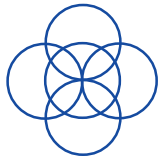


Birth to 6 EVENTS



Waisman Center

A BULLETIN FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SERVING YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Issue 62—Fall 2009

Bridges to Literacy: Early Routines That Promote Later School Success

Sharon Rosenketter, Ph.D. and Lauren R. Barton, MA
ZERO TO THREE, February/March 2002, pp 33-38.

Full text link:
www.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Vol_22-4f.pdf?docID=1182&AddInterest=1145

Summary by Arianna Keil

Authors Rosenketter and Barton identify 11 meaningful ways, or “bridges,” that families and communities can aid the youngest children in their efforts to become readers and writers. They note that play provides young children the best opportunity for these strategies to be practiced and integrated in a safe environment.

Bridges to Literacy, and “How To’s” for parents and home visiting professionals:

1. Relationships that include print

Reading together daily with a parent or caregiver can provide young children with positive feelings associated with this activity. It can also be calming and offer security.

How To: The child sits on the lap of (or next to) an adult as a book is shared. Both reading the printed words (occasionally following with a finger as words are read) or pointing to pictures and talking about images are effective. Ideally, this occurs daily, even if only for a brief period of time.

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This issue of Birth to 6 EVENTS focuses on early literacy. Skills like decoding and meaning making are strongly related to, but distinct from, the complex task of reading. These skills develop along a continuum during a child’s early years. Increasingly, both anecdotal and research evidence suggests that addressing early literacy skills in very young children is an essential piece of ensuring that children are successful in school and life beyond.

The Journal Highlights section of this issue reviews many activities promoting early literacy for infants all the way through preschoolers. Want concrete ideas of how to share this with families? Read the “How To’s” for the 11 bridges to literacy outlined on pages 1-3.

Wisconsin-specific efforts in early literacy (including the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards) are addressed in this issue, along with national resources on early literacy and “research bites” from our partners at Head Start. Your State Birth to 3 team has spent time considering how this topic influences the Office of Special Education Programs’ Child Outcomes Indicator 2. Read their contribution on page 11.

To promote literacy in children with communication challenges, we review strategies for children who require alternative/augmentative communication on pages 4-5.

Finally, we’ve said farewell to Arianna Keil and Mary Peters as they’ve transition from state level work to other positions on pages 16-17. 

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2. Responsiveness

Following the child's lead, parents or caregivers give attention to, repeat, expand and affirm the child's attempts at using words. Learning that language is enjoyable and gets results are foundational for early literacy.

How To: Parents respond verbally to child's vocalizations. If the child says "Dada!" when seeing her father, the adult might say, "Yes, that's your daddy. Daddy loves you."

3. Repetition

Repetition of familiar words and actions helps children build and maintain connections in their brains and nervous systems. Including rhymes and rhythms throughout routines also helps to surround children with diverse sounds and words.

How To: Home visitors can use or encourage parents to use set phrases to mark activities or transitions. Examples of such phrases include "time to choose," "let's have lunch," and "scrub a dub dub."

4. Modeling and motivation

Family routines demonstrating the importance of reading in the lives of adults draws attention to the value of reading in everyday life.

How To:

- Hang images that include print at children's eye level in infant and toddlers' environments.
- Write and read aloud children's verbal comments about their artwork.
- Showily read and write in children's presence, in order to draw attention to what you are doing.
- Act out stories, create stories, role play and refer to story characters during everyday activities also link prose to daily life.

5. Oral language

Exposure to a lot of verbal interaction helps children not only learn to talk, but also facilitates later literacy acquisition and overall school performance. Researchers in this area Betty Hart and Todd Risley (1999) state that "the data show that the first 3 years of experience put in place a trajectory of vocabulary growth and the foundations of analytic and symbolic competencies that will make a lasting difference to how children perform in later years."

How To:

- Home visitors can model for families responsive talking in conversation and play with infants and young children.
- Home visitors can also model for parents parallel talk, or side-by-side verbal descriptions of work and play activities that help children link language with actions and objects.
- Encourage parents to dialogue with their children about their everyday thoughts, feelings and activities. The most important aspect of parent talk appears to simply be its amount.

6. Experiences in the world

The more ideas a child has experienced personally, the easier she will find word identification (guessing the meaning of a word), and predicting nonfiction descriptions and fiction storylines involving a known concept. Personal experience also is essential in helping children find meaning in topics.

How To:

- Providing and talking about ordinary experiences with young children introduces them to people, objects and actions they will later experience in print. Parents can be reassured that discussion around everyday activities like going grocery shopping, and trips to the park or grandma's house provide ample opportunity to learn many concepts.
- Watching television can also help here, if adults watch the program with the child and talk about what they see.

7. Experiences with the tools of literacy

Young children and their families are ideally surrounded by the tools of literacy, or print in daily life. Examples include catalogs, newspapers, sale bills, billboards, picture and story books, magnetic letters, writing instruments and computers.

How To: Libraries are great resources for ensuring that every home has access to developmentally appropriate books. Encourage parents to attend library story times with their toddlers and preschoolers.

8. Experiences with sounds

A child learning to read must pair visual symbols with sounds. Using rhythms and rhymes throughout infant and toddlers' daily activities helps build auditory requirements for literacy.

How To: Encourage parents and caregivers to purposefully increase what they do with the sounds of language, through

- Word play with similarities (“Tell me a word that starts like ‘pig’”).
- Word play with differences (“Let’s say ‘pig’ with a buh sound”).
- Songs that play with language (such as *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, *Bingo* and *Raffi’s Apples and Bananas*).
- Jump rope rhymes, songs made up by caregivers, jingles using the child’s name or other ways of encouraging attention to individual sounds.

9. Experiences with decontextualized language

In order to read, children must be able to imagine times and places that are not physically present. This is a challenge for children who are often just learning to take another person’s perspective.

- How To:**
- Tell children joint stories about experiences with people or places they have experienced but are not currently present. In joint stories, an adult prompts the child to fill in missing pieces of the story with guided questions, such as “Who was it who had a birthday and gave us cake?”
 - Play games like peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek.
 - Share riddles and jokes with preschoolers.

10. Experiences with writing

Scribbles and invented spelling by young children help them realize not only that written words stand for spoken words, but also that words stand for objects, actions or ideas.

- How To:**
- Adults can write down an oral story told by a young child.
 - Children aged 3 or 4 can engage in daily journal writing with picture symbols.
 - It is now recommended that preschoolers write a lot with relatively few corrections, so that greater enjoyment of writing gradually leads to conventionalized spellings and more self-confidence.

Early literacy is important for all children. It is especially important, however, that children in groups at higher risk for literacy challenges have access to materials and experiences to facilitate early literacy.

Literacy problems are more common among:

- children in poverty,
- children of color,
- children whose primary language is not English,
- those with preschool hearing impairments and
- children whose parents had difficulty learning to read (Snow, 1998).

11. Hypothesis construction and testing

In order to read, children have to combine many observations and then guess as to the print’s meaning.

How To: Have conversations with children that encourage them to think about different pieces of information and then draw conclusions. For instance, “It is time for lunch and all the forks are dirty. What could we do?”

In the end, the authors conclude that the most important actions for emergent literacy are for adults or older children to frequently share words and print with young children, and to pair words with actions and feelings as they happen. 🌀

Encouraging the Development of Literacy Skills with Children Who Require Alternative/Augmentative Communication (AAC)

-Ellen Franzone, National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, Waisman Center

Many parents fondly remember their child's earliest years through the lens of storybooks: from *Goodnight Moon* to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* to *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*. But for parents of children who require alternative/augmentative communication, there are often challenges to the book sharing process. Tasks of daily living, such as bathing and feeding, can take up large parts of the day. Positioning equipment like bolsters and adapted strollers make it difficult to cuddle on the couch with a book. And AAC devices themselves can be cumbersome and unwieldy, seemingly impossible to access while also holding a book.

However, literacy skills (the ability to read and write) can open up a world of possibilities for individuals who require AAC. With literacy, these individuals are able to generate communication on their own, by writing out messages rather than relying on pictures or symbols that others have made available to them. Literacy skills allow children to more fully participate in school. With an eye on adulthood, functional literacy skills are required for many activities of daily living (e.g., making grocery lists and keeping track of appointments), and almost all jobs. These skills are becoming increasingly necessary for social connections (email, texting, Internet use). Although there is obviously a tremendous need for AAC users to be functionally literate, many experience difficulties in their development of reading and writing skills.

When comparing home literacy experiences of children under age six who use AAC versus children without disability, Light and Kelford Smith (1993) found that while the amount of printed material in the homes and the frequency of book reading activities were roughly the same, there were some differences between the groups. These differences included:

- Children who used AAC were less likely to initiate book-reading activities, possibly due to motoric challenges that made it difficult to bring a book to a parent or sibling.
- Children who used AAC were less likely to engage in prewriting activities. This may be due to a lack of access to adaptations or computer systems that were required because of physical disabilities.
- Children who used AAC were less likely to ask questions about the story, most certainly due to challenges with expressive language.

There are things that parents and professionals can do to facilitate the reading and writing skills of young children who use AAC. Providing certain experiences and introducing certain skills prior to kindergarten can help level the playing field as the child enters his/her school years. The following ideas may get you started, and additional resources listed at the end of this article will provide more in depth information.

- Be mindful of the challenges the child may have in initiating a book reading activity. Parents, siblings, childcare providers – anyone can bring a book to the child or facilitate their selection of a book!
- Think about positioning: while sitting on an adult's lap may be cozy, it may prevent the adult from seeing the child's facial expressions (so important for pre-verbal kids!), gestures, or signs. Face-to-face positioning allows the child and adult to see each other, and also makes it easier to share attention around the book and/or a speech generating device or picture board.
- Prewriting activities include more than scribbling with crayons! Adaptations are available that allow children with physical disabilities to learn how to control a mouse, type, and produce written documents, (e.g., letters to Grandma, journal pages, printing out interesting pictures). An occupational therapist is an important resource in the identification of these adaptations.
- Make sure that the AAC is available during book-reading activities. That means that picture boards, speech generating devices, and/or PECS books are close at hand and *used* throughout the activity. If a child uses signs, the reading partner should be aware of the signs and be able to understand and respond to them.
- Always, always pair symbols with the written word. For even the youngest AAC users, this pairing starts the association between text and meaning.
- Language instruction is imperative! Frequently, our focus for kids who use AAC is on functional language.

continued on next page

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

However, if our goal is for them to be literate, they need to have an understanding of the more complex vocabulary and grammar (i.e., syntax) that they will encounter in text.

- Find books and stories that are of interest to individual kids. If a child is obsessed with *Thomas the Train*, find books that include Thomas and his friends.
- Make personalized books. Use photos to put together a picture book that tells the story of a family trip, for example. Write or type sentences on the same page as the photo, and tell the story in a logical sequence.
- Provide opportunities for the child to respond to questions about the story. Because he/she may not be able to verbally respond, arrange another way for them to answer. Ideas include pointing to symbols, eye pointing to symbols, making a selection on a speech generating device, or producing a sign.
- Rereading a book several times is a great way for any child to increase their understanding of the links between words, pictures, and meaning.
- Phonological awareness activities are a great way to help young children begin to understand that words are made up of different sounds. Ways to target phonological awareness include:
 - Any kind of rhyming activities-nursery rhymes like *Jack and Jill*, songs that play with sounds like *I Like to Eat Apples and Bananas* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmW3aBqZtKQ>), or rhyming books like the ones by Dr. Seuss or Sandra Bonyton.
 - Working on sound/symbol awareness, which is the understanding of what sound different letters make. Teachers can be helpful in identifying ways to teach this, and there are great resources out there (including the *Leap Frog Letter Factory* video, which is a really nice tool).
 - Helping kids isolate the initial sound of a word. Explain that we're going to listen for the /t/ sound (use the sound, not the letter name "tee"). Provide and label pictures representing several words, and have the child identify which word starts with the /t/ sound.
 - Working with kids to blend sounds together. For example, pictures of a mop, a cat, and a pin are in front of the child. The adult says the different sounds, "mmm....ahhh....pp," and asks the child what word those sounds make (mop!).

Additional Resources:

<http://aacliteracy.psu.edu/>: Literacy Instruction for Individuals with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and Other Disabilities

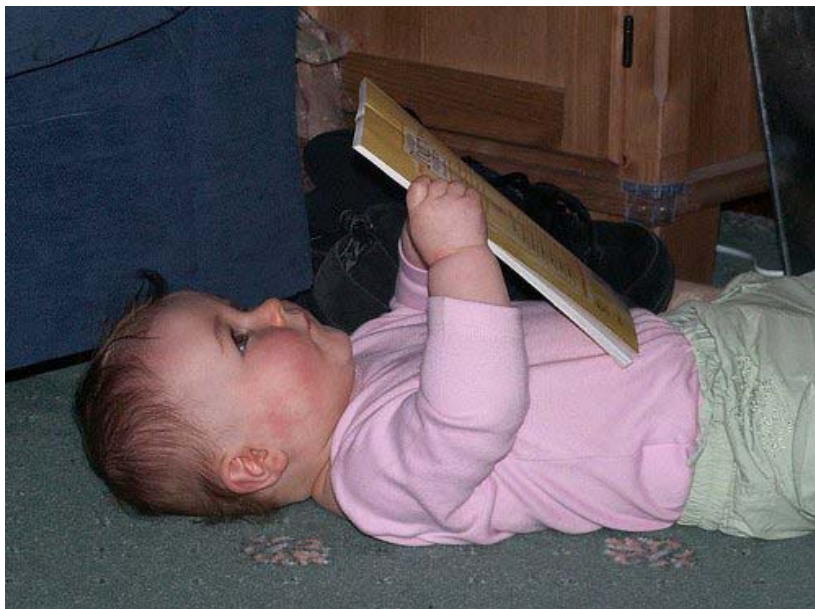
[Online Self-Study Workshop: Maximizing the Literacy Skills of individuals Who Use AAC](#)

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/phonemicawareness.htm>: Listen to and access lyrics of songs that promote phonological awareness

<http://pbskids.org/superwhy/index.html>: Website for the PBS Kid's show *Super Why*, with a focus on phonological awareness and other early literacy skills

<http://online.sfsu.edu/~nancyr/literacy.html>: Collaborative AAC Services for Children in Inclusive Preschool Settings

Hetzroni, O.E. (2004). AAC and literacy. *Disability and rehabilitation*, 26 (21/22), 1305-1312.



Light, J & Smith, A. (1993). Home literacy experiences of preschools who use AAC and their nondisabled peers. *AAC Alternative and augmentative communication*, 9, 10-25.

Soto, G. & Zangari, C. (2009). *Practically Speaking: Language, Literacy, and Academic Development for Students with AAC Needs*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.

TECHNOLOGY WORKS!

How Might Technology Assist You in the Workplace?

From *Strategic Technology for Professional Development Conference, June 2009, Madison*
Presented by *Larry Edelman, University of Colorado at Denver*
-*Arianna Keil, Waisman Center*

Technology has become an integral part of our everyday lives. We use cell phones, email and GPS systems almost without thinking about it.

Many other technologies exist to help you in your work with children and families. These technologies will never replace relationships, but can be helpful in light of decreasing budgets and increasing expectations.

Consider trying some of those listed below – most are **free** and can be used to support performance within and outside of your organization.

For Use at Work

If you want to...	Try...
Create your own website	WetPaint.com or Google site (sites.google.com)
Set up a webconference	DimDim.com or Fuze.com (no webcams needed)
Store and organize your websites	Delicious.com
Store e-documents online	Box.net
Record a Skype session	Callburner.net
Use an alternative to Powerpoint	Prezi.com
Have Microsoft Office-like programs on your computer	Openoffice.org

Just for Fun

If you want to...	Try...
Create word clouds	Wordle.net
Create your own video	Animoto.com
Create a cartoon version of yourself	Voki.com
Edit video and audio files	Audacity (audacity.sourceforge.net)

For more free applications relevant to professional development, visit Larry Edelman's site at exploringtech.wordpress.com

What happens if you **need help** when learning about a new technology? Try these strategies:

- If you don't know what a term means, look it up on wikipedia, webopedia.com or search for a tutorial by common craft on youtube.
- If you are stumped with a new application, try the tutorial first. If you still need assistance, look for the words HELP and SUPPORT on the page.
- If you continue to have difficulties after accessing HELP and SUPPORT, do a smart search by using Google and typing in your specific question.



Foundations for Early Literacy

-Gaye Tylka, CESA 4

As in so many areas, there are two schools of thought on how to support early literacy in young children today. One perspective, associated with Marie Clay, views literacy development as a process children begin very early in life. Adults model reading and writing in the context of daily activities, have frequent conversations with children, read to children daily, provide ready access to interesting reading and writing materials, and seize those “teachable moments” (e.g. “Yes,” that letter is a ‘B’ – just like in your name. Ball starts with a ‘B’, too!). In this model, these combined ‘emergent literacy’ experiences over time prepare children to become readers and writers.

The other perspective draws on scientifically-based reading research (SBRR). This approach identified the components of literacy acquisition that are highly correlated with reading success and continues to examine the evidence for what teaching strategies appear most successful. The SBRR model is a data-driven, systematic, adult-directed approach. Numerous early literacy kits are now available through the publishers of elementary level reading series.

The International Reading Association (IRA), in alignment with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), has recently supported a balanced approach; a position that promotes emergent literacy practices along with some systematic SBRR instruction.

One essential evidence-based strategy is described as “**shared reading**”. Simply reading a book to a child or group of children is NOT supported as an effective strategy! In a shared reading experience, both the child(ren) and the adult are active participants, asking/answering questions, making predictions (“what do you think will happen now?”), building vocabulary (“the cat was enormous – that means it was very, very big ...”), and commenting. An easy way to help parents use shared reading is to remember the acronym **C-A-R**:

1. **Comment** (and wait for a response)
2. **Ask questions** (open-ended are best; requiring more than a yes/no answer)
3. **Respond** and add a little more (“Yes, that is a kitty. It has yellow and brown stripes.”)

Shared reading, using a variety of books, can support **oral language and vocabulary development; phonological and phonemic awareness; alphabet knowledge** (ABCs, environmental print, print conventions – left to right, etc.); and **code-focused instruction** (developing strategies to read words and gain meaning from text) – all identified as critical to later reading competence.

Developmental writing is also a critical early experience. Children record their own ideas and experiences through drawings and scribbles. They learn that pictures can represent objects/people/events; that spoken words can be represented through drawings or printed words; that written words together form sentences; and ultimately, that we can communicate through reading and writing. Writing down words as a child dictates them, having the child assist you in writing a thank you note, posting ABCs on the table where the child writes, and creating multiple opportunities for the child to experiment with writing materials all support this important early skill.

While skills are important to later reading, the child’s attitude or disposition for literacy is equally important. Lesley Morrow suggests that the most important thing we can do for children is to “instill a desire to learn to read and write”. Adults unintentionally turn literacy experiences into negative experiences by expecting a child to sit and attend too long, punishing a child by removal from the group for disrupting story time, or expecting the child to perform writing exercises that are too challenging. Keeping the ‘just right’ balance for each child – challenging but achievable – is the key.



WISCONSIN EFFORTS

Selected resources for early literacy:

www.collaboratingpartners.com

WI Model Early Learning Standards – a great place to begin

www.readingrockets.org

Amazing literacy links and resources!

www.getreadytoread.org

For educators and parents - national initiative to build early literacy skills

<http://www.famlit.org/educators/free-resources> Click on *NELP Teacher Guide*

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), What Works: An Introductory Teacher Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction, 2009

<http://www.readingrockets.org/webcasts/3001>


Webcast on writing development – Susan B. Neumann, 12 min.

*Pierce, P.L., et.al. The Bridge: An Authentic Literacy Assessment Strategy for Individualizing and Informing Practice with Young Children with Disabilities, *Young Exceptional Children*, Division for Early Childhood, June 2009, p. 2-31

References:

International Reading Association (IRA), How Children Learn to Read and Write, 2009, p.1-16

<http://www.reading.org/Publish.aspx?page=bk700-1-Vukelich.pdf&mode=retrieve&D=10.1598/9780872077003.1&F=bk700-1-Vukelich.pdf&key=CA32BBE6-DE97-4322-B2BA-DF15896F903E>

National Institute for Literacy, Report of the National Early Literacy Panel, Developing Early Literacy: A Scientific Synthesis of Early Literacy Development and Implications for Intervention, 2008. <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf> 

"Bite" of Research "There is a strong relationship between children's learning and how often their parents have interactive conversations with them."

(Hart & Risley, 1995; Snow, et al., 1998)



National Literacy Web Site Resources



The National Head Start Family Literacy Center (NHSFLC) is funded by the Office of Head Start, to provide training and technical assistance to Head Start programs to improve the quality and positive outcomes of their family literacy efforts. According to the 1998 Head Start Act, family literacy has the following four components:

- **Interactive literacy** activities between parents and their children
- **Training for parents** on how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children
- **Parent literacy** training that leads to economic self-sufficiency
- **Age-appropriate education** approaches that prepare children for success in school and life experiences

Website: <http://www.sonoma.edu/cihs/familyliteracy/index.html>

Family Literacy trainings can be accessed in a variety of ways. Here are a few examples of trainings available through NHSFLC:

1. The Preschool Language and Literacy Course was developed to support the following Office of Head Start goals:
 - Improve child language and literacy outcomes in Head Start and Early Head Start
 - Support Head Start teachers to attain bachelor's degrees

When taught as an online course, the Preschool Language and Literacy Course has the additional benefit of attracting students who do not have easy access to traditional classroom settings, as well as enhancing students' computer skills.

2. My Parents, My Teachers Discussion Guide and DVD

- Includes a DVD containing a 16 minute video produced in English and Spanish. Both videos cover similar content and beautifully illustrate multiple ways that families support their young children's growth and development through everyday interactions.
- Includes a discussion guide to use for follow-up conversations

The training module is suitable for in-service and pre-service training and for families in groups and home visiting sessions.



Systems Change in Personnel Preparation is a cluster of projects including projects from Natural Allies and Natural Resources that have studied and continue to explore and support improvements in the preparation of personnel who work with young children (0-9) and their families, especially with disabilities. An enormous challenge to providing quality services for young children (0-5) in inclusive community settings (natural environments) is how to meet increasing demands for well-trained personnel to provide those services. **Natural Allies** aims to offer insight and direction on this challenge.

Are you interested in quality materials on topics related to early childhood and early intervention? The **Natural Resources** listserv is one way to stay up-to-date with the latest free or low-cost booklets, CD-Roms, videos, Power Point presentations and other items.

Website: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~SCPP/>

Subscribe to the **Natural Resources** listserv and receive weekly email announcements featuring a product that is available at no cost or very low cost. A short description combined with ordering information will give you the details you need to add another valuable resource to your own library.

If you are interested in subscribing to the weekly listserv please send an email to listserv@unc.edu with a **blank** Subject line. The text of the message must be: **subscribe natural_resources2**
Be sure the Subject is blank. Then Send the message.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Donna Bell and Laura Westberg of the National Center for Family Literacy have recently completed *What Works: An Introductory Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction*. Based on the work reported in *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*, this guide describes ways teachers can use the research effectively for early childhood instruction, assessment, choosing curriculum, and helping parents better support their young children's language and literacy learning. Download a free copy at <http://www.familit.org/pdf/what-works.pdf>



Center For Early Literacy Learning

CELL is a research-to-practice technical assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Research to Practice Division. The main goal of CELL is to promote the adoption and sustained use of evidence-based early literacy learning practices by early childhood intervention practitioners, parents, and other caregivers of young children, birth to five years of age, with identified disabilities, developmental delays, and those at-risk for poor outcomes. CELL is a major initiative of the Center for Evidence-Based Practices at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute.

Website: <http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/index.php>

The CELL website contains Literacy Learning Practice Guides for parents and for professionals to use with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Practice guides for professionals can be used by early childhood educators, child care providers, early interventionists, and other early childhood practitioners for promoting infants', toddlers', and preschoolers' literacy learning using interest-based and highly engaging activities.

Practice guides for parents can be used by parents to provide their infants, toddlers, or preschoolers fun and exciting literacy learning experiences and opportunities. These guides may also be used by practitioners who are working with parents to promote their use of literacy learning activities with their children.

Free and Low Cost Literacy Resources

A Child Becomes a Reader. To order copies of this booklet, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Call 800-228-8813 or email edpuborders@edpubs.gov. This booklet can also be downloaded at The Partnership for Reading web site, www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading.

Big Dreams: A Family Book About Reading. National Institute for Literacy. For additional copies of the booklet, download PDF or HTML versions at www.nifl.gov. To order print copies, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland 20794-1398. Call 1-800-228-8813 or email edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

Helping Your Preschool Child. No Child Left Behind: US Department of Education. This brochure is part of a larger booklet in the Helping Your Child series. A PDF can be downloaded from www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html.

Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read. For additional copies of this brochure, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. 1-800-228-8813. Fax 301-470-1244. Email edpuborders@edpubs.org. Or download the document at www.nifl.gov.

Shining Stars: Preschoolers Get Ready to Read. This brochure is based on A Child Becomes A Reader-Birth to Preschool, published by the National Institute for Literacy. For a free copy of the full booklet, visit www.nifl.gov.

For additional copies of this booklet, download PDF or HTML versions at www.nifl.gov. To order print copies, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland 20794-1398. Call 1-800-228-8813 or email edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

Shining Stars: Toddlers Get Ready to Read. This brochure is based on A Child Becomes A Reader-Birth to Preschool, published by the National Institute for Literacy. For a free copy of the full booklet, visit www.nifl.gov.

For additional copies of this booklet, download PDF or HTML versions at www.nifl.gov. To order print copies, contact the National Institute for Literacy at ED Pubs, PO Box 1398, Jessup, Maryland 20794-1398. Call 1-800-228-8813 or email edpubs@inet.ed.gov.

Birth to 3 and Accountability: Office of Special Education Programs Child Outcome 2 : Asking the Tough Questions

-Dana Romary, Department of Health Services, Birth to 3 Program

There are many pathways which connect each of us to the Birth to 3 Program. Whether we are an early intervention service provider, a county coordinator, a child care provider, or a family member we find common values and beliefs in our roles with the Birth to 3 program. For example, we know that the early years of a child's life are the foundation for all future learning, and that we are committed to providing children and families the best of what we know and understand. If this were not true perhaps many of us would have chosen a very different professional path. These values and beliefs are firmly embedded into our daily work. Despite the frustration, the demands and what seems like ever changing expectations in Birth to 3, we are still here and we remain committed. However, it is not "us" that need to be convinced of the difference we make in the lives of children and families we serve, but rather it's those unfamiliar with our daily work in Birth to 3. It is at this critical juncture of value, belief and commitment we, as the Birth to 3 community, must be accountable for the work we do. Testimonial and kind words are most certainly an important component of accountability but there is also that word among early childhood professionals "hard data". Now more than ever, it's the hard data which is expected, in fact, it's required. Wisconsin, just like every other state must demonstrate the effectiveness of early intervention which includes both demonstrating realistic progress, and accounting for lack of progress. We must take the challenge of validating our work as seriously as we take the work itself. We must have the hard data available so we can "prove" what we have known to be true for a long time.

Of the many accountability measures we find ourselves immersed in, Early Childhood Outcomes is one we are all familiar with. Over the next several years Early Childhood Outcomes will likely receive much scrutiny at the national and federal levels. This issue of *Birth to 6 Events* early literacy focus corresponds well with Early Childhood Outcome 2 "Do children acquire and use knowledge and skills". If you recall Outcome 2 involves "using symbols and language" which includes early concepts such as symbols, pictures, expressive language and communication. As early interventionists we understand that children develop competency in language and literacy not through a set curriculum as one might find in kindergarten and first grade but rather through interactions and experiences with the adults around them. To put it plainly, it is not about whether books are available for the child, but whether the available books find themselves in the hands of an adult who has a relationship with that child.

In 1999 a study by the National Education Goals Panel revealed only 30% of parents read to their child more than one time per week. The good news is a study done in 2007 by the Child and Adolescents Health Measurement Initiative showed an increase of over 17% to 47.8%. Specifically, Wisconsin was slightly higher than the national average with a 49.6%. There are a number of ways in which to view this data. First, it's reassuring to know we have improved both as a nation and as a state when it comes to reading to our children. However, as a state the data shows that still only 50% of adults read to their children more than one time per week. Let's examine how Wisconsin's Outcome 2 data corresponds with other trends. The results/percentage breakdown for Early Childhood Outcome 2 from 2008 are based on 1025 Wisconsin children birth to 3 who were in the program for a minimum of 6 months before exit. The results are as follows:

- A: Did not improve functioning **0%**
- B: Improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to peers **18%**
- C: Improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it **26%**
- D: Improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers **40%**
- E: Maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers **17%**

What information can we gather from the results of Outcome 2? As a state, 57% of the children exiting Birth to 3 either reached a level of functioning comparable to same aged peers or maintained a level of functioning comparable to same aged peers. Even more interesting is that 83% of all children exiting Birth to 3 were nearer same age peers or above. This ought to be cause for celebration due to the fact that over half of the children upon exiting Birth to 3 were at age level or were never below age level throughout Birth to 3. So, as we prepare to celebrate our success it is important we examine more closely what the stories are at the core of this information and proceed with optimistic caution. We can begin by asking ourselves some difficult questions such as, "What methods were used to obtain ratings?", "Did we collect a sufficient amount of information to justify this rating?", "Did I (we) involve other care providers while gathering information?"

continued on page 12

STATE TEAM

“Am I (are we) unduly influenced by the numerical rating that we artificially inflated the scores?” “Do I (we) consider and value each team member’s information before determining a rating?”, “Am I (are we) concerned that lack of progress in a child rating will be reflective of who we are as a provider or program?”, “Should I or the team attend an Outcomes training in the up coming year?” These are difficult questions to ask, but as professionals, we are obligated to do so before reaching any conclusion or congratulating each other on a job well done. As we interpret this data we must determine whether it is the most accurate (valid) representation of child progress. As more information becomes available through the Early Childhood Outcomes program, we will better determine whether Wisconsin’s Outcome 2 is reflective of other programs across the nation [or whether we would be considered an “outlier”.] It is important to understand that any data being collected will undoubtedly be used to scrutinize all early intervention programs. However, we must not over react or become highly critical of the Birth to 3 Early Child Outcomes rating process either. Rather, we must be attentive to several influential factors guiding our practice and likely influencing the positive results we see statewide.

- First, our philosophy has always been (and should remain) one from a strength based model. A systematic practice which emphasizes identifying what is “right” as opposed to what is “not right” in a child’s development or family unit. In Birth to 3, failing to demonstrate a skill is viewed as an opportunity to learn rather than a “problem to be fixed” and focusing on a child’s strengths instead of weaknesses will result in enhanced motivation and improved performance.
- Second, the Early Childhood Outcomes process has no “built-in” system to cross check or cross reference to determine whether the process of determining a rating is valid or reliable. So, by default, the process determining a child outcomes rating becomes “our” responsibility.
- Third, because of our training in Birth to 3 we routinely compare a child’s progress to their own development, and not that of a “typically” developing child. In other words, the Early Childhood Outcomes process expects us to compare the functioning of each child in Birth to 3 to that of a child’s development of a same aged peer. Even though most developmental assessments are using what is purported as typical developmental milestones as criteria, we tend to report this information by emphasizing the growth within the child’s own development and not that of a same aged peer.

This, by no means, is to suggest the scores/ratings are in fact incorrect or inflated or that we need not feel a sense of obligation to provide an accurate rating, but rather to make us aware of the many factors influencing our data. Ultimately, our obligation is to be as honest, insightful and thorough when providing each “child rating.” If we believe we have done this as a program and as a state then we have done our job.

For more information about ongoing assessment and Early Childhood Outcomes trainings please visit the Collaborating Partners website: <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/> 

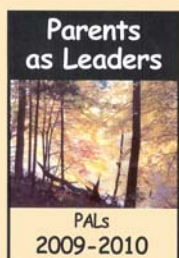
Parents as Leaders (PALs) is still recruiting for the 2009-10 Program. PALs is open to parents or primary caregivers of young children ages six and under with special needs and is limited to 20 participants.

The focus of PALs is for parents who:

- are interested in meeting other parents from around the state;
- want to learn more about resources for children with special needs;
- want to meet some of the key leaders who make the policies and run the programs that affect children with special needs and their families in Wisconsin; and
- are ready to become leaders and advocates in their communities.

There are four weekend sessions over the course of eight months that are held at the Pilgrim Center in Green Lake, WI. The sessions run from late Friday afternoons to late Saturday afternoons and lodging and meals are free of charge. Participants will need to arrange care for their children as this program is for the adults to have time to learn, grow and network. For more information, visit our brochure at: <http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/assets/pdf/palsbrochure.pdf>

or call Lynn Havemann (608/263-5947) or Elizabeth Wahl (608/265-9423) or 1-800-532-3321.



PALs is an opportunity for parents with children with special needs birth through six to grow as leaders.

INVENTING LEADERS is a part of the Wisconsin Personnel Development Project, funded by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Birth to 3 Program.

Wisconsin Center University of Wisconsin-Madison

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: Early Literacy Skills

-Elizabeth Martinkus Wahl and Ann Ramminger, Waisman Center

What are the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards?

The *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* (WMELS) is a resource for parents and professionals that provide common language for early learning. The standards were developed in 2008 by a variety of professionals working in the Birth to 6 system. The WMELS standards outline developmental milestones in sequential order so that parents and caregivers can track their child's development with appropriate expectations.

The WMELS standards are aligned with IDEA Early Childhood Outcomes and Wisconsin's K-12 Model Academic Standards; which are educational measures describing what children and youth must know and be able to do in order to become successful life long learners. The WMELS standards provide detailed information about child development from birth to first grade pertaining to the following five developmental domains:

- Health and Physical Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development and Communication
- Approaches to Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge

How is WMELS organized?

The WMELS book is organized by domains of development with the recognition that learning is multidimensional. The five domains are divided into sub-domains. See example below. The sub-domains include developmental expectations which are broad. The developmental expectations and specific skills described in the WMELS standards are not age-linked, to reinforce two of the guiding principles that children develop at individual rates and exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development. The specific information and skills that a child should know and be able to do are described in a developmental continuum. These developmental continuums are based on the order in which specific skills emerge in most children birth to first grade according to current research (WMELS, pages 4-9).

Example of how information is organized for the development of early literacy skills.

Domain: Language Development and Communication

Sub-domain: 1. Listening and Understanding

Sub-domain: 2. Speaking and Communicating

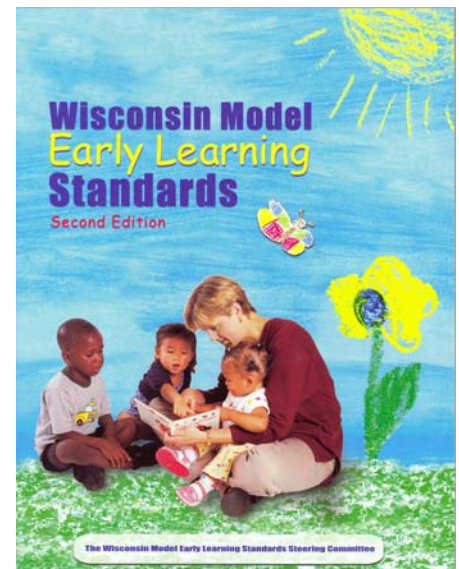
Sub-domain: 3. Early Literacy

Performance Standard 1: Shows an appreciation of books and understands how print works

Performance Standard 2: Develops alphabetic, phonological, and phonemic awareness

Performance Standard 3: Demonstrates use of strategies to read words

Performance Standard 4: Uses writing to represent thoughts or ideas



Early literacy is one sub-domain of Language Development and Communication. Early experiences with language and communication define children's assumptions and expectations about becoming literate as they learn that reading and writing are valuable tools. Long before they can exhibit reading and writing skills, children acquire basic understandings of concepts about literacy and its functions. Regular and active interactions with print, in books and in the environment are significant in early childhood. These experiences are part of a foundation that allows children to organize this information into patterns essential for later development in reading and writing. Children whose home language is not English may demonstrate literacy skills in their primary language before they do so in English (WMELS, pages 42).

What does the developmental continuum for early literacy look like according to WMELS standards?

The developmental expectation, or overarching goal in our state for Early Literacy is "Children in Wisconsin will have the literacy skills and concepts needed to become successful readers and writers" (WMELS, page 43).

Early literacy skills first begin to emerge when a child explores and enjoys books. She will point to and name pictures in a book when asked. She will look at picture books and ask questions or make comments. She then develops an understanding that the print in the book carries the message. She views one page at a time from the front to the back of the book and learns that the book has a title, author, and illustrator. She understands that books have characters, sequence of events, and story plots. She handles books correctly showing increasing skills in print directionality. She chooses reading activities and responds with interest and enjoyment. She explores, repeats, and imitates alphabet related songs and games. She mixes letters with symbols. She recognizes the difference between letters and other symbols. She recognizes beginning letters in familiar words, especially in her own name. She recognizes and names most letters of the alphabet (upper & lower case) in familiar and unfamiliar words (WMELS, pages 54-57). Note: this is an example of the developmental continuum for performance standards 1 and 2 of early literacy.

How can WMELS standards be helpful for parents and professionals?

It is critical that early childhood professionals have a solid knowledge base of the emergent literacy process in young children. This includes an understanding of alternative or augmentative communication processes and appropriate use of assistive technology devices. Of equal importance to a child's development of early literacy skills is parents' and caregivers' commitment to incorporating reading and writing skills into everyday family routines, such as reading bedtime stories and including children in writing family grocery lists (Elliott & Olliff, 2008). See AAC article on pages 4-5.

The WI Model Early Learning Standards can be a useful tool when writing goals for Individual Family Service Plans or Individual Education Plans. The sample strategies provided for caregivers are written in language that families can understand and incorporate into everyday activities.

In a recent WMELS training this past summer, professionals from Birth to 3 and Early Childhood Special Education were polled on the usefulness of WMELS standards in their professions. These professionals agreed that the standards can be used as a tool to guide curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions.

"I will use it to help with developing IFSP goals and strategies, using routines to assist with this for families."

"I can see myself sharing the whole book with some families and parts with others. I would love to steer a group of parents through this information."

"I will share copies of pages, discuss with co-workers and other agencies."

"I work with 2 families that have their child in daycare-so I see the child in home and at daycare. I plan to share this with them."

"WMELS will be helpful to use as an orientation tool for new staff."

How can I obtain a copy of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards?

The WMELS document Second Edition is available online in English, Spanish, and Hmong. To access and download the content please visit:

http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/EarlyLS_docs.htm

This publication can also be purchased for \$3.00 (minimum of 3 for \$9.00) from:

Wisconsin Child Care Information Center
2109 South Stoughton Road
Madison, WI 53716
1-800-362-7353

How can I receive WMELS Training?

The regional coaches for the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners facilitate WMELS trainings for a wide variety of audiences including Head Start, group and family child care, Birth to 3, and school district (regular and special education) staff and parents. For a list of upcoming WMELS trainings, please visit <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/training.htm>

References:

Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Second Edition (2008)

Elliott, E.M. & Olliff, C.B. (2008). Developmentally appropriate emergent literacy activities for young children: adapting the early literacy and learning model. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35: 551-556. 

"Bite" of Research

There is a strong relationship between children's learning and how often their parents play and involve them in everyday activities like going to the market.



(Hart & Risley 1995; Snow et al., 1998)

FAREWELL TO FRIENDS

Transitions

-Linda Tuchman and Jill Haglund

In the month of August we wished Mary Peters and Arianna Keil well in their transitions to new positions.



With great appreciation, we send Arianna Keil our very best regards as she transitions into a new phase of her professional path. We honor her contributions and thank her for the gift of her time and hard work. She found her way to the Waisman Center over four years ago from an ad in the newspaper. When we saw that she was a physician by training and that her family had experienced early intervention, we knew she was the perfect match for our work. Furthermore, she had all of us in stitches during her interview. Arianna quickly soaked up the guiding principles and practices within the community of Birth to 3 Programs and delved into a number of other related activities. Some of these experiences led to opportunities to conduct outreach, first to child care professionals, and then with physicians to promote the importance of universal screening and early identification of developmental concerns; use of valid screening tools such as the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire*, and referral to early intervention, schools and other community settings. This turned out to be the perfect evolution for her experiences. As we wish her well in her new endeavors with Panel Intelligence, let us reflect upon what we learned from Arianna.

Top 10 reasons we will miss Arianna - Lessons Learned

1. Always keep a sense of humor; regardless of the situation, it helps to find the lighter side of serious and not so serious experiences. Don't worry so much if it is "just things" and not people.
2. Listen! Listen! Listen!
3. Sound advice and input on a myriad of topics often comes from an eloquent, soft spoken voice.
4. It is possible to find the common ground among health care and early intervention/childhood professionals.
5. Be patient with questions, provide encouragement and use kind words, no matter the topic of the conversation.
6. Be organized and prepared. Details matter.
7. To increase credibility and gain "buy in" have thorough knowledge of the literature that contains the research and evidence-base that supports our work. Go directly to the original source.
8. Always strive to help families realize that their children are their strengths and capabilities, not their diagnosis and deficits.
9. Politeness and manners are not out of date; they go a long way in showing respect and opening the doors for relationships.
10. When you learn something pass it along to someone else.



We also offer deep appreciation to Mary Peters, who served as the early childhood consultant for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction since 2003. Her contributions to the early childhood community are countless. It is nearly impossible to separate thoughts of Mary from a big vision for children and families. Her gifts range from a propensity for thinking in pictures to analyzing data in answer to the question, "Is what we are doing making a difference?" In her new position with Nicolet Area Technical College, she will continue to contribute to our vision by touching the lives of those seeking higher education to improve the quality of early childhood. While Mary will be connected in new ways, we will miss her participation in many statewide initiatives.

Top 10 reasons we will miss Mary - Lessons Learned

1. See the hidden (spiritual) wholeness of people.
2. We are better together.
3. Speak the truth.
4. Dream big.
5. Look for teachable moments and support natural learning.
6. Challenge the existing order for the betterment of the children.
7. Technology is really our friend - try it.
8. Find an organizational style that works for you - even if you have to change it frequently.
9. No act of kindness goes unnoticed.
10. Follow your heart.

A Message from Arianna

It has been my pleasure to serve the early intervention community over the past four years. I have thoroughly enjoyed editing and writing for EVENTS, as well as assisting in other statewide professional development opportunities in my work at Waisman Center.

I am starting a new position with an online medical information company based in Boston called Panel Intelligence. I worked with this team in a different capacity when my children were very young. Although I will miss many people, I am looking forward to this new work and the challenges it will bring.

I wish you all the best in your meaningful work serving children and families.

Sincerely,



Arianna Keil

Saying Goodbye to Very Young Children

by John Updike

Available at The Poetry Foundation <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

They will not be the same next time. The sayings so cute, just slightly off, will be corrected. Their eyes will be more skeptical, plugged in the more securely to the worldly buzz of television, alphabet, and street talk, culture polluting their gazes' pure blue. It makes you see at last the value of those boring aunts and neighbors (their smells of summer sweat and cigarettes, their faces like shapes of sky between shade-giving leaves) who knew you from the start, when you were zero, cooing their nothings before you could be bored or knew a name, not even your own, or how this world brave with hellos turns all goodbye.

Birth to 6 EVENTS



Waisman Center

Wisconsin Personnel Development Project

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For additional information, call 608-263-5022 or 1-800-532-3321, or email sankey@waisman.wisc.edu
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