

## Communication, Language, and Literacy

Communication, in its purest form, is neither the telephone nor the computer; it is the ability “to express oneself in such a way that one is readily and clearly understood.” Evolving technology: cell phones, instant messaging, email, and teleconferencing has seemingly propelled us into an age of telecommunication, one in which our messages can be instantaneously shared through speech, text, graphics, and video.

The ability to express oneself is displayed from the moment children are born. When infants cry, they are conveying a need arising from hunger, discomfort, pain, or distress. Parents and other caregivers are often soon able to detect exactly what the baby wants by the distinctive sound of the cry. Young babies may also communicate feelings of displeasure by hiccupping, yawning, stretching out their arms, grimacing, or even falling asleep.<sup>1</sup> As early as six weeks, babies begin to express their contentment by cooing, making squeals, gurgling, and even making vowel sounds such as “ah-ah.”<sup>2</sup> At around this same time, babies exhibit their first “real” smiles. Although parents often notice their baby smiling earlier – perhaps while sleeping or staring at a picture, those smiles are regarded as spontaneous, not requiring “the complex thought process of a social smile. One of the most special things about the social smile is that it opens up a whole new way of communicating with your baby.”<sup>3</sup>

This connection between baby, parents and/or caregiver sets the stage for the “dance” of communication, a dance that becomes increasingly intricate as very young children acquire language. Daniel J. Siegel, a leader in the field of attachment and parenting, has proposed the idea of “contingent communication,” in which the mind of one person joins the other. Basically, the child sends a need. The parent perceives the need, interprets the need, and responds promptly and sensitively to it. Babies learn that they can rely on their parents’ responsiveness, thereby forming a secure attachment to the parent. Research by Shonkoff and Phillips indicates that infants whose parents respond appropriately and consistently to their efforts to communicate are more advanced on virtually all assessments of developmental and cognitive status.<sup>4</sup> It has also been noted that mothers with securely attached children of preschool age tend to

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<sup>1</sup> Reinhartsen, D. & P. Pierce, P. (no date) Developing communication abilities.” In *Baby Power: A Guide for Families for Using Assistive Technology with their Infants and Toddlers*, ed. P. Pierce. Chapel Hill, NC: The Center for Literacy and Disabilities Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved 6/6/08 from [www2.edc.org/NCIP/LIBRARY/ec/Power\\_7.htm](http://www2.edc.org/NCIP/LIBRARY/ec/Power_7.htm)

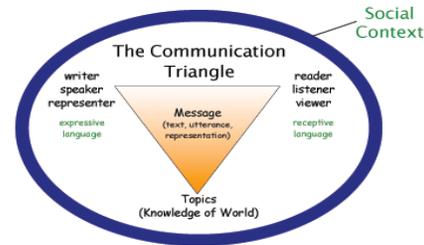
<sup>2</sup> Papalia, D. & S. Wendkos Olds. 1987. *A Child’s World: Infancy through Adolescence*. Fourth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

<sup>3</sup> *Smiling: What Experts Say*. Retrieved 6/6/08 from <http://family.go.com/parentpedia/baby/milestones-development/baby-smiling/>

<sup>4</sup> Shonkoff, J. and D. Phillips. 2000. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

read more and give more reading instruction than mothers with children who are less securely attached, again suggesting the interactive nature of communication and of language development.<sup>5,6</sup>

That language exists within a social context is not a new idea. In his book, *Closing the Circle: A Practical Guide to Implementing Literacy Reform, K-12*, author Sean Walmsley traces the roots of what is known as the “communication triangle” to Aristotle. The basic relationships among those who create and representers), those who receive and make sense of the topics or ideas themselves, and the actual text. social context that influences – in some cases,



traces the roots of what is known as communication triangle “represents express ideas (writers, speakers, and them (readers, listeners, and viewers), All of these interactions lie within a controls – these interactions.”<sup>7</sup>

The terms “expressive language” and “receptive communication triangle have long been used in the defined below), but the listing of “representer” and may be unexpected. To represent is to express ideas can be regarded a precursor to writing, but interestingly, writing is also one of the many forms of representing. Likewise, children “view” before they are able to read, yet the ability to make sense of what they observe will carry through as a necessary life-long skill in an increasingly visual world. That young children express themselves before knowing how to write, and acquire knowledge before knowing how to read convinces Walmsley that representing is indeed a critical and first component of expressive literacy, viewing a critical and first component of receptive literacy.<sup>8</sup>

If communication is the ability to express oneself, and language is one way in which to do so, what then, is literacy? Traditionally, literacy has meant the ability to read and write, but experts agree that it is much more than that. Since the mid-twenties when the concept of “reading readiness” was introduced, to the early 1970’s when noted educator and researcher, Marie Clay, challenged reading readiness with the new idea of “emergent literacy,” to Walmsley’s present-day argument that viewing and representing are critical components, literacy has come to include a continuum of those early behaviors that lead to actual reading and writing.

<sup>5</sup> Bus, A.G. and M.H. van Ijzendoorn. 1995. Attachment and early reading: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 149: 199-210.

<sup>6</sup> Bus, A.G. and M.H. van Ijzendoorn. 1988. Mother-child interactions, attachment and emergent literacy: A cross-sectional study. *Child Development* 59: 1262-1273.

<sup>7</sup> Walmsley, S. 2008. *Closing the Circle*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. pg. 7

<sup>8</sup> Walmsley, S. 2008. *Closing the Circle*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Much research confirms the validity of this model. Teale and Sulzby found that literacy development begins before children participate in formal education and other researchers have identified contributors to that development.<sup>9</sup> According to Logue, “nothing is more important [to developing literacy skills] than regular, daily experiences of face-to-face interactions – being read to, talked to, listened to, touched, and comforted.”<sup>10</sup> Studies by Purcell-Gates, McGee, Lomax & Head, and Neuman & Roskos found that interacting with print or seeing print on a day-to-day basis helps children learn about written language and reading, even if they do not already read.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> Nursery rhymes and rhyming, singing, and word games all promote linguistic awareness, which leads to phonemic awareness.<sup>14, 15</sup> Inventive spelling – when young children attempt to spell a word based on what they hear in the word – appears to Clarke and Ehri to be a step toward alphabetic knowledge.<sup>16, 17</sup>

These studies and many others over decades of research prompted the National Early Literacy Panel to identify characteristics of children, birth to age five, that were most closely linked to later literacy achievement: oral language development, phonological/phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, print knowledge, and invented spelling. Furthermore, the Panel recommended the inclusion of high-quality early language experiences as a means to enhance young children’s development.<sup>18</sup> The National Reading Council’s recommendations for promoting literacy development in young children also includes instruction designed to “stimulate verbal interaction, to enrich children’s vocabularies, to encourage talk about books, and to provide practice with the sound structure of words.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Teale, W. and E. Sulzby. 1986. *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation

<sup>10</sup> Logue, M.E. 2000. *Implications for Brain Development Research for Even Start Family Literacy Programs*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education.

<sup>11</sup> Purcell-Gates, V. 2000. Family literacy. In *Handbook of Reading Research*, eds. Kamil, M., P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr. Vol. III (pp. 853-870). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum

<sup>12</sup> McGee, L., R. Lomax, & M. Head. 1988. Young children’s written language knowledge: What environmental print and functional print reading reveals. *Journal of Reading Behavior* 20: 99-118.

<sup>13</sup> Neuman, S.B. & K. Roskos. 1993. Access to print for children of poverty: Differential effects of adult mediation and literacy-enriched play settings on environmental and functional print tasks. *American Educational Research Journal* 30: 95-122.

<sup>14</sup> Bryant, P.E., M. Maclean, L. Bradley, & J. Crossland. 1990. Rhyme and alliteration, phoneme alliteration, phoneme detection, and learning to read. *Developmental Psychology* 26: 429-438.

<sup>15</sup> Maclean, M., P. Bryant, & L. Bradley. 1987. Rhymes, nursery rhymes, and reading in early childhood.” *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* 33: 255-81.

<sup>16</sup> Clarke, L. 1988. Invented versus traditional spelling in first graders’ writings: Effects on learning to spell and read. *Research in the Teaching of English* 22: 281-309.

<sup>17</sup> Ehri, L. 1988. Movement in word reading and spelling: How spelling contributes to reading. In *Reading and Writing Connections*, ed. J. Mason & J. Newton. MA: Allyn & Bacon.

<sup>18</sup> International Reading Association. 2005. *Literacy Development in the Preschool Years: A Position Statement of the International Reading Association*. Newark, DE: Author. Available at [http://www.reading.org/downloads/positions/ps1066\\_preschool.pdf](http://www.reading.org/downloads/positions/ps1066_preschool.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Snow, C.E., M.S. Burns, & P. Griffin, eds. 1998. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Why the heavy emphasis on oral language skills? Research by Tabors and Dickinson shows language development is crucial in preparing pre-school age children for literacy and that word knowledge is closely linked to reading accomplishments.<sup>20</sup> The National Reading Panel credits oral vocabulary as “the key to learning to make the transition from oral to written forms” of communication.<sup>21</sup> From findings of numerous studies, Whitehurst and Lonigan inferred that “children who have larger vocabularies and greater understanding of spoken language have higher reading scores.” A study by Larrick of children with limited language exposure, and therefore fewer words in their vocabulary by school entry, revealed that they did not understand sequence of events basic to stories and had difficulty recalling and anticipating the sequence of events in simple stories.<sup>22</sup>

Before they enter school, children may know and use correctly as many as 32,000 words, most of which are learned indirectly by engaging in daily oral interaction (talking with parents and other caregivers, siblings, and peers), by listening to adults read aloud (bedtime stories), and by being actively involved with books (looking at and talking about books).<sup>23</sup> The quality, frequency, and nature of these interactions are influenced by a great number of factors, not the least of which is the socio-economic status of the family. Hart and Risely determined that an average child in a professional family accumulates experience with 45 million words in the first four years of life, compared to 13 million words for the child from a family receiving public assistance. This is a concrete example of how social context influences the interactions within the communication triangle and how, as suggested by Walmsley, the players can interact in ways that support – or inhibit – growth in expressive and receptive language.<sup>24</sup>

The connection between vocabulary and prior knowledge is especially intriguing. Drawing on background knowledge helps children understand new words; at the same time, new words serve as tools of access to knowledge of the world around and beyond them. This interrelatedness between vocabulary development and background knowledge suggests that what children already know is as important as the new words they acquire. Studies establishing a connection between vocabulary development and literacy achievement have already been mentioned; research on background knowledge and achievement also exists. Robert Marzano, author of *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*, cites seven different studies that confirm that “what students *already know* about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content.”<sup>25,26</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> Dickinson, D. & Tabors, P. 2001. *Beginning Literacy with Language*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes. pp 139-287

<sup>21</sup> National Reading Panel. Undated. Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction, Reports of the Subgroups. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. pg. 4-3. Available at [http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/report\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/upload/report_pdf.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Larrick, N. 1988. *Literacy Begins at Home*. Claremont, CA: Claremont Reading Conference

<sup>23</sup> Voyager U Reading Academy: NYS Reading Resource Center: [www.nysrrc.monroe.edu](http://www.nysrrc.monroe.edu) and [www.voyagerlearning.com](http://www.voyagerlearning.com)

<sup>24</sup> Walmsley, S. 2008. *Closing the Circle*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>25</sup> Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987; Bloom, 1976; Dochy, Segers, & Buehl, 1999; Tobia, 1994; Alexander, Kulikowich, & Schulze, 1994; Schiefele & Krapp, 1996; Tamir, 1996; and Boulanger, 1981

significant contribution that background knowledge plays in learning to read prompted the New York State Department of Education to include it in its implementation of *Reading First*, an intervention strategy that focuses on improving reading instruction. New York State guidelines for scientifically based reading instruction call for a block of systematic and explicit instruction that includes “activating and building background knowledge.”<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, word knowledge and background knowledge are key contributors to literacy and to communication, but how is such knowledge best cultivated? Again, the strategies are interrelated. Rare or unusual words can easily be introduced within the context of new experiences, which provide information for future ideas and thoughts. Intentionally engaging children in extended discourse – in meaningful conversation – about these experiences will benefit all children, but particularly those who don’t naturally interact in meaningful conversation in their day-to-day lives. Snow and Tabors, in their study of low-income elementary children who were experiencing reading difficulties, found that indirect activities, such as frequency of children’s outings with adults, amount of time spent interacting with adults, and other enrichment activities, were more closely related to literacy acquisition than direct activities such as helping with homework.<sup>28</sup>

It is perhaps of little surprise that these same activities can serve as tools of assessment. Conversing with students and observing their literacy behaviors are very real means of assessment that can, and should, be used in conjunction with scientific, evidence-based, standardized measures of achievement. In this way, assessment, as a process, can not only help inform policy makers and school districts on what works, but also fulfills its true intent of guiding instruction. This is keenly important in the preschool years, when each student arrives with very different experiences and backgrounds that affect their ability to learn. By knowing where students started, where they are now, and where they are going, teachers and other caregivers can determine how to best build literacy.

## Receptive Literacy

Receptive language, referred to above, is a component of the more encompassing term “receptive literacy” put forth by Walmsley. Receptive literacy is the ability to understand meaning that originates with others.<sup>29</sup> It is the taking in of information, whether by listening, viewing, or reading. In the first months of life, babies demonstrate receptive language skills when they respond to their mother’s voice. Toddlers often recognize logos and understand them to mean a favorite restaurant or activity. Pre-schoolers decipher

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<sup>26</sup> Marzano, R. 2004. *Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. pg. 1

<sup>27</sup> New York State Education Department. 2005. *New York State Guidelines for Scientifically Based Reading Instruction*. Retrieved July 2008 from [http://principalsacademy.monroe.edu/files/NYSGuidelinesReading1stInst ruct.pdf](http://principalsacademy.monroe.edu/files/NYSGuidelinesReading1stInst%20ruct.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Snow, C. and P. Tabors. 1996. *Intergenerational Transfer of Literacy*. Commissioned Paper for *Family Literacy: Directions in Research and Implications for Practice -- January 1996* National Symposium. (Available at [www.ed.gov/pubs/FamLit/transfer.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FamLit/transfer.html)).

<sup>29</sup> Walmsley, S. 2008. *Closing the Circle*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

messages from picture books, and are beginning to pay more attention to print. They may know some words and are starting to make letter-sound associations. As they mature, children are learning how to make sense of what they hear, what they see, and what they read.

A complementary sense of receptive language is the “mental store of words and phrases.”<sup>30</sup> As children are repeatedly exposed to a new word, they learn what the word means and how to use it. When this knowledge is securely captured, it is incorporated into the process of building background knowledge to understand more new words and to learn more about the world.

Young children understand more words than they are actually able to produce themselves, partially due to the context in which the message is being sent. In pretend play with food, for example, children may serve food to their adult “customers” who respond, “Oh yum! Doesn’t this food taste good? It’s so *delicious!*” While the child understands the connection between “delicious” and something that tastes good, he or she may not use this word until much later. By school age, children use approximately 2,500 words, in contrast to understanding 6,000 and responding to 25,000.<sup>31</sup>

### **Expressive Literacy**

The partner to receptive literacy is expressive literacy, or the ability to create and communicate meaning. If receptive literacy is the taking in of information, so then expressive literacy is the “output” of information through representing, speaking, and writing. As children develop, their ability to express ideas in each of these venues becomes increasingly refined.

Expressive literacy is perhaps easiest to observe through the distinct stages of writing development. Scribbling soon takes the direction of left to right; first letters appear; strings of letters suddenly turn into first “words,” words then look like they sound. Before long, and rather remarkably, children are expressing their ideas in conventional writing. Speaking is readily marked, from five-month-old babbling, to toddlers’ one-word utterances, to the ensuing explosion of words and phrases, all of which lead to complete sentences by kindergarten entry. Children also express their ideas through their speech.

As a form of expressive literacy, representing warrants further discussion. It may be thought of as what happens before children can speak or before they can write, but it is actually a life-long skill that becomes increasingly sophisticated. Eight-month-babies are representing when they wave bye-bye. Pre-schoolers are representing when they draw or scribble, work with clay, and play “fire-

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<sup>30</sup> Roskos, K.A., P.O. Tabors, & L.A. Lenhart. 2005. *Oral Language and Early Literacy in Preschool: Talking, Reading, and Writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

<sup>31</sup> Pierce, P. & A. Profio. 2006. From cooing to conversation to *The Carrot Seed*: Oral and written language connections.” In *Learning to Read the World: Language and Literacy in the First Three*, eds. Rosenkoetter, S. and J. Knapp-Philo. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three Press.

fighter.” Older children – fully able to express themselves through speech and writing – continue to represent when they build models, when they illustrate books, when they perform in a school play. At all ages, children communicate understanding through a variety of media.

As the building blocks of literacy– vocabulary, background knowledge, expressive and receptive language, phonological and phonemic awareness, oral expression, the alphabetic principle come together, children learn to view and represent, to listen and speak, to read and write. They become increasingly sophisticated in expressing themselves in ways that are readily and clearly understood. But, true to the communication triangle, this doesn’t come in isolation. Pre-school aged children also are becoming increasingly able to interpret and describe in their own words that which others have expressed, whether the moral of a story, the main point of an argument, the feeling of a poem, or the message of artwork. Pre-schoolers are, in fact, perfecting the dance of communication.

## Communication, Language, and Literacy

### LISTENING

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate that they recognize familiar sounds, understand spoken language, and listen purposefully.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child attends to sounds in language. (e.g., recognizes rhymes; hears alliteration; identifies initial sounds in words)
- Child is able to retell a story read to him/her. (e.g., dramatization; verbal retelling; creative movement)
- Child demonstrates the ability to sequence events after listening. (e.g., to a story; on a class trip; in the classroom)
- Child demonstrates he/she can understand and follow spoken directions.
- Child uses new vocabulary acquired through listening.
- Child demonstrates he/she listens attentively for a variety of purposes. (e.g., for enjoyment; to gain and share information; to perform a task; to learn what happened; to follow directions)

## **SPEAKING**

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate that they speak for a variety of purposes, using appropriate content and mechanics of spoken language.

### **Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child verbally participates in small or large group activities for storytelling, singing, or finger plays.
- Child uses language to communicate, and to negotiate rules, ideas, and plans for a variety of activities. (includes sign language)
- Child uses relevant or appropriate gestures to communicate ideas.
- Child uses language to express ideas, feelings, needs, and relationships.
- Child speaks clearly using volume, speed, sentence structure, and vocabulary for the message to be understood.
- Child speaks to persuade, express a point of view or opinion, and/or to give instructions.
- Child asks questions to clarify directions.
- Child chooses a variety of descriptive words to tell a story.
- Child demonstrates an expressive vocabulary (e.g., child shows increasing sophistication in choice of words).
- Child dictates simple stories and descriptions that express his/her intended meanings.
- Child participates in conversations one on one, in small or large groups, to get or provide an answer or learn something new.

## VIEWING

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate that they understand what they observe.

### **Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child makes sense of pictures and symbols in books and environment.
- Child identifies emotions by observing faces in pictures and faces of peers and adults.
- Child asks appropriate questions about visual text.
- Child recognizes that there are a variety of different formats for viewing and that they serve different purposes.
- Child uses electronic media for play, personal inquiry, and learning.
- Child makes inferences and draws conclusions based on information from visual media.
- Child identifies relevant and irrelevant information, pictures, and symbols related to a familiar topic.
- Child uses vocabulary relevant to visual media.

## REPRESENTING

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate their ability to express their ideas using a variety of media.

### **Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child uses visual media to represent an actual experience (e.g., field trip or other event).
- Child uses facial expressions, body language and gestures to express their ideas
- Child uses a variety of materials (e.g., art, print and non-print media, and dramatic play props) for creative expression and representation.
- Child creates and interprets a simple map that represents various aspects of the environment.
- Child uses existing objects to represent desired or imagined objects in play or other purposeful way (e.g., banana for a telephone).
- Child reviews and reflects on his/her own representations.

## WRITING

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate their ability to express their ideas using a variety of media.

### **Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child creates drawings, pictures, signs, or other graphics to represent a word or concept.
- Child demonstrates an understanding that writing conveys meaning.
- Child demonstrates an understanding that writing comes in different forms (e.g., lists, notes, labels, stories).
- Child dictates ideas to be written down by an adult.
- Child uses unconventional forms (marks, lines) of writing to convey a message.
- Child “writes” his/her name.
- Child applies alphabetic principle to what he/she writes using sound, invented spelling, and approximations.
- Child clusters letters to form “words,” “phrases,” or “sentences”.
- Child participates in shared writing experiences.
- Child writes and draws spontaneously to communicate meaning.
- Child shares writing and drawings with others.
- Child writes some uppercase and lowercase manuscript letters, especially those that appear in his/her own name.
- Child uses computers and other forms of technology to express his/her ideas.

## READING

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate motivation to read.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child shows an interest in a range of texts (e.g., alphabet books, stories, poetry, informational text, magazines, etc.).
- Child engages in “reading” (e.g., looks at pictures in book; pretends to read).
- Child brings books to adult and asks to be read to.
- Child initiates conversations about a book or print in the environment.
- Child wants to reread a book that has been read to them.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate phonological/ phonemic awareness (listen to and identify language sounds).

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child identifies initial sounds in words.
- Child recognizes words that rhyme in familiar games, songs, and stories.
- Child matches or produces words that rhyme.
- Child taps the number of syllables in a given word.
- Child counts or taps the number of words in a sentence.
- Child pronounces words, one sound at a time.
- Child identifies/recognizes alliteration.
- Child is able to blend individual sounds to say a word.
- Child manipulates phonemes.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate knowledge of the alphabetic principle (identifying letters and sounds).

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child demonstrates an understanding that letters in written words stand for sounds in spoken words.
- Child demonstrates the ability to recite the alphabet by rote memory.
- Child identifies letters of the alphabet.
- Child identifies sounds typically associated with letters that are frequently used.
- Child uses letter/sound correspondence to identify simple words.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate word recognition skills.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child identifies his/her own name.
- Child associates a printed word label with object. (e.g., blocks, chair, table, etc.).
- Child demonstrates awareness and beginning knowledge of environmental print (e.g., on, off, stop, McDonald's, etc.).
- Child notices and discusses letters and words in context of daily or meaningful activities.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate knowledge and awareness of book/print concepts.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child identifies the function and location of a book's front, back, top, bottom, and spine.
- Child demonstrates how to turn pages of a book properly.
- Child points to where to begin reading.
- Child recognizes that the purpose of print is to communicate spoken language or ideas.
- Child distinguishes between letters and words.
- Child distinguishes between print and pictures of printed words.
- Child recognizes that print is what is read in text.
- Child recognizes that a variety of print material is used for different purposes (e.g., store sign, newspaper menu, grocery list, telephone book, etc.).
- Child recognizes that text flows from left to right and top to bottom.
- Child identifies there are spaces between words.
- Child identifies the kinds of text being read (e.g., narrative or informational text).

**PreK Benchmark:** Children recognize informational text, stories, and poetry.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child interacts with a variety of common texts (e.g., story books, songs, informational books, poetry)
- Child distinguishes between informational texts (e.g. newspaper report, book about butterflies), fiction (e.g. folk and fairy tales; stories, realistic fiction) and poetry (e.g., finger plays, nursery rhymes, etc.) with assistance.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate background knowledge and vocabulary skills.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child correctly identifies meanings of words in read-alouds, in conversation, and descriptions of everyday items in the world around them (e.g., faucet, school bus, and umbrella).
- Child correctly identifies words related to pictures (e.g., Show me the white dog.).
- Child makes use of new vocabulary in an appropriate manner.
- Child uses strategies to figure out word meanings (e.g., looks at pictures, asks someone, uses context clues).
- Child uses previous experiences and acquired vocabulary to demonstrate a bigger understanding of the world around them (direct observation, field trips, family activities) and the world beyond them (text, media, social interactions).

**PreK Benchmark:** Children demonstrate comprehension of printed material.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child identifies meaning and purposes of common signs and symbols (e.g., pictures, street signs, icons on computer, labels, brand names).
- Child makes predictions and confirms them with textual evidence.
- Child retells a story from a read-aloud attending to the main characters, sequence of events, and main ideas.
- Child understands big ideas from read alouds.
- Child identifies facts and concepts from informational text read aloud.
- Child relates ideas in read-alouds to life experiences and/or other texts.
- Child uses illustrations/text in read-alouds to ask and answer open ended questions.

**PreK Benchmark:** Children engage in the discussion about authors and illustrators.

**Benchmark Indicators:**

- Child identifies the author or illustrator of a book (i.e. knows where to locate the names, recognizes them from books he is familiar with.)
- Child distinguishes between the roles of author and illustrator.
- Child selects books based upon author or illustrator by recognizing characters, or illustrator's style of drawing.
- Child demonstrates knowledge of authors and illustrators in class discussions, answering and asking relevant questions.