NURTURING EARLY LEARNERS
A GOOD START FOR EVERY CHILD

A Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education in Singapore

EDUCATORS' GUIDE FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Copyright © 2023, Ministry of Education
Republic of Singapore
Earlier editions published by Ministry of Education, Singapore in 2003 and 2013.

All rights reserved. This publication shall not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

All information contained herein is correct at the time of printing.

ISBN: 978-981-18-7427-7

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 6

OVERVIEW OF EDUCATORS' GUIDES 7

CHAPTER 1:
Language and Literacy in the Early Years 9

- Children as Bilingual Learners in Singapore 10
- Interest in Language and Literacy 12
- Listening and Speaking 13
- Early Reading 17
- Early Writing 20
- Appreciation for the Local Ethnic Culture 24

CHAPTER 2:
Learning Goals for Language and Literacy 25

- Learning Goal 1: Listen for Enjoyment and Information 26
- Learning Goal 2: Speak with Confidence to Convey Meaning and Communicate with Others 31
- Learning Goal 3: Read with Enjoyment and Understanding 38
- Learning Goal 4: Use Symbols, Letter-Like Shapes, Letters and Words With Invented and Conventional Spelling To Communicate Ideas and Information 51
- Overview of Mother Tongue Language Learning 57

CHAPTER 3:
Strategies and Approaches for Language and Literacy 64

- Strategies to Develop Listening and Speaking Skills 66
- Strategies to Develop Reading Skills 67
- Strategies to Develop Writing Skills 77
- Strategies to Develop Language and Literacy Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions 80
- Key Considerations for Mother Tongue Language Teaching and Learning 86
- Catering to Diverse Learners 87

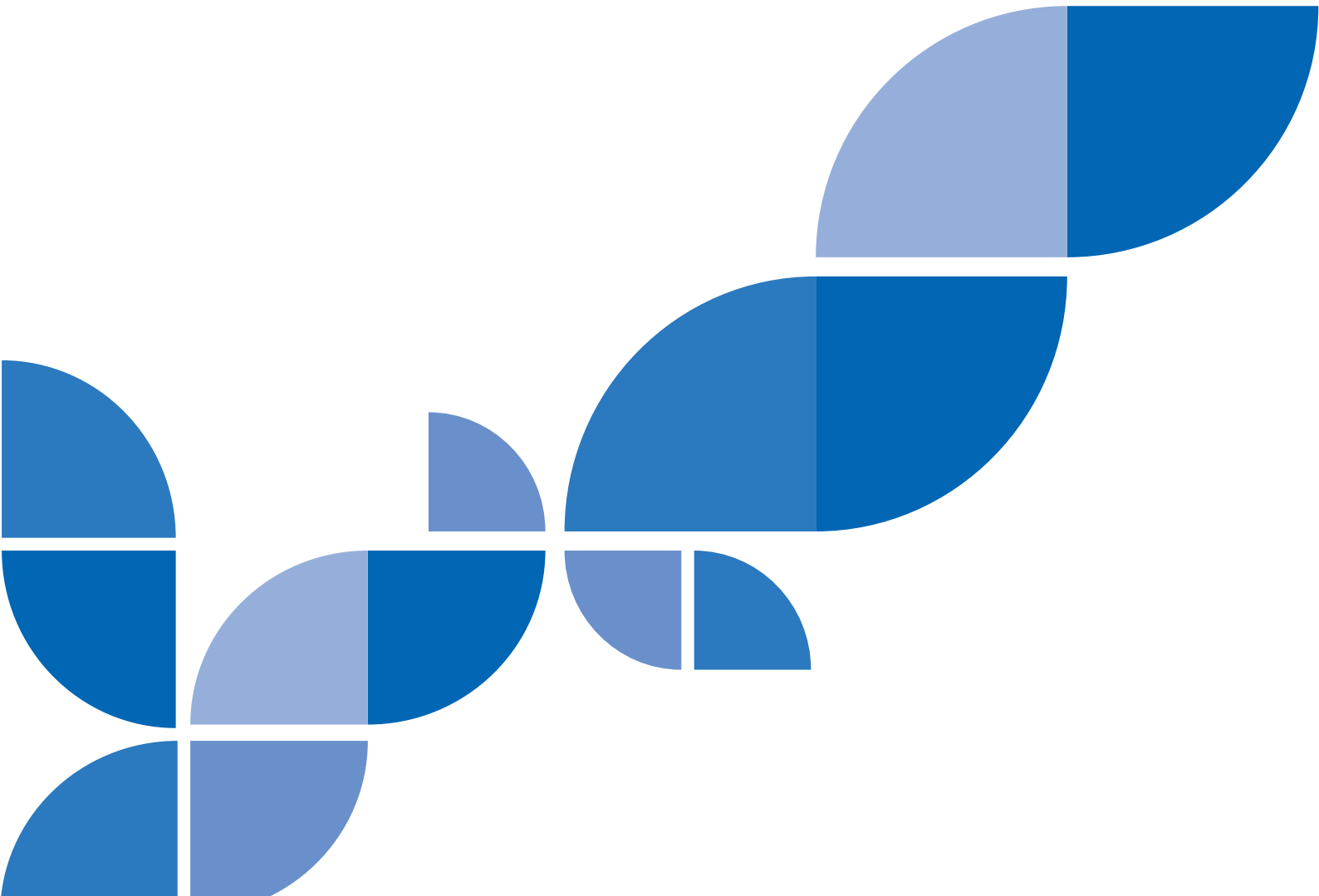
CHAPTER 4:
Organising the Learning Environment 93

- Language-Rich Environment 94
- Print-Rich Environment 96
- Setting Up Learning Centres to Support Language and Literacy 100
- Promoting Language and Literacy in Other Learning Centres 109

CHAPTER 5:
Monitoring and Assessing Learning and Development 110

- Observing, Documenting and Assessing Children's Learning and Development 111
- Examples of Observation, Documentation and Assessment of Children's Learning 114

BIBLIOGRAPHY 119



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry of Education wishes to thank Dr Beth O'Brien who had provided valuable advice in the development of the document.

We would like to acknowledge the members of the Nurturing Early Learners Framework Review Committee, Yvonne Pek Chu Lin from the National Institute of Early Childhood Development, and Associate Professor Dora Chen, Early Childhood Programme, S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences for their advice, feedback and recommendation for the document.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the following preschool centres for sharing their photographs:

- E-Bridge Pre-School @ Bukit Panjang Plaza
- Hampton Preschool Tanjong Pagar
- Learning Vision @ Techpoint
- Little Atlas Preschool
- MOE Kindergartens
- M.Y World @ Tampines Central
- My First Skool at 50 Sengkang West Way
- Presbyterian Preschool Services
- Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten
- St. James' Church Kindergarten @ Gilstead (Anglican Preschool Services)
- The Schoolhouse by Busy Bees, Sembawang Country Club

OVERVIEW OF EDUCATORS' GUIDES

Nurturing Early Learners – A Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education in Singapore or NEL Framework was updated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2022. It provides broad principles to guide preschool centres in planning and implementing a quality curriculum for children aged four to six (i.e., Nursery 2, Kindergarten 1 and Kindergarten 2).

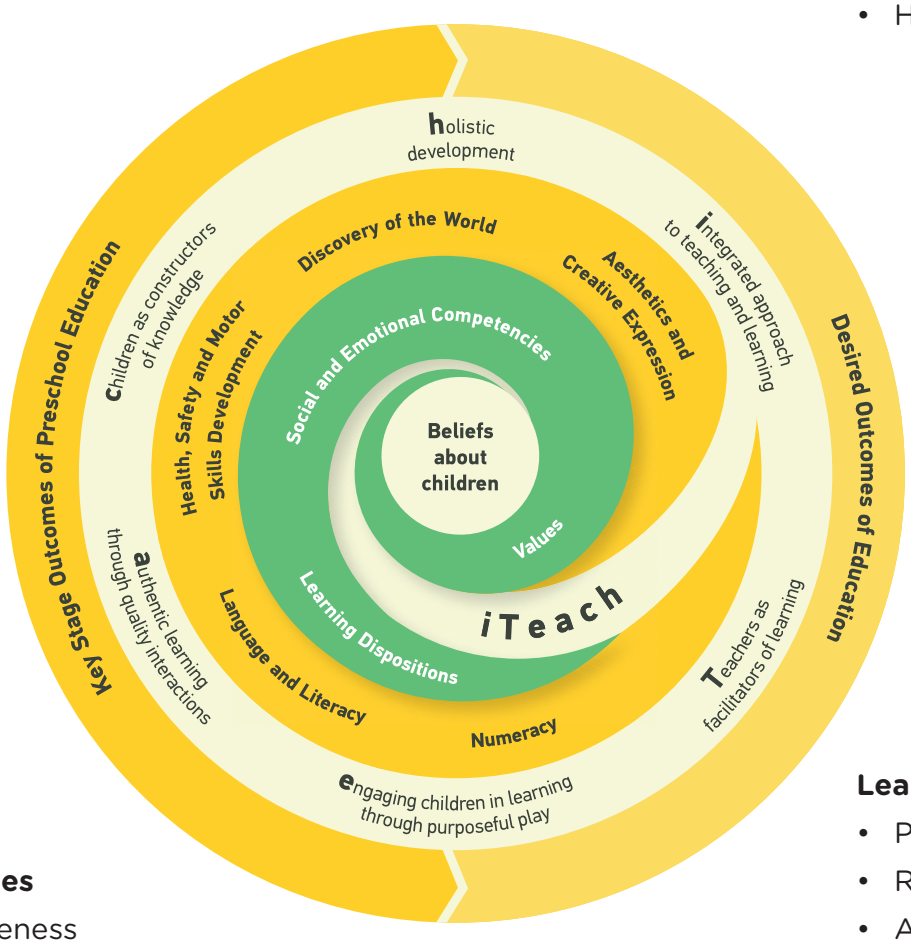
Figure 1: Key Concepts of NEL Framework

Beliefs about Children

- Children are joyful, curious, active and competent learners.
- Children play, learn and grow with others in a diverse and multi-cultural community.

Values

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Care
- Honesty



Social and Emotional Competencies

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship management
- Responsible decision-making

Learning Dispositions

- Perseverance
- Reflectiveness
- Appreciation
- Inventiveness
- Sense of wonder and curiosity
- Engagement

At the centre of the NEL Framework is our beliefs about children. It emphasises the importance of holistic development and nurturing the joy of learning in our children. The NEL Framework places an increased importance on the key aspects of children's learning and development, which include inculcating values, developing social and emotional competencies and fostering learning dispositions. These cut across all learning areas and should be intentionally and consistently incorporated across children's learning experiences as they serve as the foundation for character building, lifelong learning and learning to live harmoniously with others. The NEL Framework also states the key knowledge, skills and dispositions of five learning areas to support children's holistic development.

Teachers play a critical role in stimulating and deepening children's learning based on their understanding of how children develop and learn. The six *iTeach* principles serve to guide preschool teachers in planning, designing and facilitating joyful and meaningful learning experiences which will lay a strong foundation to help children achieve the Key Stage Outcomes of Preschool Education and the Desired Outcomes of Education in Singapore.

PURPOSE OF THE EDUCATORS' GUIDES

The NEL Educators' Guides seek to help teachers translate the NEL Framework into quality teaching and learning experiences for children. The nine volumes of Educators' Guides provide teaching and learning strategies; examples of learning activities; ways of organising the learning environment; and considerations for observation and assessment of children's learning and development. Each Educators' Guide takes close reference to the principles and learning goals of the NEL Framework. The examples in each Educators' Guide illustrate one or several of the following:

Values

Social and Emotional Competencies

Learning Dispositions

Executive Functioning Skills

1. Nurturing values, social and emotional competencies, learning dispositions and executive functioning skills across learning experiences
2. Promoting learning in, about and through the outdoors
3. Using technology meaningfully and appropriately

The Educators' Guide for *Language and Literacy* provides ideas for teachers to create and facilitate appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for children through examples and suggestions. Teachers may adapt and modify these examples and suggestions to cater to the interests, needs and abilities of their children. The Educators' Guide also gives information on Mother Tongue Language teaching and learning to centre leaders. Centre leaders are encouraged to create a conducive and supportive environment in their centre that promotes the love and use of Mother Tongue Language.

Back to Contents

Chapter 1

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS

Children's exposure and fascination with language starts even before birth. In the womb, babies are known to be sensitive towards the rhythms and sounds of the languages that they hear. Infants below six months can recognise the sounds of different languages. They begin to communicate with their caregivers from birth and these skills are built upon and extended as they grow older. Children's language and literacy development is more than just about getting children to become independent readers as quickly as possible. Children's development can be understood in these three aspects:

- Their enjoyment of the language and positive disposition towards reading
- Language skills that include listening and speaking knowledge and skills
- Literacy skills that include reading and writing knowledge and skills - These build upon the foundation of language skills.

As children develop in the area of language and literacy, they grow in their communication skills and use them to connect with others, learning more about their community and the world.

> **Language and culture are the frameworks through which humans experience, communicate and understand reality.**
>
> Lev Vygotsky, 1978

CHILDREN AS BILINGUAL LEARNERS IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore's context, children grow up in a multicultural and diverse community, where it is possible for them to hear both English and other languages, such as Chinese Language, Malay Language or Tamil Language spoken in their surroundings. Nevertheless, there is a growing trend of more households and families communicating in English (EL) most of the time and rarely or not at all in the Mother Tongue Language (MTL). When children start attending preschool, they will learn EL and an MTL. Learning to communicate in both EL and MTL supports children in making connections and building relationships with their family, peers and the people around them.

When children are provided with opportunities to interact with their friends, teachers and people in their community, and engage in meaningful literacy activities through purposeful instruction, they develop a lifelong interest in English and MTL, a strong foundation for later learning of languages and a growing appreciation for the cultures in Singapore.

The bilingual policy is a cornerstone of Singapore's education system. All students are to learn the English Language and an official MTL to as high a level and for as long as possible. The three official MTLs are Chinese Language, Malay Language and Tamil Language.

> **Bilingualism is a hallmark of our education system. Since the 1960s, almost everyone who went to school in Singapore has learnt two languages – English and a Mother Tongue. After decades of the bilingual policy, most people can appreciate and personally attest to the benefits of learning two languages.**
>
> Then-Minister for Education, Lawrence Wong, 2020, In MOE. (2020a). 9th Mother Tongue Languages Symposium (e-MTLS)

The benefits of being bilingual are that:

- Children can communicate with different people in their community and build connections with them through EL. This is the "social glue" that fosters national identity and social cohesion.
- Children have access to and communicate with others in a globalised world through EL, helping them to be successful in a competitive economy.
- Children's cultural identity is affirmed when they understand and appreciate the customs and traditions of their local ethnic culture, helping them to connect with people around them through the use of MTL.
- Children develop executive functioning skills, such as focus and concentration, helping them to be more successful than monolinguals in school settings (Adesope et al., 2010).

Even as bilingualism remains a cornerstone of Singapore's education system, there is a rising trend of more households using English as the main language. Over a decade, about 16% more households are using English as the main language. Of these households that use English as the main language, majority of them also speak a Mother Tongue Language as a second language (Department of Statistics, 2020). These trends show the importance of developing children's interest in communicating in Mother Tongue Language and knowing their local ethnic culture. It also shows that children have varying levels of exposure and proficiency in EL and MTL. Hence, there is a need for teachers to cater to the varying needs of children in their class to develop their interest and proficiency in EL and MTL.

INTEREST IN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Dramatising a frequently-read story develops children's interest in books and the language.

Even before children understand a language, they are interested in the sounds from their environment. As they observe and hear the sounds around them, they begin to understand that sounds convey meaning. Their interest in the language is stirred when they listen to the frequent reading of picture books, sing songs, recite rhymes and enjoy the warm and nurturing interactions with adults. These motivate them to learn the language, picking up the fundamentals of listening and speaking skills.

In Singapore's diverse and multi-cultural community, children have opportunities to hear EL and MTLs spoken around them. In the Mother Tongue Language Review in 2010 (MOE), children whose main home language was EL were less likely to be motivated to learn MTL.

When children are motivated to learn their Mother Tongue Language, they would find it easier to acquire the language with the help of teachers, friends and their parents.

Besides an interest in communicating in the language, children's interest in reading materials such as picture books has been shown to be an important factor in raising children's proficiency in the language. The more children enjoy reading, the more they read, and this helps them to have better language and literacy outcomes (Clark, 2011; Clark & Douglas 2011). Encouraging children even when they are not independent readers to pick up a picture book, flipping through the pages and talking about the pictures can be a good start towards cultivating their interest in and enjoyment of books.

Children who have an interest in learning EL and MTL will be motivated to continue learning and communicating in both languages, even after they leave preschool.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Children need to hear a language in order to learn to speak it. They also need opportunities to use the language to communicate with others. Developing children's language skills is key to their cognitive development and understanding of the world around them. Children's language skills are essential as research has shown that they help children to develop later reading and writing skills.

Playing with their friends and interacting with the people around them provide real and meaningful contexts for children to use a language. In the process, they learn to listen and take turns to talk in conversations and discussions. They also develop an understanding of intonation, gestures, facial expressions and body language which helps them to communicate with others effectively.

Children may go through the following phases as they learn and acquire language (Holdaway, 1979):

- **Observation**
  Children act as spectators and may not speak up in class or when playing with peers. Instead, they are observing and learning as teachers and peers use language to express themselves and communicate with others.
- **Participation**
  Children take part in the play, conversation or discussion with guidance from the teacher.

- **Practice**
  Children practise using language through opportunities created by the teacher, such as during dramatic or functional role-play, large group discussions and show and tell.
- **Performance**
  Children feel confident and are able to independently use language to communicate with others and express needs, wants and ideas.

Vocabulary[1] and syntax[2] are important components of oral language. The more vocabulary children have, the better able they are to understand what others are saying and to express themselves. The more children hear and use language, the better they learn how words are put together to form sentences. It is important to develop children's listening and speaking skills in the preschool years as these lay the foundation for reading and writing.

Interacting with authentic materials in a meaningful context provides opportunities for role-modelling and active use of the language.

There are children in Singapore who grow up in home environments where they are able to observe, listen and use more than one language. These are bilingual or multilingual learners who are able to communicate with those around them in two or more languages.

[1]Vocabulary refers to words and their meanings.

[2]Syntax refers to the structure of language or how words are combined to form meaningful phrases and sentences to communicate a message.

At the same time, there are also children who come from homes where only one language is used most of the time (e.g., EL, MTL or another language). EL or MTL would be a second or third language for these children and they might not be confident in communicating in that language. For such children, the five stages of second language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) can help educators understand their developmental stage and scaffold language learning experiences accordingly. The five stages of second language acquisition are:

1. Pre-Production

Characteristics

The child:

- Does not speak the language and is silent.
- Has minimal comprehension.
- Nods "Yes" and "No".
- Draws and points.

Teacher Prompts

- Show me ...
- Where is ...?
- Who has ...?

2. Early Production

Characteristics

The child:

- Produces one- to two-word responses.
- Has limited comprehension.
- Uses or repeats key words and familiar phrases.

Teacher Prompts

- Yes/no questions
- Either/or questions
- What is ...?

3. Speech Emergence

Characteristics

The child:

- Speaks using simple sentences.
- Has good comprehension.
- Makes grammatical and pronunciation errors.

Teacher Prompts

- Why ...?
- How ...?
- Explain ...

4. Intermediate Fluency

Characteristics

The child:

- Has excellent comprehension.
- Makes few grammatical errors.

Teacher Prompts

- What would happen if ...?
- Why do you think ...?

5. Advanced Fluency

Characteristics

The child has near-native level of speech.

Teacher Prompts

- Retell ...

(Adapted from Hill and Miller, 2006)

It is important to provide a positive learning environment that encourages children to communicate in EL and MTL. Children may at times use both EL and MTL in a conversation to convey their needs, thoughts and ideas and this is known as **code-switching** or **code-mixing**. Teachers can paraphrase what they are saying in either EL or MTL but they should not discourage children from communicating or using both languages in a conversation. **This is because research has shown that children who code-switch or code-mix tend to build larger vocabularies in the language that they are weaker in as compared to children who do not code-switch or code-mix.** Hence, children who code-switch or code-mix are exploring both languages and picking up knowledge and skills to communicate more effectively in the respective languages.

Providing a language-rich environment that encourages children to communicate in EL and MTL is key to developing children who can communicate bilingually. According to research, the sensitive period for children to learn more than one language is before the age of seven. This is the period during which the learning of languages is accelerated. Children can continue to learn languages when they are older but might not do so as easily as when they are younger. Hence, the early childhood years provide a window of opportunity to expose children to English and the Mother Tongue through quality interactions and a print-rich environment.

EARLY READING

Besides developing children's knowledge and skills in reading, it is important to nurture their interest and enjoyment in books. This is especially important as more students are reading because they have to and not because of enjoyment (OECD, 2018). Cultivating children's love for reading benefits children in these ways:

1. Contributes to the child's educational success

Reading enjoyment has been reported as being more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).

2. Enables children to experience reading success

Evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between reading frequency, reading enjoyment and attainment. When children enjoy reading, they read more frequently which helps them to be successful at reading.

As children are given opportunities to recognise print in EL and MTL, it is important to note that EL and the three MTLs have different scripts and their own unique characteristics as a language. The main characteristics of English Language, Chinese Language, Malay Language and Tamil Language are summarised below:

Language	Characteristics of the Language in Print
English Language (Standard Singapore English)	• Known as an alphabetic language • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Read from left to right
Chinese Language (Mandarin)	• Known as a morphographic language where characters represent syllables that hold meaning • Each character made up of different components that give clues to how it is pronounced and its meaning • Individual characters have meaning and can be combined to form words (e.g., bookshelf), phrases and sentences • Can be read from top to bottom, left to right; at times, can be read from right to left
Malay Language (Bahasa Melayu)	• Known as an alphabetic language • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Has different vowel sounds from the English Language • Has different syntax and grammatical structures from the English Language • Read from left to right
Tamil Language	• Tamil is alphasyllabary that represents sounds at the syllable level • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Different vocabulary, syntax and grammatical structures for spoken Tamil and written Tamil • Read from left to right

Reading in EL and MTL involves constructing meaning from print. Children generally go through the following phases (Chall, 1983; Ehri, 1995) when learning to read:

- **Pre-reading**
  Children first become aware that print carries a message. They use visual cues to make sense of print in the environment. E.g., children recognise the word 'exit' by associating it with the sign above the door.
- **Initial reading**
  As children begin to learn the names and sounds of letters, and recognise some parts of different characters, they use this knowledge to decode words and recognise some words or characters by sight or guess their meaning. E.g., children who recognise the word 'at' in EL become aware that words such as "cat" and "mat" share the same ending sound (i.e., 'at'). For Chinese characters, children discover that words like 吃 and 喝 share the same character part (口) and can guess that this character 吹 which they might not have seen before, could be an action that involves the use of one's mouth.
- **Fluent reading**
  As children start to decode words faster and more efficiently, they will be able to read more effortlessly. As automaticity[3] sets in, children will be able to focus their attention on understanding and making meaning of the text.

Children need experiences with oral language and a variety of texts (e.g., rhymes, story books, charts) to develop early literacy skills which help them in learning to read.

For MTL, children would be able to recognise letters, words, characters and phrases that they commonly see in the environment, e.g., in the form of labels, signs and posters in the centre, as well as the picture books that are frequently read to them. The emphasis in MTL development would be to help children develop an awareness and recognition of the print in MTL, laying the foundation for them to become fluent readers later in primary school.

[3]Automaticity refers to the ability to recognise words instantly without having to decode them deliberately.

EARLY WRITING

Reading and writing are intertwined. Learning one helps in the learning of the other. Thus, it is important for children to have experiences with both reading and writing.

Writing involves children being able to use print to construct a message that conveys meaning to others. Children must first understand that writing is intentional and conveys meaning. Before they learn to write conventionally, they need to develop their fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination so as to hold and use writing tools. They should be given opportunities to engage in activities that strengthen their hand and finger muscles as well as develop their dexterity. Examples of these activities include threading beads, tearing paper, cutting paper with a pair of scissors and modelling with moulding clay.

Activities such as tearing paper, threading and modelling with play dough allow children to develop their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination which are essential for writing.

The first tools children should use are fat crayons, markers, jumbo chalk and fat pencils. They should be provided with opportunities to use these tools to draw and experiment with lines, whirls and patterns. This helps them when they have to use lines and curves to form the letters of the alphabet or the strokes of the characters.

As children explore and experiment with writing, they generally move from using less mature forms (e.g., scribbling, mark making) to conventional writing. While there are six broad categories of writing (Sulzby, 1990), they do not develop in a fixed order. Children often combine different types of writing to represent their ideas and express themselves. The tables on the following pages show the six broad categories of writing for EL.

Drawing

Drawing resembles writing. When asked to share what they have "written", children are able to share and make sense of their "writing". At this stage, children demonstrate their awareness that drawing conveys meaning.

Scribbling

Children become aware that writing is different from drawing. As they develop their fine motor control, their scribbles start to resemble writing and are often in lines.

Letter-like forms and symbols

Children begin to recognise letters of the alphabet and become aware of the different shapes (i.e., lines, zigzags, loops) that make up letters. Their writing starts to resemble letters and symbols which are randomly scattered among their drawings and scribbles.

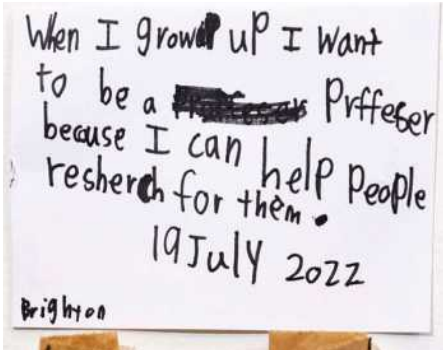
Random letters or letter strings

Children use letter sequences (e.g., letters in their own names, strings of letters in random order) in their writing. They may write the same letters in different ways as they refine the way they form the letters. They generally use upper case letters in their writing as lower case letters require more finger dexterity and are more difficult to form. They may form letters incorrectly or write them in reverse as they learn about directionality and orientation of the letters.

Writing with invented spelling

Children begin to discover that spoken words are made up of sounds which are connected to letters in printed words. They may invent their spelling and use letters/groups of letters to represent the sounds they hear in words. Often, they hear only the first sound in a word so they may use one letter (i.e., beginning consonant) to represent the entire word. They begin to leave spaces between words and may mix upper and lower case letters in their writing.

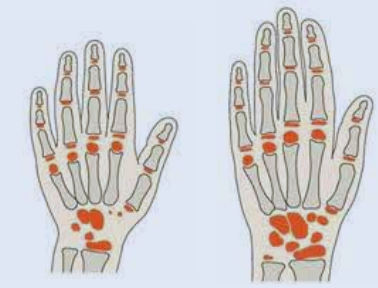
Writing with conventional spelling



Children progress from representing only the most prominent sound in a word to representing most of the sounds they hear (i.e., the ending consonant sound and finally, the vowel sounds in words). More words are spelled conventionally but there might still be some words written with invented spelling as the English Language has words with irregular spelling (e.g., blue and shoe).

Besides learning the mechanics of writing, such as developing their fine motor skills and giving them opportunities to create letters and be aware of writing conventions, children can be encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas through writing. It is important to build children's confidence in expressing themselves through writing. When children engage in meaningful and authentic writing-related activities (e.g., creating a menu at the learning centre, writing a card to a friend), they understand that writing can convey meaning and begin to develop confidence in communicating their thoughts and ideas through writing.

In the preschool years, there should not be an over-emphasis on children's handwriting and penmanship skills (e.g., being able to write on a line). While teachers should role-model the correct way of writing letters, characters and words, children are not expected to perfect their handwriting by the end of preschool education. Research has shown that hand maturity and dexterity takes time to develop. Children must also be supported in the following areas to help them develop their motor skills for handwriting:



5 years 7 years

The images above show the difference between the bone and muscular structure of a developing versus a developed hand. This suggests that most preschool children may not have the dexterity to perfect their handwriting by the end of preschool education. (Images taken from Schmitt and Lanz, 2008)

- Good posture
- Shoulder stability
- Visual perception and sensory processing
- Pre-writing skills where they are able to make marks or colour using a drawing or writing tool
- Executive functioning skills, such as remembering what to write and being flexible to correct mistakes made

For MTL, children develop an awareness of how the letters and strokes are formed by observing their teacher role-modelling the sequence and directionality of how the letter or stroke is written. As the print for Chinese and Tamil Languages is different from English and Malay, children may have the oral vocabulary but may not recognise or decode the print well as the print ranges in terms of complexity. Hence, they may use a mixture of symbols, mark-making and letter/character-like shapes to communicate their ideas and thoughts and share them with their friends, teachers and family members.

APPRECIATION FOR THE LOCAL ETHNIC CULTURE

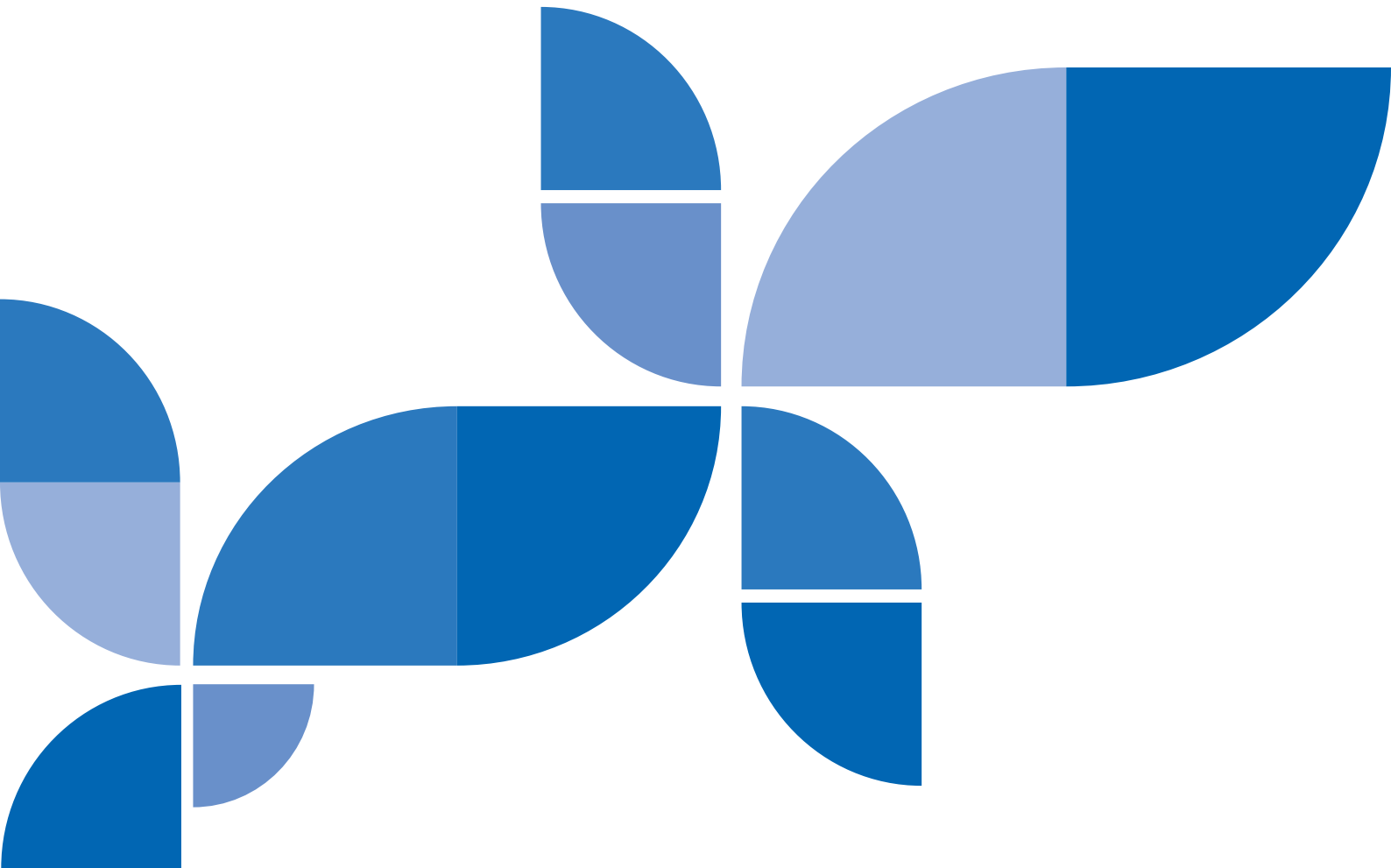
Collaborating with parents is one of the ways children can experience the local ethnic culture in our community.

The learning of MTL is closely intertwined with the customs and traditions of the culture. When children are given opportunities to learn about traditions and folk-tales and actively participate in culturally-related activities, they become aware of certain moral values as well as various aspects of the ethnic culture such as festivals that are relevant to Singapore's context. These moral values are often depicted in culturally-related stories or practices and can be made relevant to the everyday life of children when children are given opportunities to retell and talk about them, as well as put them into practice.

Back to Contents

Chapter 2

LEARNING GOALS FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



Language is essential for the development of children's thinking and learning. The focus in the preschool years should be on nurturing children's interest in the language and developing their oral language and early literacy skills to lay a strong foundation for their future learning.

The learning goals for Language and Literacy serve as a guide for teachers to help children by the end of Kindergarten 2 to be able to:

- Express themselves and communicate with others confidently
- Enjoy books and reading-related activities
- Demonstrate understanding of texts
- Convey meaning using print

The examples in this chapter illustrate how teachers can provide opportunities for children to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and dispositions of the learning goals for Language and Literacy (English Language).

LEARNING GOAL 1

Listen for enjoyment and information

Plan for opportunities where children can take turns to share their work and listen to each other.

When children are given opportunities to hear language being used in a variety of contexts (e.g., in conversations, through songs and rhymes, reading of storybooks), they develop the capacity to listen attentively and increase their understanding of the language. In doing so, they also gain knowledge about themselves and the world around them.

Overview of the Key Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Learning Goal 1 (EL)

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
1.1 Develop an interest in listening to stories, songs and rhymes 1.2 Understand and follow verbal instructions involving at least two steps 1.3 Understand everyday conversations	• Request for a story, rhyme or poem to be read • Listen attentively when spoken to or when a story, rhyme or poem is being read by making eye contact and facing the speaker • Respond with appropriate gestures (e.g., nod, shake their head) and facial expressions (e.g., smile, laugh, frown) in response to everyday conversations and stories, rhymes or poems that are read to them • Respond appropriately to questions (e.g., questions beginning with "who", "what", "where") about their everyday activities using appropriate gestures (e.g., raising hands, pointing, nodding, shaking their head)

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Example: Have Fun with Rhymes

Introducing or sharing a rhyme can be part of the centre's routine when transitioning from one activity to the next. Children can choose which rhyme they would like to listen to and this enhances their interest in the rhymes.

Learning Objective/s

N2 children are given opportunities to:

- Listen to a rhyme.
- Accompany the teacher's reading with actions.

Learning Activity

Select a rhyme that provides opportunities for children to accompany the reading with actions (e.g., "The Hokey Pokey", "Teddy Bear Teddy Bear"). Say the rhyme together with the actions. Do this several times for children to practise the accompanying actions. When children are familiar with the rhyme, get a few volunteers to lead the rest of the class in doing the accompanying actions.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

Introducing props like percussion instruments can help to enhance children's interest in rhymes. Children can use the instruments to tap to the chanting of the rhyme.

Example: Memory Game

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Listen and follow verbal instructions involving at least two steps in a game.

Learning Activity

Have three to four different coloured cards. Each coloured card will represent an action (e.g., red card – touch your toes). Explain and demonstrate to the children the action that they must do when they see a coloured card. Flash one coloured card at a time and get the children to demonstrate the appropriate action.

When the children are familiar with the action for each coloured card, explain to them that you will show them two coloured cards (e.g., red first, and then green). They must remember the coloured cards and the actions to do them in the right sequence (e.g., red first, and then green – touch your toes first, and then turn around). They can only do the actions after seeing both cards. Make sure that there is enough space between each child.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

This game can be played first with a small group of children who need support in language learning. This will help the children to be confident in participating in a large group when this game is conducted.

DID YOU KNOW?

This game also builds children's executive functioning skill, "working memory" as they remember the action for each coloured card, the sequence of the coloured cards and the corresponding actions to do.

Example: What Does My Friend Like?

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Listen to a conversation between two puppet friends.
- Recall what they like and dislike.

Learning Activity

Role-play using two puppets who find out from each other what they like and dislike. Ask the children what each puppet liked and disliked. Share with the children that it is alright that people may not like the same things.

Useful resources that role-model how conversations can take place between friends or family members include picture books from the series "Elephant and Piggie" (by Mo Willems) and "The Little Dim Sum Warriors" (by Dr Woo Yen Yen & Colin Goh).

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

As each puppet describes what it likes, display concrete objects or pictures that illustrate what the puppet has said. When getting the children to recall what the puppets like/dislike, they can point to the objects or pictures even if they are not able to verbalise. Describe what they have pointed to and encourage them to repeat after you.

DID YOU KNOW?

This learning activity provides opportunities to nurture children's social and emotional development by helping them to be aware that everyone is unique in terms of their opinions (SEC 3, KSD 3.1)

LEARNING GOAL 2

Speak with confidence to convey meaning and communicate with others

When children experience success in sharing in pairs and small groups, opportunities to share with a class can build their confidence in speaking.

Children become more confident speakers when their talk and questions are valued, and when they are encouraged to respond and verbalise their thoughts and ideas. As confident speakers, they are able to initiate and sustain a conversation with others. Over time, they understand that the way they speak (e.g., their volume, tone) will depend on the people (e.g., friends, family members, teachers) and context that they are communicating in (e.g., in school, an outdoor area, at a library).

Overview of the Key Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Learning Goal 2 (EL)

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
2.1 Develop conversational skills by: 2.1.1 Starting a conversation 2.1.2 Taking turns to listen and speak 2.1.3 Asking questions and responding appropriately 2.2 Express personal needs and wants, thoughts and ideas with appropriate phrases and sentences 2.3 Ask and respond appropriately to questions (e.g., "who", "what", "where", "when", "why", "how") during large and small group discussions and activities 2.4 Speak using an appropriate volume and tone during conversations with friends and in class discussions 2.5 Speak with appropriate non-verbal gestures (e.g., occasionally making eye contact, nodding their head)	• Convey messages to their teachers, friends and family • Tell their friends about events they have experienced • Talk about the drawings and artworks they have created • Enjoy having conversations with friends during activity, routine and/or transition time • Speak not too loudly with friends; and vary volume and tone when dramatising stories

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Example: Our Feelings

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Talk about what makes them excited or angry.
- Find out what makes their friend excited or angry by asking questions.

Learning Activity

Having introduced the feelings of being excited or angry in a previous learning activity, model to the children how to share what makes them excited and what makes them angry and how to ask their friends what makes them excited or angry. Model to the children how to listen attentively to their friend's sharing.

In a small group of three or four children, give each child two talking chips. One child can start first by putting a talking chip at the centre and sharing what makes him/her excited or angry. Then the child asks the next child, *What makes you excited or angry?* and the next child puts his/her talking chip at the centre and shares what makes him/her excited or angry.

Children use talking chips to take turns to listen and speak in a group.

They continue doing this until all talking chips are at the centre of the table. Invite a group of children to share how they took turns to share and listen to each other. Invite the children to share what they found out about what makes their friend excited or angry, and what they can do if they or their friends feel angry.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

For children who are less verbal, have picture cues (e.g., picture of the neighbourhood playground, snacks, someone shouting) on standby. Guide their friend to ask close-ended questions like *Does this make you angry/excited?*

DID YOU KNOW?

As children learn to take turns with their friends to speak using the talking chip, they are developing the social and emotional skill of taking turns to establish and maintain friendships and positive relationships with others (SEC 4, KSD 4.2). Through this activity, they also develop the social and emotional skill of identifying emotions in themselves and others (SEC 2, KSD 2.1).

Example: My Dream Bus

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Share their thoughts and ideas on what their dream bus would look like.

Learning Activity

Show the children different pictures of buses around the world. Ask them to imagine a bus that they would like to have to bring all the children in the centre on a field trip. Give the children time to think and draw the kind of bus they would like to have. Get the children seated in a circle. Play music and pass the object (e.g., ball, small toy) around the circle. When the music stops, the child with the object will share what this dream bus would look like based on his/her drawing. Encourage the child to share more by asking questions about the details of his/her drawing (e.g., "The wheels of your bus have a different shape! Could you tell us more about the wheels?")

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

When it is time for large-group sharing, let the music stop first at a few children who can role-model to their friends how to describe their dream bus. This allows their friends to learn from them and gain confidence in speaking to a large group.

DID YOU KNOW?

This learning activity provides opportunities for children to develop the learning disposition, "appreciation" when they are encouraged to share one thing that they like about their friend's bus. This helps them to value the ideas of others.

Example: What I Wonder About My Neighbourhood

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Respond to questions about what they have found interesting about their neighbourhood.
- Ask questions to find out more about the neighbourhood according to their interest.

Learning Activity

Based on the the theme, The People and Things Around Me, the children have visited their neighbourhood and taken photos of things that interested them as well as the places and people in the neighbourhood. Show some pictures related to what they saw in the neighbourhood and ask them questions on what interested them. Examples of questions to ask the children are:

- *Where was this photograph taken?*
- *What is interesting about this photograph?*
- *What did you hear/smell/do at this place?*

Encourage the children to find out more about what they are interested in by coming up with questions. Roll a die that has on each face the word “who”, “what”, “where”, “when”, “why” and “how”. Get the children to ask questions using the word on the face of the die that is revealed to the class (e.g., “what”). Collate the questions that children come up with. Get the children to vote on the question that they would like to know the answer to.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

For children who need support in language learning, put up more “what” and “where” words on the die. This will reduce the difficulty level by increasing the chances of asking literal questions.

Example: Speaking to My Friends

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Speak in pairs at an appropriate volume.
- Speak to the class at an appropriate volume.

Learning Activity

Model to the children the appropriate volume to speak in their pairs. Invite them to speak like a mouse in their pairs at an indoor volume. Model to the children the appropriate volume to speak to the class.

Get the children to listen and compare when a few children speak loudly and clearly like a parrot and when all children speak like parrots. Ask them what the difference is, and which volume is better for everyone to hear one another comfortably.

Get the children to suggest ways to remind each other to speak at an appropriate volume. E.g., if a friend does not like to speak loudly and no one can hear him, what can we do to help our friend? (e.g., "Everyone needs to be very quiet to hear our friend.") Write down their suggestions and display them on the wall to remind them how they can help each other speak at an appropriate volume.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

Some children may have difficulties speaking to a large group. Encourage them to speak in smaller group settings, such as with a friend or in a small group first, building their confidence gradually.

DID YOU KNOW?

Speaking at an appropriate volume in different settings can help children to build the executive functioning skill, inhibitory control as they control their impulse to speak loudly.

Example: Let's Listen to Our Friend

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Understand the importance of making occasional eye-contact and active listening (e.g., facing the speaker to listen).

Learning Activity

Use a puppet to have a conversation with the children about what they did during outdoor time. As the children are speaking, have the puppet face away from the children and getting distracted with a toy. When the children have finished speaking, get the puppet to look at the children and ask them to repeat what they said. After the conversation with the puppet, ask the children:

- *What was the puppet doing when they were speaking?*
- *How did they feel when the puppet was doing those things?*
- *When someone speaks to us, how should we listen to them?*

Share with children the importance of actively listening to others and what active listening looks like (i.e., facing the speaker to listen, make eye contact occasionally, do not get distracted by other things, wait for the person to speak finish before speaking).

Have the puppet apologise to the children for not actively listening to them. The puppet can ask the children how it can actively listen to others and the children can share with the puppet what they have learnt.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

There are children with developmental needs that may have difficulties making eye contact with the person that they are talking to. Encourage them to practise active listening in other ways like turning their bodies in the direction of the person they are talking to, and praising them for their attempts at making eye contact (e.g., "Thank you for looking at Mavis when talking to her").

LEARNING GOAL 3

Read with enjoyment and understanding

Varying the tone and pace of reading can make any reading experience fun and enjoyable.

Children's interest in books and reading is built when they can choose from a wide range of reading materials. Nurturing in children a love for reading is key to their learning and development. Reading with enjoyment and understanding has been reported as being far more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).

Teachers should provide opportunities for children to develop the following early literacy skills:

Book and Print Awareness

Developing book and print awareness helps children to understand the writing conventions of a language.

Children with book awareness understand concepts about books, such as the title, author and illustrator of a book, the front and back of a book, knowing how to hold the book correctly, turning the pages one by one and from right to left as well as indicating where to begin reading.

Print awareness refers to the understanding that print carries meaning for the reader and can be read aloud. Children develop concepts about print as they learn the structure of print (e.g., sentences are made up of words separated by spaces, words are made up of letters) and conventions of the written language (e.g., in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom).

Decoding – Knowing How to Read

Children make use of various ways to read or decode print (e.g., sounding out the letters in a word and blending them, sight word recognition). This means that they are able to sound out the print but may not necessarily understand its meaning.

Alphabetic knowledge involves children naming the letters of the alphabet and recognising the letter symbols (both upper and lower case) in print. It also includes children sounding out the letters of the alphabet (e.g., the short vowel sounds, the consonant sounds). Being able to name the letters of the alphabet quickly and correctly helps children in learning to read and write words.

There are four components of letter knowledge (Bradley & Jones, 2007) that children should develop:

Letter-shape knowledge

Ability to distinguish letters based on visual features (i.e., lines, curves, orientation)

Letter-name knowledge

Understanding that a letter is a symbol and that it has both an upper case and lower case form

Letter-sound knowledge

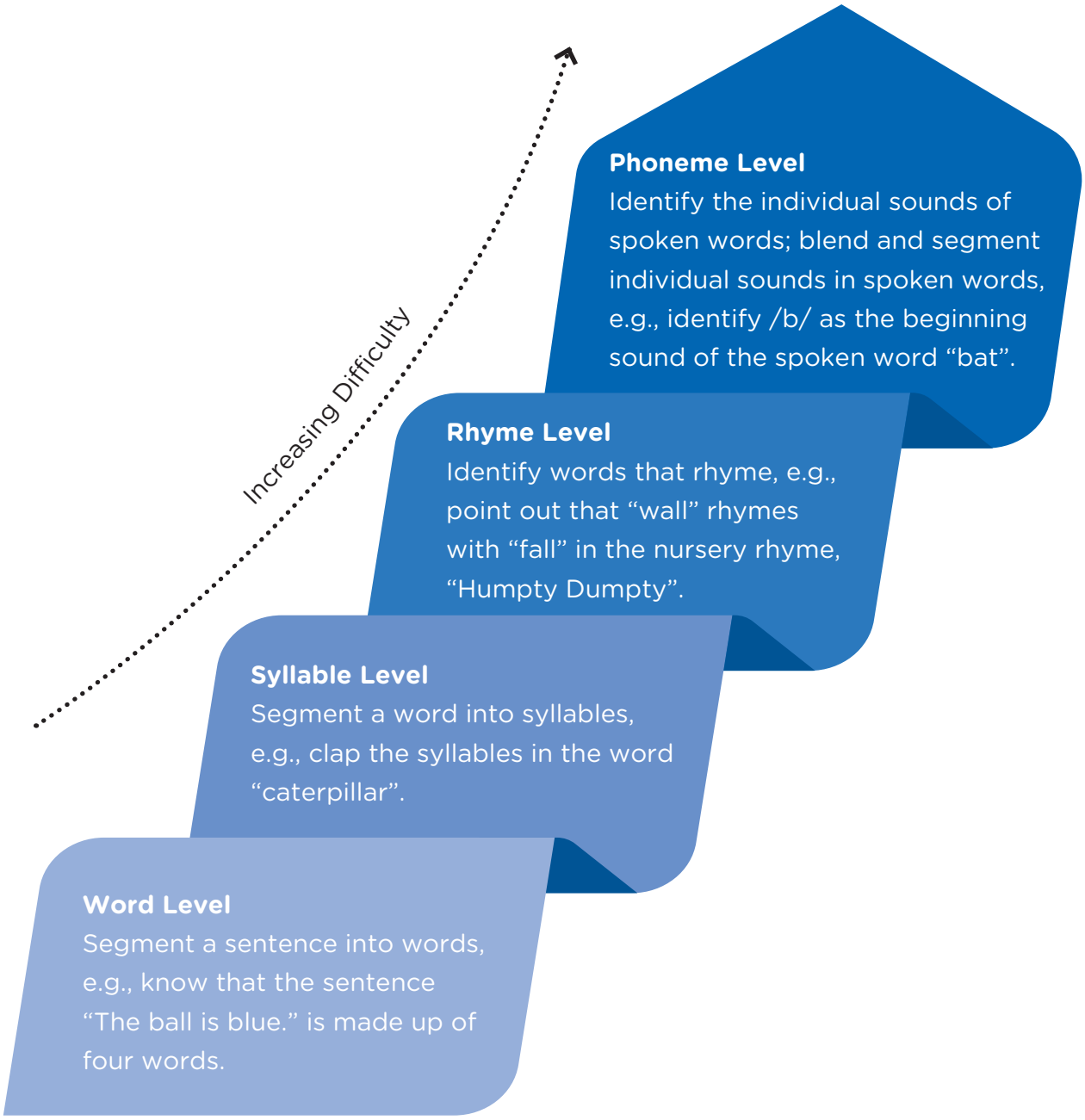
Understanding that letters represent sounds

Scan this QR code to hear the 44 sounds of the letters (BBC Learning English, 2023).

Letter-writing knowledge

Ability to write letters of the alphabet

[4]Onsets and rimes refer to parts of words. The onset is the beginning part of the word that comes before the vowel sound and the rime is the ending part of the word comprising the vowel sound and the consonant sounds that follow it (e.g., 'b' represents the onset and 'ook' represents the rime in the word 'book').



When learning how to read, children first need to understand that spoken language consists of sounds that can be broken down into smaller and smaller parts – into words, into the syllables within words and finally into the individual sounds in words. It is important to note that the levels of phonological awareness are not discrete stages and neither do they develop in a fixed order. For example, as children become aware that words can be segmented into syllables, they may also be developing an understanding of the initial sounds of words.

Word recognition and emergent reading skills involve children recognising words by sight, decoding and using contextual clues, such as the pictures on the page or even what they had discussed in a recent learning activity.

Comprehension

Children explore the playground for picture clues to guess the animal that is the main character of the story.

Comprehension refers to the ability to listen to or read and understand a text. It involves thinking about and making meaning from print. There are different levels of comprehension (Sadoski, 2004) that children should develop in order to make deeper and fuller sense of a text:

- **Literal**
  Understanding what is directly said in the text, e.g., *Where did the story take place?, What did the hungry caterpillar eat?*

- **Inferential**
  Understanding what is implied in the text based on background knowledge along with the words used by the author, e.g., *Why is the caterpillar not hungry anymore?*

- **Critical**
  Evaluating what was read in the text and making judgements about characters, e.g., *Is the story real or make believe?, How do you know?*

- **Application**
  Using the knowledge gained from reading to solve a problem, e.g., *If you were to continue the story, what might happen next?*

- **Appreciation**
  Personalising and becoming part of the story, e.g., *Which is your favourite character and why?*

Children's Learning and Development in Reading Skills

Given that there is much research and study on young children's emergent reading skills, it is helpful for teachers to understand children's general trajectory of emergent reading skills so as to:

- Plan meaningful activities to scaffold children's learning and development.
- Provide ample opportunities for children to acquire and apply the skills in different contexts.
- Give specific and positive feedback in a timely manner.

The table "Children's Learning and Development of Reading Skills (From Birth to the End of K2)" takes reference from both literature research and the NEL Framework's learning goals, knowledge, skills and dispositions for language and literacy (EL). While children's learning and development in reading skills depicted in the table suggest a typical range of development, it is important to note the following:

- There will be children who will be able to develop more complex skills and those who are beginning to grasp some of these skills at the end of K2. This means that teachers will need to provide appropriate scaffolding and support for their different needs.
- Every child develops at different rates and may deviate from the general trajectory (e.g., some aspects may be skipped or experienced simultaneously). The description of children's learning and development in the table should not be interpreted as the only way that children should progress in their reading skills.
- The general trajectory should not be used in the identification of children who require intervention. If there are concerns over a child's development (i.e., by the teacher and/or parent), this would require more rounds of observation and if necessary, a referral for the child to be assessed for possible developmental needs.
- Teachers should not rely only on the learning and development in reading skills depicted in the table to understand children's needs. Teachers should continue to observe children and gather information from different sources (e.g., parents, other educators) to understand each child's development.

Reading Knowledge and Skill	Infancy	End of K2
Alphabetic Knowledge	• Start to recognise letters • Start to recognise upper and lower case letters' shape, name and sound • Start to decode unfamiliar words • Recognise all letters shapes and names • Recognise most of the letter sounds • Start to decode unfamiliar words	
Phonological Awareness	• Hear sounds in the language • Start to recognise words, syllables and some rhymes • Recognise words and syllables in spoken sentences • Have greater familiarity with rhyming words • Start to recognise beginning and ending sounds • Recognise beginning and ending sounds • Start to blend or segment sounds in words they hear	
Word Recognition and Emergent Reading	Start to recognise environmental print (e.g. "Stop" sign) Recognise the name they are called by • Recognise all letters' shapes and names • Recognise most of the letter sounds • Start to decode unfamiliar words Build vocabulary of familiar words and sight words (e.g. nouns, verbs, articles, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, contractions)	
Comprehension	Listen to songs, rhymes, poems and stories and responds with gestures and/or facial expressions • Ask and respond to questions about what has been read or heard • Start to sequence events in what they have been read to • Dramatise a scene or character from a frequently read/sung song, rhyme, poem and story • Predict the ending or suggest alternative ending • Sequence the events in what they have been read to • Talk about and comment on characters, the scene or ideas from what they have been read to	

Overview of the Key Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Learning Goal 3 (EL)

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
3.1 Develop an interest in reading books and other printed materials (e.g., signs, labels, posters, brochures, recipes, other printed materials)	• Pick out reading materials to read during their free time • Share what they like about a book with their friends
3.2 Develop book and print awareness 3.2.1. Show awareness of the correct way to handle a book (e.g., hold a book upright, turn pages in the right direction, read a book from front to back) 3.2.2. Know that print is read from left to right and top to bottom 3.2.3 Show awareness of the title, author and/or illustrator of a picture book.	• Recognise that a word is made up of letters • Point to the first word on a page of a picture book to indicate where the teacher should start reading • Point to words as teacher reads a story or other reading materials • Point to the title, author and illustrator on the cover of a picture book
3.3 Develop alphabetic knowledge 3.3.1 Know upper and lower case letters of the alphabet 3.3.2 Know that sounds are associated with the letters of the alphabet and produce some of the sounds	• Recognise the letters in their name and words • Name and match upper and lower case letters • Produce some of the 44 sounds of the letters and match the sounds to the letters (e.g., consonant sounds, short vowel sounds, long vowel sounds, and common digraphs like "ch" and "sh")

3.4 Develop phonological awareness 3.4.1 Identify syllables in words that they hear 3.4.2 Recognise beginning and ending sounds in words that they hear 3.4.3 Recognise rhyming words	• Clap to the syllables of words in songs and books • Pick out words that they hear which have the same or different beginning sound • Pick out words that they hear which have the same or different ending sound • Pick out rhyming words from a story, song or rhyme that they hear • Attempt to blend individual sounds to say a word without using print • Attempt to segment a word that they hear into individual sounds
3.5 Develop word recognition and emergent reading skills 3.5.1 Recognise their name 3.5.2 Recognise high frequency and/or sight words (e.g., "a", "the", "to") or familiar words (i.e., words that are frequently seen by the child in his/her surroundings, such as "stop", "push" and "pull") 3.5.3 Read words by blending letter sounds 3.5.4 Read words from word families (e.g., words with the rime of "at", "en", "it", "og", "ug") 3.5.5 Read some of the short sentences from familiar and appropriate reading materials (e.g., books, labels, signs that children have been read to or have read several times)	• Call out familiar signs and logos (e.g., "Stop" sign) • Identify and call out the name that they are called by in print when seen in their environment • Read aloud familiar words in the classroom (e.g., words in labels, on word walls) • Point out and read words of high interest to children that they find in books and other reading materials (e.g., toys, sun, pizza, cake) • Attempt to decode words that they may be unfamiliar with (e.g., smart, grab) by identifying the letter sounds and blending them • Read repetitive phrases or sentences in stories

3.6 Develop comprehension skills 3.6.1 Talk about characters and events of stories that they have been read to 3.6.2 Respond to questions about stories that they have been read to 3.6.3 Retell and sequence events in a story 3.6.4 Construct meaning from texts in familiar books using picture cues, prior knowledge and words they can recognise	• Talk and ask questions about the illustrations in a book to help them make sense of the story • Talk about their favourite character in a story (e.g., why they like the character) or favourite part of the story • Respond appropriately to literal and inferential questions about a story, rhyme or poem • Retell events in a story by dramatising or drawing • Sequence events in a story (e.g., by drawing, ordering pictures of the events in the correct sequence) • Predict the story based on the book cover • Predict what will happen next based on picture cues from a story and/or prior knowledge • Suggest a different ending to a story

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Example: Words Are All Around Us

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Read print found in their environment from left to right and top to bottom.

Learning Activity

Encourage the children to bring food labels, flyers and pictures of hawker stall menus to build the Dramatic Play Centre. Get the children to talk about them. Read aloud to them the environmental print. This helps them recognise that print has meaning and

words can be read. When reading aloud to the children, demonstrate print awareness by reading from top to bottom, left to right, using a finger to glide below the text.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

For children who are starting to develop print awareness, encourage them to choose a food label or flyer that attracts them. Ask them to point to the part of the page/ label that they would like you to read to them. As you read the text, use your finger to follow, below the word, phrase or sentences so they know how the print is to be read.

Example: Letter BINGO

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Name upper and lower case letters of the alphabet.

Learning Activity

Create BINGO cards with the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet and distribute them to the groups of children. Call out a letter and have the children in groups strike out the letter on their card that has been called. The group that forms a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row of letters will shout BINGO and win the game.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

For children who have difficulty recognising all the upper and lower case letters, a pre-activity can be done to help them recognise the name of the letters on their BINGO card. Their BINGO cards could also have fewer letters that are different.

DID YOU KNOW?

This game can build children's social and emotional skill of respecting their friends (SEC 3, KSD 3.2) through these suggested instructions:

- **Give a BINGO card to a small group.**
- **Inform children that everyone in the group will take turns to strike out the letter.**
- **If their friend does not know the letter, they can tell their friend where the letter is for their friend to strike it out.**

Example: Recognising Beginning Sounds

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Match pictures of objects with the same beginning sound.

Learning Activity

Prepare the pictures of objects that begin with the sound /k/ and /t/, e.g., cat, cow, carp, corn for /k/ and table, tooth, tiger and tap for /t/. These picture cards should not have the word printed on them.

Bring the children outdoors and place these pictures on the ground. Have the children stand around the pictures in a circle. Call out a beginning sound and the children are to jump onto the picture with the object that has that beginning sound. Encourage the children to jump onto a picture that they have not jumped onto before by getting them to move to a different position in the circle.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

Children who are familiar with these beginning sounds can identify objects around them that start with /k/ or /t/. They can draw a picture of the object or take a picture of it and this can be included in the outdoor game.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jumping onto a different picture with the same beginning sound may be difficult for some children. This presents an opportunity for them to develop the learning disposition of perseverance. Get children to chant a cheer to encourage each other to persevere and to celebrate every effort.

Example: Word Family Riddle

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Guess the object based on the onset and rime given.

Learning Activity

Prepare picture cards of objects in the "at" family – for example: cat, bat, hat, mat, rat. Put the picture cards in a bag and pass it around the children sitting in a circle. When the signal is given to stop passing the bag, recite the riddle, "What is in my bag?" to the class:

Who can guess what is in my bag?

It starts with /c/ (onset)

And ends with /at/ (rime)

Can you guess what it is?

Get the child with the bag to pick out a picture card. Ask the child whether the object on the picture card starts with /c/ and ends with /at/. If it is the right card, ithe child can keep the card. If it is the wrong card, it can be returned to the bag. And then the bag would be passed around the circle and stop at a different child. When the correct word has been guessed, give another word in the riddle, e.g., /b/ and /at/.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

For children starting to recognise word families, help them to recognise first that all the cards belong to the "at" family because they all end with "at". This can be done by putting all the words on the whiteboard and asking them what they notice about the words. The rime can be underlined to help them in their observation.

Example: Sequencing Events in a Story

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Sequence events in the story.

Learning Activity

After reading a story, talk about the events in the beginning, middle and ending of the story with the children. Using illustrations from the book, prepare pictures of the events in the beginning, middle and ending of the story. Get the children to put the pictures in the correct sequence.

Once they are familiar with the story, the pictures can be placed in a square grid. Using a programmable toy, children can programme it to move to the pictures of the story in the right sequence. When the toy reaches the right picture, get the children to recap the story event of the illustration and explain what the next event in the story should be.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

Some children may need to first sequence the events in the story using the visuals provided, before planning the route for the programmable toy. This is especially helpful for those who may need more support in comprehending the events of the story.

Children recall the events of the story "The Three Little Pigs" as they programme the toy to move from one event to the next.

DID YOU KNOW?

This activity develops the executive functioning skill, working memory as children recall the story events through the programmable toy. It also develops cognitive flexibility as they engage in problem-solving when the toy goes in the wrong direction. At the same time, they also gain spatial awareness of front, back, left and right.

LEARNING GOAL 4

Use symbols, letter-like shapes, letters and words with invented and conventional spelling to communicate ideas and information

Writing a Mothers' Day card provides an opportunity for children to apply what they have learnt about the language, and to communicate their thoughts and feelings in an authentic and meaningful way.

When developing early writing skills, children are also developing two important skills which are their fine motor skills as well as expressing themselves in writing (i.e., composing). Children will need different opportunities to develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, such as beading, tying their shoelaces and knowing how to use a pair of scissors. This enables them to develop the recommended grip of their pencil or marker and helps them in writing legibly.

More than just the mechanics of writing, children should be given learning experiences that build their confidence in expressing their ideas and thoughts through various forms of writing. These forms of writing range from drawings, scribblings, mark-making, invented spelling, as well as conventional spelling and can take place in authentic and meaningful settings, such as creating cards, writing a note to a friend, drawing up a recipe for their pretend play. These opportunities will interest and motivate children to use writing to express themselves.

Overview of the Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions for Learning Goal 4 (EL)

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
4.1 Write upper and lower case letters of the alphabet 4.2 Write their own name 4.3 Copy words, phrases or short sentences with basic writing conventions 4.4 Write phrases or short sentences to communicate thoughts and ideas using basic writing conventions and invented or conventional spelling	• Show proper posture and hold a pencil and/or marker with recommended pencil grip • Write upper and lower case letters clearly on a single line (with the exception of more challenging letters like "g", "y", "j", "p" and "q" where the tail of the letter may not always be below the line) • Write the name that they are called by using upper and lower case letters • Copy words, phrases or short sentences from a book or sheet of paper in front of them and from the whiteboard or screen when ready • Show knowledge of basic writing conventions through: - Leaving spaces between words - Appropriate use of capitalisation (e.g., use upper case letters only for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences) - Appropriate use of punctuation (e.g., use of full-stop at the end of a sentence) • Write phrases or short sentences to communicate their thoughts and ideas in authentic tasks (e.g., writing a menu for pretend play, labelling their items and drawings, creating a greeting card with the sentence "I love you" or "Thank You")

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Example: Letters Gallery Walk

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Form upper and lower case letters.

Learning Activity

At the Literacy Centre, select a letter for the week. Provide children with a range of materials to use to form the upper and lower case letters. Materials can include moulding clay; natural materials like twigs, dry leaves and pebbles; colouring materials like paintbrushes, crayons and markers; and everyday objects like bottle caps, cotton buds and paper clips. Display the children's work at the learning centre. For letters that make use of objects, encourage the children to take a picture of what they have done and display their work through photographs. At the end of the week, bring the class on a gallery walk to view and talk about the work that the children have done. Facilitate their discussion to appreciate each other's work and talk about the features of the letter, e.g., "I like Dashni's "g" as its tail has a nice curl at the end." Photographs of the gallery walk can be made available to the children at the Literacy Centre after the learning activity for them to revisit at any time.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

With children who are still getting to know the letters, get them to recognise the letters in their name and write them. Research shows that introducing the letters of a child's name is an effective way to help them recognise and write letters.

DID YOU KNOW?

This learning activity helps to nurture the learning disposition, "appreciation" as children recognise the efforts of their friends and how everyone's effort contributes to the gallery walk.

Encourage children to learn through the outdoors as they pick fallen twigs and brown leaves from the outdoor environment to form their letters.

Example: Recognising and Writing My Name

Learning Objective/s

N2/K1 children are given opportunities to:

- Recognise and write their names on the attendance chart.

Learning Activity

Put up an attendance chart in the classroom. Each child has to select the card with his/her name on it and put it on the attendance chart. This helps them to recognise their own names. Once they are familiar with their names, get the children to write their own names daily to indicate that they are at the centre.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

With children who are beginning to write their names, provide them with a small whiteboard or blank piece of paper with no lines to copy their name. Provide additional writing materials such as molding clay, magnetic letters and thick crayons to form the letters of their name.

DID YOU KNOW?

Recognising their own names as part of the daily routine provides a meaningful context for children to learn letters of the alphabet. Children may also recognise their friend's name and point out the differences between their name and their friend's. This provides an opportunity for teachers to explain how different cultures have different kinds of names (e.g., Chinese names include a family name while Malay and Indian names include the name of the child's father), fostering the value, "respect" for different cultures and ethnic groups.

Example: Copying Words

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Copy words that start with the same letter.

Learning Activity

At the Literacy Centre, select a letter for the week. Encourage the children during the daily routines and activities to identify words that start with the letter of the week. Based on what children have identified, create word labels to display at the Literacy Centre. Children will copy the words and create accompanying drawings to illustrate the meaning of the word. These words can be copied into each child's individual book which provides opportunities for teachers to revisit the words with each child to reinforce his/her word recognition skills.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners
Children who are starting to copy words and phrases can be given the word to be copied written on a piece of paper and placed beside them, rather than on a wall or a white board.

Example: How Will This Story End?

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Create their own ending to the story, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" and copy the lines transcribed by the teacher.

Learning Activity

Read "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" several times and when the children have understood the events in the story, ask them what Goldilocks could have done when the bears woke her up from her sleep. Write the children's responses on the board.

Invite the children to select one of the responses, copy the lines onto their paper and create an accompanying drawing to illustrate the lines. Before the children start copying the lines, revisit the tips for writing conventions:

a) Start with an upper case letter

b) All other letters are in the lower case

c) Leave a space between words

d) End with a full-stop

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

The lines can be written on a piece of paper and placed beside children who may have difficulties copying from the board.

Select the writing conventions that children can demonstrate according to their abilities. For example, some children may only be ready to follow (c) while others are ready to do all aspects from (a) to (d).

Example: Making a Fruit Salad

Learning Objective/s

K1/K2 children are given opportunities to:

- Write about their experience making a fruit salad.

Learning Activity

Introduce to the children the steps of how to make a fruit salad. Demonstrate each step and after each step, get the groups of children to follow the instructions. Take pictures of the children completing each step.

After they have completed making the fruit salad, invite the children to write their experience of making the fruit salad in each of their groups. Share with them that they will be creating their class recipe book. Show the photographs of them making the fruit salad to help them think about what they would write for each photograph. Give a photograph to each group for them to recall and write the step. Compile their writings and share with them what they have written. Invite them to give suggestions on ways that they can enhance the class recipe book.

Tips on Catering to Diverse Learners

Children can do this learning activity even if they are not fully competent in writing conventions. This is because the aim of this activity is to give children opportunities to represent their thoughts and ideas through writing and to enjoy the writing process. If the writing is not legible or spelled incorrectly, write the correct word or phrase below children's writing.

DID YOU KNOW?

This learning activity helps children to develop the learning disposition, "reflectiveness". This happens when they are asked to recall how they did the recipe book and consider ways in which they could improve/do better in.

OVERVIEW OF MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE LEARNING

This overview aims to help centre leaders in understanding children's learning and development in Mother Tongue Language (MTL). This will help them to develop and sustain a thriving environment at the centre that promotes the active use of MTL in different settings. Detailed examples of children's learning and development in Chinese Language, Malay Language and Tamil Language respectively can be found in the Educators' Guide for each of the three MTLs.

The aim of MTL teaching and learning is for children to enjoy learning language in an active and interactive manner so that they will be able to develop their interest and confidence in using it on a daily basis.

To achieve this, three broad objectives have been outlined below:

Objectives of MTL Teaching and Learning

Communication

To develop children's **foundational language and literacy skills:**

- Listen with understanding
- Speak with confidence
- Recognise print and read with assistance
- Make marks, draw symbols and write letters/characters to represent ideas

Culture

To develop an **awareness** and nurture children's **appreciation of the local ethnic culture** in the following:

- Festivals, customs and traditions
- Folk tales and stories

Connection

To develop and strengthen children's **bond with family members, friends and community** in the following:

- Use MTL in daily life and share about experiences in learning MTL
- Actively participate in festivals, customs and traditions

These broad objectives of MTL teaching and learning are translated into a set of learning goals for Chinese Language, Malay Language and Tamil Language at the preschool level. The set of learning goals for each MTL also takes into consideration Singapore's complex sociolinguistic environment.

Teachers should support children's development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions through planning meaningful and relevant learning experiences. The following are learning goals for Language and Literacy (MTL).

LEARNING GOAL 1

Enjoy and show an interest in learning Mother Tongue Language

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
1.1 Develop an interest in participating in MTL activities (e.g., listening to stories, singing, dramatising)	• Follow the actions in a song, play games and/or respond to stories read to them (e.g., talk about, draw, act out the story) in MTL • Request for help in learning during MTL activities • Ask questions during MTL activities • Attempt to start or join a conversation using MTL • Request for MTL stories and songs and/or rhymes to be read or sung • Pay attention and make eye contact while listening to stories and songs or having a conversation with others in MTL • Recite catchy phrases of a song or rhyme in MTL, or perform the actions of a song on their own • Make up words, phrases or sentences verbally in MTL • Talk about learning experiences that were conducted in MTL
1.2 Develop an interest in looking at books and other printed materials in MTL	• Pick out reading materials in MTL to browse or read during their free time • Show interest in books (e.g., point and look at pictures in the book closely, comment or ask questions about the story) • Share with their friends what they like about an MTL book • Draw friends' or adults' attention to print, songs and/or games in MTL that they are aware of, or can be found in their immediate environment

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

LEARNING GOAL 2

Develop foundational language and literacy skills in Mother Tongue Language

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
2.1 Listen with understanding 2.1.1 Understand simple messages and instructions 2.1.2 Understand the main idea in a conversation	• Respond through appropriate body language when called by their name (e.g., eye contact, nodding, hand gestures) • Follow one- to two- step verbal instructions • Perform appropriate actions when singing songs or reciting rhymes • Respond to a simple message or main idea of a conversation through appropriate body language (e.g., eye contact, gestures, facial expressions) and/or simple words or phrases
2.2 Speak to convey meaning 2.2.1 Express personal needs and wants 2.2.2 Ask and respond to simple questions 2.2.3 Share personal experiences with others	• Use familiar greeting phrases (e.g., "Good morning", "Goodbye") • Use one- or two-word utterances with gestures to express needs and wants • Make a simple introduction by giving their name and age • Name familiar objects around them (e.g., things found at home, in the preschool centre, in the neighbourhood) • Ask questions to learn more about familiar people around them (e.g., family members, friends, neighbours) • Share experiences (e.g., a family outing, a class field trip, a favourite book and/or television programme) with others using simple phrases with guidance or on their own • Convey simple messages to their family, teachers and friends • Participate in simple short conversations • Use appropriate tone and volume when speaking (e.g., speaking in a polite manner)

2.3 Recognise words and read with assistance 2.3.1 Recognise familiar words 2.3.2 Have print and book awareness 2.3.3 Show understanding of stories, rhymes and poems	• Recognise familiar MTL characters, letters and/or words in the classroom, preschool centre (e.g., words on labels, word walls, books) and in the neighbourhood (e.g., shop signboards, posters) • Recognise their own name • Handle a book in the correct way • Point to the first word on a page of a story book to indicate where the teacher should start reading • Point to characters, letters, and/or words as the teacher reads the storybook • Have an awareness of some features of the MTL print such as: - the sound of each of the 12 vowels and 18 consonants in Tamil Language - the letter sounds in the Malay Language alphabet - parts of a Chinese character that give clues about the meaning of the character • Respond with appropriate gestures (e.g., nod, shake their head, shrug) and facial expressions (e.g., smile, laugh, frown) in response to stories, rhymes or poems that are read to them in MTL • Talk about their favourite character in the story (e.g., why they like the character) or favourite part of the story • Retell key events in a story • Sequence some events in the story (e.g., by drawing, putting pictures in the correct sequence) • Use pictures (e.g., book illustrations, simple picture cards, photographs) as clues to talk about the meaning of simple words or phrases

2.4 Make marks, draw symbols and write letters, characters and/or words to represent ideas 2.4.1 Copy letters, characters and/or words with understanding of basic writing conventions 2.4.2 Show understanding that drawing and writing symbols on a page is a way to explain information about a topic	• Show proper posture and hold a pencil and/or marker with recommended pencil grip • Attempt to sequence the strokes in a letter and/or character according to what they have observed • Create letter, character and/or word-like forms by tracing the forms in sand and through finger painting, etc. • Use a pencil and/or marker to make scribbles and letter, character, and/or word-like forms • Use symbols to represent ideas (e.g., draw circle for moon, triangle/rectangle for sandwich) • Verbally explain in words or phrases the ideas or information represented by different forms of writing when asked by friends or the teacher

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

LEARNING GOAL 3

Develop an awareness of their local ethnic culture

Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions (KSD): ***Provide opportunities for children to...***	***Children's learning and development could be observed, for example*, when they...***
3.1 Be aware of local customs and traditions of their culture	• Ask questions related to cultural celebrations and festivals (e.g., how traditional meals and/or desserts are prepared) • Retell, draw or role-play traditional stories and characters • Express their thoughts and/or ideas on the customs, traditions and/or moral values that the story, rhyme and/or proverb portrays • Share some details of how customs relevant to Singapore's context are carried out (e.g., local customs and practices related to ethnic celebrations) • Participate in culturally-related activities and learning journeys, and explore artefacts to find out about their local ethnic culture
3.2 Interact with family, friends and the community	• Exhibit culturally-appropriate behaviours in and out of the classroom (e.g., use appropriate language to address and greet people and show respect to the elderly) • Ask questions to know more about their family members' background and interests • Share personal experiences (e.g., their favourite song and/or food, family gatherings during celebrations) with others in simple phrases • Participate in activities (e.g., ethnic celebrations, culture performances) organised by the community (e.g., community centres, clubs, National Library Board, National Heritage Board) that promote the local ethnic culture

**The examples are not age-specific or exhaustive. Teachers may provide other appropriate learning experiences/ activities based on children's developmental needs and interests.*

Back to Contents

Chapter 3

STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The strategies and approaches for EL and MTL aim to provide opportunities for children to access and acquire languages in developmentally appropriate ways with the aim of laying a strong foundation for EL and MTL. The strategies and approaches that are applicable for both EL and MTL instruction in preschool education are:

Listening and Speaking

Modelling

- Role-model the Use of Language
- Recast or Paraphrase
- Extend and Expand

Reading

Reading Aloud

- Dialogic Reading
- Shared Book Approach/Shared Reading

Explicit Instruction

- Teaching Vocabulary
- Teaching Phonological Awareness

Writing

Shared Writing and Language Experience Approach

Language and Literacy Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions

- Songs, Rhymes and Finger Play
- Functional Role-Play
- Language Games
- Gradual Release of Responsibility

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Modelling

As children learn to speak by listening to language being used by people around them, teachers play a vital role by being **good language models**. When children begin to communicate with people around them and use language to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas, teachers need to show that they value children's talk by **taking time to listen and respond.**

In addition, teachers must recognise that **children come from different homes and language backgrounds.** Some children may be at the beginning stage of their language development, learning the sounds, words and rules of a language that is different from the language they speak at home. Teachers can help to facilitate their understanding of the language by **adopting appropriate strategies**, such as using simple sentences, speaking slowly and clearly as well as pausing between sentences.

Teachers can model how to take part in conversations and discussions through active listening and asking questions. To model **active listening**, teachers should:

- Face the child who is speaking.
- Make and keep eye contact.
- Listen to what the child is saying and not interrupt.
- Repeat or paraphrase what the child has said to show understanding.

Being at children's eye-level helps to sustain children's interest and engagement in a conversation.

As good language models, teachers can **recast** or **paraphrase** what children say in standard English or MTL instead of correcting their language. For example:

Child: "Bird there."
Teacher: "Oh yes, I see a bird too. There is a small bird perched on a branch of this tall tree."

Teachers can also **extend and expand** on what children say as this helps them to build new vocabulary. For example:

Teacher: "What did you do yesterday?"
Child: "I played toys."
Teacher: "Oh, did you play with some toys like racing cars yesterday?"

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP READING SKILLS

Reading Aloud

Engage children in the reading experience by asking a variety of open- and close-ended questions about the story.

Children's experiences with books help to build the foundation for their literacy development in the later years. The most important thing in the preschool years is for teachers to **read aloud to children**. This helps children develop interest and positive attitudes towards reading.

Research has shown that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills eventually required for reading appears to be reading aloud to children" (Adams, 1990). Reading aloud to children **promotes their listening skills** and **exposes them to the sound structure and grammar** of the language. They **learn words beyond those they hear in their daily conversations** with others. They also learn about letters and the sounds of letters, enhancing their **alphabetic knowledge** which is important in learning to read in alphabetic languages.

When reading a story to children, teachers should:

- Know the story beforehand.
- Sit in a position that allows for eye contact with the children.
- Seat the children in a semi-circle so that every child gets to see the pictures in the book.
- Hold the book so that the text and pictures face the children.
- Use facial expressions, volume contrast, different voices for different characters and audience participation/involvement to focus and retain children's attention.

However, it is not just exposure to stories that makes a difference in children's literacy development. What is more important is how teachers read to children. To enhance children's learning of the language and early literacy skills, teachers can use storybook reading techniques such as **Dialogic Reading** or **Shared Book Approach**.

Dialogic Reading

In dialogic reading, teachers involve a **small group of children** in the reading process. **The goal is for children to move from being a listener to a storyteller**. Teachers start by thinking aloud (e.g., making predictions, checking predictions as the story unfolds, asking questions, making connections) which shows the children how to understand the story as they read. Teachers then get the children involved in the story by using prompts and asking different types of questions. Gradually the interaction moves from being teacher-led to one in which the children do more of the talking and storytelling.

The acronym CROWD (Morgan & Meier, 2008) refers to five different types of prompts that teachers can use to get the children involved in the story:

C – **C**ompletion prompts – Leave a blank at the end of the sentence and invite children to supply a word to complete the sentence, e.g., "The brown bear saw a ..."

R – **R**ecall prompts – Ask questions about the events and characters in the story, e.g., *What did the brown bear see?*

O – **O**pen-ended prompts – Encourage children to talk about what is happening in a picture, e.g., *Can you guess what the teacher sees?*

W – **W**hat, where, when and why questions prompt – Ask questions beginning with "what", "where", "when" and "why" that focus on the pictures in the book, e.g., *Why did the goldfish say it could see the teacher?*

D – **D**istancing prompts – Relate the story to the children's experiences as this allows them to practise conversational and storytelling skills, e.g., *Where have you seen these animals before?* and *What is something red that you can see?*

Shared Book Approach (SBA)

In SBA, teachers model the reading process by leading the children in reading a text which is usually from a **Big Book**, i.e., enlarged picture book. Big Books allow all the children to see the print and pictures, enabling them to participate actively in the reading of the story. Teachers can use a pointer to point to the words while reading to emphasise the link between spoken and written words as well as to draw children's attention to print and print conventions. As teachers model how to handle books and talk about books, children develop knowledge about and a love for books.

Teachers should **read favourite books over and over again** as repeated readings help children to understand the story better, gain new information and acquire new vocabulary.

The general goals of SBA are to:

- Provide an enjoyable experience with books for all children.
- Provide oral English or Mother Tongue Language models for both book and spoken language.
- Encourage children to use English or Mother Tongue Language in non-threatening situations.
- Introduce beginning reading skills through engaging stories and story-related activities.
- Teach and reinforce vocabulary and language structures.

An example of SBA using the book, "What the Ladybird Heard" by Julia Donaldson

This should be conducted over a few days.

First reading of the story

Introduce the book, "What the Ladybird Heard". Draw on the children's prior knowledge and help them make links with the book by getting the children to name the animals that can be found on a farm and the sound that these animals make.

Ask some of these questions to discuss the cover of the book with the children:

- *What do you see on this cover?*
- *What animals do you see?*
- *Where is the ladybird?*
- *What do you think this story is about?*

Point out the author's name and tell the children that Julia Donaldson wrote the story. Point out the illustrator's name and tell the children that Lydia Monks drew the pictures. Read the title while gliding the pointer under the words being read to direct the children's attention to print.

Use some of the following questions to discuss the illustrations on each page before reading the text on that page aloud with rhythm and expression:

- *What animals do you see?*
- *Where is the ladybird?*
- *What sound do you think the (animal's name) makes?*

Second reading of the story

Reread the story without stopping, gliding the pointer under the words as they are being read. Invite the children to join in the repetitive parts of the story (such as making the sounds of the different animals). Ask questions about the story to check the children's understanding and get them to talk about and draw what they like best in the story.

Subsequent readings of the story

Get the children to retell the story using the pictures in the book. Reread the story with the children once through and without interruption. Finally, ask questions to relate their personal experiences to the characters and events in the story.

- *Have you seen these animals before? Where have you seen them?*
- *What is your favourite animal in the story? Why?*

Follow up with activities that help the children learn the following:

- **Letter recognition** – Use a letter frame to highlight the letter 'l' in the word 'ladybird' to help the children recognise the letter by its shape, name and sound. Get the children to write the letter "l" and draw two or three things they know that begin with the letter.
- **Phonological awareness** – Get the children to identify rhyming words using the word frame. Get them to sit in groups and read the story aloud with the pointer. When a rhyming word is heard, the groups will tap their fingers. The group that taps first gets to send a pair to the front to identify the rhyming word using the word frame.
- **Target language structure** – Get the children to imitate the sound of the animal and use the target language structure, "_____!" said the (animal's name).
- **Target vocabulary** – Use a word frame to focus the children's attention on the target vocabulary (e.g., left, right, round, through) from the story to help them identify directional words.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction is important in language teaching as it does not assume that children will naturally pick up the language around them. It directly introduces to children specific aspects of the language, e.g., letters (name, shape and sounds), phonological awareness, vocabulary.

Teaching Vocabulary

Teachers should not assume that children will pick up new words just by listening to stories or from listening to the language spoken around them. Thus, they must select the target words and intentionally teach these words to the children and widen their vocabulary.

The following are key principles to bear in mind when teaching target vocabulary:

- Be intentional in selecting target words
- Provide both explicit and implicit instruction, e.g., explain the meaning of the word and present the word in context through a story
- Give children repeated exposure to the word in order to consolidate their understanding of the new vocabulary

Teachers can do the following to help children learn target vocabulary:

- Select target words, e.g., words that are central to understanding the story, words that are useful to children in different contexts, words that children may not hear in everyday conversations but may come across in books
- Present each word in context, e.g., in a story/rhyme, using props and pictures
- Explain the meaning of each word using a child-friendly definition
- Give examples of each word in sentences different from the story
- Get the children to say each word to establish phonological awareness of the words
- Provide opportunities for children to use each word

The "Say-Tell-Do-Play" technique (Roskos et al., 2009) is an example of vocabulary instruction that can be used during shared book reading:

- Say the target words and get the children to say the words
- Tell the meaning of each word using a child-friendly definition
- Do actions or use gestures to add to the meaning of the words
- Play a game or role-play with the children to get them to use the new words

The table below shows an example of the "Say-Tell-Do-Play" technique based on "Giraffes Can't Dance" by Giles Andreae.

Say the word	Tell the meaning	Do the action	Play
buckled	Fall or break apart	Bending the knees and falling over	Children tell and act out the story using the target words
sneered	Smile in an unfriendly way	Make the facial expression	
swaying	Moving gently side to side	Move the arms and step side to side	
entranced	Amazed with looks of surprise	Make the facial expression	

Teaching Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is a skill that must be taught explicitly. Through clear and direct instruction, children are able to hear parts of spoken speech and begin to blend or segment sounds they hear into spoken words. Children can acquire phonological awareness before being able to read print.

An example of explicit instruction for phonological awareness is **direct teaching**. Direct Teaching is a **systematic and structured approach** that scaffolds children's learning experience in acquiring phonological awareness, particularly phonemic awareness (i.e., hearing individual sounds in a spoken word). It aims to help children hear the individual sounds in words and acquire the skills of differentiating the sounds in words. Direct Teaching adopts a **fast-paced, explicit and repetitive mode of teaching** whereby children are expected to learn by receiving and following instructions that are systematically presented by the teacher.

Direct teaching has the following three segments:

- Introduce the objective
- Teacher modelling
- Application of learning

When carrying out direct teaching, teachers are to consistently use the **key words** in each of the three segments to build children's understanding of phonological awareness. Teachers are also encouraged to **give opportunities for children to respond.**

This is an example of how direct teaching can be used to introduce the beginning sound of spoken words.

Learning activity focus: Recognising Beginning Sounds

Materials: Picture cards
(Real objects can be used whenever available and appropriate.)

Note: Key words that teachers should consistently use are in bold.

Segments	Direct Teaching Instructions
i) Introduce the Objective	Children, we are going to learn a **beginning sound** today. We are going to listen carefully and then pick out picture cards with the same **beginning sound**. Are you ready?
ii) Teacher Modelling	The **beginning sound** we are going to learn today is /s/. **Look at my mouth**, /s/. **Now children, say** /s/. *(If a child does not say the beginning sound, say the following.)* Child 1, **say with me** /s/. *(If a child says the beginning sound wrongly, say the following.)* *Child 1, look at my mouth. /s/. Child 1, say /s/. Alternatively, the child can hold a mirror to see how he/she makes the sound.* *(Display the picture cards with the same beginning sound to be taught. Model all the words with the same beginning sound.)* This is "sun". It has the **beginning sound** /s/. This is "seven". It has the **beginning sound** /s/. This is "seed". It has the **beginning sound** /s/. This is "soap". It has the **beginning sound** /s/. Children, **what is this**? *(Show the picture card)* **What is the beginning sound?** *(Repeat these questions for the remaining picture cards)* Good job!

iii) Application of Learning	*(Besides the picture cards with the beginning sound that is to be taught, select at least three picture cards of other beginning sounds. Jumble the order of the cards.)* **We have learnt the beginning sound** /s/. Let's play a game. I would like you to pick the picture cards that have the **beginning sound** /s/. Child 1, can you pick one picture card that has the **beginning sound** /s/? *(If the child picks the right picture card, say the following)* Child 1, **what is this?** *(Point to the picture card)* What is the **beginning sound?** Good job! *(If the child picks the wrong card, say the following)* Child 1**, This is** "sun". It has the **beginning sound** /s/. Say /s/. *(Point to a picture card with the correct beginning sound)* Let's try again. Child 1, what is this? What is the beginning sound? *(Ensure that every child has the opportunity to participate.)*

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS

Shared Writing

In order to spell and write words, children must be able to link letters to their sounds and understand that letters are used to write the sounds they hear in words. Teachers can help them by using shared writing to model the writing process. In shared writing, teachers think aloud what they want to write, sound out the words and represent each sound with a letter or letters, and demonstrate print conventions as they write. As children become more familiar with the writing process, teachers can encourage them to participate in the writing.

Teachers can use the following steps to engage children in shared writing:

- Guide the children in a discussion about an activity (e.g., making a Father's Day card) or a story that has been read aloud.
- Model the writing process by thinking aloud while writing.
  - **Example of the planning process:**
    What do I want to say to my father for Fathers' Day? What does he like? What does your father like you to say to him? [Invite the children's responses and practise wait-time] *Yes, he would like you to say "thank you" and "I love you". What could you thank him for?* [Invite the children's responses and practise wait-time] *Yes, you can say, "Thank you for making delicious food."*
  - **Example of the drafting process:**
    We have written "Thank you" before. Do you remember when we did the Mothers' Day card? Can anyone remember how we wrote "Thank you"? [Invite the children's responses and practise wait-time]. *Where do we start writing?* [Invite the children's responses and practise wait-time] *Yes, we start at the top on the left side... Now, how do we write "making"? How many syllables are there in "making"? Let's clap the syllables as we say the word. There are two syllables in "making". Let's sound out the first syllable "mak". "Mak" starts with the sound /m/. What letter has the sound /m/?*
  - **Example of the reviewing process:**
    Let's read together what we have written. [Read a sentence or phrase] *Is there anything we would like to change or add on?*
- Guide children in a discussion of the text. For example, point to the words and say, *I notice that the words 'cooking' and 'care' start with the same sound /c/. Can you find other words that start with the sound /c/?*
- Encourage the children to draw and write on their own as a follow-up activity.

The **"Language Experience Approach (LEA)"** is an example of shared writing where children use their own words to compose stories stimulated by a shared experience, for example, going on a field trip to the zoo or going on a neighbourhood walk. The shared experience provides the context and content for children to think, talk about and create a class story with the help of the teacher who transcribes their input. When teachers encourage children to talk about what they are thinking and then write it out for them to read, children begin to understand the link between spoken and written language.

LEA involves the following steps:

- Select a shared experience (e.g., going on a field trip to the zoo, going on a neighbourhood walk) for the discussion and recording of ideas.
- Encourage the children to talk about what they have experienced, e.g., what they saw, what they did and what they liked best.
- Get the children to suggest a title and compose four to five sentences for their story.
- Read the story to the children, modelling expression and phrasing.
- Invite the children to reread the story.
- Explore the story by getting children to discover letters (e.g., "Let's find the letters 'V' and 'L' in the story. Raise your hand if you spot them.") or words (e.g., "Let's look for the word 'bread'. We used bread to make our sandwiches.") in the story.
- Display the class-dictated story on the wall at the children's eye level so that they can revisit the story in their own time.

Teachers should also consider the following to support children's writing development:

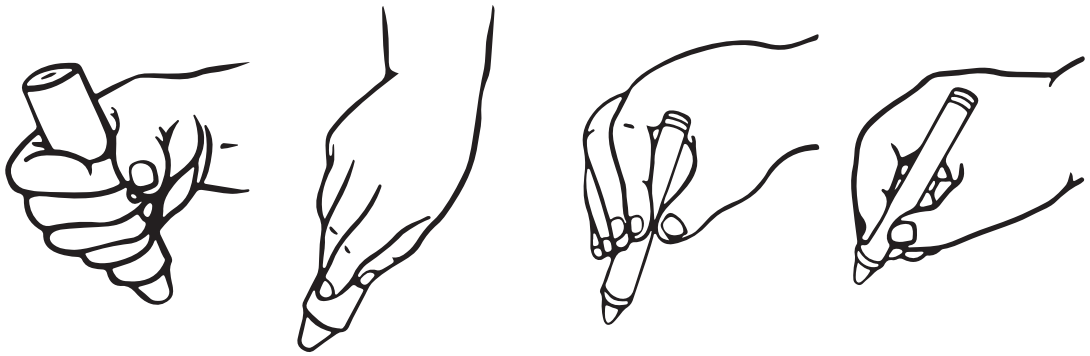
- **Provide time, place, materials and opportunities**
  Teachers need to set aside time and provide space, materials and opportunities for children to play with language, explore letters and sounds in words, and to experiment with writing. They can also introduce writing as part of classroom routines, for example, getting children to label or describe their artwork.

Children's self-written labels displayed with their artwork provide opportunities for teachers to revisit what children had learnt.

- **Model correct ways of forming letters**
  To help children in their handwriting, teachers can model the correct ways of forming the upper and lower case letters when writing for and with children. Children often reverse their letters and teachers can help them by drawing their attention to letter orientation, for example "'M' and 'W' are alike, but 'M' faces down and 'W' faces up."

- **Model the recommended posture and handwriting grip**
  It is also important for teachers to understand how children develop their handwriting grip. Teachers can observe children as they draw or write and model the recommended posture as well as the recommended way of holding drawing/writing tools using the tripod grasp. The diagram "Children's Development of Handwriting Grip" shows how children develop their handwriting grip from the cylindrical grasp to the tripod grasp.

Children's Development of Handwriting Grip



Cylindrical Grasp | Digital Grasp | Modified Tripod Grasp | Tripod Grasp

With the understanding of how children develop their handwriting grip, teachers can model the recommended way of holding writing tools using the tripod grasp.

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE AND LITERACY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND DISPOSITIONS

Songs, Rhymes and Finger Play

Songs, rhymes and finger play[5] are natural tools for learning about language in a fun way, especially those that have repetitive phrases (e.g,. "Mary had a Little Lamb", "Two Little Black Birds") and require children to do actions and make sounds, e.g., "Itsy-Bitsy Spider", "If You're Happy and You Know It", "Old MacDonald had a Farm".

Songs, rhymes and finger play expose children to new vocabulary and help them to notice sounds and intonation patterns which develop their phonological awareness.

They provide opportunities for children to:

- **Develop sensitivity to beginning sounds of words**
  Songs such as "Baa Baa Black Sheep" or tongue twisters such as "Rama Rolls the Rambutans" help children to focus on the beginning sounds of words and notice that they sound alike.
- **Recognise and produce rhyming words**
  Rhymes such as "Humpty Dumpty" help children hear similar sounds at the end of words. They can also substitute words to modify and create new rhymes. For example: *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a big ball* or *Humpty Dumpty sat on a mat, Humpty Dumpty had a pet cat*

[5]Finger plays are chants, rhymes or songs that involve hand movements that are coordinated with the words.

When introducing a song, rhyme or finger play, teachers can consider the following steps:

- Introduce the song/rhyme/finger play by singing or reciting it once through.
- Demonstrate the actions of the song/rhyme/finger play to children as this makes it easier for them to understand the words.
- Go through the lines of the song/rhyme/finger play so children can focus on the words.
- Invite the children to join in the song/rhyme/finger play.
- Sing/recite it many times in different contexts/ways to help children to remember.

Functional Role-Play

Functional role-play allows children to use language as they act out roles, organise and maintain the play in familiar settings.

In functional role-play, children take on different roles and act out situations in familiar settings, such as the home, clinic, bakery or restaurant. Children have the opportunity to use language as they act out their roles as well as organise and sustain the play. Functional role-play also helps them to develop their understanding of the world around them.

Children play best with what they know and are familiar with. Teachers can organise play settings based on their experiences. They can discuss the role-play situations with the children (e.g., taking care of the baby at home, taking orders from customers in a bakery), suggest examples of what to say and do as well as role-model the language to use, e.g., how to greet one another, take orders, ask questions. Teachers should not assume that children know what to say in different social contexts.

Teachers can take on the following roles (Roskos & Neuman, 1993) to initiate and extend children's role-play:

- **Stage Manager**
  Teacher supplies the props and suggests ideas to enhance the play but does not enter into children's play.
- **Co-player**
  Teacher takes on a role (e.g., customer in a fastfood outlet, passenger on the bus) and joins in children's play while letting children take the lead most of the time.
- **Play leader**
  Teacher actively participates in children's play and takes deliberate steps to extend the play by introducing new props or problems that need to be resolved.

Language Games

Children revisit the familiar words they have learnt as they play a BINGO game.

Teachers can use language games to create contexts for meaningful communication. Games provide opportunities for children to practise phrases and sentences that are useful for communicating in everyday situations. Games are also fun and enjoyable. In the excitement of playing, children often lose their shyness and inhibition.

However, teachers need to consider the level of difficulty as children may get discouraged if the games are too challenging. To help children understand how to play the game as well as understand the language content, teachers can do the following:

- Demonstrate how the game is played
- Give clear and simple directions
- Provide a list of useful phrases and/or sentences

Examples of language games include:

- Guessing games such as "10 Questions" in which the teacher thinks of an object and children ask 10 "Yes"/"No" questions for clues to guess what the teacher is thinking of
- Search games such as "Find a Friend" in which children move around the room, asking questions to find a friend who fits the description, e.g., find a friend who has a younger brother, find a friend who likes the colour blue
- Matching games such as "Snap" in which children are given cards with pictures and/or labels and they take turns to open up a card from the stack with the aim of matching it with a similar card in hand, e.g., cards can be matched by the same beginning or ending sounds, or picture cards of rhyming words. As part of the rules of "Snap", get the children to say out the beginning sound, letter or word to reinforce their learning
- Labelling games in which children match word labels and pictures

Many of these language games also provide the opportunity to build executive functioning (EF) skills, such as children's working memory, inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. Below are some examples of language games that help to build the specific EF skills:

Working Memory

- Cards with a mixture of words and pictures are placed face-down. Pairs or a group of children are to match the word with the pictures and they must remember the position of the cards to make the most number of matches possible.

Inhibitory Control

- A game of "Simon Says " builds children's inhibitory control as they resist their impulse to do an action when the phrase "Simon Says" is not spoken.
- At the Literacy Centre, children can pick out from a bag either a picture of a pair of lips or an ear. The child that picks up the picture of a pair of lips gets to read to the child with the picture of an ear. The child can read either a picture book or a set of letters or sight words. The child with the picture of an ear is to listen and pay attention to his/her friend reading. The child with the ear can help the friend who is reading only if asked to.

Cognitive Flexibility

- Each child has a pencil and drawing paper. All the children are to look at an object and try to draw it without lifting the pencil from the paper. Before they start drawing, they are to plan where to start drawing on the paper and which part of the object to start drawing from. Children are not to use erasers when drawing. As children draw, they will need to be flexible and think how they can complete the drawing if they find themselves running out of space or if they feel that they have drawn wrongly at one point. At the end of the activity, get children to guess what each other's drawing is.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

Gradual Release of Responsibility (van de Pol et al., 2010) is a model that encourages teachers to role-model, scaffold and support children's learning such that eventually, children will be able to apply the skill independently. This model can be used in developing children's reading and writing skills and can be summarised with these three steps: "I Do", "We Do" and "You Do".

- At the first stage of "I Do", the teacher first demonstrates and role-models the skill for children to observe. This demonstration can be done in different contexts and situations.

- At the second stage of "We Do", children begin to apply the skill with the teacher's facilitation; the teacher may need to again demonstrate or role-model a certain skill.

- At the third stage of "You Do", the children have acquired foundational skills and can apply them to different contexts and situations. The teacher may give reminders or suggestions to children to support their continued development. When children reach the third stage, they also gain the confidence to communicate with others and this enhances their motivation for learning.

It is important that teachers provide the support for children according to their readiness and abilities, such as providing developmentally appropriate materials and not rushing children through the stages. The choice of material or learning content should be within the child's zone of proximal development – providing sufficient challenge without overwhelming the child. For example, selecting appropriate reading materials for children with different reading levels (e.g., materials where children can read 90-95% of the words and understand the content) can build children's confidence, helping even reluctant readers to experience success at the "You Do" stage. When the child's readiness level has increased, the material or learning content can be adjusted to sufficiently challenge the child and the child may return to the second stage of "We Do" till the child is able to acquire the skill.

The diagram below shows how the model can be used to develop children's **reading skills.**

I Do

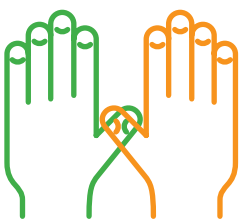
- Teacher reads a book or print in the children's environment and role-models how to decode unfamiliar words through blending of sounds, recognition of high frequency words and/or contextual clues.
- Children are introduced to the decoding skill and are given opportunities to observe how the skill is used by the teacher in different contexts.

We Do

- As children read, teacher guides children as a class, in small groups or individually to decode unfamiliar words, e.g., identifying the onset and rime of words in the same word family, high frequency words, and/or contextual clues.
- Children are beginning to identify some letter sounds and blend them but may need support.

You Do

- Even though children may not know all the letter sounds, they are able to blend what they know to read some unfamiliar words with minimal support.
- The teacher revisits the letter sounds through a song or rhyme when children forget a letter sound. Teachers may pair children to help each other in decoding.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOTHER TONGUE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

When implementing the above strategies for Mother Tongue Language (MTL) teaching and learning, educators can bear in mind these key considerations to help them in adapting the strategies for their children:

Learning about the local ethnic culture (e.g., celebrations, greetings, games) is part of the MTL learning experience.

These considerations take into account:

- Singapore's unique sociolinguistic landscape where EL and the three MTLs are used widely in the community.
- An increasing number of children speaking EL most of the time and who do not or infrequently communicate in MTL.

MTL needs to be a living language to children.	MTL needs to be a living language to children so that they can see the relevance of using MTL in their daily experiences and routines. This can include using MTL to greet each other and to interact with others in their community.
Teaching of MTL should cater to diverse learners.	Children enter preschool centres with varying levels of abilities in MTL where some may not be able to understand verbal instruction in MTL and while others are fluent in MTL. Teachers are encouraged to adapt their strategies and activities to meet children's interests and needs.

Learning of MTL is active and interactive, taking place in authentic settings.

MTL learning should involve the use of songs, games and activities that will actively engage children. Dramatising a familiar story also enlivens the learning of MTL. Children should be given opportunities to interact with others in the centre and the community to enhance opportunities for quality interaction. When MTL learning experiences draw from children's daily experiences (e.g., a visit to the supermarket or a park), children are able to make connections between what they learn and their daily experiences, providing opportunities for them to use more of MTL in their lives.

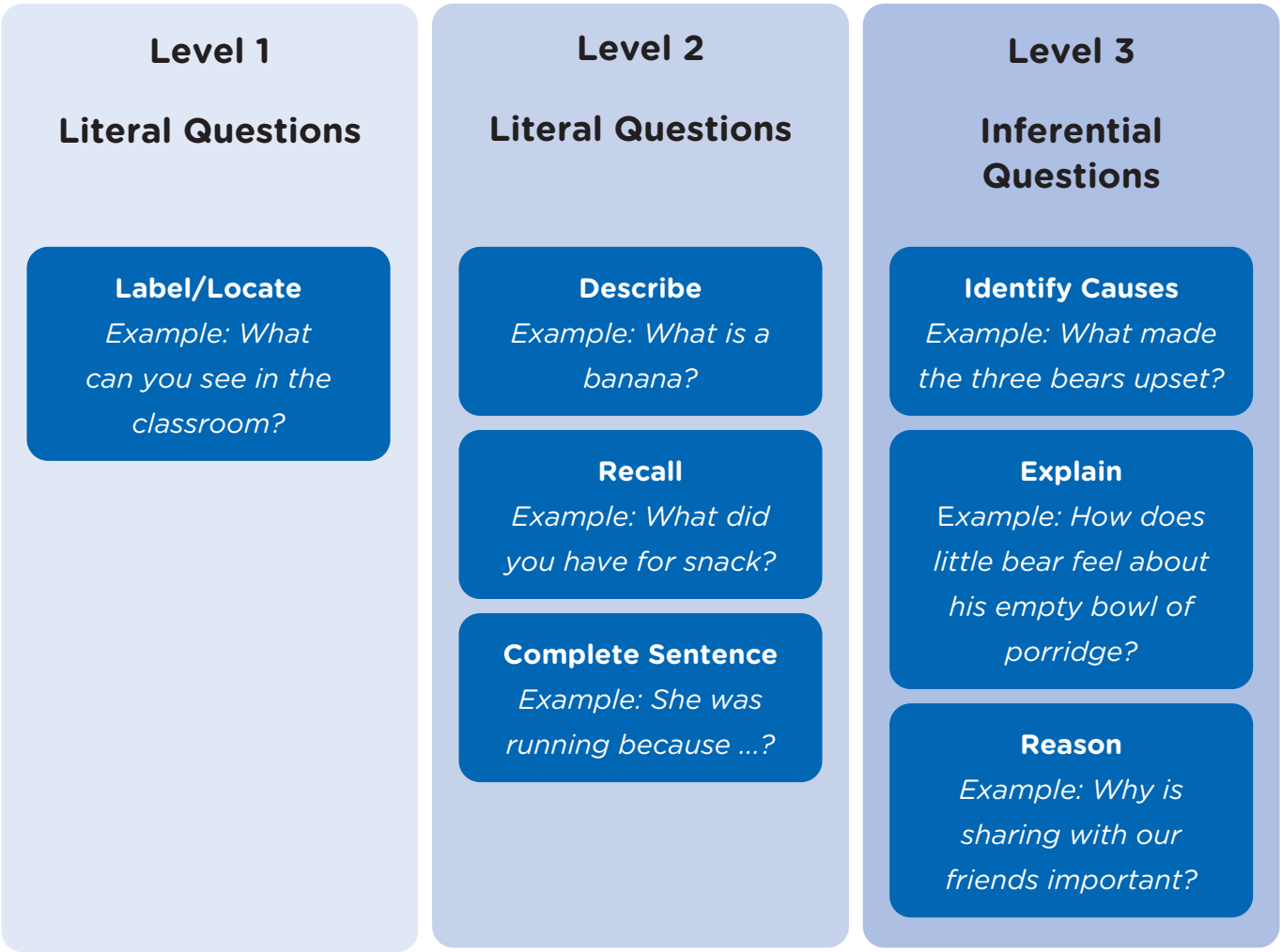
CATERING TO DIVERSE LEARNERS

Children have different learning needs and their learning and development can be supported by their teacher as well as their friends as children observe and learn from each other.

Children have varying abilities in EL and MTL and also interest in the languages. Catering to their needs and interests is key in developing their language and literacy knowledge, skills and dispositions. Being able to observe their development and provide targeted support in a timely manner will help children lay a strong foundation in both languages.

Differentiating Questions

For children who are proficient in either EL or MTL, or even in both languages, providing them with an enriching language experiences by surrounding them with both oral and print language will continue to support their development. Using a variety of questions can enrich their language learning experience. The variety of questions that teachers can ask can be categorised into three levels:



For children who are starting to acquire or struggle with learning the language, asking more literal questions at level 1 and 2 will help them develop their listening comprehension.

As teachers and children interact and pose questions to each other, it is important to give sufficient time for both to respond to each other. Providing wait time for young children to think, put into words their thoughts and verbalise is important to encourage more elaborate responses, developing children's language abilities.

Here are some ways which teachers can practice wait time with young children (Wasik & Hindman, 2018):

Count to 3	Ask a question and silently count to three before responding. Three seconds provides a good amount of wait time.
Model wait time	• When responding to a child's question, wait for three seconds before responding. • Use the wait time to think about the child's question, your response and the possible follow-up questions you can ask.
Be purposeful and patient	• Identify appropriate activities where wait time can be practised (e.g., large circle time, book reading) and/or plan the number of times you can practise wait time in a day. • Be patient as it takes time for adults and children to learn how to practise wait time.

Providing Effective Support for Children

Besides differentiating the questions to cater to children with different language and literacy abilities, it is important for teachers to consider providing additional support to children with gaps in language learning. Especially for EL, support is essential as EL is the medium of instruction in schools. There are several considerations to develop effective support for such children in EL:

1. Observing and identifying children that need support

- Identification of children should be based on the **expectations of the centre's curriculum** which takes into consideration the profile and needs of children.
- Identification of children new to the centre can be done once such **children have adjusted well to the centre's routines.**
- Give teachers **time and space to observe children in different settings** and to collect information from other sources, such as other teachers or parents.

- **Set up professional teams or groups of teachers** that can discuss their identification of children. This will help to establish a common understanding among teachers of the children in their centre that need support.
- **If more than half of the class is identified to need support**, teachers are encouraged to **first adjust the pitching and pacing of the centre's curriculum** to meet the needs of most children. Then, teachers can observe and identify a smaller group of children who need dedicated support.

2. Teachers' support should complement the centre's curriculum

- Research (Brooks, 2006) shows that when teachers and centres who **follow up on the support that children receive**, children maintain their gains or make further gains in Language and Literacy.
- Teachers' support should be **timely and targeted.** For example, after the letter sounds of "c" and "s" have been introduced in the week, those who still struggle with acquiring these letter sounds should receive just-in-time support from the teacher within the week.
- Teachers' support is **done during class time.** While the rest of the children are engaged at the learning centre or engaged in a differentiated task individually or in pairs, the teacher can support the children who need dedicated support.
- Teachers' support should have **explicit instruction.** The language and literacy areas for teachers' support can include (but is not limited to) the following:
  - Phonological awareness, e.g., identifying syllables, beginning sounds, ending sounds, and blending or segmenting of sounds in words
  - Phonics, e.g., recognition and production of letter names and sounds
  - Word Recognition and emergent literacy, e.g., high frequency words, reading decodable words, blending and segmenting letter sounds
  - Fluency, e.g., shared reading of decodable text[6]

[6]Decodable text refers to books that have many words which share the same phonetic sound or pattern

3. Maintain frequency and duration of support to children in small groups or in pairs

- **Keep support group size small but one-to-one support may not be necessary:** Research at the moment does not have conclusive findings on whether one-to-one support is more effective than support in pairs or small groups for children with varying needs.
- The duration of support during curriculum time should have the **right balance of providing sufficient support to children without taking away too much time from other important learning experiences** in the centre's curriculum that will impact children's holistic development.
- Research shows that children who struggle in reading at kindergarten grade (equivalent to Singapore's K2 level) make gains when they have **more than 100 support sessions in a school year** (Wanzek et al., 2018).

4. Monitoring children's progress at key time points in the year

- Monitoring the progress of children who need language and literacy in **a timely manner** can inform teacher's instruction and the centre in refining or adapting the curriculum to cater to the needs of these children.
- The learning progress of these children can be **communicated to relevant stakeholders** (e.g., parents, therapists, other teachers supporting the child) who are supporting these children's development, fostering a greater understanding of the child's needs that will enhance the collaboration between teachers and relevant stakeholders.
- Useful tools to monitor and document these children's progress include **progress monitoring checklists and indicators.** The progress monitoring checklist below shows how a teacher can monitor the progress of children with needs in language and literacy in a specific area:

Literacy Skill/ Time Period*	**Outstanding!**	**Good job!**	**Much better!**	**You can do it!**	**Remarks****
The child reads aloud words from some familiar word families.	The child is able to read aloud words from 3-word families.	The child is able to read aloud words from 2-word families.	The child is able to read aloud words from 1-word family.	The child is not able to read aloud words in the same word family.	**A child who is able to read words from word families can first sound out the onset and rime, blend them and then read the word.**
1st time point (May)					
2nd time point (Nov)					

*This progress monitoring checklist for a child who needs support in language and literacy assumes that the identification period is in March and the skills in the identification checklist and this progress monitoring checklist are similar so teachers can see the progress of children easily across the year.

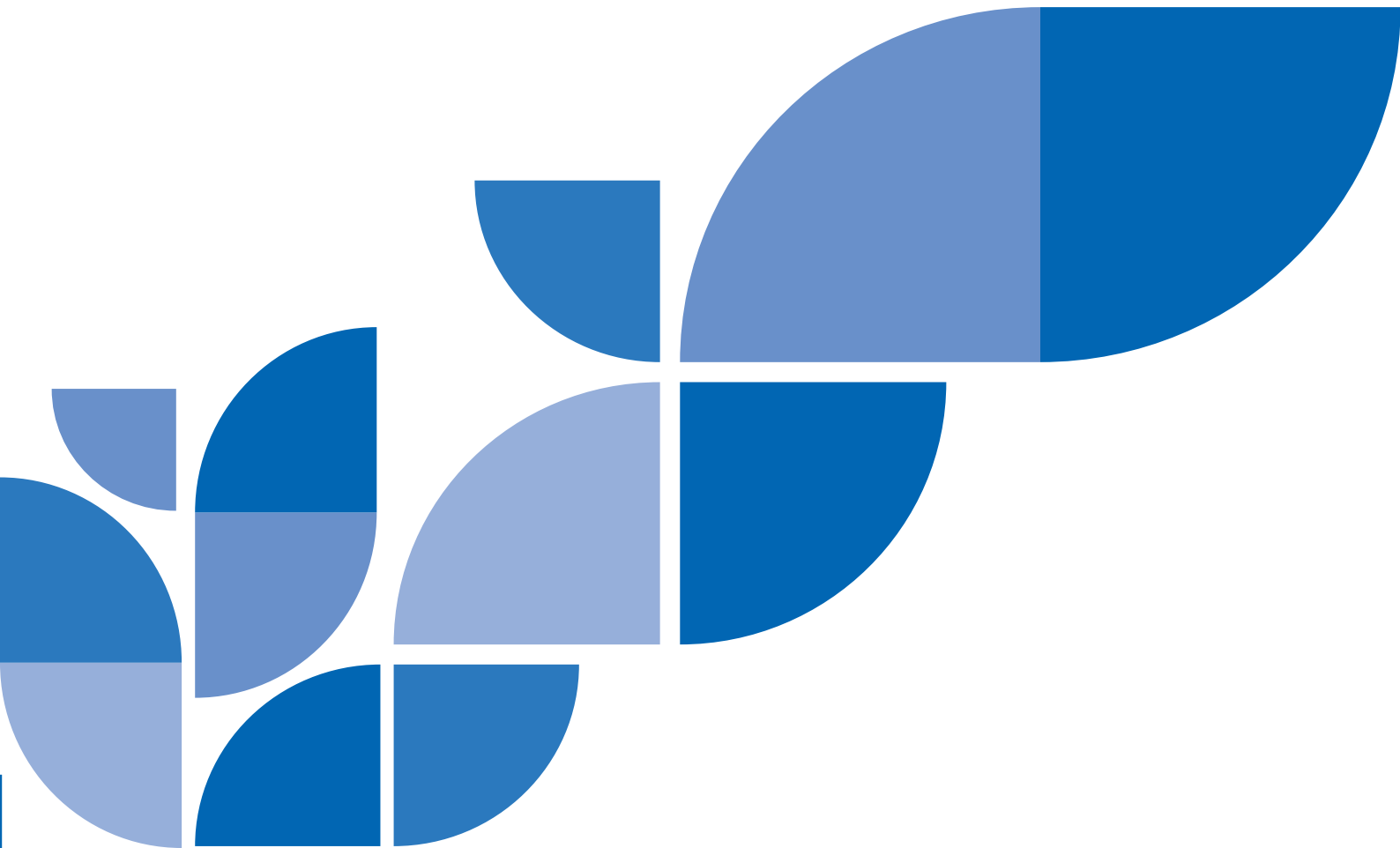
** Remarks are meant to ensure a common understanding among teachers on what to observe and assess. These can be updated from time to time to address teachers' misconceptions.

- With teachers monitoring the progress of these children, centres can **collate the information gathered across the classes from the progress monitoring checklist** and review the progress and learning needs of the children in the centre as a whole. This will inform the centre's efforts to refine the curriculum and/or put in place structural supports (e.g., dedicating more time to support these children) to enhance the support given to these children.

Back to Contents

Chapter 4

ORGANISING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



A learning environment that promotes the communication of languages in different settings and contexts supports preschool children's development of language and literacy.

When designing an environment that is rich in possibilities to reinforce or extend children's use of the language, consider how the physical, temporal and interactional environments can:

- **Enrich the language** children hear as well as the print that they see (i.e., a language-rich and print-rich environment).
- **Engage children** in language and literacy learning through play.
- **Encourage children to be self-directed learners,** building their confidence in communicating in the language.

LANGUAGE-RICH ENVIRONMENT

Besides the interactions during learning activities, routines and transitions also provide opportunities for children to hear, see and interact using languages.

While it is important for children to hear a language being spoken frequently, it is also important for children to hear a variety of words, phrases and sentences in a language-rich environment.

These are some ways to create a language-rich environment for children:

- Use parallel talk and self-talk
- Read frequently to children
- Have conversations with children about what they are interested in
- Do not be afraid to use complex or rare words with children

Use Parallel Talk and Self-Talk

In parallel talk, the teacher describes the child's current actions or experiences. E.g., when a child is in the outdoors exploring a slide, the teacher may say, "Look at you climbing the steps. You look ready to slide down. Whoosh! You went down the slide like a race car!"

In self-talk, the teacher describes what he/she is thinking/feeling and invites children to participate in the conversation. E.g., during snack time, the teacher may say, "Oh dear, I forgot to bring my snack today. I'm feeling so hungry. My tummy is growling. Can you hear it? What can I do to get a snack?".

Read Frequently to Children

Establish a routine to read daily to children. Reading a range of picture books to children such as stories and information books can introduce to children a wide variety of vocabulary that might not be possible during their daily conversations.

Have Conversations with Children

Allow time and space to have conversations with children on what interests them. A way to do this would be when they are engaged in play and they are eager to share what they are doing with the teacher. Extend their responses, e.g., if they point to a block and say one word "block", try to understand what they are saying and extend it into a sentence "Would you like the red rectangular block?" Wait for their response and continue the conversation with them as much as possible.

Do Not Be Afraid to Use Complex or Rare Words

Research has shown that the use of complex or rare words that connect to children's experiences help children to construct sentences and describe or narrate what they experience. It even predicts their later language proficiency at age 12 (Uccelli et al., 2019). Here are three ways to include complex or rare words in conversations with children:

Talk about past or future events	E.g., "Remember the visit to the community garden yesterday? We saw different flowering plants like the ixora. Who remembered the butterfly that was attracted to the ixora's nectar?"
Talk about pretend scenarios: Make an object represent another; Describe the feelings and thoughts of objects; Enacting a script	E.g., Make an object represent another during children's play with interconnecting blocks: "I wonder if the red block is like a dynamite. A dynamite causes things to explode. Oh dear! The whole area is covered with dynamite!".
Talk to connect different events, concepts or objects	E.g., "What happens if the hungry caterpillar eats all of this food in one week? What happens if the hungry caterpillar eats all of this food in one day?"

PRINT-RICH ENVIRONMENT

A print-rich environment displays different types of print, such as labels, descriptions, speech bubbles and even environmental print (i.e., the box labelled as "water pitcher").

A conducive **physical environment** that allows children to see how print is used in different contexts can provide opportunities for children to be curious about print and teachers to reinforce or extend children's learning about print.

In terms of the **temporal environment**, time and space can be set aside for teachers and children to talk about the print that they see around them in the centre as well as outdoors or in the neighbourhood. For example, routines and transitions present opportunities for teachers and children to talk about the print that they see and relate them to their current or previous learning experiences.

As teachers and children interact and ask questions about the print that they see, this also enhances the **interactional environment** where attempts to read or make sense of the surrounding print environment are encouraged and questions can be asked about them.

These are examples of how available resources and materials can create a print-rich environment:

- Environmental print
- Labels
- Lists, schedules and calendars
- Messages
- Alphabet and word charts

Environmental Print

Examples of environmental print can be found in the child's familiar environment, such as on the roads and at their neighbourhood.

Environmental print is found in the everyday environment of the children. Teachers can provide opportunities for children and parents to be curious about the environmental print around them, such as street signs, shop signs, menus and food labels that they encounter on a regular basis outside the classroom. Children learn to recognise and read environmental print through their many experiences with it. These could be opportunities for children to understand that print conveys meaning and to begin to recognise letters, characters and simple words.

How to use environmental print in teaching and learning

To set up a hawker stall in the Dramatic Play Centre, collate pictures of shop signs, displayed menus and other relevant signages (e.g., the sign of no littering/no smoking) in a folder. Children can look through the folder and decide what signages and environmental print they want to create and put up in their Dramatic Play Centre.

Labels

Labelling common objects found in the classroom such as tables, chairs, easels and cupboards is one of the ways to help children recognise that print has meaning. Labels can be used to organise the space in the classroom, for example, to indicate the designated area for the different learning centres. They also help children know where to store materials, such as shelves for writing tools and building blocks of different shapes. Labels can be accompanied by pictures to help children understand the meaning of the labels.

How to use labels in teaching and learning

For places that are special to children, such as their own cubby hole or small garden plot with vegetables that they have grown, get them to create their own label with their name or the name of the vegetable. Allow children to copy their name onto the label if they are not yet ready to write on their own. Have a picture to accompany their label at the beginning and gradually replace that with just the label when they are ready.

Lists, Schedules and Calendars

Lists, schedules and calendars are useful resources to display in the classroom as they contain words and phrases that children can learn to recognise. When children put their names on a list to indicate their choice of learning centre for the day, they gradually come to recognise their own names and their friends' names. Lists also include classroom rules which remind children about acceptable behaviour in class. Displaying the daily schedule presents opportunities for the teacher to explain the activities of the day and helps children make connections between spoken and written language.

How to use a list for teaching and learning

Upon arrival, establish a routine with children that they will pick up their name tag and place it on the attendance chart. They can do it with some adult help (e.g., teachers, parents) and this helps them to recognise their name.

Messages

Messages refer to notices that inform children of changes in their daily routine/schedule or introduce activities that will take place later in the day. These messages can be placed when children first enter the classroom for the day or during transition between activities when the teacher is waiting for the class to settle down. Children begin to realise that reading these messages is important and will be motivated to learn to read.

How to use messages for teaching and learning

Have the message ready at the start of the day or before an activity. Children are given time to read and guess from the messages what will happen next. Get children to read the message. As they read the message, glide your finger or pointer below the words to model print awareness. An example of a message could be:

We learned that insects have six legs.

We are going to find insects during outdoor time.

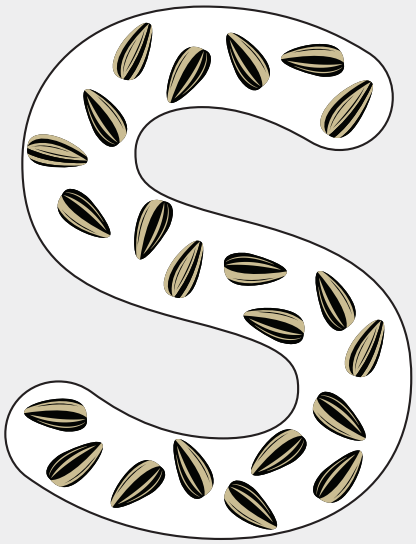
What kind of insects will you find?

Alphabet and Word Charts

Displaying alphabet and word charts at children's eye level encourages them to recognise the letters and words that they had been introduced to in previous learning activities. These charts also provide teachers with the opportunity to help children be self-directed learners. Instead of always being the one to answer children's questions like how to write the letter "q" or how to spell a word that they had learnt, teachers can re-direct children to look for the letter or word on the alphabet or word chart for themselves. Each child can also have a word journal that captures the words that they like, which they can refer to when they want to write or revisit the word.

How to use the alphabet and word charts during teaching and learning

Put up the upper and lower case letters. Fill each shape of the letter with objects that begin with the letter, i.e., outline the letter S and fill the space within the outline with seeds. Provide opportunities for children to revisit the letters and suggest other objects that start with that same letter.



Put up card with words that children have learnt onto a magnetic board that is at children's eye level. If children need to know how to write one of the words, they can take the word card off the board to copy and return it when they are done. Give the children an opportunity to vote for a word that they would like to put up on the magnetic board which they have learnt. An "I Spy" game can be played with the children to revisit the words that they had learnt.

SETTING UP LEARNING CENTRES TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Setting up well-designed learning centres such as the Dramatic Play Centre and Literacy Centre provides opportunities for children to use language to communicate and play with one another and motivates them to be interested in print and to use and make sense of it.

Dramatic Play Centre

A Dramatic Play Centre like a post office can provide opportunities for children to communicate and use the language in an authentic and meaningful setting.

A Dramatic Play Centre gives children opportunities to act out different roles. Through playing with others in imaginary scenarios, children are able to listen to and use language in meaningful ways.

Teachers can consider the following when setting up a Dramatic Play Centre to support children in their language and literacy development:

- Display a sign with the name of the setting, e.g., Little Stars Veterinary Clinic
- Label props that are related to the setting, e.g., x-ray machine, medicine, first aid kit, patient appointment list
- Display commonly used words and phrases that children can use when role-playing, e.g., "Welcome to Little Stars Veterinary Clinic. How can I help you today?
- Put up children's drawing and writing related to the theme
- Display suggestions and messages to give children ideas on what and how to play, e.g., *Your cat Fifi does not want to eat. Will you bring Fifi to the vet?*
- Include printed materials (e.g., brochure on how to take care of a pet) and writing materials (e.g., paper of different sizes, markers, pencils) to encourage children to integrate reading and writing into their play

When appropriate and meaningful, teachers can participate in their play and seize the opportunity to model how words and phrases are used when interacting/communicating with others. They can also introduce a problem for children to solve during the play as this helps to prolong the play scenario and allows children to extend and expand their language.

Children can make use of the writing materials to write words and phrases to remind themselves what to say as they role-play. To encourage children to write in meaningful contexts, the role-play could include having them create their own props, such as designing a menu or writing a medical record card.

Placing a **video camera/touch tablet with video-recording capabilities on a stand** and making it available at the Dramatic Play Centre can be a valuable learning resource for children. Children may wish to record their dramatic play of an authentic situation or a part of a story they have been read to. Children can be encouraged to review the video-recording and a discussion can be facilitated where they can suggest how and what they could do better or differently. This provides the opportunity to develop children's listening and speaking skills, comprehension of a story that they have been read to and the learning disposition of reflectiveness.

Literacy Centre

The Literacy Centre is a dedicated space for reading and writing. It is a comfortable and inviting place in the classroom that children can go to during small group time or in their free time. A wide range of reading and writing materials should be made easily accessible to them to encourage them to pick up a book to read or use crayons to draw and write what they have experienced or read about.

Writing Corner

This is a place where children can explore writing for different purposes. A well-equipped Writing Corner contains a variety of writing tools, such as markers, colour pencils and crayons, as well as paper of different sizes, colours and textures. Samples of greeting cards, pamphlets and posters can be displayed to encourage children to write for different purposes. An alphabet chart of upper and lower case letters can be displayed at eye level for children's use in the writing corner.

Teachers can include book-making materials, such as lined paper, a hole-puncher and ribbons in the Writing Corner for children to create their books. Children need not be accurate in spelling, grammar or sentence structure. The objective of encouraging them to create their own books is to help children express their ideas and take ownership of the writing and illustration process.

Teachers can engage children in a discussion about what they want to write and get them to share their story plans with their friends for feedback and suggestions. As children write their stories, teachers can encourage them to sound out the words. This presents an opportunity to review letter sounds with them and help them gain confidence in expressing themselves using print.

Reading Corner

This is a comfortable and inviting place that allows children to relax and choose from a wide range of books to read. Teachers can display books that are related to the theme to help children relate to and extend what they have learnt. Teachers can consider including devices, such as tablets and headsets in the Reading Corner for playing eBooks and audio books. Paper or flannel cut-outs and puppets of characters from children's favourite stories can be placed in the corner to encourage children to act out familiar scenes from the books and learn to retell stories. Book posters and "reviews" created by children can also be displayed to encourage their friends to read a particular book.

When setting up the Reading Corner, it is important to provide a varied and wide range of books for children to choose from and refresh these according to children's interest as well as the centre's curriculum and programmes. This will cater to children with different interests and abilities and helps to nurture in them a love for reading.

Teachers should consider the following when choosing books for preschool children:

- Attractive illustrations that capture children's attention
- Characters from varied backgrounds (e.g., ethnicity, professions) that children can identify with
- Storyline that is fast-paced and fun
- Brief text (one or two sentences per page)
- Repetition of words or phrases

A variety of books can be selected to complement a theme or topic like learning about plants.

Including different types of books in the Reading Corner presents opportunities for teachers to introduce a range of vocabulary. Each type or genre of books provides specific opportunities to help children learn about literacy. The different types of books include alphabet books, information books, picture picture books and rhyming books.

Alphabet Books

Alphabet books introduce the letters of the alphabet and help children review the alphabet in interesting and creative ways. Children can recall the names and sounds of the letters through such books. They associate the letter names with objects or animals whose names begin with a particular letter, e.g., "B" for "banana". Some books such as "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom" portray the letters as characters and remind children that letters in the alphabet have a consistent order.

Examples of alphabet books include:

- "Alpha Block" by Christopher Franceschelli
- "Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination" by Mitsumasa Anno
- "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom" by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault
- "The Sleepy Little Alphabet" by Judy Sierra

Information Books

Information books are written to convey information about the world. They appeal to children's curiosity about the world and how things work. The photographs and pictures attract children and spark their interest about the world, prompting them to ask questions about the pictures or words they come across. These books help children learn about things they may not notice or experience first-hand, increasing their knowledge of the world. They also contain more sophisticated technical words with accompanying descriptions or explanations which children might be interested to know. This helps expand children's vocabulary.

Examples of information books include:

- "I Read Signs" by Tana Hoban
- "I Spy" series by Jean Marzollo
- "Nature Spy" by Ken Kreisler
- "Timmy and Tammy" series by Ruth Wan-Lau

Picture Books

Dramatising a familiar picture book can nurture children's disposition for reading and develop their comprehension of the story.

Picture books are books in which the text and illustrations combine to tell a story. The text is minimal and the illustrations complement or extend the text, or provide information that is not stated in the text. The illustrations in picture books help children make meaning of and understand the story. They also help build background knowledge which is important as children learn to read.

Teachers and children can talk about picture books in different ways – they can talk about the story as told by the words, the story that can be told from the pictures or the story that can be told as a result of combining both the words and pictures.

In general, picture books for young children have the following features (Sutherland, 1997):

- Story line is presented in a brief and straightforward manner
- Story contains a limited number of concepts for easy understanding
- Text is written in a direct and simple style
- Illustrations complement the text

Examples of picture books include:

- "Little Wayang Kid" by Raymond Tan
- "Piggie and Elephant" series by Mo Willems
- "Press Here" by Herve Tullet
- "We're Going on a Bear Hunt!" by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury

Rhyming Books

Children who read or who are regularly exposed to rhyming books, poems and songs develop phonological awareness and become better readers and spellers (Bryant et al., 1989). Rhyming books help children to be aware of letter sounds and make the association between written letters and sounds. The more children are exposed to such books, the more they are able to produce rhymes on their own and decode words that share the same rhyming sounds.

Examples of rhyming books include:

- "Goodnight, Goodnight Construction Site" by Sherri Duskey Rinker
- "Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb" by Al Perkins
- "Rhyming Round Singapore" by Kathleen Chia & Linda Gan
- "See You Later, Alligator" by Sally Hopgood

Choosing E-Books

Selection and use of appropriate e-books to develop children's disposition and reading skills have shown to be beneficial. While e-books should not replace physical books, they can be useful in developing children's print awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension (i.e., understanding the story) and disposition towards reading.

While children can read e-books on their own, research shows that **children gain the most when an adult reads the e-book with them**. The conversations about the e-book that adults and children can have enrich children's learning and enhance their reading progress.

When using e-books with children, **start by using the read-only mode**. It is important for children to hear the whole story first before engaging in the games and/or interactive hotspots as this enhances their reading comprehension.

These are some of the common features found in e-books for young children and ways that they can be used appropriately with children (adapted from Guernsey & Levine, 2016; Lowry, 2016).

Hotspots: Interactive areas that children can press to receive auditory and/or visual information **Games:** Puzzles, mix-and-match and other fun/engaging activities provided with the e-book	Games and hotspots should only be activated after the page is read and should help children to understand the story. • When children can access games and hotspots during the reading of the story, the narration is interrupted and this affects children's comprehension of the story.
Bi-modal text: Highlighting the words at the same time that they are narrated	E-books with bi-modal text help children to develop print awareness, making connections between what the narrator says and the text. "Forward" and "backward" buttons also help children to understand that a text is read from left to right.
Dictionary: Feature that explains difficult words	Dictionary mode in e-books helps children to understand challenging words and increases their vocabulary.
Repeated reading options: Options that allow children to select a word, phrase, sentence or pages to be narrated	Repeated reading options help children to develop understanding as they revisit the text.

PROMOTING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN OTHER LEARNING CENTRES

Other learning centres (e.g., Construction/Block Play Centre, Discovery Centre, Art and Craft Centre) can provide opportunities to meaningfully introduce language- and literacy-related materials and activities that can enrich children's play and help them reinforce their dispositions, knowledge and skills in language and literacy.

Here are some suggestions on how language- and literacy-related and activities can be introduced in other learning centres:

Placing **reading materials** (like brochures, pamphlets and books) that are relevant to children's interests and learning experiences

E.g., Children at the Construction/Block Play Centre may be interested in building race tracks or may have experienced a prior activity that introduced the concept of skyscrapers. Putting books related to racing cars/race tracks or skyscrapers could enrich their play as they incorporate ideas that they get from the reading materials. This also presents an opportunity to nurture children's positive disposition towards books and reading.

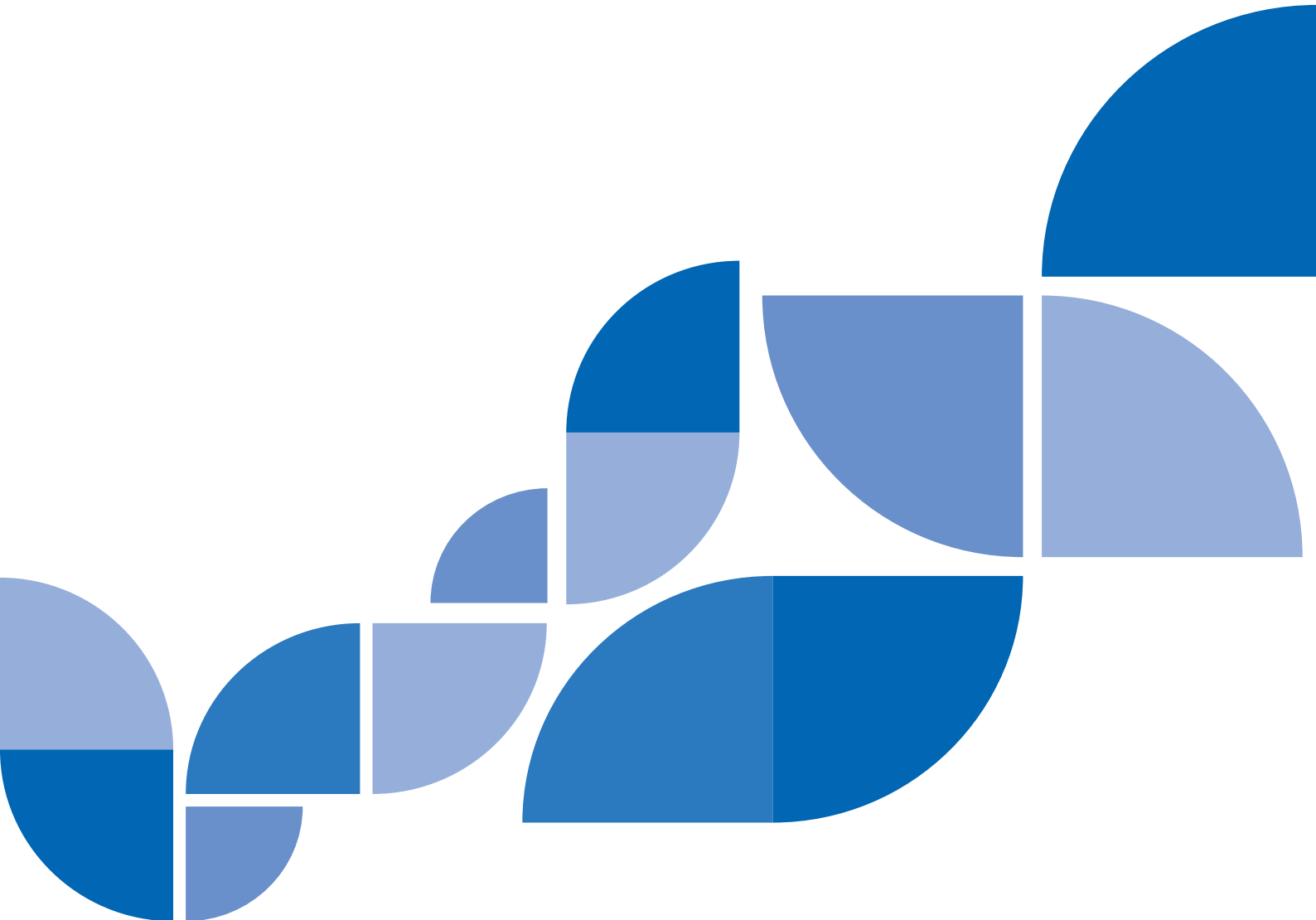
Making available **writing materials** (e.g., paper, markers, crayons, pencils) as part of the learning centre's materials

E.g., At the Discovery Centre, children may be interested in dismantling a used keyboard to find out what is inside the keyboard. As they do so, teachers can facilitate a discussion on the function of the different parts of the keyboard. Children can draw the different parts of the keyboard that they see, developing their observational and recording skills in the learning area, discovery of the world, and at the same time develop their writing skills (according to their abilities) as the teacher facilitates the description of their observations.

Back to Contents

Chapter 5

MONITORING AND ASSESSING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



To find out what children know and can do in order to plan for and build on their learning, teachers must first understand how children acquire language and literacy. With this understanding and taking into account different home and language backgrounds, they observe children to identify where each child is at, design learning experiences that cater to the varying abilities and collect information to monitor their progress. Teachers interpret the information they gather and communicate their understanding of each child's learning development to various stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, therapists) to foster collaboration between stakeholders to support each child's learning development.

OBSERVING, DOCUMENTING AND ASSESSING CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Language Development

Observing and documenting how children use language help teachers to better understand their language development. Teachers can use anecdotal records, checklists, audio and video recordings to document children's language development over a period of time.

Children use language for different purposes and to perform different functions. For example, children can use language **to communicate their wants** (e.g., "I want to read this book."); **control the behaviour of others** (e.g., "I will be the waiter and you be the customer."); **explore and learn about the world around them** (e.g. "Why do I get a stomach-ache like the hungry caterpillar?"); **create a new play scenario** (e.g., "Let's pretend this is a castle."). By observing how children use language, teachers gain insights into their language competency.

For a more complete picture of their language development, teachers should **observe children using language in different contexts** which include both informal and formal settings, e.g., as they converse with one another during play or when they stand in front of the class to talk about their artwork.

While children may feel comfortable using language to converse with their friends, they may not have the confidence to speak in front of a group. Teachers can provide opportunities for children to speak in a small group before introducing activities, such as show and tell in a large group setting. Teachers can also model and teach specific vocabulary and language structure to help children plan what they want to say in front of a large group.

Early Literacy Development

Besides documenting children's progress in their acquisition of the various early literacy skills (i.e., print and book awareness, alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness), teachers should consider observing and documenting **children's interest in reading** as this shows their **attitude toward books** and indicates their motivation to learn to read.

Teachers can consider the following questions while observing children during read aloud or as they select and read books on their own at the reading corner:

- *Is the child attentive during shared reading?*
- *Does the child respond verbally to the story by answering questions or making comments?*
- *Does the child respond in non-verbal ways, e.g., laughing at the funny parts of the story?*
- *Does the child choose a book intentionally and spend time looking through it? Or does he pick up a book at random, flip through it and then move on to the next book too quickly?*

As **comprehension** is one of the major goals of reading instruction, teachers can also ask questions about a story or get children to retell the story to **assess their level of understanding as they listen to or read texts**. If children are unable to do so, this may indicate a lack of understanding of the text. Teachers may have to provide more scaffolds, such as reading the story again or explaining the meanings of words using child-friendly definitions to help children in their comprehension.

After reading a story, teachers can ask questions to assess children's understanding. For example:

- *What is happening on this page?*
- *How did the story end?*
- *Who is your favourite character? Why do you like the character?*
- *Which is your favourite part of the story?*

Teachers can also ask children to retell the story. Pictures in the book can be used as visual cues, if necessary.

As the child retells the story, teachers can consider the following questions in order to understand the child's level of comprehension:

- *Does the child's retelling show that he understood the story?*
- *Is the child telling the story in a logical sequence?*
- *Does the child know how to use relevant or key words from the story?*
- *Does the child include details in the retelling of the story?*

To track children's **writing development**, teachers need to take note of the different ways children attempt to **express their thoughts, feelings and ideas in written form**. They can keep samples of children's drawing and writing accompanied by anecdotal notes (e.g., brief descriptions of where, when and how the writing was produced) to document these changes over a period of time.

Teachers can consider the following when analysing samples of children's drawing and writing:

- **Talk about the piece of writing with the child to find out the meaning** he/she is trying to convey.
  - Based on the context and purpose of the writing, is the message appropriate?
- Based on the six categories of writing, what **types of writing is the child using to represent ideas and express himself/herself**? Teachers can plan and provide opportunities for children to explore writing depending on whether the writing resembles:
  - Scribbles that are randomly placed or marks arranged in a line
  - Mock letters or letter-like forms
  - Actual letters
  - Mock words or strings of letters randomly put together to represent words
  - Words spelt using letters/groups of letters to represent the sounds they hear
  - Words spelt conventionally
- What is **the level of the child's message, based on length and complexity**? For example, a story is a higher-level message than a label for a picture. If the child continues to write one-word labels for his/her pictures, teachers may need to help the child progress to writing a higher-level message. They can encourage the child to talk about the picture and write what the child says while sounding out the words to model the writing process.

After teachers have made their observations, analysed and interpreted the information gathered to assess children's learning development, teachers can communicate to parents about their child's development and progress. During the communication with parents, teachers can ask questions or give tips where relevant:

Questions and tips for parents	Why is this important?
• Find out more about the child's language environment, e.g., *What is the language most often spoken at home?* • Find out more about the child's print environment, e.g., *Is the child read to often at home? How often does the child visit the library?*	Knowing the child's exposure to the language at home can help the teacher to understand the kind of resources and opportunities that can be provided at the centre which are lacking at home.
• Suggest simple follow-up actions for parents that would promote bonding between parents and the child, and promote the love for learning the language at home.	Parents may not be fluent or confident in using the language but giving them tips to engage their children and show interest in their child's language learning can motivate children in learning the language.

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION, DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Example 1: Observing a Child's Disposition for Other Printed Materials (N2/K1)

Context

The children visited their centre's vegetable garden and the teacher introduced the vegetables in the garden. She pointed out to them the labels in the garden that described the name of the plant or vegetables.

Observation

At the centre's vegetable garden, Hanif pointed to a label and asked, "What is the vegetable's name?". Later on, a friend was looking closely at a plant. Hanif joined his friend, pointed at the label and said, "Did you know this plant has a name?" His friend asked if he knew the name of the plant and Hanif replied, "I don't know. It has the letter 'H'. 'H' for 'Hanif'." Hanif then asked the teacher for the name of the plant.

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

- Hanif understood that the print materials in his environment (e.g., labels in the centre's vegetable garden) communicate information. He was curious about the content and was able to identify letters in the print that he was familiar with e.g., 'H'.

- Hanif had a positive sense of his own learning ability and was confident to ask questions when he did not have the answer.

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Take photos of different print materials in Hanif's immediate environment to expose him to different print materials that communicate different kinds of information, e.g., labels, reminders, instruction. Get him and his friends to guess where these print materials can be found and invite him to do a "treasure hunt" of these print materials with his friends.
- Encourage Hanif to notice other print materials in his neighbourhood or at home, e.g., newspaper, biscuit packaging. Encourage Hanif and his parents to take photos of these print materials and share them with the class where they were found and what they think these mean.
- As Hanif is beginning to recognise the letters, encourage him to also identify the other letters of his name in the print around him (e.g., labels and signages in the centre).
- Continue to build Hanif's confidence in himself by giving him opportunities to take on simple responsibilities in the class e.g., pushing in chairs, turning the watering cans upside down.

Example 2: Observing a Child's Phonological Awareness in the area of Recognising Beginning Sounds (N2/K1)

Context

The teacher had introduced to the children that the words that they heard were made up of different sounds and how to recognise the beginning sounds in words. To reinforce their learning, an outdoor game was created and the teacher role-modelled to the children how to play the game. During outdoor time, children engaged in outdoor play and a group of children was given the opportunity to play the game to reinforce their phonological awareness.

Observation

Alicia and her friends were given an opportunity to play an outdoor game to recognise the beginning sounds /m/ and /s/ of objects that they were familiar with, e.g., monkey, melon, mop, sand, soap, sandals. The objects were represented by pictures on the ground. When Alicia's friend, Farhana sounded out /m/, Alicia looked at the pictures quickly and then looked at her friends on her left and right. As her two friends jumped onto the pictures on the ground, Alicia also jumped onto the picture of "melon". When Farhana next sounded out /s/, Alicia jumped onto "monkey".

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

Alicia has started to recognise the beginning sounds in the spoken words that she heard. She will need support to identify spoken words that begin with the sound /s/ and /m/.

- The following checklist could be completed with some remarks given to provide evidence for the interpretation:

Indicator	Outstanding!	Good job!	Much better!	You can do it!
The child recognises beginning sounds in words.	The child is able to recognise beginning sounds of words most of the time.	The child is able to recognise beginning sounds of words sometimes.	The child is able to recognise beginning sounds of words with guidance.	The child is not able to recognise beginning sounds of words.
			Alicia is starting to recognise beginning sounds (e.g., /s/ and /m/) with guidance.	

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Play a "Snap" game using the same pictures with Alicia and a classmate who has yet to grasp fully the beginning sounds. Before playing the game, revisit the name of the pictures and their beginning sound with Alicia and her classmate. As part of the rules of "Snap", Alicia and her friend will need to voice the beginning sound to win if both cards have the same beginning sound.
- Have Alicia see how the teacher's mouth forms the sound /m/ so that she is better able to recognise and produce the sound. Alicia could also use a mirror to see how her mouth forms the sound /m/.
- Encourage Alicia and her parents to take pictures or bring objects from home that have the same beginning sound of /s/ and /m/. The activity can suggest objects that have either the /s/ or /m/ as a beginning sound to support families in completing the activity.
- A list of objects that have either the /s/ or /m/ as a beginning sound could be provided to support families in completing the activity.

Example 3: Observing a Child's Writing Skills (K1/K2)

Context

The children had been learning about the value of showing care to the people around them. Through a neighbourhood walk, they realised that their neighbourhood was kept clean and green by many people like gardeners, garbage collectors and NEA officers checking for mosquitoes. During a class discussion, the children suggested that they could draw and write "thank you" cards to give to these community helpers as a way of showing care.

Observation

Dennis chose to draw a card for the cleaner at his block to thank the cleaner for keeping the neighbourhood clean. He sounded out the words as he wrote a sentence to accompany his drawing: "thank you fr makin 365A kleen"

Documentation, Interpretation and Assessment

Dennis was able to communicate his thoughts using both invented and conventional spelling in his writing. He might still be learning about all the aspects of the writing convention, e.g., starting the sentence with an upper case letter and ending a sentence with a full-stop.

- The following checklist could be completed with some remarks given to provide evidence for the interpretation:

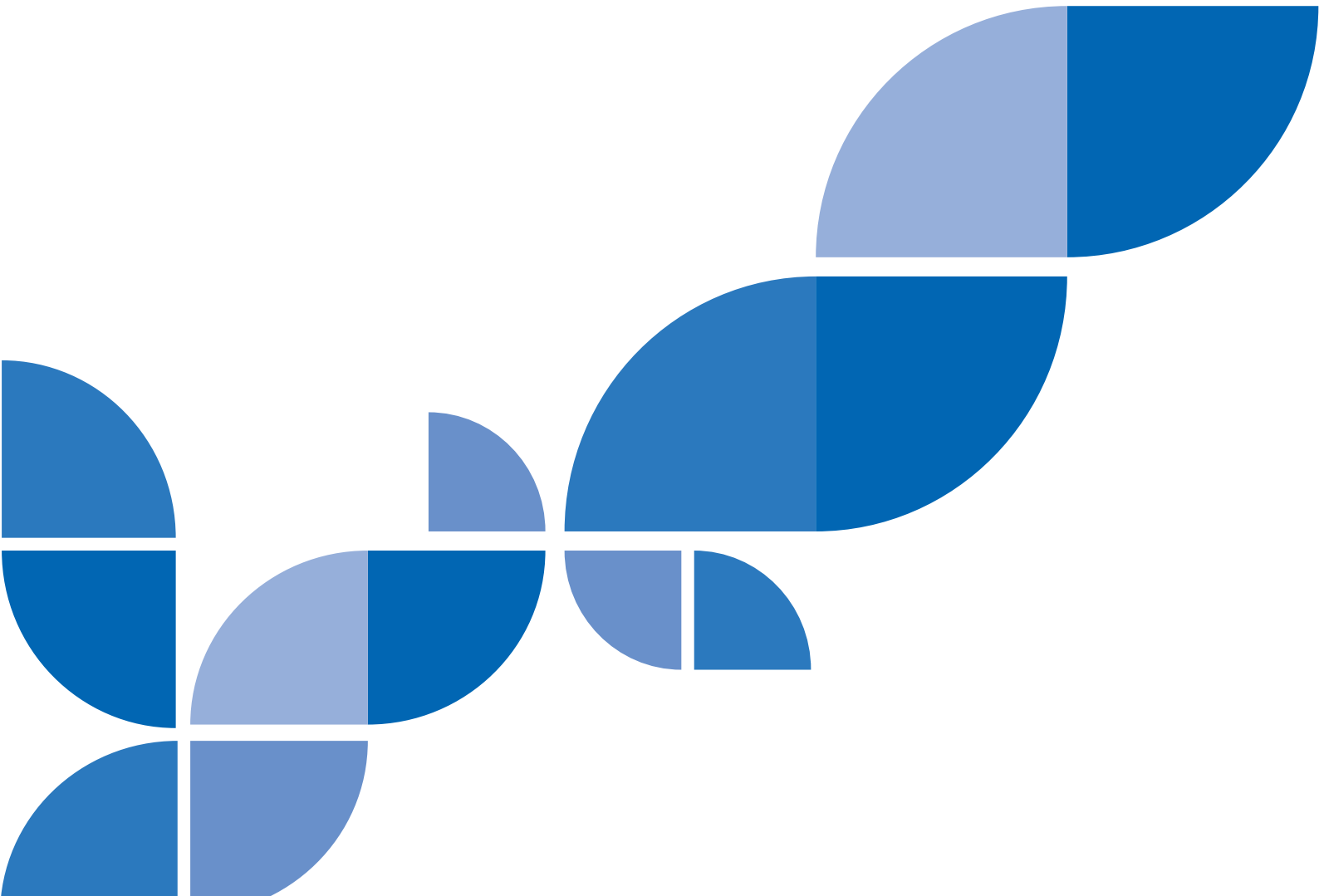
Indicators	Outstanding!	Good job!	Much better!	You can do it!
The child writes short sentences to communicate thoughts and ideas using basic writing conventions and invented or conventional spelling	The child writes a short sentence to communicate thoughts and ideas with the use of basic writing conventions.	The child writes a short sentence to communicate thoughts and ideas with some guidance on the use of basic writing conventions.	The child writes a phrase to communicate thoughts and ideas with some guidance on the use of basic writing conventions at times.	The child forms letters to communicate thoughts and ideas but has little to no understanding of writing conventions.
		Dennis is confident in expressing his thoughts in writing. When prompted, he is able to follow the writing conventions.		

Possible Follow-up Activities to Reinforce/Extend Learning

- Review with Dennis what he had written and ask him if he would like to make any changes to his writing. During the review, point out to Dennis the familiar print environment around him (e.g., poster on having clean hands, wall chart on high frequency words introduced to children). Ask him to notice how certain words are spelled or that the upper case letter is used at the beginning of the sentence. Ask him how he can make changes to his writing so that the cleaner receiving his card will be able to read the message.

Back to Contents

Bibliography



Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: thinking and learning about print.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Adesope, O.O.,Lavin, T., Thompson, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2010). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the cognitive correlates of bilingualism. *Review of Educational Research, 80*(2), 207-245.

Archer, A.L., & Hughes, C.A. (2010). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. The Guilford Press.

BBC Learning English. (2023, August 10). The sounds of english.

Bradley, B.A., & Jones, J. (2007). Sharing alphabet books in early childhood classrooms. *The Reading Teacher, 60*, 452-463.

Brooks, G. (2006). *What works for pupils with literacy difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention schemes*. London: DfES.

Bryant, P. E., Bradley, L., Maclean, M., & Crossland, J. (1989). Nursery rhymes, phonological skills and reading. *Journal of Child Language, 16,* 407-428.

Bus, A. G., van IJzendoorn, M. H., & Pellegrini, A. D. (1995). Joint book reading makes for success in learning to read: A meta-analysis on intergenerational transmission of literacy. *Review of Educational Research, 65*(1), 1–21.

Cahill, M., & McGill-Franzen, A. (2013). Selecting “app”-ealing and “app”-ropriate book apps for beginning readers. *The Reading Teacher, 67*(1): 30-39.

Chall, J. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Clark, C. (2011). *Setting the baseline: The National Literacy Trust’s first annual survey into reading.* 2010. London: National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C., & Douglas, J. (2011). *Young people’s reading and writing: An indepth study focusing on enjoyment, behaviour, attitudes and attainment.* National Literacy Trust.

de Jong, M. T., & Bus, A. G. (2002). Quality of book-reading matters for emergent readers: An experiment with the same book in a regular or electronic format. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(1), 145-155.

Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Republic of Singapore (2021). *Census of population 2020 statistical release 1: Demographic characteristics, education, language and religion.*

Duke, N.K. (2003). Reading to learn from the very beginning: Information books in early childhood. *Young Children, 58*(2), 14-20.

Ehri, L.C. (1995). Phases of development in learning to read word by sight. *Journal of Research in Reading, 18,* 116-125.

Greenberg, J., & Weitzman, E. (2014). *I'm Ready! How to prepare your child for reading success.* Toronto: The Hanen Centre.

Griffith, P.L., Beach, S.A., Ruan, J., & Dunn, L. (2008). *Literacy for young children: A guide for early childhood educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Guernsey, L., & Levine, M.H. (2016). *G*etting smarter about e-books for children. *Young Children, 71*(2). NAEYC.

Hall, S.L. (2006). *I've DIBEL'd, now what? Designing interventions with DIBELS data.* Longmont: Colorado, Sopris West Educational Services.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1969). Relevant models of language. *Educational Review, 22*(1), 26-37.

Hart, B., & Risley, R.T. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Holdaway, D. (1979). *The foundations of literacy.* International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Iturbe, C.Z. (2019). *What is dialogic reading?.* World of Better Learning. Cambridge University.

Korat, O., & Shamir, A. (2008). The educational electronic book as a tool for supporting children's emergent literacy in low versus middle SES groups. *Computers and Education, 50*, 110-124.

Korat, O., & Or, T. (2010). How new technology influences parent-child interaction: The case of e-book reading. *First Language, 30*(2), 139-154.

Korat, O., Shamir, A., & Arbiv, L. (2011). E-books as support for emergent writing with and without adult assistance. *Education and Information Technologies, 16,* 301-318.

Krashen, S.D., & Terrell, T.D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Lowry, L. (2016). *E-book or paper book - What's best for young children?*

Ministry of Education. (2020). *Speech by Minister for Education Lawrence Wong at the 9th Mother Tongue Languages Symposium (e-MTLS).*

Moody, A.K., Justice, L.M., & Cabell, S.Q. (2010). Electronic versus traditional storybooks: Relative influence on preschool children's engagement and communication. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 10*(3), 294-313.

Morgan, P.L., & Meier, C.R. (2008). Dialogic reading's potential to improve children's emergent literacy skills and behavior. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 52*(4), 11-16.

Morrow, L.M., Freitag, E., & Gambrell, L.B. (2009). *Using children's literature in preschool to develop comprehension: Understanding and enjoying books (*2nd Ed.*)*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1998). *Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children.* Newark, DE; Washington, DC: Authors.

Parish-Morris, J., Mahajan, N., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Michnick Golinkoff, R., & Fuller Collins, M. (2013). Once upon a time: Parent-child dialogue and storybook reading in the electronic era. *Mind, Brain, and Education, 7*(3), 200-211.

OECD. (2002). *Reading for change: Performance and engagement across countries: Results from PISA 2000.* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD. (2018). *PISA 2018: Insights and interpretations.* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Rog, L.J. (2011). *Read, write, play, learn: Literacy instruction in today's kindergarten.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Roskos, K., & Neuman, S. (1993). Descriptive observations of adults' facilitation of literacy in play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 8*, 77-97.

Roskos, K.A., Tabors, P.O., & Lenhart, L.A. (2009). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool: Talking, reading and writing (*2nd Ed.*).* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Sadoski, M. (2004). *Conceptual foundations of teaching reading.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Salmon, L. (2014). Factors that affect emergent literacy development when engaging with electronic books. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42*, 85-92.

Schickedanz, J.A., & Casbergue, R.M. (2009). *Writing in preschool: Learning to orchestrate meaning and marks (*2nd Ed.*).* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Schmitt R., & Lanz U. (2008). *Bildgebende diagnostik der hand*. Stuttgart: Thieme.

Segal-Drori, O., Korat, O., & Klein, P.S. (2013). *What can better support low SES chidlren's emergent reading? Reading e-books and printed books with and without adult mediation.* In A. Shamir & O. Korat (Eds). Technology as a support for literacy achievements for children at risk. Literacy Studies 7, Dordrecht, NL: Springer.

Shamir, A., Korat, O., & Fellah, R. (2012). Promoting vocabulary, phonological awareness and concept about print among children at risk for learning disability: Can e-books help? *Reading and Writing, 25*, 45-69.

Smeet, D. J. H., & Bus, A. G. (2014). The interactive animated e-book as a word learning device for kindergarteners. *Applied Psycholinguistics.* 1-22.

Strickland, D.S., & Schickedanz, J.A. (2009). *Learning about print in preschool: Working with letters, words, and beginning links with phonemic awareness (*2nd Ed.*).* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Sulzby, E. (1990). *Assessment of emergent writing and children's language while writing.* In L.M. Morrow & J.K. Smith (Eds.), Assessment for instruction in early literacy (pp. 83-108). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Sutherland, Z. (1997). *Children and books.* New York: Longman.

Tompkins, V., Zucker, T., Justice, L., & Binici, S. (2013). Inferential talk during teacher–child interactions in small-group play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28*(2), 424-436.

Trehearne, M.P. (2003). Learning to read and write: What is developmentally appropriate. *Reading Manitoba (IRA), XXXIII,* (3).

Uccelli, P., Demir-Lira, Ö. E., Rowe, M. L., Levine, S., & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2019). Children's early decontextualized talk predicts academic language proficiency in mid adolescence. *Child development, 90*(5), 1650–1663.

van de Pol, J., Volman, M., & Beishuizen, J. (2010). Scaffolding in teacher–student interaction: A decade of research. *Educational Psychology Review, 22*(3), 271–296.

Verhoeven, L., & Perfetti, C. (2021). Universals in Learning to Read Across Languages and Writing Systems. *Scientific Studies of Reading. 26*(2), 160-164.

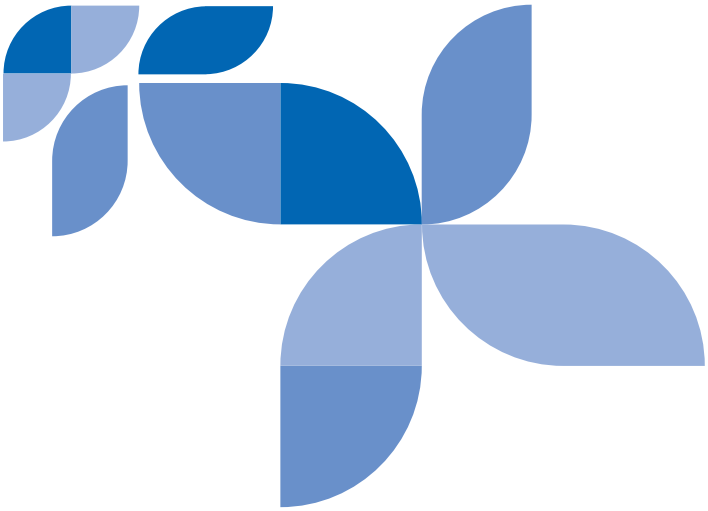
Vukelich, C., & Christie, J. (2009). *Building a foundation for preschool literacy: Effective instruction for children's reading and writing development (*2nd Ed.*).* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

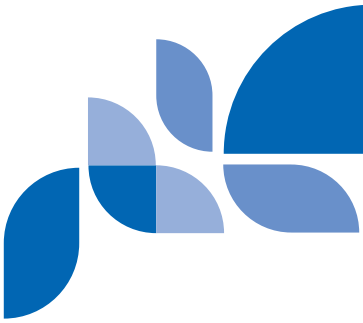
Vygotsky, L.S., Cole, M., Jolm-Steiner, V., Scribner, & S., Souberman, E. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press.

Wanzek, J., Stevens, E.A., Wiiliams, K.J., Scammacca, N., Vaughn, Sharon., & Sargent, K. (2018). Current evidence on the effects of intensive reading interventions. *Journal of Learning Disability, 51*(6), 612-624.

Wasik, B., & Hindman, A. (2018). Why wait? The importance of wait-time in developing young students' language and vocabulary skills. *The Reading Teacher 72*(3), 369-378.

Whorall, J., & Cabell, S.Q. (2016). Supporting children's oral language development in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal 44*(4), 335–341.





Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

Pre-school Education Branch

ISBN 978-981-18-7427-7