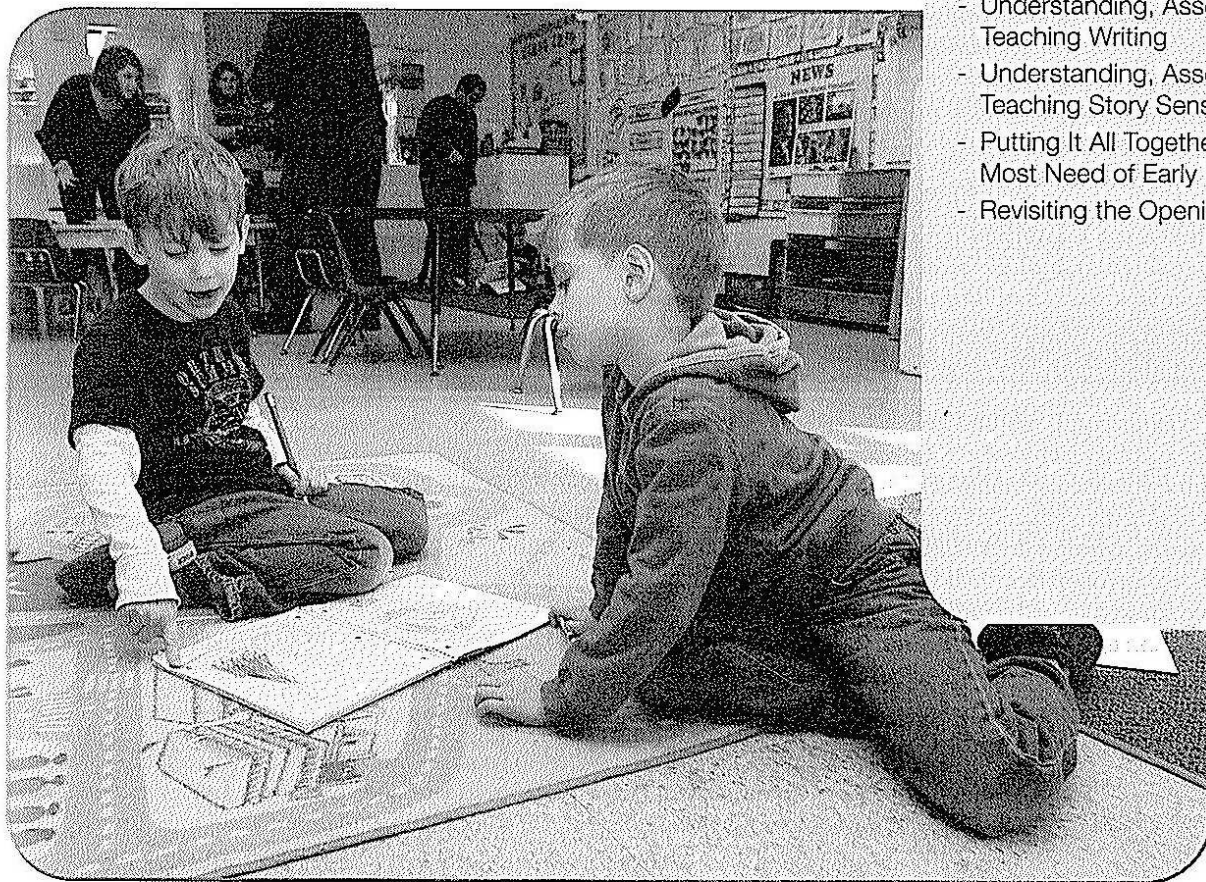


7

Assessing and Teaching Early Literacy

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Scenario: Helping Children Advance as Language Learners
- Building an Understanding of Early Literacy
- Assessing Early Literacy
- Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Concepts
- Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Phonological Awareness
- Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Letter Identification
- Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Writing
- Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Story Sense
- Putting It All Together: Who Is In Most Need of Early Intervention?
- Revisiting the Opening Scenario





SCENARIO: HELPING CHILDREN ADVANCE AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS



Go to the Assignments and Activities section of Topic 4: Oral Language in the MyEducationLab for your course and complete the activity entitled "Literacy." As you watch the video and answer the accompanying questions, reflect on the narrative voiceovers. Do you agree with the narrator? Why or why not?

Ms. Berger is a highly qualified early childhood teacher who believes that literacy is an ongoing, dynamic process and that children are often at different places in their literacy acquisition. Rather than waiting for children to show that they are ready for literacy instruction, she uses what she knows about her students to plan developmentally appropriate instruction. She wholeheartedly believes that assessment drives instruction, but she recognizes that she must use a variety of assessment measures, each designed to evaluate different aspects of early literacy. She can then interpret the results to plan lessons and to determine which children might need additional instructional time so that they can learn essential literacy skills.

As is often the case, Ms. Berger's students come from a variety of backgrounds. Some come from high-poverty areas, whereas others come from middle-class neighborhoods. When she looks at the results of the many different assessment measures she uses, she recognizes that some children perform poorly when compared to their peers. That is, some are lagging in oral vocabulary, print concepts, letter identification, and phonological awareness. She knows that she will be able to offer some children additional instruction in each of these areas, while others will be better served by teachers who are specially trained in early intervention. She fully understands that children who don't do well on the assessments need more rather than less help. Their progress must be accelerated in order for them to function at the same level as their peers.

Ms. Berger recognizes that there are noneducational factors such as parental support, socioeconomic status, and nutrition that affect school performance. She also knows that there are several educational factors such as teacher experience, curriculum rigor, and time on task that affect how children fare in school. Although all factors are important, she focuses on what she can control—the educational factors—and strives to teach children to the best of her ability.

Recent government mandates have Ms. Berger quite concerned. Even though she is an advocate of accountability, she also understands that the results of early literacy tests are not supposed to be used as high-stakes tests by which children are labeled and sorted into various groups. Yet this is what she sees happening. She is concerned that too much time is being spent on labeling children and not enough time is being spent on helping them advance as language learners.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the essential components of early literacy, and the differences between the terms *early literacy*, *reading readiness*, and *emergent literacy*.
- Provide an example of a specific assessment measure and explain what it is designed to reveal.
- Discuss early intervention and provide an example of an early intervention program.
- Explain the pros and cons of three different ways to determine who is most in need of early intervention.

In this chapter, we focus on the different aspects of literacy that young children enrolled in kindergarten and first grade need to acquire. Our purpose is to explain these essential components and provide some ways to assess and teach each one. Whereas several of the assessment measures explained throughout this text are suitable for all ages, those in this chapter are especially appropriate for evaluating essential components related to early literacy.

BUILDING AN UNDERSTANDING OF EARLY LITERACY

Emergent literacy

The development of the association of print with meaning that begins early in a child's life and continues until the child reaches the stage of conventional reading and writing.

Reading readiness

Children demonstrate behaviors that show they are ready for reading instruction.

Many terms are used to describe the beginning stages of literacy. One of the most common is *emergent literacy*, defined by Harris and Hodges as “the development of the association of print with meaning that begins early in a child’s life and continues until the child reaches the stage of conventional reading and writing.”¹ This definition suggests that children’s involvement with language begins long before they come to school and that it continues to evolve over time. For example, what appears to be a young child’s scribbling is really more than scribbling; it is the child’s attempt at using written language. In the past, behaviors such as these were often thought of in terms of *reading readiness*. That is, children were showing that they were ready for reading instruction.

Although some may argue that emergent literacy and reading readiness are basically synonymous, they are not at all. Emergent literacy connotes an ongoing process that is developmental in nature. Reading readiness seems to connote a “waiting period.” The notion of waiting in literacy development violates the spirit and essence of literacy as a developmental process.

Some make the distinction between emergent literacy and *beginning reading* by noting that once children show a certain amount of understanding about how print functions, they are no longer emergent but actually beginning to read in the formal sense. Therefore, they are beginning readers. But exactly how much do children have to know to move from being emergent to beginner? At what age does this shift happen?

Although kindergarten is usually considered to be the bridge between emergent literacy and beginning reading, using kindergarten as a yardstick can be problematic for a couple of reasons. First, not all children attend kindergarten because it is not required in several states. Therefore, lack of exposure to a language-rich environment could mean that the children will not exhibit several emergent literacy behaviors until first grade.

Second, there are still differences of opinion about the purpose and curriculum of kindergarten. Those who believe that children will grow or mature into reading provide children with many opportunities to learn all areas of literacy (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), yet do very little explicit teaching. Others believe that children are continually developing and that they need some help as they develop. Consequently, like their counterparts, they provide children with a language-rich environment, but they also believe in offering children explicit instruction based on what they have discovered as a result of using several different assessment techniques and interpreting what they reveal.

We base our view on the latter opinion, for which the International Reading Association is using the broader term “early literacy.” We believe that children are always showing us what they know and what they need to learn. Children change over time in the way they think about literacy and the strategies they employ as they attempt to comprehend and/or produce text. Like Teale, we believe that children are always trying to make sense of their world and that there is a logic behind what they do that drives their attempts to solve the literacy mystery. Once we understand this logic, we are in a better position to plan instruction that will foster their development toward conventional language use.²

One of the best ways to take a look at children’s attempts at using language in meaningful ways is to create a language-rich environment and observe what the children do. Such an environment needs to employ authentic language experiences and much

¹T. Harris and R. Hodges, *The Literacy Dictionary* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1995).

²W. Teale, “Emergent Literacy,” in *The Literacy Dictionary*, eds. T. Harris and R. Hodges (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1995), pp. 71–72.

support. Cambourne provides a useful way to think about such an environment. His conditions of learning are shown in Figure 7.1.

AREAS OF EARLY LITERACY

In Chapter 1, we provided some sample benchmarks that show some specific behaviors that we would expect to see from children. Whereas a number of the behaviors overlap and continue through different stages, many manifest themselves early on. In a broader sense, there are specific areas of emergent literacy that are viewed as the foundation for future reading and writing success. In Table 7.1 we provide an overview of these components.

ASSESSING EARLY LITERACY

PRE-READING ASSESSMENT

Before the label *emergent literacy* surfaced and replaced *reading readiness*, most school systems administered whole group reading readiness tests to their students, usually at the end of kindergarten, to determine whether the children were “ready for reading.” These tests were usually the first types of standardized tests that the children encountered in their lives at school.

Pre-reading
Precursor to
reading; before
formal reading
begins.

Group-administered standardized tests are still being used. Most major standardized achievement assessment batteries still have some types of *pre-reading* tests that are usually administered to children at some point in kindergarten. Some school district personnel use these tests to predict reading success, as well as to determine those children who will be “at risk” in school. One example is the *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test*, 4th edition (2000). This test is a group-administered standardized reading test. There is a pre-reading test (PR), which contains four subtests: literacy concepts, oral language concepts, letters and letter/sound correspondences, and listening comprehension. According to the authors, the purpose of the test is to determine “a student’s background for reading instruction.”³ The authors also note that the test is designed to help teachers learn “what each student already knows about important background concepts on which beginning reading skills are built and which concepts students may need additional help with as they begin to receive reading instruction.”⁴ A close examination of the testing manual provides the authors’ rationale for the subtests and other important information. A separate volume entitled *Linking Testing to Teaching: A Classroom Resource for Reading Assessment and Instruction* provides teachers with some ideas about interpreting test scores as well as teaching suggestions related to each subtest.

Unfortunately, there are some dangers attached to pre-reading tests if they are misused. One danger is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a child does poorly on such a test, the teacher may feel that the child cannot benefit from reading instruction; the child is not expected to be able to learn to read, and, as a result, the teacher defers instruction in reading. Eventually, the teacher’s feelings concerning the child’s inability to read become part of the child’s own self-concept (see “Teacher Expectations” in Chapter 2).

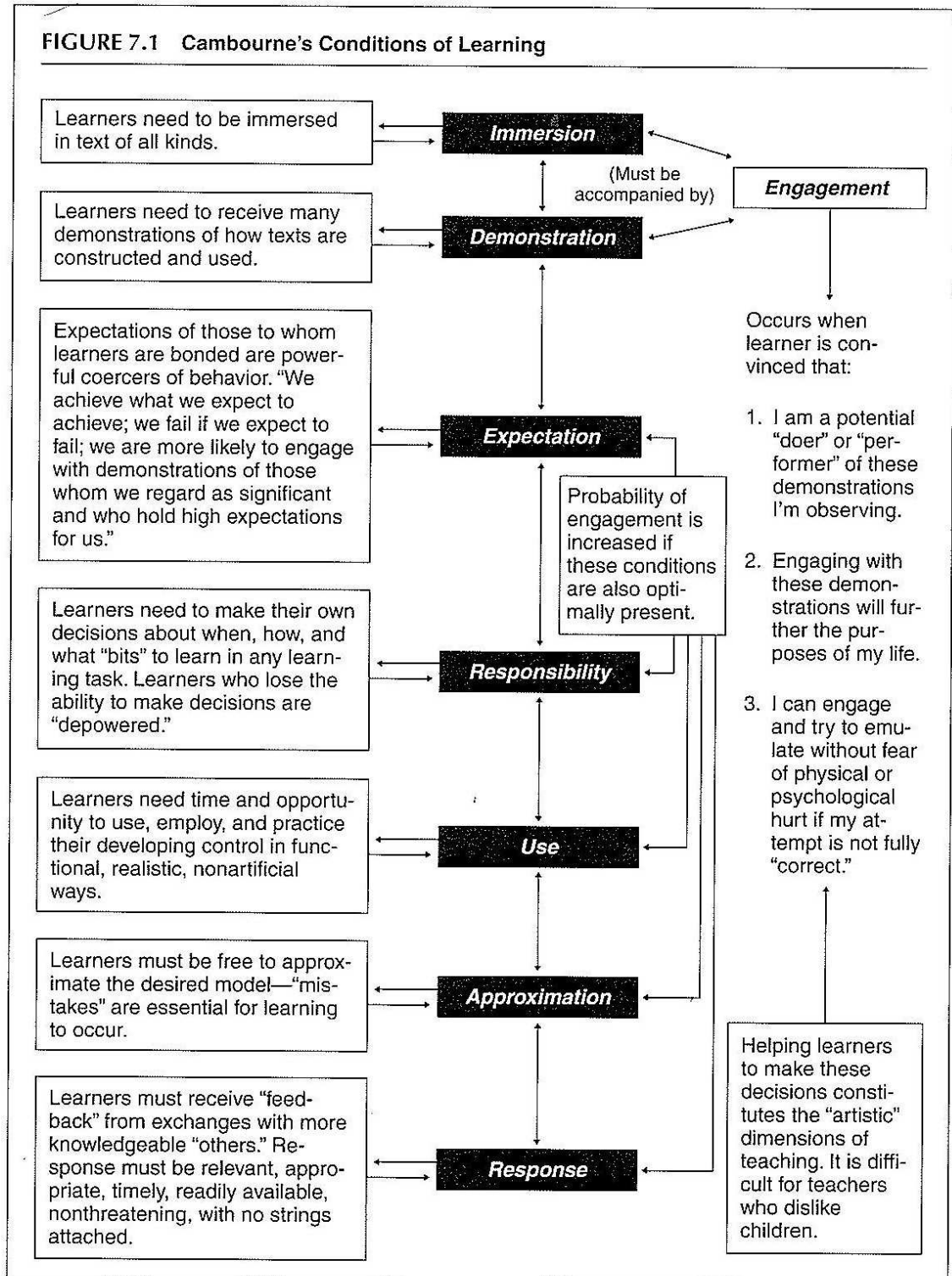
USES OF GROUP-ADMINISTERED STANDARDIZED PRE-READING ASSESSMENTS

Studies have suggested that the predictive validity of pre-reading tests is not very high, that they could not predict with accuracy how well nonreaders would learn to read, and

³Walter H. MacGinitie, Ruth MacGinitie, Katherine Maria, Lois G. Dreyer, and Kay E. Hughes, *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests*, 4th ed. (Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing, 2000).

⁴*Ibid.*

FIGURE 7.1 Cambourne's Conditions of Learning



Source: Cambourne, B. "Towards an educationally relevant theory of Literacy Learning: Twenty years of inquiry." *The Reading Teacher*, 49 (3): 182–202. 1995.

TABLE 7.1 Early Literacy Components and Their Definitions

Early Literacy Component	Brief Definition
Oral language concepts	Understanding concepts that are used in spoken language
Print concepts	Understanding written language related to books and some of the terms associated with it
Phonological awareness	Awareness that spoken language is made up of words, syllables, and phonemes
Letter identification	Understanding of the symbols used to form the alphabet
Alphabetic principle	Understanding that there is a systematic relationship among letters and sounds and that this code can be used to communicate with others
Story sense	Awareness of the structure used to create narrative stories; understanding that stories have to make sense and that books contain stories

Source: Snow, C., S. M. Burns, and P. Griffin, eds. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998.



Go to the Assignments and Activities section of Topic 1: Reading Instruction in the MyEducationLab for your course and complete the activity entitled "Creating a Print-Rich Environment." As you watch the video and answer the accompanying questions, notice how many ways that a teacher can create a print-rich environment. How might the teacher encourage children to participate in creating a print-rich environment?

that teachers' ratings were just as accurate in predicting reading success.⁵ On the other hand, there is a great amount of evidence available to support the relationship between young children's letter naming and their later reading achievement, as well as school achievements.⁶ This is also true of phonological awareness. Studies have shown that the alphabet subtest of the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests* "has consistently been the best predictor of scholastic achievement."⁷

It has been stated that "a great saving in testing time could well stem from using only the letters and numbers subtests or, perhaps, by not testing readiness at all. In either case, the sacrifice in information would be minimal."⁸ Such statements continue, and educators still decry the misuses of pre-reading tests.⁹ Despite many expressions of concern, test makers continue to produce such tests, and many teachers are required to use them.

Why is a test needed to predict future reading success? We already know from voluminous research that high-achieving readers usually come from homes with enriched verbal environments, whereas low-achieving readers usually come from homes in which little conversation takes place. We also know that a rich verbal environment is more likely to be found among middle and upper socioeconomic classes than in lower socioeconomic classes.

⁵Max Coltheart, "What Can Children Learn to Read—and When Should They Be Taught?" in *Reading Research: Advances in Theory and Practice*, Vol. 1, eds. T. Gary Waller and G. E. MacKinnon (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 15.

⁶Daniel J. Walsh, Gary Glen Price, and Mark G. Gillingham, "The Critical but Transitory Importance of Letter Naming," *Reading Research Quarterly* 23 (Winter, 1988): 110. Steven A. Stahl, Jean Osborn, and Fran Lehr, "Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print" by Marilyn Jager Adams: A Summary (Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, 1990), p. 10.

⁷Ibid., p. 110.

⁸Robert L. Hillerich, *Reading Fundamentals for Preschool and Primary Children* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1977), p. 25.

⁹See "NAEYC Position Statement on Standardized Testing of Young Children 3–8 Years of Age," *Young Children* 43 (March, 1988): 42–47. Sue Bredekamp and Lorrie Shepard, "How Best to Protect Children from Inappropriate School Expectations, Practices, and Policies," *Young Children* 44 (March, 1989): 14–24. Constance Kamii, ed., *Achievement Testing in the Early Grades* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1990).

Pre-reading tests, like other assessment measures, have their problems. Here are three that come to mind:

1. As any teacher who has ever tried to get a group of twenty kindergarten students all focused on the same item on the same page knows, actually administering the test can be extremely time-consuming. When test developers estimate how long it will take to administer the test, they do not take classroom management into account.
2. More often than not, there are too many prompts from the teacher. Therefore, a child's performance score may be inflated. Take, for example, a subtest that is designed to determine whether students can identify words. There is a sentence with one word missing, and four choices are given below the sentences. The examiner's manual directs the test administrator to read the sentence *and* the words under the sentence. Students are then supposed to choose the word to complete the sentence so that the sentence will make sense. The problem? Although the test is designed to shed light on how well students can identify words, it does not do this at all because the teacher does all of the reading. All the students have to do is *recognize* a word, which is much easier than identifying it. The only conclusion that can be drawn about students who successfully complete a subtest such as this is that they appear to be able to recognize some words. But can they read them independently, as their performance on this test is supposed to indicate? We cannot say.
3. Yet another problem is the lack of congruence between *emergent literacy* and the best way to assess it. Because children are constantly emerging and changing, it can be extremely difficult to obtain valid and reliable scores indicative of their development and learning from a one-time group-administered standardized test.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CHOOSING AND USING REQUIRED PRE-READING TESTS

Here are some suggestions on how to choose and use pre-reading tests if they are required in your school system:

1. Use a test that can provide you with information on a child's present level of literacy development.
2. Check the subtests to determine how directly the tasks required are related to reading. For example, some tests require children to match pictures and geometric figures rather than letters. Those children who do well in matching pictures and geometric figures may not do well in matching letters. Check to see if the subtests are similar to the activities presented in the beginning reading program.
3. Check the administration time of the test. Make sure that it is suited to the attention span of your students.
4. Make sure children comprehend the terminology used on the test and understand the directions.
5. Use the results of the test and your interpretation of them to gain information about the child's present level of development so that you can provide the best possible program for him or her.
6. Use the pre-reading test as one measure; also use informal assessments and your judgment to make decisions concerning the child's literacy development. (See Chapter 1.)

CURRENT WAYS TO ASSESS EARLY LITERACY

One of the recommended policies set forth by the authors of the joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for

the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) calls for “appropriate assessment strategies that promote children’s learning and development.” Because children are constantly changing, obtaining a valid and reliable score indicative of a child’s development and learning from a one-time, group-administered, timed standardized test can be extremely difficult.

Does this mean that there is no place for standardized tests in assessing and teaching early literacy? Not necessarily. Standardization doesn’t automatically make a test evil. Many times it is the *content* of these standardized tests juxtaposed with a teaching philosophy and a district or state policy that causes problems. For example, one test that appears to be sweeping the nation is the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)* (2000).¹⁰ This battery of tests was created by researchers at the University of Oregon. (For more information, visit the web site at dibels.oregon.edu.) The tests begin in kindergarten and continue through sixth grade. The creators use the word “fluency” a lot when they actually mean “proficiency.” Thus, the letter recognition subtest is called “fluency of letter recognition” (LRF). Students are given one minute to say the displayed letters. Their performance is then interpreted as a reading level. The problems we see with this battery of tests in general, and the letter recognition test in particular, stem from their lack of congruence with our view of what it means to be a reader (see Chapter 1). First, when assessing fluency, students need time to rehearse; a “cold” read tells us nothing about how fluently a child reads. Second, who cares how quickly a child can say letters of the alphabet? What we want to know is which letters does the child know and which need to be learned? Third, good readers adjust their rate of reading to their purpose for reading. But will students be left with this most important learning if they are constantly timed on all subtests? Not likely. Instead, tests such as these can potentially distort what it means to read, leaving children with many misconceptions about reading. In reality, the one-minute time standard on DIBELS is a standardized way of keeping the test simple and quick to administer. Yet interpreting the results as “fluency” creates a misconception of what fluency is about. The misconceptions surrounding the protocols and labeling on this test can prevent children from becoming willing and able readers.¹¹

We all want to be efficient with our use of time. But speed is not what matters, especially for early reading. Instead, what matters is asking and answering these assessment questions: What do I want to know? Why do I want to know it? How can I best learn this information? When making decisions about selecting assessment strategies, staying focused on the purpose of the assessment and how the results will be used to inform instruction is essential. With standardized measures, teachers need to find and understand the statements of purpose usually provided by test authors in training materials.

And let’s remember that most often teachers are told rather than asked about using standardized measures. Fortunately, there are several standardized measures that can be used to meaningfully and appropriately assess different aspects of early literacy. For example, the *Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation*¹² is a useful standardized tool to help ascertain how well children can segment phonemes in spoken words. *Concepts About Print*¹³ is another useful tool that is designed to tap students’ understanding of books and terminology related to them. Rathvon¹⁴ lists additional standardized measures.

¹⁰*Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)* (Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 2001).

¹¹Kenneth S. Goodman, *The Truth About DIBELS What It Is—What It Does*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006).

¹²H. Yopp, “A Test for Assessing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children,” *The Reading Teacher* 49, no. 1 (1995): 20–29.

¹³M. Clay, *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*, 3rd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1985).

¹⁴N. Rathvon, *Early Reading Assessment: A Practitioner’s Handbook* (New York: Guilford, 2004).

TABLE 7.2 What, Why, How of Early Literacy Assessment Techniques

<i>What Do I Want to Know?</i>	<i>Why Do I Want to Know?</i>	<i>How Can I Best Discover It?</i>
Do the children have an understanding of basic language concepts?	Knowing the language concepts children understand and need to learn will better help me to explain instruction.	Informal Inventory of Concepts (pp. 114–116)
Do the children have an understanding of how print functions?	Understanding how print functions and knowing the terminology associated with reading are essential for effective reading.	Print Concepts (p. 117)
Do children display phonological awareness?	Having phonological awareness can assist reading success.	Phonological Awareness Test (p. 125)
Can children identify letters of the alphabet?	Knowing letters appears to be associated with competent reading.	Letter Identification (pp. 131–132)
To what degree do students write?	Understanding about the alphabetic principle and using other print conventions are essential for writing success.	Writing Vocabulary (p. 137) Message Writing (p. 137)
Do children understand how stories are structured, and do they show listening comprehension?	Understanding how stories are structured will facilitate future reading success. Showing listening comprehension indicates that students realize that understanding is essential for reading.	Wordless Picture Story (p. 139)

The majority of these measures are individually administered and they can be given several times so that the teacher can note progress over time. When contrasted with group-administered tests, these individual assessment measures can also yield much more information because the examiner can watch what the child does on given tasks. For example, after reading a passage, a child might stop and talk about something that happened to him or her that is similar to what happened in the story. This type of response indicates that the child is making some self-to-text connections, that he is comprehending.

To standardize or not to standardize is not the question. Instead, the pertinent question is “What are the children showing they know and what do they need to know to advance as language users?” Addressing these strengths and needs at the onset is about ensuring that children get a fair start, rather than needing to catch up later on. Just as regular maintenance can prevent costly car repairs, so, too, early intervention saves resources, human as well as monetary.

Because there are different aspects of early literacy, we need to use a variety of measures to assess them. However, variety can be a bit overwhelming if we aren’t sure what it is we’re looking for. This leads us once again to ask three important questions: What do I want to know? Why do I want to know? How can I best discover it? Table 7.2 provides some help in answering these questions.

UNDERSTANDING, ASSESSING, AND TEACHING CONCEPTS

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

A *concept* is a group of stimuli with common characteristics. These stimuli may be objects, events, or persons. Concepts are usually designated by their names, such as *book*,

Concept

A group of stimuli with common characteristics.

war, man, woman, animal, teacher, and so forth. All these concepts refer to classes (or categories) of stimuli. Some stimuli do not refer to concepts; Ms. Jones, the lawyer, Hemingway's "The Killers," World War II, and the Empire State Building are examples. These are specific (not classes of) people, stimuli, or happenings.

Concepts are needed to reduce the complexity of the world. When children learn that their shaggy pets are called *dogs*, they tend to label all other similar four-footed animals as "dogs." Young children overgeneralize, tending to group all animals together, and have not yet perceived the differences between and among various animals. Unless children learn to discern differences, the classes of words that they deal with will become exceptionally unwieldy and unmanageable. However, if children group each object in a class by itself, this too will create difficulties in coping with environmental stimuli because it will also be unwieldy.

The first step in acquiring concepts concerns oral vocabulary because concepts are based on word meanings: Without vocabulary there would be no base for concept development. The second step is gathering data, that is, specific information about the concept to be learned. In doing this, students use their strategies for processing information—they select data that are relevant, ignore irrelevant data, and categorize items that belong together. Concepts are formed when the data are organized into categories.

Concept**development**

Refers to development of thinking.

Schemata

These structured designs are the cognitive arrangements by which the mind is able to categorize incoming stimuli.

Assimilation

A continuous process that helps the individual to integrate new incoming stimuli into existing concepts—one aspect of what Piaget refers to as cognitive development.

Accommodation

Developing new categories for stimuli that do not fit into existing ones—another aspect of what Piaget refers to as cognitive development.

HOW DO CONCEPTS DEVELOP?

Concept development is closely related to cognitive (thinking) development. Jean Piaget, a renowned Swiss psychologist, has written on children's cognitive development in terms of their ability to organize (which requires conceptualization), classify, and adapt to their environments.

According to Piaget, the mind is capable of intellectual exercise because of its ability to categorize incoming stimuli adequately. *Schemata* (structured designs) are the cognitive arrangements by which this categorization takes place. As children develop and take in more and more information, it becomes necessary for them to have some way to categorize all the new information. At the same time, their ability to categorize by means of schemata grows, too. That is, children should be able to differentiate, to become less dependent on sensory stimuli, and to gain more and more complex schemata. Children should be able to categorize a cat as distinct from a mouse or a rabbit. They should be able to group cat, dog, and cow together as animals. Piaget calls the processes that bring about these changes in children's thinking *assimilation* and *accommodation*.¹⁵

Assimilation does not change a concept, but allows it to grow. It is a continuous process that helps the individual to integrate new, incoming stimuli into existing schemata or concepts. For example, when children tend to label all similar four-footed animals as dogs, they are assimilating. They have assimilated all four-footed animals into their existing schema.

If the child encounters stimuli that cannot be made to fit into the existing schema, then the alternative is either to construct a new category or to change the existing one. Accommodation occurs when a new schema or concept is developed, or when an existing schema is changed.

Although both assimilation and accommodation are important processes that the child must attain in order to develop adequate cognition, a balance between the two processes is necessary. If children overassimilate, they will have categories that are too large to handle; similarly, if they overaccommodate, they will have too many categories. Piaget calls the balance between the two *equilibrium*. A person having equilibrium would be able to see similarities between stimuli and thus properly assimilate

¹⁵Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

Equilibrium

According to Piaget, a balance between assimilation and accommodation in cognitive development.

them, and would also be able to determine when new schemata are needed for adequate accommodation of a surplus of categories.

As children develop cognitively, they proceed from more global (generalized) schemata to more particular ones. For the child, there are usually no right or wrong placements, but only better or more effective ones. That is what good education is all about.

HOW DOES CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT RELATE TO LANGUAGE AND READING?

Concept development is closely related to language development. Unless children attain the necessary concepts, they will be limited in reading as well as in all other aspects of the language arts (listening, speaking, writing, and viewing).

Knowledge of what concepts are and how children attain them is especially essential in a reading diagnosis and improvement program. Teachers in such a program must recognize early when a child is lacking certain concepts and help that child to attain them.

The quality of language development depends on the interrelationships of factors such as intelligence, home environment, sex differences, and family makeup. The factors that influence language development also influence concept development. As a result, children who are more advanced in language development are also usually more advanced in concept development, and these children tend to be better readers than those who are not as advanced.¹⁶

HOW CAN ORAL LANGUAGE CONCEPTS BE ASSESSED?

Concepts are necessary to help students acquire increasing amounts of knowledge. For example, as students proceed through the grades in school, their learning becomes more abstract and is expressed in words, using verbal stimuli as labels for concepts. Many teachers take for granted that those spoken concept labels are understood by their students, but this is not always so. Young children's literal interpretation of oral and written discourse and their limited knowledge of the world around them affects their comprehension and ability to form correct concepts. If not enough information is given, concepts are often learned either incompletely or incorrectly.

When children enter school, the teacher must assess their concept development level, and then help them to add the attributes that are necessary and relevant for the development of particular concepts. At the same time, the teacher must help students to delete all those concepts that are faulty or irrelevant.

One way to assess language concepts is to use an informal inventory test of concepts, such as the one shown in Figure 7.2. It can be given orally to individual students.

Another method to determine whether children have a concept such as opposites is to ask each child to give some opposites for words such as these:

no	good	fat
boy	mommy	go
happy	early	fast

A third way to determine whether the children understand language concepts is to play games. For example, to see if children understand the concepts of left and right, play the game "Simon Says" with the children and use directions with the words *left* and *right*.

A fourth way to observe whether children understand specific language concepts is to use these concepts as part of classroom routines. For example, the concepts of *first* and *last* can be assessed by asking children to name who is first or who is last in line.

¹⁶Walter D. Loban, *Language Development: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve*, Research Report #18 (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1976).

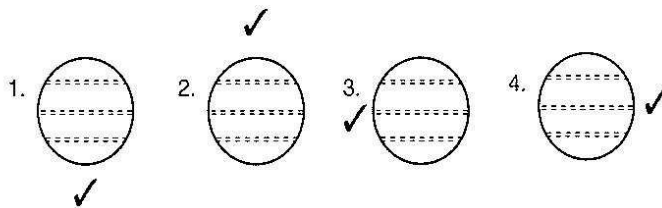
FIGURE 7.2 Example of an Informal Inventory Test of Concepts for Early Primary-Grade Students

For each concept the teacher will orally state the tested term in the context of a sentence. The children will show they understand the concept by correctly checking or putting a circle around the picture that best describes the concept. Before beginning, the teacher should make sure that all children understand the symbol for a check (✓) and that they can draw a circle around an object.

1. Concept *over*. Concept in sentence: The check (✓) is over the ball.

Directions

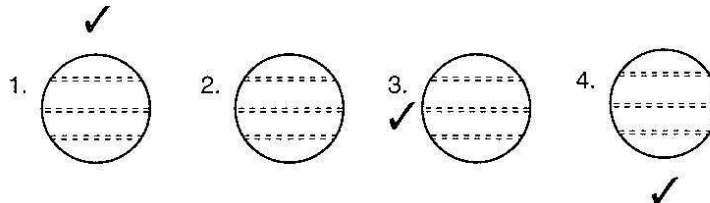
Put a circle around the picture that shows a ✓ is over a ball. (Again, the teacher should put a ✓ on the board to make sure children understand this term. The teacher should make a circle on the board to make sure children understand this concept as well.)



2. Concept of *under*. Concept in sentence: The check (✓) is under the ball.

Directions

Put a circle around the picture that shows a ✓ is under a ball.



3. Concept of *square*. Sentence: Which picture shows a square?

Directions

Put a check in the square.

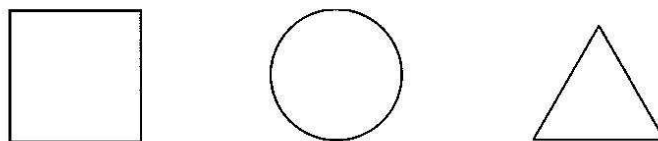
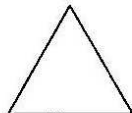
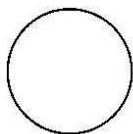


FIGURE 7.2

4. Concept of *triangle*. Sentence: Which picture shows a triangle?

Directions

Put a check in the triangle.

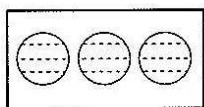


5. Concept of *most*. Sentence: Which box has the most balls?

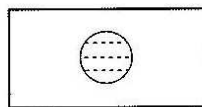
Directions

Draw a circle around the box that has the most balls.

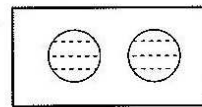
1.



2.



3.

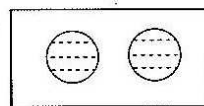


6. Concept of *least*. Sentence: Which box has the least number of balls?

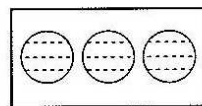
Directions

Draw a circle around the box that has the least number of balls.

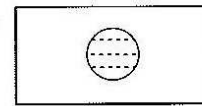
1.



2.



3.

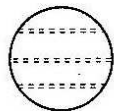


7. Concept of *smallest*. Sentence: Which ball is the smallest?

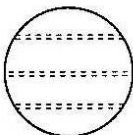
Directions

Draw a circle around the smallest ball.

1.



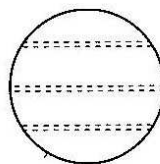
2.



3.



4.

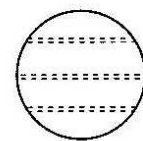


8. Concept of *largest*. Sentence: Which ball is the largest?

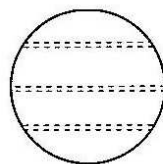
Directions

Draw a circle around the largest ball.

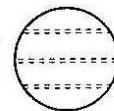
1.



2.



3.



4.

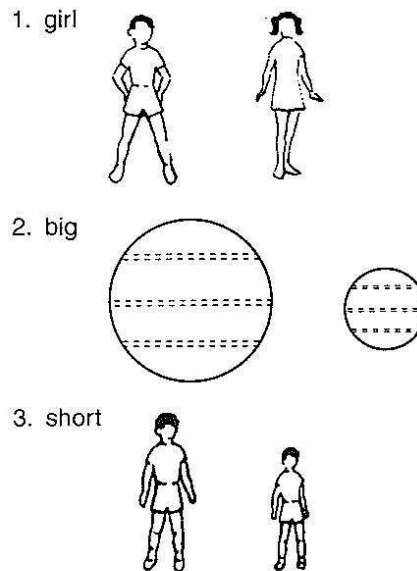


(continued)

FIGURE 7.2 (continued)

9. Concept of *opposites*.*Directions*

Draw a circle around the picture that is the opposite of the word that I am going to say. (For example, the teacher says, "What is the opposite of girl?")



A fifth, more formalized way of assessing oral language concepts is to use a standardized, norm-referenced test such as the *Boehm Test of Language Concepts*, 3rd edition (2000), which is published in both English and Spanish. The test is designed to help teachers determine which of the 50 most frequently occurring concepts children know or need to learn.

HOW CAN PRINT CONCEPTS BE ASSESSED?

Some concepts relate to print and books. Children's understanding of these concepts is important to their early reading success. These concepts include: print carries a message, left-to-right progression, return sweep, and terms such as "word," "letter," "beginning," and "ending."

One way to assess for these print concepts is to use the *Print Concepts Test* shown in Figure 7.3. It is a modification of the original *Concepts About Print* test developed by Marie Clay.¹⁷ The main difference between this version and Clay's is that this one is not standardized. It also permits the examiner to use just about any children's literature selection.

Print Concepts Administration Procedures

1. Choose a book that is relatively short. *The Hungry Monster* by Phyllis Root (Candlewick, 1997) is one example.
2. Make a copy of the *Print Concepts* form for each child (Figure 7.3).

¹⁷Clay (1985).

FIGURE 7.3 Print Concepts

Name: _____

Directions: Using the book that you have selected, give the following prompts to encourage the child to interact with it. Read the story aloud as you proceed. Place a ✓ next to each item answered correctly.

Prompt	Response (✓ = correct)	Print Concept
1. Hand the child the book upside down, spine first, saying something like: "Show me the front of this book." Then read the title to the child.		layout of book
2. Say: "I would like to begin reading the story, but I need your help. Please open the book and point to the exact spot where I should begin reading."		print conveys message
3. Stay on the same page and say: "Point to where I need to start reading."		directionality: where to begin
4. Say: "Point to where I should go after I start reading."		directionality: left-to-right progression
5. Say: "Point to where I go next." Read the pair of pages.		directionality: return sweep
6. Turn the page and say: "Point to where I should begin reading on this page. Now point to where I should end." Read the page.		terminology: beginning and end
7. Turn the page and say: "Point to the bottom of this page. Point to the top of it. Now point to the middle of it." Read the page.		terminology: top, bottom, middle
8. Using the same page, say: "Point to one letter."		terminology: letter
9. Again using the same page, say: "Point to one word."		terminology: word
10. Turn the page. Make sure that this page contains words that have corresponding upper- and lowercase letters. Read the page. Then point to a capital letter and say: "Point to a little letter that is like this one."		matching lower to uppercase letters
11. Turn the page and say: "Let's read these pages together. I'll read and you point." Read the pages.		speech-to-print match
12. Finish reading the book. Then turn back to a page that has the punctuation marks you want to assess. Point to the punctuation mark and say: "What is this?" "What is it for?"		punctuation: period, question mark, quotation marks

Source: From *Flexible Grouping in Reading* by Michael Opitz. Published by Scholastic Teaching Resources/Scholastic, Inc. Copyright © 1995 by Michael Opitz. Reprinted by permission.

3. Read through the form to become familiar with what you will be asking and to make sure that the book you will be using has the appropriate examples as noted on the form.
4. Individually administer the *Print Concepts* assessment using the prompts shown on the *Print Concepts* form.

Scoring Procedures

1. Look at the responses that the child provides.
2. Record your observations on the *Summary of Print Concepts* form shown in Figure 7.4.
3. Use the results to plan instruction.

As noted in Chapter 5 compiling the results of individual assessment measures on a class matrix can be helpful in terms of seeing the class at a glance. The *Concepts about Print: Class Profile* form shown in Figure 7.5 can be used for this purpose. The form is also helpful in that it shows which items are related to directionality, terminology, and punctuation.

Those who need to use a norm-referenced standardized test will want to use Clay's *Concepts About Print* test. Standard prompts are used, and the literature selections used to assess the print concepts are specified.

TEACHING ORAL LANGUAGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

A rich oral language program is a necessary first step to prevent reading failure because it helps prepare children for reading. The closer the children's language is to the written symbols encountered in reading, the greater their chance of success. Hearing English in the context of something meaningful with which they can identify helps children gain "facility in listening, attention span, narrative sense, recall of stretches of verbalization and the recognition of new words as they appear in other contexts."¹⁸

Teachers using a reading diagnosis and improvement program understand that one main reason for assessing students is to determine what students know and what they need to learn. Teachers can then use the results to plan appropriate instruction. There are several ways to teach language and print concepts.

Read Aloud to Children

Numerous researchers investigating the power of the read-aloud have arrived at the same findings: Reading aloud increases children's listening vocabularies.¹⁹ Other researchers have discovered that children who speak nonstandard English make significant gains toward standard English when they are involved in a rich oral program, one that stresses reading stories aloud and actively involving children in related activities. In terms of language and print concepts, there is much teacher can do:

- Before reading, the teacher can emphasize "front" by saying something like, "The title of our book is on the front cover."
- The teacher can also point to the words while reading, which helps children to see that print carries the message and that there is a match between what is said and the print on the page (i.e., speech-to-print match).
- Upon completion of the story, the teacher can emphasize language concepts such as "first" and "last" by using the terms as children tell what happened first and last.

¹⁸Dorothy H. Cohen, "The Effect of Language on Vocabulary and Reading Achievement," *Elementary English* 45 (February, 1968): 217. See also David B. Yaden, Jr., Deborah W. Rowe, and Laurie MacGillivray, "Emergent Literacy," *Handbook of Reading Research*, III (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 2000), p. 429.

¹⁹Warwick B. Elley, "Vocabulary Acquisition from Listening," *Reading Research Quarterly* 24 (Spring, 1989): 174-187.

FIGURE 7.4 Summary of Print Concepts

Title of Book: _____

Directions: Use this form to summarize your observations of print concepts.

Observations

The child demonstrates knowledge of the following print concepts (✓ the appropriate spaces)

- _____ layout of books (item 1)
- _____ print conveys written message (item 2)
- _____ directionality (items 3, 4, 5)
- _____ terminology associated with reading (items 6, 7, 8, 9)
- _____ uppercase letters (item 10)
- _____ lowercase letters (item 10)
- _____ speech-to-print match (item 11)
- _____ punctuation (item 12)

Comments/Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Source: From *Flexible Grouping in Reading* by Michael Opitz. Published by Scholastic Teaching Resources/Scholastic, Inc. Copyright © 1995 by Michael Opitz. Reprinted by permission.

- Concepts such as “pair” can be emphasized by telling students to pair up. Each pair can then be invited to chime in during a rereading of the story at their designated time.

As you can see, there are many ways that language concepts can be reinforced through read-alouds. There are several children’s literature titles that actually focus on language concepts that you can choose to use for read-aloud sessions. *A Pair of Protoceratops* by Bernard Most (Harcourt, 1998), *Parts* by Shelley Rotner (Walker, 2001), *Over, Under, Through* by Tana Hoban (Macmillan, 1973), and *What’s Opposite?* by Stephen Swinburne (Boyd’s Mills, 2000) are a few of the many available titles.

Reading a story to children can be a rewarding, interactive learning experience if it is done properly. Here are some suggestions to ensure your success when reading aloud to children.

Preparing for the Story

1. Choose a short storybook that is at the attention, interest, and concept development levels of the children and that has large pictures that can be easily seen.
2. Have the children sit comfortably and in a position that allows them to see the pictures easily.
3. Make sure there are no distractions in the room.
4. State the title and show the book to the children. Ask them if they can figure out what the story will be about from the title.
5. Tell them to listen carefully for certain things. (Of course, this will be based on the story being read.)

Reading the Story

1. Read the story aloud to the children.
2. Stop at key points and have them predict what will happen or have them state the refrain if the story contains one.
3. State more questions for them to think about while they are listening to the story.
4. If children interject comments during the story, you should acknowledge these by saying “good thinking,” if it shows they are thinking, and then continue reading.

After the Story

When the story is finished, have the children answer some of the unanswered questions and do some of the following based on their attention and interest levels:

1. Tell what the story is about.
2. Retell the story in sequence.
3. Discuss whether the story is based on fantasy or reality.
4. Act out the story.
5. Make up another ending for the story.

Engage Children in Language Play

Learning language can and should be fun. Fun allows for a positive association with learning language. Games such as “Simon Says” are perfect for developing further understanding of specific language concepts. And playing the “Hokey Pokey” is a perfect way to help children to better understand specific language concepts. A rich oral language classroom should involve singing songs, reciting poems and verse, oral storytelling, dramatizations (including reader’s theater, student-authored plays, puppet shows). All oral language play can be accompanied by print in some form to help children make the connection between their playfulness and printed text.

Do Some Focused, Explicit Teaching

You might decide that in addition to focused story reading, you want to design some lessons that teach specific language concepts. Looking at the class matrix described earlier can help you to see who needs some extra instruction in certain areas so you can teach them the needed concepts. In Chapter 5, we provide an example of a teacher who did just that.

Use Language in a Variety of Ways

Several years ago, Halliday identified seven distinct functions that children often use for language. However, some children appear to be limited language users. Knowing about these functions can help teachers to create classroom situations in which children need to use all seven functions, which will help them become flexible language users.²⁰ In Table 7.3 we show these functions and provide sample classroom activities.

TABLE 7.3 Halliday's Functions of Language and Sample Instructional Activities

<i>Function of Language</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Sample Instructional Activities</i>
Instrumental ("I want")	To satisfy needs or desires	Check out library books Sign in for attendance Provide directions for others
Regulatory ("Do as I tell you!")	To control behavior of others	Establish guidelines for taking care of classroom equipment Play follow-the-leader type games
Interactional ("Me and You")	To establish and maintain relationships	Write messages to one another Have children share work areas and/or materials Have children work together to plan a project
Personal ("Here I Come!")	To express one's personal feelings or thoughts	Provide time for students to talk with one another Read stories and ask students to share their thoughts about the story
Heuristic ("Tell me why.")	To discover and find out why something happens	Create problems for students to solve Conduct simple experiments
Imaginative ("Let's pretend.")	To create an imaginative world of one's own	Use puppets Have a dress-up center
Informative ("I have something to tell you.")	To provide information to others	Provide time for students to share announcements Provide time for students to tell current events

Source: From Halliday, M., *Exploration in the Functions of Language*, 1975.

²⁰M. Halliday, *Explorations in the Functions of Language* (London: Arnold, 1975).

UNDERSTANDING, ASSESSING, AND TEACHING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Phonological awareness

Awareness of spoken words, syllables, and phonemes.

Phonemic awareness

Awareness that words are made up of individual sounds.

WHAT IS PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS?

Although the terms phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are sometimes used as synonyms, this is incorrect. *Phonological awareness* refers to awareness of three aspects of spoken language: words, syllables within words, and sounds or phonemes within syllables and words. *Phonemic awareness* is the awareness that words are made up of individual sounds. It is one aspect of the larger category of phonological awareness. One way to remember the difference between the terms is to visualize an umbrella adorned with tassels. Phonological awareness would be the fabric and the frame holding the umbrella together. Phonemic awareness would be one of the tassels hanging from the end of one of the umbrella's sections. Both terms, however, refer to spoken language. A child who is phonologically and phonemically aware is not necessarily able to connect the sound units with written symbols.

Phonological awareness develops in stages. Learners first become aware that their spoken language is composed of words. They then progress to the stage in which they become aware that words are constructed of syllables. The last stage is the one in which learners become aware that words and syllables are made up of individual sounds (i.e., phonemes). Children who end up being proficient readers usually have developed a strong sense of phonology, whereas children who end up struggling with reading and writing often have needs in this area during early literacy. Table 7.4 shows the different stages of phonological awareness and sample tasks associated with each.

Phonemic Awareness Tasks

There are many tasks associated with phonemic awareness; some are more difficult than others. When children can perform all of these tasks, they are considered to have phonemic awareness. Identifying and producing rhyme appears to be the least difficult of these tasks. Another phonemic awareness task is *phoneme matching*, which calls for the learner to identify words that have a given sound or to generate a word that has a given sound. When children are expected to listen to a sentence and then state the sound that they hear at the beginning of a word or to state some words that begin like a given word, they are performing phoneme matching.

TABLE 7.4 Stages of Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness Level	Sample Activity
Recognizing that words represent a sound unit—word awareness	Provide children with some sort of counter. After reading a story, select one sentence and say it aloud. Repeat the sentence slowly and instruct students to drop a counter into a cup every time they hear a word.
Detecting that words are made up of different parts—syllable awareness	After reading a story, select some words that have single and multiple syllables. Invite students to clap out the parts as words are read.
Recognizing that words are made up of individual sounds—phoneme awareness	State a given word from a story and ask students how many sounds they hear in the word.

Source: From *Rhymes and Reasons: Literature and Language Play for Phonological Awareness* by Michael Opatz. Copyright © 2000. Published by Heinemann.

In a *phoneme blending* task, students are expected to put sounds together to form a given word. For example, the teacher might say, “I’m thinking of a word that names something we have at lunch. It’s /m/ ilk. What’s the word?” Children must blend the first sound with the rest of the sounds to state the word “milk.”

In a *phoneme segmentation* task, children are given a word and asked to tell how many sounds they hear in it. They are also often expected to produce the actual sounds. For example, the teacher might say, “Tell me the sounds you hear in the word ‘mom.’” Learners might be expected to drop a counter into a cup that represents the sounds heard in the word.

Phoneme manipulation entails manipulating the sounds within a given word in different ways. Sometimes, children are expected to substitute one sound for another as in “What word do we have if we change the /m/ in *man* to /p/?” Other times, children are asked to add sounds to a given word as in “Add /s/ to *nail*. What’s the new word?” Another task requires children to delete a sound within a word such as when the teacher says, “Take away the first sound in *gate*. What’s the new word?”



Go to the Assignments and Activities section of Topic 5: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics in the MyEducationLab for your course and complete the activity entitled “Assessing Phonological and Phonemic Awareness.” Watch the video to see how phonological awareness plays out in some classrooms. Pay close attention to the narrators’ comments and see which, if any, connect to what we mention about phonological awareness.

HOW CAN PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS BE ASSESSED?

Phonological awareness in general and phonemic awareness in particular appear to be important for reading success. Recently, the National Reading Panel performed a meta-analysis of several studies and concluded that phonemic awareness is an important reading skill and that some children needed explicit instruction.²¹ Likewise, the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association published a position statement on phonemic awareness and the teaching of reading.²² By posing several questions and answers in the statement, the group explains the intricacies of phonemic awareness.

There are both informal and formal ways of assessing the different levels of phonological awareness. The one shown in Figure 7.6 is an informal measure that Michael Opitz created for *Summer Success Reading*.²³

Administering the Phonological Awareness Test

1. Make a copy of the score sheet shown in Figure 7.6 for each student to be assessed.
2. Individually administer the test following the prompts shown on the score sheet.

Scoring the Phonological Awareness Test

1. Write the number correct for each subtest in the Summary section shown on the form in Figure 7.6.
2. Write any pertinent comments in the space provided.

A second way to assess phonological awareness is to use a norm-referenced measure such as the *Test of Phonological Awareness* (TOPA),²⁴ which is a group-administered test.

TEACHING PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

For most children, phonological awareness is more caught than taught. Children who come to kindergarten or first grade with this awareness have been raised in a rich language environment where they were exposed to read-alouds, songs, nursery rhymes,

²¹National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*, NIH Publication 00-4654 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000).

²²“Phonemic Awareness and the Teaching of Reading: A Position Statement from the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association” (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1998).

²³Michael Opitz, *Summer Success Reading* (Boston, MA: Great Source Education Group, 2001).

²⁴J. K. Torgesen and B. R. Bryant, *Test of Phonological Awareness* (Austin, TX: PRO-ED, 1994).

FIGURE 7.6 PRETEST: Part A: Phonological Awareness Score Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

For each item, circle + for each correct response and – for each incorrect response. Give one point for each +.

1. Word Level: Counting Words in Sentences

Directions: "I am going to say a sentence to you. I want you to clap every time you hear a word. Let's try one: 'I am here.'" (Pause for child to clap or repeat the sentence and clap.) "Good! You clapped three times! Now do the same for these sentences."

<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Response</i>		
I like you. (3)	+	—	
Summer is fun. (3)	+	—	
The boy likes to read. (5)	+	—	
Can you write? (3)	+	—	
Tom drinks his milk. (4)	+	—	Score _____

2. Syllable Level: Counting Syllables in Words

Directions: "I am going to say some words to you, and this time I want you to tap on the table for each word part, for example, *cat* (tap once), *mother* (tap twice). Try some with me: *pig* (pause for response), *letter* (pause), *bunny* (pause). Good! Let's do some more words."

<i>Word</i>	<i>Response</i>		
Dad (1)	+	—	
funny (2)	+	—	
animal (3)	+	—	
toy (1)	+	—	
sidewalk (2)	+	—	Score _____

3. Phoneme Level: Rhyming

Directions: "I am going to say two words. If they rhyme, say 'yes.' If they don't, say 'no.' Let's try a couple: *mat/cat* (pause for response). Yes! They rhyme. Now try another: *man/bet* (pause). Good! Let's do some more."

<i>Word Pairs</i>	<i>Response</i>		
fish/wish (<i>yes</i>)	+	—	
said/pet (<i>no</i>)	+	—	
look/book (<i>yes</i>)	+	—	
come/some (<i>yes</i>)	+	—	
nine/name (<i>no</i>)	+	—	Score _____

(continued)

FIGURE 7.6 (continued)

4. Phoneme Level: Matching

Directions: "Now let's think of words that begin with the same sound. For example, dad, dog, and door begin with /d/." (Be sure to state the sound rather than the name of the letter.) "Let's try one. I'll say a sound and you tell me a word that starts with that sound: /s/." (Accept any word that begins with /s/.) "Good! Let's do a few more."

Sound	Response	
/l/	+	—
/p/	+	—
/r/	+	—
/t/	+	—
/m/	+	—
		Score _____

Summary

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Word Level: Counting Words in Sentences | _____ |
| 2. Syllable Level: Counting Syllables in Words | _____ |
| 3. Phoneme Level: Rhyming | _____ |
| 4. Phoneme Level: Matching | _____ |
| Total | _____ /20 |

poems, and other forms of language play. The reverse is true for those children who are lacking in phonological awareness. More than likely, they have not been afforded a rich language environment that facilitates an understanding of spoken language.

Here are six specific suggestions drawn from the work of many individuals who have shed light on how best to help children acquire phonological awareness.²⁵ Keep in mind that while much unintentional instruction occurs throughout a school day, planned deliberate instruction in phonemic awareness is most effective when it is kept within short time frames (the National Reading Panel suggests about 200 minutes per school year, or about 7 minutes per day).

1. *Embed phonological awareness into everyday reading and writing experiences.* Doing so helps children understand how this awareness of sounds relates to reading and writing. Table 7.5 provides a list of typical reading and writing experiences, a sample activity for each, and an explanation of how the experience promotes phonological awareness.
2. *Provide children with time to write using invented spelling.* Although it is true that phonological awareness is focused on sounds of language rather than its printed form, there is a wealth of research that points to the value of having children write to develop phonological awareness. As children write, they learn to represent spoken language with written symbols and hone their skills at segmenting phonemes.

²⁵M. Opatz, *Rhymes and Reasons: Literature and Language Play for Phonological Awareness* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

TABLE 7.5 Reading and Writing Experiences That Foster Phonological Awareness

<i>Typical Reading/ Writing Experiences</i>	<i>Sample Activity</i>	<i>Phonological Awareness</i>
Read-aloud	Reading books that emphasize language features such as rhyme and alliteration	Words are made up of sound elements that sometimes sound alike.
Shared reading	Reading a big book and asking children to clap every time they hear a word	Words are separate units in the speech stream. They can be used to create stories and sentences.
Guided reading	Providing children with a text to read and directing them to point to each word as they read	Stories are made up of words. Spaces show where a word starts and ends.
Independent reading	Providing time for children to read their own books	Stories are a written form of language. There are units of sound in the speech stream—including words, syllables, and sounds—that are used to write these stories.
Modeled writing	Inviting children to watch as words are written on a chart or on the board, saying each word slowly to stretch them out—either by syllable or by sound	Several word parts/sounds can be used to create a word. These need to be put in a specific sequence.
Interactive writing	Encouraging children to participate in creating a message by stating their ideas	Speech can be written. It is written in chunks.
Independent writing	Providing time for children to write	Sounds are used to create words to communicate an idea to others.

3. *Read aloud books that use specific language features.* These kinds of texts draw the learners' attention to given language features such as rhyme, alliteration, phoneme substitution, and phoneme segmentation. As a result of being exposed to books such as these, children learn to make distinctions among sounds and may develop phonological awareness in general and phonemic awareness in particular in meaningful contexts. Fortunately, several such titles are written every year. *Clickety Clack* (Spence & Spence, 1999) is a rhyming story about what happens when many different kinds and numbers of animals decide they want to ride a train. Much initial consonant substitution is used to create the rhymes, making this an excellent book not only for exposing children to rhyme but also for providing some meaningful practice with phoneme substitution. *Pignic* (Miranda, 1996) is an example of alliterative text in which each member of the pig family brings to the pignic something that begins with the same sound that begins their name. Children can join in the fun by going on their own imaginary picnic and bringing along some item that begins with the same sound as their name. *Things That Are Most in the World* (Barrett, 1998) is a repetitive text that tells about some of the silliest, heaviest, and smelliest things in the world! Once they have finished reading the book, children can learn more about phoneme deletion by playing the take-away game. Using words from the text, children might be asked to "Take *-est* away from wiggliest. What's the new word?" *Earthsong* (Rogers, 1998) is a poetry text that includes a rhythmic, rhyming pattern in the dialogues between parents and their offspring. It is an excellent book to help children further understand rhyme.

Songs can also be used to further children's understanding of phonological awareness. Song picture books have been created to illustrate specific songs. For example, *Hush Little Baby* (Frazee, 1999) is true to the original song, but uses updated illustrations. Once children have sung the song, each word can be framed on a second reading to help children understand word boundaries.

Finally, texts that use language in humorous ways, such as those written by Dr. Seuss, help children to see that we often play with the sounds in our language. Along with this learning comes a heightened sense of phonological awareness. For example, in *Altoona Baboona* (Bynum, 1999), the author inserts a sound at the end of several words, making this a perfect book to help children further understand sound deletion or sound addition. Children can be directed to take the last sound off the word and say the remaining word (i.e., phoneme deletion), or to add a sound to the end of their names (i.e., phoneme addition). Additional books that invite language play are listed in Table 7.6.

4. *Involve children in fun oral language activities.* Some children may need more explicit instruction to develop all levels of phonological awareness. These children need to be engaged with the three points listed above as well as with activities that will stimulate their curiosity about and understanding of their spoken language. If children need to understand the concept that words represent a sound unit, they can be provided with some sort of counter. Once a story has been read, students can be directed to pick up a counter for each word they hear. If children need to better understand that words are constructed of syllables, they can be invited to clap out the parts as words are read aloud. If students need additional practice with recognizing that words are made up of individual sounds (i.e., phonemes), they can be asked to tell the sounds they hear in given words from the story.
5. *Assess to see where children need the most help.* This can be accomplished through observing children as they participate in literacy-related activities such as writing. Observations during writing could reveal those children whose writing shows spaces between words or words that have representative symbols for sounds. These would indicate that the child has developed a sense of all levels of phonological awareness. And the results of assessments such as those shown and mentioned above can be used to detect which children might need some additional help.
6. *Get families involved!* One way to accomplish this is to provide a book and a brief explanation of how to complete an accompanying activity. For example, if the book that is being sent home contains much alliteration, the letter can explain how to point out to the child that all of the words on a given page begin with a certain sound. The child can then be asked to listen for the sound and to state it after a page has been read. The parent can then be instructed to have the child think of other words that begin with the same sound. The letter must focus on exactly what the parent needs to do when working on the book with the child.

UNDERSTANDING, ASSESSING, AND TEACHING LETTER IDENTIFICATION

WHAT IS LETTER IDENTIFICATION?

Letter identification is just that—identifying the letters of the alphabet. Although common sense would tell us that being able to identify and name the letters of the alphabet is important for reading and writing tasks, there is also ample evidence that being able to name letters is a predictor of end-of-year achievement for kindergarten students.²⁶

²⁶G. Bond and R. Dykstra, "The Cooperative Research Program in First-Grade Reading Instruction," *Reading Research Quarterly* 2 (1967): 5-142.

TABLE 7.6 Additional Books That Invite Language Play

Rhyme

- Burleigh, R. 2009. *Clang! Clang! Beep! Beep! Listen to the City*. Simon & Schuster. 978-1-4169-4052-4.
- Downey, L. 2000. *The Flea's Sneeze*. Holt. 0-805-061037.
- Marshak, S. 1999. *The Absentminded Fellow*. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. 0-374-300135.
- Martin, B. 1999. *A Beastly Story*. Harcourt. 0-15-201683-X.
- Morrow, B. 2009. *Mr. Mosquito Put on His Tuxedo*. Holiday House. 0-8234-2072-8.
- Thomas, J. 2009. *Rhyming Dust Bunnies*. Beach Lane Books. 978-1-4169-7976-0.

Alliteration

- Barron, R. 2000. *Fed Up! A Feast of Frazzled Foods*. Putnam. 0-399-234500.
- Duncan, P. 1999. *The Wacky Wedding: A Book of Alphabet Antics*. Hyperion. 0-7868-2248-1.
- Pavey, P. 2009. *One Dragon's Dream*. Candlewick Press. 978-0-7636-4470-3.
- Shapiro, Z. 2009. *We're All in the SAME BOAT*. G.P. Putnam's Sons. 978-0-399-24393-6.

Repetition

- Bauer, M. 2002. *Sleep, Little One, Sleep*. Aladdin. 0-689-85269X.
- Collicut, P. 1999. *This Train*. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. 0-374-37493-7.
- Hamilton, K. 2009. *Police Officers on Patrol*. Viking. 978-0-670-06315-4.
- Weinstein, E. 2008. *Everywhere the Cow Says "Moo!"* Boyds Mill. 978-1-59078-458-7.

Poetry

- Lobel, A. 2009. *The Frogs and Toads All Sang*. Harper Collins. 978-0-06-180022-1.
- Rylant, C. 1998. *Bless Us All: A Child's Yearbook of Blessings*. Simon & Schuster. 0-689-823703.
- Schertle, A. 2009. *Button Up!* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 978-0-15-205050-4.
- Stevenson, R. 1999. *My Shadow*. Harcourt. 0-7636-0923-4.

Song

- Hoberman, M. 2000. *The Eensy-Weensy Spider*. Little, Brown. 0-316-363308.
- Norworth, J. 1999. *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. Aladdin. 0-689-82433-5.
- Scieszka, J. 2009. *Truckery Rhymes*. Simon & Schuster. 978-1-4169-4135-4.
- Tobin, J. 2009. *Sue MacDonald Had a Book*. Henry Holt and Company. 978-0-8050-8766-6.

Goofy

- Feldman, E. 2009. *Billy & Milly Short & Silly*. G.P. Putnam's Sons. 978-0-399-24651-7.
- London, J. 2001. *Crunch Munch*. Harcourt. 0-15-202603-7.
- Palatini, M. 2009. *Boo-Hoo Moo*. Harper Collins. 978-0-06-114375-5.
-

Letter identification also helps students learn letter-sound associations (i.e., alphabetic principle). This should come as no surprise because it would be pretty difficult to make any kind of association if one part of the equation is unknown! And, as Rathvon notes, “Only when children have developed the insight that written word forms are related to the sounds rather than the meaning of language can they learn the specific correspondences between letters and phonemes.”²⁷

Many games teachers are likely to play with words depend on children being able to identify letters from their names. Therefore, children will have much more fun and are more likely to participate well in such games when they can identify letters early on.

HOW CAN LETTER IDENTIFICATION BE ASSESSED?

Ask any kindergarten or first-grade teacher and he or she will tell you that a good way to assess letter identification ability is to individually ask children to name the letters in random order. Both uppercase and lowercase letters are assessed because knowing one form of the letter doesn’t necessarily mean that a child knows the other form.

The protocol in Figure 7.7 shows one informal way of assessing letter identification.

Administering the Letter Identification Test

1. Place the letter identification page in front of the child. Say something like, “Here are some letters. Take a look at each one and tell me what it is. You may say ‘pass’ if you cannot remember the name of the letter.”
2. Use index cards to cover everything but the lines being read. If necessary, point to each letter with your finger (or have the child point).
3. As the child responds, use your copy of the assessment to note correct responses (1) and incorrect responses (2). When responses are incorrect, record the actual response or “DK” (doesn’t know) if the child doesn’t know the specific letter. If the child self-corrects, write OK. Remember that self-corrections can be made at any time and should not be counted as errors.

Scoring the Letter Identification Test

1. Count the number of responses for the uppercase letters and lowercase letters.
2. Note the scores in the box on the scoring form in Figure 7.8.

Marie Clay’s *Observation Survey* (Heinemann, 1985) provides a formal, norm-referenced standardized way of assessing letter identification. The assessment is similar to the one described above and it is individually administered. However, norms are provided, as are some additional assessment procedures.

TEACHING LETTER IDENTIFICATION

Many children come to school already knowing the letters of the alphabet, so the suggestions given here simply enhance their understanding. We catch others right in the middle of the process. However, there are some children who are just beginning to learn to identify letters. This is not to say that these children haven’t already noticed letters. Few can escape environmental print and most understand at an intuitive level that certain marks are used to record their names. They simply cannot put a label with the squiggle. Here are a few suggestions for helping children to identify letters:

1. *Use their names!* Meaningful association is necessary for any of us to learn anything, and this is also true of children learning letters. That is why many kindergarten and first-grade teachers use children’s names when thinking about which letters to teach first. In other words, the fact that children can identify their names



Go to the Assignments and Activities section of Topic 5: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics in the MyEducationLab for your course and complete the activity entitled “Name Lotto.” As you watch the video and answer the accompanying questions, pay close attention to how the teacher uses what children know to teach them something they need to know. How might using children’s names to teach letter identification facilitate children’s success?

²⁷N. Rathvon, *Early Reading Assessment: A Practitioner’s Handbook* (New York: Guilford, 2004).

FIGURE 7.7 PRETEST: Part A: Letter Identification, Student Copy

C U S I N Q
Z K E M L D V
P T R B F G
Y X W O H A J

d w e t f p
j u h k n r i
x b o y c a
g m v l q z s

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FIGURE 7.8 PRETEST: Part A: Letter Identification, Score Sheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Capital Letters

C U S I N Q
Z K E M L D V
P T R B F G
Y X W O H A J

Number Correct _____

Lowercase Letters

d w e t f p
j u h k n r i
x b o y c a
g m v l q z s

Number Correct _____

TOTAL CORRECT _____/152

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is no guarantee that they know every letter in the name. Because names are meaningful, teachers often begin by having children learn these letters.

2. *Use alphabet books.* One sure way to help children see the connection between letters and reading is to share alphabet books with them. Different letters can be pointed out along the way. There are numerous alphabet books that would appeal to just about any interest. *ABC Disney* by Robert Sabuda (Hyperion, 1998) is a pop-up book that features different characters from Disney movies. Others include *The Accidental Zucchini* by Mary Grover (Harcourt, 1997), *Flora McDonnell's A B C* by Flora McDonnell (Candlewick, 1997), and *ABC Kids* by Laura Ellen Williams (Philomel, 2000).
3. *Create an alphabet book.* Staple enough pages together for each letter of the alphabet. You might print one letter on each page in alphabetical order or you may decide to have the children write the letters in the order they learn them. In either case, the letter can be written at the top of the page and children can find pictures associated with the letter. These pictures can be labeled and children can trace over the letter shown at the top of the page.
4. *Be newspaper detectives.* Tear pages of the local newspaper into four parts and give each child a part. Have them search out letters that match the ones they are learning. They can use a yellow marker to highlight the letters.
5. *Use objects.* Have children bring in toys or other objects whose names begin with letters they are learning. These could be put in a big tub and could be used for sorting into different pockets, each labeled with a different letter. Likewise, labels from cans and other food products can be brought into the classroom and students can identify the letters shown on the various labels.

UNDERSTANDING, ASSESSING, AND TEACHING WRITING

Emergent writing
Nonconventional writing that includes scribbling and nonphonetic letterings.

WHAT IS WRITING?

When young children of about two and one-half first put pencil or crayon to paper, they are in the initial, or emergent, stage of writing. Children in the *emergent writing* stage write in preconventional or emergent forms (scribbling, drawing, nonphonetic letterings, and phonetic spellings) before they write conventionally. The desire to create something of one's own is a very important and necessary first step.

Teachers and parents can create a stimulating environment for preschoolers, so that children will scribble and express themselves. After preschoolers have put something down on paper, they can be encouraged to tell about what they have drawn or "written." A number of preschoolers try their skills at writing stories, even though they do not have specific hand motor control. (See Figures 7.9 and 7.10) Showing enthusiasm about the child's efforts will encourage him or her to continue.

Teachers and parents are good role models for their children. Those who write will be more likely to have children who write. Teachers and parents who value and model writing invite children to do the same.

Children who are motivated to write, and who value it intensely, will master the control of specific muscles needed to write. Three-year-olds are often able to make circles, showing that they are gaining control of specific hand muscles. By age five, many can construct other geometric figures, such as squares, which require more precision. Some kindergarten children, who have the necessary coordination and desire, are able to construct letters or words. Some can print their names in some legible form and write a story about themselves or their families. See Figure 7.11 for an example of such a story. Early childhood writing can be one of the most engaging and rewarding aspects of early literacy.

As you can see, children attempt to use writing at a very young age and they progress over time toward conventional writing. Taking a look at their writing enables

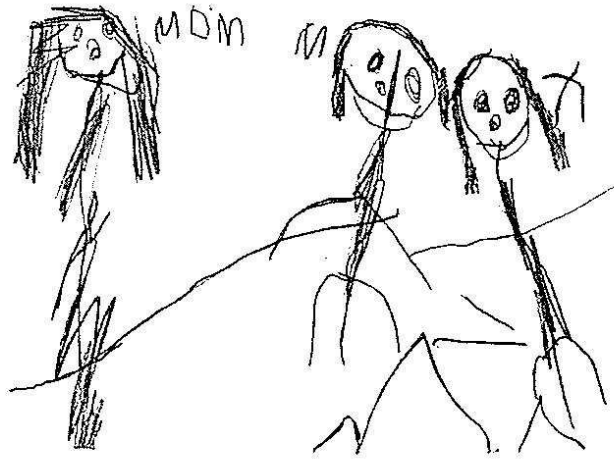


FIGURE 7.9 Melissa, who is 4, knows "M" is for "Mom."



FIGURE 7.10 Melissa at 4½ includes Kelsey, her sister, in her stories. She also likes to draw and tell stories about her neighbor's kitten. (Melissa tells you that she is the one with the bow in her hair.)



FIGURE 7.11 A kindergarten child's story.

us to identify their progress. We can also get a glimpse of the words a child has in his or her writing vocabulary—those words the child can write conventionally without any prompting from the teacher. Finally, we can see what the child understands about the alphabetic principle by noting the symbols the child uses to represent sounds in words; this indicates where the child is in terms of developmental spelling.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENTAL SPELLING?

Learning to spell is a complex undertaking that involves more than simply memorizing words; it is developmental in nature and requires the acquisition and application of knowledge of spoken and written language.²⁸ By *developmental*, we mean that *learning to spell is ongoing and based on the cognitive development of the child*. Conventional spelling is learned gradually as a child writes over the years.

Young children's spelling is based on their present knowledge of the language system, so when they spell, they may use *invented spelling*. When young children begin asking about adults' writing, it is often a signal that they want to write, too. They may begin by using invented spelling. The pattern of invented spelling will vary from one child to another. However, an analysis of children's invented spelling indicates that they

Developmental spelling

Learning to spell is ongoing and based on the cognitive development of the child.

²⁸Richard E. Hodges, "The Language Base of Spelling," in *Research in the Language Arts: Language and Schooling*, eds. Victor Froese and Stanley B. Straw (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1981), p. 218.

progress through stages that make use of their years of experience with oral language. Some researchers claim that children's spelling development parallels earlier stages of oral language development. This language-based hypothesis about how children learn to spell argues that children "internalize information about spoken and written words, organize that information, construct tentative rules based on that information, and apply these rules to the spelling of words."²⁹

Gentry has developed a model to show four stages children often go through before they develop standard or correct spelling.³⁰ The first is called the *precommunicative stage* (formerly known as the deviant stage) because the appearance of the child's spelling attempts shows that the child has no knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. At the *semiphonetic stage* the child demonstrates some letter-sound correspondences; that is, the child is beginning to gain the concept that letters represent sounds and that these are used to write words. Semiphonetic spelling is abbreviated spelling in which one, two, or three letters usually represent the word; for example, U = *you*, B = *Be*, and LEFT = *elephant* show that the "speller represents words, sounds, or syllables with letters that match their letter name."³¹ At this stage, the child is also gaining the concept that letters are arranged in a left-right orientation, knows the alphabet, and can form the letters.

At the *phonetic stage*, the child's spelling is characterized by an almost perfect match between letters and sounds. The child's spelling includes all sound features as he or she hears and says them. As a result, the child's spelling at this stage does not resemble standard spelling, for example, "MONSTR" = *monster* and "DRAS" = *dress*. The *transitional stage*, which is the final stage in this model, precedes standard spelling. At this stage, the child is better acquainted with standard spelling, and words look like English, even though they are misspelled. The child includes vowels in every syllable, so phonetic "EGL" for *eagle* at this stage becomes "EGUL." It is at this stage that the child moves from phonological to morphological and visual spelling (e.g., EIGHTEE instead of the phonetic ATE [*eighty*])³² and begins to use more conventionally spelled words in writing.

If children are given many opportunities to write for many different purposes, they will progress through these stages with teacher guidance. Forcing the child to move into the next stage without time to develop the concepts in the current stage can actually thwart progress rather than advance it. Correction of spelling during these early stages is ineffective. Children need long time periods to "live" and figure things out in each stage.³³

HOW CAN WRITING BE ASSESSED?

To find out whether children have a writing vocabulary, we can give them a blank sheet of paper and ask them to write all of the words they know.

To get a view of the children's understandings about the alphabetic principle, we can give them a blank piece of paper and tell them to write a message. We can then watch what they do and make note of our observations using a form such as the one shown in Figure 7.12.

²⁹James W. Beers, "Developmental Strategies of Spelling Competence in Primary-School Children," in *Developmental and Cognitive Aspects of Learning to Spell*, eds. Edmund H. Henderson and James W. Beers (Newark, DE: IRA, 1980), p. 36.

³⁰J. Richard Gentry, "An Analysis of Developmental Spelling in GYNS at WRK," *The Reading Teacher* 36 (November, 1982): 192-200.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 194.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 197.

³³S. Kucer, *Dimensions of Literacy*, 3rd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum, 2009).

FIGURE 7.12 Writing Observation Form

Brief Directions: Give the student paper and pencil. Ask the student to do some writing. Record qualitative judgments, observations, and insights below.

	<i>Not Evident, Low, Seldom, Weak, Poor</i>	<i>Very Evident, High, Always, Strong, Excellent</i>
Directionality		
Left to right	-----	-----
Top to bottom	-----	-----
Writing		
Scribbles or "cursivelike" scribbles	-----	-----
Letterlike formations	-----	-----
Repeated letters, numbers, words	-----	-----
Variety of letters, numbers, words	-----	-----
Knowledge of first (F) and last (L) name	-----	-----
Letter-Sound Relationships		
Represents sounds heard at word beginnings	-----	-----
Represents sounds heard at word endings	-----	-----
Represents sounds heard in middle of words	-----	-----
Writing Conventions		
Use of word boundaries	-----	-----
Use of punctuation	-----	-----
Overall Message Intent (check one)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student indicated no message intent.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student talked about but did not read or pretend to read what was written.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Student was able to read what was written.		
Teacher could make sense of writing independently. <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		
Observations, Comments, Notes, and Insights		

Source: From Jerry Johns, *The Basic Reading Inventory*, 8th edition, p. 425. Copyright © 2001 by Kendall/Hunt. Reprinted by permission.

Teachers who need a norm-referenced standardized writing test might want to use the writing assessments in Clay's *Diagnostic Survey* (1993).³⁴ The writing vocabulary test is used to reveal a child's writing vocabulary, whereas the dictation test is used to shed light on a child's understanding of the alphabetic principle.

TEACHING WRITING

In early literacy teaching, we want to encourage children to express and share their own ideas. This gives them confidence in themselves and makes them feel that what they have to write is worth sharing with others. Teachers need to capitalize on children's creativity. They can do this by giving children the time and opportunity to write and by respecting their ideas. Although the writing may be scant at first, it is the child's own creation. When children feel supported as writers, the volume and frequency of writing will increase.³⁵

Writing Environment

An inviting classroom, filled with books and children's "published" works and well organized into a number of learning centers, can be a catalyst for students' writing. A classroom where exciting things are happening and where children are involved in reading, observing, manipulating, and experimenting, is a place that encourages written self-expression. The quality of the teacher-student and student-student relationships is important in setting the emotional climate. If students and teachers are engaged in cooperative endeavors and students feel secure, they will want to write and share their written ideas with others.

Time for Writing

Writing helps students become better writers. They need adequate time to write in class. As with all writers, expressing themselves takes time. Good writing requires teachers to provide students with enough time to write. After getting the proper start in class, many children will work on their own during free time and at home, finishing compositions because they have become involved with the creative act and want to see the finished product.

UNDERSTANDING, ASSESSING, AND TEACHING STORY SENSE

Story sense

The understanding that there is a structure used to tell stories and that stories are written to be understood.

WHAT IS STORY SENSE?

Story sense is the understanding that there is a structure used to tell stories and that stories are written to be understood. In other words, not only does it involve understanding a simple story line, it also includes comprehension.

HOW CAN STORY SENSE BE ASSESSED?

Probably the best way to assess story sense and story comprehension is to use a wordless picture book such as *Good Dog, Carl* by Alexandra Day (Green Tiger, 1985). As students tell the story, note whether they are able to tell it with any kind of order that flows from one page to the next. This is the most authentic assessment, but it is time-consuming.

Another way to assess story sense and story comprehension is to use the wordless picture story shown in Figure 7.13. After giving the student time to preview the pictures, have him or her tell you the story. Follow the directions stated on the score sheet in Figure 7.14 to score the storytelling. To check comprehension, ask the questions shown on the score sheet in Figure 7.14 and score them as directed.

³⁴M. Clay, *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2003).

³⁵J. Hansen, *When Writers Read* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002).

FIGURE 7.13 PRETEST: Part B: Wordless Picture Story #1

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FIGURE 7.14 PRETEST: Part B: Wordless Picture Story #1 Score Sheet

Name _____ Date _____

Storytelling

Check the details the child mentions for each picture. Accept any logical interpretation. Give one (1) point for each detail the child includes. Make sure the student understands each picture before going on to the next.

Frame 1

1. a **man** (dad, brother, uncle, etc.) _____
2. is giving a **package** (box, present, gift, etc.) _____
3. to a **girl** (child, his daughter, etc.) _____

Frame 2

4. the **girl** (child ...) _____
5. is **tearing the paper off** (unwrapping) _____
6. the **package** (box ...) _____

Frame 3

7. the **girl** _____
8. **opens the box** (package ...) _____
9. **inside** the box _____
10. is a **ball** (basketball ...) _____

Frame 4

11. the **girl** _____
12. and the **man** _____
13. **play with the ball** (play catch, play basketball ...) _____

Score _____ /13

Story Comprehension

Ask these questions. Give 1 point for each correct answer.

1. Who is this story about? *a girl (child ...)* _____
2. What happens to the girl? *She gets a package with a ball in it.* _____
3. What does the girl do with the ball? *plays with the man (her dad ...)* _____
4. How do you think the girl felt when she opened the package? How can you tell? *This response requires inferential thinking based on prior knowledge. Accept any reasonable opinion and explanation. Probably the girl is happy. She is smiling and she goes right out to play.* _____

Score _____ /4

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TABLE 7.7 Directed Listening/Thinking Approach (DLTA) Chart

<i>What Teachers Do</i>	<i>What Children Do</i>	<i>What Teachers Need to Observe</i>
Relate talk to children's past experiences	Listen carefully; relate to past experiences	Students' attentiveness and their interest level based on the kinds of questions that students ask
Present motivating technique and vocabulary necessary to understand talk		
Present questions as guide before, during, and after talk	Answer and ask questions	Students' responses to questions

TEACHING STORY SENSE AND STORY COMPREHENSION

Reading aloud to children is perhaps one of the best ways to help them develop a sense of story. Likewise, giving them time to share their thoughts about the story after the read-aloud can be a good way to check their comprehension.

What's really going on here has to do with listening comprehension, however, because students are listening to the text rather than reading it for themselves. Using the *Directed Listening/Thinking Activity* shown in Table 7.7 is an excellent way to teach students how to listen and to work on story sense and comprehension simultaneously.

The Directed Listening/Thinking Approach

They *directed listening/thinking approach* requires teachers to ask questions before, during, and after a talk. The steps in this approach are as follows:

Directed listening/thinking approach

Requires teachers to ask questions before, during, and after a talk; consists of a number of steps; requires students to be active participants.

Step 1: Preparation for talk, lecture, audiotape, or film. The teacher relates to students' past experiences, gives an overview of the talk and presents any special vocabulary and questions at various difficulty levels that students should try to answer while listening to the talk.

Step 2: Students listen to the presentation. During the presentation, the teacher stops, asks students to answer some of the previously given questions, and interjects some more thought-provoking questions to guide students.

Step 3: After the presentation. The children answer unanswered questions and are presented with some more challenging questions. In addition, the teacher asks the children to identify the central idea of the talk, as well as to give a short summary.

Step 4: After the discussion. The teacher asks students to devise some good questions that could be used as test questions.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: WHO IS IN MOST NEED OF EARLY INTERVENTION?

WHAT IS EARLY INTERVENTION?

Early intervention is just what the term suggests: helping children to become successful as early as possible. Once their strengths and needs are identified, children receive specialized instruction that focuses on their strengths and addresses their needs.



Go to the Assignments and Activities section of Topic 11: Reading Difficulties and Intervention Strategies in the MyEducationLab for your course and complete the activity entitled "Early Intervention." As you watch the video and answer the accompanying questions, think about what you can do as a teacher to prevent reading problems.

Accelerating foundational knowledge through rich early literacy experiences sets students up for success in attaining proficient reading. Teachers using a reading diagnosis and improvement program will often provide this instruction themselves, but they may also call on others to help them.

Extra reading help sometimes comes in the form of an early intervention program such as *Reading Recovery*.³⁶ The purpose of this program is to identify those children who are experiencing difficulty in their first year of reading instruction. In this short-term curriculum, children who are the lowest achieving readers in a given first-grade class receive daily individualized 30-minute lessons from a specially trained *Reading Recovery* teacher in addition to the regular classroom reading instruction. Every individualized lesson is tailored to engage children in authentic reading and writing activities that will help them catch up with their peers.

WHO IS IN MOST NEED OF EARLY INTERVENTION?

But how do we determine which children could benefit from additional instruction and assessment? The most obvious way is to make a class composite of each of the subtests shown in this chapter. The class composite will show how children performed and can signal which children need the most help with a given aspect of early literacy.

A second way is to follow a process similar to the one used by *Reading Recovery* teachers. Children complete each test of Clay's *Diagnostic Survey*: letter identification, word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, dictation, and text reading. The examiner then adds the scores together to get an overall score. However, combining scores in this way is useful only for identifying a student with needs. To design appropriate instruction, the teacher will need to take a look at the child's performance on each subtest. Doing so will help to reveal where the child needs some additional instruction.

As it relates to the measures we show in this chapter, teachers can use the form shown in Figure 7.15 to note scores for each test. As with the *Diagnostic Survey* noted above, the scores can be added together and the students with the lowest overall scores can then receive the individualized additional reading instruction designed to address their reading needs.

A third way to identify those children who need the most help is to use a rating tool such as the *Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL)*,³⁷ which was created to guide observations of children's literacy skills in all areas of the language arts (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). This instrument provides a way for teachers to record what they see. The authors note that the TROLL also does something that a direct assessment cannot capture—it enables the teacher to observe children's interests in a variety of oral language and written language activities.

Another advantage of the TROLL is that teachers can use the results to inform instruction (e.g., to identify children who are showing evidence of oral language delay, those who may need further testing to explore learning needs, and those who are functioning above average and need additional stimulating activities). For further explanation about TROLL and its development, see the article by Dickinson, McCabe, and Sprague. The authors include the entire instrument, along with an explanation about what the scores mean.

³⁶Clay (1993).

³⁷D. Dickinson, A. McCabe, and K. Sprague, "Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL): Individualizing Early Literacy Instruction with a Standards-Based Rating Tool," *The Reading Teacher*, 56, no. 6 (2003): 554–564.

REVISITING THE OPENING SCENARIO

Describe the various assessments that Ms. Berger uses to figure out how best to advance her students in oral language and early literacy. How can she simultaneously demonstrate accountability to those concerned with meeting government mandates?

AUTHORS' SUMMARY

The major focus in this chapter was how to best assess and teach various aspects of early literacy. After providing background for each component of early literacy, we presented some assessment and teaching

suggestions intended to give teachers ways to work with students on the various components in early literacy. We concluded the chapter with three suggestions for determining who is most in need of early intervention.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOUGHT QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Observe a kindergarten classroom, making note of the classroom environment. How do you see Cambourne's conditions of learning exemplified?
2. Create a list of alphabet books that could be used to help children learn more about the alphabet, and identify different features that each book brings to students.
3. Using the guidelines on pages 126–128, develop a list of books that can be used to teach children about the different aspects of phonological awareness.
4. During your interview for a teaching position, the committee members ask you to explain how you would determine kindergarten students' strengths and needs. Construct your response.

WEB SITES

<http://www.starfall.com/>

This colorful site provides information and activities for teachers, parents, and children. Geared toward emergent literacy, the site includes printable books, downloadables for teachers and parents, and information and activities on phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, vocabulary, and so on. Also contains a scope and sequence page lining up texts with objectives.

<http://www.readinga-z.com/assess/other.html#reading>

Although the site requires a subscription for access to its extensive resources, it does offer some assessment ideas without the subscription that are worth checking out. For example, this resource includes assessment tips on student talk, observation checklists, and running records. Also included in the larger site are resources on guided reading, fluency, poetry, and more.

<http://10ss.qtp.nsw.edu.au/elo/stage1/assesrecord.html>

This Early Literacy Online site includes various teaching and assessment resources. The assessments include talking and listening, reading behaviors, writing, and more. The site also contains links to

scope and sequences and points to consider when planning lessons. Including various downloadable sources, Early Literacy Online also provides units (e.g., http://10ss.qtp.nsw.edu.au/elo/stage1/Assets/pdfs/Eng_TRS1_oneworld.pdf).

http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading_recovery/facts/index.asp

In this portion of the Reading Recovery Council of North America site, teachers have access to basic information regarding Reading Recovery. Other links in the site offer access to lessons, professional development, and information on a comprehensive literacy plan.

<http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED272922>

Defining invented spelling and its development, this site covers the developmental stages of spelling and the implications for teachers and their instructional planning. The site provides useful background research for teachers interested in developing students' strategies for learning Standard English spelling as opposed to memorization as the key to mastery.

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