



## Sources of Information About Early Literacy Development

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### Abstract

Selected references to the major domains of early literacy development are included in this bibliography. The domains include phonological awareness, oral language, print awareness, alphabet awareness, written language, and text comprehension. The particular sources of information are ones that provide a foundation for understanding those aspects of the early literacy development of young children leading to subsequent literacy competence (e.g. reading, writing, and the cognitive capabilities needed to produce and comprehend text).

This *CASEmaker* bibliography includes selected references to the major domains of early literacy development of young children. The domains are ones considered the key elements of a child's early literacy development and subsequent literacy success (U.S. Department of Education, 2003; Snow, Burns, & Griffith, 1998). The domains include the development and emerging mastery of: (1) phonological awareness, (2) oral language, (3) written language, (4) text comprehension, (5) print awareness, and (6) alphabet awareness. Research now indicates that child competencies in these early literacy skills are related to children's subsequent success in a number of literacy related competencies (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003a; Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003b; Learning First Alliance, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The *Prescription for Practice* includes references that practitioners should find helpful for developing a better understanding of the key characteristics of each literacy domain.

### Early Literacy Development

The references in this *CASEmaker* bibliography are organized into six sections, corresponding to each early literacy domain: Phonological awareness, oral language, print awareness, alphabet awareness, written language, and text comprehension.

#### *Phonological Awareness*

Phonological awareness refers to a child's ability

to hear, identify, manipulate, and use the sounds spoken in words. This includes, but is not limited to, rhyming, blending, and segmenting of words (Armbruster et al., 2003b). The following articles include descriptions of different aspects of phonological awareness:

- Anthony, J. L., & Lonigan, C. J. (2004). The nature of phonological awareness: Converging evidence from four studies of preschool and early grade school children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*, 43-55.
- Carroll, J. M., & Snowling, M. J. (2004). Language and phonological skills in children at high risk of reading difficulties. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*, 631 - 640.
- Reiner, K. (1998). Developing a kindergarten phonemic awareness program: An action research project. *Reading Teacher, 52*, 70-73.
- Stahl, S. A., & McKenna, M. C. (2000, April). *The con-*

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“Good reads” for those interested in understanding the early literacy development of young children include the following:

- DeBaryshe, B. D. (1993). Joint picture-book reading correlates of early oral language skill. *Journal of Child Language, 20*, 455-461.
- Dickinson, D. K., & Tabors, P. O. (2002). Fostering language and literacy in classrooms and homes. *Young Children, 57*(2), 10-18.
- Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2002). Use of storybook reading to increase print awareness in at-risk children. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 11*, 17-29.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1990). The influence of literacy-enriched play settings on preschoolers’ engagement with written language. *National Reading Conference Yearbook, 39*, 179-187.
- Nodelman, P. (2001). A is for ..... what? The function of alphabet books. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 1*, 235-253.
- Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. H. (2000). Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom. *Reading Teacher, 54*, 130 - 143.

*current development of phonological awareness, word recognition, and spelling.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

- Yopp, H. K. (1995). A test for assessing phonemic awareness in young children. *Reading Teacher, 49*, 20-29.
- Yopp, H. K., & Yopp, R. H. (2000). Supporting phonemic awareness development in the classroom. *Reading Teacher, 54*, 130-143.

### Oral Language

Oral language refers to a child’s ability to relate sounds to meaning that involve the phonological (the rules for combining sounds), semantic (word meaning), and syntactic (rules having to do with the order of words in sentences) components and elements of language use. Oral language also includes a child’s ability to use words to communicate ideas and thoughts through vocabulary, expressive language, and listening comprehension. In-

formation on oral language development is described in the following sources.

- Bryan, J. K. (1996). Kindergarten children’s uses of oral language and social interaction in literacy activities during unstructured play. In E. G. Sturtevant & W. M. Linek (Eds.), *Growing Literacy: The eighteenth yearbook: A peer reviewed publication of the College Reading Association, 1996* (pp. 2-16). Harrisonburg, VA: College Reading Association.
- DeBaryshe, B. D. (1993). Joint picture-book reading correlates of early oral language skill. *Journal of Child Language, 20*, 455-461.
- Dickinson, D. K., & Beals, D. E. (1994). Not by print alone: Oral language supports for early literacy development. In D. F. Lancy, (Ed.), *Children’s emergent literacy* (pp. 29-40). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Isbell, R., Sobol, J., Lindauer, L., & Lowrance, A. (2004). The effects of storytelling and story reading on the oral language complexity and story comprehension of young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 32*, 157-163.
- Roskos, K. A., Tabors, P. O., & Lenhart, L. A. (2004). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Smith, M. W., & Dickinson, D. K. (1994). Describing oral language opportunities and environments in Head Start and other preschool classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 9*, 345-366.

### Print Awareness

Print awareness refers to a child’s recognition of the rules and characteristics of the written language. Print awareness includes the child’s ability to understand that words in print correspond to speech and directionality (e.g. reading left to right, top to bottom). The development of print awareness is described in the following sources.

- Adams, M. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Huba, M. E., Robinson, S. S., & Kontos, S. (1989). Pre-readers’ understanding of the purposes of print and subsequent reading achievement. *Journal of Educational Research, 82*, 210-215.
- Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2002). Use of storybook reading to increase print awareness in at-risk children. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 11*, 17-29.
- Lawhon, T. (2000). Creating language and print awareness environments for young children [Electronic

version]. *Contemporary Education*, 71(3), 5-9.

- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1993). Access to print for children of poverty: Differential effects of adult mediation and literacy-enriched play settings on environmental and functional print tasks. *American Educational Research Journal*, 30, 95-122.
- Share, D. L., & Gur, T. (1999). How reading begins: A Study of preschoolers' print identification strategies [Electronic version]. *Cognition and Instruction*, 17, 177-213.

### **Alphabet Awareness**

Alphabet awareness refers to the child's ability to recognize and name the letters of the alphabet in isolation, the context of word recognition, and as part of word use. A child develops alphabet awareness by exposure and opportunity to experiment with and write the letters of the alphabet. Several articles that include descriptions of the development of alphabet awareness are:

- Fielding-Barnsley, R. (1997). Explicit instruction in decoding benefits children high in phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 1, 85-98.
- Nodelman, P. (2001). A is for ..... what? The function of alphabet books. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 1, 235-253.
- Speece, D. L., Mills, C., Ritchey, K. D., & Hillman, E. (2003). Initial evidence that letter fluency tasks are valid indicators of early reading skill. *Journal of Special Education*, 32, 223-233.
- Strickland, D. S., & Schickedanz, J. A. (2004). *Learning about print in preschool*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Thatcher, D. H. (2002). Beyond the ABCs: The pleasures of the alphabet book. *Michigan Reading Journal*, 35(1), 21-26.

### **Written Language**

Written language refers to a child's ability to represent ideas and words in print form. When children learn to write the letters of the alphabet, their name, and other words, they develop an understanding of the conventions of print and written language. Information about the development of written language is described in:

- Crowell, D. C., Kawakami, A. J., & Wong, J. L. (1986). Emerging literacy: Reading-writing experiences in a kindergarten classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 144-149.

- Dyson, A. H. (2002). Writing and children's symbolic repertoires: Development unhinged. In S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson, (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Frijters, J. C., Barron, R. W., & Brunello, M. (2000). Direct and mediated influences of home literacy and literacy interest on prereaders' oral vocabulary and early written language skill. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 466-477.
- Neuman, S. B., & Roskos, K. (1990). The influence of literacy-enriched play settings on preschoolers' engagement with written language. *National Reading Conference Yearbook*, 39, 179-187.
- Sénéchal, M., LeFevre, J.-A., Thomas, E. M., & Daley, K. E. (1998). Differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33, 96-116.
- Sulzby, E. (1990). Assessment of emergent writing and children's language while writing. In L.M. Morrow & J. K. & Smith, (Eds.), *Assessment for instruction in early literacy* (pp. 83-109). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

### **Text Comprehension**

Text comprehension refers to a child's ability to read, listen, and process the meaning of ideas represented in text. Text comprehension is developed in the context of a child's working vocabulary, ability to relate one's own experience to the printed text, and the ability to monitor one's understanding of printed material. Information on text comprehension is described in the following sources:

- Dickinson, D. K., & Smith, M. W. (1994). Long-term effects of preschool teachers' book readings on low-income children's vocabulary and story comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 29, 104-122.
- Morrow, L. M. (1985). Retelling stories: A strategy for improving children's comprehension, concept of story structure, and oral language complexity. *Elementary School Journal*, 85, 647-661.
- Morrow, L. M., & Gambrell, L. B. (2004). *Using children's literature in preschool: Comprehending and enjoying books*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Pardo, L. S. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *Reading Teacher*, 58, 272-279.
- Smolkin, L. B., & Donovan, C. A. (2000). *The contexts of comprehension: Information book read alouds and*

*comprehension acquisition* (Ciera Report #2-009). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan School of Education, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.

Teale, W. H., & Martinez, M. G. (1996). Reading aloud to young children: Teachers' reading styles and kindergartners' text comprehension. In C. Pontecorvo, M. Orsolinin, B. Burge, & L. B. Ressnick, (Eds.), *Children's early text construction* (321-344). Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum.

### Conclusion

This *CASEmaker* bibliography included references to selected aspects of the major domains of young children's early literacy development. The material included in the references provide a foundation for understanding young children's early literacy development and what aspects of early literacy competence are related to subsequent literacy competence. Additionally, the references include information that practitioners can use to provide children learning opportunities for developing the skills necessary to become competent in literacy. The interested reader should find the following websites helpful in learning more about the domains of early development:

International Reading Association <http://reading.org>

Literacy Development in  
Young Children <http://www.earlyliteracytoday.org>

National Center for Family  
Literacy <http://famlit.org>

National Institute for Literacy <http://nifl.org>

### References

- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2003a). *A child becomes a reader: Birth through preschool*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.
- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2003b). *A child becomes a reader: Kindergarten through third grade*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.
- Learning First Alliance. (2000). *Every child reading: A professional development guide*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved December 1, 2004, from [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)
- National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *Guidance for the Early Reading First Program: Subpart B, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) as Amended by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Washington, DC: Author.

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