



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PROMOTING EARLY LITERACY

WHAT YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW IN
KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 3



BUILDING BLOCKS OF READING AND WRITING

- Build spoken language by talking and listening
- Understanding print and books
- Understanding the sounds of spoken language and meaning (*phonological awareness*)
- Learning letters of the alphabet
- Reading with and for you or to themselves
- Use of letter-sound relationships (*phonics*) and recognize words when they see them
- Spell and write
- Develop the ability to read quickly and naturally (*fluency*)
- Learn new words to build their knowledge of word meanings (*vocabulary*)
- Build their knowledge of the world
- Understanding what they read (*comprehension*)



THE ALPHABET

- Recognizes the shapes and names of all the letters in the alphabet (both uppercase and lowercase letters)
- Writes many uppercase and lowercase letters on his/her own

SOUNDS IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- Understands that spoken words are made up of separate sounds
- Recognizes and makes rhymes
- Identifies words that have the same beginning sound
- Puts together, or blends, spoken sounds into simple words

PHONICS AND WORD RECOGNITION

- Knows a number of letter-sound relationships
- Understands that the order of letters in a written word represents the order of sounds in a spoken word
- Recognizes some common words on sight, such as *a, the, I, said, your, is, and are*

KINDERGARTEN – WHAT TO DO AT HOME

TALK OFTEN WITH YOUR CHILD

- When you eat together, shop for groceries, walk or drive to school
- Getting ready for school ask him/her stories and poems he/she is reading and what projects he/she is doing at school
- Ask about friends and classmates
- Encourage him/her to talk, and not just give “yes” or “no” answers
- Have your child use their imagination to tell stories or fairytales
- Talk about family photographs
- Listen to his/her questions patiently and answer patiently
- Pay close attention to the amount of Television or games your child watches/plays

SHOW HIM/HER HOW BOOKS AND PRINT WORK

- Have your child point out the front and back covers and title
- Have him/her make connections between print and pictures as you read

FOCUS HIS/HER ATTENTION ON SOUNDS OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- Sing or say nursery rhymes and songs
- Play word games
- Read a story or poem and ask your child to listen for words that begin with the same sound
- Stop and say simple words

HAVE YOUR CHILD IDENTIFY AND NAME THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET

- Point out letters and have your child name them
- Make an alphabet book with your child

SHOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LETTERS AND SOUNDS

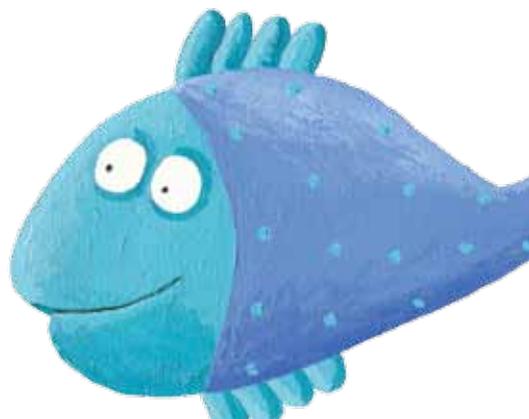
- Point out labels, boxes, newspapers, and signs
- Listen to your child read words

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO SPELL AND WRITE

- Write notes, emails, and letters to family
- Create their own picture book

BUILDING VOCABULARY, KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD, AND COMPREHENSION WITH YOUR CHILD

- While reading with your child, pause from time to time asking him/her about the meaning of the book
- Speak your thought process out loud “This reminds me of ...”



WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF KINDERGARTEN

BOOKS AND PRINT

- Parts of a book and how books are held and read
- Identifies a book's title and understands what authors and illustrators do
- Follows print from left to right and from top to bottom of a page when stories are read aloud
- Understands the relationship between print and pictures
- Understands that the message of most books is in the print and not the pictures

THE ALPHABET

- Recognizes the shapes and names of all the letters in the alphabet (both upper-case and lowercase letters)
- Writes many uppercase and lowercase letters on his/her own

SOUNDS IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- Understands that spoken words are made up of separate sounds
- Recognizes and makes rhymes
- Identifies words that have the same beginning sound
- Puts together, or blends, spoken sounds into simple words
- Phonics and word Recognition
- Knows a number of letter-sound relationships
- Understands that the order of letters in a written word represents the order of sounds in a spoken word

- Recognizes some common words on sight, such as a, the, I, said, your, is, and are

READING

- Listens carefully to books read aloud
- Asks and answers questions about stories
- Uses what he/she already knows to help him/her understand a story
- Retells and/or acts out stories
- Knows the difference between “made-up” (fiction) and “real” (nonfiction) books and the difference between stories and poems

SPELLING AND WRITING

- Uses phonemic awareness and letter knowledge to spell and write words
- Begins to spell some words correctly
- Writes his/her own first name and last name and the first names of some friends, classmates, or family members
- Writes some letters and words as they are said to him/her



WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF KINDERGARTEN

VOCABULARY AND KNOWLEDGE OF WORDS

- Plays with and is curious about words and language
- Uses new words in his/her own speech
- Knows and uses words that are important to school work, such as the names for colors, shapes, and numbers
- Knows and uses words that are important to daily life, such as, street names and addresses and names for community workers

PARENT TALK

“Why didn’t the dog just run away?”

“Where did the boy live?”

“What kind of eyes did the monster have?”

“How many words can you say that rhyme with fox? With bill?”

“The dog is big. BIG. Can you say the sounds in big? Now can you write the letters for the sounds? Good. Now read the word to me.”



1ST GRADE – WHAT TO DO AT HOME

SUPPORT WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING IN SCHOOL

- Listen to him/her read books from school
- Say the sounds of letters and ask him/her to write the letters that represent the sound
- Have your child point out the letter-sound relationship
- Play word games

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO SPELL AND WRITE

- Write notes, emails, and letters to family
- Create their own picture book

BUILDING VOCABULARY, KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD, AND COMPREHENSION WITH YOUR CHILD

- While reading with your child, pause from time to time asking him/her about the meaning of the book

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 1ST GRADE CLASSROOMS

- Develop talking and listening abilities
- Talking about books and print
- Teaching of the alphabet
- Teaching Phonemic Awareness (*example below*)
- Teaching phonics and word recognition
- Developing spelling and writing
- Building vocabulary and knowledge of the world
- Building Comprehension

AWARENESS ACTIVITIES THAT YOU MAY SEE IN FIRST GRADE CLASSROOMS

PHONEME DELETION: Children recognize the word that remains when you take away a phoneme.

TEACHER: What is space without the /s/?

CHILDREN: space without the /s/ is pace.

PHONEME ADDITION: Children make a new word by adding a phoneme to the word

TEACHER: What word do you have if you add /p/ to the beginning of lace?

CHILDREN: Place.

PHONEME SUBSTITUTION: Children substitute one phoneme for another to make a new word.

TEACHER: The word is rag. Change /g/ to /n/. What is the new word?

CHILDREN: Ran.



WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 1ST GRADE

BOOKS AND PRINT

- Knows the difference between letters and words
- Knows that there are spaces between words in print
- Knows that print represents spoken language and contains meaning
- Knows some of the parts of print, such as the beginning and ending of sentences, where paragraphs begin and end, and different punctuation marks
- Begins to understand why people read - to learn and enjoy

THE ALPHABET

- Can recognize and name all of the letters of the alphabet

SOUNDS IN SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- Can count the number of syllables in a word
- Can put together and break apart the sounds of most one-syllable words

PHONICS AND WORD RECOGNITION

- Can show how spoken words are represented by written letters that are arranged in a specific order
- Can read one-syllable words using what he/she knows about phonics
- Uses phonics to sound out words he/she doesn't know

- Can recognize some irregularly spelled words, such as have, said, you, and are
- Knows the sound letter relationship of all letters of the alphabet

READING

- Reads aloud first-grade books and understands what they mean
- Can tell when he/she is having problems understanding what he/she is reading
- Reads and understands simple written instructions
- Predicts what will happen next in a story
- Discusses what he/she already knows about topics of books he/she is reading
- Can ask questions (how, why, what if?) about books he/she is reading
- Can describe, in his/her own words, what he/she has learned from a book he/she is reading
- Can give a reason for why he/she is reading a book (to be entertained, to follow directions, to learn about a non-fiction topic, for example)

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 1ST GRADE

SPELLING AND WRITING

- Uses invented (or developmental) spelling to try to spell words on his/her own
- Understands that there is a correct way to spell words
- Uses simple punctuation marks and capital letters
- Writes for different purposes - stories, explanations, letters, lists
- Writes things for others to read (by thinking of ideas, writing draft copies, and revising drafts)

VOCABULARY

- Uses language with more control (such as speaking in complete sentences)
- Understands that the language used in school is more formal than the language used at home and with friends
- Talks about the meaning of words and uses new words when he/she speaks and writes
- Begins to see that some words mean the same thing (synonyms) some words have opposite meanings (antonyms)
- Begins to recognize that words play different roles in sentences (for example, some words - nouns - name things and some words - verbs - show action)



WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 2ND GRADE

PHONICS AND WORD RECOGNITION

- Can read a large number of regularly spelled one- and two-syllable words
- Figures out how to read a large number of words with more than two syllables
- Uses knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words
- Accurately reads many sight words

READING

- Reads and understands a variety of second grade level fiction and nonfiction books
- Knows how to read for specific purposes and to seek answers to specific questions
- Answers “how,” “why,” and “what-if” questions
- Interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs
- Recalls information, main ideas, and details after reading
- Compares and connects information read in different books and articles
- Takes part in creative responses to stories, such as dramatizations of stories and oral presentations

SPELLING AND WRITING

- Pays attention to how words are spelled
- Correctly spells words he/she has studied
- Spells a word the way it sounds if he/she doesn’t know how to spell it
- Writes for many different purposes
- Writes different types of compositions (example, stories, reports, and letters)
- Makes good judgments about what to include in his/her writing
- Takes part in writing conferences and then revises and edits what he/she has written
- Pays attention to the mechanics of writing (example, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) in the final versions of compositions

VOCABULARY

- Wants to learn new words and share those words at school and home
- Uses clues from the context to figure out what words mean
- Uses knowledge of words parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words, to figure out word meanings
- Increases vocabulary through the use of synonyms and antonyms



WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 2ND GRADE

VOCABULARY CONTINUED

- Can use different parts of speech correctly, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- Learns more new words through independent reading
- Explores and investigates topics of interest on his/her own

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

In second and third grade classrooms, effective instruction will include both specific word instruction and instruction in word learning strategies.

SPECIFIC WORD INSTRUCTION

- Teachers teach specific words from selections the students are about to read. These words are important for the students to know in order to understand what they will read.
- Teachers use the new words over an extended period of time.
- The children see, hear, and work with the words in many ways and in various contexts.

WORD LEARNING STRATEGIES

- Teachers show children how to use the dictionary and thesaurus to learn about the meanings of words. Teachers show how some words have more than one definition, and they teach children how to find the right definition for their particular situation.
- Teachers teach children how to use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and root words) to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- Teachers provide instruction in how to use the meanings of known words in a reading selection (context) to figure out the meaning of unknown words.



2ND AND 3RD GRADE – WHAT TO DO AT HOME

USE READING OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP FLUENCY

- Listen to your child read books that he has brought home from school
- If your child is not a fluent reader, (he/she reads slowly and makes lots of mistakes), ask him/her to reread a paragraph or page a few times

FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR CHILD TO SPELL AND WRITE

- Encourage your child to write often - example, letters and thank you notes to relatives and friends, simple stories, emails, and items for the grocery list
- Help your child learn the correct spelling of words

FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP VOCABULARY, KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD, AND COMPREHENSION

- Talk about new words that your child has read or heard
- Help your child use the dictionary or thesaurus to check on the meanings of new words she reads or hears
- Help your child become aware of prefixes, suffixes, and root words
- Talk about how a book connects to real world events

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 2ND AND 3RD GRADE CLASSROOMS

- Promoting reading accuracy
- Building fluency
- Teaching spelling and writing
- Developing vocabulary and knowledge of the world
- Increasing comprehension



PARENT TALK

*Read a line from a book, such as this line from Eric Carle’s **Pancakes, Pancakes!** “Take a sickle and cut as much wheat as the donkey can carry.” Then ask a question, such as “Look at the picture of Jack cutting the wheat. What is he doing? That’s right, it’s a sickle. A sickle is a tool for cutting wheat and other kinds of grain.”*

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 3RD GRADE

PHONICS AND WORD RECOGNITION

- Use phonics knowledge and word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes) to figure out how to pronounce words he/she doesn't recognize

READING

- Reads with fluency
- Reads a variety of third grade level texts (example, story books, informational books, magazine articles, computer screens) with fluency and comprehension
- Reads longer stories and chapter books independently
- Summarizes major points from both fiction and nonfiction books
- Identifies and then discusses specific words or phrases that interfere with comprehension
- Discusses the themes or messages of stories Asks "how," "why," and "what if" questions
- Distinguishes cause from effect, fact from opinion, and main ideas from supporting details
- Uses information gathered and his/her own reasoning to evaluate the explanations and opinions he/she reads about
- Understands and reads graphics and charts
- Uses context clues to get meaning from what he/she reads

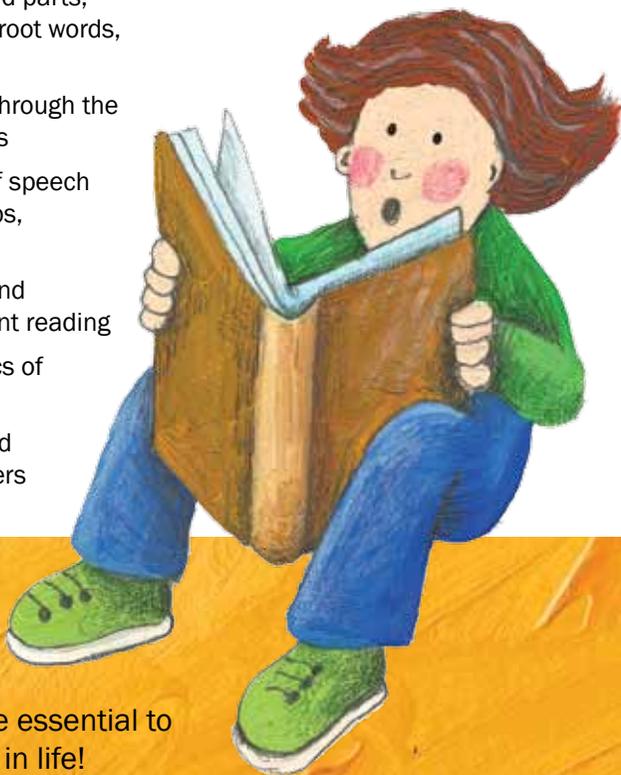
SPELLING AND WRITING

- Correctly spells previously studied words
- Independently reviews his/her own written work for errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
- Begins to use literary words and sentences in his/her writing, such as figurative language
- Combines information in compositions from a variety of sources, including books, articles, and computer information
- With assistance from teachers and classmates, edits and revises his/her compositions to make them easier to read and understand
- With assistance from teachers and classmates, edits and revises his/her written work
- Discusses his/her own writing with other children and responds helpfully to the writing of other children

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO BY THE END OF 3RD GRADE

VOCABULARY

- Wants to learn and share new words at school and home
- Uses clues from context to figure out word meanings
- Uses his/her knowledge of word parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words, to figure out word meanings
- Increases his/her vocabulary through the use of synonyms and antonyms
- Is able to use different parts of speech correctly, including nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs
- Develops his/her vocabulary and knowledge through independent reading
- Explores and investigates topics of interest on his/her own
- Uses a variety of sources to find information, including computers



REMEMBER:

Good reading skills are essential to success in school and in life!

Take time to enjoy reading to, or with, your child every day.

Your interest in reading sends a powerful message to your child:
READING IS IMPORTANT!

HELPFUL TERMS

ALPHABETIC KNOWLEDGE - knowing the names and shapes of letters of the alphabet

ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE - the understanding that written letters represent sound. I.E. the word big has three sounds and three letters

BIG BOOKS - oversized books that allow for the sharing of print and illustrations with a group of children

BLENDING - putting together individual sounds to make spoken words

COMPREHENSION - the ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read

DECODABLE BOOKS - books that are made up of words that contain only the letter-sound relationships that the children are learning, along with a few words that are taught as sight words

DECODE - the ability to recognize and read words by translating the letters into speech sounds to determine the word's pronunciation and meaning

DEVELOPMENTAL SPELLING - the use of letter-sound relationship information to attempt to write words

EMERGENT LITERACY - the view that literacy learning begins at birth and is encouraged through participation with adults in meaningful reading and writing activities

ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT - print that is a part of everyday life, such as signs, billboards, labels, and business logos

EXPERIMENTAL WRITING - efforts by young children to experiment with writing by creating pretend and real letters and by organizing scribbles and marks on paper

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION - direct, structured, systematic teaching of a skill-set

FLUENCY - the ability to read text accurately and quickly and with expression and comprehension

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS - diagrams that visually represent the organization and relationships of ideas in a text

INVENTED SPELLING - see developmental spelling

IRREGULAR WORDS - frequently used words that don't follow the letter-sound relationship rules that children are learning

LEVELED BOOKS - books that have been assigned a particular level intended to indicate how difficult the books is for children to read

LITERACY - includes all the activities involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and appreciating both spoken and written language

PHONEMES - the smallest parts of spoken language that combine to form words. I.E. the word hit is made up of three phonemes (/h/ /i/ /t/) and differs by one phoneme from the words pit, hip, and hot

PHONEMIC AWARENESS - the ability to hear and identify the individual sounds in spoken words

PHONICS - the relationship between the sounds of spoken words and the individual letters or groups of letters that represent those sounds in written words

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS - the understanding that spoken language is made up of individual and separate sounds

PREDICTABLE BOOKS - books that have repeated words or sentences, rhymes, or other patterns

PREFIX - a word part such as re-, un-, or pre- that is added to the beginning of a root word to form a new word with a new meaning

PRETEND READING - children's attempts to "read" a book before they have learned to read

PRINT AWARENESS - knowing about print and books and how they are used

ROOT WORD - a word or word part to which a prefix or suffix is added

SEGMENTATION - taking spoken words apart sound by sound

SIGHT WORDS - words that a reader recognizes without having to sound them out. Some sight words are "irregular," or have letter-sound relationships that are uncommon. I.E. you, are, have, and said

SUFFIX - a word part such as -ness, -able, or -er that is added to the end of a root word to form a new word with a new meaning

SYLLABLE - a word part that contains a vowel or, in spoken language, a vowel sound (e-vent, news-pa-per, pret-ty)

VOCABULARY - the words we must know in order to communicate effectively. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.

WORD WALLS - word-study and vocabulary words that are posted on the classroom wall so all children can easily see them

WORD RECOGNITION - the ability to identify printed words and to translate them into their corresponding sounds quickly and accurately so as to figure out their meanings

CUT OUT
BOOKMARK ►
TO START
YOUR
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