

EMERGENT Literacy Development

- Did you know?
- How are spoken language and literacy connected ?
- Early warning signs to watch out for
- Who is at risk?
- What can parents do to promote Emergent Literacy?
- What if a problem is suspected?



Did you know?

- Language development is the foundation for reading and written language
- Children start to learn language from the day they are born
- The optimal window for language development is 0-5 years
- Reading skills start to develop before 2 months of age
- Poor reading skills are likely to cause significant academic challenges

How are spoken language and literacy connected ?

As children grow and develop their speech and language skills develop with listening, sound play and talking experiences. Literacy development begins at birth and continues through the pre-school years.

During early listening, speech and language development children learn skills that are important to the development of reading and writing (literacy).

One language skill that is strongly connected to literacy development is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize the separate sounds in words. Phonological awareness includes the ability of children to play with rhyme, alliteration and isolating sounds. As children engage in listening, play and activities where print is involved they become aware of sounds in words. Children who struggle with sound awareness often do not become successful readers and writers.

Literacy skills further develop when children see and interact with print in everyday situations. An example is seeing Dad reading a newspaper and making a comment about the content to Mom. Children's enjoyment and appreciation of print grow gradually as they begin to recognize logos, scribble and point out signs or recognize words on sweet wrappers.

Gradually children combine listening and speaking with their experience with print to become ready to learn to read and write.

Early warning signs to watch out for

- Persistent baby talk
- No interest in joint book reading



- Poor language development
- Poor speech
- Difficulty in understanding simple directions
- Failure to recognize own name in print
- Difficulty in learning rhymes and songs

Who is at risk?

Any Child that

- was prematurely born
- have a history of chronic middle ear infections
- has a developmental delay
- experiences poor parent-child interaction
- has limited access or exposure to print
- is not regularly read to from age appropriate books
- has a family history of language and literacy disabilities
- has a chronic sick parent or who has a chronic illness

What can parents do to promote Emergent Literacy?

- Talk to your child about events in the everyday environment
- Repeat your child's babble strings and add to them
- Talk to your child during routine activities e.g. bath time. Name objects, talk about what you do, allow your child to respond. Add to your child's response.



- Draw your child's attention to print in everyday situations e.g. store logos and food containers
- Engage your child in songs and rhymes
- Draw your child's attention to words and pictures in books
- Re-read your child's favorite book often
- Make your own books to read with your child from magazine pictures and photographs
- Encourage drawing and scribbling by providing a variety of materials e.g. food paint, finger paint, crayons, markers and any paper
- Encourage your child to tell the story you have read together
- Play listening games

What if a problem is suspected?

Literacy development can be assessed in early childhood. Intervention and parent training started as early as possible will promote reading and writing skills development.

Developmental areas determining reading readiness are:

- Expressive language
- Phonological awareness
- Print awareness
- Meta-linguistic knowledge

Other developmental areas involved in Early Literacy Development are:

- Attention
- Fine motor skills
- Visual perception
- Auditory perception
- Parent-child interaction

When a child is at risk of an Emergent Literacy Development delay, or when warning signs are present, all of the above areas of the child's development should be assessed. Appropriate intervention and parent training should be planned to prevent future reading and written language difficulties.

The quality of a child's early literacy skills determines his later literacy skills and academic performance

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