

part one



Building the Foundation for Phonics They Can Use

Part One has five chapters that together will help you establish a firm foundation for teaching all children to read. Chapter 1 defines five critical understandings children must develop to start their journey down the literacy road:

Functions of print and desire to learn to read

Print concepts

Phonological and phonemic awareness

Concrete words

Letter names and sounds

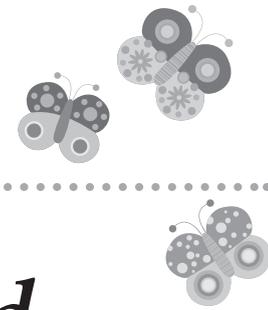


Four activities—shared reading of predictable books, predictable charts, writing, and “Getting to Know You”—are described to build these early reading concepts.

Phonological and phonemic awareness are the focus of Chapter 2. Children develop their phonological awareness as they learn to count words and clap syllables. Their phonemic awareness is expanded as they participate in the activities designed to develop the concept of rhyme and teach blending and segmenting. Activities are also included using the children’s names to build phonological and phonemic awareness.

Chapter 3 contains activities to build children’s store of concrete words and to teach letter names and sounds. Activities in this chapter include focusing on the names of letters, using alphabet books, learning foods and actions to solidify letter sounds, establishing key words for sounds, and enjoying two very popular activities, “Changing a Hen to a Fox” and “Guess the Covered Word.” Chapter 4 presents sample lessons for Making Words in kindergarten. Chapter 5 describes assessments you can use to determine how your students are developing the early reading concepts and ways to differentiate instruction.

chapter 1



Early Reading and Writing Activities

Before we begin helping children learn letter–sound relationships they can use—we must be sure our students know what they are trying to learn and how it is useful to them. There is a tremendous amount of research, usually included under the term *emergent literacy* (Teale & Sulzby, 1991), that shows us what happens in the homes of children where literacy is a priority. We know that children born into homes where someone spends time with them in reading and writing activities will walk into our schools with an incredible foundation on which our instruction can easily build. These children experience an average of over 1,000 hours of quality one-on-one reading and writing activities.

Parents (or parent substitutes including grandmothers, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters) read to children and talk with them about what they are reading. This reading is usually done in the lap position, where the child can see the pictures as well as the words used to tell about the pictures. Favorite books are read again and again, and eventually most children choose a book that they pretend-read—usually to a younger friend or a stuffed animal.

In addition to reading, these children are exposed to writing at an early age. They scribble and make up ways to spell words. They ask (and are told) how to spell favorite words. They make words with magnetic letters and copy favorite words from books. From the over 1,000 hours of reading and writing experiences, these children learn some incredibly important concepts. These concepts include:

- Functions of print and desire to learn to read

- Print concepts

- Phonological and phonemic awareness

- Concrete words

- Letter names and sounds



Early Reading Concepts

* Functions of Print and Desire to Learn to Read

Imagine you are visiting in a kindergarten classroom. You have a chance to talk with several children, and you ask them, “Why are you learning to read and write?” Some children answer, “You have to learn to read and write.” When pushed, they can name all kinds of “real-world” things as reasons for reading and writing—books, newspapers, magazines, recipes, and maps. Other children respond to the why-learn-to-read-and-write question with answers such as “to do your workbook,” “to read in reading group,” and “to go to second grade.” Children who give “school-world” answers to this critical question demonstrate that they don’t see reading and writing as part of their real world. Children who don’t know what reading is for in the real world do not have the same drive and motivation as children for whom reading and writing, like eating and sleeping, are things everyone does. In addition, children who pretend-read a memorized book and “write” a letter to Grandma want to learn to read and write and are confident that they can!

* Print Concepts

Print is what you read and write. Print includes all the funny little marks—letters, punctuation, space between words and paragraphs—that translate into familiar spoken language. In English, you read across the page in a left-to-right fashion. Because your eyes can see only a few words during each stop (called a fixation), you must actually move your eyes several times to read one line of print. When you finish that line, you make a return sweep and start all over again, left to right. If there are sentences at the top of a page and a picture in the middle and more sentences at the bottom, you read the top first and then the bottom. You start at the front of a book and go toward the back. These arbitrary rules about how we proceed through print are called *conventions*.

Jargon refers to all the words we use to talk about reading and writing. Jargon includes such terms as *word*, *letter*, *sentence*, and *sound*. We use this jargon constantly as we try to teach beginners to read:

“Look at the *first word* in the *second sentence*. How does that *word begin*?
What *letter* has that *sound*?”

Using some jargon is essential to talking with children about reading and writing, but children who don’t come from rich literacy backgrounds are often very confused by this jargon. Although all children speak in words, they don’t know words exist as separate entities until they are put in the presence of reading and writing. To many children, letters are what you get in the mailbox, sounds are horns and bells and doors slamming, and sentences are what you have to serve if you get caught committing a crime! These children are unable to follow our

“simple” instructions because we are using words for which they have no meaning or an entirely different meaning.

Many children, however, come to school knowing these print concepts. From being read to in the lap position, they have noticed how the eyes “jump” across the lines of print as someone is reading. They have watched people write grocery lists and thank-you notes to Grandma and have observed the top–bottom, left–right movement. Often, they have typed on the computer and observed these print conventions. Because they have had someone to talk with them about reading and writing, they have learned much of the jargon.

While writing down a dictated thank-you note to Grandma, Dad may say, “Say your sentence one word at a time if you want me to write it. I can’t write as fast as you can talk.” When the child asks how to spell **birthday**, he may be told, “It starts with the letter **b**, just like your dog Buddy’s name. **Birthday** and **Buddy** start with the same sound and the same letter.”

Children with reading and writing experiences know how to look at print and what teachers are talking about as they give them information about print. All children need to develop these critical understandings in order to learn to read and write.

* Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Phonological awareness and *phonemic awareness* are terms that refer to children’s understandings about words and sounds in words. *Phonological awareness* is the broader term and includes the ability to separate sentences into words and words into syllables. Phonemic awareness includes the ability to recognize that words are made up of a discrete set of sounds and to manipulate sounds. Phonemic awareness is important because children’s levels of phonemic awareness are highly correlated with their success in beginning reading (Ehri & Nunes, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonological awareness develops through a series of stages during which children first become aware that language is made up of individual words, that words are made up of syllables, and that syllables are made up of phonemes. It is important to note here that it is not the “jargon” children learn. Five-year-olds cannot tell you there are three syllables in **dinosaur** and one syllable in **Rex**. What they can do is clap out the three beats in **dinosaur** and the one beat in **Rex**. Likewise, they cannot tell you that the first phoneme in **mice** is “**mmm**,” but they can tell you what you would have if you took the **mmm** off **mice**—**ice**. Children develop this phonemic awareness as a result of the oral and written language they are exposed to. Nursery rhymes, chants, and Dr. Seuss books usually play a large role in this development.

Phonemic awareness is an oral ability. You hear the words that rhyme. You hear that **baby** and **book** begin the same. You hear the three sounds in **bat** and can say these sounds separately. Only when children realize that words can be changed and how changing a sound changes the word are they able to profit from instruction in letter–sound relationships.

Children also develop a sense of sounds and words as they try to write. In the beginning, many children let a single letter stand for an entire word. Later, they

use more letters and often say the word they want to write, dragging out its sounds to hear what letters they might use. Children who are allowed and encouraged to “invent-spell” develop an early and strong sense of phonemic awareness.

* **Concrete Words**

If you sit down with kindergartners on the first day of school and try to determine if they can read by giving them a new book to read or testing them on some common words such as **the**, **and**, **of**, or **with**, you would probably conclude that most kindergartners can't read yet. But many kindergartners can read and write some words. Here are some words a boy named David could read when he went to kindergarten:

David
Mama
Daddy
Bear Bear (his favorite stuffed animal)
Carolina (his favorite basketball team)
Pizza Hut
I love you (written on notes on good days)
I hate you (written on notes on bad days)

Most children who have had reading and writing experiences will have learned 10 to 15 words before entering school. The words they learn are usually concrete words that are important to them. Being able to read these words matters, not because they can read much with these few words, but because children who come to school already able to read or write some concrete words have accomplished an important and difficult task. They have learned how to learn words.

* **Letter Names and Sounds**

Finally, many children have learned some letter names and sounds. They may not be able to recognize all 26 letters in both upper- and lowercase, and they often don't know the sounds of **w** or **v**, but they have learned the names and sounds for the most common letters. Usually, the letter names and sounds children know are based on those concrete words they can read and write.

* **The Foundation**

From the research on emergent literacy, we know that many preschoolers have hundreds of hours of literacy interactions during which they develop understandings critical to their success in beginning reading. We must now

structure our school programs to try to provide for all children what some children have had. This will not be an easy task. We don't have 1,000 hours, and we don't have the luxury of doing it with one child at a time, and when the child is interested in doing it! But we must do all we can, and we must do it in ways that are as close to the home experiences as possible. In the remainder of this chapter, you will find activities successfully used by kindergarten and first-grade teachers who are committed to putting all children in the presence of reading and writing and allowing all children to learn:

Functions of print and desire to learn to read

Print concepts

Phonological and phonemic awareness

Concrete words

Letter names and sounds

For older children just acquiring English, these understandings are also critical for them to develop the foundation on which reading and writing can grow.



Shared Reading of Predictable Books

Teachers of young children have always recognized the importance of reading a variety of books to children. There is one particular kind of book and one particular kind of reading, however, that has special benefits for building the reading and writing foundations—shared reading with predictable Big Books.

Shared reading is a term used to describe the process in which the teacher and the children read a book together. The book is read and reread many times. On the first several readings, the teacher usually does all of the reading. As the children become more familiar with the book, they join in and “share” the reading. In order to share in the reading, your children must be able to see the words as well as the pictures. There are many wonderful Big Books and if you have access to a document camera or can scan the pages and project them on your smart board, you can enlarge the print in smaller books. News magazines for primary children, including *Time for Kids*, *Scholastic News*, and *Weekly Reader*, often include a “big picture” edition. You can use this enlarged edition for shared reading, and then students can read the normal-size edition with friends or in centers, or they can take it home to share with families.

Predictable books are the best kind of books to use with shared reading. Predictable books are books in which repeated patterns, refrains, pictures, and rhyme allow children to “pretend-read” a book that has been read to them several times. Pretend reading is a stage most children go through with a favorite book

that some patient adult has read and reread to them. Perhaps you remember pretend reading with such popular predictable books as *Goodnight Moon*, *Are You My Mother?*, or *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. Shared reading of predictable books allows all children to experience this pretend reading. From this pretend reading, they learn what reading is, and they develop the confidence that they will be able to do it. They also develop print concepts and begin to understand how letters, sounds, and words work.

In choosing something for shared reading, consider three criteria. First, the text must be very predictable. The most important goal for shared reading is that even children with little experience with books and stories will be able to pretend-read the book after several readings and develop the confidence that goes along with that accomplishment. Thus, you want a book without too much print and one in which the sentence patterns are very repetitive and the pictures support those sentence patterns.

Second, you want a book that will be very appealing to the children. Since the whole class of children will work with the same book, and since the book will be read and reread, you should try to choose a book that many children will fall in love with.

Finally, the book should take you someplace conceptually. Many teachers choose books to fit their units or build units around the books.

Shared reading is called “shared” because the children join in the reading. There are many ways to encourage children to join in. Many teachers read the book to the children the first time and then just invite the children to join in when they can on subsequent reading. You might also want to “echo read” the book, with you reading each line and then the children being your echo and reading it again. Some teachers like to read the book with the children several times and then make an audio recording in which the teacher reads some parts and the whole class or groups of children read the other parts. Children delight in going to the listening center and listening to themselves reading the book!

In addition to books, many teachers write favorite poems, chants, songs, and finger-plays on long sheets of paper or on the smart board. These become some of the first things children can actually read. Most teachers teach the poem, chant, song, or finger-play to the children first. Once the children have learned to say, chant, or sing it, they then are shown what the words look like. The progression to reading is a natural one, and children soon develop the critical “of course, I can read” self-confidence. Once children can read the piece, many teachers copy it and send it home so that each child can read it to parents and other family members. They also place copies in centers and around the room so that children can read these favorite pieces as they do center reading and read the room.

After the book has been read, enjoyed, and reread in a variety of ways, most children will be able to read (or pretend-read) most of the book. This early “I can read” confidence is critical to emerging readers, and the shared book experience as described is a wonderful way to foster this. When engaging in shared reading

with predictable books, try to simulate what would happen in the home with a child who delights in having a favorite book read again and again. First, you focus on the book itself, on enjoying it, rereading it, talking about it, and often acting it out. As you do this, you develop concepts and oral language. When most of the children can pretend-read the book, you focus their attention on the print. Provide writing activities related to the book and help children learn print conventions, jargon, and concrete words. When children know some concrete words, you use these words to begin to build phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge.

* **Children Understand What Reading Is for and Develop the Desire to Learn to Read as They Engage in Shared Reading**

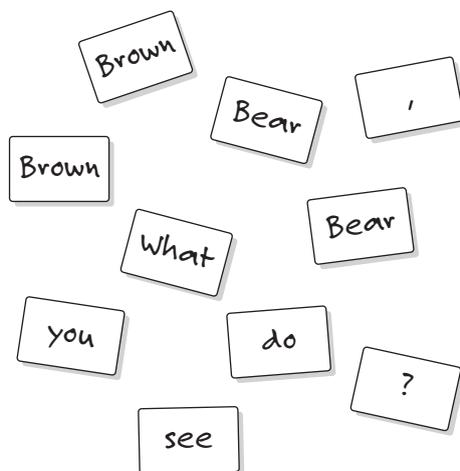
As children join in the shared reading of a predictable book, they experience what reading is. They know what it feels like and sounds like and, most importantly, they develop the confidence and desire to learn to read. Think of shared reading experiences as the training wheels on a bike. Training wheels allow a child to get the feel of the bike, to steer and stop, to ride faster and slower, without also having to concentrate on keeping the bike upright. Once the child develops confidence in bike riding and some bike riding skills, the training wheels are removed and the child rides without them—but often with a parent running alongside the bike! Soon, the child will ride the bike completely on his or her own. Shared reading allows children to experience reading before they have all the print tracking and decoding skills to read on their own. As they develop these skills, they will move toward being independent readers and will no longer need the training wheels support provided by shared reading.

* **Children Develop Print Concepts as They Engage in Shared Reading**

Once you and the children have read and reread a favorite predictable book, poem, song, or chant, you can use that text to help them develop print concepts, including some important jargon such as *word* and *sentence* and *tracking print from left to right*. The most concrete activity you can use to build these print concepts is called Sentence Builders. In Sentence Builders, you write all the words and punctuation marks from a portion of the text on separate index cards. The cards are distributed to various children and these children build a sentence by matching their card to the words and punctuation marks in the text.

Here is how the words for the Sentence Builder activity for *Brown Bear*, *Brown Bear* might get done. The teacher and children reread the first page of *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, and the teacher asks the children to tell her what words

and punctuation marks to write on the cards. Directed by the children, she prints one to a card these words:

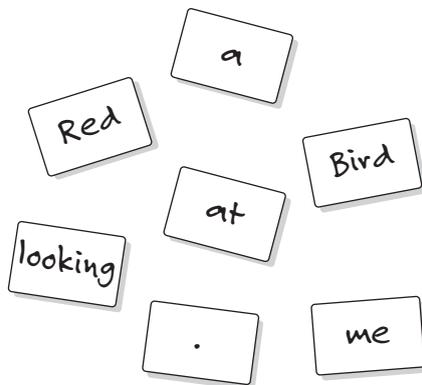


The teacher places these words in order along the chalk ledge or in a pocket chart and the children read the sentence chorally.

The teacher turns the page and tells the children that she wants to write all the words and punctuation marks needed to make the sentence on this page but not write again any words already written. The children decide that she needs a card for:



But not for *see*, which is already written; cards are needed for:



This sentence is then constructed taking the *see* out of the first sentence.

The process speeds up as the children realize that just a few words need to be written for each of the remaining pages. The words not already written from previous sentences are written as needed, and each sentence is built along the chalk ledge or in the pocket chart. Each sentence is also read chorally as one child points to the words to be read.

Once the book is completed, you have all the words and punctuation marks needed to do Sentence Builders for each sentence in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. Distribute all the cards to all the children, giving several words to some children if necessary. Go back to the beginning of the book and have the class read the sentence chorally as the children who have cards with words or punctuation marks in that sentence come to the front of the room and build that sentence. Children love being the words and making the sentences. Equally important, since they become the words, they are interacting with the text to learn left-to-right sequence and the difference between a word and a sentence.

After doing this sentence-building activity as a class, put the book and the cards in a center so that your children can manipulate the words and re-create the text.

* Children Learn Some Words as They Engage in Shared Reading

Imagine that you have read and reread *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* or any of the many favorite predictable books with your students. You have written the words on cards and let the children match the words to sentences in the book and build the sentences. You have done the Sentence Builder activity several different times, allowing different children to be different words. Children are going to learn some of the words. Many children will learn the concrete words that name the animals, such as **bear**, **bird**, and **duck**. They might also learn some of the color words, such as **brown**, **red**, and **yellow**. Because words are repeated in all the sentences, some children will learn some of the abstract connecting words, such as **what**, **do**, **you**, **see**, **I**, and **at**.

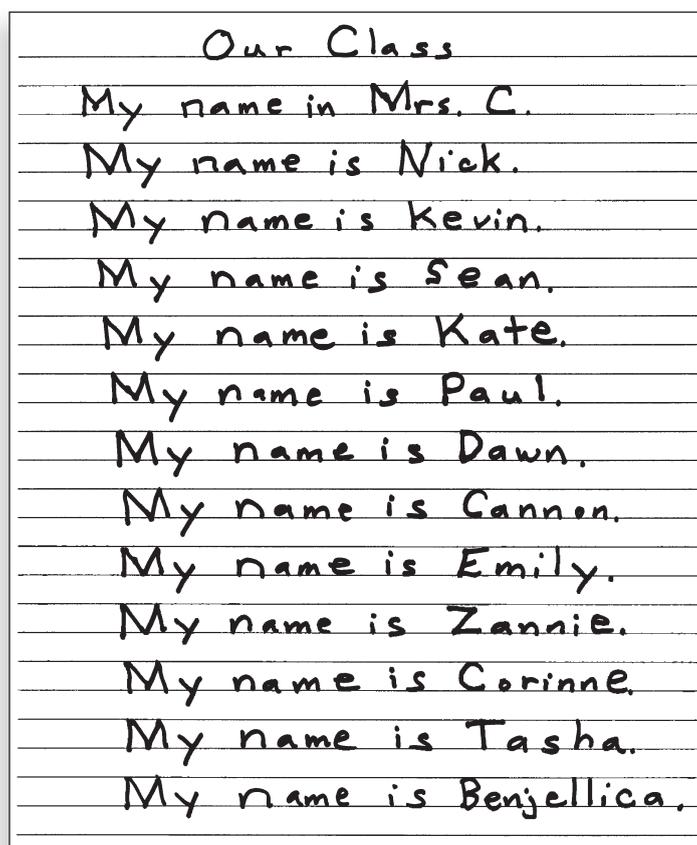
As noted at the beginning of this chapter, children from literate homes have often experienced 1,000 hours of reading and writing before coming to school. Many of the books read to young children are predictable books that they insist on having read over and over and from which they learn some of the words. Shared reading simulates this experience and gives everyone the opportunity to encounter what reading feels like, to understand print concepts, and to learn to read some words.

Predictable Charts

Just as children enjoy reading predictable books together, they also like to write and read predictable charts. A predictable chart is created by the teacher and children. What makes it predictable is that all the sentences begin with the same stem. Each child's response completes the sentence. The first predictable chart made in Mrs. C's classroom simply included the names of all the class members.

The teacher always begins the chart, modeling the sentence pattern she wants children to use.

My name is Mrs. C.

figure 1.1 The first predictable chart made in Mrs. C's classroom

Next, the teacher calls on each child to tell his or her name. The teacher writes each sentence on the chart and leads all the children to all read each sentence. Once the chart is written, each child comes and reads his or her sentence pointing to each word as the word is read.

For the second predictable chart, Mrs. C chose to focus on colors.

After a discussion of favorite colors, Mrs. C began a chart on Colors by saying and writing the first sentence. She put her name in parentheses after the sentence so that everyone would know it was her sentence.

I like green. (Mrs. C)

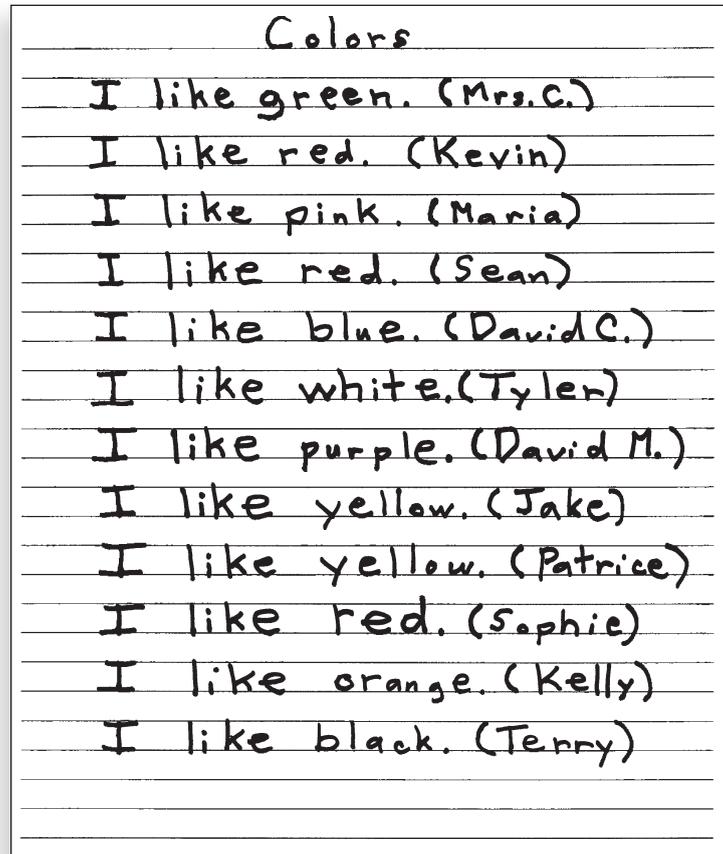
Next she called on Kevin to tell his favorite color.

I like red. (Kevin)

Maria and Sean were called next.

I like pink. (Maria)

I like red. (Sean)

figure 1.2 The Colors predictable chart

As Thanksgiving approached, Mrs. C and her children made a chart telling what they were thankful for.

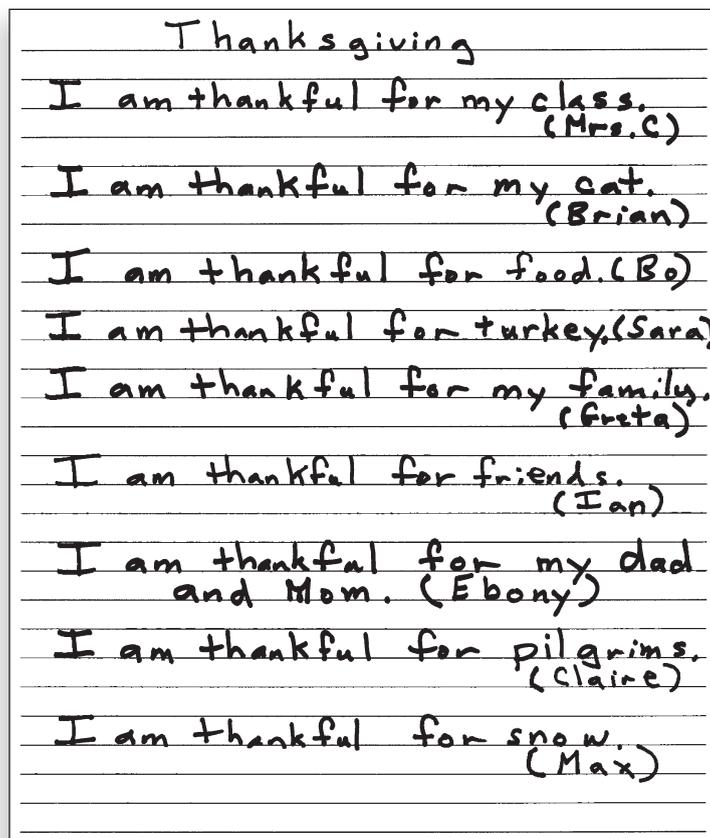
In Mrs. C's classroom, there are many children who have limited early reading experiences and several English language learners. She does a new chart each week and uses the chart to teach print concepts, to teach concrete and function words, and to be sure every child knows what reading and writing are for and is developing the confidence to become a reader and a writer. Here is how the predictable chart activities proceed in a typical week.

Monday Half the class meets with Mrs. C, and she begins the chart with their sentences. After each sentence is written, all the children read that sentence as the child whose sentence it is points to the words.

Tuesday The other half of the class meets with Mrs. C. Their sentences are added to the chart and read by all the students.

Wednesday On Wednesday, the whole class gathers and chorally reads the whole chart. Next the teacher asks children to come up to the chart and point out

figure 1.3 The Thanksgiving predictable chart



anything they notice. The children notice a variety of things depending on what they know about letters, sounds, words, and reading. These may include:

- “All sentences begin with **I Like**.”
- “**Pink** and **purple** begin with the same letter.”
- “**Kevin’s** and **Kelly’s** names start with a capital **K**.”
- “**I** is at the beginning of every sentence!”
- “**I** is always a capital (or big) letter.”
- “**Benjellica** has the longest name.”
- “**Bo** has the shortest name.”
- “All sentences have this [pointing to all the periods] at the end.”

When the children have “noticed” all kinds of important concepts about print and words on the chart, Mrs. C tells them that she needs their help to make the word cards needed to create all the sentences on the chart. Mrs. C leads the class to read the first sentence on the chart:

I am thankful for my class. (Mrs. C)

The children tell her what the words are and she writes these words on index cards.

figure 1.4 Words in the first sentence written on index cards

I am thankful for my class. Mrs. C

Together, they read the second sentence:

I am thankful for my cat. (Brian)

The class decides that two new words are needed to create Brian's sentence. The teacher writes these on index cards. To make Brian's sentence, the class decides that they need to remove the word *class* and Mrs. C's name and replace these with the word *cat* and Brian's name. Brian does the honors.

figure 1.5 Brian's sentence with the words written on index cards

I am thankful for my cat. (Brian)

The lesson proceeds more quickly as the children realize that cards need to be created just for the last words and each student's name. Cards are created and the child whose sentence is being made replaces the words from the previous sentence to create the new sentence.

figure 1.6 Ebony's sentence

I am thankful for my mom and
dad. (Ebony)

Thursday The word cards made on the previous day are used to do a sentence builder activity similar to that described for *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. The word cards are distributed to all the children. Each child gets his or her own name and one or two other cards. The class reads each sentence, and children who

figure 1.7 Some pages from the class book on Colors

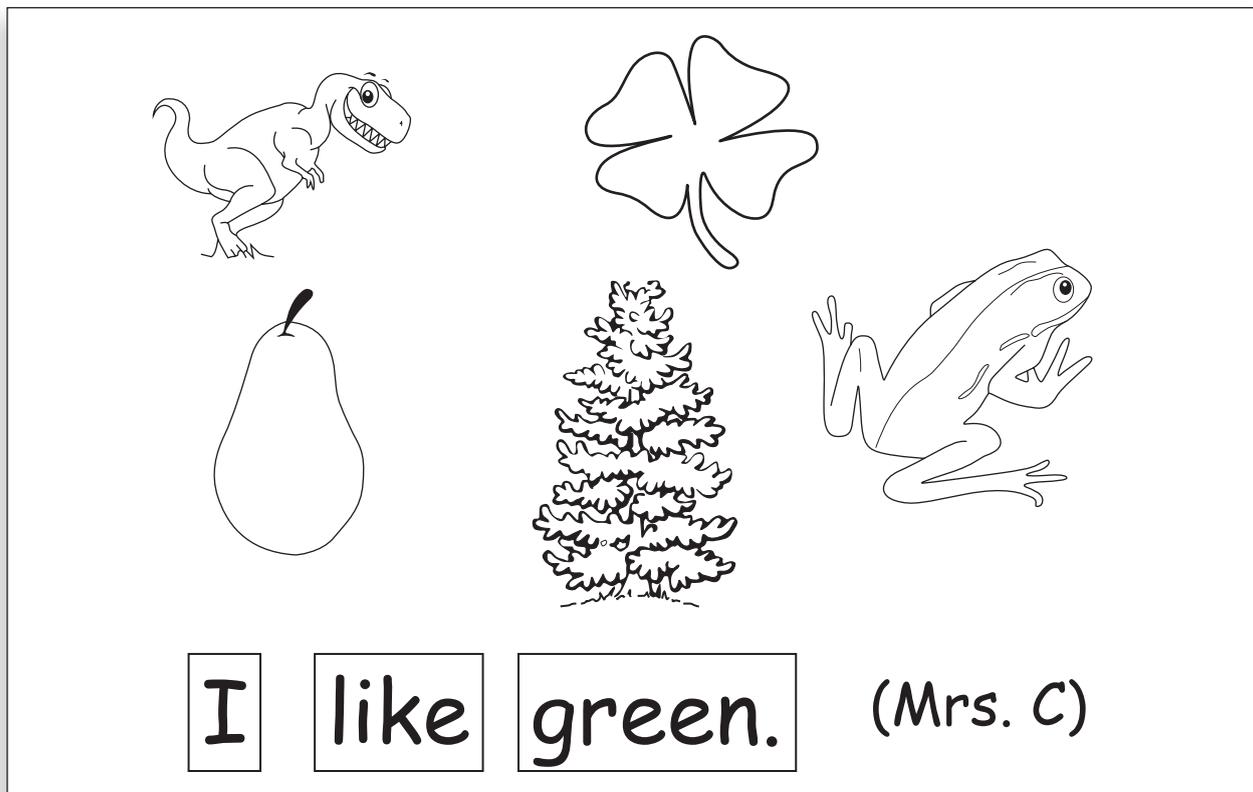
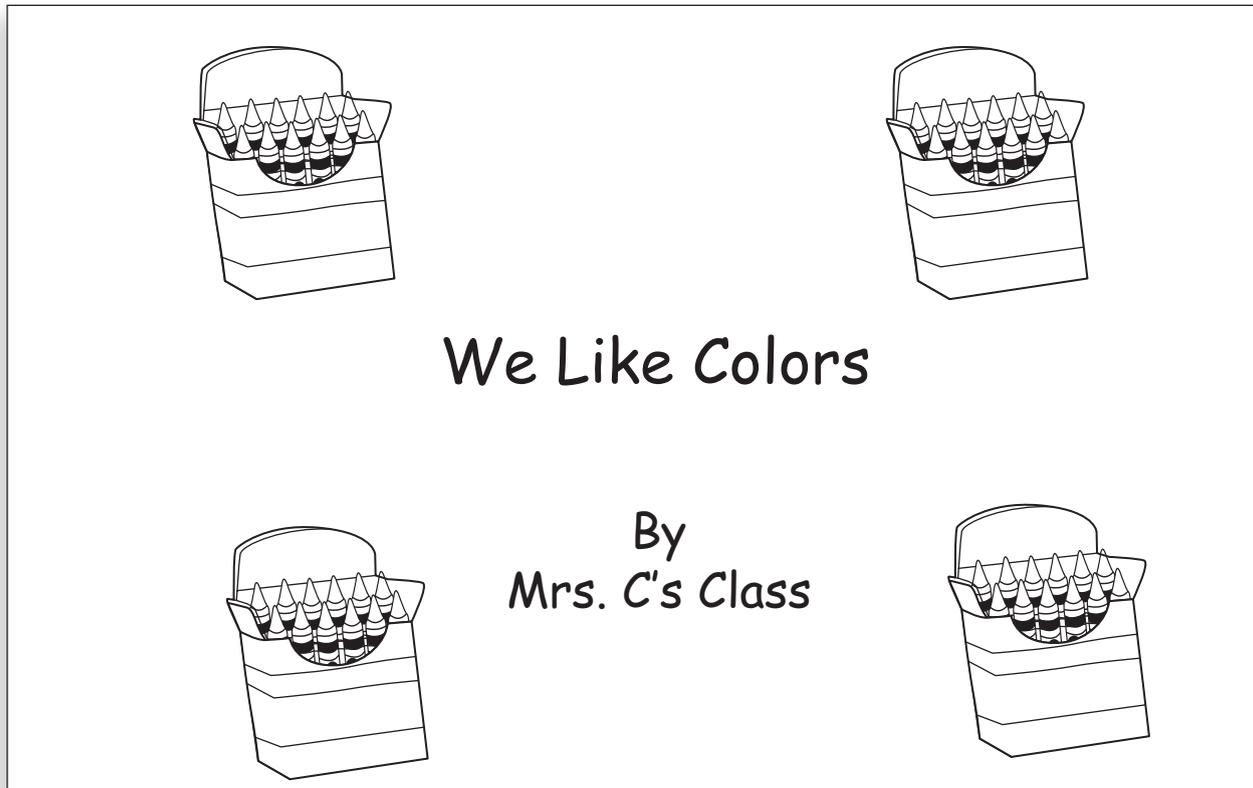
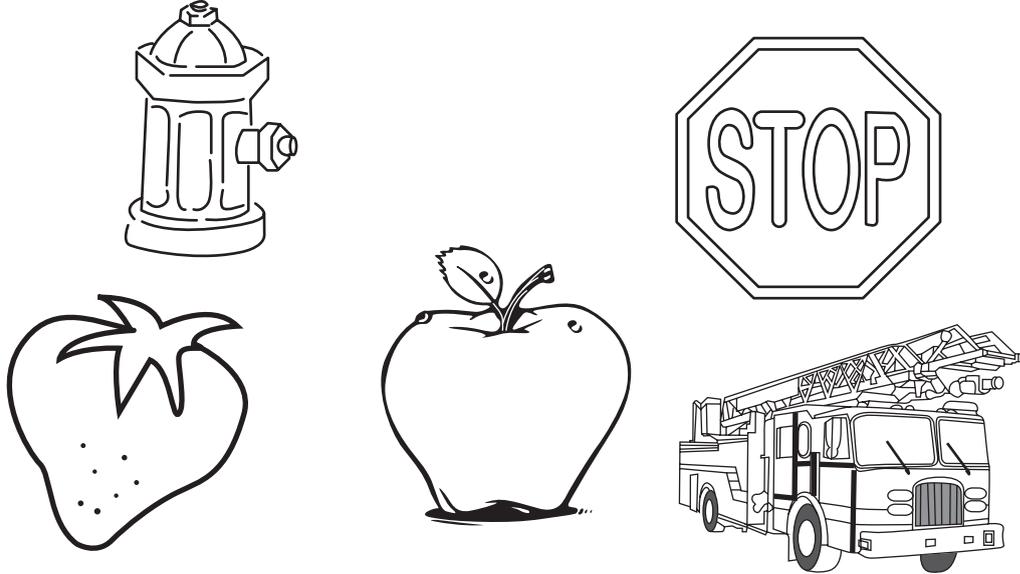
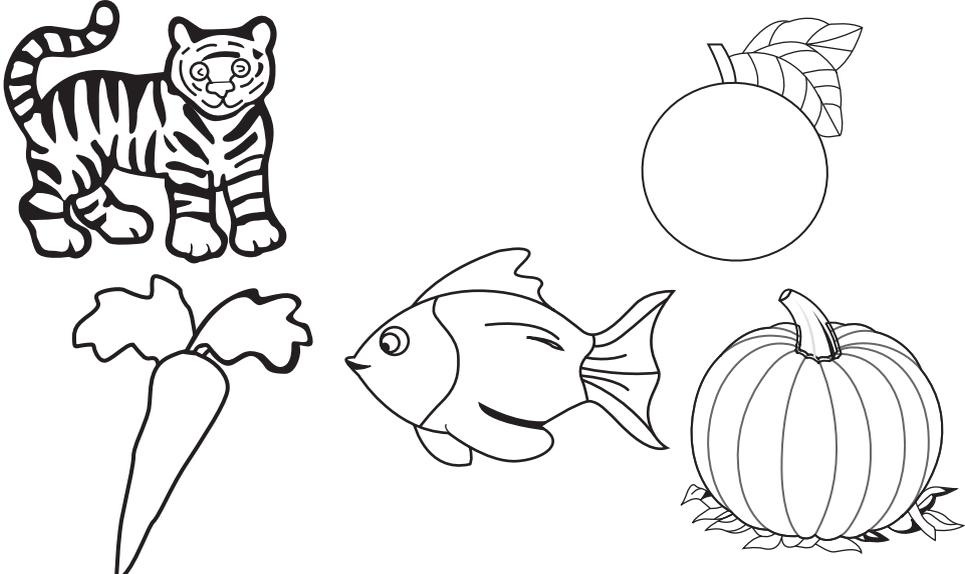


figure 1.7 continued



I like red. (Kevin)



I like orange. (Kelly)

have the words in that sentence come up and arrange themselves to build the sentences. For this chart, the children with the words *I, am, thankful, and for* stay in place and other words join them to form the sentences. (When the sentences of the children holding the cards that are in every sentence are being built, these children get to choose a “sub” to hold their card while they go to the end of the sentence so they can hold up their name.)

Friday On Friday, the whole class participates in making a class book based on the predictable chart. To prepare for Friday’s lesson, Mrs. C copies each child’s sentence on a sentence strip. Each child cuts his or her sentence into words and pastes these words in the correct order on the bottom of a large piece of drawing paper. Then the child illustrates the page. (Although usually the children draw the illustration, for the class book on colors Mrs. C used a free clip art site to let children find pictures of objects beginning with the chosen color. The children printed these out and cut and pasted them on their pages.) When completed, the class books are put in the “Reading Center.” By Thanksgiving, the children will have made 10 class books. These are perennial favorites for independent reading time. The children never tire of reading about themselves and their friends!

* Children Learn Print Functions, Print Concepts, and Words from Their Predictable Charts

Just as children learn print functions, print concepts, and words from the shared reading of predictable text, they also develop these early reading concepts as they participate in making the predictable charts and class books. They learn that reading and writing are for telling about yourself and learning about your classmates. They track print from left to right and proceed in that order as they build the sentences and when they paste them on their page of the class book.

All children learn some words from the charts and books. Most children learn to read their names and the names of many of their classmates, which are written at the end of every sentence. They learn some concrete words—**cat**, **football**, and **pizza**, for example—as they write and read about their favorite animals, sports, and foods. Children who come to school with many of the early reading concepts in place often learn the abstract connecting words—such as *for*, *like*, and *is*—that are repeated again and again on the charts. Predictable charts provide many opportunities to learn both interesting, concrete words and high-frequency abstract words.

Writing

Just as children from literacy-oriented homes read before they can read by pretend-reading a memorized book, they write before they can write! Their writing is usually not readable by anyone besides themselves, and sometimes they

read the same scribbling different ways. They write with pens, markers, crayons, paint, chalk, and normal-size pencils with erasers on the ends! They write on chalkboards, magic slates, walls, drawing paper, and lined notebook paper. (They just ignore the lines!)

They write in scribbles, which first go anywhere and then show a definite left-to-right orientation. They make letterlike forms. They underline certain letters to show word boundaries. As they learn more about words and letters, they let single letters stand for entire words. They draw pictures and intersperse letters with the pictures. They make grocery lists by copying words off packages. They copy favorite words from books. They write love notes (e.g., “I love you, Mama”).

Emergent literacy research has shown that the ability of children to learn is not ruined by being allowed to write before they can write. Rather, they learn many important concepts and develop the confidence that they can write (Sulzby, Teale, & Kamberelis, 1989). Here are some activities that promote writing for all.

* **Provide a Print-Rich Classroom**

Classrooms in which children write contain lots of print in them. In addition to books, there are magazines and newspapers. Charts of recipes and directions for building things hang as reminders. Environmental print boards contain labels from favorite foods—Cheerios, peanut butter, yogurt—and advertisements from local restaurants and stores—Walmart, Taco Bell, Food Lion. Children’s names are on their desks and on many different objects. There are class books, bulletin boards with labeled pictures of animals under study, and labels on almost everything. Children’s drawings and all kinds of writing are displayed. In these classrooms, children see that all types of writing are valued. Equally important, children who want to write “the grown-up way” can find lots of words to make their own.

* **Let Children Watch You Write**

As children watch you write, they observe that you always start in a certain place, go in certain directions, and leave space between words. In addition to these print conventions, they observe that writing is “talk written down.” There are numerous opportunities in every classroom for the teacher to write as the children watch—and sometimes help—with suggestions of what to write.

In many classrooms, the teacher begins the day by writing a morning message on the board. The teacher writes this short message as the children watch.

Dear Class,

Today is Friday. We will go to music at 10:00. After lunch, we will make our 14th class book telling where we like to shop.

I love you,

Mrs. C

The teacher then reads the message, pointing to each word, and invites the children to join in on any words they know. Sometimes teachers take a few minutes to point out some things students might notice from the morning message:

“How many sentences did I write today?”

“How can we tell how many there are?”

“What do we call this mark I put after *I love you*?”

“Do we have any words that begin with the same letters?”

“Which is the longest word?”

These and similar questions help children learn print tracking and jargon and focus their attention on words and letters.

* Include Interactive Writing

Interactive writing is “sharing the pen.” This notion of not only letting children tell you what to write but also letting them “share the pen” is what makes interactive writing different from watching the teacher write and what makes it important to include as another writing format.

To do interactive writing, you gather the children up close to you at a chart or the board and with the children you think of something you want to write. For beginning lessons, what you write should be quite short—no more than a sentence or two. Perhaps you and the children decide that you should write about Brad’s birthday and that the sentences should say:

Today is Brad’s birthday. He is six years old.

You then might ask children to look around the room and see if they can find the word **today** anywhere. When a child finds the word **today**, that child is given the pen and comes up and writes **Today**—the first word in the sentence.

The writing continues as the teacher asks if anyone can come up and write **is**. Brad comes and writes his name. The teacher adds the apostrophe and Brad adds the **s**. Together the teacher and children stretch out **birthday**. Different children come and write the letters they can hear and the teacher fills in the other letters to get **birthday** spelled correctly. Another child volunteers to put the period to show that they have finished the first sentence. The same procedure is continued with the second sentence. Children who can spell **he** and **is** come and write those words. **Six** is found on the number chart and someone comes and writes **six**. **Years** and **old** are stretched out with volunteers writing letters they can hear and the teacher filling in missing letters. Finally, a child adds the period at the end of the second sentence. Children love “sharing the pen” and they pay much more attention to the writing when they are a part of it. Regular, short interactive writing sessions should be a part of every young child’s day.

* Let Them Write and Accept Whatever Kind of Writing They Do

Accepting a variety of writing—from scribbling to one-letter representations, to invented spellings, to copied words—is the key to having young children write before they can write. Sometimes it is the children and not the teacher who reject beginning attempts. If more advanced children give the less advanced children a hard time about their “scribbling,” the teacher must intervene and firmly state a policy, such as:

“There are many different ways to communicate through writing. We use pictures and letters and words. Sometimes we just scribble, but the scribbling helps us remember what we are thinking. We use all these different ways in this classroom!”

Without this attitude of acceptance, the very children who most need to explore language through writing will be afraid to write.

Writing is the most “visible” way to develop print concepts. As children watch you write the morning message or sentences on a chart, they see print tracking in operation. You can make these concepts more obvious by being intentional and “thinking aloud” about what you are doing as you are doing it. Here are some of the common “think-alouds” done by teachers that help children pay attention to print concepts as they watch the teacher write. (Jargon and concepts are bolded and should be emphasized as you say them.)

“Today I am going to write two **sentences** to tell you about what will happen at 10:00.

“I start the first **word** of my **sentence** with a capital **letter**.”

The teacher writes *We*, saying “We” as she writes it.

“I need a **space** before my next **word**.”

The teacher puts a “finger space” and then writes *will*. Each word is read by the teacher as she writes it.

“Another finger **space** and I can write the third **word** of my **sentence**.”

The teacher writes *have*.

“This **word** is also a **letter** and takes only one **letter** to spell it.”

The teacher writes *a*.

“The next word is a **long word** and takes **seven letters** to spell it.”

The teacher writes *special*.

“The **last word** in my **sentence** is . . .”

The teacher writes and says “*treat*.”

“I am at the **end** of my **first sentence** so I will put a **period** here to show that.

We will have a special treat.

I have one more **sentence** to write. I will write it on this **second line** and **start back on the left** again.”

The teacher writes:

Bobby’s mom is bringing cupcakes for his birthday!

As she writes, she talks about what she is doing as she did for the first sentence.

As the year goes on, instead of telling the children what she is doing, she asks them what she should do, with questions such as:

“I am writing the **first word** in my **sentence**. What kind of **letter** do I need?”

“I have finished my **first word**. What do I need to leave **between the first word and the next word**?” “I am at the **end of my sentence**. What should I put here to show that?”

“I am going to write another **sentence**. **Where should I start** writing it?”

Because children can actually watch you write and see the message go down one letter and word at a time, many people believe that modeling writing for children is one of the most effective ways to teach print concepts.

Letting the children write—in whatever way they can—is another powerful way to teach print concepts. As the children write, the teacher circulates and encourages children—coaching them with gentle prompts:

“I will put a little dot here on the **left side** to help you start your sentence in the right place.”

“You have the word **I** written. Tell me the rest of your sentence.”

The child says the sentence, “I like my cat.” The teacher says,

“Good. Put a finger space here and then write your second word, **like**. Can you find **like** in the room to spell it, or should we stretch it out?”

“Is that the end of your sentence? What do you need to put at the end of your sentence?”

“Are you going to write another sentence? Where will you begin it?”

Some teachers hesitate to let children write before they know much about reading and writing because the writing is far from perfect. It helps many teachers to remember that when young children are writing, it doesn't matter what it looks like when they finish. What matters are all the understandings they are developing as they go through the process. Writing provides the "teachable moment" to teach print concepts, and all young children should be encouraged and applauded for their early writing efforts.

* **Children Learn Print Concepts, Words, Phonemic Awareness, and Some Letter Names and Sounds as They Write**

Encouraging young children to write has many benefits. As children write, they learn the print concepts of left to right and leaving spaces between words. (Even when children are scribbling, they usually scribble from left to right and stop occasionally to write a new scribble.) Children often write about themselves and each other, copying names of favorite foods, restaurants, and other places from the print in the classroom. From these writing opportunities, they learn concrete, important-to-them words. As they stretch out words to "put down the sounds they hear," they are developing phonemic awareness. People of all ages are more apt to remember things they actually use; children are no exception. As they use what they are learning about letters and sounds to try to spell words, they are applying their phonics knowledge. Writing is perhaps the best opportunity for developing young children's print concepts, concrete words, phonemic awareness, and knowledge of letters and sounds. Because they are writing what they want to tell, children become perfectly clear about what reading and writing are for.



Getting to Know You

Most teachers begin their year with some get-acquainted activities. As part of these activities, they often designate a special child each day. In addition to learning about each child, the teacher can focus attention on the special child's name and use the name to develop some important understandings about words and letters.

To prepare for this activity, write all the children's first names (with initials for last names if two names are the same) with a permanent marker on sentence strips. Cut the strips so that long names have long strips and short names have short strips. Let the children watch you write their names and have them help you spell their names if they can. After writing each name, display it in a pocket chart or other board. As you put each name up, comment on letters shared by certain children or other common features:

"Rasheed's name starts with an R—just like Robert's."

“Bo’s name takes only two letters to write. He has the shortest name, but he is one of the tallest boys.”

“We have two Ashleys, so I will have to put the first letter of her last name—M—so that we will know which Ashley this is.”

The children will watch and think as the names are being written, and probably all will pay close attention because they are so egocentric—interested in themselves and in each other. Their attention for anything, however, diminishes after 15 to 20 minutes, so if you have a large class, you may want to write the names in two different sessions.

Once you have all the names written and displayed, ask volunteers to come and find a name they can read. Many children will read their own, and almost everyone will remember Bo!

Tell the children that each day one of them will be the special child and that in order to make it fair—because some children will have to wait 20 or more days—you are going to put all the names in a box and shake up the box and, without looking, draw one of the names. Explain what the special child will get to do each day. Some teachers crown that child king or queen, let him or her lead the line, decide what game to play for P.E., sit in a special chair to greet visitors, pass things out, take messages to the office, and so on. Do keep in mind that whatever you do for the first, you must do for all the rest, so make sure you can sustain whatever you start. (Remember the “Don’t do anything the first month of marriage you don’t want to do the whole rest of your married life” advice most of us got but ignored!) Each day, reach into the box and draw out a name. This child becomes the special child and the focus of many literacy activities. For our example, we will assume that David is the first name pulled from the box.

* **Interviewing and Shared Writing**

Have David come to the front of the room and sit in a special chair. Appoint the rest of the children as class reporters. Their job is to interview David and find out what he likes to eat, play, and do after school. Does he have brothers? Sisters? Cats? Dogs? Mice? Decide on a certain number of questions (five to seven) and call on different children to ask the questions.

After the interview, write your “newspaper article” on this special child using a shared writing format in which the children give suggestions and you and they decide what to say first, last, and so on. Record this on a chart while the children watch. The chart should not be more than five or six sentences long and the sentences should not be too complex because these news articles about each VIP will form some of the first material most children will be able to read. The interview and the writing of the chart should be completed within the children’s 20-minute attention span and can be if the teacher limits the number of questions and takes the lead in the writing of the article. This first activity for each child—interviewing and shared writing of the article—develops crucial oral language skills and helps children see how writing and reading occur.

figure 1.8 Sample pages from *All About Us Class Book*

David Cunningham is 5 years old. He does not have any brothers or sisters. He has a pet cat named Harriet. He has 3 cousins, Jon, Sarah, and Kevin. David likes to eat pizza. He likes to play basketball. His favorite team is the Boston Red Sox.

Kathleen Gallagher is 5 years old. She has a brother named Ryan. She has a pet cat named Squeaky. She likes to eat chocolate ice cream. She likes to skate. Her favorite holiday is Halloween.

* Shared Reading of the Charts

The second activity is the reading of David's chart. This takes place later in the day and, again, does not take more than 20 minutes. On the first day, you will have only one chart to read. Lead the children to read it chorally several times and let volunteers come and read each sentence. Guide their hands so that they are tracking print as they read. Most teachers display each chart for five days and then let the child take the chart home with instructions to display it on the child's bedroom door. That way, there are only five charts in the room at any one time but every chart gets read and reread on five different days.

Many teachers also write (or type) the article from the chart and, after all the children have had their special days and have been interviewed, compile a class book containing each article (often along with a picture of each child). Each child then has one night to take the book home so that each child's family can get to know the whole class.

* Children Learn What Reading and Writing Are For, Print Concepts, and Some Words through Getting to Know You Activities

Getting to Know You is another opportunity for children to become clear about the functions of reading and writing. Children pay very close attention as each child is being interviewed and as the chart about each child is written. They love to reread the charts and class book (a compilation of these charts) over and over. The "hook" in Getting to Know You is that the reading and writing are centered on the most important people in the world—the children themselves! Writing is for telling important things and reading is for learning and enjoying, and

For English Language Learners

The activities included in this chapter are important for helping launch all children successfully on their literacy journey; they are especially crucial for English language learners. Children who are learning to speak and understand English as they are learning to read and write need the language support and the confidence boost endemic to these activities. Predictable books and predictable charts have repeated sentence patterns that allow children learning English to feel successful in reading as they add these simple sentences to their English spoken language. Providing a print-rich classroom, letting children watch you write, and supporting children's fledgling attempts at writing allows your English language learners to feel successful at writing when their—like everyone else's—efforts are less than perfect. English language learners, along with their English-speaking classmates, delight in the Getting to Know You charts both when they are the subject of these charts and when they are learning and reading about their friends. The jump-start to literacy activities included in this chapter have been successful with children learning English—young children and older children alike.

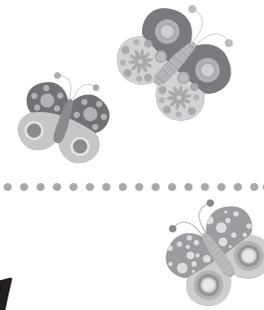


children who emerge into literacy through Getting to Know You activities have no doubt about how important and satisfying reading and writing are. Just as in shared reading and predictable charts, children are put into a very comfortable, supportive environment through which they learn significant print concepts and begin to add words to their reading and writing vocabularies.

Summary

In order to make sense of phonics instruction, children must develop some basic concepts. They must know why people read and write and develop an “I can't wait 'til I can do it too” attitude. They must learn how to track print and understand the print-related jargon used to talk about print. Children also need to develop a basic level of phonological and phonemic awareness, learn some important-to-them words and learn some letter names and sounds. This chapter has suggested four activities—shared reading of predictable text, predictable charts, writing, and Getting to Know You—that will help children begin to develop these basic concepts. The remaining chapters in Part One will focus specifically on phonological and phonemic awareness and learning some words as well as letter names and sounds.

chapter 2



Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

As described in Chapter 1, phonological and phonemic awareness refers to children's understandings about words and sounds in words. *Phonological awareness* includes the ability to separate sentences into words and words into syllables. *Phonemic awareness* includes the ability to recognize that words are made up of a discrete set of sounds and to manipulate sounds. Many children come to school with well-developed phonemic awareness abilities, and these children usually come from homes in which rhyming chants, jingles, and songs are part of their daily experience. These same chants, jingles, and songs should be a part of every young child's day in the classroom. Children also develop a sense of sounds and words as they try to write. Children who are allowed and encouraged to "invent-spell" develop an early and strong sense of phonemic awareness.

Many of the activities discussed in Chapter 1 help children develop phonemic awareness. As children participate in shared reading and writing, they become aware of words as separate entities. Sentence Builders help children understand what words are. Encouraging invented spelling during writing is one of the main ways teachers have of helping children develop their understanding of how phonemes make up words. As children try to spell words, they say them slowly, listening to themselves saying the sounds and thinking about what they are learning about letters and sounds. Following are other activities you can use to promote phonological and phonemic awareness.

Developing Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness includes the ability to separate sentences into words and words into syllables. Two activities, Counting Words and Clapping Syllables, help develop children's phonological awareness.

* Counting Words

To count words, all children should have 10 counters in a paper cup. (Anything manipulable is fine. Some teachers use edibles such as raisins, grapes, or small crackers and let the children eat their counters at the end of the lesson. This makes cleanup quick and easy.) Begin by counting some familiar objects in the room (windows, doors, trash cans), having all children place one of their counters on their desks as each object is pointed to. Children should return counters to the cup before beginning to count the next object.

Tell the children that they can also count words by putting down a counter for each word you say. Explain that you will say a sentence in the normal way and then repeat the sentence, pausing after each word. The children should put down counters as you slowly say the words in the sentence and then count the counters and decide how many words you said. As usual, children's attention is better if you make sentences about them. ("Carol has a big smile." "Paul is back at school today." "I saw Jack at the grocery store.") Once the children catch on to the activity, let them say some sentences, first in the normal way, then one word at a time. Listen carefully as they say their sentences the first time because they will often need help saying them one word at a time. Children enjoy this activity, and not only are they learning to separate out words in speech, but they are also practicing counting skills.

* Clapping Syllables

Once children can automatically separate the speech stream into words, they are ready to begin thinking about separating words into some components. The first division most children learn to make is that of syllables. Clapping seems the easiest way to get every child involved, and the children's names (what else?) are the naturally appealing words to clap. Say the first name of one child. Say the name again, and this time, clap the syllables. Continue saying first names and then clapping the syllables as you say them the second time and invite the children to join in clapping with you. As children catch on, say some middle or last names. The term *syllables* is a little jargony and foreign to most young children, so you may want to refer to the syllables as beats. Children should realize by clapping that **Paul** is a one-beat word, **Miguel** is a two-beat word, and **Madeira** is a three-beat word.

When the children can clap syllables and decide how many beats a given word has, help them to see that one-beat words are usually shorter than three-beat words—that is, they take fewer letters to write. To do this, write on sentence strips some words children cannot read and cut the strips into words so that short words have short strips and long words have long strips. Have some of the words begin with the same letters but be different lengths so that children will need to think about word length to decide which word is which.

For the category "animals," you might write **horse** and **hippopotamus**; **dog** and **donkey**; **kid** and **kangaroo**; and **rat**, **rabbit**, and **rhinoceros**. Tell the

children that you are going to say the names of animals and they should clap to show how many beats the word has. (Do not show them the words yet!) Say the first pair, one at a time (**horse**, **hippopotamus**) and then have the children say them. Help the children decide that **horse** is a one-beat word and **hippopotamus** takes a lot more claps and is a five-beat word. Now, show them the two words and say, “One of these words is **horse** and the other is **hippopotamus**. Who thinks they can figure out which one is **horse** and which one is **hippopotamus**?” Help the children by explaining that because **hippopotamus** takes so many beats to say, it will probably take more letters to write. Continue with other pairs—and finally with a triplet—**rat**, **rabbit**, **rhinoceros**—to make the activity more multilevel.



Developing the Concept of Rhyme

Recognizing and producing rhyming words is an essential part of phonemic awareness. To develop the concept of rhyme, teachers can use nursery and other rhymes and take advantage of all the wonderful rhyming books.

* Do Nursery Rhymes

One of the best indicators of how well children will learn to read is their ability to recite nursery rhymes when they enter kindergarten. Since this is such a reliable indicator, and since rhymes are so naturally appealing to children at this age, kindergarten classrooms should be filled with rhymes. Children should learn to recite these rhymes, sing the rhymes, clap to the rhymes, act out the rhymes, and pantomime the rhymes. In some kindergarten classrooms, they develop “raps” for the rhymes.

Once the children can recite many rhymes, nursery rhymes can be used to teach the concept of rhyme. The class can be divided into two halves—one half says the rhyme but stops when they get to the last rhyming word. The other half waits to shout the rhyme at the appropriate moment:

First half:	There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
	She had so many children, she didn't know what to
Second half:	do.
First half:	She gave them some broth without any bread,
	and spanked them all soundly and put them to
Second half:	bed.

Nursery and other rhymes have been a part of our oral heritage for generations. Now we know that the rhythm and rhyme inherent in nursery rhymes are important vehicles for the beginning development of phonemic awareness. They should play a large role in any kindergarten curriculum.

* Do Rhymes and Riddles

Young children are terribly egocentric, and they are very “body oriented.” In doing rhymes and riddles, therefore, have children point to different body parts to show rhyming words. Tell children that you are going to say some words that rhyme with **head** or **feet**. After you say each word, have the children repeat the word with you and decide if the word rhymes with **head** or **feet**. If the word you say rhymes with **head**, they should point to their head. If it rhymes with **feet**, they should point to their feet. As children point, be sure to respond, acknowledging a correct response by saying something like, “Carl is pointing to his head because **bread** rhymes with **head**.” You may want to use some of these words:

meet	bread	led	sleet	seat	red	sheet	fed
bed	beat	sled	thread	dead	greet	heat	shed

Now, ask the children to say the missing word in the following riddles (the answers all rhyme with **head**):

On a sandwich, we put something in between the . . .
 When something is not living anymore, it is . . .
 To sew, you need a needle and . . .
 The color of blood is . . .
 We can ride down snowy hills on a . . .

Here are other riddles, the answers to which rhyme with **feet**:

Steak and pork chops are different kinds of . . .
 On a crowded bus, it is hard to get a . . .
 You make your bed with a . . .
 When you are cold, you turn on the . . .

If children like this activity, do it again, but this time have them listen for words that rhyme with **hand** or **knee**. If the word you say rhymes with **hand**, they should point to their hand. If it rhymes with **knee**, they should point to their knee. Some words to use are:

sand	band	land	see	me	bee	stand
grand	we	free	brand	tea	tree	and

Here are some riddles for **hand**:

At the beach, you dig in the . . .
 To build a house, you must first buy a piece of . . .

The musicians who march and play in a parade are called a . . .

You can sit or you can . . .

And here are some more that rhyme with **knee**:

You use your eyes to . . .

You could get stung by a . . .

If something doesn't cost anything, we say it is . . .

You can climb up into a . . .

To challenge your class, have them make up riddles and point for words that rhyme with **feet**, **knee**, **hand**, or **head**. As each child gives a riddle, have the riddle giver point to the body part that rhymes with the answer. Model this for the children by doing a few to show them how.

* Sing Rhymes and Read Lots of Rhyming Books

There are many wonderful rhyming books, but because of its potential to develop phonemic awareness, one deserves special mention. Along with other great rhyming books, Dr. Seuss wrote *There's a Wocket in My Pocket*. In this book, all kinds of Seussian creatures are found in various places. In addition to the wocket in the pocket, there is a vug under the rug, a nureau in the bureau, and a yottle in the bottle! After several readings, children delight in chiming in to provide the nonsensical word and scary creature that lurks in harmless-looking places. After reading the book a few times, it is fun to decide what creatures might be lurking in your classroom. Let children make up the creatures, and accept whatever they say as long as it rhymes with their object:

"There's a pock on our clock!"

"There's a zindow looking in our window!"

"There's a zencil on my pencil!"

Once you have found some wonderful books with lots of rhymes, follow these steps to assure your children are learning to recognize and produce rhymes:

1. Pick a book with lots of rhymes that you think your children will "fall in love with." Read, enjoy, and talk about the content of the book, and let children become thoroughly comfortable and familiar with the book. Remember that children who are lucky enough to own books want books read to them again and again.
2. After the children are very familiar with the book, reread it again, and tell them that the author of this book made it "fun to say" by including lots of

rhymes. Read the book, stopping after each rhyme, and have children identify the rhyming words and say them with you.

3. For the next reading, tell the children that you are going to stop and have them fill in the rhyming word. Read the whole book, stopping each time and asking the children to supply the rhyming word.
4. The activities in steps 2 and 3 have helped children identify rhymes. We also want children to produce rhymes. Depending on the book, find a way to have your students make up similar rhymes. Producing rhymes was what children were doing when they made up rhyming items such as “the zencil on the pencil.”

Recognizing and producing rhymes is one of the critical components of phonemic awareness. Children who engage in these kinds of activities with wonderful rhyming books will develop the concept of rhyme.



Teaching Blending and Segmenting

Blending is the ability to put sounds back together to form words. *Segmenting* is the ability to separate a word into its component sounds. Blending and segmenting are difficult concepts for many children, but they can develop them if you use a lot of blending and segmenting games, tongue twisters, and sound boxes.

* Play Blending and Segmenting Games

In addition to hearing and producing rhyme, the ability to put sounds together to make a word—blending—and the ability to separate out the sounds in a word—segmenting—are critical components of phonemic awareness. Blending and segmenting are not easy for many children. In general, it is easier for them to segment off the beginning letters (the *onset*) from the rest of the word (the *rime*) than it is to separate all the sounds. In other words, children can usually separate **bat** into **b/at** before they can produce the three sounds **b-a-t**. The same is true for blending. Most children can blend **S/am** to produce the name **Sam** before they can blend **S-a-m**. Most teachers begin by having children blend and segment the onset from the rime and then move to blending and segmenting individual letters.

There are lots of games children enjoy that can help them learn to blend and segment. The most versatile is a simple riddle guessing game. The teacher begins the game by naming the category and giving the clue:

“I’m thinking of an animal that lives in the water and is a **f/ish**.”
(or **f/i/sh**, depending on what level of blending you are working on)

The child who correctly guesses **fish** gives the next riddle:

“I’m thinking of an animal that goes quack and is a **d/uck**.” (or **d/u/ck**)

This sounds simplistic, but children love it, and you can use different categories to go along with units you are studying.

A wonderful variation on this guessing game is to put objects in a bag and let children reach in the bag to choose one. Then they stretch out the name of the object and call on someone to guess “What is it?” Choose small common objects you find in the room—a cap, a ball, chalk, a book. Let the children watch you load the bag and help you stretch out the words for practice as you put them in.

Children also like to talk like “ghosts.” One child chooses an object in the room to say as a ghost would, stretching the word out very slowly: “dddooorrr.” The child who correctly guesses “door” gets to ghost talk another object: “bbboookkk.” The ghost-talk game and the guessing game provide practice in segmenting and blending as children segment words by stretching them out and other children blend the words together to guess them.

* Tongue Twisters and Books with Lots of Alliteration

In addition to concepts of rhyme, blending, and segmenting, children must learn what it means that words “start the same.” This understanding must be in place before children can make sense of the notion that particular letters make particular sounds. Children often confuse the concept of words beginning or starting with the same sound with the concept of rhyme, so many teachers like to wait until most of their students have a firm grasp of the concept of rhyme before focusing on whether words begin with the same sound. Just as with rhyme, teachers can help children understand the concept of words that start the same by using wonderful books such as *All about Arthur—An Absolutely Absurd Ape* by Eric Carle. Arthur, an ape who plays the accordion, travels around the country meeting lots of other musicians—including, in Baltimore, a bear who plays a banjo, and a yak in Yonkers. *Dr. Seuss’s ABC*, in which each individual letter of the alphabet appears throughout a sentence, such as in the sentence beginning “Many mumbling mice . . .,” is another excellent example of an appealing book that helps children understand what it means to “start the same.” Activities using alliterative books should follow the same steps as those for rhyming books:

1. Read and enjoy the book several times.
2. Point out that the author used some “start the same” words to make the book fun to say and identify these words.
3. Let the children say the “start the same” words with you as you read the book again.
4. Have the children come up with other words that “start the same” that the author could have used on that page.

Tongue-Twister Books

Here are some wonderful tongue-twister books:

All about Arthur—An Absolutely Absurd Ape (Eric Carle, Simon & Schuster, 1974)

Alphabet Annie Announces an All-American Album (Susan Purviance & Marcia O'Shell, Houghton Mifflin, 1988)

Animalia (Graeme Base, Abrams, 1987)

The Biggest Tongue Twister Book in the World (Gyles Brandeth, Sterling, 1978)

Dr. Seuss's ABC (Dr. Seuss, Random House, 1963)

Faint Frogs Feeling Feverish and Other Terrifically Tantalizing Tongue Twisters (Lillian Obligada, Viking, 1983)

Six Sick Sheep (Jan Cole, Morrow, 1993)

A Twister of Twists, A Tangler of Tongues and Busy Buzzing Bumblebees and Other Tongue Twisters (Alvin Schwartz, HarperCollins, 1972)



Once you have read and enjoyed several tongue-twister books, why not create a tongue-twister book for your class? Let the children help you make up the tongue twisters and add two or three each day. Turn the tongue twisters into posters or bind them into a class book and ask the children to read them with you several times—as slowly as they can and as fast as they can. Help the children understand that what makes tongue twisters hard to say fast is that the words all start the same and you keep having to get your mouth and tongue into the same place. The same first sound repeated over and over is also what makes them so much fun to say. Here are some to get you started. You and your students can surely make up better ones. Be sure to use children's names from your class when they have the right letters and sounds!

Billy's baby brother bopped Betty.

Carol can catch caterpillars.

David dozed during dinner.

Fred's father fell fifty feet.

Gorgeous Gloria gets good grades.

Hungry Harry hates hamburgers.

Jack juggled Jill's jewelry.

Kevin's kangaroo kicked Karen.

Louie likes licking lemon lollipops.

Mike's mom makes marvelous meatballs.

Naughty Nellie never napped nicely.
Patty picked pink pencils.
Roger Rabbit runs relays.
Susie's sister sipped seven sodas.
Tom took ten turtles to town.
Veronica visited very vicious volcanoes.
Wild Willy went west.
Yippy yanked Yolanda's yellow yoyo.
Zany Zeb zapped Zeke's zebra.

As you work with books with lots of words that begin the same and with tongue twisters, begin by emphasizing the words that start the same. This is the phonemic awareness understanding that underlies phonics knowledge. When your students can tell you whether words start with the same sound and can come up with other words that start that way, shift your instruction to which letter makes which sound. You can use the very same books and tongue twisters again, this time emphasizing the sound of the letter. Books with alliteration and tongue twisters can help children develop the “starts the same” component of phonemic awareness and can help them learn some letter sounds.

* Sound Boxes

Some children find it very difficult to segment words into sounds. Many teachers have found success using a technique called Sound Boxes (Elkonin, 1973), in which children push chips, pennies, or other objects into boxes as they hear the sounds. In the first lessons, children have a drawing of three boxes.



The teacher says familiar words composed of three sounds, such as **cat**, **sun**, **dog**, and **pan**. Often children are shown pictures of these objects. After naming each object, the teacher and children “stretch out” the three sounds, distorting the word as little as possible: “ssuuunnn.” Children push a chip into each box as they say that part of the word. It is important to note here that the boxes represent sounds—phonemes—not letters. **Cake**, **bike**, and **duck** have three sounds but four letters. These words would be segmented into three sound boxes. After

the children get good at segmenting words with three sounds, they are given a drawing with four boxes and they stretch out some four-phoneme words such as **truck**, **crash**, and **nest**. Sound Boxes are used extensively to develop phonemic awareness in children in Reading Recovery (Clay, 1985), a highly successful one-on-one tutoring program that works with first-graders who are in the bottom 20 percent of the class.

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Once the children can push the chips to represent sounds, they can push letter cards into boxes. From the letters **m**, **b**, **s**, **t**, and **a**, the teacher could ask the children to push these letters to spell words such as **sat**, **bat**, **mat**, **bam**, **Sam**, **tab**, **bats**, **mats**, **tabs**, and **stab**. Children should not work with letters in the sound boxes until they have developed some phonemic awareness and are working on learning letter names and letter sounds. Later on, children can actually write the letters in the boxes as they are attempting to spell words they are writing.

Using Names to Build Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

You can use your children's names to build phonological and phonemic awareness.

Clap Syllables The first way that children learn to pull apart words is into syllables. Say each child's name and have the children clap the beats in that name as they say it with you. Help children to see that Tran and Pat are one-beat names, Manuel and Patrick, two beats, and so on. Once children begin to understand, clap the beats and have all the children whose names have that number of beats stand up and say their names as they clap the beats with you.

Matching Beginning Sounds Say a sound—not a letter name—and have all the children whose names begin with that sound come forward. Stretch out the sound as you make it: “ssss.” For the “sss” sound, Samantha, Susie, Steve, and Cynthia should all come forward. Have everyone stretch out the “sss” as they say the names. If anyone points out that Cynthia starts with a **c** or that Sharon starts with an **s**, explain that he or she is correct about the letters but that now you are listening for sounds.

For English Language Learners

All children—those learning English as well as those whose native language is English—need to develop phonological and phonemic awareness to be successful readers. In 2006, the National Literacy Panel (August & Shanahan, 2006) concluded that there was a great deal of variation in the levels of phonemic awareness among English language learners and that this variability was related to age, language and literacy experiences, and level of language proficiency in both languages. The organization also concluded that difficulties in phonemic awareness are not causing more difficulties for English language learners in learning to read when compared with native speakers. Phonemic awareness skills developed in the first language seem to predict and be instrumental in phonemic awareness development in the second language. For teachers, the comforting news appears to be that phonemic awareness development activities such as those described in this chapter are appropriate for both native speakers and English language learners.



Hear Rhyming Words Choose the children whose names have lots of rhyming words to come forward. Say a word that rhymes with one of the names and have the children say the word along with the name of the rhyming child.

Segment Words into Sounds Call children to line up by stretching out their names, emphasizing each letter. As each child lines up, have the class stretch out the name with you.

Summary

Phonological and phonemic awareness is an essential part of the foundation for learning to read. Children need to understand how sounds go together in words. They need to be able to manipulate words in their heads. The activities in this chapter mimic activities children from literacy-rich homes do before coming to school. If schools provide young children with a variety of activities such as those suggested here, all children can develop phonological and phonemic awareness and greatly increase the possibility that they will become fluent readers and writers.