

## **Developmental Progressions Early Literacy Components**

Scaffolding is an educational term describing the process where the adult adjusts the level of assistance provided to fit the child's abilities. More support is offered when a task is new; less is provided as the child's competence increases, thereby fostering the child's independence and mastery. The underlying concept of scaffolding is "The Zone of Proximal Development," developed by psychologist and educator Lev Vygotsky. It is the distance between what a child can accomplish independently and what he can accomplish with the help of an adult, the region where learning and development take place. Learning takes place most readily when the adult starts with what the child already knows or can do and builds on it to something new

Early literacy skills are developed in a series of stages. In our storytimes, we have children who are at different levels of early literacy skill attainment. To create a positive storytime experience for all children, we need to be able to adjust our storytimes to the abilities of the children who are in attendance. An awareness of each skill and the varying levels of progression of development will help in creating activities and adapting them when needed. Here are some ideas of ways we can scaffold activities we do in storytimes. This does NOT mean you have to do the whole progression in one storytime! They can be used over several storytimes. Or, if an activity seems too easy or too hard, you can make adjustments, either for the whole group or for individual children.

It is important to note that while skills are developed in a certain progression, the sequences also overlap, rather than mastering one before moving onto the next.

**Phonological Awareness:** the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words

Phonological awareness includes the ability to hear sounds (including environmental sounds), produce sounds, discriminate between sounds, hear and identify alliteration (beginning sounds), and rhyme.

- Hears sounds, phonemes
- Imitates sounds and vocalizations
- Distinguishes sentences
- Distinguishes phrases
- Distinguishes words
- Distinguishes compound words
- Distinguishes syllables
- Onset-rime awareness/rhyming awareness
- Distinguishes phonemes
- \*\*\*\*\*
- Hears beginning sounds
- Matches words with same beginning sounds
- Produces words with same beginning sounds
- Identifies beginning sound of a word (toy starts with /t/)
- Hears ending sounds
- Hears sound in middle of word
- \*\*\*\*\*
- Hears rhymes
- Fills in rhyming word to complete a sentence
- May say words that rhyme spontaneously
- Recognizes whether two words rhyme
- Picks out non-rhyming word among three words
- Produces rhyming words when given a word

## Phonological Awareness continued:

In general:

- Easier to hear than to recognize than to produce rhymes  
For example: listening to Jack and Jill and hear Jill and hill rhyme  
Then to recognize the rhyme—does Jill rhyme with hill?  
THEN to produce the rhyme—what word rhymes with Jill?
- Easier to identify\* than to produce
- Easier to blend\*\* than to segment\*\*\*
- Easier to synthesize/blend than to analyze/segment
- Easier to use visual prompting than not
- Easier when using multiple-choice than requiring more memory or verbal production

\*Identity tasks—which word does not rhyme; first-sound matching

\*\*Synthesis tasks—syllable or phoneme blending /a/ + /t/ = at

\*\*\*Analysis tasks—word or syllable segmenting, deleting, phoneme-counting tasks bat without the /b/ = at

Segmenting tiger is ti-ger

Deleting a syllable: What is tiger without the ger/? = ti

[Phillips, Beth, Jeanine Clancy-Menchetti, Christopher Lonigan, "Successful Phonological Awareness Instruction with Preschool Classroom: Lessons from the Classroom" from Topics in Early Childhood Special Ed v. 28#1 May 2008, p.3-17]

### Activities that support phonological awareness

- Encourage children to listen for animal sounds or other sounds as you share books
- Encourage children to make these sounds
- Use songs, stories and rhymes that play with language (alliteration, rhythm of language, rhyming)
- Clap or tap out syllables in words while singing or saying rhymes
- Use songs like Willaby Walloby Woo to focus on rhyming using the child's name
- Use the theme of a storytime or a word in the title of a book to play word games
  - Change first sound of the word
  - What other words start with the same sound
  - Clap out the syllables in the word
  - Ask if two words rhyme
  - Which two of three words rhyme
  - Think of rhyming words
- Have children fill in rhyming word in a song or rhyme, while you stop before saying the word
- Encourage children to make up their own rhymes, nonsense words are good!

**Print Awareness/Conventions:** The underlying concept is the understanding that print has meaning. Aspects of print awareness include recognizing environmental print, making sense of the print all around (signs, books, lists, notes), knowing how to handle a book, recognizing the direction of print, understanding the features of print such as punctuation.

Environmental Print:

- Focuses eyes on things in environment
- Notices logos of familiar places
- Relates logo to the place or context (restroom signs for men/women)
- Relates items in newspapers, advertisements, catalogs to real items
- Understands functions of print such as signage, making a list, restaurant menu, etc.
- Asks what a word says

Writing:

- Gains control of hand motions
- Gains control of finger motions
- Makes marks on paper
- Scribbles
- More controlled scribbles, repeating forms
- Tells you what a picture means
- Makes letter-like forms
- Draws letters
- Tells you what a word says even if it is not a real word
- Writes name

**Print Awareness/Conventions continued:**

Becoming familiar with books:

- Looks at pages of a book
- Chews on book
- Bats hands at pages
- Plays with books
- Brings books to adult to read
- Relates a picture and to a real object
- Makes up a story while turning pages (may or may not be able to understand what child says)
- Points to a word and says a word even if it is not the correct word
- Runs finger under text even though child may not be saying the correct words or even tracking word for word
- Reorients a book to proper position (if upside-down or backwards)
- Recognizes a word by sight
- Recognizes books by cover
- Runs finger under text from (in English) left to right and top to bottom, may or may not track actual words
- Asks about some features of print—punctuation, callouts, etc.
- Knows that books have authors and illustrators
- Knows what authors and illustrators do

Activities to support print awareness:

- For infants/toddlers, hand out board books for adults to read with their children, allowing them to turn the pages.
- Use nametags for adults and children.
- Run your finger under the words in the title of the book
- Always say the author and illustrator of the book
- Add author—written by and illustrator—the pictures done by
- After reading the book, come back to a page to point out words where the font reflects the meaning of the word
- Before or after reading the book, point out callouts or other features of print
- Start by holding the book upside down; either you are the children will point out it is upside down.
- Point out words that are part of illustrations. Many non-fiction books label illustrations.
- Encourage parents to point out signs as they go about their day.
- Encourage parents to have writing materials available and to let their children see them writing.
- Use writing activities as part of craft/activity time.

Letter Knowledge: knowing that the same letter can look different, that letters have names and represent sounds.

- Plays with shapes (balls, blocks)
- Recognizes and names shapes
- Notices how things are alike and different
- Matches things (socks in the laundry)
- Plays with puzzles (single piece per item, handles on pieces)
- Sorts items into categories
- Sings the alphabet song
- Recognizes two letters that are the same
- Recognizes some letters in alphabet books or in titles of books
- Plays with more complicated puzzles (several pieces per item)
- Identifies letters, especially those in his/her name
- Produces the sounds to some letters

Activities to Support Letter Knowledge:

- Talk about shapes
- Talk about alike and different—with pictures in books
- Play matching games (mitten match on flannel board)
- Suggest matching games for parents to play with children at home
- Encourage parents to have writing materials easily available at home
- Sing alphabet song to different tunes (Mary Had a Little Lamb, etc.)
- Share alphabet books in different ways
- Make letters meaningful by using the ones in a child's name or in the word of something a child is interested in—dinosaurs, snakes
- Allow children to play with magnet or foam letters after storytime
- Use writing activities as part of craft/activity time
- Use nametags—encourage children to write their own names

**Vocabulary:** knowing the meanings of words

Knowing the meanings of words is based on a child's hearing many words, words in context of actions and situations, from simple words to more complex. It includes the ability to follow directions, again from the more simple—Please give me your bottle, to the more complex—Please get a paper towel and wipe up the water on the floor.

Receptive vocabulary is the words a child can understand but not necessarily say. Expressive vocabulary is the words a child can say or verbalize. Children (and adults) have larger receptive vocabularies than expressive ones. Expressive language is dependent on receptive language. Expressive language will be discussed in the next section under Narrative Skills.

Development from more concrete to the more abstract

- Things
  - Concepts and Feelings
  - Ideas
- \*\*\*\*
- Turns head to sounds
  - Shows interest in the talk of those around him
  - Responds to own name
  - Follows adult pointing to an object and naming it
  - Recognizes familiar voices
  - Understands gestures
  - Responds to simple requests especially with gestures as clues
  - Identifies objects and familiar people (Where's Daddy? Where's your nose?)
  - Understands and responds to questions from concrete and simple to more complex ideas
  - Follows simple directions without gestures as clues
  - Follows directions of two or more steps that relate to familiar experiences
  - Follows multi-step directions

Activities that support receptive vocabulary

- Speak with your child in the language that is most comfortable to you. Use complex language and ideas.
- Use parentese (higher pitch, shorter sentences, elongate vowels, speak very clearly, repeat) with infants
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help children understand meaning
- Talk often with children about a variety of topics even when you know they do not understand what you are saying
- Use language that the child understands while introducing new words, explaining them when necessary
- Don't be afraid to repeat the same words and phrases. Children learn through repetition.
- Use rich language when describing what you are doing use nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, not pronouns. "Put it there," offers less vocabulary than "Look at this green bean seed. We are going to plant it in the soft, moist soil. First you make a hole with your finger. Then put the green bean seed in the dark brown soil."
- Give positive feedback when the child understands what you are saying or follows directions
- Use books and stories as a vehicle for introducing new words, concepts, and ideas
- Bring in real thing to show something in a story
- Point to picture as you say the word
- Use your voice intonation and sounds to convey meaning
- Discuss word/idea before reading book
- Use realia or flannel board to represent item or to demonstrate idea or concept
- Talk about an aspect of the book, a situation being described or background information to help children understand

**Background Knowledge—Conceptual and Content Knowledge:** A child's prior knowledge, what they know before they enter school. Develops from the more concrete and general to more abstract and detailed.

Understanding time sequence:

- more concrete—first put on socks, then shoes
- recount multiple events in order with increasing detail
- recount events in order that occurred in the past
- recount events in order using imagination

Use of factual books

- Look at realistic pictures or photos, listen as you label items
- Understands more complex information
- Asks questions about the topic
- Adds information about the topic

**Background Knowledge—Narrative Skills:** expressive part of language, the child's ability to describe things and events, to tell and retell stories. They learn the structure of story. Strong narrative skills help develop comprehension.

- Babbles and coos, cries
- Imitates your sounds
- Uses gestures for meaning (raises arms to be picked up)
- Names familiar objects and people
- Repeats/uses words even if does not sound exactly the same
- Repeats/uses phrases even if does not sound exactly the same
- Repeats words in an understandable way
- Repeats phrases in understandable way
- Expresses needs and feelings using words
- Uses simple phrases about people or objects not visible
- Tells simple story—one or two phrases or sentences
- Asks questions to get further information or understanding
- Speaks in full sentences
- Uses language to share stories and ideas (decontextualized language)
- Uses language to solve problems
- Uses long sentences and tells complex/detailed stories
- Uses language to discuss relationships between ideas, events and actions (explanatory talk)

## Activities to support background knowledge and narrative skills:

### Conversations

- Speak with your child in the language that is most comfortable to you. Use complex language and ideas.
- When talking with your baby, pause until s/he babbles back. Be patient.
- Look interested when your child talks to you even if you cannot understand what s/he says.
- Have your child repeat words you say.
- Keep conversations going!
- When children are just learning to speak words, allow 5 to 12 seconds for them to respond.
- Encourage your child to tell you what they know about a topic.
- Ask open-ended questions (cannot be answered yes/no) as you speak with your child. How they are feeling, what might happen, what they would do if . . .
- Provide toys that encourage dramatic and open-ended play.
- Encourage your child to tell you stories or to describe events.
- Talk about things you know to help your children understand the world around them.

### Using books

- Tell them ahead of time what you expect.
- Have your child say a repeated phrase in a book or rhyme.
- Encourage your child to tell you about a picture in a book or one s/he has drawn.
- Ask open-ended questions (cannot be answered with yes/no) about pictures in a book
- Read a book over and over again so your child becomes familiar with it. Then have your child retell stories you have read. Use props to make it easier to remember.
- Encourage your child to act out stories.
- Encourage your child to talk about what is happening in a picture or a story, relating it to their own experiences.
- Use factual books with photographs and/or clear pictures

## **Developmental Progressions Support by Activity**

Here are some ideas of ways we can scaffold activities we do in storytimes. This does NOT mean you have to do the whole progression in one storytime! They can be used over several storytimes. Or, if an activity seems too easy or too hard, you can make adjustments, either for the whole group or for individual children.

### Using Flannel Board:

Goal for Child: Encouraging independence for toddlers

- Present flannel board rhyme or story for children to watch.
- Encourage children to put up flannel board piece, encouraging adult help.
- Encourage child to put up flannel board piece on his own.

### Using Flannel Board:

Goal for Child: Tell story using flannel board pieces as prompts

- Encourage children to repeat your word(s) as you put up flannel board piece(s), saying the words with the child.
- Encourage children to say word(s) as you put up flannel board piece(s), but you do not say them. Along came a . . . .
- Encourage children to retell story you have just told as you put up flannel board pieces.
- Encourage child to tell his/her own story as you put up flannel board pieces.
- Encourage child to tell story and put up the flannel board pieces himself.

### Story Types to Retell

Goal for Child: To have child retell a story

- Story with animal sounds
- Story that has a repeated phrase (Little Red Hen—"Not I", Brown Bear)
- Story with repeated action (Three Billy Goats Gruff—slapping knees for trip-trap)
- Stories that are shorter easier than longer ones
- Stories children are familiar with easier than ones hearing for the first time
- Story with no repetition (Llama Llama Red Pajama)
- Cumulative Story (Jump Frog Jump)

### Retelling a Story

Goal for Child: To have child retell/act out a story

- Story with animal sounds; children repeat the sound you make
- Children say the sound as you point to animal
- Children repeat a familiar word you say
- Children say word based on a signal, sign language, or pointing to a picture
- Children repeat an unfamiliar word you say
- Children say unfamiliar word based on a signal, sign language, or pointing to a picture
- Children repeat a phrase
- Children say a phrase based on signal, sign language or pointing to picture
- Children imitate your voice—loud, soft, etc.
- Children imitate your action for a repeated word or phrase
- Children do the action at your prompting
- Children act out one part of a story
- Children act out whole story



### Rhymes/Fingerplays

Goal for Child: To say and do fingerplays/action rhymes independently

- Repetitive rhyme (Five Little Monkeys)
- Non-repetitive rhyme (Jack and Jill)
- Body motion—seated, then standing
- Finger motions
- Adult doing action to or on the child
- Children doing action themselves

### Repetition

Goal for Child: Become comfortable putting actions to words/rhymes/stories

- You demonstrate action
- Participants imitate you/join in with action on repeated word/phrase/action
- You repeat often enough that they are comfortable doing the action
- Encourage participants to do on their own, all together as a group
- Encourage participants to do on their own, different groups do different parts

### To Encourage Participation

Goal for All Participants: to participate!

- Use something more familiar than less familiar
- Use shorter rather than longer item
- Give participants an opportunity to repeat
- Give a signal or prompt where they are to join in
- Involve adult with children in activity