

## Early literacy learning can be promoted through experiences with print and language

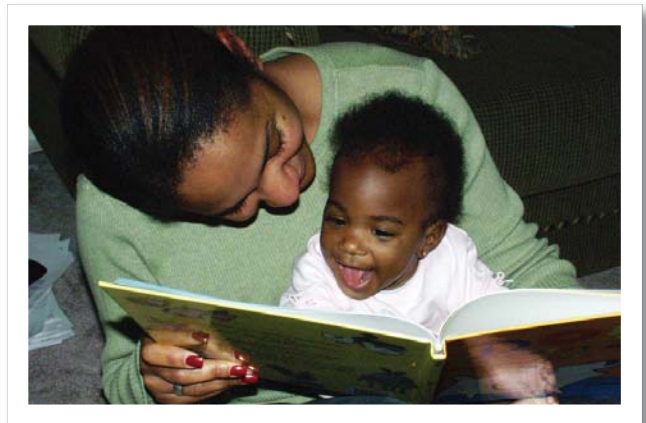
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### What is early literacy?

Early literacy refers to the knowledge and skills that young children need to read, write, and communicate. Early literacy learning for children from birth through 6 years of age is made up of print and language (spoken and written) learning. Print-related learning includes recognizing letters of the alphabet, understanding what is read, expressing words in writing, and knowing the rules of writing (for example, that we read from left to right on a page). Language-related learning includes recognizing the different sounds that make up words, being able to use words to communicate, and understanding what is said by others.

Young children learn about print and language by interacting with the people and objects in ways that are interesting and enjoyable. Children often experience formal literacy learning in their early childhood and early inter-

vention programs where early literacy skills are specifically taught. Informal literacy learning experiences occur as a child takes part in everyday family and community life. Both formal and informal learning experiences help to lay the foundation for later literacy development.



### What does the research tell us?

Current thinking about early literacy learning was the focus of a research synthesis conducted by Anya Robyak, Tracy Masiello, Carol Trivette, Nicole Roper, and Carl Dunst at the Center for Early Literacy Learn-

ing. These investigators examined 71 published papers, chapters, and books by current literacy experts, literacy centers, and professional organizations to assemble their recommendations for fostering early literacy learning. The researchers found that all sources of information recommended that young children be provided with a rich mix of print-related and language-enhancing experiences. All sources also identified several print-related and language-related accomplishments that indicate a child has successfully developed early literacy. By providing young children with a mix of print-related and language-related experiences, parents and early childhood professionals will start young children on the path to become successful, competent readers and writers.



This *Cellnotes* summarizes findings reported in Robyak, A., Masiello, T., Trivette, C. M., Roper, N., & Dunst, C. J. (2007). Mapping the contemporary landscape of early literacy learning, *Cellreviews* 1(1), 1-11.

# Acting on the Evidence



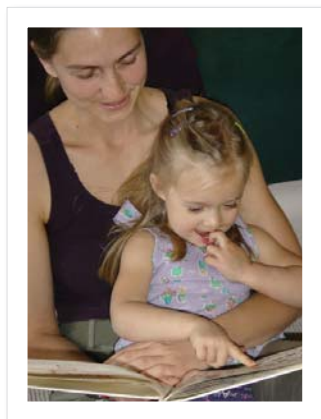
Toby babbles, wiggles, and reaches with growing excitement as he watches his mommy talk with Grandma on a cordless phone. “Mom? Looks like your favorite grandson wants to chat...hold on,”

Daria says. She turns to her 15-month-old and asks, “Phone? Do you want to talk to Grandma, Toby? Tell me!” “Toe-mee-mee-mee!” Toby squeals with delight. “Good, Toby! You want to talk,” Daria says as she helps Toby press the phone to his ear. For the next few minutes he listens to Grandma’s familiar voice and responds with happy babbling.



Three-year-old Oliver climbs on a chair at the kitchen table and watches his mama mix bread dough. “What ya doin’, Mama?” he asks. “I’m baking bread for the church sale, and you’re just the helper I need,” Mama says with a smile. Soon she’s showing Oliver her recipe card, reading out the names of each ingredient as she helps him measure and dump it in her mixing bowl. Oliver glows with pleasure when she flours his hands and lets him “knead” a lump of dough. As she begins to form loaves for the oven, Mama has an idea. “Watch this, Oliver,” she says. She gives him a small ball of dough and shows him

how to roll it into a rope shape. Then Mama loops the dough rope into a circle. “Look! This is a letter *O* for *Oliver*. Your name starts with the letter *O*! Soon Oliver is happily forming *O*s, and before much longer, the two bakers are munching on hot, buttered *O*s.



Nan lifts 2-year-old Daisy onto her lap to share a pre-naptime reading session. The young mom chuckles as she sees Daisy’s storybook choice, the little girl’s current favorite—

Audry Wood’s *Silly Sally*.

“Who’s this funny girl on the cover of your book?” Nan asks. “Silly Sally!” Daisy chirps with anticipation. “That’s right! Silly Sally,” Nan reads as she moves her finger from left to right under the title words. As Daisy turns the pages one by one, Nan asks her questions about each colorful picture, praising her answers. As she reads each rhyming line, continuing to move her finger under the words, Nan pauses to let Daisy say the word needed to complete the rhyme. “Silly Sally went to town, dancing backwards, upside \_\_\_\_\_.”

During a recent meeting, a childcare center director challenged her staff to discover and creatively use the early-literacy-development potential in every feature of their center building, grounds, materials, and personnel. Teachers at all levels took up the challenge with enthusiasm. By focusing on their surroundings with new eyes, they have found a world of learning opportunities that they had missed before.

An example? A broad stretch of concrete pavement at one end of the building—an area once largely ignored—has become the setting for a world of fun pre-writing experiences. Toddlers supplied with pails of water and large brushes “paint” bold designs on the pavement and an adjoining brick wall. Bright chalk is handy for solo doodling, group murals, and sidewalk games. A teacher enlisted parent volunteers to paint the alphabet in large, colorful letters as a border around the area. Soon preschoolers were found tracing the letters with chalk; arranging acorns, small rocks, and other found materials in letter shapes; and hopping from letter to letter while calling out their names.

