



What the Research Says
Families & Family Literacy Educators
should KNOW about
Children's Literacy Development

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Key Findings from the Research

- Literacy learning starts early and persists throughout life
- Oral language is the foundation for literacy development
- Children's experiences with the world and with print greatly influence their ability to comprehend what they read



Key Findings from the Research

- Children are active participants in the processes of learning language and literacy
- Storybook reading, particularly family storybook reading, has a special role in young children's literacy development

Key Findings from the Research



- Literacy learning is nurtured by responsive adults
- Literacy learning is deeply rooted in a child's cultural milieu and family communications patterns



Research on Emergent Literacy

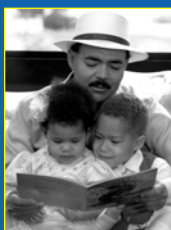


- Researchers are studying very young children's literacy development –
- Age range includes 14 mos. and under
 - Literacy learning no longer regarded as simply a cognitive skill; it is highly social
 - Literacy learning is tied to the child's natural surroundings at home & school.

(Sulzby & Teale, 1989)



Research on Cognitive Development



- Children's capacity for learning is not fixed at birth
- Development hinges on interplay between genes and experience

Research on Cognitive Development



- Early experiences have impact on the architecture of the brain; affect how the brain is “wired”
- Very young children search for patterns and make connections between elements in their environment, including speech and print.

(Families and Work Institute)

Research on Early Language & Reading Success



- Children who fall behind in oral language and literacy development are less likely to be successful beginning readers
- The achievement lag is likely to persist



(Juel, Williams)

Research on Early Language Environments



Children reared in families where parents provide rich language and literacy support do better in school than those who are not.

(Hart and Risley)

Table 5: Averages for measures for parent and child language and test scores



Measures and scores	Families					
	13 Professional		23 Working-class		6 Welfare	
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child
Pretest score ^a	41		31		14	
IQ score at age 3		117		107		79
Recorded vocabulary size	2,176	1,116	1,498	749	974	525
Average utterances per hour ^b	487	310	301	223	176	168
Average different words per hour	382	297	251	216	167	149

^aSee this chapter, endnote 1, for description of the pretest and testing conditions.
^bParent utterances and different words were averaged over 13–36 months of child age. Child utterances and different words were averaged for the four observations when the children were 33–36 months old.

— S. Hart & T.R. Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*, 1995.

The Foundation for Literacy Development—Oral Language



Oral language and literacy development are interdependent. Oral language:

- Provides a sense of words and sentences
- Builds sensitivity to the sound system
- Provides the means for children to demonstrate their understanding of the meaning of written materials

Research on the Role of Vocabulary Development



- There is a strong relationship between vocabulary development and reading achievement.
- Children who acquire strong vocabularies increase their ability to make sense of what a word might be by using this along with decoding strategies.

(Nagy, Clay)



Research on the Role of Vocabulary Development



Exposure to less common, more sophisticated vocabulary (rare words) at home relates directly to children's vocabulary acquisition.

(Dickinson & Tabors)



Research on the Role of Background Knowledge



- The more limited a child's experiences, the more likely he or she will have difficulty with reading.
- Key experiences provide:
 - *background knowledge about the world*
 - *background knowledge about print and books*

(Rand/OERI Report)

Experiences that Build Background Knowledge



- Involving children in trips to local points of interest and talking with them about what they see and do helps build background knowledge about the world.
- Shared book experiences play a special role in building children's background knowledge about books and print.

National Early Literacy Panel Research on Early Literacy



Early Literacy predictors for reading & school readiness—

- **Oral language**
(Listening comprehension, oral language vocabulary)
- **Alphabetic Code**
(Alphabet knowledge, phonological/phonemic awareness, invented spelling)
- **Print Knowledge/Concepts**
(Environmental print, concepts about print)
- **Other**
(Rapid naming-RAN, visual memory, visual perceptual abilities)

Research on Home Literacy Environment & Parent Involvement



Home Literacy Environment is highly correlated with:

- Higher student achievement
- Better student attendance
- Positive attitudes toward education by parents and students



Studies of **Parent Involvement** and **Family Literacy** programs have shown mixed results.

A Template for Planning Family Literacy Activities



Before the session be sure to →
select a particular literacy goal or outcome on which to focus

Then, center on 3 phases of activity:

1. Getting started
2. Participant interaction
3. Wrap-up
