

Your Library Today



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

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Early Literacy: See It Yourself!

Like many things we learn KNOWING means being able to DO something. When children are getting ready-to-read, we can see that they are learning early literacy skills.

We can best help children if we watch where they are building strong early literacy skills and where we can work to with them to help them grow. We need to do more than talk about, model, and teach early literacy skills. We need to know how children are learning these skills too.

In "teacher talk", the behaviors we can see to check learning are called "benchmarks." We can help children by watching for behaviors that indicate how they are picking up early literacy skills – the building blocks that eventually become reading.

Here are some objective, observable behaviors to watch for to help you teach children early literacy skills:

Print Motivations

Child enjoys having books read to them

- Handles books, talks about pictures,
- Takes pride in owning books.
- Notices signs, asks what they say
- Wants to go to the library and has fun there
- "Browses" and selects books

Phonological Awareness

- Child identifies sounds around them
- Creates sounds, sings, makes music
- Makes up own chants using words that rhyme
- Listens to others with attention
- Listens for a purpose – noting details and uses new ideas and information in play
- Fills in rhyming words in familiar poems and chants
- Identifies words that end alike or rhyme
- Shows awareness of syllables in name or words by clapping to them
- Identifies beginning and ending sounds in words

Six Early Literacy Skills

The American Library Association has identified these six key skills that will prepare children to become readers when they enter school:

- **Print Motivation.** Being excited about and interested in books.
- **Phonological Awareness.** Playing with the sounds in words.
- **Print Awareness.** Noticing print everywhere, knowing how to handle a book, and following words on a page.
- **Narrative Skills.** Telling stories and describing things.
- **Enriched Vocabulary.** Knowing the specific names of things.
- **Letter Knowledge.** Knowing the difference between how letters look, their names, and their sounds.

The single most important thing a family can do to help their children succeed in school is to prepare them to read. Scientific studies are documenting the physiological changes that occur in the brain that enable this to happen.

Nurturing a baby's healthy development, stimulating brain development, and maximizing learning work hand-in-hand with early literacy skills. When we help children become ready to read - help that begins at birth - we are addressing other important developmental needs as well.

Print Awareness

- Child is aware of some conventions of reading, such as reading from the front to the back of books, left to right on a pages
- Makes distinctions between print and pictures
- Sees meaning from text as "magical" or as having meaning beyond text characters.
- Shows interest in the content of books
- Attempts to use letters in writing, sometimes in a random or scribble fashion
- Notices and reads some environmental print
- Engages in pretend reading and writing
- Uses reading-like ways that approximate book language
- Uses picture clues to recall a story
- Shows some awareness of one-to-one correspondence and concept of words

Narrative Skills

- Child can answer questions
- Counts, says alphabet in proper sequence
- Describes pictures in books
- Sees how pictures add to story.
- Can explain things they do
- Recites chants, poems, songs, folk or fairy tales

- Knows difference between asking a question and telling a story

Enriched Vocabulary

- Child talks about how she is doing, what she did, and how she did it
- Expands on and extends conversations
- Asks what words mean
- Uses new words
- Shows interests in different things around them and the words that are used to describe them

Letter Knowledge

- Child can correctly say alphabet
- Identifies letters in her name and in print
- Begins to relate letters to corresponding sounds
- Can draw shapes of letters
- Sees when letters are backwards
- Understands that different letters are written differently
- Sees that the same letter can be written in different ways
- Recognizes capital and lower case letters