

# Virtual Lab School



Welcome!

Live Webinar will begin at 11:00 EST

# Supporting Strong Literacy Practices in Your Program

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# To support your learning...

- ✓ All participants have been muted
- ✓ Please type questions or comments into Chat
- ✓ We will monitor the CHAT and answer questions throughout the training
- ✓ This session is being recorded to share on the Virtual Lab School site
- ✓ We encourage you to participate in the polls throughout the training
- ✓ Share your feedback after the training!
- ✓ If we disconnect – please log back in

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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- Examine research-based practices that support literacy development in early childhood and school-age programs.
- Discuss how to create environments and experiences that promote the development of early literacy skills.
- Review strategies and tools to partner with families on supporting literacy development.
- Identify VLS resources that support language and literacy rich environments and interactions.



1 in 5 adults in the U.S. struggle to complete literacy tasks that require comparing and contrasting information, paraphrasing, or making low-level inferences. National Center for Education Statistics (2023)

## What kinds of things do kindergartners know?

The previous ECLS studies worked with kindergartners to learn about their knowledge and skills.

66%

recognized their  
letters

A B C

29%

knew the first  
sounds of words

C A T

58%

understood size  
comparisons such  
as big, bigger, and  
biggest



94%

recognized  
numbers and  
shapes and were  
able to count to 10

1 2 3

NOTE: Data were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

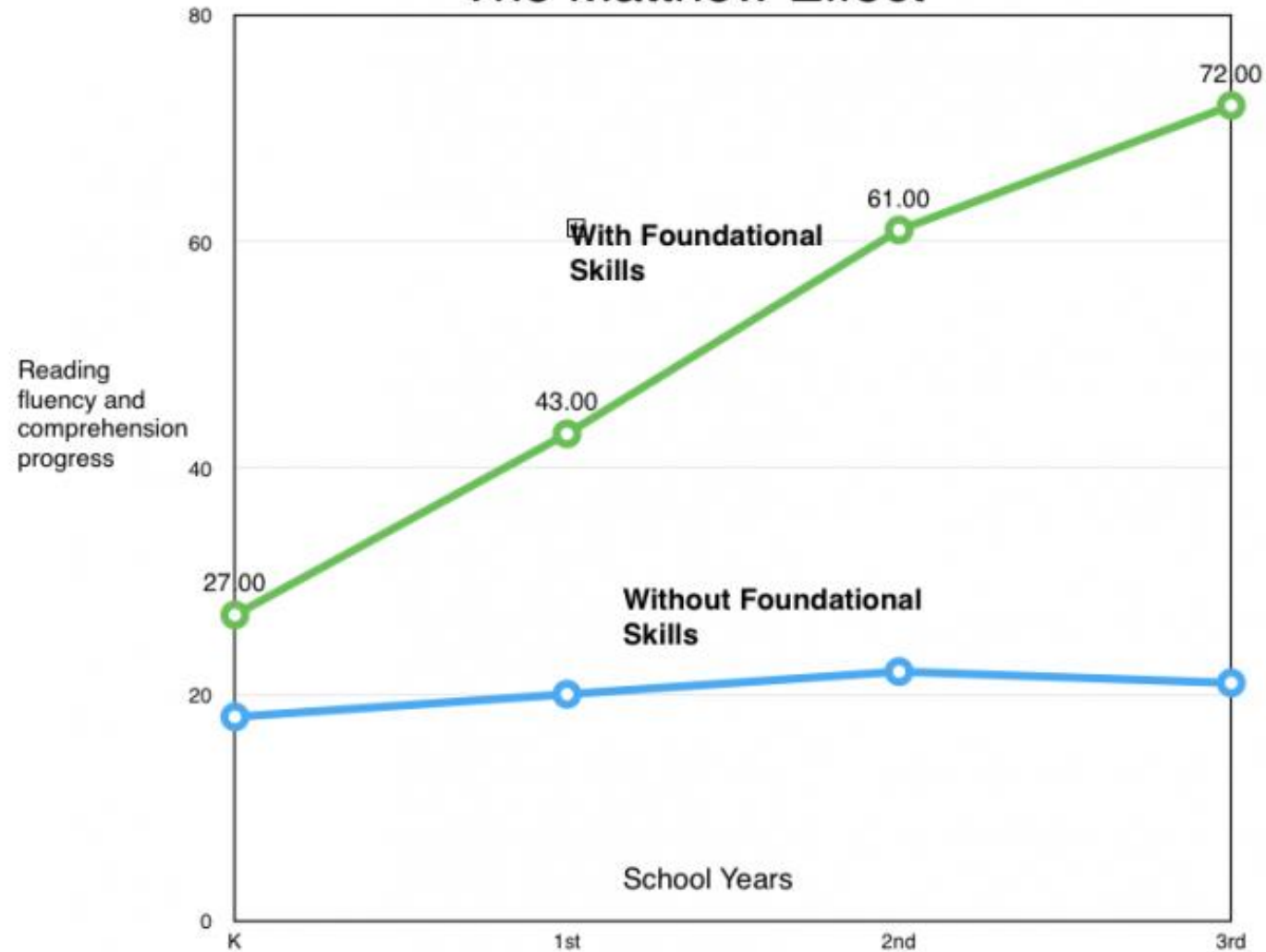
SOURCE: West, J., Denton, K., and Germino-Hausken, E. (2000). *America's Kindergartners* (NCES 2000-070). Retrieved July 31, 2020, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000070.pdf>.



# Continuum of Reading Development



## The Matthew Effect



This early foundation matters later on



# Emergent Literacy Building Blocks



- **Oral Language:** children's ability to understand and use language to communicate.
- **Print Knowledge:** recognizing letter names, words, and concepts of print.
- **Phonological Awareness:** ability to identify and manipulate sounds and that sounds are combined to make up words.
- **Vocabulary:** knowing words and word meanings.

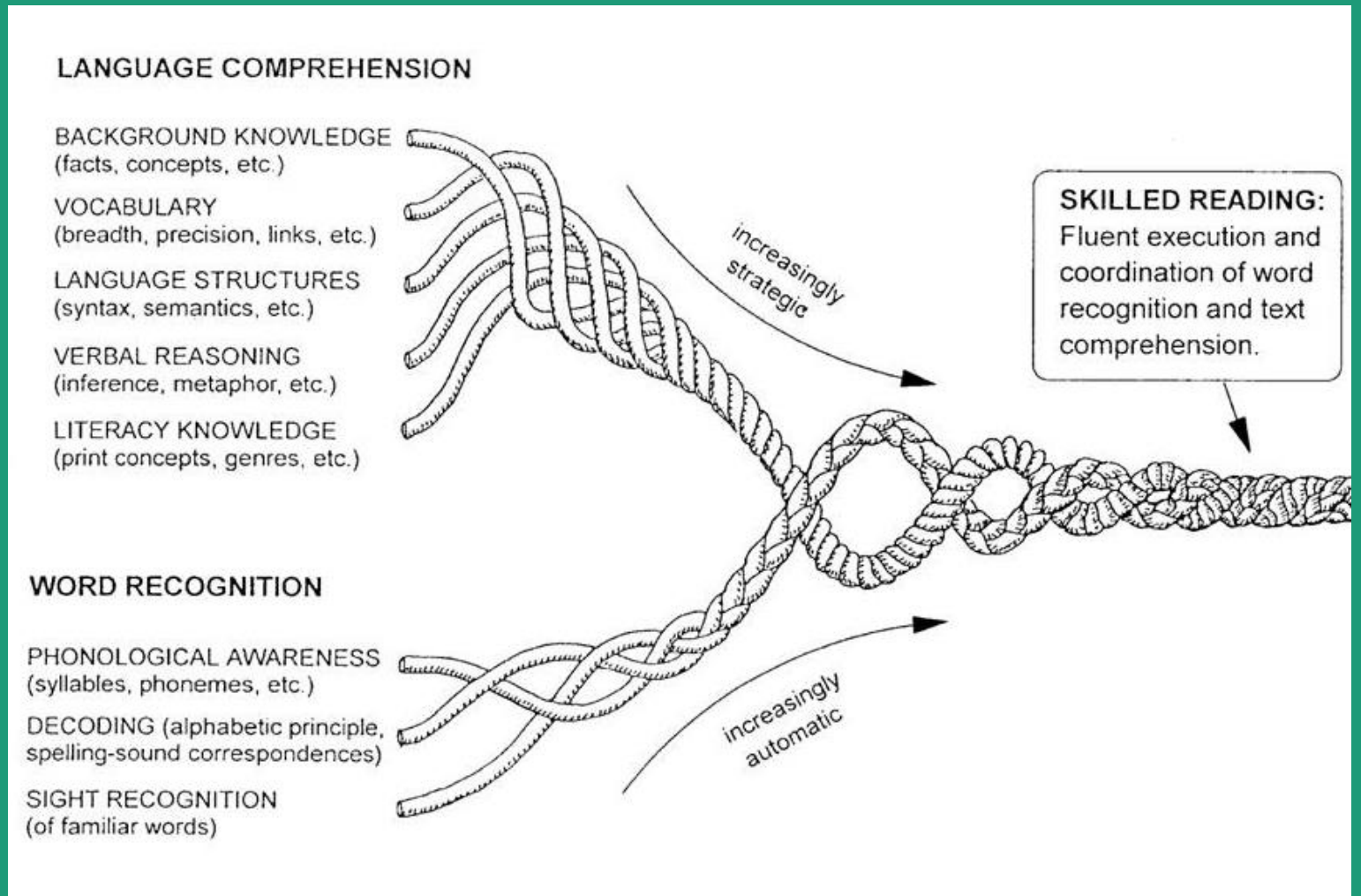


## **SHARE OUT- CHAT**

*What is your earliest memory of engaging with literacy?*

# Strands Woven Into Skilled Reading

Scarborough, H. S.  
(2001)



# Today's Focus

## Language Development

- Background knowledge
- Vocabulary
- Verbal Reasoning

## Literacy Knowledge and Skills

- Phonological awareness
- Alphabet knowledge
- Print Concepts

## Early Writing

- Levels of development
- Scaffolding strategies



## Language & Communication Development

"Of all the life skills available to us, communication is perhaps the most empowering." - *Brett Morrison*



## Supporting Infants' and Toddlers' Communication

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- Mimicking
- Narrating
- Using a wide variety of words & phrases
- Singing and rhyming
- Gestures and signs
- Introducing objects that spark interest





## **SHARE OUT- Poll**

*What does language and literacy support look like  
in your program's classrooms?*



# Using the VLS to Support Language Development



Infants & Toddlers / Communication & Language Development / Lesson 2

## Caregivers Communicating with Infants and Toddlers

You can continue to be intentional about your interactions and the experiences you offer so that infants and toddlers can build their communication skills and enjoy experimenting with sounds and words within relationships! Think about the strategies you are using to support communication development in infants and toddlers. Identify specific ways you are applying the various strategies as well as new ways to consider using these strategies throughout the day. Share your responses with your trainer, coach, or administrator.

Communication Strategy	Ways I Do This Now with Infants and Toddlers	Additional Ways I Can Use this Strategy with Infants & Toddlers
Learn about infants' and toddlers' communication development		
Respond enthusiastically to infants' and toddlers' gestures		
Read books with infants and toddlers		
Listen to infants and toddlers and respond to what they say		
Watch as infants and toddlers point to things; use words to describe the object at which they're pointing		
Sing with infants and toddlers or Talk with infants and toddlers about our day together		



Guide

Preschool / Communication & Language Development / Lesson 4

## Strategies for Promoting Communication

### Model

When a child communicates nonverbally, say what they would have said

### Expand

If the child makes a sound or says one word or a few words, expand these into longer phrases or sentences slightly more complex than what the child said

### Label

As children are engaged in experiences, talk about and describe what they are doing

### Ask Questions

Use open-ended questions relevant to children's experiences

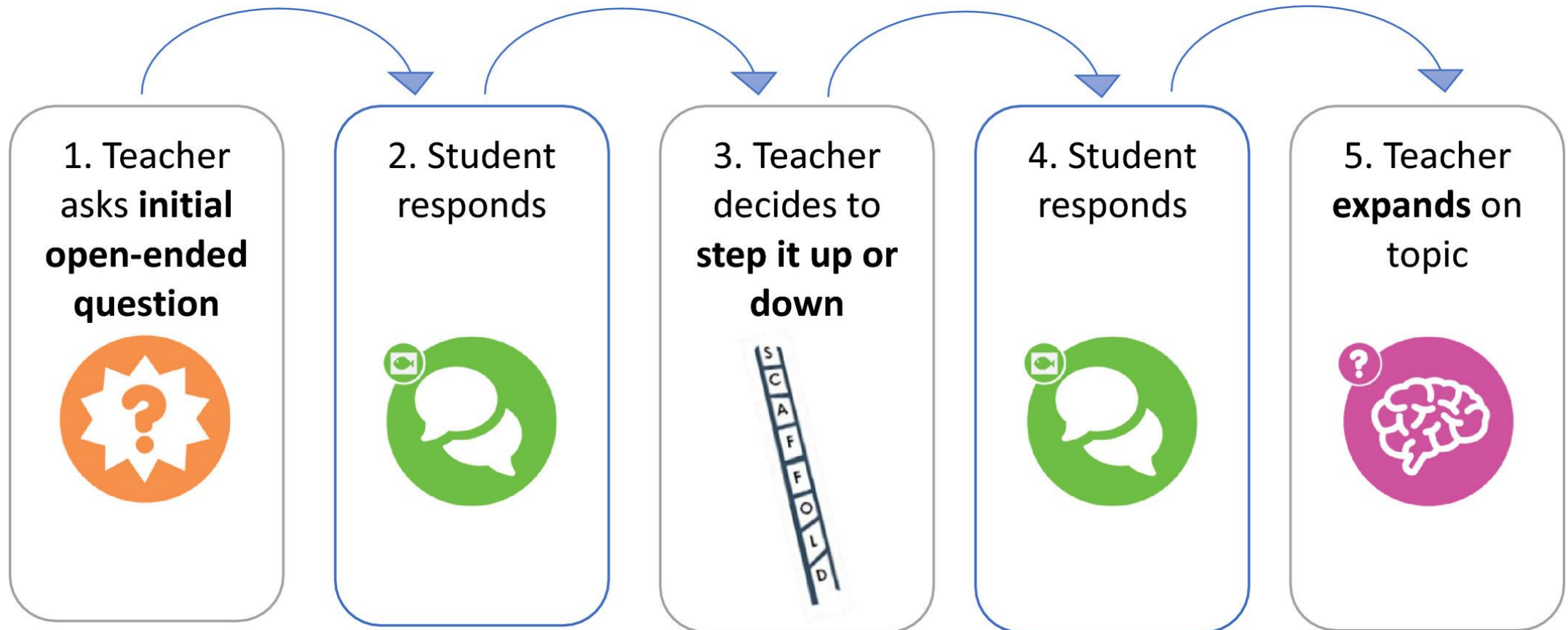
### Listen Before Responding

After asking a question or making a comment, wait for a child to communicate. Listen to what they have to say, and then respond

## What I Know About Their Development

	Young Infant (Birth to 9 months)	Mobile Infant (9 to 18 mos)	Toddler (18 to 36 mos)
<b>What I know about their development:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They notice different sounds.</li> <li>They coo and make sounds.</li> <li>They babble around 9 months.</li> <li>They look at pictures in books and listen to the adult's voice as they read.</li> <li>They enjoy touching pages of a book; may want to chew on books.</li> <li>They enjoy listening to music and adults singing songs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They can understand more words than they can speak.</li> <li>They begin to use single words.</li> <li>They take turns in communication and language with an adult.</li> <li>They enjoy looking at books, turning pages of cardboard books, and pointing to pictures they like and are familiar with.</li> <li>They bring favorite books to caregivers to listen to and read together over and over again.</li> <li>They begin to sing a few words of a song.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They understand two- and three-word directions such as "Get your shoes."</li> <li>They learn and begin to use words, including two-word sentences, such as "Me go."</li> <li>They have favorite books they enjoy reading over and over again.</li> <li>They begin to sing words to short songs.</li> <li>Older toddlers use two-word sentences and begin to create longer sentences.</li> <li>Older toddlers listen to longer stories when adults read with excitement in their voice, change facial expressions and tones.</li> <li>Older toddlers can sign words to several songs and use motions, such as with "Wheels on the Bus."</li> </ul>
infants and and tone - quilt next to and hold the ee it (consider pictures for an impairment).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read out loud to infants and monitor your pace and tone - consider lying on a quilt next to them on the floor and hold the book so they can see it (consider larger books with pictures for an infant with a visual impairment).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and offer opportunity for toddlers to touch the pages and photos within books. Help toddlers with limited movement to point at pictures or turn pages with you.</li> </ul>
er opportunity n the pages and board and cloth		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and offer opportunity for infants to touch the pages and photos within cardboard and cloth books.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use sign language with toddlers who may have delays or when called for within their IFSP's (Individual Family Service Plans)</li> </ul>
with infants who r when called for ual Family )		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use sign language with infants who may have delays or when called for within their IFSP's (Individual Family Service Plans)</li> </ul>	
a special book eir home		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask families about a special book or song that is in their home language - invite the family to share with all infants in your care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask families about a special book or song that is in their home language - invite the family to share with all infants in your care</li> </ul>
language - invite the family to share with all infants in your care			

# Interactions that Support Language Development



(Zucker & Cabell, 2023)



# Literacy Knowledge & Skills

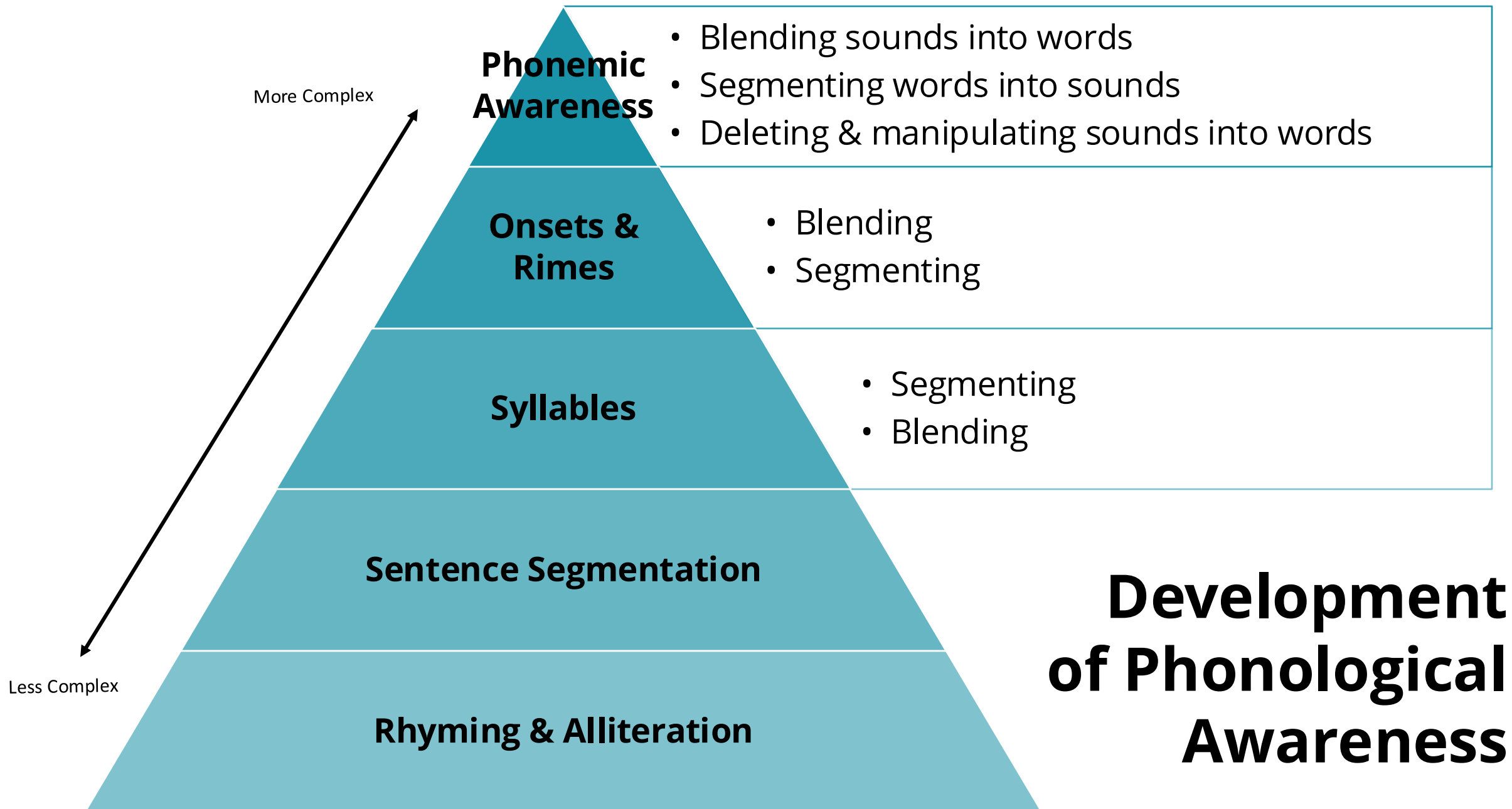
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**Phonological Awareness:** the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in oral language

**Alphabet Knowledge:** knowledge of individual letter names, sounds, and shapes

**Print Concepts:** the understanding that print carries meaning, that books contain letters and words







# Literacy-Rich Curriculum

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- Shared reading
- Interactive activities
- Routines
  - Games, songs, and procedures that incorporate letters and sounds





#### RESEARCH NOTE

### The Impact of Print Referencing

Research with 4-year-olds shows that print referencing during read alouds can improve children's understandings about print in preschool and can have lasting effects on children's reading development (Justice et al. 2010; Piasta et al. 2012).



# Interactions that Develop Literacy Knowledge and Skills

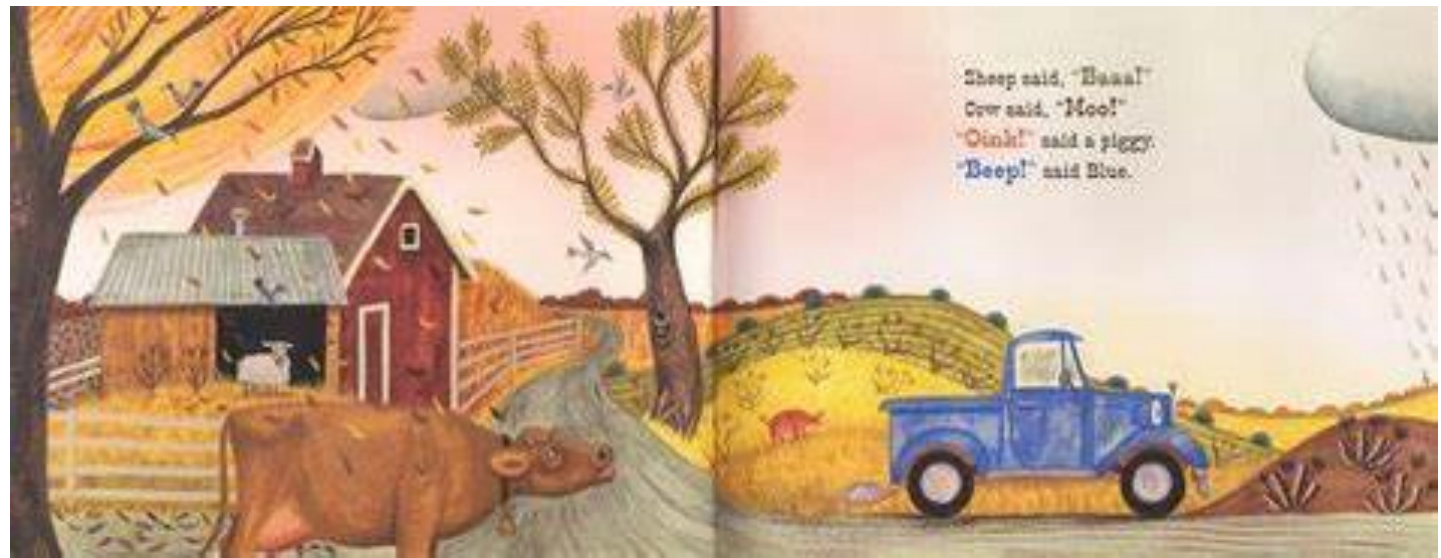
- Print referencing
- Dialogic reading
- Activities that promote phonological awareness



# Dialogic Reading Prompts (CROWD)

- Completion prompts
- Recall prompts
- Open-ended prompts
- Wh-prompts
- Distancing prompts

(Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)



(Schertle & McElmurry, *The Little Blue Truck*)



# Thinking about the Environment & Materials

- Labels including pictures and text in English and families' home languages
- Books are within children's reach and visual aids/charts are at children's eye level
- Age-appropriate and adaptive materials are available
- Variety of spaces and ways to engage with books
- Limited background noise & clutter
- Routines, transitions, and schedules are supported by visual cues



# Using the VLS to Create Literacy-Rich Environments



Guide

School-Age / Communication & Language Development / Lesson 4

## Building the School-Age Library

### Leveled Readers

Many school districts require students to read books that fall into the reading level appropriate for their grade and abilities. They are referred to as easy readers or early chapter books. They are usually set up like a chapter book, but have fewer words on a page, contain sight words and age-appropriate vocabulary. Most book publishers will put a "level" number on the cover of the book; levels are the same across publishers. You can use online tools to find out the book's level to help children pick the right-fit book.

The most widely used book leveling measures are:

- **Grade Level Equivalent:**

This is simply giving the book a developmentally appropriate grade level match. A level of 2.3 would be: 2nd Grade, Month 3.

- **Guided Reading:**

A common leveling system used by schools. This leveling system gives the book a letter, which will correspond with a grade level below for a comparison chart.

- **Developmental Reading Assessment Levels (DRA):**

A common leveling system used by schools and book publishers. This leveling system will give the book a number, which will be a grade level; see the link below for a comparison chart.

- **Leveled Readers: Comparison Chart:**

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/guidedreading/leveling\\_chart.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/guidedreading/leveling_chart.htm)

- **Leveled Readers: Scholastic Book Wizard:**

To check the levels of easy readers, you can use the Scholastic Book Wizard, which is an online tool designed to help find the right book for children. You can look up a book's level, or even get a list of books on the same level to use when purchasing materials for your library. <http://www.scholastic.com/bookwizard/>

### Accelerated Reader

This is a system that is separate from the three systems mentioned above. It levels books and offers reading comprehension tests commonly used in schools. To check the level of an AR book, refer to the website listed in the Learn section of Lesson 4 in the Communication & Language Development course.

### Chapter Books

Chapter books also have a level that can be used to help children find the right-fit book for them. You can also access this information through the Scholastic Book Wizard link above. The level for chapter books is called Lexile. It will give a number range that will correspond to a grade level. When helping a child choose a chapter book, it is important to keep in mind that while a child may have the reading skills to read a particular title, they may lack the maturity to understand the subject matter. There are online tools available to help check this before putting a specific title in your collection.

### Common Sense Media

This Common Sense Media website provides reviews and rates books on areas such as language, mature content, positive role models, and more. You can search by title, age or subject matter. <https://www.common Sense Media.org/reviews/category/book>

### Libraries



Program Tool

Preschool / Communication & Language Development / Lesson 2

## Phonologically Rich Classroom Checklist

Phonological awareness is an important skill that plays a big role in reading development. Take a few minutes to complete the checklist and think about how often you are promoting this skill for preschoolers in your classroom. Share your responses with your trainer, co-teacher, or administrator.

### Practices that Encourage Phonological Awareness:

1. Read books aloud to children that play with sounds, letters, rhyming, and words.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
2. Sing songs that help children play with sounds, letters, rhyming, and words.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
3. Identify words and sounds that rhyme.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
4. Talk about letters and their sounds.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
5. Include print labels for activities, materials, and routines and talk about their letters and sounds.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
6. Read and sing poems to children and have them fill in words or create their own lines.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this
7. Play games that emphasize or draw attention to sounds, words, and letters.
  - A. I do this every day
  - B. I do this sometimes
  - C. I need to work on this



Guide

Preschool / Learning Environments / Lesson 4

## Child's Play: Toys and Games for Learning Goals

All toys are not created equally. Some toys help children learn valuable social skills and promote learning goals in your classroom. This list can help you decide the best types of toys to purchase or create for your classroom.

### Toys that Encourage Cooperation

- Simple cooperative board games:
  - "Max: A Cooperative Game" (Family Pastimes)
  - "The Secret Door" (Family Pastimes)
  - "Hoot Owl Hoot!" (Peaceable Kingdom)
  - "Count Your Chickens" (Peaceable Kingdom)
- Simple cooperative movement games:
  - Cooperative musical chairs: Play like traditional musical chairs, except each child must find a place to sit when the music stops. Encourage children to share seats, sit on laps, and get creative about helping their friends find a place to sit. When the music stops, remove a chair and help children think of ways to sit.
  - Wagon pull: Encourage children to take turns pulling each other in a wagon.
  - Parachute games: Use small or large parachutes and encourage children to work together to keep a ball bouncing in the middle.
- Classroom toys:
  - Dominoes
  - Blocks
  - Balance rocker weights
  - Ramps for toy cars

### Toys that Encourage Imagination

- Dress-up clothes
- Simple dolls
- Art materials (clay, paint, buttons, collage materials)

SA, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 4  
PS, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 2  
PS, Learning Environments, Lesson 4







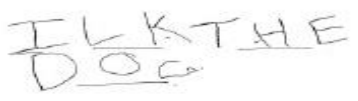
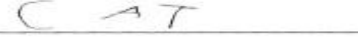


# Early Writing



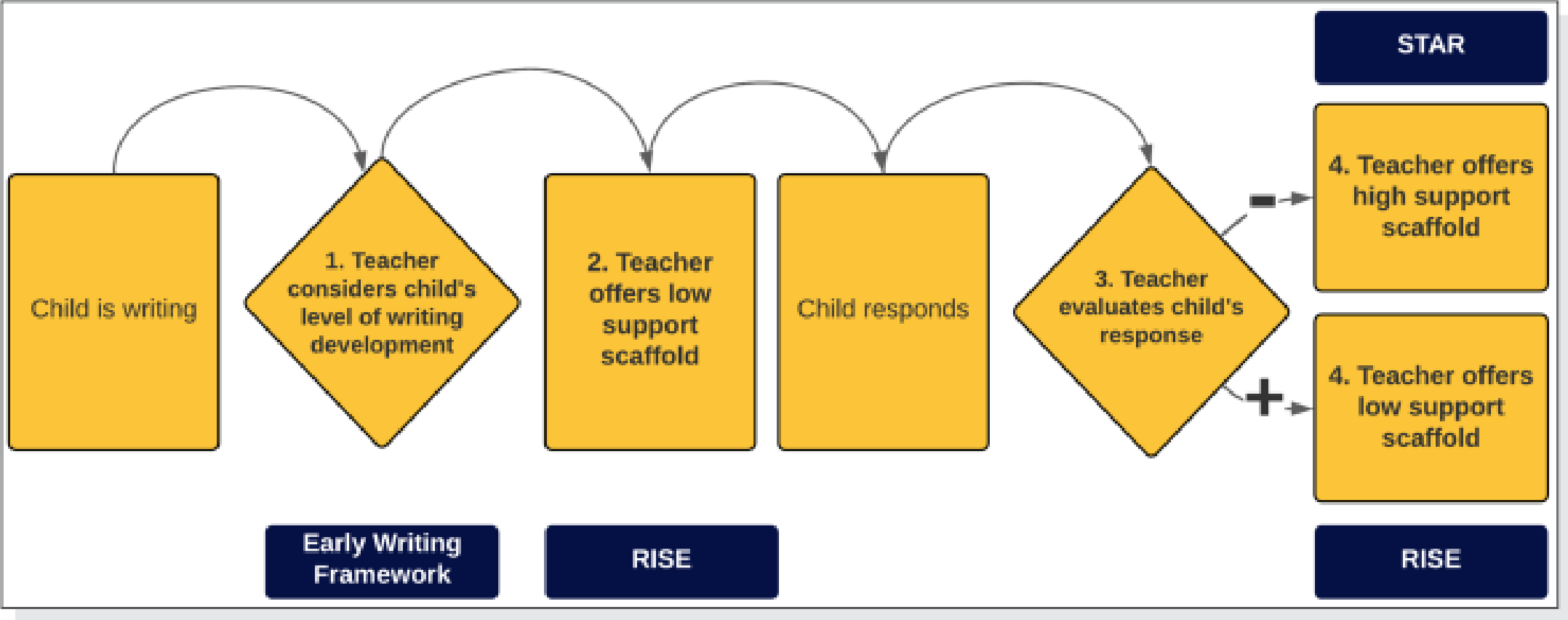


# NAEYC Emergent Writing

(Byington & Kim, 2017)

Stages of Emergent Writing		
Stage	Description	Example
Drawing	Drawings that represent writing	
Scribbling	Marks or scribbles the child intends to be writing	
Wavy scribbles or mock handwriting	Wavy scribbles that imitate cursive writing and have a left-to-right progression; child pretends to write words	
Letter-like forms or mock letters	Letters and marks that resemble letter-like shapes	
Letter strings	Strings of letters that do not create words, written left to right, including uppercase and lowercase letters	
Transitional writing	Letters with spaces in between to resemble words; letters/words copied from environmental print; letters often reversed	
Invented or phonetic spelling	Different ways to represent the sounds in words; the first letter of the word or beginning and ending sounds represent the entire word	
Beginning word and phrase writing	Words with beginning, middle, and ending letter sounds; short phrases	 
Conventional spelling and sentence writing	Correct spelling of words, generally the child's name and words such as <i>mom</i> and <i>dad</i> ; sentences with punctuation and correct use of uppercase and lowercase letters	

Rising Star Scaffolding Decision Guide



(Copp et al., 2022)

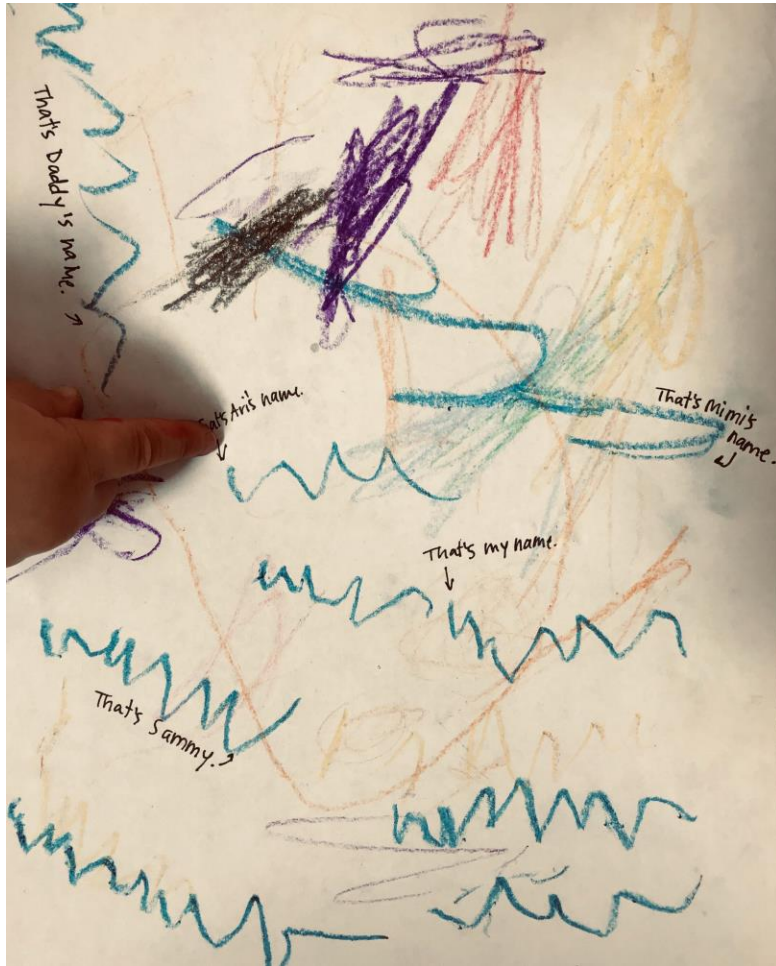
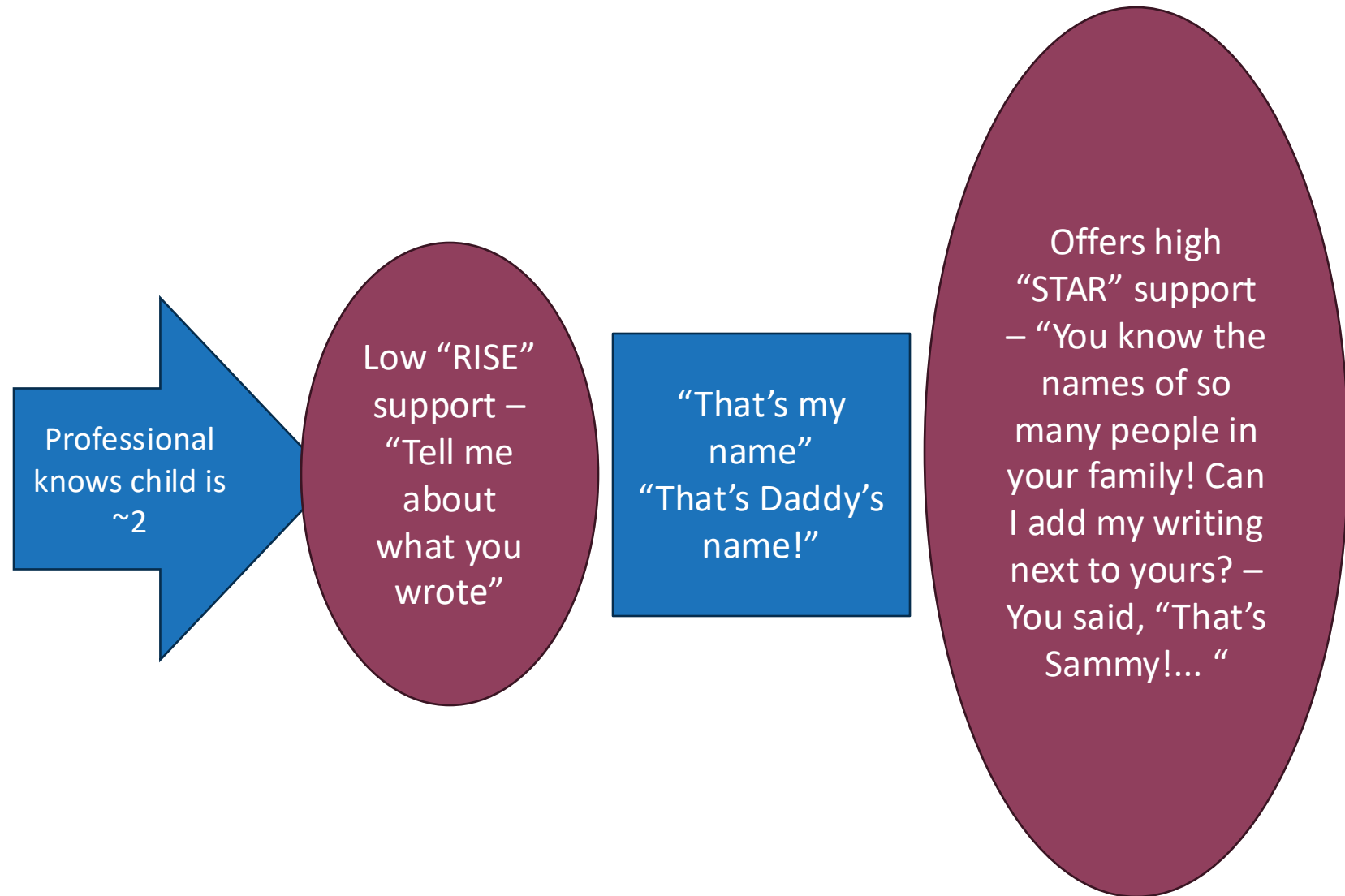


Image from Grady (2023) article in *Teaching Young Children*; NAEYC





Professional  
knows child is  
~5

Low “RISE”  
support – “I  
see you wrote  
the letters  
IMPSCR – why  
did you write  
these letters”

“Cause I’m  
playing soccer”  
– child points to  
letters as they  
share

Offers low “RISE” support –  
“You knew the first letter for  
every word in your sentence!  
Remember to think about the  
sounds that you hear in a  
word and the letters that  
make those sounds.” When  
sounds do you hear in the  
word play?”



Example STAR Scaffolds by Level of Writing Development

	Showing	Tools	Asking	Reducing
<b>Drawing and Scribbling</b> Goal: To consistently differentiate writing from drawing and use individual units or letters while writing	I am going to write <i>girl</i> underneath my picture. First, I need to write the letter g. Here is how I write a g.	Let us look at the alphabet card to help us with the letter. Here is a g. Now let us write a g in the air.	What sound do you hear at the beginning of <i>girl</i> ?	Does g look like this or like this? (Pointing to alphabet chart).
<b>Letters and Letter-Like Forms</b> Goal: To write letters with variety and consistency and represent the salient sound in a word	I am writing the word <i>top</i> . I need a letter that makes the /t/ sound. The letter t makes the /t/ sound.	Look at the alphabet card. Put your finger on the letter t.	What sound do you hear at the beginning of <i>top</i> ? What letter makes the /t/ sound?	What letter makes the /t/ sound? P or T?
<b>Salient and Beginning Sounds</b> Goal: To write with beginning and ending sounds in a simple word and represent salient sounds in a longer word	I am going to write the word <i>rainbow</i> . /r/ rainbow. The first sound I hear is /r/. R makes the /r/ sound, so I will write an r.	Rainbow is a long word. Let us clap out how many parts we hear in the word. Rain-bow. Let us focus on the first part – <i>rain</i> .	What sound do you hear at the beginning of <i>rain</i> in rainbow? I hear an /r/ at the beginning of rainbow. What letter makes the /r/ sound?	What letter makes the /r/ sound? R or S?
<b>Beginning and Ending Sounds</b> Goal: To solidify beginning and ending sounds of words and syllables and to include the medial vowel sound in a word	When I write the word <i>tiger</i> , I listen for how many sounds are in the word. /t/ /i/ /g/ /r/. (Teacher models writing the letters paired with the sounds.)	Your word is <i>tiger</i> . Let us count how many sounds are in your word. (Teacher holds up fingers to count each sound in the word.) There are four sounds in the word, so you should write at least four letters.	What sound do you hear at the end of <i>tiger</i> ? What letter makes that sound?	What sound do you hear at the end of <i>tiger</i> ? Is it /g/ or /r/?

Adult does more thinking

Child does more thinking

Example RISE Scaffolds by Level of Writing Development

	Reasoning	Information	Sequencing	Encouragement
<b>Drawing and Scribbling</b> Goal: To consistently differentiate writing from drawing and use individual units or letters while writing	Point to your word. Tell me what you wrote.	Remember the illustrator draws pictures. You did a great job adding an illustration! The author writes the words. Try to add some words.	You drew a picture of a monster truck. Next, let us add some words to go with it?	Way to go! You wrote letters for monster. Keep going!
<b>Letters and Letter-Like Forms</b> Goal: To write letters with variety and consistency and represent the salient sound in a word	I see you wrote the letter s. Why did you write the letter s?	Remember, words are made up of letters. Can you use some letters to make your words?	You want to write solar system. What is the first word you need to sound out?	You have the first letter for each planet in your solar system. Pat yourself on the back!
<b>Salient and Beginning Sounds</b> Goal: To write with beginning and ending sounds in a simple word and represent salient sounds in a longer word	How did you know to write a c for the first sound in caterpillar?	Remember to think about the sounds that you hear and the letters that make those sounds. You can use the sound wall if you get stuck.	Let us clap out the sounds in caterpillar. (Teacher claps out each sound with the students cat-er-pil-lar.) What sounds do you hear in cat?	You heard the /c/ and the /t/ sound in caterpillar and wrote a c and a t. Way to go!
<b>Beginning and Ending Sounds</b> Goal: To solidify beginning and ending sounds of words and syllables and to include the medial vowel sound in a word	Tell me why you wrote these letters for hat?	Stretch out the sounds in the word. Say it very slowly like a sloth.	What sound do you hear in the middle of the word?	You wrote three letters for hat. Way to sound out the word and match the sounds with letters!

# Scaffolding Strategies

# Using the VLS to Support Young Writers

CDA

CDA

Infants & Toddlers / Communication & Language Development / Lesson 4

CDA Language and Literacy Activity Plan

Directions: Create a language and literacy activity plan using the template provided. Within the activity plan, clearly indicate the age group (young infants, mobile infants, or toddlers), explain why it is developmentally appropriate for that age group, and list the intended goals, materials, and processes/teaching strategies. Note: When your CDA Professional Portfolio is completed you will have a total of nine activity plans: three should be appropriate for young infants, three for mobile infants and three for toddlers. You may want to decide ahead of time, which three RC II Learning Experiences you want to write for young infants, which three you want to write for mobile infants, and which three you want to write for toddlers.

RC II-2  
Language and Literacy Activity

Activity Title:	Age Group:
Why this activity is developmentally appropriate for this age group:	
Learning Goals:	Materials:
Processes/Teaching Strategies:	

FCC, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 3  
PS, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 4  
IT, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 4

Especially for parents of preschoolers!

## Write Right

Drawing and Writing

Preschoolers are just starting to understand the difference between writing and drawing. Many can write their names and some letters. To be ready to learn adult spelling, they need lots of writing practice. Even using spelling and letter shapes that are not always correct.

### What is the practice?

**Invented spelling** is having preschoolers **write using whatever letters or symbols they can**. It works best when an adult helps the child "sound out" words and shows interest in the child's attempts. There are many chances to put invented spelling into your daily routine with your child.



### What does the practice look like?

By drawing a picture and writing about it with a mix of letters and "sounded-out" words, a child begins learning the rules of writing. In the same way, a child writing his name on a sign for his room, even if letters are missing, learns that he can write things others can understand.

### How do you do the practice?

You can encourage your child to use invented spelling in lots of ways during the day. Look for chances for writing or drawing. Since you know your child's personality best, figure out what activities your child likes most.

- Give your child lots of chances to observe and help you with writing during your day. For example,

## Embedding Writing and Print into Daily Activities and Routines

Routine / Activity	Writing	Print Awareness
Arrival	Have children write or check off their name when they enter the room.	Have all cubbies labeled with the child's name.
Snack	Have the names of snacks on cards and have children copy.	Label all chairs, snack items, etc.
Science Center	Have children write amount of water; draw experiments, record how much something weighs...	
Art	Include pencils and markers so children can write their names on their artwork and label the drawings.	
Dramatic Play	Include writing utensils and paper related to the activities.	
Block Area	Include small and large blocks and signs for children to use blocks to make letters and words.	



## SHARE OUT- POLL

What are your program's biggest strengths  
in supporting literacy development?



# Partnerships for Learning: Families





*Especially for parents of preschoolers!*

## Let's Read Together

*Reading and Storytelling*

Children ages 3-5 are ready to learn about books and take part actively in sharing them. Reading picture books with your preschooler helps spark her imagination and her love of stories.

### What is the practice?

Sharing, reading, and looking at the pages of a picture book with your child and asking questions help prepare her to read. The more books you read with your child, the more her love of books will grow. Provide your preschooler with books on topics that interest her and share in reading experiences that capture her imagination. Reading storybooks with young children is a vital activity for later reading success.



### What does the practice look like?

Let your preschooler choose a picture book for you to read to her. Find a comfortable place where the two of you can sit together to look at the pictures. Spark her interest in the book by actively involving her in the storytelling process. Let your child ask questions and encourage her to point to the pictures in the story. Ask her questions about the pictures and point out connections between the pictures in the books and her own experiences.

### How do you do the practice?

Provide your preschooler with a variety of picture books to choose from. Let her pick out the book she wants to read.

- **Ask "wh-" questions:** Asking your child questions as you read helps her think about and understand the story. Start by identifying what is going on in the pictures. "What is this dog doing?" Agree with and expand on her answers. "That's right! That dog is chasing a cat! What do you think the cat is trying to do?" You can also relate the book to your child's own experiences. "Our dog likes to chase cats too, doesn't he? What else does he like to chase?"
- **Reread and retell:** Rereading the same book helps your child become familiar with the story and learn to connect the words that are being said with the words she sees on the page. Once your child becomes familiar with the story, have her retell it in her own way. She can use the pictures and her memory. Encourage and praise her attempts even if her version is different from the original.

**CELL**  
CENTER for EARLY LITERACY LEARNING

### How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your preschooler show greater interest in reading?
- Does your preschooler have a favorite book, one that she wants you to read again and again?
- Does your preschooler retell stories while looking at the books?

# VLS Tools for Partnering with Families

*Especially for parents of preschoolers!*

## Wacky Word Games

*Talking and Listening*

A playful attitude makes gaining listening and language skills fun for preschoolers. Your young child will delight in the same wacky word games that have appealed to children for generations. You can also invent new ones together.

### What is the practice?

Word games can take the form of songs, rhymes, and letter games. These games help your preschooler learn new words and listening skills. Children ages 3-5 who are exposed to a rich language and print environment have better language skills.

### What does the practice look like?

Word games help your child describe and think about the world around him. There are many times every day when you can play word games about things that interest and engage your child. Point out things that you see while you are driving. Have your child describe how his lunch tastes. While waiting in line at the grocery store, ask your child what he sees that's green.



### How do you do the practice?

Playing *I Spy*, *Simon Says*, and naming opposites are examples of word games that you can play with

# VLS Tools to Partner with Staff

## Competency Reflection

Each statement below refers to behaviors or attributes staff should demonstrate when interacting with children, families, or colleagues. Many of the competencies are directly observable. Other competencies may be assessed through conversations with the staff member or by examining the environment. Ask the staff member to complete the caregiver version of this competency reflection. For each of the statements, mark the level of mastery the staff member currently displays. Meet to discuss your observations and the staff member's thoughts and comments.

Viewing as: TCS/Administrator Caregiver

STAFF NAME  
DATE(S)  
CERTIFIER

**E** Emerging  
Staff member is building their understanding and use of the practice

**D** Developing  
Staff member understands the practice and is working to consistently or fully implement it

**M** Mastered  
Staff member consistently displays or implements the practice in an appropriate manner

COMPETENCY	RATE: E/D/M	NOTES
<b>I Direct Observation</b>		
A Extend the sounds and words used by children.	E D M	
B Communicate with each child in care every day.	E D M	
C Use words to help children solve problems.	E D M	
D Answer children's questions patiently and expand their ideas with relevant responses.	E D M	
E Model effective communication skills with eye contact and active listening.	E D M	
F Consider body language and tone of voice when speaking with children.	E D M	
G Follow children's cues and preferences.	E D M	
H Read to and with children daily.	E D M	
I Provide frequent, developmentally appropriate language models throughout daily activities and routines.	E D M	
J Ask children questions about their interests, feelings, life events, etc.	E D M	
K Give children lots of time to talk and listen attentively to what they are saying.	E D M	
<b>II Observation or Conversation</b>		
A Implement language games and singing into daily routines and activities.	E D M	
B Use formal and informal communication methods in appropriate situations.	E D M	
C Understand and respond to children's and families' unique communication needs and preferences.	E D M	
D Develop strong relationships with children and families.	E D M	

## Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool (CORT)



### Introduction

The CORT provides a systematic framework to observe and document interactions and experiences that occur within a classroom. The goal of this measure is to assess and document observing actual caregiving practices. This measure covers environment. The observation tool is divided into five domains: Balanced & Differentiated Instruction, Comprehensive Care

Each of these domains is comprised of key skills or practices that should use this tool to observe and document a caregiver's should carefully observe interactions and experiences offered competency for each skill. This information can then be used and goals for caregivers.

This tool is intended to be used to observe caregivers' practices and document their level of mastery. For each skill, the observer should rate the skill as Emerging, Developing, or Mastered. When rating a skill, take into account observation on that skill. The skill levels build on each other; some under developing, or some developing skills and some Mastered. try to pick the competency level that best fits the materials. For example, if a caregiver mostly has interactions on a specific one or two emerging skills, that caregiver could likely be classified as Emerging. If an observation you will only see a snapshot of the child caregiver on the observation form that you did not observe or do not observe current skills level, rather than trying to rate the domain, in

**E** Emerging  
Staff member is building their understanding and use of the skill.

**D** Developing  
Staff member understands the practice but is not consistently

### Language Literacy

#### LL1 Quality Reading Materials

The learning environment has a variety of developmentally appropriate print and reading material with a wide range of vocabulary, themes, and pictures.

##### Emerging

Limited number of developmentally appropriate reading and print materials.

- Most books are scribbled in or torn
- There is not a clear system for organizing books and print materials
- Materials are not developmentally appropriate (e.g., chapter books in a preschool classroom library)
- Some books unknowingly reinforce negative assumptions or provide limited scope (e.g., only books with movie characters or religious stories are present)
- Nonfiction books are outdated or do not reflect current knowledge (e.g., space, geography)
- Books are the only source of environmental print that are directed at children

##### Developing

"Enough" reading materials and books are present but limited thought is put into the content of the materials.

- Organizational systems are in place, but do not allow children or adults to easily access books and materials
- People and characters in books do not reflect the different backgrounds, interests, and abilities of the children in the room or the community
- Books do not connect to learning objectives or curriculum
- Limited amount of print in learning environment aside from books (e.g., labels for common objects, welcome signs, names on cubbies, visual schedules)
- Charts, visuals, and other environmental print has been created by adults, but does not reflect children's involvement

##### Mastered

Different types of reading materials and books are chosen to reinforce learning objectives and curricula.

- There is a clear organizational system that allows children and adults to easily find what they want to read or use
- Infant room has touch and feel, picture-only, and picture-and-word books
- Preschool room has books reflecting different types of families, concepts related to number representation, and stories that allow children to make inferences and problem-solve
- School-age program has a wide selection of books that cover fiction and nonfiction content that spans reading levels (e.g., picture books, chapter books, reference texts like dictionaries)
- Visuals, charts, and other sources of environmental print are cocreated with children and include children's writing

#### LL2 Reading Opportunities

Provides children with multiple opportunities to participate in reading in different and meaningful ways each day.

##### Emerging

Minimal opportunities for enriched and enjoyable reading.

- Children are only read to during whole group time
- Children are not given time to freely enjoy books in developmentally appropriate ways with adult support available
- School-age children are asked to read a book as a consequence for behavior
- School-aged children are discouraged from reading a particular book based on an adult's assumptions about that child's ability (e.g., discouraged from reading a chapter book because it's "too difficult")

##### Developing

Reading is a part of specific, daily routines.

- Children may be read to during whole group time and have opportunities to independently look at books during free choice
- School-age children are allowed to read independently as an alternative to other activities

##### Mastered

Intentionally incorporates different reading experiences across routines and activities.

- Children are read to as a whole group, in small groups, and when individual children request
- Literacy opportunities are incorporated into daily routines, such as meals, to reinforce concepts ("Which one has a letter that makes the "mmm" sound, the milk or the Cheerios?" or for older children, encouraging them to read the food labels)
- School-age children are encouraged to read independently as an activity, or participation in a book club is offered for a scheduled amount of time

## FT, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 5



# Additional VLS Supports

*If you are interested in learning more about ways the Virtual Lab School supports language and literacy development, we encourage you review these VLS courses more deeply:*

Lessons & activities referenced in today's session:

- ☐ Infant & Toddler, Communication & Language Development, Lessons 2 & 4
- ☐ Preschool, Communication & Language Development, Lessons 2, 3 & 4
- ☐ Preschool, Learning Environments, Lesson 4
- ☐ School-Age, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 4
- ☐ Family Child Care, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 3
- ☐ Focused Topic, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 5

Additional courses for review:

- ☐ TCS, Communication & Language Development
- ☐ Management, Communication & Language Development
- ☐ Focused Topic, Supporting Language Diversity: Direct Care
- ☐ Focused Topic, Supporting Language Diversity: Coaching



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*SHARE OUT: CHAT*

*What has been your biggest  
takeaway from today's session?*

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Thank you again for joining us today!  
Any questions?

Please complete the QUICK feedback survey-  
What future training topics would be helpful?

<https://www.virtuallabschool.org/>  
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