release of tension as the problem is resolved. There may be **person-to-person** conflict, **person-to-society** conflict, **person-to-self** conflict, or **person-to-nature** conflict. Story mapping helps in developing an understanding of the plot.

Theme

Theme indicates the main idea. Themes are generally written as sentences. For example, "slow and steady wins the race." Have your students identify the story's main idea while guiding them with questions.

Comprehension strategies for narrative texts

Strategies for helping students comprehend texts include reviewing, predicting, activating prior knowledge, setting a purpose, think-aloud, visualizing, inferring, summarizing, and evaluating.

Before reading

Before reading the story, the book is introduced through the 4 Ps: Preview, Prior knowledge, Prediction, and Purpose.

- **Preview:** Previewing consists of examining the title, author, and illustrator and taking a picture walk through the book. It can be done with chapter books as well as picturebooks.
- **Prior knowledge:** Students are encouraged to think about the book's topic through think-aloud or a question.
- **Prediction:** To promote active reading, the students are asked to predict something related to the book based on their preview.
- **Purpose:** Set the purpose of their reading the text. Generally, it is to find information based on the reader's prediction.

While reading

While reading, the students are encouraged to think about the **5 W's and H's: What, Where, When, Why, Who, and How?** The placing of strategic questions at points throughout the book will help the children to comprehend the story. The Iowa Reading Research Center recommends using the **CROWD**+**HS** questions and **PEER**+**PA** dialogue to encourage dialogic reading to promote reading comprehension and oral language development.

Throughout the story, active readers make predictions, they think aloud ("I wonder…, I think…, I feel…"), visualize ("I can vividly see the action happening through the use of descriptive language by the author"), self-monitor ("I don't understand why…"), summarize ("So far in the story…"), and evaluate ("My favorite part is…"). The ability to infer develops over time as children gain experience with reading and learn to make connections using their background knowledge and information from the text to draw conclusions.

After reading

We make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections during and after reading. Students can summarize stories by story mapping to showcase their understanding.

Story mapping

Story mapping is a visual representation of the various elements of a story. Different graphic organizers can be explored online, such as concept maps, story maps, and others. The elements to consider when mapping the story are setting, characters, problem, sequence of events, solution, and theme (main idea).

Compare and contrast

Students may use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast characters from the same book or different books. This allows them to examine the similarities and differences between the characters.

Writing a bilingual story.

Dual-language learners can write with Rebus (a combination of words and pictures) or a bilingual story using two languages.

Retelling using Bob Prost and Kylene Beers' BHH Framework (2017)

Developing the skill to retell stories after hearing them in read-aloud, shared-reading experiences, or guided-reading times reinforces the students' grasp of the beginning-middle-end structure of stories. Retelling skills can be improved over time and made more specific. BHH stands for:

- What is in the book?
- What is in your head?
- What did you take to heart? (The personal connections you made with the story.)

Comprehension strategies for informational texts

Informational text is text that is nonfiction. Newspapers, encyclopedias, and nonfiction books are examples of informational text. The comprehension strategies for informational text are similar to those for narrative text in terms of **visualizing, summarizing, and evaluating information.** The text features of informational text and content-specific vocabulary require close reading, figuring out or looking up vocabulary words, and paying attention to tables, captions, and headings.

Sketch noting and various **graphic organizers** can be used to help visualize the information. **T-charts and double-entry journals** are also great ways to organize the information, with significant points on the left and associated connections on the right. **Tree diagrams** (Cunningham & Allington, 2016) can summarize the text, with the trunk, branches, and twigs representing the main topic, subtopics, and examples/details.

Scavenger hunts and other gamified learning activities with incentives are excellent methods for comprehending informational text.

The Second Life uses a **simulation platform** to teach content areas, and Wondropolis uses children's natural curiosity to teach informational text in a multimodal manner. Newsela provides articles on various informational texts, and you may modify the text difficulty by adjusting for the grade level.

Cunningham and Allington (2016) suggest a "Guess Yes or No," or "**confirm or correct**" framework where students first predict and then read to check their predictions. False predictions are corrected with the correct information. For this activity, students can be given anywhere from 10-15 informational statements to make predictions about, read, confirm, or correct.

Reflection Questions

1. How would you support a student who struggles with comprehension but can read words quickly and accurately?
2. What are some graphic organizers, sketch noting tools, and virtual simulations that support English Language Learners' comprehension, and how would you use them in your classroom?

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=291#h5p-27

Key Takeaways

- Fluency and comprehension are correlated.
- Create a print-rich, inclusive learning environment.
- Lower the affective filter by creating a sense of belonging.
- Engage the students in authentic, fun learning experiences that reinforce comprehension and fluency, such as readers' theater and spoken-word poetry.
- Provide various reading experiences, including buddy/partner reading, shared reading, guided reading, read-aloud, and independent reading.

Resources for teacher educators

- [The Go-To Literacy Resources for Literacy Teachers](#)
- [Teaching Reading Resources](#)
- [Early Learning Resources](#)
- [Wonderopolis- A Questioning Resource](#)
- [Nonfiction Reading Resource](#)
- [Library of Congress Resource](#)
- [Science Resource for K-12 Educators](#)
- [Smithsonian Learning Lab](#)
- [Time for Kids](#)
- [2022 Notable Books: 21 Best Poetry and Verse Novels for Kids | School Library Journal](#)
- [2022 Notable Poetry Books and Verse Novels – NCTE](#)
- [Notable Children's Books – 2022 | Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)](#)
- [Effectiveness of Early Literacy Instruction: Summary of 20 Years of Research](#)
- [International Literacy Association's Resource on the Science of Reading](#)

Professional materials

- Slide deck on fluency: [OER Fluency Powerpoint](#)
- Slide decks on comprehension:

  - [OER Comprehension (Think-Alouds)](#)
  - [OER Comprehending Narrative Text](#)
  - [OER Reading Informational Texts](#)

Learning Activities

Potential assignments

1. Consider how you would use wordless picturebooks to support comprehension and fluency in children. Explore some wordless picturebooks and decide on one for children to use as a basis for creating something in small groups that they can perform for an audience. Their performance can fall into any one of the following categories: spoken-word poetry, play, readers' theater, news report, talk show, infomercial, or any other type you approve that relates to your wordless picturebook.
2. Explore online resources for fluency and comprehension to create an early literacy instructional resource center for PreK-3rd grade. Choose from the categories listed below:

   ◦ File-folder literacy game ideas
   ◦ Online lesson plans for literacy development
   ◦ Blogs and podcasts related to literacy instruction
   ◦ Performance-poetry resources

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Chapter 8. Writing

Nandita Gurjar and Sohyun Meacham

"I can shake off everything as I write, my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn." – Anne Frank
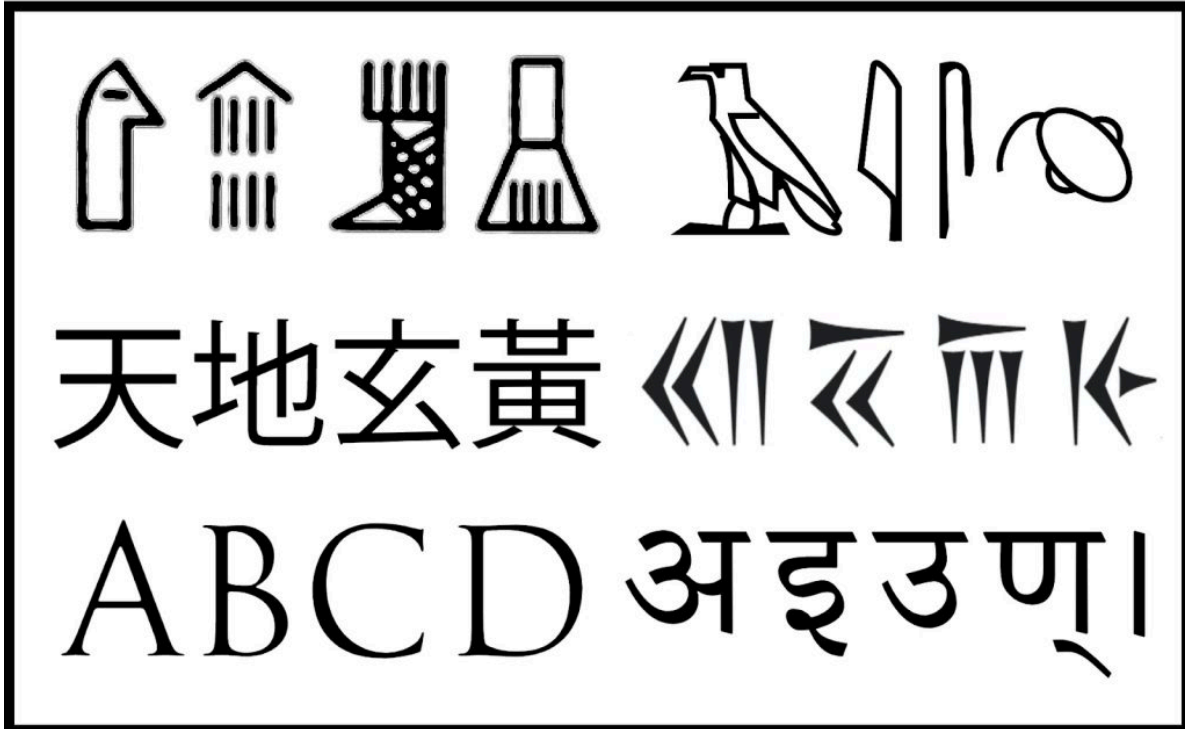
Writing systems in different languages. ("Historical writing systems" by ThisIsNotEditorXVorziblixMason, William Albert (1855-1923) is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

Keywords: writing development, writing process, writing workshop, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, mentor text, mini lessons, writing strategies, conferring

Iowa Core Standards for Writing

Kindergarten

1. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., *My favorite book is…*).
2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.
3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.
4. With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed.
5. With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.
6. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them).
7. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

> **Learning Objectives**
>
> After reading this chapter, you should be able to:
>
> - Identify effective strategies to promote writing development in children (InTASC Standards #1, #2, #4, #8).
> - Identify elements of the writing workshop (InTASC Standard #3 & #7).
> - Describe the process of conferring and its associated benefits (InTASC Standard #5, #7 & #8).
> - Assess writing using the 6+1 traits to personalize writing instruction (InTASC Standard #4).
> - Model and support children's penmanship and handwriting development (InTASC Standard #4).

First Grade

1. Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing

about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure. (W.1.1)

2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure. (W.1.2)

3. Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure. (W.1.3)

4. With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed. (W.1.5)

5. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers. (W.1.6)

6. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of "how-to" books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions). (W.1.7)

7. With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. (W.1.8)

Second Grade

1. Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., *because, and, also*) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

3. Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

4. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

5. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

6. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).

7. Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

Imagine you are in a kindergarten classroom, and the children are in a writing workshop. You look around the room. Some kids are drawing a concrete or shape poem on a whiteboard; others can be seen telling a story to a volunteer; some are writing down their ideas in a graphic organizer, while others are working on grabbers or creating a lead to capture audience attention. The teacher moves from student to student, conferring with them and teaching specific skills they need, differentiating their instruction. This demonstrates the beauty of the writing workshop, where everyone works productively at their own pace while the teacher scaffolds and supports the students as they write, revise, edit, and work on formatting and publishing their work.

Video Example

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=303#oembed-1

Children's writing development

Reading and writing develop simultaneously. Marie Clay, a "guru" of young children's literacy development, suggests that writing can be encouraged if your child can just hold a pencil or a crayon. They do not need to master reading first for you to teach them writing. In the early stages of children's writing development, they just draw and scribble. Research has found that very young children who can't write yet can distinguish between drawing and "writing." When they say they are drawing, they make large figures with round edges. When they say they are writing, though, they use strokes and dots. They lift their pencil off the page and interrupt their movements more when they are "writing." Just be patient when you see your child scribbling indiscernible letters. When they scribble and call it writing, just affirm them and encourage them to do more "writing."

Your child will go through several different stages in the process of writing development. Their scribbles will turn into letter-like forms arranged linearly. Then when there are real noticeable

letters in your child's writing, it still might be pretend writing with randomly ordered letters. Some letter combinations could represent correct sound blends. Many times, these are letters from your child's name or are used at the beginning of words. It is a long journey for your children to master the conventional English writing system. In the meantime, allow them to use their own inventive spelling. "It is far too soon to aim for correctness. Accept and enjoy the child's many attempts and accomplishments" (Clay, 2010, p. 12).

Gentry's (2005) writing-development scale can track children's writing progress and personalize instruction to scaffold their writing development. It describes 5 stages that children go through. Van Ness et al. (2013, p. 578) provide Gentry's writing-development stages as listed below:

1. **Non-alphabetic**: Children use markings, scribbles, and pictures, but no letters.
2. **Pre-alphabetic**: Children write letters, but the letters do not represent sounds. Random letters cannot be read, for example, "RzxTQO" for "bottle."
3. **Partial alphabetic**: Children write letters that represent sounds. There is directionality such as from left to right. There is some correct spelling, for example, "bt" for "bottle."
4. **Full alphabetic**: Children provide a letter for each sound. Some medial short vowels are written, for example, "botl" for "bottle."
5. **Consolidated alphabetic**: Most (two thirds) of the words are written correctly. There is one-to-one spelling correspondence, for example, "bottle" for "bottle."

Spelling as a window into child's reading and writing development

Spelling is a window through which you can assess your child's reading development (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2019). When your child is only able to pretend to read, their writing looks like scribbles. When they start using letter-sound knowledge and blending letters, they might get the beginning and ending consonants, while omitting the intervening vowels, for instance, spelling *cat* as *ct*. Once vowels are used correctly in simple words like *cat* and *dog*, your child will start learning to spell more complicated words. At this stage, *bottle* might be spelled *botl*. English is one of the most opaque languages in terms of spelling. That is why you can see many English monolingual adults who still struggle with it. Much reading experience is necessary for your children to learn to spell correctly, in addition to their receiving explicit teaching of spelling patterns in words. We suggest graciously accepting developmental spelling,

also known as invented spelling, in children's writing to encourage them to focus on the content of their writing as they go through Gentry's developmental stages of writing.

Developing an author identity in children

There are wordless and nearly wordless picturebooks that can provide a context for your child to write something meaningful and useful. Since the illustrations in the book is open to each child's unique interpretation, you can suggest that your child become the author for the picturebook by creating their own story. You can have a conversation with your child as you examine the illustrations together. Then you can encourage your child to write their story based on your conversation.

Louie and Sierschynski (2015, p. 110) provided neatly structured steps to follow when it comes to teaching writing to children with wordless picturebooks.

- First, **preview** the peritextual features: the cover, title page, end pages, dedication and author's note.
- Second, use **repeated viewings** to help them identify the elements in layers, such as setting, text structure, and characters.
- Third, analyze the **author's purpose** together by asking your children why the author/illustrator uses certain images.
- Fourth, help the children put your **discussion in writing**, by **choosing a text structure** such as description, comparing & contrasting, cause & effect, problem & solution, sequence, or a story map as a retelling guide.

Louie and Sierschynski's steps were originally developed as a writing-instruction strategy for learners of English as a second language in the classroom. However, they work well for any family with English as a first or second language. If your children can still only write a few words, and not sentences or paragraphs, you can still encourage them to write some words for a wordless picturebook. Making a road sign or writing a few words in a bubble for a character is a good start. Crews' *Truck* is a wordless picturebook. Wherever the red truck goes, Crews illustrates details of the vehicles, roads, and landscapes surrounding it, including some signs as environmental prints (common logos that the children will be familiar with). Adding more road signs in *Truck* would be a fun writing project for your children.

Many adults only think about the grammar, spelling, and mechanics of writing. However, as you

see from Louie and Sierschynski's strategy above, text structure is an important starting point for writing that your child must learn to be a good writer. In addition, other perspectives from which you can analyze your child's writing are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. This list is the "6 + 1 traits of writing" framework. It was originally 6 traits, and the last trait (presentation) was added to evaluate how the sentences and paragraphs are presented on a page or online screen. As you can see here, writing is so much more than grammar and mechanics. Especially when your child is just starting to write, rather than focusing on grammar and mechanics, listen to your child tell the story that they are trying to write. This can support their process of developing the content of the story. If your child covers a piece of paper with drawings and a couple of letters, try to decipher it with your child.

Let's say your child shows you a small card with squiggly lines and "MOM" on the back. Your face shows much excitement. You ask your child, "Wow, is this card for me? Did you write a card for me?" Then your child will explain what they wrote for you. Oral language and written language work together for you here to understand what your child is trying to communicate. Apparently, the main idea of that writing is love for Mom.
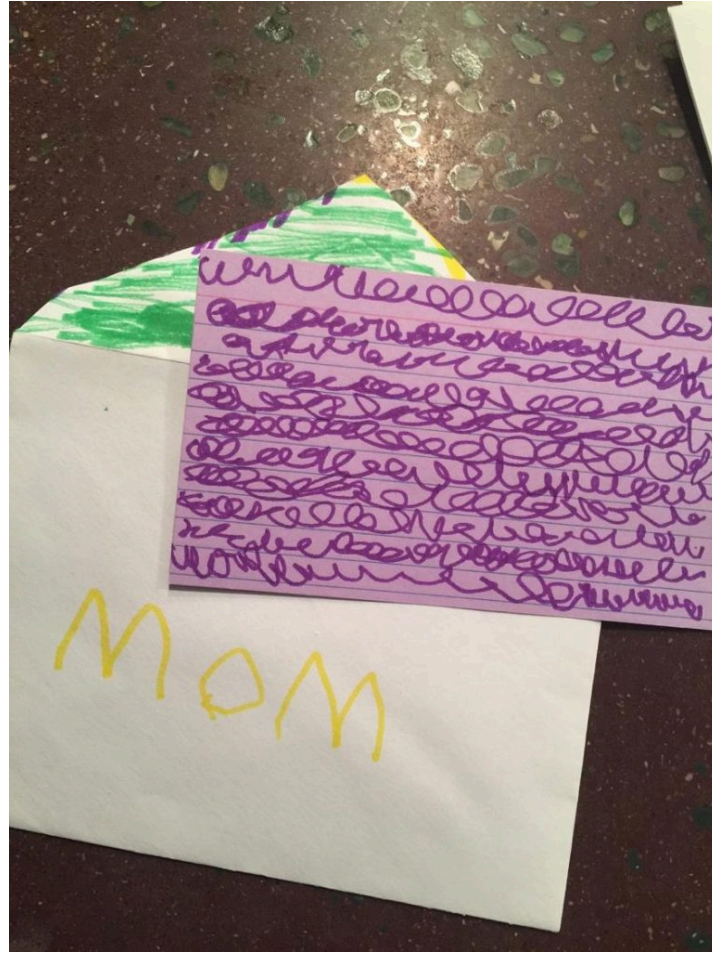
Figure 2: Example of a child's writing to provoke dialogic conversation. (Source: Soh's daughter's handwriting.)

It is important for your child to be able to identify themselves as an author in everyday life. At some point, they might feel that writing is something required only for schoolwork. However, writing is not just for book authors and journalists. Writing can be fun and useful in everyday life. There are many authentic purposes, like writing letters to loved ones and special occasion cards to friends. Your child needs to perceive purposes of writing like these and develop an author identity. The earlier they see the big picture, the less they will struggle with writing at school.

Soh's daughter has loved writing in Bare Books since she was able to write some words on her own, although her spelling was predominantly inventive. Bare Books are blank books with hard white covers and white pages. They usually contain 32 pages that your child can write on, following the average traditional picturebook page count. She has written several of her own

books. One titled *Fireman* had a problem for the main character, a fireman, to solve: putting out a fire. She recalls writing this book below:

> "When I was on a trip to Arizona, I was working on a book called *Fireman*. It's a realistic fiction book about a few firemen that saw fire in New York City, at the Empire State Building. It took quite a while for me to get done with the problems. So they had to spray water out of the hose a lot. Multiple times! A lot of kids like firemen. I think they will enjoy my *Fireman* book. The reason I got inspired to write the book is because I went to a firehouse."

She is a third grader now, but she calls herself an author. She always engages in writing at home for her own authentic purposes, not only for homework. She wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up. She says she can still be an author while she takes care of ill animals for her job.

There are children who are reluctant writers. If your child likes watching videos, you can use them as a springboard for your child's writing. Strassman and O'Connell (2007) suggested this strategy:

> "Authoring with Video (AWV) enables students to get started writing in a medium they know and love: video. It is similar to writing text for a wordless picturebook. The videos, like the pictures in a wordless book, serve as the trigger for an organized text. Finding their voices as writers is less of a challenge for students because they are comfortable with messages and visual images working together to communicate meaning. AWV encourages students to formally recognize this ability as a skill that has its roots in writing. It capitalizes on the sophisticated video-viewing and comprehension abilities of children and casts them as writers, publishers, and producers of content." (Strassman & O'Connell, 2007, p.330)

The important thing is to promote your child's writing habit and support their development of an author identity. All the fun pieces written by your author-child for you to enjoy reading are just the entertaining by products!

Schickedanz and Collins (2013, pp. 124-125) recommend the following effective practices for supporting children in their writing:

1. **Read to children** even in infancy and engage them in conversation. It not only develops language, vocabulary, and their background knowledge, but also makes them familiar with written discourse.

2. Expose them to a **range of purposes for writing** in daily life such as creating a menu, compiling a grocery list, writing a note to their mom, making a wish list for Santa, etc.
3. Provide **mark-making experiences** (scribbles, mock letters, and pictures) early, as it gives an opportunity for them to talk about the meaning.
4. **Talk to children** about their writing and drawing.
5. Keep the **focus on meaning and communicating**.

Using wordless picturebooks to promote writing for dual-language learners

I (Nandita) enjoy using wordless picturebooks in my undergraduate and graduate classes. Writing with wordless picturebooks not only ignites imagination and creativity (among the top-ten skills based on a [WEF report](#)) but also supports collaboration, which makes writing fun and engaging! Laughter fills my room as the students joyfully share their whimsical stories.

Every semester, I hunt local public libraries and the university library to find unique, new wordless picturebooks. My college students get a kick out of collaborating to create fresh, original stories inspired by the ideas and imaginations of each individual in the group. It is fun for them to share their creative stories with their peers! The purpose of this exercise is for the preservice teachers to pass this joyful learning experience with wordless picturebooks on to their elementary students, who may come from various backgrounds and cultural contexts.

Wordless picturebooks build a **schema** for the story with the narrative elements of setting, characters, plot, and theme. They can be used to promote **language development** as the adult asks critical thinking questions to encourage the children to "view" the text closely and construct meaning. The pictures provide **visual scaffolding** for building vocabulary and language skills, providing **comprehensible input** for dual-language learners.

Dual-language learners bring their own **cultural experiences** as they interpret the visuals and create an authentic, personally meaningful story. These stories can be published and shared in a celebration of learning with music, games, and food, where the parents are invited to the school, and the children get to showcase and proudly share their work. This learning celebration honors children's **cultural heritage** (Leija & Peralta, 2020) and positively impacts children's emerging identities. A positive **self-concept** builds positive **self-esteem** and **a sense of belonging, fostering a safe learning environment.** Validating, embracing, and welcoming

children's whole selves with their linguistic and cultural identities creates a nurturing environment conducive to their literacy development.

Our goals as writing teachers

- Have a consistent writing time every day.
- Provide choice, which develops voice in writing.
- Incorporate writing throughout the day.
- Create a safe learning environment to write and share.
- Support and honor children's writing.
- Model writing, sharing, and celebrating writing.
- Provide authentic opportunities to write.

Authentic writing

Authentic writing aims to communicate to an authentic audience in children's lives. An example of authentic writing is writing a letter to a grandmother, aunt, or other relative or friend. After reading the book *Flat Stanley,* my daughter's classroom teacher had her write a letter to her aunt. In that letter, Flat Stanley was sent to Boston. The daughter requested the aunt to take him to museums and collect postcards from every place he visited. The aunt sent Flat Stanley back with a letter and postcards. This activity provided authentic reading and writing opportunities to strengthen the child's literacy skills.

Working on project-based learning and global collaboration also facilitates authentic writing opportunities. For example, children may participate in global read-aloud and do related writing activities, or they may collaborate on global goals and read, write, create, and invent with peers to solve global problems for sustainable global goals.

Writing across content areas

Integrate writing in math, science, and social studies. Write research reports, create posters and advertisements, and compose using tools of technology to be creative communicators.

Daily journaling

One of the ways to incorporate daily writing is through daily journaling and "quick writes." Brainstorm and generate a list of topics with children for journaling to give them a managed choice. Journaling is discussed more under personal narratives. Quick writes can be meaningfully integrated throughout the day to increase the volume of writing children do daily. It also develops a writing habit in children and gradually increases their focus and stamina in writing.

Some examples of quick writes are provided below.

Think-writes

"Think-Writes are short, quick bits of writing that help students focus and clarify their thinking" (Cunningham & Allington, 2016, p. 182). The audience for think-writes is only the writer. This writing is done in 2-5 minutes for the purpose of jotting down one's thoughts or ideas.

Think-write-pair-share

Writing is thinking. Writing provides quiet time to gather thoughts and jot them down before talking. We may ask children to write or draw to represent their thinking and then talk to their "shoulder buddy" about their drawing or writing.

Exit tickets

Exit tickets may be done in a variety of ways. Children may illustrate a vocabulary word that they learned that day. They may complete the sentence: *Today I learned* _____. Children may complete a graphic organizer in pairs under the guidance of an adult.

While some writing is quick writing for jotting down thoughts, other writing follows a process to create a product for sharing with an audience. The audience could be parents, peers, teachers, or others. The genre and format (letter, short story, opinion essay, poem, etc.) depend on the author's purpose.

The writing process

Writing is not a linear process, but **iterative** and **recursive** in fashion. It consists of five stages:

Prewriting

According to Donald Murray (1985), 70% of the time should be spent prewriting. During prewriting, the focus is on identifying the topic, purpose, audience, and genre. The focus at this stage is on the content. It is better to allow a self-selected topic on which the child has background information. Donald Graves (1983) and Lucy Calkins (1994) have affirmed that choice brings out the voice in children's writing, showing the author's personality. *Reading Rockets* recommends the [RAFT strategy](#) of writing, which helps kids explore their role as a writer.

- **Topic:** The topic needs to be **manageable and focused**. It should not be too broad. The choice of the topic depends on the student, but it should be something they are interested in and have background knowledge on.
- **Purpose:** The children need to be made cognizant of **why** they are writing. What is the purpose of their writing? Is it to entertain, inform, or persuade?
- **Audience:** The choice of words and how a piece is written depends on the audience. A letter meant for a friend is different from one written to Mom. Consideration of the audience is very important for achieving appropriate and effective writing.
- **Genre:** The genre is carefully chosen to best attain the **writer's goal** or purpose. For example, suppose the purpose of writing is to persuade – what genre of writing would best accomplish that purpose? Possible writing genres include a letter, essay, poem, song, infomercial, commercial, poster, tweet, video, short story, newspaper article, cartoon strip, play, blog, research report, and so on.

Learning Activities

Generating and Synthesizing Ideas on a Graphic Organizer

Once the topic, purpose, audience, and genre are identified, focus on **generating ideas**. Mind-mapping tools and graphic organizers organize and synthesize ideas visually. This makes them great for ELLs due to their visual element. Kidspiration is a child-friendly mind-mapping app to display ideas. Children generate ideas by talking to peers, reading books, doing online research, and gathering pictures, audio, and video files for multimodal composing.

Drafting

The second stage of writing is drafting. The focus of drafting is on content creation and developing the ideas with elaboration and examples. The author works on **developing a hook** at the beginning of the piece. A hook or a grabber is something that will grab a reader's attention and motivate them to read on. A mystery, humor, and a narrative can all act as grabbers that capture a reader's attention. Craft a lead using mystery or humor, or inspire wonder, sympathy, anger, or fear in such a way that your audience will want to read your work (Forney, 2001).

Revising

Revising is different from editing. In revision, children re-read what they have written. They make their words and sentences clearer. They replace weak verbs with strong ones and include more vivid vocabulary, add details to their drawings and prose, move sentences and words, and delete anything that does not belong. The acronym **ARMS** accurately describes the revision process: children **A**dd information, **R**emove information, **M**ove words, phrases, and sentences, and **S**ubstitute words for more precise and interesting vocabulary. Then they re-read, question, ponder, share, and receive peer feedback. The goal of revision is clear and concise writing. Teachers may confer with students at this time.

Editing

Editing ensures that the spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct. During editing, the mechanics and conventions are considered. The final writing should be readable and polished. The correct placement of punctuation such as commas ensures readability and flow. Proofreading is also done at this time to remove typos. Teachers can create editing circles and provide checklists for self-checking and peer-checking.

Publishing

The publishing process involves formatting, decorating, and getting binding done to create a published book to share with others. In the digital age, it is relatively easy to publish your work online. Kids blogs, Flipgrid videos, and eBooks have been created on various platforms. [Little Bird Tales](#) is for younger kids and combines pictures with the text to create a story. [Bookcreator](#) is another story-creation platform that can be used with guidance from adults.

Writing strategies for children

- Choose and narrow the topic. (What?)
- Set a purpose. (Why?)
- Consider the audience. (For whom?)
- Decide on the genre. (How?)
- Generate and organize ideas.
- Re-read, revise, elaborate, question, self-monitor, self-evaluate, share, and get peer feedback.
- Edit, proofread, format, and publish.

> **Things that strategic writers do:**
>
> - They make deliberate choices based on their purpose.
> - They engage in self-regulation strategies such as self-monitoring and self-evaluating.
> - They are willing to take feedback from peers and adults.
> - Initially, they focus on developing the content, postponing looking for errors until towards the end.

Types of writing

Narrative writing

Narrative writing is story writing containing the elements of setting, characters, plot, and theme. The story can be based on personal experiences, as in the case of personal narratives, or they can be fictional stories written using imagination and creativity.

Personal narratives

Personal narratives are about personal experiences, and they convey the point of view of the author. Some of them, such as biographies and simulated journaling, convey the point of view of another individual the author has decided to write about.

Journal writing

Journaling is expressive writing. Incorporating journaling into your curriculum taps into the background experiences of the kids, and it functions as a connecting bridge between expressive writing and formal, academic, and transactional writing. I would suggest exploring children's books written as journals at the developmentally appropriate level for the children. Daily journaling builds a positive attitude toward writing, where writing is seen as a medium for communicating ideas, processing life, and connecting with others. Through writing, thinking becomes visible.

Dialogue journals

Dialogue journaling is written dialogue that occurs between two individuals. It is a writing activity that builds positive, trusting relationships between the teacher and the students. It provides access to the teacher for the students and lets them share their thoughts and ask questions. When the teacher responds, the teacher's writing provides authentic text that the students can read for meaning. The teacher's writing also acts as a model of correct spelling and grammar for the students; this is especially valuable for dual-language learners.

Simulated journals

Simulated journals are a creative way for students to develop the point of view of an imaginary or real-life character by writing a journal while taking on the identity of that person.

Performance poetry or spoken-word poetry

Performance poetry is performed for an audience with voice and gestures to communicate an idea or theme. It develops civic agency in students to think about socio-cultural or environmental issues they are passionate about. Amanda Gordan and Sarah Kay are two well-known spoken-word poets. Performing poetry develops fluency in children as they learn to read with expression and conviction, using their voice and body as tools to convey ideas. Adults can help and guide children in writing poems and practicing their delivery.

Biographies

Children can read about their favorite historical or sports figures and write short biographies or bio poems of them.

Autobiographies

The children can write about themselves. In *Literacy Con Carino*, the children wrote the "autobiographies of not so famous people," writing about themselves and envisioning their futures.

Fictional narratives

There are different strategies for inspiring story-writing in children. One effective way is to have them write a story, play, letter, or newspaper article that is prompted by a picture. For

example, I have used the following picture for this purpose. Pictures spark creativity in writing. Students use their imagination to create a unique story. My students have come up with creative responses in the forms of poetry, a letter, a newspaper article, an eyewitness account, or a short story that is uniquely reflective of the author.

Figure 3: Flying pigeons writing prompt (Source: Picture taken by Nandita during her visit to India.)

Cartoon strips

Cartoon strips are a lot of fun to write, as they focus on visuals more than words. The strips can be five frames long for starters.

Wordless picturebooks

Children who love to draw will enjoy creating a story by drawing a picture on each page. Adult guidance may be needed as the child plans and verbalizes the story's beginning, middle, and end.

Short stories

The children can plan a story on a graphic organizer with a setting, characters, plot, and theme. They may leave some space at the top of the page for drawings and at the bottom for writing.

Fractured fairy tales

The children can tell a different version of the story from the point of view of another character through words and drawings. Then they can write that version of the fairy tale.

Children's original endings

Coming up with their own endings to the story ignites creative thinking and imagination, and helps them understand the story better.

Plays

Pretend play makes it natural to write dialogues with quotation marks. The children may pair up with a buddy to create an imaginative scene out of their pretend play. After they write it, let them engage in pretend play with it to make it come alive.

Reader's theater

Writing a reader's theater script is like writing a play. In reader's theater, the children read from a script they wrote. Reading and re-reading the script helps to build fluency.

Poetry writing

Poetry writing develops vocabulary and concise writing skills. Explore some poetry interactives at www.readwritethink.com

Limericks

A limerick is a rhyming poem with the "aa, bb, a" rhyme scheme. The first two lines rhyme; the third- and fourth lines rhyme, and the fifth line rhymes with the first two. Limericks can be written with a partner, taking turns coming up with words to match the rhyme scheme:

- Line 1: _____ a
- Line 2: _____ a

- Line 3: _____ b
- Line 4: _____ b
- Line 5: _____ a

Haikus

A haiku is a popular Japanese poem that has 3 lines. The first line has 5 syllables; the second has 7, and the last has 5. The children may write haikus on nature, the seasons, or any topic of their choice:

- Line 1: _____ (5 syllables)
- Line 2: _____ (7 syllables)
- Line 3: _____ (5 syllables)

Cinquains

A cinquain is a 5-line poem and follows the following structure:

- Line 1: _____ (a 1-word title)
- Line 2: _____, _____ (2 words describing the title)
- Line 3: _____, _____, _____ (3 words expressing a feeling)
- Line 4: _____, _____, _____, _____ (4 words expressing an action)
- Line 5: _____ (a synonym for the title or one word describing the title)

The children can write about their pets or their favorite sport or food.

Six-word memoirs

Six-word memoirs are great for motivating reluctant writers to write. They are short and simple, and the children only need to be motivated to write six words. An example of a six-word memoir is "I help my mom with chores!"

Diamantes

A diamante demonstrates opposites or antonyms. It is a 7-line diamond-shaped poem describing opposites:

- Line 1: _____ (noun)

- Line 2: _____, _____ (two describing words)
- Line 3: _____, _____, _____ (three words with "ing")
- Line 4: _____, _____, _____, _____ (four words – two related to line 1, two related to line 7)
- Line 5: _____, _____, _____ (three words with "ing")
- Line 6: _____, _____ (two describing words)
- Line 7: _____ (opposite noun)

Concrete or shape poems

Children draw a shape and then write phrases or sentences related to the drawing inside or around it. Shape poems are fun for children to create as it taps into their love for drawing and coloring.

Acrostic Poems

First the children choose a word or name, such as their own. Then they write it vertically going down, and each letter of the word is used to begin a descriptive word, phrase, or sentence. It makes for a great beginning-of-the-year activity for self-introductions. For example:

- N: Nice
- A: Amiable
- N: Nurturing
- D: Delightful
- I: Intelligent
- T: Teacher
- A: Attentive

Expository writing (nonfiction)

Informational writing

Informational writing conveys information to readers through recorded observations, interpretations, connections, research reports, processes, instructions, and problem solutions.

Science journals

In science journals, students make hypotheses, and write procedures, observations, and conclusions.

Double-entry journals

The double-entry journal is like a T-chart, where the child writes the main points on the left and comments on the right.

Math journals

Math journals can be used for solving word problems or other math-related problems.

Research reports

Children research a topic and write a detailed report on it.

ABC books on a country

An example of an ABC book is a research book on aspects of a country or culture. For example, if I were doing a book on India, I may have A for architecture, B for Bollywood movies, C for customs, D for traditions, E for elephants, F for food, and so on.

Recipes

Make writing playful and fun by coming up with weird recipes and fun names! Children enjoy bugs. Utilize their interests in developing recipes alongside them. Create a list of ingredients and develop a step-by-step process for preparing it.

Persuasive writing

Persuasive writing is done to persuade the readers to embrace a certain point of view or idea. To be convincing, the writer must provide strong reasons to support their assertions.

Newspaper articles

Some newspaper articles are written to persuade people about policies, programs, or procedures.

Letters

Letters can be written to persuade someone to take an action such as make a playground safer, improve the functionality of an old school building, address climate change, and so on.

Opinion writing

Opinion writing is a form of expository writing where students express their opinions on a choice of topics. Opinions are supported by evidence.

Children enjoy writing in the **OREO** format.

- **O** – State your opinion.
- **R** – Provide a reason. (Why?)
- **E** – Present evidence.
- **O** – Re-state the opinion.

Teachers engage the children in OREO writing by celebrating their writing with an OREO cookie party!

The writing workshop

Generally, writing workshops (Graham, 1983; Portalupi & Fletcher, 1995; Ray & Cleveland, 2004) are conducted anywhere from 45-60 minutes on a consistent basis to provide opportunities for students to write. Ray and Cleveland (2004) encourage free writing and drawing with younger students by providing them writing tools (chalk, shaving cream, finger paints, sand, modeling clay, etc.) of various kinds. This writing is supported by talk that focuses on communicating meaning, elaborating, and clarifying. Conferring with the children is very important throughout the writing process.

In the writing workshop, the teacher begins by first reading aloud the mentor's text (Culham,

2014). The text exemplifies the features or a skill that the teacher is focusing on as a modeling example. Then, the teacher conducts a mini lesson that is usually 8-10 minutes long, and models with "I do" where she defines the feature or skill, explains how it is used, and shows an example. For example, in preschool, the teacher might demonstrate and provide a moving model for how to write "I." She provides an example by using it in a sentence and asks the students to use it in a sentence also. Next, she continues guided practice with the students with "We do" and scaffolds their learning by checking for understanding. Lastly, she provides an opportunity for them to practice the skill independently with "you do," while she watches and helps. Then the children brainstorm ideas, draft, craft leads, revise, edit, proofread, and publish their work. Writing circles (Vpat, 2009) are synonymous with literature circles, where students work collaboratively to write, revise, and publish. Providing a choice in writing (Calkins, 1994) and having a consistent writing time (Graves, 1983) support children's writing development.

Conferring in the writing workshop

Student-teacher conferences in the writing workshop are an important method for supporting the students' writing. Anderson (2019) notes: "Writing conferences help students become better writers. In conferences, students become known to us as people, writers, and learners. Through conferring, we become known to our students" (p. 10). While conferring, the teachers and students engage in purposeful talk (Hawkins, 2016) that scaffolds the students' writing.

Conducting the student-teacher writing conference

Anderson (2019) suggests the following steps for conducting the writing conference:

1. First, think about the logistics of conferring. Confer with the students at their own desks.
2. Second, decide on the amount of time you will devote to each conference. Five-seven minutes is recommended.
3. Confer with the students when they are still writing, and they will be more receptive to constructive feedback than when they are finished.
4. Start the conferring process by asking the student an open-ended question – "How is it going?" – to see what the student is doing as a writer (Murray, 1985). Examine the student's draft to assess the areas of strength and those needing growth.
5. Decide on what to teach the student after assessing their draft.
6. Provide positive feedback by focusing on what the child already understands and is doing well. Next, suggest the next step you would like the student to take to improve the writing.

7. Explicitly teach a skill the student can apply to improve their writing. Provide modeling examples.

8. Make your expectation clear that you would like the student to apply the skill that you just taught and that you will check back after you are done conferring with another student.

Benefits of conferring

- Conferring builds the student-teacher relationship. It sustains student motivation.
- Conferring is differentiated instruction, i.e., based on what the student needs.
- Conferring reinforces strategic writing: knowing the audience, choosing the topic and genre, crafting the writing, revising, and editing.
- Conferring informs whole-group instruction. Through conferring the teacher comes to know what most of the students are struggling with so they can revisit and reteach those concepts and skills.

Assessing writing with the 6+1 Traits Rubric (K-2 Rubric)

Please click on the hyperlink above to see the specific features we are looking for when evaluating a child's writing. The 6+1 Traits of Writing (Culham, 2005) uses an analytical rubric that provides feedback on each area to inform instruction for strengthening the areas needing improvement.

Ideas

The goal here is to communicate clear, focused, well-developed ideas that are fresh and original through drawing, dictation, and writing. Our ideas for writing come from various sources, such as nature, personal experiences, books, videos, newspaper articles, and the people around us. Well-developed ideas are important in writing. One of the ways to assess writing is for the ideas and whether the child is communicating them well through writing, drawing, or dictation. Their writing also needs supporting details. Ideas need to be fresh and original, supported by details.

Organization

Good writing needs to be organized, with a grabber or hook, for an inviting start. It should be

structured in paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting details, with smooth transitions between the paragraphs. The concluding paragraph needs to provide a strong finish.

Voice

Voice means it should sound like the person who has written it. The writing reflects the author's personality and unique way of expression. The author conveys the feelings, mood, and awareness of the audience through their drawing and writing to connect with the readers. For example, Kwame Alexander writes novels in verse that is reminiscent of a shape or concrete poem. Authors' personality often shines through in their writing. Providing choice brings out the writer's voice, which makes the writing engaging, with humor, storytelling, or a unique way of presenting the content.

Word choice

The author chooses precise and vivid vocabulary from the wide range of words in their linguistic repertoire. Additionally, the author uses strong verbs that show how the action is performed instead of weak, overused verbs. For example, instead of *look* or *see,* the author uses *glance, stare, gaze*, and so on. Or, instead of *walk,* the author uses *strut, hop, skip, swagger, skitter,* and so on.

Sentence fluency

Is the child writing in sentences or not? Are the sentences decodable? What types of sentences are there in their writing? Sentence fluency reflects the cadence or rhythm of the language. The child enjoys reading aloud. There is variety in the sentence structures. There are dialogues and other sentence phrasing as needed to enhance the meaning. The punctuation marks are placed appropriately.

Conventions

Does the child display grade-level-appropriate knowledge of conventions such as punctuation, spelling, and grammar? Are they demonstrating skill in letter-sound relationships in their writing? Are they spelling conventionally or phonetically? Are most high-frequency words spelled correctly? Do they use periods, commas, question marks, and capital letters well? Where are they capitalizing?

Presentation

Presentation is important for the readability of the writing. Does the child have one finger space between words? Do they produce readable writing, with mostly correct letter formation, spacing, and the correct placement of drawings and other graphic elements about the writing? Is the handwriting polished and easy to read? Are the white spaces used well, and do all the elements contribute to clarifying the meaning?

Penmanship

Handwriting is still pertinent even in the 21st century. There is a strong connection between the desire to communicate and growth in handwriting (Graves, 1983). Consistent time spent in meaningful writing with the freedom to choose the topic are the determining factors in the quality of handwriting (Graves, 1995).

There is evidence of a connection between the motor movement of writing and enhanced brain activity (Hannover Research Group, 2012). We remember more when we write by hand. When handwriting flows fluently, we think more cohesive thoughts.

Handwriting is an essential skill for children to have. Teach children how to hold a pencil because once habits form, they are hard to break. Provide chunky pencils that are easier for young children to work with. Have a consistent time of at least 15 minutes to teach handwriting by providing a moving model while verbalizing your thinking as you form the letters. Manuscript and cursive writing are essential to teaching, even in the digital age.

As a teacher, you should have three goals when teaching handwriting to children: legibility, fluency (speed), and mechanics. Your method of instruction is to provide a moving model while verbalizing the process of forming letters, reminding them about size and proportion, spacing, consistency in the slant, alignment, symmetry, and line quality.

Elements of handwriting legibility

There are six elements of legibility in handwriting (Caravolas et al., 2020; Fogel et al., 2022), as explained below.

1. **Letter formation:** Letter formation is the way the letters are constructed. Teachers model

how to form each letter using three-lined paper. They demonstrate how to produce the letters as a moving model by making their thinking visible (think-aloud) while giving verbal instructions to the children.

2. **Size and proportion:** The size and proportions of each letter are important for legibility. There should be a consistent size, and the parts of the letters should be in the right proportion to each other.

3. **Spacing:** There should be a consistent rule for spacing. Generally, we tell young children to keep a one-finger space between words.

4. **Slant:** The letters should be consistent for a neat and organized look.

5. **Alignment:** The alignment and symmetry of the letters are components of legibility.

6. **Line quality:** The lines used to form the letters need to be solid, not squiggly, for the writing to be neat and legible.

Forms of handwriting

Manuscript
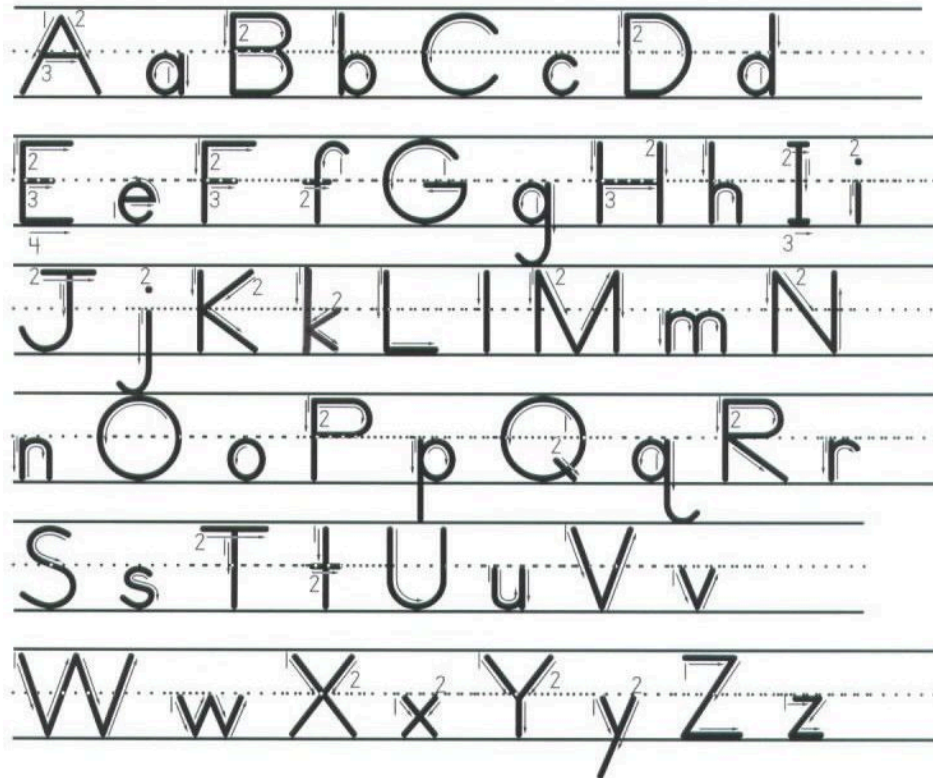
Zaner-Bloser handwriting chart, being used here after a fair use assessment.

D'Nealian

From D'Nealian to Cursive

Handwriting stations

Make handwriting fun with handwriting stations. Let them doodle when they have extra time! Make handwriting authentic and creative by supplying the stations with materials such as shaving cream, finger paints, sand, playdough, and so on.

Best practices in handwriting instruction

- Integrate handwriting in authentic writing contexts for science, social studies, math, and the writing workshop.
- Set aside time consistently (15-20 min.) to teach handwriting by providing a moving model and time to practice.
- The handwriting practice should be on a meaningful, open-ended prompt.
- Students self-evaluate their handwriting and set personalized goals.
- The goal of handwriting should always be legibility and not perfection.
- Portfolios that reflect growth over time are encouraged.

Adapting for diverse learners

- Incorporate Universal Design for Learning's principles to remove perceivable barriers with multiple means of representation (video, visuals, audio, text, etc.); provide multiple means of engagement (learning pathways and experiences), and multiple means of expression, allowing the students to choose how to showcase their learning.
- Leverage students' cultural and linguistic capital.
- Allow students to write in their native language.
- Incorporate Rebus or a combination of drawings and text.
- Use dialogue journaling to build relationships with all students.
- Use wordless picturebooks or visual prompts to inspire writing using students' background knowledge.
- Create writing circles where each student contributes a line to construct a collaborative story.

Discussion-based reflection questions

1. How can you motivate children to write?
2. How can you engage children in authentic, fun writing experiences?
3. How would you structure your classroom instruction to enhance the amount of writing children engage in daily?

Learning Activities

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=303#h5p-37

Learning Activities

Writing across the content areas

Create cross-curricular centers on a thematic topic for a grade level of your choice (K-2). Choose from one of the topics in the list provided. Please incorporate writing across content areas (science, social studies, and math) in an engaging way to motivate students to learn the content in depth.

Some themes to choose from:

- Places and Spaces (Iowa Core social studies topic for kindergarten)
- Community and Culture (Iowa Core social studies topic for 1st grade)
- Choices and Consequences (Iowa Core social studies topic for 2nd grade)

Digital storytelling

Create an eBook on a social-justice topic in a genre of your choice. You may use Bookcreator or any other tool to create a multimodal book. Think about your purpose, audience, topic, and genre. Gather or take pictures, record a short video, and explore multimodal resources to add visuals, texts, and hyperlinks.

Key Takeaways

- Provide a choice in writing.
- Choice brings out the writer's voice.
- Graciously accept all forms of writing, including scribbles, mock letters, and pictures.
- Focus on meaning while conversing with the children about their writing.
- Have a consistent writing time.
- Confer with children.
- Read mentor texts aloud.
- Do mini lessons to teach specific skills.
- Differentiate instruction through the 6+1 traits of writing.
- Bring in writers' cultural identities and heritage through culturally relevant prompts and read-alouds.

Resources for teacher educators

- [Traits Rubric for K–2 | Education Northwest [PDF]](#)
- [Graphic Organizers to Help Kids With Writing | Reading Rockets](#)
- [Writing Reports in Kindergarten? Yes! | Read Write Think](#)
- [Seven great ways to encourage your child's writing](#)
- [Composing multimodal writing with BookCreator](#)
- [Assessing Writing: Six Traits of Writing](#)
- [OER_Writing Process.pptx](#)
- [OER_ Self-Evaluation](#)

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Chapter 9. Literacy Instruction for Diverse Learners

Constance Beecher; Sohyun Meacham; and Nandita Gurjar

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams." – Jimmy Carter

"We should all know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color." – Maya Angelou

Keywords: cultural literacy, dual-language learners, universal design for learning, trauma-informed instruction

Imagine a class with diverse kids – some with invisible or visible disabilities, different ethnicities, and nationalities – who feel a sense of belonging and whose cultural capital, customs, traditions, and languages are valued in the classroom space. The teacher focuses on building relationships with each child to scaffold and enrich their learning as s/he has an undaunted belief in their capabilities and strengths. In this nurturing environment, every child could blossom and reach for the stars. This is the class every child deserves, no matter where they come from or where they are going!

Culturally responsive instruction begins with getting to know our students – their home lives and cultures. Having an appreciation and respect for each child and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and leveraging them in classroom instruction in reading and writing lets the children know that they belong in the classroom community. A positive self-concept and self-esteem are crucial for learning and engagement to occur. Therefore, it is the teacher's job to embrace and welcome each child's cultural and linguistic identities to foster a culturally inclusive learning environment.

Teachers should build relationships with parents and students and welcome parents as volunteers and guest speakers into the classroom space. Invite parents to read a folktale, fable, myth, or legend from their culture to the class. Have "Show and Tell" days where children can bring cultural artifacts to show their peers and take pride in who they are. During reciprocal teaching, they can teach a peer some

Learning Objectives

- Apply effective ELL strategies to engage learners in higher-order thinking (InTasc Standards #2 & #5).
- Analyze the characteristics of dyslexia to address the needs of students with dyslexia (InTasc Standards #1).
- Synthesize your understanding of trauma-informed instruction (InTasc Standards #3).
- Apply principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create inclusive classrooms (InTasc Standards #7).
- Use children's literature that provides mirrors, windows, and sliding doors for children to identify with and learn from diverse perspectives (InTasc Standards #4).

expressions from their native language or a song from their culture. Also, ensuring that the child sees themselves in the literature they read is vital for their self-concept. Therefore, having books

that are mirrors, windows, and sliding doors (Sims Bishop, 1990) will ensure that all children see themselves in literature and media.

To get to know your students and their families, learn about their family literacy practices. Some children come from an oral storytelling tradition where they grow up listening to stories from grandparents, uncles, and aunts or learning family arts and crafts such as quilt making and basket weaving; these are all valid family cultural practices that contribute to building the children's native language and cultural literacies, upon which school literacies are built.

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Begin with family cultural literacy practices

Alma Flor Ada (2003) reminds us: "Students live in two worlds: home and school. If these two worlds do not recognize, understand, and respect each other, students are put in a difficult predicament (p.11)"; and very little learning can occur. The Global Family Research Project emphasizes that literacy begins at home.

Researchers who study diverse learners say that teachers must talk with families to understand their lives outside of school. Teachers will see a complete picture of the families' socio-cultural contexts, and they will also recognize the wealth of stories, history, motivations, and cultural information, or "funds of knowledge"

Culturally and linguistically diverse parents value literacy and see it as the single, most powerful hope for their children's future
(Ordonez-Jasis & Oritz, 2006)

(Moll & Gonzalez 2004), that the parents contribute to their children's literacy learning. These funds of knowledge become the building blocks for a comprehensive literacy program. Positive early literacy experiences in families – reading with a parent, grandparent, or aunt, visiting the library, or enjoying books with other children at their childcare prepares them to learn to read at school. Here are seven research-based ways families contribute to the child's literacy development:

1. Creating a literacy-friendly home environment.
   a. The number of books in the home is a predictor of the children's success in reading.
   b. Reading to children and asking questions about the story builds vocabulary, letter knowledge, and comprehension.
2. Having lots of conversations.
   a. Children need to hear a lot of language from birth in order to grow the neural networks that are the basis of their language development.
   b. The number of words children hear by age 3 strongly predicts kindergarten readiness.
3. Having high expectations for the children's learning.
   a. When parents believe their children will succeed in school, their children have greater success than the children of parents who do not believe it.
4. Making reading enjoyable.
   a. When families nurture encouraging interactions, the children are interested in reading, which helps their literacy skills grow.
   b. Adults benefit too – these enjoyable experiences help reduce stress!
5. Families use their home language.
   a. Around 25% of young children in the U.S. are learning two languages at the same time.
   b. Using the home language helps the children build vocabulary and have a healthy self-identity.
6. Families and teachers communicate.
   a. Research clearly shows that when parents are involved with a child's schooling, the children's learning is enhanced.
   b. Schools/childcare centers can invite the parents into the classroom and share information so they can support their children.
7. Visiting the library.
   a. Kindergartners who visit libraries with their families score higher on assessments of reading, mathematics, and science in third grade than those who rarely visit.

It is important for teachers to connect with families and validate their roles in their children's learning. After all, children only spend around 25% of their waking time in school! (Wherry, 2004).

Diversity and children's Books

Diversity and social justice are two key themes in literacy-education research today. This research focuses on teaching children to understand the diversity within human beings in this world and injustice issues associated with the diversity. In this context, scholars use "multicultural children's literature" as the term for the children's literature that deals with diversity and social justice (Cai, 2002). In many early childhood classrooms, multicultural picturebooks from different countries are considered to be the main resources for diversity education. However, the use of international picturebooks may not be sufficient to reduce our children's cultural biases and develop their ability to make social changes. Helping our children become aware of injustices perpetrated because of cultural differences and to actually act on the issues should be an ultimate goal when exposing them to multicultural picturebooks. Botelho and Rudman's (2009) critical multicultural analysis of children's literature gives us some ideas about how to use multicultural picturebooks in attaining this goal. Introducing the topics of race, gender, and social class, they emphasize that understanding who exercises the power in our society, where these three aspects of humanity are intertwined, is a key consideration when deciding which picturebooks to read with our children and what conversations we will have with them.

Facilitating critical reading

In addition, **critical reading** is something we should promote during read-alouds with our children, after selecting culturally sensitive, high-quality multicultural picturebooks for our classroom library. High-quality texts do not overly explain the story, to invite readers to "draw their own conclusions without being told precisely what to think " (Young et al., 2020, p. 32). Quality multicultural picturebooks do not necessarily tell the systemic factors regarding social inequity but show the issues. In addressing them, the adults' role in facilitating critical conversations around the readings with the children is significant (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019).

Last Stop on Market Street, written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson, is a multicultural picturebook that stands out in my mind. This book is frequently discussed in the recent literacy-education literature that focuses on diversity and social justice. It deals with economic inequality portrayed in an urban U.S. context. The main storyline follows CJ's bus rides with his grandmother. He usually takes the bus with his grandma after church, even on rainy days. Although in the early part of the story he questions why he needs to take the bus

but his friend rides in the family's car, he and his grandma find real beauty around them during their bus rides.

CJ needs to ride the bus because they don't own a car. CJ asks his grandma, "Nana, how come we don't got a car?" Grandma responds, "Boy, what do we need a car for? We got a bus that breathes fire, and old Mr. Dennis, who always has a trick for you" (De la Peña, 2015). In the United States, the use of public transportation is often associated with poverty. Cities and towns there have been built primarily for people with personal vehicles. Therefore, except for metropolitan areas such as New York and Chicago, the use of public transportation is an inconvenience that mostly people on low incomes end up needing to bear. Rather than complaining about the situation, however, CJ's grandma and he talk about enjoyable things. They focus on people that they enjoy seeing and being with – from the bus driver to a guitar player.

While deficit views and devaluing the cultures of people in poverty are prevalent in society (e.g., they are lazy; something's wrong with them), *Last Stop on Market Street* supports the counter-narrative. The last stop, which CJ and his grandma get off at, is a soup kitchen where they volunteer weekly. They are not lazy. They are helping others.

Race is not explicitly spoken of in this book, although readers can see CJ's skin color is dark. This is where we can have a critical conversation about how people with certain racial backgrounds tend to experience poverty more often than others, and about "how people from all different racial, ability, and cultural backgrounds might share similar poverty experiences" (Quast & Bazemore-Bertrand, 2019, p. 221). As the book does not speak about the reasons for CJ and his grandma's current economic condition either, more critical conversations between the teacher and the children will be needed for the children to become aware of systemic factors contributing to inequity.

Last Stop on Market Street speaks about the Blind culture (capitalized to indicate that this person belongs to the Blind culture, not just that they do not see) a little more explicitly than racial issues. Another rider on the bus is Blind. When CJ sees the man, he asks his grandma, "How come that man can't see?" A conversation among this man, CJ, and his grandma ensues in which it is revealed how the Blind culture has a rich appreciation of their world because of their enhanced olfactory and auditory senses. The man tells CJ's grandma that he even closes his eyes to feel music.

Last Stop on Market Street is a rare picturebook, earning a Newbery Medal, an award that is not for the illustrations but for the quality of the writing. Considering that most of the books

receiving the Newbery Medal are chapter books, the accomplishment of this picturebook is remarkable. It is also notable that Matt de la Peña is one of only three Latin-background authors to have won the Newbery. This talented author also won Pura Belpré Honor Book Awards for both this book and his young-adult novel The Living, in 2014. The Pura Belpré Award was founded in 1996 to celebrate the work of Latinx writers and illustrators. Christian Robinson, the African-American illustrator of Last Stop, won the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award; Coretta Scott King Book Awards have gone to one African-American author and one African-American illustrator annually since 1974. Last but not least, this book won the Caldecott Honor in 2016.

The urban atmosphere as depicted in Robinson's paintings and collages can make us feel some human warmth, rather than seeming merely cold, sterile, and industrial. His illustrations effectively delineate a remarkable level of diversity among the characters through the many different shades of people's skin color, hair texture, clothing, gestures, props that the characters hold or use, and whatnot. This quality is also evident in Robinson's more recent wordless picturebook titled *Another*, which was published in March 2019. In both of the books illustrated by Robinson, he only uses dots for people's eyes, although the colors of the dots vary. By doing so, the illustrations avoid potentially stereotypical eye shapes (e.g., thin slanted eyes).

In conclusion, we should reiterate that there are many things that are not explicitly articulated in *Last Stop on Market Street*, while it delineates an unexpected beauty in the experiences of people who live in poverty. Children's literature scholars suggest that quality multicultural children's literature should "avoid the single story or allowing one story to speak for an entire group of individuals" (Young et al., 2020, p. 81). This book does not attempt to speak for an entire group of people in poverty, people of color, or people with (dis)abilities. Still, it vividly depicts cultural specificity, which makes it a high-quality multicultural picturebook (Sims Bishop, 1992). Picturebooks like this can foster our children's intercultural understanding and the development of empathy.

DLL strategies in reading and writing

Dual-language learners' and emergent bilinguals'/multilinguals' needs should be addressed based on the policies and standards of the Iowa Department of Education. The number of English-language learners continues to increase in Iowa, which it has by almost 60% since 2010 (per the Iowa Department of Human Rights). One hundred seventy-seven languages were spoken by 31, 236 students in Iowa in the year 2020-2021 (Iowa Department of Human Rights).

Here is a poster with the number of languages spoken in Iowa [PDF]. There are 18 languages spoken in Black Hawk County, where the University of Northern Iowa is located. Crawford County has the highest number of ELL students (32.7%) followed by Buena Vista with 26% and Marshall with 24.7%. There is an 83% increase in Iowa in the number of foreign-born residents. Embarc, in Waterloo, Iowa, is a non-profit community-based organization that addresses the needs of refugee children who migrated to Iowa due to socio-political upheavals.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=323#oembed-2*

We have a moral responsibility to reduce barriers and enhance educational, healthcare, and supportive services for ELLs, especially those who are new to the country and culture, and students with disabilities. The following inclusive strategies should be incorporated while reducing barriers for diverse learners in Iowa.

Incorporate Universal Design for Learning
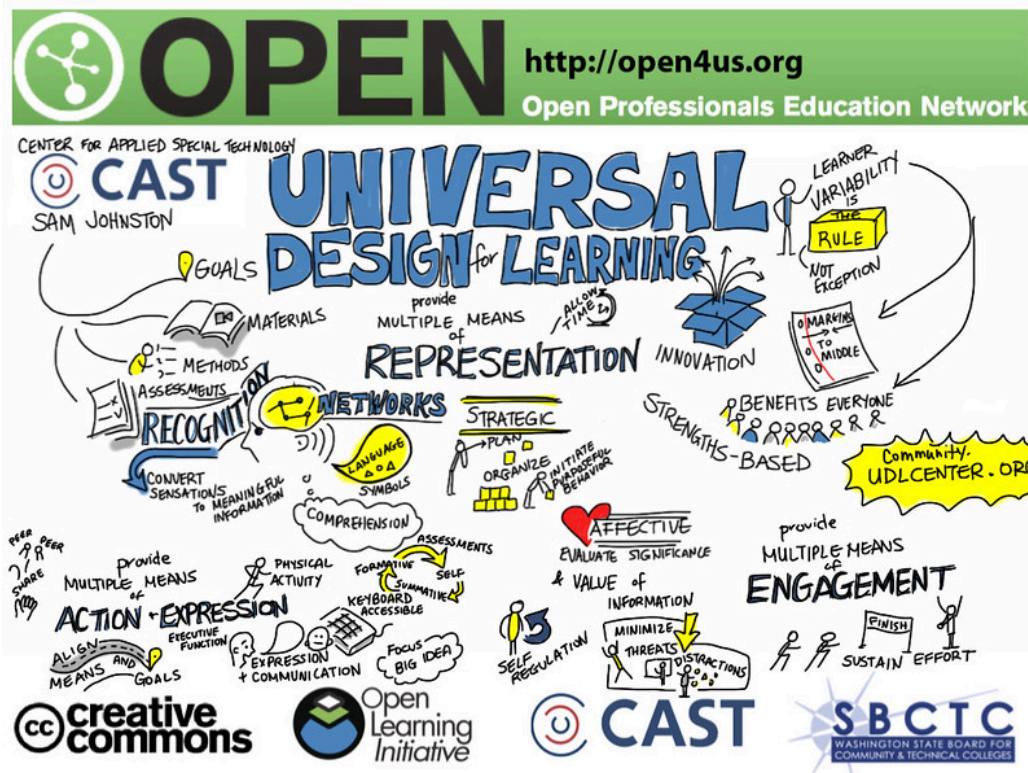
"Universal Design for Learning from Center for Applied Special Technology" by Giulia Forsythe is in the public domain, CC0

Video Example

Watch this video on the Universal Design for Learning for addressing the needs of diverse learners by adapting our instruction to meet their needs.

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ELL strategies

It is important to reduce anxiety in newcomers and second-language learners. We should aim at lowering the affective filter of our students so they can function at their best. It is important for us to understand the **silent phase of language acquisition**: second-language learners go through a period in which they are quiet but very receptive to comprehensible input. During this phase, the teacher's job is to continue to provide comprehensible input with visuals, gestures, and simplified language, without slang or idioms. If you choose to include idioms, explain them in a simple form through writing and drawing. Idioms are very hard to understand, as they are culturally specific.

Comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981) is the linguistic input that can be easily understood. It usually has more than one mode of expression. Along with simplified verbal expressions, other means of communicating used to make material clear and easily understood by second-language learners include visuals, videos, gestures, simulations, and hands-on experiences such as movement.

Motivate ELLs by engaging them in authentic reading and writing activities. Motivation plays a huge role in engagement. Relevance, interest, confidence (expectation of success), and satisfaction (enjoyment, extrinsic reward) play important roles in motivating learners (Keller, 1987). Having choices based on their interests and a supportive community that fosters collaboration provide linguistic support for emergent ELLs and DLLs. Social learning can be fun and playful. Students learn while discovering and playing. Leverage

"Motivation" by Nick Youngson is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

nature, creative opportunities, and teamwork in learning. Incorporate art, music, movement, theater, dance, play, discovery, and building. Children are naturally inquisitive. Tap into that! Engage in dialogic reading outdoors in nature! Let children express themselves through painting, drawing, pretend-play, and makerspace experiences to form hypotheses, test them, and develop their own interpretations of the world. As an ILA Literacy Brief suggests, children are active constructors of meaning. Let them play, discover, and learn!

Translanguaging

For DLLs, welcome translanguaging in their two languages. The use of both languages is an expression of their bicultural and bilingual identity. **Translanguaging** is very common and natural for non-native speakers of English who speak more than one language.

Here is a brief synopsis of some effective strategies (Hayes et al., 1998) that you can implement in your classroom:

1. Rebus is a very useful strategy that ensures that students have more than one way of expression by using a combination of pictures and writing to communicate meaning.
2. Idioms are culturally specific expressions, so much so that even after years of living in the U.S., some idioms can still be hard to understand, especially if they are connected to a culturally specific local context or sports which newcomers or immigrants might be unfamiliar with, for example, "knee-high by the Fourth of July" – an Iowa-specific idiom referring to the hoped-for corn growth. Idioms are important to understanding dialogue, so teaching them to ELLs through illustrations and the relevant background information is essential. Have the children follow this pattern:
    a. State the idiom.
    b. Illustrate the idiom.
    c. Provide the literal meaning of the words.
    d. State the cultural context and significance. Provide the actual meaning.
3. Illustrate the vocabulary – "Sketch to stretch." Drawing the vocabulary words communicates meaning. In addition, ELLs can act them out; they can write synonyms, antonyms, and put the words in sentences.
4. Dialogue journaling is a conversation that happens between the teacher and the student. This has been shown to build relationships, and it is helpful to students for them to have access to the teacher when they are going through the transition to a new culture.
5. Create a story using wordless picturebooks. Use picturebooks to leverage ELLs' background knowledge and cultural capital to make meaning while reading and writing stories. This activity also develops oral language.
6. Writing Weird Recipes with bugs and insects is a lot of fun for kids! Make a dish using the class recipe.
7. Do collaborative writing where one child describes an alien and another one draws it.
8. Have the children collect some interesting items on a nature walk and describe them to a peer. What can you do with the object?

9. Write a play or reader's theater with a peer with dialogues and enact it in class.
10. Have the children write a poem or a song from their culture and teach it to others.
11. Implement guided reading groups to differentiate instruction for ELLs with varying levels of English and first-language proficiency.
12. Engage in a [Global Goals project.](#) Choose one of the sustainable Global Goals and engage in researching it as a small group. Collaborate with another classroom from another part of the world!
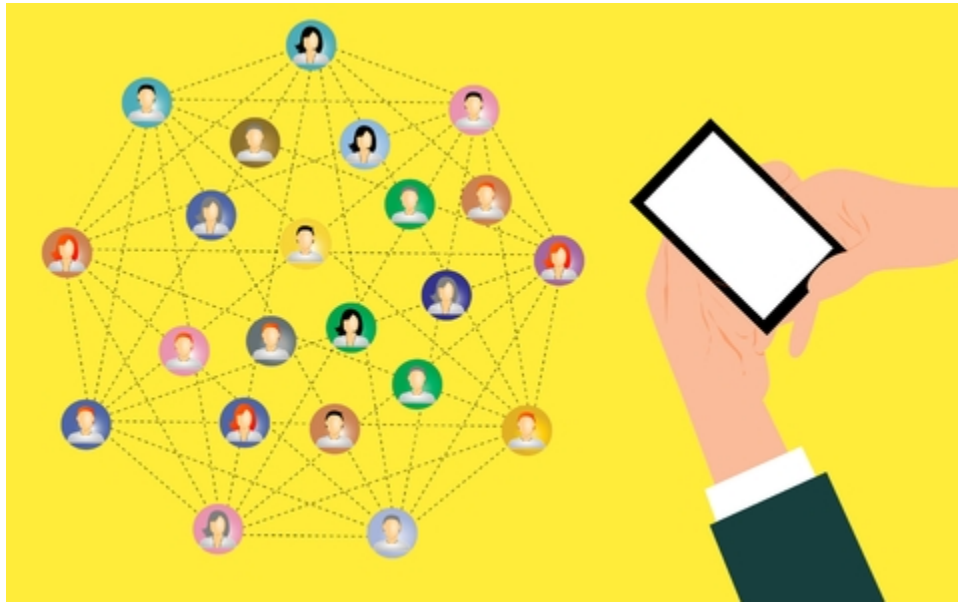
"Network Digital Marketing" by Mohamed Hassan is in the Public Domain, CC0

Lastly, ensure that you create an inclusive space where other countries, cultures, and people are not stereotyped. The video below shows us the importance of not judging any child or their family based on a single story. It is key for the teacher to provide multicultural, diverse literature that provides mirrors where children can see themselves and windows and sliding doors that widen children's perspective of other cultures (Sims Bishop, 1990).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=323#oembed-4

Reflection Questions

1. What is the essence of this video?
2. Discuss the quotes that resonated with you and why? What implications do they have for your future classroom?

Dyslexia

According to the Iowa Code:

> "**Dyslexia** is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge."

As you learned in the chapter on phonics, the National Reading Panel found that many difficulties encountered in learning to read were caused by poor phonemic awareness, and that systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness contributed directly to improvements in children's reading and spelling skills.

The following list shows common ways young children may show that they have difficulty "breaking the code":

- Difficulty hearing or producing rhymes.
- Difficulty remembering or naming letter names and sounds.
- Inability to sound out known words.
- Slow, effortful oral reading.
- Misreading or omitting common short words.
- Inconsistent sight-word recognition.
- Difficulty remembering simple sequences such as reciting the alphabet, counting to 20, or

naming the months of the year.

Dyslexia is NOT a visual problem with confusing letters; rather, it is a difficulty in processing the sounds of language. In other words, children don't confuse b and d because they look alike; they confuse them because they sound alike.

However, young children often confuse letters, so letter reversal alone is insufficient to signal an underlying problem. If you notice a child who struggles with any of these tasks, it is essential to document the areas of difficulty.

For more details see these helpful resources on Iowa's AEA page, including Dyslexia in the Classroom: What every teacher should know

Keep in mind that people have only been reading for a few hundred years. Our brains were not developed to read – rather they are designed to recognize language and objects. So having difficulty reading is not an indication that someone is not intelligent – in fact, many people with reading difficulties are very talented! It is a problem with the way the brain processes the sounds of language. Brain research [YouTube video] demonstrates that people with dyslexia rely too much on their memory, neglecting to use the faster system of sounding words out. However, research has also demonstrated that with training, the patterns can be changed. In other words, we can retrain the brain to use the sound system.

Early intervention is key! The earlier we can recognize the signs of a possible reading difficulty, the earlier systematic instruction can begin.

Learning Activities

In the next video, a parent discusses how difficult it was to get help for her child who was struggling with reading. What were the signs of reading problems?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=323#h5p-3

How to provide support

First, if you have documented that a student has trouble in the areas listed above, talk with your schools' Special Education staff about a referral.

However, you can support the student in your classroom. The first thing you can do is to develop a positive, supportive relationship with the student. A review of close to 150 studies on motivation found that to help children succeed, you must help them feel 3 things:

- **Competent**: A feeling of competence doesn't mean that students already know how to do something, but that they have the confidence that they're capable of learning it. Starting off a reading lesson with something the students already know can build the feeling of competence. Then go to something that might be harder and encourage them to try it.
- **Belonging**: This is feeling accepted and connected to others. Listen to a student's thoughts and feelings and respond with empathy: "Yes, learning new things can be hard. I know what that feels like." Help the student build the identities of a learner and a reader.
- **Autonomy**: This is about choices and deciding for yourself what you want to do. Even little choices make a difference. Let the student pick their own books and personalize their assignments. Explain the rules and requirements of lessons so that the students can understand why they're being asked to do them.

These suggestions by the International Dyslexia Association (see Resources, pp.7-8) can help any student who might be struggling. These work for students who are learning English as a second or third language as well.

- Clarify and simplify written directions. Some directions are written in paragraph form and contain unnecessary information. These can be overwhelming to some students. The teacher can help by underlining or highlighting the significant parts of the directions. Rewriting the directions is also often helpful.
- When confronting unacceptable behavior, do not inadvertently discourage the child with dyslexia. Words such as "lazy" or "incorrigible" can seriously damage the child's self-image.
- Present a small amount of work. The teacher can tear pages from workbooks and other materials to present small assignments to students who are anxious about the amount of work to be done. This technique prevents students from examining an entire workbook or other large amount of text and becoming discouraged.

- Block out extraneous stimuli. If a student is easily distracted by visual stimuli on a full worksheet or page, a blank sheet of paper can be used to cover sections of the page not being worked on at the time. Also, line markers can be used to aid reading, and windows can be used to display individual math problems. Additionally, using larger font sizes and increasing spacing can help separate sections.

- Provide additional practice activities. Some materials do not provide enough practice activities for students with learning problems to acquire mastery of selected skills. Teachers then must supplement the material with practice activities. Recommended practice exercises include instructional games, peer-teaching activities, self-correcting materials, computer software programs, and additional worksheets.

- Use assistive technology. Products such as tablets, electronic readers/dictionaries/spellers, text-to-speech programs, audio books, and more can be very useful tools.

- Employ peer-mediated learning. The teacher can pair peers of different ability levels to review their notes, study for a test, read aloud to each other, write stories, or conduct laboratory experiments. Also, a partner can read math problems for students with reading problems to solve.

- Make work times flexible. Students who work slowly may be given additional time to complete written assignments.

- Provide additional practice. Students require different amounts of practice to master skills or content, and students with learning problems need ample practice.

Adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed instruction

ACEs, or **adverse childhood experiences**, are traumatic events that can dramatically upset a child's sense of safety and well-being. These experiences can include substance abuse in the home, the death of a parent, divorce, abuse, or witnessing violence. We know in our state that 64% of Iowans have experienced at least 1 ACE (Iowa ACES 360). Data from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) showed that 46% of America's children had experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, with the number rising to 55 percent for children aged 12 to 17. One in five U.S. children had had two or more ACEs.

"Person Holding Photo" is by Anita Jankovic on Unsplash.

POSITIVE — Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

TOLERABLE — Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC — Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.
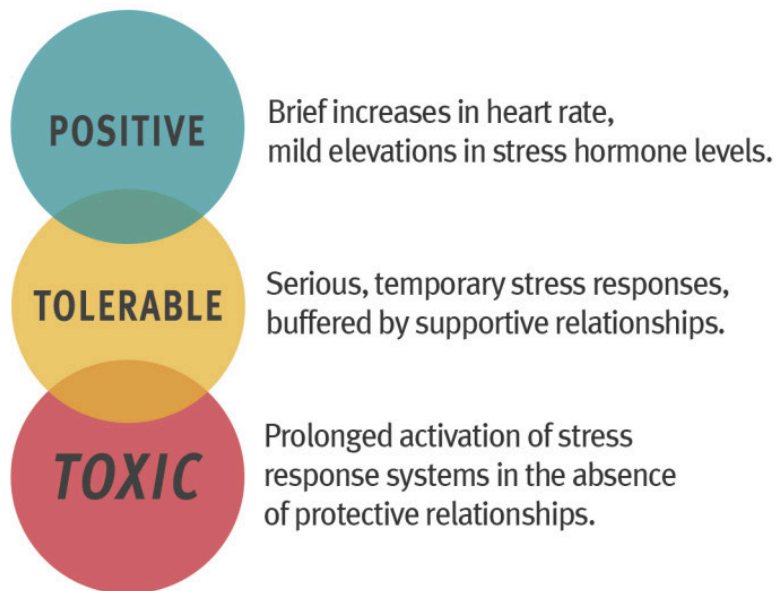
Image credit: Harvard University Center for the Developing Child.

When we are threatened by stressful events, our body's stress system kicks in to prepare us to respond by increasing our heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones such as cortisol. But not all stress is created equal. Some, as in the top circle, gets our heart pumping a little faster and slightly elevates our stress hormones, but it's considered positive stress because it gets us moving to do something we need to or want to do. For example, maybe you are chatting with your spouse or friend when you realize how late it is getting. The stress of realizing that time before class is short gets you motivated to meet your goal of being on time to class.

The next level of stress is tolerable stress, shown in the yellow circle. This is a serious, but temporary stress that's buffered by supportive relationships. Think about goodbyes between a parent and their child in your classroom in the morning. These can be highly stressful for both the child and their parent, but with support from you – a warm welcoming smile to the parent, a hug and engaging activities for the child – the stress is tolerable.

Toxic stress, the red circle, is prolonged stress. The biological stress response – what naturally happens in the body in stress situations – stays engaged, and in this case there are few, if any, protective relationships to buffer that stress. With toxic stress, the body just doesn't get a break. Adverse Childhood Experiences from abuse, neglect, dysfunctional households, and violent situations can cause children to experience toxic stress.

How can a teacher recognize when a student might have experienced trauma? The signs can include:

- not following or understanding directions;
- overreacting to statements or events in the classroom;
- interpreting comments as negative;
- lack of understanding of cause and effect;
- poor communication skills; and
- difficulty in regulating emotions.

Download this trauma toolkit for educators [PDF]

The following recommendations for supporting students' social emotional learning are drawn from the Trauma Toolkit: Tools to support the Learning and Development of Students Experiencing Childhood & Adolescent Trauma, by First Book:

1. Create a safe classroom environment. Incorporating consistent routines and rituals in the classroom helps students experience predictability and security. Take a zero-tolerance stance on bullying, teasing, and other behaviors that make children feel unsafe or threatened.
2. Help students identify an area of competence. Whether it is an academic subject, extracurricular activity, or other creative outlet, helping students identify an area where they feel successful is important to their healing and development.
3. Develop rapport and positive relationships with students. Students experiencing trauma greatly benefit from having strong, positive relationships with adults and peers.

The Responsive Classroom

An evidence-based program that helps to build positive relationships in the classroom is "The Responsive Classroom." Here are the basic components of the Responsive Classroom approach:

Shared practices (K–8)

- Interactive modeling: an explicit practice for teaching procedures and routines (such as those for entering and exiting the room), as well as academic and social skills (such as engaging with the text or giving and accepting feedback).
- Teacher language: the intentional use of language to enable students to engage in their learning and develop the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to be successful in and out of school.
- Logical consequences: a non-punitive response to misbehavior that allows teachers to set clear limits and students to fix and learn from their mistakes while maintaining their dignity.
- Interactive learning structures: purposeful activities that give students opportunities to engage with content in active (hands-on) and interactive (social) ways.

Elementary practices (K–6)

- Morning meeting: Everyone in the classroom gathers in a circle for twenty to thirty minutes at the beginning of each school day and proceeds through four sequential components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message.
- Establishing rules: The teacher and students work together to name individual goals for the year and establish rules that will help everyone reach those goals.
- Energizers: short, playful, whole-group activities that are used as breaks in lessons.
- Quiet time: a brief, purposeful, and relaxed time of transition that takes place after lunch and recess, before the rest of the school day continues.
- Closing circle: five to ten minutes at the end of the day in which everyone participates in a brief activity that promotes reflection and celebration.

You can read more about the principles and practices on the [Responsive Classroom website](#).

While the teacher can support students with practices like these, remember that if you suspect trauma or abuse, you should follow your school's policies on reporting and seeking help for children.

Video Example

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=323#oembed-5

[Download Responsive Classroom Video Transcript [DOC]](#)

Key Takeaways

- This chapter has covered how to support many different types of students, but the main takeaway should be that each student has a right to receive a quality education with a teacher who cares.
- When teachers take time to form relationships with students and their caregivers, teachers can better serve the students in their class.

Resources for teacher educators

- The Influence of Home on School Success
- Learning for Justice
- 6 Essential Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners
- 12 Ways to Support English Learners in the Mainstream Classroom | Cult of Pedagogy
- Innovative strategies for teaching English language learners | UMass Global
- eLearning – Online Literacy Professional Development (module on Dyslexia)
- What is Dyslexia?: An Overview for Educators [Powerpoint slides] provides general information about dyslexia from Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEA).

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Chapter 10. Reading and Writing Across Content Areas – Disciplinary Literacy

Emily Hayden and Constance Beecher

"Wisdom is not a product of schooling, but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it" – Albert Einstein

Photo by MI PHAM on Unsplash

Keywords: content-area literacy, disciplinary literacy

From birth, children use their voices and developing speech sounds to communicate, and they make sense of the world through language. Perhaps you have noticed that children who are engaged in play or other activities often talk simultaneously about what they are doing, using talk to plan their next steps or to generate solutions to some problem they have encountered in the course of their work or play. Vygotsky (1986) believed that language and thought were

practically inseparable. The internal and external language children engage in while they are learning advances their reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Later, these processes can be replicated through writing – another way to use language. These literacy skills, talking and listening, as well as writing and reading, should be used in all content areas in the elementary classroom to help students learn new information.

Literacy in content-area classes

The academic standards in mathematics, science, and social studies acknowledge that children use language and literacy to make sense of what they are learning. The same literacy skills taught in English Language Arts (ELA) can be used to help students gain knowledge and master these content areas as well.

The [CEEDAR Center](#) (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform) illustrates essential literacy skills that are used across content areas. Teaching your students to use their skills and strategies to make sense of texts they read in science, social studies, and mathematics can be called disciplinary literacy.

Disciplinary literacy and content-area literacy

You may have heard of both **content-area literacy** and **disciplinary literacy**. Content-area literacy refers to strategies that can be used to make sense of text in any content area. For example, a [KWL chart](#) (what I KNOW, what I WANT to know, and what I LEARNED) can be used in almost any context to organize learning before and after reading texts. Here's a sample lesson using the KWL method entitled *Let's Build a Snowman.*

However, there are ways to use literacy strategies that are specifically suited to certain content areas or disciplines. This is disciplinary literacy. Disciplinary literacy recognizes that reading, writing, and other language processes vary depending on the discipline.

For example, the literacy skills for mathematics include the ability to read and write number sentences, using particular symbols and conventions. The following number sentence:

$$2 + 9 = 11$$

uses two symbols generally seen only in mathematics: + and =. Likewise, there are certain literacy comprehension tools and strategies that are especially suited to the requirements of mathematics. For example, a T-chart may be just the right comprehension tool to use when developing an important mathematics skill – separating necessary information from unnecessary information in a story problem, as shown below:

> Sammy and three friends want to share a pizza. The pizza is cut into 12 pieces. They all think that pepperoni is the best kind of pizza. If Sammy and her three friends each get the same number of pieces, how many will each person get?

T-Chart to organize information in a story problem.

Information I need to solve this problem	Extra information that I do not need
Sammy and three friends want to share a pizza.	
The pizza is cut into 12 pieces.	They all think that pepperoni is the best kind of pizza.
Each person gets the same number of pieces of pizza.	

Components of disciplinary literacy

Choosing the best-fitting comprehension strategies for a discipline depends on recognizing several components of disciplinary literacy:

1. Learning the specific vocabulary of a discipline is essential for gaining knowledge in that discipline.
2. Reading and writing are used differently in mathematics, science, social studies, and ELA.
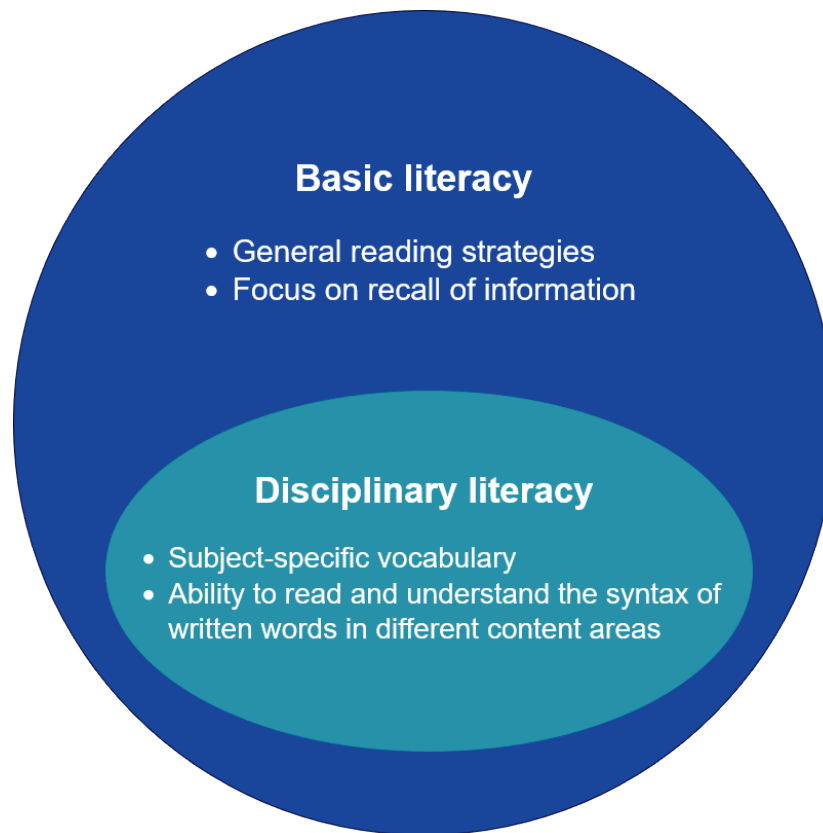
Image adapted from example on [example of basic and disciplinary literacy on study.com](#)

Learning Activities: Learning specific vocabulary

Watch this video about the sun. Make a list of some subject-specific vocabulary words used in this video that you would want to teach students who were learning about the sun. Compare your list with those of your classmates.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=359#h5p-34

Maybe your vocabulary list looked something like this:

- Energy
- Light
- Surface
- Fahrenheit
- Celsius
- Dwarf star

Teaching the vocabulary that goes with specific topics is an important part of disciplinary literacy. Knowing vocabulary words and their meanings supports comprehension in science, mathematics, and social studies just as it does in English Language Arts. In fact, all components of literacy – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – help children learn content in every discipline. Introducing and emphasizing the literacy components below will strengthen students' understanding of the content areas as well.

Reading and writing are used differently

In the mathematics T-chart example above you saw how a specific graphic organizer could help with a specific mathematics language task: sorting necessary from unnecessary information in a story problem. The ability to determine the relevance of information is a highly complex and challenging task; and while there are times when students will need to sort information in this way in social studies, science, and ELA, this task occurs early and often in mathematics instruction. This is one way that reading is used differently in mathematics.

Social studies experts and scientists also use reading and writing in ways that are unique to their disciplines. For example, in elementary social studies tasks, students are asked to determine cause and effect relationships and to use timelines to keep track of events. In elementary science tasks, students record observations and hypothesize about outcomes. Classroom learning in the early elementary years establishes these discipline-specific ways of using literacy; and like all other early learning, these skills are expanded on in later school experiences. A strong base of disciplinary literacy skills is crucial for later success.

How to start

You can help your students establish a strong foundation of disciplinary knowledge by incorporating reading, writing, speaking, and listening into as many learning activities as possible. A good way to start is by reading informational texts to explore topics of student interest, because having a purpose for reading enhances students' engagement. Dr. Nell Duke, a literacy researcher, has studied informational text. In her [blog post for the National Association for the Education of the Young Child](), Dr. Duke suggests the following:

Photo by [Suad Kamardeen]() on [Unsplash]()

- Read informational texts to learn how to care for a class pet.
- Write instructions for something of importance, for example, how-to instructions for the staff who will be taking care of the school garden over the summer.

As students become more comfortable with **informational texts**, use such texts to introduce new topics and to set a purpose for the learning to come:

- Read and compare a few informational texts to prepare for a class field trip or to get an overview of a new topic at the start of the unit.

For example, you might read *12 Ways to Get to 11* (Merriam, 1996) as a way of introducing how to conceptualize and write math number sentences:

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/teachingearlyliteracy/?p=359#oembed-1*

Some published curricula will include suggestions for companion texts and writing activities. For example, see this open-access social studies lesson: [What Makes a Hero?]()

Sometimes you will need to think of your own ways to include literacy. Look again at the lesson example for *Let's Build a Snowman.* By clicking on the Resources & Preparation Tab you will see three texts, fictional and informational, that were chosen to help students build the knowledge and disciplinary ways of thinking that are needed for this lesson.

What about science?

Scientists also use reading and writing in very specific ways, and young children can begin to practice these disciplinary literacy skills. See this slide show for some ways that literacy use in science compares to that in ELA, and for student writing examples.

Writing

An effective way for young children to start writing in any discipline is to make lists.

You try it! Start by making a list of things you see (observe) in this picture:

Hayden, (2017). Horses at the Iowa State University horse barn.

I see …

-
-
-

Now, think like a scientist and generate some questions.

I wonder …

-
-
-

Learning Activities

Once again, work with a partner to search online book sites and find at least three texts (both fictional and informational) that you could use to learn about your questions.

Generate some vocabulary words to teach as well.

Key Takeaways

The disciplinary literacy skills that children learn in the primary grades will set the stage for learning across the content areas in the middle grades and beyond. Learning to use the literacy components – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – in mathematics, science and social studies depends on knowing

- the vocabulary that is essential for gaining knowledge in that discipline; and
- that reading and writing are used in different and unique ways in mathematics, science, social studies, and ELA.

Resources for teacher educators

- KWL Chart [PDF]
- Olness, R. L. (2022). *Let's build a snowman*.
- What makes a hero? [Lesson plan]
- Hayden, H. E. (2018) Reading and writing in science. [Powerpoint slides]

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Review Statement

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Peer reviews for this book were provided by subject matter experts and structured around considerations related to the text's usefulness as a teaching resource. Reviewers provided feedback based on a rubric adapted from the [Open Textbook Library's Review Rubric](), rating the text on various aspects of its organization and content. Comments from peer reviewers were used to guide edits and additions to the book's content, which were incorporated by the lead authors prior to publication.

About the Authors

Nandita Gurjar, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Elementary Education at Rhode Island College, Providence, RI. Before her current position, she was an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Northern Iowa in the Literacy division. While at UNI, she taught undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy, particularly *Methods of Teaching Early Literacy*, for several years. Nandita led America Reads program and was an Iowa Reading Research advisory council member. She co-chairs Early Childhood Education SIG at the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education. Nandita earned her Ph.D. in Elementary Education from the University of Central Florida. Her research promotes inclusive, equitable learning and virtual learning communities. She has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals: *The Reading Teacher, Reading Horizon-the Journal of Literacy and Language Arts, Childhood Education, TechTrends, Applied Instructional Design, Italian Journal of Educational Technology*, and *Educational Technology Research and Development*. Nandita is passionate about promoting developmentally appropriate technology and literacy skills in children and mentoring preservice teachers through community engagement and service learning in her classes. She has been selected as the 2023-2024 Open Education Research fellow.

Sohyun "Soh (pronounced as so)" Meacham, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Northern Iowa. Her research interests include teachers' language use, young children's oral language development in the classroom, and representations of minoritized children in picturebooks. With this research background, she teaches early literacy courses. She has been the state secretary of Iowa Reading Association since 2021. Her early literacy research has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals such as *The Reading Teacher, Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Early Education and Development, European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, Journal of Children's Literature, Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, and *Science and Children*. Last but not least, in addition to this brand new OER textbook, her newer co-authored book titled *Supporting Korean American children in early childhood education: Perspectives from mother-educators* is forthcoming through Teachers College Press in November, 2023. She is currently writing another book about Asian American early childhood and intersectionality under a contract with Routledge.

Constance Beecher, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Literacy in the School of Education

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