Early BIRD
Family Literacy
Program Manual

by
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Pamphlets
Introduction

The Early BIRD Program Manual has been developed through an initiative of the Family Literacy Network in partnership with the Hamilton Literacy Council.

The Early BIRD Program is built on the strong belief that the best way to help young children to meet success in their literacy development, is by supporting the family. The path to literacy begins when the child is born, and it is in the familiar surroundings of the home that young children can best develop the foundations of listening and speaking, reading and writing. The term “family literacy” refers to the stories, songs, rhymes, games, conversations and informal play times that children and parents enjoy together; and to the many ways that families use literacy as a natural part of their daily routines — writing shopping lists, reading labels and recipes, talking and listening to each other.

The purpose of the Manual is to provide program support for Family Literacy Programs, and for any early childhood programs, community programs or Family Resource Centres that wish to include a family literacy component as a part of their regular programming.

The Manual includes information on the following: research and current practice in family literacy; children’s early language development; adult learning principles; practical considerations in planning programs; and curriculum topics, activities and materials for use in group settings or in the home. Child development information is provided in the Appendix to assist in program planning.

A series of Parent Pamphlets has also been developed to complement the curriculum topics and support family literacy activities at home. These are included with the Manual, along with a set of black line masters that may be photocopied for parents and families.

It is hoped that the experiences and lessons we gained in developing this program in Hamilton may be useful to other practitioners involved in planning and implementing family literacy programs.
This section examines some of the factors, such as child poverty, parent education levels, and parent literacy levels, which may contribute to children’s poor performance in school.

This section also includes some of the new research information, documented in The Early Years Report by Fraser Mustard and Hon. Margaret McCain, that describes how very young children learn, and shows how support for parents and families, along with good quality Early Childhood programs, can make a positive difference in children’s early school achievement.

Finally, the concept of family literacy will be discussed. The term “family literacy”, first coined by Denny Taylor of the United States, is a broad one encompassing a range of beliefs about literacy, about family literacy activities and programs for children and families. The section will look at these beliefs, describe some family literacy programs that have developed in Canada and abroad, and describe how the Family Literacy Network in Hamilton, Ontario worked to develop a local family literacy program to support families and young children in our city.
“Parents are their children’s first and most influential teachers.”
— Maitland McIsaac, Executive Director Learning and Reading Partners Adult Learning System, August 2002

This comment by Maitland McIsaac expresses the key belief that inspired the Family Literacy Network in Hamilton to embark on its Family Literacy Project. In pursuing its goal of a family literacy program, the Network set out to learn about some of the conditions that hinder children’s school achievement, and about the most effective ways of supporting families and children in the journey to literacy.

**Poverty and Literacy**

The links between poverty and low school achievement have been well documented. The following studies describe those links and, though diverse in scope and in location, all reach similar conclusions; that the best way to help children achieve success in school is by supporting the family, and involving parents in their child’s education.

The Ontario Child Health Study (Offord, Boyle and Racine, 1989) identified children who live in subsidized housing, in lone-parent families, or in families on social assistance as being at risk for poor school performance and for psychiatric disorders. The authors of the study conclude that, “the findings have important program implications, suggesting [among others] a need to:
expand quality child-care programs as a preventative measure against poor school performance, and emotional and behavioral problems, particularly for poor children regardless of whether parents are working;

- target parenting and child-care programs to assist lone parents with young children.” (p. 20)

The Early Years Study (1999) also looked at how well Ontario’s children are doing. The authors examined statistics from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, and from Statistics Canada which show that a higher proportion of children in low-income families do not do well academically and socially, compared with children in higher income families. The statistics also show, however, that factors other than economic ones, such as parent-child interactions, may affect the development of children across all economic levels (p.10). Mustard and McCain point out that all children will benefit from good quality childhood education programs, and that parents across the economic spectrum can benefit from parenting support.

A 1999 study conducted in Newfoundland identified that children growing up in economically disadvantaged families enter school with an interest in reading and writing, but lacking the cognitive and linguistic skills that would enable them to achieve the reading proficiency of children from more affluent families (O’Sullivan).

The study, by O’Sullivan and Howe, examined the relationship between parent expectations, student beliefs about their own abilities, and school performance. It involved 439 children aged four to eight living in poverty, that is, living below the low-income level as defined by Statistics Canada. They found that children who believe they are good readers, achieve more reading success than could be predicted, based on their linguistic and cognitive ability. And further it was found that, “at every grade level the parents of outstanding readers were distinguished by their extremely positive beliefs about their child’s competence” (p.29).
This factor, beliefs about competence in literacy skills, was found to be more powerful than beliefs about the value of literacy in influencing children’s reading abilities. The research also shows that “even small increases in exposure to print for children living in poverty could result in considerable benefits for their reading” (p.33).

The study concludes that involving parents in literacy programs contributes to improved reading achievement for the children, and that low-income parents should be viewed as the valuable resources they are and not as “part of the problem” that needs to be fixed.

Research quoted by Dr. John Wherry in a survey of studies on parent involvement in schools, shows that “the number one predictor of student’s academic achievement is their mother’s educational level followed by the educational level of both parents” (Thomas, 1994). However, this study also points out that parents with less than a high school education are anxious to cooperate with teachers, although they generally have fewer contacts with their children’s schools (Moles, 1993). Wherry concludes that most parents really care about their children; some simply do not know how to help them with their education.

The information in these studies has large implications for the school achievement of children who grow up in families where parents struggle with financial issues, have low-literacy levels and may have negative attitudes towards schools based on their own experiences as students. The information also points to some solutions, reminding educators of that largely untapped resource referred to by Julie O’Sullivan, the valuable resources of the parents themselves. Family literacy programs, as we shall see in a later section of this chapter, seek to tap into this resource by supporting and encouraging families’ involvement in their children’s literacy development.
Literacy in Canada

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was undertaken in 1994 by seven post-industrial countries, including Canada, as a result of the need to better understand the nature of literacy. The IALS recognizes that literacy is no longer perceived as a skill that one either does, or does not possess. Rather, the skills involved in being “literate” are seen to be on a continuum, depending on the degree of difficulty of the information being read. For the purposes of the Survey, literacy was defined as:

“Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

— (Statistics Canada, 1996)

The results of the Survey in Canada showed that approximately 22% of the population between the ages of 16 and 69, scored at or below Level One on the IALS Literacy Scale. Level One describes individuals who have “great difficulty reading.” Approximately 27% of the population in Hamilton scored in this category. An additional 25% of the population in Canada scored at Level Two. Level Two describes individuals who are able to “read, but not well.” In Hamilton, approximately 33% of the adult population scored at Level 2.

The studies already described by O’Sullivan and Wherry, talk about the relationship between parent literacy levels and children’s literacy abilities. The findings from the IALS about literacy levels in adults, confirm a need for early intervention. Literacy support for families, parents and children, will be important in any attempt to improve children’s reading and writing abilities.
Early Brain Development

It is often said that children’s literacy development begins at birth. We know that babies can, very clearly and loudly, demand attention when they are hungry or uncomfortable! We know too, that it is instinctive for most parents to talk and sing to their baby as they meet those physical demands. Recent research into the development of babies’ brains tells us how important those interactions are.

In the Early Years Study Final Report, mentioned earlier, Mustard and McCain describe exciting new information about babies’ brain development. They describe how the baby’s brain is directly affected by the experiences and interactions of the first few years of life. All the daily activities of babyhood; bath-time, mealtime, singing, playing, exploring and family interactions contribute to the baby’s development. The authors explain that,

“The evidence is clear that good early childhood development programs that involve parents can influence how they relate to and care for children in the home and can vastly improve outcomes for children’s behaviour, learning and health in later life.” (p. 52)

In other words, rich, early childhood experiences are not simply nice-to-have extras, but are critical in determining the child’s future success or failure in learning. Failure to establish early brain growth has the potential to severely limit a child’s learning capacity, especially in the areas of language development and symbol recognition, both of which undergo crucial development between the ages of 9 months and 4 years of age.
Some principles for laying the groundwork for early child development are identified towards the end of The Early Years Study. Some of those principles describe the necessity for, “responsive relationships between adults and children that increase the potential of play-based learning,” and “quality programs that teach family literacy and numeracy to parents and other caregivers from diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds; and parenting programs that support parents and other caregivers in all aspects of early child development.” (p.156)

Two key concepts from the Early Years Study, that children’s early experiences shape their readiness for school and their later school performance, and that the most important influence on children’s development is that of their parents, come together in the concept of “Family Literacy.”

Family Literacy

As we have looked at some of the factors that influence young children’s development in positive or negative ways, we have used the term, “Family Literacy”. In this section we will consider some definitions of family literacy and describe the key features of the family literacy approach.

Family literacy views parents as their child’s first and most influential teacher. It acknowledges that parents want the best for their children, supports the family in seeking activities and materials to enhance their children's development, and provides information, friendship, and the modeling of language and literacy experiences in a group setting.

The Family literacy approach sets out to address the developmental needs of young children, of parents and other caregivers, and of parents/caregivers and children together.

The International Reading Association (IRA) Commission on Family Literacy, identified the following key elements involved in family literacy:
1 Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in the community.

2 Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children “get things done”.

3 Examples of family literacy might include using drawings or writings to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; keeping records; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing.

4 Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent, or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives.

5 Family literacy activities may reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved.

6 Family literacy activities may be initiated by outside institutions or agencies. These activities are often intended to support the acquisition and development of school-like literacy behaviours of parents, children and families.

7 Family literacy activities initiated by outside agencies may include family storybook reading, completing homework assignments, or writing essays or reports.

— (Thomas, 1999)

In commenting on this I.R.A. description of family literacy in her book, Families at School; A Guide for Educators, Dr. Thomas points out the difference between literacy activities that occur naturally in a home setting, and those “school-type” activities that may be initiated by outside agencies. She cautions that, although economically disadvantaged families may lack the formal literacy skills to succeed in school, they may use reading and writing activities in informal ways as they go about their daily routines. Dr. Thomas goes on to remind family literacy program leaders that “fix-it” type programs will undermine parents’ confidence, and counteract attempts to
involve parents in meaningful ways in their child’s literacy development:

“Respect for families’ differences and their unique abilities and strengths is fundamental to a successful family literacy program.” (P.7)

In British Columbia a series of fact sheets has been published by Literacy BC to describe family literacy programs in that Province. One of these Fact Sheets outlines the Goals of a Family Literacy program as follows:

- to promote reading and learning as valued family activities that encourage positive interactions and shared experiences;
- to enhance the ability of parents to support their children’s literacy development, from birth throughout the school years;
- to support parents in the challenging and critical job of nurturing children who will become successful adults and contribute to a strong society;
- to provide an opportunity for parents to pursue their own learning goals;
- to provide children with developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that support “school readiness”; and
- to promote and support lifelong learning.

— (Literacy B.C.)

The unique nature of family literacy, as described here, is the three-fold approach to programming:

1 Family literacy programs seek to encourage and support parents in their role as the first teachers for their children. This is done as program leaders affirm the literacy activities parents do naturally through daily routines at home, share information about ways to extend and enrich literacy learning for babies, toddlers and pre-school children, and encourage discussions about other parenting issues;
Family literacy programs enrich children’s literacy development through regular circle times involving stories, rhymes, songs, alphabet games and phonemic awareness activities. Sharing books, playing with literacy and other learning materials, and interacting with caring adults will encourage children’s growing self-confidence, and develop positive attitudes towards books, language and learning.

Family literacy programs provide shared literacy experiences for parents and children to enjoy together. Program Leaders have an opportunity to model story-reading techniques, teach new songs and rhymes, demonstrate simple creative activities that families can do at home and encourage positive attitudes towards literacy and learning in the family.

Although family literacy activities can be quite varied, there is consensus among many educators and researchers that the single most important activity is that of reading stories to children. Gordon Wells conducted longitudinal research into children’s language development and concluded, “that the frequency of experiences in listening to stories and engaging in book-talk was one of the strongest predictors of that child’s later achievement in reading and oral language.” (Wells, 1986)

The family literacy programs described in the following section may differ in size and scope, but all share the same strong emphasis on the importance of reading stories, and of sharing and talking about books.

A Brief Survey of Some Family Literacy Programs

In England the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) was set up in 1995. It developed family literacy programming for parents and children, (age 0–5) living in disadvantaged areas. The project is large, involving about 2,000 children, and offers group sessions, home visits, parenting materials, and book and toy packs for families to borrow. The focus is on,
“listening, talking, playing and singing together, and sharing books every day; aiming to lay solid foundations for later learning, especially literacy.” (PEEP Annual Report, 2002)

Learning outcomes for children in the PEEP program include areas of self-esteem, listening skills, letter knowledge, knowledge of stories, songs and rhymes, and positive attitudes towards reading and writing. Key features of the PEEP program are an emphasis on music and a framework for programming that identifies ways in which parents help their children’s literacy development. Parents involved in the program are able to earn credits through their participation, towards their own further education.

PEEP has set up a longitudinal research study, and initial findings have shown that participation in the PEEP program produces positive outcomes for children in “verbal comprehension, vocabulary, writing, concepts about print, phonological awareness, early number concepts, and self-esteem in relation to acceptance by the parent.” (p.22)

The Toronto District School Board operates Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in 34 schools, with more than 7,000 families and 11,000 children taking part. The program was developed by Mary Gordon in 1980, in response to concerns about low levels of academic achievement in inner-city schools. The Centres offer a drop-in program for pre-school children and caregivers with music and story-times, healthy snacks, playtimes and gym sessions.

In a report written for the book, Family Literacy in Canada, Mary Gordon explains how parent workers informally discuss child development issues and “assist parents to develop ways to stimulate and interact with their children in a developmentally appropriate way. Through guided observation, using the children themselves as the ‘text book’, parents learn to identify and celebrate their children’s developmental milestones”. (Gordon, 1998)
Other programs at the Centres offer a toy lending library, multi-lingual book lending library, parenting courses, and links to community and ESL programs. A formal evaluation of the Parenting and Family Literacy Centres is being undertaken by Dr. Dan Offord, of the Centre for Children at Risk, McMaster University. Informal feedback from teachers, Principals and Trustees at the Toronto School Board confirms the benefits gained by the families involved at the Centres.

In St. Catharines, Ontario, a Family Literacy Program ran in conjunction with the District School Board of Niagara in a local High School. The Program is described by Dr. Adele Thomas of Brock University, in her book, Families at School. A Guide for Educators.

Adult participants in this Family Literacy program were able to earn credits towards their high school diploma. The program encouraged parents to develop their own literacy and parenting skills, while interacting with their children in a pre-school literacy-focused program. The confidence and self-esteem of the parents increased as they participated in the planning of activities for the pre-school program. Each session allowed for children and adults to have time together for stories, music and creative activities, and time apart, when the parents took part in parenting and nutrition classes.

In Fredericton, New Brunswick, the Early Childhood Research and Development Centre at the University of New Brunswick, in partnership with the Fredericton Family Resource Centre, developed a family literacy program called “Parenting for a Literate Community”. The program focused on books and discussions around books. Pam Whitty, of UNB, describes some of the key beliefs guiding the program as follows:

“We [also] were aware of the apparent polarity that can frame literacy issues between home and school. An oft-repeated school phrase, “read to your child” is countered by another phrase from
homes, “Wait ‘til they get to school, then they will get books and reading.” As educators, we all know that success at school is more complicated than, ‘read to your child’. We also know that children who engage in peer activities prior to school, who have extensive literacy experiences with drama, play, and books, for example, are more successful when they enter school situations. And we know that most parents are highly motivated to make their children’s lives better than their own.”

— (Whitty, 1999)

Dr. Whitty describes how the program set out to “hook parents on books” by having the staff talk about books with the parents; by linking children’s play interests to books; and providing opportunities for parents and children to interact together with books.

From this brief examination it seems clear that the Family Literacy approach is an effective and powerful way to improve children’s school readiness. In involving parents and children together in appropriate literacy activities, children are gaining necessary literacy and cognitive skills, and parents can appreciate the many ways they are guiding and supporting their children’s learning.

The Family Literacy Network

The Family Literacy Network (FLN) was formed in 1998 to respond to the needs of young children and families in Hamilton.

The Network is comprised of representatives from ten local agencies: Hamilton Literacy Council, School Boards, Hamilton Public Library, Early Childhood Education, Public
Health and other interested agencies. The mission statement of the Network reads as follows:

_We are a network of community members that strives to improve the literacy levels of young children in the city of Hamilton by promoting and supporting family literacy through the provision of family literacy resources and programming._

The recommendations of the Early Years Report and the growing body of research into the efficacy of Family Literacy programs encouraged the Network to launch a number of initiatives, including Books for Babies, a Family Literacy Day and a Family Literacy Program. The Family literacy Network employed a staff member to implement the Family Literacy Program on a weekly basis in two parent/child drop-in centres, as well as at two “stand-alone” sites. The activities and materials used in this program form the basis of the Early BIRD Family Literacy curriculum described in Section Three of this Manual.

The sites used for this Family Literacy Program were located in the north end of Hamilton. This area was chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, Focus Groups with north end agencies and parents revealed a lack of accessible and universal early learning programs for young children. In addition, a higher percentage of the north end population falls within the pre-school age group in comparison with the city’s general pre-school population indicating that there are a substantial number of children to serve in this neighborhood. This area is also notable for a high unemployment rate and a large immigrant population. Hamilton is the second largest centre for immigration and refugees, after Toronto (City of Hamilton, 2001).
High levels of poverty also characterize the north end neighborhoods. Compared with other Central West Ontario districts, Hamilton has the highest percentage of low-income families, and lone-parent families living in poverty. 27% of the children aged 0-14 years, in Hamilton are living in poverty (Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, 1999). Results from Provincial standardized tests (EQAO) have also identified that the schools in this inner-city area have high numbers of children with poor test results.

The recommendations of the Early Years Report make it clear that all children and families can benefit from early learning initiatives and parenting support. However, most of the family literacy programs described in this chapter are located in low-income neighborhoods. Family literacy programs tend to be run by local community groups, operating with limited and short-term funding. For this reason, the programs are usually targeted to those areas that lack accessible, affordable early childhood programs, and where many families live in poverty. The available funds, then, as in Hamilton, are used to serve the families with the highest need for support.

In this chapter we have described some of the educational needs of children who grow up in poverty. We have also examined the very hopeful and positive information about the influence of family literacy programs in encouraging parents to gain both the confidence and the knowledge to help their children improve their reading and language ability.

We asked parents attending some pilot sessions of the Early BIRD Family Literacy program to tell us what they enjoyed about the program, and what they had learned. Some of their responses are listed opposite. They sum up for us our rationale for pursuing this project.
“I enjoy talking more with my child while he is playing.”

“We liked talking about books. My child liked telling the story her way.”

“I learned how important it is to play and talk with children.”

“I had my child help me with some simple chores around the house and as we did this we talked about everything and it was great.”
This section examines some of the key elements involved in planning a family literacy program. First, information about literacy, and about children’s early language and literacy development in particular, is described.

Another key element in family literacy is the understanding of adult learning needs. The characteristics of adult learners and some of the principles involved in planning learning environments for adults and children are considered.

Finally, this section describes some of the practical considerations the Family Literacy Network faced in Hamilton when planning for a Family Literacy Program. These considerations involve finding suitable locations and looking for community partners to assist in implementing the program.
CHAPTER 2: Literacy

Literacy Definitions

“Literacy is the demonstration of the understanding of information received visually (i.e. print and media) and aurally (i.e. listening); and the expression of information to others in visual (i.e. writing and representing) and oral (i.e. speaking) forms. Literacy in children is characterized by a series of developmental phases, which, for most children, relates to their chronological age. Children progress through the phases sequentially, but may demonstrate indicators from more than one phase at any given time.

Children develop literacy skills best in a meaningful context through literacy play and communication, and in situations where language is modeled by others. An environment that promotes literacy play and risk-taking, is effective in the development of language skills.

— (Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, Communication Services, 2002)
“The most fundamental definition of literacy is being able to read and write and understand the uses of these abilities. Beginning literacy consists of experiences during the first years of life that lead to reading and writing and contribute to a recognition of the significance of these skills.

Like walking and talking, literacy doesn’t appear all at once but develops slowly through countless experiences with books, other print materials, and writing tools.”

— (International Reading Association 1999)

Both of these definitions of literacy stress the importance of early childhood experiences in the development of literacy skills. Both definitions also describe the gradual nature of that development. This gradual development of young children’s literacy abilities is known as Emergent Literacy.

**Emergent Literacy**

There is a wealth of information about children’s emergent literacy. A recent synthesis of the research identified some of the key factors involved in early literacy development as follows:

- Oral language, listening and speaking
- Frequent and regular storybook reading; talking about books
- Experiences with reading and writing
- Alphabet letter knowledge and phonemic awareness
- Parent support and encouragement; books, reading and writing materials readily available in the home.

— (Gunn, Simmons and Kameenui, 2001)
All of these factors will be important elements of a family literacy program, and parents can also be encouraged to incorporate these literacy activities into their daily routines at home. For program leaders and for parents, understanding the significance of these early literacy experiences activities is key. We will take each of these factors and briefly look at the implications for family literacy programs.

**Oral Language**

Babies are social beings right from day one and as they respond to their parents’ voices and touch, they make vocal sounds and eye and body movements in attempts to communicate. This “intent to speak” may be seen as a key element in the acquisition and development of literacy skills (Rutledge, 1991). How babies develop these skills will depend on the quality of the oral language surrounding them (Wells, 1986). It is important for parents and other adults to talk with and listen to children in a caring and natural way. Parents and caregivers who talk to their babies frequently and who also respond to the babies’ coos and babbles, are facilitating their children’s language development naturally.

The following strategies for encouraging oral language with babies and toddlers are taken from Early Learning Canada. All of them can occur in the context of everyday routines and conversations.

- “Your baby babbles, exploring the different sounds he can make with his voice. As you repeat and encourage the sounds that make sense in our language, he is developing his ability to listen for sounds.”

- Talk about what is happening as you do things together. “Let’s put on your blue shirt.” “It’s starting to rain. We’re going to get wet!” Babies can understand more words than they can say.

- As children begin to talk, help them find the words for things they see and do. “Milk. You want some milk.”
Add words. “Kitty!” “Yes, soft kitty!” as you stroke the kitten’s fur. Build on what they already know.

Repeat words again and again so your children will be able to understand and remember them.

Don’t do all the talking. Ask questions and listen to your children’s answers. You’ll learn a lot about them and they’ll feel loved and respected.

Sing songs. The music makes the words easier to remember and gives children a feeling for the rhythm of language.”

— (McIsaac, Estey and Rendell, 1999, p.98)

Gordon Wells also describes the importance of everyday conversations, and gives some specific suggestions for adults to encourage conversations with children. These strategies may be used with older children too. Oral language continues to be the foundation for literacy even as children become capable readers and writers.

“When the child appears to be trying to communicate, assume he or she has something important to say and treat the attempt accordingly.

Because the child’s utterances are often unclear or ambiguous, be sure you have understood the intended meaning before responding.

When you reply, take the child’s meaning as the basis of what you say next — confirming the intention and extending the topic or inviting the child to do so him or herself.

Select and phrase your contributions so that they are just at or just beyond the child’s ability to comprehend.”

— (Wells, 1986, p50)
Talking and Thinking

McIsaac calls these everyday conversations “gateways to the child’s language development” (p.106). But conversations also foster the development of the child’s thinking skills. It is through conversations that children listen to the ideas of others and compare them with their own ideas, thus building up concepts about the world around them. Thought and language develop in an interrelated way. Children learn to store their experiences in the form of thought, (Yardley, 1970), and then are able to “recall them, relate them and manipulate them” (p.39). As children and adults think, they seem to talk inwardly. In learning a new skill, or meeting a new experience, however, children and adults will often talk out loud, talking themselves through the experience. Children may be heard keeping up a “running commentary” as they play; adults may talk out loud as they try to figure out how to set up the new VCR! Both children and adults in these situations are putting their actions into words to help them understand and internalize the experience (p.41).

The chart on page 28 from Early Learning Canada, shows this thinking and language connection in the context of a family getting ready for dinner. As the adults talk about what they are doing, and involve the child in both the activity and conversation, they are helping the child develop both language and thinking skills.

Fostering Children’s Language

When adults are aware of the importance of conversations in the development of children’s language and thought, they can set out to encourage, or foster, that development by using helpful strategies as they talk and listen with children. Joan Tough describes some of these specific strategies in Talking and Learning (1977). Tough first describes the variety of ways children use language as they talk, and then describes how adults can help extend and enrich the child’s language and
Open-ended questions that encourage more than a one-word response and comments that demonstrate the adult’s interest in the topic will lead to a sustained conversation. The adult can follow the child’s lead in the conversation, but also give new information, or “orient” the conversation towards different kinds of thinking, such as predicting, reasoning or recalling other similar events.

For example:  How are you going to make your castle?
What happened at the park yesterday?
Why does the bird need a nest?

— (Tough, 1977, p.30)

(N.B. A complete list of Joan Tough’s “talking strategies” is included in the Appendix)

### Reading Stories

If oral language is the foundation of literacy, the key to growth in children’s literacy skills is in books and stories. There is a remarkable degree of consistency among researchers when

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Skill</th>
<th>Things to talk about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observe</td>
<td>watching Mom or Dad model how to set the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>learning the names of tools for eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence in order</td>
<td>setting things on the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>things we eat with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize patterns</td>
<td>place settings form a repeated pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict</td>
<td>if we set out soup bowls, we must be having soup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— (Mclsaac, Estey and Rendell, 1999, p.98)
discussing the role that story reading plays in children’s literacy development.

“In examining the elements affecting success in the early years of schooling, it was found that the most important predictor of achievement at the age of seven was children’s knowledge of what books are for and how they are used. This knowledge, in turn, was strongly predicted by the extent to which parents encouraged their children to read and write and, in particular, by the frequency with which they read stories to their children.”

— (Wells, 1986, p.151)

In the Summary of Emergent Literacy Research, Gunn Simmons and Kameenui (2001) described why story reading is so important, and identified the literacy skills and knowledge that children gain from regular story reading experiences. Their Summary describes the findings from a number of key studies into children’s early literacy experiences. The following information is a synthesis of those findings.

Why is reading aloud to children so important?

Reading stories to children:

► Usually occurs in a nurturing manner, is enjoyable and relaxing for child and adult

► Exposes children to advanced and expanding vocabulary

► Increases children’s attention to verbal and visual information

► Provides early neurological exposure to letter shapes and forms
SECTION 2
Foundations for Family Literacy

CHAPTER 2: Literacy

- Demonstrates that the printed word is related to the spoken word, and that print conveys a meaning
- Exposes children to story frameworks, imaginative and critical thought

**What happens during the interaction between adult and child that helps children become more in tune to literacy knowledge?**

During story reading:

- Labeling and commenting on single pictures occurs first
- Later, oral retelling using pictures accompanies labeling
- Infants are exposed to letters and numbers
- Adults introduce ideas such as surprise, and prediction of what is going to happen
- Attention is focused on some of the printed words
- Alphabet and rhyme are included in the storybook text
- Over time, stories become more complex
- Adults engage the child in conversation to expand the main idea, relate the text to the child’s experience, ask questions about the story and challenge children to make inferences and conclusions from the text
- Adults purposefully focus children’s attention on letters of the alphabet
- Children develop good listening based on verbal and visual information

The emotional or affective aspects of reading to children are also significant. Attitudes towards reading, books and stories play a powerful role in children’s reading achievement. Positive attitudes, and a curiosity about books and reading, develop when parents openly display their enjoyment during story reading (Strickland and Denny, 1989). Children who have had many loving, enjoyable story reading experiences
before coming to school “feel the joy of making sense of the mystery of print” (Cullinen, 1989).

Another interesting finding from the research, points out the importance of reading stories more then once. Children often have favourite stories that they want read to them over and over again. The cry of “Read it again!” may be greeted with dismay by parents, but it has been noted that after repeated readings children will respond more frequently to questions in more complex ways than they do after hearing only a single reading of a story (Teale and Sulzby, 1987).

Of course, as well as reading stories to children it is important for adults to provide books for children to handle and play with. Babies will look at, touch, and maybe even taste, cloth books, sturdy board books and plastic bath-time books. Toddlers enjoy feeling the furry bunny, lifting the flap to look for Spot, and turning the pages back and forth as they examine clear, bright pictures. Gradually children begin to notice the print on the page and will ask, “What does it say?” or “That says my name!”

The evidence is certainly clear, that for any early childhood family literacy program, books and stories will play a central part in the curriculum.

Reading and Writing Experiences

Apart from books and stories, there are many opportunities for children to experience reading in very natural ways during daily routines at home and in the community. Labels on cereal boxes, the big M for McDonald’s, the Stop sign at the corner, store flyers and shopping lists are all sources of reading, and help children understand the importance and meaning of print. Adults can help by pointing this “environmental print” out to children, and reading labels and signs out loud as they shop or walk around the neighborhood.
Family literacy programs can build on this meaningful print by printing children’s names, labeling favourite toys, and using simple signs and pictures at snack time and playtime.

Researchers have found that many children write before they can read. Children who achieve well in school at reading and writing have usually had lots of opportunities in early childhood to play and experiment with writing and drawing materials (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). It is important for children to have access to paper, crayons, pencils, markers, etc. as well as seeing adults write notes or shopping lists. The uses of writing can also be modeled in a family literacy program as the leader prints the children’s names, writes the words to favourite rhymes, or displays simple snack recipes.

**Alphabet Knowledge: Phonemic Awareness**

Knowledge of both the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet are also important predictors of children’s later success in reading. Children need many opportunities to play with magnetic letters, to read alphabet books and sing the alphabet song. Phonemic awareness refers to knowledge about words and sounds within words, and again it is an important precursor to reading ability.

The following list shows some of the signs of linguistic awareness that young children will demonstrate:

- Makes spontaneous comments about language — “You said ‘Peggo’, that sounds funny.”
- Makes games with words; makes up ‘silly’ words, plays with sounds
- Develops a sense of rhyme and rhythm;
  - can judge if words rhyme
  - can clap out the number of beats (syllables) in a word
  - enjoys stories and songs with strong rhyme and rhythm
  - creates and plays with words using rhyme
  - can isolate the initial phoneme (sound) in a word using repetition (the z-z-z-z-zoo)
Later on, as children’s alphabet knowledge increases they are able to:

- create rhyming words at will
- create new words by changing sounds (cat becomes bat)
- understand the concept of a “word” (what’s a word for…)
- begin to identify beginning sounds

— (Source: HWDSB, Communication Department)

Parents and teachers can help children develop their phonemic awareness through frequent repetition of nursery rhymes, songs, chants, finger-plays and action songs; playing sound and word games; choosing books with repeated words and phrases, rhyme and alliteration; and using humour to have fun with sounds.

Support and Encouragement

This last factor, of encouraging children’s literacy development, is listed separately to emphasize its importance; but it is really a part of all the other factors that contribute to literacy. Children need to catch the enthusiasm of the significant adults in their lives towards reading and books, towards singing and playing with literacy materials.

An Australian children’s author, Mem Fox, calls it the passion for reading. She describes a young mother, Helen, whose three year-old daughter, Sally, is happily reading entire books. Helen claims to know nothing about teaching reading. All she has done is read to Sally every day since she was born:

“Sally associated books with cuddles on the rocking chair on her mother’s lap, sweetly learning to read words, then pages, in the relaxed knowledge that she was the centre of her mother’s focus and pride. Her emerging literacy was greeted with so much
The lesson for a family literacy program to learn from the story of Helen and Sally is that warm, comfortable and encouraging adult-child interactions are key in the development of children’s literacy skills. The Research Review conducted by Gunn (2001), also points out that socio-economic status does not necessarily contribute most directly to reading achievement.

“Rather, other family characteristics such as attitude towards education, parental guidance, parent goals for their child, conversations in the home, reading materials in the home, and cultural activities contribute to success with literacy for the child.” (Gunn, 2001, p.15)

A Note About ESL Learners

Parents whose first language is not English, sometimes worry that they are not able to speak English well enough to help their children. These parents can be reassured that talking to their children in their first language is essential for literacy development. English as a second language develops best with a solid first language acquisition. Early childhood programs need to provide a comfortable and accepting environment for all children, where children are not “pressed to parrot a language they do not understand” (Graeme and Fahlman, 1990 p. 7). Program leaders can help ESL children understand what is happening in the program by simplifying their own language, using one or two word utterances to help children
gain vocabulary, and by using gestures, objects and picture cues to assist comprehension.

ESL families will also feel more comfortable when books with multilingual texts are available in the program. Parents or volunteers can then read the stories to the children in their own language, thus supporting the child’s first language acquisition (Graeme and Fahlman, 1990). Multilingual storybooks, and Family Language Kits containing books, puppets, videos and cassettes in English and a child’s home language, are available at many Public Libraries. The Hamilton Public Library, for example, has kits available in Serbian, Croatian, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Punjabi, French, Portuguese, Somali, Hungarian, Albanian and Khmer.

Conclusion

There is certainly an enormous amount of information available about young children’s language development. In planning a curriculum for a weekly family literacy program it will be important to consider the needs of the particular families attending the program and to focus on the most critical aspects that will help and support their literacy development.

Program Leaders will be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and strengths of the families and ensure a warm, friendly, supportive atmosphere where parents and children will feel confident enough to experiment with new and exciting literacy activities.

In summary;

Parents will foster language development by providing:

- Books and other reading and writing materials in the home,
- Support and guidance to children using those materials,
- Many family conversations, singing and cultural activities,
Frequent and regular storybook reading.

A family literacy program will foster language development by providing:

- Modeling of literacy behaviours and activities,
- Support and encouragement to parents as they engage their children in literacy activities,
- Experiences with reading and writing,
- Phonemic awareness activities; alphabet games and songs,
- Frequent and regular storybook reading.
The Early BIRD Family Literacy Program sets out to meet the needs of both children and parents/caregivers, with a family literacy focus. The program leaders are trained early childhood educators, who have considerable experience in working with large and small groups of children and some experience in working with families. However, in planning to implement effective programs for parents and children together, it was important to consult with adult literacy programs and with other family literacy programs to learn more about effective ways to help the parents gain both confidence and improved skills in the area in literacy.

The experience of the first pilot program showed that the parents were interested in their child’s language development, were anxious to help their children and were motivated to attend the program. We needed to ensure that the program affirmed the parents’ desire to help their children, and provided the encouragement and information they needed to support their children’s literacy growth. As well, the program hoped to encourage parents to increase their own literacy skills and confidence, and to seek out further adult education programs.

A search of the literature on Family Literacy identified four models for family literacy programs (Nickse, 1991). These models were differentiated by the direct or indirect nature of the program delivery as follows:
1 Parents and children together — direct service to children and to parents (joint parent/child programming; adult basic education and parenting skills for parents; and E.C.E. programs for children.)

2 Focus on parents — direct service to parents; indirect service to children (Adults only participate in parent education programs to assist them in supporting their children’s learning at home.)

3 Parent involvement — direct service to children; indirect service to parents (Parents/caregivers participate in programming together with their children; no specific instruction for parents; the focus is on children’s literacy development with the support of adult participants; emphasis is on skill building and enjoyment.)

4 Community resource — indirect service to children and to parents (Little or no literacy instruction is offered. Parents attend information sessions, may receive gifts of books, attend library story times, etc.)

The Early BIRD Family Literacy Program generally follows the third model of direct service to children and indirect service to parents. However, the program leaders endeavor to explain briefly the strategies used at circle time, encourage parents to participate in all activities, model a variety of literacy strategies, and provided written materials (e.g. songs and rhymes enjoyed by the children, simple home activities and information about children’s literacy development). Informal times at the beginning and end of the programs also provide opportunities for conversations with parents.

**Adult Learning Styles**

The following information about adult learning styles was found to be helpful. It comes from the parent programs, Learning Begins and Early Learning Canada.
→ Adults learn differently from children. The acronym M.A.P. is a reminder of this:

**Motivation.** Adults will learn when they *need* to know, and when they *want* to know certain information.

**Active involvement.** Adults need to be actively involved in their learning. It is important that they own it.

**Prior knowledge.** It is important to respect, and start from, what people already know.

→ Adults/parents have much to contribute to each other, and are resources for the program.

→ Given that family literacy programs are based on the premise, “parents are their child’s first and most influential teachers,” program leaders need to put parents at the front of their child’s learning, while they walk beside.

— (McIsaac, Rendell and Estey, 1999)

Malcolm Knowles, known as the “father of adult education”, describes certain principles that characterize effective learning and teaching for adults. As well as the ones listed above, Knowles adds the need for learning to be relevant, and for the goals of the learning experience to be clearly defined (Lieb, 1991).

In his article, Stephen Lieb points out that adults often have many responsibilities to balance against the demands of learning. Many of these responsibilities pose real barriers against participating in learning situations. For parents some barriers to attending a family literacy program may be a lack of money for transportation, lack of confidence, lack of information about the program, or other family responsibilities. It is important then, in planning a new family literacy program, to make every effort to increase the motivation of parents to attend, and to decrease the barriers that might discourage them from attending.
Adult Learning Principles

The following charts, taken from an adult training guide (National Cancer Institute, 2001), give information about adult learning that will be useful for family literacy program leaders.

### Adult Learners Retain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>of what they hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>of what they see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>of what they see and hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>of what they see, hear and discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>of what they see, hear, discuss and do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— (National Cancer Institute, 2001 p.5)

#### The Adult Learning Cycle

1. **Experiencing**: doing an activity together

2. **Processing**: sharing observations about the experience

3. **Generalizing: Deriving Meaning**: examining the meaning of the experience, and comparing it to other experiences

4. **Applying: Taking Action**: planning for real-life situations

— (National Cancer Institute, 2001 p.7)
### Characteristics of Adult Learners and The Role of the Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants Learn Best When…</th>
<th>The Role of the Leader is to…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>they feel valued and respected for the experiences and perspectives they bring.</td>
<td>elicit participants experiences and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the learning experience is active and not passive.</td>
<td>actively engage participants in the learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the learning experience actually fills their immediate needs,</td>
<td>identify participants’ needs and tie program into those needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they accept responsibility for their own learning.</td>
<td>make sure content is directly relevant to participants’ experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their learning is self-directed and meaningful.</td>
<td>involve participants in deciding content and skills to be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the learning addresses ideas, feelings and actions.</td>
<td>use a variety of methods to address knowledge, attitudes and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the learning environment is conducive to learning.</td>
<td>ensure that the environment is safe, comfortable and enjoyable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning is reinforced.</td>
<td>use methods that allow participants to practice new skills, and ensure reinforcing feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning occurs in small groups.</td>
<td>provide opportunities for participant to apply the new information and skills they have learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Leader values their contributions as both a learner and a teacher.</td>
<td>use methods that encourage participants to explore feelings, attitudes and skills with other learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encourage participants to share their knowledge and experiences with others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— (National Cancer Institute, 2001 p.6)
In conclusion, the research is clear that family literacy program leaders need to consider carefully the needs of both children and parents in planning strategies and materials to enhance literacy skills and attitudes. It is also clear, from the literature on family literacy, on children’s literacy development and on adult learning principles, that it is most important to provide a comfortable, friendly and accepting environment for any family literacy program.

Malcolm Knowles sums up the key to a successful program:

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“As do all learners, adults need to be shown respect. Instructors must acknowledge the wealth of experience that adult participants bring to the classroom.”

— (Lieb, 1991)
The Family Literacy Network in Hamilton is not an Agency; rather it is a Network of interested individuals, representing agencies such as the Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton Literacy Council, YMCA child-care programs, the local School Boards, Public Health, etc. When the concept of a family literacy program was explored, it was clear that community partnerships would be needed to help bring this concept to fruition. The Network wrote and submitted the Proposal for funding to The Ontario Trillium Foundation. Once the funding was approved, the following partners worked with the Family Literacy Network to help in the implementation of the family literacy initiatives in Hamilton.

This list is an example of the cooperation that we found in our community. Other family literacy practitioners may find similar partners in seeking to establish program support in other areas.

**Family Literacy Network Partnerships**

1. **Hamilton Literacy Council**

   The Hamilton Literacy Council acted as the lead agency for the writing and production of this Manual. Funds were obtained from the National Literacy Secretariat and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and were administered by the Hamilton Literacy Council. Literacy Council staff also acted as a resource on adult learners for this Manual. It is a goal of the Family Literacy Network, that through the family literacy programs, parents and caregivers will be encouraged to access the Hamilton Literacy Council programs and resources.
2 Hamilton Public Library
The Hamilton Public Library has been a keen supporter of the Family Literacy Network, and its family literacy initiatives. The Library provides office space for any staff of the Network, and a children’s librarian is a member of the Network, giving advice and guidance to the project.

3. Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
The School Board provided locations for several of the pilot programs. At the school level, Principals and School Council members gave support and encouragement, as well as helping to publicize the program. Several School Board staff are members of the Network, and provide some curriculum support to the program.

4. Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton
The Umbrella acted as “lead agency” for the first family literacy pilot project. They received and administered the funds; provided office space, storage and informal support for the program leader; and answered public enquiries about the program.

5. Early Literacy Consultants
One of the new Ontario Early Literacy Consultants acts as a resource to the Family Literacy Network. The Early Literacy Consultants share the Network’s goal of assisting and supporting parents in literacy areas. By working together, both groups can ensure that their programs complement each other and that overlap is avoided.

6. Field Test Programs
The Early BIRD Manual was field-tested in six different locations across the city, in a variety of Resource Centres, parent/child drop-in programs and home-visit programs.

The following centres assisted in the field-testing of the program and curriculum materials. The input of the staff at
these centres was invaluable in the development of the Early BIRD program materials.

- Robert Land Preschool (YMCA)
- Resource Centres (Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club)
- Victoria Park Resource Centre (Wesley Urban Ministries)
- CATCH (Community Access to Child Health)

**A Change in Direction for the Project**

The Family Literacy Network was unsuccessful in its attempts to obtain funding to run the family literacy program in 2003. The work on the Program Manual continued, however, and this part of the project is seen as providing a valuable support and resource for family literacy programming at parent/child programs in the community.

Along with this change in direction for the family literacy project, came a change in name. The program became known as Early Beginnings In Reading Development, or **Early BIRD**.

The Family Literacy Network also changed its format, becoming part of a broader collaboration of agencies and groups in Hamilton that are seeking to encourage and support early literacy initiatives in this community. This new group is known as the Early Literacy Steering Committee.
This section gives information about the Early BIRD Family Literacy Program. A description of the program includes curriculum goals and outcomes, and program approaches. The components of the program are described, giving practical background information on each component for program leaders.

Program topics are outlined, and planning charts for each topic offered as guides in planning and delivering the program. The text of the Parent Pamphlets, designed to complement the program topics, is included so that it may be photocopied.
Curriculum Goals and Outcomes

The first overall goal of the Early BIRD program is to work with caregivers to share strategies for early literacy and numeracy development.

Through the use of a variety of informal strategies, including discussions, adult/child interactions and printed outreach materials, the program is working towards the following outcomes for parents/caregivers.

Parents will:

► understand their role in helping their child learn
► enjoy sharing stories, songs and games with their child
► engage in simple, literacy activities with their children at home
► understand that the early literacy experiences they are providing at home will develop a strong foundation for their child’s later literacy achievement
► use specific, simple strategies to help their child’s language development
► read stories regularly with their child
► know the importance of stories, books and conversations in their child’s language development
► increase the amount and use of reading materials in the home
► learn a variety of traditional and enjoyable nursery rhymes and songs to use with their child, including rhymes and songs from the family’s cultural experience
► demonstrate increased confidence in their own literacy abilities; seek out adult literacy programs where applicable

► recognize the value of the cultural experiences they are already providing for their children at home and in the community.

The second overall goal for the Early BIRD program is to improve school readiness in children under five.

Through stories, songs and literacy activities during the program sessions, and through the increased use of literacy activities and strategies at home, the program is working towards the following outcomes for children:

**Children will:**

► enjoy participating in songs, stories and games

► show an interest in stories, books and literacy materials

► know many stories, nursery rhymes and songs

► develop the confidence to ask questions, offer comments, join in repetitive stories

► demonstrate increased vocabulary and oral language skills

► listen for enjoyment and for information

► take part in conversations

► demonstrate awareness of the sounds of language (e.g. rhyming sounds)

► demonstrate awareness of letters and words in the environment

► know some letter names and sounds

► show confidence in exploring and experimenting with literacy materials, scribble writing and drawing

► demonstrate an interest in learning to read and write.
Program Approaches

1. Parents and Children Together

Family literacy programs are unique in that the program is designed for parents and children to play and learn together. Sometimes parents may have a separate session for part of the time, when they can discuss literacy or parenting issues together, but most of the time in the Early BIRD Program is spent with parents and children together. The organization of the time in each family literacy session may be dictated by the space available or by the number of staff the funding will allow.

Each session in Early BIRD focuses on a specific topic concerning literacy development, and this topic is explored with the children and the parents or caregivers. As the adults and children engage in the activities, there are opportunities for informal conversations, demonstrations, modeling and practice. Pamphlets for each topic, listing the key points, and handouts with the words for the rhymes used in the program, or suggested home activities, are available for parents.

The goal of empowering parents to take an active role in their child’s literacy development will be central to the success of a family literacy program. All parent materials, as well as the activities in the program, will be designed to enhance the confidence of parents and children as they engage in literacy activities together.

2. Curriculum Framework

Three key learning strategies are consistently reinforced throughout the family literacy curriculum. These three strategies are:

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Watch and Listen to your child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Talk and Play with your child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Add New Ideas, new words, or different materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These “ABCs” of learning are seen as key building blocks for the program and they are integrated into each component of the program and into each curriculum topic. This framework seeks to encourage in children, parents and teachers, a positive attitude towards, and enthusiasm for, learning.

The framework seeks to affirm, encourage and enrich the parent-child relationship, by teaching parents to:

- ▶️ **A** — observe and celebrate their child’s interests and abilities;
- ▶️ **B** — enjoy playing and talking with their child; and
- ▶️ **C** — foster their child’s development in appropriate ways.

### Watch and Listen to your child.

This strategy will encourage parents and teachers to:

- ▶️ notice what the baby looks at, or reaches for
- ▶️ notice the children’s interests before “jumping in” with new ideas or materials
- ▶️ listen carefully to children’s language before responding in a conversation
- ▶️ notice and celebrate children’s new skills
- ▶️ be aware of the child’s needs for comfort, reassurance, change of activity, etc.
- ▶️ notice what the child enjoys doing, or chooses to play with.

### Talk and Play with your child.

This strategy will encourage parents and teachers to:

- ▶️ follow the child’s lead in conversations and play situations
- ▶️ join in sharing stories, songs, books and activities with their child
- ▶️ involve their child in everyday routines at home
- ▶️ foster confidence and self-esteem in their child
A Family Literacy Curriculum

CHAPTER 5: Curriculum Goals and Outcomes; Program Approaches

have fun together with their child.

Add New Ideas, (words, toys, or materials)
This strategy will encourage parents and teachers to:
- extend the child’s play experience or conversation
- introduce new words and concepts when appropriate
- encourage new skills as the child is ready
- encourage creativity
- provide interesting toys and scrap materials for children to explore.

Integrating the ABCs into the Program

All parts of the program will offer the leader opportunities to model and encourage these key strategies. During circle times and during informal conversations the leader will model simple ways to engage the children’s attention and to respond to the children’s ideas and conversation. The leader will be sensitive in encouraging parents to participate, so that shy or E.S.L. parents will feel comfortable.

Creative play times will provide opportunities for the leader to encourage parents to observe their children’s interests and skills, to join with their children in exploring and playing with different materials, and to engage the children in conversations about their play.

The leader will point out why new materials are added, show how simple, scrap materials interest children, and model ways of extending the children’s language and encouraging problem-solving through conversations.

3. Program Plans

Background information on the components of the program, and planning guides for each of the curriculum topics will be found in the following Chapters. It is hoped that this family
literacy curriculum may be used in flexible ways so that the leader will be able to respond to the particular needs of the participants in the group. Program locations vary; some are “stand-alone” programs and some are integrated into existing child-care programs. Some programs have smaller numbers, and some have a high proportion of participants who speak little English. Some programs too, will have more babies in the group and some will have more 3-4 year olds. The program leader will use his or her judgment in planning for each group and in modifying the program to meet the needs of the group, and to build on the strengths of the participants.

**Program Structure**

The program time is divided into two larger time blocks, Circle time and Creative Play / Book Browsing time, followed by shorter time blocks for Snack and a Closing Circle.

This program structure is offered as a sample. When the family literacy curriculum is integrated into existing child-care programs, the plan will be adapted to fit the usual structure of the host program.
Families Reading Together: Program Structure

It is suggested that a variety of music tapes or CDs may be played to set a “friendly tone” as the families arrive and as the leader greets each family, checks attendance, helps with coats, etc.

**Circle Time**

- Greeting and welcome songs
- Story and book time; may involve using puppets, flannel board, etc.
- Songs, nursery rhymes, poems and chants
- Music for listening; may include playing instruments, dancing or movement
- Language games; may include matching and sorting objects or pictures, listening activities, alphabet games, phonemic awareness games, etc.

**During Circle Time, parents will be encouraged to:**

A. Watch, to see what interests their child; Listen to their child’s responses.

B. Participate in songs, rhymes and games with the children.

**Creative Play Time**

- Drawing, pasting, cutting or tearing, painting, using “found materials”
- Puzzles, shape/colour/size sorting toys, small blocks, counting games
- Letters, numerals to manipulate, alphabet puzzles and games
- Writing/scribbling materials, materials for home-made books
Library Book Time
An informal reading time for parents and children to look at books together on a cozy blanket or cushions. The book browsing area will be available for parents and children to use throughout the Creative Play time.

**During Creative Play Time, parents will be encouraged to:**

A Watch to see their child’s interests and abilities; Listen to their child’s ideas.

B Respond to their child by playing and talking together, following the child’s lead.

C Introduce materials and ideas as appropriate.

**Snack Time**
This will be a relaxed, informal time for “social talk” and conversations with children and parents.

**Closing Circle**

- Goodbye routines and songs

- Recap, “what we did today” and “what did you notice about your child today?”

- Distribute Parent Pamphlets and any handout sheets
The key components of the Early BIRD program are:

1. reading stories/sharing books
2. songs, nursery rhymes and chants
3. phonemic awareness
4. creative play activities
5. parent materials

This Chapter will discuss each of the program components, giving background information, teaching tips, key messages for parents (including the A B C Strategies) and practical examples.

1. Stories and Books: Background Information

Story time is probably the central part of the family literacy program. The story will complement the topic chosen for the program session; and may provide the impetus for talking and singing, and for the creative play activities that follow. The curriculum planning sheets use a variety of good children’s literature as the basis for developing each session. Program leaders will, of course, also select storybooks based on the preferences of the children, the ages of the particular group, and their own personal favourites. Blank planning sheets have been provided for this purpose. The book lists included in this section will provide a good basis for selecting stories to use in the program. Program Leaders will aim for a variety of books: fiction and non-fiction; stories about everyday life and imaginative stories; alphabet and “labeling” books; poetry and traditional tales.

Reading stories also involves lots of talking about the stories. It is very important that children have the opportunity to relate
the story to their own experiences, and have an opportunity to discuss, reflect on and ask questions about the story (Wells, 1985).

The importance of reading stories to babies and young children has been documented in Section Two, but it is worth repeating that reading stories to children is the single most important thing parents can do to help their child’s later literacy achievement.

**Story Time: Teaching Tips**

- For babies and toddlers, choose books with large, clear pictures and simple words.
- Introduce the story before reading it; after a brief introduction, you may want to use the same phrase each week before you begin to read,
  e.g. Introduction:
  *This is a story about a little puppy that is hiding.*
  Story starter:
  *Are you sitting comfortably? Then I’ll begin!*
- Read with enthusiasm and expression; change your voice, make faces!
- Give special emphasis to rhyming words and rhythmic phrases.
- Hold the book so that all the children can see the pictures.
- Pause during reading to encourage children to chime in, or supply a word.
- Expect interruptions; talk about the story and pictures, encourage questions.
- Ask open-ended questions, and questions that encourage thinking skills like prediction, reasoning, recalling, etc.
- Relate the story to the children’s own experiences where possible.
- Sometimes, follow the print with your finger.
Be responsive to the group; be prepared to “read it again”, or to put the book aside and change the activity if the group is restless.

Tell some stories without the book; use puppets or props to “tell” the story.

**Messages for Parents**

- Point out to parents why you chose the book: show that good children’s books are fun for adults to read too!

- Wordless books will encourage the children to tell a story from the pictures; (parents who lack confidence in their reading abilities can enjoy using wordless books with their children).

- Point out, and model for parents, that you don’t have to read all the words; paraphrase or shorten the story sometimes, read one section of the book, or just talk about the pictures.

- Model ways of encouraging the children to participate in the story, and to talk about the story. Acknowledge and respond to the children’s comments about the story.

- Reassure parents, that children are listening even when they wiggle around! If a child needs to hold a toy, or move around during story time that’s O.K.!

- Remind parents that reading stories and looking at books is the best thing they can do to help their child to be a better reader later on.

- Ask parents if they know of similar books that their child already enjoys.

- Be sensitive to families who speak English as a second language. Multi-lingual books are available at public libraries. The Hamilton Public Library, for example, has dual language kits (F.L.A.G. Kits) with books, puppets, videos and cassettes in English and a child’s home language. These languages include: Serbian, Croatian, Arabic, Urdu, Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Punjabi, French, Portuguese, Somali, Hungarian, Albanian and Kmer.
A B C Strategies for Stories and Books:

A Watch how your child listens; see what interests your child. Listen to your child’s responses to the story.

B Talk about the story — follow your child’s lead. Ask open-ended questions.

C Add new words; build on your child’s ideas. Look for another similar book to introduce to your child.

Recommended Books
The Hamilton Public Library compiled the following lists of storybooks. We are grateful to the library for giving us permission to reproduce these lists.

Books For Babies — Birth to 18 Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Books:</th>
<th>Picture Books:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Faces</td>
<td>Big Fat Hen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baby Food</td>
<td>Big Red barn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daisy Says Coo!</td>
<td>Dear Zoo</td>
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<td>Daisy's Day Out</td>
<td>Goodnight Moon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Animals</td>
<td>How Do I Put it On?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knock at the Door</td>
<td>Night Cars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max's Bath</td>
<td>Peek-a-boo</td>
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<tr>
<td>See Goonight</td>
<td>Read to Your Bunny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where is Maisy?</td>
<td>Ten, Nine, Eight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoe's Sunny Day</td>
<td>The Runaway Bunny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baby Food</td>
<td>Trucks</td>
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<td>Mother Goose Stories</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Three Bears</td>
<td>Margaret Wise Brown</td>
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<td>Three Little Kittens</td>
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<td>Three Little Kittens</td>
<td>Margaret Wise Brown</td>
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</table>
# Books For Toddlers — 18 Months to 3 Years

**Picture Books:**
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?
- Chicka Chicka Boom Boom
- Each Peach Pear Plum
- Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed
- Freight Train
- Guess How Much I Love You?
- I Went Walking
- If You Give a Mouse a Cookie
- It Looked Like Spilt Milk
- Owl Babies
- Sheep in a Jeep
- Snowy Day
- So Much
- Tell me Something Happy Before I Go to Sleep
- The Cake That Mack Ate
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- Carl Goes Shopping

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill Martin</td>
<td>This Is The Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Martin</td>
<td>Wheels On The Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Ahlberg</td>
<td>When You Were a Baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Christelow</td>
<td>Where's My Teddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Crews</td>
<td>Where's Spot?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam McBratney</td>
<td>Would They Love a Lion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Williams</td>
<td>The Mitten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Numeroff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Shaw</td>
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<td>Martin Wadell</td>
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<td>Nancy Shaw</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezra Jack Keats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trish Cooke</td>
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<td>Joyce Dunbar</td>
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<td>Rose Robart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Carle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandra Day</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Books For Preschoolers — 3 to 5 Years**

**Picture Books:**
- Amos Sweater
- Angus and the Ducks
- Caps For Sale
- Corduroy
- Curious George
- Franklin in the Dark
- Happy Birthday
- Harry the Dirty Dog
- Little Engine that Could
- Love You Forever
- Madeline
- Make Way for Ducklings
- Mama, Do You Love Me?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet Lunn</td>
<td>Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjorie Flack</td>
<td>Mr. Grumpy's Outing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Espphy Slobadkin</td>
<td>Paperbag Princess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Freeman</td>
<td>Red Is Best</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.E. Rey</td>
<td>Stella, Queen of The Snow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paulette Bourgeois</td>
<td>Tacky the Penguin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robie Harris</td>
<td>Tale of Peter Rabbit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gene Zion</td>
<td>Too Much Noise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watty Piper</td>
<td>Where the Wild Things Are</td>
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<td>Robert Munsch</td>
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<td>Ludwig Belmehans</td>
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<td>Robert McCloskey</td>
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<td>Barbara Joosse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trina Schart Hyman</td>
<td>May I Bring a Friend</td>
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<td>Janet Stevens</td>
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<td>Paul Galdone</td>
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<td>Wilhemina Harper</td>
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<td>Beatrice DeRegniers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Lee Burton</td>
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<td>John Burningham</td>
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<td>Robert Munsch</td>
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<td>Kathy Stinson</td>
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<td>Marie-Louise Gay</td>
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<td>Helen Lester</td>
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<td>Beatrice Potter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann McGovern</td>
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<td>Maurice Sendak</td>
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**Traditional Tales:**
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Princess and The Pea
- The Gingerbread Boy
- The Gunniwolf

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trina Schart Hyman</td>
<td>Puss in Boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet Stevens</td>
<td>Something From Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Galdone</td>
<td>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</td>
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<td>Wilhemina Harper</td>
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<td>Lorinda Cauley</td>
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<td>Phoebe Gilman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Galdone</td>
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</table>
**20 Minutes A Day…**

Read to your children  
Twenty minutes a day.  
You have the time,  
And so do they.

Read while the laundry is in the machine;  
Read while the dinner cooks;  
Tuck a child in the crook of your arm  
And reach for the library books.

Hide the remote,  
Let the computer games cool,  
For one day your children  
Will be off to school.

Read in the morning:  
Read over noon;  
Read by the light of  
Goodnight, Moon.

— By Richard Peck —

(Book lists are taken from, *Reading Together @ your Library*. Hamilton Public Library)
2. Songs, Nursery Rhymes and Chants: Background Information

Music is always an important part of any early childhood program. Singing together in a group is enjoyable for children and for adults. The rhythm and rhyme of songs and nursery rhymes contribute to children’s phonemic awareness and ultimately to literacy skills. For little babies, the sound of a parent singing to them is very satisfying and comforting. Singing is a form of communication and it encourages babies to talk and sing more. It doesn’t matter how well you can sing! When singing and rhymes are “part of children’s lives from the beginning, they are more likely to,

- feel good about themselves,
- listen well and respond expressively,
- be able to distinguish between sounds,
- know many songs and rhymes.

All these things are likely to help children become good learners.”

— (PEEP, p18)

There are many different kinds of rhymes and songs for children; energetic songs that encourage movement and actions, gentle sleepy-time songs, funny songs and nonsense rhymes, and the songs that have been sung by parents and grandparents for generations.

Some songs lend themselves to using instruments like shakers and drums, or to using the fingers and toes to tap and clap, or to point to various body parts (such as “Head and Shoulders”).

Songs used in each program session, such as hello and goodbye songs, songs for routines like tidy-up and snack time, and those using the children’s names, will provide a familiar, comfortable structure for the children. Parents may share songs they enjoy, and parents from other cultures may be encouraged to share songs in their first languages.


**Songs and Rhymes: Teaching Tips**

- Look for action songs for parents to sing with their baby.
- Look for songs that get faster and slower, or louder and softer.
- Use funny songs and “nonsense” songs that encourage children to play with the sounds.
- Use songs for routines in the program; and to signal changes or transitions.
- Be ready to sing requests!
- Use puppets or props to teach new songs.
- “Sing” the story sometimes. There are many lovely storybooks based on songs. *(e.g. Baby Beluga by Raffi)*
- Set the pitch and the pace of the song so that it is appropriate for the children’s voices

**Messages For Parents**

- Encourage parents to join in and sing with their children.
- Point out how songs and rhymes help children’s language development.
- Show how songs can help to make routine times, like tidy-up, bath or bed time, happy times.
- Reassure parents that it doesn’t matter how well you sing — the children will love it anyway!
- It is important for parents to sing to their children in their own first language.
- Children’s music tapes or CDs make good birthday presents!
- Singing is a good way to comfort a baby.

**A B C Strategies for Songs and Rhymes:**

- **A** Listen to the songs your child is singing. Notice the songs or rhymes that make your child smile.

- **B** Join in with your child when they sing. Clap and smile to show that you like it too!
SECTION 3
A Family Literacy Curriculum

Teach a new song or rhyme to your child.

**Recommended Nursery Rhyme Collections**
The Hamilton Public Library compiled the following lists of Nursery Rhyme books. We are grateful to the library for giving us permission to reproduce these lists.

### Nursery Rhyme Books for Babies — Birth to 18 Months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby's Lap Book</td>
<td>Kay Chorao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clap Your Hands</td>
<td>Sarah Hayes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamp Your Feet</td>
<td>Sarah Hayes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My First Mother Goose</td>
<td>Iona Opie, Rosemary Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round and Round the Garden</td>
<td>Sarah Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One, Two, Buckle My Shoe</td>
<td>Heather Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Many Rabbits and Other Finger Plays</td>
<td>Kay Cooper</td>
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### Nursery Rhyme Books for Toddlers and PreSchoolers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Child’s Treasury of Nursery Rhymes</td>
<td>Kady Denton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger Rhymes</td>
<td>Marc Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Colors of Mother Goose</td>
<td>Arnold Lobel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Goose: A Collection of Classic Nursery Rhymes</td>
<td>Michael Hague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomie De Paola’s Favourite Nursery Rhymes</td>
<td>Tomie De Paola</td>
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</tbody>
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### Action Rhymes

**Fee Fi Fo Fum**

- Fee Fi Fo Fum
- See my fingers!
- See my thumbs
- Fee fi fo fum
- Fingers gone
- And so are thumbs

**Wiggles**

- I wiggle my fingers
- wiggle my toes
- I wiggle my shoulders
- And I wiggle my nose
- Now all the wiggles are out of me
- And I’ll be as still as still can be.

---

*(Rhymes taken from *Reading Together @ Your Library*. Hamilton Public Library 2002)*
More Action Rhymes

Wiggle, Waggle
Fingers like to wiggle, waggle,
Wiggle, waggle, wiggle, waggle,
Fingers like to wiggle, waggle,
Right in front of me.

2nd verse ends: High above my head.
3rd verse ends: Almost on the floor.

With My Little Broom
With my little broom I sweep, sweep, sweep.
On my little toes I creep, creep, creep.
With my little eyes I peep, peep, peep.
On my little bed I sleep, sleep.

What Do You Suppose?
What do you suppose?
A bee sat on my nose.
Land the tips of your finger and thumb
On your nose.
Then what do you think?
He gave me a wink.
Wink your eye.
And said, “I beg your pardon,
I thought you were the garden!”

The Beehive
Here is the beehive.
Where are the bees?
Hiding away where nobody sees.
Watch them come creeping
Out of the hive;
One, two, three, four, five.
Interlock both hands
to make a beehive.
“Creep” fingers out one by one
to fly about.

Two Little Dicky Birds
Two little dicky birds sitting on a wall.
Hold up a finger for each bird.
One named Peter, one named Paul.
Fly away Peter, fly away, Paul
Put fingers behind your back.
Come back, Peter, come back, Paul.

Slowly, slowly!
Slowly, slowly, very slowly,
Creeps the little snail.
Slowly, slowly, very slowly
Up the wooden rail.
Quickly, quickly, very quickly,
Runs the little mouse.
Quickly, quickly, very quickly,
Round about the house.

Flowers Grow
Flowers grow like this,
Cup hands
Trees grow like this,
Spread arms
I grow,
Jump up and stretch
Just like that!

A Mouse lived in a little hole
A mouse lived in a little hole
Curl one hand around the other.
Lived softly in a little hole.
When all was quiet as can be (Sh!).
When all was quiet as can be (Sh!).
Said very quietly!
Out popped HE!
Hand pops out of fist.

— (Rhymes taken from This Little Puffin. E. Matterson. 1969)
3. Phonemic Awareness: Background Information

Phonemic awareness is an important factor in children’s reading development. As outlined in Section Two, knowledge of alphabet letters and sounds directly influences children’s later language and reading achievements. Children’s growing understanding of the sounds and structure of language will be reinforced by songs and rhymes that emphasize rhyming words, rhythmic phrases and familiar “noises” such as *choo-choo*. Storybooks with alliteration, strong rhythmic phrases and rhyming sounds will also be helpful.

Some other ways to encourage the children’s growing understanding of the sounds of language include; nonsense rhymes, activities that involve playing with sounds, word games such as “I Spy,” and listening games.

**Phonemic Awareness: Teaching Tips**

- Use rhyming songs and chants at each session, and repeat them often.
- Emphasize rhyming sounds when reading stories.
- Use funny songs and rhymes, and lots of rhythmic action songs and finger plays.
- Choose books with simple repeated phrases for the children to join in.
- *(e.g. Run, run as fast as you can. You can’t catch me, I’m the Gingerbread Man!)*
- Clap the beats (syllables) in children’s names: *(e.g. clap, clap- Da-vid; clap, clap — Su-san; clap, clap, clap — Jenn-i-fer)*
- Emphasize the beginning sounds of key words. *(e.g. they went to the z-z-z-zoo)*
- Encourage the children to move to rhythmic songs such as *The Grand Old Duke of York*
- Sing the alphabet song frequently.
- Play listening games; listen for beginning sounds in words.
Provide magnetic, felt and cardboard letters for children to manipulate, match, trace, glue, etc.

Provide alphabet puzzles and matching games.

Messages for Parents

- Point out how rhyme and rhythm help children’s language skills.
- Encourage parents to sing to their children in their first language.
- Provide the words to frequently used songs.
- Provide take-home activities involving letters.
- Talk about letters and words in the environment: look for signs in your neighbourhood.
- Reassure parents that children learn about letters *gradually, and at their own rate*; they need many, many experiences with letters and sounds as they develop these skills.

A B C Strategies for sounds and letters:

**A**
- Listen carefully to your child’s talk.
- Notice the new sounds they can say.

**B**
- Respond to your child’s comments.
- Use the context to understand your child’s meaning.
- Sing funny rhyming songs together.

**C**
- *Model* correct speech, rather than *correcting* your child.
- Play alphabet games when your child is interested in letters.
Rhymes and Games about Sounds

**I Spy**

“I Spy with my little eye something that rhymes with (or “sounds like”) cup (pup), moon (spoon), jar (car), glue (shoe), rose (nose), floor (door), etc.”

Mount pictures of the objects on cards to give the children an extra clue, or use a collection of real objects on a tray or in a box.

**Feely Bag Game**

Put an object inside a cloth bag. Let the children take turns to feel and describe what is inside. Model how to do it — “I feel something round and soft” (an orange). “I feel something prickly” (a brush).

---

**Chook-chook-chook!**

Chook, chook; chook-chook-chook
Good morning Mrs. Hen.
How many chickens have you got?
Madam, I’ve got ten.

Four of them are yellow; four of them are brown.
Two of them are speckled red — the nicest in the town!

**Here is a Box**

Here is a box;

*make a box with one fist*

Put on the lid.

*use other hand for lid*

I wonder whatever inside is hid?

(peek under lid)

Why, it’s a _____ without any doubt!

*poke one finger through fist*

Open the box and let it come out!

*make the sound of whatever was named e.g. a cat, a dog, a bell.*

---

**I Hear Thunder**

I hear thunder, I hear thunder.
Hark, don’t you? Hark don’t you?
Pitter, patter, raindrops,
Pitter, patter, raindrops,
I’m wet through
So are YOU!

*sing to tune of Frere Jacque*
Alphabet Activities

Musical Letters
Place large alphabet cards, enough for every child, around the floor. Play music for the children to walk around; when the music stops they run to a letter card. Start with the same letter on each card. Say, “Find the letter B.” Later on add another letter.

Alphabet Memory Game
Make sets of alphabet cards and alphabet/picture cards for a memory game. Start with about 3–5 sets of letters for children to use with Mom or a friend. This is a good take-home activity.

Make-a-Letter Game
Children use pipe cleaners, wool, string, plasticene or play dough to outline large letters on laminated cards.

Alphabet Sorting and Matching
Provide a container of letter blocks, plastic letters, magnetic letters and board, letter puzzles, letter-lacing cards, etc. for children to play with at Creative Activity time.

Alphabet Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabears: An ABC Book</td>
<td>Kathleen Hague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet City</td>
<td>Stephan Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</td>
<td>Bill Martin Jr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford’s ABC</td>
<td>Norman Bridwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples to Zippers</td>
<td>Patricia Ruben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC of Cars and Trucks</td>
<td>Anne Alexander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating The Alphabet</td>
<td>Lois Ehlert</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Creative Play Activities: Background Information

The creative materials and toys provide a time for children and parents to play and interact together. It also allows the children to handle many different materials like crayons, paper, glue, blunt-end scissors, play dough, scrap materials, etc. This will be an informal, relaxed part of the program, where children and parents can work at their own pace, make choices and explore a variety of materials and toys. The leader will be able to model and encourage interaction between adults and children, talk informally with individual parents and point out materials and activities that can be duplicated at home.

The Leader will talk with the children as they explore art activities that may be a follow-up to the story, taking the opportunity to repeat and reinforce words and phrases from the story and to relate the events of the story to the children’s own experiences. The Leader may also encourage the children to recall and retell events from the story.

Use a wide variety of creative activities, so that the children may experience many different creative materials, and the parents will learn about simple, creative activities they can easily duplicate at home. Plan for open-ended activities and avoid any expectation that the children’s results will be “carbon-copy” crafts. Notice that children will often chatter freely when they are relaxed and enjoying the sensory pleasure of rolling play dough, snipping paper or drawing with markers.

A variety of literacy materials will be made available for the children to explore freely. Containers will be set out holding items, such as the following:

- scrap paper, crayons, markers, little blank booklets
- pictures from magazines, glue sticks, blunt-end scissors
- letter blocks, magnetic letters, sand-paper letters for tracing
- alphabet puzzles, letter matching games
Another container may hold a variety of cognitive toys such as simple puzzles, nesting toys, shape-matching toys, lacing cards, picture blocks, etc. As the children play with these toys they will be putting things in order, matching shapes and colours, sorting things that are same and different, counting objects, classifying and sorting pictures, developing fine motor skills, and using their imagination. All these activities will help in the children’s literacy development. Adults can help by joining in the children’s play, commenting on their discoveries, naming objects, encouraging conversations, offering challenges and praising their accomplishments.

A quiet area, with a blanket or some carpet squares and a box of books will encourage parents and children to spend some time looking at books and reading together. This collection will include wordless books, picture books, nursery rhyme books, book/puppet kits and some multilingual books, as well as the storybooks used in recent sessions.

**Creative Activities: Teaching Tips**

- Use scrap materials whenever possible. Encourage parents and children to bring egg cartons, cardboard tubes, etc. to the program. Show how they can use these materials at home.

- Use creative, open-ended activities that can accommodate a range of ages.

- Be aware of safety: glue sticks, scissors, markers, etc. should be out of reach for babies, and chunky crayons provided for babies to use.

- Always provide a choice of activities for children and parents.

- Choose activities that can easily be adapted to do at home.

- Repeat favourite activities often.

- Encourage and expect that the children’s creations will be wonderfully unique! Avoid any expectation that the children will produce “carbon-copy” results.
If the book does not lend itself to a follow-up activity, don’t force it. Provide a variety of interesting materials and the children will come up with many creative ideas.

**Messages For Parents**

- Point out that creative activities are fun for children and adults!
- Encourage parents to observe their children, and notice their particular interests and skills.
- Encourage parents to participate with their children.
- Point out that the fun and learning is in the “doing”, and it is not necessary to have a product each time.
- Model ways of praising children’s efforts in encouraging and positive ways.
- Provide recipes for materials like play dough.
- Provide simple instructions for open-ended activities to do at home.
- Demonstrate how to make simple, personal picture books for babies and toddlers.
- Show how simple cardboard-tube or paper puppets can be used to encourage children to retell the stories and act them out.

**A B C Strategies for Creative Play times:**

- **A** Watch to see which materials and toys interest your child. Notice your child’s growing motor skills and creative ideas.
- **B** Join in your child’s play — follow their lead! Initiate a conversation with your child about the play situation.
- **C** Add a new idea — “could this box be a garage for your truck?” Help to solve a problem — “see if this glue will stick better.”
Creative Activities: Some Simple Recipes and Ideas

N.B. Ensure that the activities you chose to use in the program may be done easily at home!

Modeling materials

Simple no-cook play dough
Mix together 1 cup flour and 1 cup salt
Add water to make a soft dough and knead well.
Use food colouring to tint the water.
Store in baggies or a covered container.

Stretchy Dough
Mix 1 cup of oil, 1 cup of water and 1 tsp food colouring.
Slowly add 4 cups of flour and mix until dough forms a ball.
Knead until smooth.
(This dough is oily, so use a plastic mat or tablecloth when the children play with it.)

Cooked play dough

In a large saucepan, mix together 5 cups water, 2.5 cups salt, 3 tbsp cream of tartar and food colouring. Stir with a wooden spoon over low heat. As the mixture heats up add 10 tbsp oil, then slowly add 5 cups flour. Keep stirring until mixture pulls away from the sides of the pan. Feel it. It should not be sticky.
Turn mixture onto a counter and knead. This recipe stores well in an airtight container or plastic bag. Do not refrigerate.

Let children use their hands to pull, squeeze, poke and roll the play dough

Tools may be added to vary the play:

- Cookie cutters
- Rolling pin
- Plastic knives
- Pizza cutters
- Straws
- Feathers
- Muffin tins
- Small plastic plates
- Small plastic toys (cars, animals, etc.)
- Plastic, blunt scissors
- Plastic flowers

Let children explore and find a variety of interesting objects to use in their creative play!
Drawing and Scribbling

Markers, crayons, pencils, etc. and a variety of scrap paper, textured paper, large and small pieces of paper will be available at each session for children's drawings and scribbles. The ideas that follow give a variety of textures and effects to intrigue the children.

Drawing in Sand
Line the bottom of a baking sheet with dark coloured paper. Cover the paper with about 5 cm of fine, clean play sand. Children use their fingers or straws, Popsicle sticks, feathers, etc. to make marks and shapes in the sand.

Chalk pictures
Put a small container of water and a sponge. Children use the sponge to wet a sheet of dark construction paper. Then children use the chalks to make beautiful, bright scribbles and pictures.

Sandpaper pictures
Use small sheets of sandpaper and old crayons. The children will see how quickly the crayons wear down!

Pasting, Tearing, Cutting and Collage
A variety of paper scraps, magazines, fabric, feathers, tissue paper, greeting cards, etc. will be available for picture making and collage. Glue sticks and children’s glue bottles may be used, or the children can use their fingers to spread this homemade paste.

Homemade paste
Mix together 80g sugar and 80g flour. Slowly add 2 cups water and stir vigorously to break up the lumps. Cook over a low heat, stirring constantly. When the mixture is smooth and clear, remove from the heat. Stir in 2ml oil of cinnamon if desired. When cool, put into a heavy dish.
Personal Books
The children may tear pictures from magazines to paste into their very own book. Fold one or two sheets of paper and staple them to make a little book. The children can look for pictures of children, families, favourite food, animals, cars and trucks, etc., to paste into their book.

(This is a good activity to do at home. Parents may paste pictures of baby’s favourite things in a book to look through together.)

Collage
Anything can be used for collages! Aim for a variety of textures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cotton balls</th>
<th>feathers</th>
<th>foil scraps</th>
<th>baking cups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>newspaper</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>twigs</td>
<td>plastic flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt scraps</td>
<td>large buttons</td>
<td>string</td>
<td>yarn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lace</td>
<td>Styrofoam</td>
<td>pine cones</td>
<td>straws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood scraps</td>
<td>“jewels”</td>
<td>large beads</td>
<td>burlap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper plates</td>
<td>ribbon</td>
<td>wrapping paper</td>
<td>Popsicle sticks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— (A much longer list of collage items will be found in, First Art. MaryAnn Kohl, 2002)

Encourage the children to look for “treasures” on the way to the program. These can be added to the collage box, or used to make simple collections. Shoe boxes make good containers for collections of leaves, twigs or stones. If the boxes are decorated by the children, that will make the collection even more special for the child. This makes a good family activity.

Cutting with Scissors
Cutting play dough will help children learn how to manipulate scissors. Snipping around pieces of card and paper will also give lots of practice. Children often cut paper into tiny pieces with no end result in mind other than experiencing the joy of cutting! Don’t expect a product all the time.
N.B. Piles of yellow “cuttings” make good straw to stick on a little pig’s house! Brown cuttings will cover the stick house and red cuttings, the brick house. Use cartons for the houses, and retell the story as you help with the sticking. Add the little pig and wolf puppets to enhance the storytelling experience.

Creative Snacks!
Simple charts can give picture instructions for the children and parents to make their own individual “assembly line” snacks. Have a bowl and towel handy for washing hands before and after making the snacks.

Fruit Salad

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>3 apple pieces</td>
<td>3 orange segments</td>
<td>3 grapes</td>
<td>Mix and eat!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ants on a Log

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 plate</td>
<td>1 celery stick</td>
<td>1 spoon of cream cheese</td>
<td>5 raisins</td>
<td>Eat it up!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Making Instruments

Shakers
Plastic containers, or film canisters, may be filled with rice, small stones, or beads. The children may do the filling, and decorate the containers with markers. Parents will need to make sure the lids are securely taped on.

Cardboard tubes may also be used in the same way. Tape one end before the children start to fill them, then tape the other end. The children can glue crepe paper streamers onto their shakers and watch them wave about as they play their shaker. Then use the shakers at singing time!

Fruit Salad

1 cup 3 apple pieces 3 orange segments 3 grapes Mix and eat!

Ants on a Log

1 plate 1 celery stick 1 spoon of cream cheese 5 raisins Eat it up!
Drums
Tie a sheet of waxed paper around the top of a coffee can to make a drum. The children may decorate the can, and use their hands or a short rhythm stick to play their drum.

Guitars
The children decorate cardboard tissue boxes by drawing with markers or gluing on paper shapes. Elastic bands, or lengths of string, are then stretched across the opening to make the guitar.

Painting Projects
Painting can be a challenging activity to organize within a portable program! However, children love to paint so it is worth the effort. These hints may help.

► Cut two or three holes in a detergent box and push tin cans firmly into the hole to hold paint.
► Pour some paint into a foil plate and use for printing, or stamping, on large sheets of paper. Lots of found materials make interesting prints — sponges, bath puffs, leaves, old toy cars, old blocks, small pieces of carpet, fingers and hands!
► Use a large pizza box, opened up and folded into a triangle, as a table-top easel. Tape it to the table so it won’t slide.
► Plan group projects; bring in a large carton, cut a “door” in the side and the children can paint a little house for the Three Bears, or a dog house for Spot.
► Use old shirts as paint aprons.
► Hang a string across the wall and use clothes pegs to hang paintings up to dry.
► Bring in a small wash-up bowl to use for “painty” hands.
► If you have access to outdoors, use pails of water and large brushes to “paint” on the ground in warm weather.

(Ideas taken from: Kohl, First Art, 2002)
5. Parent Materials

Sets of colourful Parent Pamphlets are provided to accompany this Manual. They are designed to complement each of the curriculum topics, and will serve as a reminder of the strategies and information that was practiced and discussed during the session. They provide practical suggestions that will encourage parents/caregivers to increase the amount of literacy activities used at home and stimulate adults to interact with their children. A complete set of Parent Pamphlets is also found at the end of this Manual. The pages are designed so that they can be photocopied and folded into a booklet. The parent materials will be used at the discretion of the program leader, with consideration given to parents who may have difficulty in reading English.

Other parent materials such as handouts giving recipes, book lists, words to songs and rhymes, or art suggestions may also be provided. Program leaders will develop these parent handouts to respond to the interests and needs of the group.

Community brochures giving information about related programs, community services, literacy resources, child health issues, adult education opportunities, etc. may also be made available to participants in the program.

A Special Note About Babies and Family Literacy

It’s never too early to learn! Babies are learning right from birth, and there are lots of simple things parents can do to encourage that learning. It may be a challenge to plan a program for a group of children ranging in age from 0–5 years, but there is much useful information about literacy to help and support parents of young babies.

The following list of hints for parents is taken from Learning Begins (1999).

- Babies learn through repetition. Read the same stories and sing the same songs over and over.
Read books to infants from the time they are born. By about six months old, baby starts to respond to familiar pictures and objects.

- Touching and massaging your baby stimulates brain growth.
- Provide lots of opportunities for proper stimulation, but also respect your baby’s need for quiet and peace.
- Your baby uses body language and sounds to tell you how she feels and what she needs. When you respond appropriately to her signals she learns to trust and to believe that she can have an affect on her world.
- Provide pictures and toys with strong contrasts — such as black and white. Babies can’t see pastel colours.
- Regular rocking actually promotes brain growth.
- Provide lots of “on the floor time” for baby, so she has the freedom to move, to creep and crawl and to reach for things.

— (p.20, 34, 44)

**Songs and Music**

“Babies love to hear familiar voices humming and chanting and they love to be rocked, bounced and handled in a rhythmic way” (PEEP p14).

- Sing “bouncing” songs with baby on your knee.
- Look closely at your baby as you sing. You will get their attention, and they will respond by cooing and babbling back to you.
- Gently touch and tickle your babies hands and feet as you sing songs like, “Round and round the Garden”, “This little piggy” and “Head and shoulders”.
- Sing and play Peekaboo games. Babies love to be surprised!
- Play “lullabye” tapes at sleep times for your baby, and sing some lullabye songs.
Babies are sensitive to rhythm, even before they are born! Singing and rhythmic movements help babies to learn about the rhythmic nature of language and conversations.

**Babies and Books**

“Babies like handling books, feeling them with their mouths and turning the pages. A battered well-worn book is probably a well-loved book” (PEEP p28).

- Sturdy board books will survive a baby’s chewing! Buy cloth books for baby’s crib and plastic books for the bath. Spend time talking about the pictures and turning the pages with your baby.

- Home-made books can be made very simply. Small books with a few pages will be best. Paste in some photos of the family or of your pet, and your baby will enjoy looking and recognizing familiar things.

- Help your baby to understand the pictures in a book by making the sounds that match the pictures: *woof-woof* — *a doggie*; *vroom, vroom, vroom* — *a car*

- Babies are often fascinated by faces. Borrow the book “Baby Faces” from the library. Point out eyes, nose, mouth in pictures as you look at books together.

**Baby Games**

**Peekaboo Games**

1. Sing, “Are you sleeping, are you sleeping,  
   Little (baby’s name), little (Baby’s name),  
   Now it’s time to wake up, now it’s time to wake up,  
   Ding, ding, dong, ding, ding, dong.”

   - Cover your eyes as you sing, “Are you sleeping?”
   - When you sing, “now it’s time to wake up”, take baby’s hands and gently pull her upwards.
   - When you sing, “Ding, ding, dong,” move your baby’s hands up and down.
2. Hide a puppet or soft toy behind your back. Bring it out and say,
   “Peekaboo (baby’s name), Peekaboo (baby’s name).
   Notice how the baby anticipates the puppet appearing!

**Mirror Games**
Look in the mirror with your baby:
Say, “Who is that baby?” Wave her hand and say, “Hi baby.”
Say, “Where’s the baby’s foot?” Wave her foot and say, “Hi foot.”

**Faces Games**
1. Cut out pictures of faces from magazines or old photographs and glue them into round lids for your baby to look at and play with.

**Music games**
Give your baby a rattle to shake as you sing or listen to music on the radio. You can make simple shakers by filling containers with rice or beans. Make sure the container lids are taped very securely!

― (Baby Games taken from: J. Silbert, *Brain Games for Babies*, 1999)

**Talking with Babies**
It is very important for parents and caregivers to talk a lot around their young babies. Talk about everything you are doing; washing your hands, getting dressed, cooking dinner, etc. Using baby talk or “motherese” comes naturally to adults when talking with babies, and is helpful for the child. Using “motherese” means that parents and other caregivers shorten their sentences, stress important words, vary their tone of voice, speak more slowly, and use pictures or objects to help the baby understand what they are saying. (Weiztman and Greenberg, p231).
When babies and toddlers begin to speak, it is important that the adults around them respond to them by copying their sounds. As children begin to communicate more with “babble” and with words, parents and caregivers can use the context to help them to understand what the children are saying, and then respond to confirm to the child that their message has been understood.

A B C Strategies for Playing and Talking with Babies

A
Notice what captures the baby’s attention.
Watch to see what makes her smile.
Listen closely to the baby’s sounds.

B
Be on the baby’s level to respond.
Imitate the baby’s babbles.
Talk to the baby about what you are doing; use an exaggerated voice! Cuddle and rock the baby as you sing.

C
Introduce different, simple things for baby to explore (rattles, plastic cups, cloth books, etc.).
Introduce different bouncing or clapping songs.
Give the baby the words for familiar things (it’s your cup, here’s teddy).
The following Topics have been chosen as a focus for each of the Early BIRD program sessions. They have been chosen after a careful study of the key features of family literacy programs and represent the information that will be most helpful in supporting families and children as they start on the road to literacy. The topics also reflect the essential building blocks of early language and literacy development that were identified by the research and described in Chapter 2.

Each session will be planned to provide interesting, stimulating and developmentally appropriate literacy activities and materials for the children to explore. The children’s program will provide opportunities for parents to observe their child’s interests and skills, and to learn how their everyday interactions with their child provide a good basis for extending their child’s learning. The leaders will show, through modeling, through discussions and by encouraging parents’ participation, how important conversations, stories and play experiences are in children’s literacy development.

As parents participate with their children in the literacy activities they will be practicing skills of interaction, and gaining both an appreciation of their children’s developing language skills, and an understanding of the effective ways in which they can help their children become confident readers and writers.

The activities and materials used in the sessions will be things that are easily found at home. Scrap materials, and inexpensive toys and books will be used so that parents will feel comfortable in repeating the activities and experiences at home. Parents will be encouraged to use the local Public
Library with their children, and information about other community resources for families will be shared.

The leaders will also be aware of the importance of supporting parents, of affirming the skills the parents have, and encouraging them to be involved in learning together with their children.

**Family Literacy Topics**

1. **A Playing and Learning with your Child**  
   **B Playing and Learning with your Baby**

   The discussion focus for this session will be on the many ways that young children learn, and the important part that parents play in their child’s development. The leader will model ways to interact with children, and of extending children’s learning through play situations. Simple ideas will be shared to help parents to involve their children in everyday chores and routines, and to have fun together. The importance of children developing confidence and self-esteem will be a key idea.

2. **Reading Stories**

   Discussion focus will be on the importance of reading stories often to babies and children. The Leader will model ways of reading stories and of involving the children in the story. The value of re-reading stories will be discussed and adults will be reminded to let children see them reading too. The Leader will also talk about *telling* stories as well as reading them.

3. **Talking about Books**

   Discussion focus will be on different ways to share books with children. The leader will emphasize talking about the pictures, labeling objects, predicting what will happen, turning pages, re-telling the story, and relating the story to the children’s own experiences. Wordless books will also be used in the session and a follow-up activity will encourage parents and children to make their very own book together.
4. **Choosing Books**  
Different kinds of books will be introduced in this session. The discussion will focus on the variety of books available: board, cloth, or plastic bath books, lift-the-flap and “feely” books, fiction & non-fiction books, picture dictionaries and alphabet books, song and poetry books. Parents and children may make a book box (out of a cereal box) to store their favourite books.

5. **Talking Together**  
Discussion will focus on the importance of conversations with children. The Leader will model ways of asking and answering questions, extending the child’s responses and some simple talking and listening games. A follow-up activity will involve making and using simple puppets (stick puppets, paper finger puppets or sock puppets). Parents will be encouraged to listen carefully to their children’s talk and report back on the different ways their child is able to use language.

6. **Rhymes and songs**  
Rhymes and songs will be used in every session. In this session the discussion will focus on the reasons why songs and nursery rhymes help children’s language development. The Leader will emphasize different sounds and language patterns: rhyming, rhythm, alliteration, etc., and show how having fun with sounds in songs and rhymes can help children’s oral language and reading.

7. **Alphabet Letters and Sounds**  
Alphabet books and songs will be used in this Session. The importance of knowing letters and sounds will be the focus for discussions. Circle time activities will include songs or games that “play” with sounds or use the children’s names, alphabet games and other phonemic awareness activities.

8. **Words around us**  
The focus for discussion will be on the words all around us. Reading the STOP sign, shopping for “Cheerios” and looking
for the big M! The story will use words from the children’s environment and discussion will focus on being aware of these words, and pointing them out to children. Follow-up activities may involve making shopping lists with pictures of favourite foods cut from store flyers.

9. Writing and Drawing
Children need to see the uses for writing. Adults and children can write messages and shopping lists; writing comes before reading! Discussion will focus on the importance of children’s scribbles. Activities will involve making cards, shopping lists, homemade books, etc.

10. Counting
Children love to count! Discussion will focus on the children’s need for many, many experiences with numbers and counting, as they gradually develop concepts about numbers. The leader will point out the many opportunities for counting that parents and children will meet everyday. Circle time will involve number stories and counting rhymes, and materials for children to sort and count will be available at Creative Play time.

Each of the Topics may be addressed several times, in subsequent program sessions. In this way the topics can be reinforced and extended. The following planning chart gives an example of using these ten topics over a three-term time span.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>First Cycle</th>
<th>Second Cycle</th>
<th>Third Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Playing and Learning Together</strong></td>
<td>Importance of observing children’s growing skills; and of playing and talking together</td>
<td>Ways to build your child’s self-esteem; involving your child in everyday routines</td>
<td>Extending and enriching your child’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Stories</strong></td>
<td>Why reading stories is important.</td>
<td>Re-reading favourite stories. Reading at home — let children see you read!</td>
<td>Telling stories, using simple props</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking about books</strong></td>
<td>Looking at pictures, labeling objects</td>
<td>Predicting what will happen next</td>
<td>Making our own books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choosing books</strong></td>
<td>Different kinds of books (board, cloth, lift-the-flap, etc.)</td>
<td>Fiction and non-fiction for children</td>
<td>Using the library, making a book box, or book bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking Together</strong></td>
<td>Why conversations are important, talking about what you are doing</td>
<td>Asking questions, extending children’s language</td>
<td>Talking and listening, making/using simple puppets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhymes and Songs</strong></td>
<td>Focus on sounds, rhythm and rhyme</td>
<td>How rhymes help children’s reading and writing</td>
<td>Having fun with language, Nursery rhyme books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alphabet names and sounds</strong></td>
<td>Alphabet song, alphabet books</td>
<td>Importance of knowing letters, name games</td>
<td>Phonemic awareness activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Words around us</strong></td>
<td>Signs and labels, Stop sign, traffic books</td>
<td>Playing at shopping for Cheerios, etc. Cut and paste food pictures</td>
<td>Following picture recipe, stop/go sign games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing/drawing</strong></td>
<td>Opportunities for scribbling and drawing</td>
<td>Writing at home, making shopping lists, etc.</td>
<td>Making child’s own book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counting</strong></td>
<td>Talking about numbers; counting fingers, toes, etc. Counting songs</td>
<td>Sorting, matching and comparing — math skills in everyday routines</td>
<td>Talking about sizes, shapes; recognizing important numerals, e.g. How old are you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program Planning Guides

Program Leaders may use the following planning guides as a basis for leading each session. The planning guides focus on both the children's program, and the parent topics. The stories, rhymes and activities planned for the children are intended to provide effective literacy experiences for the children, as well as demonstrating a particular aspect of children's literacy development for the parents.

Program Leaders will want to modify the program to accommodate the needs of the particular group, and to listen carefully to any questions or concerns expressed by the parents so that those concerns can be addressed.

A Note about Stories: In the following sample planning guides, one or two particular stories are chosen to illustrate or complement the topic. However, there is a wealth of good children's literature available to use with children and families, and books should also be chosen for the simple reason that they have great stories and beautiful illustrations.
## TOPIC: Playing with Your Child (or Baby)  
### Parent Pamphlets: 1A and 1B

### Background Information/Messages for parents
- babies and children need lots of talking, playing and exploring times to help them learn
- everyday routines at home provide opportunities for children to play and learn
- children need adult attention and praise to feel happy and secure
- when we notice and praise children’s accomplishments, we help them gain confidence
- little babies love it when adults to talk and sing to them
- children love to help Mom or Dad with real tasks; sorting laundry, setting the table
- doing things together helps children feel good about themselves

### Story Title:
*Please, Baby, Please* by Spike Lee  
(Or a story of everyday routines with Mom or Dad)

### Features of the story
- a very funny and loving story about a family with a busy baby
- children love to hear stories about children being mischievous! (parents may talk about ways to react to mischievous behaviour)
- children can relate to the everyday activities in this book; eating, playing, changing baby’s diaper, etc.

### Creative play activities
- parent and child decorate a shoe box together, to hold special treasures (leaves, stones, etc.) found on a walk.
- have a special snack children and parents can prepare together, e.g. ants on a log, fruit salad
- tub of literacy materials and toys available for free exploration. Book browsing area available for parents and children.

### A B C focus
- **A** Notice your child’s new skills; show them that you are proud of them!
- **B** Involve your child in daily jobs around the house. Tell them you need their help.
- **C** Help your child to learn new skills by breaking the task down into small steps. e.g. getting dressed

### Songs and Rhymes:
- Hello Everybody; nursery rhymes and finger plays
- With my little broom, or other songs around the house

### Home Activity
- talk about the different things children and parents can collect in their treasure boxes; suggest they go on a “treasure walk” this week

### Notes:
Materials: shoe boxes, paper and glue, crayons, markers; snack ingredients
### SESSION 2

#### TOPIC: Reading Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information/Messages for Parents</th>
<th>Creative play activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• reading stories to children is enjoyable for adults and children</td>
<td>• use a toy or puppet puppy to hide, ask the children, “Is he in the __?” “Is he under?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it is a <strong>key factor</strong> that contributes to children’s reading achievement</td>
<td>• Cut and paste; paste Spot “cutouts” and draw basket, table, etc. around him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it helps increase children’s vocabulary and language skills</td>
<td>• play with plastic animals: put them in and out of containers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it shows how the spoken word is related to the printed word</td>
<td>• other Spot books available for browsing on the book blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it encourages children to think imaginatively and critically</td>
<td>• tubs with literacy materials, creative materials and cognitive toys, as well as the book browsing area, will be available for the children to explore freely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it develops good listening skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• you don’t have to read all the words; talk about the pictures, shorten the story or read part of the story. Take your cue from the children!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children may be listening as they wriggle around; don’t expect them to sit still!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Story Title:** *Where’s Spot?* By Eric Hill • Or, *Peekaboo Park* Lamaze Infant Development

#### Features of the story
- question / answer format encourages the children to join in
- lift-the-flap surprises
- different animals to name
- repeated pattern in the text will encourage children to participate
- position words (in, under, beside, inside)
- children will enjoy the humour

#### Creative play activities
- use a toy or puppet puppy to hide, ask the children, “Is he in the __?” “Is he under?”
- Cut and paste; paste Spot “cutouts” and draw basket, table, etc. around him
- play with plastic animals: put them in and out of containers
- other Spot books available for browsing on the book blanket
- tubs with literacy materials, creative materials and cognitive toys, as well as the book browsing area, will be available for the children to explore freely.

#### A B C Focus

A Watch your child as they listen to the story — what did they enjoy? How did they respond?

B Share a book with your child — talk about the story, listen to your child’s comments.

#### Songs and Rhymes:
*Hello Everybody, Open them, shut them*  
*Tommy Thumb, Bobby Bingo, nursery rhymes*  
*Goodbye song*

#### Home Activity
- have some books available for parents to borrow, to read at home with their child
- parents “contract” to tell next week about their child’s favourite story

#### Notes:
*Materials: cut-out puppy pictures from magazines for pasting, glue sticks, crayons, markers*
Notes:
### SESSION 3

#### TOPIC: Talking About Books

**Parent Pamphlet: #3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information/Messages for Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Talking about the book before you start to read it will encourage the children to predict what might happen in the story (show the cover and say, “What do you think this story is about?”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asking questions about the story will encourage the children to think, and reason (Ask, “What is Carl going to do now?” “Where is the baby’s mother? etc.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraging children to tell the story from the pictures will help their language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relating the story to the child’s own experience helps their comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk about the front and back of the book, turning pages, taking care of books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Title: 1. <strong>Carl Goes Shopping</strong> by Alexandra Day</th>
<th>2. <strong>Book!</strong> by Kristine O’Connell George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features of story 1.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creative play activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wordless books allow the children to tell the story</td>
<td>• Make a picture book with Mom: provide blank 4-page booklets, magazine pictures and glue. When it is finished, print a title using the child’s name; Jack’s Truck Book, Ben Likes Animals, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The pictures have lots of details for the children to notice and talk about</td>
<td>• Have a variety of other wordless books available at the book browsing area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The unlikely situations provide humour and surprise, and will encourage a response from the children</td>
<td>• Free exploration of other literacy materials and toys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk about how everything works out in the end!</td>
<td><strong>A B C Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk about shopping with Mom</td>
<td><strong>A</strong> Listen as your child talks about the pictures in a favourite book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Story 2.</th>
<th><strong>B</strong> Talk with your child as you look at a picture book together.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The many ways a toddler enjoys handling a new book will reassure parents that children cannot be too young to have books around!</td>
<td><strong>C</strong> Find a similar book to introduce to your child.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songs and Rhymes:</th>
<th><strong>A B C Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hello Everybody, Bobby Bingo</td>
<td><strong>A</strong> Listen as your child talks about the pictures in a favourite book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pat-a-cake, Tommy thumb</td>
<td><strong>B</strong> Talk with your child as you look at a picture book together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goodbye song</td>
<td><strong>C</strong> Find a similar book to introduce to your child.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Activity</th>
<th><strong>A B C Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide some blank booklets, for children to make a book at home with Mom or Dad</td>
<td><strong>A</strong> Listen as your child talks about the pictures in a favourite book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage parents to share a book with their child every day</td>
<td><strong>B</strong> Talk with your child as you look at a picture book together.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes:</th>
<th><strong>A B C Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: Blank booklets, pictures from magazines, glue</td>
<td><strong>A</strong> Listen as your child talks about the pictures in a favourite book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 4

#### TOPIC: Choosing Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information/Messages for parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• talk about different kinds of books available: non-fiction, fiction, alphabet and number books, picture books, board and cloth books for babies, books for bath-time, bed-time, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• encourage children to choose their own books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plan a group trip to visit the local Library or invite a librarian to the session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• point out favourite authors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Story Title: The Three Bears by Annabelle James (a “story in a box” book) |
| (many other versions of this story are readily available) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a familiar and well-loved nursery story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “old-fashioned” stories are often best!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the story has a predictable pattern in the plot and the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children are encouraged to join in, and to use different voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children enjoy the element of surprise and an ending that’s a little bit scary!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• this Annabelle James version has sturdy card figures children can use to retell the story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative play activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• use the card figures to retell the story with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• make paper finger puppets of the 3 bears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• make a book box to use at home; cut the top off a cereal or detergent box, strengthen with tape, cover with plain paper for children to decorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have a variety of types of books available at book browsing area (non-fiction, nursery rhymes, fiction, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tubs of literacy materials and toys available for free exploration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A B C Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A听你的孩子用木偶来讲故事。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B加入你的孩子一起讲故事。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Songs and Rhymes:
- Hello Everybody
- nursery rhymes
- Goodbye song

#### Home Activity
- encourage parents to visit the library this week. Provide directions, talk about getting library cards for the children

#### Notes:
- Materials: cardboard boxes, paper, glue crayons
- Information about local Library programs
### SESSION 5

#### TOPIC: Talking Together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information/Messages for parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• oral language is the <strong>foundation</strong> of literacy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talking about stories is an important pre-reading strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• adult/child conversations develop children's language skills and thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• asking open-ended questions will encourage children to develop their language and thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it is important to listen to children and respond to their ideas; they will gain confidence in their growing abilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Title: <em>The Gingerbread Man</em> (various editions are readily available)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the predictable story encourages children to guess what comes next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• repeated rhythmic and rhyming phrases encourage children to join in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the familiar, repeated phrases encourage shy, quiet or E.S.L. children to join in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• humour and surprise make the story enjoyable for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a traditional well-loved tale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pre-schoolers may compare different versions of the story</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative play activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• children and parents may make gingerbread boy finger puppets together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children and parents are encouraged to re-tell the story using the puppets, and to use the puppets to talk about the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• play-dough and other creative materials available for children to explore freely and talk about, with parents (Children will often chat away while squeezing and rolling play-dough!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A B C Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Watch your child's reactions to the story. Listen to your child's comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Respond to your child's comments. Join in with your child in re-telling the story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songs and Rhymes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello Everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger plays, nursery rhymes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• suggest that parents use the finger puppet at home with their child to tell the story together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide extra paper for parents make another puppet with their child at home; or provide instructions for sock or glove puppets for families to make at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: paper, tape, crayons, etc. to make puppets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack: gingerbread cookies!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SESSION 6

**TOPIC: Songs and Rhymes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Parent Pamphlet: #6</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Background Information/Messages for Parents
- Little babies feel happy and secure when parents sing to them.
- Children who know many songs and rhymes, generally do well at school.
- Repeated words in rhymes encourage children to practice the sounds of language.
- Singing songs helps children to distinguish between sounds.
- Children enjoy singing familiar songs and nursery rhymes over and over.
- Singing helps children feel good about themselves.
- Action songs that involve marching, jumping, clapping, bouncing are fun for children and help develop good rhythm.

### Story Title: *Clap Your Hands* by Sarah Hayes and Toni Goffe (other books of Rhymes are readily available)

#### Features of the story
- A collection of rhymes and songs for babies and young children.
- The illustrations show small children playing and acting out the rhymes.
- Children can recognize and “read” the rhyme from the pictures.
- This collection has a variety of rhymes: traditional, counting, action and funny rhymes; finger plays and baby games.
- The children can choose their favourite rhymes from the book.

#### Creative play activities
- Put out puppets of nursery rhyme characters for children to play with.
- Children sort nursery rhyme pictures and use nursery rhyme puzzles.
- Sing with the children as they use play dough or other creative materials.
- Tubs with literacy materials and toys available for free exploration.

#### A B C Focus
- **A** Watch your child; which rhymes do they know? Which rhymes do they like best?
- **B** Sing and play your child’s favourite action rhymes together.
- **C** Find some new rhymes to sing with your child.

### Songs and Rhymes:
- Hello Everybody
- Nursery rhymes and action rhymes from the books
- Goodbye song

### Home activity
- Run off copies of the songs and rhymes used at Circle Time for parents to use at home.
- Encourage parents to sing songs from their own culture with their children.

### Notes:
- Materials: nursery rhyme puppets and pictures

---

*SECTION 3*
A Family Literacy Curriculum
# SESSION 7

**TOPIC:** Alphabet: letters and sounds  
**Parent Pamphlet:** #7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Background Information/Messages for Parents</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• knowing the names and sounds of letters is important early reading skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children need many opportunities to sort and play with letters; sing the ABC song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• nursery rhymes, songs and nonsense rhymes help children to listen to, and play with, the sounds and patterns of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• emphasize the sounds of letters to help children hear them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• emphasize, and point out, rhyming words in songs and stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Story Title:** | 1. Eating The Alphabet by Lois Ehlert  
2. a is for apple A Ladybird book |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Features of Story 1.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• the illustrations are brightly coloured, with a variety of fruit and vegetables for each letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• shows both lower case and upper case letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• familiar and unfamiliar fruits will give lots to discuss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Features of Story 2.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• one clear illustration on each page makes this a good choice for toddlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pictures are chosen to illustrate the sound of the letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lower case letters only are used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Creative play activities</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• exploring with letters; magnetic, card, felt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• gluing letters to make my name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• alphabet puzzles available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a box of alphabet books to look at on the book blanket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tubs with literacy materials and toys available for free exploration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A B C Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong> Listen to your child; which letters do they know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong> Sing the alphabet song with your child; look at alphabet books together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong> Talk about the letters in your child’s name.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Songs and Rhymes:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello Everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now I know my ABC, nursery rhymes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nonsense” and funny rhymes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Home activity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• suggest parents and children go on a “letter hunt” at home or on the street — “how many letters can you see”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Notes:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: paper letters for gluing; alphabet activities for sorting and matching, a variety of alphabet books for browsing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Snack:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet cereal, fruit or veggies from the story book</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SESSION 8

#### TOPIC: Words Around Us

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information/Messages for Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• there are words and letters all around us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• signs in the street tell us important things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children will recognize familiar words that they see and use regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reading signs, symbols and pictures is a good beginning to reading books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children feel proud when they recognize words and signs around them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Title:</th>
<th>1. Red Light, Green Light by Margaret Wise Brown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. A home-made book of advertisements for familiar products or with pictures of road signs in your area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Story 1.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Red stop lights and green go lights tell traffic and people to stop or go through the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children can join in the repeated &quot;red light, green light&quot; refrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• make props; a red STOP and a green GO to hold up during the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talk about traffic lights in your area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of Story 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• easily recognizable pictures and signs tell us what is in the box, e.g. Cheerios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• signs in the street tell us what to do, e.g. STOP, WALK, EXIT, BUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• some signs tell us where to play, e.g. PLAYGROUND</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative play activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• use STOP and GO signs to play a musical &quot;statues&quot; game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• STOP and GO signs with a box of little cars for children to play with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• product pictures from magazines to cut and paste (cereal, toothpaste, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talk about names, have name cards for each child to find, trace over or copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tubs of literacy materials and toys available for free exploration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A B C Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Notice which letters your child recognizes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Join in “reading” street signs with your child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Introduce new letter names when your child is ready.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Songs and Rhymes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello Everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name songs, nursery rhymes and finger plays</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• suggest parents play an &quot;I Spy&quot; game with their child to spot signs on the street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• make shopping fun! Encourage children to help find familiar items in the grocery store</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: small stop and go signs, little cars; pictures of signs or familiar products from magazines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SESSION 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: Writing and Drawing</th>
<th>Parent Pamphlet: #9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background Information/Messages for Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• writing begins with baby's squiggles in the sand or mud!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children learn about writing when they see adults writing around them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children learn about writing by <strong>writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• writing is fun for children; all their writing attempts deserve praise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• even early scribbles may communicate a real message</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children mix drawing and writing together to communicate messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• writing comes before reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Story Title:</strong> <em>Mommy’s Hands</em> by K. Lasky and J. Kamine (or a story about going shopping or cooking)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Features of the story</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creative play activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a mother and child do things together, including cooking, making pictures in sand and on a frosty window pane, and writing letters</td>
<td>• a variety of writing materials and tools available for children to use freely; colored paper, little blank booklets, large and small sheets of paper, crayons, markers, pencils, chalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the gentle story about a loving relationship will encourage talking about things we do together and about adults helping children to experience and practice new skills</td>
<td>• sand tray, play dough and other tactile materials to encourage younger children to make shapes and marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• tubs of literacy materials and toys available for free exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A B C Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A</strong> Notice your child's interest in scribbling or drawing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>B</strong> Write messages with your child, and draw pictures together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>C</strong> Provide paper and crayons, and encourage your child to draw and scribble.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Songs and Rhymes:**
Hello Everybody
name songs, ABC song, songs about everyday routines
nursery rhymes, Goodbye song

**Home Activity**
• provide small stapled “shopping list” pads for Moms and children to use together
• encourage parents to draw and write messages with their child

**Notes:**
Materials: a variety of writing materials and tools; modeling materials
## SESSION 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC: Counting</th>
<th>Parent Pamphlet: #10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background Information/Messages for Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children need lots of experiences to understand number concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children love to count their fingers, their toes, people in the family, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reading numerals is an important part of reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children find numbers all around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it takes time and practice for children to match one object to one numeral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lots of nursery rhymes and stories use numbers (three bears, 5 little monkeys, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• everyday routines at home provide lots of opportunities to count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Title: Ten Red apples by Virginia Miller Or Spot Can Count by Eric Hill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Features of the story</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• these are both counting books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the children can join in with the counting as the story is being read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the children can anticipate which number will come next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• in Ten Red Apples, a little bear provides another story line to follow and talk about</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Creative play activities</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• provide small toys, wooden beads, etc. for children to sort and count; use egg cartons, or little baskets for sorting trays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• children and parents can paste apple cutouts on a big tree; count as you paste them on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• other literacy materials and toys available for free exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• put a variety of counting books in the book browsing area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A B C Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Watch to see your child’s interest in numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Count with your child during daily routines. Count real objects, rather than counting by rote, e.g., knives and forks; socks and shoes, cars or buses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Teach your child new numbers as they are ready.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Songs and Rhymes:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello Everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counting songs and nursery rhymes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Home activity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ask parents to look for opportunities each day to count with their child, e.g. getting dressed, sorting out toy cars, setting the table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Notes:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials: selection of objects to sort and count, counting books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPIC:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Information/Messages for Parents</td>
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</table>

| Story Title: | |

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<th>Creative play activities</th>
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<td>A B C Focus</td>
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</table>

| Songs and Rhymes: | Home activity |

| Notes: | Materials: |
### SESSION

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<tbody>
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</table>

**Story Title:**

**Features of the story**

**Creative play activities**

- A B C Focus

**Songs and Rhymes:**

**Home activity**

**Notes:**

**Materials:**
## SESSION

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</table>

**Story Title:**

**Features of the story** | **Creative play activities**
--- | ---
--- | **A B C Focus**

**Songs and Rhymes:**

**Home activity**

**Notes:**

**Materials:**
References


Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading achievement (CIERA). *Every Child a Reader*. University of Michigan, 1998.


Literacy B.C., Family Literacy Fact Sheet. British Columbia, 2002


Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. Urbanization of Poverty in Hamilton-Wentworth. 1999


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 6 months</th>
<th>By 12 months</th>
<th>By 18 months</th>
<th>By 24 months</th>
<th>By 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows feelings with different cries, screams, and vocalizations</td>
<td>Imitates sounds and babbles, making sounds like “ga-ga”</td>
<td>Babbles in a way which sounds like sentences</td>
<td>Uses some 2-words sentences like, “Me go?” and “All gone.”</td>
<td>Uses sentences of 4 plus words to convey a wide variety of messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is soothed by calm, gentle voices</td>
<td>Understands common words such as bottle, mommy, bye-bye</td>
<td>May use up to 10 different recognizable words for favourite things, like “doo” for juice, or “up”, etc.</td>
<td>Uses up to 50 words to convey meaning</td>
<td>Uses adult-like grammar, with the exception of irregular forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coos and squeaks for attention</td>
<td>Looks when own name is called</td>
<td>Understands simple sentences like “Give me the doll.”</td>
<td>Ask questions like “What’s sat” a lot, and understands many more words than can say</td>
<td>Speech is generally understand by most adults although 2 to 3 articulation errors may be present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startles to loud or sudden noises</td>
<td>May use 2 to 3 words along with mama and dada</td>
<td>Understand more words, and will point to own toes, nose, eyes, etc.</td>
<td>Understands questions like, “Where is Mommy?”</td>
<td>Understands 2 related directions like “Take off your pants and put them on the bed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches your face with interest when you talk</td>
<td>Watches and listens and responds with simple gestures like nodding and pointing</td>
<td>Watches, listens, and responds to commands like “Show me the doggie.”</td>
<td>Watches, listens and responds to 2-step commands like “Bring me the truck and the block.”</td>
<td>Watches, listens, and answer questions like “Which one do we eat with?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tries to ‘talk’ back to you and enjoys smiling at you</td>
<td>Tries to sing along with music on the radio and TV</td>
<td>Enjoys music, and rhythm and tries to dance to music</td>
<td>Likes to play repetitive word games like “pat-a-cake”</td>
<td>Sings favourite songs and know the words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys looking at picture books and pointing to common objects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes to listen to stories with rhyming words</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses language to ‘pretend’</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses language to ‘pretend’ and to tell a ‘story’</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can judge when words ‘rhyme’ and likes to make up silly words</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

— Adapted by Communication Services, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, May 2003
Children’s Uses of Language

Children use language in many different ways. It is useful to listen carefully to children’s language, and to recognize the different ways they are able to use language, in order to help them to develop a wider range of language use. Joan Tough has identified seven categories of language, as a tool to help adults in analyzing children’s language use. In the following chart, the examples of children’s talk illustrate the variety of “talking strategies” in each broad category.

1. **Self-maintaining**
   - Look what I did.
   - It’s my truck!
   - I had it first.
   - Can I have those blocks?

2. **Directing**
   - I’m driving my car.
   - You have the blue one.
   - Let’s make a castle.

3. **Reporting**
   - I went to my Grandma’s house.
   - We had supper then I watched TV.
   - The Three Bears scared Goldilocks and she ran away.

4. **Towards Logical Reasoning**
   - I can’t have a kitten because my dog would chase it away.
   - The car is too big to go in this garage.
   - When it is cold, I have to wear my mittens.

5. **Predicting**
   - Soon it will be my birthday.
   - When it’s my birthday, we’re going to have pizza and cake.

6. **Projecting**
   - Mommy will be happy to see my picture.
   - I think Franklin is sad because he lost the race.
   - I could drive a big train like that.

7. **Imagining**
   - I am the Mommy and you can be the baby.
   - I’m going to chase the gingerbread boy!

— (Language uses taken from J. Tough, Listening to children Talking)
Adult Language Strategies to foster Children’s Language Development

These strategies were identified by Dr. Joan Tough to encourage adults to use everyday conversations with children as opportunities to extend and enrich the children’s language development.

1. Orienting strategies
   These are comments or questions that set the child’s thinking towards a particular topic or use of language; and invite the child to respond.
   E.g. What happened at your party yesterday?
       How will you make the tower?
       What will you do next?

2. Enabling strategies
   These comments encourage the child to continue the conversation. There are three chief ways to “enable” the conversation:
   a) Follow-through strategies. These comments follow the child’s lead and encourage the child to give more details.
      E.g. What else did you do at your party?
   b) Focusing strategies. These comments direct the child’s attention to one aspect of the experience.
      E.g. What was special about your Birthday cake?
   c) Checking strategies. These comments help the child to check his statements, and to think again about the experience.
      E.g. Did you really ride on an elephant?

3. Informing strategies
   These comments offer information, explanations or ideas at a time when the child is ready to receive them, or requires help in solving a problem.
   E.g. You can make pink by mixing red and white together.
       Sometimes birds make a nest on the ground.
       Try putting the biggest blocks on first.

4. Sustaining strategies
   These comments assure the child of your continued attention. A smile or a nod may be sufficient!
   E.g. Really! — Good for you! — I’m watching you.
5. Concluding strategies

These comments leave the child with a feeling of satisfaction, that you recognized his or her achievements or understood the message they were trying to give.

E.g. What a lovely picture. Let’s hang it up to dry now.
   That is a good idea — I’ll come back to see when you have finished.
   I enjoyed hearing about your party. You had a lovely time.

— (Language strategies taken from J. Tough, Talking and Learning)
First Steps Language Program

Oral Language Development

PHASE 1. Beginning Language

The Child:

- Cries, chuckles, gurgles and coos
- Babbles and repeats sound patterns
- Constantly plays at making sounds
- Recognizes human voice
- Responds to own name
- Uses non-verbal gestures (waves)
- Produces first words
- Coordinates word and gesture (waves and says, bye)
- Uses single words and two-word phrases to convey meaning
  
  *Drink* — I want a drink
  
  *Go way* — go away
- Understands more language than can be verbalized
- Follows simple directions
- Engages in language games e.g. *Incy wincy spider*

How can Parents/Teachers help?

- Talk to your child often
- Read to your child and talk about the story
- Provide a selection of durable books with clear illustrations
- Do things with your child that involve talking together
- Introduce rhymes and finger plays
- Provide toys that encourage exploration; talk with your child as you play

  *Let’s build a tall house. More blocks, Oh no! What happened? It crashed!*
- Talk with your child and introduce words to describe colour, shape, movement as you play
- Read nursery rhymes, sing songs and chant chants to help your child hear the sounds and patterns of language
Oral Language Development (continued)

Phase 2. Early Language

The Child:

- Uses own grammar style which is an approximation of adult grammar
  - overgeneralizations are common; sheeps for sheep, goed for went
  - experiments with sounds through rhyme and repetition
  - understands most common prepositions; on, under, front
  - may make sound substitutions; wabbit, brudda, sip for ship, free for three

- Is beginning to develop awareness of listener needs and begins to provide feedback when introducing a new topic, e.g. Grandma, I went shopping. Look at this.
  - is aware of social conventions, but does not match actions to phrases, e.g. “scuse me” and pushes friend away from blocks
  - refines conversation skills e.g. enters conversations, takes turns in a conversation
  - talks aloud to self; engages in imaginary play and talks with imaginary friends

- Gives a simple description of past events
  - shows an interest in listening to and talking about stories
  - asks for and joins in stories
  - “reads” books out loud often assigning own meaning to print
  - retells simple stories
  - reads familiar print in the environment
  - writes symbols and “reads” the message

- Shows and interest in explanations of how and why
  - is able to offer an opinion, e.g. I don’t like...
  - is beginning to develop concepts of quantity, size, time
  - is beginning to understand cause and effect, e.g. my tower fell down because I put this big block on top
  - expresses feelings
  - constantly asks questions!
How can Parents/Teachers help?

- Listen to what your child is saying
- Talk to your child often
- Talk about familiar things; encourage your child to tell stories, recount experiences
- Involve your child in planning, e.g. to go shopping, to the park
- Read and reread a wide range of books together
- Say and sing rhymes and songs with your child; focus on language patterns
- Link reading, writing and talking whenever possible
- Provide an example of good listening
- Play inside and outside games
- Visit the Library
- Help children give and receive simple explanations, instructions and information

— (Developmental information from First Steps Oral language Developmental Continuum)

### Reading Development

#### Phase 1. Role Play Reading: Awareness and exploration.

**The Child:**

- Enjoys listening to, and talking about, storybooks
- Understands that print carries a message
- Engages in reading and writing attempts
- Identifies labels and signs in the environment
- Participates in rhyming games
- Identifies some letters and makes some letter-sound matches
- Uses known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language (especially meaningful words like their name and phrases like “I love you”)

**How can Parents/Teachers help?**

- Talk with children, engage them in conversation, give names of things, show an interest in what the child says
- Read and re-read stories with predictable texts; encourage the child to join in and “read” too
- Choose books and rhymes that use rhyming words, alliteration, repeated phrases, language patterns and rhythms
- Let the child hold the book and turn the pages
- Help the child to tell the story from the pictures
- Talk about letters by name and by sound
Point out how print is written left to right and top to bottom
Accept and praise the child’s attempts at reading
Encourage the child to recount experiences and describe ideas and events that are important to them
Visit the Library regularly
Make scrapbooks of favourite pictures for your child
Model reading and writing behaviour; let your child see you read and write

— (Developmental information taken from First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum)

Writing Development

Phase 1. Role Play Writing

The Child
► Assigns a message to own symbols
► Understands that writing and drawing are different, e.g. points to words while “reading”
► Is aware that print carries a message
► Uses known letters, approximations of letters and scribbles to represent written language
► Shows beginning awareness of directionality, e.g. points to where print begins

How can Parents/Teachers help?
► Show children you value reading and writing
► Show children how you use writing; write phone messages, shopping lists, greeting cards in front of children and talk about what you are doing
► Share simple picture books; talk about the pictures and story and relate them to the child’s experiences
► Read and sing nursery rhymes often
► Provide writing and drawing materials for children to use; encourage child to “scribble” messages

— (Developmental information taken from First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum)
Pre-school Reading and Print Concepts

Preschool Accomplishments for the Oral Language-Reading Connection

- Understands the overall sequence of events in stories.
- Understands and follows oral directions.
- Connects information and events in stories to life experiences.
- Knows that it is the print that is being read.
- Pays attention to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g. Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater).
- Uses new vocabulary and grammatical construction in own speech.
- Demonstrates understanding of the literal meaning of stories by asking questions and making comments.

Preschool Accomplishments for Concepts of Print, Phonemic Awareness, and Letter Naming

- Knows that alphabet letters are a special type of graphics that can be individually recognized.
- Recognizes familiar print such as STOP signs.
- Knows that it is the print that is read in stories.
- Understands that different texts are used for different purposes (e.g. a list for groceries)
- Shows interest in books.
- Displays reading and writing attempts. (e.g. “Look at my story.”)
- Identifies 10 alphabet letters especially those from own name.
- “Writes” (scribbles) messages as part of playful activity.
- Begins to attend to beginning or rhyming sound in prominent words.

— (From: Every Child a Reader. Centre for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) University of Michigan, 1998)
TRAIN-THE-TRAINERS GUIDE
for WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Section 1 — Introduction
Train-the-Trainers Guide for Workshop Facilitators

by Shelagh Simpson