Indiana
Birth – Age Five
Literacy Framework

2011

Indiana Birth-Age Five Literacy Framework

PREFACE

The purpose of the Birth-Age Five Literacy Framework is to ensure ALL children have the necessary early literacy skills to thrive in kindergarten - including children with special needs, English learners, and children from culturally diverse backgrounds. To reach this goal, the implementation of the Framework requires a concerted and coherent collaboration among early literacy stakeholders at every level. Therefore, the Birth-Age Five Literacy Framework is designed for early childhood leaders, teachers, family child care providers, parents, caregivers, allied health professionals, paraprofessionals, and others who work directly with children birth-age five.

The Framework is intended to serve as a roadmap for effective early literacy instruction for all Indiana children. It provides clear direction to early childhood leaders on the design and implementation of evidence-based practices for improving early literacy instruction and achievement. Though the Framework is aligned with the Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth-Age Five, which encompass all content areas and development domains, this Framework will focus specifically on early literacy skills, instruction, and supports. Consequently, this document provides sound guidance for establishing and improving conditions for early literacy learning in early childhood programs.

Because of the broad audience base for this Framework and the diverse settings in which early literacy skills are developed, it is important to explain some general terms that will be used throughout the Framework. For example, the term *preschool* will be the universal term for all types of early childhood programs. Please see the chart on page 2 for other common terms and definitions. In addition, a glossary at the end of the document will provide explanations to specific terms and vocabulary used at different points in the Framework.

Table 1: *B-Age 5 Literacy Framework Common Terms and Definition*

Term	Definition
Early childhood	Children birth to age eight
Infants/toddlers	Children birth to age three
Preschoolers	Children age three to age five
Teachers/caregivers	Adults in educational environments
Families/caregivers	Adults in home environments
Early childhood providers	Adults in educational and home-based environments
Early childhood leaders	Administrators and principals of early childhood programs; and directors of home- and center-based early childhood programs

Table 1

The Need for a Birth-Age Five Literacy Framework: Why Early Literacy Skills Matter

In the past decade significant research has informed the early childhood community of how best to teach early literacy effectively. In 2001, the National Research Council produced *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers,* and in 2006, volume two of the *Handbook of Early Literacy Research* was released. Following the National Institutes for Literacy's 2008 *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National*

Early Literacy Panel, the National Association for the Education of Young Children published its revised position statement on *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (3rd Edition). This position statement includes new information relating to the issues of 1) reducing learning gaps and increasing the achievement of all children; 2) providing a coherent curriculum from preschool to kindergarten; and 3) recognizing teacher knowledge and decision-making as vital to educational effectiveness. Additionally, the third edition updates the principles of child development and learning that inform practice and guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices. These seminal documents, along with many others, provide the information for the basis of evidence supporting the early literacy information discussed in this Framework. Below is a brief overview of what the research on birth-age five literacy learning says:

1. ***Language and literacy development are interwoven*.** Literacy embodies receptive and expressive language (listening and speaking), reading, writing, and thinking; and the connections between these domains. Therefore, reading-related development begins early in children's lives. This development is influenced by differences in both biological and experiential factors as children grow. Children need well-developed language abilities, foundational skills for reading attainment, and varied emergent language experiences in the early years to set the stage for future literacy success.

2. ***Literacy acquisition is developmental***. Children progress through stages of literacy development beginning at birth. These progressive steps begin with the babbling and cooing of infant communication and gradually move to the emergent language patterns, print awareness, and scribbling of toddlers. As preschoolers enter the early fluent reading and writing stage, they show an understanding of phonological awareness, symbolic writing, and letter-word associations. Finally, school-age children exhibit fluent reading and writing. Though these stages are usually linear, children become readers and writers following various paths and their unique time table. A child may linger at one

stage of literacy development or appear to advance at an accelerated pace. It is important that adults: a) recognize these developmental stages; b) understand how best to support children's early literacy within each stage; and c) assist children in advancing their literacy skills when appropriate.

3. ***Nature and nurture contribute to literacy development.*** Language acquisition is a natural act, while the development of reading and writing is not. The brain is *hard-wired* at birth for language, but reading and writing must be taught. Children acquire early literacy skills by attending to spoken language and experiencing the world of print surrounding them. Therefore, it is important that adults interact intentionally with children to build oral language and literacy skills. These early listening, speaking, reading, and writing experiences serve as the foundation for language and literacy proficiency.

This state-wide birth-age five literacy framework summarizes Indiana's beliefs about effective early literacy development, instruction, and programs based on research, thereby informing early literacy practices across our state. The framework is meant to provide a coherent vision of how early literacy initiatives should be implemented across the state of Indiana.

The Major Components of This Framework

The six components of the Literacy Framework are explained in separate sections. In total, this comprises a comprehensive approach to balanced early literacy instruction. The Framework outlines the fundamental approach necessary for implementation with guidance at the program level. On page 5 is a chart listing the component name, description, and overarching Guiding Principle for each section.

Table 2: *B-Age 5 Literacy Framework Components and Descriptions*

Component	Description	Guiding Principle
Goals	The importance of language and literacy development and its relationship to all developmental domains and future literacy achievement; the relationship between quality of preschool program design and achievement of language and literacy goals.	Learning to read and write is intertwined with language development and literacy skills; language and literacy provide the foundation for success in school.
Instruction	The components of scientifically research-based preschool instruction.	Appropriate instruction for young children is based on scientific research, emphasizes all domains of development (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), and builds language and literacy competence.
Assessment	How to develop a child assessment plan and use data to track student progress.	A systematic assessment approach is used to collect multiple forms and types of data about children's language and literacy growth.
Professional Development	How to develop a high-quality professional development plan.	High quality professional development is differentiated for teachers/caregivers to impact positive outcomes for children.
Leadership	How early childhood leaders support and supervise shared expectations for language and literacy learning and teaching excellence.	Effective administrators, center directors, and school principals of early childhood care and education environments embrace the multiple roles of leadership as they ensure safe and healthy environments, promote appropriate learning opportunities for all children, and monitor effective instructional practices that build language and literacy skills.
Commitment	How all stakeholders (leaders, teachers, caregivers, families) are committed to work together to ensure that early childhood care and education is of high-quality.	Early childhood leaders commit to communicating the vision and providing leadership for high quality programming and services by involving all key stakeholders – teaching staff, families, and community members.

Table 2

At the beginning of each section of the Framework, a navigation bar icon indicates the level (early care and education environments, transition to kindergarten, and/or state leadership) that relates to the component. References to current research are cited at Reference Section at the end of the document.

Aligned to the Indiana K-6 Reading Framework, the guiding principles and high quality program implementation serve as the glue that binds together all the components of the Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework. Guiding principles, a culture of shared expectations for excellence, and effective leadership are necessary to drive instruction and determine appropriate assessments. Undergirding high quality program implementation are scientifically-based instruction and assessment. The former focuses on the methods and pedagogy for teaching the skills and knowledge needed to reach learning goals and stay on track, while the latter serves as the gauge to determine the extent to which children have met those goals. In order to implement an assessment system and high quality, research-based instruction, an organized support system is vital; leadership and professional development are the crux of this support. Finally, without a clearly articulated commitment to provide excellent instruction, establish and maintain an assessment system, demonstrate the necessary leadership, and ensure ongoing and adequate professional development, achieving the state's ambitious goals will remain a dream rather than a reality.

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

GOALS

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments	★					
Transition to Kindergarten	★					
State Leadership	★					

Guiding Principle:
Learning to read and write is intertwined with language development and literacy skills; language and literacy provide the foundation for success in school.

- ☑ Instruction: Appropriate instruction for young children is based on scientific research, emphasizes all domains of development (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), and builds language and literacy competence.

- ☑ Assessment: A systematic assessment approach is used to collect multiple forms and types of data about children's language and literacy growth.

- ☑ Leadership: Effective administrators, center directors, and school principals of early child care and education environments embrace the multiple roles of leadership as they ensure safe and healthy environments, promote appropriate learning opportunities for all children, and monitor effective instructional practices that build language and literacy skills.

- ☑ Professional Development: Teachers/caregivers receive high quality, differentiated professional development to impact positive outcomes for children.

- ☑ Commitment: Early childhood leaders commit to communicating the vision and providing leadership for high quality programming and services by involving all key stakeholders – teaching staff, families, and community members.

Language and Literacy Development

The development of language and literacy are intertwined. Children are born "hard-wired" for language development because the ability to communicate is needed for their survival (Snow & Burns, 1998). On the other hand, most children must be taught to read and write; these literacy skills are not "hard-wired" at birth. The ongoing process of language development and becoming literate begins at birth and continues throughout adulthood.

Language does not occur in a vacuum, but is developed and nurtured through the environment through meaningful experiences within cultural contexts. Research

indicates that what children learn from listening and talking will enhance or impede their emerging skills in reading and writing (Dickinson & Tabor, 2001; Head Start Bureau, 2003b; Strickland, 2004). Hart and Risley (1995, 1999) researched how parents talk to their children and their findings indicate that the quantity of words, as well as the quality of word choice, influence children's language use, vocabulary development, and learning. If a child is exposed to rich and varied vocabulary through on-going dialogue, he/she has the opportunity to build a robust vocabulary and the critical skills that are the foundation for learning to read and write. The ability to use language influences thinking skills as well as social competence; both are crucial for success in school.

Young children constantly act on and process the world around them. Ideally, children are exposed to cognitively rich conversations and vocabulary during their preschool years and they have the opportunity to become involved in sharing their thoughts, opinions, and play experiences (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Teachers/caregivers play a central role in encouraging and nurturing children's language development through conversations, shared-book reading, singing, reading of nursery rhymes, and play experiences.

The *Indiana K-6 Reading Framework Goals* (2011) states that "the most critical reading goal for primary grade Indiana students is that they read at a third grade level or higher by the end of third grade" (p. 1). After third grade, students must use basic reading skills to comprehend the more academically challenging text of the content areas (e.g., social studies and science). This concept is further supported by The Anne E. Casey Foundation's (2010) report, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters: A KIDS COUNT Special Report* that shows that 3rd grade is a critical benchmark for reading proficiency. If children do not read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade then they will fall further behind their peers who are reading at or above grade level. Research findings indicate that as children move into the intermediate grades and the demands for expository reading increase, children have more difficulty comprehending unfamiliar and complex text (Miller & Veatch, 2010).

To ensure that all children have the foundational skills needed to succeed in school one must examine the importance of language and literacy development from birth to 5 years of age. These are critical years when children gain the fundamentals of speaking and listening that provide the blueprint for learning to read and write. Young children who demonstrate oral language skills and an understanding of print concepts have more success learning to read in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades (Scarborough, 2001). The *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children, Birth to Age 5* (2006) list a number of key findings supporting how critical the early years are to language and literacy development for birth to 3-year olds and 3- to 5-year olds. The *Foundations* further outlines indicators that will make later academic achievement possible for children in all areas of learning.

Dunst, Trivette, Marsiello, Rpoer, and Robyak (2006) propose a developmental model describing early literacy related skills that follow a continuum from birth to 5-years of age (see Figure 1, p. 5). Beginning at the first stage of *pre-literacy*, infants use pre-language and non-verbal communication to connect with significant people in their environments. These skills are the foundation for both language acquisition and emergent literacy skills. As toddlers acquire spoken language and begin to show an interest in books and writing tools they enter the next phase of development, identified as *emerging literacy*. At this stage of development, vocabulary increases and young children begin to show print recognition and scribbling. The skills developed during this phase are those that are required in learning to read and write (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). As children progress to the stage of *early literacy,* language and literacy skills advance as they develop phonological awareness, beginning writing skills, and letter-word association. Each part of the continuum builds on the other as children become readers and writers. Children will lag behind their peers and experience difficulty with learning to read and write if they do not have the essential building blocks necessary for obtaining a level of proficiency in reading and writing; the lack of literacy skills is a barrier to future academic success.

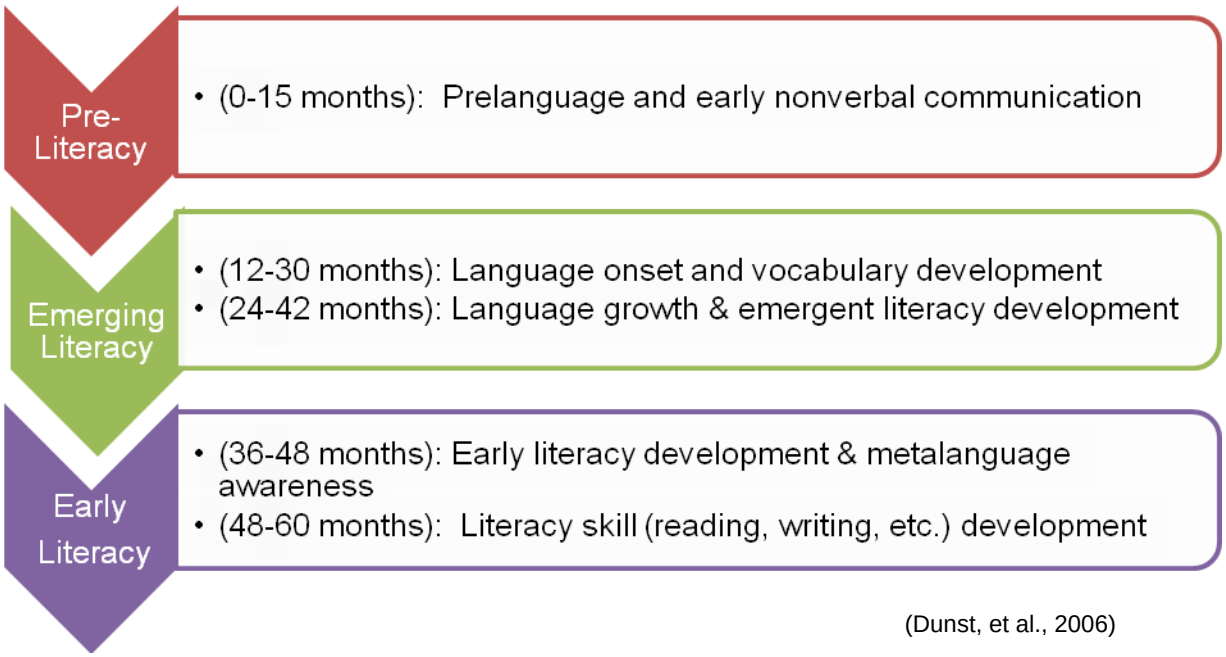


Figure 1: Early literacy skill development.

This figure illustrates a model of a Birth to Age 5 literacy continuum.

Various research studies and reports identify overlapping and interrelated skills that are precursors to learning to read and write, including the Head Start Bureau (2003), Early Reading First (2007), and the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008). These critical skills include the development of oral language skills, such as Receptive and Expressive Language; and early literacy skills that are more code-focused skills, such as Phonological Awareness; Print Awareness and Concepts of Print; Alphabet Knowledge, Vocabulary, and Writing (Lonigan & Shanahan, 2010). See Table 1, p.6, for a brief definition of each of these skills.

TABLE 1: *Identifying and Defining the Critical Skills for Learning Language and Literacy*

Domain:	Indicator:	Definition:
Oral Language Development	Receptive (Listening and Understanding)	The ability to listen and comprehend spoken language
	Expressive (Speaking and Communicating)	The ability to express wants, needs, and ideas using words and sentences
Emergent Literacy Skills	Phonological Awareness	The ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language (i.e., awareness of the nuances of *pat* versus *cat*)
	Print Knowledge and Concepts of Print	The ability to recognize and understand the forms and functions of written language and concepts of print (i.e., read left to right; how to hold a book)
	Alphabet Knowledge	The ability to identify the names and sounds associated with printed letters
	Vocabulary	The body of words (lexicon) that are comprehended when listening (receptive) or are used when speaking (expressive)
	Writing	The ability to write and attach meaning to letters and words

Table 1

Oral Language Development

Oral language development includes both receptive language skills (listening and understanding) and expressive language skills (speaking and communicating). Children are able to understand a greater number of words than they are able to express.

Receptive language, especially oral language comprehension, is critical to acquiring reading and writing proficiency (NELP, 2008). If a child is able to accurately decode a word, but does not know the meaning of the word, (i.e., the word is not part of the child's oral vocabulary), comprehension of the text is hampered. If a child has developed sufficient knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and the skills to decipher unknown words, then reading comprehension will increase. As children move into the intermediate grades, they use textbooks to learn content and reading comprehension becomes critical to learning.

Expressive language skills provide the capability to convey one's ideas and feelings. This ability develops through social and personal interactions with families and teachers/caregivers in both home and school environments. Families and teachers/caregivers can enhance the development of expressive language by engaging young children in meaningful interactive conversations, scaffolding children's oral responses through conversational expansion, reading aloud and talking about books with children, and encouraging children to write about their ideas.

As children mature, they broaden their knowledge of words and increase their understanding of language. This enables children to communicate effectively with other children and the adults around them. Children deepen their understanding of words through observing the use of language and through interacting with others in their environment. Engaging conversation and manipulating learning materials provide meaningful contexts for learning words and grammatical structures. As children move along the continuum of language learning, they begin to acquire communication skills and learn the subtleties of language that are the precursors to literacy development.

Emergent Literacy Skills

Learning to read and write does not begin in kindergarten or first grade; the roots of literacy development begin when a child is born. Teachers/caregivers are able to enhance children's emerging literacy skills by providing playful experiences with language sounds, words, letters, stories, and books. Teachers/caregivers and families should, of course, read aloud to children on a daily basis, but they should also engage these young learners in singing; reciting nursery rhymes, poetry and finger plays; dramatic play, and interactive games. Through playful interaction, significant adults in the lives of children will be able to encourage **word consciousness** and cultivate an interest in reading and writing. Promoting an interest in books and reading aloud will provide motivation for learning basic literacy skills: phonological awareness, print awareness and concepts of print, alphabet knowledge, and writing.

Key term:

Word Consciousness refers to an awareness of and interest in words and their meanings.

(Graves & Watts, 2002)

Phonological awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the sound structure of language, including awareness of syllables, onset-rime patterns, individual sounds (phonemes) (Paris, 2011), and words in spoken language. Others have suggested using *phonological sensitivity* as being a more accurate term because phonological awareness "is not necessarily involved in applying the knowledge to decoding text" (Paris, 2011, p. 233). For the purpose of this document, we will use the term "phonological awareness". Children need to develop awareness of these small units of sound and understand that when blended together the individual sounds make the words of language. Furthermore, children must be able to manipulate the phonemes of words to make new words. Children should have playful experiences with rhymes, including poetry and songs. Phonological awareness has been found to be one of the most powerful predictors of later success in reading (Snow, et al., 1998). Children who participate in phonological awareness activities from birth-age five are more likely to:

- Develop increasing sensitivity to the sounds of spoken words,
- Identify rhymes and rhyming sounds in familiar words,
- Attend to the beginning sounds in familiar words,
- Clap syllables in words, and are beginning to
- Add, substitute, and delete phonemes to create new words.

Print Knowledge and Concepts of Print provides an understanding of the forms and functions of written language and the awareness of the unique aspects of various texts. Children begin to have the knowledge that print and pictures are different, there are rules of print, there are print components (i.e., letters, punctuation, sentences), and that print carries meaning. *Concepts of print* is an understanding of how print is organized on the page, including directionality of print, identification of letters, and a recognition of words (Morrow, 2007). Children from birth to age-5 who participant in learning activities that promote print awareness and concepts about print understand that:

- Reading and writing are ways to obtain information, communicate ideas, and solve problems.
- Print carries a message by recognizing environmental print.
- Functions of print include: lists, signs, recipes, stories (both fiction and non-fiction), and letter writing.
- Differences exist between letters and numbers.
- Words are read from left to right and top to bottom on a page.
- Letters are grouped to form words and that words are separated by spaces.
- Different text forms are used for different functions (e.g., grocery lists, newspapers and Internet to learn about current events, letters and email for communication).

Alphabet Knowledge is the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between letters and sounds; and the words that are composed of letters. Alphabet

knowledge, specifically letter naming, has historically been among the *reading readiness* skills used for the prediction of reading achievement (Snow et al., 1998). Preschool children begin to learn letters as they make the connection between written symbols and word sounds. Children usually begin learning the connection between letters and symbols by recognizing, reading, and writing their own names. A child's name is meaningful. All letter learning should be meaningful to children and connected to reading activities, not an isolated "Letter of the Week" event.

The National Early Literacy Panel report (NELP, 2008) synthesized the research of early development of literacy. Their findings state that **rapid automatic naming (RAN)** of letters is predictive of later reading success. Additional research studies indicate that recognizing the alphabet at kindergarten entry is a strong predictor of success in reading during first grade (Snow, et al., 1998). Children who participate in alphabet learning activities from birth to age five are more likely to succeed with early reading skills, for example:

- Associate letter names with letter shapes
- Identify printed alphabet letters
- Recognize beginning letters in familiar words
- Distinguish letter/sound associations, and
- Identify high-frequency words

Key term:

Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) refers to an assessment that measures the number of objects, pictures, colors or symbols (letters or digits) a child is able to name within a specified time limit.

Vocabulary is the body of words (lexicon) that are comprehended when listening (receptive) or are used when speaking (expressive). Children need to develop rich listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies for successful reading and writing development. Children who are part of families that experience ongoing financial distress or poverty hear roughly 25% fewer words than children from more affluent homes (Hart & Risley, 1995). Young children learn vocabulary from the words they frequently hear and those that are learned within meaningful contexts (Harris, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011). Children build their vocabularies from everyday interactions with

teachers/caregivers and families. As children learn vocabulary from birth to age 5, they demonstrate an increase in word knowledge and in the construction of longer, more complex sentences.

Writing is the ability to form letters, but also includes an understanding of how print is used in the real world. It involves the knowledge that words are organized on a page, that writing has different purposes, and that a person can express different emotions through print (Schickedanz, 1999). A child's first attempt at writing begins with scribbling and progresses to discriminating between these unformed lines and specific symbols, called letters. With development, the scribbling becomes more purposeful as preschoolers pretend to write and engage in approximations of functional writing during play. Children who experience writing from birth to age five are more likely to succeed with early writing skills and demonstrate:

- an understanding of the purpose of writing
- the use of letters or letter-like markings to represent written language,
- an approximation of functional writing skills as part of play experiences,
- an understanding of the alphabetic principle (connecting letter sounds to printed letters,
- an interest in a variety of writing forms (e.g., stories, lists, messages), and
- the ability to dictate words, phrases, and sentences.

Learning Language and Literacy across Content Areas

The development of language and literacy is enhanced by learning experiences in all content areas, including mathematics, science, expressive and creative arts, movement and music, and social studies. The content areas provide background knowledge that is necessary for literacy learning and later reading comprehension (Head Start Bureau, 2003). Early childhood teachers often use themes or units of study to introduce concepts and provide experiential learning for young children. When units of study align to the reading and math curriculum, children are able to extend what they are learning about letters and numbers to the real world around them. It is important to

note that units of study should focus on learning about the environment that surrounds children.

A unit of study on insects is more conceptually meaningful than a unit of study on dinosaurs. Children are able to go outside and observe insects. Although a unit of study on dinosaurs may be interesting, it does not provide a better understanding of the world in which children live. Teachers are able to stimulate inquiry and discovery, important higher level thinking skills, by providing **authentic experiences**. The process of discovery builds conceptual knowledge and vocabulary. As children apply problem solving and hypothesis testing to scientific inquiry, they are steeped in robust language, engaged in rich conversations, and cognitively challenged as they move between linguistic and mental representations (Conezio & French, 2002).

Theory to Practice:

Authentic Experiences:

Rather than just talking about shadows, the teacher plans a lesson where the children go outside several times throughout the day to observe and "measure" their shadows. The teacher guides the children through the process of discovering how the brightness and position of the sun affect the visual image of their shadows.

Connecting Home and School Learning Environments to Promote Language Development and Emerging Literacy Skills

Research indicates that families play a central role in children's language and literacy development (Dickinson & Tabor, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995; 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2000), especially when considering the quality and frequency of adult-child book reading and intentional instruction (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998; Landry & Smith, 2006).

Although families may engage in book reading activities, they often need suggestions about how to enhance language and literacy skills. Families are usually willing and able to contribute to children's early literacy learning, but they may be confused by conflicting messages regarding actual reading activities and strategies (Fitton & Gredler, 1996; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Preschool teachers/caregivers can

be instrumental in providing support, suggestions, and encouragement. It is important to provide families with evidence-based literacy strategies to promote interactive and informal literacy-based activities in the home (Neuman & Neuman, 2009).

Research indicates that children's reading achievement increases when teachers/ caregivers provide families with specific training on how and what they can do to enhance their children's reading skills. For example, Sénéchal and LeFevre (2001) studied home environments, collecting longitudinal data on what experiences facilitate the development of children's literacy skills during the early childhood years. These researchers found that children benefit most when they are exposed to engaging literacy activities. Preschoolers made the most progress when families used systematic and direct teaching techniques, such as **dialogic reading**.

Key term:

Dialogic Reading refers to a specific technique for reading books aloud to children. This approach can be used by teachers, caregivers, or families to support oral language and vocabulary development. The technique for dialogic reading includes multiple readings of the book, during which the adult uses a systematic approach to "move the child beyond naming objects in pictures to thinking more about what is happening in the pictures, and how this relates to his own experiences."

Assisting families to work with their children at home has important implications for aiding children's typical language development. Children from low-income families are at risk for both oral language and reading difficulties (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). By encouraging and mentoring parents, children can receive additional support at home, particularly if parents know what is needed (Restar, Noell, Pelligrini, 2006) and receive specific training on how to effectively conduct a shared reading with children (Fitton & Gredler, 1996; Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

English Learners and Literacy Development

Language and literacy development, such as the alphabetic knowledge and phonological awareness, are important as children learn the mechanisms of language.

However, the development of these skills usually assumes that the teacher/caregiver and the children in the classroom share English as their common language. If children are English Learners (EL), it is important to support the continued development and maintenance of the home language while children acquire English (Tabors, 2008). In fact, evidence suggests that children who continue to learn academic concepts in their native language while gradually learning English outperform both academically and socially when compared to children who are in English-only programs (Restrepo & Kruth, 2003).

The center or school's approach to curriculum and instruction needs to address the language challenges that confront children who are learning English. For example, if oral language is critical for later literacy success, how do teachers support English Learners and help them meet this challenge? Children learning English face language and literacy challenges beyond those experienced by their English-speaking classmates. This may be obvious, but early literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment does not always provide support for language diversity.

A teacher/caregiver can demonstrate sensitivity to the individual language needs of all children by defining and demonstrating basic concepts, such as what a word means through pictures, photos, and physical actions (Head Start Bureau, 2003). Children learning English may be hesitant to engage in conversations, which ideally provide opportunities to apply new vocabulary and conversational skills. Tabors & Snow (2001) found that English-speaking children engaged in rich dramatic play throughout the year but EL children were reluctant to participate until spring. They concluded that the EL children did not feel confident to join in. A teacher/caregiver who is aware of the conversational skill levels of all children can help nurture interactive play and language development.

Transition to Kindergarten

The transition from preschool or home learning environments to kindergarten can be a time of anxiety for children and their families. Research indicates the transition

practices used in many schools do not soothe the concerns of families (National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL), 2002). A letter sent to the home inviting families to an "open house" does not bridge the gap between children's preschool experiences and the formal learning environment of kindergarten. Additionally, many kindergartens are very different than they were a decade ago. Full day kindergarten, less play, and greater academic expectations, create a difficult adjustment for many young children.

Schools often ask the question: "Is this *child ready* for kindergarten?" Indeed, this is the wrong question. Schools should be asking: "Is our *school ready* for the child?" To be *ready for children,* schools must work closely with area preschools and with families. NCEDL suggests the following transition policies:

1. Strengthen the bonds between preschools and elementary schools
2. Strengthen the bonds between families and schools
3. Form transition planning teams that include school personnel, preschool staff, families, agency workers, and community leaders.
4. Provide high quality learning experiences that provide continuity between preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

A smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten is the first step to school success.

Summary

Early childhood programs today are expected to provide high-quality learning environments that emphasize the development of language and literacy skills for all children. The program must integrate curriculum, instruction, and assessment that best meets the individual learning needs for each child. To implement research-based curriculum, effective instructional practices, and an appropriate assessment plan, teachers/caregivers need high-quality differentiated professional development to understand how to design learning experiences that enhance positive outcomes for children and determine the effectiveness of instruction. To meet the goals and promise

of early childhood education, all stakeholders must be committed to using and supporting research-based practices so the common vision for high-quality programming and services come to fruition.

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

INSTRUCTION

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments		★				
Transition to Kindergarten		★				
State Leadership		★				

Guiding Principle:

Appropriate instruction for young children is based on scientific research, emphasizes all domains of development (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), and builds language and literacy competence.

- ☑ Teachers/caregivers create an environment and implement a developmentally appropriate language and literacy curriculum so that children attain learning goals across developmental domains and content areas.
- ☑ Teachers/caregivers recognize that children develop at different rates and have various styles of learning; therefore instruction must be differentiated to meet individual differences.
- ☑ Effective methods for delivering instruction in language and early literacy skills provide a balance between child-initiated exploratory play and teacher-directed intentional instruction.
- ☑ Scientifically-based research supports intentional instruction in early literacy skills, including oral language, phonological awareness, print knowledge, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, and emergent writing.
- ☑ Teachers/caregivers use a wide range of instructional practices to engage children in literacy and language learning.
- ☑ Teachers/caregivers use assessment data to monitor student progress and plan instruction.

Early Childhood Language and Literacy Development

> *There is increasing recognition that literacy development starts long before children begin formal instruction in school and that later reading success is powerfully affected by the skills children acquire during these formative years.* (NICHD, 2005)

The *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5* (2006) is built on the philosophy of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Indiana early childhood teachers are expected to plan and implement learning experiences that are appropriate for each child's age and developmental status. Developmentally appropriate practice is responsive to the social, emotional, and cultural context of children's lives. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) emphasizes that developmentally appropriate practice "requires both meeting children where they are – which means that teachers must get to know them

well – and enabling them (children) to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. xii).

Developmentally appropriate practice is indicative of the instructional decisions that teachers/caregivers make that affect children's learning. These decisions are based on three sources of knowledge (See Figure 1 below):

1. Knowledge of child development and learning
2. Knowledge of the strengths, needs, and interests of each individual child
3. Knowledge of the social and cultural context in which each child lives.

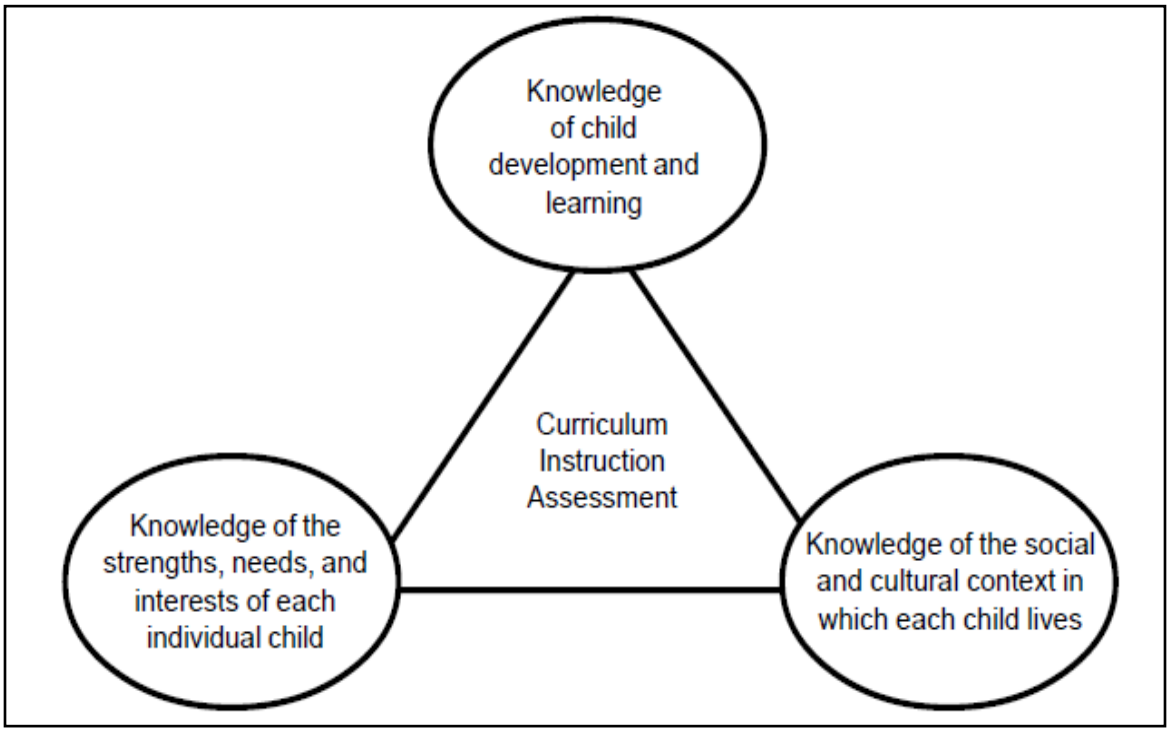


Figure 1: Sources of Knowledge for Early Childhood Teachers

This figure indicates the three sources of knowledge needed for effective instructional decision making

Source: *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5 (2006).*

Developmentally appropriate practice is dynamic. NAEYC has revised the guidelines for implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessment as research, especially neuroscience, provides new insight into how the brain develops and how young children learn. It is not a question of classroom practice being developmentally appropriate OR scientifically-based. Indeed, early childhood care and education must be founded on BOTH developmentally appropriate AND **scientifically-based** practice.

Quality Early Childhood Instruction is based on Scientific Research

The field of brain research has provided a wealth of discoveries that indicate the profound learning potential of infants from the minute they are born. Babies are *hard-wired* to explore their environment and learn. Studies using medical technology reveal that the brains of young children actually change as a result of their learning experiences. Brain research, or neuroscience, also provides educators with findings that inform teaching and learning during the preschool years. This research suggests that intentional (i.e., direct) instruction in literacy skills, with a focus on oral language, stimulates the developing brains of young children and strengthens the parts of the brain that are responsible for later reading and writing (Fletcher, Simos, Papanicolaou, and Denton, 2004). Quality early childhood care and education can enhance cognitive development and can even ameliorate many of the negative effects of neglect and poverty in young children. Furthermore, studies suggest that high quality preschool care and education can narrow the literacy achievement gap that is prevalent in many of our schools (Nisbett, 2010).

Key term:

Scientifically-based is a term that was part of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation to ensure that federal dollars purchased literacy programs that "worked." Rigorous research evidence indicates that scientifically-based programs cause improvement in learning if teachers implement instruction with fidelity (correctly).

A high quality preschool program is characterized, in part, by an environment that nurtures language and literacy development by providing scientifically-based, engaging learning experiences and stable relationships between teachers and children.

Opportunities for learning and engagement within a secure base profoundly affect a child's language and literacy development (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (CDCHU), 2007; Hart and Risley, 1995).

A Positive Learning Environment promotes Language and Literacy Learning

The physical and aural environment of an early childhood program has a major impact on children's development. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) recommend that teachers/caregivers carefully organize the classroom environment, plan the schedule, and implement activities to promote optimal learning and development. The tone or climate of the environment should be nurturing and provide a **secure base** that supports children's natural curiosity and eagerness to explore. The frequency of verbalizations and conversations is a critical factor for facilitating language development (McGee, 2007). Teachers/caregivers should have verbal interactions and conversations with children of all ages throughout the day. Talking with children provides opportunities for the teacher/caregiver to deepen conceptual understanding, introduce vocabulary, model appropriate language use, support and extend children's vocalizations, and encourage positive peer interactions among children.

Key term:

First used by Mary Ainsworth in her research on infant attachment to primary caregivers (1969), **secure base** in this document refers to the trusting relationship between a child and the teacher/caregiver. A secure base provides a child with the confidence needed to reach out and interact with the environment. This emotional safety net is essential to support early development and learning.

The physical environment contributes to language and literacy development by surrounding children with the sights, sounds and materials that spark and support exploration and learning. An organized classroom that uses classroom space efficiently and appropriately includes areas for work and play. The room should enable the teacher to work with both small and large groups of children. Additionally, the arrangement of furniture and the use of classroom space should include several delineated areas for high interest activity centers.

Interest or activity centers provide opportunities for building language and social competence. Suggested interest or activity centers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Block Center
- Book Center/Classroom Library
- Writing Center
- Listening Center
- Dramatic Play Center
- Science Discovery Table
- Art Center
- Housekeeping Center

Important Point

Activity or interest centers should provide children with opportunities for exploring, problem solving, creating, conversing, and role playing.

Materials in activity centers must be accessible (i.e., on shelves or in containers at a height that is easy for children to reach). Although there are separate areas for the book and writing centers that are devoted specifically to reading and writing, there should be books and writing materials available at other centers when appropriate. For example, there may be informational picture books at the Science Discovery Table to provide additional information about the bug collections that are on display or notepads available for "writing" orders at the Housekeeping Center that is set-up as a restaurant.

The Book Center, or Classroom Library, should include an abundance of print materials and books of various genres, including books representing children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There should be children's magazines, catalogs, board books, picture books, informational books, menus, comic sections from the newspaper, and other print materials. The Writing Center should have a variety of writing implements, types of paper, envelopes and "postage stamps," inkpads and rubber stamps. A Dramatic Play Center encourages dialogue and performance using puppets and dress-ups for role playing. The materials at the Housekeeping Center change based on the learning themes and projects children are working on. By introducing new props the Housekeeping Center becomes a post office or a restaurant that encourages pretend play to stretch the imagination of children. For example, by adding menus, tablets, and receipts, children can engage in pretend restaurant play.

Pretend play provides opportunities for children to build language skills, interact with other children, better understand the world around them, and practice various adult roles, such as mommy, daddy, doctor, builder, actor, cashier, grocer, or waiter. Children often become absorbed in the characters they play, as evident in the example below.

What does it LOOK like?

Pretend Play in Action: Superman by Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld

Red cape fastened to his back, he runs excitedly into my movement session with his class.

"Hi, Jackie," I call.

"I'm NOT Jackie, I'm Superman!"

While his classmates skip, leap, and hop around the room, Superman flies.

Each week, red cape floating behind him, he soars through our stories, poems, and songs. No matter what our curriculum he is saving people and fighting evil. My challenge is to include Superman with our Jack Be Nimbles, Dorothy and her friends on the Yellow Brick Road, with Olympic athletes, and with migrating birds.

One day, SURPRISE! Jackie's class bounds into my room for its weekly session. Jackie is NOT wearing his red cape!

"Hi, Superman," I greet him.

He whispers to me, "I'm not Superman."

"Oh, who are you?"

"I'm Clark!"

Lesson: Never underestimate the attention span of children totally involved in imaginative play! When children are fascinated by an idea they go on and on and on and on . . .

Source: (Klein, Wirth, & Linas, 2004).

Even the classroom walls and bulletin boards can promote learning and language development. Teachers should display children's writing and art work throughout the classroom and hallway. (Smith & Dickinson, 2002). The items should be

posted at or just above children's eye level so they are able to enjoy the work and study the details of the posted displays. When teachers/caregivers draw attention to the displays they encourage conversations and awareness of print. Table 1 (See below) summarizes the components of a language and print-rich classroom environment.

Table 1: *Components of a Language and Print-Rich Learning Environment*

Language-rich Environment	**Opportunities for children to:** • Practice listening and speaking skills in conversations and discussions • Use emerging language skills during daily routines and transitions • Practice various uses for language through role play (i.e., dramatic play) • Listen and engage with poetry, rhymes, finger plays, and songs • Listen and engage with story reading, storytelling, and retelling • Build robust vocabulary by using new words with teacher scaffolding (i.e., conversational expansion)
Print-rich Environment	**Physical environment provides:** • Highly visible print labels on objects, signs, and bulletin boards (e.g., labels for classroom objects, names displayed on cubbies, schedule, morning message) • A classroom library or reading area with easily accessible books that represent a variety of genres and formats • Books and writing materials that are accessible in all learning areas in the classroom • A Writing Center with a variety of writing instruments and materials • Alphabet manipulatives (alphabet blocks, magnetic letters, sandpaper letters, etc.) • Children's drawings and writings on walls and bulletin boards • An appropriate Word Wall (preschool classroom)

Table 1: Source: (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Two Critical Learning Goals from Birth to Age 5 in a Standards-Based Learning Environment

Two critical learning goals in early childhood are: (1) the development of oral language and (2) emergent literacy skills (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2010, Dunst et al, 2006; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2010; NELP, 2008; National Institute for Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2005). Together oral language and emergent literacy skills provide the foundation for future success in learning to read, write, and speak fluently. Reading, writing, and speaking, as well as listening, are the cornerstones for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Language Arts and Literacy (IDOE, 2010). Although the CCSS provide the guidelines for instruction, it is the educators who will be the instructional decision makers in classroom practice. The following quote from the Indiana Department of Education's press release, announcing the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, emphasizes the important role of teachers and school leaders:

> *We want to ensure our students are held to the highest academic standard, and we believe the CCSS will position Indiana children well — nationally and internationally. While these common standards will serve as guidelines for success, it will be up to our outstanding educators to decide how best to deliver instruction to make sure our students receive an academically rigorous and globally competitive education.*
>
> Dr. Tony Bennett (IDOE, 2010)

It is important to reiterate that language and literacy skills in the early childhood years provide the foundation for school success. However, they should be integrated across all developmental domains so they bridge the content areas (science, social studies, math, the arts, physical education, and health). This chapter focuses on these critical learning goals by exploring robust curriculum and effective instructional practice for oral language development and emergent literacy skills (See Table 2, page 10).

Important Point

Developmental Domains:

- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Cognitive

Table 2: *Identifying and Defining the Critical Skills for Learning Language and Literacy*

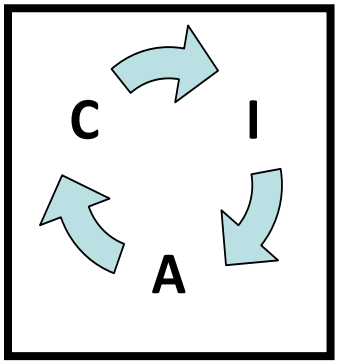
Critical Learning Goals	Indicator	Definition
Oral Language Development	Receptive (Listening and Understanding)	The ability to listen and comprehend spoken language
	Expressive (Speaking and Communicating)	The ability to express wants, needs, and ideas using words and sentences
Emergent Literacy Skills	Phonological Awareness	The ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken language (i.e., awareness of the nuances of *pat* versus *cat*)
	Print Knowledge and Concepts of Print	The ability to recognize and understand the forms and functions of written language and concepts of print (i.e., read left to right; how to hold a book)
	Alphabet Knowledge	The ability to identify the names and sounds associated with printed letters
	Vocabulary	The body of words (lexicon) that are comprehended when listening and reading (receptive) or are used when speaking and writing (expressive)
	Writing	The ability to write and attach meaning to letters and words

Table 2

High Quality Language and Literacy Curriculum

A curriculum is a written plan for instruction that identifies specific knowledge to be learned or skills to be attained by the intended learner. A comprehensive early childhood curriculum covers all domains of child development (See Table 2, page 8), and includes learning goals and a scope and sequence of instruction that are developmentally appropriate for the ages of children to be served.

When planning the sequence of instruction and learning experiences for children, it is important to consider the relationship between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Curriculum can be thought of as the blueprint for teaching; it identifies the **WHAT**, or the content for instruction. The written curriculum must be robust and delineate content that builds conceptual understanding (knowledge) as well as basic skills and learning strategies (performance). Aligned to the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children, Birth to Age 5* (2006), a child-centered curriculum focuses on learning and is based upon developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).



In a *backward design* approach to curriculum development, designers begin with the "end in mind" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). In other words, curriculum designers begin with identifying the desired results (What will children know and be able to do as a result of learning?) and then they consider what developmentally appropriate assessments will provide evidence of learning (i.e., naturalistic observations, checklists, and portfolios of children's work, as well as more formal measures). Teachers should systematically assess children's learning as part of the instructional process (formative assessment), not simply evaluate student progress from the results of one standardized, formal assessment administered once each year. (See the chapter on Assessment for a more in-depth review of this topic.)

The final stage of *backward design* is to plan learning experiences and lessons that are aligned to the specific goals of the curriculum. Teachers intentionally construct lesson plans and learning activities based on what children should know and be able to do. The instructional process is the **HOW**. It is essential that the instructional decisions early childhood teachers make are child-centered, engaging, and based on what all children need to know, as well as individual learning needs. Effective teachers/caregivers differentiate instruction so each child is a successful learner.

Figure 2 (see below) illustrates the final stage of *backward design* (Wiggens & McTighe, 1998) adapted for the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5* (IDOE, 2006). The nested ovals represent an example of possible priorities of literacy curricular content for preschoolers.

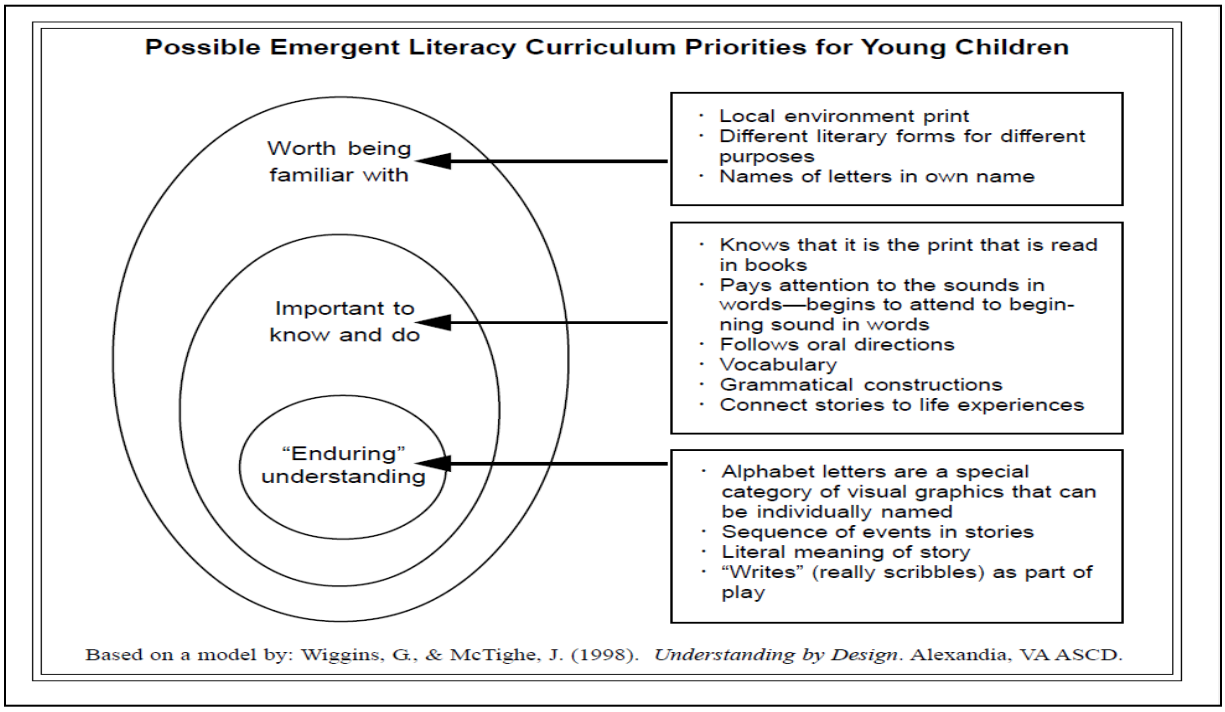


Figure 2: Emergent Literacy Curriculum Priorities for Young Children

This figure depicts a nested model of literacy curriculum priorities for young children.

Source: *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5 (2006).*

The smallest oval denotes “Enduring Understanding” or the core content that ALL children must master. Responsive teachers/caregivers adapt instructional methods, materials, and pacing of the lesson to meet the individual learning needs, ensuring that all children have an enduring understanding of the basic content. When differentiating instruction, teachers/caregivers extend learning to “*Important to know and do*” and “*Worth being familiar with*” content for children who are ready for more challenging content.

The **scope and sequence** of instruction enhances children’s ability to master the core content (enduring understanding). Although oral language development and emergent literacy skills are central to preschool curriculum (National Institute for Literacy, 2009), Copple and Bredekamp (2009) assert that the most important factor influencing learning and development is a teacher/caregiver’s interactions with children. Interactions generated through child-initiated play, adult-guided play, and teacher-directed instruction provide opportunities for conversing, problem solving, and extending learning (Boat, Dinnebeil, & Bae, 2010; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; NIFL, 2009). Positive and stable relationships between teachers/caregivers and children provide an emotionally safe environment to explore, take risks, and build confidence.

Key term:

Scope and Sequence refers to the listing of skills that are taught (scope) and the order in which they should be taught (sequence).

Research studies and reports identify overlapping and interrelated skills that are precursors to learning to read and write, including the Head Start Bureau (2003), Early Reading First (2007), and the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008). These skills include: Expressive and Receptive Language; Phonological Awareness; Print Awareness and Concepts of Print; Alphabet Knowledge; Vocabulary; and Writing. Together, oral language development and emergent literacy skills provide the foundation for future reading success. To expand knowledge and provide opportunities for practice, it is essential for early childhood programs to teach language and literacy skills across all developmental domains (See Table 3, page 14).

Table 3: *Language Development and Literacy Skills across Developmental Domains*

Domain	Clarification	Language Development and Emergent Literacy Skills
Physical	Healthy physical development is essential to overall well-being and learning. Opportunities to develop fine and gross motor skills need to be varied, unstructured, and play-oriented.	• Handle writing tools, such as crayons, pencils, markers • Employ fine motor skills through stringing beads, lacing, putting puzzles together, and using scissors • Explore art materials, such as painting, drawing, sculpting clay • Track print in big books and small books • Use multi-sensory materials to create/write the alphabet letters (i.e., play dough, sand, magnetic letters, finger paint, shaving cream, pipe cleaners) • Employ gross motor skills in role playing, dramatics, dancing, marching
Social/ Emotional	Social/Emotional development determines how children think, feel, and act. It affects learning in all areas of growth and development.	• Use language to engage in conversation with classmates and adults • Ask questions during conversations and discussions • Listen attentively to classmates and teachers • Participate actively in instructional activities and play • Use language to negotiate rules during play • Apply language skills to resolve conflicts
Cognitive	Active learning provides stimulation for brains. Critical thinking and problem solving skills help children deepen conceptual understanding and explore their environment.	• Use language to clearly express thoughts and ideas • Develop the ability to classify, compare and contrast, predict, question, and discuss results • Learn to explore, observe, and describe the natural environment • Observe, participate, conduct simple science experiments, and share results with others

Table 3: Adapted from: Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2000; IDOE, 2006; Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), 2009; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009

Developmentally Appropriate Instruction: Play, Language, and Literacy

Copple and Bredekamp (2009) assert that the most important factor influencing learning and development is a teacher/caregiver's interactions with children. Interactions generated through child-initiated play, adult-guided play, and teacher-directed instruction provide opportunities for dialogue and problem solving (Boat, Dinnebeil, & Bae, 2010; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; NIFL, 2009). Positive and stable relationships provide children with an emotionally safe environment to explore, take risks, build confidence, and learn.

Key term:

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) refers to "best practices" for young children. DAP is a construct derived from research that is based on child development, learning theories, and observed practice. DAP is not a curriculum, but rather a philosophy or belief about how children learn.

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Developmentally appropriate practice is grounded in the learning theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, and others. All of these theorists highlight the connection between play and learning. Play is essential for children - it contributes to healthy child development cognitively, socially, and physically. It is through active play that children acquire and refine many of the prerequisite skills that contribute to successful learning. Perhaps Neill (1960) says it best:

Childhood is Playhood!

Play is natural to children. Pretending, moving, laughing, talking, singing, solving problems, and negotiating are all aspects of play that provide opportunities for learning. Children who are provided with ample time to engage in self-directed play benefit in a variety of ways. Play provides children with the chance to interact with their environment and begin to make sense of their world. Healthy infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are energetic and passionately engage with toys, objects and people in their surroundings. Play also encourages interaction between children. As children socialize during play, they learn to express their ideas and to listen to the suggestions expressed by others.

Early childhood staff should understand the developmental stages of play (See Table 4 below) and the adult's role in supporting learning through playful experiences. It is the action and dialogue of play that are important for learning, not the end product.

Table 4: *Types and Stages of Play*

Stage	Description	Age
Solitary Play	Child plays independently.	Solitary play begins in infancy and is common in toddlers due to their limited social skills. It is important, however, for children at any age to have some time to play alone.
Parallel Play	Children play side by side, but they do not interact with each other.	Parallel play is most often observed with toddlers.
Associative Play	Children involved with associative play do not set rules. They play together, but there is no formal organization.	Associative play often begins when children are toddlers and extends through preschool.
Cooperative Play	Cooperative play is organized around group goals. There is a play "leader" and children can be identified as in or out of the group.	Cooperative play begins in the late preschool years and extends throughout childhood.
Onlooker Play	Children watch others play, but do not attempt to join the group.	Onlooker play is observed in toddlers and extends throughout childhood.
Structured or Guided Play	Structured play involves adult input, either in organizing, initiating or intervening in the play activity	Structured play often begins in the late preschool years and extends throughout childhood.

Table 4: Adapted from: www.healthofchildren.com/P/Play.html; Copple & Bredekamp (2009)

In a child's world, play is a child's prime educator. Play enhances the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of the young child. A child needs opportunities for play that are active and quiet, spontaneous and planned, indoors and outdoors, and done alone and with peers. When reviewed as a learning process, play becomes a vehicle for intellectual growth. Play involves not only materials and equipment, but also words and ideas that promote literacy and develop thinking skills. Play promotes problem solving, critical thinking, concept formation, creativity, and social/emotional development. Indiana Department of Education (2006).

Role of the Teacher

Early childhood caregivers and teachers have a significant role in supporting learning through play. They establish the learning environment, provide engaging materials, and encourage children to extend skill-building activities during play. Teachers and caregivers can model new approaches to using materials or extend children's understanding through dialogue during play.

Vygotsky's concept of **scaffolding** (building knowledge incrementally), is useful when considering the role of the teacher to deepen conceptual understanding and develop mastery of foundational skills. Scaffolding learning, in which teachers and caregivers offer responsive comments that elevate children's thinking and performance, should occur during all types of play and instructional interactions with children. Scaffolding guides and supports learning by building on what children already know, moves children from lower to higher levels of skill use, and builds language and literacy skills in young children. Teachers and caregivers scaffold learning by providing just enough support to match the child's skill level, providing more support if the child is struggling,and

Key term:

Scaffolding refers to the process of providing extra support or targeted instruction that builds on what a child already knows so he/she is able to successfully learn or perform more complex tasks.

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decreasing support when the child is ready to move ahead (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).

During structured or guided play, teachers purposefully design play experiences to support specific learning goals. Unlike child-initiated play, adults guide children to participate in particular play activities, observe children's success or struggles with the activity, and provide scaffolding when necessary to optimize learning opportunities. Effective teachers/caregivers adapt instruction to meet the needs of each child and use a variety of spontaneous and planned teaching strategies to scaffold children's learning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Below is an example of scaffolded learning.

What does it LOOK like?

Scaffolding Language Development during Play

Classroom setting: A 3-year old boy chooses the Block Interest Center and is stacking five blocks when the teacher joins him.

Child: (points to the tower of blocks) See*, I builded a big house*.

Teacher: (following the child's lead and modeling correct grammar): *Yes, you built an **enormous** house.* (The teacher uses elaboration and extension, rather than just saying "Yes, you built a big house." which provides only repetition and slight extension.)

Child: (placing more blocks on the stack) *I am making a 'normous house.*

Teacher: (again, following child's lead): *Your house IS **enormous**. Enormous is another word for big; it is something that is very big. Say, "Enormous."* (model)

Child: *enormous*

Teacher: *The house is **enormous**. Say it with me.*

Child and **Teacher:** *The house is **enormous**.*

The teacher might provide additional scaffolding by asking the child to say the word in three parts by syllable and then model putting it together. Later, the teacher might prompt by saying, *"This house is not only big, it is _____,"* waiting patiently for the child to insert the new vocabulary word.

Teachers/caregivers also use **intentional instruction** to build word knowledge. Storybook reading provides an engaging venue for children to learn print concepts and new vocabulary. The teacher/caregiver intentionally plans instruction, selecting a book that will interest the children and deciding which words to teach to the children. A typical storybook may have numerous words that will be new to young children. The goal is not to teach every new word, but to select two or three words to teach intentionally and explicitly. In the following example the teacher intentionally and explicitly teaches the word "enormous." Compare the scenario below to the spontaneous teaching during play that is depicted in the example on page 18.

What does it LOOK like?

Intentional Instruction

Classroom setting: The teacher is reading the story, The Enormous Turnip, by Alexei Tolstoy. The children are gathered around her.

Teacher: (Holding the book so the children are able to see the cover, the teacher introduces the storybook.) *Today I am going to read you this book. The title of the book is The Enormous Turnip."* The teacher points to the turnip on the cover of the book, leaning down from her chair so all the children are near the book. *"Look at this turnip. A turnip is a vegetable. We eat vegetables here at the center. Look at how **BIG** this turnip is; it is **VERY BIG.** A word that means very big is **enormous**. This turnip is **enormous**; it is very big!"* Say the word **enormous** with me.

Children: (in unison) enormous

Teacher: *"The turnip is **enormous**; it is very BIG. Say that with me."*

Together: *"The turnip is **enormous**; it is very BIG."*

Teacher: *"I'm thinking of something else that is **enormous**. It is an animal that has a trunk and floppy ears. We saw one when we went to the zoo. It is an **enormous** animal. Tell your partner what animal I'm thinking of."*

Children: (whisper to their partners)

Teacher: *"I heard you! Did you say elephant? Yes, an elephant is very BIG, it is _____."* (The teacher waits for the children to say "**enormous**."

Teacher: *"Okay, let's find out more about this **enormous** turnip."* The teacher begins reading the story.

Oral Language Development: Instructional Strategies and Practices

> *The most important aspect to evaluate in childcare settings for very young children is the amount of talk actually going on, moment by moment, between children and their caregivers.* (Hart & Risley, 2004)

Oral language skills play a crucial role in reading and writing acquisition as well as the development of learning and thinking processes (NICHD, 2005). Research indicates that language development actually begins BEFORE as the fetus, at approximately the 7th month of gestation, begins to recognize and respond to the sound of the mother's voice. From birth, the infant learns to communicate, using non-verbal cues: crying, cooing, babbling, and laughing. The infant is also listening to the surrounding voices and words. The research of Hart and Risley (2004) indicates the importance of both the quantity and quality of the language a child hears in the early years of life. Although language development follows a natural progression, the quantity and quality of a child's oral vocabulary is highly dependent on early environmental variables. For additional information refer to the *"What Should a Child Be Able to Do?"* and *Language-Progression of Skills* (Appendices A and B) at the end of this chapter.

Effective teachers/caregivers are aware of the language development milestones. They use rich vocabulary and converse with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers throughout the day using strategies that promote oral language development. As children begin to talk, teachers/caregivers use interactive conversations and discussions in whole group, small group, and one-on-one settings to build language, vocabulary and developing thinking skills. These early language skills provide the foundation for reading and writing.

Take the time to listen to the "noise" of an early childhood classroom. Ask yourself, "Who is doing the talking?" Do you hear just the teacher/caregiver or do you hear the voices of children? The teacher must refrain from being the *sage on the stage*; early childhood classrooms should be filled with the voices of children. Children learn when they are responding to the learning environment. (Bennett-Armistead, et/ al.,

2005). Peer interactions and conversations should be encouraged. Children learn language from each other, as well as from the teacher.

A teacher/caregiver should implement **instructional strategies** that enhance children's language skills from the birth to age 5. Infant and toddler instruction occurs informally, primarily during unstructured play. Although preschoolers are able to participate in more structured learning activities, they need ample opportunities to engage in interactive and purposeful play to allow them opportunities to practice their developing language and literacy skills. (Table 5 lists various instructional strategies.)

Table 5: *Instructional Strategies that Enhance Oral Language Development*

Strategy	The Teacher/Caregiver should . . .
Conversational Expansion	• Engage children in conversations about topics that interest them (large group, small group, one-on-one) • Listen carefully to what the child is saying • Model correct grammar • Use robust vocabulary • Expand child's understanding of language through modeling and intentional instruction
Pretend Play	• Participate in the dialogue of pretend play • FOLLOW the lead of the child, but provide background knowledge, deepen understanding, and use robust vocabulary (The Housekeeping Corner can be used as a thematic center for language – provide the props so it becomes a post office, hospital, grocery store, etc.)
Language Play	• Sing songs and listen to music • Recite finger plays and simple poetry • Recite Nursery Rhymes • Play word games (I See Something that is *describe item in the environment.* What is it?)
Shared Reading; Interactive Read Alouds	• Use BIG Books for Shared Reading. Discuss the pictures and characters • Conduct Dialogic Reading (a systematic book reading strategy) • Read stories from various genre and authors

Table 5

Instructional practices that enhance oral language development include: (1) Interactive Read Alouds, (2) Storytelling, and (3) Dialogic Reading. These instructional practices are effective with toddlers as well as preschoolers. Because of the short attention span of toddlers, however, teachers/caregivers may not finish reading a book or telling a story before children lose interest. The adult should follow the lead of young children and not continue with the activity if interest has waned. Children will often return to the activity or want to hear more of the story at a later time. (See Table 6.)

Table 6: *Instructional Practices that promote Oral Language Development*

Strategy	The Teacher/Caregiver should . . .
Interactive Read Alouds (Intentional instruction)	• Select an appropriate book with engaging illustrations (consider the age and interest of the children) • Read the book and select 2 or three words to intentionally teach to the children • Construct a "kid-friendly" definition so children understand the meaning of the word(s) • Discuss the chosen word(s) as you read the story • Engage students in dialogue about the story and targeted words • Use the targeted word(s) in follow-up discussions
Storytelling	• TELL stories as well as read stories to children. • Select familiar stories (fairytales, etc.) for storytelling • Use props, such as puppets or flannelboard cutouts • After telling the story, encourage children to use the props to retell the story
Dialogic Reading (Shared book reading)	• Use the Dialogic Reading process (PEER) with small groups of children • Conduct Dialogic Reading as a "second read," after children are familiar with the story • Use the systematic prompts (CROWD) • Access the *Doing What Works* website for detailed directions for implementing Dialogic Reading: http://dww.ed.gov/learn/?T_ID=15&P_ID=31

Table 6

Emergent Literacy Skills and Intentional Instruction

Teachers/caregivers of infants to preschoolers use developmentally appropriate practices, providing scaffolded instruction in foundational skills. Each child comes to the classroom with different literacy experiences and abilities. As a result, teachers and caregivers need to consider each child's individual learning needs and provide programs that balance play and intentional instruction, focusing on meaningful emergent literacy activities (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

Participation in carefully planned, purposeful emergent literacy activities help children manipulate the sounds of language, name and write the letters of the alphabet, and understand the purposes for print. In time, children begin to synthesize this information by matching sounds with letters of the alphabet and attaching meaning to letters and words. Through exposure to books, children gain an understanding of the conventions of print, such as how to turn pages and which direction to read. These emerging reading and writing skills allow children to understand that print conveys the spoken message.

Teachers use intentional instruction to teach many of the foundational skills. Intentionality, however, does NOT translate to didactic "stay in your seat and complete these worksheets" methods of teaching and learning. Intentional instruction is explicit and systematic. For instruction to be effective and developmentally appropriate, teachers must also be intentional. See Figure 3 on page 24 to clarify the instructional attributes of an *intentional teacher.*

> *. . . an "intentional" teacher aims at clearly defined learning objectives for children, employs instructional strategies likely to help children achieve the objectives, and continually assesses progress and adjusts the strategies based on that assessment. The teacher who can explain just why she is doing what she is doing is acting intentionally . . .*
>
> (Epstein, 2007)

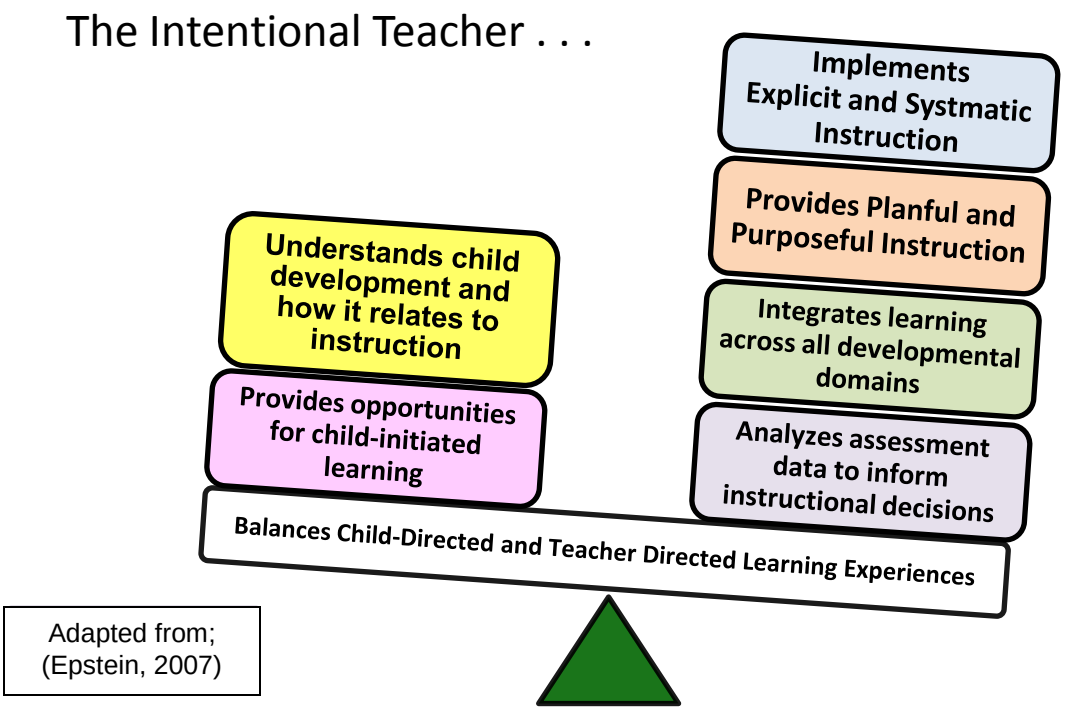


Figure 3: Balancing Child-Directed and Teacher Directed Learning

This figure depicts the instructional attributes of an Intentional Teacher

Early Literacy does not mean Early Reading

The components of early reading instruction (kindergarten to Grade 3) include phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Early literacy skills, especially at the emergent level of development, provide the precursors for reading. Oral language is the foundation for reading and writing; other emergent skills are phonological awareness, print awareness and concepts of print, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, and writing. The goal of intentional teaching of these emergent skills is not to require preschoolers to memorize all the letters of the alphabet

or twenty high-frequency words. The goal is to prepare children for learning to read and write. There is a need to balance teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. Instruction in the preschool years should be neither didactic nor laissez-faire. Emergent literacy skills should be taught intentionally, systematically, and explicitly across all domains, using developmentally appropriate methods with an awareness of the individual learning preferences of children (Epstein, 2007).

Five Emergent Literacy Skills

1. Phonological Awareness

> *Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds.* (Yopp, 1992).

This awareness of individual and groups of sounds is a critical part of learning to read and write. As children enter elementary school, phonological awareness is important for spelling or decoding unfamiliar words. Research indicates that the most common cause of early reading difficulties is a weakness in children's phonological processing skills (Snow, Burns, & Griffin., 1998; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001; NELP, 2008). Children with poor phonological processing skills have difficulty "cracking" the alphabetic code that connects the graphemes (letters) in written alphabetic languages to the phonemes (sounds) in spoken language.

Research consistently states that children with strong phonological awareness skills become better readers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). It is critical that teachers/caregivers develop purposeful and planned instruction in phonological awareness to ensure that children have opportunities to develop this skill. **Studies indicate that ten minutes a day of intentional instruction that is playful and engaging for children can make a difference for children's emerging reading skills** (Ehri & Roberts, 2006; Gillon, 2004).

Obtaining phonological awareness is a progression, beginning with the realization that there are separate words in the stream of oral language. From word awareness, children discern finer segments of sound: syllables, onset-rimes, rhyme, and finally to the smallest unit of sound, the phoneme. When reaching the level of phoneme awareness, a child is phonologically aware of the sounds of language. Figure 4 depicts the progression of phonological awareness.

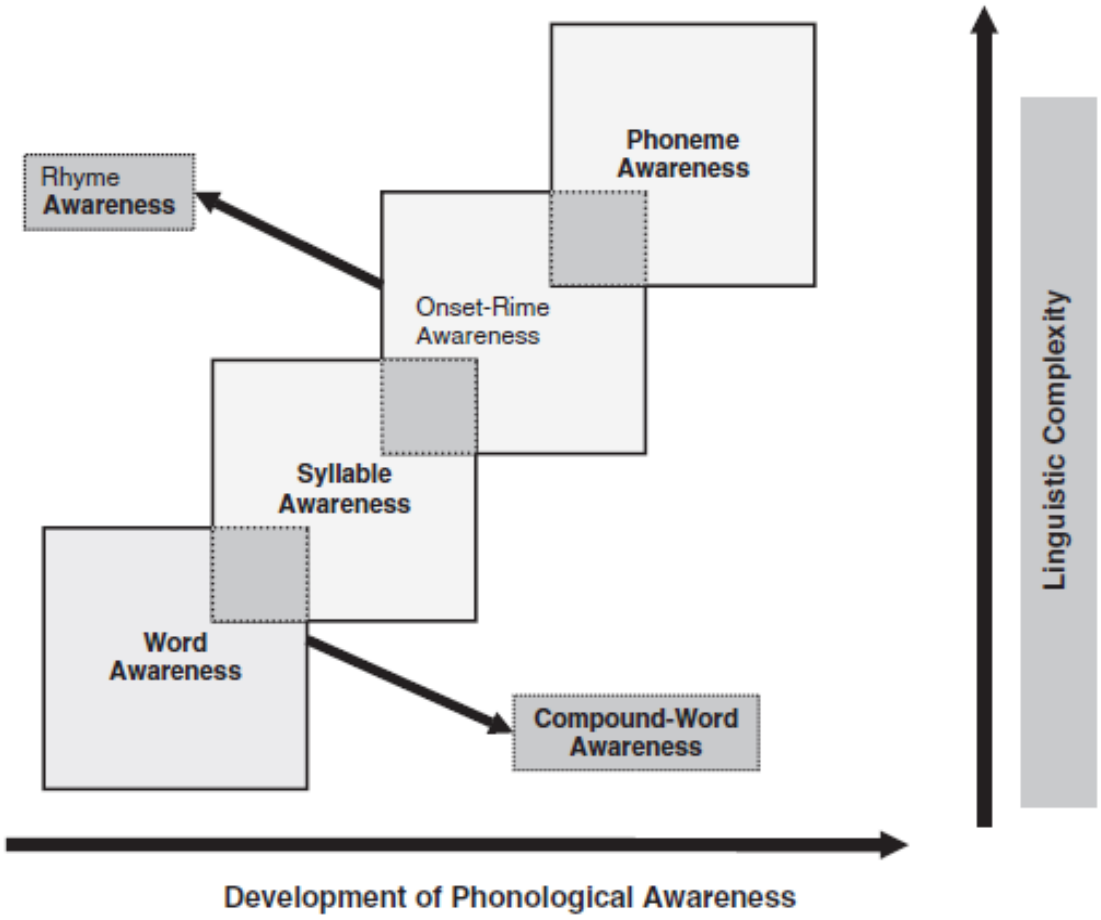


Figure 4: The Developmental Continuum of Phonological Awareness

This Figure depicts a child's progression of phonological awareness, from the word level to the phoneme level.

Source: *Phillips, Clancy-Menchetti, & Lonigan (2008)*

Examples of intentional instruction of phonological awareness include:

- Providing intentional instruction in rhyming, segmenting, and blending words
- Singing songs
- Reciting nursery rhymes, simple poetry, tongue twisters, and riddles
- Playing word games (clapping syllables, identifying rhyming words)
- Stretching words (slowly draw out the pronunciation of words to hear the individual sounds)
- Choosing books for Read Alouds that focus on targeted sounds

2. Print Awareness and Concepts of Print.

Children perceive that print surrounds them in their everyday lives and that print conveys meaning. This awareness of print is one of the first steps toward learning to read. From birth, children interact and enjoy books and print in varying ways: infants chew on books, but also gaze at pictures and their eyes track when an adult points to details in an illustration; toddlers pretend to read and insist that their favorite books are read to them repeatedly; preschoolers progress from awareness of print to understanding the alphabetic principle (the connection between the sounds of language and the symbolic letters of the alphabet). They become aware that print conveys a message (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Teachers/caregivers should encourage children to interact with print through Shared Reading activities. The interaction of the adult and child with a book increases the understanding of print awareness, functions of print and print concepts. Table 7 lists the basic concepts of print that preschoolers should know (See page 28.). Examples of intentional teaching practices that promote print awareness and concepts of print include:

- Providing access to high quality books that are appropriate for the child's age (board or cloth books for infants and toddlers; colorful picture books for preschoolers)
- Drawing attention to environmental print (matching familiar logos and the word)

- Labeling objects in the classroom
- Drawing attention to the variety of print that exists in the world (mail, flyers, menus, magazines, newspapers, letters, books, etc.).
- Providing access to an assortment of writing materials so children can practice writing notes, lists, letters, etc.
- Explaining and demonstrating how print works on the written page
- Modeling that all spoken words can be written and read

Table 7: *Concepts of Print*

Using a children's book, the teacher prompts the child with the following questions and instructions :

1. What is the correct way to hold this book?
2. Show me the front cover of the book.
3. Point to the title of the book.
4. Point to the part of the book that tells the story.
5. Where does the story begin?
6. Where does the story end?
7. Point to the place where some begins to read.
8. Move your finger to show me the words that someone would read next.
9. Move your finger to show me where to go after finishing the first line.
10. When I get to the end of this page, where do I go to continue reading?
11. Point to a word on this page.
12. Point to the first letter in the word.
13. Point to the last letter in the word.
14. Find a capital (or upper case) letter and point to it.
15. Point to a small (or lower case) letter.
16. What is the name of this mark? (Teacher points to a period.)
17. What is the name this mark? (Teacher points to a question mark.)
18. What do you call these marks? (Teacher points to quotation marks.)

Table 7 Adapted from: Clay (2000)

3. Alphabet Knowledge.

The first letters children usually recognize are those that are associated with their own names. Most children are fascinated with the awareness that letters can represent their names. Gaining knowledge of the alphabet is enjoyable for preschoolers when they are not pressured to memorize letters; often using meaningless flashcards. Teaching the alphabet should include a variety of instructional strategies that are both playful exploration and guided learning. Most children learn to recite the letters of the alphabet by singing the *Alphabet Song.* Teachers should build upon children's initial interest in the alphabet by using music, movement, and the arts to learn letters.

The traditional method of teaching the *Letter of the Week*, especially when the teacher begins with "A" and introduces the letters in a lockstep progression, is not as successful as teaching children letters that are meaningful to them (Morrow, 2007, p.131). Letters should be selected in clusters so children are quickly able to construct simple words. Additionally, if letters are learned in the context of a particular unit of study or theme, the association helps children remember the letter. For example, if a unit of study focuses on pets, the letter "c" for cat or "d" for dog might be introduced. By providing ongoing guided and independent practice, children will be able to identify the letter or letters in new contexts. It is important for preschoolers to gain knowledge of the alphabet. Research indicates that knowing the alphabet at kindergarten entry is a strong predictor of success in reading during first grade (Snow, et al., 1998).

The following instructional strategies can be used by teachers/caregivers or families to encourage children to learn the alphabet letters.

- Providing opportunities for children to practice identifying the letters in their names and matching those letters with print within the environment.
- Displaying a word wall with the children's pictures and first names
- Playing letter bingo and other letter games
- Providing manipulatives that include alphabet puzzles, magnetic upper and lower-case letters, tactile letters made from fine sandpaper or sand, and letter stencils.

- Reading and displaying alphabet books.

4. <u>Vocabulary</u>

Children's vocabulary increases rapidly during the preschool years. Their receptive vocabulary (words they hear) is larger than their expressive vocabulary (words they speak). Eventually children will have four categories of vocabulary: hearing, speaking, reading, and writing. During the preschool years, children learn new words by hearing them and practicing new words in conversations. Once children are fluent readers, usually by the end of third grade, their vocabularies will expand most rapidly when confronted by new words during reading. They independently unravel the meanings of the words through context and word learning strategies (Harris, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011).

The average preschooler knows about 5,000 words (speaking vocabulary) and after age 3, children learn about 2,000 new words each year (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2004). Children from disadvantaged home environments hear roughly 25% fewer words than children from more affluent home and research indicates that not only do they begin school with smaller vocabularies, but they learn fewer words per year . (Hart & Risley, 1995). This deficit impacts their success as readers unless teachers intervene. English learners may present a dual challenge if they do not speak English and also come from homes where the conversations in their native language are not robust with sophisticated words. If teachers/caregivers intervene and help children build robust vocabularies in the preschool years, there is a greater chance to overcome the *vocabulary gap* (Harris, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2011).

Children learn vocabulary in meaningful contexts and through numerous exposures to words. The following instructional strategies encourage the development of oral vocabulary and an interest in print, precursors for reading and writing:

- Use conversational expansion to introduce children to more robust words (For example: enormous instead of big; famished instead of hungry; elated instead of happy)

- Use both simple everyday words, especially for English Learners, as well as the sophisticated words when explaining daily activities or during conversations.
- Promote curiosity about words (also known as word consciousness).
  - Model your curiosity about new words
  - Plan playful activities and word games to encourage learning new words.
  - Praise children when they ask about a new word or use a new word in conversation.
  - Read engaging books and *fast map* robust words. *Fast map* is a term used to indicate the learning strategy of providing a quick, child-friendly definition immediately after reading a robust word in a story. (For example: The boy sprinted *(he ran quickly)* across the street. The words in italics *fast map* the word sprinted.)
  - Use Shared Reading practices with BIG books to emphasize robust words in print. Highlighting tape can be used to draw attention to these words.

An important bridge that connects oral vocabulary to written vocabulary is writing. Children should begin to write as soon as they are able to hold crayons and pencils. The next section explores the importance of writing in the toddler and preschool years.

5. Emergent Writing

Learning to write follows a developmental continuum. (See Appendix D at the end of this chapter.) Children begin at the scribbling level and progress through drawing pictures. Preschoolers practice writing, but early attempts are random symbols and waving lines. As children become more aware of print and develop greater hand-eye coordination, they begin to make recognizable letters. Eventually, children connect symbolic letters with sounds and begin to refine their writing using conventional spelling. Although there is a developmental progression to learning to write, the stages are not rigid and children may go back and forth between levels of emergent writing as they

move toward conventional spelling (Sulzby, 1985; Bennett-Armistead, 2005; Morrow, 2007).

Writing reinforces the alphabetic principle (the connection between language sounds and letters of the alphabet). Teachers/caregivers model writing behaviors through *morning message*, Language Experience, or dictation. Teachers should scaffold children's early writing endeavors by encouraging children's attempts to put their ideas and thoughts on paper, whether through simple drawings or random symbols.

As children advance, teachers/caregivers should assist children in sounding out words and teaching the correct formation of letters. As independent writers, children will practice writing the alphabet, composing messages, creating signs, or writing stories. Journal writing should be an integral part of the preschool writing curriculum. From scribbling to drawings to inventive spelling, a journal provides a record of a child's writing development. As children transition from preschool and kindergarten to first grade, they tend to use a combination of invented spelling and conventional spelling.

One of the best ways for teachers/caregivers to promote the development of writing is to provide ample opportunities for writing by establishing a writing center. A writing center is a designated location in the classroom where children experiment with and practice writing. Learning activities range from drawing to writing in journals. A writing center should be stocked with a variety of materials, including:

- Various types of paper (white, colored, lined and unlined, envelopes)
- Colored pencils, crayons, gel pens, rubber stamps, markers
- Magazines, menus, and other authentic print materials
- Photos and pictures for story starters
- Clipboards for portable writing surfaces
- Non-paper writing materials (chalkboards or whiteboards)

High-Quality Preschool Care and Education in Indiana

Effective early childhood programs include high quality curricula and high quality instruction to develop language and early literacy skills in young children. Language and early literacy instruction should be developmentally appropriate to help children master goals across developmental domains and content areas. Effective language and emergent literacy instruction should take place during child-initiated play and teacher-directed intentional instruction in large groups, small groups, with partners, and one-on-one. Teachers/caregivers should use assessment to guide instructional decisions and use a variety of instructional practices or routines that provide active engagement and tap children's unique interests.

The Indiana Bureau of Child Care provides a "roadmap," titled *Paths to Quality,* to guide and evaluate early childhood programs. This rating system provides a systematic approach to assessing the structure and processes of early learning centers and programs. Figure 5, below, illustrates the four levels of quality.

Indiana Paths to QUALITY establishes four levels of quality and the criteria to determine the level attained by licensed centers:

Level 4: National Accreditation

Level 3: Planned Curriculum

Level 2: Learning Environment

Level 1: Health & Safety

Figure 5: Four Levels of Quality of the *Indiana Paths to Quality*

This figure illustrates the progressive levels that can be attained by Indiana Early Learning centers and programs.

http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/cff/documents/project_reports/07_paths_to_quality.pdf

Table 8: A Guide to Establishing Positive Early Learning Environments and Planning Effective Curriculum using the Indiana Paths to Quality

Level 2 Learning Environment	Level 3 Planned Curriculum
• Provide an environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and safe for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of all children. • Activities and materials reflect the age, interests, and abilities of all children. • Provide for children's language and literacy skill development. • Provide pertinent program information to families. • Promote staff/assistant caregivers' development and training. • Program has a written philosophy and goals for children.	• A written curriculum and planned program for children reflects developmentally appropriate practice. • Program evaluation is completed annually by parents and staff. • Actively engage in program evaluation and have an action plan for improvement • Demonstrate professional growth of Director and staff or lead caregiver and assistants in excess of licensing requirements • Facilitate family and staff input into the program. • Program has been in operation for a minimum of one year or lead Caregiver has at least 12 months experience in a licensed or Bureau of Child Care nationally recognized accredited child care setting as a child care provider.

Table 8 (Elicker, Clawson, Langill, & Kwon, 2007)

Transition to Kindergarten

Getting ready for kindergarten begins at birth.

Leaving preschool and entering kindergarten is a major transition in a child's life. Although adults often do not realize the anxiety experienced by a child during this transition, the emotions that accompany this change in a child's educational environment can impact the entire family. Teachers/caregivers and families can help preschoolers with this educational milestone. Below are a list of accomplishments that will help preschoolers prepare for the transition to kindergarten feeling confident and eager to take the next steps in becoming a reader and writer.

14 Preschool Literacy Accomplishments – Preparing for Kindergarten

1. Knows that alphabet letters can be used to make words
2. Recognizes environmental print
3. Understands the basic concepts of print
4. Knows that different forms of print are used for different functions (reading stories, making grocery lists, labels, signs, etc.)
5. Is phonologically aware (able to hear and manipulate the sounds of language)
6. Uses new vocabulary during conversations
7. Understands and follows oral directions
8. Able to retell a familiar story
9. Shows an interest in books
10. Is able to identify the letters in his/her name and some additional letters
11. Is eager to learn to read
12. Communicates through drawing and emergent writing (random symbols or letters)
13. Enjoys rhyming and word games
14. Is building confidence in literacy skills

Source: Adapted from: Starting Out Right (1999)

Summary

Becoming a reader and writer does not begin in kindergarten. The foundation for literacy begins at birth with an infant's eagerness to learn and communicate. As children develop, they need a balance of child-initiated play and adult-directed intentional instruction. Caregivers/teachers who work with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers have the opportunity to impact the learning trajectory of the children in their care. Neuroscience indicates that positive early learning environments impact brain development and thinking skills. Effective teachers/caregivers use a variety of instructional practices and routines during play, intentional instruction, and daily functional tasks to enhance children's oral language development and support children's emerging literacy skills.

Language and early literacy instruction should be developmentally appropriate to help children master goals across all domains and content areas. Effective language and early literacy instruction should occur in large groups, small groups and one-on-one. Teachers/caregivers should use assessment to guide instructional decisions and differentiate instruction to meet the individual learning needs of all children. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers should be actively engaged in learning activities and teachers/caregivers should use a variety of instructional practices based on the developmental levels and interests of the children..

Successful language and emergent literacy experiences are contingent upon teachers/caregivers' knowledge of child development, effective instructional practice, the language and literacy curriculum, and the ability to adapt instruction to meet individual needs. Teachers/caregivers must work with their colleagues, leaders, and families to ensure the excellence in learning and teaching.

(See Appendix E for helpful websites.)

Appendix A

What Should a Child be able to Do?
Birth to 12 Months

Hearing and Understanding	Talking
Birth-3 Months • Startles to loud sounds • Quiets or smiles when spoken to • Seems to recognize your voice and quiets if crying • Increases or decreases sucking behavior in response to sound	**Birth-3 Months** • Makes pleasure sounds (cooing) • Cries differently for different needs • Smiles when sees you
4-6 Months • Moves eyes in direction of sounds • Responds to changes in tone of your voice • Notices toys that make sounds • Pays attention to music	**4-6 Months** • Babbling sounds more speech-like with many different sounds, including *p, b* and *m* • Chuckles and laughs • Vocalizes excitement and displeasure • Makes gurgling sounds when left alone and when playing with you
7-12 Months • Enjoys games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake • Turns and looks in direction of sounds • Listens when spoken to • Recognizes words for common items like "cup", "shoe", "book", or "juice" • Begins to respond to requests (e.g. "Come here" or "Want more?")	**7-12 Months** • Babbling has both long and short groups of sounds such as "tata upup bibibibi" • Uses speech or noncrying sounds to get and keep attention • Uses gestures to communication (waving, holding arms to be picked up) • Imitates different speech sounds • Has one or two words (dada, mama, bye-bye) around first birthday, although sounds may not be clear

Appendix A

What Should a Child Be Able to Do?
1 to 4 Years

Hearing and Understanding	Talking
1-2 Years • Points to a few body parts when asked. • Follows simple commands and understands simple questions ("Roll the ball," "Kiss the baby," "Where's your shoe?"). • Listens to simple stories, songs, and rhymes. • Points to pictures in a book when named.	**1-2 Years** • Says more words every month. • Uses some one- or two- word questions ("Where kitty?" "Go bye-bye?" "What's that?"). • Puts two words together ("more cookie," "no juice," "mommy book"). • Uses many different consonant sounds at the beginning of words.
2-3 Years • Understands differences in meaning ("go-stop," "in-on," "big-little," "up-down"). • Follows two requests ("Get the book and put it on the table"). • Listens to and enjoys hearing stories for longer periods of time	**2-3 Years** • Has a word for almost everything. • Uses two- or three- words to talk about and ask for things. • Uses *k, g, f, t, d,* and *n* sounds. • Speech is understood by familiar listeners most of the time. • Often asks for or directs attention to objects by naming them.
3-4 Years • Hears you when you call from another room. • Hears television or radio at the same loudness level as other family members. • Answers simple "who?", "what?", "where?", and "why?" questions.	**3-4 Years** • Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes. • People outside of the family usually understand child's speech. • Uses a lot of sentences that have 4 or more words. • Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words.

Appendix A

What Should a Child Be Able to Do?

4 to 5 Years

Hearing and Understanding	Talking
4-5 Years • Pays attention to a short story and answers simple questions about them. • Hears and understands most of what is said at home and in school.	**4-5 Years** • Uses sentences that give lots of details ("The biggest peach is mine"). • Tells stories that stick to topic. • Communicates easily with other children and adults. • Says most sounds correctly except a few like *l, s, r, v, z, ch, sh, th.* • Says rhyming words. • Names some letters and numbers. • Uses the same grammar as the rest of the family.
Source: Retrieved and adapted from American Speech-Language Association, http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/01.htm	

Appendix B

Language - Progression of Skills

Age of Child	Typical Language Development
6 months	• Vocalization with intonation • Responds to his name • Responds to human voices without visual cues by turning his head and eyes • Responds appropriately to friendly and angry tones
12 months (1 year)	• Uses one or more word fragments or words with meaning • Understands simple instructions, especially if vocal or physical cues are given • Practices inflection • Is aware of the social value of speech
18 months	• Has vocabulary of approximately 5-20 words • Vocabulary made up chiefly of nouns • Some echolalia (repeating a word or phrase over and over) • Much jargon with emotional content • Is able to follow simple commands
24 months (2 years)	• Can name a number of objects common to his surroundings • Is able to use at least two prepositions, usually “in, on, or under” • Combines words into short sentences (2-3 words) of largely noun-verb combinations • About 75% of what child says should be intelligible, and has vocabulary of approximately 150-300 words • Rhythm and fluency are not well-developed • Can use two pronouns correctly - “I, me, you” - although “me and I” are often confused • “My and mine” are beginning to emerge • Responds to such commands as "show me your ____” (eyes, nose, mouth, hair)
36 months (3 years)	• Use pronouns “I, you, me” correctly • Is using some plurals and past tenses • Knows at least three prepositions, usually “in, on, under” • Knows chief parts of body and should be able to indicate these if cannot name them • Handles three word sentences easily • About 90% of what child says should be intelligible, and has vocabulary of approximately 900-1000 words • Verbs begin to predominate • Understands most simple questions dealing with his environment and activities • Relates his experiences so that they can be followed with reason

Age of Child	Typical Language Development
36 months (3 years) continued	• Able to reason out questions, such as "what do you do when you are sleepy, hungry, cold, or thirsty?" • Should be able to give his sex, name, age • Should not be expected to answer all questions, even though he understands what is expected
48 months (4 years)	• Knows names of familiar animals • Can use at least four prepositions or can demonstrate his understanding of their meaning when given commands • Names common objects in picture books or magazines • Knows one or more colors • Can repeat 4 digits when they are given slowly • Can usually repeat words of four syllables • Demonstrates understanding of “over and under” • Has most vowels and diphthongs and the consonants p, b, m, w, n well established • Often indulges in make-believe and imitation with extensive verbalization as he carries out activities • Understands such concepts as longer, larger, when a contrast is presented • Readily follows simple commands even though the stimulus objects are not in sight • Much repetition of words, phrases, syllables, and even sounds
60 months (5 years)	• Can use many descriptive words spontaneously - both adjectives and adverbs • Knows common opposites: big-little, hard-soft, heavy-light • Has number concepts of 4 or more • Can count to ten • Speech should be completely intelligible, in spite of articulation problems • Should have all vowels and the consonants, m,p,b,h,w,k,g,t,d,n,ng,y • Should be able to repeat sentences as long as nine words • Should be able to define common objects in terms of use (hat, shoe, chair) • Should be able to follow three commands given without interruptions • Should have simple time concepts: morning, afternoon, night, day, later, after, while, tomorrow, yesterday, today • Should be using fairly long sentences and should use some compound and some complex sentences • Speech on the whole should be grammatically correct

Retrieved and adapted from Child Development Institute, LLC, January 31, 2010 at http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/language_development.shtml

Appendix C

Phonological Awareness - Progression of Skills

Discriminating

Children listen to determine if two words begin or end with the same sound.

Counting

Children clap the number of words in a sentence, syllables in a word, sounds in a word.

Rhyming

Children create word families with rhyming words (all, call, fall, ball).

Alliteration

Children produce groups of words that begin with the same initial sound (ten tiny tadpoles).

Sentence Segmentation

Children separate the individual words of a sentence.
(The dog ran away. = /The/ /dog/ /ran/ /away)

Blending Syllables

Children blend syllables to say words or segmenting spoken words into syllables (/mag/ /net/ = magnet and /pa/ /per/ = paper).

Blending Onsets and Rimes

Children blend the initial consonant or consonant cluster (*onset*) and the vowel and consonant sounds spoken after it (*rime*).
(/m/ /ice/ = mice and /sh/ /ake/ = shake)

Segmenting

Children say the word and then say each syllable or sound
(inside = /in/ /side/ or /i/ /n/ /s/ /i/ /d/).

Manipulating Phonemes:

Deleting:

Children listen to words and then say them without the first syllable (*baseball* becomes *ball*) or sound (*bat* becomes *at*).

Adding:

Children listen to words and add syllables (to *come* add */ing/),* or sounds (add the */s/* sound to the beginning of */un/).*

Substituting:

Students listen and change sounds (change /r/ in *run* to */b/* to make *bun*).

Appendix D

Conventions of Writing
A Developmental Continuum for Infants – Toddlers – Preschoolers

Level 1: Scribbling/Drawing (9 to 12 months and older)

Makes uncontrolled or unidentifiable scribbling, lines and circular shapes

Level 2: Pictorial (Toddler and PreKindergarten)

Draws somewhat recognizable pictures, imitates writing

Level 3: Precommunicative (end of PreKindergarten)

Prints own name or occasional known word, uses letter-like forms or letters, attempts to convey a message with writing and "read it back"

Level 4: Semiphonetic (Early and Middle Kindergarten)

Forms letters correctly (although may reverse some letters), usually writes left to right and top to bottom, correctly uses one, two or three letter spellings and can spell some grade-level high frequency words correctly

Level 5: Phonetic (Late Kindergarten)

Writes left to right and top to bottom, separates words with spaces, begins to use lower-case correctly, correctly spells one, two and three letter words and spells some grade-level high frequency words correctly, represents most consonant sounds and some vowel sounds

Level 6: Transitional (Early and Middle First Grade)

Uses appropriate spacing between words, uses lower-case correctly most of the time, correctly spells many grade-level high frequency words, uses logical phonetic spelling including vowels in most syllables (although vowels may not be correct)

APPENDIX E

Online Websites to Support Language Development and Literacy Skills

Birth to Age 5

1. **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)**
   This website provides information on language development, including developmental milestones from birth to age 5; speech and language disorders

   http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/

2. **Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL)**
   This website provides a wealth of ideas, suggestion, and learning activities that focus on language and literacy for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

   http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgpracts.php

3. **Center on the Developing Child**
   This website, developed by Harvard University, provides information about brain research and learning, child development, and early intervention.

   http://developingchild.harvard.edu/

4. **Doing What Works**
   This website provides research based materials – ideas and suggestions that work (based on rigorous scientific study). Topics include: Preschool Language and Literacy.

   http://dww.ed.gov/

5. **ED PUBS**
   Order free materials from the U.S. Department of Education

   http://www.edpubs.gov/\

6. **Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5**

   http://www.doe.in.gov/primetime/foundations.html

7. **International Reading Association (IRA)**
   This website provides a wealth of information on reading instruction. Some of the materials are accessible only to IRA members; however the position statement, *Literacy Development in the Preschool Years* is available to the general public.

   http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1066_preschool.sflb.ashx

8. **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**
   The NAEYC website provides resources for early childhood care and education teachers, caregivers, center directors, principals, and families. Materials accessible to non-members include position statements, research findings, and an extensive list of early childhood websites.

   http://www.naeyc.org/

9. **National Center for Family Literacy**
   This website provides materials for families and educators, including the online tool *Thinkfinity Literacy Network.*

   http://www.famlit.org

10. **National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)**
    This website provides news reports, research findings, statistics, and publications that focus on early care and education. Access the report *The State of Preschool* and policy briefs at this site.

    http://nieer.org/

11. **Report of the National Early Literacy Panel**
    Download the report of the National Early Literacy Panel from this website.

    http://lincs.ed.gov/earlychildhood/NELP/NELPreport.htm

12. **Zero to Three**
    This website promotes the health and development of infants and toddlers. This site provides free resources for caregivers and families, including articles, guidelines, webinars, and videos.

    http://www.zerotothree.org/

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

ASSESSMENT

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments			★			
Transition to Kindergarten			★			
State Leadership			★			

Guiding Principle:

A systematic assessment approach is used to collect multiple forms and types of data about children's language and literacy growth.

- ☑ A clearly defined purpose exists for assessing all children.
- ☑ Assessment procedures and content are age-appropriate.
- ☑ Multiple approaches are used to assess children's literacy learning including formative and summative measures that are reliable, valid, and fair for the purpose intended.
- ☑ Differentiated professional development provides opportunities for teachers/ caregivers to deepen their understanding and use of data for instructional decision-making.
- ☑ Teachers/caregivers have the knowledge, skill, and competence to effectively communicate with families about assessment.
- ☑ Families are part of the assessment process, including providing input to teachers/caregivers and sharing of results.

Language and Literacy Assessment

> Assessment allows teachers and parents to see how a child is progressing and helps teachers to prepare instruction appropriate for their students' ever-changing language development and literacy needs. (Enz & Morrow, 2009, p. 2)

All teachers/caregivers strive to create the optimal learning environment for all children entrusted to them. An essential part of doing this is to use assessments to gain insight into children's interests, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Assessment is best defined as involving "the multiple steps of collecting data on a child's development and learning, determining its significance in light of the program goals and objectives, incorporating the information into planning for individuals and programs, and communicating the findings to parents and other involved parties" (Hills, 1992, p. 43).

The principles and philosophies that are applied to the assessment of young children are part of a continuum that begins at birth and extends through age six into elementary school. Assessment of skills learned by young children must align to expected developmental milestones and then change, as appropriate, to support children as they grow and develop. All children learn by doing, but infants and toddlers exhibit this through their actions rather than through language or writing. Children's growth is more rapid and uneven from birth to preschool than at any other period of development so it becomes difficult and challenging to capture children's skills and abilities, particularly if it must be done at a singular point in time (Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000).

Generally, teachers/caregivers individually assess all domains of development to ensure that each child attains appropriate milestones and that the curriculum is serving the child's learning needs. It is also critical to examine children's developing early language and literacy skills. Research has consistently demonstrated that deficits in language and literacy skills are associated with learning difficulties in the elementary years (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). By assessing language and literacy in the preschool years, issues and challenges can be addressed to ensure children have all the foundational skills necessary for school success.

Assessment has tremendous value for both the teacher/caregiver and the family. First, information from assessments allows teachers/caregivers to provide an optimal learning environment for all children. Assessment data can provide information about children's interests and learning that teachers/caregivers can use to plan lessons and experiences that target children's curiosity and abilities, particularly as these opportunities relate to language and literacy. Using assessment affords teachers/caregivers a greater understanding of individual learning needs and how to best differentiate instruction. Second, assessments inform teachers/caregivers of children's progress toward meeting the language and literacy goals that are critical for school success. Third, assessment enables early detection of learning differences and/or disabilities. Instruction must be differentiated so all children benefit. **One size does not fit all.** Children use all of their senses to learn, but may have preferred modalities. Furthermore, children who struggle in the elementary years may have an

undiagnosed learning disability and through early childhood assessments, this disability may be detected and addressed. Finally, assessment often enlightens families and they gain insight into their children's abilities, interests, and developmental level. Families are able to use this information to make important educational decisions for their children.

The principles and purposes for assessment are similar whether assessment addresses children's overall development or a specific learning domain such as language and literacy. Throughout this chapter, assessment procedures and instruments are discussed through the lens of language and literacy development. When language and literacy development, concepts, and skills are assessed and the findings are used to inform instruction, children benefit.

Assessment Guidelines and Purposes

Recommended practices in assessment for young children are guided by specific professional standards and position statements established by national organizations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association for Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children; the National Association of School Psychologists, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (2006); and the National Education Goals Panel (1998) . The following guidelines inform decisions when planning assessment for children from birth to Age 5:

- Assessment data are used to understand and improve learning.
- Data collection is ongoing and authentic, occurring within the child's daily contexts, including interactions with materials, adults, and other children.
- Assessment instruments are used appropriately, for the purpose specified.
- Assessments are based on scientific research, child development, early learning standards, and curriculum goals for all domains of learning (social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical).

- Assessments are age-appropriate in both content and the method of data collection.
- Assessments should be linguistically appropriate, recognizing that to some extent all assessments are measures of language.
- Staff and families are knowledgeable about the assessments administered and the data collection techniques.
- Families are a valued source for assessment information and are provided suggestions for working with their children based on the findings.

These guidelines support appropriate assessment practices and ensure accurate and reliable data collection. Through appropriate assessment practices, a teacher or caregiver gains insight about children's interests and development. This information assists teachers as they plan lessons and organize their classrooms to provide rich learning environments for children.

Snow and Van Hammel (2008) state that the key dimensions for decisions about assessment are condensed into three basic questions of *Why? What?* and *How?*. In essence: *Why are we assessing? What are we assessing?* and *How do we conduct the assessments?* Recently, Snow and Oh (2011) added the fourth question "*Who is being assessed?*" The answer to this question enables teachers to make an appropriate match between the assessment instrument and the characteristics of the population being assessed. For example, assessment decisions will vary if children are monolingual versus bilingual or if children are 2 years of age versus 4 years of age.

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes, each influencing the other. Only through assessment is a teacher able to determine if children are learning and, in turn, whether changes are needed to improve teaching and learning. (Roberts, Kellough, & Moore, 2005). The first step is to clearly understand the purposes for assessment and to select an assessment instrument that is appropriate for the children who will be assessed. Data results provide information about the progress of children's learning, as well as the effectiveness of instruction. Thus, the findings are dependent on the

selection of the assessment instrument. The table below provides a list of purposes and questions to assist teachers in selecting appropriate assessment tools.

TABLE 1: *Language and Literacy Assessment Purposes and Clarifying Questions*

Purpose	Questions
Planning for Instruction	1. What are the child's strengths, needs, and learning processes? 2. What are the child's interests? 3. What are the skill levels of children in language? In literacy? 4. How can instruction be responsive and appropriate to each child's abilities? 5. Are developmental milestones being met, and if not, what can be adapted in the curriculum? 6. What gaps exist between the child and the curriculum? What can be modified to minimize this gap?
Reflecting on teaching	1. How well is classroom instruction working? 2. How can I improve my instructional practice?
Identifying children with special needs	1. What is needed for the program to meet the child's needs? 2. Is further intervention necessary?
Communicating with families	1. Do families understand the assessment procedures? 2. Do families understand the assessment results? 3. Do families know what to do at home to support their children's language development and literacy learning? 4. Do families contribute information about their child's home learning experience?

Table 1 Source: (Hills, 1992)

Methods of Assessment

An assessment system or plan for obtaining data about children's learning styles, abilities, and interests involve a multi-source approach. An assessment system may

include the following: (1) ongoing observations of children that use checklists and anecdotal records, (2) student work samples and portfolios, and (3) formal assessment measures that may be part of the literacy program.

Observation assessment must be authentic, occurring during daily learning experiences, play activities, and care routines to record and describe the development and learning of children. Children are rapidly changing and growing and by engaging in authentic, observational assessments, it is easier for the teacher or caregiver to monitor and improve children's learning, as well as their own teaching. The observations provide immediate feedback about the child's development and literacy progress which then informs the teacher or caregiver about how to adapt the curriculum and instruction to meet the child's needs. Further, by noticing differences in children's abilities, teachers or caregivers can engage in differentiated instruction to target and scaffold each child's learning. Student **work samples** also provide ongoing evidence of learning progress and development. Teachers collect sample of children's drawings and other work which is dated and placed in a folder or portfolio. Learning growth is evident when the collected materials are reviewed by teachers/caregivers and families. Observation data and work samples are types of **formative assessment**. This is the most common assessment for young children.

Key term:

Formative Assessment: Ongoing assessment that informs instruction.

Formative assessments document children's individual growth and development, focusing on the individual child. The defining characteristic of effective formative assessment is its interactive or cyclical nature (Sadler, 1988; Wright, 2009). Assessment should not be a single occurrence, but an ongoing process. The Indiana *Early Childhood ISTAR-KR Assessment Handbook* (2010) states that assessment "is the process of gathering information from several sources of evidence, organizing the evidence, and finally interpreting the evidence, using it to inform instruction and monitor child progress" (page 17). This process should repeat itself as teachers and caregivers work with children.

Based loosely on Jones' (2003) 5-stage literacy documentation cycle, each step describes a process where the teacher collects and examines data. Teachers or caregivers follow the cycle of data collection to continually monitor children's learning. Each step in the cycle is part of a system where assessment is integral to the teaching and learning process (Jones, 2003; Indiana DOE, 2010). The steps of a Formative Assessment Cycle are depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Formative Assessment Cycle.

This figure illustrates the 5 steps of the Formative Assessment Cycle.

Step1: Identify Goals

The teacher or caregiver, working with the school principal or facility director, clarifies the purpose of the assessment, determines which goals are being targeted, and identifies the evidence of learning.

- What evidence of learning will indicate that children have mastered the learning goals?

Step 2: Collect Data

This step includes planning and collecting multiple sources of data, including observations, checklists, audio and videotapes, portfolios, records of children's conversations and drawings, and other informal techniques.

Step 3: Examine Data

A thorough and reflective examination of the data by the teacher or caregiver, as well as the school principal or center director, is scheduled to determine each child's strengths and challenges and to establish if progress is being made toward the identified learning goals. Teachers and caregivers might ask themselves the following questions:

- "Is my instructional practice working for all children?"
- "What instructional changes do I need to make or what other learning opportunities can I develop so every child meets his/her learning goals?"

Step 4: Revise Instruction/Implement

This important step is where adaptations are made to the curriculum and then implemented based on the findings from the data.

Step 5: Evaluate new instruction plan

The teacher or caregiver determines if the adaptations made to the curriculum resulted in learning success and if other modifications need to be made. <u>The cycle then repeats itself</u>.

One aspect of formative assessment is **progress monitoring**, which is the measure of children's progress toward meeting a particular goal. Progress monitoring can vary in frequency depending on the learning growth of individual children. Teachers may ask: "Is this child making adequate progress toward the goal(s) or is the child in need of more intervention to achieve age-appropriate outcomes in language and literacy?" If children are at high-risk and are achieving below learning expectations,

progress monitoring should occur weekly to every two weeks. Table 2, below, outlines a progress monitoring schedule similar to that found in the *Indiana Reading Framework* (2011).

TABLE 2: *Progress Monitoring Schedule*

Level of Need/Risk	Skill Level	Frequency of Progress Monitoring
Low Risk	Meeting or exceeding age-level goals	Several times a year
Moderate Risk	Somewhat below age-level expectations	Once to two times per month
High Risk	Well below age-level expectations	Once a week or every two weeks

Table 2 Source: (IDOE, 2011)

Summative assessments, on the other hand, are often formal instruments that provide a *snapshot* of what a child knows and is able to do. These assessments are typically administered once or twice a year. Both types of assessments, formative and summative, are necessary to provide teachers/caregivers, principals/center directors, and families with the evidence needed to determine if children are learning and making appropriate progress. Summative assessments usually measure progress against typical development; measuring specific learning goals, such as literacy or math skills. Summative assessments provide information about a child's achievement of these goals and may support findings from formative assessments. The methods and purposes for each type of assessment are distinct, but ultimately they should be used as part of an integrated

Key term:

Summative Assessment: An indicator of what children have learned over time -- usually at the end of the year.

program that includes an assessment system, standards-aligned curriculum, and evidence-based instruction (Johnson & Jenkins, 2009).

Whereas formative assessments inform curriculum and instruction, summative assessments determine if the learning outcomes of children have been met. This type of assessment summarizes the learning after instruction and is often labeled as "high stakes testing" (American Educational Research Association, 2000). Two types of summative assessment are:

1. Criterion-referenced: instruments that test a child's mastery toward a particular content or pre-set benchmark.

2. Norm-Referenced: instruments that are designed to compare one group of students against another and are administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner (standardized).

Enz and Morrow (2009) discuss concerns associated with standardized testing as it relates to language and literacy development. The content of these tests often do not assess emergent literacy skills, such as oral language or prior knowledge. Teachers/caregivers, principals and center directors must carefully review standardized tests before administering these assessments to young children to determine if they are developmentally appropriate and if they will provide the data needed to assess children's progress, instructional effectiveness, or program outcomes.

Developing an Assessment Plan

School leaders and teachers, as well as center directors and caregivers should design a systematic plan to determine children's progress that includes multiple measures of assessment. A written plan will provide clear expectations and procedures for assessing language and literacy skill development.

Key term:

Assessment Audit refers to an evaluation of present data collection procedures and how the results are used to inform instructional practice.

Prior to developing an Assessment Plan, it is useful to perform an **assessment audit** to identify what

is currently being used to assess children's learning. Through this audit, instructional leaders can determine if the assessments match the purpose or goals of the curriculum; if any assessments currently being used are unnecessary or redundant; and if the assessments meet the learning needs of the children in the program. In the end, the audit will help develop a focused and streamlined assessment plan.

Teachers/caregivers, with the support of leadership, need to design a plan that matches the goals of the Birth to Age 5 program (see the *Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Report for Kindergarten Readiness* (ISTAR-KR) *Handbook* (IDOE, 2010) for state early childhood learning goals. The plan includes both formative and summative measures for ongoing and outcome-based assessment. A significant purpose of the assessment plan is to ensure that progress monitoring is part of the instructional program so teachers/ caregivers monitor children's learning and adjust instruction when needed. According to the National Association for the Education for Young Children's guidance for accreditation (NAEYC; 2010), the assessment plan* is expected to contain the following principles and/or information:

- Assessment information is used to support children's learning and is collected through a variety of methods, including observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests (formal assessments).
- A description of the purpose, procedures, and use of the results.
- An understanding that there are multiple purposes, such as, identifying children's interests and needs, progress monitoring, informing the curriculum, diagnosing the need for more in-depth assessments, and communicating with families.
- Methods that are sensitive to culture, home language, and developmental disabilities.
- Multi-domain assessments and additional methods to target specific language and literacy skills.

* See Appendix A for a sample child assessment plan based on the NAEYC criteria.

- Use of summative measures (i.e., norm-referenced or formal instruments) to gauge program outcomes. However, these summative measures are combined with informal, naturalistic methods.
- Methods for effectively communicating with families.

Role of the Teacher/Caregiver

The assessment plan must be comprehensive and aligned to the curriculum. The concepts and skills for language development and emergent literacy found in the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5* (IDOE, 2006) will assist assessment planners as they develop learning goals, lesson plans, and instructional activities. The identified learning goals will guide teachers/caregivers as they determine what to assess and where to focus instructional time so children are prepared for kindergarten and beyond. The teacher/caregiver observes and records children as they are engaged in learning activities and language interactions, using observation templates and checklists. Samples of children's work are gathered in individual portfolios to provide evidence of progress throughout the school year. See the ISTAR-KR Handbook for examples (IDOE, 2010).

Gathering assessment information is only the first step toward determining if developmental milestones and/or children's learning goals are met. Once the data are collected it is necessary to analyze and interpret the results. Typically, standardized instruments require a person with adequate training to administer the assessment and specialized knowledge to **analyze**, interpret, and report the results. Informal assessments, however, can be analyzed and interpreted by the teacher/caregiver because the data collection tools are designed to match curriculum goals and the learning goals.

Key term:

Analyze: to examine data systematically by separating the findings into parts and studying how the parts relate.

The assessment results also help the teachers/caregivers to reflect upon their instruction as it relates to children's learning. If the assessment demonstrates that children are learning, then they should move on to new material. On the other hand, if

the assessments indicate that children are not learning the expected content, then they must reconsider what is being taught and the method of instruction (Enz & Morrow, 2009). The teachers/caregivers may also notice that only particular children are struggling with the content and based on this knowledge, they should differentiate the instruction to meet individual development and skill levels. The progress monitoring cycle repeats itself as teachers/caregivers continually examine and reflect upon the assessment results, and then determine if changes need to be made to the curriculum and/or instruction to ensure children are learning the foundational skills of language and literacy. By engaging in differentiated instruction, teachers/caregivers use assessment information proactively to help design and implement the best learning opportunities for children.

Role of the Center Director or School Principal

Curriculum, assessment, and instruction must be aligned in order to establish an effective assessment system that informs practice and meets the learning needs of all children. Effective center and school leaders build a shared vision that addresses the purposes for assessment and how it should be implemented. A number of elements are important when designing and implementing an efficient assessment system (Jones, 2003). First, the individual learning goals need to be clearly defined and understood by the leaders, teachers/caregivers, paraprofessionals, and families. If the goals are not understood, then unnecessary assessment of children often occurs. Second, leadership must design the daily schedule to provide teachers/caregivers adequate time to collect and interpret the data, as well as to reflect and adapt curriculum so instruction meets children's learning needs. Third, appropriate professional development that ensures an understanding of valid data collection and the application of the findings to instructional practice is crucial.

Important Point

Four Essential Questions

1. ***Why*** are we assessing?
2. ***What*** are we assessing?
3. ***Who*** are we assessing?
4. ***How*** are we assessing?

(Snow & Oh, 2011)

Professional development should be differentiated to meet the individual learning needs of the staff. Teachers/caregivers need both breadth and depth of assessment

knowledge so they are able to implement a systematic assessment plan and answer the questions: *Why? What? Who?* and *How?* (Snow & Van Hemel, 2008; Snow & Oh, 2011).

Role of Families

To understand children's development and the learning progress, families, teachers/caregivers, and leadership need to work together as a team. Because every child and every family is unique, the assessment of infants', toddlers', or preschoolers' should be planned with children and families in mind. Although they want to be involved, many families lack an understanding of the processes of assessment and what is expected and appropriate.

Generally, families need an explanation of the assessment process, an understanding of the assessment tool, an explanation of the results, and resources so that they continue to be involved. Families are also crucial to the data collection process because they are data informants, providing teachers/caregivers with information about their child's behaviors and activities at home, such as developmental milestones and preferred learning styles. By engaging families in the assessment process, a number of positive outcomes will occur. Families will benefit from partnering with teachers/caregivers by:

- Sharpening their own observation skills,
- Recognizing new abilities in their child, and
- Learning the stages of appropriate development.

Early Childhood Assessment Instruments

The *Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Report for Kindergarten Readiness* (ISTAR-KR; www.doe.in.gov/assessment) is a tool available without cost to all public and private early childhood providers to assess children's overall development. One section, English/Language Arts, focuses on children's language and literacy development. The ISTAR-KR Handbook (Indiana DOE, 2010) provides valuable information to the teacher about how to gather data. In particular, three

chapters provide information that are applicable to any type of formative assessment: (1) Ongoing Assessment: Observation and Documentation, (2) Using ISTAR-KR Data to Improve Planning and Expected Outcomes, and (3) Adjusting the Curriculum.

In brief, the ISTAR-KR is a rating tool that is comprised of 30 behaviors that represent developmental skills of children ranging from 4 months to 6 years of age. In particular, the two areas of Mathematics and English/Language Arts are aligned with the Kindergarten Common Core State Standards, which serve as Indiana's Academic Standards. Scores on these two scales represent a child's skill/age level "on the assessment data compared to typically developing same-aged peers" (p. 10). The behavior competencies on the ISTAR-KR were derived from Indiana's Early Learning Standards, the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children, Birth to Age 5* (2006). The ISTAR-KR is completed when a child enters a program, annually at the child's birthday, and when the child exits the program. This schedule is the minimum expected by the State of Indiana, but ongoing progress monitoring is critical for informing instruction to meet the needs of all children.

The chapter, Ongoing Assessments: Observations and Documentation, in the ISTAR-KR Handbook (IDOE, 2010) outlines step-by-step procedures for engaging in child observations from determining what to observe, how to collect the information, and what to do with the information. Once the data are collected, teachers/caregivers complete matrices to help interpret the data. For additional and more detailed information, teachers/caregivers can use the *ISTAR-KR Progress Monitoring Instrument* with a child. The *Progress Monitoring Instrument* is a Detailed/Second Level assessment "that monitors a child's progress on performance indicators through incremental descriptive behavior examples of the next performance expectation of a child's learning" (pp. 20-21). The instrument contains rubric criteria that rates children's behavior within a range: introduced, emerging, developing, ongoing, demonstrated, and applied.

There are numerous commercial early childhood assessment instruments available. Snow and Oh (2011) provide a brief review of a number of instruments that assess language and literacy skills and an explanation of the scores generated for those skills.

TABLE 3: *Assessment Instruments and Measurements of Language and Literacy*

Domain	Language/Literacy Domain(s)	
Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum	Head Start Outcomes Framework	
Child Observation Record (for both infants and toddlers and preschoolers)	1. Phonological Awareness 2. Concepts about Print 3. Alphabetic Principle 4. Comprehension	
Developmental Assessment of Young Children (birth to 6 years)	Communication subscale: 1. Receptive and expressive vocabulary 2. Verbal and nonverbal expressions	
ECHO Early Childhood Observation System (Pre-K to grade 2)	1. Letter knowledge/phonics 2. Oral language and vocabulary 3. Comprehension 4. Emergent writing/writing 5. Print awareness/concepts of print	
The Early Learning Accomplishment Profile (birth to 3) and The Learning Accomplishment Profile-3 (LAP-3) (preschool)	1. Language/pre-literacy (ELAP) 2. Language/prewriting (LAP-3)	
Galileo Pre-K	1. Listening and understanding 2. Speaking and communicating 3. Phonological awareness 4. Book knowledge and appreciation 5. Print awareness and concepts 6. Early reading and writing 7. Alphabet knowledge	
The Ounce Scale (birth to 3) and the Work Sampling System (pre-K to grade 6)	(The Ounce Scale) 1. Understanding 2. Communicating	(Work Sampling System) 1. Listening 2. Speaking 3. Reading 4. Writing

Table 3

Classroom Literacy Environment

The classroom for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers needs to be a nurturing environment. The physical and emotional surroundings provide the setting for teachers/caregivers to engage in authentic assessments as children are engaged in play and learning activities. Teacher/caregivers often focus their attention on lesson planning not realizing that the physical arrangement of the classroom plays an equal part in contributing to how children learn language and literacy (Enz & Morrow, 2009). Research indicates that children who attend high-quality programs not only engage in more complex activities with peers and materials, but also score higher on standardized measures of school readiness (Pianta, 2004).

Language and literacy rich classrooms typically have word walls, morning meeting areas with functional print (calendars, weather chart, helper chart, etc.), and classroom labels, and instructional charts (e.g., directions, songs, poetry). Furthermore, each of the activity centers is stocked with engaging materials that enhance opportunities for children to learn through play and dialogue about what they are doing. A substantial quantity and variety of books and other print materials are available for children's use. Games provide practice in literacy skills such as word concentration, lotto, and puzzles; computer programs involve children in creating their own stories and activities. Classrooms with materials that are engaging to children provide opportunities for observing children's play, interactions, and learning, providing fertile ground for authentic data collection.

To ensure that the classroom environment supports language and literacy development, an assessment of the physical environment is important. Two such instruments are the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation* (ELLCO; Smith & Dickinson, 2002) and the *Classroom Literacy Environment Profile* (CLEP; Wolfersberger, Reutzel, Sudweeks, & Fawson, 2004). Each of these tools examines the "literacy richness" of the classroom. For an instrument that examines the global or overall quality of the environment, the *Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale* (ITERS; Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. M., 1990) or the Early *Childhood*

Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) are often used.

The ELLCO measures the quality of language and literacy experiences in classrooms by examining literacy practices and environmental supports. The ELLCO identifies instructional practices and supports that encourage children's early literacy and language development from preschool to elementary school (classrooms that serve 3-year olds to 8-year olds). The ELLCO is comprised of three interdependent observation components: (1) *Literacy Environment Checklist*, (2) *Classroom Observations and Teacher Interview*, and (3) *Literacy Activity Rating Scale*. The ELLCO is a comprehensive tool that examines dimensions of classroom environments related to student achievement in literacy.

The CLEP is another instrument that examines the "literacy richness" of the classroom. This tool provides and assessment of the quantity and organization of print materials and literacy materials available in the classroom, as well as spatial organization, and literacy interactions using print materials. The findings help refine and design classrooms to enhance literacy learning. See Table 4 (page 20) for a list of the key literacy elements measured with the ELLCO and the CLEP.

Another critical aspect of the classroom environment is the quality of interactions children have with their teachers/caregivers. Examples of classrooms with high-quality interactions include teachers who promote children's learning through scaffolding and support, establish episodes of joint attention with children, and offer appropriate questioning and feedback (La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004). The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS), developed by La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman (2004), examines the emotional and instructional climate of the classroom. This instrument has nine subscales to assess classroom quality in terms of emotional and instructional climate and quality of teacher-child interactions, including classroom management and instructional supports for learning. Because materials can be variable across early childhood programs, this instrument is unique because it examines the use and implementation of curriculum and materials. The CLASS examines what teachers do with the materials as opposed to what is available in the physical environment.

TABLE 4: *Environmental Rating Scales and Key Literacy Elements*

Instrument	Key Literacy Elements
Early Language and Learning Classroom Observation (ELLCO)	• Classroom structure • Curriculum • Language environment • Books and book reading opportunities • Print and early writing supports
Classroom Literacy Environment Profile (CLEP)	• Literacy related tools • Variety of text materials • Classroom organization • Child literacy product displays • Reference materials available • Forms of written communication • Writing utensils, writing surfaces • Technology

Table 4

Language and Literacy Assessments

Although early childhood providers may use an assessment system that measures global language and literacy skills or the literacy environment, some teachers/caregivers may be interested in pursuing more precise measures that target particular areas of children's language and literacy development. Many of these instruments fall within the more formal, standardized realm of assessment tools. To diagnose if a child is lacking a particular language and literacy skill, it is often necessary to move away from informal assessments, such as observational scales and checklists. Table 5 lists a number of formal or standardized instruments identified for assessing targeted skill areas of language and literacy (Enz & Morrow, 2009).

TABLE 5: *Language and Literacy Assessment Tools*

Domain:	Indicator:	Standardized Assessment Tools
Oral Language Development	Receptive & Expressive	• Preschool Language Scale 4 (PLS-4) • Test of Language Development (TOLD) • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -4 (PPVT-4) • Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2nd Ed. (EVT-2) • Oral Written Language Skills (OWLS)
Emergent Literacy Skills	Phonological Awareness	• Test of Phonological Awareness • Auditory Analysis Test • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Print Knowledge and Concepts of Print	• Concepts about Print • Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Test of Early Reading Ability, 3rd Ed. (TERA-3) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Alphabet Knowledge	• Early Literacy Skills Assessment (ELSA) • Test of Early Reading Ability, 3rd Ed. (TERA-3) • Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)
	Vocabulary	• Boehm Test of Basic Concepts, Preschool 3rd Ed. • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – 4 (PPVT-4) • Expressive Vocabulary Test, 2nd Ed. (EVT-2)
	Writing	• Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K)

Table 5

English Learners and Assessment

Early childhood programs are serving young children who are increasingly diverse in cultural background and language (Snow & Van Hemel, 2008). Unfortunately, there has not been a corresponding development of appropriate assessment instruments for English Learners. The predominant method is to assess all children in English, but by doing this, the teacher/caregiver ignores children's existing skills and abilities in their home language. Teachers/caregivers may also have difficulty knowing how to distinguish between language differences and language disorders since many of the characteristics of second language acquisition can easily be mistaken for language disorders. Finally, unresolved issues exist with language assessments that are currently in use (Espinoza & Lopez, 2007), including:

- Many of the current instruments are direct translations of English versions, which may compromise the validity of the instrument.
- The order in which the instrument items are organized may vary in difficulty from language to language.
- Words that are translated from English to Spanish, for example, may have different levels of exposure for young children.
- The normative samples may not include a representative number of minorities.

Ideally, a program should assess a child in both the home language and English, but this may not always be feasible if the teacher/caregiver does not speak or understand the home language. In light of this, high quality professional development can assist the teacher/caregiver to understand the variability of how children learn a second language and how to appropriately assess English Learners.

Professional Development

Teachers/caregivers and center directors/principals need an in-depth understanding of how a comprehensive assessment system contributes to a high-quality learning environment. Teachers/caregivers need to understand what role

assessment plays in planning learning activities for young children, as well as the protocols and procedures for administering the required assessments. Professional development focusing on assessment may include a number of the topics (See Table 6 below for a list of topics.)

TABLE 6: *Focus Areas for Professional Development: Assessment*

1. Child development as it relates to appropriate assessment practices
2. Elements of a high quality literacy environment
3. Knowledge of the *Indiana Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children birth to age 5*, focusing on language and literacy
4. Formative and summative assessment
5. Appropriate assessment measures
6. Appropriate use of informal and formal assessments
7. Analysis and application of data to guide curriculum and instructional decisions
8. How to assess English Learner children
9. Effective and appropriate communication with families about all aspects of assessment (purpose, administration, interpretation, implications, activities for the home, etc.)

Table 6

Although professional development provided to all teachers/caregiver may be useful in developing a knowledge base on assessment practices and strategies,

research indicates that teachers/caregivers who receive additional ongoing support and guidance through individualized coaching are more likely to learn and implement new instructional and assessment practices (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Differentiated professional development enables teachers/caregivers to deepen their understanding of the assessment process and to use data to plan appropriate instruction. Research indicates that following-up on professional development sessions with on-going, differentiated coaching is more effective in improving instructional practice than coursework or isolated one-day professional development sessions alone (Neuman & Wright, 2010). (See the chapter on Professional Development for additional information).

Summary

Early childhood assessment needs to be an integral part of all early learning classrooms. In particular, a focus on language and literacy development is necessary to ascertain if children are achieving the critical skills needed for later reading and school success. Early childhood classrooms need to combine formative and summative assessment methods and progress monitoring to obtain a complete picture of a child's development. Accurate data collection, meaningful professional development activities, supportive leadership, and a comprehensive assessment plan are essential for achieving success.

Appendix A

Sample Child Assessment Plan

✔	Criteria	Evidence
	A variety of methods are used to collect assessment information: ☐ Observations ☐ Checklists ☐ Rating scales ☐ Video/audio tapes ☐ Individually administered tests	
	A written plan exists describing the: ☐ Purpose of assessment ☐ Procedures (i.e., timeline, conditions for assessment) ☐ Use of assessment results ☐ Methods for involving and communicating with families	
	Written plan includes multiple purposes of assessment ☐ Progress Monitoring ☐ Improving the curriculum and adapting teaching methods and environment ☐ Program evaluation and improvement ☐ Diagnosing the need for more in-depth assessments ☐ Identifying children's interests and needs	
	Assessment methods are sensitive to culture, home language, and developmental disabilities	
	Assessments gather information in all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive, language and literacy, social-emotional, health, approaches to learning, and physical development.	
	Summative measures are used to gauge program outcomes and to make improvements.	
	Effective methods of communicating with families about: ☐ Gathering input about the child's development, behavior, and home language/ literacy use ☐ Planning and implementing classroom assessments ☐ Sharing and discussing classroom assessment results ☐ Suggesting at home activities to support growth in language and literacy	

(Adapted from the *Guidance to the NAEYC Accreditation Criteria, 2010)*

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

LEADERSHIP

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments				★		
Transition to Kindergarten				★		
State Leadership				★		

Guiding Principle:

Effective administrators, center directors, and school principals of early child care and education environments embrace the multiple roles of leadership as

they ensure safe and healthy environments, promote appropriate learning opportunities for all children, and monitor effective instructional practices that build language and literacy skills.

- ☑ Early childhood leaders are visionaries who set high expectations, create a common culture of excellence, and get results.
- ☑ Early childhood administrators, directors, and principals are instructional leaders who understand that the early learning years provide the best opportunity for closing the achievement gap.
- ☑ Early childhood leaders use scientifically-based research to support and supervise effective instructional practices that increase language and literacy learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- ☑ Early childhood leaders use a continuous improvement model and work with their staffs to achieve standards of quality that are higher than the minimum state licensing requirements, as defined by the Indiana *Paths to Quality.*
- ☑ Early childhood leaders strengthen the relationship between preschool and kindergarten to assure a smooth transition for children.

The Essence of Leadership

> *Effective leaders convey a vision and, through their example, expand others' view of what is possible. They set high expectations, create a strong sense of community, and get results. Leaders accomplish this both by what they do, as well as by who they are. In terms of tasks, good leaders enhance the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, create a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, hold the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and hold individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective results.*

(Elmore, 2000)

Early Childhood Leadership Today

This is an exciting and challenging time to be a leader of early childhood care and education. Throughout the past twenty years neuroscientists have studied the basis of learning. Findings indicate a connection between early brain function and success in school (Blair, 2002). **Scientific research** confirms that an infant is not born with a fully developed brain. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (NSCDC) states that a child's brain is "built over time" (2007, p. 1). As a result, the day to day experiences of early care and education will affect a child's developing brain function, especially in the areas of self-regulation, language, and literacy (Blair, Protzko, & Ursache, 2011). It is essential, therefore, that early childhood leaders establish nurturing environments and high quality educational programs for the children entrusted to their care.

High quality care and education for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is now a focus of interest and discussion from the United States Congress to local town meetings. Universal access to high quality preschool education is considered a significant step toward decreasing the **achievement gap** that is prevalent in elementary and secondary classrooms across the United States. Responsive early childhood care and education environments are in the midst of adapting to higher expectations. The traditional preschool model of childcare and school readiness has broadened to focus on evidence-based learning and intentional instruction of literacy and numeracy skills.. Early childhood leaders must determine and mediate how these new expectations influence all aspects of child development and learning.

Key terms:

Scientific research refers to rigorous studies that focus on problems that are tested using scientific methods, findings are peer-reviewed and published, and the results are replicated through additional experimentation.

Achievement Gap refers to the documented disparity of performance between diverse groups of students, especially when assessment is disaggregated by socioeconomic status, gender, ability, language, and race/ethnicity.

Before establishing *high quality* literacy programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, early childhood leaders must have a deep

understanding of child development, appropriate teaching practices, and possess the interpersonal skills to establish a common culture of excellence. This chapter of the *Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework* focuses on the critical aspects of early childhood leadership, highlighting the essential roles of visionary, instructional leader, and change agent.

Building High Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Literacy Programs: Birth to Age-5

> *Quality affects what children learn, how well they learn it, and what long-term benefits they derive from what they learn. All the positive outcomes attributed to early education come about only when children experience high-quality programming.* (Kostelnick & Grady, 2009)

High quality* early childhood programs do not just happen because the building is clean, there is an abundance of learning materials, classrooms have computers, or teachers are certified in early childhood education. These are all aspects of high quality programs, but alone and disjointed they do not create dynamic and caring early childhood learning environments. At the helm of a high quality early childhood program is an effective leader with the "right vision" of excellence.

A dynamic leader "attracts commitment and energizes people" (SEDL, 1993). With commitment and energy from staff members and families, the early childhood leader can begin to establish a common culture of excellence. The first step is to articulate the "**right vision**," one that is child centered, respectful of teachers, and reaches out to families. This common culture of excellence is the result of

Important Point

5 Characteristics of the "Right Vision"

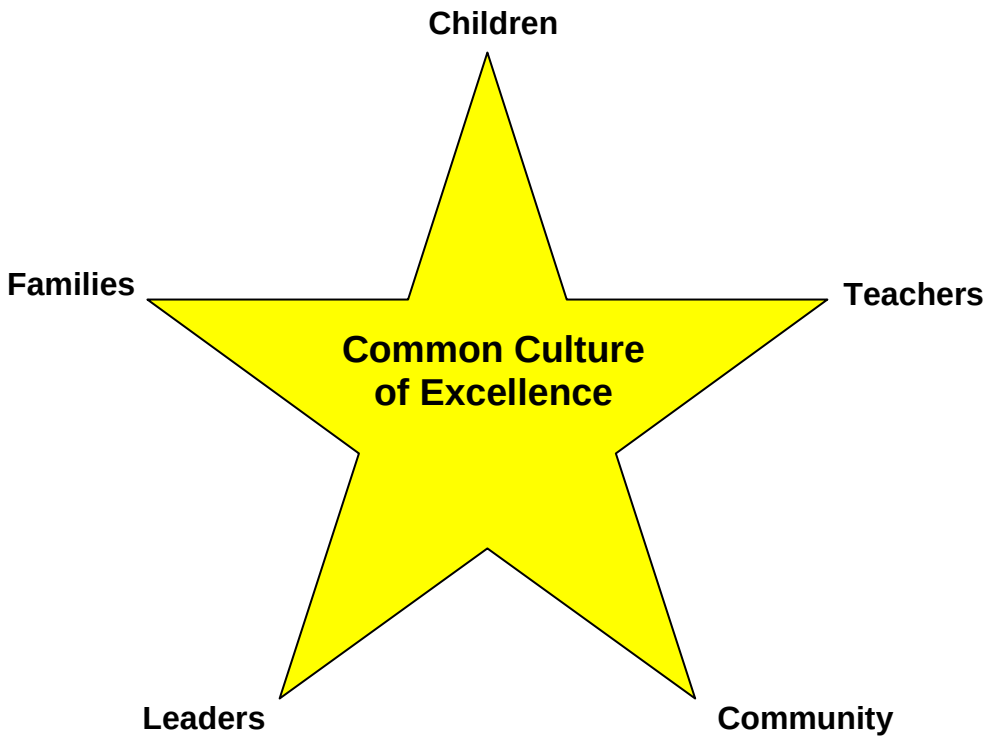
The "Right Vision" . . .

1. Attracts commitment and energizes people.
2. Creates meaning in the lives of teachers/ caregivers and families.
3. Establishes a common culture of excellence.
4. Bridges the present to the future.
5. Transcends the status quo.

(Adapted from SEDL, 1993)

*See Appendix A: Components of a High Quality Early Childhood Program

the values, beliefs, and traditions of the individuals who are part of the center or school, including the leader, teachers, caregivers, children, parents, community leaders, and governing boards of centers and schools (See Figure 1, below).



Source: Adapted from: Copple & Bredekamp (2009)

Figure 1: The Stakeholders of a Common Culture of Excellence

This figure illustrates the stakeholders that must work together to ensure learning and teaching excellence in early care and education.

The stakeholders of a *Common Culture of Excellence* answer these questions:

1. What is important to us?
2. What do we stand for?

3. How do we get along?
4. What is worth striving for in this environment?

Focus on the Whole Child

Effective leaders construct a shared vision of excellence with their staff and the families they serve. Fostering an inclusive culture and a climate of high expectations for children and staff, early childhood administrators, center directors, and principals lead by example. They build a cohesive team that focuses on the well-being and education of the **whole child**. All leadership decisions are made from the perspective of what is best for children. ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) proposes that educational leaders advocate the perspective of educating the *whole child*. The following tenets of a *whole child* approach to learning and teaching are adapted for Birth to Age 5 from the ASCD Whole Child Initiative (ASCD, 2011).

Key term:

Whole Child refers to a commitment to promote the development of children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

http://www.ascd.org/programs/The-Whole-Child/The-Whole-Child.aspx

- Each child learns in an intellectually stimulating environment that is physically and emotionally safe for children and adults.
- Each child is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- Each child receives instruction that is developmentally appropriate and personalized to meet individual differences, supported by qualified, caring adults.
- Each child will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Setting the Tone: The Learning and Teaching Climate

The center director or elementary principal has a strong influence on the emotional climate and culture of a center or school. The beliefs and values of the leader permeate the learning environment. To establish a culture of excellence in literacy, the director or principal must make learning and teaching a priority and clearly communicate the importance of preparing children to be lifelong readers and writers.

The **climate** of the center or school can be sensed when entering the building. This first impression is based on the friendliness of the staff and the cleanliness of the building, as well as how classrooms are arranged, whether children's work is displayed, the number and variety of books that are accessible to children, and the interaction between children and teachers. The emotional climate is an important part of the culture of a center or school. It is like a barometer that measures the attitudes, caring, and interactions of the individuals. The Center Director or School Principal sets the tone or the climate for the learning and teaching environment. The McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership (2011) cites the following components of high-quality early care and education environments:

Key term:

Climate refers to the collective personality of a school or center. The atmosphere or tone (climate) is characterized by the attitudes, social and professional interactions, culture, organization, and vision of the leader and staff.

- well-educated teachers, knowledgeable about child development and curriculum
- caring and compassionate staff, able to connect with children and families
- regular, reflective supervision of staff, providing continuous support for professional development
- clear educational goals and objectives with flexibility to address children's individual strengths and needs
- adequate and consistent staffing to ensure continuity in care

- a family focus, stressing involvement both within and beyond the center
- a comprehensive curriculum, geared to the developmental needs of young children
- systematic evaluation and benchmarking of progress to improve practice

. . . all depend on strong program leadership.

See Appendix B for the *Early Childhood Work Environment Survey: Short Form.*

Shared Vision for Birth to Age 5 Literacy Education

An effective early childhood leader not only has the *Right Vision,* but it is a vision of excellence that is shared by all stakeholders, this is especially true when considering the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of early literacy. It is well known that there are philosophical differences regarding what, how and when children should be taught language and literacy skills. For example, centers and schools may confront the following questions . . .

- How do teachers balance exploratory play with intentional instruction?
- What instructional materials are appropriate?
- What are the developmentally appropriate methods for differentiating learning experiences?
- Should preschoolers be required to know all the letters of the alphabet?
- Will a commercial literacy program increase instructional effectiveness and student learning?

These are important concerns that leaders of early care and education centers should discuss with staff, families, and other stakeholders. An essential element of leadership is to be sure that all members of the organization understand the literacy goals and to determine if everyone is moving forward in the same direction. Reaching

out to others through staff meetings, small group dialogue, classroom visits, and family interactions provide the leader with the opportunity to build a shared vision for literacy education. Table 1 (below) addresses important questions to guide Indiana leaders as they build a shared vision of literacy education for early care and education with staff, families, and stakeholders.

TABLE 1: *Building a Shared Vision of Literacy Education*

Questions to Consider when Developing a Shared Vision of Literacy Education

1. Do we have a shared philosophy of teaching literacy? (i.e., how? and what?)
2. Do we have a written curriculum that is cohesive and well-articulated?
3. Are the literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to the state early learning standards (Indiana Foundations)?
4. Who are our students? (e.g., demographic data)
5. What special characteristics and qualities of our students need to be addressed? How are we addressing them? (e.g., early intervention)
6. What assistance might be needed outside of the school (e.g., social services)?
7. What do families expect from our center/school?
8. How are we communicating with families?
9. What are our strengths in teaching literacy?
10. What do we need to improve?
11. Are we using the resources that are available to us from the Indiana Department of Education?
12. How will we continue to improve? Do we have a Plan of Action?

Table 1 Adapted from: Strickland & Riley-Ayers (2007)

Instructional Leadership

> *. . . any dedicated educator has the capability to become an exemplary instructional leader. All that one needs is a willingness to learn, accompanied by the commitment to follow through in day-to-day behavior.*
>
> (McEwan, 2002)

Instructional leadership reflects the decisions and actions made by a center director or elementary principal to promote excellence in learning and teaching. Early childhood leaders prioritize their supervisory role to support, guide, and monitor the instructional process. To do this effectively, center directors and principals are visible, frequently visiting classrooms to observe children learning. Focusing on children's growth across all developmental domains, instructional leaders are knowledgeable of scientifically-based curriculum, best instructional practices, and the potential for reliable and valid assessment data to propel improvement (See the Assessment chapter). Furthermore, effective instructional leaders are good communicators and clearly articulate teaching and learning expectations.

It is important to note that instructional leadership is not possible unless the early childhood leader is also an efficient manager. Center directors and elementary principals must manage budgets, coordinate scheduling, and administer the daily operations of the building. Most early childhood leaders are also responsible for security, discipline, and safe working conditions. Good building management is essential for instructional leadership; a chaotic childcare center or elementary school negates the opportunity for leaders to effectively guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Effective leaders balance the roles of building management and instructional leadership. This "balancing act" is often challenging when there are many tasks that compete for the leader's attention. The first step to creating a personal schedule that prioritizes instructional leadership is to consider the many management and instructional leadership tasks. Table 2 (see page 11) provides a task comparison of management and instructional leadership.

Table 2: *Task Comparison between Building Management and Instructional Leadership*

Building Management	Instructional Leadership
• Supervise building cleanliness and maintenance • Assure safety and security • Maintain an orderly environment, including student discipline • Manage budgets and resources • Develop effective schedules • Order materials and equipment • Update technology • Hire new staff • Evaluate staff • Organize professional learning and development • Complete required paperwork • Communicate with staff, families, and stakeholders	• Establish a shared vision of excellence • Maintain a positive climate for learning and teaching • Model professionalism, integrity, dedication, courtesy, and collegiality • Promote reading educational journals and books to continue to build knowledge of best practices and scientifically-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Analyze and use data for instructional decisions • Mentor new staff members • Supervise instruction: visit classroom daily (walk-throughs, coaching) • Promote lifelong learning • Monitor implementation of scientifically-based curriculum and new instructional practices • Identify instructional needs and differentiate professional development

Table 2

Instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning through formative supervision. Leaders are visible throughout the day, interacting with staff, children, families, and other stakeholders. Classroom visits are a priority for instructional leaders; they use ongoing dialogue about effective instructional practice and targeted coaching to promote professional growth and improve student learning. Supervision is not the same as evaluation. Supervision is formative; evaluation is summative. Evaluation is a judgment of teacher performance, including a written report, a required management task. On the other hand, supervision concentrates on improving the instructional process – one teacher/caregiver at a time. As a result, supervision needs to be differentiated to meet the various instructional needs of staff members.

Walk-throughs provide the opportunity to conduct formative supervision. The leader should schedule two or more walk-throughs every day. These classroom visits are brief, but frequent. They provide snapshots of teaching and learning. Numerous walk-throughs enable leaders to use the "snapshots" to determine patterns of instructional practice; a "photo album" that portrays the learning and teaching in each classroom. Leaders should always provide feedback to the caregiver/teacher. This can be an informal dialogue about what was observed or more formal support, such as instructional coaching. The ultimate goal of the walk-through is to improve children's learning.

Key term:

A **walk-through** is an instructional leadership strategy that provides opportunities for on-going, differentiated supervision. A walk-through is a brief classroom visit (5 to 15 minutes). During the visit the leader is able to observe patterns of learning and teaching. After visiting the classroom, the instructional leaders should provide feedback to the teacher or caregiver.

See Appendix C for a sample Literacy Walk-Through protocol.

Literacy "Look Fors" - an Early Childhood Leadership Perspective:

As an instructional leader in early care and learning environments, what should center directors or principals see when they visit classrooms? What is effective practice at the infant, toddler, and preschool levels? The answers to these questions begin with the BIG picture, the characteristics of an effective early childhood program. At a minimum, early childhood programs should have the following basics:

1. Identified learning processes – an understanding of how children learn

2. Safe and Nurturing environment – the learning context

3. Written curriculum – a plan that clearly states what children are expected to learn

4. Instructional practices – evidence-based teaching methods and materials

5. Assessment plan – identification of what children have learned and what they need to learn, including what adjustments are needed

To establish and maintain the "basics," and move toward a culture of excellence, the leader must be a dynamic and lifelong learner. As the "learning leader" of the center or school, it is important for the director or principal to continually "grow" as an instructional leader and supervisor. Thus, center directors or school principals should have personal learning goals that include increasing their knowledge of child development, instructional practice, and effective supervision. This is especially important when the focus of instruction is increasing children's language development and literacy skills.

Research by Robert Pianta (2004) and colleagues at the University of Virginia shows that many preschool teachers provide children with emotional support, motivate children to participate in classroom activities, and build children's social skills, but the learning tasks they offer often lack challenge, creativity, and authenticity. The

importance of nurturing emotional and social growth cannot be underestimated; however, the developing brains of young children also must be stimulated. Children need learning tasks that provide them with opportunities to solve problems, tap their imaginations, and become physically involved in learning. It is the nexus of nurturance and learning that is the key to advancing children's cognitive development and preparing them to be readers and writers.

So, we return to the question: What should *leaders of learning* see when they observe classroom literacy environments, learning, and teaching? What instructional practices foster language development and literacy skills? The list below delineates *Literacy "Look Fors."* It provides an initial guide for Walk-Throughs that focus on emergent literacy learning, imagination, and thinking.

Teaching and Learning Literacy *"Look Fors"* - Birth to Age 5

Literacy Classroom Environment:

- Teachers/caregivers are responsive, enthusiastic, and caring.
- Children's voices are heard – talking, laughing, and singing.
- The classroom is organized and has designated areas for large group instruction, small group discussion, and one-on-one conferences.
- The toddler and preschool classrooms have activity centers (big blocks, easel painting, writing center, listening center, housekeeping corner, dramatic play center, etc.).
- There is an abundance of books in the classroom that are easily accessible to the children.
- The classroom has a variety of interesting learning materials; including a "discovery" table with engaging items that attract the interest of children. These hands-on materials are related to classroom units of study or themes.
- Children's work (drawings, paintings, emergent writing activities) is displayed on walls and bulletin boards.

- The toddler and preschool classroom environments are “print rich;” there are classroom labels, appropriate word walls, charts, lists, a *morning message*, etc.

Literacy Learning:

- Children are actively engaged in playful learning experiences; they are talking to adults and other children.
- Children participate in shared reading lessons at least twice each day.
- Children show an interest in books and print.
- Children “read” books (infants may chew on books, toddlers will look at the pictures on the cover and/or back of books, preschoolers will page through books looking at pictures and print).
- Children “write” throughout the day (toddlers will scribble; preschoolers may draw pictures and/or write random letters).

Literacy Teaching:

- Teachers/caregivers scaffold and expand children’s language during conversations and discussions; building their vocabularies and an understanding of grammar.
- Teachers/caregivers provide intentional instruction to develop children’s phonological awareness.
- Teachers/caregivers provide intentional instruction to build children’s conceptual understanding of print and book concepts.
- Teachers/caregivers use a gradual release of responsibility model to teach. (“I Do – We Do – You Do”)
- Teachers/caregivers systematically plan for literacy instruction. Plans are written with alignment to the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children - Birth to Age 5* and the center/school literacy goals.
- Teachers/caregivers differentiate instruction based on children’s learning needs.
- Teachers/caregivers use assessment data to plan instruction.

- Teachers/caregivers follow the lead of children with regard to pacing, use of instructional materials, etc.
- Teachers/caregivers scaffold children's attempts to try new words and literacy activities, building competence and confidence. Source: Schickedanz (1999)

The following *"What does it LOOK like?"* boxes provide a quick reference for literacy behaviors at the Birth to Age 3 and the Age 3 to 5 levels.

What does it LOOK like?

Literacy Leadership "Look-Fors: Birth to Age 3

Book Handling Behaviors

Behaviors related to a child's physical manipulation or handling of books, such as page turning and chewing.

Looking and Recognizing

Behaviors related to how children pay attention to and interact with pictures in books, such as gazing at pictures or laughing at a favorite picture.

Behaviors that show recognition of and a beginning understanding of pictures in books, such as pointing to pictures of familiar objects.

Picture and Story Comprehension

Behaviors that show a child's understanding of pictures and events in a book. (e.g., imitating an action seen in a picture or talking about the events depicted in a story)

Story-Reading Behaviors

Behaviors that include children's verbal interactions with books and their increasing understanding of print in books, such as babbling in imitation of reading or running fingers along printed words.

What does it LOOK like?

Literacy Leadership "Look-Fors: Ages 3 to 5

Concepts of Print and Print Knowledge

Behaviors that indicate children know that it is the print that is read when an individual reads a story.

Behaviors that show children recognize print in the environment.

Phonological Awareness

Behaviors that demonstrate children are able to hear individual sounds in language (phonemes) and manipulate the sounds (e.g., alliteration, rhyme, blending and segmenting sounds).

Oral Language and Vocabulary

Behaviors that exhibit children's attempts to use new words and an interest in words (word consciousness).

Alphabet Knowledge

Behaviors that demonstrate children are learning the letters of the alphabet.

Listening Skills

Behaviors that demonstrate children's ability to understand and follow oral directions.

Picture and Story Comprehension

Behaviors that confirm that children are comprehending stories that are read to them (e.g., retelling, placing story pictures in the correct sequence).

Behaviors that suggest children are able to connect events in stories to their own lives.

Behaviors that indicate children comprehend stories by asking and responding to questions.

Story-Reading Behaviors

Behaviors that indicate children are interested in books and reading.

Writing

Behaviors that indicate children understand that different text structure is used for different functions of writing (grocery lists, personal letters, story writing, newspapers, menus, etc.)

Curriculum Leadership

The most effective instruction will not result in learning excellence if the curriculum is not robust. High quality teaching of trivia does not produce children who are proficient readers and writers. Curriculum for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must be " . . . thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive . . . " (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003, p. 1) and it must be based on scientific evidence of what works. The purpose of curriculum is to delineate WHAT teachers should teach. Early childhood leaders and teachers are surrounded with information and competing agendas; they must make responsible choices that advance children's learning. The hours spent with children must be used wisely. These early years provide the best hope for closing the achievement gap and this is dependent on effective teaching <u>and</u> well-designed curriculum (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)

As instructional leaders, Indiana center directors and principals must ensure that teachers/caregivers understand the literacy learning goals and implement the curriculum with fidelity. Fidelity does not mean rigidity; it is teaching with continuity and the flexibility to meet the learning needs of all children. The following **indicators** for effective curriculum promote positive learning outcomes for children (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003):

1. The curriculum is challenging and uses developmentally appropriate content; a "backward" design (i.e., beginning with the end in mind) is used to develop curriculum.

2. The curriculum goals are clear and shared by all.

3. The curriculum is evidence-based.

4. The curriculum is implemented using investigative play, and focused, intentional teaching.

5. The curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences.

6. The curriculum is comprehensive and it is based upon the *Foundations to the Indiana Academic Standards for Children - Birth to Age 5.*

The literacy curriculum should be dynamic. As scientific findings brings new insights to how children learn to read and write, the curriculum should be modified, updated, or rewritten. The leader should always be aware of the most recent research-based recommendations for improving instructional practice. See Appendix D for reflective and analytical questions to help early childhood leaders, staff, and other stakeholders evaluate the quality of the present literacy curriculum or one that is in the early stages of design.

Leading at a Time of Change

Policy, politics, and power are transforming early childhood education. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California at Berkeley underscores the need for early childhood leaders who are *intentional change agents*. These are leaders who understand the development and learning of young children and are effective advocates at the "tables where decisions that shape the quality and availability of services are made" (CSCCE, 2010, p. 1).

Early childhood leaders who are *intentional change agents* use their knowledge, influence, and power to insure that local, state, and federal policies promote appropriate care and education for young children. These leaders are committed to improving

Important Point

The Three P's: Policy,Politics, and Power

(adapted from CSCCE, 2010)

Policy: A course of action selected from among alternatives, which guides and determines decisions and practices. Policy may refer to actions of governments and of public and/or private organizations.

Politics: Competition among interest groups or individuals for power or leadership in government or other groups.

Power: The capacity to affect the outcomes for oneself, others, and the environment.

outcomes for children and advocate for high quality early childhood care and education at all levels of governance, from their own centers and schools to the agencies of state and federal government. Leaders who are intentional change agents have the following attributes:

1. Articulate learning and teaching goals: Effective leaders of change construct a shared vision with their staff, families, and the community. These leaders clearly articulate, energetically promote and continuously support the goals to increase children's healthy development and learning achievement.

2. Believe change is possible: Effective leaders believe they can guide their staffs to a higher level of excellence. If the leader does not believe change is possible, positive reform is unlikely to occur. When leaders are ambivalent to change, the result is often resistance and stagnation among the staff members.

3. Take Calculated Risks: Effective leaders are not foolhardy, but they know that change does not occur without being proactive and taking some risks. Change agents study the problems, research options, and discuss possible solutions with staff and stakeholders before launching new ideas and practices. Change agents are flexible if faced with barriers or disappointment; they know that what may appear to be a failure is often a learning opportunity and perhaps an indication for a course correction.

4. Persist when reform is difficult: Change is a process that does not happen overnight; it takes time for meaningful reform to "take root." Effective leaders of change do not give up when faced with problems; they find a way to achieve the desired results.

5. Sustain enthusiasm: Effective leaders are motivators who inspire others to embrace the effort and hard work that change entails. These leaders celebrate the small successes along the way and encourage others to share the lead.

6. Maintain effective communication: Effective leaders are articulate and inspiring, however, they are also good listeners. Change cannot happen if others are not invested in the new idea, program, or direction. An exchange of ideas (i.e., listening and learning, as well as speaking and leading) is crucial to implementing and sustaining change.

7. Organize and systematically plan: Effective leaders of change are organized. They determine the stages and steps to implement new ideas and practices; then they scaffold change through careful planning and attention to the details.

8. Provide guided support: Effective leaders provide opportunities for their staff to learn new practices through professional development and coaching. They support and monitor change from the initial idea to implementation to sustainability. (Source: Hall & Hord, 2010; CSCCE, 2010, SEDL, 2010)

Leadership and the *Paths to QUALITY*

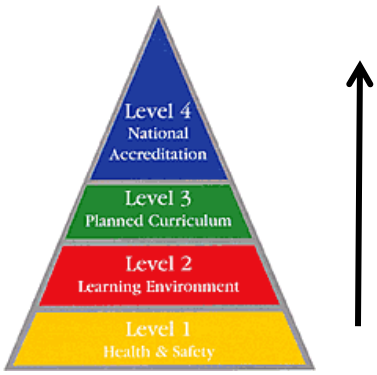
The state of Indiana requires all public schools to have a *School Improvement Plan.* Regardless of student data, teacher effectiveness, and family involvement, leaders of public schools in Indiana are required to submit a written plan each year by June 30. The *School Improvement Plan* outlines the goals for continuous improvement and how school leaders and teachers will implement the changes. Does the state of Indiana address continuous improvement at the early care and education level? Should early childhood programs spend time developing an improvement plan?

Indiana uses a systematic approach to rating the quality of early childhood care and education. Known as ***Paths to QUALITY***, the purpose of this rating system is to:

1. Increase the quality of care and education for children
2. Increase families' understanding and demand for higher quality care
3. Increase professional development of child care providers

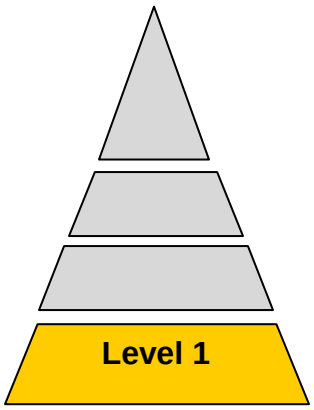
Source: Elicker, et. al. (2007), p. 5.

Early childhood leaders who are proactive and embrace continuous improvement use *Paths to QUALITY* to rate their program effectiveness and plan improvement strategies. The Indiana *Paths to QUALITY* identifies four levels of excellence. Each level specifies criteria that must be met to be awarded the designated level by the state. A triangle is used to graphically depict the following labels:



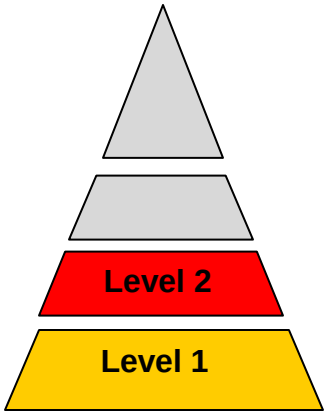
Level 4: National accreditation
Level 3: Planned Curriculum
Level 2: Learning Environment
Level 1: Health & Safety

The four levels of quality identified in the *Paths of Quality* can be compared to the trajectory of growth for an early childhood leader. At each level of quality, the early childhood leader plays a significant role: (1) manager, (2) builder of a positive learning and teaching climate and establishing a culture of excellence, (3) instructional leader, and (4) an intentional change agent and visionary.



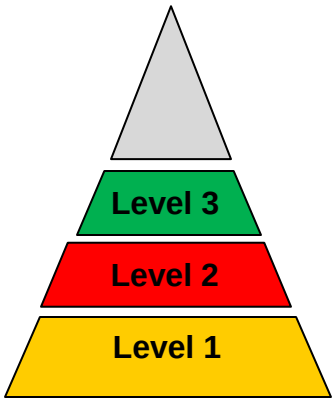
At **Level 1** the early childhood leader is a **manager** of the building. The criteria for a rating of Level 1 (Health & Safety) include:

- Managing safety concerns
- Making financial decisions
- Constructing schedules



At **Level 2** the early childhood leader is a **builder of climate and culture**; a leader who establishes a positive climate and a culture of learning that is based upon a shared vision of excellence. Criteria for a rating of Level 2 (Learning Environment) include:

- An environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and safe for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of all children.
- Activities and materials reflect the age, interests, and abilities of all children.
- Language and literacy skill development.
- Pertinent program information provided to families.
- Teachers/caregivers' staff development and training.
- Written philosophy and goals for children.

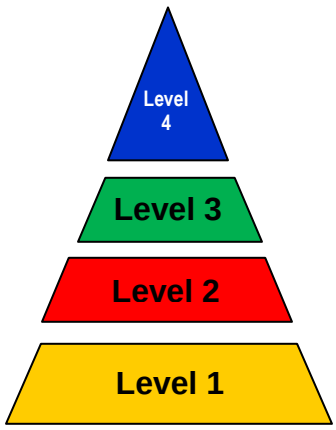


At **Level 3** the early childhood provider is an **instructional leader** who supports and monitors the implementation of a developmentally appropriate written curriculum.

The leader is proactive and uses an improvement plan to engage caregivers, teachers, families, and stakeholders in systematic improvement of learning and teaching.

Criteria for a rating of Level 3 (Planned Curriculum) include:

- A written curriculum that reflects developmentally appropriate practices.
- A program evaluation that is completed annually by parents and staff.
- Stakeholders who are actively engaged in the program evaluation and development of an action plan for improvement.
- A professional development plan for the Director and staff that is beyond the licensing requirements.
- A process for facilitating input from family and staff
- The program has been in operation for a minimum of one year or the lead teacher/caregiver has at least 12 months experience in a licensed or Bureau of Child Care nationally recognized accredited child care and education setting as a child care provider.



At **Level 4** the early childhood leader is an **intentional change agent** and **visionary**; a leader who "gets results." Achieving National Accreditation is not easy. It requires a cohesive team who is committed to a vision of excellence.

Criteria for a rating of **Level 4 (National Accreditation)** include:

- Accreditation through National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) , National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), Council on Accreditation (COA), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

- Professional development and leadership involvement continues, including mentoring other directors/providers.

Ready Children – Ready Schools:

Facilitating the Transition to Kindergarten

Beginning kindergarten signals a major transition for young children and their families. Although transitions are defined as the "*continuity of experiences* that children have between periods and spheres of their lives" (Kagan, 1998, p.366), research conducted by Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) indicate that young children face many *discontinuities* as they enter kindergarten, including the following:

- A shift in learning culture and expectations
- More formal academic demands
- Greater complexity in the social environment
- Less individual time with teachers due to larger class sizes

Young children experience emotional, social, cognitive, and physical adjustments that often produce stress and anxiety. Brain research indicates that emotion plays an important role in learning (National Research Council, 2000). Anxiety and stress, which often occur when children are transitioning from preschool or kindergarten, trigger the production of adrenalin and other chemicals that may negatively impact attention and memory (Wolfe, 2001). For a young child, transitioning from preschool to kindergarten is

not just changing buildings or meeting a new teacher. Leaving the familiarity of preschool and going to kindergarten means making new friends and learning new procedures, rules, and routines.

Although research confirms the importance of a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten, a national survey conducted by the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) indicated that most "transitioning" practices occur after the kindergarten year has started. These activities included: sending a letter home to parents and Open House or Back to School Night. As a result, kindergarten teachers have little information regarding children's preschool experiences. Preschool teachers, on the other hand, have a wealth of information about their young students, but it never reaches beyond the preschool doors. "In short, schools do too little, too late to connect with children and families" (NCEDL, 2002).

Research by Pianta and Cox (1999) suggests that when kindergarten and preschool teachers collaborate there are significant benefits for children, teachers, and families. Kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers reported the following benefits when they were given the opportunity to collaborate:

- A heightened appreciation for each one's efforts in stimulating children's learning and development.
- A greater awareness of pre-kindergarten and elementary school expectations and curriculum.
- an increased knowledge of the children.
- A larger network of professional support.
- An increased awareness of the preschool and kindergarten programs.

Early childhood leaders, both center directors and elementary school principals, have a responsibility to work together to develop a *transition plan*. The purpose of the

plan is to insure a smooth transition for children as they leave preschool programs and enter kindergarten. A successful transition plan considers the *whole child* as he/she prepares for kindergarten. A plan that relies solely on sharing assessment data misses the opportunity for the kindergarten teacher and school principal to better understand the many characteristics of each individual child.

It is important to include families in the transition process. It is not just the child who makes the transition. Families are also involved and they are excellent resources for the kindergarten teacher. An **Early Learning Passport** can be prepared by the preschool teacher and family. This passport provides valuable information about a child's development and the kindergarten teacher will start the year with a deeper understanding of the child. The transition period is a critical time for building partnerships between schools and families to support student learning (NCEDL, 2002). Figure 2 (see page28) provides ten steps for successful kindergarten transitions to assist center directors and principals as they develop a Transition Plan.

Key term:

Early Learning Passport refers to an organized folder filled with checklists, documents and work samples that is prepared by the preschool teacher and presented to the kindergarten teacher. The passport provides a basis for discussion about the development of the child across all domains of learning. The passport assists the kindergarten teacher in starting the year with a deeper understanding of the child.

Early childhood leaders, teachers, and caregivers should begin working with families to prepare children for a successful transition to kindergarten when the children are just infants and toddlers. Assisting families in creating literacy rich home environments will have a significant impact on children's successful transition to kindergarten (Hart & Risley, 2005). Table 3 provides steps to consider when planning a successful transition.

See Appendix E for a Home Literacy Environment Scale.

TABLE 3: *Planning a Successful Preschool – Kindergarten Transition*

1. Early childhood leaders (Center Director and School Principal) need to contact each other to discuss the importance of developing a Transition Plan.
2. Schedule a time to meet in person to begin the planning process.
3. Identify a Transition Coordinator at each site (elementary school and preschool).
4. Conduct a Needs Assessment (What information is needed?).
5. Include teachers, family representatives, and stakeholders on the transition planning team.
6. Create a *transition timeline* and schedule regular meetings.
7. Generate ideas for transition activities.
8. Anticipate barriers and possible solutions.
9. Implement transition practices.
10. Evaluate success and revise plan.

Table 3 Source: Science of Early Childhood Development, Center on the Developing Child

Insights for Leadership Success

Karin Chenoweth (2010) identifies five "insights for success" based on her study of principals from high-performing, high-poverty, and high-minority schools. These findings are applicable to early childhood settings as well as K-12 schools. The "insights for success" listed below are adapted for early childhood leadership.

1. *It's everyone's job to run the school*

   When center directors and principals use distributed leadership, they not only build a cohesive team, but they share the responsibility of building excellence. The center director or principal does not abdicate his/her responsibilities of leadership, but sharing decision-making and the many tasks that are involved in managing and leading a center or a school,

2. *Inspect what you expect and expect that all students will meet or exceed standards*

   This is a popular clique in school leadership circles, but it addresses the importance of aligning supervision to center/school goals and learning expectations for children.

3. *Be relentlessly respectful and respectfully relentless*

   Leaders need to be persistent, but not at the expense of civility and kindness toward staff members. When center directors make decisions focused on what is best for children, build a respective working climate, and clearly communicate teaching and learning goals, there is a greater chance that everyone will be working in the same direction. Staff resistance is often the result of confusion, mixed messages, and a breakdown in communication.

4. *Use student achievement data to evaluate decisions*

   There are many ways to collect data to determine student learning. This is addressed in the section on assessment

5. *Do whatever it takes to make sure students learn*

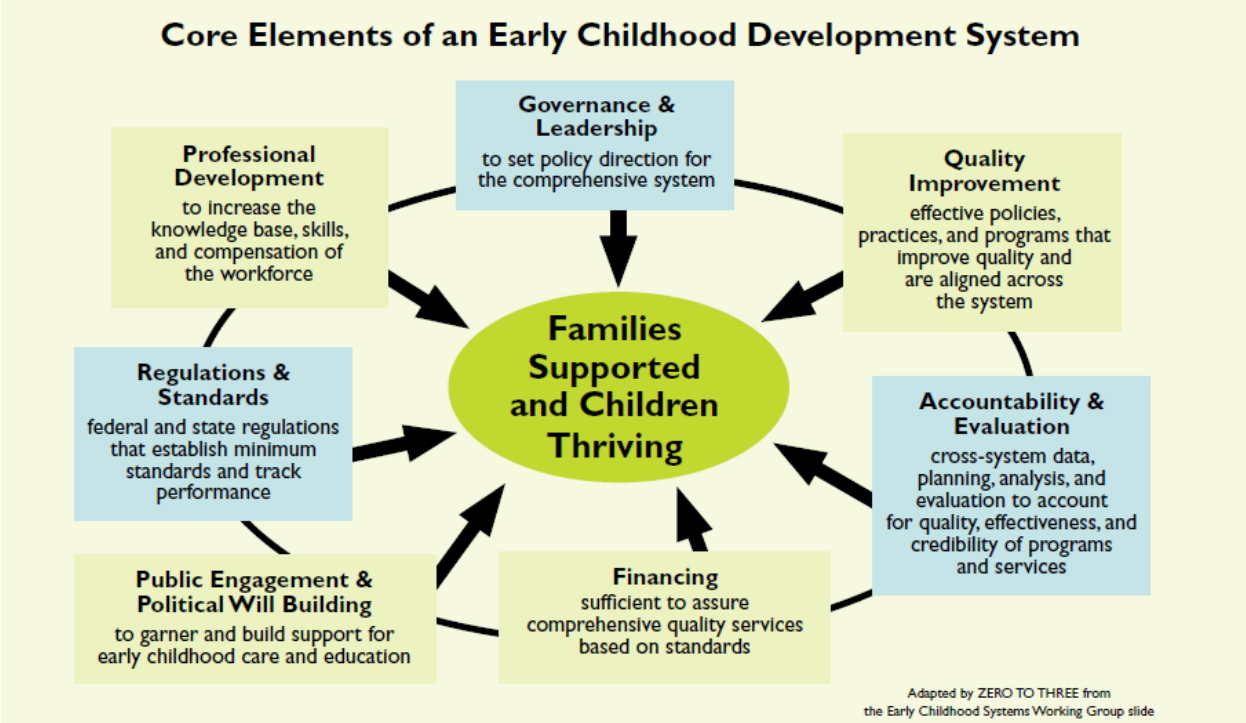
   Effective early childhood center directors and principals lead by example. They not only do the right thing, but they do things right. They are leaders who get results.

Summary

The ultimate goal for early childhood leaders is to provide a safe and nurturing classroom environment where children learn and grow across all domains of development. Successful preschool experiences enable children to transition to kindergarten feeling competent in their social, emotional, physical, and academic skills. Becoming an effective early childhood leader, however, is a complex endeavor. Center directors and principals are influenced not only by their prior educational experiences, but by the families, children, and stakeholders they serve. Men and women gravitate to positions of authority with a rudimentary understanding of leadership. As they become leaders, their success is influenced by policies, politics, and practices at local, state, and national levels.

An early childhood leader, in turn, influences families, children, and stakeholders, as well as the staff of the center and other educational leaders. When embracing the many challenges and roles of leadership, center directors and principals affect student learning through the climate and culture of the center or school; their knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices; and their ability to establish a shared vision of educational excellence.

An effective early childhood leader maintains a focus on excellence in teaching and learning by conveying a shared vision of what is possible when everyone works together to insure student learning. A clear vision holds everyone accountable for children's success. Dynamic leaders invest in people, supervising and coaching staff to raise their level of effectiveness. Leaders are effective not only because of <u>what</u> they do, but because of <u>who</u> they are. They are individuals of integrity; they not only do the right thing, but they do things right. They are leaders who get results.


Core Elements of an Early Childhood Development System
Governance & Leadership
to set policy direction for the comprehensive system
Quality Improvement
effective policies, practices, and programs that improve quality and are aligned across the system
Accountability & Evaluation
cross-system data, planning, analysis, and evaluation to account for quality, effectiveness, and credibility of programs and services
Financing
sufficient to assure comprehensive quality services based on standards
Public Engagement & Political Will Building
to garner and build support for early childhood care and education
Regulations & Standards
federal and state regulations that establish minimum standards and track performance
Professional Development
to increase the knowledge base, skills, and compensation of the workforce
Families Supported and Children Thriving
Adapted by ZERO TO THREE from the Early Childhood Systems Working Group slide

Appendix A

Components of a High Quality Early Childhood Program

High Quality Learning Environment	• Physical space is safe, flexible, and child-oriented; spaces are secure, inviting, and encourage curiosity • Physical space and materials are organized with children's activities in mind (play, group learning, and care areas) • Learning activities tap children's interests and are cognitively engaging • An abundance of developmentally appropriate materials are available for play and teacher-directed intentional instruction • Teachers and caregivers use rich vocabulary when conversing and encourage children to "try-out" new words • Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers have the opportunity to establish and sustain long–term, secure, and trusting relationships with knowledgeable and responsive caregivers/teachers • Small class sizes assure low child-to-teacher ratios
High Quality Curriculum	• Curriculum is written and all teachers receive training and guided practice so they are able to implement it with fidelity • Curriculum is developed using a "backward design" that begins with the outcome goals for learning • Curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills children need to acquire • Curriculum integrates children's learning within and across the domains (physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral, language, and cognitive) • Curriculum is designed to stimulate brain development across all content areas (language, literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, health, physical education) • Curriculum includes examples of learning experiences that provide opportunities to master the identified knowledge and skills • Curriculum clearly delineates the learning goals, essential questions, instructional plan • Curriculum provides guidelines to adapt instruction to children's individual differences
High Quality Instruction	• Instruction is appropriate to children's age and developmental status • Instruction to build literacy concepts and skills and concepts is integrated across all domains (physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral, language, and cognitive) and content areas (language, literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, health, physical education) • Instruction provides a balance of play and teacher-directed intentional instruction • Instructional decisions are informed by assessment data • Instruction uses modeling and demonstration of skills by the teacher/caregiver. • Instruction is scaffolded, providing opportunities for children to practice skills with corrective feedback by teacher/caregiver • Instruction is incremental, building on what children already know

	• Instructional routines provide multi-sensory experiences • Instruction includes opportunities for practice and reflection (metacognition) to strengthen and expand brain connections
High Quality Instruction specific to Language and Literacy	• Instruction promotes oral language development using conversational expansion, socio-dramatic play, puppetry, and building interest in learning new words through read alouds and word play • Intentional teacher-directed instruction of language (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension) and early literacy (i.e., phonological awareness, print concepts, and alphabet knowledge) is planned, aligned to early learning standards, and child-centered • Instruction includes a variety of scientifically-based literacy practices and routines (e.g., Interactive Read-Alouds, fast-mapping, Dialogic Reading, and word blending/stretching) for language and literacy development) • Instruction in language and literacy is not limited to a specified block of time; it is a focus throughout the day and in all content areas (science, social studies, math, art, etc.) • Instruction uses a variety of groupings (whole class, small group, and individual) to meet the instructional needs for all young children • Instruction encourages interactions with adults and other children to expand complex thought processes, such as problem solving and critical thinking

Bowman, Donovan, Burns (2001); CDCHU, 2007; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Espinosa, 2002; Goffin, 2010a; Goffin, 2010b; IN Department of Education, 2006; Lombardi, Cohen, Lurie-Hurvitz, & Oser, 2003; National Institute for Literacy, 2009; NSECSP, 2007; Albert Shanker Institute, 2009; Schiller, 2001).

Appendix B

http://cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/resources/ecwes_short.pdf

Early Childhood Work Environment Survey
Short Version

This survey is designed to find out how you feel about this early childhood center as a place to work. The success of the survey depends on your candid and honest responses. Please know that your answers are completely confidential; you do not need to sign the form. When you have completed the questionnaire, put it in the attached plain envelope, seal it, and give it to your staff representative.

Indicate in the space provided the numeral (0–5) that most accurately describes how you feel about each statement.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Somewhat regularly	Frequently	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5

_____ Staff are friendly and trust one another.
_____ Morale is high. There is a good team spirit.
_____ Staff are encouraged to learn new skills and competencies.
_____ The center provides guidance for professional advancement.
_____ Supervisor(s) are knowledgeable and competent.
_____ Supervisor(s) provide helpful feedback.
_____ Communication regarding policies and procedures is clear.
_____ Job responsibilities are well defined.
_____ Salaries and benefits are distributed equitably.
_____ Promotions are handled fairly.
_____ Teachers help make decisions about things that directly affect them.
_____ People feel free to express their opinions.
_____ Staff agree on school philosophy and educational objectives.
_____ Staff share a common vision of what the center should be like.
_____ The program is well planned and efficiently run.
_____ Meetings are productive. Time is not wasted.
_____ The work environment is attractive and well organized.
_____ There are sufficient supplies and equipment for staff to do their jobs.
_____ Staff are encouraged to be creative and innovative in their work.
_____ The center implements changes as needed.

What three words describe the climate of this center as a place to work?

What do you perceive to be the center's greatest strengths?

What areas do you feel could use some improvement?

Thank you!

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Appendix C

Sample Protocol: Walk-Through for Literacy Learning and Teaching

Birth to Age 5

WALK-THROUGH **Language and Literacy**	
Date: _____ Classroom: _____	Timeframe: _____ Observer: _____
Observation of Learning: Children are . . .	Observation of Teaching: The teacher/caregiver is . . .
Comments, Praise, Suggestions, Recommendations:	
Follow-Up Discussion:	

Appendix D

High Quality Curriculum – Questions for Reflection and Analysis

Qualities	Questions for Reflection and Analysis
Goals	1. Are the goals clearly outlined, aligned to the Foundations to the *Indiana Academic Standards for Young Children from Birth to Age 5*, and shared by all stakeholders? 2. Do the goals address all developmental domains? 3. Do the goals connect language and literacy to all content areas? 4. How were families involved in the development of the goals?
Implementation and Instruction	5. Does the curriculum provide an instructional plan that assists teachers in implementing the curriculum so it is tailored to children's ages and developmental levels? 6. Is the content developmentally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for all children and families? 7. Does the curriculum encourage language and literacy connections through relationships, routines, and rituals? 8. Does the curriculum integrate learning opportunities across subject areas? 9. Does the curriculum planning and implementation emphasize an understanding and respect for each child's native language and culture?
Child Engagement	10. Does the curriculum provide examples of instructional practice that is engaging for all young children? 11. Does the curriculum facilitate children's construction of knowledge through their interactions with materials, other children, and adults? 12. Does the curriculum empower children to initiate ideas and activities? 13. Does the curriculum provide guidance for teachers to scaffold and motivate learning?

Appendix E

http://www.getreadytoread.org/

Get Ready to Read!

www.GetReadytoRead.org

Home Literacy Environment Checklist

Is your home literacy-friendly?

You are your child's first teacher. Your home is where your child will get his or her first experiences with books and reading.

Look around your home and think about what you do with your child. If the statement on the checklist is true, place a check in the "true" column. If the statement is false, place a check in the "false" column. When you are finished, count up the number of checks in the true column and find that number on the chart at the end of the checklist. Use the results as a guideline to see what you can do for your child.

What my child has...	TRUE	FALSE
My child has at least one alphabet book (e.g., Dr. Seuss's *ABC* book).	☐	☐
My child has magnetized alphabet letters to play with.	☐	☐
My child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing.	☐	☐
My child has paper readily available for writing and drawing.	☐	☐
My child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing.	☐	☐
My child has at least one rhyme book (e.g., Joseph Slate's *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*).	☐	☐
My child has more than one rhyme book.	☐	☐
My child has at least 10 picture books.	☐	☐
My child has at least 20 picture books.	☐	☐
My child has at least 50 picture books.	☐	☐
My child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer (e.g., *Reader Rabbit* or *Bailey's Book House*).	☐	☐
My child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet.	☐	☐

What I or another adult do...	TRUE	FALSE
I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least once a week.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least four times a week.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child at least once a week.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child nearly every day.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child at least once a week. (e.g., "How do you think ice cream is made?").	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child nearly every day.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn nursery rhymes.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house encourage my child to tell me what he or she wants using complete sentences.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house take my child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months.	☐	☐

What my child sees me or another adult doing...	TRUE	FALSE
My child sees me or another adult in the house reading books, magazines or the newspaper at least once a week.	☐	☐
My child sees me or another adult in the house reading books, magazines or the newspaper nearly every day.	☐	☐

What I am...	TRUE	FALSE
I am a good reader.	☐	☐
I have a large vocabulary.	☐	☐
I began to read picture books with my child before he or she was a year old.	☐	☐
I enjoy reading picture books with my child.	☐	☐
I expect that my child will work to his or her potential in school.	☐	☐

Now or in the past, I or another adult encourage or help my child...	TRUE	FALSE
I or another adult in the house encourage my child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes (e.g., Between the Lions on PBS).	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house encourage my child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading (e.g., *Reader Rabbit*).	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn to sing or say the alphabet.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn to name letters of the alphabet.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write letters of the alphabet.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write his or her name.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write other people's names.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn how to rhyme.	☐	☐
I or another adult in the house help my child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make (e.g., "M makes the mmmm sound").	☐	☐

Count up the number of statements marked TRUE and put that number in the box to the right. See the chart below to find out how literacy-friendly your family child care program is. ☐

30 - 37	Home literacy environment has most of the necessary supportive elements
20 - 29	Home literacy environment has many supportive elements
11 - 19	Home literacy environment has some supportive elements
0 - 10	Home literacy environment needs improvement

Get Ready to Read! is a project of the National Center for Learning Disabilities. For more information about this program please visit our Web site www.GetReadytoRead.org.

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments					★	
Transition to Kindergarten					★	
State Leadership					★	

Guiding Principle:

High quality professional development is differentiated for teachers/caregivers to impact positive outcomes for children.

- ☑ A high-quality professional development plan is based on an assessment of children and educator needs.

- ☑ A high-quality professional development plan requires collaborating, communicating, and planning with all key stakeholders.

- ☑ The research-based, professional development objectives are specific and clearly linked to child early literacy outcomes.

- ☑ Various evidence-based professional development models are used to convey the knowledge and instructional practice to be learned.

- ☑ Teachers/caregivers, paraprofessionals, and early childhood leaders participate in differentiated professional development to ensure cohesion across the program.

- ☑ Instructional practice is an explicit focus of the professional development and practice is linked to teacher/caregiver knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions.

- ☑ The intensity of the professional development should be matched to the content being conveyed.

- ☑ The content is aligned with the organizational context and early childhood standards.

- ☑ Programs have resources that are appropriate, adequate, and readily available to effectively implement professional development learning.

- ☑ Ongoing assessments are conducted to ensure high-quality implementation of professional development practices and evaluate outcomes in early childhood settings.

Comprehensive Professional Development

Successful early literacy instruction does not happen by chance. It is the result of study, reflection, practice, and hard work. Professional development is the mechanism for professional growth for both early childhood providers and the early childhood leaders who support them. This chapter focuses on the principles of effective, high quality early childhood professional development that support children's language development and literacy growth. Though the research on connecting early childhood professional development to children's achievement outcomes is at an early stage, results of recent studies point to promising practices for improving the professional learning of early childhood providers. Studies show that participation in professional development is found to increase teachers' knowledge and improve teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This outcome leads to improved literacy learning for children. Not only do the knowledge and skills of early childhood providers affect the quality of support for children's literacy development, but their beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions about how young children approach early literacy also play a role. Ongoing and consistent professional learning opportunities are a key to providing quality care and learning opportunities to children and to successfully supporting children's early language and literacy growth.

Although it is clear that early childhood professionals, early childhood leaders, other individuals who care for young children need appropriate pre-service preparation, the focus of the information discussed in this chapter is in-service professional development. The definition of professional development provided by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) is:

> *. . . a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement.*

This definition is grounded in the essential elements of NSDC's Standards for Staff Development, which describes the broad conditions necessary for high quality professional development, while also detailing specific practices that lead to improved performance for educators and children. There does not seem to be an agreed upon professional development definition for early childhood. The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) defines professional development as:

> *Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice.* (In Buysse 2009, NPDCI, 2008, p. 3)

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines professional development as:

> *. . . initial preparation (preservice) and learning experiences (inservice) designed to improve the knowledge, skills/behaviors, and attitudes/values of the early childhood workforce.*

The definitions above, coupled with the conclusions drawn from a U.S. Department of Education literature review on professional development for early childhood educators, form the goal for this chapter. The professional development goal will be applied and described in relation to the evidence from the literature review's professional development studies targeting the following outcomes:

1) improving early childhood providers' and early childhood leaders early language and literacy knowledge;
2) improving early childhood providers' and early childhood leaders practice; and
3) improving children's early language and literacy development.

Based on a summary of the findings, in general, participation in professional development was found to increase early childhood providers' knowledge, improve early childhood providers' practice, and improved child outcomes. Eight concepts relating to the goal are most consistently linked with at least one of the three outcome categories mentioned above. The description of each concept below includes information synthesized from other relevant sources in addition to the literature review (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1993; National Research Council, 2000; National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Professional development needs to be organized, carefully planned and implemented. The concepts here can serve as guidelines for developing an effective professional development plan in center, school, or home-based settings, or may be used by individuals as "look fors" in personal professional development pursuits. High quality professional development offering must be made available to early childhood providers, leaders, and others who care for young children. If developing a professional development plan is the objective, each of the concepts below should be carefully considered. A professional development plan that addresses these concepts, and is developed collaboratively with contributions from early childhood leaders, providers, and stakeholders, ensures not only a high quality plan, but one that will be appropriate and of value to the implementers and recipients of the plan. The professional development plan serves as the foundation for an effective professional development system, in other words, "a comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing support for all early childhood education professional working with and on behalf of young children" (NAEYC). To begin, a planning team can ask its members, and early childhood providers:

- What does an analysis of children's needs reveal about their major literacy learning issues?
- What knowledge and skills do early childhood providers need to learn to more effectively address the identified children literacy learning difficulties?

- What support or assistance do early childhood providers require as they work to apply to their instruction the knowledge/skills they learned in professional development? (Mizell, 2010)

The answers to these questions will serve as the foundation for the professional development plan. Next, the planning team can use the information in each discussed in this section to refine the content of their plan and develop goals and action steps.

> "The professional development of teachers has been shown to be related to quality of early childhood programs, and program quality predicts developmental outcomes for children." (National Research Council, 2001)

First and foremost, securing highly qualified and credible professional development providers is essential. Trainers can be external, internal, or a combination of both, but they need to have the appropriate content knowledge, skills, experiences, and understanding of adult learning principles to effectively convey information to participants. Researching, interviewing, and observing professional development providers in action is important to ensuring that the match between provider and participant is a good fit and that the providers has a clear understanding of the professional development goals.

Establish and Articulate Specific Goals for Professional Development

What should birth to age 5 educators know? Beyond knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practices, early childhood providers need strong content knowledge. A reemerging theme in the best practices literature on professional development is that all professional development training, regardless of topic, should be research-based. This means that the professional development content should be based on what is known about effective early literacy instruction. The most valid information to inform professional development content comes from experimental and quasi-experimental studies linking early literacy instruction to improved literacy achievement in young children. These types of studies provide the

most rigorous basis of research. However, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, recently expanded their standards to include two other research designs, single case study and regression discontinuity, along with randomized, controlled trials, as the strongest scientific evidence for what works in education.

One example of a summary of scientifically based reading research is the report of The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The panel concluded that effective Kindergarten to grade three literacy instruction includes the components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Understanding what children should know and be able to do at the beginning of kindergarten can help preschool educators better prepare children for the transition to kindergarten. This occurs by ensuring that children meet literacy learning expectations by the time they leave preschool. Though children's early literacy skills develop at different rates, clear alignment and continuity between preschool and kindergarten is crucial for a child's future literacy success and for determining professional development topics for early childhood providers.

But what does the research say about what early literacy skills are most important for a child's early literacy and language development? Previous reports, such as The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, and Griffin 1998), and more recently, The Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2010), provide guidance on what research-based early literacy skills are essential for early childhood providers to know. The Report of the National Early Literacy Panel determined that the following skills were the *strongest* and *most consistent* predictors of later literacy skills in children:

- Knowing the names of printed letters
- Knowing the sounds associated with printed letters
- Being able to manipulate the sounds of spoken language

- Being able to rapidly name a sequence of letters, numbers, objects, or colors
- Being able to write one's own name and individual letters
- Being able to remember the content of spoken language for a short time

Furthermore, young children need support in oral language development, print awareness, and emergent writing. Though the introduction to and emphasis of these skills may shift slightly when talking about infants, toddlers, or preschoolers, they are all important areas of focus and should be considered as goals and objectives for professional development opportunities. For more detailed information about the instructional skills and strategies within each of these areas, please refer to the Instruction section of the Framework.

A final, but no less important topic of professional development for early childhood providers is how to work effectively with parents. Early childhood providers need training in strategies for how to involve parents in literacy activities that support children's language and literacy development at home. Unfortunately, this is a topic that has limited research. Research does indicate however, that there are important connections between school and home literacy practices and child outcomes among both English-speaking children and English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). More research is needed in how best to engage parents in ways that support their children's literacy learning and complement early childhood providers' literacy instruction. Besides learning activities that help their children understand letters and sounds, parents can be mentored on how to talk in ways that develop their child's oral language skills, how to effectively read aloud, and how to support children's early efforts at writing. For example, parents can be encouraged to talk and sing to their children at birth. They can point to and name familiar objects and answer their children's questions. Parent should also learn what's developmentally appropriate and how to recognize signs of trouble. Most importantly, the professional development should focus on how early childhood providers can help parents reinforce the literacy skills their children are learning and how to "support and engage diverse families

through respectful, reciprocal relationships that support, involve, and empower families in their children's development and learning" (NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs, 2009).

Whatever the chosen goals and objectives are for the professional development opportunities, they should be made transparent to the participants upfront. That way, participants can monitor their learning throughout the course of the professional development event. They can ask questions or seek clarification if the objectives do not seem to be met by the end of the professional development session. One promising practice seems to be giving attendees a voice in determining some of the professional development objectives. Professional development opportunities in which participants set their own personal goals, are involved in the planning and design of the professional development events, and are encouraged to self-reflect throughout the professional development process appear to be most successful (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). It is important that professional development opportunities help early childhood providers to 1) reflect on literacy activities they are already doing, 2) use data to determine whether they are on the right path, and 3) refine the activities based on best practices (Mizell, 2010). In the end, it is critical that the professional development provider be highly-qualified to teach the required content in order to meet these outcomes.

Use Various Professional Development Models

Fruitful professional development opportunities are not one-shot events. They are based on the idea of continuous learning, expert mentoring, and immediate feedback. There are many different approaches to professional development that incorporate these aspects: course work, a series of interactive workshops, on-site support, or a combination of all three. Furthermore, professional development events can be technology-based, structured as a training of trainers, or as a book study. Professional development includes discussions with colleagues or learning from a more knowledgeable peer, such as in professional learning communities. Some of these

approaches are more formal and some are considered informal. The goal of all of these approaches is to convey information on literacy research and best practices for developing children's language and literacy skills. When reviewing the research on course work, workshops, and on-site professional development approaches, each seem to benefit early childhood provider *knowledge* equally. However, the greatest benefit to early childhood provider *practice* – based on empirical research studies - seemed to be with the combination of course work with on-site support, such as the work of a coach (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

This conclusion is verified by professional developments studies by Neuman and Wright (2010) showing coaching to be more effective than coursework alone in improving early childhood teacher practice and by Joyce and Showers (2002) indicating an estimated ninety-five percent of teachers who received ongoing support and guidance through coaching were more likely to learn and implement new practices than through theory, demonstration, and practice alone. Furthermore, Garet and colleagues (2001) found that three core features – developing content expertise, active learning, and coherence – had a significant impact on teacher's self-reported increases in knowledge, skills, and changes in practice. These features affected teacher learning best in job-embedded approaches, or those that encouraged collective participation, in-depth discussion with peers, practice opportunities, and timely feedback. Though there is very little rigorous research on the direct impact of teacher practice and student learning of job-embedded approaches, implementing their key features is a wise bet. Below is a summary of three promising job-embedded approaches:

Coaching: On-site support consists of the professional development provider or a site-based content expert "coaching" the early childhood provider by observing literacy instruction and providing formative feedback that will positively influence instruction in the future. The coaching may involve demonstrating strategies learned from professional development sessions in the colleague's classroom. This is usually followed by a self-reflective discussion about what worked, what did not, and why, along

with ongoing problem-solving dialogue with the coach as the early childhood provider applies new practices over time. Through ongoing support and feedback over time, the knowledge and skills of early childhood providers improve as a result of being able to apply and refine the information acquired through professional development sessions to their real-world situations. The success for this type of coaching has been verified by a study conducted by Griffin et al. (2010) that found professional development for preschool teachers and aids in instructional practices coupled with coaching over multiple years produces positive results in teaching and student learning.

Professional Learning Communities: Professional learning communities (PLC) is a favorable and effective format for enhancing professional learning. PLCs are small groups of educators who come together to help one another improve children's learning, often by analyzing data and planning lessons. The purpose of PLCs is to enhance implementation of curriculum rather than change it. PLCs foster critical reflection based on shared experiences between educators. One process for a PLC is: 1) reflecting on the previous collaboratively planned lesson; 2) discussing the research pertaining to the instructional concept being applied; 3) reviewing an upcoming lesson to discuss strengths and weakness based on the research; and 4) collaboratively planning a lesson that incorporates the targeted research principle (Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2009). Though the research base is sparse, studies on PLC suggest that their success is due to having a formal, systematic approach, and possibly experts, to help guide educators. One study found larger achievement gains for schools whose learning teams used formal protocols, a leadership structure for meetings, and a process for solving problems (Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2009) and another study showed significant improvements on observed teaching practice for teachers participating in PLCs compared to those who did not (Gersten et al., 2009).

Lesson Study: The Lesson Study approach is a cyclical process where teachers take an existing lesson and collaborate to develop and teach a new lesson. One educator implements the lesson while the other educators observe and collect

observational student data. These observed lessons are called research lessons (Lewis, Perry, & Murata, 2006). After the lesson, the group meets to reflect on the lesson and data and to decide the extent to which the instructional goals were met. Then the educators revise the lesson, conduct another lesson study cycle, report on the findings, and share research-based lessons. In this process educators serve as on-site researchers, becoming more child-centered as they observe what children are learning and how. Lesson Study promotes continuous knowledge sharing and transfer between educators and furthers educator responsibility for the improvement of classroom practice.

Establish the Link between Theory and Practice

Regardless of the type of approach used, it is crucial to establish a clear linkage between theory and practice in professional development. Without this connection, early childhood providers may dismiss the information as theoretical and not practical. The closer the professional development experience can simulate real contexts that the early childhood providers may face, and allow for opportunities to try out the strategies as they are learning them, the more likely that the knowledge and skills learned will be implemented in the classroom.

For transference to occur, professional development providers should activate participants' prior knowledge of the topic at the beginning of the session to connect the "known" to the "new," thereby sparking interest, questions, and relevance. Consideration should be given to a multi-modal approach to professional development to promote a comprehensive and complete professional development plan.

Professional development should not be a single event, but a coherent plan to build knowledge and skills systematically. This allows not only for information to solidify, but for attendees to see the connections between what they already know, what they previously learned, and what they are currently learning. Opportunities for multiple interactions between the professional development provider and participants, as well as

among participants, provide a venue for discussion. The interactions permit participants to collaborate with peers to ask questions, seek clarification, and apply new knowledge, while simultaneously building instructional confidence.

An approach such as the scaffolding model from Pearson and Gallagher (1983), which uses modeling, guided practice, and independent practice elements, is designed to support a gradual release of knowledge and practice from the professional development provider to the early childhood provider during professional development trainings.

Involve Teachers, Paraprofessionals, and Administrators

Training a group of early childhood providers from one center, along with the early childhood leaders and support staff, appears to be a successful practice for establishing "buy-in" from all levels of the organizations, creating a professional learning community, developing on-site experts who can support others, and support the sustainability of practices when challenges arise (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Early childhood leaders who attend events along with their staff show: 1) commitment to the professional development goals; and 2) support by leading the learning.

To adequately support their staff needs, early childhood leaders require specific professional development designed for their role, such as how to be the instructional leader in their setting and how to support and monitor the implementation of practices effectively. This includes recognizing effective early literacy instruction, providing constructive feedback, and conducting "walk-throughs." Their professional development goals should be different from, but complement, those of their staff.

Execute Instructional Strategies That Support Early Literacy Learning

The instructional practices shared during professional development must directly align with children's early literacy outcomes, such as those discussed in the establishing goals explanation earlier. It is valuable to teach early childhood providers the Pearson

and Gallagher scaffolding model as an effective technique for ensuring explicit instruction, since it is not topic dependent. Training for early childhood educators in how to conduct Interactive Shared Book Reading and Dialogic Reading are key topics for professional development. These strategies, along with phonological awareness training, has been shown to have positive effects on children's early reading/writing, oral language, and phonological processing respectively (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007; 2006). Specifically, early childhood educators should be taught how to use Interactive Share Book Reading and Dialogic Reading to engage children by asking open-ended questions, discussing illustrations, and extending the story into art and writing activities. See the end of the section for a description of each of these strategies.

Other important topics for professional development trainings include creating a literacy-rich environment, such as easy access to books and how to increase environmental print to support children's print awareness; supporting emergent writing; promoting oral language, listening comprehension, and reasoning skills; developing concepts of print; integrating literacy across the content areas; and inspiring motivation to read. In combination with these instructional strategies and topics, early childhood providers should be allowed to reasonably adapt strategies to suit their own children and environment, in order to promote buy-in to the new methods.

In order to get a clear and accurate picture of children's literacy learning, early childhood educators need to be trained in and use a variety of assessment methods. An over-arching and critical focus for professional development should be how to assess and monitor progress of individual children's language and literacy skills. That is because both formative and summative assessment provides relevant information about the literacy levels of all children. Once early childhood educators understand the purpose and type of various assessment measures, then the suitable measure may be selected for the right purpose. If a standardized and/or normed assessment measure is used, then training in how to interpret the assessment results and determine instructional implications is crucial. Decision-making should be based on data collected

from standardized and/or normed assessments as well as practitioner-developed assessments, project-based assessments, running records, anecdotal notes, and observations.

In addition to an initial assessment of children literacy learning needs, early childhood providers need to learn how to monitor children's progress over time. Not only does frequent progress monitoring help early childhood providers to determine who may need extra support at any given time, it provides them with information for differentiating their instruction. Differentiated instruction is a method of helping more students in diverse settings experience success. This requires thinking about children's varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, and interests. Early childhood providers should react responsively by meeting each child where he or she is, and assisting them in the learning process. This process helps even precocious children progress in their literacy learning. Differentiated instruction works when it is based on assessment data. Otherwise, it's like driving a car in the dark without its lights on. Therefore, professional development formats that allow for frequent collaboration and communication between early childhood providers is best suited to promoting data-based decision making and the subsequent differentiated instruction planning that follow.

Match the Intensity to the Content

Scheduling time for professional development can be challenging. Although there never seems to be enough time in the day to get everything accomplished, allocating time for professional learning is imperative. Early childhood leaders need to show their commitment to professional learning by building and preserving time in the schedule for early childhood educators to acquire and maintain knowledge and skills. A recently released national study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education on the effect of teacher professional development on student achievement K-12, found that only the teachers who received between 30 and 100 hours of professional development for one topic were correlated with positive student achievement gains. The teachers

who received between five and 14 hours showed no effect on student achievement (Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Lee, S.W.-Y., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K., 2007). These studies indicated a wide variation in the intensity and duration of professional development. One study found that a site provided 100 hours of professional development over four weeks, while another provided about the same amount of hours over ten months. Similarly, Blank & de las Alas' 2009 meta-analysis concluded that when professional development focused on targeting the learning needs of teachers with frequency of professional development, it produced a positive relationship. The measure of time (contact hours, frequency, and duration) indicated positive correlations of professional development on student achievement. The mean contact time with teachers in program activities in this study was 91 hours.

Research findings indicate that even small dosages of professional development can be beneficial when taking into account time and quality. (US Department of Education, 2010). Professional development is not just about the time, but also *quality*. Many hours can be spent in low-quality professional development events with no real beneficial outcomes. Conversely, smaller dosages of high-quality professional development that are precise in focus can lead to learning and application. When the professional development goals are focused on a discrete set of targeted skills, then short-term or a brief dosage of professional development appears to be adequate. When the professional development goals have a broad, comprehensive focus, then long-term/intensive professional development is most effective. Therefore, the goals and objectives of professional development are critical in determining the amount of time necessary. Professional learning that leads to change in practice requires intensive study as well as guided practice. When early childhood providers see positive results from the implementation of the practice with children, then they are more likely to continue that practice.

A report published by NSDC (2009) recommends that teachers receive 50 hours of professional development in a 12 month period. The studies highlighted above

support the notion that professional development that is rigorous and extensive seems to be associated with positive outcomes for early childhood providers and children alike. However, there is still no conclusive answer to the question of how much training time is best.

Differentiate Professional Development

Professional development should not be a “one size fits all” approach. Children vary in learning styles and rate; early childhood teachers/caregivers also have preferred modalities of learning and differences in their rate of learning and implementation of new ideas. The most sophisticated professional development plans are differentiated based on individual staff needs. The professional development experiences should be tailored to the experience, previous education, and teaching competence of the participants. It should be responsive and respectful to the background and contextual constraints of the early childhood educators and their environment.

This approach is consistent with the National Research Council Report *How People Learn* (Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999) that indicates an understanding of the preconceptions or misconceptions adult learners bring to the table is crucial to building new knowledge. By doing this, the overtone of professional development is one in which trust, collegiality, and respect is conveyed between the professional development provider and the participants. When the environment is positive and supportive, participants are more likely to take instructional risks, share concerns, and ask questions. The goal of effective professional development is to meet participants where they are and use their existing strengths to build their knowledge and skills incrementally over time. These adult learning principles - safety, sound relationships, collaboration, engagement, and respect for participants as decision-makers – need to be incorporated into all professional development opportunities (Vella, 2002).

Changing and enhancing practice is more likely to occur when the professional development provider has a firm handle on early childhood providers’ current practices

and early childhood providers see strong data results from implementing the knowledge and practices learned. One way to gather information about early childhood providers' current practice is to administer a needs assessment prior to beginning the professional development. Doing a needs assessment is a basic principle of adult learning, honoring the different experiences and expectations that participants bring with them. The questions or indicators of the needs assessment should be aligned to children's learning outcomes. The results of the needs assessment will provide useful information on the knowledge, practices, topics of interest, and concerns of the early childhood providers that will assist in tailoring the professional development goals. A post assessment will indicate to the professional development provider if the professional development goals were met.

Designing follow-up sessions to an initial training allows for the most consideration to be given to individual needs, and therefore is most appropriate for differentiating. Some early childhood educators will require minimal support and may be perfect as a mentor or coach to peers, while others may need more intensive, individualized support. Making professional development opportunities more context-specific is especially important because of the variation of early childhood settings in which the professional development takes place.

Lastly, because early childhood centers are likely to have staff turnover, each setting should anticipate the professional development needs of new staff. That means incorporating strategies in the professional development plan for determining who will require training, what type, how frequently, and for what duration. For example, some sites have developed an "in house" new staff training that occurs each year and is taught by internal staff. This ensures consistency and continuity of the early literacy practices between new and veteran staff, which results in a shared and lasting vision for how early literacy should look in that setting.

> "Teachers' belief about their efficacy influences other behaviors, such as willingness to work and openness to new ideas…" (National Research Council, 2001)

Provide Adequate Resources for Implementation of Practices

Strong professional development trainings provide resources that participants can take away with them to use with their children, such as instructional guidelines, planning templates, websites, and reference lists. The resources should be explained and modeled by the professional development provider. Participants also have an opportunity to practice using the resources during the training while receiving feedback from the professional development provider and/or their colleagues. Participants are then able to take the resources back to their setting so they can immediately begin using them with children. The benefit to receiving and "testing out" materials at a training is that it prevents a lag time in implementation, resulting in a greater chance that early childhood providers will remember and use the techniques with greater confidence. To ensure sustainability of instructional resources shared, the 'take away" materials should be easy to use and create a link between the training and real-world practice. For example, when implementing Shared Book Reading or Dialogic Reading (See Appendix A), participants need time to interact with big books during the professional development and then have access to big books at their site in order to implement the techniques.

Finally, it is imperative that when participants return to their setting they have the appropriate instructional resources to implement the practices learned at the professional development events. This includes research-based curriculum manuals for instructional programs, scope and sequence charts, state standards, and benchmark documents. If early childhood providers do not have adequate resources to implement what they learned, then the professional development is futile and they may not see the value in attending future professional development sessions.

Evaluate Professional Development Outcomes

The value and results of professional development can be determined by evaluating (1) what new knowledge and skills early childhood providers and literacy

leaders acquire from participation, (2) the use of learning to improve teaching and leadership, and (3) how student learning and achievement increases as a result of professional development (Mizell, 2010). Many different tools can be used to gauge the benefits of professional development opportunities in these ways, such as the *Needs Assessments* discussed previously. Surveys, interviews, and observations are all effective ways of measuring the benefit to cost ratio of professional development. At the conclusion of professional development sessions, encourage participants to be self-reflective about their professional development experiences, noting what they learned, what they still want to learn, and why. This perception data, along with questions such as the following can provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of professional development outcomes:

- What is the evidence that the professional development impacted language and early literacy instruction?
- What is the evidence that the professional development enabled teachers/caregivers to increase their effectiveness in responding to children's literacy learning problems?
- What is the evidence that children's language and literacy skills have increased as a result of applying new instructional strategies and skills to classroom practice? (Mizell, 2010)

In addition, the effects of professional development should be evaluated at multiple time points throughout the year by early childhood leaders or a planning team. Ongoing, on-site observation is a powerful way to gather a complete understanding of teachers' adherence to an instructional strategy, process, or program, while simultaneously assessing if a child's literacy learning is evolving. Plus, the information collected on the needs of early childhood providers and children can be used to develop next year's professional development calendar and/or refine the professional development plan.

Summary

Professional development is a vital component of any early childhood program design. Participation in professional development is found to increase early childhood providers' knowledge, improve instructional practice, and increase child outcomes. Research suggests that establishing precise goals and objectives for professional development to build knowledge of effective instructional practices, increase the use of research-based instructional strategies, and focus on sound professional development delivery methods contribute to adult learning and instructional change. In addition, paying attention to the intensity of professional development, the resources needed to support implementation of new ideas and practices, and a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development are crucial to success.

Finally, consider the unique context that each early childhood provider faces when planning and providing professional development. How can teachers/caregivers contribute their ideas and thoughts to make professional development a success? Although there is much to learn about early childhood professional development, and many more questions to be asked, the principles addressed in this chapter provide early childhood leaders with a solid foundation to develop and implement an effective professional development plan. A cohesive, systematic and well thought out professional development plan ultimately prepares birth to age 5 children with the skills they need to thrive in the transition from preschool to kindergarten. For that reason, high-quality professional development is a powerful investment.

Appendix A

Professional Development - Instructional Practices

Shared Book Reading:

Teachers/caregivers use interactive shared book reading with individual children, pairs, small groups, and/or a large group.

- The teacher/caregiver reads an appropriate, engaging book to children using interactive techniques before, during, and after reading the text.

- During book reading, the teacher/caregiver may provide additional details (background knowledge), give explanations, use prompts for student responses, and/or ask questions using think-pair-share or calling on a child to answer a specific question.

- Teachers/caregivers may focus on modeling fluent reading to children and/or highlight various aspects of print awareness and text features.

- After reading the book, the teacher, caregiver may discuss the book with the children and draw connections between events in the story and in the children's lives.

- The books chosen for shared reading often have large print and a small number of words per page, with colorful illustrations throughout.

Other factors to consider in selecting books for shared book reading include regional relevance (e.g., reading a story about children making snow angels may not be relevant to children in Southern California). Although Interactive Shared Book Reading practices vary in frequency, reading sessions are generally brief (e.g., 10 to 15 minutes) and occur several days a week. (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007).

Dialogic Reading:

Teachers/caregivers use dialogic reading, a systematic method of shared book reading, with individual children or in small groups. Teachers/caregivers or families can become familiar with the principles of Dialogic Reading through a training that includes a videotape followed by role-playing and group discussion. While reading books aloud, the adult uses five types of prompts (CROWD) to elicit children's thoughts about the story:

Completion prompt: the child fills in "blank" at the end of an oral sentence. Example: *"The Billy Goat was BIG and _____."*
Recall prompt: basic knowledge-level questions about the book Example: "How many children are in this family?"
Open-ended prompt: questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no response. Example: "Tell me about this picture."
Wh- prompt: "wh-" questions (what, when, who) about the pictures in the book. Example: "Who do you see in this picture?"
Distancing prompt: adult relates pictures and words in the book to children's own experiences outside of the book. Example: This story is about the beach. Tell me about a time when you went to the beach.

The prompts are used by the adult in a reading technique called PEER:
P: adult prompts the child to say something about the book.
E: adult evaluates the response.
E: adult expands the child's response.
R: adult repeats the prompt.

As the child becomes increasingly familiar with a book, the adult reads less, listens more, and gradually uses more higher level prompts to encourage the child to go beyond naming objects in the pictures to thinking more about what is happening in the pictures and how this relates to the child's own experiences. (What Works Clearinghouse, 2007)

Phonological Awareness Training:

Teachers should schedule daily learning activities that focus on phonological awareness. Instruction can focus on whole group, small group or individual children. These practices can also be used as a supplement to the regular curriculum for children who need extra support. Phonological Awareness Training practices may include such activities as:

- **rhyme detection** training (e.g., teachers may engage children in games involving rhyming words and questions about which word in a series of three does not sound like the others)

- **blending** training (e.g., teachers may say three sounds and teach children how to blend the sounds together to make a word)

- **segmentation** training (e.g., teachers may say a short word such as "cat" and teach children how to separate the word into the three sounds that make up the word) at the phoneme, syllable, or word level. (What Works Clearinghouse, 2006).

Appendix B

Checklist for Effective Professional Development for Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers and Center Directors/School Principals

- ☐ Professional development goals and objectives stem from program goals and a systematic needs assessment.
- ☐ Various professional development delivery methods are used to convey knowledge and practice.
- ☐ Theory, practice, and a rationale for each are presented during professional development sessions.
- ☐ Modeling, demonstration, and practice are included in initial and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- ☐ Training in implementing a variety of research-based instructional strategies is provided.
- ☐ Training on the use of literacy assessments is provided.
- ☐ Training on using data from literacy assessments to inform instructional practices is provided.
- ☐ The timing, content, and duration of professional development is appropriate for the topic.
- ☐ Professional development is sensitive to and reflective of the current context of early childhood providers.
- ☐ Professional development trainings provide adequate resources for the implementation of learned knowledge and skills.
- ☐ Early childhood leaders have developed a system for determining the extent to which early childhood providers are implementing programs and strategies effectively and follow-up and onsite support to improve fidelity of implementation are based on this information.
- ☐ A systematic, ongoing needs assessment informs short and long term professional development planning.
- ☐ High-quality, knowledge trainers have been secured and other logistics have been finalized.

Adapted from the National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance, 2004

Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework

COMMITMENT

	Goals	Instruction	Assessment	Leadership	Professional Development	Commitment
Early Care and Education Environments						★
Transition to Kindergarten						★
State Leadership						★

Guiding Principle:

All stakeholders (Early Childhood leaders, teachers/caregivers, families, and the community) commit to providing high quality care and learning environments for children from birth to age 5; preparing all children for future success in school and throughout their lives as lifelong readers and writers.

- ☑ Early childhood leaders commit to communicating the vision and providing leadership for high quality programming and services by involving all key stakeholders – teaching staff, families, and community members.

- ☑ Teachers and other staff commit to including families in plans for instruction and assessment by eliciting input on their children, ensuring they understand program activities, and providing information on children's abilities, needs and progress.

- ☑ Early childhood leaders, teachers/caregivers and families commit to participating in professional development that enhances their knowledge and effectiveness in helping children to develop, learn and succeed.

- ☑ Administrators, teachers and families commit to ensuring that preschool children are prepared for kindergarten, and that the transition from early childhood settings to kindergarten is smooth and successful.

As the African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." A focus on the "whole child" must include collaborations among families, teachers and key community stakeholders to ensure that all the needs of infants/toddlers and preschoolers are met. Early childhood programs, families and the communities in which they operate show their commitment to high quality programming and support for young children's language and literacy development by working together to provide learning opportunities for all children. Central to this dynamic is the positive and meaningful involvement of families. Over thirty years of research have demonstrated that "parent/family involvement significantly contributes, in a variety of ways, to improved student outcomes related to learning and school success" (Carter, 2002). Parents who are involved in early childhood programs read to their children more, are more likely to visit the children's kindergarten classrooms (after they enter kindergarten), and are more likely to network with other parents (Kreider, 2002).

One of the foremost experts on parent involvement and school-family-community partnerships, Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University, has developed a research-

based framework that is widely used by thousands of schools and organizations (Epstein, 1992 and 2009). The six types of parent/caregiver involvement that early childhood programs should strive to incorporate are outlined in the framework (See Figure 1, below).

Type 1	**Parenting**: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.
Type 2	**Communicating**: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
Type 3	**Volunteering**: Recruit and organize parent help and support.
Type 4	**Learning at Home**: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions and planning.
Type 5	**Decision Making**: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
Type 6	**Collaborating with Community**: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Figure 1: Epstein's Framework for Six Types of Parent Involvement
This figure lists six types of parent or family involvement.

Source: *Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (1992)*

While Epstein's framework is usually applied to K-12, it easily can be adapted for families of young children, and teachers/caregivers of early childhood programs. The overall principles of the sections of the Indiana Birth-Age 5 Framework relate well to and can be cross-referenced with these principles. Figure 2, on page 4, aligns the two

frameworks and includes additional suggestions that can be used by early childhood providers to inform the design of meaningful family and community involvement that supports children's development.

IDOE Framework Sections	Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement
Goals, Instruction	**Parenting**: Help all families understand child development and establish home environments that support children's development in all domains. Provide parent education (e.g., family literacy) that enables families to become full partners in their children's development and learning.
Assessment, Leadership, Professional Development	**Communicating**: Design effective forms of program-to-home and home-to-program communications about program services and children's progress. Develop user-friendly and regular means of communicating with families (e.g., newsletters, phone calls, one-on-one meetings). If necessary, provide translation services and/or translated materials.
Leadership	**Volunteering**: Recruit and organize family help and support. Welcome, train and provide ongoing support to enable parents and family members to volunteer. Ensure that parents and family members feel welcome in the classroom and center, and that their input and volunteer efforts are recognized and valued.
Instruction, Professional Development	**Learning at Home**: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help children at home with learning activities and planning. Provide information and resources (e.g., toys, books, activities) that enable families to support children's development through daily activities. Conduct home visits to observe, model and ensure transfer of learning from the program to the home environment.
Leadership	**Decision Making**: Include families in program decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives. Support parent committees and individual efforts that promote participation in making decisions that affect services for children and help families to advocate for their children.
Goals, Leadership	**Collaborating with Community**: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen early childhood programs, family practices, and child learning and development. Provide information to families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.

Figure 2: IDOE Birth-Age 5 Framework aligned with Epstein's Framework

This figure aligns Epstein's Types of Parent Involvement with the IDOE Birth-Age 5 Framework.

Positive and successful family involvement rarely happens by chance. It requires planning at the center and classroom level to develop a true partnership between the early childhood program and families (Epstein, 2009 and Sanders, 2003). Training for early childhood staff in the design and implementation of such plans should be part of professional development, since staff may not have prior experience with formal community or family involvement models or multicultural training, which also comes into play when dealing with diverse families. The importance of building strong relationships with parents and families of young children cannot be overstated. Trust between the teacher/caregiver and parent is the foundation for everything the program hopes to achieve with its families – providing personal information on children; asking for help when needed; accepting advice that may be different from their current beliefs and practices; being willing to learn and use new information, strategies and habits (Mullis et al., 2004).

A position statement of the NAEYC specifically addresses how important it is for teachers/caregivers and families to commit to working together for the benefit of their children. It provides the following description of "the kind of relationships that are developmentally appropriate for children, in which family members and practitioners work together" (NAEYC, 2009):

- In reciprocal relationships between practitioners and families, there is mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, and negotiation of conflicts toward achievement of shared goals.
- Practitioners work in collaborative partnerships with families, establishing and maintaining regular, frequent two-way communication with them (with families who do not speak English, teachers should use the language of the home if they are able or try to enlist the help of bilingual volunteers).
- Family members are welcome in the setting, and there are multiple opportunities for family participation. Families participate in program decisions about their children's care and education.

- Teachers acknowledge a family's choices and goals for the child and respond with sensitivity and respect to those preferences and concerns, but without abdicating the responsibility that early childhood practitioners have to support children's learning and development through developmentally appropriate practices.
- Teachers and the family share with each other their knowledge of the particular child and understanding of child development and learning as part of day-to-day communication and in planned conferences. Teachers support families in ways that maximally promote family decision-making capabilities and competence.
- Practitioners involve families as a source of information about the child (before program entry and on an ongoing basis) and engage them in the planning for their child.
- The program links families with a range of services, based on identified resources, priorities, and concerns.

Excerpt from "Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8," NAEYC (2009).

The NAEYC statement clearly echoes the principles found in Epstein's framework. Early childhood programs that adopt these principles pave the way for families and children to make a smooth transition to kindergarten. Not only will families be comfortable with and have prior experience as active participants in their children's learning, they also may find a similar structure for their continued involvement at the elementary school level and beyond. Epstein's framework is a key component of several federally-supported programs, including those under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs), and Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration models (CSRD). Among the many school districts and organizations that have adopted the model, the national organization of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) built upon Epstein's framework when it created its national standards (See Figure 3, page 7).

Standard 1	**Communicating**: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
Standard 2	**Parenting**: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
Standard 3	**Student Learning**: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
Standard 4	**Volunteering**: Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
Standard 5	**School Decision Making and Advocacy**: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
Standard 6	**Collaborating with Community**: Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Figure 3: National PTA Standards for Parent/Family Involvement

This figure lists the National PTA Standards for family involvement in schools.

Source: National PTA Standards for Parent/Family Involvement (1997)

When children transition to kindergarten, schools provide many opportunities for families to be involved and to volunteer. This usually begins with "kindergarten orientation" and "open house" sessions to familiarize parents and children with kindergarten teachers, classrooms, schedules and expectations. Effective early childhood providers collaborate with their local elementary schools and engage in joint planning for families to shepherd them through this process of transition, ensuring that it

is a positive and successful experience. There also should be a process for exchanging student data related to learning progress and needs between the early childhood provider and elementary school staff, especially in cases where there is no shared data collection system.

Summary

When early childhood leaders and teachers commit to creating and delivering age-appropriate, high quality services, and program staff and families commit to working together, children are immersed in a world of enriched learning opportunities and support that enables them to reach their full potential. Involving families at the earliest stages of preschool services establishes a foundation for family-school relationships that can ensure a successful transition to kindergarten and long-term academic success for children. The Indiana Birth-Age 5 Literacy Framework provides a wealth of information to guide those who are responsible for ensuring that our youngest children have a chance to learn, thrive and flourish.

For further information on parent and family involvement resources, models and organizations, visit the web links below:

Center on Schools, Family and Community Partnerships (Johns Hopkins University)
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm

Family Friendly Schools/ 4sight learning
www.familyfriendlyschools.com

Harvard Family Research Project
www.finenetwork.org

Indiana Parent-Teacher Association
http://www.indianapta.org/

Indiana Partnerships Center (PIRC)
http://www.fscp.org/

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
http://www.ncpie.org/

ParentNet
http://www.parentinvolvementmatters.org/

U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov/

GLOSSARY

Alphabet Knowledge – knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters

Alphabetic Principle – the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between the sounds and written symbols of letters

Analyze - to examine carefully by separating into parts and studying how the parts relate

Anecdotal Observation Notes – the teacher records student interactions with peers, print, literature, writing processes, and center activities

Assessment Audit – an evaluation of present data collection procedures and how the results are used to inform instructional practice

Authentic Assessment – assessment based on activities that represent and reflect the actual learning and instruction in the classroom

Big Book – an oversized book, usually a brightly illustrated storybook, that teachers use for shared readings with groups

Concepts of/about Print – the understanding of the use of print and the elements of a book (words tell a story, cover, title, author, beginning and ending, left to right, top to bottom sequence)

Constructivism – a theory of learning that suggests that children build knowledge by actively engaging with their environment; new information is connected with prior knowledge to build new understanding

Conventions of Print – the understanding that there are standard aspects and patterns of print (words are made of letters, use of spaces between words, use of upper case letters, spelling patterns, punctuation, etc.)

Criterion-Referenced – instruments that test a child's mastery toward a particular content or pre-set benchmark

Developmental Checklists – predetermined observation guides to document children's development on specific aspects of language or literacy behavior

Dialogic Reading – refers to a specific technique for shared reading that includes multiple readings of the book, during which the adult uses a systematic approach to engage children in conversation about the illustrations and story

Differentiated Instruction (DI) – lessons and activities that are planned and implemented to meet the specific learning needs of individual children

Direct Instruction (DI) – a structured, systematic lesson, often a commercial program that targets basic skills; the teacher usually implements the instruction using a written guide or script

Emergent Literacy – a developmental approach to learning to read and write; children gradually gain the foundations of language and literacy, beginning at birth and continuing throughout the preschool years

English Learners – Individuals whose first language is not English; levels of English proficiency may vary, from no English to some.

Expressive Language – speaking; ideas expressed using oral words and sentences; development is incremental

Explicit Instruction – teacher directed learning that emphasizes a step-by-step approach to learning specific skills and learning strategies

Formative Assessment – ongoing assessment that informs instruction

Graphemes – the letters that represents the sounds of language

High-Stakes Testing – standardized measures or any one measure that is used to make major decisions about children's promotion or retention, often without using other information about the child

Informal Assessment – a nonstandardized measure of progress, including teacher-made checklists and anecdotal records

Interactive Writing (shared writing) – a teacher scaffolds a child's writing through the use of dictation (writing down what a child says) or supporting a child's early attempts to write (assisting with spelling, punctuation, etc.)

Morning Message – an instructional practice used to model the process of reading and writing; a teacher writes one or more sentences on a chart at the beginning of the school day that informs children about an event or asks a meaningful question leading to further discussion

Norm-Referenced – instruments that are designed and standardized using a normative sample that is representative of the population that will be tested; a standardized measure that is administered, scored, and interpreted comparing the tested group of students against a normative group

Phonemes – the individual sounds that make up spoken words

Phonics – the instruction of the relationship between the sounds of language (phonemes) and the letters that represent the sounds (graphemes); children use this relationship to decode and encode words for reading and writing

Phonological Awareness – the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds (phonemes) and rhyming patterns in spoken language (i.e., substituting the sound /p/ for /c/; cat becomes pat)

Portfolio – a collection of children's work that can be used to provide evidence of a child's progress in reading and writing

Print Knowledge– knowledge of the forms and functions of written language

Progress Monitoring – to measure children's progress toward meeting a particular goal

Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) – an assessment that measures the time to name aloud objects, pictures, colors, or symbols (letters or digits)

Receptive Language – ability to listen and comprehend what is being said; a child's listening vocabulary

Retelling – after the teacher reads a story, a child tells the story; a teacher can use retelling as an informal assessment to measure a child's listening comprehension skills, understanding of sequence, and vocabulary

Scaffolding - an approach to teaching and learning where the teacher assists or supports a child complete a task or skill that is at a level just above what the child is able to perform successfully on his/her own

Standardized Assessment - an instrument or test that has statistical validity and reliability; it is administered using prescribed directions

Summative Assessment – an instrument that measures what children have learned over time – usually administered at the end of the year

Vocabulary – the body of words (lexicon) that are comprehended when listening (receptive) or are used when speaking (expressive)

Word Consciousness – an awareness of, and an interest in, words and their meanings

Word Wall – a designated area of the classroom or a chart that lists targeted vocabulary words; the word wall should be at children's eye level so they are able to interact and refer to the words

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