

Before They Read

Teaching Language and Literacy Development
through Conversations, Interactive Read-alouds,
and Listening Games

Cathy Puett Miller



Before They Read: Teaching Language and Literacy Development through Conversations, Interactive Read-alouds, and Listening Games

By Cathy Puett Miller

© 2010 Cathy Puett Miller

All rights reserved.

Cover design: Studio Montage

Book design: Marble Sharp Studios

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Miller, Cathy Puett.

Before they read : teaching language and literacy development through conversations, interactive read-alouds, and listening games / Cathy Puett Miller.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-934338-75-9 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 1-934338-75-3 (pbk.)

1. Language arts (Early childhood)--Activity programs. 2. English language--Study and teaching (Early childhood)--Activity programs. I. Title.

LB1139.5.L35M54 2010

372.6--dc22

2009040738

“Until Another Day,” copyright Jean Warren, can be found on the Preschool Express, www.preschoolexpress.com.

Maupin House publishes professional resources for K-12 educators. Contact us for tailored, in-school training or to schedule an author for a workshop or conference. Visit www.maupinhouse.com for free lesson plan downloads.

Maupin House Publishing, Inc.

2416 NW 71 Place

Gainesville, FL 32653

www.maupinhouse.com

800-524-0634

352-373-5588

352-373-5546 (fax)

info@maupinhouse.com

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Dedication

To the inspirational, innovative teachers who listen to their students, teach children rather than a curriculum and, as a result, turn children on to the powers and passion of reading.

And to my son, Charlie, one of my greatest teachers in understanding how children learn.

Table Of Contents

Introduction

A Few Big Ideas vii

Chapter 1

Priming the Pump: The Overlooked Essentials of Preparing Children to Read 1

Chapter 2

Creating a Literacy-rich Classroom 15

Chapter 3

**The First Essential:
Secrets to “WOW” Conversations in the Classroom** 25

Chapter 4

**The Second Essential:
Revisiting and Reinventing the Read-aloud** 41

Chapter 5

**The Third Essential:
Listening to the Sounds of Words
(the Basis of Phonological Awareness)** 55

Chapter 6

**An Introduction to Phonological Awareness
AND More Games** 67

Chapter 7

Moving to the Next Level: The Middle of the Pool 79

Final Word 89

Appendices

**Appendix A: Stages of Phonological Awareness
Development** 91

Appendix B: Shallow-to-Deep Progression 92

**Appendix C: A-Hunting We Will Go Rhyming Words—More
Rhymes for Activity #8** 94

Appendix D: Great Rhyming Reads from (Activity #10) 95

**Appendix E: Tongue Twisters for Every Letter of the Alphabet
(Activity #16)** 96

**Appendix F: Read-aloud Books with Suggested Targets for
Vocabulary and Concepts** 97

**Appendix G: List of Rhyming Word “Families” (Activity
#10)** 98

Professional References 100

Additional Resources 101

Introduction

A Few Big Ideas

This Book Will Improve Your Teaching and Raise Your Students' Assessment Scores

Preschool and kindergarten teachers, this toolkit is for you. It is designed to be a quick read or a pick-up resource that will make your job easier and your teaching more effective. Educators can also use this book to facilitate in-school professional development on early language and literacy learning.

Within these pages, you will find references to core research in early literacy. Just as important for your daily classroom, you will find carefully designed, easy-to-use ideas and activities for every segment of emergent literacy development. Beginning with the most foundational skills, this book ends at the point children are ready to crack the reading/alphabetic code.

“Why do I need anything else?” you might ask. “I have curriculum. I have standards. I have a degree.” My answer is that we are learning new information about how children prepare to be readers every day. No practicing teacher can keep up with it all. And no curriculum addresses the needs of all children.

To be an effective teacher, you need a toolbox full of “What do I do when...?” ideas, from trusted, experienced voices. The most dynamic and effective classrooms are full of those “tricks.” As you embed the three ready-to-read foundations in your classroom, you *will* have more children reach benchmarks and goals identified by your school, school district, and state. You will have more children truly ready to read.

Perhaps most importantly, this book will help you discern when the *time is prime* for each student to begin to read. While each is growing to that moment in time, you'll have tons of ready-made activities to support them where they are.

I purposefully address both preschool and kindergarten here for several reasons. One: you (and your students) will benefit immensely by having a wide variety of strategies beyond those strictly for your

“Children who are immersed in activities that combine active experiences, rich conversations and print-related activities are apt to develop the foundational skills required to become successful readers and writers .”

—Dorothy Strickland,
Distinguished Research
Fellow at the National
Institute for Early
Education Research

Dr. Marie Clay, creator of Reading Recovery and former president of the International Reading Association, defines emergent literacy as “what children know about reading and writing before they actually learn to read and write in a conventional way.” It only makes sense that a child will be a better reader if he knows a lot about what reading is and what it is for before he tries it himself.

GET PARENTS INVOLVED

In addition to the practical ideas for classrooms, through frequent sidebars like this, you will learn secrets for partnering with families (an essential and often neglected piece of the reading puzzle). The companion title for families, *Anytime Reading Readiness*, offers even more ways for families to join you on this early literacy road.

age/grade level. Understanding the “before and after” steps and expectations smoothes the path for students.

Also, kindergarten and preschool teachers have the inimitable potential for building transition partnerships. “In-the-trench” dialogues and collaboration between preschool teachers and their counterparts in kindergarten improve results for both. The best part of such an alliance is that, with a consistent message, more children fall in love with language, reading, and books. If we light that spark of literacy when they are young, they will forever be readers.

The Rush to Reading

Dr. Robert Meyers (Child Development Institute, CA) says, “We often expect children to think like adults when they are not capable of doing so.” Nowhere is that statement truer than in our rush for young children to become readers. I often hear parents of five-, four- or even three-year-olds ask their child’s preschool teacher “When are you going to teach my child to read?” That same question is on the lips of most parents when children start school.

A constant diet of myths and sales pitches in today’s media leads many of us as parents *and* educators to believe that somehow earlier is *always* better. That’s a lie. Some statistical research indicates that the differences between those who read at an earlier age than when formal school begins and those who do not virtually disappears by the time children reach third grade. Even when we look beyond the statistics, it is more likely that children who read early at *their own instigation* do so as a result of a steady diet of rich experiences with language, text, and human interaction from birth. They are ready earlier because the foundations have been laid and they are developmentally ready (which happens at a different place for different children). Conversely, children pressured into reading before they are ready have a negative

early experience, which often hinders their literacy growth and may even color the rest of their school life.

How do we counter such challenges? As educators in preschool and kindergarten, you are in a unique position to look at literacy with a panoramic view. We must seize children’s natural curiosity, watch for their internal “I’m ready” buttons, learn what they know and don’t know and what their home literacy is like, and then teach what they need at individual points in time.

Three Essentials

Keep in mind as you gear up to make this your best teaching year ever that young children learn holistically. The three essentials addressed in this guide—conversations, interactive read-alouds, and listening games—mirror that holistic approach and apply whether we are helping children with literacy, math, or social skills.

Young children’s brains are primed to learn. Perhaps no aspect of child development is as amazing as the progress of a young child’s brain. Researchers, such as Dr. Sally Shaywitz of Yale University, have conducted extensive studies in this area in recent years. The conclusion? A child’s brain is growing faster during the early years than any other time in her life.

This growth surge creates a challenge for teachers. Dr. Reid Lyon, an internationally recognized education authority, says there is a window between the ages of five and seven when the underlying skills of reading are most easily learned. “A kindergarten teacher can accomplish in 30 minutes what a fourth-grade teacher would need two hours to do.” This book maximizes those efforts.

A young child learns differently. Only when the proper foundations are established through repeated and varied concrete experiences can we expect young children to grasp higher-level skills. Sitting young children at desks all day with worksheets and structured activities will end in failure. The more focus there is on problem solving and thinking during this important time, the better prepared a child is for the academics that come next.

“Children are not little adults. We often expect children to think like adults when they are not yet capable of doing so.”

—Dr. Robert Meyers of the Child Development Institute, Orange, CA

TEACHER TIP

Dr. Hirsh-Pasek, co-author of the best-selling book, *Einstein Never Used Flashcards*, cautions us that accelerated, overly structured academic programs, especially in preschools, do not have long-term positive effects. In fact, they seem to have a negative emotional impact. Children from such programs are more anxious, less creative, and less positive toward school, compared with those who went to play-oriented preschools.

Grasping this important fact every day will revolutionize your teaching. You will spend less time herding and directing, trying to fit students into a mold for which they are unprepared. Instead, you'll discover your day is full of actively engaged students immersed in true, effective learning.

Play is an important vehicle for learning. You may be surprised to hear that play is research based. In fact, play is the prime way young children develop problem-solving skills and creativity (essential skills for the 21st century and beyond). It's not a waste of time. Make sure that when you are having staff discussions about research-based teaching, you bring this subject up. A respected early childhood researcher, Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, sees it as a driving force. "Play is to early childhood what gas is to a car."

But we so often make so little time for play in the real world. Dr. David Elkind, author of *The Power of Play*, frequently cites an American Academy of Pediatrics 2007 report that documents play as a factor in promoting "behavioral development *and* brain growth." I know that each of you has seen firsthand how a child's social and emotional maturity impact her learning.

The University of North Carolina's Abecedarian project on early childhood intervention found that children who received an enriched, play-oriented parenting and early childhood program had significantly higher IQs at age five than did a comparable group of children who were not in the program (105 vs. 85 points). Pair this with the brain research Dr. Sally Shaywitz is conducting. Wow!

Simple, Effective Pathways

With those brief reminders, it's time to focus on the subject at hand. My aim is not to address learning to read. Instead, we will hone in on what has too often been ignored: the very foundations that create the most skilled, most internally motivated, and most enthusiastic readers. Let's not be guilty of putting the cart before the horse and then forgetting the horse.

If we do so, we may succeed in creating strong decoders, Speedy-Gonzalez word callers, or maybe even minimally adequate classroom readers, but there will be something missing, something that may very well prevent children from becoming lifelong readers. In Chapter 1, you'll learn more about these important "pre-reading" foundations and understand the overall spectrum: what children need *before* they read.

Chapter 1

Priming The Pump: The Overlooked Essentials of Preparing Children to Read

As mentioned already, each student comes to you at a slightly different place on the early literacy road. How do you know what your students need to be ready to read? There are signposts to watch for. And when teachers know what to pay attention to, those signposts can guide them to the most appropriate activities for individuals or groups of children. Literacy skills don't happen overnight. It's not just learning to name letters and their sounds or suddenly being able to put those sounds together into words using phonics. Indeed it is much, much more.

To understand this larger picture of *early literacy*, let's take a bird's eye view:

It all starts with oral language. Everything else builds upon this essential first: speaking, listening, and understanding. Many normally developing two- and three-year-olds already have a sense of proper grammar and sentence structure. Their vocabulary is growing daily. That all provides a foundation for learning to read.

Once children begin to read on their own, this base continues to help them improve as they make more connections between words they know and hear and words they are learning to read (and vice versa). A rich oral language environment (and in this context, I mean hearing and using lots of different words in various contexts) helps children understand more about how our spoken language works. That translates into how it works in print. You will find more details on oral language in Chapter 3.

“During the first months and years of life, children's experiences with language and literacy can begin to form a basis for their later reading success....

Research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language and literacy before they arrive at school [or learn to read conventionally], the better equipped they are to succeed in reading.”

—Dr. Catherine Snow,
author and reading
researcher

Engaging children in read-alouds is an important way for them to learn how books and print work. International literacy consultant Mem Fox recommends children hear a minimum of three books a day by the time they reach age six. If educators and parents combine efforts, that goal will be easy. See Chapter 4 for details about the best techniques.

The next level is deeper: developing abstract thinking around the sounds of letters and sounds within words. This moves children toward a major intersection, and prepares them to figure out those squiggles on the page. Identifying sounds and names of letters and phonological awareness (paying attention to sounds in our language and the sounds within words) come into play.

Chapters 5-7 provide many activities and ideas to support these concepts.

A number of organizations endorse these core pre-reading foundations. The American Library Association’s Get Ready to Read and Family Place Libraries™, The National Institute for Literacy’s *Shining Stars—Preschoolers Get Ready to Read* publication, and the early learning guidelines developed by many states in conjunction with the *Good Start, Grow Smart* federal initiative all send the same message. You’ll find multiple references to preliminary “before reading” skills in state language arts standards in the U.S. and publications from leading reading authorities such as the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Such a foundation cannot be ignored.

Exploring the Early Literacy Spectrum

Now that you have been introduced to core concepts, it is helpful to look at more specifics. The general categories break down easily into specific developmental/age levels. Remember to use the age level as a guide only, recognizing that the individual progress of young children allows for a spectrum of growth. As I’m sure you’ve seen, every five-year-old will not be able to do every item on the five-year-old list.

As you explore these age-specific charts, you will notice that, at first with younger or slower-developing children, the oral language takes precedence. Later that shifts, with more items appearing in the phonological awareness area as a child moves along the spectrum. Items continue, however, to appear in both the book/print awareness

and oral language areas. Getting ready to read is truly a complex, multi-level process.


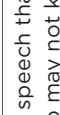
Think about a child's mobility. First he rolls, then he scoots, then he crawls, then he walks with help, and finally he walks independently. He may flex between several of these levels and will continue to crawl in play or ask for help walking up stairs, even after he is moving upright on his own. A child cannot just stand up and walk without motor development from earlier experiences. It's exactly the same with emergent literacy.

What is most important as you look at real children with these guidelines in mind is that you see regular, consistent progress, even if the child isn't able to do everything listed under his/her age.

Share what you learn from these early literacy guidelines with your fellow teachers, administrators and families. You are welcome to copy these charts and use them as quick, informal checklists to evaluate children when they first enter your classroom or several times during the course of the year. I've even left a small comments box for your use.

TEACHER TIP

A convenient legend appears below each of the following charts to help you match the three segments of the overview to the age levels in the charts.

By the age of three, children should:	I see this daily	Just beginning	Not Yet	Comments
	Use between 750-1,000 different words			
	Have clear enough speech that they are understandable to me and others who may not know them			
	Ask many questions			
	Use proper grammar and completes simple sentences to communicate			
	Be able to listen to simple stories			
	Follow a two-step direction and understand "taking turns"			
	Be able to distinguish similarities/differences and answer questions about those (Are these blocks both blue? Which of these is bigger?)			
	Be able to name objects pictured in books and tell how they are used			
	Enjoy stories about self and family			
	Sing/say nursery rhymes and be interested in songs and finger plays that tell stories			
	Begin to select favorite books and recognize them by their covers			
	Answer questions about a story when posed by a reader			

	<p>Begin to chime in with refrains or repeated words either on their own or with prompting by the teacher (shows growing abilities in short-term memory)</p> <p>Pick out favorite books to hear again and again</p> <p>Begin to relate story to self</p> <p>Begin to show interest in print in his environment (STOP signs, labels on familiar objects, etc.)</p> <p>Enjoy rhyming stories and begin to understand that some words rhyme</p> <p>Begin to gain arm, hand and finger control required to hold a book and turn the pages</p> <p>Begin to show an interest in letters of the alphabet and to sing the ABCs</p> <p>Begin to understand the concept of rhyming (may begin with just "parrotting" or repeating rhyming words)</p>						
							

Legend




Oral Language



Book and Print Awareness



Alphabets and Phonological Awareness

By the age of four, children should:		I see this daily	Just beginning	Not Yet	Comments
	Have very clear speech—95% can be understood by a stranger				
	Talk in the present (“I am eating now”), past (“I ate”) and future (“I will eat”) tense				
	Correctly identify colors and understand terms like “more,” “less,” and “most”				
	Show that they understand the literal meaning of a story, song, or book read aloud by talking about them				
	Be able to answer “why,” “where,” and “how” questions				
	Begin to make the connection between spoken and written words and understand it is the words that are being read in a story				
	Recite rhymes and sing simple songs from memory				
	Pretend to “read” a book while retelling the story				
	Be aware that we read print in English from top to bottom and from left to right on a page (and understand any directional focus for their native language if it is not English)				
	Show that they are starting to understand that print has a function and appears in many forms in many places				



					<p>Show progress in being able to name letters, pay attention to their shape and sometimes even their sound (“sssss” is the sound for the letter “s”), and identify at least 10 letters of the alphabet by this year’s end</p>			
	<p>Understand that alphabet letters are a special visual graphic that can be named individually</p>	<p>Pay attention to repeating sounds in language and separate sounds within words</p>	<p>Know that sentences and phrases can be broken into single words (not in print but by talking about them and listening to them (“When I say the word ‘fingernail,’ it can be broken into two words—‘finger’ and ‘nail’—and into three syllables—fin-ger-nail.)</p>					

Legend




Oral Language




Book and Print Awareness



Alphabets and Phonological Awareness

By the age of five, children should:		I see this daily	Just beginning	Not Yet	Comments
	Begin to retell stories and recount events in their own words and enjoy acting out in dramatic play				
	Use their words to tell you what will happen next in the story				
	Be able to identify common opposites (go/stop, big/little, tall/short)				
	Continue to use more and different words each day (as many as 1,500 unique words), including more adjectives and adverbs				
	Want to read themselves				
	Like to act out stories while listening to a read-aloud when appropriate				
	Begin to recognize more print in their everyday world (like Wal-Mart or McDonald's) and start to read some simple words				
	Be able to name 10 or more letters of the alphabet and know the one that starts their name (and perhaps all of the letters in their name)				
	Be trying to write their own name and enjoy "pretending" to write while at play, such as "writing" on the bottom of a picture they drew (squiggles that don't really look like letters come first, but children show an understanding that these squiggles mean something)				
	Begin to pay attention to common beginning sounds in words (like the /b/ in "banana," "baby," "ball," and "balloon") and love tongue twisters				

	<p>Understand that, in speech, words can be broken down into parts (the word “cat” can be broken down into the sounds /c/ and /a/ and /t/) and sometimes break words into larger chunks (“black” into /bl/ and /ack/).*</p> <p>Be able to “manipulate” words, although this is less common (may be an indicator of early development): change “mop” to “top” by taking away the /m/ sound and replacing it with a /t/ sound; successfully take away the /s/ sound from the word “stop” and understand that makes a new word, “top”; hear separate sounds like /b/, /a/, and /t/ and know that this represents the word “bat” (all this manipulation/play with words still relates only to sound, not to actually looking at words in print and separating the letters and their corresponding sounds)</p>					
---	---	--	--	--	--	--

*Whenever you see a letter or combination of letters with a slash on each side, it refers to the sound of the letter or group of letters, not the name.

Legend





Oral Language



Book and Print Awareness



Alphabets and Phonological Awareness

By the age of six, children should:		I see this daily	Just beginning	Not Yet	Comments	
	Retell stories with proper sequence, talk about main characters, and verbalize empathy/understanding of them					
	Correctly answer questions in complete sentences					
	Use new vocabulary and show growth in words actively used/understood; six-year-old children should use/know 2,500-5,000 unique words (Beck & McKeown, 1991) and understand up to 13,000 (Schwartz & Heller Miller, 1996)					
	Make the <i>oral language/writing connection</i> : Be able to independently write a word after saying it out loud or hearing someone else say it orally (inventive spelling is OK)					
	Begin to use their finger or their eyes to track the print in a familiar book (or in a whole-group/shared-reading situation)					
	Make accurate predictions of what a story might be about or what will happen next and understand the idea of adjusting predictions with new information					
	Be familiar with different uses of print (signs, books, newspapers, lists, labels, poetry, etc.) and able to identify whether a story is make-believe (fiction) or true (non-fiction)					
	Make the <i>thinking-about-reading connection</i> : Develop “self-correction” abilities (able to recognize when a simple sentence read by someone else or themselves doesn’t make sense)					
	Be able to name a favorite book or story					
	Begin to connect text to self, text to world, and text to text (Zimmerman and Keene, 2008)					

	<p>Listen with attention and patience to books read aloud</p> <p>Know parts of/information about a book (cover, title, author, illustrator, page)</p> <p>Easily produce a rhyming word when given a spoken word</p> <p>Make more complex comparisons between two or more words with similar and different sounds when heard (same or different beginning, median, or ending sounds)</p> <p>Name most and eventually all alphabet letters accurately and quickly (upper-/lowercase)</p> <p>Orally “manipulate” phonemes (single sounds in words) by adding, removing, or substituting sounds</p> <p>Understand basics of the alphabetic principal (that the 26 or so symbols/letters and a slightly larger number of sounds, or phonemes, are what we use to read words and that these letters map the sounds people make when saying words)</p> <p>Be able to separate a word into its single phonemes, listen to a word delivered in separate phonemes, and then blend them together to identify the word</p> <p>Begin to read (conventionally) and understand what it means to be a reader (to gain meaning)</p> <p>Understand and apply more complex phonics rules for decoding regarding long and short vowels, R-controlled vowels, and closed and open syllables</p>
---	--

Legend



Oral Language



Book and Print Awareness



Alphabetic and Phonological Awareness

Using These Guidelines to Best Support Your Students

A teacher's life is full of routines, and that can be a good thing in managing the classroom. However, routines in teaching leave less to be desired. When you take a curriculum and teach it, delivering each page the same from year to year, some of the fire that sparks learning dissipates. That's especially true in these days when teaching seems so directed by scripts and other structured tools. Instruction can become stale, and you may find yourself ignoring evolving needs of children or their learning styles.

I challenge you to do something superior and raise teaching to the level of professionalism it deserves in your classroom. Take action that will benefit your students incredibly. I'm not just giving you more to pack in to an already busy and overscheduled day. I also don't mean you should become a rebel and do whatever you want. That could get you fired.

What I am saying is that using these research-based guidelines is the core of what makes teaching young children more effective. It will streamline their progress. Use these guidelines and you *will* have better results and more children ready to read.

Begin by reviewing these guidelines. Think about the children you teach (paying less attention to the age-level labels and more attention to the progression of the skills in each area).

Where does each child fit?

What areas have they already mastered?

What are they exhibiting to you that can help you see the next step they need?

Having asked those questions, you are in a much better position to teach children at their current level (to use a coined phrase, in their "zone of proximal development") instead of trying to teach them at the point you think they "should" be.

Two quick tips before we move on:

Resist the temptation to compare one child with another or react by pushing too hard. Although you are to teach the whole class, you must differentiate your instruction to address individual shortcomings. Armed with the guidelines provided earlier and any other formal or informal evaluations you conduct or note for your students, you will then be able to adjust instruction to

meet the needs of each child. That is the only way to see each student progress. This aligns with the RTI (Response to Intervention) framework.

Always be attentive to signs that your children as individuals have mastered a certain level (using your standards and the guidelines provided here). When necessary, use your small-group instruction time (or individual interactive time with particular children) to reinforce and add practice where needed. The ideas, activities and games in the following chapters will help you do just that.

Chapter 2

Creating a Literacy-rich Classroom

Just as there are three core areas of school readiness, there are three keys to creating a literacy-rich classroom. It's more than just putting up "stuff." Overdo it and you end up with so much print that it becomes meaningless. These keys focus on the physical, the visual in the tangible environment, activities and products, and more abstract areas of motivation and integration.

Have a great classroom library, but don't stop there.

Selectively choose areas of your classroom to highlight classroom literacy and the literacy of your students. If you function with stations or centers, be sure to include literacy in each one in some way.

Regularly celebrate reading, writing, listening, and communicating.

Setting up a Delicious Classroom Book Nook

Please tell me you have a classroom library! Some of you may have accumulated books over the years that you keep on a shelf for students to access during the school day and perhaps borrow to take home. The first secret to having a library that's actively used (and why have one if it's not?) is to fill it with a delectable, diverse smorgasbord of materials.

Resist the temptation to over-organize or limit your library. Tubs of books aren't very inviting and only serve you ("I've got to make sure they are only reading in their "level"). They limit your children's exploration. Besides, such restrictions don't send the message that children can read any book they want. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) cautions against limiting reading to "texts that include only words that contain the letter-sound relationships children have been explicitly taught." In an official position statement, NCTE goes on to say that "in *all types* of instructional programs, teachers must involve all students, from the

"As teachers design their learning environment, it is essential that they consider the diverse needs and skills of the students they teach. As they integrate the skills and background of their diverse students, teachers should ensure that each student is represented in their classroom design and instruction."

—The Access Center,
U.S. Department of
Education Office of
Special Education
Programs

TEACHER TIP

Worried that your kindergarten children already beginning to read will waste time finding the right book? Teach them the FIST test: As they open a book that appeals to them, have them hold their hand flat, palm up. As they read the first page or two, show them how to fold down into their palm one finger for every unknown word they encounter. If they make a full fist before finishing the first two pages, it's probably too difficult a book.

TEACHER TIP

Comments like “No, you can't have that book—it's not at your level” are counterproductive to nurturing a love of reading (not to mention vocabulary growth). Leveled reading materials have their place, but don't offer those controlled vocabulary books as the only type of reading your children have access to.

beginning of their schooling, in daily writing and daily reading of a *wide variety of literature and other print materials.*”

Instead of the standard tubs of books, mix it up. Children love to explore and test and try with their hands-on approach. If they want to explore the pages and pictures, (reading or not), let them!

A better arrangement is general groupings with as many front covers exposed as possible. Have little space? Pick one of these ideas to maximize appeal:

Jim Trelease, author of *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, recommends attaching/hanging composite rain gutters above a conventional bookshelf or on a wall within reach of students. Face every book with the cover out. Use this to highlight books students (or parents or you) recommend. If you have too many books to face all of them out, rotate every week or two. Keep sticky notes handy with “I recommend this book” already printed along with a place for a signature and a comment. Draw a simple “smiley face” on several. Using funky paper or binder clips adds an element of fun.

Can't manage that? Have assigned “library helpers” who (minutes before the centers/stations open) take a handful of books from designated areas and line them up in the chalkboard tray or against a wall. Have them spread the books face up in a corner of the library so children can see all the titles. More and more children are becoming visually sensitive due to the increase in video, TV, and other visual media. You can

capitalize on that by using the beautiful covers of picture books.

The same or other helpers can put books away later. It only takes a few minutes and there's something very appealing about letting children pick any book they want.

Ask your children how they would like the books organized. Have a class problem-solving discussion. You might be surprised what you discover.

Paramount in your mind when arranging your library is how you can draw all of your children to the materials. Allow students to pick the book that is just right (on so many levels) for them. There will be plenty of time for reading what they “should.”

Select contents for your reading retreat based on the following criteria. If you already have a substantial library, use this list to evaluate the current contents:

Short books with lots of large and interesting pictures.

Books you have shared in circle or read-aloud time. Don't hide the book behind your desk where the kids can't get to it. Put them in your library to explore. Let your children see you do so and point out that the book(s) will be there any time they'd like to read. Multiple copies if possible—those books are going to be popular.

Books and magazines on subjects (fiction and non-fiction) that interest young children (favorites include families, animals, sports, familiar and unfamiliar settings, activities, or times). Specifically include non-fiction books with lots of illustrations, charts, and diagrams.

Books from the school or public library. This source for borrowing books can help you in the pinch of a tight economy. A plus is that your children will learn about the library and its services.

Books with lots of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition (plus few easy-to-read titles).

Books up to two grade levels above your children's level—purely for exploration. Even the most pristine, beautiful library will just sit there unless your children understand there are treasures within.

Get Parents Involved

Invite all of your families to visit and spend time in the book nook with children. Set no other expectations than sharing a book with a child (make sure you include a few wordless ones). Don't try to turn them into the teacher. You'll be amazed at the energy and learning that will happen.

Get Parents Involved

1. Ask them to donate a new book (book fairs are great for that), a slightly used one, or a magazine subscription.
2. Encourage families to have a library of their own (or borrowed) books at home.
3. Supplement your library with homemade books children and parents make together (share a disposable camera and paper to get that started).

Beyond books—include student-created, handmade books and portfolios, magazines, age-appropriate reference materials (including picture cards for building vocabulary and first non-fiction titles), and anything else to read that appeals to your children.

Use small-group station or center time to plop down and do a few “mini-book talks” to whet children’s appetites. Teach them a little about book selection (not just reading level but also “Will I like this book?” questions, skimming through the pictures, etc.—it’s OK not to like every book). This is especially important if the children you serve come from homes that are not literacy rich. Just because we love books and reading, doesn’t mean that our students will unless we share that passion with them. Don’t worry that some of the books might get torn or misplaced or never returned. Teach your children to care for them and make them accessible. Help them learn to value taking special books home and caring for them.

A classroom library should be more than a place children are *supposed* to go when they *have* to read. Make your recreational reading room inviting with pillows, bean bag chairs, a lamp, and a colorful rug, old quilt, or blanket. Include a few pictures of favorite book characters or stuffed animals or puppets to read to. Families will enjoy helping you “decorate.” Include felt boards or other props for retelling a few of the favorites with strong sequence. Emphasize the sharing that can happen between several children (or between an adult and a child) over a book.

The Role of “Posted” Print in a Rich Literacy Environment

TEACHER TIP

Pose those three questions to three different people:

Your most trusted colleague

The best teacher in your center or school (perhaps a bit more intimidating)

A parent, your media specialist or librarian, or an older student

When a stranger walks into your classroom, what is his first impression? Go outside your room, set your mind as “I’m seeing this for the first time,” and then step inside. At first glance, ask three questions:

Are there so many words and labels that they are just a big blur of cluttered walls?

Are alphabet letters, classroom rules, and student work posted and at what eye level?

Is it obvious that students had a part in producing at least part of what is displayed?

These are not always easy questions for a teacher to answer objectively. Finding a confidante will help you. Right up front, tell her that you would like to know her true feelings, an initial sense without too much thought. Whenever I walk out of my comfort zone in a situation such as this, I am ALWAYS rewarded. Try it!

You may hear complements. Take those thankfully, but follow up with more specifics; “Can you immediately recognize the purpose behind this print? Tell me more of what you mean.” The more specific follow-up questions you ask, the more you’ll learn.

If you receive criticism up front, don’t take it personally. Listen carefully and honestly ask, “Is there any validity, anything I can take away from this comment, something that will make my classroom better?” When you receive those challenging replies, have the courage to ask, “How can I improve this?” or “How can I fix that?” Again, ask your coaches and confidants to be specific.

The answers you hear may be telling you that sometimes *less is more*. Setting up an inviting, stimulating classroom with many learning opportunities but without cramming it full of too much “stuff” is the balance to aim for. If you overdo it, you are likely to negate your intended effectiveness.

The Proper Balance

With your answers in hand, reflect on secrets to help you establish the proper exposure to print in your classroom:

Be sure that the print you post has a purpose and a regular use.

Be selective. Putting a label on every object in your classroom is overkill. With that extreme, it becomes merely visual white noise rather than something your children pay attention to.

TEACHER TIP

Save time by making words durable. Once you are familiar with your curriculum and the key vocabulary emphasized, identify those words that you want to post in your classroom. They are likely to be the same ones your children will identify as interesting.

Print each out in a clear, large font from your computer or use your best handwriting to print them on a card. Laminate the words and keep them in a file with your other thematic materials. Put Velcro on the back if you wish to post them on a “word blanket” (a bright-colored piece of polar fleece works well).

Whip these print postcards out when that new theme or unit begins and place them in your classroom print environment at the appropriate time. They will serve as a core for key vocabulary. Have a marker and extra cards handy to capture words your students fall in love with.

Change it up. Student writing or pictures from a month ago lose appeal. It doesn't reflect where your students are. Posted print can not only be a positive influence for your students but also a way to engage families in a conversation about the progress of their child.

A Bit about Word Walls

I don't often recommend a word wall for preschool. Print is much more meaningful if it is in a context (the door is labeled "door" or children's names are printed on cards at their cubby). If you do decide to use a word wall in your preschool, limit it to letters, children's names, and a few simple sight words. Add pictures to go along with the words. Integrate a few critical words from a unit or theme (those you want your children to remember) into the print around your room.

If you have a word wall in your kindergarten classroom, keep it simple (don't post 100 words; after all, will any four- to six-year-old child have the patience to look through 100 words to find one?). Replace words once your students have mastered them, or have children add them to a personal dictionary (complete with illustrations) if most students don't need them anymore. Regular "maintenance" keeps your word wall from going stale.

Even with kindergarten students' growing ability to recognize words, you can inadvertently sabotage your teaching by talking about words in isolation. Consider carefully the print you post in your room. Make sure it is meaningful to your students and connects to what they are learning. Integrate the critical words you emphasize in a unit or theme (those you want your children to remember) into the print around your room.

Connect the Print You Post to the Content You Teach

When your children sing the ABC song, do you have a chart of the ABCs (at child level) that you (or they) can point to as you sing? Do you regularly and proudly post artwork and other student creations with captions or printed names? Do you point to functional print (class-created lists and rules or words on bulletin boards) during your interaction with your children? These are a few of the better ways to show them that print has purpose.

Some of you may be familiar with the work of Beck and McKeown. In their “Text Talk” technique, they recommend drawing attention to a few vocabulary words by initially inserting child-friendly definitions while reading aloud.

Extend this technique by asking open-ended questions using the earlier identified vocabulary after a read-aloud. Create a prediction chart from these discussions. Its purpose is to reflect in print what your students think will happen next in simple terms (and maybe a few cartoon sketches) and to record a poll of who agrees with each prediction. Giant sticky notes, a whiteboard, or poster paper can all be used. Write the various predictions across the top as column headings and then allow children to put their name or their “mark” below the column they agree with.

Based on whether your children are beginning to conventionally read and write or are not yet there, they can help create the chart. If they are still focused on oral language, let them dictate while you write.

Meaningful print such as lists, charts, dictated writing, strategically placed signs or labels, and environmental print (see “Teacher Tip” and recycling idea below) is stimulating and appropriate. The goal of posted print in preschool and early in the kindergarten year is to show the use and purposes of print before children conventionally read. Once children begin to read in a traditional way, this use of meaningful print will continue to grow their vocabulary, their comprehension, and their reading abilities.

Environmental print can be a bridge between pre-reading of familiar symbols and conventional reading. Here’s an easy (and free) way to collect some environmental print for your classroom. Why not ask your students to recycle? Collect a treasure chest full of items without spending a dime: empty boxes from the groceries your families already buy such as cereal, crackers, or snacks; candy wrappers; milk or juice cartons; and any package or container with a recognizable logo.

Environmental print uses are nearly endless: favorites and comparison charts, homemade alphabet cards your families can make for you (“D is for Dial soap”), student-created poetry with the

TEACHER TIP

Drs. Kirkland, Aldridge, and Kuby, authors of *Jumpstarters: Integrating Environmental Print throughout the Curriculum*, define environmental print as “print found in the natural environment of the child. This includes logos, labels, road signs, billboards, and other print found in the child’s immediate ecology.” The word “natural” is key here.

Get Parents Involved

The end of the school year is a perfect time to have a contest among your families:

Ask them to identify other ways that they use literacy in everyday life, especially ones you can incorporate into your centers.

environmental print inserted as “rebus” characters, matching games (to emphasize same and different), charts to practice counting, etc.. Add your own ideas.

Literacy in Stations or Centers

Add literacy (reading, writing, listening, communicating, and viewing) to some aspect of *every* station or center. After all, literacy is everywhere in real life. The best time to think about this is when you are planning your classroom for the new year, but you can add literacy in any time. It just takes a bit of big-picture thinking.

As you consider expanding where literacy happens in your room, consider literacy experiences your children will find familiar and those they may not (but ones we want to expose them to). For preschool, that might mean:

Clipboards with graph paper in the blocks area (attach a pencil), along with magazines that feature floor plans, pictures of skyscrapers, roads, and famous buildings. Children can sketch their ideas before building or make “notes” about what they are doing (inventive writing is OK). Don’t forget the hard hats! What about “CAUTION” barriers made from crepe paper or cardboard signs?

Cookbooks with lots of pictures and telephone books (perhaps a homemade one with children’s numbers next to their name). They can use the phone book to practice learning their own phone number in the home living center. Don’t forget notepads, grocery coupons, and those ever-present newspaper and junk mail ads.

Do you have books in the home living center for children to read to the babies? Menus for takeout food have a place in most homes. Think about what is in your own kitchen and den.

Science books in the science center (relating to the experiments at hand). There are many children’s books that have tactile or see-through sections on subjects such as archeology, nature, and animals. Add a second pencil and clipboard here, name tags for the scientist in residence, and a pegboard for measuring utensils.

Books on tape, conversation starters (for pairs of children), and objects that make distinctly different sounds, all for the listening center.

Puzzles that also contain a few labeling or rhyming words in the manipulatives center.

Kindergarten classrooms have moved, in many cases, to more structured, results – and accountability-oriented activities in various parts of the classroom. More and more commonly these are called “stations.” These are areas in the classroom that offer self-challenging activities children can perform independent of teacher supervision. If you are a kindergarten teacher, you can easily apply the center ideas above to those stations.

In addition, you will be able, with older students, to encourage them to document results, even as they are beginning to write conventionally. An alternative is to allow children to initially draw pictures and dictate a short caption that reflects their learning to you, a volunteer, or paraprofessional.

Focus on what Debbie Diller, an expert in effective literacy stations, calls “balancing process and product.” For maximum effect, you want your station activities to be ones in which your students sometimes simply practice alone or with another child and other times document. With the documentation, you can later evaluate where that child is and what she might still need to be taught. Of course, the trick to make that manageable for your children is to plan carefully, teach/introduce, model what to do, set accountability and consequences, and confirm.

Use the following chart to brainstorm about the centers or stations you have in *your classroom* that were not specifically addressed here. You ask your children to write their ideas down. You should do the same. It is the first step to changes that will make each center more effective.

Once you have named the centers, ask yourself, “How can I incorporate reading, writing, listening, communicating and viewing in each of them?” Even when the focus is math or history, think about how your students use literacy to help solve the problem or record findings or observations.

Center Name	Bright Idea

A Final Word: Writing

Although the primary focus of this book is getting ready to read, reading and writing are, without a doubt, inseparable. Wherever reading happens (with alphabet letters, with signs and environmental print, in your reading nook, or at other centers), writing materials should be handy. Purchase a few inexpensive, plastic shower caddies with handles in the middle (like those we used in college). Small aluminum paint buckets work just as well. Fill them with writing materials (pens, pencils, different sizes and types of paper, small journals, old checkbooks with the account numbers blacked out, address labels, fake stamps or stickers, etc.). Add a simple label to the outside and perhaps a picture of someone writing. Once these are stocked, allow the children to take them to the station or center where they are needed. This is especially useful if you don't have room for a conventional writing center. Plus it shows that writing, like reading, can happen anywhere.

Turning the Page

Remember our list of essentials for creating a literacy-rich classroom at the beginning of this chapter? The last item is "Regularly celebrate reading, writing, listening, and communicating." You have found many ways to make literacy a visible part of your classroom and to celebrate that literacy with your students.

In the next chapter, you will build on these essentials with conversations that intensify the impact of your physical classroom environment.

The First Essential: Secrets to “WOW” Conversations in the Classroom

Secret 1

Conversations Are Powerful

In today’s classroom environment, it is so easy for conversations to disappear. Walking in straight lines, the need to minimize noise for the sake of others, and the pace of most curricula even in the preschool and kindergarten classroom can all take precedence. Teachers who feel stressed may be distracted or worried about the impression a noisy classroom might have on a visiting administrator. Such conditions can result in too many “no chat” zones throughout the day. That negligence teaches the unintended lesson that talking is bad and has no place in learning.

Conversations build vocabulary, teach patience and empathy, unlock the alphabetic principal, help children learn how to think, communicate their wants and needs, and build a sense of community. By listening to conversations modeled by and between adults, students learn about language. They see how words convey new information. Talking with students and allowing them to talk with one another stimulates core brain cells that later serve as the foundation for more complex connections needed to read.

Secret 2

Conversations Build Community

Not the least of the functions of conversation in the classroom is building a feeling of acceptance and success for all. Although using oral language to communicate is key, it is worthwhile to consider

“If we are to increase children’s ability to profit from education, we will have to enrich their oral language development during the early years of schooling.”

—Andrew Biemiller,
author and professor at
the University of
Toronto’s Institute of
Child Study

the bigger picture of conversation as a tool to create a learning classroom community.

In his book, *Life in a Crowded Place: Making a Learning Community*, author and researcher Dr. Ralph Peterson points out that “In everyday life, talk is the primary medium for learning, and for that reason, talk is an essential part of a learning community’s life.” For it is when we stop to listen and share feelings and thoughts that we begin to understand one another. We move beyond the rudimentary layers of thinking, from knowledge [and regurgitation of facts] to higher levels such as comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, and synthesizing (Bloom, 1956). If, as a professional, you want to do more than shuffle papers, record test scores, and push kids on to the next level, you must make space (both literally and figuratively) for conversation in your classroom.

Secret 3

Think about Conversations in Your Classroom

1. Re-read the oral language section in Chapter 1’s overview.
2. Then flip to the more detailed charts in the chapter. Look at the age level you teach (or where you determined most of your children fall). Then, review the items listed to expand your understanding of oral language.
3. With this refresher, you have set the stage. This chapter provides the connections you need between what you already know about oral language, new information on the subject, and the ready-for-your-classroom activities you’ll find later in this book.
4. Now, think about the current verbal interaction in your classroom. Teachers have so little time for reflection, but try taking just fifteen minutes. That’s a long coffee break. Carefully consider the kinds of talking common in your class (including vocabulary, sentence structure, and content). Once you do that, you’ll be primed to pull the ideas you need and raise the roof on conversations in your classroom.

Secret 4

Make Group Conversation Effective

Of course, we all know what dialogue and conversation look (or sound) like, right? We talk with others every day. To maximize conversations in your classroom, first instigate them, encourage listening and active participation, and extend the content and contribution. Model how you want your student-to-student discussions to look. Don't forget the value of teacher/parent dialogue either.

Logical questions teachers often ask are, "How do I fit all this in? How do I find time?" The key is integration. Seeds are there already—opportunities to enhance learning. Consistency is the most essential aspect. A regular dose of verbal interaction doesn't have to be time intensive. Here are a few tips.

Start with a few important conversations. Don't think about revolutionizing your classroom overnight or talking extensively every day with every child. It probably isn't possible. Taking small steps to infuse conversation into the fabric of your classroom will improve results.

Select targeted times ahead of time. Try these whole-group ideas.

Pick an established time at least once a week to devote to conversation, perhaps during circle time, welcome, community time, or at the start of your day. Set aside a mere fifteen minutes, but protect it. Write it into your lesson plan. Otherwise, it can too easily be squeezed out.

Ask your class a thought-provoking question related to a current event, a book you read together, or upcoming content-area topics. Let your students share what they think. It may be as simple as:

"We're going to study dinosaurs this week; what do you know about them?"

TEACHER TIP

Even though your ELL students and students with special needs may simply listen, they, too, are gaining an understanding of conversation and how language works. Those students often observe long before they chime in.

Don't forget that these students may have nonverbal ways of contributing. Focus more intensively on interacting with them on an individual or small-group basis to reinforce what you see them respond to in whole group. Encourage the verbal abilities that they may not be comfortable showing in whole group at that time. The good news: this can be accomplished effectively in less than five minutes if you enter the conversation with a purpose.

TEACHER TIP

“We support children’s language development when we talk with them in ways that show we care about them and are more interested in their ideas and experiences than the correctness of their language forms.

We develop their language when we show we understand their intentions and elaborate on the sentence structures that they use without losing our informal conversational style.”

—Marie Clay, educational literacy researcher

“Why do you think we’ve had so many hot days this week?”

“How can we solve the problem we have with the class forgetting to pick up at the end of an activity?”

Even young children have important feelings and ideas to share. When you carve out this mere quarter of an hour, you establish that communication is important and that your students each have something valuable to say.

Focus on good listening skills among all participants. You may need to explain or reinforce a few “no interruption” rules. One tool I’ve found very helpful for young children is to give the “talkers” something to hold in their hand: a stuffed animal, a talking stick, or a “magic wand” (a pencil with a feather on the eraser end). The message to your class is that, if you have something in your hand, it’s your turn to speak. Don’t make the conversations in your classroom that rigid all the time—only in selected situations when you want

your children to practice taking turns and the back-and-forth elements explicitly.

Extend your students’ words by offering a follow-up question or by reflecting in more complex language on what they said. Let them confirm that you understand what they are saying. After allowing the conversation to develop, encourage other less gregarious children to join in. Don’t limit the interaction to just one child. Tie up loose ends with a few closing remarks and you’re off to start a new day. With this simple ritual, you began the morning with a focus on communication and community.

Find other times during the day for conversation. Reading time is a natural fit as you discuss the featured story. Consider transition/wait times before and after lunch or recess. At such times, extend conversations that started in class. Use unique words, newly introduced in the context of class discussions or read-alouds. Do you remember the TV show, “Pee-wee’s Playhouse”? Pee-wee had a “word for the day.” Whenever anyone said it, whistles went off and everyone celebrated. You can do the same. Such conversations get kids excited about learning!

Secret 5

Teacher Reflection Is REALLY Important

Take a few minutes now to examine *your* conversations with children in more detail. The “Let’s Have a Chat” checklist that follows helps with introspection. Great teachers are always evaluating, adjusting, and improving. Such an exercise can end in an “I know what I can do now!” moment that makes you a more effective teacher.

“Let’s Have a Chat” Instructions

Think more about the actual conversations you have with students during the course of a typical day. Consider your language, the words you direct toward them, and how you engage them. Think of what you say (and how you say it) when you are most frustrated. Keep those in mind as you complete the checklist.

As you take this quiz, read each statement and place a check by the ones that characterize your conversations with your children best. Checking as many statements as you believe are true most or all of the time is the key to evaluating your chats honestly. If the statement doesn’t characterize your typical conversations, don’t check it off.

It is truly hard in any self-evaluation for us to be objective. Find a confidante from our earlier exercise on classroom literacy environments in Chapter 2 or another trusted colleague or fellow “improving teacher.” Ask her to score actual conversations from your classroom.

How? It’s as simple as setting up a tape recorder in your classroom for an hour. Hide it so it doesn’t distract you or the children. Later, ask your trusted friend to listen to the record of verbal exchanges in your classroom with a blank copy of the quiz

TEACHER TIP

Somehow, we’ve gotten the idea that “not talking” is equivalent to “being good.” I even see that bleeding into preschool under the guise of “getting them ready for school.” Part of it is the challenge of working with 18-25 children at once.

However, at that point, the teacher’s aim shifts from creating a learning environment to making children behave. If that is paramount, it can stifle the best conversations with students, preventing those times when the learning light bulb goes on and children’s skills blossom.

TEACHER TIP

Self-examinations are only effective if you do them and do them honestly. When monitoring your own health or that of your children, you probably routinely check for a temperature. If there is evidence of one, you do something about it. This self-exam is no different. If you test yourself and the candid results reflect a need for improvement, do something about it.

and score it apart from you. Be bold and ask your administrator to pay attention to your verbal interaction with students when he or she observes in your classroom. Imagine how impressed your principal or director will be with that learning attitude from a teacher!

“WHAT MY CHATS LOOK LIKE” QUIZ

- 1. Most of my questions are the kind that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
- 2. I often ask open ended questions (ones that do not have simple “yes” or “no” answers), at least 60%.
- 3. I raise my voice to get my children’s attention. I found myself reacting strongly with harsh words to negative behavior at least once in the last day.
- 4. My conversations with my children focus on helping them discover how to solve problems or puzzles.
- 5. My responses to student- generated questions are short and direct (that means four or less words per sentence).
- 6. I add words to the conversation to expand or elaborate on what my students ask or say when I respond.
- 7. I often use one or three word commands when addressing my students (examples: “don’t do that,” “sit down now,” “stop,” “you must wait,” “forget it”).
- 8. I use words rather than force to redirect my students to other, more acceptable activities. I consistently focus on communicating clear expectations to my children with words.
- 9. I speak to my children in short, simple sentences (with four or less words per sentence). I use baby talk.
- 10. I use long, complex sentences with varied vocabulary when I talk with my students. I use the same sentences I would with anyone else I was talking with.
- 11. I tend to stand over children or away from them (always at the front of the room) when talking.
- 12. I place myself at a child’s level when I speak to him/her individually.
- 13. I do most of the talking when having a conversation with my students.

14. I look at my children's faces (in their eyes) and listen closely when they are talking.
15. There is a back and forth, give and take to our conversations.
16. Most of what I say to my students falls under the category of correcting or directing.
17. Most of my conversations center on mistakes my students have made or problems they have caused (either in whole-group or individual conversations).
18. I talk to my students about things they are interested in.

SCORING

- Give one point for each check that appears next to statements numbered 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16 and/or 17. Count those up and write your first total in the blank.
- You get two points for each check that appears next to statements numbered 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, and/or 18. Count those up and write your second total in the blank.
- Total the two for your final score here.

What Your Score Means

Now the important part: evaluate. Going through this process helps you keep classroom conversations and their ties to oral language development on your radar. The lower your score, the more opportunities you have for improvement and for impacting your children positively. The higher your score, the stronger your conversations with students are now. No one gets a perfect score, so using the following tips will help everyone improve.

If your score is between **0-9** points, conversations with students will improve when you increase the amount of talking and listening in your day.

Craft questions that cannot be answered “yes” or “no.” Do less “correcting and directing.”

Find positive times to talk with your students. Ask them in small groups or individually about something they are excited about or looking forward to.

Lao Tzu, an ancient philosopher, once said of great people, “When they make a mistake, they realize it. Having realized it, they admit it. Having admitted it, they correct it.”

If your score is between **10-18** points, you're on the right track in some areas, but your conversations need work.

Look at statements 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, and 18 for specific ways to improve.

Use more positive words. Add words that describe and words that are new to your students into your talking time together. You may find those in books you read together or your textbooks.

If your score is between **19-27** points, congratulations! You are most often on target.

Write one student's name on a day of your calendar to plan targeted talking. Take conversation to the next level to influence and improve communication in your classroom.

Look at any of the statements numbered 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, or 18 on the chart that you *did not check* for more pointers. Focus on using de-contextualized, complex language.

Secret 6

Connect Conversations to Reading

An essential part of oral language development, vocabulary is a proven factor in children learning to read. Even before children learn to speak, they are building their vocabulary through listening to conversations and stories read. Before children read, a strong vocabulary allows them to build stellar comprehension skills they will need later. The National Early Literacy Panel, in their mega-analysis of early literacy research, recently concluded that the ability to produce and comprehend oral language—including vocabulary and grammar—was correlated to at least one measure of later literacy achievement.

Teachers, like the best picture book authors, are in a position to influence children's vocabulary. One way is by talking about words in a way that invites learning. Dr. Steven Stahl, in his extensive research in vocabulary, found that students learn only about ten to seventeen percent of vocabulary (around 300-500 words) through direct instruction. The rest (as many as 2,500 to 4,000 words in a year) is added through incidental learning. When I read *The Adventures of Isabel*, a picture book by poet Ogden Nash, I describe “enormous” by talking about “really, really, really, really, really big things.” I use

big hand and arm gestures to emphasize how large that is. I ask children to say the word with me, then repeat it. By using complex “academic” vocabulary in your own conversations with whole groups, small groups, and individuals, you introduce new words and send the message that they are worth talking about for their sounds *and* their meanings.

At no time is this reciprocal relationship between oral language and reading more important than when a child reaches prime “ready-to-read” time. The world of his listening vocabulary and oral language and the world of language in print then converge.

Think about a kindergartener learning to sound out a simple word like “fan.” He has learned all the letter sounds, so he knows that this word has three separate sounds: /f/, /a/, and /n/. He says them singularly and then a little faster (blending). The word he hears is similar to one he knows in his own speaking vocabulary. You’ll often hear the response, “Oh, I know that word.” A child who has used the word “fan” in everyday life (and who knows a fan’s function—a cooling mechanism or a supporter of a sports team) is likely to be the first to “get it.”

Secret 7

Foster and Document Conversations

National Head Start’s Project SOLAR (Strengthening Operations for Learning and Results) identifies facilitating conversations as a key skill indicator for preschool teachers. SOLAR insists that expert teachers are those who “foster child-to-child conversations *intentionally* by facilitating mutual sharing and authentic exchanges of ideas, thoughts, and feelings.” Likewise, many states such as Connecticut include in their teacher competencies such statements as “Effective K-3 teachers recognize the importance of talking with children and encouraging talk among children in developing oral language competencies.” Even the new national standards for early childhood and kindergarten devote an entire segment to encouraging teachers to promote habits of speaking and listening, kinds of talk, language use, and conventions.

To meet these sorts of “expert teacher” competencies, observe carefully and provide settings conducive to conversation (in ways such as those outlined in Chapter 2). Wisely nurture beginning and in-process conversations without taking the focus away from the children

participating. Classrooms should be noisy places with a buzz that reflects engagement and learning.

Make a copy of the age-level developmental charts from Chapter 1 of this book for each child in your classroom. Alternatively set up an electronic spreadsheet that allows you to document on your laptop. As you observe, enter the child's name at the top. Enter a quick date in the appropriate column to serve as your record for monitoring:

<i>Bianca Lopez</i>			
I see this daily	Just beginning	Not Yet	Comments
<i>07/01/09</i>	<i>05/13/09</i>	<i>02/13/09</i>	<i>Vowel decoding</i>

Add more specifics in the small space provided for comments or on the bottom or back of the sheet. When complete, add to each child's portfolio. Teachers can easily refer back to these or add additional notes during planning. Such records are also an excellent tool for talking with families about a child's development.

Remember the tape recorder method you used earlier to evaluate your own conversation with students? You can use this same tool to evaluate students' oral language. You can't be in every part of the classroom at one time, so hide the recorder in a center where conversation happens. Later, evaluate that conversation with the aforementioned tool. No time? Ask your paraprofessional (or a local early education major or college professor) to help with the evaluations. Now you have another documented evaluation for the portfolio!

One Last Tool

Here's one more way to take a measure of your classroom environment and its contribution to children's group and individual conversation skills. Ask yourself:

Which stations or centers are the most attractive/most frequently chosen by my students?

Which stations or centers facilitate the most conversation?

Turn those questions around and ask which centers are least chosen and which facilitate the least conversation. Then ask why. Perhaps the answers provide a legitimate reason for little or no conversation (the center's purpose is to focus on and complete a task independently). If you don't find a reason, use those answers to fine-tune your conversations with children and the opportunities you give them to talk constructively with one another.

Secret 8

Conversations Between Young Children Build Skills

Teachers are not the sole influence when it comes to growing oral language abilities in the classroom setting. The other side of classroom conversation—discussions between peers—also contributes. Children spontaneously practice with each other what they hear in conversations with adults. Conversations between children can also be initiated and guided by the teacher without the adult being the focus.

In either case, such engagement and interaction spark learning for *all* children. These types of conversations not only impact oral language development but motivation to learn, the ability to listen and think and, as we have already alluded to, a strong sense of security and belonging.

Common Threads in Peer Conversations

There are commonalities in conversation between young children in preschool and kindergarten. Three that stand out:

1. **Conversations often develop during play, dramatics, or retelling between students and during small-group discussions.** In those contexts, de-contextualized talk is common (see “Teacher Tip” on next page). Co-author of the popular *Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, Dr. Laura Colker, tells us that this type of language requires children “to use their developing mental abilities to represent ideas.” Sharing books together, telling stories, and encouraging pretend play can all

TEACHER TIP

De-contextualized talk is defined as the use of “language in which the meaning is not supported by the context (participants are separated [from what they are talking about] in space and/or time) . . . the topic is not here-and-now.”

—William Nagy, Seattle Pacific University Professor of Education

TEACHER TIP

Keep a camera (disposable or digital) in your classroom. Take pictures of children involved in structured play and learning centers. Use these pictures as the focus for classroom discussions or individual conversations. Children love to talk about themselves and their friends.

familiarize children with the functions and vocabulary of de-contextualized language.

2. Extended conversations between peers can be a booster shot for oral language. When conversations develop independently of the teacher, and are nurtured and given time to develop, they allow for more frequent practice and reinforcement independent of the teacher. They develop into extended conversations (those most commonly defined as having more than three or four exchanges back and forth). Several conversations can go on at once. Such conversations may not happen in your classroom at first. With support, guidance, encouragement, and steady practice, eventually, children are able to construct “an almost seamless narrative” when left on their own (Tabors, Snow, & Dickinson, 2001). They can do so for a surprisingly long, sustained time.

3. Diversity in language and culture also becomes a learning tool when children share differences in background knowledge, vocabulary, and experiences in the course of conversation.

Peer conversations act as a catalyst for oral language growth, beginning in the less formal world of preschool. Their influence continues into the more structured setting of today’s kindergarten. The road branches here (there are clearly distinctions as you’ve seen in the age-level descriptions of development in Chapter 1), so let’s take a closer

peek into each of these environments.

Children Chatting in the Preschool World

Traditionally in early childhood programs and, until fairly recently, in kindergarten, the heart of the day has been periods when children are allowed to move about the classroom into activity areas or centers. Some still call this “free play” or “choice time.” Such conditions are natural conversation windows when more than one child is playing within the same space. As children begin to interact more at age three, they start to ask many questions of their peers and adults.

They use grammar with growing correctness and consistency. They even begin to learn to take turns talking.

As you'll remember from the oral language age-level descriptions, most four-year-olds' speech is becoming more easily understood, which facilitates peer conversation. Children use their expanding vocabularies; speak about present, past, and future events; and answer *how*, *why*, and *where* questions.

By their fifth year, children's conversations are full of prediction and retelling of stories. "What do you think we're going to do outside?" or "Wait to you hear what we did last night. It was awesome!" They begin to sprinkle more adjectives and adverbs into their everyday conversation and the complexity of their sentences continues to grow.

By their sixth year (developmentally), children add proper sequence to their retelling and relate to and talk more about characters in stories. They use even more complex sentences and more varied vocabulary in their everyday conversations. This can even bleed over into their beginning efforts at writing.

Kindergarten Child-to-child Conversations

Fostering learning conversations in the more structured kindergarten classroom isn't much different, although the application and opportunities may vary. The fact that whole-group instruction plays a larger part in the instructional day means that providing time for cooperative learning, student-generated conversations with peers, and meaningful learning discussions must be even more intentionally planned. The good news is that, once you have a system, that integration is easy. A bit of planning goes a long way. Do it one time and your ideas can easily be replicated year after year.

Here are three ideas to help you build your kindergarten conversation framework:

1. Think about how to reward your children for using conversation correctly.
2. Give students electronic or sand timers to help them keep track of time when they are asked to talk about a book, a picture, or an idea.
3. Just as you have writing prompts later in the kindergarten year, create talking prompts connected to your curriculum. Commercial

vocabulary cards work well. No budget for such? Involve parents with a fun homework project:

Ask families to collect old magazines (or provide a few from an in-school used magazine drive). The discards can later be recycled.

Parents and children take home selected magazines and search for intriguing pictures that prompt thinking or questions. Several years ago, I found an advertisement with Emeril Lagasse (the famous chef) in the center of the photo. He had on rubber boots on and held a fish in his hand. The background was a Louisiana fishing pier. Emeril's expression is one open to interpretation. Was he thinking, "I can't wait to get this stinking fish out of my hands," "Take the picture; get on with it," or "I love redfish"? If each family cuts out five such pictures, you'll have 100 cards or more!

Include glue sticks with the magazines so children can mount pictures they find on recycled cardboard. They can cut cardboard backings from empty cartons or boxes of any kind (the thinner, the easier). I'd venture to say every family has those on hand.

Completed, these cards are perfect tools for conversation. Organize them by theme (matching what you cover in the school year), complexity, and alphabetical order (by adding a construction-paper mat, you have space for brief captions/labels at the bottom)—any way that works for you. Store four to ten cards (depending on the time allowed for this activity) in plastic bags or small bins. Keep them close for easy access.

Extend the use of these cards. In pairs, ask children to sort the pictures into a student-defined category (outside activities vs. indoor activities, things you can eat, animals, etc.). Encourage them to talk about what is happening in the picture or what they believe the person (or animal) in the picture is thinking. You or the children can designate the label for "alike" piles.

When the conversations are over, have the children clip sorted pictures together with a colorful binder clip or clothespin. Later, you have a quick way to evaluate a variety of skills (fine motor, sorting, thinking, and categorizing skills as well as success in a cooperative activity). Once children begin to write (even inventively), they can make notes about their conversations on a colorful clipboard or note card at the same time.

A perfect partner for stimulating oral language growth is the read-aloud experience. While reading aloud, you can encourage even more conversation and grow vocabulary and social-interaction skills. You can promote connections between print and language. Turn the page to find tools for making your read-alouds the most delicious, delightful part of your day.

The Second Essential: Revisiting and Reinventing the Read-aloud

A Different Sort of Read-aloud Experience

Think you know all about read-alouds? Think again. Sylvia Galliard, media specialist at Carmel Elementary School in Woodstock, Georgia, has been reading aloud to children for years. She still is amazed at its impact: “A read-aloud experience should be one that *astounds* children, shares an amazing story, or provides incredible information whether it takes place in the media center, a classroom or at home.”

With dramatics and enthusiasm, she initially uses read-alouds simply to maximize interest, but appealing to children with story and zest is just the beginning. The read-aloud has all these benefits:

- Exposes students to a richer vocabulary
- Stretches and expands the number of words a child knows
- Develops a strong concept of story and how print works
- Demonstrates proper grammar and sentence structure
- Exposes students to a variety of story types, information, and rich literature
- Reinforces letter sounds and blending sounds into words (essentials of how our language works)
- Gives opportunities to practice prediction and the order or sequence of stories (what happens next)
- Builds background knowledge or a mental schemata (what your students already know that they can bring to a new experience or idea)

“Extensive pleasant experiences with read-alouds and shared reading enables children to see themselves as readers and to become readers more quickly and easily than any other single experience teachers can provide.”

—Margaret Moustafa,
author and professor of
literacy education at
California State
University-Los Angeles

TEACHER TIP

Practice reading aloud picture books to your colleagues at school over lunch (it will only take two-five minutes). Include your media specialist.

Choose “picture books” as the topic for your next book club discussion or in-house professional development session. Bring along this book.

THE STANDARD RINGS TRUE

“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.”

—*Becoming A Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*

Strengthens listening skills and the ability to understand what they hear (and later will read)

Puts a strong model of fluency (when readers’ expressiveness, pace, flow, and phrasing make it sound like they are talking) in front of children

Increases attention span

Builds excitement about learning and reading

Can any other tool build so many skills with so many different children? And be fun to boot? Imagine the impact you can have when you carve out daily time to include a powerful resource that does all this in your toolkit.

Some of you may have seen read-alouds forced out of your classroom by scripted or highly structured curriculum. Others have seen it compartmentalized into an artificial instructional piece. For a few, read-alouds may be the first thing to go when the schedule is disrupted or tight. The true impact of read-alouds over time is the incredible impact such an activity has on a variety of skills AND motivation, all at the same time.

Later we’ll look at the research base for read-alouds and recent best practices to incorporate. First, let’s explore five secrets for guaranteeing the effectiveness of read-alouds: book selection,

timing, preparation, performance, and layering.

Book selection. Not every book lends itself to read-alouds. For success, you need to find the most musical, creative, and engaging stories. Pick books that move quickly or have a strong sequence.

Read a bit of a possible selection aloud when you first consider it. Then visit your school media specialist, local public librarian, or children’s bookstore owner. They are sure to recommend several titles. Appendix F contains a list of read-aloud picture books you can use to teach specific vocabulary and concepts.

Timing. With everything you must accomplish daily, your first reaction may be: “I don’t have time.” Teachers, caregivers and parents

do often look at reading aloud as an option, something nice to do when they have time. “The truth is, if we couldn’t find time for anything else, we should find time for reading aloud,” says Nationally Board-certified Master Reading Teacher Lisa Frase. David J. Schwartz, motivational speaker and author of *The Magic of Thinking Big*, adds a relevant reminder when he tells us that “great achievements take time.” Whether you commit five minutes or twenty to a read-aloud, include this power-packed activity in your daily plans.

Performance. Before beginning, take a deep breath. Ask your students to do the same. You are prepping yourself and them for a show.

Use voice inflection, pauses, and even re-reading to heighten the suspense or draw attention to turning points in a story. Slow down slightly and leave an opening for interaction when you want comments or questions. You will learn even more performance techniques at the end of this chapter.

Even the most reserved individual can find ways to entertain an audience. Enthusiasm for and familiarity with the story are most important. When you know what is coming next, you can anticipate, emphasize, relax, and let your personality and the author’s shine through. Some of you may relate to me: I draw out my ever-present “inner child” when I read aloud.

Regardless of your approach, consider drawing students in. Ask them to chime in when they know the word(s) that come next. Create a reader’s theater element to read-alouds.

Preparation. Even with something as seemingly simple as a read-aloud, it is important to prepare. The aim, whether you read aloud to one child or a group, is to teach and reinforce without making a structured plan evident. The newer you are to read-alouds, the more prep time you need to pull that off. Reading aloud is a large part of my repertoire, but I still plan.

As you prepare, read the book several times (out loud at least once). You can do that while waiting at the bank, before a meeting with

QUICK AND EASY TEACHER TIPS FOR SELECTING READ- ALOUDS

Carefully choose books whose words sound good to the ear. Read a selection out loud to yourself and ask these questions:

Does it grab your attention with strong word choice and creative language?

Does it sing with rhythm and rhyme and keep you on the edge of your seat?

Can you make it come alive with your delivery?

your supervisor, during a portion of your planning time, or before a parent/teacher conference. Make sure you know how to properly pronounce unfamiliar or cultural names or phrases, including the author's name. It doesn't have to take hours; most picture books can be read in fewer than ten minutes.

Use the following organizer to think through your read-aloud and set purposes for reading. Concentrate on the purpose, and it will come through without turning your read-aloud into "just another lesson." As you plan, think of how and when to encourage conversations about the text but never stray far from it. Let students think they are just having a good time. After you plan a few times, your entire preparation should be brief.

A Read-aloud Guide

Title _____

Author _____

MY PURPOSES

- Pure enjoyment of great stories
- Taking students to a different level of understanding of the story, a higher level of thinking
- Discussion and reinforcement of story elements
- Reflecting on the text and searching for multiple meanings
- Exploring the elements and format of print
- Practice of specific comprehension strategies such as questioning, predicting, and clarifying
- Building and activating background knowledge
- Using inference
- Understanding of the writing process; use of grammar, point of view, writer's voice, and other writing-related skills
- Reinforcing letter-sound connections, rhyming, word families, and other elements of beginning reading
- Introducing and reinforcing vocabulary
- Reinforcing content-area learning
- Practicing "think-alouds"
- Introducing and/or reinforcing summarizing
- Targeting specific grade-level standards
- Other

"Point-it-out" vocabulary: _____

Possible questions:

_____	Page Reference	_____
_____	Page Reference	_____
_____	Page Reference	_____

The first couple of times you complete this form, it will take a bit of time. Eventually, with practice, you will be able to do it quickly, even in your head.

“Reading aloud reveals the rewards of reading and develops the listener’s interest in books and desire to be a reader.”

—Margaret Mooney,
author and educator

Layering. Still worried about connecting read-alouds to what is required in your district? Refer back to the benefits of read-alouds outlined at the beginning of this chapter. If you are a K-12 teacher, place that list beside your grade-level standards and highlight the parallels you find. If preschool is your environment, look at the state guidelines or standards for language and literacy development. You’ll find a surprising number of parallels. Today’s read-alouds must be powerful if we are to devote precious class time to them.

Think about students for whom the curriculum moves too fast, those who don’t seem to get it the first time. Nearly every child fits that category at one time or another. If your curriculum prevents you from adjusting the pace of instruction, layer it with read-alouds to strengthen skills that need reinforcement.

The Faces of Read-aloud

The conventional approach to read-aloud—an adult reads and children listen—still works well occasionally. Choose a read-aloud that contains melodic rhythms or hypnotizing language. Poetry is excellent for that. For the majority of read-alouds in your classroom, however, use a different approach.

One of the most powerful purposes of read-alouds is to help students reflect on what is behind a text and how we as good readers figure that out. We want the read-aloud to build skills and open a pathway for students to translate those skills into their own reading. Dr. Marilyn Adams, author, educational researcher, and psychologist, says, “The participatory forum is ideal for engaging children in discussions of character and plot. It is, moreover, ideal for engaging children in predicting, accommodating, and more generally thinking about the forms, uses, and messages of written text. At best, sharing of books provides a way of delighting the children both in texts and in their own capacity to explore and learn from and about text.”

More Research Evidence

Although most of us think of Dr. Marilyn Adams’ scholarly *Beginning to Read* as a discussion of the complex system of skills and knowledge involved in learning to read, there are, embedded within this text, plenty of references to the power of the read-aloud experience. Many other prominent voices in the world of reading link the read-aloud experience to student achievement and growing up literate. Catherine Snow and her colleagues at the National Research Council, in their

landmark report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, recommend regular read-alouds to improve comprehension and the mechanics of reading, both in school and at home.

A companion publication from the same group, *Starting out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*, makes more than twenty-three references to the read-aloud experience. No matter where you look, the idea that listening to stories facilitates literacy growth is everywhere.

Lucy Calkins, perhaps best known for her work with the writer's workshop concept, points out, "In the teaching of reading, there are only a handful of things that everyone agrees are essential. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that children need to listen to the best of children's literature read aloud to them." She also believes that "the single most important habit we need to model in read-aloud is engagement in the text."

Diving deeper into the research, I've pulled common factors from four of the most prominent, promising ideas and best practices to help you create the most powerful, practical, and, pleasurable read-alouds for your students:

Targeted read-alouds. A 1993 study by Katherine Goldner found demonstrated growth for each student in retaining the basic story line as a result of conversations conducted during read-alouds. Her approach allows before, during, and after discussion opportunities within each story and identified dialogue between the adult and students as the most effective element.

Interactive read-alouds. In the early 1990s, the term "interactive read-alouds" came to the forefront in conjunction with discussions of engaged learning. S.J. Barrentine, in particular, addressed practical applications in articles for the International Reading Association's *The Reading Teacher*. As the term "interactive" intimates, teachers pose questions throughout the reading that enhance meaning construction and how to make sense of text. Students draw upon personal experiences to build relevance.

Dialogic read-aloud. Dialogic reading is a sister technique to interactive read-alouds in which an adult or more

TEACHER TIP

S. J. Barrentine's Favorite Read-alouds:

Blueberries for Sal

by Robert McCloskey

Frederick

by Leo Lionni

The Relatives Came

by Cynthia Rylant

Fly Away Home

by Eve Bunting

experienced reader takes turns with a non-reader or less experienced reader, carrying on a conversation about a book or reading and talking about it together. The main premise is that understanding is built by the classroom community, not delivered by the teacher.

Shared reading. Don Holdaway was the first to quantify this approach to reading aloud with children in the classroom in his natural learning classroom model in 1979. Shared reading is an interactive reading experience that occurs when children join in the reading of a Big Book or other enlarged text, guided by a teacher or other experienced reader. Shared reading always contains these elements: demonstration (showing children how reading works—left to right, top to bottom, front to back, building interest through a picture walk), participation (allowing children to interact with the story), practice (encouraging children to read some of the words in the story—certainly those often repeated), and performance (allowing children to take on more of the reading function as familiarity with text and retelling increases).

Bringing It All Together: Engaged Interactive Reading (EIR)

“The best effect of any book is that it excites the reader to self-activity.”

—Thomas Carlyle,
writer

A distinct thread is at the heart of targeted, shared, interactive and dialogic reading. Look back and you can see each of these emphasizes thinking, wondering, and pondering about text. Competing with video games, TVs, movies, and DVDs requires that we take reading aloud to a different level.

Through years of observation, research, and practice, I have taken this “heart of reading” and built a flexible framework called engaged interactive reading (EIR). It focuses on moving students from learning isolated skills to regularly applying those skills as involved, thinking readers. It evolved from the work of the researchers just mentioned plus the research from Drs. Michael Pressley, P. David Pearson, and Michael Graves. The term “engaged interactive reading” is derived, in part, from a concept first introduced by J. T. Guthrie several decades ago. His definition of engaged reading summarizes this approach: “a merger of motivation and thoughtfulness.”

EIR allows children to respond to the story with informal interruptions. It places them in an active rather than a passive mode. This takes a skilled and purposeful approach on the part of the adult reader coupled with a sense of response to what children see in the

story. It also requires the teacher to be a practicing, learning model of a mature, proficient reader. Other elements of engaged reading are:

- musing about what will happen next;
- sharing what you (the reader) are thinking in terms of how you comprehend and process the story;
- posing rhetorical questions as think-alouds; and
- always reading with excitement and enthusiasm, directed by the text itself.

Such readers seek to understand, enjoy learning, and believe in their abilities. Engaging children in the experience of reading also helps them develop real-world connections to print in its various forms. It helps children make meaningful choices about what, when, and how to read through text that is familiar, vibrant, important, and relevant.

With those ideas in mind, walk with me through a real-life example of EIR. I've chosen a well-known piece of literature, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. I often use it as a read-aloud selection for kindergarten or first-grade students. The story has become a classic, with its lyrical, musical language and clever word choice, and those characteristics, in themselves, make it a great choice for read-alouds. (This “walk” through an engaged interactive read-aloud will actually take longer to read than the book):

1. First, **introduce the book as you would a treasured friend**. Tell the **title**, the **author**, and the **illustrator**, using those terms.

Use **“big school” words** (*title, author, illustrator*) to increase your students' vocabulary. Doing this before you start helps students make a quick and good first-impression connection to the story. It draws them in. After hearing several Dr. Seuss stories, for example, children will soon learn that he writes funny books and perhaps want to hear more. This doesn't have to take very long—just enough to fire up interest.

2. Before you actually begin to read, **ask your students what they think the story will be about**. **Predicting grabs children's attention**. It causes them to take notice so they see what the story is really about when you read. By making predictions, a child learns to draw on what he knows about the world. He uses his imagination. Bringing that to the reading table makes the reading experience more positive and more rewarding.

Prediction is not the same thing, however, as guessing. Prediction is when a child takes what he knows about the subject or circumstance at hand and makes a logical evaluation of what will happen. When you ask for a prediction, you are teaching a child to use his brain and think!

Spend some time teaching your students what prediction is. With the younger children, you may need to start with guessing. Then, use your words to lead the children to a higher level of thinking. Look at the pictures on the cover carefully together.

Any clues there?

Are there animals or silly monsters? That gives a hint it might be a make-believe story.

Or my personal favorite: What *are* they up to?

Read the title aloud again and think about what it might mean.

The words or pictures might trigger an idea. You and your students can also change your prediction as more of the story unfolds. Predicting need not take much time and should lead into the heart of the read-aloud.

3. After predicting, we can **actually begin the read-aloud**. Open the book and read the first three pages of text. You may decide that you've already found a place where students commonly want to interact. Do you always stop at this point? Absolutely not. If you want your students to experience the lyrical sounds of the words themselves (Mr. Sendak is almost poetic in his writing), read more before pausing. Lucy Calkins calls that "letting the words work their magic." If you want your students to connect their own thoughts to the story, linger on those last few words and let them respond ("He looks funny in that suit" or "What is mischief?").

4. **Reading stories more than once allows you to relate to the story on another level or from a different point of view.** You will be teaching the value of re-reading without even trying. The wonderful thing about good stories is that they remain fresh, even when you read them more than once. Each interaction with the story can be unique.

If comments or questions don't come quickly at this early point, don't sweat it. You can always ask a question yourself like:

What do you think it means when Max's mom call him a "wild thing"?

What was Max thinking when he responded to his mom with “I’ll eat you up”?

Have you ever been a wild thing? Or blurted out something hurtful without thinking? Tell me about it.

Look at Max; what is he doing?

Consciously and carefully select where you want to encourage interaction. Think about these additional “windows” when you read this book aloud.

5. **During a break, allow children to imitate** the animals/characters and their active verbs (roared, gashed, rolled). **The secret in a prime learning environment is engagement.** “For most of us, learning happens when we are motivated to grapple with facts and skills and ideas, to do the mental processing and organizing that makes new material our own,” says Joe Blatt, lecturer from Harvard’s Graduate School of Education. Search for those ways to connect your students to the text.

Solicit responses the same way when the wild rumpus begins. The words in the text “NOW STOP!” are a key that it’s time to get back to the story.

6. **If your children’s enthusiasm goes beyond your comfort level, take a deep breath and stretch that comfort zone slightly when you see learning happen.** You can always use the phrase “Now let’s see what happens next” to draw them back into the story once that learning window passes.

7. At the end, talk about how Max feels. **Empathy opens the door for understanding.** As many times as I’ve read this book, I never noticed the powerful imagery Sendak uses at this point. He infers the total acceptance a child feels at the end of the day. No matter where their behavior has taken them, it’s powerful to know that teachers still care for them. Here is a fantastic feeling to close with, an opportunity to talk about the value of each person and to experience the perfect ending to a story, powerfully illustrated with the imagery of a hot meal.

Think aloud to lead your students into different interpretations of the end of the story. Talk about higher-level thinking!

As you dive into this book and prompt discussions and thinking about it, your aim is to create an environment in which your students feel they have an *active* part of extracting meaning. Remember those

two key words: *interactive* and *engaged*. You want students to experience the story and be able to safely expose their true understanding and responses in the context of a class read-aloud (this contributes to that sense of community we addressed in Chapter 3). Is EIR the only way to read this book aloud? Absolutely not. However, EIR is certainly a tool you want to use regularly in your classroom since the end goal of gaining meaning from text is increasingly essential.

Now that you have experienced a walk-through of EIR, select a book from this list (some of my favorites). Try a few on for size, relax, and just become one of the readers, practicing and modeling what the best readers do when they encounter a text.

THE LITERACY AMBASSADOR’S FAVORITE READ-ALOUDS (ADD A FEW OF YOUR OWN)

A Kiss for Little Bear by Else H. Minarik, Harper/Trophy, 1983

Bear Snores On by Karma Wilson, Elderry, 2002

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr., Henry Holt, 1992

Hattie and the Fox by Mem Fox, Aladdin, 1992

Max’s Chocolate Chicken by Rosemary Wells, Puffin, 2000

Mouse Mess by Linnea Asplind Riley, Blue Sky Press, 1997

No, David! by David Shannon, Blue Sky Press, 1998

Noisy Nora by Rosemary Wells, Viking Books, 1999

Olivia by Ian Falconer, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001

Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy E. Shaw, Houghton Mifflin, 1997

Soap! Soap! Don’t Forget the Soap!: An Appalachian Folktale by Tom Birdseye, Holiday House, 1993

The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss, Random House, 1957

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant, Aladdin, 2003

The Three Billy Goats Gruff by Stephen Carpenter, Harper Festival, 1998

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle, Philomel, 1981

Who is It? by Rosalind Beardshaw and Sally Grindley, Peachtree Publishers, 1998

Read-alouds as a Bridge to Independent Reading

For the preschool caregiver/teacher, your aim with every read-aloud is for your children to leave each experience with a good taste in their mouths. You can easily find time in any day to create a pleasant and engaging experience around reading. That is the best way to prepare your children for more formal instruction when they are ready to learn to read themselves. If we do not give children mostly positive reading experiences at an early age, they will probably not choose to be lifelong readers.

If you teach kindergarten, you may have days when you can't plan fifteen to twenty minutes for a read-aloud. Take the mini-lesson concept and slip in a five- to six-minute read-aloud at the beginning of the day, before or after lunch, or at the start of a new segment of instruction. Use that brief time to introduce concepts that will be expanded in your later teaching. Choose books that you want to encourage students to read independently. Read a particularly juicy part early in the story, using the outlined strategies, and leave your students hanging, closing with the announcement that you'll read more later. You are sure to hear a few "Oh, don't stop!" groans. Making sure you read aloud *every day* sends a strong message to your children about how all-encompassing and powerful reading is.

What I love about reading to children of any age is that when you read aloud, you free their brain to concentrate 100 percent on comprehending the text. Their mental energies are not torn between decoding, pacing, and understanding the story. Want to solve the comprehension issues we have in fourth grade and above? Teach children to comprehend with EIR before they can read.

A Read-aloud Family Resemblance

In my father's family, you can tell at a glance that we are all related. Something in facial features, mannerisms, ways of expressing ourselves—even among the cousins—is distinctly "Puett." It's the same with teachers who use read-alouds well. There are certain commonalities that make what they do special. But, unlike families you have to be born into, anyone can join the read-aloud family and bring his or her own personality and style.

If you read aloud and your children aren't changed, don't blame the students. What kind of commercial are you? Could someone hear

you read and say, “That’s a great story”? International literacy expert, former teacher, and best-selling author Mem Fox believes that, with read-alouds, “We could probably wipe out illiteracy within one generation.” That’s a legacy you can be proud of. I couldn’t agree more.

The Third Essential: Listening to the Sounds of Words (the Basis of Phonological Awareness)

With a rich foundation in oral language and stories read aloud, your students are ready to move to a higher level. This new stage is one where we think about words, not just for their meaning, but for their sounds and their parts.

In this chapter, you'll find the secrets you need to know about "cracking the code"—getting children ready to read *phonetically*. Many of you, especially those teaching kindergarten, have no doubt heard this term.

My goal here is to give those of you who for whom these terms are new a basic understanding. I can imagine a few of you, upon reading this, might be on the edge of your comfort zone. I understand. I didn't learn about phonological awareness until I was almost forty years old! I'll be here to help.

For those of you who already understand this concept, I encourage you to read on just to be sure. In my training of kindergarten teachers across the country, I find that there is confusion. I want to clear that up for you so you can be the phonological awareness expert. It is important that you read this before moving on.

Wherever you find yourself, we start with a few definitions and a bit of background (or review). Once you have a handle on how listening and sounds of words work together, you'll be ready to go on to the fun stuff!

“You can have phonological awareness without phonics, but you cannot have phonics without phonological awareness. When you think of phonological awareness, think ears. It is independent of print.”

—Yvette Zgonc, author of *Sounds in Action*

Three Simple Definitions

Definition 1

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness (which I'll sometimes refer to as PA) is an often misunderstood term. It is an understanding of the sounds in our language and how they work. It is knowing how such sounds relate and create patterns. For example, the words “chug,” “chair,” and “choo-choo” all have the same single sound (/ch/) at the beginning.

Phonological awareness starts to grow when a child begins to understand rhyming (words that have the same endings that sound the same like “hat” and “cat”). That may even develop before the child comes to you. Recognizing alliteration (words that start with the same sound) often follows. The deepest level—being able to switch and move letter sounds to make new words in speech—comes last. Phonological awareness is the foundation.

Take a few minutes now to look at Appendices A and B for a more detailed explanation of these concepts—a true detailed picture of the spectrum. There you'll see that phonological awareness develops from understanding the largest chunks or sounds of words, down to the smallest, the single phoneme (single language sound). Researchers differ slightly in their count of the number of phonemes in English, but the range is usually between forty and forty-five (compared to twenty-six letters in our alphabet).

Definition 2

Phonemic Awareness

Another related term you may hear is phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is an advanced skill but one your students can master. It falls under the bigger umbrella of phonological awareness and is, simply put, adding and taking away single sounds within words. Substituting, replacing, and blending phonemes (the single sounds in our language like /p/ in the word “pat”) can be a lot of fun. Phonemic awareness deals exclusively with sounds. There is no reading or matching sounds to letters yet. Children who have advanced phonemic awareness know that taking away the /s/ (sound) from “slap” leaves you with the word “lap.”

Kindergarten teachers will be familiar with this term most likely because it was identified as a key component in effective reading instruction by the National Reading Panel in 2000. The difficulty (for students and teachers) comes when we dive into that high level of thinking before children have the foundations we have concentrated on thus far.

Definition 3

Phonics

Phonological awareness is sometimes confused with another term: phonics. Phonics is a special way of teaching a child to read and pronounce words by learning the phonetic (sound) value of letters and groups of letters. It is probably the way your local schools teach reading. Phonics is a tool that helps readers to understand how letters and their sounds relate and to recognize the letter and sound patterns in words.

Don't worry if these terms and their meanings are still a little fuzzy. In a summer institute I taught several years ago with forty preschool and kindergarten teachers, no one understood them correctly at the beginning, even though some had been teaching for quite a few years. Playing the games that follow will help you make more sense of these terms. Start by remembering that it is all about the sounds in our spoken language; that's what is most essential. I'll show you plenty of examples and give you places to practice so you get the idea.

When Do I Start?

Before you rush to the deepest end of the phonological awareness spectrum, focus on the building blocks and moving through the shallow end first. See how far your children take you, not how far you want to force them.

Kindergarten teachers: Your goal is that children will be competent in all levels of the phonological awareness spectrum by year's end. Initial sound fluency, random letter-naming fluency, an auditory ability to segment words into phonemes, and reading three-letter/one-syllable "nonsense" words are frequent abilities assessed. Be careful to move students through the shallow, intermediate, and deep stages as they demonstrate progress.

Preschool Teachers of Four- to Five-Year-Olds: Your goal is that children will at least have moved through the shallow and intermediate stages before they move on to kindergarten.

Preschool Teachers of Three- to Four-Year-Olds: Your goal is for children to at least have moved through the shallow stages before they move up to the next class.

You may begin the activities outlined in the remainder of this book with children as young as three years of age. If a particular activity seems too difficult or isn't working for your children, move back to a simpler one. Remember that the sequence in which their phonological awareness develops moves from larger units of sound to smaller units, down to the phonemic or single-sound level (i.e., the /p/ in "pig" or the /ch/ in "chair").

Children can distinguish same and different sounds before they can manipulate sounds. They will recognize that "slime" and "time" sound the same at the end/rhyme before they see that taking off the /m/ in "map" and substituting a /c/ gives you "cap"). Children can blend sounds (put /m/ and "-ap" together to get "map") before they can dissect words into separate phonemes ("map" is /m/-/a/-/p/). And, like many other things you teach them (ABCs, counting, shapes, etc.), each child will have a slightly different developmental speed and pattern.

Ready for the fun part—learning through games and pleasant activities? Simply look at the next the page.



Listening Games

Many children come to the preschool and kindergarten years with short attention spans (a normal attention span for most children is the equivalent of one to two minutes per year of age). They may not have learned the important skill of listening, so we begin with those types of games. Listening and concentration are imperative for development of phonological awareness.

Begin with a short discussion during a whole-group time. Talk about the important elements of listening:

“What do we do when we are good listeners?”

Show pictures of children actively listening in a group, and let the children observe what they are doing to prompt their ideas. Let your students contribute what they think and then share additional ideas with them from the following list. You may even create a simple chart in which you write a few key words and then post it as environmental print. (Your aim here is not to teach them to read but to teach them that print has meaning and how it works in our language). When we listen, we

- “turn on our ears” (listen)
- keep our hands to ourselves
- are quiet, no talking
- use our brains (think, focus, and concentrate)
- pay attention
- look at the person who is doing the talking (tied to auditory processing)

Fidgeting, touching others, and looking elsewhere detract from listening. You might even suggest a few of these as things we do when we listen to facilitate the conversation: “What about touching your neighbor? Is that a part of listening?” Most children will quickly tell you those things don’t belong on the list.

Give children plenty of opportunities to practice listening throughout the day. Some children need very explicit instruction here: “I need you to look at me while I’m talking with you,” or “You cannot listen if you are talking.”

Do not only give them directions to follow, but stop from time to time and listen to the sounds around you. You can do that with the whole group by calling children together outside on the playground, at lunch, or while everyone is in centers or stations. As a signal, cup your hand around your ear when you ask the children to tell you what they hear.

From this basis, you can begin to play the following listening games with students.

Activity

1

Sound on/Sound off

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Paying attention to sound

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Talk about different sounds your children hear every day.

“What did you hear on the way to [school, the store, wherever] today?”

“Which sounds do you hear right now?”

“Are the sounds different in the day and at night, when you wake up or sleep?”

NOW LET'S PLAY

“I want to teach you a game but you must pay very close attention so you know what to do. Watch me do it and then you can try.”

“Sound of a cat ON” (Adult places hands in the air, arms spread wide, while making sound—in this case, “meow.” Children can chime in.)

“Sound of a cat OFF” (Pull your hands and arms down and closer to the body or floor while making no sound. You can also place fingers on your lips in a “shhh” position with no sound. If necessary, remind students that, when your hands and arms go down, the sound stops.)

“Our hands go up when the sound is on and go down when the sound is off. Now you try with me.” (Do the same sound and same actions again.)

Now do it more than once. Make sounds with your voice (beep of the garbage truck, moo of a cow, bark of a dog, whistle of a fire engine). Use silly sounds too. After a few times, let a child be the leader. You may need to remind young children what to do more than once. If a child has a hard time coming up with a sound, suggest one: “Why don’t you make the sound of an elephant?”

You only need do this for two to three minutes at first. Practicing in shorter spurts helps children learn self-control to pay attention, listen, and follow directions. Slip it in while waiting.

CHANGE IT UP

Once students are comfortable with the rules of the game, switch sounds but leave the sound on continuously (switch from a meow to a bark with no break). Speed up sound on/sound off to help them follow directions quickly. This keeps them listening and watching.

Activity

2

Simon Says— The Listening Version

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Teaching children to listen for specific sounds or words within a regular conversation; learning to follow two-part directions

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

We've all played the game Simon Says where the leader prefaces a command with the words "Simon Says." The key to Simon Says is the players only follow the directions when the leader says "Simon Says" beforehand. If the leader doesn't say "Simon Says" before the directions, no player should follow them.

NOW LET'S PLAY

Start with something simple (only a few words in the directions), and choose something your child can easily understand: "Simon says: moo like a cow."

Use the hands/arms up (or down) described earlier in this chapter to help students follow. You can also have them act like the animal or object whose sound they are making.

Say "bark like a dog," but don't raise hands or use the phrase "Simon says...."

This activity can do double duty as students practice large motor skills like standing up or marching around the room.

With the youngest children or children with weak listening skills, be patient and very explicit about the rules of the game. For those children who don't get it after a few tries, sneak in a reminder before you give each command: "Now remember, if you hear me say 'Simon Says' before I tell you do to something, then you should do it. But, if you don't hear me say those words (What are they? Simon Says!), then don't you do it, OK?"

Increase your pace of the game as the children get better at listening. It will be a lot of fun and they will practice following directions and making sounds.

CHANGE IT UP

Some books have listening as their theme. *The Ear Book* by Al Perkins and *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* by Bill Martin Jr. are two examples. Talk about the sounds in these books before, during, and after reading. Some books even have their own sound effects (like Eric Carle's *10 Little Rubber Ducks*). This book has a button in the back that when pushed sounds like a quacking duck.

Activity

3

Environmental Sound Bingo

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Gaining a sense of directionality with sound; matching an object or creature with the sound it makes; identifying people, places, things, locations, and actions

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Search for pictures of animals, cars, musical instruments, or anything that makes sound. Use the same picture cards that you created or purchased for the activity in our earlier chapter on oral language. Smaller pictures can be pasted together in a Bingo card format (three pictures by three pictures on one background or nine pictures in all).

NOW LET'S PLAY

1. Try this for a short time initially (five minutes or less at first). Make a sound to match a picture (roar like a lion). Hold the picture where everyone can see it.
2. If you have multiple pictures on one card, look together at the card for the match. Hold up several individual pictures if you have those. See if your students can find the right picture. If no one knows right away, look at each picture together. If not, look from top to bottom and left to right at each picture (in the same way as we follow print in a book). Point to one picture and another if you like.

Ask "What is this? Does it make the sound we heard?" Repeat, if necessary. Students still don't know? Say "Let's keep looking." With the correct answer, respond "You're right! Good listening!" Move on to search for the next sound.

3. Once your students learn to do this as a group, they can try individually (a Bingo version). Lay out the cards or individual pictures. Make a sound and let each child look for the picture that matches. Give your students markers (or if the pictures are laminated, a grease pencil or dry-erase marker). In this version, students may only place a marker when they have done the matching all by themselves. Students can work in pairs as well. If that's too hard, keep it as an activity you do together, especially for younger children.

CHANGE IT UP

Ask students to close and cover their eyes. Let them guess what sound you make using just their ears. Ask them to name the object/animal making the sound. Stand in various locations. Can students point to where the sound is coming from?

Create your own CD or audiotape of sounds to match the pictures. Then it can be placed in your listening center for individualized play. Commercial versions of sound Bingo are often available at school supply stores.

Activity

4

Noise Scavenger Hunt

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Distinguishing differences and similarities in sound

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

If you have students who have a hard time listening, remind the class of those key “what we do when we listen” elements. Prompt children when necessary to draw attention back. Simply asking a child to listen doesn’t help her learn *how* to do it. Be specific: if a child is distracted or looking somewhere else in the room, say “Remember, Joe. A good listener looks at the person who is talking and uses only his ears. Can you do that?”

Point out what a child who is listening well does. Give positive feedback and let your students see what a good listener does by your example. When talking with a student individually, ask her to look at your eyes and face you. Do the same with her.

NOW LET’S PLAY

A noise scavenger hunt or virtual mini-field trip is a fun way to practice listening. Move around the room or gather around a computer screen while looking together for things that make sound. If you are on an actual hunt, pick up the things that make the sound and put them in an apron pocket or a bag. The list below will get you started. Feel free to add others that appear in *your* students’ world or home.

Stay away from toys or video games. Part of the fun is hunting. I still remember my brother and me making trumpets out of the cardboard from a roll of toilet paper or paper towels. We just “tooted” or yelled into one end. You can find plenty of things that make noise to play from *your* students’ everyday world.

A bell	A coin (for dropping or spinning)
Sandpaper or an emery board	A whistle
Drumsticks	A set of car keys
A crunchy food (potato chips or apples)	Fingers (snap or tap on the table)
Macaroni or dried beans in a box	A broom
A door (two noises—squeaks or latching)	A police siren
A bottled beverage	A Plastic bag you crumple

CHANGE IT UP

After the scavenger hunt, you will have seen a whole collection of things that make sound. If you collected actual items, let students burn off a little energy by creating an orchestra of sound. Each student can play his or her chosen sound maker when you point to him or when you sing a song together.

Keep at least a few of these found items in a bag or basket for later play.

Activity

5

Listening with Music

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Listening through hands-on learning that involves body and mind

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Do your students like music? If so, use melodies and songs to help your children learn to listen. Nearly everyone has some sort of CD or MP3 player. Look through titles you have or can borrow. See which ones will help your students listen best. Short poems, rhymes, songs, and stories with repeated patterns work especially well. Look for recordings with sound effects as well. My favorite is Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (various CD recordings available). This story has a main storyteller with instruments that "speak" for the various characters.

NOW LET'S PLAY

Sing this little song with your children as they are closing out the day:

Until Another Day* (Tune: "The Farmer in the Dell")

Now our day is done
 We've had a lot of fun
 It's time to go
 So don't be slow
 Goodbye to everyone
 Put your things away,
 It's time for us to say,
 "Goodbye, goodbye
 Goodbye, goodbye,"
 Until another day.

Listen very carefully to your students as they sing. After the first time, point out the words in the song that your students don't know or don't pronounce clearly. Slow the words down with a funny voice so they hear all the words clearly.

Perhaps people in your community play musical instruments. Invite them to your classroom on a special day and let them share the sounds of their instruments. If no one you know plays an instrument, take a field trip to your local university or city orchestra rehearsals (they are sometimes free). It's easy to create a drum from an old pot or empty cardboard container.

If you have a diverse community, invite people of different cultures to your class. Ask them to bring things that make sounds in their world: rain stick, Alaskan yo-yo, African or Latin drum, bagpipe, flute. Play a guessing game, listening to the different sounds they make. This is a chance for your children to practice listening skills and share culture.

CHANGE IT UP

Change the rhythm in the ABC song, turning it into rap, jazz, or opera. At the same time you are focusing on helping your children listen, you can be helping them learn to name and recognize letters of the alphabet (another building block of reading).

* Used with permission from Jean Warren, The Preschool Express, www.preschoolexpress.com

Activity

6

Patterns in Clapping and Tapping

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Distinguishing patterns in sounds and words and being able to reproduce them

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

No prep needed here (but a great time to invite parents), or do this activity during transition times (while waiting for everyone to wash their hands for lunch).

NOW LET'S PLAY

The “Can You Copy Me?” Game

Clap in a steady beat. If your students can't copy the rhythm right away, focus them on the number of times you clap by saying:

“I'm going to make sounds by clapping my hands. After I make them, you try to make the same sounds in the same way. Can you copy me?”

Then model a steady beat clapping (*show* them how to do it). You can even count beats so the children get the idea. You only do so many claps with all the same rhythm. If a child needs extra support, hold his hands inside yours and clap together.

Keep practicing until students get it at this simplest level. You can sing a simple song whose rhythm matches the clapping.

After children can copy at this level, clap and add the word “clap.” Every time you clap your hands, say the word. See if they can copy both the clap and saying the word.

CHANGE IT UP

Vary the pattern to include loud and soft sounds, helping your students listen and tell the difference between the two: CLAP, clap, CLAP, clap. Vary the volume by how hard you clap. If you have active children (and who doesn't at this level?), let them do this standing up. Use arm motions as you did with the sound off/sound on activity (large open claps as a signal for loud and strikingly different, small, close-together claps with hands starting shut for soft).

Chapter 6

An Introduction to Phonological Awareness and More Games

Before we begin the next set of activities, let's stop and check your knowledge with the following simple review quiz. Even if you know these terms, take a few moments to "assess" your understanding. We do this with students all the time.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. Match the example in the first column with the term in the second column. Draw a line between the two that go together. Then check your answers in the key on the next page. Don't stress if you didn't get them all right. Read the definitions once more and move on.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| i. Understanding that the words "road" and "toad" rhyme. | a. PHONICS |
| ii. Sounding out the word "cat" correctly because you know the individual sounds of each letter and how to blend them together. | b. PHONEMIC AWARENESS |
| iii. Being able to hear a word like "trap" and know that when you take away the /t/, you make a new word "rap" | c. PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS |

2. Can you pick out the words that rhyme from the list below?

man pat window pan blow that

"It is clear that a major effort in teaching phonological awareness at the earliest possible opportunity will have a significant impact on reducing the number of individuals who will require special services."

—Dr. William Ellis,
educator and learning
disabilities advocate

3. Which of these phrases shows alliteration?

Mary had a little lamb

The pretty pink pony

Which way did he go?

4. Is rhyming a phonics or phonological awareness skill?

Answer Key

4. Rhyming is a phonological awareness skill.

with the same sound).

3. "The pretty pink pony" is the phrase that shows alliteration (words that begin

2. "Man" and "pan" rhyme, "pat" and "that" rhyme

1. -c, -a, -b)

Phonological Awareness Activities

These next activities are more complex but are built upon the skills you've been practicing from Chapter 5. Remember that, even with the more structured activities that follow, the focus should always be on fun, playful learning. Don't turn it into skill drills.

Think quick spurts. It doesn't take long to play any of these. When you don't have minutes to do the activities in their entirety, think *concept*. For example, you can play with rhymes, alliteration, words, and syllables *any time*:

coming in from the playground

as an added value for students who finished a task early

waiting for students to arrive and class to begin

as a break for less-than-engaged students

Add a few others times you can think of:

During any of these times, another version of Simon Says plugs in nicely. This game always helps children learn to follow directions, no matter the specifics. Let your children take the lead sometimes as a reward for good behavior. Do you need a reminder of how to play?

The “leader” first says “Simon Says” and then gives a command. Make your commands begin with the same letter or rhyme.

Simon says “Hop to the hearth” or “Bop until you drop.”

Keep repeating different commands, sometimes leaving the “Simon Says” on and sometimes not.

Use a playful tone (no scolding) when giving instructions.

You may even ask students to remind you of the rules before you get started. They love being the “teacher.”

Increase the pace of the game as your students get better at listening.

Make up a silly rhyming name or one that starts with alliteration (remember, that’s two or more words starting with the same sound) when you want a child to do something: “Brave Billy, it’s time to clean up your desk,” or “Sailor Taylor, did you remember to wash your hands?” Anytime you use language, you can play with the sounds.

Playing with Big Chunks First: Words and Sentences

“Light: That’s *the word* for that thing that we turn off and on so we can see when we go in a room.”

Notice that I used a term (*the word*) that your students probably know. Don’t make assumptions, however, and be quick to expand on the definition if you see puzzled looks on the faces of some of your children. I once met a four-year-old child who knew and could describe a light bulb’s function but didn’t know the name/label for that object.

In this one simple action, you give students *words* to use when talking about written and spoken language. You help them connect their world to the world of school.

When we talk, we use *words* so others understand what we mean. When we read, we translate words from the print to spoken language (aloud or in the silent voice in our head). Your students may not be ready to focus on sound/letter association at this point, but you can certainly begin by introducing the idea that we can pay attention to how words sound.

Refer back to that term *words* when you take dictation from a student or write down what she said (an excellent thing to do when children cannot yet write but want to share a story). As a bonus, send what

A FEW BOOKS PERFECT FOR WORD PLAYS

Sprinkle your word play activities with books that play with words. Bill Martin Jr. has written several books that work well (*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* or *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?*). Read a short sentence or phrase a second time and ask your students to clap each word as they say a selected (and often repeated) sentence or phrase back to you. Here are a few books you can use for this type of reading and re-reading:

Any Dr. Seuss book

Big and Little by Margaret Miller

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

Edwina, the Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct by Mo Willems

Franny B. Granny, There's A Bird in Your Hair by Harriet Lerner

Funny Bunnies on the Run by Robert Quakenbush

Max's Dragon by Kate Banks

Rock It, Sock It, Number Line by Bill Martin Jr.

Talking Like the Rain: A Read-to-Me Book of Poems by Janet Stevens

you write home or put it in your child's portfolio. When you write a note or fill out paperwork (you don't have any of that, do you?) and students see you writing, tell them you are writing words and show them what a word looks like.

You might tell a student, "See, I'm using your *words* to make *sentences*."

As you have these types of conversations, you and your students are talking about language in a way that may be different than anything they have previously experienced.

From this point on, select from the next activities based on where *your* students are in *their* phonological awareness development. They will move from the shallow (or beginning) to the deep (or ending) skills. Think of that image of a swimming pool with varying levels.

In the shallow end, a child can understand and identify larger chunks of our language (like sentences and words). As that child moves a little deeper, rhyming and alliteration come into play. As he moves into the middle, he can break words into syllables or smaller parts. At the deep end, a child can understand that words can be broken down into individual sounds of letters and that changing one sound (adding, subtracting, moving, or substituting) makes a new word. Don't forget that a more detailed sequence of these skill sets appears in Appendices A and B.

Ready to play? To begin:

Use the activities numbered 6-8 once or twice. Simply engaging children in this play will be an additional chance for you to notice which students already have mastered the underlying concept or standard related to that game.

Next, choose a game that is a challenge to most of your students, one in which initially they might need a lot of support but are eager to learn. Unless it is the very

beginning of the year, you'll be able to figure that out before you ask them to play. All the same, watch carefully to identify children who may benefit from special attention in a small group or individually or for signals you may have chosen too high a level of game. Kindergarten teachers may be familiar with differentiating instruction for such students through the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. The perfect game may be one of those you just played or a new one (9-12).

If the game is too difficult or many of your students seem lost, move back to an easier level (an activity with a lower number).

Following this pattern, you can quickly find just the right spot to play regularly with your students. The activities are arranged from simplest to most complex to match that shallow-to-deep-end-of-the-pool concept. Even after you leave a game behind, come back to it from time to time for fun and review. Teach parents when they come in to volunteer so they can join in the fun.

You would never push a child into the deeper end of a swimming pool before she is ready, so don't press here either. If you see a wide range of abilities in your classroom, choose to play these games in small-group time or individually during the time when children visit centers or stations.

Activity

7

Playing with Words

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Understanding that sentences are made up of words and that words are units in our language; distinguishing letters from words

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This activity is extra easy if you have building blocks, Duplo Blocks, or Legos in your room. Don't have any? Turn small, empty boxes (from vitamin bottles, individual cereal servings, spices, paper clips) into homemade blocks. If you make your own blocks, use leftover scraps of wrapping paper or stickers to decorate them. Your students and families can help you with that from home or during a special evening or afternoon event.

Why play with blocks to learn about words? Combining physical and mental activity is the best way to learn at this age. Your child can practice phonological awareness skills and counting at the same time.

NOW LET'S PLAY

Say a short sentence, such as "I like milk." (Begin with all short, single-syllable words.) Show your students how to move a block from one spot to another each time you say a word. At the same time, hand and arm muscles are growing strong for writing.

Let them try (in whole groups, everyone has something to build with on their desks; in small groups or individually, you can do this in the block/building center or at a small table). If students have trouble, separate out the individual words with more of a pause between each. Say "I," have them move the block, then go on to "like," let them move the block, and finally "milk," with the last block moved at that time. Talk with them about what they should do to play this game.

Let students count the number of blocks they moved (they can write the number if they are able). Then ask them how many *words* they heard. If a child doesn't know, let her count the blocks again while you say each word in the sentence. Quickly say the sentence and ask her to listen carefully. Pause and help her if she hesitates. Stick to simple, single-syllable-word sentences until your students get the idea.

CHANGE IT UP

Later, you can change to multi-syllabic words and increase the length of sentences. For example, "I like spaghetti with meatballs" moves five blocks in this game.

Activity

8

Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Recognizing and identifying rhyming words and the parts of words that sound alike; learning how much fun it is to play with words—a motivational segment

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Do you know the song, “Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go”? There is a picture book with the same title by John Langstaff that contains all of the words. Download the tune onto your cell phone FREE at <http://www.metrolyrics.com/a-hunting-we-will-go-lyrics-children.html>. You can also find a simple version of the song’s lyrics at <http://www.kididdles.com/lyrics/a001.html>.

NOW LET’S PLAY

Here are the first words to the song:

A-hunting we will go, a-hunting we will go,
Heigh ho, the dairy-o, a hunting we will go!

When you sing the next part, change the second line to:

We’ll take a little *fox* and put him in a *box* and then we’ll let him go.

Let students sing and march along behind you. Tell them when you (the leader) stop, it’s time to make a rhyme. Everyone listens and acts the line out.

In other words, march around until you get to “We’ll take a little fox.” Just before you sing that line, stop and turn to the children. Be theatrical and dramatic. Hesitate to draw your students’ attention to what you do next and build excitement. Pretend to pick up a fox and put him in a box. Encourage the students to copy you. Then start again, singing the stanza first before adding another verse.

When you’ve sung a few, point out the two words that sound the same in the song (“fox” and “box”). Just mentioning those is enough for three-year-olds. Ask older students (four to six years of age) to tell you which two rhyme. Over the years, I’ve collected a long list of rhyming words to use in this song. Turn to Appendix C to find more rhyming pairs.

CHANGE IT UP

After you’ve played this game for a while, pause for the rhyme and let students fill in the missing word. It doesn’t have to be the word you came up, but it must rhyme.

Activity

9

Rhymin' Simon Game (a version of Simon Says)

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Recognizing rhymes

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Teach your students a hand signal they will use while playing Rhymin' Simon.

Start by having students hold their hands palms downward, then make a fist with the thumbs sticking out.

Next, have students turn the thumbs toward one another with the knuckles facing you, palms down.

Show students how to make thumbs “kiss” by touching the tips lightly together. (It’s OK to be silly.) The thumbs now stick out away from the fist and toward one another. Everyone holds their hands in this “ready” position.

NOW LET’S PLAY

Say a pair of words. If the two words rhyme, the children turn their thumbs up and say “Rhymin’ Simon.” If they don’t rhyme, they put their thumbs down and say, “No way, José!” Add a nod for yes and a head shake for no. Let students stand while doing this if they need to move and stretch.

Start with simple, one-syllable words. They can rhyme or not rhyme. Once you say those two, ask your students if they think it’s thumbs-up “Rhymin’ Simon” or thumbs-down “No way, José!” You may even prompt by asking “Do those words rhyme?” Remind, if necessary, how to tell if two words rhyme (but only if you need to).

If your students are *only beginning* to understand rhyming and need help, lead them to the right answer by beginning to move your thumbs toward up or down. That’s OK. Remind them of how you knew those words rhymed (“They sound the same at the end when I say the word.”). Emphasize the sounds at the end.

Insert Rhymin’ Simon anytime. My mother would often play a similar game with us when we were young. If anyone happened to say a sentence with two rhyming words in the middle of a conversation, like “My shoe is blue,” she’d say “You’re a poet but don’t know it.” Hear the rhyme? Such a little comment can entertain your students while drawing attention to rhyming words and how to recognize them.

CHANGE IT UP

Let a student pick two words. See if the class can make the appropriate hand signal.

Activity

10

Fill in the Rhyming Word

(Do this one while you read together!)

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Recognizing rhyming words when heard in context (a read-aloud story or poem)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose books with lots of rhyming words. Choose books with repetition (such as Sarah Weeks' *Baa-Choo!*) in which the text returns to the same phrase or refrain over and over. Here are five to get you started:

A Beautiful Feast for a Big King Cat by John Archambault

A Sock Is a Pocket for Your Toes: A Pocket Book by Liz Garton Scanlon

And the Cow Said Moo! by Mildred Phillips

Bear Snores On by Karma Wilson

My First Action Rhymes by Lynne Cravath (actions included!)

There's an even longer list in Appendix D!

NOW LET'S PLAY

When you read a rhyming story your students have heard before, stop occasionally. Let them fill in a rhyming word that ends a line. Give them permission to chime in.

"Today I'm going to read a story to you that you love and that you have heard before. I want you to help me read it. Here's how. When I stop and leave off a word, I'll look at one of you and ask 'Do you know what goes here?' or maybe just point to you. That's your signal to tell me the next word in the story. Let's try it."

After the second or third time the word or phrase repeats, leave out the final rhyming word. See if your students can fill it in. In Sarah Weeks' book, *Baa-Choo!*, Sam the lamb says one thing over and over (it contains the words "please" and "sneeze"). When I use that book, I leave off the word "sneeze."

CHANGE IT UP

Include poetry in your rhyming reading. Bruce Lansky and Jack Prelutsky are experts at writing fun poetry for young children. You can also try books by Eileen Spinelli, Diane Shore, Charles Ghigna, Eric Ode, and Robert Pottle. *The Adventures of Isabel*, a book by poet Ogden Nash is another effective choice.

Activity

11

Odd Man Out!

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Identifying which words rhyme and which don't in a series

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Consider using this in small groups rather than whole so each child can be more actively involved.

Collect a set of objects that rhyme (soap/rope, flag/bag, shell/bell, cat/hat). They should be small enough to fit in a bag. Seeing objects they can name helps students remember words. Make picture-card drawings or pull those from the Bingo game (Activity #3).

NOW LET'S PLAY

Pull out two cards or items that rhyme and one that doesn't. Name the three objects. Remember that, at first, it will be easier for students to hear the rhymes in one-syllable words. For example, you can start by choosing a boat, a coat, and a hat.

Point to each picture/object and say each word they represent (cat, toe, snow). Remind your students you want them to name the one that doesn't rhyme.

If your students are just learning about rhyming, they may match the items that go together by meaning (i.e., coat and hat, shoes and socks, or dog and cat) rather than by rhyme. If so, remind them of what this game is all about, but don't scold. If the youngest children still want to play the game by categorizing in this different way, come back to the rhyming version later. When a child makes this choice, she is signaling to you that she's not quite ready for this new level of thinking.

Carefully select objects for naming to avoid confusion. Maybe you have a "hat" and a "rat." Most young children call the "rat" a "mouse." Later you can introduce the word "rat" and explain the difference between a rat and a mouse to grow your children's vocabulary. Avoid those confusing objects for now.

Ask students who have trouble to watch your mouth as it forms the last part of the word—how it moves exactly the same way at the end of "toe" and "snow." Emphasize the ending sound and perhaps isolate it so students can hear it. Repeat the words if needed (pointing to the pictures or objects). Emphasize the rhyming part of the word.

CHANGE IT UP

Increase the pace. Make it a race once students are familiar with the rules. Set the objects/pictures in front of the children. Mix them up to build excitement, then name them as you point to them. Let students take away the "odd man out" quickly. After children learn the game, they can play in pairs at centers or stations.

Activity

12

How High Can We Go?

Underlying Concept/Standard:

More recognizing—and now generating—rhymes

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Generating rhymes moves students to a deeper level. When they can play all the rhyming games successfully, you know they have mastered the concept of rhyming.

Pull out building blocks or Legos again for this game.

The object is to build a tower, adding a block each time someone comes up with another word that rhymes. Choose beginning words carefully; you want your students to be able to make the tower as high as possible. This activity sets the stage for word families (words that end in the same sounds). Here are some good starters:

back	tip
cake	mop
cap	by
light	lock
ring	

Explain the game and place the first block, giving the first word. If you need more words that rhyme (word families), the most common ones are listed in Appendix G.

NOW LET'S PLAY

Ask a student for a word that rhymes with yours. When your student provides a correct word, acknowledge that it rhymes with the others and add a second block.

Once you add a new block, go back and point to each block in the tower. Say each rhyming word already identified and let your students repeat after you. Repeating all those words together makes that ending sound stick in their heads: “Joanne, that’s very good. Now we have ‘back,’ ‘black,’ ‘sack,’ ‘stack,’ and ‘tack.’ Can we find any more to make our tower even higher?”

Only add blocks if the word rhymes. As you grow the tower, start a written list on the board if the tower gets higher than two or three blocks. By explaining what you are doing, you remind students of how we use print and model writing with a purpose.

Later, as your students understand rhyming better, they can do this with a buddy. One child names a rhyming word and builds; the other confirms the rhyming.

CHANGE IT UP

Running out of words? Having a hard time coming up with words that rhyme? Check out the BIG list in Appendix G.

Chapter 7

Moving to the Next Level: the Middle of the Pool

By now, your students are surely having frequent fun playing with words. These games are enhancing your direct instruction in the classroom. If you had good intentions but are having trouble finding time, remember that it only takes a few minutes a day. Schedule a “phonological awareness coffee break” with your students each day. Consistency is the key. Include families and share these learning playtime games with them. Together it will make a BIG difference.

If your students are masters at these earliest games, they are probably on track to move into the middle of the phonological awareness pool. Just as in your local swimming hole, you can go back into the shallow water (or take a few steps back) if things are moving a little too fast. If your students, however, are eager and show you they are ready, give them some new “water wings,” or new tools to play with that will help move them along the early literacy road.

Remember that the middle of the pool is represented by playing with syllables (parts of words like “hear” and “ing” in the word “hearing”). That involves compound words like “flashlight,” too. Children at this stage have become familiar with talking about words apart from their meaning. Don’t think yet about letter sounds; think bigger chunks.

When you hear a word, you can hear those larger parts we call *syllables*. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines a syllable as “a unit of spoken language larger than a phoneme or single letter sound.” Sometimes there is only one, like in the word “tree.” Sometimes there are several, like in the words “glasses” or “welcome.” Each time your chin goes up and down as you speak, you are saying a separate syllable. When you combine hearing syllables in words with physical activities like

“Today is your
day! Your
mountain is
waiting. So...get
on your way!”

—Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the
Places You’ll Go!*

clapping, stomping, or tapping, you help your students understand them.

The middle of the pool is also full of smaller parts of words called *onsets* and *rimes*. The first initial consonant sound of a word is the onset, and then the vowel and remainder of the word is the rime. For example, in the word “cake,” the onset is /c/ and /-ake/ is the rime. Understanding this concept moves students from the building block of rhyming to the next level. Your children will soon be able to point out individual sounds of letters. The next activities will help you get there!

Activity

13

Learning about Words

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Talking about words and their components aside from their meaning; counting or tapping words and letters

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Show students several real objects and printed versions of the word that represents that object (use the picture cards you created earlier with a caption at the bottom). The focus here is how long the word is and the idea that the length of the word has nothing to do the meaning/size of the object being named: “Look at how many letters there are in this word!” You can even count them.

“This is the word *horse*. Let’s see how many letters are in this word (count together).”

“*Cabinet* is a longer word than *cabin* (has more letters), but a *cabin* is a bigger thing.

“*Carpet* is a bigger word than *car*, but a *car* is bigger than a *carpet*.”

Don’t move into this too quickly. Your students will get the idea after they watch you a few times. As they watch, they are learning a new concept about words and letters.

NOW LET’S PLAY

Let students help name objects in your room or from photographs (they will be practicing vocabulary at the same time). Give them each a picture and a ruler. Model how to measure the word’s length, count the letters, and think about the size of the object.

Is *popcorn* bigger than *pop*?

Is the *microwave* bigger than a *wave* in the ocean?

Is a *desk* smaller than a *drawer*?

In each case above, the shorter word stands for a bigger object. The longer word stands for an object that is smaller. Sometimes it’s the other way around (a *flea* is smaller than an *elephant*). The important lesson here is that words represent things, but we can look at the characteristics of words separate from the thing itself (what the word names or means).

When you play this game, your students are operating at a high level of thinking. As Dr. Jean says, “Kiss that brain!”

CHANGE IT UP

Mix talking about lengths of words into conversations with children throughout the day. When you write a word, point out how long the word is and count the letters together.

Activity

14

Introduce Rhythm, Pattern, and Syllables

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Recognizing syllables and being able to identify them as a part of a word

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Sing this short song to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

Clap, clap, clap your hands,

Come and sing your name.

We will play and play with sounds,

Different and the same.



(Cathy Puett Miller, originator. All rights reserved.)

NOW LET'S PLAY

When you have a group of children gathered, chant each one's name and clap each time you say a syllable. Incorporate this game when singing “Who Stole the Cookie from the Cookie Jar?” The name “Jerry,” for example, has two syllables and two claps. Show students how your chin moves up and down once for each syllable.

Some students, particularly children with special needs, may have trouble clapping and speaking at the same time. Using words with more than two syllables is more difficult, so start with simpler ones. Practice with just one clap at first. Help them by saying “Watch how I make sounds with my hands clapping. Then you try to make the same sounds the same way. Can you copy me?”

Here's one more tip for challenged learners: Sit just behind a student or hold that student in your lap, both of you facing forward. Put your hands on the outside of his. When a new syllable starts, press gently on the outside of his hands to start a clapping motion. Hold his hands together until just before you are ready for the next syllable. Gently grasp his flattened hands with your thumbs. Then pull them apart and repeat: “I'm going to count to three and, after I say *three*, I'll say the word *deer*. That's just the right time to clap, just once.”

TEACHER TIP

Webster's Dictionary defines a syllable as “a unit of spoken language larger than a phoneme or single letter sound.” Some of your families may not know that term. Help them understand it the same way you explain it to students.

CHANGE IT UP

Add words with multiple syllables.

ONWARD AND UPWARD

Let's take a break from the games. By now you know I believe in assessments if we use the results to confirm understanding and drive instruction. Use the following checklist to help determine if your students are ready for deeper phonological awareness. You can do this for your class as a whole or, even better, for each child. If you choose the latter, add this checklist to their portfolio.

- Yes No Does the student to answer questions correctly, quickly, and with certainty in the earlier activities?
- Yes No Can the student generate rhyming words herself, especially rhymes you have not explicitly discussed? ("Did you know punch rhymes with munch?")
- Yes No Can the student clap syllables of spoken words?
- Yes No Does the student understand that words have different parts and that you can talk about those parts rather than what the word itself means?
- Yes No Is this student resistant or unsure with these activities?
- Yes No Does the child have trouble with his speech? (Is it hard for a stranger to understand when he talks?)
- Yes No Is this student paying more attention to the letters of the alphabet when he sees them and learning to say his ABCs?

Because these skills and components of emergent literacy will be influenced by the combination and overlapping of your curriculum instruction and these games, you may see children move through these developmental spectra quickly. Stay in tune with what each student needs.

"From birth through age five, children are developing the language, thinking, physical, emotional, and social skills that they will need for the rest of their lives."

—*Helping Your
Preschool Child*, U.S.
Department of
Education

WHAT IF I CHECKED MOSTLY NO?

No problem. That probably just means your students need more practice and more exposure. Are they still within the age range described in the guidelines in Chapter 1? Part of your intervention for children who do not grasp concepts and learn skills through whole-group instruction is to provide additional small-group or individual support. You can move these games into those levels as needed, individualizing them to the group size you are working with.

If you play these games often over the next few weeks and there is still no progress, the next step might be to discuss the child's progress with your reading specialist, principal, lead teacher, or administrator. Talk with parents, too, and decide together if a more technical and specific evaluation or assessment might be valuable. Most schools have early intervention specialists or resources for referral. Often families of preschool children can take advantage of those same services. An evaluation by a pediatrician may also help determine more exactly if this child is on track, not only in language development but in emergent literacy and overall development as well.

WHAT IF I CHECKED MOSTLY YES?

Although this is by no means a clinical formal assessment, if you answer at least half of the questions on the checklist with a “yes,” move on to the “single sound of letters” level. At this level, students may point to letters and talk about the names of letters and how each sounds. Since the spectrum of emergent literacy isn't linear but rather a process in which several skills are built simultaneously, letter recognition may already be occurring. Talk with the ready students about letters they know the name of and the sounds associated with those letters. Many are interested first in the letter that begins their name. You are moving along the phonological spectrum and getting closer to associating sounds in our language with the letters they represent.

A few preschool children may start to tell you or their families that they want to learn to read. Remember that beginning to read *at the child's instigation* is the best. The best way to prepare children who may have not given you those signals yet for phonics instruction (the point at which they will use their knowledge of both letter names and sounds together for the first time to figure out words) is to make sure they have a strong foundation in oral, phonological (including

phonemic) awareness. Continue to discuss how print works and how parts of words sound, and make connections between print and sound. All that will increase the strength of your students' foundation.

If you determine that your students are ready for the next level, the following segment will give you a few more “just right” activities, games, and ideas. Otherwise, save these activities for later. In the case of preschool children, many of them will not develop strong phonemic awareness until their kindergarten year. Kindergarten teachers, you have a multitude of lessons and activities specifically targeted to the deep end of phonological and phonemic awareness skills. If your students have a strong foundation in the earlier skills we've been playing with, they are likely to be successful in kindergarten.

Activity

15

Talk Like the Slowsky Turtle Family

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Attending to separate speech sounds in words

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Set the stage for this activity by telling students:

“Turtles are known for not being very fast. They do everything *slow*. If turtles were to talk, they just might talk realllllly slowwwwwww. Let me show you how I think a turtle might talk if he could.” (Spread out each sound, especially in the names. Distinctly separate the phonemes once you’ve stretched out the word):

I w - ant to vi—sit my re—la—tives. Their n-a-m-es are:

MMMMaattttt (Matt),

CCCCaaaattttt (Catt),

DDDDDaaaaannnnnn (Dan),

FFFRRRaaaaannnnnn (Fran),

Sssssaaaaannnnnddddyy (Sandy),

MMMaaaaannnnnddddii (Mandi).

While introducing this idea, read the story *The Tortoise and the Hare*. You can also incorporate this into a science lesson on turtles or reptiles (a chance to build vocabulary). Visit a nearby zoo on a field trip or take a quick virtual tour (many zoos have online webcams). Seeing turtles move will emphasize just how slow they are.

NOW LET’S PLAY

Use short, one- or two-syllable words to help your students see how to stretch them out. Then ask, “How would you say your name like a Slowsky Turtle?” and let your students practice stretching out their name and the names of their classmates into the different sounds of the letters. Exaggerate the dragging out and stretching of individual sounds so children can hear the different parts of the word.

CHANGE IT UP

Reverse the game by saying a student’s name in the drawn out pattern and asking children to guess whose name that is: “BBBennnnn. Whose name is this?” He should respond with the name spoken as usual (not drawn out). Later you can do this with common words. Remember to go reeeaaaallly slow.

Take your students to an even higher level—completely separate the phonemes /B/, /e/, and /n/.

Activity

16

Songs and Tongue Twisters

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Manipulating sounds by changing beginning or ending sounds in words

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Tongue twisters and songs help students learn to manipulate the sounds within words. Most of you already know a few tongue twisters, or sentences in which most if not all of the words start with the same sound. See Appendix E for a list of tongue twisters for every letter of the alphabet. Don't forget that there are many songs built on word play. The old "Name Game" song ("Banana Fana Fo Fana") from the 1960s is one of the most popular. Check the Additional Resources at the end of this book for a list of CDs with more of these fun singing activities.

NOW LET'S PLAY

If you know "The Name Game" song, substitute students' names. Play by changing the name according to the pattern in the song. Put in other students' names and your own. You can even do this with the names of objects around the classroom. When playing with the tongue twisters, read one or two to your students and ask them if they can identify the sound they hear repeating. Let them say the tongue twister with you (you may need to break the longer tongue twisters apart into phrases).

CHANGE IT UP

See if your students can say a tongue twister really fast (an exercise for building short-term memory and recall).

Slow a tongue twister down and ask the child to listen for the sound he hears most often in the words.

NOTE

Many typically developing preschoolers don't reach the point of being able to hear or manipulate single sounds in language before they enter kindergarten. If you find that, just have fun with these foundational exposures to the concept. Don't worry or press your students before they are ready. This illustrates the deeper level of phonological awareness called phonemic awareness.

Activity

17

Substitution Game

Underlying Concept/Standard:

Segmenting and substituting phonemes in spoken words

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The best part of this game is that you can play it, like many activities in this book, at any time and any place.

Every teacher is tired, challenged, and stressed at one time or another. But if you think ahead and plan to slip in a few of these games, your students will reap the benefits. Instead of having the mere skeletal introduction, they will become masters. We don't just feed children nutritious food once a week. Neither should we starve their mental and intellectual literacy development by only doing such activities occasionally. In the midst of heavy-duty instruction, children must have time to practice in order to internalize the skill.

NOW LET'S PLAY

Choose a word (any word). It's always easiest to start with short ones at the beginning.

See how many new words you can make (real and nonsense) by changing just one letter in the word. This is an extension of some of the earlier activities. Here's an example:

“Waste. Can you think of any new words we can make by changing the first sound? Paste, haste, taste, zaste” (nonsense words are OK).

CHANGE IT UP

I purposely suggested changing a first letter and keeping the “rhyming” part (rime) to begin with. After your students become proficient, ask them to change the end of a word. “Bat” becomes “bac” (remember, we're not reading/spelling, only sounding), “bab,” “bag,” or “bad.”

If students progress to the point that this is really easy, try changing the middle sound. “Bat” becomes “bit” or “boat” or “but.”

FINAL WORD

You've made it! By now your children are on the verge of reading if they are not already there. Your efforts have made the journey easier for them and more enjoyable in the process. You can be proud of that.

At the end of this journey together, I wish the best for you and your students as they move into the magnificent world of reading. Understanding the basic stages of development—the map to the highway, so to speak—and exposing your students to delightful, interactive, real-life experiences with words, their sounds, books, and conversations places you in a position of great influence. Take this new knowledge with you and continue to use it regularly in your classrooms.

Through our travels on the early literacy road, I hope you have gained two important concepts:

1. You can be an expert, whether you've been teaching one year or twenty. Armed with the information in this book and your experience and training, you can be confident that you know what your children need to be successful as readers and learners.
2. Sharing the power of language, learning, and literacy is one of the best gifts you can give your students. But reading really is more than teaching the rules. American journalist and political author Elizabeth Drew once said "The true test of literature is, I suppose, whether we ourselves live more intensely for the reading of it." Reading is more than the tools of decoding (translating the letters into sounds and blending them together into words), fluency (sounding like you are talking when you read), comprehension (understanding what you read), and vocabulary (the words you know and understand). It is bigger than its individual parts.

Whether you teach preschool or kindergarten, remind yourself and your students regularly *why* we read and how all these parts fit together. Otherwise, we run the risk of slicing reading into so many separate components that children cannot apply those components outside of the immediate context. Without that compass, we might lead others to mistake decoding or reading fast for good reading. Decoding and speed are certainly utensils, if you will, for becoming a reader, but they are not what reading is.

"He that loves
reading has
everything
within his reach."

—William Godwin,
seventeenth-century
novelist and political
writer

Through the tips and ideas in this book, you and your students are now ready for the next big chapter in *their* reading road. Your consistency will travel with them, continuing to be a driving force behind those children's reading development and growth as an individual. You have honored me with your attention and for that I am grateful.

Appendix A

Stages of Phonological Awareness Development

This general sequence of stages of phonological awareness development was created by Dr. Margaret J. Kay, a nationally certified school psychologist from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. These will help you see that larger-to-smaller progression.

Stages of Phonological Awareness Development

1. Recognition that sentences are made up of words
2. Recognition that words can rhyme—then being able to produce rhymes
3. Recognition that words can begin with the same sound—then being able to produce words that start with the same sound
4. Recognition that words can end with the same sound—then being able to produce words that end in the same sound
5. Recognition that words can be broken down into syllables—then being able to produce words in syllables
6. Recognition that words can be broken down into onsets and rimes (first initial consonant sound and then vowel and remainder of word; i.e., in the word “cake,” the onset is /c/ and “-ake” is the rime)—then being able to produce onset and rime from a given word
7. Recognition that words can be broken down into individual phonemes (single sounds of the language; i.e., /m/, /ch/)—then being able to produce individual phonemes within a whole word when given that whole word
8. Recognition that sounds can be deleted from words to make new words and being able to manipulate the sounds independently to do so
9. Ability to blend sounds to make words
10. Ability to segment words into constituent sounds

Appendix B

Shallow-to-Deep Progression

Dr. Johanna Rubba, linguistics professor at California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo, gives us another way to look at this progression. She describes growth in phonological awareness from shallow to deeper levels. Her explanation here will help you see, in more detail, the most common stages of phonological awareness development (the italics added are mine except when referring to parts of words):

Shallow/First Stage

Word Level, Rhyming And Alliteration

(most often acquired in preschool)

Awareness that sentences and phrases can be divided up into single words

For example, knowing that “what’re ya doing?” can be divided up into *what, are, you, and doing*

Awareness that some words share sounds or sound sequences

For example, that the words *sing* and *ring* rhyme, or that the words *black* and *blue* have the same beginnings
(rhyming recognition first, then rhyming generation)

Intermediate/Middle Stage

Syllabic, Onset, And Rime—All Oral Memory

(most often acquired in pre-K/K)

Awareness that a word can be broken down into component syllables

For example, that *tomorrow* has the three parts *to, ma,* and *row*

Awareness that a syllable can be broken down into onsets and rimes

For example, that the one-syllable word *black* has the onset *bl* and the rime *æk* or

that the syllables of the word *sandy*, *san* and *dy*, can be broken down into */s/ + /æn/* and */d/ + /i/*

Deep Stage

Finally, Phonemic Awareness

(most often acquired in K, sometimes in 1st grade)

Awareness that you can change single sounds in a word, thereby producing a new word

For example, removing the *m* from *mat* and replacing it with *b* to make *bat*

Awareness that a word can be broken down into single sounds (phonemes); ability to count the number of phonemes in a word

For example, being aware that the word *boot* has three sounds, /b/, /u/, /t/

Segmentation: The ability to identify the sounds in a word singly

For example, being able to pronounce each sound of *boot* separately, in any order: the last sound is /t/, the first is /b/, and the middle sound is /u/

Manipulation: The ability to move single sounds in a word around, creating new words

For example, given the whole word *cat*, being able to produce *act* or *tack*

Taking away and adding; for example, take *star* and remove the /s/ to get *tar*, OR take the word *ring*, add an /st/ in the front, and you get the new word *string*.

Blending: The ability to put single sounds together to form one or more words

For example, when given separate sounds such as /æ/, /t/, and /p/, being able to use them to form *tap*, *apt*, or *pat*

Deletion: a complex phonological skill that may not be developed until after formal reading instruction begins (say "sunshine"—now say "sunshine" without the "sun")

Appendix C

A-Hunting We Will Go Rhyming Words— More Rhymes for Activity #8

Let's take a little cat and put it in a hat
Let's take a little pig and chase it with a twig
Let's take a little whale and put it in a pail
Let's take a little horse and lasso it, of course
Let's take a little frog and put it on a log
Let's take a little bee and put in on our knee
Let's take a little fish and put it on a dish
Let's take a little dog and put it with a hog
Let's take a little hare and handle it with care
Let's take a little mouse and put it in the house
Let's take a little rat and put it in a hat
Let's take a little skunk and put it in a trunk
Let's take a woodchuck and put it in a truck

You can even make up your own! One of my favorites came from a mom I met in one of my workshops:

“We'll catch an armadillo and put him on a pillow...and then you let him go.”

Nonsense words (combinations of letters you can say/pronounce that aren't real words) are OK, too:

“We'll catch an armadillo and pat his gramazillo...and then we'll let him go.”

A special challenge to readers of this book: If you have ideas for adding to this list, contact me at my website, www.readingisforeveryone.org, or through Maupin House Publishing, www.maupinhouse.com. If you send an email, be sure to add “A-Hunting We Will Go” to the subject line.

Appendix D

Great Rhyming Reads (Activity #10)

A Tisket, A Tasket by Ella Fitzgerald

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin Jr.

Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom by Bill Martin Jr.

Fox in Socks by Dr. Seuss

How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight? by Jane Yolen

Hush Little One by John Butler

Hushaby, Baby Blue by Kathi Appelt

I Knew Two Who Said Moo:

A Counting and Rhyming Book by Judi Barrett

I Know a Rhino by Charles Fuge

If You See a Kitten by John Butler

Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino

It's Hard to Be Five:

Learning How to Work My Control Panel by Jamie Lee Curtis

Jillian Jiggs by Phoebe Gilman

Mud Is Cake by Pam Muñoz Ryan

My Crayons Talk by Patricia Hubbard

My Truck is Stuck by Kevin Lewis

One Little Mouse by Dori Chaconas

Sleepy Bears by Mem Fox

The Animals' Song by David L. Harrison

The Monster Who Ate My Peas by Danny Schnitzlein

The Random House Book of

Mother Goose: Timeless Rhymes by Arnold Lobel

The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson

Time for Bed by Mem Fox

Appendix E

Tongue Twisters for Every Letter of the Alphabet (Activity #16)

Alice appreciates adding apples.

Bill and Betty baked brown bread for Bobby's baby.

Carol and Cathy can cook carrots, corn, and cabbage.

David and Donald delight in delicious doughnuts daily.

Eleven elephants exercised.

Frank fries French fries for Felicity on Fridays.

Gregory the goat gallops grandly.

Harry Horse has the hiccups.

Indigo igloos are incredible.

Jack Jordan jiggles Jell-O and jam.

Katie Kangaroo kisses Ken kindly.

Licking lions love large lollypops.

On Mondays, Minnie Mouse munches many muffins.

Nurse Nancy napped while Nellie nibbled on noodles.

Oscar Ostrich often offered onions to Ollie.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

The queen quietly questioned the quarrelling Quakers.

Ricky Raccoon ran the race rapidly.

Sheila saw sea shells by the sea shore.

Twenty tulips tiptoed through the tall tangle to the train.

Ursula urged the unicorn under the umbrella.

Victor Viper values violins.

Wilma Walrus wants wild wisteria for her wedding.

The excited experts explained the extra x-rays were excellent. *(Remember, we're working with sound. The sound of "X" is our aim here, not words that start with "X.")*

Yesterday yawning Yvonne yacked in the yard.

Zebras zip zippers in the zoo.

Appendix F

Read-aloud Books with Suggested Targets for Vocabulary and Concepts

Title/Author	Vocabulary Words	Concepts
<i>Corduroy</i> by Don Freeman	Corduroy, escalator, amazing, palace, paws, dashing, sofa, tuck, enormous	Disappointment, anticipation, anxious, contentment
<i>Cows in the Kitchen</i> by June Crebbin	Balance, bounce, haystack, hat rack, pantry,	Havoc, shoo, catastrophe
<i>Harold and the Purple Crayon</i> by Crockett Johnson	Purple, path, moonlight	Imagination, landscape, wilds, difficulties
<i>I Love You, Stinky Face</i> by Lisa McCourt	Swamp, terrible, stinky, plunk	Unconditional, assures, absolutely
<i>I Was So Mad</i> by Mercer Mayer	Clothesline, juggle	Mood, frustrated, destructiveness, hilarious, repeatedly, self-control
<i>If You Give a Mouse A Cookie</i> by Laura Joffe Numeroff	Mouse, moustache, probably	Energetic, request, rodent, cycle
<i>Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse</i> by Kevin Henkes	Glittery, excellent, fiercely, surgeon,	Interruptions, remorse, revenge, furious
<i>Madeline</i> by Ludwig Bemelmans	Whisked, pooh- poohed, teetering	Fearless, mischievous
<i>The Little Engine That Could</i> by Watty Piper	Rumbled, spinach, berths, bellowed, dingy	Motivation, assistance
<i>The Napping House</i> by Don and Audrey Wood	Snoring, dozing, slumbering	Hibernation, sequencing

Appendix G

List of Rhyming Word “Families” (Activity #10)

Here’s an idea list for you. These words are, for the most part, ones your child will know from everyday talking. They also represent the most common “phonograms,” or word families (something your child will learn about in kindergarten). Feel free to add your own and treat this as a resource list to come back to again and again.

-ab: cab, lab, blab, crab, flab, grab, scab, slab, stab

-ack: back, pack, quack, rack, black, crack, shack, snack, stack, track

-ag: bag, rag, tag, brag, flag

-ail: fail, mail, jail, nail, pail, rail, sail, tail, snail, trail

-ain: main, pain, rain, brain, chain, drain, grain, plain, Spain, stain, train

-ake: bake, cake, fake, lake, make, quake, rake, take, wake, brake, flake, shake, snake

-am: ham, Sam, clam, slam, swam

-an: can, fan, man, pan, ran, tan, van, bran, plan, than

-ank: bank, sank, yank, blank, crank, drank, thank

-ap: cap, lap, map, nap, rap, tap, clap, flap, scrap, slap, snap, strap, trap, wrap

-at: bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, rat, sat, brat, chat, flat, spat, that

-ay: day, may, pay, say, clay, play, pray, spray, stay, tray

-eed: feed, need, seed, weed, bleed, freed, greed, speed

-ell: bell, fell, sell, tell, well, yell, shell, smell, spell, swell

-est: best, guest, nest, pest, rest, test, vest, west, chest, crest

-ew: dew, few, knew, new, blew, chew

-ick: kick, lick, pick, quick, sick, brick, chick, click, stick, thick, trick

-ight: knight, light, might, night, right, sight, tight, bright, flight, fright, slight

-ill: fill, hill, pill, will, chill, drill, grill, skill, spill, thrill

-in: bin, fin, pin, sin, win, chin, grin, shin, skin, spin, thin,
twin

-ine: fine, line, mine, nine, pine, vine, wine, shine, spine,
whine

-ing: king, ring, sing, wing, bring, cling, spring, sting, string,
swing, thing

-ink: link, pink, sink, wink, blink, drink, shrink, stink, think

-ip: dip, hip, lip, rip, sip, tip, chip, clip, drip, flip, grip, ship,
skip, strip, trip

-ob: knob, mob, rob, blob, slob, snob

-ock: knock, lock, dock, rock, sock, block, clock, frock,
shock, stock

-op: cop, hop, mop, pop, top, chop, crop, drop, flop, plop,
shop, stop

-ore: bore, more, sore, tore, wore, chore, score, shore,
snore, store

-ot: got, dot, hot, knot, lot, not, plot, shot, spot

-ow: cow, how, now, brow, chow, plow

-uck: buck, duck, luck, cluck, stuck, truck

-um: gum, hum, drum, plum, slum

-y: by, my, cry, dry, fly, fry, shy, sky, spy, try, why

Professional References

Adams, M.J. (2000). *Beginning to Read: thinking and learning about print*. Boston, MA: MIT Press, p 370.

Adams, M.J., Foorman, Barbara R., Lundberg, Ingvar, & Beeler, Terri. (1997). *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Aldridge, J., Kirkland, L., Kuby, P. (2002). *Jumpstarters: Integrating Environmental Print Throughout the Curriculum*. Birmingham, AL: Campus Press.

Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading.

Beck, I.L. and McKeown, M.G. (1991). Social studies texts are hard to understand: Mediating some of the difficulties. *Language Arts*, 68, 482-490.

Bloom B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick (2001). *The Art of Teaching Reading*. New York: Longman.

Colker, L J. (2008). "First Steps Toward Literacy: When Talk Isn't Idle." Source: RIFNet, Retrieved May 6, 2009 from <http://www.rif.org/educators/articles/whentalk.msp>.

Ellis, W. (1997). Phonological Awareness. *NICLCT News Digest*, v25, 7.97.

Emmitt, M. & Hornsby, D. (1996). Phonics in Early Literacy. *Practically Primary*, pp.11-17.

Evans, G.; Maxwell, L. "Kids near airports don't read as well because they tune out speech." Retrieved December, 13, 2006 from <http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/April97/noise.reading.ssl.html>.

Evans, G.W. & Lepore, S.J., (1993). Nonauditory effects of noise on children: A critical review. *Children's Environments*, 10(1), pp.31-51.

Evans, G.W. & Maxwell, L., (1997). Chronic noise exposure and reading deficits: The mediating effects of language acquisition. *Environment and Behavior*, 29(5), pp.638-656.

Fisher, D., Flood, J., Lapp, D., & Frey, N. (September 2004). Interactive Read-Alouds: Is There a Common Set of Implementation Practices? *The Reading Teacher*, 58(1), 8-17. doi: 10.1598/RT.58.1.1

Goranson, D., editor, (2000). *Connecticut's Blueprint for Reading Achievement*, Hartford, CT: Connecticut State Department of Education.

Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R.M., et al, (2003). *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards: How Our Children REALLY Learn – And Why They Need to Play More and Memorize Less*. New York, NY: Rodale Press.

- International Reading Association (2000). "Providing Books and Other Print Materials for Classroom and School Libraries: A Position Statement," Retrieved June 20, 2009 from http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1039_libraries_2.sflb.ashx.
- International Reading Association (IRA) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1998). *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children—A Joint Position Statement of the IRA and NAEYC*. Washington, DC.
- Keen, E.L., Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of Thought, Second Edition: The Power of Comprehension Strategy Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Mooney, M. E. (1990). *Reading to, with, and by children*. Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owens.
- Resnick, L.B., & Snow, C.E. (2009). Learning to Speak and Listen. In *Speaking and Listening for Preschool Through Third Grade* (pp. 1-18). Newark, DE: National Center on Education and the Economy and University of Pittsburgh.
- Schwartz, S., Miller, J.E.H. (1996). *The New Language of Toys*. Bethesda MD: Woodbine House.
- Shield, B., Dockrell, J. "The effects of noise on the attainments and cognitive performance of primary school children," April 2002. Retrieved January 27, 2007 from http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/NoisePollution/NoisePollutionGeneralInformation/NoisePollutionGeneralArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4031962&chk=9Pe4Jx.
- Snow, Catherine E., Burns, M. Susan, and Griffin, Peg (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Tabors P., Snow. C.E., & Dickinson, D. (2001). Homes and schools together: Supporting language and literacy development. *Beginning literacy with language*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.
- Trelease, J. (1995). *The Read Aloud Handbook*, New York: Penguin Books.
- Warren, J., The Preschool Express. Granted permission September 2, 2006 to reprint her version of "Until Another Day." from www.preschoolexpress.com.
- Wylie, R.E., & Durrell, D.D. (1970). Teaching vowels through phonograms. *Elementary English*: 47, 787-791.

Additional Resources

- Avni, F. *Little Ears* and *Rhythm and Rhyme Time*. CDs available through www.franavni.com/rec_forkids.html.
- Barrentine, S.J. (1996). Engaging with reading through interactive read-alouds. *The Reading Teacher*: 50, 36-43.

Campbell, Robin (2001). *Read-Alouds with Young Children*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Codell, E.R. (2003). *How to Get Your Child to Love Reading*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Press.

Copenhaver, J. F. (2001). Running out of time: Rushed read alouds in a primary classroom. *Language Arts*: 79, 52-62.

Cupp, C., Alphamotion Cards and CD (a song for learning letter names and sounds) available at www.cindycupp.com.

Fox, M. (2001). *Reading Magic*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Inc.

Kannenberg, S. & Desimowich, L. (2006). *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* Fredonia, WI: Cedar Valley Publishing.

Kosman, G.L. & Chiu, G.M. (2007). *Bonding While Learning*. Mission Hills, CA: America Learns.

Morrow, L.M., O'Connor, E.M., Smith, J. (1990). Effects of a story reading program on the literacy development of at-risk kindergarten children. *Journal of Reading Behavior*: (20, 2): 104-141.

Namenerds. Names for family members in other languages list retrieved August, 28, 2006 from <http://www.namenerds.com/uucn/granny.html>.