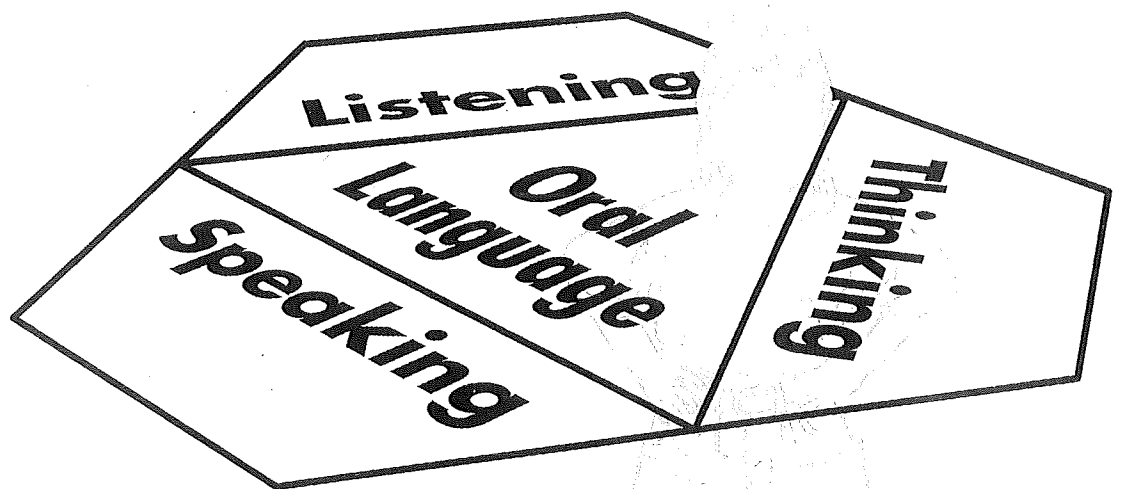


CHAPTER 3:

ORAL LANGUAGE

*Oral language is the foundation of literacy learning. Reading and writing are meaningful because they represent and extend the oral language system.**



* Fountas and Pinnell 4.

Research on Oral Language

The development of oral language is a key component of a successful kindergarten program. Language is a self-extending system—the student learns more about language by using it (Pinnell and Fountas 11). School provides a rich language environment, which supports growth in language, but it also places new demands on students' communication skills. Students need to develop *flexible* language systems to make the adjustment from the informal communication style used at home to the more formal one used at school. These systems must encompass oral language—speaking, listening, and thinking—as well as language use in print. As students explore language in classroom experiences, they begin to understand how to use their knowledge about language to communicate effectively in different ways, for a variety of purposes, including how to read and write.

Oral Language in the Classroom

When children enter school, they will continue to use language to explore their environment and make discoveries about the world around them. However, the demands placed on their language skills in the classroom require that they learn to use language in new ways.

The development of social language is important for success in school since learning takes place in a social context. Students need to learn how to communicate effectively in a variety of social situations in the classroom for many different purposes.

For example:

- with a *peer* to solve a problem or for conversation
- with a *teacher* in his or her varied roles
- in a *small group* for play or for completing a center activity
- in the *large-group setting* for following directions, listening to a story, or sharing information

One of the purposes of communication in the classroom is to learn new information. Children “learn to talk” before they come to school, but to be successful in school, they must also develop skills in “talking to learn.” In other words, they have to use language to monitor and reflect on experience, and reason about, plan, and predict experiences both orally and in relation to language use

Find Out More About Oral Language

- Blakemore, Caroline Jackson, and Barbara W. Ramirez. *Literacy Centers for the Primary Classroom*. Dominie Press, Inc., 1999.
- Dodge, Ellen Pritchard. *Communication Lab 1*. Singular Publishing, 1994.
- Depree, Helen, and Sandra Iverson. *Early Literacy in the Classroom*. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1994.
- Evans, J., and L. Allen. *First Steps Oral Language Developmental Continuum*. Irwin Publishing, 1994.
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- Fountas, I., and G. Pinnell, eds. *Voices on Word Matters*. Heinemann, 1999.
- Graham, Amanda. *Educating Arthur*. Access, 1995.
- Pinnell, G., and I. Fountas. *Guided Reading*. Heinemann, 1996.
- Roser, N., James Hoffmann, L. Labdo, and C. Forest. “Language Charts: A Record of Story Time Talk.” *Language Arts* 69 (Jan. 1992): 44–52.
- Westby, Carol. “Learning to Talk—Talking to Learn: Oral—Literate Language Differences.” In *Communication Skills and Classroom Success*, ed. C. S. Simon, 334–55. Thinking Publications, 1991.

Social language is the language of interpersonal communication—how to communicate effectively with other people for a variety of purposes. See “Function (Pragmatics)” on page 186.



in print (Westby 335). They need to develop language that will enable them to

- develop hypotheses and test them out
- reflect on what they have observed
- make connections between what they know and new information
- problem-solve

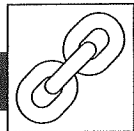
Students must have frequent opportunities to talk in the kindergarten classroom, since this underpins learning and is one of the major ways that they construct and refine their understandings of language (Evans and Allen, *Developmental Continuum*: 14).

Oral Language and Literacy

Oral language development not only supports learning in the classroom context, but it is critical to success with literacy development. Children who come to kindergarten with previous experience with books and storytelling have a wealth of knowledge to bring to the development of reading and writing:

- They already understand that book language is different from home language—book language has a different function, topics, and structure.
- They understand how stories are structured (e.g., that there is a beginning, middle, and end; there are characters; there are events in the story).
- Students use their knowledge of story structure to help develop prediction in reading and narrative skills (telling, reading, and writing stories) in general.

As they begin to explore books and print, students need to learn how to use what they already know about language to help them understand what is written on the page. Making the explicit connection between oral and written language is critical for emergent readers.



My Child as a Literacy Learner

Dear Parents:

Date: _____

Family literacy experiences before, during, and after kindergarten will make a real difference to your child's ongoing success in learning to read and write. In kindergarten, three major areas work together to help your child be successful: Print Awareness, Phonological Awareness, and Oral Language.

1. Print Awareness:

- your child's understanding of a *book*, a *letter*, and a *word*
- your child's ability to *recognize the letters of the alphabet*
- your child's ability to print letters of the alphabet, his or her name, and a few other words

2. Phonological Awareness:

- your child's ability to play with sounds, such as:
 - rhyming
 - blending sounds (e.g., *c-at* = *cat*)
 - recognizing the first sound in a word (e.g., /c/ in *cat*)

3. Oral Language:

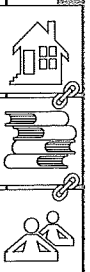
- your child's ability to communicate by
 - using sentences
 - joining group conversations
 - using appropriate vocabulary in conversation
 - attending to and making sense of discussions, conversations, and book readings

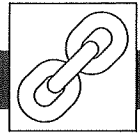
In order to help you assess where your child is on this developmental continuum, you may find it helpful to complete the attached Observation Survey.

"My Child as a Literacy Learner"

Record your observations now and before you come in for each parent-teacher interview. You and I will share our perceptions of your child as a literacy learner. By the end of kindergarten, the majority of children will exhibit most of the understandings and skills listed on the attached Observation Survey.

Sincerely,





Getting to Know Your Child

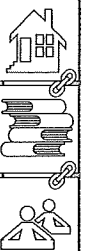
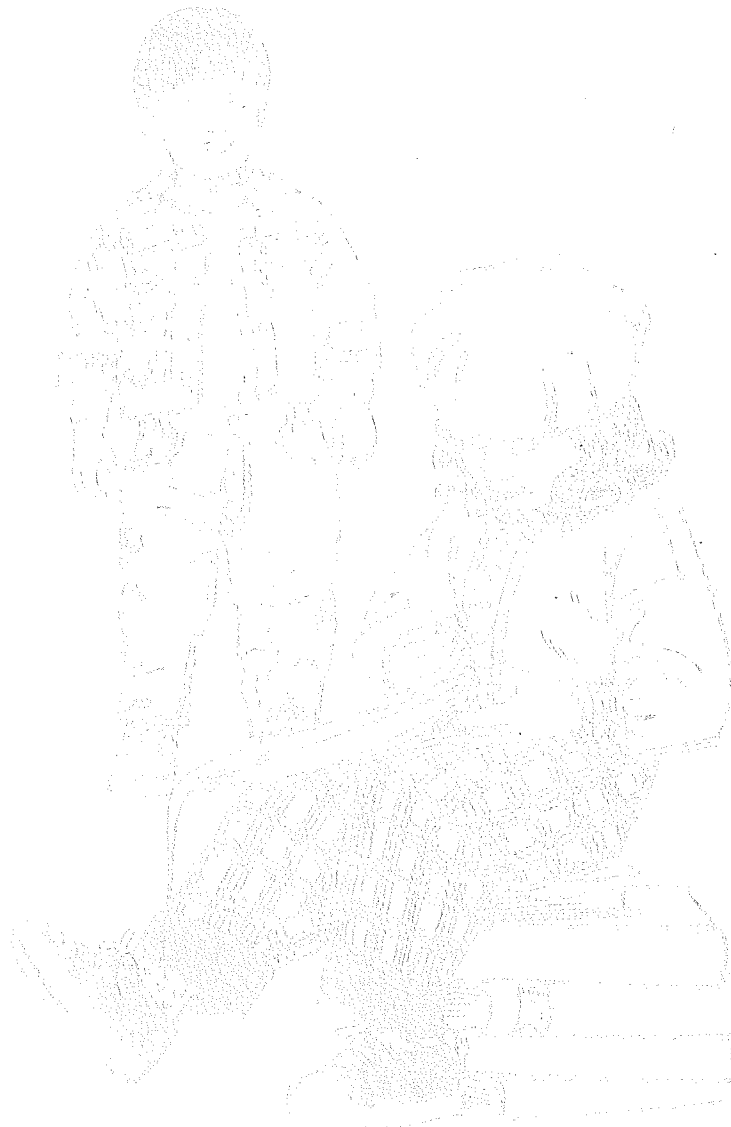
Dear Parents:

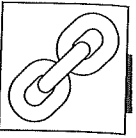
Date: _____

Kindergarten is a significant milestone for many students (and parents). It often represents a student's first formal schooling. In order to make this experience both valuable and enjoyable, we, as a school staff, would like to get to know your child. Please write us a letter about your child. You may choose to include family stories, likes, dislikes, strengths, challenges, fears, and interests. The more we know about your child, and the more we share, the better we will be able to support his or her learning.

We look forward to working with you and your child this year.

Sincerely,



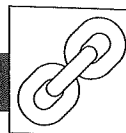


My Child as a Literacy Learner Observation Survey

Date: _____

My Child (Name): _____	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. speaks so others can understand him or her				
2. is able to follow oral directions				
3. likes to be read to				
4. knows how to open a book				
5. knows where to start reading on a page				
6. understands what is read aloud to him or her				
7. "reads" to me using pictures/story				
8. can follow along by pointing				
9. understands what a word/letter is				
10. recognizes and names most letters				
11. recognizes his or her name, some environmental print, other words				
12. can recognize a rhyme				
13. can create a rhyming word				
14. can blend the sounds in a word (e.g., c-at = cat)				
15. draws pictures and writes some letters				
16. can print his or her name				
17. knows the first/last sound in a word (e.g., c in cat; t in cat)				
18. can copy some words/letters				
19. writes using invented spelling (e.g., dg for dog; gt for gate)				
20. can talk about what he or she wrote				
21. chooses to look at books alone or with a partner				
22. chooses to "write" for fun or a purpose				
23. likes to "read" to me				
24. joins in group conversations				

Further Observations: _____



Kindergarten At-Home Reading

Dear Parents:

Date: _____

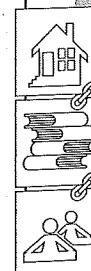
Please join the At-Home Reading Program for kindergarten students and their parents. This program takes 10–15 minutes of your time daily and helps your child develop skills in three major areas: print awareness, phonological awareness, and oral language. These three areas most significantly impact your child's emerging literacy skills.

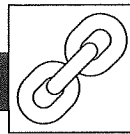
The At-Home Reading Program

1. You and your child select a book to share.
2. You read the book (fiction or nonfiction) to your child.
3. You discuss the text with your child.
4. Your child "judges" the book and circles the statement indicating whether it was very enjoyable, enjoyable, or not very enjoyable.
5. You scribe for your child or write together, sharing your child's feelings about the book.
6. You help your child read the response back to you.
7. You both sign the Kindergarten At-Home Reading sheet (see attached).
8. Your child returns the response sheet to me.

Enjoy the At-Home Reading Program!

Sincerely,







Kindergarten At-Home Reading


_____ and I (reading buddy) shared the book _____
(name of child) (name of book)

- We also:
- _____ discussed the book.
 - _____ drew a picture to go with the book.
 - _____ wrote about the book.
 - _____ read the text again.
 - _____ acted out part of the selection.

The book was (scribe for your child or write together):

Very enjoyable because: 

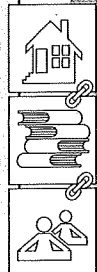
Enjoyable because: 

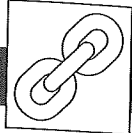
Not very enjoyable because: 

(Signature of child)

(Signature of reading buddy)

(Date)





Kindergarten Homework

The most important homework in kindergarten is reading together.

Reading to Your Child



- Try to make it a habit to read daily (10 minutes a day is better than 30 minutes every three days).
- Establish a regular reading time.
- Read also when your child asks you to.
- Make sure that your child can see the book easily.
- Before you start, read the title, look at the cover, and wonder together what the story will be about.
- Let your child pick the story often.
- You may point to each word or slide your finger under the text as you read.
- Make reading fun—use different expressions and character voices.
- Spend lots of time talking about the book—before, during, and after reading.
- Stop when your child indicates that he or she has had enough.
- Read and reread your child's favorite stories.
- Enjoy!

Reading with Your Child

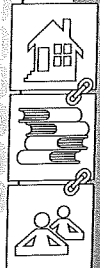


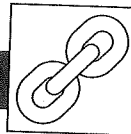
- Choose a book to read or reread. Pattern books (i.e., books with the same word pattern repeated throughout) work well.
- Hold the book together.
- Share pointing to the words as you read together.
- Echo read by reading one sentence, and then letting your child read the same sentence.
- Let your child take over when he or she is ready to try it on his or her own.
- Enjoy!

Reading by Your Child



- If the book is new to your child, go over the title and the cover and predict (wonder out loud) what the book will be about.
- If the book is familiar to your child, let him or her get right into the text by reading it to you.
- If your child gets stuck on a word, prompt her or him with one or more of the following:
 - Check the picture to help predict the word.
 - Try using the beginning letter(s)/ sound(s) to figure out the word.
 - Look to see if there are any parts of the word that you know.
 - Skip the word and read on to at least the end of the sentence. Can your child figure out the word now?
 - Ask what word will make sense.
- Don't let your child get frustrated by spending a long time trying to figure out the word. If he or she has tried unsuccessfully several times, tell him or her the word.
- Talk about the story:
 - What did you like?
 - What didn't you like?
 - Do you want to read it again?
- Praise your child's reading efforts.
- Enjoy!





Literacy on the Run

Make literacy a part of your busy day—while driving, shopping, walking

READING AND WRITING AROUND THE HOUSE

My Name

- Make your name with the letters on the refrigerator.

Read the Milk Carton

- Find the *m* on the milk carton.

Rhyming

- Can you make a word that rhymes with *house*?

Shopping

- Make the shopping list together.
- Ask what is the first sound in *milk*, *butter*, *lemons*.

Play "I Spy"

- I spy a person whose name starts with
- I spy a fruit that starts with *b* ...

On a Walk

- Look at the S-T-O-P sign. What does it say?

Read a License Plate

- My family's license plate begins with _____.
- Who can spot the first license plate with a letter *p*?

Sing the Alphabet Song

