

Language and Literacy Development

- Listening and Understanding
- Speaking and Communicating

- Book Knowledge and Appreciation
- Print Awareness and Early Writing



Between birth and three years of age, children begin to learn that they can communicate with adults through crying, gestures, expressions, sounds, and later through words or other alternative methods.

These language skills develop through playing, listening, talking, reading, and learning the skills that adults use to communicate. Early nonverbal interactions (smiling, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) are followed by spoken language, sign language or other alternative communication methods to practice the rules of communication within their culture and family. These skills set the foundation for development in all areas, but especially literacy development.

The adult plays an important role in helping the very young child understand and communicate by being responsive to the infant's/toddler's attempts to communicate, and by providing a rich language environment. During the first three years young children are also beginning to learn about print and writing, and how oral language is reflected in written symbols (drawings). Literacy skills are promoted and supported through play, reading books, scribbling, back-and-forth communication, and interactions with adults. A solid foundation in oral language development in the early years before a child enters school will promote success in reading and writing in the future. Young children who have rich language and literacy experiences are more likely to be successful in learning to read independently.

Strategies to support inclusive learning environments:

- ❖ Acknowledge the child's current level of communication and build upon it
- ❖ Provide good models of communication, including sign language and native language if needed
- ❖ Use special or adaptive devices and/or processes to increase level of communication and/or participation
- ❖ Use a favorite toy, activity or person to encourage communication and/or participation

Some general accommodations to support children with special learning or developmental needs can be found on page 9 of this document, and in NDE Rule 51.

Listening and Understanding Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child responds to sounds in the environment
 - Turns in the directions of sounds
 - Begins to identify sounds with particular objects (phone, doorbell, car horn, etc.)
- Child begins to listen to words with understanding
- Child begins to follow simple directions
- Child demonstrates understanding of native and/or English language
 - Begins to attach meaning to the sounds, gestures, signs and words they hear or see

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Startles or turns to sounds in the environment (loud sounds, voices, car horn, etc.)
- Responds to familiar words or gestures (stops crying when caregiver says "bottle", smiles or laughs when told "Mommy/Daddy is here" etc.)
- Recognizes familiar social games and routines (smiles or pats hands together when the adult says "pat-a-cake", etc.)
- Responds to simple questions or requests (searches for a toy when asked, "Where's your ball?" etc.)
- Points to objects, pictures, and body parts (nose, eyes, ears, etc.) as part of interactions with adults

The Adult

- Engages children in social games and back and forth communicating
- Pairs words with actions and objects during play activities and daily routines
- Names and describes people, things, and actions during play activities and daily routines
- Follows the child's lead, commenting on the child's actions and sounds
- Encourages parents to develop and maintain their first language in the home

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Stories, songs, words, games and daily schedules in English and the languages of non-English speaking children
- Durable cloth, board or vinyl books, soft toys, and puppets, which are accessible throughout the day

Listening and Understanding Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child listens to simple directions and conversations with understanding
 - Demonstrates understanding of the meaning of stories, social games, songs and poems
- Child follows directions, responds to simple instructions/requests
 - Follows single- and two-step directions
- Child listens to others and responds to feelings and expressed ideas
 - Responds to simple, direct, conversational sentences, either verbally or by actions or gestures
- Child demonstrates understanding of many vocabulary words
 - Builds a growing vocabulary of everyday events, people, and things

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Attends to and gains information from short stories, rhymes, finger plays, songs, etc.
- Demonstrates understanding of native and/or English languages
- Responds with understanding to action words, such as "Let's put the baby in bed"
- Follows directions such as "Please go wash your hands, then sit down at the table"
- Answers simple questions using short sentences
- Imitates sounds and simple rhythms

The Adult

- Engages children in songs, rhymes, finger plays, and stories
- Uses short phrases to describe toddlers' actions in play activities and daily routines
- Names and describes people, things, and actions
- Expands on child's language and answers questions
- Encourages parents to develop and maintain their first language in the home

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Stories, songs, words, games and daily schedules in English and the languages of non-English speaking children and their families
- Sturdy board, vinyl, and cloth books, photo albums, magazines with pictures, catalogs, flannel boards, puppets, etc.
- Quiet location for listening to books on tape
- Opportunities to play listening games and listen to different types of sounds

Speaking and Communicating Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child communicates needs, wants, feelings, or thoughts through words, gestures, actions, or expressions
 - Cries to indicate different needs
 - Begins to use words and gestures to communicate (coos, babbles, makes sounds, uses sign language, etc.)
 - Begins to initiate interactions with adults and peers
- Child communicates for a variety of purposes
 - Signals for more
 - Greets adults and peers

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Communicates nonverbally with adults and other children (reaches for or turns away to end an interaction, waves, smiles, etc.)
- Communicates verbally with adults and other children (cries, babbles, uses simple words or signs, etc.)
- Engages in vocal play and back and forth communication games with responsive adults
- Communicates needs and interests to get responses from others for comfort, warmth, nourishment and satisfaction

The Adult

- Uses alternate ways to communicate when needed (sign language, gestures, etc.)
- Builds on children's interests to introduce new words and ideas during play activities and daily routines
- Engages children in back and forth communication
- Creates a climate of trust by responding to infants' cues and communications
- Understands that young infants do not intentionally cry or act out in order to "be naughty" or "make you angry", but that they are developing ways to communicate their wants and needs

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Materials that encourage face-to-face interactions (books, puppets, dolls, mirrors, etc.)
- Pictures of children and their families (books, photos, etc.)

Speaking and Communicating Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child communicates needs, wants, feelings, or thoughts through words, gestures, actions, or expressions
 - Uses words, phrases, short sentences and gestures to communicate
- Child communicates for a variety of purposes
 - Asks questions
 - Initiates social interactions with other children and adults
 - Communicates to show or share with adult
- Child uses new vocabulary words that they have learned

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Communicates nonverbally through expressions and gestures
- Communicates verbally ranging from single words to simple sentences
- Uses words or phrases to express wants, seek attention, protest, comment, or offer greetings
- Names objects or actions in picture books
- Asks questions to achieve more information ("What's that?" , "Why?" etc.)

The Adult

- Uses alternate ways to communicate when needed (sign language, gestures, etc.)
- Builds on children's interests to introduce new words and ideas during play activities and daily routines
- Provides opportunities for children to engage in conversation
- Responds to toddlers' cues and communications
- Engages children in back and forth communication

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Materials that encourage face-to-face interactions (books, puppets, dolls, mirrors, etc.)
- Pictures of children and their families (photos, books, etc.)

Book Knowledge & Appreciation

Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child responds to language and shows enjoyment of the sounds and rhythms of language
- Child explores books with interest
 - Mouths, touches, shakes, throws
 - Points at pictures
- Child responds to pictures in book
 - Names pictures in books

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Explores physical features of books (chews, touches, handles, mouths, etc.)
- Explores books (looks at, pats pictures, turns pages, etc.)
- Vocalizes and attends to book as adult talks about the pictures
- Looks at and recognizes favorite books by their cover
- Points to pictures
- Babbles with growing consistency using speech-like words

The Adult

- Provides a variety of books and pictures that are accessible (those that can be manipulated, ones with textures, pop-ups, etc.)
- Looks at and names pictures in books with the child
- Provides books with simple, realistic pictures to build vocabulary, exploring and extending children's understanding of the meaning of new words
- Provides daily lap reading time
- Provides durable books that engage the senses (different textures, bright colors, sounds, etc.)

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Many types of durable children's books (cloth, vinyl, board, etc.)
- Soft, cozy place for looking at books (pillows, rugs, stuffed animals, etc.)

Book Knowledge & Appreciation Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child demonstrates interest in and appreciation of reading-related activities
 - Explores books
 - Shows interest when stories are read
 - Relates events in story to own knowledge and experience
- Child increases knowledge about books and how they typically are read
 - Holds book right side up
 - Turns pages front to back
- Child responds to pictures in book
 - Describes pictures in books

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Points to and names pictures in book
- Chooses favorite book and looks through as though reading
- Requests favorite book to be read repeatedly
- Uses phrases to describe events in books
- Holds book right side up and turns pages from front to back

The Adult

- Places interesting books and signs/posters in all interest areas
- Reads books with rich, descriptive pictures and vocabulary
- Explores and extends children's understanding of the meaning of new words
- Reads to children daily, individually and/or with others
- Helps children to care for and respect books

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Many types of durable children's books (cloth, board, big books, etc.)
- Soft, cozy place for looking at books (soft chairs, rugs, pillows, stuffed animals, etc.)

Print Awareness & Early Writing Infants (Birth to 18 Months)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child begins to develop eye-hand coordination
- Child manipulates materials with increasing precision (reaches for toys, plays with toes, shakes keys to make sound, carries blanket, etc.)
- Child explores with writing materials

Learning in Action: Examples

The Infant

- Develops eye-hand coordination, (follows objects with eye, passes objects from one hand to another, waves bye-bye, etc.)
- Scribbles on paper using large crayons or pencils
- Uses thumb and forefinger to pick up items (pincer grasp)

The Adult

- Provides crayons and other art materials for infant to explore
- Respects scribbles as early forms of writing
- Writes child's name on artwork, cubby, and all personal supplies

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- A variety of writing tools (large sheets of paper, large crayons and pencils, large paint brushes, etc.)
- Displays of children's art around the room at child's eye level
- Pictures, posters, labels on cubbies and materials, toy shelves etc.

Print Awareness & Early Writing Toddlers (18 Months to 3 Years)

Widely Held Expectations

- Child manipulates materials with increasing precision
- Child shows an awareness of print as a form of meaningful communication
 - Environmental print (road signs, signs on stores, symbols, etc.)
- Child shows an interest in early writing
 - Uses scribbles, shapes or pictures to represent specific thoughts, ideas, stories
- Child begins to recognize own name on artwork or possessions

Learning in Action: Examples

The Toddler

- Uses a variety of writing tools and art materials (easel, brushes, large crayons, pencils, markers, etc.)
- Scribbles spontaneously, often using circular motions
- Identifies familiar symbols or environmental print (names, logos, food signs, etc.)
- Tells adults about drawing and asks adults to write their stories

The Adult

- Displays children's names on artwork, cubbies and all personal supplies
- Models the use of writing and drawing in everyday activities
- Write child's dictation on artwork
- Promotes literacy related play activities (reads stories, play with magnet letters, etc.)
- Respects children's attempts at writing

THE ENVIRONMENT INCLUDES

- Durable books and a variety of writing tools accessible to children (variety of paper, large crayons and pencils, paint brushes, markers, etc.)
- Displays of children's art (including children's beginning attempts at writing) around the room at child's eye level
- Pictures, posters, labels on cubbies and materials, toy shelves, etc.

Resources

The Creative Curriculum for Infants & Toddlers -- Amy Laura Dombro, Laura J. Colker, and Diane Trister Dodge

Growing Up Reading: Learning To Read Through Creative Play -- Jill Frankel Hauser

Learning Language and Loving It: A Guide to Promoting Children's Social and Language Development -- Elaine Weitzman and Janice Greenber

Literacy: The Creative Curriculum Approach -- Cate Heroman and Candy Jones

Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever -- Mem Fox

Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success -- Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin

The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning Tells Us About the Mind -- Alison Gopnick, Andrew N. Meltzoff, and Patricia K. Kuhl

Tender Care and Early Learning: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Settings -- Jacalyn Post and Mary Hohmann

Young Children and Picture Books: Literature from Infancy to Six (NAEYC) -- Mary Renck Jalongo

Books for Children

I Love You, Sun I Love You, Moon -- Karen Pandell and Tomie dePaola

My First Animal Board Book -- Dorling Kindersley Publishing

My First Baby Games -- Jane Manning

My Very First Mother Goose -- Iona Archibald Opie

Time For Bed -- Mem Fox

Who's Peeking? -- Charles Reasoner

What Is That? -- Tana Hoban

In the Tall, Tall Grass -- Denise Fleming

Jessie Bear, What Will You Wear? -- Nancy White Carlstrom

Mama Mama or Papa Papa -- Jean Marzollo

On Mother's Lap -- Ann Herbert Scott

Ten, Nine, Eight -- Molly Bang