

# Listening and Spoken Language as Building Blocks for Later Literacy

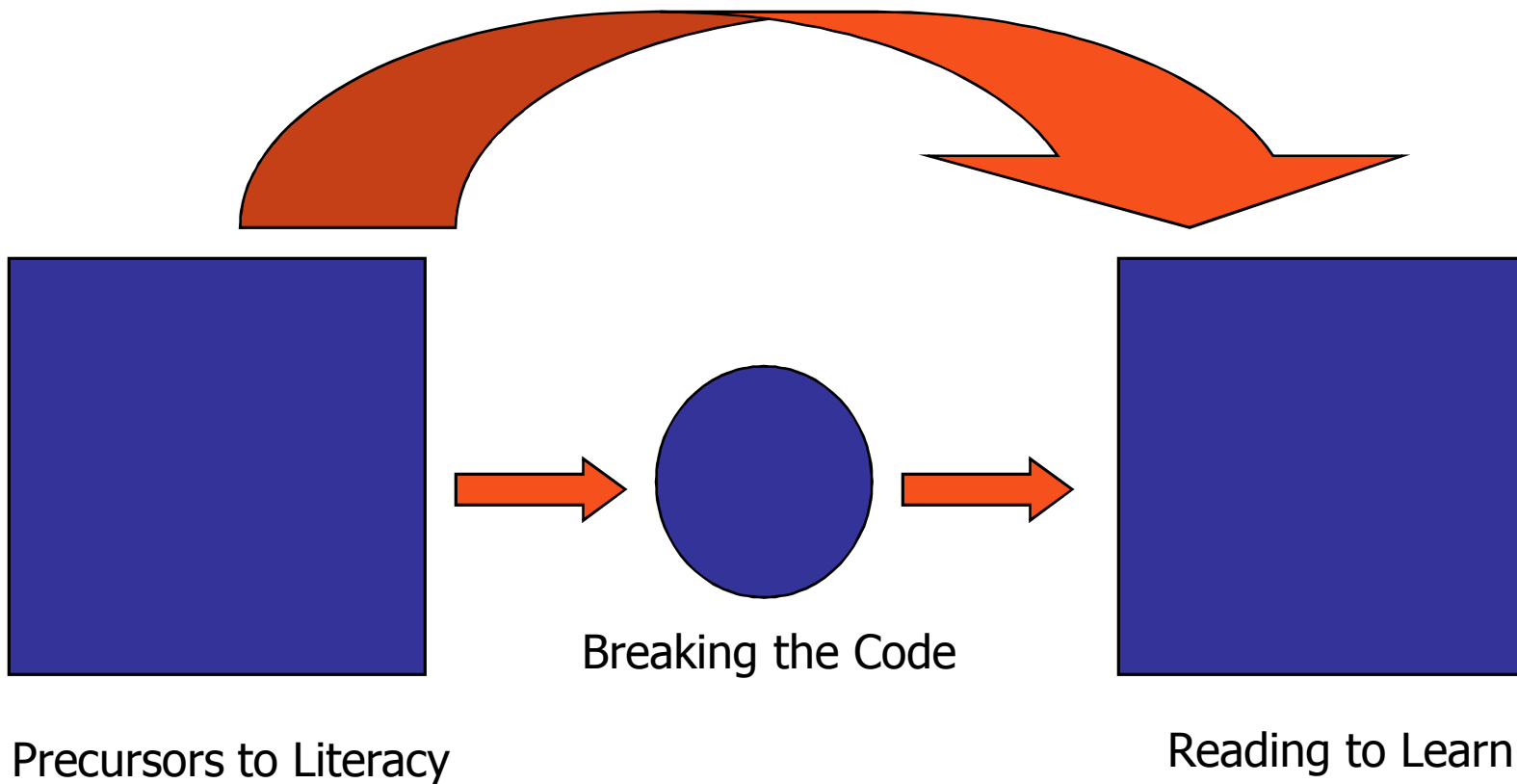
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# Conceptualizing Reading Development in Three Stages



# Setting the Stage for Reading Achievement

- There is much work that is done prior to formal reading instruction that will influence later reading achievement
  - Language competence is a good predictor of later reading achievement,
    - developing a rich language base can contribute directly to reading with comprehension
  - Developing thinking skills that will be required in reading with comprehension before the introduction of print
  - Building schemata through plentiful world experiences

# Listening and Talking

- Children with auditory access have the potential to learn language in a manner more similar to their hearing agemates
- Language competence sets the stage for success in reading and school subjects

# Oral Language as a Building Block for Literacy

- Listening and talking are the sensory partners of reading and writing
  - Listening and reading are subsets of receptive language ability
  - Talking and writing are subsets of expressive language ability

# Skills Necessary to Become a Good Reader

- Ability to decode text
  - Match sounds with letter symbols
- Ability to read fluently
  - A function of decoding accuracy, text difficulty and general language ability
- Ability to *comprehend* what is written
  - Retrieving known vocabulary, anticipating storyline based on familiarity with topic, handling complex grammar

McGuinness, 2004

# Language Comprehension as a Predictor of Reading Achievement

- Performance on a reading comprehension measure can be predicted with 50% accuracy from a language comprehension measure vs. 10% from a decoding measure
- Combining the two allows for predicting reading comprehension ability with 70% accuracy

McGuinness, 2004

# Setting the Stage for Reading Achievement

- Language Comprehension involves
  - World knowledge
  - Understanding of time, sequence of events
  - Understanding causal relationships
  - Ability to make inferences, predictions
  - Taking another's point of view
  - Vocabulary



# Background/World Knowledge

- The experiences that a child has build his concept of
  - objects, equipment, people encountered in a particular situation and the vocabulary used to describe them
  - communication patterns particular to the situation
  - expectations for behavior in that situation/experience
- Experiences can be direct (field trips, museums, activities) or indirect (pictures, books, movies)

# Understanding Time Sequence & Causality

- Understanding the concepts of time, sequence and causality begins with predictable life events
- Time becomes very specifically coded to indicate point in time, sequence, duration, frequency, and speed
- A child's concept of action/reaction evolves into "because", "so that", "if-then"

# Making Predictions and Inferences

- As routine events and play contribute to comprehension of cause and effect, children begin to predict consequences of actions
- Expanding comprehension of time, sequence and possibility are coded by words such as “what if,” “I think,” “who knows,” “it could be,” “we might,” “but then”
- Combining world knowledge with predictable events allows for the development of inference skills

# Taking Another's Point of View

- From an early age, children monitor emotion/intention through body language, facial expression and tone of voice (“no, no”)
- Around age 3, children begin to describe events and experiences that happen to others
- In the preschool years, understanding of emotion words matures and is applied to others: “sad,” “angry,” “disappointed,” “sorry,” “nervous”

# Characteristics of Early Vocabulary

- Includes receptive and expressive forms
- Can be adult-based or idiosyncratic
- Has referential stability (imitative or spontaneous)
- Has phonetic stability

(Owens, 2007)

# Parental Word Choice

- Lexical levels include:
  - Super-ordinate = furniture
  - Basic = chair
  - Subordinate = rocker
- Parents show a preference for the basic level as the most useful level of categorization for a child

# Breadth of the Lexicon

- Degree of variety of words that one has:
  - Different functions (adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech)
  - Tier 2 lexical items (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2002)
    - “large” for big
    - “astonished” for surprised
    - “parched” for thirsty

# Depth of the Lexicon

- Degree of understanding of lexical items:
  - the ability to think about words—metalinguistic ability
    - words are arbitrary
  - multiple meanings of words
    - “run”, “hit”, “drop”, “show”
  - Developing in-depth understanding of abstract concepts represented by words such as “freedom”, “courage”, “love”



# Prerequisites for Learning New Vocabulary

- A good environment for listening
- Experiences that provide the opportunity to build the lexicon
  - Experiences don't necessarily need to be direct in order to provide opportunity for new word learning
- Multiple contexts to broaden the meanings associated with various words
- A language expert to help the child access new concepts and the words to represent them and “file” the word in the appropriate place in the vocabulary network for later retrieval

# Including Parents in Book Sharing & Reading

# Begin with Book Sharing

- Use the first time a child is introduced to a particular book to “share” it at his pace
- Capitalize on what the child is interested in
- Don’t worry about “reading” the text or even looking at every page

# Strategies for Book Sharing

- Read book title and guess what the book might be about based on title and cover
- Let the child control the pace of the activity
- Describe pictures and interesting details; avoid testing questions
- Make comments to encourage discussion, (e.g. “The bear is playing with his toes”)
- Use an interesting voice to engage the child
- Make connections between the new book and the child’s experiences or other books

# Book Reading

- Benefits of reading aloud:
  - Introducing the mechanics of reading
  - Building vocabulary and world knowledge
  - Exposing them to richer language patterns than spoken language
  - Developing familiarity of story structure
  - Emphasizing that reading is pleasurable

# Introducing the Mechanics of Reading

- Books are opened and pages are turned from right to left
- Sentences are read from top to bottom and left to right
- A reader continues with the next line or the next page when the end of a line of text is reached

# Building Vocabulary

- Books often use more varied vocabulary than is used in spoken language
- Tier 2 lexical items are more often used
- Rhyming patterns and other word play are natural complements to illustrated text

# Building World Knowledge

- Storybooks expose children to a range of experiences and cultures with which they may not have come in contact in daily life
- Illustrations provide a jumping-off point for discussions about things outside of a child's direct experience



# Exposing Children to Rich Language Patterns

- Storybooks are often written with more complex sentence structures than we use in talking to children
  - greater use of expanded phrases
  - greater use of embedded clauses
- Alternate sentence compositions are used in print whereas speakers tend to stick with one construction
- Grammar is more often correct
  - fewer run on sentences
  - more specific references

# Building Familiarity with Story Structure

- Books have titles that give clues to or summarize the main ideas of the story
- Stories have characters that have different traits and personalities
- Each story has a setting (time and place)
- Typically, action revolves around conflict which is resolved before the story ends
- Language is used to describe these features and create a “mood” for the story

# Emphasizing that Reading is Pleasurable

- Carving out sacred time for reading at home or school sends the message that reading is valued and enjoyed
- Reading aloud while cuddling in bed or sitting with the child in our laps associates reading with positive emotion
- Modeling reading as a worthwhile activity encourages children to view it in this way

# Benefits of Repeated Reading

(Sulzby & Teale, 1991 )

- Multiple exposures to a favorite story set the stage for later storybook reading
  - Repeated reading allows for frequent pairing of the auditory and print representations of a story to reinforce the concept that print makes sense
  - Rereading familiar stories is complemented by growing interpretation of picture cues
  - Self-taught readers report “teaching themselves to read from favorite storybooks”

# Final Thoughts

- It is never too early to begin building literacy skills
- Parents who do not have a “script” for reading at home need intentional guidance on the “how to” of book sharing and book reading
- Abundant experiences and an exuberant vocabulary contribute greatly to later ability to read with comprehension

# Works Cited

- Beck, I. MeKeown, M. & Kucan, L. (2002), *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Guilford Press.
- McGuinness, D. (2004). *Growing a Reader from Birth: Your Child's Path from Language to Literacy*. W.W. Norton & Co.
- Owens, R. *Language Development : An Introduction*. (2007). Allyn & Bacon.
- Sulzby, Elisabeth, and Teale, William H. (1991). Emergent Literacy. In *Handbook of Reading Research*, ed. Rebecca Barr, Michael L. Kamil, Peter Mosenthal, and P. David Pearson. New York: Longman.

# Free Parent Resource

- Helping Your Child Become a Reader

[www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html)