EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

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Overview

1. What is Early Literacy?
2. Areas of development affected
3. Strategies to promote early literacy skills
What is Early Literacy?

- Oral language and concept development are the foundation of literacy
- Begins at birth
- Has to be established before formal instruction in braille or print can begin
Literacy and Communication

- Infants and toddlers learn to:
  - listen
  - speak (or use AAC)
  - read
  - write
- At the same time
- In an interconnected way

Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman, & Yoder, 1991
adapted from Teale & Sulzby, 1989
Understanding Symbols
Key Components of Early Literacy

- Auditory discrimination/phonemic awareness
- Comprehension of language
  - Based on own experiences
- Introduction to the alphabet
- Pragmatics (print/braille)
- Pre-writing opportunities

https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/helping-young-children-develop-emergent-literacy-skills
Introduce, Expose, and Surround!

- Language-rich environment
- Access to books/braille
- Family conversations
Areas of Development
Not Just Books!

- Cognitive – Concepts, pragmatics (print/text awareness)
- Language/Communication (Receptive and Expressive) – letter sounds, rhymes
- Self-Help – choosing a book, initiating stories, independently finding materials
- Social – bonding, book sharing, connecting experiences to real life
- Vision/Compensatory – pictures, print, tactile images, braille
Cognitive and Language/Communication Strategies

- Encourage your child’s active engagement
  - Help turn to the next page (“turn the page”)
  - Use interactive language (“Do you remember…?”)
  - Find the “top” or “bottom” of the page
  - Learning what a book is and its parts
Predictable books

- Rhyme, rhythm, and repetition
  - Children fill in the repeated or rhyming word
  - Can sing and act out the story

- Examples:
  - Brown Bear
  - Five Little Monkeys
  - Goodnight, Moon
  - Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes
Story Boxes/Bags and Story Boards

- Use actual objects to illustrate the story
- Let your child explore that object
- Have your child find that object
Story Buckets

- Bucket full of items to “illustrate” the story
- Can also make buckets based on concept
  - Summer bucket
  - Dinosaur bucket
  - Birthday party bucket
  - Letter “B” bucket
Story Bars and Concept Bars

- Hang items associated with the story from the toy bar
- Can make toy bars based on concept
  - Seasonal
  - Color
  - Shapes
  - Textures
  - Holidays
Alpha Boxes

- Provides exposure and exploration
- Pair initial sounds with letters of the alphabet
Motor Skills Strategies

- Help Turn the Page
  - Board books
  - Adapt pages so they are easier to turn
    - Stagger popsicle sticks
    - Add colorful round stickers to make “tabs”
    - Add raised textures to keep pages separate
Motor Skills Strategies

- Sitting and holding a book
- Set up an art table
- Encourage your children to be active
- Scavenger Hunts
- Acting out actions in story
  - Llama Llama Hoppity Hop
  - Going On A Bear Hunt
  - Tickle Time
Motor Skills Strategies

- Strengthen hands and fingers
  - Bilateral hand use
  - Isolating finger use
  - Scribbling
  - Pushing buttons
  - Ripping paper
  - Walking the ball
  - Playing with playdough
Vision/Compensatory Strategies

- Enhance what you already have!
  - Braille labels for items around home
  - Add MEANINGFUL textures to books
    - Adding a texture to pictures so your child can “find” the object
  - “Find The Textures/Braille”
    - Helps with learning to identify/discriminate textures
    - Helps with learning directions (top, bottom, left, right)
    - Helps with tactual search
Vision/Compensatory Strategies

- **Find The Object Visually**
  - Have your child find requested picture; may have to add colored paper or fabric
  - Same object on each page
  - Helps with learning directions (top, bottom, left, right)
  - Helps with visual scanning
  - Helps with object identification
  - Helps with point/follow a point
Vision/Compensatory Strategies

- Make Tactile Experience Books
  - Based on your child’s experience
  - Incorporate real objects from event to recall activity
    - Straw from a milkshake
    - Coin used to pay to get on merry go round
    - Bark or blades of grass from playground
Self Help and Social Strategies

- Verbally label and describe what your child is feeling, smelling, and hearing
- Make it part of your daily routine
- Make the stories MEANINGFUL to your child
  - Meaningful experiences
  - Meaningful adaptations
Self Help and Social Strategies

- Song Boxes
  - *Row Row Your Boat* (boat)
  - *Itsy Bitsy Spider* (toy spider)
  - *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* (star)
  - *Wheels On The Bus* (bus)

- Make it part of your daily routine
  - May help with transitions
Self Help and Social Strategies

- Moonlite Storybook Projector
- [Moonlite - A Storybook Projector For Your Cell Phone (mymoonlite.com)](mymoonlite.com)
- Can purchase kits and individual stories
- Excellent opportunity for family time
CVI Early Literacy Strategies

- Must consider visual skills/CVI phase
- Must consider understanding of symbols
- What is the goal?
  - Learning concepts
  - Creating vision opportunities
  - Building understanding of 2D images
Phase 1

- Child has not yet achieved appropriate fixations
- Compensatory skills are very important for learning concepts/vocabulary
- Use objects/textures as mentioned in previous slides
- Encourage looking with light, color, and/or reflective material
- Maximize vision supports (distance, clutter, lighting, field) for vision opportunities

https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/overview-literacy-children-cvi
Early Phase 2

- Child is just beginning to achieve appropriate fixations
- Visual field still important (slant board)
- Look and touch may not be simultaneous
- Routines-based experience stories

https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/strategies/hot-chocolate-tactile-connections-experience-story
Late Phase 2

- Real photos
- Pair objects with photos/pictures
- Think about presentation – positioning, visual field, array

https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/transitioning-object-schedule-system-photos-child-cvi
Phase 3

- Focus on vision but keep supports (hearing, touch, smell)
- Backlighting still important for some students (lightbox or tablet)

https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/resources/cvi-friendly-videos
Digital Books

- Paths to Technology – resource library of ready made digital books
- Using photos of child’s own/favorite objects is more meaningful and motivating
- Use photo album, PowerPoint/Keynote, or ibooks
- Simplify images

Tiny Tap App

- Free version for families
- Teacher version is free for now
- Create books or borrow from library
- Many excellent settings – black background, search images with no background, highlight area to tap, etc
- Can use own photos or internet images

Resources

- Seedlings Braille Books (3 Free Books Per Year)
  http://www.seedlings.org/

- Paths To Literacy (Strategies & Resources)
  http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/

- Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (Braille Tales Print/Braille Book Program - 6 Free Books Per Year until 6 years)
  http://www.aph.org/dolly-partons-imagination-library/

- National Braille Press (Hands On! Books for Blind Children)
  http://www.nbp.org/
Questions?

- Illinois School for the Visually Impaired (ISVI)
  - Birth to 3 Program
  - [IDHS: Birth to Three Program](state.il.us)
  - Calendar of Events
  - [https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=129313](https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=129313)

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