



Saskatchewan  
Learning.

# Early Literacy: A Resource for Teachers



February 2000



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(includes selected charts and forms)

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❖ **Provides a foundation for lifelong learning**

*The orientation of instructional strategies and activities in the resource is to develop students who:*

- *choose to read and write*
- *enjoy reading and writing*
- *continue to build their critical and creative literacy skills and abilities.*

The importance of the emerging phase in English Language Arts instruction is that it is a foundational phase in which:

- attitudes and values are developed
- key literacy skills and abilities are introduced.

The resource supports instructional practices that help students to become lifetime participants in literacy activities.

❖ **Supports children’s progress from the Emerging to the Developing Phase by attending to all the foundations of literacy**

This resource is divided into four chapters--each one devoted to a particular set of literacy foundations. While the resource uses a framework in which these foundational areas are described separately, this separation is an organizational device and not a description of the realities of teaching and learning.

The four areas of literacy development in which the foundations of lifetime literacy are laid include those shown in the chart below.

*In practice, the four foundational areas of literacy development:*

- *are interrelated and interdependent*
- *require equal attention*
- *need to be integrated within instructional strategies and activities that adopt a whole, to part, to whole approach.*

*Children’s success in using the skills/abilities in one foundational area is dependent upon their development of the skills and abilities from the other areas as well.*

**Foundations of Early Literacy Development**

**Oral Language Foundations**

- strengthening listening and speaking abilities
- developing confidence as a language user
- becoming familiar with the vocabulary and sentence structures of conventional English
- increasing vocabulary while broadening life experiences.

**Textual Foundations**

- developing a love for literature and an enjoyment of reading
- becoming familiar with the language of fiction and nonfiction books
- developing story sense, basic book knowledge, and concepts of print
- developing the ability to track print

**Graphophonic Foundations**

- strengthening auditory and visual discrimination
- developing phonemic awareness
- developing knowledge of letter-sound relationships and patterns

**Foundations of Independent Reading and Writing**

- developing an enjoyment of writing
- perceiving self as a reader and writer
- viewing reading and writing as valuable for a variety of purposes
- developing an orientation to reading/writing as the construction of meaning
- laying the ground work for accuracy and fluency in decoding
- developing a problem-solving approach to decoding and spelling, and a bank of problem-solving strategies to apply

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### ❖ **Emphasizes instructional strategies and informal assessment**

This resource provides:

- diagnostic tools to help teachers clarify the needs of children in the emerging phase
- some instructional activities useful for responding to these needs.

Most of the strategies, activities, and processes in the resource can be integrated into existing programs with minor adjustments. The emphasis in the resource on high quality children's literature,<sup>2</sup> however, does require continuously addressing this need in all school systems.

### ❖ **Emphasizes research and experiences of Saskatchewan teachers**

This resource has been developed in consultation with Saskatchewan teachers of Pre-K to grade three students who teach in a variety of settings that reflect various socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures. A major source for the strategies and approaches recommended in the resource is the wealth of current research and literature related to best practices in early literacy development.

### ❖ **Validates and supplements familiar approaches**

Many teachers will be familiar with the practices that are recommended and find the resource to be a validation of their present instructional approaches. It may also offer teachers a source of:

- new ways to apply familiar strategies
- additional activities to incorporate into established practices
- children's literature, software, and professional reading suggestions.

### ❖ **Assumes a general direction for children's literacy development and varying degrees of individual difference within this overall direction**

The resource incorporates a developmental view of literacy growth. Such a view assumes that there will be variations between and within individual children's growth in relation to the foundational areas of literacy development. The developmental continuum on the following pages gives an overview of literacy growth through the Emerging Phase to the beginnings of the Developing Phase. It provides guidance in establishing a general direction for instruction in each of the four foundational areas and for assessing children's progress in general. However, it is not intended to be a substitute for the more specific observations and instructional adaptations that teachers make in order to meet the specific needs of individual children.

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<sup>2</sup> See the chart on page 56 for characteristics of high quality literature.

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Additional developmental information related to emerging literacy can be found in:

*Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994):

- The Development of Spelling and Phonics Knowledge and Abilities, p. 62
- John McInnes Interviews Two Early Childhood Educators, pp. 64-74
- A Letter to Parents/Caregivers on Emerging Literacy, pp. 212-213.

*English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992):

- The Development of Spelling and Phonics Knowledge and Abilities, pp. 52-56
- Emerging Literacy Checklist, p. 159 (This assessment instrument is particularly useful in observing and recording children's progress through the emerging phase.).

# Developmental Continuum: From Beginning Emergent to Beginning Developing Phase

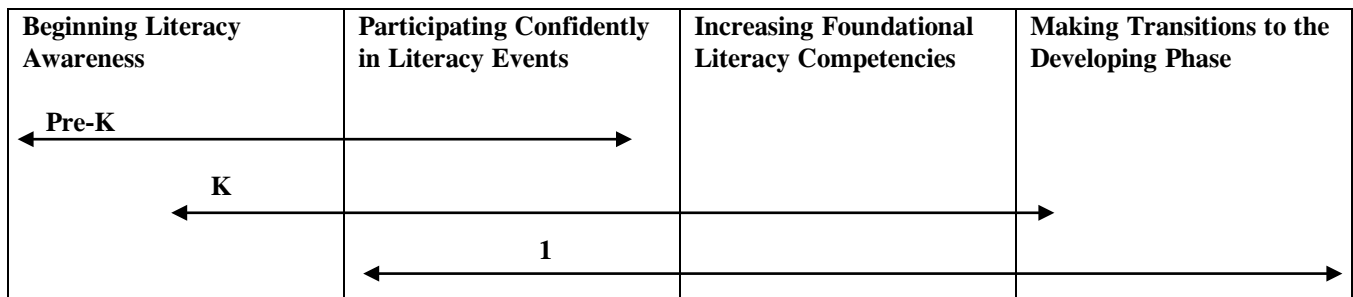
Beginning Literacy Awareness	Participating Confidently in Literacy Events	Increasing Foundational Literacy Competencies	Making Transitions to the Developing Phase
<b>Oral Language Foundations</b>			
<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximate adult grammar with some overgeneralizations (e.g., “<i>goed</i>” for <i>went</i>)</li> <li>Pronounce most phonemes<sup>3</sup> correctly (common mispronunciations <i>f, l, s, r, th</i>)</li> <li>Use language incorporating simple sentence structures to inform, make requests, and meet social and emotional needs</li> <li>Ask questions when something is not understood</li> <li>Name most things in their immediate world and enjoy learning new vocabulary within concrete and high interest experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize differences between language of home and school</li> <li>Increasingly use language in sustaining social interactions</li> <li>Engage in imaginative play--talking to self and others</li> <li>Give simple descriptions of past experiences</li> <li>Share information from television programs, field trips, and informational books</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply most grammatical rules correctly in their speech</li> <li>Recognize differences between fiction and nonfiction books</li> <li>Use descriptive language</li> <li>Distinguish between “sense and nonsense”</li> <li>Use language to create and sustain imaginative play and role plays</li> <li>Recognize and use simple story structures to tell, retell, or write and draw stories</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize whether a sentence with a simple structure is grammatically correct</li> <li>Correctly pronounce all phonemes (with guidance)</li> <li>Make some adaptations in their language to meet the requirements of audience and context (e.g., formal/informal context)</li> <li>Learn to use specific vocabulary from different subject areas appropriately</li> <li>Use language to mediate and resolve conflicts</li> <li>Include details such as <i>when, who, where, what</i> in describing experiences, stories, and television shows</li> <li>Listen to informational books and retell the most important information</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> See chart on page 73 for definitions of *onset, rime, phonemes*, and other related vocabulary.

Beginning Literacy Awareness	Participating Confidently in Literacy Events	Increasing Foundational Literacy Competencies	Making Transitions to the Developing Phase
← Pre-K	→		
← K			→
	← 1		→
<b>Textual Foundations</b>			
<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and enjoy stories read in “one-on-one” and small group situations</li> <li>• Discuss pictures/illustrations</li> <li>• Incorporate words and phrases from books into their play</li> <li>• Respond to stories through drawing</li> <li>• Incorporate story elements into their play</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and enjoy stories read in whole class situations</li> <li>• Confidently share feelings about books</li> <li>• Show enjoyment and understanding of books through talking, drawing, and dramatizing meaningful parts</li> <li>• Choose to return many times to favourite books</li> <li>• Make connections between story events and own experiences</li> <li>• Distinguish text from illustrations</li> <li>• Voice-print match<sup>4</sup> when supported by teacher framing of words and sentences</li> <li>• Demonstrate book knowledge: cover, front/back, right side up, how to turn pages</li> <li>• Participate in framing and counting words in short Morning Messages and other meaningful texts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show an interest in the meaning of words in books</li> <li>• Show enjoyment of books through responding to them in discussing, drawing, dramatizing, and writing</li> <li>• Realize that print contains a constant message</li> <li>• Use vocabulary for print concepts (letter, sound, word, sentence)</li> <li>• Distinguish letters from words and words from sentences</li> <li>• Show awareness of punctuation marks and their uses</li> <li>• Make predictions that show understanding of cause and effect</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View books as sources of information as well as enjoyment</li> <li>• Retell familiar stories using most elements of story structure (e.g., setting, characters, episodes/events, problem and resolution)</li> <li>• Understand that all texts have authors</li> <li>• Distinguish between different types of texts and formats (e.g., fiction/nonfiction, stories, poems, signs, lists, personal letters, etc.)</li> <li>• Use left to right and top to bottom progression, and voice-print matching consistently</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> The ability to **voice-print match** involves recognizing a word as an individual unit, using left to right and top to bottom progression in order to follow words in the correct order as they are read, and one-to-one matching of a spoken word being read and its printed form.





**Graphophonic Foundations**

<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy and participate in language games showing awareness of rhyme and alliteration of initial consonants</li> <li>• Make auditory discriminations of sounds in the environment</li> <li>• Show awareness of sound qualities (e.g., loud/soft, high pitched/low pitched, near/far, abrupt/sustained)</li> <li>• Recognize and imitate short sound sequences making use of concepts of <i>first, last, middle, same, different</i></li> <li>• Recognize shapes in the environment and in printed materials</li> <li>• Copy/draw simple shapes and lines</li> <li>• Make visual discriminations between a few letters</li> <li>• Write own name using letters and letter-like approximations</li> <li>• Show interest in magnetic letters, making letters in sand/salt, etc.</li> <li>• Show interest in alphabet and one-letter books</li> <li>• Repeat short sentences with varying forms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate increased awareness of rhymes and various forms of alliteration when listening to stories, poems, and songs</li> <li>• Recognize and imitate sound sequences making use of the concepts of <i>repetition</i> and <i>pattern</i></li> <li>• Count words in spoken sentences and clap the syllables in spoken words</li> <li>• Segment familiar compound words</li> <li>• Segment and blend words into their onsets and rimes<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Create rhymes and short phrases using alliteration</li> <li>• Write own name and a few high frequency words correctly</li> <li>• Form most letters correctly</li> <li>• Copy words and short sentences, cut sentence strips into words and words into letters</li> <li>• Recognize and name most of the letters of the alphabet</li> <li>• Show awareness of the alphabetic principle and expect letters to have consistently corresponding sounds</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Segment short words into their phonemes and blend a short sequence of phonemes into words</li> <li>• Create word families and apply knowledge of familiar rimes when decoding (with teacher support)</li> <li>• Make use of knowledge of initial and final consonants to predict what a word might be (during Shared Reading, Morning Message, or cloze activities)</li> <li>• Recognize, name, and write all the letters of the alphabet</li> <li>• Write dictated words made up of familiar phonemes and/or make such words using sets of letters</li> <li>• Leave spaces between words when writing</li> <li>• Recognize some short vowel sounds and digraphs within meaningful words (e.g., children’s names) when supported by teacher/adult</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply letter-sound knowledge during independent reading</li> <li>• Show interest in unfamiliar letter-sound patterns</li> <li>• Use picture dictionaries in writing and decoding</li> <li>• Increase their letter-sound knowledge through sustained interest and alertness to opportunities to do so (through environmental print, new books introduced in Shared Reading)</li> </ul>
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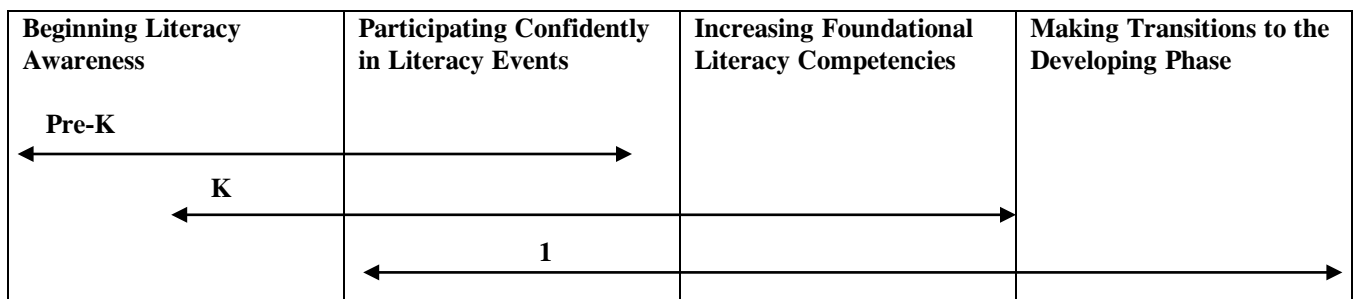
<sup>5</sup> See chart on page 73 for definitions of *onset*, *rime*, *phonemes*, and other related vocabulary.



Beginning Literacy Awareness	Participating Confidently in Literacy Events	Increasing Foundational Literacy Competencies	Making Transitions to the Developing Phase
Pre-K			
← K			
	1		

### Foundations of Independent Reading and Writing

Children can:	Children can:	Children can:	Children can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display enjoyment of, and interest in, books (e.g., choose books independently, request rereadings of favourites, talk about books they like)</li> <li>• Show an awareness that the text of favourite books is consistent and/or that the story stays the same across readings</li> <li>• Recognize environmental print that is connected to their own experiences</li> <li>• Use a combination of scribbling, letter approximations, and letters to write own name and other meaningful words and phrases</li> <li>• Imitate reading and writing behaviours</li> <li>• Communicate through and about their drawings</li> <li>• Dictate short stories to accompany their drawings</li> <li>• Use literacy materials provided at structured play centers in meaningful ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy being read to, relate story events to own experiences, and choose and discuss favourite books</li> <li>• Participate orally in Shared Reading of predictable books</li> <li>• “Pretend read” to other children or toys using a familiar book and a simple retelling format, or an unfamiliar book and the pictures to construct a story</li> <li>• Read classroom labels, signs, and other environmental print</li> <li>• Recognize a few high frequency words within instructional contexts such as Word Wall activities and Shared Reading of predictable books</li> <li>• Use the meaning of the story to predict what might happen</li> <li>• Understand that what can be said can be written and read</li> <li>• Show an interest in authorship and write words and messages using invented spelling</li> <li>• Suggest and make literacy materials for use in Structured Play and other learning centres</li> <li>• View self as a reader and writer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to read familiar texts independently (e.g., predictable books, poems, experience charts, etc.)</li> <li>• Expect to get meaning from text</li> <li>• Use picture clues and knowledge of content/topic to confirm meaning</li> <li>• Use knowledge of oral language and letter-sound relationships to decode</li> <li>• Show interest in categorizing, sorting, and creating lists of words using letter-sound knowledge, knowledge of some common word structures (e.g., <i>er</i>, <i>ing</i>, <i>es</i>, <i>s</i> endings), and word patterns (e.g., rimes)</li> <li>• Spell short, high frequency words correctly in own writing and increasingly use graphophonic knowledge to spell unknown words</li> <li>• Attempt to use punctuation and capitalization</li> <li>• Independently initiate reading and writing activities</li> <li>• Contribute ideas for responding to books</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain reading behaviours alone for longer periods</li> <li>• Participate confidently in Guided Reading instruction</li> <li>• Check one information source with another to decode and retain meaning (with teacher support)</li> <li>• Use knowledge of frequently encountered words and word families to decode and spell</li> <li>• Notice mismatches (e.g., word predicted does not make sense in that context) and self-correct some of the time</li> <li>• Rely less on picture clues for meaning</li> <li>• Add to their bank of sight words and recognize these words across contexts</li> <li>• Choose reading as an activity for home and school</li> <li>• Make some use of phrasing and expression in oral reading</li> <li>• Demonstrate confidence in reading and writing activities (e.g., get started quickly, make attempts before requesting help, etc.)</li> </ul>



**Developing and Integrating the Foundations**

<p><b>Teachers can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community of learners in which each child is valued and supported in taking risks with his/her literacy learning, and children are encouraged to help each other</li> <li>• Read books for children’s enjoyment on a daily basis</li> <li>• Reread children’s favourite books</li> <li>• Engage children in informal conversations and show an interest in what they say</li> <li>• Engage children in language play such as finger plays, rhyming games, tongue twisters</li> <li>• Sing, chant, and recite poems, songs, and Nursery Rhymes with children on a daily basis</li> <li>• Draw children’s attention to letters and letter sounds in their own names and in environmental print</li> <li>• Support literacy-related play activities</li> <li>• Encourage children to experiment with writing and reading behaviours</li> <li>• Create a print-rich environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community of learners</li> <li>• Frequently read books to children that are interesting and conceptually rich</li> <li>• Draw children’s attention to authors and illustrators</li> <li>• Encourage children to describe experiences that are important to them</li> <li>• Support children in developing the language needed for a variety of social situations through modeling appropriate language and engaging children in role playing activities</li> <li>• Draw attention to connections between children’s experiences and those of characters in books</li> <li>• Provide regular opportunities for children to participate in Shared Reading and Interactive Writing in whole class and small group situations</li> <li>• Provide many opportunities for children to explore letter-sound relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community of learners</li> <li>• Read books to children daily choosing a wide variety of topics and genres, and including several books by the same author for discussion of common and unique features (e.g., characters, themes, style, illustration techniques, etc.)</li> <li>• Select books that broaden children’s understanding of gender, culture, and other aspects of human difference</li> <li>• Help children build their sight vocabulary through drawing attention to high frequency words and those with personal meaning (during Shared Reading activities; through the development and use of Word Walls, personal word banks, etc.)</li> <li>• Demonstrate the use of problem-solving strategies (e.g., use of picture clues; semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and graphophonic<sup>6</sup> knowledge; reading ahead; rereading; etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community of learners</li> <li>• Continue to read books for children’s enjoyment daily</li> <li>• Select books that expand children’s vocabulary development</li> <li>• Engage children in conversations on a variety of topics and for differing purposes including the establishment of rules and routines and reasons for them, and the planning of new centers, field trips, etc.</li> <li>• Expand the foci for social play and children’s roles in setting up centers and incorporating literacy materials into them</li> <li>• Encourage and support children’s reading and writing across subject areas</li> <li>• Model ways to find and obtain information from books</li> <li>• Demonstrate and encourage the use of a wide variety of ways to respond to books</li> <li>• Encourage children to talk about their reading and writing</li> </ul>
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<sup>6</sup> See chart on page 69 for definitions.

Beginning Literacy Awareness	Participating Confidently in Literacy Events	Increasing Foundational Literacy Competencies	Making Transitions to the Developing Phase
Pre-K			
K			
	1		

**Developing and Integrating the Foundations (continued)**

Teachers can:	Teachers can:	Teachers can:	Teachers can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the foundational literacy concept that what can be said can be written and read through activities such as Morning Message and the creation of short Experience Charts</li> <li>• Model reading and writing behaviours</li> <li>• Create and maintain classroom libraries and well-stocked writing centers</li> <li>• Believe in each child’s desire to learn and in his/her unique set of abilities</li> <li>• Show an interest in reading and writing for enjoyment, and talk with children about personal reading and writing interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop graphophonic knowledge and concepts of print in activities that move from whole, to part, to whole</li> <li>• Support children in blending and segmenting sounds in high interest words such as their own names</li> <li>• Demonstrate key features of reading and writing behaviours through problem solving out loud as they read and write (e.g., “<i>We need to start here on the page and move from left to right as we read.</i>”; “<i>We need to make a period next as this is the end of our sentence.</i>”)</li> <li>• Provide daily opportunities for children to read and write independently at their own level, and support their approximations of reading and writing behaviours</li> <li>• Believe in each child’s desire to learn and in his/her unique set of abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show their own interest in reading and writing through reading when children are reading and writing when children are writing, and sharing personal writing and information about their own favourite poems and books</li> <li>• Engage children in discussion of their own reading and writing preferences</li> <li>• Expand children’s knowledge of topics and purposes for writing and reading through a variety of concrete experiences such as field trips</li> <li>• Believe in each child’s desire to learn and in his/her unique set of abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model critical reading of, and response to, books (e.g., pointing out stereotypes, defending personal book preferences)</li> <li>• Engage children in discussion of their own reading strategies and writing approaches</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for children to write every day for a variety of purposes and audiences</li> <li>• Believe in each child’s desire to learn and in his/her unique set of abilities</li> <li>• Show an interest in reading and writing for enjoyment, and talk with children about personal reading and writing interests</li> </ul>

**Suggestions for Use**

The developmental continuum c  
❖ Understanding children’s pro

- ❖ Noting children’s progress and communicating with parents/ guardians
- ❖ Selecting appropriate strategies for individuals and groups (see “Teachers can” columns on pages 9 and 10)
- ❖ Developing a balanced teaching practice.

Teachers can use the continuum, the assessment tools in this resource, and their own observations to assess the progress of individuals in relation to the full range of developmental tasks in the emerging phase. Strategies in the resource can be selected to support the continuous progress of children in Pre-K to mid-grade one and offer further support to those older students<sup>7</sup> who require it. Attention to each foundational area in the continuum will help to ensure the development of a balanced practice. Some guidelines follow.

- **The assessment tools can be used as part of daily language arts instruction.**

The assessment tools in the resource are relatively informal in nature.

- **Each assessment tool/technique provides just one perspective on a child’s literacy abilities. Use of a variety of tools together with daily observations is recommended.**

Teachers should not draw conclusions from the results of a single assessment, but rather develop tentative ideas of a child’s literacy needs through combining information gained from their daily observations and a range of assessment tools. Suggestions for appropriate strategies and activities are given for each assessment tool/technique.

- **Assessment tools are linked to key strategies.**

Teachers can use the information gained from assessment to plan strategies and activities that will support development in areas of need. Implications of the assessment findings are discussed to support teachers in interpreting the results.

*Informal assessment assumes that teachers incorporate their assessment of children’s development in natural and enjoyable ways and, for the most part, during daily activities. Normally, assessment would not be timetabled separately from instruction. Young children should not feel that they are under pressure to “perform well” or that they are being “tested”.*

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the resource, “older” is used to refer to children of age 7 and older and/or those in grades two and up.

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*“I have found a good way to train the volunteers in my classroom. I invite them to sit on the carpet with the children while I do a demonstration Shared Reading with a big book. The volunteers join in with the children in answering my questions and we just have some fun with these demonstrations. After experiencing the strategies themselves, the volunteers are able to use them with the children.”*  
- a Saskatchewan teacher

- **Strategies can be used for whole class, small group, or individual activities.**

At the beginning of the year in Pre-K, kindergarten, or grade one classrooms, teachers might use many of the strategies as whole class activities. As teachers become familiar with the differences in strengths and needs of children in their class, the activities can be incorporated into instruction with small groups of children who require them. The activities can also be used with an individual child whose needs are different than those of all, or most, of the other children in the class. As it is often difficult for teachers to incorporate such individualized time into their day, the activities are described in sufficient detail that classroom assistants and volunteers could use them with some training and support from the classroom teacher. See *Enlisting other Adults and Older Students to Read to Small Groups of Children* (p. 60) and *Mentor-supported Literacy Development* (p. 139) for ideas.

- **The instructional strategies can be incorporated into daily routines.**

Many of the activities in the resource are designed for incorporation into the daily whole class routines of Shared Language, Shared Reading,<sup>8</sup> and Shared or Interactive Writing (p. 153). Some of these same strategies can be used in the small group instructional routine often referred to as Guided Reading (p. 136). Other strategies are intended to be incorporated into Learning Centers/Center Time and Structured Play. Many fit well into Language Arts units while others are useful as transitions from one activity to the next. Suggestions for the best use of each strategy are given within its description.

- **Instructional strategies that are key elements of successful practice are noted.**

Through research and experience, some instructional methods, routines, or strategies are suggested as most central in supporting emerging literacy learners in establishing the foundations needed for continuous growth. These strategies and routines are described in the information that follows and marked in the resource with the symbol of a key (Ⓚ).

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<sup>8</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 78, for descriptions of Shared Language and Shared Reading.

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## Summary of Essential Practices

The following pages describe the main principles of emergent literacy instruction and relate them to key strategies and activities in the resource. A chart is also provided on the following page as a quick reference for teacher planning and program evaluation. The chart includes examples of some appropriate strategies. The resource contains other strategies not listed in the chart but is not an exhaustive compilation of all the strategy/activity possibilities in emergent literacy instruction.

## 10 Essential Practices and Related Strategies

<p><b>1. Believe in the potential of all. Build self-confidence and self-acceptance.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart: Building Confidence and Capability, p. 15</li> <li>🔑 Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving, p. 36</li> <li>• Book Browsing, p. 61</li> <li>🔑 “Signing in”, p. 96</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play, p. 116</li> <li>🔑 Shared Reading, p. 135</li> <li>• Writing Samples, p. 150</li> <li>🔑 Interactive Writing, p. 155</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Start where children are and scaffold<sup>9</sup> their learning.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Oral Language Development within Structured Play, p. 33</li> <li>🔑 Language Experience Approach, p. 42</li> <li>• “What’s in a Name?”, p. 94</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Aids for Remembering Problem-solving Strategies, p. 129</li> <li>🔑 Mentor-supported Literacy Development, p. 139</li> <li>• Writing Samples, p. 150</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Provide a language-rich environment that is filled with things to write with, listen to, talk about, and read.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Language Experience Approach, p. 42</li> <li>🔑 Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write, p. 63</li> <li>🔑 Using Alphabet Books, p. 102</li> <li>• ABC and Word Study Center, p. 107</li> <li>🔑 Word Wall, p. 122</li> <li>🔑 Morning Message, p. 132</li> <li>• Read Around the Room, p. 141</li> </ul>			
<p><b>4. Read to children daily from a variety of fiction and nonfiction books. Reread favourite books.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chart: Choosing Fiction Books for Reading Aloud, p. 57</li> <li>🔑 Reading to Children Daily, p. 57</li> </ul>			
<p><b>5. Provide frequent listening and speaking opportunities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Supporting Oral Language Development within Structured Play, p. 33</li> <li>🔑 Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving, p. 36</li> <li>🔑 Language Experience Approach, p. 42</li> <li>🔑 Class Meeting/Group Time Activities, p. 45</li> <li>• Sound Walks, p. 80</li> <li>• “Which Sound Did You Hear First?”, p. 82</li> <li>• “What’s My Pattern?”, p. 83</li> <li>🔑 Exploring Sound Patterns, p. 85</li> </ul>			
<p><b>6. Incorporate daily writing.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write, p. 63</li> <li>🔑 Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play, p. 116</li> <li>🔑 Writing Samples, p. 150</li> <li>🔑 Daily Writing, p. 152</li> <li>🔑 Interactive Writing, p. 155</li> </ul>			
<p><b>7. Use teacher demonstrations to teach concepts, skills, and processes. Model appropriate language.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using Big Books and Predictable Books to Develop Concepts of Print, p. 67</li> <li>• Using Big Books to Develop Basic Book Knowledge, p. 70</li> <li>🔑 Teacher Demonstrations of Reading Strategies, p. 131</li> <li>🔑 Morning Message, p. 132</li> </ul>			
<p><b>8. Develop daily and weekly reading routines for emerging literacy learners.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Reading to Children Daily, p. 57</li> <li>• Book Browsing, p. 61</li> <li>🔑 Morning Message, p. 132</li> <li>🔑 Shared Reading, p. 135</li> <li>🔑 Guided and Independent Reading, p. 136</li> </ul>			
<p><b>9. Use a whole, to part, to whole approach to skills instruction.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🔑 Making Words, p. 104</li> <li>• Using Onsets and Rimes, p. 121</li> <li>🔑 Word Wall, p. 122</li> <li>🔑 Mini-units Using Predictable Books, p. 142</li> </ul>			
<p><b>10. Use an appropriate developmental sequence in planning for graphophonic instruction.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developmental Continuum, p. 5</li> <li>• Chart: Suggested Instructional Sequence for Phonemic Awareness and Graphophonics, p. 75</li> <li>• Strategies and Activities in Chapter Three are ordered to approximate an appropriate developmental sequence.</li> </ul>			

<sup>9</sup> See page 15 for a description of “scaffolding”.

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## 1. Show all children that you believe in their potential as readers and writers. Build self-confidence and self-acceptance.

k *“Happy, relaxed, stimulating relationships between children and between child and teacher promote growth of personality which in turn advances achievement.”* (Clay, 1991, p. 40)

The respectful relationships that you establish with your students and the warm and friendly environment that you create affect the learning of all children in positive ways. The importance of these practices is highlighted and suggestions related to them are given in boxes throughout the resource. The boxes contain a snowflake symbol as a reminder of the uniqueness and value of each child (k ) and the fragility of many young children’s developing confidence as literacy learners.

### Building Confidence and Capability

A summary of the main ways to build a sense of confidence and capability includes:

- maintain an emphasis on enjoyment; laugh together
- stop instructional sequences before children tire
- remain sensitive to cultural differences between children, and between teacher and child
- reduce pressures to compete or “perform”
- emphasize mistakes as opportunities to learn and encourage approximations as steps on route to new achievements
- offer children choices and support their decision making and problem solving
- create instructional sequences that use children’s strengths.

In addition, several of the strategies and activities in the resource are particularly related to supporting children’s perceptions of themselves as readers and writers, and developing their self-confidence as learners. Examples of such strategies include Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play, “Signing In”, Book Browsing, and Shared Reading.

## 2. Start where children are and scaffold their learning to help them achieve the next steps.

“Scaffolding” is based on the importance of social interaction to children’s learning.

**Scaffolding** refers to the practices of:

- deciding upon which learning tasks a child might not be able to accomplish independently but could learn through the support of a co-operative dialogue with adults or more skilled peers
- providing supportive dialogue while the child engages in these tasks.

Such dialogue would focus upon giving children the language to use to do the same task independently (i.e., provide them with a way to “talk themselves through it”). Teacher demonstrations are one example of scaffolding that is provided in a group setting.

For further discussion of scaffolding as it relates to Vygotsky’s work on the zone of proximal development, see *Facilitating Preschool Literacy* (Campell, 1998, pp. 16-18) or *The Meaning Makers: Children Learning Language and Using Language to Learn* (Wells, 1986).



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As well, “starting where children are” includes building instruction from what children already know about oral language, reading, and writing. It requires teachers to respect the language the children bring to school and to use that language as a foundation for further growth. Each chapter of the resource begins with assessment tools designed to assess children’s present literacy achievements and to decide upon appropriate level/s for instruction. Most of the strategies in the resource are multi-leveled in order to support the participation of diverse learners at their present level of development.

**3. Provide a language-rich environment--one that is filled with things to write with, listen to, talk about, and read.**

A language-rich environment is one that is filled with meaningful print that is read regularly and incorporated into a variety of language lessons. It is also an environment that contains a well-stocked and maintained classroom library, a writing centre, a listening station, and many opportunities for co-operative learning and structured play. Read Around the Room and Word Wall are examples of strategies that make use of classroom print. Strategies such as Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write incorporate opportunities for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**4. Read to children daily from a variety of good quality poetry, fiction, and nonfiction books.**

A quality reading collection should contain a variety of genres and reflect the diversity of our society. Favourite books should be **reread** many times. The emphasis in this important routine should be on making the experiences enjoyable. The value of this practice probably cannot be overstated. An extensive body of research exists that supports the many benefits children receive from their involvement in daily (or more) story time experiences. These benefits are summarized in the chart that follows.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Children who are read to regularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learn how the act of fluent reading looks and sounds</li><li>• develop a sense of story</li><li>• attain knowledge of written language and the ways texts are structured</li><li>• increase their vocabularies</li><li>• acquire new sentence patterns and use them in conversation and their own writing</li><li>• grow in their understanding of themselves, others, and the world around them</li><li>• learn that books provide enjoyment and information.</li></ul> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Chapter Two contains information, advice, and strategies related to developing interest in, and enjoyment of, books.

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**5. Provide many opportunities throughout the day for children to speak and listen within meaningful instructional routines, strategies, and activities.**

k Young children need to be engaged in conversation about things they know and that are important to them. This familiar content gives them the security they need to experiment with ways of expressing themselves.

Conversations with teachers and other adults, teacher demonstrations, and favourite stories that have been reread many times provide children with models of different sentence patterns, language registers, and language forms. In a supportive environment, children will incorporate these new words and patterns into their structured play, informal conversations, and daily writing. Advice and instructional strategies related to the development of oral language can be found in Chapter One. General listening activities are described in Chapter Three. As well, strategies and activities that integrate speaking and listening with reading and writing are found throughout the resource.

*“At first, many will draw; some will scribble; a few will make rhythmic patterns; some will write their names; a few will write words. Even just scribbling in their blank books will help children to develop important concepts (e.g., a book has a front and a back; pages should be used in a specific sequence). The work of Clay (1975) and Graves (1981), as well as the observations of many teachers, has shown (not surprisingly) that children learn a great deal about reading by composing their own written messages.” (Cairney, 1990, p. 19)*

**6. Incorporate daily writing beginning the first week of school.**

Teachers of young children can find many ways to incorporate meaningful writing activities into the school day. Teachers need to encourage children’s first attempts at writing by focusing on their intentions and the meaning of their messages. The first step in becoming a writer is an attitudinal one of perceiving the self as a writer. Children who have received the kinds of supports for their writing that are described in this resource will move into the Developing Phase of literacy with an understanding of the need for conventional letter formation and spelling, and will naturally increase attention to these aspects of writing. See Chapter Four for ideas and advice for introducing Pre-K, kindergarten, and grade one children to the writing process and for supporting writing development in older learners in the Emerging Phase.

**7. Capitalize on teacher demonstrations of the reading and writing processes to model the critical and creative thinking and questioning involved in literacy growth. Present a language model for children to emulate.**

Use language appropriately. Engage in reading and writing yourself. Talk about reading and writing strategies constantly as you read and write with children. Think out loud. For example,

- *“I wonder what is going to happen next? I can see a mouse in the corner, maybe the mouse will be the next one to climb onto grandma’s bed.” (said while reading *The Napping House* to a group of children)*

- 
- *“I have an idea today for a topic to write about during our Writer’s Workshop. I went to the National Aboriginal Day celebrations in the park this weekend and I want to describe how colourful and lively the whole celebration seemed. I’ll need to think of lots of descriptive words.”* (said during Class Meeting on Monday morning)

Many of the strategies and activities throughout the resource contain other examples of “teacher talk” that are being used to demonstrate key literacy behaviours.


### **8. Develop daily and weekly language arts routines that incorporate Shared Reading, Independent Reading, and Guided Reading experiences designed for emerging literacy learners.**

For the youngest emergent literacy learners, Big Books and predictable books might be used as part of a Shared Reading routine that includes a brief focus on one aspect of the reading process on each occasion. An example of this would be a demonstration of tracking the words in the text from left to right and top to bottom as you read. As well, even the youngest learners can participate in independent selection and “reading” of favourite books. As children mature, Shared Reading time can be extended and a greater number of strategies and activities can be incorporated into it. As children move toward the developing phase, they should also be involved in Guided Reading with other children who are at approximately the same level of literacy development.

### **9. Use a whole, to part, to whole approach when developing phonemic awareness, graphophonic abilities, letter recognition, and an initial sight vocabulary.**

This process is also referred to as developing “skills in context”. Such strategies and processes offer learners opportunities to:

- develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities together
- understand reasons for learning more about sounds, letters, and words
- become interested in skill development naturally through the use of whole texts such as predictable books, Big Books, experience charts, letters to families, etc.
- focus on specific skills in an appropriate and meaningful sequence
- apply new skills to the reading or creation of whole texts.

Chapter Three contains a wealth of such activities and strategies. As well, Chapter Four includes some strategies that make use of the whole, to part, to whole process. Most notable amongst these is the guidance offered in  Mini-units using Predictable Books.

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*“[P]re-school visual experiences tend to differ from school experiences. In pre-school days children are constantly looking upon a wide view, viewing much and seeing or remembering little detail. In formal literacy instruction seeing must go beyond just looking: it must become a systematic search for precise information.” (Clay, 1991, p. 39)*

## **10. Use an appropriate developmental sequence for developing phonemic awareness and graphophonic abilities.**

An appropriate place to start sound-directed activities is with a focus on environmental sounds. When children demonstrate that they are able to focus on and isolate specific sounds around them, phonemic awareness activities will be beneficial. In order to use their phonemic abilities for reading and writing purposes, certain key visual abilities also need to be developed. These include the abilities to track print; locate and distinguish between letters, words, and sentences; recognize letters; and develop an initial sight vocabulary.

Attention to a developmental sequence is also important in the development of visual discrimination and the co-ordination of auditory and visual information needed for reading and spelling.



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# Chapter One: Supporting Oral Language Development

Foundations for emerging literacy emphasized in this chapter are:

- ❖ Strengthening listening and speaking abilities
- ❖ Developing confidence as a language user
- ❖ Becoming familiar with the vocabulary and sentence structures of conventional English
- ❖ Increasing vocabulary while broadening life experiences.

An essential foundation for the development of reading and writing abilities is that of strong oral language capabilities including:

- Vocabulary and concept development--information about word meanings (semantics) and pronunciation of words (phonemics)
- Understanding the ways that language conveys meaning through such aspects of structure as word order and the rules for subject-verb agreement (syntactics)
- Understanding conventional and culturally specific ways to communicate with others (pragmatics)
- Desire and ability to use speech for a variety of purposes.

These capabilities are in turn dependent upon a breadth and depth of life experiences, the ability to hear and speak,<sup>10</sup> and the consistent proximity of caring adults who encourage children's language development through talking with them. Clay (1991) suggests that in order to compensate for limited language learning, we must go beyond the provision of interesting play and work opportunities for young children to also incorporate regular periods of close interaction with an adult who shows interest in their ideas and concerns. Such adults need to be alert for ways to draw children into spontaneous talk. Activities that isolate vocabulary development from its immediate application for real purposes are not recommended because they appear to have limited carry over into the daily life of the child.

The teaching strategies that follow develop oral language capabilities within meaningful contexts and concrete experiences. At the same time, they lay a foundation for literacy more broadly because they integrate possibilities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities within each strategy.

*In a print rich environment, children's understanding of written and spoken language develop together. Teachers need not postpone children's early exposure to a variety of experiences with written language while supporting oral language development.*

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<sup>10</sup> For specific guidance related to students with hearing loss or speech difficulties, see the resource suggestions in the Appendix.

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## Assessment of Oral Language Abilities

children for whom oral language development is an area of concern. As with all the assessment tools in this resource, the checklist that follows does not have to be used with all the children in your class on a continuous basis. Rather, it is intended for use with those children for whom oral language development is an area of particular concern.

### Observing Children's Social Communication

The sample checklist on page 25 is useful for observing which children use language regularly to meet their needs and which ones do not. As well, you can develop a picture of the main purposes for which individual children use language. Many children's language use is different in a small group than it is in a whole class situation.

### Procedures

- 1) Use the checklist early in the year and observe every child in your class on more than one occasion.
- 2) Continue to use with those
- 3) Use during Class Meeting/Group Time, Structured Play, Center Time, outdoor play, or any form of co-operative group work to assess an individual's oral communication abilities.
- 4) Rotate your observations. One way to make informal observation work without being too intrusive for any one child is to assess three children per day and rotate your observations among them. Assess one child for 5 minutes, switch to the second child for 5 minutes, switch to the third child for 5 minutes, and then return to the first child. Observe each child twice if time permits.
- 5) Date the observations, and record the particular setting in which the child was observed such as at a social dramatic play center, a language center, a co-operative group activity, etc. Store the completed checklist in each child's individual folder or portfolio.
- 6) A manageable goal for use of this checklist might be to assess each child for whom language development is an area of concern three times each reporting period. This will give you an opportunity to see areas of progress.
- 7) Refer to the chart on the following page for examples of children's language in each category of the checklist.
- 8) Follow up your observations with appropriate referrals if you feel hearing loss might be a factor in a child's language development or have other concerns of a serious nature. Continue to include such children in activities and strategies that involve oral language but offer them additional encouragement and support.

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## **Language Categories for use with Assessment Checklists and Forms**

### **1. Uses language to communicate preferences, choices, “wants”, or needs.**

Examples: a) Child says “Blocks” instead of pointing when asked what center s/he wishes to work in that day. b) Child says to another child “I want to use that car.” instead of taking it. c) Child says to another child or adult at the art center “I’m going to use the green paper.” d) Child asks, “Can you get that for me? I can’t reach it.”

### **2. Uses language to enter into ongoing play or join an activity.**

Examples: a) Child says, “I’ll be the baby, okay?” after observing children in the social dramatic play center pretending to be a family. b) Child says, “Can I play?” Or “Can I have a turn?” when joining children involved in a game or activity. c) Child asks, “Are you guys making a bridge? I’ll help.” as s/he enters the block center.

### **3. Uses language to plan, develop, or maintain the play or group activity.**

Examples: a) Child says, “We’re out of groceries. We need to go shopping.” during social dramatic play in a house center. b) Child says, “I know, let’s make a door here so cars can go in the garage. This is a garage, eh?” c) Child says, “Okay. It’s your turn.” when working on a mural or playing a game with others.

### **4. Uses language to resolve or avoid conflicts.**

Examples: a) Child says, “I don’t like it when you call me that.” in response to name-calling. b) Child says, “I’ll trade you. You can have my car if you give me that truck.” c) Child says, “I was here first. You have to go behind me.” to a child trying to push her/him out of the way.

### **5. Uses language to entertain, describe a past event, or tell or retell a story (may incorporate language from favourite books).**

Examples: a) Child says to another child during an activity, “I went to my grandma’s last night.” b) In response to the teacher’s question about what each child did during Center Time, child says, “I played with Cheryl. We read a book.” c) Child says, “First we rode on the bus, then we got to the farm, and I saw a pig. A [sic] enormous pig.” during the making of an experience chart about a trip to a farm.

### **6. Uses language to find things out, wonder, or hypothesize.**

Examples: a) Child says in response to another child or adult, “Why did you do that?” or “What for?” b) Child talks to self while playing with a water wheel, “What makes it go?” c) Child says in response to an event in a story book, “I bet he’s going to get in trouble!”

### **7. Other literacy behaviours noticed.**

Such behaviours include the voluntary use of reading or writing materials provided in a center, as part of a display, etc.

Examples: a) Child is in the house center and says “We need to get groceries. I’ll make a list.” and begins to write a grocery list. b) Child in the block center gets a book about castles and says, “Let’s make one like this.” c) Child brings a book to Sharing Time and says, “My auntie got me this. I know how to read it.” and proceeds to demonstrate.



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## Instructional Implications

Strategies in this resource that are useful for strengthening children’s abilities to use language to meet their needs in social settings are:

- Supporting Oral Language Development within Structured Play (p. 33)
- Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving (p. 36)
- Speaking and Listening Opportunities in Creative and Collaborative Work (p. 41)
- Language Experience Approach (p. 42)
- Class Meeting/Group Time Activities (p. 45).

See also descriptions of the following strategies that support communicative abilities in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992):

- Conferencing (p. 92)
- Contextual Drama (p. 94)
- Cooperative Learning (p. 96)
- Dramatic Play (p. 102)
- Puppetry (p. 118).

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## Sample Checklist for Observing Children's Social Communication

**Child's name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Setting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Put one check mark under each category each time you hear the child using language in that category. At the end of the recording period put N/Ob under each category of language use not demonstrated by the child that day.

1. Uses language to communicate preferences, choices, "wants", or needs.
2. Uses language to enter into ongoing play or join a center activity.
3. Uses language to plan, develop, or maintain the play or group activity.
4. Uses language to resolve or avoid conflicts.
5. Uses language to entertain, describe a past event, or tell or retell a story.
6. Uses language to find things out, wonder, or hypothesize.
7. Other literacy behaviours noticed. (Briefly describe.)

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## **Recording Children’s Language Use and Communicative Behaviours**

The form on the following page makes use of the same language categories and general procedures as the Sample Checklist for Observing Children’s Social Communication (p. 25) but involves recording the child’s speech and describing her/his behaviours.

In addition to getting a general sense of who is using language regularly and/or appropriately for the particular situation, teachers who use this assessment will also become more aware of their students’ common sentence patterns and vocabularies. This information is useful for designing instructional tasks such as Repeat my Sentence (see page 28) and for planning what levels of support are required in order for individual children to benefit from language arts activities that involve the whole class.

### **Procedures**

- 1) Record the actual language the child used. When a child found ways other than speech to fulfill a need or “want”, (such as pointing, taking something away from another child, physical aggression, etc.), briefly describe these behaviours as well.
- 2) Refer to the chart on page 23 for examples of language use in each category and to the Instructional Implications (p. 24) for strategies that will support children’s development in this area.

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**Sample Form for Recording Children’s Language Use and Communicative Behaviours**

**Child’s name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Setting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Uses language to communicate preferences, choices, “wants” or needs.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**2. Uses language to enter into ongoing play or join an activity.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**3. Uses language to plan, develop, or maintain the play or group activity.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**4. Uses language to resolve or avoid conflicts.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**5. Uses language to entertain, describe a past event, or tell or retell a story.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**6. Uses language to find things out, wonder, or hypothesize.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:

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**7. Other literacy behaviours noticed.**

What the child said:

Behaviours:



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## Repeat my Sentence

*Teachers who have used this assessment technique say that it is also an assessment of children's ability to focus, concentrate, and remember sentence patterns and details as well as an assessment of their understanding of the sentence's meaning.*

This simple activity can be used to assess children's knowledge of and fluency with the sentence structures of conventional English (syntactic knowledge) and their abilities to articulate its sounds. Clay (1991) says: *When a child is asked to imitate a set of carefully selected sentences and his responses are recorded one can observe how he phrases a sentence compared with what he was asked to repeat* (p. 74).

k Children for whom English is not a first language or dialect may have difficulty learning to read book language if it contains sentence patterns very different from the ones they are accustomed to hearing at home. Such children need to be read to often from appealing, good quality stories and nonfiction books. As well, many opportunities need to be created for them to participate in language games that make use of the sounds and patterns of the English language.

### Procedures

- 1) Introduce as an instructional activity. Use this assessment technique first as an instructional activity with your whole class or a small group. Introduce it as a language game and keep your focus on enjoyment.
  - a) Tell children to listen and repeat your sentence. Challenge them to listen very carefully in order to repeat exactly what you say. Have them respond as a whole group.
  - b) When you first introduce this activity, use sentences related to a single topic or concept--one that is familiar to all children. Young children should be given some form of concrete illustration of the topic or concept. This is particularly important for children who speak English as a Second Language/Dialect. You might illustrate the concept or topic with concrete objects or pictures, or have children demonstrate the action or role play the concept.
  - c) Begin with short sentences and gradually increase their length, complexity, and form. For example, one progression follows.

- James can run fast. (Use the names of children in the group.)
- James can run very quickly.
- Can you run quickly without stumbling?
- Wow! You can run very fast!
- Can anyone run faster than James?
- Sarah can run faster than James because her legs are longer.

- d) Keep the activity short. For example, the sequence above might be enough for one game.
- e) Plan your sentences ahead of time with attention to some of the following:

- 
- Make use of sentence structures or language patterns with which some children appear to be unfamiliar. (For example, when you notice that a number of children substitute “*gots*” for *has*, you might include sentences such as *Damion has new runners with bright yellow laces.*)
  - Choose sentences from fiction and nonfiction books that have been read to the children recently as well as from unfamiliar books.
  - Use sentences that include a range of conjunctions including *and, then, because, but, if, when, so, why* and different sentence types (declaratives, questions, exclamations, expository statements).
- f) When children have had some experience with repeating sentences as a group, ask for volunteers to repeat them individually. Note children who appear to be having difficulty.

While this technique is not intended for use as an assessment of hearing, if you suspect hearing loss to be involved in a child’s inability to repeat sentences, follow up with an appropriate referral.
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*A further activity that can be used when children are familiar with this activity is to involve the children in sentence production. Group children in pairs and have them take turns making up sentences for the other to repeat. This is particularly appropriate for older students.*

- 2) Use as an assessment tool. When children have some familiarity with this language game, you can use it as a tool for the assessment of individual progress.
- a) Develop a set of 10-14 sentences arranged from simple to complex. Use them for an individual language assessment with those children with whom you have some concern. Assess these individuals every 6-8 weeks, using the same set of sentences each time. This will help you to note progress in articulation or reproduction of conventional sentence structures.
  - b) Reproduce the sentences on a simple assessment form such as the example on page 32.
  - c) Say the sentence. Pause for the child to repeat it. Mark on the form by:
    - crossing out words that were omitted
    - inserting words added
    - writing what the child said under the sentence
    - putting a check mark beside any sentences that the child repeated correctly.
  - d) On the back of the form, note to what extent the changes that the child made to the original sentence retained or changed its meaning.

### **Instructional Implications**

The results of the Repeat my Sentence assessment require interpretation -- the type of mistakes children make have instructional implications.





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The most common mistakes young children make are to omit words, mispronounce words, and/or substitute other words that approximate the meaning of the sentence. Some children may add words while retaining the overall meaning. The examples that follow show the sentence the child was asked to repeat followed by what the child actually said and an interpretation of the child's response. You may have different or additional interpretations--particularly in situations where you know the child and her/his circumstances well.

*"I find 'Repeat my Sentence' useful as an assessment tool. The exercise is purely mechanical with poorer students – involving repetition of words without meaning. Higher level students interpret the meaning and repeat it back, but not necessarily using the same words. Students substitute their own words when sentences become more complex. One of the ways I use the information gained from this assessment is to decide upon what level of instructions a child will need – for example, a child who jumbled most of the sentences requires short instructions, slowly given, and many repetitions."  
- a Saskatchewan teacher*

#### Examples

1. My sister reads a lot of books and sometimes she read magazines.

*"My sister reads a lots a books and sometimes she reads magazines."*

This child does not appear to use the conventional sentence pattern "a lot of" when speaking and is not likely to read a sentence using this pattern accurately. However, the child does retain the meaning of the sentence and thus could possibly predict the word "books" from context clues and use graphophonic knowledge to predict the word "magazines" when reading.

2. I need to go to the store before I can make supper tonight.

*"I go to store tonight."*

The child was not able to retain the meaning of the sentence. If this is the case with other sentences in the assessment as well, s/he is likely to struggle with independent reading without a good deal of one-on-one support. A child exhibiting this level of language development would benefit most from being read aloud to frequently from a variety of engaging stories, participating in lots of language play, and being given many opportunities to talk informally with good language models.

3. Her little sister wanted to play too.

*"Her little sister wanta play too."*

The child appears to have a general understanding of what the sentence means with the exception of the use of past tense. As well, s/he may not be able to voice-print match if asked to read it. A teacher who notes this substitution of "wanta" for *wanted to* might draw attention to the difference between these while articulating each clearly in a large or small group Repeat my Sentence activity but would not single out and correct an individual child's speech in front of her/his peers.

Children in grades one to three who have difficulty repeating all or most of the sentences in this assessment may require:

- more experiences of being read to from good quality fiction and nonfiction books and lots of opportunities for language play (see Reading to Children Daily, p. 57 and Exploring Sound Patterns, p. 85)
- many more informal literacy experiences such as those described in Chapter One of this resource

- 
- good language models, and teachers and other adults who value their attempts to communicate (see *Enlisting Other Adults and/or Older Students ...*, p. 60 and *Mentor-supported Literacy Development*, p. 139 for ways to increase children’s opportunities to communicate regularly with a caring adult).

*k “The child is deprived without the close, understanding, warm, readily available listener, talker, and speech model. If the child’s language development seems to be lagging it is misplaced sympathy to do his [her] talking for him. Instead, put your ear closer, concentrate more sharply, smile more rewardingly and spend more time in genuine conversation, difficult though it is.”* (Clay, 1991, p. 69)

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## Sample Assessment Form for Repeat My Sentence<sup>11</sup>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Read each sentence and write underneath it what the child said.)

1. She looks happy.
2. I have a dog.
3. I like many different kinds of food.
4. My father's car needs fixing.
5. Did you notice what colour the sky is today?
6. I need to go to the store before I can make supper tonight.
7. Once upon a time there was a friendly little caterpillar.
8. My sister reads a lot of books and sometimes she reads magazines.
9. "Be as quiet as you can while your baby sister is asleep," said her mother.
10. If you want to make vegetable soup, you should have lots of fresh vegetables.
11. Don't run so fast in the gym because you might bump into someone.
12. Why do you need more marbles when you already have a whole bag of them?
13. If you are kind to your friends, they will know that you care about them.
14. When she played ball with her friends, her little sister often wanted to play too.

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<sup>11</sup> This assessment is similar to a longer, multi-leveled assessment tool developed by Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, and Salmon (1983). See their *Record of Oral Language and Biks and Gutches* for a more complete discussion of its uses and the sentences that they used.

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## Strategies and Activities

Oral language develops as children feel the need to communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas and to engage others in social interactions. A primary way to support young children's language development is to structure activities and occasions when conversation is fostered in a natural and spontaneous manner. Teachers bring further support to these situations when they:

- act as good language models
- show genuine interest in what children have to say
- find ways to extend children's vocabularies and repertoire of sentence structures without placing undue pressure on children to conform to adult language standards.

The activities in this section focus on these types of supports.

k 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.

### Supporting Oral Language Development within Structured Play

Social play, as a primary means by which children learn about their world and develop their abilities to communicate with others, has been the focus of early childhood education literature for more than a century. As many good resources exist that describe ways to maximize the benefits of structured play, this will not be the focus here.<sup>12</sup> The suggestions in this section will focus more specifically upon the ways to support oral language development through structured play opportunities (see also *Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play*, p. 116 for ways to support children's interest in and abilities to write and read).

*The need for structured play opportunities does not end when children enter grade one. Older learners in the Emerging Phase also need the support it provides for vocabulary development and growth in appropriate ways to communicate effectively with others.*

#### Objectives

Students will demonstrate:

- emerging ability to use listening to understand the meaning and intent of others.
- emerging desire to participate in the discussion of ideas.

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<sup>12</sup> See *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994), pages 14-15, for a fuller discussion of the benefits of play and pages 29-46 for descriptions of structured play (Activity) centers.

- increasing abilities to collaborate and co-operate with peers to create and participate in dramatic activities.
- increasing abilities to use role play and simulation to:
  - express knowledge and understandings
  - express their own cultural identity
  - extend understanding and appreciation of their own cultural identity
  - appreciate similarities and differences in cultures, lifestyles, and experiences.

### Materials

- Various. The materials in play centers are dependent upon the nature of the particular center such as Housekeeping or Home Center, Sand Table, Water Table, or Block Center and on the particular topic being explored such as “Transportation” or “Fishing Camp” (see *Children First*, pp. 29-45 for ideas).
- Books, posters, movies, and videos related to a center or topic
- Camera
- Chart paper and markers
- Materials for bookmaking.

### Procedures

k The choice of centers to support children’s oral language development requires a knowledge of the communities from which your children come. While some of your structured play centers will be ones that extend children’s experiences beyond the familiar, others will be selected to represent the cultural groups that reflect children’s experiences.

*It is particularly important to be sensitive to the experiences of children from low income families when selecting foci for social play centers.*

- 1) Introduce a new center at your group meeting time in some of the following ways:
  - showing some interesting materials in the centers and briefly demonstrating a few ways to use them
  - reading a book or viewing a video related to the focus/theme of the center with your class.

As you discuss ideas and activities related to the center, incorporate theme-related vocabulary or interesting sentence patterns into your own speech and questions. Sometimes just hearing a new word or sentence structure a few more times in a related context is sufficient to result in children incorporating it appropriately in their own conversations.

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For example, you might say: “Letter carriers used to be called postmen even though some of them were women. We’ll try and remember to call the people who deliver mail from our post office, letter carriers. Those of you who want to work in our post office sorting and stamping mail will be postal workers.”

Draw attention to the ways characters in books talk to each other as another way to increase students’ attentiveness to language use.

For example, you might say: “I like the way the mother in this story always said, ‘And I certainly hope you won’t forget to kiss me good-bye’ whenever her children asked if they could go somewhere. Do you think you might say that if you were a mother or father?”

- 2) Role play ways to solve problems that arise (see Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving, p. 36). Remind children as necessary to “use their words” to solve problems and provide the language for those children who need it.
- 3) Stress the use of language for planning and carrying out plans cooperatively in play centers or other activities.

For example, you might say: “Don’t forget to talk to each other about how you are going to share the materials at your center today.” or “You will have to make a plan together about what you want to build today.”

Show appreciation of children’s abilities to plan together at your next group meeting by collecting examples of such talk as you circulate during structured play or center time, and sharing them with the class.

- 4) Enter briefly into children’s play to provide additional language for the social situations they create and the materials they are using or pretending to use. Strengthen their understanding of the following:
  - the idea that people in the situations they are pretending to be in would be talking to each other
  - ways to apply new vocabulary to concrete situations.

For example, upon entering the block center that has been turned into a fire station, you might say: “So, who’s working the late shift tonight? I’d rather work the day shift so I can do things with my family after supper.” or “Have there been any fires on this shift?... Were you able to save the house?”

Stopping to visit with two children using small vehicles in the sand table, you might say: “You’ve certainly made some good roads in your town. My street has so many bumps in it that it makes the car shake but your streets are nice and smooth. Do you have to resurface them very often?”

- 5) Show appreciation for the ways that children talk to each other as they work/play together at centers or during other activities.

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For example, on observing two children talking together at the craft table as they work on individual collages, “It’s fun, isn’t it, to have someone to visit with while we are working. Sometimes my sister and I like to bake together so that we can chat as we work.”

*Keep your conversations informal and avoid too many questions. You want to help students become accustomed to communicating about their work and ideas without “putting them on the spot” or giving them the idea that they are working or creating products for your benefit or praise.*

- 6) Briefly discuss children’s creative projects or play with them as you circulate around the room or playground. Your conversations should:
- draw students in
  - support them in expressing ideas and feelings about their learning, while keeping the ownership for their learning in their hands.

For example, on walking by a child who is painting, “I’m really interested in how you made that colour.” ... Maybe you could bring your painting to our group time today and tell your classmates about how you did it.”

On observing children playing a game of their own invention outdoors, “You look like you are really having fun. I like the way no one who wants to play is left out and newcomers can join. Maybe this would be a good game to explain to everyone at Sharing Time today.”

- 7) Incorporate a group time at the end of structured play or Center Time for children to share the work they did that day, describe ideas they had, things they learned, and ways they solved problems.
- 8) Keep a camera in your classroom and take pictures of children involved in structured play and learning centers. Use these pictures as the focus for classroom discussions. Invite the children in the photographs to tell something they remember about the experience captured in the photographs. Children can also dictate or write captions for each photograph. These can be made into books and become the focus of conversations between children in the class or children and their parents/guardians, reading buddies, and others.

## **Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving**

### **Objectives**

The activities described on the following pages are intended particularly to support development of the following English language arts objectives.

Students will demonstrate:

- emerging use of oral language to bring meaning to what they observe, feel, hear, and read.
- emerging ability to use listening to understand the meaning and intent of others.



- increasing abilities to collaborate and co-operate with peers to create and participate in a variety of activities.
- increasing abilities to use role play and simulation to:
  - express knowledge and understandings
  - express their own cultural identity
  - extend understanding and appreciation of their own cultural identity
  - appreciate similarities and differences in cultures, lifestyles, and experiences.

A strength of this strategy is that it involves children in developing a valuable life skill--one that can be applied directly in daily classroom life and used continuously in all other social situations. As well, learning the language of co-operation and respect for self and others supports children's fuller participation in learning situations. This is particularly true because a major focus of social problem solving involves learning to keep calm and listening carefully to others. A further strength of learning the language and behaviours for social interaction through a role play approach is that it also strengthens children's abilities to understand and empathize with others--an ability that supports their understanding of literature.

### Materials

- Chart paper, markers, drawing and writing materials, puppets or dolls.

A further support for children's social problem-solving abilities is that offered by the *Second Step* program (1992).

### Procedures

Supported role play for social problem solving involves these main steps:

- demonstration by the teacher
  - discussion and recording of desired behaviours
  - review and practice through a new role play enacted by one or two children.
- 1) Choose a focus for a role play demonstration such as "Ways to Share Materials/Toys". Generate two or three scenarios portraying better and worse ways to solve the problem that was selected as your focus. Be sure to portray both appropriately assertive behaviours and submissive behaviours. You want to teach children not to submit to aggression as well as appropriate ways to assert themselves. Sometimes, you may want to model that the best way to assert your rights is to leave the scene.

*Language development has a strong emotional or affective base that is integrated with its cognitive and physical foundations. Teachers who want students to fulfill their potential as literacy learners work to create an environment where all children feel accepted and valued. They help children to communicate their needs and ideas respectfully and honestly, and know that this requires time and instructional supports. Supported Role Play for Social Problem Solving is one such support. It contributes to children's language growth in a central area of human development and to the achievement of English language arts objectives.*

- 
- 2) Use puppets or dolls to enact the role plays or enlist the support of a teacher associate, adult volunteer, or older children from another class.
  - 3) Rehearse the role play once before presenting it to your class. Decide on the language you want to use in both your positive and negative examples. The use of a puppet or doll in the role of an aggressor is better than that of another child or adult as you do not want to model humans using aggressive behaviours. Even with a puppet or doll, it is best to pretend to hit someone, but not to actually use physical violence in a role play. The same is true of name calling and racial slurs--talk about them with your class but do not use them in role playing. If you want to do a role play involving name calling or racial slurs, set the scene by explaining that this type of act has just taken place and start the role play from there (for example, you might say to the puppet, *"You can't call me that. Don't say that to me again."* while modeling a firm voice, standing tall, and looking the aggressor in the eyes).
  - 4) Enact the role play and invite your class to respond. What are their ideas about the best way to solve the problem? Which solution did they think was the best one? Can they think of other ways to solve this problem besides the ones presented in the role plays? How might they decide which solution was the best?
  - 5) To involve them more fully during the role play, you might teach them to use thumbs up/thumbs down as they watch to indicate approval or disapproval of the words and actions they witness.
  - 6) Summarize their ideas on chart paper. Use a simple format such as Problem, Things to Do, Things to Say, and a few examples.
  - 7) Practice the solution they have decided upon through inviting volunteers to role play a similar scenario. Guide them through it as necessary.
  - 8) Teach behaviours through role play. Behaviours that are important to creating a democratic and caring classroom atmosphere include:
    - Calming oneself – self-talk (counting to ten slowly, saying the alphabet, reciting a verse to oneself), leaving the scene, finding a quiet activity, and when all these prove too difficult--enlisting the support of someone you trust in order to share your feelings.
    - Listening carefully in order to understand the needs, wants, feelings, and ideas of others.
    - Showing interest in and friendliness toward others - greeting others when you see them, smiling, and appreciating the contributions and/or ideas of others.
    - Showing empathy and offering encouragement through words, deeds, and body language.
    - Taking turns, trading, and sharing fairly - better and worse ways to make or refuse requests, different ways to take turns or share, and trading things of equal value/appeal.

- Using proactive assertive behaviours - initiating social interactions (for example, greeting others, making friendly as opposed to bossy suggestions, offering to help, respecting the right of others to say “no”).
- Using reactive assertive behaviours - responding to social interactions (for example, standing up for personal rights, refusing to accept discriminatory acts or any form of name calling).

9) Focus instruction on the idea that habits are changeable. Many children have witnessed and learned to shout, name call, and use physical aggression to assert their rights and wants. Others have learned passivity and withdrawal in the face of aggression. Children will revert to these behaviours during classroom and playground conflicts unless they receive help. When children are taught that these behaviours are habits that can be changed with practice and support, and given some control over the change process, they can make lasting behavioural changes. The following classroom vignette from the book *Early Violence Prevention* illustrates this well.

One troubled 5-yr.-old boy changed remarkably in his aggressive behaviour by actively participating in a program that emphasized changing one’s own behaviour. He became very proud of himself for being “good at changing habits” and as a result was highly motivated to change other problem behaviours, such as taking too much time getting dressed in the morning. When asked what helped him most to change his habits, he said “Doll playing!” (his term for role playing with a doll that was used as a skills-training tool in his classroom). He was later heard to say to an adult who was angry at a younger child, “She’s little and has to learn to change habits, so don’t get mad at her.”

(Arezzo, 1978, quoted in Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo, & Hendrix, 1995)

10) Provide a language for co-operative social problem solving. Some of the situations in which teachers can give children the language for co-operation and social problem solving follow and are accompanied by examples of “teacher talk”.

*We should not expect young children to automatically know the language with which to work and play harmoniously with others. Use role play and “on the spot” demonstrations to model and teach appropriate ways to interact socially.*

**Examples**

1. Remind children to talk to the person with whom they have a problem and give children the phrases to use for making requests of others. For example, “If you need a red marker, you can ask Abby for one. You can say, ‘Abby, may I please use the red marker?’” Or, if one child is annoying another, “Ask Hector to stop yelling. Say, Hector I don’t like it when you yell. It hurts my ears.”
2. Help children to describe feelings and reasons for actions. A simple language pattern to model that young children can learn to use effectively is “\_\_\_\_\_ (child’s name), I don’t like it when you \_\_\_\_\_ (action child does not like). It makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ (sad, bad, unhappy, lonely, etc).” Children can learn to use this pattern for conflict resolution.

*One teacher who uses a language pattern for conflict resolution regularly says she tells children, "You have 5 minutes to talk this over. If it isn't settled at that time, then one or both of you are not really ready to solve the problem and we'll have to let it go for today." She gives them a 5-minute sand timer.*

*Older children can do a practice session following a teacher-led role play by breaking into pairs (or threes) and re-enacting the role play or creating a new one on the same theme. You can invite a few pairs to share their role play with the class. They might also wish to share their role play with children from another class.*

3. The decision to share is a choice. Experience has shown that children are more likely to share when they perceive this to be a real choice. Model through role play:
  - ways to ask nicely if someone will share with you
  - saying "no" firmly but politely if you do not wish to share
  - accepting "no" by saying "okay"
  - thanking a child who agrees to share with you; using the person's name when you thank them, "Thanks Gordon for letting me use the shovel."
  - Offering to share something, "If you want to look at this book next, I'll save it for you."
4. Help children to learn appropriately assertive language and behaviours. Important language and behaviours for role play that foster positive assertiveness include the following:<sup>13</sup>
  - Firmly telling an aggressor to stop hurtful acts (e.g., "No hitting!"; "Stop that! I don't like being pushed.")
  - Refusing to give up toys or other objects to an aggressor (e.g., "I'm not finished using this."; "I'm not leaving.")
  - Refusing to accept discriminatory actions or statements (e.g., "Stop calling me that hurtful name."; "You can't say that girls can't play.")
  - Standing up for personal rights (e.g., "It's my turn now.")
  - Refusing to take orders from bossy peers and declining unnecessary assistance (e.g., "No. I don't want to do that. I want to do it my own way."; "No thank you. I can do it myself.")
  - Firmly say "No" to peer pressure to misbehave.
  - Firmly say "No" to the abusive use of power by older children and adults, and seek help from a trusted adult. (e.g., "I have a problem and I need your help."; "I need to talk to you about something important."; "I need help.")

### **A Language Pattern for Conflict Resolution for Young Children**

This strategy works best initially with two children. With support and practice, young children can learn to use it with a three-way conflict as well. Establish a quiet and private corner of the classroom for "having a talk" when a child has a problem with someone else. When two or three children come to you with a dispute or conflict, the first thing you would ask of each of them in turn is "Do you want to solve this problem?" If children are not ready to work toward a solution, but rather appear to prefer to continue to argue and justify their behaviour, you might say, "You do not appear to be ready just yet to solve this problem." If children say "Yes", send them to your corner to "have a talk". Establish with them who will speak first (and second and third if three children are involved). Remind them of the language pattern to use if necessary. When children have seen this modeled a few times, they will not need this reminder. Remind them that they each have to feel satisfied that the conflict is resolved.

#### Language pattern and example with two children

1. Each child gets a turn to say what behaviour of the other child s/he did not like. The children need to be reminded to describe the behaviour and not to criticize the person (i.e., use name calling). Each child follows this by saying how this behaviour makes her/him feel.
2. Each child takes a turn to ask the other what would make him or her feel better. (Young children often skip this question and move directly to saying "Sorry" or "I like you"). You can talk about the idea that a person does not have to say s/he is

<sup>13</sup> The list of behaviours and language suggestions are adapted from one in *Early Violence Prevention* (1995), pages 131-132.

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sorry until or unless s/he feels ready to do so. You can also model through role play that there are other ways to make amends.

3. Children decide together if they all feel satisfied with the proposed restitution or way of making amends. An example follows:

Kenny: "Damon, I don't like it when you say I can't play with you. It makes me feel sad."

Damon: "Well, I didn't like it when you played with Kerry yesterday and not me. It made me feel you like her better than me."

Kenny: "What would make you feel better?"

Damon: "I want you to play with me too, okay?"

Kenny: "You're supposed to ask me what would make me feel better. Ask me now."

Damon: "What would make you feel better?"

Kenny: "I won't say you can't play with me and you don't say I can't play with you, okay?"

(Damon nods his head.) Both children go to the teacher and tell her, "It's settled!"

Teacher (to Kenny): "Are you satisfied it's settled?" Kenny agrees that he is.

Teacher (to Damon): "Are you satisfied it's settled?" Damon says he is.

Teacher: "You are really learning to solve your problems by talking it over. Now you are ready to get back to your work. It's hard to learn when we are upset about something, isn't it?"

*Social problem solving is also a very good focus for writing. Children can write and illustrate their own vignettes about a problem that they have experienced and describe how they solved it. They can put a collection together for a class book on learning co-operative and caring behaviours, or one related to conflict resolution. As well, older children can work in small groups to make social problem-solving charts (ones that describe a problem and lists Things to Do and Things to Say). These charts can be displayed on class bulletin boards or in school hallways.*

## **Speaking and Listening Opportunities in Creative and Collaborative Work**

### **Materials**

- Various (particular materials dependent on nature of activity).

### **Procedures**

- 1) Provide frequent opportunities for children to work in pairs or small groups to explore concrete materials, share ideas, and create group products. All such activities are opportunities for oral language development. Examples of a few of the many opportunities possible include:
  - working with math manipulatives
  - exploring natural objects and phenomena at the science center or during science activities
  - sorting and classifying objects and photographs related to a unit in health education, science, or social studies
  - creating visual art products or crafts

*"Our children have not seen many of the common manipulatives or play materials before. We find we have to provide them with lots of time to explore and play with concrete materials, and to talk with each other about them before we can use them for more formal instruction."*  
- a Saskatchewan teacher

- 
- creating stories, dramas, or puppet shows.<sup>14</sup>
- 2) Incorporate these opportunities throughout each week in all subject areas. The chart that follows describes books for teachers that make use of centers and small group structured play activities--ones that provide literacy opportunities, support oral language development, and incorporate critical and creative thinking challenges.

*Serious Players in the Primary Classroom.* Wassermann (1990) describes fully developed small group activities in each subject area for children from kindergarten to grade three. They are structured in such a way that the whole class is involved at the same time. They make use of concrete materials and foster perceptual development, oral language development, and a problem-solving approach. The activities include questions for children to discuss in their small groups and questions for teachers to use in debriefing the activity with the entire class.

*Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for all Children.* Fountas and Pinnell (1996) describe a range of language centers in Chapter 5. The book explains classroom organization for use of the centers. It also describes ways to organize for student's independent use of the centers--thus freeing the teacher for small group instruction and/or individual conferences.

- 3) Support oral language development within these experiences through:
- providing and modeling a language for co-operation through demonstrations and role play
  - extending vocabulary informally as you circulate among groups
  - adding new vocabulary to classroom labels, signs, Word Wall, etc.
  - debriefing learning at the end of an activity with open-ended statements such as, *"Tell me some of the things that you noticed about the materials/objects you worked with today."*

## Language Experience Approach

*A major purpose of this approach is to impart the understanding that anything that can be said can be written, and anything that can be written can be read or said.*

The language experience approach supports children's concept development and vocabulary growth while offering many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities. Another benefit of the language experience approach is the development of shared experiences that extend children's knowledge of the world around them while building a sense of classroom community. Students are involved in planning, experiencing, responding to, and recording the experience and later, in participating in "remember when we ...?" conversations.

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<sup>14</sup> See *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994), page 106, or *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), pages 118-119, for discussion of "Puppetry" as a language arts strategy. As well, a description of a procedure for involving students in "Storytelling" can be found on page 138 of *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992).

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## Objectives

The activities described on the following pages are intended particularly to support development of the following English language arts objectives.

Students will demonstrate emerging:

- awareness that print conveys meaning
- awareness that everyone’s thoughts and ideas can be expressed in spoken and written language
- ability to gather meaning from reading or listening to others read resources that relate to personal experiences
- ability to make meaning known by speaking in informal situations
- ability to use listening to understand the meaning and intent of others
- ability to report factual information using various formats including pictures, charts, and written reports
- ability to tell and retell personal experiences
- ability to dictate stories, sentences, and phrases for others to transcribe.

## Materials

Materials used will depend to some extent upon the nature of the chosen experience. Those materials common across most experiences include:

- books, poems, songs, and/or chants related to the focus
- chart paper and felt markers
- materials for writing and bookmaking
- cameras and film for taking pictures of the experience for use in developing memory books and memory walls.

## Procedures

The general procedure for the language experience approach involves the whole class or a small group in:

- experiencing
- discussing the experience
- recording the experience
- using the record of the experience for reading and writing activities.

- 1) Choose a focus. A wide range of possibilities exists for the creation of language experience records. These include:
  - cooking (recording the recipe), special feasts, and other food experiences (describing the feast)
  - growing vegetables or flowers in the classroom (making a “How To Grow Vegetables/Flowers” chart)

*Sometimes occasions for using the language experience approach arise spontaneously such as an early snowfall, or experiments with making shadows or mixing colours. Any event or experience that creates a lot of interest or captures children’s imaginations is a good focus.*

- 
- planning a field trip, talking and writing about it both before and afterward (making lists of things to bring, rules to follow; drawing and labeling a map of where you went; describing the experience)
  - making various kinds of “how to” charts describing experiments the class has done or things they have made
  - making a record of a cultural event such as a Pow-Wow or of the visit of a special guest
  - summarizing a favourite story that children have heard, viewed, or dramatized several times.
- 2) Demonstrate print concepts as you record the experience. Initially in language experience, it is the teacher or another adult who does the recording. This is because the approach is intended to demonstrate to children the match between what they say and its written form, and to develop other print concepts. The teacher would draw attention to these aspects of print while writing on chart paper positioned so as to be visible to all the children.
  - 3) Record children’s own language. The most important aspect of recording is to use children’s own words, keeping the match between what they say and what you write. Use children’s names as much as possible because their own name is one of the first words children learn to recognize. As well, this practice helps to maintain children’s connections to the experience in subsequent reading.
  - 4) Vary the type of record that you create. The written product of your experience might be made into a Big Book, a bulletin board, or an illustrated chart. Other ideas for creating a lasting record of the experience include the following:
    - Create a class album through using your classroom camera to capture an experience. Children can dictate captions for each photograph and you can discuss concepts of print as you record what they dictate.
    - Have children work in pairs to draw a picture of their favorite part of the experience and then dictate the accompanying text for the teacher to write on a sentence strip. These pictures and sentence strips can then be used in a sequencing activity (“*What did we do first? next? etc.*”) and made into a bulletin board or Big Book to be used for Shared Reading.

*In all cases, the language should come from the children in response to the teachers’ supportive questioning.*

<p>k Remember, you cannot record a statement from every child, every time you create a language experience record. <b>Stop the discussion and recording before the children lose interest.</b> Pay attention to who has not had an opportunity and include them when you complete this record later in the day, the following day, or the next time you use this approach.</p>
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- 5) Use your records of the experience for further literacy opportunities. A main purpose of the language experience approach is to provide meaningful texts for students to read either with the support of others



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or alone. To facilitate this, the record of the experience should be mounted in a prominent place for several weeks following its creation and referred to regularly. Some of the ways the chart, Big Book, etc. can be used include:

- Shared Reading - for a “Framing” activity<sup>15</sup> that will help children develop the concepts of “word” and “sentence” as well as left to right progression.
- Independent and “Take Home” Reading - making a copy of the record to be photocopied for each child to illustrate, use for independent and buddy reading, and to take home to read to their families.
- Sentence-matching - making large sentence strips that replicate sentences in the record for a sentence matching activity. Students can attempt to read the sentences during Shared Reading. Invite volunteers to find and place each sentence strip over the one that matches it in the experience chart or record. You can follow up a group experience of sentence matching by including the chart and the sentence strips as a choice during Center Time.
- Sequencing Words into Sentences - following sentence matching activities, sentence strips from the class chart or record can also be cut up into words. Demonstrate this but allow the children to do the cutting. They can work individually or in pairs to reconstruct the sentences.
- Child-led Rereading Activities - inviting children to become the teacher and lead other children through parts of the chart, Big Book, etc. by pointing out words they know, or reading aloud specific sections and framing them by sweeping their hand or a pointer along as they read. As you develop many charts and books using the language experience approach, children can choose which chart or book they would like to lead the other students in rereading.

*English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992) also contains instructional strategies related to the Language Experience Approach. See:

- Daily Records, p. 99
- Making Books and Charts, p. 112
- Using Experience Charts, p. 138.

## Class Meeting/Group Time Activities

### Materials

- Objects related to a new theme or center
- Containers for “surprise objects”

*The first time you gather children together as a group each day is an excellent time to incorporate activities that support oral language development.*

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<sup>15</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 103, for a description of this approach.

- Name tags
- Chart paper and markers.

## Procedures

In addition to routines already established for your morning or afternoon group time, such as those incorporated in Shared Language (for example, Exploring Sound Patterns, p. 85), you may wish to incorporate some of the following short activities.

*Older students can use a form of Pair-Share for Morning News. In pairs, students take turns telling each other a sentence related to the news activity. Students listen carefully as they are responsible to share the news of their partner. When using Pair-Share, you will need a form for recording whose turn it is each day as all partners cannot share every time.*

- 1) **Morning News.** Vary your format for Morning News every week or two to keep it interesting and enjoyable. Have only a few children give news each day and use an attendance or Helpers chart to show whose turn it is each day. Model a simple format for children to use when sharing news such as Who, What, When, Where. Demonstrate this format yourself a few times before asking children to use it. Do not press reluctant or delayed language users to conform to the format exactly. Appreciate all efforts. Encourage peers to help each other to use the format but do not allow them to take over one child's turn.

### Two Examples

1. Child says, "I went to my grandma's yesterday." (Teacher or another child prompts "Where does she live?") "She just lives a few blocks away." Teacher writes on a chart, Who – I, What – went to my grandma's, When – yesterday, Where – a few blocks away. She invites the child to read it with her while others observe and listen.
2. Child says, "I played hockey." (Teacher says, "Do you want to add anything else? Do you remember our pattern?" while pointing to the Who, What, When, Where chart). Child says, "Oh yah, I played hockey last night." Teacher thanks child but does not press for any further details.

*A good Categories activity for older students is "Tell me everything you know about \_\_\_\_\_." Provide a concept such as families, reading, and sand in addition to more concrete objects. In pairs, partners take turns telling each other one thing they know about the object or concept until they cannot think of any other ideas. Pairs take turns reporting back to the class one of the things they know. This group sharing could be recorded on an experience chart.*

- 2) **Categories.** The teacher provides the category such as "Books" and each child names a book they liked/disliked and tells one reason why they liked/disliked it. Another category might be "Colours". Each child would name a colour and tell one thing they know that is that colour (perhaps using a simple sentence pattern that has been modeled).
- 3) **Pair-Share.** A simple activity that young children can do in pairs is "Tell your partner everything you know about a \_\_\_\_\_". Children would be paired with another child--each child would sit facing the other. You would provide the object for them to talk about, show a concrete example or a picture of it, and have children take turns telling each other what they know about the selected object. Good choices for this activity include an apple, a banana, an orange, and other foods. (It is important to check for food allergies before bringing any foods to the classroom.) Follow up students' discussion by:

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- inviting pairs to share some of their discussion.
  - providing a sensory experience where children are provided with a piece of the apple, banana, or orange and invited to describe *how it looks, feels, tastes, and smells*. You might include this as part of your Group Time or introduce it as an activity you will be using later in the day.
- 4) Learning New Vocabulary. The teacher selects an interesting noun related to a new book, song, or topic; puts it on a card; and reads and shows the card to the group (for example, *turnip, accordion*). S/he asks *“Who thinks they know what this word is? Who would like to predict what this might be?”* The teacher might provide a language pattern to use such as *“I think \_\_\_ is a \_\_\_”* or model a set of questions that children can ask in order to find out. For example: *“Can you eat it? Can you wear it? Is it useful for work? Can you play with it? Is it bigger than a chair? Is it smaller than my hand?”*
- 5) Surprise Object. Place an object related to a theme or concept you are teaching into a box, sock, pillowcase, or painted jar with holes punched in the lid. Invite children to take turns guessing what the object is through asking you questions such as the ones described above. Alternatively, they may shake the box, sniff the jar, or feel the object through the sock or lid. When a child guesses correctly, show the group the object and ask *“What are your ideas about where we might use this in our room? Where should it go? How might we share this?”*

*“Our children are motivated by any food experience. It is one focus that never fails to capture their interest and spark their full involvement.”*  
- a Saskatchewan teacher



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# Chapter Two: Enjoying Literature and Learning from Books

Foundations for emerging literacy emphasized in this chapter are:

- ❖ Developing a love for literature
- ❖ Becoming familiar with the language of fiction and nonfiction books
- ❖ Developing story sense, basic book knowledge, and concepts of print
- ❖ Developing abilities to track print.

## Assessment Tools and Techniques

### Retelling

As an assessment tool, Retelling has many uses. For example, we can learn:

- what the child thinks a story is (his/her concept of story) through seeing which aspects of the story the child thinks it is important to retell when sharing a story with others.
- which story structure elements (characters, setting, events in the plot, etc.) the child uses to make sense of a story.
- the extent to which the child attends to and internalizes (“picks up” and uses) the vocabulary and language patterns of the story.
- the general developmental level of a child in relation to conventional English language structures (syntax).
- about the child’s oral language abilities and listening comprehension.
- how close the match is between the text and what the child chooses to retell.
- to what extent the child chooses important information to retell as opposed to details that are more irrelevant to the story line.
- to what extent the child relates the story to her/his own experiences and considers these to be a part of retelling.

*Retelling is both a strong instructional strategy and an assessment tool—one that involves students in describing their understanding of a familiar story through retelling it.*

### Procedures

- 1) Provide demonstrations of Retelling in an instructional setting before using Retelling in the assessment of a child’s story sense (see Retelling as an Instructional Strategy, p. 65 for guidance).
- 2) Select an interesting, short storybook that has a problem and resolution.
- 3) Fill out an assessment form similar to the checklist on page 52, noting the title, the number of characters in the book, the main episodes in the plot, etc. This will help you to know what to listen for in the children’s retellings and give you a standard for assessing the completeness of a retelling.
- 4) Tell the children you will be inviting a few of them to retell the story to you after you have read it to them. Initially, you might ask them to listen carefully and to try to remember whom the story is about, and what happens to the main characters during the story. Tell students to pay attention to whether someone in the story has a

*“... [R]etellings provide far more information about a student’s comprehension than do answers to the more common comprehension questions.” (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p. 232.)*

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problem (or wish) and how she or he solved (or achieved) it. On other occasions, ask for volunteers to retell the story without previous structuring of their attention. Keep this invitation open and allow students to select those aspects of the story upon which they wish to focus.

- 5) Read the story to your class using your usual strategies. They might include some of the following:
- talking about the author, illustrator, and cover
  - encouraging predictions based on the cover and title
  - reading with expression, showing pictures, and commenting on interesting language or ideas as appropriate
  - stopping at a midpoint in the story to confirm or refute initial predictions and to make new predictions
  - discussing predictions again at the conclusion
  - encouraging general responses to the story through questions such as “What did you think was the best part of this story? The funniest? Scariest? Saddest?”
- 6) Ask children to work on a personal response to the story. They could be asked to do such things as:
- drawing a picture of their favourite part and writing (or dictating) a sentence about it
  - illustrating a 3-fold story strip by drawing what happened in the beginning, the middle, and the end on the three sections created by the folds.

Tell students that you will ask one or two of them to come and retell the story to you while everyone else is working on his/her response.

- 7) Ask the children you have selected that day to come one at a time with you to a quiet corner to retell the story. Use the checklist on page 52 or one that you have created yourself to record what each child included in the retelling. Check off items included as each child is retelling the story.
- 8) Assist the children in the retelling only as necessary to get them started. Do not prompt them unless there is a pause of more than 30 seconds. Use questions like the ones below to assist them, but note on your assessment form that it was an “Assisted Retelling”.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questions to use in Assisted Retellings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How did the story begin?</li><li>• Who is the story about?</li><li>• What happened in the story?</li><li>• Then what happened? OR What happened after that?</li></ul>
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- 9) When the child appears to be finished ask, “Is there anything more you would like to add?” Thank the child and find one thing about her/his retelling to appreciate. For example, “I like the way you started your story with ‘Once upon a time’ and said ‘the end’ when you were finished.” OR “You really picked out the important things

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that happened in the story to share with me. That's what a good storyteller does."

- 10) Complete any additional parts of the checklist and record any anecdotal comments after the child returns to her/his desk or table. You may want to note such things as enthusiasm or frustration, and comments the child made that related the story to personal experiences and/or ones unconnected to the story.
- 11) If there is time, hear a second child do a retelling. Do not leave too long a stretch between your reading of the story and the individual retelling. You may want to show the book to the child and allow her/him to look through it for a minute to aid her/him in remembering the story. This will not unfairly skew the retelling because you are not testing the child's memory but rather what s/he thinks a story is and what parts of a story are important to retell in order to retain its story form.

*Remember that any one retelling will not reveal all that the student knows. Children's retellings will vary depending upon their attraction to the story and their circumstances that day. Use retelling with each child more than once in a reporting period if possible and keep your conclusions tentative.*

### **Instructional Implications**

Children's difficulty with retelling may be related more to their language development than to their story sense. This is particularly true of students where English is a second language or dialect. Use this assessment in conjunction with other oral language assessment tools to better understand the extent to which language development is playing a role. For those children with language difficulties related to the language or dialect spoken at home or to developmental delays, the use of Structured Play and all the informal language development activities in the previous chapter will be appropriate. As well, they will benefit from lots of language play such as the activities in Exploring Sound Patterns (p. 85).

To strengthen children's story sense, the following strategies and activities will be helpful:

- Reading to Children Daily (p. 57)
- Book Browsing (p. 61)
- Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write (p. 63)
- Retelling as an Instructional Strategy (p. 65).

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## Sample Checklist for Assessing Retelling in the Emerging Phase<sup>16</sup>

**Child's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of story:** \_\_\_\_\_

Place a check mark next to each element the child includes in her or his retelling. Note the extent to which the retelling was "Assisted". Add anecdotal comments as soon as the child returns to another activity.

### Setting

- Tells where the story begins, or makes a statement about time and place. \_\_\_\_\_

### Characters

- Names the characters at some point in the retelling. (Include one check mark for each character that was included.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Describes some characteristic/s of the characters (e.g., personalities, appearance). (Include one check mark for each characteristic mentioned.) \_\_\_\_\_

### Episodes

- Describes the main events or episodes in the story. (Include one check mark for each event.) \_\_\_\_\_

### Ending (problem resolution)

- Describes how the story's problem was solved or an important goal (desire, wish) was attained. \_\_\_\_\_

### Sequence

- Retells the story in the correct order from beginning to end. (Include three check marks if all episodes were told in order; two check marks if most were in order; one check mark if some attention was paid to the order.) \_\_\_\_\_

### Book Language

- Uses some of the author's language in the retelling.
  - begins with a story phrase like *Once upon a time*
  - uses descriptive words the author used such as, *enormous*
  - uses phrases or repetitions from the book (e.g., "*Not I*", *said the \_\_\_\_\_* . ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Assistance** (none, a little, a lot) \_\_\_\_\_

### Comments

(Behaviours noted during retelling, asides the child made, etc.)

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<sup>16</sup> This form was created with reference to guidance offered and similar forms described in the following books: *Readings for Linking Literacy and Play* (Christie, Roskos, Enz, Vulewich, & Neuman, 1995); *35 Rubrics and Checklists to Assess Reading and Writing (Grades K-2)* (Fiderer, 1998); *Children Achieving: Best Practices in Early Literacy* (Neuman & Roskos, 1998); *The Whole Language Kindergarten* (Raines & Canady, 1990); *Windows into Literacy: Assessing Learners K-8* (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993).



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## **Assessment of Interest in, and Enjoyment of, Books/Reading: Observation Checklist and Interview Questions**

### **Procedures for Observation Checklist**

- 1) In order for children to demonstrate an interest in books, your classroom should:
  - have a well-maintained classroom library
  - include books incorporated into learning centers, Structured Play centers, and displays
  - incorporate times each day when children have choices of activities and materials
  - include a Class Meeting or Sharing Time routine.
- 2) Assess all children in your class on a regular basis as their interest in books may evolve.
- 3) Assess each child for a week at a time. (A week is more likely to reflect a child's usual patterns of behaviour than is a single day.)
- 4) Select 5-7 children to observe each week that you are conducting the assessment.
- 5) Keep a clipboard with the observation checklist attached handy throughout each day. Some of the times most conducive to use of this assessment tool include:
  - Morning (or Afternoon) Meeting or Sharing Time (Do children bring books or talk about books?)
  - Center Time
  - Language Centers time
  - transitions in which some children are finished their assigned or self-selected tasks and can choose an activity while others are still working
  - Shared Reading
  - Story Time
  - visits to the school library.
- 6) Date your record for each child and store for future use and comparisons across time.

### **Instructional Implications**

Children who show little interest in books or reading activities may require more individual support in order to develop their confidence and abilities to focus and concentrate on stories. Mentor-supported Literacy Development (p. 139) offers advice for ways to provide this. Reading for Enjoyment strategies may have to be modified with the structuring of a smaller group and shorter, humorous, or fast-paced stories. Informal conversations with caring adults will also be important for these children.

## Sample Checklist for Assessing Interest in, and Enjoyment of, Books

**Instructions:** Write the date below the words *Week of* for each observation period. Place a check mark in the appropriate box each time that assessment item is observed during that week. Some boxes could have several check marks by the end of the week.

Child's name: _____	Week of	Week of	Week of	Week of	Week of
1. Shows an interest in listening to stories read aloud. Seems happy when listening to stories.					
2. Relates events in stories to own life.					
3. Makes requests to go to the school library.					
4. Returns library books and chooses new ones.					
5. Talks about why s/he chose (or likes) a particular book.					
6. Participates in Shared Reading.					
7. Talks about books voluntarily.					
8. Brings books to school to share or to read (if available).					
9. Requests favourite books (e.g., uses an illustration from a book on castles as a model during block play).					
10. Chooses to look at books as an independent activity.					
11. Uses books as references.					
12. Seems happy when engaged in reading activities.					
13. Mentions reading books at home (if available).					
14. Describes books s/he owns or has borrowed.					

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## Procedures for Informal Interview Questions

- 1) Establish a schedule for having informal interviews with each of your students at least once each reporting period. Focusing interviews on children's interest in books and beliefs about reading will also help you understand the home context that influences their reading behaviours.
- 2) Select a few questions from the list below and/or make up your own set of questions with an interested colleague. Do not ask more than 3 or 4 of the questions on any one occasion but ask the same questions of each child in your class.
- 3) Accept whatever the child says without too much additional probing. Show an interest in their ideas. Share comments about your own experiences. Keep the atmosphere informal.
- 4) Record each child's comments during and/or immediately following each interview.

*Interviews with young children should not take too long, need not be held too often, and should have a friendly, relaxed quality. Children will respond best if they do not feel your questions have right and wrong answers, and believe that you are genuinely interested in their ideas.*

### **Sample Informal Interview Questions for Assessing Child's Interest in and Beliefs about Reading**

- What is reading? OR What do people do when they read?
- Do Mommy or Daddy read? Do you think it is useful for them to be able to read? OR Tell me about who you know that likes to read/can read. Tell me why you think people learn to read/need to learn to read.
- Do you like to read? What do you like about reading? OR Tell me how you feel about reading.
- What do you like to read about? OR Tell me what kinds of books you read. Tell me about things that you read besides books. (prompt – comics, signs)
- When do you like to read? Do you ever read at home? OR Tell me about some of the times you like to read and places that you read.
- Do you have a favourite book? Why is it your favourite? OR Tell me about your favourite book/s.
- Who reads to you? Who else reads to you? OR Tell me about the people that read to you.

## Instructional Implications

See the previous suggestions related to the Observation Checklist. Additionally, it will be important for you, as the child's classroom language model, to demonstrate your own interest in books, reading, and other literacy activities. Children who have not observed adults reading in their homes will be supported in their understanding of "what reading is for" through the incorporation of literacy materials into centers and structured social play (see Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play, p. 116 for ideas).

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## Strategies and Activities

### Reading for Enjoyment

*Reading to children daily from a variety of good quality fiction and nonfiction books can support a lifetime love of books and reading. This is especially the case when the teachers choose books well and show their own interest in and enjoyment of the stories, ideas, or use of language in the book being read.*

#### Choosing Fiction Books for Reading Aloud<sup>17</sup>

What qualities make a book appealing to young children and useful to teachers of emerging literacy learners? This question cannot be answered definitively nor solely on an individual book basis. This is because it is the qualities of the **collection** of books that children are exposed to over the course of a school term that is important.

You will want to provide children with:

- variety in terms of books reflecting different genres, topics, and language patterns
- a balance of books focused on familiar experiences and those that extend children's knowledge and vocabularies
- a collection that is inclusive not only of gender, abilities/disabilities, and the cultural and income diversity in your classroom but also of the diversity of the larger community and global society.

In order to ensure that children's initial school experiences of being read to are successful ones that build their confidence and abilities to participate fully, fiction books for emerging literacy learners should reflect many of the following qualities:

- simple themes and familiar concepts
- repetitive patterns and/or cumulative patterns
- rhythmic language
- simple story line
- predictable elements
- good match between text and illustrations.

Additionally, books selected for daily story time need to reflect many of the following qualities if they are to serve their main purpose which is that of enjoyment:

- brevity
- humour, nonsense, or surprise elements
- fresh, well-paced plot
- well-delineated characters
- unique individuals
- authentic outcomes
- richness of language and imagery
- thought-provoking ideas--ones that involve the listener in predicting, imagining, generating alternatives, evaluating choices
- emotional appeal and the engagement of feelings
- creation of concern for the welfare of others (characters "invite" children to join forces with them).

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<sup>17</sup> The selection guidelines offered here were developed with reference to *Choosing Children's Books* (Booth, Swartz, & Zola, 1987); *Using Literature with Young Children* (Coody, 1992); *Canadian Connections: Experiencing Literature with Children* (Jobe & Hart, 1991); and *The Storybook Journey* (McCord, 1995).

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## Reading to Children Daily

In addition to developing a love of books and reading, purposes for reading to children daily include that this practice:

- develops active listening abilities
- increases knowledge of story structure
- aids language and vocabulary development
- develops awareness of the language of books including differences in the language of fiction and nonfiction books
- increases knowledge of basic concepts related to books including the concept of author, illustrator, cover, and title.

### Objectives

Students will demonstrate emerging:

- ability to use listening to understand the meaning and intent of others.
- interest and enjoyment in listening to or reading a variety of literature.
- desire to participate in the discussion of ideas and illustrations in a variety of resources.
- awareness that print and symbols in their environment convey meaning.
- awareness that various cultures, lifestyles, and experiences are portrayed in literature.

### Procedures<sup>18</sup>

- 1) Develop a daily routine. Teachers should establish a practice of reading to the class from a variety of fiction and nonfiction books at least once a day. Use good quality children's literature and read at the same time each day--establishing this as a regular and enjoyable routine. Incorporate reading nonfiction books to children as well--integrate this with current topics in science, social studies, health education, or arts education.

*Keep your emphasis on creating an enjoyable experience and the experience itself will contain the learning. Shared/Guided Reading will offer many opportunities for more formal instruction.*

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<sup>18</sup> See *Reading to Students*, p. 127, in the Elementary Level English Language Arts Curriculum (1992) for other ideas and advice related to this strategy.

*“Today, authors for children are realizing that there is a growing audience for information presented aesthetically and effectively in books geared to the child’s abilities and interests. Adults must be wary of books that purport to present facts but have no appeal or artistic merit. Everything a child reads contributes to his or her picture of what a book can offer.” (Booth, Swartz, & Zola, 1987, p. 79)*

*For children not accustomed to being read to or those who have difficulty concentrating, you need to “get right into the story” and keep it moving, dramatizing the events with vocal and facial expression.*

### Choosing Nonfiction Books for Young Children


Young children are curious about a wide range of phenomena in their world. Information books can respond to their innate curiosity and sense of wonder. Good information books for emerging literacy learners have many of the following qualities. They:

- teach important basic ideas or generalizations
- are accurate
- pay attention to detail
- have succinct texts
- contain clearly-presented material
- refrain from the use of stereotyping and do not distort natural phenomena (for example, giving animals human qualities)
- have visual appeal
- nurture thought and wonder.

- 2) Use your classroom library as a place for additional reading aloud experiences. **Children in the Emerging Phase benefit from being read to more than once every day.** Additional experiences can be added during center time when you or another adult join children in the library center. One way to encourage children to visit the library corner for the purpose of having someone read to them is to use a signal. You could place a lamp in the corner and teach children that when “the reading lamp” is turned on, it means that you or another adult are available to read favourite books to children in that center. You could also use a sign *‘Librarian’ is in/‘Librarian’ is out* to signal that an adult is available for reading to children.
- 3) Enlist support. Additional experiences of being read to (for individuals or small groups of children) can be achieved through the use of teacher associates, older students, or adult volunteers (see *Enlisting Other Adults and Older Students to Read to Small Groups of Students*, p. 60 and *Mentor-supported Literacy Development*, p. 139 for ideas and advice).
- 4) Get right into the story. Explain any new vocabulary that would hinder children’s understanding of the story but keep other instructional comments to a minimum. Remember, the main purpose of the Reading to Children daily strategy is to foster positive attitudes toward books and reading.
- 5) Do not interrupt the flow of the story too often. For children in the Emerging Phase, stopping once only in the midpoint of the story to ask for predictions is probably offering the right balance of children talking with teacher reading.

### Examples of Questions to Elicit Predictions

- “What do you think \_\_\_ is going to do now?”
- “Oh no! How do you think \_\_\_ is going to get out of trouble (or solve this problem)?”
- “What are your ideas about what might happen next?”

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- 6) Invite children's spontaneous comments at the end of the story. Focus such discussions upon children's initial reactions to, and feelings about, the story rather than the more formal types of comprehension questions. Such teacher invitations as "Tell me how you felt about today's story" or "Tell me about a part of the story you especially enjoyed/liked" are useful. As children become able to stay involved for longer periods of time, you can increase the opportunities for their predictions, ideas, and responses.
  - 7)  **Reread favourite books many times.** On a regular basis, ask children what old favourite they would like you to reread. You might have a display adjacent to your gathering place with a group of books that have been read to them previously to help them with their choice. Choose books to reread that you especially enjoy as well.
  - 8) Make the book available to the children for rereading. One of the main reasons that you are reading to children daily is to increase their interest in books. An important practice is to conclude each story time or reading of a nonfiction book by asking a child to take it and place it in the classroom library (or at the center to which the nonfiction book is related). Encourage children to get the book and 'read' it to themselves whenever they have the opportunity.
  - 9) Support reluctant listeners and children who do not appear interested in books. Some children find books very exciting and want to comment about every picture and event. These comments encourage others to join in and when this happens you may find that the flow of the story is being lost. Other children may appear disinterested and move away from the group or distract other children with their behaviour. In both cases, a talk with the children who are disrupting the story is best done on an individual basis. Explain that all the children want to hear the story and ask for their co-operation. When this is not sufficient, you may have to involve the help of a teacher associate or parent volunteer in sitting with the child during the story to offer them support and quiet reminders of their role. Some teachers have found that seeking such children out immediately prior to a story time and giving them some individual attention helps increase their co-operation.

*Asking closed comprehension questions that elicit specific details from the children is not recommended for emerging learners. Avoid possibilities for right/wrong answers and accept all children's comments as valid.*

*"In studies of books that are repeatedly read aloud to the same class, researchers have found that children ask more involved questions, point out different story and illustration features, and increase their comprehension of the story each time the book is read." (Raines & Canady, 1990, p.110).*

<p>k A practice that has been demonstrated to work with children who do not appear interested in books or the library center is to ask them to be the ones to put the book you read that day in the library center. When you involve individual children in this way, make a comment such as "We need to put this book in our classroom library so that it will be available for you to enjoy again. ____, will you put it in a good spot where everyone will be able to find it?"</p>
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## **Enlisting Other Adults and Older Students to Read to Small Groups of Students**

- 1) Collect cushions for this purpose so that the person reading and the child or children being read to can sit together comfortably on the classroom floor, in the hallway, or any other spot that provides a private space. (Some adults may find they are more comfortable on a low chair.)
- 2) Focus these experiences on reading for enjoyment and use good quality children's literature. Choose books that you know from experience are appealing to children.
- 3) Offer a brief training program for teacher associates, reading buddies, or adult volunteers that focuses on advice like the following.

### **Reading to Children in the Emerging Phase of Literacy**

- Make the experience enjoyable, read with expression.
- Read the book through once before reading it to the children in order to decide on a good spot in the book to stop and ask them to predict what they think will happen next.
- Talk with the children about the author and illustrator.
- Read the title and show the cover to the children and ask "What do you think this book is going to be about?"
- Ask children at the end of the book if the story turned out the way they thought it would.

- 4) Record these guidelines on paper and give every volunteer a personal copy.
- 5) Allow time for volunteers to read each book themselves or give them the book they will be reading next at the end of each session.



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### **Enlisting Other Adults and Older Students to Read to Small Groups of Students**

- Start a reading buddy program with another teacher in the school who works with Middle Level students.
- Encourage teachers with older students who are reluctant or struggling readers to support these students in becoming reading buddies. Provide them with the books to be read ahead of time and ask that they be given time and support to practice reading the book, or provide alternative activities related to the book for them to do with their buddy.
- Ask school or school division staff if they would be willing to take turns filling a once-a-week, half-hour time period to read to an individual or small group of children in your class. People to consider asking are: your principal; vice-principal; school secretary; resource room teacher; school librarian; school division language arts, early childhood, or primary consultant. Give everyone who agrees a schedule and tell them that when it is their week, they can decide what the best time will be for them that week and let you know. Be willing to adapt your schedule to theirs.
- Send a note home to parents explaining your “Reading to Children” program and its benefits and ask for volunteers. Stress that they can come in regularly, or occasionally, and for as little as 15 minutes for one session.
- Contact your local high school principal or guidance counselor to see if there are teachers or groups of students who might use visiting your classroom to read to your students as a type of career exploration and/or contact your high school’s career education/work experience teachers.
- If you have a technical institute or university program in your city/town that offers Early Childhood Education classes, day care training, or elementary education, contact the institution to see if there is an instructor who would view this as an opportunity to provide concrete experiences to a class of adult students.
- Contact your local association for retired teachers, local seniors’ centre, and/or local service clubs and ask for volunteers. Provide them with information about the benefits to children and the minimum time commitments.

See also Mentor-supported Literacy Development (p. 139) of this resource for other ways to use adult volunteers effectively.

## **Book Browsing**

### **Objectives**

Students will develop emerging:

- interest and enjoyment in reading a variety of print materials
- select and read materials appropriate to their interests and needs.

### **Materials**

- Browsing Boxes (boxes covered attractively and labeled appropriately and/or plastic bins) containing a variety of:
  - storybooks

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- nonfiction books with lots of pictures (particularly those related to a current topic)
  - books that have been read to children previously
  - children's magazines
  - copies of National Geographic<sup>19</sup> or other interesting materials that combine intriguing pictures with text.
  - Library corner with a variety of books attractively displayed with comfortable furniture including lots of cushions.

### Procedures

*Book browsing is a multi-leveled reading activity in which learners at different stages of development can look at books, approximate reading behaviours, or read books independently.*

- 1) This is a simple strategy that works well with emerging learners. Simply set aside a short time each day for children to interact with books or other reading material of their choice, each other, and you.
- 2) Set out the Browsing Boxes or invite the children to the library corner to choose a book or magazine.
- 3) Show your own enthusiasm by choosing a book or magazine yourself.
- 4) At times, make yourself and any other adults in the room available to talk with children about their book discoveries.
- 5) Remind children about the careful handling of books/magazines and to return them to the same place when they finish with them.
- 6) Choose one child each day to talk to the class about one book or magazine s/he chose, why s/he chose it, something s/he found interesting in it, etc. Keep the atmosphere for these book discussions comfortable and informal. Do not press children to volunteer or elaborate on their ideas if they appear reluctant.

## Responding to Literature: Developing Story Sense

### Objectives

Students will demonstrate emerging:

- desire to express their ideas to teachers and peers in informal settings through speech, drawing, and print efforts
- ability to gather meaning from reading or listening to others read resources that are related to personal interests and experiences
- ability to use sense of story to organize, recall, and make inferences about events
- ability to interpret and create characters
- ability to convey ideas using drawings, scribbles, symbols, and/or letter-like shapes.

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<sup>19</sup> The idea of collecting old copies of National Geographic magazines to include in Browsing Boxes comes from a Saskatchewan teacher who says her children never seem to tire of looking through them and talking about what they see.

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## Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write<sup>20</sup>

### Materials

- A children's book selected for its language quality and appeal to children
- Props and realia (real objects) related to the story in the book (optional)
- Puppets and/or flannel board and flannel board figures related to the story (optional)
- Paper and pencils
- Variety of art materials such as paint, crayons, coloured construction paper, and/or plasticine/modeling clay.

### Procedures

- 1) Plan to use the set of activities in this strategy over a number of days. Reread the book on each of those days to increase familiarity with its characters and sequence of events.
- 2) **Read.** Select a good children's book based upon some of the following criteria:
  - You like it.
  - You think children will like it.
  - It has good illustrations.
  - It contains a predictable story pattern, rhyming words, or some other device that invites children's participation.Read it dramatically, using different voices for different characters; sound effects; gestures; or the props, puppets, or realia that you have collected. All of the devices that you use not only make the story more interesting and understandable for children, but also support their ability to remember the characters and plot. Encourage participation in appropriate moments. Reread the story if the children request this.
- 3) **Talk.** Ask open-ended and aesthetic questions that invite children's individual responses. (Aesthetic questions connect children's feelings and personal experiences to the story.) Questions could include ones like the following.

*This strategy is useful with second language and second dialect learners because it makes use of concrete materials, dramatization, and other means to make new vocabulary understandable.*

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<sup>20</sup> Adapted from *Teaching Language Arts: A student-and-response centered classroom* (Cox, 1999, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.), pages 137-140.

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### Sample Questions

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- Has anything like this ever happened to you? Tell me about it.
- Does this story remind you of any other story you know? Tell me which one and how they are alike.
- What questions do you have about this story?
- Did anything in this story puzzle or surprise you? Tell me about it.
- If you could be one character in this story, which one would you like to be? Tell me your reasons.
- Is there anything in this story you would change if you were the author? Tell me what change you would make. Or, tell me what you would have happen differently. (Give an example the first time you ask this.)

As children are discussing the story, record some of their ideas on a story chart that has the title and author of the story at the top. Read it to students at the conclusion, drawing attention to important words and vocabulary from the story. Leave this chart visible throughout the activities that follow.

k Remember to keep the emphasis on enjoyment, and to conclude your discussion and the recording of it before the children tire. Two or three ideas per discussion may be all that many emerging learners can absorb.

- 4) Act. Engage children in dramatizing the story either through:
- having all the children act out all the parts of the story as you reread it or retell it
  - having individual children take the roles of different characters in the story, and act them out as you and the rest of the children reread/retell it
  - sharing the props you have provided and encouraging individual children to act out their part using the props as needed.
- Tell the children that the flannel board, puppets, or props will be available with the book in the library corner for their own retellings.
- 5) Draw. Allow children to choose from a variety of art materials and to make a picture of any part of the story that they wish. Circulate around the room as children are making their pictures, and talk to them about the story and how it relates to their picture.
- 6) Write. Ask every child to print something on their picture even if it is only their name. Encourage them to use the story chart that you created and add some other words to their picture. Encourage all writing efforts; support students' use of invented spelling, the story chart, your Word Wall or other environmental print, and obtaining help from their peers. Display the completed drawings with print or make them into a class book.

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## Retelling as an Instructional Strategy

### Materials

- Appealing storybooks containing a problem and resolution
- Chalkboard or experience chart
- Props and/or flannel board pieces related to the story used for instruction (optional).

### Procedures

*When teachers model how to tell a story and provide children with opportunities to discuss demonstrations of the retelling of a familiar story, teachers are providing children with a means to increase their “story sense” or understanding of the parts of a story and how they are related.*

- 1) Choose an appealing story with a problem and its resolution (or a goal and its achievement). Read the story to yourself and plan your retelling by deciding on the most important events to include, and which details to leave out.
- 2) Read the story once to your class or small group. Show students the book and read it through. Limit your questioning and discussion, and just let everyone enjoy the story for its own sake.
- 3) Model retelling. The next day, tell the children you are going to tell them the story from memory without using the book. Show them the book, and then put it away and retell the story with enthusiasm and expression. Sometimes you may want to use flannel board pieces, props, or realia (real objects and materials from the story such as, mittens or grains of wheat) to add interest and make important details more memorable. Flannel board pieces are also useful to strengthen children’s abilities to sequence the episodes (important events) in the story.
- 4) Demonstrate your planning. Using the chalkboard or an experience chart, show the children the parts of the story you wanted to remember. For emerging learners, you may simply want to focus on the characters, main events, and their general sequence. Write “Character/s”, “Beginning”, “Middle”, and “End”. Explain to students that the characters are whom the book is about and ask students to help you recall the characters as you write them down. Tell students you had to think about how the book started so you would know how to begin. Write down one or two sentences about what happened first under the heading “Beginning” and read them, or have the children read them with you. Incorporate some of the language used in the book in your sentences (key vocabulary, descriptive words, repetitive patterns, etc.). Do the same for the middle and end of the story. Talk about the idea that telling a story is a way to entertain people and get others interested in reading the book. Explain that this means you want to tell the story with expression and use the language of the book, if the book had interesting words or patterns.

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- 5) Ask one of the children to place the book and any props you used with it in the library centre, and suggest that they may want to use these to retell the story to each other during Center Time.

### Suggestions for Older Students<sup>21</sup>

To extend the abilities of older learners related to the development of story sense, you may want to focus on the concepts of setting, plot (particularly the central problem), and theme in addition to the main episodes and sequence. Use a procedure such as the following:

- 1) **Setting.** Describe the setting as where and when the story took place and demonstrate the ways this is often incorporated into the first sentences. For example, *Once upon a time; Long ago and far away; One dark and stormy night; In a dark, dark, wood; or Something was wrong at our house.* Remind students to pay attention to the setting when they read or when you read a book together. Ask them to note and share interesting ways that authors tell about the setting of a book. Collect examples of opening sentences that give information about where or when the story took place, and write them on a chart labeled “Setting”.
- 2) **Plot.** Describe the plot as what happened in the story and give examples of ways the plot usually revolves around a central problem. Do this through referring to the central problems in books with which students are familiar. Pick a book they have read and talk with the students about:
  - an important problem in the story (there may be more than one), why the problem was important, and how it was solved, OR
  - identify one character in the book and ask “What problem did \_\_\_ have? Why was it important? How did \_\_\_ resolve it?”
- 3) **Theme.** Choose a book familiar to the students that has a recognizable moral or message such as, the message in the *Little Red Hen* that suggests that “If you want to enjoy the rewards, you should help with the work.” Ask a question such as, “What lesson did the animals in this book need to learn?”

Repeat this procedure with other familiar books, offering guidance as necessary. You may want to focus your instruction around a unit on fables, legends, or fairy tales as most of these have recognizable moral content.

*You can develop young children’s sense of “true stories” and how to tell them as well. Model this by telling the class about an event in your life that posed a problem for you and how you resolved the problem. Use a noticeable beginning, middle, and end to your story such as “Once when I was little, I got lost in my own neighborhood. I really wanted to go to the store all by myself so I .... The next thing I did was .... Finally, I recognized my own street. I was so happy to get home and I didn’t try to do that again for a long, long, time!” Invite children to tell a true story of a problem they had and how they solved it, during Shared Language time. Write “Characters”, “Beginning”, “Middle”, and “End” on the board or a chart, and fill these categories in as the child tells her or his story. Relate the problems in your own or the children’s stories to ones in familiar books. Sometimes focus upon a “wish” instead of a “problem”.*

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<sup>21</sup> “Older” refers to children of ages 7 and older, and/or those in grades two and up.

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# Learning from Books

## Objectives

Students will develop emerging:

- awareness that print and symbols convey meaning
- ability to attend to print, in addition to pictures, when read to by others
- ability to understand and use directionality of print
- ability to recognize that punctuation guides the reader and helps to clarify meaning.

## Using Big Books and Predictable Books to Develop Concepts of Print

This strategy is intended to support children’s understanding of the following concepts of print:

- letter
- word
- sentence
- punctuation.

Predictable books have many other uses as well. See Mini-units Using Predictable Books (p. 142) for ideas related to a range of reading and writing activities.

## Materials

- Variety of books/Big Books that make use of predictable patterns (see the chart on page 69 for suggestions)
- Blank sentence strips, word cards, scissors, and masking tape
- Chart paper and markers
- Pocket chart.

## Procedures

- 1) Read the book you have selected to the children, inviting them to join in with you if they think they know what the book is going to say next. Children often do this spontaneously without always being able to talk about the pattern they have identified.
- 2) Each time you reread the book, make use of a form of “Oral Cloze” by leaving specific words out. For example, if the book makes use of rhyme, stop before the rhyming word and wait for the children to supply it. (In a book that uses a repetitive sentence pattern such as “*This is the house that Jack built*”, children could be encouraged to supply the entire sentence.) Draw their attention to what they are

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doing in each case by saying things such as, “Yes, the **word I stopped at (or left out) is Jack.**”, or “Good for you, you remember the whole **sentence.**”

- 3) You can vary the words that you omit from a repetitive sentence pattern with each subsequent rereading--for example, moving from omitting very predictable words such as *Jack* to omitting more difficult ones such as *this* and *the*. In this way, you are encouraging students’ use of syntactic knowledge.
- 4) Write some or all of the text, from the book you are using, on chart paper. Use the chart to draw attention to concepts of print through activities like the following. (If your predictable book is in Big Book format and does not contain too much text, you can use the book instead of a chart in order to do these activities.)

#### Sample Activities

- Draw children’s attention to the appearance of the sentences and words through framing them, or moving a pointer along them as you read (e.g., find “big” words and “small” words).
- Count the number of letters in a few selected words.
- Point out the spaces between words and count the words in one or two sentences.
- Show students the features of a sentence that help the reader know where it begins and ends (capitalization of first letter of first word, periods, question marks, or exclamation marks at the end).
- Count the number of sentences on one page or on a two-page spread.
- Frame one sentence and ask students how many words it has in it, or frame a word and ask students who think they can read it.
- Write some words and or sentences, that are repeated frequently in the book, on cards. Hold up one card at a time and ask “Who can find another word (or sentence) just like this one?” Explain that words that say the same thing look the same or have the same letters in the same order. Explain that sentences that say the same thing contain the same words in the same order.
- Ask the children to read with you.
- Reread your chart or Big Book more than once. Turn more and more of the reading over to the children.

- 5) Make sentence strips for each of the sentences on the chart. Distribute them and ask the children to come up to the chart when they think the sentence being read is the same as the one on their sentence strip. Have them place their sentence strip under the sentence they feel it matches. Show the children how to compare the sentence word for word in a left to right progression. After you have done this once or twice, just have the children match their sentence with the one on the chart without doing the word for word matching and ask the children “Is s/he right? Do they look the same?” Stop before the end of the chart if the children begin to tire, and tell those who did not have a turn that you will include them next time. Write their names on the board.

*Watch for predictable texts/Big Books that contain letter patterns such as “EI EI O” in “Old MacDonald had a farm” and “B-I-N-G-O” in the song “Bingo”. Pages or charts that contain such text offer excellent opportunities to draw attention to the differences and similarities between letters and words.*



- 6) Follow this lesson up on another occasion by having children cut their sentence up into the words it contains. Demonstrate once if necessary. Ask students to work in pairs to scramble their words and then put them back in the order of the sentence they were given.
- 7) Write words from the predictable book onto word cards and distribute them to children. Follow the same procedure as the one described for sentence strips but do letter by letter matching and have students cut words into letters.

### Suggestions for Predictable Books

To order books on this list which are not available in your school division, contact the Learning Resources Distribution Centre, 1500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, REGINA SK S4P 3V7, telephone 787-5987, fax 787-9747, toll free fax in Saskatchewan 1-800-668-9747.

Predictable books that come in a Big Book format are marked with an asterisk (\*).

*Predictable books come in a variety of types including ones that are centred on a familiar sequence (numbers, days, months), ones that contain recurring phrases or patterns, ones that have rhyming patterns, and ones that contain cumulative patterns. All of these types are represented in the Suggestions for Predictable Books. Those listed represent but a few of the wealth of predictable books now available. Share titles of favourites that you use, which are not on the list, with your colleagues!*

<i>A Dark Dark Tale</i> (Brown)	<i>Over in the Meadow</i> (Keats)
<i>Animals Should Definitely Not Act Like People</i> (Barrett)	<i>Pierre</i> (Sendak)
<i>Are You My Mother?</i> (Eastman)	<i>Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?</i> (Martin)
<i>Ask Mr. Bear</i> (Flack)	<i>Rooster's Off to See the World</i> (Carle)
* <i>Bingo</i> (traditional song, illustrated by Roberts)	<i>Small Green Snake</i> (Moore)
<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?</i> (Martin)	<i>Suddenly!</i> (McNaughton)
<i>Caps for Sale</i> (Slobodkina)	<i>Teeny Tiny</i> (Bennett & De Paola)
<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom!</i> (Martin & Archambault)	<i>The Braggin' Dragon</i> (Martin & Archambault)
* <i>Chicken Soup with Rice</i> (Sendak)	<i>The Cake that Mack Ate</i> (Robart)
<i>Cookie's Week</i> (Ward)	<i>The Cat on the Mat</i> (Wildsmith)
<i>Dilly Dilly Piccalilli</i> (Livingston)	<i>The Doorbell Rang</i> (Hutchins)
<i>Drummer Hoff</i> (Emberley)	<i>The Gift</i> (Prater)
<i>Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed</i> (retold by Christelow)	<i>The Good Bad Cat</i> (Antle)
<i>Goodnight Moon</i> (Wise Brown)	<i>The House that Jack Built</i> (Stevens)
<i>Go Tell Aunt Rhody</i> (Aliko)	<i>The Little Engine that Could</i> (retold by Piper)
<i>Hattie and the Fox</i> (Fox)	<i>The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything</i> (Williams)
* <i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> (Numeroff)	<i>The Little Red Hen</i> (Galdone)
<i>I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly</i> (Hawkins & Hawkins)	<i>The Napping House</i> (Wood)
<i>I Love Ladybugs</i> (Allen)	<i>The Other Bone</i> (Young)
<i>In My Backyard</i> (De Vries)	<i>The Piggy in a Puddle</i> (Pomerantz)
<i>Is Your Mama a Llama?</i> (Guarino)	<i>The Rose in my Garden</i> (Lobel)
<i>It Looked Like Spilt Milk</i> (Shaw)	<i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i> (Brown)
<i>Just Like Daddy</i> (Asch)	<i>The Teeny, Tiny Woman</i> (Galdone)
<i>King Bidgood's in the Bathtub</i> (Wood)	* <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> (Carle)
<i>Mary Wore Her Red Dress</i> (Peek)	<i>The Wheels on the Bus</i> (Kovalski)
<i>Millions of Cats</i> (Gag)	* <i>Today is Monday</i> (Carle)
<i>Mr. Gumpy's Outing</i> (Burningham)	<i>Two Bad Ants</i> (Van Allsburg)
* <i>Mrs. Wishy-Washy</i> (Cowley)	<i>We're Going on a Bear Hunt</i> (Rosen)
<i>Mud Puddle</i> (Munsch)	<i>What do You Do with a Kangaroo?</i> (Mayer)
	<i>Where's Spot?</i> (Hill)
	<i>Whose Mouse are You?</i> (Kraus)

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## Walk the Sentences

### Materials

- A favourite predictable book
- Heavy paper
- Felt markers
- Scissors and tape.

### Procedures

- 1) Make several very large sentence strips, from one of the predictable books that children especially enjoy, using bristol board or heavy paper.
- 2) Clear a floor space and tape the sentences securely to the floor with one sentence under the other (leaving enough space between them so that the children can walk in the space).
- 3) Invite children to walk the sentences in the right order, starting at the first word of the first sentence, moving from left to right and top to bottom and reading every word as they come to it.
- 4) Remind them not to walk backward along the sentences, by demonstrating what it would look like and sound like if the sentences were read backwards. Do this by walking backward along the sentences and reading the words in reverse order as you walk. Talk about the idea of “nonsense” as it applies to language that does not make any sense or is not understandable.
- 5) Have children hop the sentences sometimes.
- 6) Draw attention to any punctuation, encouraging children to pause briefly at the commas and longer at each period.
- 7) You might want to mark the first word with a red marker to remind the children where to start or use arrows to support them in establishing the “left to right” habit.

*This simple activity can be used to teach left to right progression and to develop the concepts of “sense” and “nonsense”.*

## Using Big Books to Develop Basic Book Knowledge

### Materials

- A variety of Big Books.

### Procedures

- 1) Develop children’s basic book knowledge throughout your reading and rereading of Big Books by drawing attention to:
  - the front and the back of the book
  - the cover and title
  - the author and illustrator

- the difference in appearance between pictures and words
  - the way to read from left to right and top to bottom.
- 2) Have children demonstrate the features of a book while other children observe. Ask questions like the following.

### Sample Questions

- Who can show us the front of the book? The back of the book? How can you tell the front from the back?
- Who knows where we might find the title of this book?
- Who can find a picture inside this book? An illustration?
- Who can show us where there are some words in this book?
- Can anyone show us where we should start reading on this page?
- Who can show us how to turn the pages of this book in the right order?  
(These questions can also be used as an assessment tool.)

### Big Book Suggestions

To order Big Books on this list which are not available in your school division, contact the Learning Resources Distribution Centre, 1500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, REGINA SK S4P 3V7, telephone 787-5987, fax 787-9747, toll free fax in Saskatchewan 1-800-668-9747.

<i>Bingo</i> (Roberts)	<i>Mama, Do You Love Me?</i> (Joose)
<i>Bugs</i> (Parker & Wright)	<i>The Mitten</i> (Brett)
<i>The Carrot Seed</i> (Krauss)	<i>Mrs. Wishy-Washy</i> (Cowley)
<i>Chicken Soup with Rice</i> (Sendak)	<i>Mrs. Wishy-Washy's Tub</i> (Cowley)
<i>Clap your Hands</i> (Cauley)	<i>My Picture Dictionary</i> (Snowball & Green)
<i>Clifford the Firehouse Dog</i> (Bridwell)	<i>Oh No!</i> (Scarffe)
<i>Cookie's Week</i> (Ward)	<i>Old MacDonald Had a Farm</i> (Pearson)
<i>Crunchy-Munchy</i> (Parkes)	<i>One Cold, Wet Night</i> (Cowley)
<i>The Doorbell Rang</i> (Hutchins)	<i>Pumpkin Pumpkin</i> (Titherington)
<i>An Extraordinary Egg</i> (Lionni)	<i>The PM Library Alphabet Book</i> (Giles, Smith, & Randell)
<i>The Farm Concert</i> (Cowley)	<i>Rosie's Walk</i> (Hutchins)
<i>Giant Dinosaurs</i> (Rowe)	<i>Row, Row, Row Your Boat</i> (Muller)
<i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i> (Carle)	<i>The Scrubbing Machine</i> (Cowley)
<i>Hairy Bear</i> (Cowley)	<i>The Snowy Day</i> (Keats)
<i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> (Numeroff)	<i>Something From Nothing</i> (Gilman)
<i>Itch! Itch!</i> (Annie-Jo)	<i>Splishy-Splishy</i> (Cowley)
<i>In a Dark, Dark Wood</i> (Ross)	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> (Carle)
<i>The Jacket I Wear in the Snow</i> (Neitzel)	<i>Today is Monday</i> (Carle)
<i>The Jigaree</i> (Cowley)	<i>To Town</i> (Cowley)
<i>The Jumbaroo</i> (Cowley)	<i>Who Lives in the Sea?</i> (James)
<i>Jump, Frog, Jump!</i> (Kalan)	<i>Wishy-Washy Day</i> (Cowley)
<i>The Little Overcoat</i> (Goodman)	
<i>The Little Red Hen</i> (Galdone)	



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## Chapter Three: Learning About Sounds and Letters

Foundations of the Emerging Phase emphasized in this chapter are:

- ❖ Strengthening auditory and visual discrimination
- ❖ Developing phonemic awareness
- ❖ Recognizing and naming letters
- ❖ Developing knowledge of letter-sound relationships.

The activities in this chapter are divided into four sections. The first three sections describe activities that are *foundational* to the development of graphophonic abilities. These foundations include the development of:

- general listening abilities
- phonemic awareness
- letter recognition and letter naming.

The fourth section describes activities and strategies for development of the graphophonic cueing system itself--that is, for putting together aural, oral, and visual cues to decode unknown words.

*The activities in this chapter are arranged from simple to complex. While many can be used with children from Pre-K to grade three, those not appropriate for a particular developmental level are specified as such.*

### Definitions of Central Terminology

**Graphophonics** refers to the relationship between sounds and letters. It might more accurately be described as the relationship between sounds in speech and spelling patterns in print. This is because sounds are frequently conveyed by patterns of letters such as the *oo* in *moon* or the *augh* in *caught*. Many people refer to the study of these letter-sound relationships as **phonics**.

**Phonemic awareness** is awareness that speech is comprised of separate sound elements, and the ability to segment spoken sentences and words into their constituent parts. It does not involve letter recognition (graphic knowledge). However, for the purposes of multi-sensory instruction, print may be involved in some phonemic awareness activities.

Researchers have found it useful to teach **onsets and rimes** as part of word study. An **onset** is the consonant, blend, or digraph before the vowel in a syllable or one-syllable word (for example, the *b* in *back*). A **rime** is the vowel and any consonant after it (the *ack* in *back*). Onsets and rimes are used in the creation of word families.

A **phoneme** is an individual sound component of a word (for example, *back* has three phonemes or sounds *b*, *a*, *ck* are the letters that represent each sound).

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The first sets of activities are ones that can be used throughout the day. They can fit easily into regular classroom routines such as Shared Language,<sup>22</sup> Morning Meeting, or circle time or they can be used as short whole class foci before recesses or dismissal times. The stress in the last half of the chapter is on activities that can be integrated into units of study and other meaningful contexts. Suggestions for integration are given under the heading “Contextual Integration Possibilities” or are included in narrow margins.

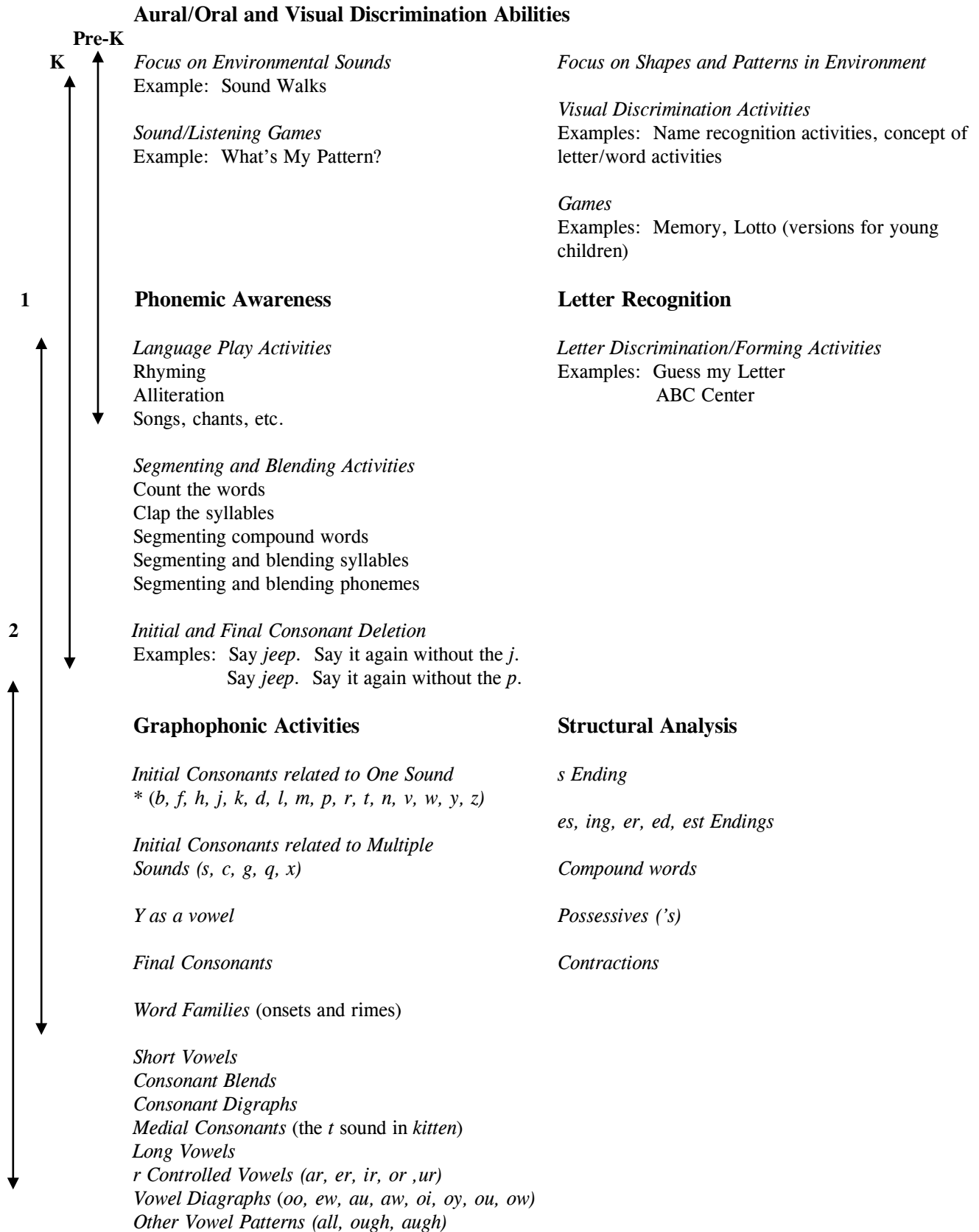
Many possibilities exist for the sequencing of graphophonic instruction. Experienced teachers develop effective sequencing over time and adapt their sequence to meet the needs of individuals and groups. The sequence that follows is one suggestion only. It is created with reference to knowledge of child development and to the importance of incorporating phonemic awareness and graphophonic instruction into meaningful contexts. One example of such incorporation would be to sequence the teaching of initial consonant sounds partly around the initial consonants of your students’ first names. With this practice, you might teach the *sh* digraph informally before all initial consonants had been learned if you had one or more students whose first name started with *Sh*.

*The activities in this chapter are designed to be short, enjoyable, and to maximize student participation--thus, making whole class instruction feasible in most cases. There may be some situations, however, where smaller groups are needed in order to ensure that all students are benefiting from instruction. The activities can also be used easily by teacher associates, parent volunteers, or older students working with small groups.*

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<sup>22</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 78, for a description of this routine.

## Suggested Instructional Sequence for Phonemic Awareness and Graphophonics



\* Experienced teachers suggest that *b, d, and p*, and *m* and *n* should not be taught together.

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## Assessment Tools and Techniques

*The assessment tools in this section are not readiness tests. As in all aspects of emerging literacy, development of phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge can proceed at the same time as children's involvement in reading and writing activities.*

### Phonemic Awareness

#### Procedures

- 1) Use the sample instrument on the following page or design a similar one to use in making instructional decisions for children in grades one to three. Teachers can add to, or substitute, other words for the ones used on the sample form.
- 2) With young children, keep each individual assessment period short. You may find it best to do only one section each time.
- 3) Assess children:
  - at the beginning of the year in grade one and continue to assess periodically those students who cannot complete all the tasks correctly.
  - at any point in the year if you have new students in grades one to three.
  - toward the end of the year in kindergarten if they are able to participate confidently in phonemic awareness activities.
- 4) Keep the procedures informal. Introduce the assessment as you would a language game.
- 5) Stop if students show any sign of frustration.

#### Instructional Implications

Younger students who have not developed phonemic awareness as a natural result of informal instruction require greater periods of time devoted to language play, listening to stories that feature rhyme and alliteration, and learning songs, poems, and chants. These opportunities can be incorporated into large group activities during a Shared Language routine (see [Exploring Sound Patterns](#), p. 85) and into small group instruction that focuses students' attention on particular aspects of phonemic awareness (see [Phonemic Awareness Activities](#), pp. 84-92).

In large and small group instruction, make use of a whole, to part, to whole process to the greatest extent possible. See [Mini-units Using Predictable Books](#) (page 142) for further guidance on the design of whole, to part, to whole activities.



## Phonemic Awareness: Sample Diagnostic Assessment Form

**Directions:** Give the child an example of each task before proceeding with a new category. You may need to give two examples with some children. Accept all responses. Do not proceed to the next category if a child cannot answer any of the items correctly in the category that preceded it. Place a check in the corresponding column for each item the child answers correctly.

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Awareness of Rhyme

(Say "yes" if these two words rhyme.

Say "no" if they don't.)

1. cat fat
2. bike hike
3. go door
4. come run
5. candle handle
6. man moon

(Tell me a word that rhymes with ...)

1. hat
2. cake
3. pet
4. jump
5. kitten

### Awareness of Alliteration

(Say "yes" if these words start with the same sound.

Say "no" if they don't.)

1. big balloon
2. come colour
3. funny morning

(I'll say a word and you tell me one that starts with the same sound.)

1. dog
2. silly
3. huge

### Ability to Blend and Segment Words

(I'm going to say some words in a special way by stretching out the sounds. Put the sounds together and tell me what word they make.)

1. p..i..n
2. j..o..b
3. s..a..t
4. sh...oe
5. th..a..t

(I'll say a word and you tell me the sounds you hear in it. You stretch the word into its sounds.)

1. keep
2. red
3. bump
4. snow
5. frost

	Date	Date	Date
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2.			
3.			
4.			
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## Letter Recognition, Letter Formation, and Letter-sound Knowledge

### Procedures

- 1) Make multiple copies of a one-page form such as the sample on the following page. It should incorporate all the letters of the alphabet in both their upper and lower case forms and have space for children to copy each letter beside the ones on the form.
- 2) Use as a quick assessment at the beginning of the year or with new students in grades one to three.
- 3) The form can be used three ways:
  - to assess children’s ability to recognize letters that you name.
  - to assess children’s ability to name letters.
  - to assess children’s ability to form letters.If you ask children to name all the letters that they know, you may also get a sense of their abilities to track print (i.e., read from left to right and top to bottom).
- 4) Ordinarily, you would limit your assessment to one of these foci each time. With older children, you might do an assessment of all of their abilities. In this case, you would need three copies of the form.
- 5) Date the form each time you use it and record the type of assessment undertaken (e.g., letter naming). Store it in each child’s assessment portfolio. This will give you a record of progress to share with parents and information for making instructional decisions to support children’s further development.

### Instructional Implications

The list of strategies that follow are appropriate for use with children from mid-kindergarten to grade three who need support in developing letter-sound knowledge. With younger students, these strategies and activities would be used as whole class activities. Older students may require the additional support offered by one-on-one practice provided by a teacher, teacher associate, or trained adult volunteer. In all cases, continue to involve students in reading and writing for real purposes.

- 🔑 Language Experience Approach, p. 42
- 🔑 Exploring Sound Patterns, p. 85
  - “What’s in a Name?”, p. 94
  - Guess my Letter, p. 97
  - Ways to Use the “Alphabet Song”, p. 99
  - One-letter Books, p. 100
- 🔑 Using Alphabet Books, p. 102
- 🔑 Making Words, p. 104
  - Morning Message, p. 132
- 🔑 Interactive Writing, p. 153.

*Be sure to continue to use language play and the reading of many alphabet books and books that feature rhyme and alliteration, with older students experiencing delays in development of phonemic awareness and graphophonic knowledge.*

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## Sample Multi-use Diagnostic Assessment Form for Letter-sound Knowledge

**Directions:** Record date and type of assessment. See below for instructions for each type.

**Letter Recognition:** Ask child, "What are these?" Say, "I'm going to say the names of some of these letters. Will you see if you can find and point to the letter I say?" Circle correct responses without comment.

**Letter Naming:** Ask child, "What are these?" Say, "Can you tell me the names of any of these letters?" Allow the child to approach this task in her/his own way. S/he may either:

- point to one letter at a time in a sequential fashion and name it
- point only to letters s/he knows in a random fashion
- call the letters by their names, or identify them by one of the sounds the letter makes or a word that starts with that letter.

Accept all responses and record how the child approached the task. Circle all correct responses without comment.

**Letter Formation:** Say, "Print as many of these letters as you can. I'll show where to make each letter." Assist the child in finding the spot beside each letter as necessary. Stop when the child appears tired or frustrated. Appreciate her/his efforts.

**Letter-sound Knowledge:** Say, "I'm going to say some words and I want you to try to find the letter that it begins with. Point to the letter you think it begins with." Allow the child to use either upper or lower case letters, or both. Use words that start with initial consonant sounds that have been taught. When you have also taught final and medial consonant sounds, repeat this procedure asking children to find the letter the word ends with or the letter for the middle sound in the word you say.

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Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_

Response to question: "What are these?"

T S B G O A D M R

H K L W F P Y C E

Z I Q V N X U J

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t s b g o a d m r

h k l w f p y c e

z i q v n x u j

Number of correct responses: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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## Strategies and Activities

### General Listening Activities

#### Objectives

*The listening activities described in this section are intended to develop auditory perception and, at the same time, to establish key concepts needed for phonemic awareness and graphophonic abilities. These include the concepts of “first”, “middle”, “last”, and left to right sequencing. They offer young children, and older children needing more support, opportunities to develop listening skills through participation in concrete experiences.*

Students will:

- demonstrate emerging use of oral language to bring meaning to what they observe, feel, and hear
- demonstrate emerging interest in participating in the exploration of the patterns, sounds, and rhymes of the English language during listening, speaking, and shared reading and writing activities
- demonstrate emerging ability to use listening to understand the meaning and intent of others
- develop emerging abilities to distinguish similarities and differences in sounds.

#### Sound Walks

##### Materials

- Writing/recording materials (optional).

##### Procedures

- 1) Tell the class members or smaller group that you will be taking them on a “sound walk” and that everyone will have to be very quiet in order to hear all the sounds around them.
- 2) Establish a purpose for the listening beginning with ideas like “Listen and see how many different sounds you can hear” and “See if you can tell who or what is making each sound.”

k Remember, it’s not just what you do, it’s **how** you do it. Put the stress on enjoyment, your enthusiasm will be contagious.

- 3) As children are confident and competent with this focus, ask them to listen for and try to remember the **softest or quietest sound** and/or the **loudest sound** they heard. Another important focus, one that will be helpful in the development of phonemic awareness is to ask them to listen for the **first sound** they can hear when you signal them to begin listening. Also ask them to notice, and try and remember, the **last sound** they heard before you signaled that the listening part of the walk was over.

- 
- 4) Other good foci for listening include asking children to listen for qualities of sounds such as pitch. Be sure to demonstrate such sound qualities in the classroom first. Additional foci for listening include:
- the highest and lowest-pitched sound they heard
  - a sound made by something that was moving (Did it sound like it was moving closer or farther away?)
  - a sound that came from above or over their heads
  - sounds made by animals
  - sounds made by humans
  - a sound that was repeated many times
  - a sound that was only heard once
  - sounds that came from under their skin (their breathing, heartbeat, stomach rumbles).
- 5) Tell the children you will be asking them to talk about all the sounds they heard when you return to the classroom. Keep your walk relatively short, particularly with pre-schoolers. Have children pause in their walking from time to time in order to hear the sounds more clearly.
- 6) On returning to the classroom, have students describe the sounds they heard. They may simply name what they heard such as a bird or a car. Ask students to talk about the qualities of the sound as well-- "loud/soft", "screeching", "booming", etc. Accept all responses. Provide new vocabulary or elaborate on ideas as appropriate without drawing out the discussion unduly.

*Sound walks would fit well with the Arts Education music unit, Learning to Hear. This is the first music unit for each of grades one to five. At each grade level, this unit contains many other suggestions for good listening activities.*

### **Variations**

- Vary the walks to locations that offer different possibilities for sounds. Outdoor walks could be to the school playground with each child standing or sitting in a designated area. Have students close their eyes for better concentration. Establish a signal such as two loud claps for when the listening time begins and ends. Alternatively, you can take children on a sound walk around the immediate school neighborhood, do an indoors sound tour of the school, or you can designate some part of a nature walk or field trip as a "sound walk".
- Children can carry journals, notebooks, or small chalkboards with them in order to record the sounds they hear through drawing, writing, or invented symbols (a form of rebus technique).
- On returning to the classroom, teachers and students can compose lists of sounds they heard, make experience charts about their sound walk, or add words from their sound walk to a Word Wall (see page 122 of this resource for a description of this activity).

*Sound walks could be used in conjunction with the Grade Two Science unit on weather or the model unit on weather in the Arts Education curriculum.*

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## Contextual Integration Possibilities

- The two model units in the Kindergarten curriculum, *Children First*, include sound walks as part of their suggested activities.
- A sound walk could follow the reading of books about animal sounds, city sounds, etc.
- A sound walk could become the focus for making a classroom book about sounds with pairs of children each contributing one page. Pages could use an alternating sentence pattern such as “We heard a soft sound. It was a \_\_\_\_\_.” “We heard a loud sound. It was a \_\_\_\_\_.”

## “Which Sound Did You Hear First?”

### Materials

- Three or four simple rhythm instruments such as sticks, cymbals, bells, or triangles
- Sets of cards, one for each student. Each set would contain individual cards depicting each instrument you will be using.

### Procedures

- 1) Lay out your instruments on a table at the front of the room. Give each child a set of cards. The first time you work with the cards and instruments, allow some time for children to become familiar with their sounds and names. For example, you could have individual children take turns demonstrating the sounds that can be made with each instrument, while other children find the card that goes with that instrument and name it.
- 2) Tell students that you are going to play a listening game with the instruments and that they will need to close their eyes for part of this game. (Blindfolds could also be used.)
- 3) The game would also work well with a second adult or a student helper present. In this case, the table with the instruments would be behind the children so that their backs are to it and they need not close their eyes. While you select and play the instruments, the other adult or student helper could be at the front facing the children and observing which cards they select each round.
- 4) The game begins with children’s eyes closed. Make a sound with one instrument. Ask children to open their eyes and hold up the card that matches the sound they heard. As the game progresses, you can play two sounds while children’s eyes are closed and ask them to hold up the card for the sound they heard **first**. Follow this by asking them to hold up the card for the sound they heard **second** or **last**.

*Games like this one strengthen children’s understanding of first, middle, and last sounds and should be used with very young children (or older ones lacking phonemic awareness) before moving to the more abstract task of segmenting the sounds within words.*

- 
- 5) Eventually, you will want to play three and four sounds in a sequence and have children arrange their cards in the order in which they heard the sounds. (Demonstrate left to right ordering as needed.)
  - 6) Remember to keep each occasion that you play this game short and enjoyable. Quit while the children still want to “play it again”.

*“Which sound did you hear first?” could be incorporated into the Arts Education music unit Learning to Hear or used following the reading of a book about instruments of the orchestra.*

### **Variations**

- Rather than reproduce a set of cards yourself, give children blank cards and have them each draw their own pictures of the instruments you will be using--one instrument per card. You could have them include the initial consonant of each instrument’s name as well.
- To keep the game interesting and challenging, tell the students that they must be very good listeners because sometimes you will try to trick them. Tell them you will need a student helper in order to make the game harder. Take the student helper aside for instructions, then using the helper for one instrument, play two instruments at once. Ask students to hold up the card for the sound that they heard. See if any of them hold up two cards.
- Continue to vary the game including new sequences. For example, play two sounds, followed by a single sound, followed by a second single sound. Ask, “Did you hear the two sounds together at the beginning, the middle, or the end of my sequence? Arrange your cards in the order in which you heard the sounds. Where two sounds were heard at the same time, put those cards on top of each other.”
- Try playing three sounds together without enlisting a third helper!
- Later in the year, you could bring a new set of instruments in and have children make the cards for them. They could put the names of the instruments on the cards as well as, or instead of, drawing the pictures.

*A follow up to the reading of such books could include adding instrument words to a Word Wall or a class research project involving trying to find an instrument for each letter of the alphabet and putting together an alphabet book. This project would provide opportunities for studying the instruments of various cultures as well.*

### **“What’s My Pattern?”**

#### **Materials**

- Hands and pencils.

#### **Procedures**

- 1) Tell children you are going to play a listening game where you will clap or tap a pattern and they should wait, and then on your signal, try to duplicate the pattern. The easiest way to signal that you are finished and that it is their turn, is simply to hold your hand out to students without saying anything--for example, clap a short sequence and then motion in students’ direction with one hand.

- 
- 2) With very young children, begin by making one clap or tap only and ask, “How many sounds did you hear?” Gradually increase the difficulty and decrease your questioning.

*Use clapping or tapping patterns to work on the concept of “same and different”. Clap or tap a short sequence and ask an individual student to make one the same as yours. Follow this by asking another student to make one different from yours. Vary your request each time.*

This is a good activity for sharpening students’ attentiveness at any point in the day.

- 3) When students know the game, do not give any advance notice, simply clap a pattern and motion in their direction. You might call this “Drop everything and clap”.

For more listening activities, refer to the Arts Education curriculum guides for Grades One to Three, 1991. The suggested activities for Units One, Two, and Three all contain many good listening games and explorations.

## Phonemic Awareness Activities

### Rhyming and Alliteration

*The use of alliteration (especially repetition of words starting with the same consonant) is also a relatively easy starting point to phonemic awareness. Children develop these two foundations for phonemic awareness through exposure to literature and informal activities that involve children in conscious recognition and use of these sound patterns.*

Research suggests that the easiest forms of phonemic awareness for most children to acquire are those of rhyming and alliteration. Awareness of when words rhyme and how to create rhyming words is an important prerequisite to the use of rimes or word families (word endings with the same graphophonic pattern) to decode unfamiliar words.

#### Examples of Word Families for use with Emerging Learners

at cat fat sat rat mat  
an can Dan fan man pan ran tan  
bent dent sent tent went  
in bin din fin sin tin win  
book cook look took  
bun fun run sun

*The phonemic awareness activities described in the following pages are arranged from informal to more formal activities. They can be used as whole class or small group activities with students in the emerging phase from pre-kindergarten to grade three. The informal activities would be the only ones used with many of the children in Pre-K and kindergarten.*

### Word Segmentation

Many children also develop the ability to segment words into their component sounds without more formal instruction. For those who do not, some direct instruction with individuals or small groups will be necessary. As much as possible, these lessons should be followed by opportunities for students to use their developing phonemic awareness skills in real contexts.

### Objectives

Students will:

- develop emerging abilities to distinguish similarities and differences in words and sounds



- 
- demonstrate emerging interest in participating in the exploration of the patterns, sounds, and rhymes of the English language during listening, speaking, and shared reading and writing activities.

## Exploring Sound Patterns

### Materials

- Nursery Rhyme books, poetry books, and storybooks with patterned rhymes
- Recorded music, song books, and books with finger plays
- Songs, poems, and nursery rhymes on charts
- Collections of tongue twisters and books that play with language.

### Procedures

- 1) Read, say, or sing to children daily using material that contains rhymes, chants, alliteration, and language play. Shared Language or Morning Meeting are obvious times in which to include this material but you need not restrict yourself to these times.
- 2) Reread books with rhythmic patterns and engaging language many times, and encourage children to participate by joining in as they are able. Many of the books that invite children's participation contain phrases that are repeated frequently.

A good example of a book with a repetitive pattern and interesting language that invites full participation is *Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud* (Plourde & Schoenherr, 1997). As different animals get stuck in the mud, different family members try to get them out and the same language pattern is repeated with interesting minor variations. The basic pattern is:

*"Pigs in the rud!" Grandma said.  
Oh no. Won't do. Gotta shoo. But who?  
"I'll shoo. That's who," Brother said.  
And he shooed.  
And he squealed.  
And he rutted.  
And he reeled.  
But the pigs didn't budge.  
Not a tiny little smudge.*

After listening to this book several times while looking at the illustrations, children will want not only to **say** the rhyming pattern but also to **role play** the parts of different characters as the story unfolds.

*Language play involves having fun with the sounds of words, creating new words, and exploring and creating language patterns such as the use of rhymes and repetition. The benefits of language play are numerous including that rhymes, chants, and alliterations get incorporated naturally into children's oral language.*

- 3) Sometimes you will want to make use of charts or Big Books that show children the print version of the rhymes, songs, or fingerplays. This adds a multi-sensory dimension to the activity but is not a necessary component of developing phonemic awareness. Minimize explicit teaching about the appearance of rhyming words or words that start with the same consonant with younger children. Use the

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same chart or Big Book many times throughout the year, putting a different emphasis on its use each time.

- 4) Keep your activities short and your emphasis on enjoyment. Involve children in activities like the following:
- When reading or chanting a familiar poem, pause before a rhyming word and let children supply the rhyming word. Encourage children to join in with the whole poem, chant, or song when they are able.
  - Use a familiar chant or nursery rhyme to model writing. Begin the recording on an experience chart, stop frequently and ask children what comes next.
  - Create your own simple rhymes or chants based on ones familiar to the children and invite them to try to create some as well.

The book *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* (Muller & Duranceau, 1992) is a good book to read to children as an example of creating new rhymes from familiar patterns. The book begins with the familiar "*Hickory, Dickory, Dock*" but continues with new verses from there. For example:

*Giggley, figgley fare,  
The goat looked under the chair,  
The clock struck two,  
The mouse yelled "Boo!"  
Giggley, figgley fare.*

Books such as this one are good for many rereadings and lots of student participation. When children are provided with many book experiences such as these, playing with language and creating rhymes independently will become a natural occurrence in your classroom.

- Another way to create new rhymes from familiar verses that works well with young children is to substitute their names for other characters in the lines. For example, instead of "*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?*" try verses such as "*Tyler, Tyler, What do you see? I see a teacher looking at me.*"
- Encourage and recognize children's attempts to memorize very simple rhymes and songs. Provide Pre-K and kindergarten children lots of experiences with nursery rhymes.
- Record on experience charts any chants or rhymes you hear your students saying, or have them dictate them to you. Include these in your daily, shared language experiences.
- Use tongue twisters and alliterations for developing awareness of initial consonant sounds. Make up new ones using the names of children in your class. Invite children to do the same. When this can be done quickly, record their ideas for later use.

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### Examples of Tongue Twisters/Alliteration

Brenda's brother broke brittle bottles.  
Carla cut cauliflower, carrots, and cucumbers carefully.  
Justin's jeep just jumped, joggled, and jiggled.  
My mommy makes marvelous, munchy meatballs.  
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.  
She sells seashells by the seashore.  
Kitty caught a caterpillar. Timmy caught a turtle by his tiny turtle tail.

- Make up a few rhymes with the children's names to use as examples, then invite children to make up their own. The rhymes could make use of either real words (for example, "*Fancy Nancy*") or nonsense words such as "*Alex Palex*". From time to time, you may want to make lists of these combinations for Shared Reading<sup>23</sup> time or for use in the activity Read Around the Room (see page 141 of this resource for a description of this strategy).
- Do the same with alliteration, varying your examples to encourage sensitivity to new vocabulary (for example, "*Soggy Sarah*" on a rainy day instead of "*silly*" or "*sad*"). Be sure that children understand that the point is to **have** fun and not to **make** fun of each other. These last two activities can be done on occasions when children have to line up or wait for other children to join a group.
- Use finger plays that incorporate rhyme to bridge the transition between different activities.
- Follow the reading of a rhyming book, chanting, or singing activity with a short word production activity that makes use of one or two rhyme combinations from the book, chant, or song. For example, after reading *Green Eggs and Ham*, say "*Sam, ham, what other words can you think of that rhyme with Sam and ham?*" Do the same following a book or tongue twister that features alliteration. For example, follow the reading of *Sheep on a Ship* by asking "What other words do you know that start like sheep and ship?" Accept nonsense words as well and label them as such so children start to distinguish sense from nonsense.
- From time to time make use of rhymes, chants, or songs that are on overhead transparencies or experience charts, to model left to right progression and to develop the concept of word. This can be done through the use of a pointer, touching each word or sweeping along under each word as it is read, and through a variety of word or sentence framing practices.<sup>24</sup>

*Nursery Rhymes are often the focus for a language arts mini-unit in Pre-K or kindergarten. Rhymes, songs, and chants with content that matches a particular topic being studied can be introduced as part of the unit.*

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<sup>23</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 78, for a description of this daily routine.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, see page 103 for a fuller description of the framing strategy.

## Book Suggestions for Language Play: Prose, Poetry, Word Play, Tongue Twisters, Songs, and Jump-rope Rhymes

To order books on this list which are not available in your school division, contact the Learning Resources Distribution Centre, 1500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, REGINA SK S4P 3V7, telephone 787-5987, fax 787-9747, toll free fax in Saskatchewan 1-800-668-9747.

The books in this list offer a starting point only--there are many more. Share your favourites with colleagues! Books that come in a Big Book format are marked with an asterisk (\*).

- |                                                                      |                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain</i> (Aardema)                   | <i>Eight Ate: A Feast of Homonym Riddles</i> (Terban)                  |
| <i>Noisy Poems</i> (Bennett)                                         | <i>The Itsy Bitsy Spider</i> (Trapani)                                 |
| <i>Tiny Tim</i> (Bennett)                                            | <i>1000 Knock Knock Jokes for Kids</i> (Kilgariff)                     |
| <i>Hand Rhymes</i> (Brown)                                           | <i>I Don't Care! Said the Bear</i> (West)                              |
| <i>I Love You, Good Night</i> (Buller & Schade)                      | <i>The Happy Hippopotami</i> (Martin)                                  |
| <i>The Biggest Tongue Twister Book in the World</i> (Brandeth)       | <i>The Teddy Bear Book</i> (Marzollo)                                  |
| <i>What am I? Very First Riddles</i> (Calmenson)                     | <i>One Sun: A Book of Terse Verse</i> (McMillan)                       |
| <i>All About Arthur: An Absolutely Absurd Ape</i> (Carle)            | <i>Pigs Aplenty, Pigs Galore!</i> (McPhail)                            |
| <i>The Hopeful Trout and other Limericks</i> (Ciardi)                | <i>When We Were Very Young</i> (Milne)                                 |
| * <i>Goggly Gookers</i> (Cowley)                                     | <i>Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin</i> (Moss)                                  |
| <i>Mrs. Wishy Washy</i> (Cowley)                                     | <i>Row, Row, Row Your Boat</i> (Muller)                                |
| <i>Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose</i> (dePaola)                        | <i>Hickory, Dickory, Dock</i> (Muller & Duranceau)                     |
| <i>Sing a Song of Popcorn</i> (deRegniers, Schenk, White, & Bennett) | <i>Poems for 7-year-olds and Under</i> (Nicoll)                        |
| <i>Butterscotch Dreams</i> (Dunn)                                    | <i>Faint Frogs Feeling Feverish, and other Terrifically</i>            |
| <i>Crackers and Crumbs</i> (Dunn)                                    | <i>Tantalizing Tongue Twisters</i> (Obligado)                          |
| <i>Deep Down Underground</i> (Dunrea)                                | <i>Moose on the Loose</i> (Ochs)                                       |
| <i>101 School Jokes</i> (Eisenber & Hall)                            | <i>Dinosaur Chase</i> (Otto)                                           |
| <i>One Wide River to Cross</i> (Emberley)                            | <i>Amelia Bedelia</i> books (Parrish)                                  |
| <i>In the Tall, Tall Grass</i> (Fleming)                             | <i>Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud</i> (Plourde & Schoenherr) |
| <i>In the Small, Small Pond</i> (Fleming)                            | <i>My Parents Think I'm Sleeping</i> (Prelutsky)                       |
| <i>Henny Penny</i> (Galdone)                                         | <i>The Random House Book of Poetry for Children</i> (Prelutsky)        |
| <i>Is Your Mama a Llama?</i> (Guarino & Kellogg)                     | <i>Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young</i> (Prelutsky)                |
| <i>Stop that Noise!</i> (Geraghty)                                   | <i>Something Big Has Been Here</i> (Prelutsky)                         |
| <i>Jillian Jiggs</i> (Gilman)                                        | <i>Old Mother Hubbard</i> (Provensen & Provensen)                      |
| <i>Six Sleepy Sheep</i> (Gordon)                                     | <i>Alphabet Annie Announces the All-American Album</i>                 |
| * <i>Jewels, Children's Play Rhymes</i> (Harwayne)                   | (Purviance & O'Shell)                                                  |
| <i>Pat the Cat</i> (Hawkins & Hawkins)                               | <i>Down by the Bay</i> (Raffi)                                         |
| <i>Surprises</i> (Hopkins)                                           | <i>Sing a Song of Mother Goose</i> (Reid)                              |
| <i>The Sky is Full of Song</i> (Hopkins)                             | <i>We're Going on a Bear Hunt</i> (Rosen)                              |
| <i>Don't Forget the Bacon</i> (Hutchins)                             | <i>Frogs in Clogs</i> (Samton)                                         |
| * <i>Letter Clusters</i> (Iversen)                                   | <i>A Twister of Twists, A Tangler of Tongues</i> (Schwartz)            |
| <i>I Can Fly</i> (Krauss)                                            | <i>Fox in Socks</i> (Seuss)                                            |
| <i>Roar and More</i> (Kuskin)                                        | <i>Green Eggs and Ham</i> (Seuss)                                      |
| <i>Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go</i> (Langstaf)                           | <i>There's a Wocket in my Pocket</i> (Seuss)                           |
| <i>Alligator Pie</i> (Lee)                                           | <i>Sheep on a Ship</i> (Shaw)                                          |
| <i>Jelly Belly: Original Nursery Rhymes</i> (Lee)                    | <i>The Listening Walk</i> (Showers)                                    |
| <i>Frederick</i> (Lionni)                                            | <i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> (Silverstein)                           |
| <i>Buzz Said the Bee</i> (Lewison)                                   | <i>A Giraffe and a Half</i> (Silverstein)                              |
| <i>What's a Frank Frank?</i> (Maestro)                               | <i>The Hungry Thing</i> (Slepian & Seidler)                            |
| <i>The Hungry Thing Returns</i> (Slepian & Seidler)                  | <i>The Lady with the Alligator Purse</i> (Westcott)                    |
| <i>The Dove Dove</i> (Terban)                                        | <i>Hush, Little Baby</i> (Zemach)                                      |

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## Count the Words

### Materials

- Paper or plastic cups or small containers (one for each child)
- Counters (plastic chips, tiles, unifix cubes, popsicle sticks, etc.).

### Procedures

- 1) Give each child a container and set of counters. Ask students to start with their containers empty and their counters on their desks.
- 2) Tell students that the game you are going to play is called “Count the Words”. Demonstrate the game for students by saying a sentence, pausing, and then saying “*I am going to say that sentence again. This time I will pause after each word so you can count the words in this sentence. Put one counter in your container for each word. If my sentence has three words, your container should have three counters. I will use counters too. You can watch me count the words as a practice.*” Say the sentence again, pausing and placing one counter in your container after each word. Demonstrate a few more times if necessary.
- 3) Continue the game, allowing students to count the words in each sentence that you say independently. Gradually increase the length of your sentences.
- 4) Appreciate students’ efforts. Rather than checking each child’s accuracy, take note of who appears to be having difficulty and plan some additional help for him/her either individually or in a smaller group.

*This is a short activity that introduces young children to the concept of segmenting things that they hear into their component parts. Segmenting sentences into words is easier for most children than segmenting words into syllables or phonemes. It is also useful for strengthening children’s concepts of word and sentence. Students require some basic number concepts to understand the directions. Increase your use of concrete demonstrations with children who appear to need this support.*

## Clapping Syllables

### Materials

- Experience charts and markers (optional).

### Procedures

- 1) Tell the children that you are going to demonstrate a new listening game. Say the name of someone in the class whose name has only one syllable. Clap once after you say it. Tell the children, “\_\_\_\_’s name has only one syllable or beat, so I only clapped once.” Ask students to listen again while you say a two-syllable name and clap twice. Say, “\_\_\_\_’s name has two syllables or beats”. **Do not use the word “Sounds” or say that a one-syllable name has one sound. This may confuse students later when asked to segment names like Dan into three sounds (phonemes).**

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- 2) Ask the children to join you in clapping the syllables or beats after each name that you say. Allow the whole class or group that you are working with to join in rather than singling out individuals at this point.
  - 3) When you feel all children are confident with this activity, you could call on individuals to clap the syllables in their names individually. As well, you may want to turn this into a game where one child names another; the child named responds with the appropriate number of claps and then names the next child.

### **Variations for Older Students<sup>25</sup>**

- When children have the idea of this activity, it can be integrated with vocabulary development as you create lists of animals, vegetables, fruit, or colours for them to respond to by clapping out the syllables.
- When you think children are ready, try having them clap out all the syllables in short sentences. Put sentences from a familiar book, poem, or Language Experience Chart on the board for children to see as well as hear.
- Distribute print versions of lists and/or sentences for children to mark. Have them show the syllables by putting a check or line above each syllable as you say it aloud. Demonstrate this several times before asking students to do it.
- You can extend this further by having children say the words to themselves, count the syllables, and write the appropriate numeral for the number of syllables under each word. Ask, “Which word has the most syllables? The fewest syllables?”

*These variations extend students' abilities beyond those of phonemic awareness as they also involve print.*

## **Oral Word Segmentation and Blending Activities**

### **Materials**

- Books and name tags for children in the class
- Chart paper and markers.

### **Procedures**

- 1) To begin with, use the segmentation and blending activities in informal situations such as, to call children one at a time to line up to get ready for recess or a trip to the school library. Ask the children to listen closely, and to come and stand by you only when they hear their own name. Tell them that you are going to say their name in a special way. Begin with children whose names are only one syllable that starts with a single consonant. Segment their names into their

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<sup>25</sup> “Older” refers to students of ages 7 and older, and students in grades two and up.

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phonemes by stretching out the sounds (for example, *T-o-dd*).

Progress to two, then three syllable names, segmenting them into the phonemes they contain (for example, *C-ar-l-a* or *S-u-s-a-n*).

- 2) After reading a book, chanting, reciting a poem, or singing a song, choose a few one-syllable words from this material to segment. Tell the children you are going to say some words from the book, poem, or song in a special way. Ask them to listen and tell you what word they think you are saying (for example, say *J-i-ll* and *h-i-ll* after chanting Jack and Jill). Depending upon the particular circumstance, you may record each word on the chalkboard or a chart after children have identified it.
- 3) During Shared Language time, segment the children's names alternately with the names of favorite characters from books. Ask, "Whose name is this?" and allow individuals or the whole class to respond.

### Variations

- Place a number of children's favourite books in a line on the chart stand or chalkboard ledge. Tell children you are going to say the name of a character in one of the books in a special way. Segment a storybook character from one of the books into its phonemes. (For example, "*W-i-nn-ie th-e P-oo-h*"). Ask, "*Can you point to the book that this character is from?*" This activity would also work with a group of name tags.
- Build word families orally starting from a familiar rime such as "*at*". Say, "*C-at, what word is that?*" Follow this with "*b-at, f-at*", etc. each time having the children say what the word is. As they are ready, let them suggest words that would fit the "*at family*". Record the words as you or the children say them. Give them the opportunity to comment on the visual similarities before drawing their attention to them.
- With children who have sufficient letter knowledge or show a desire to "have a go", ask the children to write how they think the word would look.

## Representing Phonemes with Concrete Materials

### Materials

- Coloured plastic chips and/or small tiles--enough for each individual that is participating to have his/her own set.

### Procedures

- 1) Give children each a set of six chips, tiles, or other small manipulatives. Tell students that you are going to say some words

*You need not hesitate to include children in your class who have names that begin with digraphs like Charlie or Sheila. This type of informal activity establishes a natural context for incidental teaching/learning of these sounds. This holds true as well for names that begin with a blend. While you would not teach digraphs and blends formally to emerging learners, you can incorporate them as appropriate in such meaningful contexts as "the sounds in our names".*





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*With older children, do not use this activity more than once or twice before moving to the use of the Making Words strategy instead (p. 104). Making Words gives students more opportunities to combine letter-sound recognition and to spell words from meaningful and familiar texts for use in later decoding or writing activities. That is, it is a more integrative and useful strategy.*

they know in a special way that makes use of every sound in the word.

- 2) To begin with, say each word normally before segmenting it. Segment the words into phonemes by saying them very slowly and drawing out each individual sound (for example, say “*Hot. H-o-t*”). Demonstrate for students what to do with their chips by setting one chip down for each sound you make.
- 3) Begin with one-syllable words and progress to longer ones. Ask questions such as, “*How many sounds did you hear in “dog”?* *How many chips did you need for “dog”?*”

### **Variations**

As a short routine for times such as dismissal, ask children to either blend phonemes together and tell you what word they say or to segment a known word into phonemes. (For example, “Put these sounds together m-a-p. What do they say?” or “Tell me all the sounds in the word map”.)

### **“Say that Word Again but Don’t Say \_\_\_\_\_”**

#### **Materials**

- Chalkboard or experience charts
- Books used for Shared or Guided Reading (optional).

#### **Procedures**

- 1) During Shared Language or as part of transition routines, tell children to repeat a word after you. Then ask them to say it again with one part of the word missing. Start with compound words. For example, “*Say baseball. Say it again without the base. Say basketball. Say it again without the basket. Say basketball. Say it again without the ball.*”
- 2) This game can progress to removing initial consonants or ending consonants. For example, “*Say tack. Say it again without the ‘t’.* *Say tack. Say it again without the ‘ck’.*”

#### **Variations and Contextual Integration Possibilities**

Following Shared Reading or Guided Reading of a story, choose words from the story for segmentation and blending. Write the selected words one at a time on the board or chart. Following the writing of each word, ask the children to say the word. Then ask them to say it again with a designated part missing. Mask the missing part with your hand, a card, or tape. They can look at the part that is left when they say it.

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## Letter Recognition and Letter Naming Activities

Visual discrimination abilities are foundational to the development of letter recognition. Teachers and parents of young children have many informal ways to help children notice visual phenomena and make visual discriminations related to the size, shape, colour, and other features of natural and constructed materials and objects. An important feature of all of these activities is the talk that accompanies them. As adults name and discuss visual phenomena, they are also strengthening the child's vocabulary and understanding of basic concepts.

### Developmentally Appropriate Ways to Support the Development of Visual Discrimination in Young Children

- frequent adult-supported experiences with picture books
- walking and talking with children about what they see (neighbourhood walks, nature walks, sign-watching, etc.)
- playing "Spot the cows, or railway crossings, or red barns, etc." when travelling with children
- finding basic shapes in the classroom (the chalkboard is a rectangle, etc.)
- playing simple card games and board games with an emphasis on enjoyment, not "winning"
- encouraging drawing, writing, and craft activities of all sorts
- sorting buttons, shells, stones, and other collectables
- providing a variety of puzzles of increasing levels of difficulty.

A book that is useful for supporting visual abilities, particularly for teachers of older emerging literacy learners, is *I See What you Mean: Children at Work with Visual Information* by Steve Moline (1995).

The recognition and naming of letters is foundational to use of the graphophonic cueing system. This does not mean, however, that teachers need to wait until a child knows the names of all letters before using graphophonic strategies. The two abilities of letter recognition/naming and of associating a sound with a letter or set of letters can develop together.

### Objectives

Students will develop an emerging ability to:

- discriminate visual similarities and differences in letters and words
- associate letters with their name.

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*Often, the first word in children's sight vocabularies is their own name. Activities that make use of children's names are a natural starting point for developing letter recognition. Such activities are especially appropriate for emerging learners in Pre-K and K classrooms.*

## **“What’s in a Name?”**

### **Materials**

- Name tags
- Set of photographs of individual children
- Chart paper and felt markers
- Chalkboard, individual chalkboards, and chalk
- Pencils and paper
- Scissors.

### **Procedures**

All the activities described on pages 94-97 rely for their success on teachers' interspersing of short comments about the appearance and names for letters in the children's names throughout the activities. These comments need to be made without drawing out the activities for too long a period. Comments like the following are useful:

- *“Brent's name starts the same as Brittany's. They both start with 'b'”* (said while pointing to the *B*).
- On another occasion, you might draw their attention to “long names” and “short names” counting the letters in two contrasting examples through finger pointing to help children form a concept of “letter”.
- Later in the year, you might print both children's first and last name on the name tags and draw attention to the concept of word. For example, *“This word says Carmen and this word says Vermette.”*
- To help children discover the relationship between letters and sounds (the alphabetic principle), you should also include some comments about the sounds associated with letters in the children's names (for example, noting other names or words that start with the same initial consonant).

- 1) Name tags. Make name tags for everyone in the class and use them for a variety of relevant purposes. For example:
  - a) Taking attendance. There are many ways to use name tags for discovering and/or recording who is present each day.
    - Large place tags to sit on. You can make a large (12 x 18 inch) place tag with a name printed on it for each child. Make these from Bristol board and laminate them for each child to use to mark the place where they will sit on the carpet for the initial morning activities (Morning Meeting, Shared Language, etc.). To make this practice effective for letter and word recognition, keep all place tags the same colour. Establish their use through a routine such as having all place tags in a pile on the carpet at the beginning of every morning and again in the afternoon. Teach children to look for their

*Some children will be able to recognize their name immediately--others will need to be helped through talking to them about the features of their name.*

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place tag as soon as they come in and to set it where they want to sit and then to sit on it. This practice of sitting on their place tags can also be a classroom management tool--one useful in teaching children to respect the personal space of others. These large place tags can be used to mark children's places at a table as well.

Variations: At the beginning of the year, choose one child each day to feature in a "Getting Acquainted" activity.<sup>26</sup> Show the children the place tag of the child chosen, and invite that child to come and sit beside you for the Morning Meeting time. Ask the child to tell a few things about her/himself--who is in her/his family, things s/he likes to do, favourite foods, a favourite book, etc. Write the child's name on the board and talk about the visual and aural features of her/his name. Invite all children to say the name and participate in other related activities such as, clapping the syllables, segmenting the name into onsets and rimes or phonemes, and thinking of other names that start the same or rhyme with that name.

- Name tags for attendance. Make name tags that can fit into a pocket chart or on other wall charts. Take attendance with name tags by holding them up one at a time and asking children to come and get their own when they see it, and to place it in/on the attendance chart. You could have a photograph of each child on your chart. Children would place their name tags under their photographs. Alternately, you can have cutouts shaped like children--one for each child, and an attendance chart with each child's name on it. As children come in each day, they can be given the cutouts to place above their name. A chart like this will also show at a glance those who are absent. Use the information about numbers present for times throughout the day when helpers are giving out snacks or other items--one per child.
  - Name tags to "remember when". A separate chart could be displayed for children who were in the class but have moved away. Be sure to read it from time to time--perhaps as part of a "remember when" discussion. The message you are conveying with this practice is that all children are important and that you still value people who are no longer present.
  - Name tags to fill a "Helper's Chart" each day. Be sure to ask children to read it and confirm who has jobs each day.
- b) Labeling possessions, lockers, and places at activity centers. Use name tags to mark children's individual lockers, coat hangers, etc. Change the assignment of these places from time to time so

*When the name for the day starts with an initial consonant, you might want to focus on the appearance and sound of that letter throughout the day. Invite children to tell you and their classmates every time they see or hear another word that starts with that same letter or sound.*

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<sup>26</sup> See Cunningham's (1995) *Phonics they Use: Words for Reading and Writing*, pages 29-32, for a variation on this idea and a complete set of Get-acquainted Activities.

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that the children need to keep looking and identifying their own names. Construct charts to be placed at each center in the classroom so that children working at that center can attach their name tags to it when they enter, and remove them again when they leave.

<p>k As soon as most children recognize their own name and those of others, change your labeling strategies to ones where children write their own name on labels that you provide or on sign-up sheets at each center. Accept and appreciate approximations of printed names with young learners. Remember, you want to value their writing as a contribution to classroom organization or a step toward their independence.</p>
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*This signing in strategy is recommended in the literature on early literacy instruction as both a strong instructional practice which strengthens children's sense of themselves as writers and also a good assessment tool for teachers.*

- 2) Signing your name to important documents. Establish this practice early and provide many opportunities for children to sign their names. For example:
  - a) ✍️ “Signing In”. Have an attendance sheet for each day--one that is stamped with the date but otherwise blank. Place it and a pencil in the same place each day, and teach children to “sign in” when they arrive. These attendance sheets will make interesting records of the consistencies and changes over time in the way children print their name. Later in the year, you might have children add one sentence to their name when they sign in, telling something about how they are feeling that day or an item of personal “news”.
  - b) Compose some of your notes to parents/guardians with the help of your class. You can recopy what the children suggest onto note-sized paper to be photocopied. Each child would sign her/his own copy to take home (using the name tag as a model, if necessary). Each note that goes home could come from you and from the children. Show children where you have signed your name and the spaces where they should print theirs.
  - c) Develop group charts such as the classroom rules and have everyone sign them. Explain that each signature means that that child has agreed to do her/his best to follow the rules.
  - d) Incorporate forms appropriate to each social dramatic play center (see page 120 for examples of these centers) for children to sign. For example, include forms for prescriptions at the doctor’s office.
  
- 3) Letter games using children’s names. A variety of short games can be devised for use with small groups, pairs, or individuals. These can be incorporated into an ABC and Word Study Center as well (see page 107 for a description of this center). Examples of short name games or activities include:

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- a) Follow my directions if your name has this letter in it. Say the name of a letter and write it on the chalkboard and ask students to follow your directions only if their name **starts** with the letter you write. For example, say and write an uppercase letter and then say, *“Clap two times if your name starts with this letter”*. Alternate this with lowercase letters, writing the letter and saying its name followed by a direction like *“Put one hand under your chin if your name ends with this letter.”* Or use at dismissal time, *“Those whose name begins like this may get ready for home.”* Or, *“If you have the letter ‘e’ anywhere in your name, you may get ready for snack.”*
  - b) Name Bingo. Give each child a card with her/his name on it (initially just the first name, later include middle and last names) and a set of plastic chips. Tell the children, *“I will call out the name of a letter and write it on the board. If your name has that letter in it, cover it with a plastic chip. When all the letters in your name are covered, hold up your hand and say ‘Bingo’.”* Each time a round is finished, have children switch name cards so that they learn the letters in other children’s names as well.
  - c) Name Scramble. Give each child a card with her/his name printed on it and have students cut their name cards up into smaller cards, each one with a letter of their name on it. Ask students to scramble the letters on their desks and then put them back in order to spell their name. (Demonstrate this first.) Have students trade cards and see if they can unscramble a different name. Refer students to the attendance chart, or other chart with class names on it, if they need help. They could also ask the person whose name they have for one clue to get them started.
  - d) Name Riddles. Make up riddles using children’s names. For example, I am thinking about a boy who has two o’s in his name. Encourage the children to make up name riddles as well.

## Guess My Letter

### Materials

- Chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and marker
- Large alphabet cards with upper case letters on one side and lower case on the other.

### Procedures

- 1) Arrange the alphabet cards where all children can see them. Display either all upper case letters or all lower case ones.
- 2) Tell children you are going to think of a letter for them to guess and that their clues will be visual (*“You will need your eyes for this activity.”*). Explain that you are only going to write part of a letter

*This is a short activity that can be used as a transition or during **Shared Language** or **Morning Meeting** to strengthen children’s ability to recognize and form letters.*

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*Leading this activity involves thinking ahead and thinking critically. After you have played the game a few times, invite volunteers to be the leader who thinks of a letter and draws the parts while other children do the predicting.*

- and that they will need to watch you carefully and try to figure out which letters have that kind of shape or part. Tell them whether you will be writing upper or lower case letters and that students can check their ideas by looking at the alphabet cards.
- 3) Make a part of a circle or curve, a straight vertical or horizontal line, a slanted line, etc. Pause and ask for students' predictions as to which letter you are making. (Young students may point to the alphabet card instead of naming the letter.)
  - 4) Write students' predictions beside your shape, drawing their attention to the part of the letters they predicted which do contain the shape that you drew.
  - 5) Continue to add more to your shape and elicit students' predictions until the whole letter is drawn. As you add more lines or curves to your letter, ask students if you need to eliminate (or cross out) any of their predictions. For example, you might be thinking of an *E* and have started with the vertical line. Children might have guessed *L*, *I*, *T*, *F*, and *E*. If you added the middle horizontal line, some may realize that they need to eliminate the *L*, *T*, and the *I*.

## Graphophonic Strategies and Activities

<p>k Keep your teaching of graphophonic strategies relevant to students' lives. More children will voluntarily engage in learning sound-symbol relationships when they see a need for them in order to read and write for real purposes.</p>
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In the Emerging Phase, it is important to support students' discovery of the alphabetic principle. The alphabetic principle is the concept that each letter of the alphabet has one or two sounds associated with it and that these letter-sound relationships are stable. This means that children become used to the idea that the *B* in the name *Brent* makes the same sound in the words *ball*, *baby*, and *cab*. As children progress with this understanding, they also:

- recognize that letters like *c* have two sounds
- notice that *c* and *k* can make the same sound
- notice that certain letters combine to make one sound such as the digraphs *ch* and *sh* or *ough* and *augh* combinations in *bought*, *taught*, and *caught*.

<p>k These discoveries can be as exciting to children as that of other wonders of their world--especially if their teachers treat learning about letters and sounds as an adventure for word detectives. Be sure to appreciate each letter-sound discovery that children make.</p>
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All of the activities related to children's names can support discovery of the alphabetic principle. In the Emerging Phase, another excellent source for learning letter-sound relationships is the use of the alphabet song and all sorts of alphabet books. (Not all alphabet books are equally

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appropriate for supporting discovery of the alphabetic principle. Some books contain examples such as “*S is for ship*” which may confuse emerging literacy learners who are attempting to relate letters with their most common initial consonant sound. See page 103 for a few suggestions for appropriate alphabet books.) Children develop a sense for the alphabetic principle simply from the fact that letters include their sound (or one of their sounds) in their name.

During the Emerging Phase, it is appropriate to emphasize consonants. In the English language, consonants do not vary in sound and spelling combinations to the same extent as do vowel sounds. Researchers suggest that consonants are easier for children to learn and that they draw upon their knowledge of consonants more frequently when decoding or creating text. While vowel sound-letter combinations will form a natural part of the informal language instruction as well, children in the early stages of reading and writing development may gain the most from having a strong base of consonant sound-letter knowledge. One way to understand the usefulness of emphasizing consonants is to compare the process of decoding unfamiliar words when the consonant sounds are known and used, to decoding using vowel sound knowledge. Which of the following is easier for you to figure out?

- The \_\_\_\_\_ was crossing the road.
- The c-t-r-p-l-l-r was crossing the road.
- The -a-e--i—a- was crossing the road.  
(caterpillar)

## Objectives

Students will develop emerging abilities to:

- associate words and letters with sounds in meaningful contexts.

## Ways to Use the “Alphabet Song”

Using the alphabet song in activities such as the ones that follow provides informal and enjoyable ways to become familiar with the names and appearance of letters. While some educators may feel that early literacy experiences should concentrate on sounds only, when children recognize and know the names for letters of the alphabet they:

- have more tools for participation in graphophonic activities
- can more readily understand teachers’ and other adults’ instructions and comments that make use of the names for letters
- can help peers spell unfamiliar words.

Adults use letter names frequently when supporting children’s reading and writing. For example, “*The word ‘terrible’ is on our Word Wall under the ‘T’.*”

*The purpose of the alphabet-song activities is not to teach alphabetic order but to support letter recognition together with knowledge of letter names.*



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## Materials

- Alphabet chart (mounted close to children’s eye level)
- Chalkboard and chalk
- Pointer
- Set of laminated alphabet cards.

## Procedures

- 1) Sing the alphabet song with emerging learners on a regular basis but vary the ways that you do this. For example:
  - point to the letters of the alphabet as children sing.
  - vary the speed at which you sing.
  - sing the alphabet backwards sometimes.
  - tell the children to watch you and stop singing whenever you stop moving the pointer. Ask, “*What letter did I stop on?*”
  - have child volunteers take your role and do the pointing, stopping, and asking.

## Variations

- 1) Print the letters of the alphabet across the chalkboard while children are observing. Demonstrate singing the sounds that the letters make instead of singing the names of the letters. Stop on letters with more than one sound and sing both or all sounds of that letter. Write the number of sounds associated with each letter under the letter. On another occasion, write words related to each sound under the letter as well. For example, under *a* you might write *at, ate, ball,* and sing and point to each word as you sing the “a sound” it contains. Another variation would be to sing a short vowel with each consonant, asking children to not sing the other vowels when they come to them. For example when using the ‘short a’ sound, sing “*A, ba, ca, da, \_\_, fa, ...*” and so on.
- 2) Pass out your laminated alphabet cards--one per child. Display any that are left over on the chalkboard ledge. Sing the alphabet song slowly as the children line up for dismissal, etc. Each child can join the line when her/his letter is sung. Distribute the cards randomly whenever you repeat this activity so that no child is always *A* or always *Z*.
- 3) Choose a simple tune that most children know and make up a new version of the alphabet song to sing to it.

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## One-letter Books

### Materials

- Collection of trade books or teacher-constructed books that focus on a single letter of the alphabet
- One-letter “take home” books
- Paper, pencils, markers, crayons, catalogues, magazines, scissors, and other materials for bookmaking.

See Appendix J of Fountas and Pinnell’s (1996) *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for all Children* for instructions and templates for “Folded Letter Books” intended for photocopying as take-home books. These are 26 little books--one for each letter of the alphabet.

*PM Alphabet Starters* are a set of 26 one-letter books--one for each letter of the alphabet. They also feature a short, appealing poem making use of alliteration of the letter upon which each book focuses. Young children could read and use these as models to make their own class set of one-letter books complete with poems.

### Procedures

- 1) Show children an example of a one-letter book and talk about its features:
  - focuses on one letter only
  - shows the printed version of that letter in both upper and lower case forms
  - each page contains a picture of something that starts with (or contains) that letter and the word for the picture (for example, a book about the letter *t* might contain 8 pages with one of the following words and its accompanying picture on each page: *table, tree, totem pole, tent, tub, ticket, turtle, t-shirt*)
  - is predictable in that when the picture is correctly identified, the word can be read. Your idea of what the word says can be partially verified by seeing if it starts with the right letter (beginning use of graphophonic cueing system).
- 2) Read the book a few times. Turn more of the reading over to the children each time--pausing from time to time to draw attention to letter-sound relationships or spelling patterns with which students are familiar.
- 3) Invite each child to make a one-letter book. Initial books could focus on beginning consonants that most children know or the first letter in their name.
- 4) Remind children of the many sources for ideas of words to use in their books (alphabet chart, Word Wall, alphabet books, pictionaries, etc.). Encourage students to say the words they are thinking of using aloud, to check for the letter sound that they want it to start with and to consult classmates when in doubt.

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- 5) When books are completed, they can be signed by their authors and put in the alphabet center or class library, used for independent reading and reading with a buddy, and taken home to read to family members.

### **Variations**

Make a class set of one-letter books around a theme such as foods. Make a list of foods that start with each letter of the alphabet as a class and post these on an experience chart. Let children choose which letter their class book will be about.

In their book *Teaching Phonics, Phonemic Awareness and Word Recognition*, Bishop and Bishop (1996) include a list of children's books classified according to the letter of the alphabet and the letter-sound pattern which is repeated in words throughout the book. The letter-sound pattern is repeated enough times to become a natural focus for graphophonic instruction. For example, under the letter *Jj*, they include:

- *No Jumping on the Bed* (Arnold, 1987)
- *Hop Jump* (Walsh, 1993).

## **Sensory Exploration of Letters**

### **Materials**

- Individual chalkboards and chalk
- Plasticene or clay
- Sand and/or salt trays
- Pencils, markers, and paper
- Magnetic letters and magnetic board
- Sandpaper letters
- Felt letters and felt boards.

### **Procedures**

Throughout your focus on the alphabet, encourage children to experiment with forming and/or tracing letters using a variety of materials. Encourage children to draw letters in the air, write letters on another child's back for them to identify, and form letters with their bodies--either alone or with a partner.

## **Using Alphabet Books**

### **Materials**

- Collection of alphabet books including some in big book format
- Word Wall (p. 122)
- Materials for making alphabet charts and books
- Variety of pictionaries in a labeled plastic bin.

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## Procedures

- 1) Collect a variety of alphabet books to read to children, and read and reread one or two each day for a week. Encourage children to read the books with you as they recognize the text pattern and or picture clues. Place the books in your class library for children to choose during independent reading times. Encourage children to work with a buddy and read together. Draw attention to the appearance of, and sounds associated with, each letter.
- 2) Talk about the topic or category used to focus a particular book such as “the names of animals”, “the names of places, towns, cities”, etc. Ask children for their ideas about what else could be the focus for an alphabet book.
- 3) Invite children to make a class alphabet book related to a current topic. Show them how to use pictionary or other books related to the topic to find things that start with the letter they have chosen or been assigned. Class alphabet books can be either Big Books for Shared Reading or smaller ones that could be photocopied so that each child can have a copy to read independently and to take home.
- 4) Make a new alphabet chart as a class. The chart could have an open focus or be organized around a topic such as “Winter Words”. The chart could be created with all children using a particular media or craft such as, stitchery or painting.

### Examples of Alphabet Books

To order books on this list which are not available in your school division, contact the Learning Resources Distribution Centre, 1500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, REGINA SK S4P 3V7, telephone 787-5987, fax 787-9747, toll free fax in Saskatchewan 1-800-668-9747.

Books that come in a Big Book format are marked with an asterisk (\*). Books with cross cultural content that are appropriate for older emerging literacy learners are marked with two asterisks (\*\*).

<i>Animalia</i> (Base)	<i>Antics</i> (Hepworth)
<i>A, My Name is Alice</i> (Bayer)	<i>Something beginning with ...</i> (Keane)
<i>A is for Angry: An Animal and Adjective Alphabet</i> (Boynton)	<i>*From Acorn to Zoo</i> (Kitamura)
<i>Alphabet Out Loud</i> (Bragg)	<i>On Market Street</i> (Lobel)
<i>*It Begins with an A</i> (Calmenson)	<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> (Martin & Archambault)
<i>Alpha Bugs</i> (Carter)	<i>Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination</i> (Mitsumaso)
<i>The Handmade Alphabet</i> (Dial Books)	<i>The Butterfly Alphabet</i> (Sandved)
<i>Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z</i> (Ehlert)	<i>*My Picture Dictionary</i> (Snowball & Green)
<i>Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book</i> (Feelings)	<i>The Z was Zapped: A Play in 26 Acts</i> (Van Allsburg)
<i>*A First Alphabet Book</i> (Giles, Smith, & Randell)	<i>ABC</i> (Wegman)
<i>**ABC's of our Spiritual Connection</i> (Goodtrack)	<i>An Alphabet of Animals</i> (Wormell)
<i>26 Letters and 99 Cents</i> (Hoban)	<i>All in the Woodland Early: An ABC Book</i> (Yolen)

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## “Who has this Letter in their Name?”

### Materials

- Children’s name tags
- Large alphabet cards (optional)
- Chalkboard and chalk.

### Procedures

- 1) Write the letters of the alphabet across the board, or place a set of alphabet cards in order on the chalkboard ledge. Give children their name tags by holding the tags up one at a time and having them identify their own.
- 2) Point to each letter of the alphabet in turn and ask “Who has this letter in their name?” If necessary, draw attention to both upper and lower case versions. Count the number of children who have each letter included in their names and write the numeral or the appropriate number of tallies above each letter.
- 3) Discuss which letter was included in the most and least names, and whether there were any letters that did not appear in any names.

*This strategy is highly recommended for emerging literacy learners because it:*

- *supports their development of letter-sound knowledge within a meaningful context*
- *develops spelling abilities and a sight vocabulary*
- *supports their active participation through the use of concrete manipulatives.*

*As well, in this strategy:*

- *peer support is encouraged*
- *the margin for “error” is reduced by having a controlled set of letters with which to work*
- *the vocabulary needed for reading engaging books is reinforced.*

## Making Words<sup>27</sup>

### Materials

- Books used for reading aloud to children or for Shared or Guided Reading (choose ones that children especially enjoy, and want to read and reread independently)
- Sets of letters (one set per child) containing all the letters of a word selected from a book of current interest
- A teacher’s set of the same letters on larger cards
- A word list for the teacher on a separate card (one with a list of words to be made from the set of letters).

#### Example of Teacher’s Word List for an Initial Making Words Lesson

The teacher has selected the **base word** “moon” from the book *Good Night Moon* and provided the students each with a set of the four letters, ‘m’, ‘o’, ‘o’, and ‘n’.

Teacher’s sequenced word list:

Two letter words – no, on.

Three letter words – moo.

Four letter words – moon.

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<sup>27</sup> This strategy is adapted from a method developed by P.M. Cunningham and her colleagues. See Cunningham (1995), *Phonics They Use*, for related ideas.

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## Procedures

- 1) This strategy works best with a small group of children. The group can be composed either of those with similar needs or ones at different stages of letter-sound knowledge development (thus offering opportunities for peers teaching peers). It can also be used as a whole class activity in some cases.
- 2) Identify an important word from a recent reading experience. This word should have at least four letters. As children gain some experience with the approach and grow in their letter-sound knowledge, gradually increase the length of the base word that you select.
- 3) Develop a list of smaller words that can be made from the base word starting with one or two letter words and ending with the longest words. Order the words within each category to reflect the spelling patterns that you wish to emphasize. In the previous example, the teacher might wish to draw the children's attention to such things as the following:

**Example of Teacher Implementing the Initial Making Words Lesson**

Teacher draws attention to:

- the number of letters in each word (“You need two letters for this word--make the word *no*.”)
- the order of letters and the way that changing the order changes the word (“You can use the same two letters for this word, but you will have to change the order. Make *on*. Listen to the first sound--*on*.”)
- the way that adding one letter to an existing word makes a new word (Make *moo*. You will need three letters to make *moo*. Now make *moon*. You can make it by adding only one letter to *moo*. Listen. *Moon*. Can you hear another sound?”).

- 4) Write your sequenced list on an index card for use during instruction.
- 5) Make each child a small set of the letters you will be using--one letter per card with the upper case version on one side and the lower case version on the other. Organize each set into a separate envelope with the base word on the outside of the envelope.
- 6) Tell the group of children you are working with that they will be making words using the letter cards. Explain that you have chosen a word from one of the books they have read and that many words can be made from the letters of this word. Tell and show them the base word and the book it comes from.
- 7) Start with one or two letter words, progressing to the longer words. Tell students the number of letters in the first word. Ask them to hold up that many fingers to show that they know how many letters to use. Write that numeral on the board. Call out the word and ask the children to try and make it with their letters.

- 8) After each attempt, invite one child to come up and make the word on the blackboard ledge using your set of larger letters. Offer help only as needed. When the word has been made correctly on the chalkboard ledge, have students check their word to see if it is the same and to change theirs if necessary. Write the word under the numeral and continue with the next word on your list moving from shorter to longer words. Each time you begin a set of words with a larger number of letters, tell the children the number of letters they will need, write that numeral on the board, and have them hold up that many fingers.
- 9) Review the words by asking the children to make them again. This time, giving them a clue--phonic, semantic, or syntactic. For example, using the words made from the letters of "moon", you might ask the children to make a word that means the opposite of "yes" (*no*); one that could be used in the sentence "Put the letters \_\_\_ your desk." (*on*); a word for a sound that cows make (*moo*); a word with two "o's" that is the name of something that can be seen in the sky (*moon*).

### Second Example of a Making Words Lesson<sup>28</sup>

**Book:** *Bingo*      **Children's Song:** *The Farmer in the Dell*      **Base Word:** *farmer*

**Teacher's Word List:**

1-letter word: a

2-letter words: am, me

3-letter words: ram, mar, arm, are, far

4-letter words: farm, fame

5-letter words: frame

6-letter words: farmer

**Teacher's Comments while Implementing the Lesson:**

**am** (Explain that it can be made from first word by adding a letter.)

**ram** (Ask students to make **am** again. Then say "**ram**" and tell them they can make it by adding one letter to **am**.)

**mar** (Explain that this word has the same three letters as **ram** but in a different order.)

**arm** (Explain that it has the same three letters as **ram** and **mar** but in yet another order.)

**are** (Tell students that they only need to change one letter to make this word from **arm**. After it has been attempted, discuss the silent **e** at the end.)

**far** (Note that it rhymes with **are** but has a different spelling pattern. You might say, "This word has the same spelling pattern as **car**", if **car** has been an earlier focus of word study in your class.)

**farm** (Tell students that it can be made by adding one letter to **far**.)

**fame** (Note the silent **e** spelling pattern and the long **a** sound.)

**frame** (Explain that it can be made from **fame** by adding one more letter.)

**farmer** (Ask students to make **farm** again. Tell them that they can add two letters to make **farmer**. Note the **er** ending by comparing it to words such as **mother**, **father**, **sister**, and **brother**.)

<sup>28</sup> This lesson would be appropriate for students who are moving into the Developing Phase as it contains some incidental teaching of the "silent e" spelling pattern and structural analysis of the "er" ending.

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## ABC and Word Study Center

### Materials

A center for letter and word study would include materials such as:

- Alphabet linking chart (a smaller version of an alphabet chart that links each letter in upper and lower case forms with a picture of something that starts with that letter and the word naming the picture)
- Collection of alphabet books, picture dictionaries, and individual letter books (including those made by children)
- Boxes of letters for matching, sorting, and making words
- Boxes of frequently used words (see Frequently Used Words chart, page 125 for ideas for words to include)
- Sets of common sight words including children's names, and sets of phrases and sentences using common sight vocabulary for matching activities
- Magnetic letters and magnetic boards
- Felt letters and flannel boards
- Small chalkboards and chalk
- Salt and sand trays for tracing letters with a finger
- Writing materials
- Computer and related software (see suggestions below)
- Alphabet puzzles and simple lotto or memory games.

#### Suggestions for Computer Software that Supports Graphophonic Development

Pre-K-2: *Bailey's Book House* (Edmark)

Pre-K-2: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Davidson and Associates Inc.)

K-3: *Has Anybody Seen My Umbrella?* (The National Film Board of Canada)

K-3: *Easy Book Deluxe* (Sunburst Communications)

K-3: *Kid Works Deluxe* (Davidson and Associates Inc.)

### Procedures

- 1) Use the center in conjunction with other language routines and activities during scheduled language arts time or as a choice during structured play or center times.
- 2) Introduce one or two of the materials in the center during morning group time and demonstrate ways to use them. Spread these demonstrations over several weeks--adding and subtracting materials and activities to meet new needs and maintain interest.
- 3) Many of the materials in the center are self-explanatory. Activities and strategies, for the use of those that are not, follow. Additional ideas for the use of these materials can be found throughout this resource. Where this is the case, the page numbers where such activities are described are also included.

*The more regularly that you include center approaches and teach children to use them independently, the more time you will have for individual and small group lessons and conferences.*



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- a) Alphabet Linking Chart. This chart should be in a prominent place in the center for handy reference in all decoding and word-making activities. It can also be used as part of the Read Around the Room (p. 141) strategy and for writing.
  - b) Collection of Alphabet Books, One-letter Books, and Pictionary. This collection will serve many purposes including for children's independent reading, reading with a friend or adult volunteer, and as reference materials for independent writing. Children may choose from this collection during a Book Browsing (p. 61) activity as well.
  - c) Boxes of Letters and Sets of Instruction Cards. In addition to the Making Words (p. 104) strategy for small group instruction, children can work individually or in pairs to do activities like the following.

**Sorting:** Find all the letters with circles, find all the letters with tails, find all the tall letters, find all the small letters, find the letters in your name.

**Ordering:** Find all the letters of the alphabet and put them in order by singing the alphabet song to yourself or by looking at the alphabet chart.

**Matching:** Match the upper and lower case letters.

**Making Words:** Make all the words you can from a set of letters (*b, a, t, d, n, f*), make all the words you know that start with "f", make all the words you know that end with "t", make all the colour words you know, etc.

- d) Boxes of Words and Sets of Instruction Cards. Working individually or in pairs, children can do activities like the following.

**Sorting:** Find all the words that rhyme with "at", "in", etc. Find all the words that start with "s", "t", "sh", etc. Find all the words that end with "e", "y", etc. Find all the 2-letter words, 3-letter words, etc. Find all the words with double consonants (give an example or two on your instruction card). Find all the words with double vowels (give an example).

**Matching:** Match 2 words that are the same in some way. Tell someone your rule for each pair.

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e)  Sets of Words and Phrases for Matching.

This is an important activity to support children's ability to voice-print match<sup>29</sup> as it involves moving from left to right and looking at one letter or one word at a time. It also is useful in establishing concepts of letter, word, and visual discrimination abilities. Your word card and phrase card sets can also be used for a quick assessment of these abilities with new students.

Select high frequency words that children need to learn by sight either because they are high frequency words (*as, is, it, if*), they contain irregular spellings (*there, they*), and/or are words that children frequently confuse (*what/want*). Make sets of 10 matching cards--each set containing two copies of five high frequency words that are similar in some way. Shuffle the cards and bind them with an elastic band. Children are instructed to look carefully at each card and to put pairs together of words that are exactly the same in appearance. Make sets of phrase cards as well using a similar procedure.

**Examples of Sets of Words**

1. want/want what/what was/was when/when went/went
2. cat/cat can/can car/car tar/tar tan/tan
3. the/the they/they then/then there/there their/their

**Examples of Sets of Phrases**

1. in the house/in the house in the horse/in the horse on the house/on the house on the horse/on the horse house in the town/house in the town
2. by the car/by the car by the can/by the can be the cat/be the cat by the cat/by the cat cat by the car/cat by the car

As children work on these activities, talk occasionally about the similarities and differences in spelling patterns that students see. Appreciate their efforts--stressing how their abilities to look closely will help them become better readers.

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<sup>29</sup> The ability to **voice-print match** involves recognizing a word as an individual unit, using left to right and top to bottom progression in order to follow words in the correct order as they are read, and one-to-one matching of a spoken word being read and its printed form.

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## Action Words for the Consonants<sup>30</sup>

### Materials

- Laminated cards with a consonant of the alphabet on one side and an action word that starts with that consonant on the other side.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Action Words for the Consonants</b></p> <p>Bounce catch dance fall gallop hop jump/jiggle kick laugh march nod paint/point run sit/skip talk/tug vacuum walk/wiggle yawn zip</p>
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### Procedures

- 1) Teach children the actions for two or three consonants. Show the letter and the action word. Do the action yourself while saying the name of the letter and the name of the action. Exaggerate the action and have fun with it. Have the children join you in doing the action, and saying the letter and word. Have them continue to do each action while you are displaying that letter and continue until you hide the letter behind your back.
- 2) Continue to teach new consonant-action combinations in subsequent days and use students' knowledge of these associations for a variety of simple games. An example of one game would involve passing out the letters face down so that only the child with that letter can peek at it to identify it. Have one child do an action and the other children try to guess which letter that child was given. Cunningham (1995) also describes a game called "Follow the Letter Leader". The child who is designated as the leader, draws a card and does that action. The other children follow the leader in doing the same action. The leader can then pick a new child to be the leader and the game continues.

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<sup>30</sup> The activity and the list of action words that accompanies it is adapted from one in Cunningham (1995).

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## Chapter Four: Supporting Independence in Reading and Writing

Foundations of the emerging phase that are emphasized in this chapter are:

- ❖ Perceiving self as a reader and writer
- ❖ Viewing reading and writing as valuable for a variety of real life purposes
- ❖ Developing an orientation to reading/writing as the construction of meaning--supporting the understanding that texts should “make sense”
- ❖ Laying the groundwork for accuracy and fluency in decoding; developing a bank of sight words
- ❖ Developing a problem-solving approach to decoding and spelling words, and a bank of problem-solving strategies to apply.

### Assessment Tools and Techniques

#### Reading and Writing Interview for Emerging Literacy Learners

##### Procedures

- 1) Early in the year, set aside some time each day to hold short informal interviews with each of your students.
- 2) Use a form like the one on page 113 to record students’ responses to your questions. Change or adjust the questions to meet the needs of each individual. Introduce this assessment as an opportunity to talk with the child about his/her ideas about reading and writing.
- 3) Record the child’s language as accurately as possible.
- 4) Use the reading and writing questions on separate days with very young learners.
- 5) Interview all your students again at the mid-point and end of the year, making use of the same set of questions.

*A central focus of literacy instruction in the Emerging Phase is to help learners establish a view of themselves as readers and writers who are capable of strengthening their reading and writing abilities with support and practice. Assessments that give teachers an understanding of their students’ beliefs in this area are foundational tools for planning.*

##### Instructional Implications

Children who do not see themselves as readers and writers and/or as capable of becoming better at reading and writing lack the most important foundation of literacy learning. Such children need:

- the support of a caring teacher and other adults who find ways to include them in literacy activities at their present level of development

- 
- many more experiences of listening to stories and interesting nonfiction books being read aloud to them in large group, small group, and individual instructional settings
  - many opportunities for participation in structured play that incorporates literacy materials and reasons for using them, and in learning centers designed for small groups.

k Some of the ways that timid, reluctant, or unconfident readers and writers can be supported to participate in emergent literacy instruction include:

- showing an interest in the book they have chosen for Book Browsing or Independent Reading (Have a brief, friendly, and informal chat--for example, "*Oh, you've picked one of my favourite books today. I love the illustrations. They are full of little surprises that you have to watch for carefully. Let me know if you find the ladybug that's hidden on each page.*")
- asking them often to be the ones to choose their favourite books when you are soliciting suggestions for books to reread
- starting programs that provide these students with the additional supports of reading buddies or literacy mentors
- encouraging the use of drawing as part of writing
- beginning your routine of Daily Writing with a strategy such as Writing Samples: We don't all write the same way! (see p. 150)
- incorporating all the key activities (📝) in this resource.

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## Sample Reading and Writing Interview for Emerging Literacy Learners

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Change the wording of any of the questions and/or add prompts in order to ensure each child understands what is being asked. Omit any questions that you know do not apply to the child being interviewed.

Begin the interview by saying something encouraging such as, *“I know you have good ideas and today I’d like to hear your ideas about reading and writing. Let’s start by talking about reading.”*

1. Who do you know that can read? Tell me about some of the children and adults that you have seen reading (OR that you know can read).
  
2. Can you read?
  - a) If the child says “Yes”, ask “Are you a good reader? What kinds of things do you do that make you a good reader?”
  
  - b) If the child says “No”, ask “Are you learning to read?” If child says “No”, ask “When do you think you will be able to read?”
  
3. How do people learn to read? Tell me your ideas about how people learn to read.
  
4. Who helps you learn to read? How do they help? Do you help anyone else to read? What do you do to help others?
  
5. Do you like to read? Why? OR Do you want to learn to read? Why?
  
6. Who do you know that can write? Tell me about the children and adults whom you know that can write.
  
7. Can you write?
  - a) If the child says “Yes”, ask “Are you a good writer? What makes you a good writer? How do you think of things/topics to write about? What do you do if you can’t think of anything to write about?”
  
  - b) If the child says “No”, ask “Are you learning to write?” If the child says “No”, ask “When do you think you will learn to write?”
  
8. Who helps you learn to write? Do you help anyone else with his/her writing? How do you help?
  
9. Do you like to write? Why? OR Do you want to learn to write? Why?

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## Assessment of Bank of Sight Words and Spelling Patterns

### Materials

- Frequently Used Words chart (p. 125)
- List of words on classroom Word Wall and/or other words taught/highlighted as part of Shared Reading and Interactive Writing
- List of Word Families (onsets and rimes) taught.

### Procedures for Reading

- 1) Develop a list of 25-40 words that are included in the Frequently Used Word chart on page 125 and/or have been incorporated into language arts instruction through Shared or Guided Reading or Interactive Writing Activities. Copy these words onto an assessment form that includes a place for comments at the bottom. (The length and nature of your list is dependent upon the age of the learners. With very young learners you might only include the names of the children in the room and a few words from some of the environmental print.)
- 2) Make a copy of the list for each child in the room.
- 3) Assess children individually. Ask them to look at the word list you have created, and find and read all of the words that they know. Circle each word they read correctly and record what word was substituted above any words that were attempted and read incorrectly.
- 4) In looking over the assessment after it has been completed, note to what extent substitutions make use of some letter-sound knowledge. Include under “Comments” how confidently the child approaches decoding words in isolation and her/his ability to recognize features of words, take words apart, use word family analogies, etc.
- 5) Repeat this assessment at least once each term either with the same list or using an extended list for children who were able to recognize most words on the initial list.

*It is helpful for children to have a small core of words that they can recognize quickly when reading, use strategically for decoding similar words, and write confidently. It helps the teacher to select initial Shared and Guided reading texts for emerging learners when s/he knows which sight words a number of the students hold in common. Teachers can also use this knowledge when composing Morning Messages, classroom labels, and charts and when inviting participation in Interactive Writing.*

### Instructional Implications

See the activities in this chapter under the heading Supporting Fluency through Developing a Bank of Sight Words, p. 121.

### Procedures for Writing/Spelling

- 1) Assess children individually or in a small group. Give them blank sheets of paper on which you have stamped or recorded the date.
- 2) Explain that you want them to show you what words they can write and how they go about spelling words.

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- 3) Ask them to write all the words that they know how to write, beginning with their names.
  - 4) This activity is not a spelling test. Offer support and encouragement such as suggesting categories of words they might know how to write. For example you might say, “*Can you write the names of anyone in your family?*” or “*Can you write any of the colour words?*” You can ask them how they figure out how to spell words when they are writing. For example, “*Do you search the Word Wall or other classroom print for similar spelling patterns?*”
  - 5) Allow children to decide when they are finished. Thank them and show appreciation of all efforts.
  - 6) Observe the children as they are writing and note on the back of the assessment sheet any strategies they used when writing, such as orally segmenting words or glancing at the classroom Word Wall.
  - 7) Repeat the assessment each reporting period noting growth and changes in writing behaviours.

### **Instructional Implications**

See the activities in this chapter under the heading Supporting Fluency through Developing a Bank of Sight Words (p. 121) as well as those specifically focused on writing in the final section of this chapter. Note those children in your class who seem least able to participate in this assessment activity. Be especially alert for ways to include them in writing activities, help them develop personal word banks, and support their confidence.

k Remind yourself to support the participation of those children who lack abilities or confidence in spelling words or forming letters by soliciting their ideas for:

- writing topics
- things to include in experience charts
- ways to word sentences or phrases, etc.

Children can provide content for writing experiences whether or not they can spell words. Respond positively and comment often on the good ideas that children have and the contributions they make to Interactive Writing.



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## Strategies and Activities

### Supporting Children in Viewing Themselves as Readers and Writers

#### Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play

The following activities provide suggestions for use of social dramatic play centers as a means to strengthen oral language while providing opportunities for **reading and writing**.

#### Objectives

The activities described in this section are particularly useful in supporting development of the following English Language Arts objectives (Emerging Phase).

Students will:

- demonstrate emerging desire to express their ideas to teachers and peers in informal settings through speech, drawing, and print efforts.
- demonstrate awareness that print and symbols in their environments convey meaning.
- develop increasing abilities to attempt and practice reading behaviours.
- demonstrate increasing abilities to convey ideas using drawings, scribbles, symbols, letters, and/or letter-like shapes.
- demonstrate increasing abilities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

#### Materials

- Fiction and nonfiction books related to the current focus of the center
- Other reading materials related to the focus such as newspapers, magazines, menus, maps, forms, or charts
- Writing materials of all kinds selected for their relationship to the focus.

#### Procedures

- 1) Plan a focus for a social dramatic play center. A House Center is often a good place to start because it incorporates activities common to most children. Other centers in which a range of similar types of literacy materials could be added include a grocery store, post office,

*The suggestions in this section focus most specifically on the incorporation of dramatic play centers developed from **common family and work activities** of the children's community such as "going grocery shopping" or "visiting the doctor's office". Centers developed from such common experiences offer many opportunities for the incorporation of reading, writing, listening, and speaking tasks. They can also support awareness and practice of equitable relationships and inclusive language.*

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fire or police station, school, or library.<sup>31</sup> Ideas for new centers can come from the social studies, science, or health education curricula, a current event, or a book that captured the imagination of several children. Encourage children to suggest ideas for a new center as well.

k The focus for Social Dramatic Play Centers needs to be selected with sensitivity to the following:

- economic circumstances and
- cultural backgrounds of children in your class, and
- the portrayal of gender roles and abilities/disabilities.

You want your focus and the play that results from it to create community and strengthen self-esteem in relation to gender, culture, and family background. Watch for teachable moments and appropriate and inclusive materials to support these goals.

- 2) The provision of appropriate literacy materials is crucial to the success of the center. Suggestions for such materials are developed more fully in the chart on page 120. The chart shows examples of literacy materials for four of the many types of centers that could be developed.
- 3) Introduce each new social dramatic play center with a story, film, or field trip related to the focus of the center. Children need ideas for things to do, things to talk about, and things to make and to write while in the center. Stories, videos, or field trips extend their ideas about how adults would behave in the place the center represents.
- 4) Collect other books, poems, songs, chants, videos, etc. related to the focus and have some of these on display in or close to the center.
- 5) Ask children for ideas about how to set up the center and for furniture and other materials that should be in it. Discuss ways to make or represent materials, furniture, or vehicles that are not available or feasible for classroom use. Set up the center with some of the furniture, materials, and other props and allow space to add to the center as children have new ideas.
- 6) Add the literacy materials (books, notepads, pens, etc.) to the center and introduce ways to use them through your interactions with the children using the center or through demonstrations of their use at Morning Meeting or Circle Time.

*“When I taught pre-school, I often used large fridge and stove boxes to make dramatic play centers. The children became involved in painting, deciding where windows should go, deciding the items we needed, etc. This strategy created a sense of ownership, accomplishment, and a high level of interest in the centers.”*

*- a Saskatchewan teacher*

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<sup>31</sup> See *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994), pages 29-42, for other activity centers and the literacy materials that can be used in conjunction with them.

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For example, you might:

- Visit the House Center, pretend to take a phone call while you are there and write a message down on the notepad for one of the children in the center
- visit the House Center and talk about the need to go shopping for groceries and begin thinking out loud, and writing a list of things to buy
- ask children during the Morning Meeting what kinds of things they think would be needed in order to take a trip on a bus, train, or airplane. Suggest some materials they could use to make tickets.

- 7) Continue to read books, view films, or videos related to the center and add new signs and other literacy materials to the center as long as children's interest is sustained.
- 8) Choose words related to the center for word study activities such as segmenting words or classifying them by their initial consonants.
- 9) Add words related to the center to your Word Wall (see page 122 for a description of this strategy).

k Join in the center play from time to time to extend children's vocabulary in relation to the center focus or to demonstrate use of the literacy materials. Do this by acting as if you were one of the players. **Have fun but don't stay too long!**

## Variations

Dependent upon the space and materials you have available, and the particular theme of interest, social dramatic play could also take place in the following centers:<sup>32</sup>

- the sand or water table
- the small manipulatives center where the theme is incorporated with the use of materials such as Lego, tabletop blocks, and small figurines
- the block center

*Building and Constructing (Teacher's Planner)*, from The Scholastic Early Childhood Workshop Series (1996), shows how to integrate storybooks and a range of language and literacy activities into thematic block play.

- “make it” or creative center where children develop the materials for play by constructing train stations, restaurants, and other buildings from boxes, cardboard, paints, tape, felt markers, etc. In this variation, children can use small figurines to “people” their center or make people from cardboard and other materials.

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<sup>32</sup> See *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994), pages 29-42, for descriptions of a variety of such centers.

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## Suggestions for Older Students<sup>33</sup>

In addition to Social Dramatic Play Centers, Dramatic Play or Role Dramas<sup>34</sup> that **extend students' experiences** beyond the familiar are good foci for students in grades two and three (e.g., Crossing the Desert, Travels in Space).

## Accuracy in Children's Writing of Signs and Labels

Children in the Emerging Phase of literacy need support and encouragement in order to develop a sense of themselves as capable writers, and of writing as useful for a variety of life purposes. Writing for real purposes within social dramatic play helps to develop both of these beliefs. However, emergent literacy learners will often make use of invented spelling and letter-like approximations in their early attempts at writing. This creates a dilemma for teachers in relation to the provision of good language models within classroom environmental print. It may also be a concern to parents who visit your classroom. Explain to parents why children's approximations of writing behaviours need to be supported. Assure them that in your class discussions:

- you draw children's attention to the need for accuracy for the purposes of communicating clearly with others
- you will be supporting the development of correct spelling and printing as children progress to further stages of their literacy development.

You might also explain that most of the other environmental print in your room provides good language models as does your daily language arts instruction.

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<sup>33</sup> "Older" refers to students who are 7 years or older, and those in grades two and up.

<sup>34</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 102, for an overview of this method under the heading "Dramatic Play" and *Arts Education: A Curriculum Guide for Grade One (Two, Three, Four, or Five)* (1991), page 128, for an overview of this approach and pages 145-156 for the process of planning a drama in context. Unit Two: Beyond the Community would be a good focus for supporting oral language development and literacy abilities in the manner described in this chapter.

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## Literacy Materials for Social Dramatic Play Centers (Four Examples)

### House Center

- Books to read to dolls or other children
- Magazines and newspapers
- Cookbooks
- Telephone book
- Address book with children's names and phone numbers (involve children in making this)
- Small notepad and pencils beside the telephone
- Emergency numbers decal on the telephone
- Flyers advertising food on sale
- Home office materials, computer, stationery, and utility bills
- Play money and cheque book

### Doctor's Office

- Eye chart (make one with rows of letters of different sizes)
- Other health charts showing ears, teeth, human skeleton, etc. (collect some real ones)
- Pamphlets related to health (many of these are available free in clinics)
- Magazines, books, and toys for the waiting room
- Telephone book, message pad, and pencils
- Signs such as *Doctor is in/Doctor is out; Thank you for not Smoking; etc.\**
- File folders and forms (prepare them with a few boxes to fill in information such as, name, age, health concerns)
- Small index cards for appointment cards
- Date stamp
- Pad for writing prescriptions

### Bus/Train Station or Airport

- Chairs arranged as seats
- Sign that says, "(name of town, city, etc.) Bus/Train Station or Airport"
- Books and magazines to read while waiting for departure
- Small cards and other materials for making tickets
- Stamp and/or hole-punch for tickets
- Maps, atlases, travel brochures, and posters
- Sign pointing the way to the washrooms with symbols and text
- Luggage tags (to be filled in by children)
- Departure and arrival schedules (make them for places children have visited or know)
- Cash register, play money, cheque books, and constructed credit cards
- Travel diaries and pens for writing
- Post cards and stationary, felt markers, and small squares of paper for making postage stamps

### Restaurant Play

- *Open/Closed* sign
- Sign pointing toward washrooms using symbols and text
- Sign for name of restaurant (children should be involved in deciding on the name and designing and making the sign--use examples photocopied from phone book)
- Chalkboard or magnetic board for advertising daily specials, chalk, and magnetic letters
- Menus (Children should design and make some. Teachers could provide a few models from local restaurants.)
- Placemats with name of restaurant (designed by children)
- Notepads and pencils for taking orders
- Cash register, play money, cheque books, and constructed credit cards

\* To the greatest extent possible, children should be involved in the designing and making of signs and other print materials used in the centers--making use of invented spellings as necessary. Teachers can provide some models and make some of the signs early in the year. When children have the idea, however, their independence should be encouraged.

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# Supporting Fluency through Developing a Bank of Sight Words

## Objectives

Students will develop emerging ability to:

- discriminate visual similarities and differences in words.

## Using Onsets and Rimes

Children, who have been given lots of practice with onsets and rimes to generate word families, have a larger bank of sight words to draw upon and a means to decode many unfamiliar words. Approximately 500 words can be generated from the following 37 rimes!

ack	ay	ink
ain	eat	ip
ake	ell	ir
ale	est	ock
all	ice	oke
ame	ick	op
an	ide	or
ank	ight	ore
ap	ill	uck
ask	in	ug
at	ine	ump
ate	ing	unk
aw		

## Materials

- Books and charts with text that contains repetition of one of the 37 common rimes
- Paper and pencils, experience charts, individual chalkboards, and boxes of letters.

## Procedures

The procedure that follows is an example of whole, to part, to whole instruction and of teaching skills in meaningful contexts.

- 1) Start with a whole text. Be alert for children's books, poems, and experience charts that make use of words containing these common rimes. Use such books, poems, etc. during Shared Reading to draw attention to that particular word pattern. For example, the Nursery Rhyme *Jack and Jill went up the hill* can be used to introduce the rime *ill* or *The Cat in the Hat* can be used to focus on the *at* rime.

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- 2) Focus on the parts. Follow up these occasions with opportunities for children to generate word families using the rimes upon which you are focusing.
  - 3) Include guided practice. Involve children in both saying and making the words. They can write them in list format on individual slips of paper or take turns writing them on an experience chart.

Be sure to draw students' attention to the parts of the words that change and the ones that stay the same.

- 4) Alternatively, you can use materials such as chalkboards or letter cards so that children can erase initial consonants or substitute letter cards in order to make new words. *"Make read. Change it to bead. What letter did you take away? What letter did you add?"*
- 5) Apply the new knowledge to a whole text. Teach children to use their knowledge of onsets and rimes to decode new words. Model this procedure during Shared Language or Shared Reading. Have students compare an unknown word to already known words and then use context to confirm their predictions.

For example, when encountering *nice* for the first time in the poem *I think mice are rather nice*, you might read most of this line for emergent readers but stop before *nice*, compare it to the appearance of *mice* and say *"If this is mice, what word might this be?"* OR *"Does this word look like any other word in this sentence? Remember that words that have the same endings usually rhyme."* Offer further instructional support as needed including drawing attention to the onset (*n*), supporting children in blending the onset and rime, etc. After *nice* has been suggested, reread the sentence and ask, *"Does nice make sense in this sentence?"* in order to help establish the practice of using context to confirm predictions.

## Word Wall

### Materials

*A Word Wall is a chart that is highly visible and contains words that children use frequently in their reading and writing. New words are added to the Word Wall each week and practiced daily through short reading and writing activities. The purpose of creating a Word Wall is to help children develop fluency through adding to their store of sight words and known spelling patterns.*

- Bulletin board or part of a classroom wall
- Set of 26 alphabet cards with both upper and lower case versions of each letter written on them
- Construction paper, markers, and scissors
- Books used in Shared or Guided Reading
- Nonfiction books used in various units
- Frequently Used Words chart.

### Procedures

- 1) Attach alphabet cards to the wall in order, in three or four rows, allowing space for lists of words under each card.
- 2) Choose 3-5 words per week to add to the Word Wall. Select the words using some of the following criteria. Choose words:

- 
- from books you are currently reading
  - used frequently in children’s writing (for example, *birthday, grandma/kokum*)
  - that provide examples for each initial consonant. Include ones with both common sounds for *c* and *g* and the *ck* combination.
  - that provide examples of the most common spelling patterns for each vowel such as:
    - *at, make, rain, day, car, saw, caught*
    - *end, eat, see, her, new*
    - *in, like, night, girl, thing*
    - *not, rose, coat, go, for, how, snow, out, boy, book, school*
    - *us, use, hurt*
    - *my, funny*
  - that include the most frequent contractions (*can’t, didn’t, don’t, won’t, isn’t, it’s*), word endings (*s, ed, ing, er*), and homophones (*too, to, two; no, know; write, right; one, won; etc.*)
  - that are high frequency words with irregular spelling such as *know*
  - that are high frequency words that are often confused for similar words (for example, *the/this, then/there, what/want/was*)
  - of particular interest to children that contain irregular spelling or many syllables (*nightmare, Tyrannosaurus*).
- 3) As the new words are introduced to children, print the words on construction paper, cut out (following the shape of the word), and place on the Word Wall under their beginning letter. Words that fit into the same category such as homophones *to, too, two*, or that are all drawn from the same book or series that you are reading, could be printed on the same colour of paper to provide an additional way to identify them quickly.
- 4) A routine to follow when introducing new words each week might include:
- using the word in a couple of sentences to provide a way for children to associate meaning with the word
  - practising the word in a variety of learning modes such as clapping the syllables while chanting the word, writing the word in the air and on paper, and closing the eyes and trying to visualize the word.

See the discussion of using visual imaging to strengthen spelling abilities described in “Visual Imaging”, page 139, of <i>English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level</i> , 1992.
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- 5) Develop a routine to follow for practicing the words each day of the week they were introduced. Your routine would vary dependent upon the ages and developmental levels of the children. The routines could range from simpler activities such as pointing to the words



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*Remember, a Word Wall is only effective as an instructional tool if it is used regularly!*

once a day and having children read them and clap the syllables or saying the word and having a child locate it, to more complex activities such as having children write the words each day on a sheet numbered from 1-3 (or 1-5).

- 6) Read the Word Wall frequently as a class. Encourage children to refer to it for the conventional spelling of words and to help other children locate a word they need during writing.
- 7) Use the Word Wall as part of an independent or buddy reading activity such as Read Around the Room (see page 141 for a description of this activity).

### **Variations**

- 1) Add sight words from each unit studied throughout the year. Use construction paper of the same colour for all words from the same theme or unit as an additional context clue.
- 2) Have children draw small pictures above difficult nouns or verbs.
- 3) Introduce a “Mystery Word” game.
  - Tell students you are thinking of a word on the Word Wall and that you will give them 3 (or more) clues to help them figure out what your mystery word is.
  - Have students number a paper from 1-3 and ask them to write down their predictions as you give each clue but to not say them out loud.
  - Give students a semantic clue such as *“The word I am thinking of is something that you can use to get places”* (e.g., bus).
  - Remind students to look over the Word Wall for possibilities and have them write down their first prediction.
  - Give students a graphophonic clue such as *“The word I am thinking of has a short ‘u’ sound”* and have them make a second prediction.
  - Continue with your third clue and student prediction.
  - Ask students to share their predictions and their thought processes. (Ask, *“How did you figure that out?”*) Discuss why certain words had to be eliminated as not fitting the clues.

### **Frequently Used Words**

Frequently used words are also referred to as *high frequency words*. These are words that occur the most often in children’s books and other texts, and are used most frequently in children’s writing.

Many of the activities in this resource make use of the words used most frequently by beginning readers and writers. The chart that follows contains a list of these words. It can be consulted in selecting words to be used:

- in a Word Wall or Making Words activity

- when making word cards for activities in the ABC or Word Study Center
- for an informal assessment tool of a child’s sight vocabulary.

Some words not used as frequently are included as models for the consonant and vowel sounds, the common digraphs, and common word endings such as *er*, *est*, and *ing*.

**Frequently Used Words<sup>35</sup>**

**Aa** a about after all an and are am as asked at away  
**Bb** back be because before big boy brother but by  
**Cc** came can come could children  
**Dd** day dad did do don’t down **Ee** end eat  
**Ff** for from funny **Gg** go going good  
**Hh** had has have he her here him his house how  
**Ii** I I’m if in into is it isn’t it’s **Jj** just  
**Kk** keep kind know **Ll** like little look looked looking long longer longest love  
**Mm** make making man mother mom my me **Nn** no not now  
**Oo** of off old on one or our out other over only **Pp** people play put **Qq** quiet question  
**Rr** run ran rain **Ss** said saw see she so some something  
**Tt** than that the then there these they this three to too two **Uu** up us **Vv** very  
**Ww** was want we went were what when where who will with would **Xx** xylophone  
**Yy** yes you your **Zz** zipper zoo zoom

## Other Strategies for Developing a Bank of Sight Words

Other strategies that support development of a sight vocabulary in this resource are:

- One-letter Books, p. 101
- Making Words, p. 104
- ABC and Word Study Center, p. 107
- Action Words for the Consonants, p. 110.

As well, see the “Key Vocabularies” strategy, page 108, in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992).

<sup>35</sup> The “Frequently Used Words” chart has been developed with reference to similar lists in Cunningham (1995), Fountas and Pinnell (1996), and Tarasoff (1993).

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## **Integrating Use of Cueing Systems into Daily Reading Activities**

### **Objectives**

Students will develop emerging abilities to:

- use combined knowledge of context, syntax clues, sight words, word structures, and graphophonics to draw meaning from print
- employ a variety of problem-solving strategies when confronted with an unfamiliar word.

Cueing systems are sets of cues or clues built into the structures and patterns of the English language. They are called systems because the English language is systematic in the ways that words are ordered to create meaning, letters and sounds are related, punctuation is used, and in the ways that the English language is used to communicate. When children are taught to recognize and use these relatively predictable language patterns within texts, they have the means to become independent readers and writers.

In addition to the main cueing systems, children can be taught other problem-solving strategies such as the use of picture clues. Together these cueing systems and problem-solving strategies offer learners the means to “figure things out for themselves”. The foundations for use of all cueing systems and other problem-solving strategies are laid in the Emerging Phase. The cueing systems and other problem-solving strategies are described in the two charts that follow. Examples are included with each description to illustrate how a child might make use of each cueing system or other problem-solving strategy.

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## Knowledge of Cueing Systems

### Syntactic Knowledge

When learners are familiar with the patterns of word order or grammar that determine meaning in sentences, they can use this knowledge to predict unfamiliar words and to read with greater fluency. For example, children with good oral language have internalized a rule of word order that helps them to know that the following two sentences have different meanings:

*“The pitcher threw the ball.”*

*“The ball threw the pitcher.”*

They can recognize this difference without being able to talk about such elements of grammar as subject and object. Teachers can help children access this knowledge by frequently focusing them on the difference between “sense” and “nonsense” or between something that sounds right and something that does not.

### Semantic Knowledge

When learners are familiar with the topic of a text because they have had personal experiences related to it, they are able to make use of this background knowledge to predict what an unfamiliar word or phrase might say. For example, children whose parents are interested in baseball are more likely to predict that the unfamiliar word in the sentence *“The \_\_\_\_ threw the ball”* might be “pitcher” or “catcher” than those unfamiliar with baseball.

In this example, children who predicted that the word might be “pitcher” as opposed to “he” would also be making use of syntactic knowledge. They might also recognize that the word order *“The he”* does not make sense.

You encourage children to make use of their “language sense” (integrating syntactic and semantic knowledge) by asking questions such as:

- *Did that make sense?*
- *Did that sound right?*
- *What do you think would make sense in this story about baseball?*

In the Emerging Phase, such strategies are developed informally during group times such as Morning Message, Shared Language, or Shared Reading.<sup>36</sup>

### Pragmatic Knowledge

When learners understand that people use language differently in different contexts, they are drawing upon pragmatic knowledge. For example, children may notice that adults talk differently to a baby than to another adult. English as a Second Dialect speakers might notice that the language spoken by teachers at school is different than the language spoken by members of their family even though both are speaking English.

### Graphophonic Knowledge

When learners begin to develop an understanding of letter-sound relationships, they can use this knowledge to predict what an unfamiliar word might be. For example, if a child knew the “p” letter-sound relationship, s/he could use it to support the prediction of “pitcher” as opposed to “catcher” or “he”.

### Good Readers and Writers Integrate the Cueing Systems and Focus on Meaning

Researchers have shown that children who become proficient readers and writers use all of the cueing systems relatively simultaneously and are not overly reliant on one method. They use these systems to attain meaning and expect literacy events to be meaningful. All children can be taught strategies that integrate the use of all available textual clues and their store of background information to decode and create texts. Teachers who consistently focus on the purpose of such strategies as being that of discovering and retaining meaning are likely to maintain the motivation and enthusiasm of their students in relation to literacy tasks.

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<sup>36</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 78, for a description of these daily routines.

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## Other Problem-solving Strategies

### Use of Picture Clues

One of the first reading strategies that children use is that of inventing text in a storybook through use of picture clues. This strategy can be encouraged as children attempt to decode text accurately.

In the Emerging Phase, teachers can strengthen use of picture clues in two ways. First, teachers can do this by drawing relationships between pictures and text during Story Time or Shared Reading. Second, teachers can choose books for beginning reading experiences that have a good page by page match of picture to text (see Fountas and Pinnell, 1996, for examples of books with this quality.)

To prevent an over reliance on picture clues, teachers need to teach students to use them in conjunction with their cueing systems knowledge and other problem-solving strategies.

### Strategies that Integrate Semantic and Syntactic Knowledge

- **What has Already Happened**

Keeping in mind what has already happened can give important clues to what a text is saying about what happens next. Children will make use of this knowledge when they have developed the understanding that just like oral language, printed language makes sense. Reading to children daily develops this understanding. It can be further developed during Shared Reading times by asking questions such as:

- *Do you remember the part we read before about ...?*
- *What do you think might happen next?*

- **“Reading On”**

Just as children can review what has already happened in order to help them figure out new text, they can also be taught to read ahead, skipping the unknown word and then going back to see if they can fill it in based on what would make sense in the sentence. During the Emerging Phase, teachers can develop this practice initially during Shared Reading time or as part of figuring out the Morning Message.

- **Predictable Patterns in the Text**

Many children’s books contain predictable patterns such as repetition, rhyming, or rhythms. When children have grasped the pattern of a particular book, they can use that pattern to predict new text and to participate in Shared Reading. Using such books regularly during the Emerging Phase can support children in using predictable patterns to read and to write more independently.

### Integrating Structural Analysis with Graphophonic Knowledge

There are many occasions when children’s attention can be drawn to patterns in word endings such as “ing”, “ed”, “er” and “est”. When children have a chance to see as well as hear these patterns, this knowledge gets added to their existing graphophonic abilities.

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## Visual Aids for Remembering Problem-solving Strategies: Making Charts and Bookmarks

### Materials

- Experience charts
- Coloured markers, paper, pencils, and crayons
- Bristol board
- Collection of simple pictures or those generated by graphics software
- Laminator.

*This strategy is particularly useful for older students in the emerging phase of literacy but simplified versions of charts listing problem-solving strategies could be developed for younger learners as well.*

### Procedures

- 1) Each time you involve children in a reading activity, draw their attention to one or two of the strategies outlined in the two previous charts.
- 2) At the beginning of a language arts period, tell children they are going to help you make a chart that will help them solve reading problems by themselves. Discuss with them all the things that they know how to do when stuck on a word. Tell them you are going to give them one idea about an important thing to figure out first. You might want to start with the idea of **context or topic** and focus on **“What is the text about?”** Write *“1. What is the text about?”* OR *“1. Find out the topic.”* and discuss some ways to do this. Use lots of examples.

#### 1. What is the text about?

Things to find out:

- Who said it or wrote it? (Does it sound like someone is talking?)
- Why was it written? (Is it in the form of a list, a letter, a poem or rhyme, a set of instructions, a recipe, a label or sign, a story?)
- Where did the text come from? (If it is not a whole book, did it come from a fiction or nonfiction book?)
- What is the topic? How could I find out? (Are there picture clues? Does it have a title that would tell me the topic? Can I tell by the location? For example, if it is over the fish tank, might it be about feeding the fish? Can I guess the topic by finding and reading all the words in the text that I already know? For example, if I recognize the words **farm** and **barn** in it, might it be about farming?)

- 3) Following the presentation of this strategy, encourage students' ideas. Support this discussion as necessary with examples and reminders. Record their ideas. The list might include ideas such as the following.

- 
1. Find out the topic by looking for picture clues, reading all the words you know, looking at the format to see if it looks like a list, a letter, a story, or a poem.
  2. Read ahead. Read all the words you know, leaving out unfamiliar words
  3. Reread it and think about what might make sense in the sentence.
  4. Try to “sound out” the unfamiliar words.
  5. Double check. Reread the sentence and see if your word makes sense in the sentence.
  6. Look for parts of words. See if any of the words you cannot read look like words you already know. Do they have some spelling patterns you know such as “ake” or “ing”?
  7. Does the punctuation help you to read it?
  8. Look around the room for words that might help you figure out words you do not know.

- 4) Develop a shortened form of this chart. Ask students for their ideas about how to illustrate each point to help beginning readers remember what the chart says. For example, the chart without illustrations might look like the one below.

**I Can Read by Myself**

1. I look at the pictures.
2. I look at the format (e.g., list, letter, story, poem).
3. I read ahead. (I read all the words I know.)
4. I try to predict.
5. I go back and reread.
6. I look for parts of words that I know.
7. I try to sound out.
8. I ask, “What might make sense?”
9. I double check. What sound does the word start with? End with? Does my word make sense?
10. I look at the punctuation.
11. I look around the room for clues. (I use our Word Wall, labels, and charts.)
12. I ask someone else.

- 5) Duplicate a copy of the chart for each student. Have students work in pairs to illustrate each point on their copy. Pair strong readers with students in an earlier phase of literacy development.
- 6) Have pairs share their ideas with the whole class. Select illustrations for the class chart.
- 7) Make a smaller version of the chart in a bookmark size and shape. Duplicate it. Have students paste their copies on bristol board or manilla tag and laminate them for students to use as book marks.

*Make extra bookmarks for the use of reading buddies, parents, and mentors!*

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## Teacher Demonstrations of Reading Strategies

### Materials

- Experience chart
- Chalkboard and chalk
- Overhead projector, transparencies, and markers
- “I Can Read by Myself” chart or student “I Can Read by Myself” bookmarks.

### Procedures

- 1) Choose a piece of text that children have not seen previously. The selection can be a page or paragraph from a fiction or nonfiction book that is at the reading level of most of the children in the class. However, it should contain two or three words that are not yet in children’s sight vocabularies. Some of these words may incorporate familiar spelling patterns. Others need not. An example of text from *Mama, do you Love Me?* (Joosse, 1991), a children’s story based in the Inuit culture, follows.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Example of Text</b></p> <p><i>I love you more than the raven loves his treasure, more than the dog loves his tail, more than the whale loves his spout.</i></p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- 2) Print the text selected onto an overhead transparency, chart paper, or chalkboard.
- 3) Tell the children that you are going to help them figure out what all of this text says using some of the problem-solving strategies that they are learning. Ask, “*What do we need to know first that would help us read this?*” Refer them to the classroom “I Can Read by Myself” chart or their personal bookmarks.
- 4) Demonstrate how you would approach this text by thinking aloud. You might begin by saying, “*Well, the first suggestion on our chart says to look at the pictures. That is to help us figure out the topic or about what the text is. There aren’t any pictures and I don’t know where this text came from. It might be from a storybook. It doesn’t look like a poem or a list or a letter. What do you think I should do now that would help me read this?*”
- 5) Respond to children’s suggestions to read all the words you know, to read ahead, try to sound out, etc. by finding words that you know that many of them can read. “*I think I’ll look for words we know how to read. Let’s see. I see the word ‘love’ and ‘loves’ (point to these words). This could be from a story about love. What other words do we know? Let’s read ahead together.*”



- 
- 6) Allow the children to read from the beginning while you frame what they read. Draw a line under words that were not known. In our example they might include *more, than, raven, treasure, tail, whale, and spout*. Ask, “Which word would you like to work on first?” Have children spell or point to a word. Using whichever word is suggested, think aloud about strategies to use for decoding it (sounding it out, looking for word families or familiar spelling patterns, etc.). Ask, “Who would like to predict what the word is now?”
  - 7) Remind children that whenever they predict a word they need to **double check** their prediction by rereading the sentence with the word in it to see if it makes sense in the sentence. Perhaps they have worked out the word *more* based on your pointing out the smaller word *or* that it contains, blending the *m* and *or*, and talking about the pattern of silent *e* at the end of a word. Double check by rereading or reading back, “*I love you more ...*”
  - 8) Demonstrate the use of syntactic knowledge by saying, “*Now that we know this says ‘more’, I think I can figure out the next word. I know the sound that ‘th’ makes and I know what might make sense here. Sometimes people say things like, ‘I love you more than the sun and stars’ or ‘I love you more than anybody in the world’. This word looks like the word ‘than’ and sounds right in the sentence.*”
  - 9) Continue demonstrating how you would solve the other unknown words and encouraging the children to make suggestions, and give you advice. Always reread from the beginning and double check for meaning.
  - 10) When most or all of the words are decoded tell students, “*Actually, this sentence comes from a good story that I know. Before I show it to you, would you like to guess what the story is called? What might the title be if it is a story about love?*” Show appreciation of all the students’ ideas. Show students the book and invite them to read it with you. Suggest that they watch for the page or pages that contain the text that you just read.
  - 11) Read the book. Encourage children to point out any of the words that they were decoding during your demonstration.

## Morning Message

### Materials

- Chalkboard and chalk
- Lots of ideas for messages related to children’s lives and current interests.

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## Procedures

- 1) Choose a topic and content for your Morning Message that reflects children's lives and interests, your own life, or classroom and community events.
- 2) Write 2-4 sentences on the topic in a prominent place on the chalkboard. Keep your sentences relatively short and vary their form. For example:
  - *Guess who is 42 years old today!*
  - *Do you know anyone who has a birthday today?*In order to establish the concept of sentence, sometimes make a sentence that is more than one line long. Do your students understand that it is the punctuation that denotes the end of the sentence?
- 3) The first time you use the strategy in a year, explain to the children that you will write them a message each day and that they should try to read it or predict what some of the words are as soon as they come in each day. Tell them you will be asking for their ideas about what it says as part of your morning routine (or afternoon routine in the case of pre-K and kindergarten afternoon classes).
- 4) When the class is settled, ask, "*Does anyone see any words he/she can read in the Morning Message today?*" If children know any of the words, ask them about what they think the message is. With young children, you might ask "*Does anyone know any letters in our message this morning?*" and invite them to circle and name letters that they know.
- 5) You would also demonstrate some concepts of print such as left to right and top to bottom sequencing, and read the sentences for the children (framing them as you do so). Ask questions and make comments such as the following.

*Morning Message is a form of teacher demonstration with a strong emphasis on the use of context clues. It is also useful for teaching concepts of print. An important aspect of Morning Message is freshness or enjoyment. Vary the form of your messages often and keep them connected to the students' interests. Remember, you want to start the day with a strategy that invites alertness and full participation!*

### Sample Questions and Comments

- Who can show me where to start reading the Morning Message? (Give the child that volunteers a pointer to use.)
- How many sentences did I write today? How can you tell how many there are?
- Who can show us the first sentence? (Use the pointer.)
- Who can count the words in the first sentence? (Use the pointer.)
- How many letters are there in the first word of the Message? Use the pointer to show us how to count them.
- Which is the longest word I wrote today? The shortest word?
- What do we call this mark at the end of the sentence?
- **Watch me while I read it to you.** (Frame the words as you read.)
- (Stop at a word that children might be able to decode using syntactic knowledge and invite them to fill in the missing word. You might stop on the word *old* in the example above.) Ask, "Does the word *old* make sense there? Let's reread the sentence and see how it sounds."

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- 6) After you have read the message to the class once, invite the children to reread the whole message with you.
  - 7) When children have the idea that Morning Message makes sense and is related to their lives in some way (and have developed some sight vocabulary and knowledge of a few spelling patterns), turn more of the reading over to students. Make use of the Cloze strategy from time to time but do not leave too many words out. Leave whole words blank or include the first or last letter only.

### Variations for Older Students

- 1) Use a mystery word game.
  - Cover one word of the Morning Message with masking tape. When children come in, ask them to try and read the message and predict the mystery word.
  - Students can number a slip of paper or part of a page in a notebook from 1 to 3. Have them all write down one word. Remind them not to tell anyone what word they have predicted.
  - Read the message together, stopping at the mystery word and inviting a few children to reveal their predictions. Confirm predictions that would make sense in the sentence and write them on the board.
  - Uncover the first letter and ask, *“Do any of the words that we predicted start like this? Which one/s?”* Erase words on the board that do not start with that letter.
  - Invite everyone to make a second prediction by writing it beside the numeral 2. Add a few new predictions to the board. They must start with the letter that has been uncovered.
  - Continue to read the rest of the message. Ask children to predict the word based on the new information they have from knowing most of the message. Add new predictions. Uncover another letter and eliminate words that do not start with that pattern.
  - Invite children to write down their third prediction. They may write the same word each time if they feel that they predicted the right word from the beginning. Add new predictions.
  - Uncover all the letters and ask, *“Who predicted our mystery word today? Who predicted other words that would make sense but are spelled differently?”* Read the message using all the words that would make sense.
- 2) Teach students to focus on topic/context. Discuss with students about what Morning Messages usually are. Make a list of the main contexts that are used in Morning Messages. It might look like the following.

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### Morning Messages are about:

- the students in our class and their families.
- our teacher.
- something that is happening at school.
- something that is happening in \_\_\_\_\_ (name of village, town, city, etc. in which children live).
- a book we are reading or have read recently.
- something that is happening in the world.

Ask students to read as much of the message as they can and to predict which of these topics the message might be about that day. Remind students that, in attempting to read unfamiliar words, it always helps to know what the book or paragraph is about.

## Shared Reading

### Materials

- Big Books and lap books<sup>37</sup>
- Class or small group sets of the same “easy to read” books
- Experience charts, charts, or overheads of favourite poems, songs, and chants.

### Procedures

- 1) Read the book, experience chart, or other text to the children right through from the beginning the first time it is used in order to keep the emphasis on meaning and enjoyment.
- 2) In subsequent rereadings, encourage children to join in the reading as they can. Use a pointer, your hand, or a framing device to help children follow.
- 3) Access children’s problem-solving strategies and help them to decode unfamiliar words by using questions like the ones that follow.

*A major difference between the “Reading for Enjoyment” strategies and those of “Shared Reading” is that in the former you are reading **to** children while in the latter you are reading **with** them. While reading to children increases their active listening abilities, in shared reading you are encouraging students to become active readers.*

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<sup>37</sup> A lap book is smaller than a Big Book, can be held in the teacher’s lap, and has sufficiently large pictures and print to enable all the children in a small group to see/read it, when seated on the carpet in front of the teacher.

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## Questions to Ask when Reading or Rereading Books or Charts during Shared Reading\*

### Before Reading

1. About what is this text (chart/book/label)? Do you remember when we made it? Why we made it? (Establishing a context--accessing semantic and pragmatic knowledge)
2. Where should we start in reading this text (chart/book/label)? (Accessing concepts of print)

### During Reading

1. What might this word be? Let's read ahead and see if we can figure it out. Would \_\_\_ make sense here? (Accessing syntactic and semantic knowledge)
2. What might this word be? Let's go back and read what came before and see if we can figure out what might work here. Does that sound right? (Accessing syntactic and semantic knowledge)
3. Do we know any sounds in this word? What sound does it start with? End with? Yes, \_\_\_ (after child has volunteered a word) does begin with that letter. (Accessing graphophonic knowledge) Does \_\_\_ (teacher repeats the word) also make sense in the sentence? (Integrating cueing system knowledge)
4. Do we know any other words that look like this? (Accessing graphophonic knowledge and structural clues--for example, compound words, word endings)

\* Make a set of cards that contain the questions on this chart for adult volunteers, parents, and older reading buddies to use when reading with children.

- 4) Go back and have children reread a section of text from the beginning whenever you feel the meaning may be lost.

## Guided and Independent Reading

### Guided Reading<sup>38</sup>

#### Materials

- Sets of leveled<sup>39</sup> books, one for each child in a small guided reading group (Many commercial reading materials listed by Saskatchewan

*"I tried every way that I could think of to get some of my reluctant older readers in the Emerging Phase to become involved in independent reading. Finally, I told them I would tap dance for them at the end of every day that they read and I would teach them to tap dance. That worked!"*

*- a Saskatchewan teacher*

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<sup>38</sup> See also the suggestions in Guided Reading and Thinking, page 104, *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992).

<sup>39</sup> Books designed specifically for early reading experiences and simple predictable children's literature that have been categorized into levels from those that are very easy and suitable for emerging literacy learners to those offering more challenges to readers who are moving through the developing stage. Appendix M in Fountas and Pinnell's (1996) *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for all Children* contains an extensive list of books categorized into levels and Chapter 10 explains the procedures for leveling books and for ways to use them.

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Education include sets of leveled books--see English Language Arts bibliographies and annual updates.)

- Easel, chart paper, and markers.

### **Procedures**

- 1) Decide when children in the emerging stage of literacy have developed sufficient foundations to participate in a guided reading group. Your decision would be based on the extent to which students show:
  - interest and confidence in attempting to read books independently
  - some basic understanding of print concepts
  - the ability to read a few sight words
  - knowledge of some letters and sounds.
- 2) Select a text from the first level of a set of leveled books. Gather the small group of children together in your class meeting place and give each child a copy of the book selected.
- 3) Be sure to mention your belief in their abilities to read the book independently with a little support.
- 4) Introduce the book in the way that you would if you were reading it to the children, noting the title, author, and illustrator and eliciting their ideas about what the book might be. Using the adjacent easel and chart paper, draw students' attention to key vocabulary the book uses and/or any words that you feel they will not be able to decode independently.
- 5) Read the first page **with** the students. Books in the earliest levels will make use of a similar sentence pattern throughout and contain very little text.
- 6) Invite students to read the rest of the book by themselves making use of the strategies you have modeled in Shared Reading and demonstrated many times. Do not have children take turns reading the book aloud as this practice can place too much pressure on individuals to "perform" well. You want them to try to figure out words independently, and with the confidence that miscues are not mistakes but rather an important part of the process of learning to read.
- 7) Monitor students' progress through the book offering encouragement to children who require it. Use reminders that keep the focus on the story events and on retaining the meaning.
- 8) Take a few minutes at the end of the session to reread the book together and to review a print concept or letter-sound combination that some children appeared to find difficult.
- 9) Make the books available for independent practice.
- 10) Use other books from the first level (of a set of leveled books) on subsequent occasions. Move to using books from the second level and higher as children show that they are ready. Form new groupings as necessary.

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## Supporting Independent Reading

### Materials

- Fiction and nonfiction books that students have chosen from the school library, your local library, or brought from home
- Variety of other texts to read including those on walls, in centers, and in your classroom library.

#### Materials to include in Classroom Library

- Big Books
- Baskets of books sorted by author, illustrator, or theme
- Baskets of books sorted and labeled by level
- Browsing Boxes (p. 61)
- Poem box
- Books or albums written and illustrated by the class
- Books authored by individual children in the class
- Magazines and newspapers

### Procedures

*The most important aspects of independent reading are that:*

- *children are supported in choosing their own texts*
- *it is a daily routine*
- *a variety of materials are available from which children can choose*
- *the collection of materials for independent reading is changed, added to, or renewed on a regular basis.*

- 1) A common way to undertake independent reading is to have a daily period in which everyone including the teacher engages in reading a book of choice in a quiet atmosphere. This practice is known both as Silent Sustained Reading<sup>40</sup> (SSR) and as Drop Everything and Read (DEAR).
- 2) Other possibilities for independent reading include sharing a book of mutual choice with a classmate and the Read Around the Room strategy (p. 141).
- 3) Find a time for children to discuss the book/s they have read independently in pairs or small or large groups, and to develop personal responses to favourite books.

In addition to Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write (p. 63), see the following strategies from *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992) for other ways for children to respond to the books they have read:

- Book Talks (p. 87)
- Illustrating Stories (p. 105)
- Reading Logs (p. 124).

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<sup>40</sup> See *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992), page 80, for a description of this strategy.

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## Mentor-supported Literacy Development

Mentoring programs have been developed as holistic responses to the needs of children whose learning is “at risk” due to such social factors as poverty, racism, and abuse. While many kinds of mentoring programs have been developed, the goals of Mentor-supported Literacy Development Programs are to provide children with the moral support of a caring adult while working on literacy learning. Evaluation of such programs has demonstrated “their immediate value and long term promise” (Ellis, Small-McGinley, & Hart, 1998, p. 161).

*A mentor is “one who provides one-to-one support and attention, is a friend and a role model, boosts a child’s self-esteem, [and] enhances a student’s educational experience” (Brodkin & Coleman, 1993, p.21).*

The procedures for mentoring described here focus specifically on providing the support for learners in the Emerging Phase of literacy to develop their independent reading abilities.

### Procedures

- 1) **Collaborate.** Discuss the idea of establishing a mentoring program with colleagues in your school. If possible, develop it as a school project. Show the description of Mentor-supported Literacy Development in this resource to your principal and other relevant administrators (vice-principal, language arts/early childhood consultant, etc.) and enlist their support.
- 2) **Describe.** Jointly develop a short description of the role, time commitments, and rewards of becoming a literacy mentor to share with parents, friends, and relatives of your school’s staff, community groups such Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Senior Centers, etc. and local high schools, community colleges, technical schools, or universities. In the description, you might:
  - stress that mentors need to make a commitment to meet regularly (for example, once a week for one half to one hour) and for an entire school term if possible
  - describe the role of a mentor as that of one who listens to, talks and has fun with, supports the independent reading of, and generally encourages and shows interest in an individual child.
  - describe the rewards of mentoring as including contributing to the self-esteem and literacy development of a child and to feelings of personal satisfaction for the mentor. You might want to incorporate a few quotes from a recent evaluation of two mentorship programs in Alberta (Ellis et al, 1998) to show the nature of the mutual benefits. See quotes that follow.



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Participants in two Mentor-supported Literacy programs in elementary schools were interviewed after 6-8 weeks in the programs. They described the many rewards of their involvement. For example,

**Children said:**

“It makes me feel happy and proud when she comes.”

“He reads books and he likes me a lot.”

“She helps me read books that I can’t read ... and she loves me.”

**Mentors said:**

“And just to be able to see that when I walk into the room he knows that it’s our time, and he has a big smile on his face and he’s very excited. That just gives me a good feeling all over.”

“She sees me and she’s all happy and smiles.”

“When he’s with me he talks now the whole time ... I get great satisfaction out of knowing that that’s going to benefit him too just by having a wonderful, really good interaction with somebody.”

From *Mentor-Supported Literacy Development in Elementary Schools*, Ellis, Small-McGinley, & Hart, 1998, p. 157.

- 3) Train. Develop a short (one session) training program and a handout for mentors which stresses that mentors do not need to be experts or persons with strong academic backgrounds. Inspire confidence in mentors that they will be helpful simply by establishing a positive relationship with a child. You might want to make your “tips for mentors” include ideas such as those in the chart on the next page.
- 4) Teacher’s Role. Your role in the program includes the following actions:
  - choose the children who might benefit the most from being paired with a mentor and do the matching of mentors and children
  - lead or co-lead the training session and provide handouts or guidelines on cards for mentors to use
  - develop an assessment profile of children’s literacy abilities at the beginning of the program including their beliefs about themselves as readers and writers and attitudes to reading and writing, and their present book knowledge, sight vocabulary, graphophonic abilities and use of problem-solving strategies for spelling and decoding.
  - support the children in choosing new reading materials for each visit with their mentor and familiar texts for rereading
  - show interest in, and encouragement and support for, mentors and children throughout the program.
  - monitor children’s progress and feelings about participation in the program.
- 5) Celebrate. Plan a small celebration of some kind for mentors and children towards the end of the program.

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## Ideas for Literacy Mentors

As a mentor, you might:

- Begin each visit with the child with a friendly chat. “How are you today? What’s new with you?” (If the child describes a problem s/he is facing, sympathize but do not try to solve it. Just by listening, you are showing support.) Have the child show you any artwork or other items s/he wants to share with you and talk with the child about them.
- Share something about yourself and your week--funny stories will be appreciated. You might want to bring a favourite book, a family photo, postcard, or other item to show the child. You want to make your time spent together as mutual as possible--you show an interest in the child and s/he shows an interest in you.
- Ask the child what s/he would like to do first--reread a familiar book or work on a new book or text with you. Leave time to do both each visit or alternate these on two consecutive visits.
- When a child has difficulty with a word, do not jump in too quickly. Wait, encourage, and suggest strategies s/he might use such as, “What might make sense in that sentence? Do you know any of the sounds in that word? Do you know any other words that look like that?”
- Use your judgement about when to supply the word and when to help the child figure it out for her/himself.
- Find ways to help the child keep track of the meaning of the sentence and of the story as a whole. You want her/him to understand that reading should make sense.
- Find ways to make the reading time fun for both of you.
- As time permits, use a small chalkboard, magnetic letters, or paper and pencil to work on some letters and sounds, word families, or sight words from the class Word Wall each visit. Choose letter-sound combinations that the child struggled with in the reading that day or previously.
- Monitor your reading time and any follow-up activities that you do so that you have time left for a short, enjoyable, child-selected activity at the end of your visit.
- Appreciate every accomplishment of the child (however small) during the time spent together.

## Read Around the Room

The purposes of this activity are to:

- help children view themselves as readers
- support independence
- provide practice in using the cueing systems.

### Materials

- Pointers of various lengths made from bamboo garden stakes or dowel rods, chopsticks, or rulers
- All the print on the walls, bulletin boards, shelving units, etc. This would include labels, attendance charts, calendars, alphabet charts, Word Walls, experience charts, lists, recipes, bulletin board captions, reminders, etc.
- Copies of favourite rhymes and songs, etc.

*Remember to use the samples of environmental print, experience charts, labels, etc. on display in your room for reading experiences on a regular basis. “The classroom print must not become like unnoticed wallpaper. Instead it needs to be clear, purposeful, and used by the teacher with the children so that it adds to the children’s literacy learning. (Campbell, 1998, p. 81).*

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## Procedures

*In the beginning, emerging learners in Pre-K or K may only recognize their name or know a few labels based upon knowing the name of the object that is labeled. Even if they are not actually reading the labels at this stage, they are learning what a “word” is and that words stand for something, two very important concepts in literacy development.*

- 1) Demonstrate how to “read a room” using a pointer, moving from text to text and encouraging all children to join in. Model the use of cues/problem-solving strategies by thinking out loud (see Questions to Ask when Reading or Rereading Books chart, p. 136). Do not read everything--just a few examples.
- 2) Invite children to find words in the room that they think they can read and give children a pointer. Have them take turns finding a word (or phrase, sentence, or whole text) that is on display, framing it, and reading it aloud. Encourage and appreciate all efforts.
- 3) Include Read Around the Room as one of your choices at Center Time. Children can work individually or in pairs. Acknowledge their efforts to use problem-solving strategies and the amount of reading they can do.

## Variations

After most children are familiar with many of the labels in the room, remove them and invite children to “Write Around the Room”. Give out blank cards to any children that feel they know how to write any of the names of objects in the room. Allow them to attach the new labels.

*k “One of the most important ways adults can foster literacy development is simply by responding positively to children’s attempts at reading and writing. We facilitate literacy growth when we treat children as already readers and writers, when we accept approximations and errors as necessary to growth, and when we convey the feeling that ‘of course’ they will become proficient at reading and writing.” (Weaver, 1994, p.86).*

## Mini-units Using Predictable Books

*The mini-units described here involve reading and rereading the same book every day for a week. Each day, the instructional practices build on those of the day before--creating opportunities for all children to participate and experience success.*

This strategy is intended to build children’s confidence in their abilities to:

- participate in Shared, Guided, and Independent Reading activities
- understand and respond to stories
- learn and apply decoding skills.

## Materials

- Collection of predictable books in a variety of formats such as Big Books, multiple copies of the same books (see suggestions for predictable children’s literature on page 69)
- Puppets and realia related to the book of the week
- Experience chart and markers
- Boxes of letters
- Word Wall
- Individual writing and drawing materials.

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## Procedures

- Choose a book that appeals to you and has some of the features described in the chart Choosing Fiction Books for Reading Aloud p. 56).
- Read the book through and decide upon the features of the book you will focus upon for instructional purposes. Some examples follow.

### Choosing Predictable Books

What opportunities does the book contain for children to:

- participate in the reading using their sense of rhyme or understanding of a cumulative pattern?
- make use of visual clues?
- discuss techniques or media used in the illustrations?
- make predictions?
- develop or apply knowledge of word families (using onsets and rimes)?
- develop concepts and new vocabulary?
- add to their bank of sight words?
- classify words?
- dramatize story events?
- incorporate new sentence structures into their own spoken or written communications?
- relate the story to their own lives?

What types of “Responding to Literature” activities could be developed?

- 3) Plan a week of instructional activities that follow the general sequence described below. The sequence makes use of a whole, to part, to whole pattern. (Activities that focus on whole texts are coded with a **W**; those that focus on parts, i.e., isolate particular aspects of the text for skill development, are followed by a **P**).

As can be seen in the sequencing of a week’s activities, the whole, to part, to whole process is a general pattern to follow with variations within it. The general pattern is one that starts with a whole text, focuses upon particular parts of that whole, and ends with an application of the new skills learned to whole texts. However, the movement from whole to part within this process can take place many times.

The activities in the following chart involve reading the same predictable book to children each day for a week, and building upon their increasing knowledge of the story and the language it contains.

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## A Sample Week of Predictable Book Activities

### Day One

- Reading for Enjoyment *W*
- Developing concepts of book (cover, title, illustrations, front, back, spine) *P*
- Rereading using Shared Reading techniques to focus on rhyme and predictable story pattern *P*

### Day Two

- Shared Reading *W*
- Focus on concepts of word, sentence, and punctuation *P*
- Focus on new vocabulary and sight words *P*
- Categorizing words *P*
- Word Wall *P*
- Making Words *P & W*

### Day Three

- Shared Reading *W*
- Focus on letter-sound (spelling) patterns *P*
- Responding to Literature activities (dramatizing story events, personal response using writing process, creating a dance using key vocabulary as stimulus, etc.) *W*

### Day Four

- Interactive Writing (creating of story map or summary of book) *W*
- Guided Reading of text created through interactive writing *P & W*
- Application of spelling patterns learned to text created *P & W*

### Day Five

- Reading personal copy of interactive writing text with a “buddy” *W*
- Independent Reading of text created through interactive writing *W*
- Illustrating a copy of text created through interactive writing *W*
- Sharing the text with someone else (taking copy of illustrated text home to read to family; reading and dramatizing large copy of text to a class of younger children, etc.) *W*

- 4) Examples of Mini-unit activities follow. A few of the predictable books suggested on page 69 are used to illustrate the activities suggested above. The following examples do not give the whole week of lessons and only a few of the many possible activities are described.

- a) *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood, illustrated by Don Wood

### Sample of Days One, Two, and Four

*“The Napping House” is a cumulative story about a granny who takes a nap on her bed during a rainy day. She is joined by a child and some animals who climb onto the bed with her and sleep on top of each other. Before the story is over, the pile on the bed is quite high. Everything changes when a flea who is not sleepy, bites the mouse at the top of the pile. The book was selected for the New York Times Best Illustrated Children’s Book Award.*

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## Day One

Developing Concepts of Book. Draw children's attention to the gold medal on the cover. Do they notice anything special about the cover of the book? Do they remember other books that had a similar gold medal on the cover? Explain that this book won an award for the illustrations (New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book Award). Do the children remember what the illustrations are? Can someone point out the illustration on the cover? Show them the illustrator's name and the author's name. Do they notice anything about these names? Why do they think that both people have the same last name? Confirm the idea that author and illustrator are married if someone suggests it. Show the picture of the Woods on the back cover.

Reading for Enjoyment. Point to and read the title, and draw attention to the cover illustration. Ask children about what they think the book will be. Keep the discussion short at this point and show them the frontispiece and dedication page. Accept comments about the illustrations such as, that it looks like it is raining. Begin the reading and read the book through stopping once or twice to ask *What are your ideas about who might get on the bed next?* OR *What clues are you finding in the pictures about who else might get on the bed?*

You might also use this book for a Picture Walk and have children look for:

- changes in the weather that can be noticed by looking at the window and/or changes in the light--discussing how it is dark outside when it is raining (even in the daytime).
- all the living things in each picture and what each seems to be doing. This is a good exercise to use with predicting who might climb on the bed next.
- where each living thing in the room is located making use of the concepts of *on, beside, over, and under.*

## Day Two

Shared Reading. Put the phrase "*in a napping house where everyone is sleeping*" on a large sentence strip in a visible place and within children's reach and your storytime chair. When children are gathered in front of you for the rereading, draw their attention to the phrase, read it and frame each word as you do so. Ask for a volunteer to point to each word as the children reread it with you. Tell them you will read the story *The Napping House* again and whenever you come to this phrase, they should read it from the sentence strip. Have a child with the ability to "voice-print match" point to each word as the phrase is read. Reread the story.

Categorizing Words. Draw students' attention to the adjectives that describe all the animals and people sleeping on granny's bed. Put the following part of the story on an experience chart.

---

*And on that mouse,  
There is a flea...*

*Can it be?  
A wakeful flea  
On a slumbering mouse  
On a snoozing cat  
On a dozing dog  
On a dreaming child  
On a snoring granny  
On a cozy bed  
In a napping house  
Where everyone is sleeping.*

(From *The Napping House*, Wood, 1984)

Read the text aloud inviting the children to join in with you as they can. Make a new chart that says “*Words that describe people and things*” OR “*Adjectives in The Napping House*” (if you have already been using the term *adjectives* with your class). Ask, *How did the author describe the flea?* Frame the words *wakeful flea* and write the word *wakeful* under your heading, discuss what it means and letters and/or sounds in the word with which the children are familiar, etc. Continue this process with the adjectives that describe the *mouse, cat, dog, child, granny, bed,* and *house*. Draw attention to all the adjectives that end in *ing*.

Reread the chart with the children. Have volunteers come up and find particular words. For example, *Who can find the adjective that starts with ‘d’ and tells something about the child? Who can find an adjective that describes a noise that people and animals make sometimes when they are sleeping? Who can find three words that have a ‘z’ in them? (You might also ask, What sound does the ‘z’ make in each word? and note that the ‘z sound’ is used sometimes to describe snoring. Make a long line of z’s on the chalkboard or chart and ask if anyone has ever seen that symbol used in a book, comic, or cartoon to show that the person is snoring. Suggest they might want to use this device in their own writing.)*

Be sure to use your adjective chart on each of the following days for some kind of reading, writing, and/or graphophonic activity.

*The Napping House* also contains verbs that describe what each animal or person on the bed does beginning when the flea *bites* the mouse. Other verbs include *scares, claws, thumps, bumps, and breaks*. This might be the focus for another chart to be used for reading and writing activities.

#### **Day Four**

**Interactive Writing.** A cumulative summary story could be developed making use of the concepts of *on, under, beside, above, below, and in*. This would make a good focus for an Interactive Writing experience. You might start with *The granny is sleeping on the bed*. Ask, *Who else is sleeping in the Napping House? Where are they sleeping? Tell me some sentences to write about them*. After a sentence has been dictated and some children have helped to spell words (or parts of words) and scribe (write) them, ask *What do we need to say next?* Continue until all the people and animals have been described. Reread your summary from the beginning each time a new sentence is added. Before concluding, ask *Do we need to change the order of these sentences in any way? In what order did the child and the animals crawl onto the bed in the book?*

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When everyone is satisfied with the summary of the story, make copies for each child to illustrate, read with a buddy, read independently, and take home to read to family members.

b) *The Piggy in the Puddle* by Charlotte Pomerantz

**Sample of Day Three**

*“The Piggy in the Puddle” is a funny story about a little pig who sits in a puddle and will not come out when asked in turn by her daddy, mommy, or brother. The book makes extensive use of language play including repetition, rhyme, and alliteration and has a rhythmic quality that draws in the listener. Many descriptive words are used to describe the mud. The plot has a wonderful turning point that lends itself well to inviting predictions about what might happen next and critical thinking about what other solutions the family might try. When, after much cajoling and commanding the little pig still will not come out of the mud, the other family members join the little pig and “we’re very, very, merry”.*

**Day Three**

Focus on Graphophonics/Spelling Patterns. *The Piggy in the Puddle* contains many possibilities for developing graphophonic knowledge and spelling abilities. With young children, you might wish to focus on *p* as an initial consonant in the words *piggy* and *puddle*. Students in grade one might be introduced to, or reinforced in, the appearance and sound of the *sh* digraph in words like *squishy*, *squashy*, *mooshy*, and *squooshy*. Students in grade two and three could be supported in their understanding of the use of double consonants in the middle of many words. This would also be a good focus for a **word categorization activity**. Selected pages in the book could be photocopied so that children would each have a copy to mark. They could be asked to find all the words that contain a double consonant. Use the double *g* in *piggy* and *puddle* as examples. For students who appear ready, you might also draw attention to the double vowel pattern *oo*. Examples include:

<p><i>muddy, little, puddle, waddle, merry, middle, fuddy-duddy, fiddle-faddle, skedaddle, mooshy, squooshy, silly billy, willy-nilly, oofy, poofy, oofy-poofy, waddling, paddling, wiggling, giggling, Boo-hoo-hoo, yelled, piggies, mommy, daddy.</i></p>
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When everyone has circled or underlined all the words with double consonants, a class list could be generated. If you make a copy of this list and photocopy it, children could cut it up into words and work alone or with a partner to categorize the words further. For example, they might put all the hyphenated words into one category, all the double *d* words into another, etc.

Personal Response to Literature. This book would lend itself well to dramatization. Children could work in groups of four with each child taking the role of a different family member. Each group could act the story using actions and some of the language from the story. (At this point, you would have reread the story together many times and the language will have been incorporated into many children’s own repertoires.) Encourage the child who is the little pig to use lots of expression and emphasis whenever she says, “*Nope!*”



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A miniature sand table, a pitcher of water, and a set of four plastic pigs would make a good language activity to add to Center Time. One or two children at a time could create the puddle and reenact the events of the story.

*Piggy in the Puddle* would also be a good story for individual responses using paint, crayons, or other art media. Each child could be invited to make an illustration of her/his favourite part of the story and write or dictate one sentence about it. These could be shared in large or small groups, made into a book, or sequenced on a bulletin board.

c) *Whose Mouse are You?* by Robert Kraus

### Sample of Day Two

*“Whose mouse are you?” is a story about families with large simple drawings and large print. The story is told in a question and answer format with one sentence per page. It contains rhyme, repetition, and a surprise ending. The simple format and focus on familiar themes of loyalty and bravery make it a good pattern book to use as a focus for student writing. This book could also be used as part of a literature unit on “Animal Families” with other predictable books that contain the same central vocabulary (mother, mommy, father, daddy, brother, sister, etc.). A few such books include “Are you my Mother?” and “Piggy in a Puddle”.*

#### Key vocabulary

- a) Words that could become sight words and added to the classroom Word Wall:  
*are you mother father sister brother love/s*
- b) Rhyming words: *Cat/trap so/toe*

### Day Two

Focus on Word, Sentence, Punctuation. Reread the book as a Shared Reading activity. Draw children’s attention to the text on the first page and ask questions that support their development of the concepts of word, sentence, and punctuation. For example, the first page contains a drawing of a mouse and the sentence *“Whose mouse are you?”* It offers the following possibilities.

- Ask children who are in the earliest level of emerging literacy (Beginning Literacy Awareness):
  - *Which part should I read? Can you show me where the words are?*
  - *Where is the illustration?*
- Ask children who are participating confidently in early literacy tasks:
  - *How many words are there in this sentence? Can you show me the first word? The last word?*
  - *Can you find the word mouse? How did you know that word said “mouse”?*
  - *Do you know any other words that end like “mouse”?* (Write the “ouse” ending on an experience chart and add the ‘h’. Ask if students can read the new word.)
- Ask children making the transition to the Developing Phase:
  - *What kind of a sentence is this?* (Review the types of sentences with them if necessary). *How did you know that this is a question?*
  - *Can you think of another question to ask that would be almost the same as this one?* Frame the sentence, *“Whose mouse are you?”* Write the

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sentence on an experience chart or chalkboard and leave a blank where the word *mouse* would be.

- Ask, *What other word might make sense here?* Turn the page and focus on the mouse's answer, "*Nobody's mouse*". Talk about the use of the apostrophe. As you read through the book, ask children to watch for other places where a question mark or an apostrophe are used. If students do not notice on their own, draw their attention to the exclamatory sentences and use of exclamation marks as well.

Focus on Development of a Sight Vocabulary. Develop a making words activity from the key word *whose* (*he, she, hoe, shoe, whose*) (see Making Words, p. 104, for guidance). Focus also on the words for family members, *mother, father, sister, brother* (draw attention to the *er* ending). Add these words to the Word Wall and practice them each day for the rest of the week (see page 122 for suggestions for a routine to follow in practicing words added to a Word Wall).

The following strategies in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992) also offer important ideas for working with predictable books:

- Pattern Writing (p. 116)
- Puppetry (p. 118)
- Reading Repetitive Patterns (p. 125)
- Story Grammar (p. 131)
- Story Mapping (p. 133)
- Story Theatre (p. 135).

## Supporting Independent Writing

### Objectives

The activities described in this section are particularly useful in supporting development of the following English Language Arts objectives (Emerging Phase).

Students will:

- demonstrate emerging desire to express their ideas to teachers and peers in informal settings through speech, drawing, and print efforts.
- demonstrate awareness that print and symbols in their environments convey meaning.
- demonstrate increasing abilities to convey ideas using drawings, scribbles, symbols, letters, and/or letter-like shapes.
- develop emerging ability to identify an audience in writing
- develop emerging ability to identify the purpose for writing
- develop emerging ability to contribute ideas and language for collaborative compositions.

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*This activity is especially useful for introducing young children to daily writing in a safe and positive manner.*

## **Writing Samples: We don't all write the same way!**

This activity supports the following purposes:

- to encourage risk-taking and approximations within the writing processes used by young learners
- to increase sensitivity to the needs of others for support and encouragement, and to foster a community of writers
- to increase awareness of writing as meaning-making
- to increase awareness of writing as a process of problem solving.

### **Materials**

- Samples of children's writing that include drawings; scribbles; letter-like shapes; random letters and numbers; combinations of drawings, scribbles, and letters; invented spelling, phonetic spelling, and conventional spelling; combinations of drawings, diagrams, and text.
- Overhead transparencies.

### **Procedures**

*Enlist the help of your colleagues who teach from Pre-K to grade three in collecting samples of children's writing. Photocopy a collection from one year to use the following year. Note on the back of each piece what the writing is about, the audience, and purpose of the writing. Highlight for later use any special features of the writing upon which you will want to comment.*

- 1) Make overhead transparencies of a sample of children's writing from the previous year.
- 2) Show the transparencies to the class during the first week of school. Tell students that they will all be writing each day and that their writing can take many forms.
- 3) Explain that when we write we are putting our ideas and stories down on paper (or other writing materials) in order that ourselves and other people will be able to read them. Ask children what kinds of writing they like to do and what writing their families do.
- 4) Discuss the many purposes for writing. For example, *Sometimes we write to tell stories that other people might enjoy reading. Sometimes we write for our own enjoyment. People also use writing to help them remember things such as what groceries they need to buy or what jobs they need to do. Sometimes we write to help ourselves think or solve a problem. I like to write in a journal and describe things I have been doing, thinking about, or would like to do.*
- 5) Explain (or remind, if you are working with older students) that people go through many stages when they learn to write just as they do when they learn to walk or talk. Show them some of the ways that children in their school wrote last year--making brief positive comments about each piece of writing in your collection. Stress the content and meaningfulness of the writing and the many ways that the authors found to convey their ideas. Tell them that if they write each day and have help from others, their writing will keep improving. The messages you want to convey include: *I will value all your attempts to write. It is okay to use patterns like this* (show a sample of scribbling) *or invented spelling or drawings* (show

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samples), and to share your ideas while you are learning more about making letters and ways to spell words. The important thing to begin with is to have something you want to say, and to try and find a way to say it. I will help and your friends in this room will help when you ask for help. You may need help with ideas, printing, or spelling. We will have many books and words around our room that will also help you.

- 6) Remind children that writers need a friendly place in which to write and lots of support and encouragement. Discuss things that would be **helpful** and things that would be **hurtful** to say about the writing of a classmate. You could give a quick writing demonstration by recording students' ideas on a chart and illustrating it with a happy and a sad face.
- 7) Give out small booklets or journals you have prepared (do not put too many pages in these first writing books). Show students your date stamp, invite them to fill a page with their own writing, and to come and stamp it with the date when they are finished. Show them that you have a booklet as well. Say, *Let's all sit quietly for a minute and think about something we want to say and then let's all write something in our own style. You can start by making a picture of your ideas if you wish.*
- 8) Cunningham (1995, p. 91) describes a technique called "Watch Me" in which a kindergarten teacher uses an overhead projector to demonstrate invented spelling for her students. The teacher draws a picture and writes a sentence under it using invented spelling--sounding out the words and writing the letters for the most prominent sounds. She explains that this is the way most children write when they first begin writing. She then writes the same sentence underneath it in conventional spelling and explains that this is the kind of writing adults do and the kind found in books. She then invites the children to draw a picture and write a sentence about it writing it at their particular level of development. She follows this by writing a sentence with conventional spelling on each child's paper. Teachers of young children may want to include this activity as part of the Writing Samples activity.
- 9) **A caution about the use of invented spelling.** Teachers have some valid concerns about the use of invented spelling. One such concern is that the incorrect spelling of some words may be repeated often enough that it will become a habit that will persist through the elementary grades. This is possible if children use invented spelling for frequently used words with irregular spelling patterns (such as *they, want, and because*).

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### Avoiding Misspelling of Frequently Used Words

To avoid the habitual misspelling of frequently used words that have irregular spelling patterns, use the activities in this resource that focus on establishing these words as part of a child's sight vocabulary. Be sure to include the Frequently Used Words (p. 124) with irregular spelling patterns on your Word Wall (p. 122) and provide students with lots of "hands on", multi-sensory practice with them.

This means using:

- a variety of materials with which to write or make these words (for example, magnetic letters, play dough, chalk, and small chalkboards)
- a variety of strategies to help students to learn the words (such as visualizing the words, spelling them out loud, clapping the syllables, making them with individual letter cards).

## Daily Writing

### Materials

- A well-equipped, well-maintained writing center<sup>41</sup>

A well-stocked writing center would contain many of the following items and materials:

- a variety of materials to write on and with which to write
- variety of papers for making book covers
- art materials for illustrations
- pictionaries
- staplers and hole punches
- twine, ribbon, and string
- letter templates for tracing
- computer and appropriate software for supporting writers in the emerging phase of literacy.

- Individual journals, notebooks, chalkboards, and Big Books for Writing (teacher-prepared large books for drawing and writing)
- Magnetic letters and magnetic boards
- Magic slates.

### Procedures

- 1) Introduce your routine of writing daily within the first week of school using a strategy such as the one described previously (Writing Samples) to create a comfortable and positive environment in which all children can explore writing options, purposes, and procedures.
- 2) Demonstrate one aspect of the writing process at least once a week using a "thinking aloud" strategy as you compose your piece of writing on chart, chalkboard, or overhead transparency while students watch and make suggestions. Even very young learners can

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<sup>41</sup> See also *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten* (1994), page 42, for a description of materials to include in a writing center for young learners.

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develop their understanding of audience, purpose, style, spelling strategies, and editing for content and forms if they meet these ideas regularly within concrete demonstrations. For example, you can:

- a) Draft a message for a Mother's Day card as students listen and observe you discussing the **audience** for the card. *I want to make a Mother's Day card for an older friend of mine who has always been just like a mother to me. She listens when I have a problem and tells me I'm a good person when I'm feeling down in the dumps. You can send Mother's Day cards to your real mother and to other people who act like a mother to you. Some people send Mother's Day cards to their grandmothers.*
  - b) Draft a list of reminders to yourself of things to do on the weekend and invite children's ideas about the form/format for the list. *Which paper do you think I should use for my list of things I need to remember to do this weekend (holding up scrap paper, good stationery, and a blank book)? I probably don't need to write complete sentences--I'll remember what I mean if I just put down 'laundry' and 'library books' and things like that. My husband wouldn't know that I want to get some books about First Nations' cultures at the library for the unit we are starting, but this list is for me.*
  - c) Put the beginning of a story on an overhead and ask, *What else might people want to know about my adventure in a canoe? I don't want to give away the ending just yet.*
- 3) Help children find purposes for writing by:
- noting ideas as they arise (e.g., *maybe we could write a note to Mr. D. telling him about the slivers you can get from the merry-go-round*)
  - modeling different purposes for writing
  - exposing them to a variety of genres and types of writing
  - incorporating writing as an important aspect of learning centers, structured play centers (p. 116), co-operative group activities, and writing in other subject areas.
- 4) Provide a time for writing each day, and choices in terms of the purposes, formats, and materials for the writing. You might include an uninterrupted, silent, sustained writing once a week while the rest of the week would include some time for peers talking with others about their writing, problems they are having, ideas they have, etc.
  - 5) Involve students in a writing process such as the one described in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992).
  - 6) Read your own writing to children from time to time.

*“One day I read my class a story about my visit to my sister the previous weekend. I described my sister's new puppy, Rambo. The students were so interested that I made it a practice to share my journal writing with them after that whenever I visited my sister. As soon as the children knew that my story was going to be about a visit to my sister's, they would begin predicting Rambo's size and asking me questions that would help me to improve my story. I would add the new details and then read them my new draft. This was a really concrete way for them to understand the writing process.”*  
- a Saskatchewan teacher

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## Other Activities that Support Writing Development

Class Post Office. Materials that are useful for establishing a post office include many of the same materials you would already have in your Writing Center such as a variety of things to write on and with which to write. Other important additions could include some of the following:




- a phone book with the pages giving postal codes marked with a tab
- a class address book
- a variety of stickers to use as stamps
- a stamp pad and stamps such as a date stamp
- a variety of envelopes and stationery
- postcards
- a cardboard postal box for mailing letters
- a tray with compartments for sorting letters
- a bag for letter carriers.

Encourage students to write to each other, to parents, to volunteers, older reading buddies, the school principal, secretary, nutritionist, etc. As well, when a real need arises, write joint letters to town/city/ municipal councillors, the mayor, chairperson of the local school board, or others in positions of authority. **This would be a good way to integrate the taking social action aspect of the Social Studies curriculum.**

Establish procedures for mail delivery and a schedule for class letter carriers.

k Remind your students that words on paper, just like spoken words, can help or harm. Establish a rule that no one can send unkind messages through your classroom postal system and of the other ways to solve disputes.

Other strategies in this resource that support young writers include:

-  Read, Talk, Act, Draw, Write (p. 63)
-  Incorporating Literacy into Social Dramatic Play (p. 116)
-  Mini-units Using Predictable Books (p. 142).

See also the descriptions of the following writing strategies in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992):

- Creating Text (p. 98)
- Daily Records (p. 99)
- Journal Writing (p. 107).

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## Interactive Writing<sup>42</sup>

Interactive writing is a whole class or small group activity in which the teacher and the children **share** the responsibility for recording a negotiated text--i.e., a text they compose together. The teacher and the children take turns writing the text on the experience chart as it is being developed. In the Emerging Phase, the teacher would write more than the children, but would pass the pen to a child from time to time to write a familiar letter or word. This activity is especially useful to help learners in the emerging phase:

- make connections between oral and written language
- concentrate on sounds in words
- note spelling patterns
- view themselves as writers.

### Materials

- Books that have been read recently, favourite books, poems, or songs (optional)
- Experience chart paper and felt pen.

### Procedures

- 1) Establish a reason for writing with the children. Some purposes might be to send a letter to a classmate who is ill, make a list of things to bring for a field trip, add a new verse to a favourite song, or retell a favourite story to be duplicated for “take home” reading.

See also the descriptions of the following writing strategies in *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1992) which lend themselves well to the interactive writing process:

- Letter Writing (p. 109)
- Making Books and Charts (p. 112).

- 2) Begin creating the text. Support the children through your comments and questions in composing the first sentence. When everyone has agreed on the best wording for this sentence, say it aloud slowly as you write it on the chart, noting capital letters, familiar words, etc. as you write. For example, *Once upon a time, ... that's how all fairy tales start, isn't it? We need a capital "O" in "Once" because it is the first word in our sentence* (pausing after saying “once upon”). *Who thinks they know how to write "a"? It's the word that comes next.*
- 3) In order to maintain the flow of meaning and assist children in sound-print matching, reread the text from the beginning each time a child has added a new word.
- 4) Different children might contribute a letter, several letters, or a whole word. When appropriate, invite the children to say the word

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<sup>42</sup> Adapted from Fountas and Pinnell (1996), pages 32-35.



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*An important part of interactive writing is the way it makes visible to children how written language works. A neat, totally accurate product is not the goal, although the writing should be very readable, since it will be the basis of future shared or independent reading. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 34)*

- slowly to listen for the sounds it contains. Other times, you might simply remind a child that s/he has that letter in her/his name.
- 5) As you continue to negotiate and record the text, pause from time to time to draw children's attention to:
    - familiar or new spelling patterns
    - concepts of print such as the spaces between words
    - other features of the writing such as, the special format of a letter or a list.
  - 6) The length of interactive writing sessions will vary according to the developmental ages of the children. A session might be as short as five minutes or as long as thirty minutes. Stop before the children tire. It is not important to complete a text in one sitting. You might work on the same text for a short period over several days.
  - 7) When you have completed your text, ask for suggestions from the children about ideas for its use. For example, would they like to make illustrations to accompany it and post it in the hallway for others to read? Would they like you to make a smaller version to duplicate for "take home" reading? Whatever follow-up activities they choose, do not forget to read the text with the children many more times over the coming weeks.

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## Conclusion: A Matter of Balance

The strategies and activities in this resource have been developed to reflect a balanced approach to early literacy instruction. Such a balanced practice:

- provides skill instruction without losing an emphasis on meaning
- makes use of a whole, to part, to whole approach
- offers opportunities to apply skill learning for real purposes
- balances a concern for skill development with a concern for enjoyment
- contains safeguards that protect the child's self-esteem and cultural pride
- proceeds from developmentally appropriate assessment
- adapts to new insights obtained through a teacher's personal and professional development, classroom observations, and reflection.

The wealth of research including that from teachers' experiences has demonstrated that there is no one best way to teach language arts nor one program that works perfectly for all students. Research literature and experienced teachers agree that it is important to adopt a problem-solving approach and an attitude of openness toward new ideas and instructional methods. Such reflective teaching would be responsive to the differences between children, and the need to change or discard favourite approaches if students do not grow in both competence and confidence as a result of their use.

Finally, activities that are recommended for early literacy instruction are most successful when they are used by teachers who enjoy and respect children's ideas and who like to read and write themselves.

*Reflective teachers are caring teachers who try to recognize when it is the program that is failing students and not the students who are failing to learn.*



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## Appendix

### Resources to Support Early Literacy Development of Children with Special Needs

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