Chapter 8: Essential Elements of an Effective Literacy Program

I’d personally like to introduce you to an invaluable resource for understanding comprehensive literacy. This 580-page guide costs about $80.00, but is well worth the investment. It links research and assessment to instruction by explaining both the “why’s” and “how’s” of teaching early literacy. Miriam Trehearne’s practical, teacher-friendly coverage is effectively organized with easy-to-follow lessons and activities. She supplies blackline masters, observation checklists, assessments, and more. As you design your literacy program, try to find resources that provide you with all of the elements so that your program is not just “balanced,” but comprehensive throughout.

Effective literacy programs are designed to give all students the opportunity to learn to read and write. Because there are so many wonderful research based programs available to teachers, it’s difficult to focus on just one. Like many teachers, my literacy program has developed over the years with experience, professional training, and the exploration and implementation of numerous resources. It’s a sort of patchwork of my professional experiences. To simplify, I used a balanced approach to literacy. It best coincides with my beliefs, personal research, and responses I’ve received from children.

• Reading aloud to children
• Shared reading- whole class (Pocket Charts, Poetry Cards, Big Books)
• Guided reading- small group
• Independent reading (Free Choice, Book Boxes, Library Books)

Students also participate in shared and individual writing activities each day. The four types of writing experiences are:

• Shared writing- whole class (Predictable Charts, Graphic Organizers, Lists)
• Interactive writing- whole class (Daily News, Class Books)
• Writer’s workshop- small groups or individual (Journal Writing, Book Making)
• Independent writing (Journal Writing, Writing Center)

Additionally, during many daily reading and writing experiences, children are taught about letters, sounds, and words and how they work. Listening and speaking are also emphasized in this integrated language approach. All experiences provided meet Clark County School District standards for language arts instruction.

Teachers implementing balanced literacy use an integrated approach to teaching language arts. Balanced literacy framework for literacy lessons consists of a number of elements that provide massive amounts of reading and writing on a daily basis. These authentic opportunities for reading and writing are arranged on a continuum based on more or less teacher support. Some reading and writing tasks are modeled by the teachers and others are accomplished with the support of the teacher, leading to a few that are done independently by the child.

The goal of Balanced literacy is to help children become readers and writers who enjoy and value literacy. Children quickly learn that what they say they can write and what they write they can read. The home-school connection is also an important part of balanced literacy; On the following pages are some of the definitions explaining the components and techniques used in balanced literacy. Source: www.literacycollaborative.org
Reading Aloud
In a read aloud, someone reads a story, news article, picture book, essay, poem, or trade book to another person. Usually this is a practice of parents who want to develop the enjoyment of reading in their young children. Reading aloud develops the vocabulary knowledge, focused listening skills, and critical thinking skills of children. Children usually ask questions about the read aloud selection. These questions lead to explanations, making connections, and questions by the reader. Informal discussion skills are indirectly developed through read aloud activities.

During an interactive read aloud, teachers verbally interact with students before, during, and after reading to help them understand and make a variety of connections with the read aloud selection. The selection can be a non-fiction or fiction narrative, a poem, or a picture book.

During an interactive read aloud, the teacher engages in a series of activities. These include pre-viewing the book, asking students to make predictions and connections to prior knowledge, stopping at purposeful moments to emphasize story elements, asking guiding questions or focus questions, and using oral or written responses to bring closure to the selection.

Shared Reading
Shared reading is a link in helping students become independent readers. It allows the teacher to model and support students using predicting and confirming skills. It allows less confident students the chance to share stories/articles/poetry in a non-threatening situation. It focuses on meaning, fun, enjoyment, characters, and sequence of a story and allows them to relate it back to their own experiences. It promotes discussion, problem-solving, and critical thinking by students.

Shared reading is an interactive reading experience. An integral component of shared reading is an enlarged text that all children can see. Children join in the reading of a big book or other enlarged text such as songs, poems, charts, and lists created by the teacher or developed with the class through shared and interactive writing. During the reading, the teacher involves the children in reading together by pointing to or sliding below each word in the text. The teacher deliberately draws attention to the print and models early reading behaviors such as moving from left to right and word-by-word matching. Shared reading models the reading process and strategies used by readers.

In the shared reading model there are multiple readings of the books over several days. Throughout, children are actively involved in the reading (Yaden, 1988). During the initial reading, the teacher:
- Introduces the book (shares theme, examines title, cover, illustrations, and makes predictions)
- Relates prior experience to text
- Concentrates on enjoying the text as a whole
- Encourages students to use background knowledge to make predictions
- Encourages spontaneous participation in the reading of the story
- Discusses personal responses to the book
Essential Elements of an Effective Literacy Program

Texts are usually read multiple times over a period of days or weeks. The first reading emphasizes reading for enjoyment. Subsequent readings aim to increase participation, teach about book characteristics and print conventions, teach reading strategies, help develop a sight vocabulary of high frequency words, and teach phonics. During subsequent readings, the teacher:

- Directs children’s attention to various aspects of the text, reading strategies, and skills
- Identifies vocabulary, ideas, and facts
- Discusses author’s style
- Experiments with intonation and expression
- Discusses colorful phrases or words

Students participate by:

- Choral reading
- Dramatization
- Masking activities
- Word work such as wearing word necklaces or sorting words

Through repeated readings and the predictable text, children become familiar with word forms and begin to recognize words and phrases (Bridge, Winograd, & Haley, 1983; Pikulski & Kellner, 1992).

During shared reading...

- Rich, authentic, interesting literature can be used, even in the earliest phases of a reading program, with children whose word-identification skills would not otherwise allow them access to this quality literature
- Each reading of a selection provides opportunities for the teacher to model reading for the children
- Opportunities for concept and language expansion exist that would not be possible if instruction relied only on selections that students could read independently
- Awareness of the functions of print, familiarity with language patterns, and word-recognition skills grow as children interact several times with the same selection

Individual needs of students can be more met with shared reading. Accelerated readers are challenged by the interesting, natural language of selections. Because of the support offered by the teacher, students who are more slowly acquiring reading skills experience success.

Guided Reading

Guided reading is an instructional reading strategy during which a teacher works with small groups of children who have similar reading processes and needs. The teacher selects and introduces new books carefully chosen to match the instructional levels of students and supports whole text reading. Readers are carefully prepared when being introduced to a new text and various teaching points are made during and after reading. Guided reading fosters comprehension skills and strategies, develops background knowledge and oral language skills, and provides as much instructional-level reading as possible. During guided reading, students are given exposure to a wide variety of texts and are challenged to select from a growing repertoire of strategies that allow them to tackle new texts more independently. Ongoing observation and assessment help to inform instruction. Grouping of students is flexible and may be changed often.
### Comparison of Traditional and Guided Reading Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL READING GROUPS</th>
<th>GUIDED READING GROUPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups remain stable in composition.</td>
<td>Groups are dynamic, flexible, and change on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students progress through a specific sequence of stories and</td>
<td>Stories are chosen at appropriate level for each group: there is no prescribed sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductions focus on new vocabulary.</td>
<td>Introductions focus on meaning with some attention to new and interesting vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills practice follows reading.</td>
<td>Skills practice is embedded in shared reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on the lesson, not the student.</td>
<td>Focus is on the student, not the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher follows prepared “script” from the teacher’s guide.</td>
<td>Teacher and students actively interact with text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions are generally limited to factual recall.</td>
<td>Questions develop higher order thinking skills and strategic reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is interpreter and checker of meaning.</td>
<td>Teacher and students interact with text to construct meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students take turn reading orally.</td>
<td>Students read entire text silently or with a partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus is on decoding words.</td>
<td>Focus is on understanding meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students respond to story in workbooks or on prepared</td>
<td>Students respond to story through personal and authentic activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worksheets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers are dependent on teacher direction and support.</td>
<td>Students read independently and confidently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are tested on skills and literal recall at the end of</td>
<td>Assessment is ongoing and embedded in instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each story/unit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children* by Gay Su Pinnell, Irene C. Fountas

### Independent Reading

Independent reading is a time when students self-select and independently read appropriate books.

Independent reading provides an opportunity to apply strategies that are introduced and taught during teacher read aloud, shared reading, and guided reading. When materials are appropriate and students can read independently, they become confident, motivated, and enthusiastic about their ability to read.

Children make great contributions to their own learning when they are given some control and ownership of the reading process. The self-selection process of independent reading places the responsibility for choosing books in the hands of the student. This teaches them that they have the ability to choose their own reading materials and that reading by themselves is a valuable and important activity.

While students are free to choose what they like, they must be encouraged to select a variety of literature and to select materials at their independent reading level. Independent means 95% to 100% accuracy as defined by running records. These materials should be able to be read without teacher support. It is at the independent level that comprehension, vocabulary extension, and fluency are improved.
Shared Writing

Shared writing or modeled writing is an approach to writing where the teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories. Children provide the ideas and the teacher supports the process as a scribe. The message is usually related to some individual or group experience. The teacher provides full support, models, and demonstrates the process of putting children’s ideas into written language. The text becomes much richer than children can write themselves and becomes good material for children to read and should be displayed in the room. The children can illustrate the finished text when possible. Children will love to see their work displayed and will feel successful because they can read it.

Interactive Writing

During interactive writing, the teacher and class or small group, work together to create written text. The group agrees on what to write through discussion and negotiation. In order to produce the written words, the students articulate the sounds with the teacher and then write the letters and chunks of words that they hear. The teacher may fill in parts of words or whole words, depending upon the group’s stage of writing development.

Interactive writing is used for creating stories, writing poems, the retelling of favorite literature, recipes, directions and lists. The pieces created by the students become a part of the classroom environment and are used for reading and re-reading. The class may use the pieces for shared reading or may enjoy reading some independently.

Daily News

Modeling concepts of print...

The Daily News is a whole group activity designed to provide practice in concepts of print for the students. Each day, the news begins by the teacher writing the day and date on a piece of chart paper. As this is written, the children are encouraged to participate as the teacher asks a variety of questions and makes comments as she writes the chart. The comments will vary throughout the year, depending on what the teacher wants to emphasize and what the students are ready to learn. Here is an example of what a typical lesson might sound like at the beginning of the school year:

Teacher: “Class, let’s write the word today. What letter would today begin with?” /t/, /t/, w
Class: “t”
Teacher: writes “T” on the chart and comments on how it is a capital letter because it is the first word of the sentence. Teacher writes “o” and says “Does anyone know what we have written so far?”
Class: “To”
Teacher: “Yes, we have written “to” so far. You are becoming such good readers! /d/, /d/, what will we write next?”
Class: “d”
Teacher: writes “d” and proceeds to make the next sound long/a/.
Class: “a”
Teacher: Writes it down and as she writes says, “Now we can’t hear the last letter, “y.” Now we will leave a space. What word will we write next?”

Children: Shout out “is!, i-s, is!”

Teacher: Praises this correct response and writes it down. “Now we are going to write a new word, so let’s leave a space. The next word is Monday. /m/, /m/, what letter do we write?”

Children: “m”

Teacher: “What kind of m?”

Children: “Capital!”

Teacher: Writes it and asks why it is capital.

Children: Some students answer “because it is a name!”

Teacher: “Okay, good, let’s keep going...o” as she writes, n, d, a, .

Teacher: Covers ‘Mon’ and asks “Now what does it say?”

Children: “Day!”

Teacher: “Now we will add a comma, which means take a breath. Hmmmmm...we are out of space on this line. What shall we do?”

Children: “Go to the next line.”

The lesson continues in this way as we write the month, day and year. The second sentence of the news varies throughout the year, but it is always about the day’s leader. Some “themes” we have used are:

The leader is...
(leader’s name) can ......
(leader’s name) went to ....
(leader’s name)’s favorite color is....
(Mr./Miss last name) likes...
(Mr./Miss last name) said, “quote of choice”.

Children can write whatever they choose.

After the news is written, the children read through it as the teacher points to each word. Then a letter that is repeated several times in the news is chosen and students come up and circle the letter. A word is chosen and students come up and underline the word in each place it occurs. Later in the year, the students take over writing themselves each day when they are leader.

They really like this as they write with the support of the rest of the class. The last time through, the leader wrote the news ahead of time with the assistance of a student of his/her choice. The student points to the news as the class reads and decides what letters and words to focus on. The student calls on other students to circle and underline.

Through these variety of topics, children are introduced to capitalization, punctuation, spacing, left to right progression, top to bottom progression, recognizing letters and sight words, letter formation, letter sounds, recognizing first and last names of classmates, etc.

This lesson needs to be kept upbeat and quick to hold the students’ attention. The skills are repeated on a daily basis, so there is no need to belabor any individual concept. As students grow and develop in literacy, you will want to gloss over things that they are familiar with and move on to other concepts.

The teacher can record the Daily News on a separate sheet of paper for the leader to illustrate. These pages can be collected in a binder for students to enjoy reading over and over again throughout the year.
Writer’s workshop

“Children can begin writing the first day they enter kindergarten and they can learn to write the same way they learn to talk.”

-Lucy Calkins

The basic philosophy behind writer’s workshop is to allow students to daily spend time writing for real purposes about things that interest them. Students can experiment with a variety of genres. English, spelling, handwriting, and other mechanics can be taught within writing workshop.

Students learn the craft of writing through practice, conferring, and studying the craft of other authors. The ultimate goal of a writer’s workshop is always to develop lifelong writers.

Within the context of writer’s workshop, a variety of organizational patterns for instruction are used: a whole class session, a small group mini-lesson, a student-teacher conference, and a sharing of written work. The writer’s workshop is devoted to supporting student learning in writing. What students need to learn during a writer’s workshop is based upon their present writing competencies and the English language arts standards and benchmarks for each grade level. For the majority of the time in writer’s workshop, students will be engaged in actual writing. Writer’s workshop gives children daily opportunities to develop their unique writing processes and communicate meaning through words and pictures.

Below are procedures to get your kids started in writer’s workshop. It is a combination of approaches (between Kid Writing by Feldgus and Cardonick and the journal writing in The Teacher’s Guide to Building Blocks by Hall and Williams).

Source: www.hubbardscupboard

Procedures for writer’s workshop in Kindergarten

1) Model for students
   The teacher:
   • Thinks aloud about possible ideas, draws a picture and orally discusses why certain elements are in the drawing (prewriting)
   • Decides what to write that corresponds to the picture
   • Does adult/book writing (with student assistance)

2) Student writing
   Students:
   • Get their writing notebooks
   • Date their next clean page
   • Think about what they want to draw
   • Draw their picture
   • Kid write (with and with out assistance)
3) Once finished, students look at books in the book basket at their table, reread their previous entries, or share their writing with an adult or other child at their table.

4) Clean up
To signal time to clean up (meaning put pencils away, push in chairs, and bring their writing notebooks to the carpet), we will sing our writing song.

You sing it like a rap:
We’re kinder kids and we can write.
We’re learning our letters and words. (All right!) We like to write and we like to share.
So we’re taking our notebooks to our notebook nook!

5) Pair Share
As students come to the carpet, they will have the opportunity to share their writing with a partner. After students have shared, notebooks are put away in the designated location. This is so students will be less distracted as they listen and participate in the sharing of other students’ writing as part of our Author’s Chair.

6) Author’s Chair
One student gets to orally share their writing entry with the entire class.
The student in the author’s chair then gets to ask three students to either ask a question about their entry or to share a comment on what they thought about their writing (focusing on meaning and content).
We always make sure to praise the author’s original writing and ask how they figured out certain letters or words (focusing on writing elements).

Why do we do writing workshop in this manner?
We can focus on:
• Letter formation
• Left to right progression
• How print and pictures contain the message
• How to differentiate between letters and words
• Spacing between words
• The sounds and letters in words
• Punctuation
• Assisting children to develop greater independence in writing
• Expressing ideas through pictures, oral language, and print
• Valuing ideas that are important to students
• Sharing orally

Independent Writing
During independent writing in kindergarten, children are encouraged to get ideas on paper by using pictures, letters, and words. Children can write in journals, make their own books, or write notes.
Teachers should accept approximations so that children will have opportunities to become risk takers and explore sound to letter relationships.
- Working with Words

The field of “word study” provides students an opportunity to manipulate words (and parts of words) in meaningful and enjoyable activities and games. Reading ability can develop dramatically as word study lessons develop experience with:

• Letters and their corresponding sounds
• Components of words, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes
• Patterns of how words are spelled, such as word families
• How parts of words often will give hints to the meaning of a word, as well as its spelling or pronunciation

Word study activities call for active problem solving. Students are encouraged to look for spelling patterns, form hypotheses, predict outcomes, and test them. These activities require students to continually ask themselves, “What do I know about this new word and how is it similar to words that I already know?”

My Ideas
Chapter 9: The Nuts and Bolts of Literacy Skills

Learning to read requires that children have considerable awareness of the sound structure of spoken language, are able to connect the sounds to printed words (phonics), and make meaning out of what they read. We as teachers of young children, have the “nuts and bolts” and are able to apply these tools where needed to secure the “structure” of literacy development. We can add a dimension of phonological awareness or any other skill to common classroom routines such as transitioning from one activity to the next. For instance, in my classroom, when it’s time for children to leave the circle and go to a center of their choice, I might say, “First, everyone whose name starts with the same sound as red and run ...etc.” Try to look for opportunities to integrate what you know about literacy development. Offered below are games, activities, songs, and rhymes devised to help make literacy development a natural, fun, and purposeful process.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the understanding that language we speak and hear is composed of units of sound. These sounds may be a single syllable sound as in the word “full.” Or they may be a single syllable sound in words with many syllables, like the words /ham/-/mer or /but/-/ter/-/cup. Phonemic awareness, a part of phonological awareness, is the understanding that these syllables are made up of even smaller sounds or phonemes. For example the word “pie” has two sounds; the word “stop” has four sounds.

- Why do children need this skill?

Children need to be able to hear the separate sounds that make up words before they try to read or write them. There are three kinds of phonological and phonemic awareness:

**Rhyming:** Children need to hear and make rhymes so they can make new words from words they already know. For example, if a child knows the word *fun*, then s/he can make the word *run*.

**Blending:** Phoneme blending helps children connect sounds in words.

**Segmentation:** Segmentation helps children learn to separate sentences into words and words into sounds. This will help a child to write the words s/he hears.

At least 20% of today’s children begin school lacking the phonological awareness skills they need to become successful readers. I use the book below to provide all the tools needed to determine who these children are, pinpoint their deficiencies, and address their various needs.

Includes:

- A comprehensive assessment that measures each child’s phonological awareness skills
- Specific reinforcement activities for each of the skills measured in the assessment
- A progress-report sheet for documenting where a child is on the phonological awareness skills sequence
- A wealth of activities designed to strengthen the connection between phonological awareness and phonics
- Plus you’ll get many time-saving reproducibles, a bibliography of books, a section about key research findings, and a detailed glossary.
- Phonemic Awareness Games

The following activities are playful and appealing to children while deliberately focusing attention on the sounds of spoken language. Helping children become phonemically aware will provide them with one more valuable tool to use on their journey into reading.

Read, Read, Read!
One of the best ways to help children develop phonemic awareness naturally is through the use of children’s books that focus on some kind of play with the sounds of language. This includes books that are rich with rhymes, alliteration, and predictable patterns. Children love playing with language through listening to and repeating rhymes, inventing nonsense words, and saying silly sentences.

__ Point out the rhyming pattern of a nursery rhyme or story
__ Re-read stories over and over again, allowing children to occasionally “fill in the blank” with an appropriate rhyming word
__ Go on a “Rhyme Hunt” as you read familiar rhyming books and pick out all the pairs of rhyming words. See if children can tell additional words that rhyme with some of the pairs they discovered in the story.

These are just a sampling of ideas that encourage adults and children to extend the conversation surrounding a read-aloud in a natural, meaningful way.

Play Games that Focus Attention on Rhyming, Blending, and Segmenting

The marvelous thing about these games is that they are easy, involve very little (if any) preparation, and often involve tangible items (picture cards, blocks, etc.) that children can see and touch.

This game encourages your children to listen to sound and context clues to generate a rhyming word that “fits” in a rhyme phrase. To introduce this game, say several rhyme phrases aloud. Then, challenge your children to complete each rhyme by telling a rhyming word that “fits” in the sentence.

A cat wearing a ________ (hat)
A mouse that lives in a ________ (house)
A moose with a tooth that is ________ (loose)
A pig that is dancing a ________ (jig)
Some kittens wearing some ________ (mittens)
A sheep that is sound ________ (asleep)
An owl drying off with a ________ (towel)
A bear with long, brown ________ (hair)
A bug crawled under the ________ (rug)
An ape that is eating a ________ (grape)
A goat that is sailing a ________ (boat)
A duck that is driving a ________ (truck)
A guy who is swatting a ________ (fly)
A bee with a hive in the ________ (tree)
On the swing, I like to ________ (sing).
We drove far in our ________ (car).
Hold the candle by the ________ (handle).
Smell the rose with your ________ (nose).
Write the numbers one to ten with a pencil or a ________ (pen).
If You’re Rhyming and You Know It (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998)
You can play variations of the above game by inventing new rhymes and singing them to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It:"

Did you ever see a (bear) in a (chair)?
Did you ever see a (bear) in a (chair)?
No I never, no I never, no I never, no I never,
No I never saw a (bear) in a (chair).

Rhyme Blending (Callaway, 1997)
This is a rhyming game that can be played anywhere. The challenge is for your child to identify the rhyming word you suggest—the trick is in the way you say the word. You will be saying (segmenting) the beginning sound of the word apart from the rest of the word. In order to guess the word, your child must listen to the two chunks of the word and blend them together to tell the word. You might say, “I can rhyme a word with /-at/ that begins with /f/ (remember—you’re saying the sound fffff, not the name of the letter “f”). Can you tell me what it is?”

Phonemic Awareness Games (Gillett, 2006)
You may have to repeat the word chunks for your child to hear them in order: /f/-/at/, to help him generate the word fat. You would then continue saying words that rhyme with the /-at/ word chunk, pointing out along the way that, “Rhyming words always have the same ending sound. Rat and sat rhyme because they both end with /-at/, but they start with a different beginning sound.” Callaway provides several rhyming patterns (teachers often refer to these as word families) to start with:

- [s, f, m, r] /-at/
- [z, l, r, sh] /-ip/
- [f, m, r, v] /-an/
- [f, m, n, s, h] /-eat/
- [s, v, m, n] /-et/
- [l, r, s] /-ock/
- [s, l, th, t] /-ick/
- [l, r, s, p] /-ay/
- [m, s, b, t] /-ee/
- [f, n, g, s] /-ame/
- [f, c, v, p] /-an/
- [b, f, r, l] /-ed/
- [b, n, w, r] /-ag/
- [k, l, p, br] /-ick/
- [b, c, f, t] /-all/
- [b, s, f, sh] /-ell/
- [d, f, m, sh] /-ime/
- [b, j, qu, t] /-ack/

Picture Sort—Beginning and Ending Sounds (Callaway, 1997)
This game involves some preparation but provides the perfect use for old magazines or all the catalogs that clog our mailboxes. Cut out pictures of items from magazines or catalogs and glue them on 3 x 5 index cards (car, cat, doll, elephant, dog, blocks, swing, slide, etc.). Try to have several pictures of items that begin with the same sound. Have children sort all of the items that have the same beginning sound, encouraging them to name the item out loud, emphasizing the beginning sound. For example, the picture cards for cookie, cat, cup, cake, and kangaroo would all be sorted in the same pile because they all have the same beginning sound /k/. You can continue to add picture cards to your collection. Once children easily sort by
beginning sound, you can vary the game by asking them to sort the pictures into piles that have the same ending sound. In this case, picture cards for frog, dog, bag, wig, and pig could be sorted into the same pile.

**I Spy—Segmenting and Blending by Phoneme (Yopp, 1999)**

Yopp (1999) suggests playing I Spy in the following manner to develop the segmenting and blending skills of phonemic awareness. Say to your child, “I spy something on the street (or in the room—wherever you are). I’m going to tell you what it is, but I’ll say it in a silly way. Can you guess what I spy? It is a /j/-/ee/-/p/” (remember, always say the sounds in the word, not the letters of the word). When you play I Spy this way, you are segmenting the word into its sounds, while your child is listening carefully to the sounds and blending those sounds together to reconstruct the word. Both skills go hand in hand and are crucial for beginning readers. After your child gets really good at this version, vary the format and see if she will segment the clue word for you to blend. Please note: segmenting and blending are easiest for beginners if you use words with only two or three individual sounds. You can always work up to words with four or more sounds, such as /c/-/l/-/o/-/k/ (clock). Below is a list of words that are fairly easy to segment and blend:

- ape cheese moose soap bean
- desk pan stool book dog
- pea stump bow dress pen
- tie bread eel phone train
- brick glass shoe truck broom
- ice skate

**Sound Snacks Phoneme Placement Identification (Callaway, 1997)**

This tasty game encourages children to pay attention to the specific sound at the beginning or end of a word and tell where that sound occurs in the word. Place two paper cups on a table next to a bowl of peanuts, raisins, cereal, or whatever snack you want to have. Label one cup “B” for “beginning” and the other “E” for “ending.” Ask the child to identify the beginning or ending sounds in words you say by placing one piece of the snack in the correct cup. For instance, you might ask, “Where is the /t/ sound in the word wet? Do you hear it at the beginning of wet or the end of wet? ” It is important to emphasize the target sound as you say the word (wet) and to ask the question both ways, as in the example. The child would then tell you that the /t/ sound is at the end of wet and put a piece of the snack in the cup labeled “E.” The child may eat the snack if she puts it in the right cup. Some words like pop or treat will allow children to put a treat in both cups and eat more than one treat at a time. They’ll love that!
Phonics

Although related to phonological awareness, phonics is different. Phonics activities can help a child connect the sounds s/he hears to the printed words s/he sees. These activities include recognizing letters and the sounds they make, hearing and writing down the sounds buried within words, and developing strategies to “decode” unfamiliar words.

Why do children need this skill?
Children need to be taught the sounds individual printed letters and groups of letter sounds make. Knowing the relationships between letters and sounds helps children to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and “decode” new words.

- Phonics Activities
Source: Michigan Department of Education: Kindergarten Literacy Activities

Hunting for Letter Sounds
Goal: To help students hear individual sounds in words and recognize letters that represent those sounds.

Materials:
• Pencils or markers
• A page from a newspaper, magazine, newsletter, recipe, etc.

Let’s Go!
1. Give students a page of the newspaper or whatever text you have chosen. Then have them circle all words s/he can find that begin with the ___ sound. Example: Find all the words that have the same beginning sound as the word “dog.” Do one or two together to get your students started.
2. After students have completed this game, go through the paper with them and have them read the words to you.
3. Ask students to think of five other words that have the same sound as you are working on. Have students write them down and draw a picture to go with them.

Sound Travel
Goal: To help your child hear the sounds in words

Materials:
1. List of one-syllable words
2. Paper and pencils or markers
3. Small toy car or truck

Let’s Go!
1. Choose a simple one-syllable word from a story or list.
2. Draw a rectangle, divided into boxes – one box for each sound in the word (Elkonin Boxes).

Example: You would need three boxes for the word “box” – [b] [o] [x]
3. As you say the word slowly, move the toy car into each box from left to right so the car “travels” through the sounds. Model the activity, then allow your students to take over.
4. Say the word again as you run your finger from left to right under the boxes.
5. Repeat for new words, as long as your child is interested.
6. Last, have students write the words in the boxes, one letter per box. Repeat the sound travel as you did before, this time looking at the letters in the words as you make the sound.

Great Classroom Resource!
*Spelling Through Phonics* describes a practical, easy-to-use method of teaching children how to spell. Children come to understand how letters of the alphabet are constructed to form words and how words are constructed to become text. Practice is encouraged and monitored, and teaching occurs in short sessions every day. Lap-top white boards and dry-erase markers are a terrific tool for these lessons. As students learn letters, they can be added to an alphabet book. As students learn word chunks, you can display them on a classroom word wall. This is a valuable resource I received in the GRIP-K class that I continue to use.

**Comprehension**

Comprehension strategies help children understand, remember, and communicate what they read. They also help children to link what they are reading to what they already know.

**Why do children need this skill?**
To become independent readers and thinkers, children need lots of practice at predicting what is coming next, and then checking to see if s/he was on track. They need to think about ideas and information, ask questions, and solve problems. Children need to know the steps good readers use to make sure they understand text. Students who are in control of their own reading comprehension become more purposeful, active readers.

**Comprehension Exercises**
Source: Michigan Department of Education: Kindergarten Literacy Activities

**Make a Pattern Book**
*Goal:* To help students recognize patterns in a book.

**Materials:**
1. Lots of pattern books
2. Paper
3. Pencils, crayons, or markers

**Let's Go!**
1. Read a lot of pattern books together.
2. Find your favorite and write your own book using that pattern. Ideas can be dictated to the teacher and written interactively. For example, *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown.
3. Follow the pattern in the book and write a book called *The Important Things About My Family.* List each family member. Write one page about each one telling the important things about them following the pattern.
Thinking About Reading

Goal: To help students think about what he/she reads.

Materials:
1. Book or story
2. Paper
3. Drawing tools
4. Pencil or pen

Let’s Go!
1. Read aloud a story with a clear sequence.
2. Discuss what the story was about.
3. Discuss where and when the story took place.
4. Discuss the characters.
5. Discuss the problems and solutions in the story.
6. Discuss the events in the story. What happened at the beginning, middle and end?
7. Draw three pictures that show what happened in the beginning, middle and end.

Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. Several skills help children read fluently: paying attention to punctuation, grouping words into meaningful chunks, and using expression. Fluency also requires children to use strategies to figure out unfamiliar words and to know a lot of sight words that can’t be “sounded out.”

Why do children need this skill?
Children who read words smoothly and accurately are more likely to enjoy reading and to understand what they read. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. When fluent readers read aloud, they read effortlessly and with expression. Readers who are weak in fluency read slowly, word by word, focusing on decoding words instead of understanding the meaning of what they read.

Read Aloud Tips

Goal: To put strategies into action that will help your students become good readers and writers.

Fluency Activities

Source: Michigan Department of Education: Kindergarten Literacy Activities

Materials:
1. Favorite books or other reading materials

Let’s Go!
1. Invite students to read with you every day.
2. When reading big books or enlarged text, point word by word as you read.
3. Read your students’ favorite book over and over again.
4. Read many stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite the students to join in on these parts. Point, word by word, as they read along with you.
5. Discuss new words. For example, “This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?”
6. Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.
7. Read from a variety of children’s books, including fairy tales, song books poems and information books.
Word Find
Goal: To help your child learn that a word is made up of many letters. One word is separated from another word by a space.

Materials:
1. Printed text

Let's Go!
1. Using a pencil, let students circle each word in the story.

My Cat
Max is my cat.
He is a nice cat.
Max can purr.
Max can take a nap.
I love Max!

2. Pick out any book and point to ten words in it.
3. If you have old garage-sale books, let your students use markers to color each word a different color.

Variation: Place different colored bingo chips on each word.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development is learning to use and understand many words and to use them correctly in sentences.

Why do children need this skill?
Children will read and write better when they actively build and expand their knowledge of written and spoken words, what they mean and how they are used.

-Vocabulary Activities
Source: Michigan Department of Education: Kindergarten Literacy Activities

“My Dictionary”
Goal: To help students become more aware of print as a source of information and to recognize familiar words.

Materials:
1. Science magazines, newspaper coupons, photos
2. An album or blank book
3. Tape or glue, labels, markers

Let's Go!
1. Collect pictures of people or items that your students considers meaningful.
2. Paste them into a book or album and label them. Help students create labels.
3. “Read” the book with your students and have them name the people or items in the book. Over time, s/he will see the print/picture connection and will be able to use it as a dictionary answer to the question, “How do you write _____?”
Restaurant Play:
Goal: To help students write words easily and automatically and to become an effective communicator.

Materials:
1. Pen, pencil, note pads for taking notes
2. Paper, tag board made into blank menus
3. Play money and cash register
4. Paper to make open and closed signs, business hours, etc.
5. Placemats

Let’s Go!
1. Read a book about people eating in a restaurant or help students remember all the things in a restaurant. Together list as many as possible.
2. Provide materials and props and let your students set up a restaurant in your classroom.
3. Have your child write the menus and signs.
4. Become a customer and order and “eat” at their restaurant. Bon Appetite!
5. Make up other situations, depending on your students’ interest (fire station, department store, pizza parlor).

My Ideas

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________