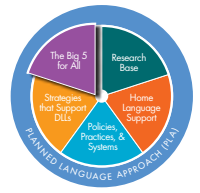


BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS



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INTRODUCTION TO BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

Young children start developing book knowledge and print concepts long before they can read. They learn about the written forms of the language or languages that adults share with them. Book knowledge is the understanding of how books and print work, like how to turn the pages of a book. Print awareness is the understanding that print is speech written down.⁵ Young children use book knowledge and print awareness when they

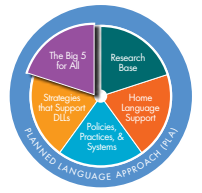
- turn to look at and touch books that are being read to them;
- notice and talk about print in the environment—signs, symbols, and logos—even before they can read them;
- enjoy books and other experiences with print;
- ask to be read to (from new books or from the same book over and over);
- look at books that reflect their languages and cultures;
- memorize parts of stories;
- pretend to read either silently or aloud; and
- participate in conversations about the books they have heard.

Different languages have different written forms and conventions. Book knowledge and print concepts that children develop in any language support children's book knowledge and print concepts in English. So, it is important for teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors to learn about the written languages families use. Encourage adults to support book knowledge and print concepts in home languages as well as English. When adults share books and talk about print (in any language), children learn that print is meaningful and that reading together can be fun.



BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPT FOR CHILDREN AGES BIRTH TO FIVE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Understanding that print is speech written down⁵
- Learning the various purposes of print
 - Communicating with others
 - Finding information
 - Recording our ideas (documentation)
 - Providing pleasure or entertainment
- Recognizing common signs, symbols, and logos
- Having experiences with different types of print materials, such as books, pamphlets, lists, letters, journals, etc.



- Knowing how to use books appropriately, including how to hold books, turn pages, etc.
- Asking and answering questions about what is read during shared reading and other experiences with print
- Identifying basic story elements, such as characters, sequence, main events, and setting
- Discussing the characters and events in stories, making predictions, and retelling the story
- Understanding that some books provide information rather than tell a story
- Enjoying books and other experiences with print, having favorite books, and asking adults to re-read favorite books
- Pretending to read books (emergent reading)

Just like the other Big 5 topics, book knowledge and print concepts should be part of the curriculum— supported every day, throughout the day. These key literacy skills are addressed in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, which is described fully beginning on page 4. Education staff can plan experiences or capitalize on teachable moments to help children develop book knowledge and learn about print concepts. Staff also support families as they promote book knowledge and print concepts in a home language, if it has a written form. Professional development opportunities should help staff build children’s knowledge and engage families. In other words, supporting book knowledge and print concepts is part of a coordinated approach across the whole program to help each child learn about books and print in English and the child’s home language.

“Dual language learner means a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language” Head Start Program Performance Standards, Part 1305 - &1305 2 Terms

A coordinated approach also ensures the full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners (DLLs) and their families. This document integrates the role that languages and cultures play in children’s book knowledge and print concept development throughout this document. We note differences between English and other languages to help adults learn and understand how to better support diverse learners.

CONNECTING EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND THE HEAD START EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK: AGES BIRTH TO FIVE

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs are required to implement program and teaching practices that are aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (HSELOF) and the state’s early learning and development standards (ELDS). Since book knowledge and print concepts are key literacy skills, they are incorporated into state ELDS and the HSELOF. This resource will show where the ELOF addresses book knowledge and print concepts.

For infants and toddlers, book knowledge and print concept goals appear in the Emergent Literacy sub-domain of the Language and Communication domain. The primary goals that address these skills are:

- IT-LC 10. Child handles books and relates them to their stories or information.
- IT-LC 11. Child recognizes pictures and some symbols, signs, or words.
- IT-LC 12. Child comprehends meaning from pictures and stories.



Infant/Toddler Language and Communication Sub-Domains

- Attending and Understanding
- Communicating and Speaking
- Vocabulary
- Emergent Literacy

Goals for Sub-Domain: Emergent Literacy

- Goal IT-LC 9. Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 10. Child handles books and relates them to their stories or information.
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 11. Child recognizes pictures and some symbols, signs, or words
- ▶ Goal IT-LC 12. Child comprehends meaning from pictures and stories.
- Goal IT-LC 13. Child makes marks and uses them to represent objects or actions.

For preschoolers, all goals associated with book knowledge and print concepts appear in the Literacy domain and two sub-domains: 1) Print and Alphabet Knowledge, and 2) Comprehension and Text Structure.

- P-LIT 2. Child demonstrates an understanding of how print is used (functions of print) and the rules that govern how print works (conventions of print).
- P-LIT 4. Child demonstrates an understanding of narrative structure through storytelling/re-telling.
- P-LIT 5. Child asks and answers questions about a book that was read aloud.

Preschooler Literacy Sub-Domains

- Phonological Awareness
- Print and Alphabet Knowledge
- Comprehension and Text Structure
- Writing

Goals for Sub-Domain: Print and Alphabet Knowledge

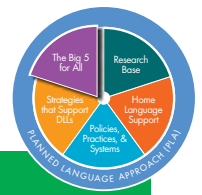
- ▶ Goal P-LIT 2. Child demonstrates an understanding of how print is used (functions of print) and the rules that govern how print works (conventions of print).
- Goal P-LIT 3. Child identifies letters of the alphabet and produces correct sounds associated with letters.

Preschooler Literacy Sub-Domains

- Phonological Awareness
- Print and Alphabet Knowledge
- Comprehension and Text Structure
- Writing

Goals for Sub-Domain: Comprehension and Text Structure

- Goal P-LIT 4. Child demonstrates an understanding of narrative structure through storytelling/re-telling.
- Goal P-LIT 5. Child asks and answers questions about a book that was read aloud.



WHY BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS MATTER: UNDERSTANDING THE RESEARCH

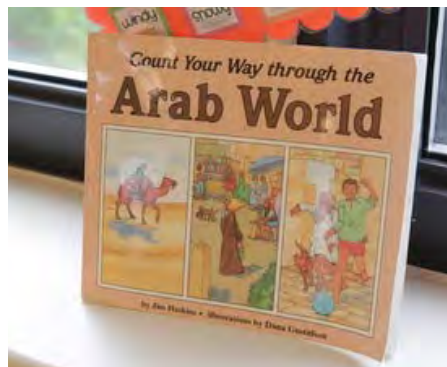
Early reading-related behaviors—including book handling, language comprehension, and emergent reading—lead to actual reading later in childhood.³ Helping very young children engage with print and learn as much as possible about its forms and functions will ease children’s transition into reading and writing.⁴ When adults show an interest in books and print (in any language), noting the differences between print and pictures, they help develop children’s later reading and writing skills. Research also shows that when children who are dual language learners have opportunities to learn in both of their languages, their print knowledge (in addition to other skills) increases.⁷

“Books and other print materials can help children explore and come to understand better the people, places, and things they encounter in everyday life. They can also help children learn about the world beyond their own.” (1, p.12)

BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS ACROSS LANGUAGES

Book knowledge and print concepts children develop in *any* language support their English-language book and print knowledge. For example, the central insight that print is speech written down⁵ can happen in any language and transfer from one language to another.

Children may develop print knowledge and learn how books work in a home language with a written form that is different from English, such as Japanese. Children may expect English language books to look and work like books in their home language. This prior knowledge of the home language is not wrong, but the child may need support in understanding how the written system of English works.



Mrs. Khan notices that Nadir opens English language books from the back. This is how books open in his home language, Arabic. She does not correct him. However, when she reads aloud to Nadir, she shows him how she opens English books and explains, “English books open from the left to the right.” After modeling this for a few days, she sees Nadir opening an English book from the front. When Mrs. Khan reads books in Arabic in the room, she also talks about how Chinese books open and close from right to left.

Children learn book knowledge and print concepts in the languages that they hear adults read and share with them. Some print concepts may differ across languages in the following ways:

- Some languages are read from right to left, and others are read from left to right
- Some books are read from right to left, and others are read from the left to right
- Some languages are read horizontally or vertically
- Some languages do not have a written form

“Reading with adults, looking at books independently, and sharing reading experiences with peers are some of the ways that children experience books...Knowledge about print is built from children’s experiences with books and other written materials.” (8, para.1)



Similarities and differences between English and other languages*

	Arabic and English	Chinese and English	Spanish and English	Twí and English
Written form of the language	Letters represent sounds. However, the letters look quite different from English letters.	Chinese does not use letters to represent sounds. Words are symbolized by characters.	Letters represent sounds. Although Spanish uses many of the same letters as English, the letters do not always make the same sounds as in English.	Letters represent sounds. Although Twí uses many of the same letters as English, the letters do not always make the same sounds as in English.
Print concepts	Arabic, unlike English, is read from right to left and from the bottom to the top of the page. Readers turn pages from left to right.	Chinese, like English, is read from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.	Spanish, like English, is read left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.	Twí, like English, is read left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.
<p><i>* Please note that this chart provides general information on how languages are similar to and different from English. Speakers of these languages may or may not need additional support in written English, depending on their prior experiences.</i></p>				

All education staff can encourage and support families as they share print materials with their children in their home languages (when possible). Teachers and family child care providers can also include print in a home language in their group care setting. For example, they can invite families to share materials in home languages, including:

- Books and magazines
- Greeting cards and pamphlets
- Recipes, sales fliers, coupons, and clean, empty containers with labels in a home language
- Notes for the child, written by family members (if family members write the home language)



Home visitors can work with parents directly through home visits and socializations. They may encourage parents to try the following:

- Draw children’s attention to signs, labels, and other environmental print
- Read books, letters, and cards with and to their children (in a home language or English, whichever the family member prefers)
- Offer children writing tools create familiar materials, such as cards and lists (using emergent or conventional writing)



BOOK KNOWLEDGE, PRINT CONCEPTS, AND CHILDREN WHO ARE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS (DLLs)

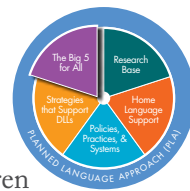
Children develop funds of knowledge about books and print based on their experiences with their families, cultures, and communities. Funds of knowledge is a strength-based way to understand the skills and attitudes that children have developed based on their experiences within their families and communities.⁶ For example, some children may have families that read picture books daily. Other children may develop print concepts using signs and labels in their homes and neighborhoods. Some children may have little direct experience with print in their families but use rich oral language to tell detailed stories about their experiences.

When teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors develop trusting relationships with families, they can ask about children’s experiences with books and print in home languages, as well as in English. These discussions, paired with observations of each child, inform education staff’s planning of print experiences that extend children’s existing knowledge. See *Gathering and Using Language Information That Families Share* for more on understanding the experiences and activities children have related to book knowledge and print concepts in their home language.

Education staff can learn from families how they use print (and in which languages). Families may read and use

- books and magazines (children’s or adults’ or both);
- mail, including letters, postcards, or greeting cards;
- the Bible, the Koran, or other religious or spiritual texts;
- devotionals (including books of prayer, etc.);
- emails, websites, social media;
- bus or train schedules;
- traffic signs and symbols in the community;
- recipes and shopping lists; and
- pamphlets, sales fliers, or coupons.





Children build on funds of knowledge about print within their families and cultures. For example, children with extensive experience reading picture books at home may use and build on this knowledge by actively participating in interactive and dialogic reading. In these types of reading strategies, adults encourage children to talk about books by making predictions about what will happen next, summarizing what has happened, or talking about character's feelings. Adults may also dictate (write down the children's stories) to help children make their own books. If children aren't familiar with book reading, teachers and family child care providers may keep initial book readings short, interactive, and interesting to the children. As children become more familiar with books, the readings become longer and more involved. Home visitors may support parents as they use books with or without text and similar interactive strategies with their child.

Children build on their funds of knowledge about all forms of print, not only books. For example, children who develop print concepts from signs, logos, and other symbols may use and build on this knowledge through environmental print in the group care setting. Teachers and family child care providers may ask these children to identify different signs, symbols, and labels. Then have children demonstrate how to use them, while supporting them as they create their own signs, symbols, and labels. Home visitors may support parents as they use these strategies with environmental print in their home and community with their child.



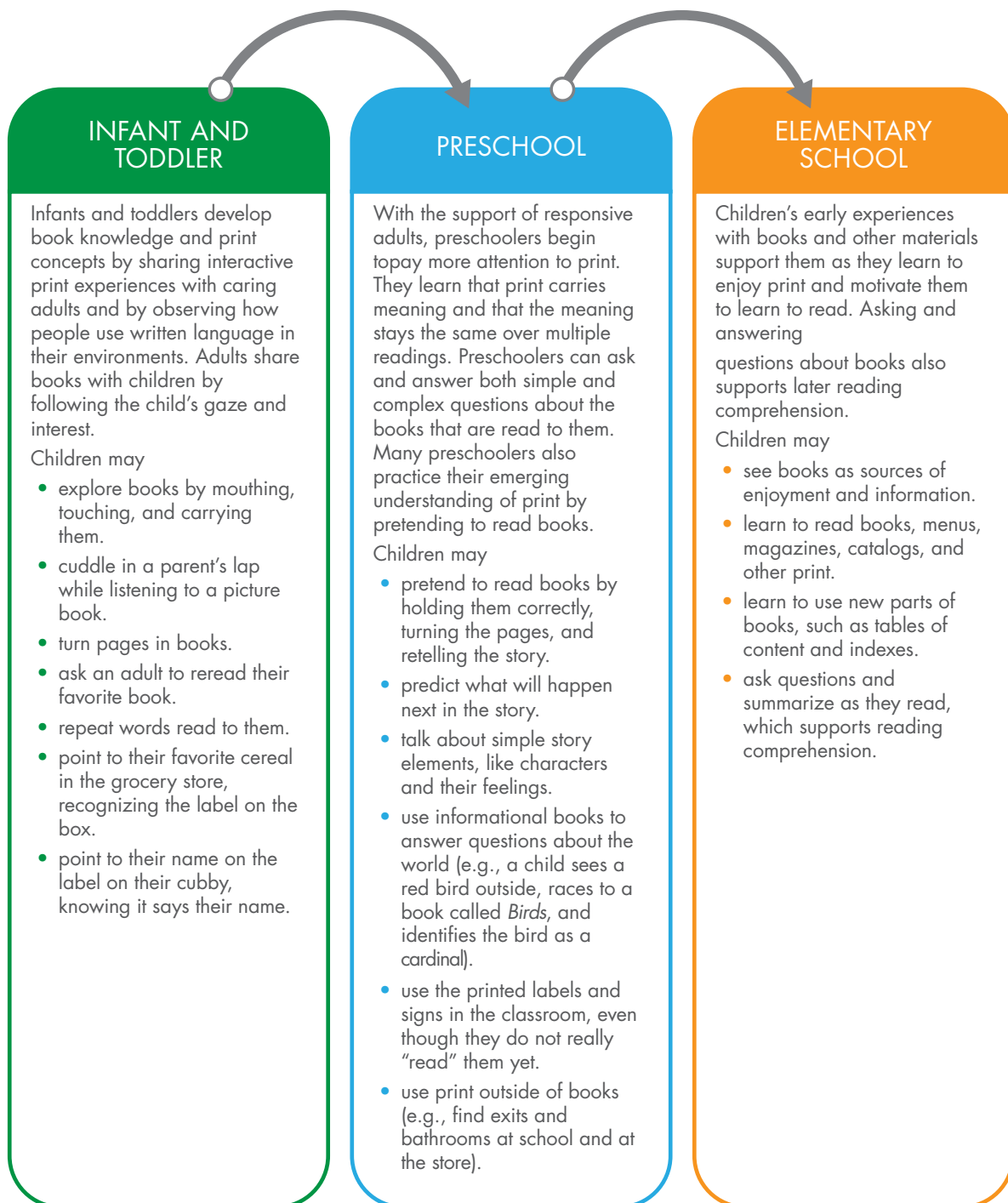
Children who have little experience with print may deepen and expand their knowledge through dictation activities. Teachers and family child care providers can write down children's speech, making a book. The book could be a story or a personal experience, such as a child's last birthday. The adults and children can read these books, as well as other (short) books. The adults draw children's attention to concepts of print, such as how to hold a book and turn pages, but focus on connecting speech to print and building children's excitement for reading. Home visitors may offer a similar approach to families, encouraging them to write what their children say (if their language has a written form and if they read and write the language) and creating a homemade book to share with their child. If the home language does not have a written form (or family members do not read or write the language), home visitors can work with families to create books from photos, children's scribbles and drawings, and pictures cut from magazines and sales flyers. Families can make up stories, encourage their child to turn pages as the story is told, and help their child learn other aspects of book concepts, with the home visitor's support.

It is important for education staff to learn about the ways that families use and value language and literacy. These experiences may differ from those that the teacher and family child care provider expect to see in their group care setting. Teachers and family child care providers can learn about, honor, build on, and extend these experiences.

Once education staff understand the ways in which families support children's interactions with print, they can begin to include familiar print materials in their group care setting. Home visitors can offer parents support as they try existing print activities and think of new ways to use print in the home and community.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION FROM BIRTH TO AGE FIVE

HOW DO BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS DEVELOP?



EFFECTIVE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

In a coordinated approach, all education staff work together to support children as they fully develop their language and literacy skills in all their languages. Home visitors, educators, and all who work with families learn about how families support book knowledge and print concepts in their language or languages.

BOOK KNOWLEDGE

Adults keep children engaged by using what they know about the book and the children. Young children benefit most when adults follow their lead and interact in a way that keeps them interested. For example, young children are more likely to engage with a book when

- adults use a special voice or vary their tone when reading;
- point out pictures that interest children;
- focus on a single page or a few pages; and
- are aware when children are losing interest (skip words or sections as needed to keep children engaged).

Education staff may model these ways of using books and support families as they learn to use books in their home languages (if any) with children.



HOW TO USE BOOKS

Adults promote children's book knowledge when they try the activities listed below.

- **Share books with infants and toddlers.** Very young children explore books with adults. The child sets the pace, showing interest through gaze and attention. The child rarely focuses on the text on the page as the adult talks about the pictures that interest the child.
- **Read books to young children.** Adults frequently read books aloud to young children in languages they understand. Wordless picture books allow adults to tell a story any language. Children's books are often colorful, fun, and engaging, and adults and children enjoy reading them together. Adults typically read to infants and toddlers sitting on their laps to support warm, engaging interactions between the adult and one or two children. Adults read to preschoolers one-on-one, in pairs, or in small groups so they can interact during the reading. Sometimes adults read to preschoolers in larger groups if the book is short and the topic is very interesting to the children. Books should be on topics that interest the child and draw from a variety of cultures, including the cultures represented in the classroom.



- **Engage children in interactive read-alouds.** When adults read aloud to children, they involve children directly in reading the book. Adults may prompt children to ask or answer questions (as they are able) about what they read, define new words, or explain new ideas for the children and provide other supports. Adults engaged in an interactive read-aloud welcome and invite children’s responses to the book. As with other ways of reading books to young children, most interactive reading sessions are short and involve an adult and one or two children. This read-aloud style may be familiar to some children, and new to others. Inviting children to respond to questions and prompts, waiting for their responses, and building on these responses can support children who are new to this read-aloud style.
- **Use dialogic reading strategies.** Dialogic reading is a specific way for adults to support a child as they read and interact with a book. Dialogic reading methods encourage children to talk about the book and then talk some more about the book. This method may be new to some children, and adults may need to wait for children’s responses, ask different types of questions, and practice this method one-on-one before using it with a small group. Most methods involve
 - prompting the child to say something about the book, perhaps by asking a question;
 - waiting for the child to respond;
 - responding by extending what the child says; and
 - repeating what the child says.



For more information on dialogic reading, visit

[*Dialogic Reading that Supports Children Who Are Dual Language Learners and Their Families.*](#)

- **Engage children in shared reading.** Toddlers and preschoolers “read along” with adults. A child will see the print and watch as an adult tracks the text by pointing to words with a finger or pointer while reading. Adults often read books, songs, chants, and poems this way. In some older toddler and preschool settings, teachers and family child care providers use very large books or chart paper, so groups of children can see the print. Large, or “big books,” that have large print and illustrations or photos, are also very useful for young children who are visually impaired.

Young children will often point to words as they “read” on their own. While they may not actually be reading the book, they may be reciting it from memory, retelling the book in their own words or watching how the words on the page relate to the words the adult is reading.

TYPES OF BOOKS

Children should experience many types of children’s books. It is important to share books of all kinds—those with stories, information, and poetry and those that teach specific ideas and concepts. It is also essential to select the kinds of books that fit children’s age and interests. Adults might adapt books for children who have difficulties holding books and turning pages. For examples, attach tabs to pages so children can turn them easily. Adults might also record books for children who are visually impaired.

Different types of books can provide interactions for all ages—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Cloth books are made of fabric and can include squeakers, crinkle sounds, and tactile objects. Infants can easily grab them when learning to reach and hold.

Board books are sturdy cardboard or plastic books designed for infants and toddlers to mouth and explore. They may be on any topic and adults can use them with all ages.

Picture books usually include engaging illustrations and may contain simple or complex stories or information. Picture books may be hardcover or paperback and may be on any topic. They, too, are appropriate for all ages.

The content of books varies widely, giving adults the opportunity to share a range of topics with young children.

Storybooks are fictional stories, typically about specific characters, their challenges, and the solutions to their problems.

Informational texts are nonfiction books that provide information about a topic and often use photographs.

Poetry and songbooks are books that often have pictures to illustrate poems, rhymes, or songs. Adults can sing or rhythmically chant as they read these books.

Concept books focus on a single concept, such as numbers or simple ideas.

Mixed books are books that fit into more than one category. Examples might be a storybook about the beach that provides information about shells and sea life, or a poetry book about a historical person.

Children's books may be **wordless** or have words in English or a home language. **Bilingual** books have text in both English and another language. Adults read the whole book in a single language (e.g., English or home language) as they prefer. For example, in a classroom setting, a child may hear the book in Spanish from one teacher on one day, and in English from another teacher on a different day. In a family child care setting, a child may hear his bilingual family child care provider read the book in Spanish in the morning, and the same book in English in the afternoon. In both settings, hearing the book books read in two languages helps children make connections between Spanish and English.

Young children who are visually impaired/blind may begin exploring books in Braille if this is identified in their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Education staff and parents can work with specialists and therapists identified in the IEP to learn Braille and to help children to access and use books and other print materials that are written in Braille.

PRINT CONCEPTS

Children learn print concepts by learning about and using print in the languages they use in their daily life. Adults help children understand print by talking about different types of print—what they are, how to read and use them—and model using the print. Adults also provide different types of print and support children as they explore, use, and create their own print. It is important for children to learn about and use print in all their languages. Education staff help families use these strategies, and talk about and use print in the languages they use with their children. Home visitors can help set up socialization spaces to include print resources and provide a print-rich environment.

Here are some ways adults can promote children's print concepts.

Create and use a print-rich environment.

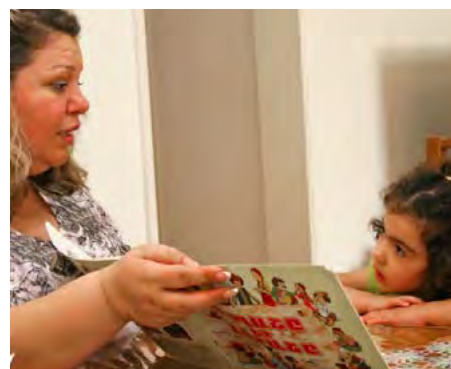
- Give children time to explore books and other print materials on their own and in groups.
- Include books in play areas for infants and toddlers to discover and explore.
- Provide a library of books in a cozy space where all children can choose and enjoy books in the languages children in the setting speak.
- Include print in the pretend play area, such as food containers, recipes, menus, etc.
- Include print in the block area, with books about construction and child-made signs.
- Include print in the science area, with picture reference books and observation journals for each child.



- Encourage families to share print materials with children at home and in the group care setting or group socialization space, and in children’s home languages.

Draw children’s attention to the features and uses of print.

- Emphasize print on the page during shared reading, beginning with toddlers. Indicate what print looks like and what it does.
- Create environmental print with toddlers or preschoolers, such as a sign for a block structure they made or a snail house (shell) they found.
- Label group care and group socialization materials with words in appropriate languages and with pictures and help toddlers and preschoolers use the labels.
- Use pocket charts with words in appropriate languages and with pictures to display a group care setting schedule and for children to use when choosing a learning center.
- Provide support for emergent writing in a child’s languages at any age.



HOW TO SUPPORT BABIES AS THEY DEVELOP BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

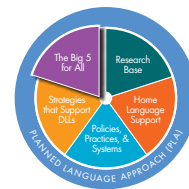
Babies and young children are learning important information about books and print that they will need to become readers. They watch how teachers and caregivers hold books and turn the pages, noticing that the pictures change when they do so. They notice the rhythm of words in the story and how the reader’s voice rises and falls. In fact, when adults read to babies often, adults may observe them “book babbling,” which involves babbling in a way that mimics a reader.² Book babbling is different from other forms of babbling. It is what babies do when they begin to understand that book reading is different than talking.

When infants and toddlers are engaged, they will look at the book, touch it, look at the adult, or switch their gaze from the adult to the book. They will seem content and interested. Children signal when they are ready to stop reading by looking at something else, squirming and fussing, or turning the pages to get to the end. When it is time to end the experience, adults should turn the page, put the book down, and tickle, cuddle, or let the children crawl, walk, and play!



Babies begin to develop book knowledge and print concepts when adults

- share stories, poems, and songs in the children’s home language;
- cuddle up and “read” books together every day—for example, labeling or describing pictures on each page;
- look in the direction where children point or follow their gaze and support babies’ language development by labeling and describing the objects of interest (e.g., “That? That is a fire hydrant.”) and by extending descriptions (e.g., “Yes, that is a truck! It’s a dump truck! See that big pile of dirt in the back?”);



- engage babies in conversations about age-appropriate books by getting their attention, asking a question, and then waiting for them to respond through body movements, gestures, facial expressions, coos, babbles, and other vocalizations. Adults interpret babies' responses and provide language (e.g., "What do you see? A cat? That's right! I see a cat, too. It's a little white cat with a black nose."); and
- play games such as peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, or invented games (e.g., "Can you find the ball?") to build children's interest in language.

Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try the practices listed above during home visits and group socializations.

GOAL IT-LC 12. CHILD COMPREHENDS MEANING FROM PICTURES AND STORIES.



DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION			INDICATORS
Birth to 9 Months	8 to 18 Months	16 to 36 Months	By 36 Months
Looks at picture books and listens to an adult talk about pictures in a book.	Points at pictures in a book, making sounds or saying words and interacting with an adult reading a book.	Talks about books, acts out events from stories, and uses some vocabulary encountered during book reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses pictures as a guide to talk about a story that has been read. Asks or answers questions about what is happening in a book or story. Identifies the feelings of characters in a book or story.

HOW TO SUPPORT TODDLERS AS THEY DEVELOP BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

Toddlers learn about their world through observing, listening, and touching everything in reach and by having their questions answered in the languages they know. Talking about or using sign language to describe print at home and out in the community in the languages they know helps toddlers begin to understand that print is meaningful and important. Many toddlers are interested in books and will ask to have their favorites read over and over. Some may begin to pretend read on their own. Some toddlers may only listen to a few words before drifting away, and others develop their interest in books later. Despite these differences, caring adults should continue to provide opportunities for toddlers to discover the joy of story reading by reading and talking about books.



Toddlers develop book knowledge and print concepts when adults

- read, talk, and sign about environmental print, such as exit signs, stop signs, bathroom signs, and store and restaurant logos;
- share stories, poems, and songs in English and the toddlers' home languages;
- make story time fun so that children happily join the group every day;
- read (and reread and reread) favorite stories, poems, and chants in English and in their home languages;
- talk or sign about books and ask questions during and after story reading ("The hippo is going up the hill. Where do you think he is going?");
- talk or sign about unfamiliar words and encourage them to say them (e.g., "Spooked means it scared him. Say 'spooked.'" Or "That's the engineer. He drives the train. Can you say 'engineer?'");
- respond when they ask what print, signs, and logos say (e.g., "That says 'push'—so we need to push this door to get it open.");





- point out and name meaningful letters of the alphabet, such as those in a child’s name (e.g., “Oh look! The word ‘kite’ has a K in it—K for Kaila!”);
- provide durable books, such as board or cloth books designed to hold up to their active explorations as they carry books around and turn the pages;
- create a comfortable book nook or place where books are attractively arranged and easy to reach, such as low, sturdy shelves or book baskets for easy storage with places to sit and read; and
- model how to use books appropriately by opening them, turning pages carefully, and returning them to the shelves or basket.

Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try the practices listed above during home visits and group socializations.



GOAL IT-LC 10. CHILD HANDLES BOOKS AND RELATES THEM TO THEIR STORIES OR INFORMATION.



DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION			INDICATORS
Birth to 9 Months	8 to 18 Months	16 to 36 Months	By 36 Months
Explores a book by touching it, patting it, or putting it in mouth.	Holds books, turns pages, looks at the pictures, and uses sounds, signs, or words to identify actions or objects in a book.	Pretends to read books by turning pages and talking about or using signs to describe what is happening in the book.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks to have several favorite books read over and over. Holds book, turns pages, and pretends to read.

HOW TO SUPPORT PRESCHOOLERS AS THEY DEVELOP BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS

Preschoolers notice print everywhere, particularly when guided by responsive adults! As adults intentionally read and discuss print with them, preschoolers learn that print is meaningful and that it carries a message. Reading to preschoolers in their home languages helps them learn that print provides information, tells an interesting story, and sometimes makes the reader laugh. Many preschoolers pretend to read books, demonstrating their emerging understandings about print.



Preschoolers develop book knowledge and print concepts when adults

- share a range of stories, poems, and songs in home languages, as well as English;
- set aside time to read age-appropriate books together every day;



- read (and reread) funny stories, stories that encourage children to use their imagination, and stories that surprise;
- read informational texts to help them learn concepts and ideas; for example, to learn about insects, animals, and habitats;
- model how to care for books by holding them, turning pages, and putting them away carefully; and
- discuss the important ideas in a story that has been read to support children’s comprehension.



GOAL P-LIT 4. CHILD DEMONSTRATES AN UNDERSTANDING OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE THROUGH STORYTELLING/RE-TELLING.



DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION		INDICATORS
36 to 48 Months	48 to 60 Months	By 60 Months
With support, may be able to tell one or two key events from a story or may act out a story with pictures or props.	Retells two or three key events from a well-known story, typically in the right temporal order and using some simple sequencing terms, such as first ... and then	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Re-tells or acts out a story that was read, putting events in the appropriate sequence, and demonstrating more sophisticated understanding of how events relate, such as cause and effect relationships. ■ Tells fictional or personal stories using a sequence of at least two or three connected events. ■ Identifies characters and main events in books and stories.

- talk about how people use print for different purposes, such as following a recipe, following directions, sending an email, and making a list;
- share how print “works”—that words are made up of letters and that there are spaces before and after them (e.g., “Look. There are four letters in ‘Papi,’ four letters in ‘Mami,’ and four letters in your name, ‘José.’”);
- draw children’s attention to letters, words, signs, and logos in meaningful contexts (e.g., “Look at the red sign by the door. It says ‘Exit!’ The exit sign tells us that we use this door to exit, or get out of, our building.”);
- model using books, magazines, and digital texts as sources of information on a topic of interest (e.g., “For example, look at a book about goldfish while making a class aquarium or follow a recipe for making applesauce”); and





- include print and writing materials in children’s play areas (e.g. place child-friendly directions for building a tower with children’s blocks and materials for creating grocery lists, taking restaurant orders, and making menus in a pretend play area).

Home visitors can help parents identify, adapt, and try the practices listed above during home visits and group socializations.

For more ideas about drawing children’s attention to letters and letter sounds, see [Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing](#).



GOAL P-LIT 2. CHILD DEMONSTRATES AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW PRINT IS USED (FUNCTIONS OF PRINT) AND THE RULES THAT GOVERN HOW PRINT WORKS (CONVENTIONS OF PRINT).



DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESSION		INDICATORS
36 to 48 Months	48 to 60 Months	By 60 Months
Distinguishes print from pictures and shows an understanding that print is something meaningful, such as asking an adult “What does this say?” or “Read this.”	Begins to demonstrate an understanding of the connection between speech and print. Shows a growing awareness that print is a system that has rules and conventions, such as holding a book correctly or following a book left to right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands that print is organized differently for different purposes, such as a note, list, or storybook. Understands that written words are made up of a group of individual letters. Begins to point to single-syllable words while reading simple, memorized texts. Identifies book parts and features, such as the front, back, title, and author.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE BOOK KNOWLEDGE AND PRINT CONCEPTS IN EARLY LEARNING SETTINGS

EXAMPLES WITH INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Isabel notices that the children in her class love to touch their food. Alejandro is very interested in pulling bread into smaller pieces. Isabel provides Alejandro with many opportunities to explore bread.

Isabel also reads books about food, including bread. A favorite is the board book *My Food/Mi Comida*. She shares this book with Alejandro in Spanish, a language they share. As she holds him in her lap, he immediately starts turning pages.

Isabel is impressed that at twelve months old Alejandro is already learning how books work. After he turns a few pages, Isabel starts to note the illustrations. She says, “Where is the bread?” as Alejandro points to the loaf. She says, “Yes, that’s a whole loaf of bread! It’s a lot bigger than the pieces...” She does not finish talking before Alejandro has turned the page. Isabel follows his lead but tries to slow him down a little bit. She watches as Alejandro looks at the page. She asks, “What is this?” Alejandro says, “Ahh.” Isabel says, “Yes, it’s an apple. Look, you can see the seeds!” She points to



the seeds in the apple. Alejandro touches them too. He puts down the book and goes to get the toy apple from the pretend play area. He proudly holds it up for Isabel. “Ahh,” he says. Isabel smiles as Alejandro returns to the pretend play area to play with (and try to name) the other fruit.

She knows that although they only read a few pages of the book, it is important to follow Alejandro’s lead. He is clearly enthusiastic about reading and is making connections between the book and his toys. She will read the book again at a quieter time of day, when he might sit for a longer time.

IN AN INFANT CLASSROOM

Nine-month-old Soledad is reading a book with her teacher, Myae. “Gaa!” Soledad says and touches a picture on the page. “Yes, a cat! That’s a white, furry cat,” Myae says. “Do you know what a cat says?” “Ahh! Ahh!” Soledad squeals. “Yes!” Myae says. “A cat can say ‘ahh!’ It can also say ‘meow.’ Can you say ‘meow?’” “Mmm-ahhh,” Soledad says. “Oh my! You sound just like my cat at home!” Myae says, laughing and making “meow” sounds, too. “Let’s see what animal is on the next page.”



IN A FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

Sue, a family child care provider, knows that even very young children learn about books and print. Six-month-old Sam explores a book that Sue read to him earlier by grabbing and mouthing it. He pats the picture of a whale. Two-and-half-year-old Mohammed walks over to the bookshelf and takes out a book about bugs that Sue read yesterday. He pages through the book saying “bug” as he points to different types of bugs.



IN A TODDLER CLASSROOM

Tameka sits in her book nook reading to two-year-old twins Mimi and Max. The nook contains a basket with many types of books, including board books. As the twins listen attentively, other toddlers come into the nook—some stay for a few minutes and listen to Tameka read. Others listen for a few seconds. Some pick out their own books to explore. Before the story ends, Max gets up, selects a different book from a basket, and carries it out of the book nook to the block area. As she continues to read, Tameka observes the many ways (and the many places) her toddlers enjoy books. Later, when it appears that Max is truly done with the book he chose, she will encourage him to return his book to the book basket. For now, she is pleased that he and her other toddlers are learning to love and care for books. She also enjoys when families borrow the books to read at home, and when they bring in books from home to share with the group.



ON A HOME VISIT

The home visitor, Isabella, is showing Mario, thirty months, and his mom, Luz, how to make a book from labels, boxes, and other forms of environmental print they have collected from the recycling bin. After tearing and cutting them down to sizes that will fit into a notebook, Isabella prompts Luz to tell Mario what to do next. Luz says, “Mijo, mírame. Look. First we tape down a label—like this one we peeled off a can of corn.” “Maiz,” Mario says and points to the picture of the corn. “Si,” Luz confirms, “una lata de maiz.” Isabella explains that after taping the label to the top of the page, Luz



and Mario can draw pictures and words about it. She encourages Luz to model how to write “maiz” and to invite Mario to “write” the word, too. Luz writes “maiz” and starts to draw a picture. Mario scribbles some lines next Luz’s word. “Mira, my word!” he says excitedly while pointing to his lines. Isabella and Luz smile. “When you finish, you will have an exciting book to read with Mario again and again,” Isabella says to Luz. Mario helps Luz color her picture and then eagerly reaches for a new label so that he can add another page to his new book.

EXAMPLES WITH PRESCHOOLERS

Karun’s class is culturally and linguistically diverse, with children who speak English, Spanish, Punjabi, and Hmong. Karun follows the children’s interests into a rich and engaging exploration into food. She starts by implementing the curriculum’s lessons related to food. When she notices that her preschoolers all mention eating bread at home, she decides to explore bread and bread-making with the children. She talks to families about the bread they eat. They respond by providing her with the names of the breads in their home languages, recipes for making the breads, and descriptions of how their cultural traditions use breads (for example, for certain holidays or at specific times of the day or year). Karun makes picture recipes for the children to follow as they make different breads at school. The first bread they make is *naan*, a flat bread many of the children eat at home.



Karun and the children make an illustrated recipe book together that they give to their families. To do this, Karun and the children

- look at other recipe books to decide what they need to make their book;
- decide to have a cover, title page, and list of recipes for their book;
- decide that each recipe will have its own page and picture;
- discuss the role of print and pictures in the book and how the print and pictures differ;
- decide that some recipes will be in two languages; and
- decide that a child or children will write the title of each recipe, make the picture, and glue a computer printout of the recipe to the page.

Karun keeps the new recipe in the dramatic play area, and the children enjoy using it as they pretend to cook the different breads. Karun also uses it with different literacy activities, looking up specific recipes and identifying letters.

DURING A HOME VISIT

Brenda, a home visitor, is talking with Anush about reading to her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Milena. Anush shares that Milena loves books and that they read every night. Anush also shares that, although she tries to read books in English, she finds reading in Armenian to be much easier. “That’s even better,” Brenda explains, “It is so important to read to Milena in her home language—in your language. I know everyone



in your family speaks Armenian. Milena will learn English later, and the fact that she knows Armenian already will help her learn English well.” Brenda gives Anush a few picture books in Armenian that she found at the local library. “I found these at your library. And there are more!” Brenda explains. “Do you have a library card? If not, let’s plan to go there during our next visit to get one. It’s free, and they always welcome parents and their children!”

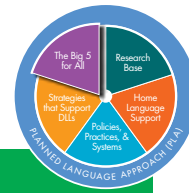
DURING A GROUP SOCIALIZATION

Home visitors Victoria and Hani, along with several parents, have prepared an activity to help the preschoolers recognize and name signs, symbols, and other environmental print in the neighborhood where the group socializations happen. As agreed when they planned the activity, Victoria encourages Kadiye, one of the fathers, to explain to the children what they will do. He gives each child a sheet of paper with pictures of signs, symbols, and other environmental print, a small clipboard, and a marker. “We’re going to go on a walk in the neighborhood and you’re going to look for the signs and symbols on your paper. When you see one, mark it with your marker. You can make any mark you want.” Hani then adds, “Your parents will ask you the name of the sign or symbol. They’ll help you if you don’t know it. And you can ask them to write the word, too.” Estrella, one of the mothers, says, “When we get back, you can tell us all the signs and symbols you found! Ok, are you ready to go?” The children say, “Yes!” excitedly. One child says, “I know this one. It’s a stop sign!” Kadiye laughs and says, “Yes—and when you see one on our walk, make sure you mark it!”



IN A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Sarah is reading the folktale *The Mitten* to a small group of preschoolers. “So the mouse went into the mitten and the mitten got bigger and bigger and bigger until . . .” When the story is finished, she closes the book and says, “I am thinking that it was so interesting that the mitten stretched and stretched as different animals climbed in to get cozy and warm.” As she says “stretched” she models stretching with her hands while she also emphasizes the word by stretching out the word. After the children discuss what they found interesting in the story she says, “I have placed a copy of this book, a pair of knitted mittens, and some plastic animals in the dramatic play area so you can tell your own mitten story. See if this mitten stretches as different animals climb into the mitten to get cozy and warm. Count how many animals can fit in the mitten.” Sarah has also placed several other versions of *The Mitten* story and other books about animals in the dramatic play area so that the children can get other ideas for their mitten stories.



SUMMARY

This resource focuses on how to develop children’s book knowledge and print concepts—important precursors to reading and writing. It discusses the connection to the goals of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and provides examples of the developmental progression from birth to age five.

Children build book knowledge and print concepts from activities and experiences with print at home, in the community, and in early learning settings. This document stresses the importance of language and culture on book knowledge and print concepts. It is important for adults to understand how language and literacy are valued by families and used at home to be able to support their development of these skills.

The resource also explains how to use books and the different types of children’s books that are available. Effective practices for supporting background knowledge of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in different early learning settings are provided. Practices to support DLLs are embedded through the document. Vignettes describe young children’s active learning of book knowledge and print concepts during home visits, a group socialization, a family child care home, and infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms.

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