

# ***Building Blocks*** for Literacy and Language

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## SECTION 1

# The Development of Language and Literacy Skills

### KEY QUESTION:

→ How does language develop in children and what does this mean for the development of literacy skills?

Language and literacy development in children cannot be separated. As young children grow in their language abilities, they are learning to listen, speak, read, and write. Each of these 4 language systems (see Figure 1) begins to develop at birth. They expand in the weeks and months that follow. The **language systems develop at the same time and in interaction with one another, each strengthening the other**. This is a new idea for many people.



Figure 1. Language Systems

Beginning with language studies in the 1960s, an overwhelming amount of research now demonstrates that **all language systems develop together**. This is called the *Concurrent Model of Language/Literacy Development* (see Figure 2) reflecting the idea that the listening, speaking, reading, and writing systems in children develop concurrently, each affecting the other. Language growth is very fluid and interactive. Growth happens as the child begins to explore and make sense of the surrounding world.

### BIG IDEA:

All 4 Language Systems begin to develop together at birth.



Figure 2. Concurrent Model of Literacy/Language Development

Unfortunately, many people – including some educational professionals, mistakenly believe that young children’s language emerges in a ladder-like way. As with an actual ladder, this *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* (see Figure 3) is considered to be rigid: On the first step (or soon after birth) the child learns to *listen*; on the second step the child learns to *speak*; on the third step the child learns to *read*; and on the fourth step the child learns to *write*.

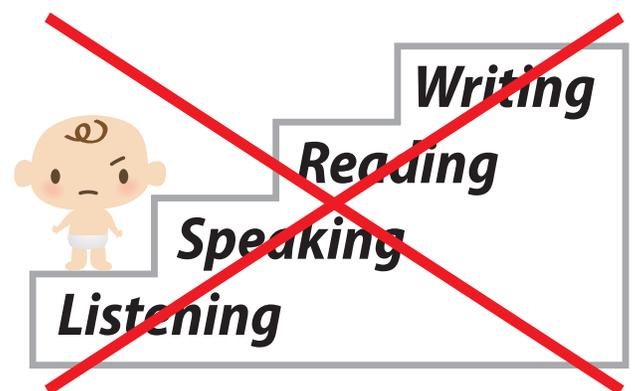


Figure 3. Traditional Ladder to Literacy/Language Model

## KEY QUESTION:

→ **If we know better, why are we stuck on the Ladder-to-Literacy/Language approach?**

Language researchers and many educators now know that the *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* does not reflect how language actually develops in children from birth. However, some teachers and other professional educators may not have had many opportunities to deeply explore research on language development. They may stick to the *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* (see Figure 3). This may occur for a variety of reasons, but none that are scientific or based on research.

One of the reasons the *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* remains with us is that many of us do not know how to think about communication and language for young children other than through their developing speech. In our society, speech is the most prominent or noticeable way that young children begin to make their needs and wants known. Typically, adults notice when infants begin to coo and babble in response to people talking with them. This is a celebrated milestone as adults realize that these early efforts at talking demonstrate that the child has been listening to the language around her or him and is now attempting to engage in the beginning of language. Most of the attention given to communication is directed at the young child's emergent speech. In this sense it can actually look like the child first learned to listen, then speak, then eventually read, and finally write.

What receives less attention, however, is the young infant's growing ability to focus on pictures, attend to surrounding objects and activities, point and gesture in order to communicate, grasp markers to scribble on paper (or walls or any other handy surface!), etc. All of these early efforts are wholly linked to the young child's global language development, including to their reading and writing. **When we know what to look for, we can see the beginning of reading and writing even in very, very young children.**

## KEY QUESTION:

→ **What does this mean for children who do not babble, coo or reach for things as young children?**

Not all young children begin cooing and babbling in response to adults talking with them. Often these children are described as experiencing *language delays* but it is important to remember that **speech is just one of the language systems**. Systems other than speech may be developing more quickly, but go unnoticed!

For children who do not begin cooing and babbling at an expected time, the *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* can be devastating. Based on how rigid the *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* is, adults – including many early intervention teachers – will await the expected emergence of speech or actually try to force the emergence of speech even when other language systems (listening, reading and drawing) may, at that moment in the child's life, be more efficient and effective for the child's communication needs.

Balancing an interest in the young child's speech with opportunities to develop, use, and strengthen the other language systems may support the expansion of early speech efforts on the part of the child. Unfortunately, too often there is a narrow focus only on speech.

When a child is a late talker, she or he may also have other physical, motor movement, or coordination struggles that make it difficult to explore and make sense of the world in the same way other children are able to. *Children who face these obstacles may not be able to reach out to books, toys, crayons, and other resources without adults supporting these efforts. This requires that adults recognize these efforts as vitally important to language development from the earliest age. They may need to bring the activities and objects to the child.*



## **BIG IDEA:**

**Language and literacy learning is not just about developing speech!**

## SECTION 2

# Comprehensive Language & Communication Supports

### KEY QUESTION:

→ **What else do I need to know to support the development of language, communication and literacy skills in my young child?**

Understanding the *Concurrent Model of Literacy/Language Development* helps lead us to several important points to remember...

**1 REMEMBER...** All children are naturally driven to make sense and meaning of their surrounding world.

Every child is born with a natural curiosity about the world around them. This drive to make meaning and sense of people, events, activities, and environments is the foundation of all learning. We see this natural curiosity in infants as they learn to focus on the faces of surrounding people and when they put objects into their mouths. They are learning about those people and objects. We see this curiosity when young children begin to crawl, then eventually walk, toward desired toys or people. We see this curiosity when young children watch their parents read a magazine then mimic what they saw. We see this curiosity in young children's play. Play in early childhood is vitally important to learning. It is through play that children begin to develop stories with one another about how the world works. As children play, their language grows and as their language grows, their play becomes more and more complex.

An important point about this drive to make meaning is that it is a *social process*. This means that it is largely carried out in interaction with other children and adults using **symbols** (See Figure 4) including the symbols of language. We learn from active engagement with one another and with literature. We cannot separate the literacy community from the social community.

Children use many symbol systems each day



Figure 4. Symbol Systems

**BIG IDEA:**  **Play in early childhood is vitally important to learning.**

Sometimes young children do not behave in ways that we associate with this drive to make sense and meaning. They may not seem to focus their eyes on others for extended periods of time. They may not crawl toward objects. They may not play with toys or other children as expected. When this occurs sometimes people make the assumption that the child does not have the interest or ability to make meaning and sense of the surrounding world. *This is never the case!* **All children are interested and able to work with others to form understandings of the world. For some children this may simply require certain supports that might not be necessary for other children.**

**Figure 5.**  
*Assistive Technology (AT)*

An area of support that some children may require to actively make sense of the surrounding world is called Assistive Technology (AT). AT includes devices and processes that help people accomplish things they otherwise could not do if the device or process was not in place. For instance, some children have difficulty grasping a Crayola marker for coloring a picture. A grip may be devised that helps them to hold onto the marker. This is a form of **low-tech AT** in that the degree of technology involved is minimal. Wheelchairs are a type of AT. Other examples of AT include picture schedules or communication devices.

**Switches are another form of high tech AT.** Switches come in many different types and can be used in many creative ways. For instance, a switch may simply be a large button on a base. A toddler who might struggle to push a toy train around the floor could instead push the switch to start a battery powered train then push the switch to turn it off. Switches can be used for many things. They can help a child use a wheelchair, use a computer or use a voice output device. Children can use their hands to push switches but for some children hand use is not possible. Some children use head movements to push switches, some use elbows, and some use toes.

Some children may not be able to easily control a computer mouse. **Scanning is a high tech form of AT** that allows children to control computers. Rather than relying on a mouse to control interactive software for toddlers or a children's internet site, scanning allows the computer to highlight icons, pictures, links, etc. in a systematic way, one after the other. When the desired icon is highlighted, the child then clicks the mouse with a single movement. **Switches are often used with scanning.** Instead of clicking the mouse, the child may use a head movement to hit the switch in order to control the computer.

**Figure 6.**  
*Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)*

**Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)** is a broad area that commonly falls within AT. When people struggle to communicate using speech an alternative system or device may be used to support effective communication. As with other forms of AT, AAC may be low tech or high tech.

- A **low tech AAC example** is a child pointing to a captioned photo or symbol on a picture board to request, for instance, her mom.
- Using a **high tech AAC device**, a child may have a portable, computerized AAC system that allows for multiple electronic pages of symbols, words, and phrases and that may have voice output for communication.

## **2 REMEMBER.... Symbols are central to communication and language.**

When infants begin cooing, babbling, and, as they grow, saying understandable words, it is because they have *actively* been involved in interactions with others. These interactions use symbols. Spoken words are symbols. Speech is a system of symbols that let us express and understand ideas, plans, emotions, stories, etc. (See Figure 4)

We also make use of other symbol systems. For instance, body movements can be symbols. When we shrug our shoulders we are saying, "I don't know." When we point we are saying, "Look over there." Drawings are symbols. In children's drawings, for example, circles often symbolize heads, dots are used for eyes, and lines are used for mouths, torsos, arms and legs. Of course, heads, faces, and bodies are more than these simple shapes, but children learn they can convey ideas and tell whole stories using simple symbols that other people understand.

### **3 REMEMBER.... Symbol Systems and Cognition grow together.**

Cognition is a word used to describe the child's developing ability to make sense and meaning of the surrounding world. The mistaken *Ladder-to-Literacy/Language Model* suggests that language follows cognition: First a child understands, and then the child expresses that understanding in symbols, spoken or otherwise. The *Concurrent Model of Literacy/Language Development* recognizes that language, symbols, and thinking, or cognition, develop in interaction. Symbol systems (see Figure 4) are used not simply to say what we know but are a part of the process of knowing. Symbol systems allow young children to store ideas in organized ways in their minds. They allow young children to deepen their understanding through building connections with new ideas and experiences. Symbol systems, particularly language, are really the tools of thinking!

### **4 REMEMBER.... Active interaction using symbols is vital to the young child's development.**

Speech or spoken language is the symbol system (See Figure 4) that receives the most attention. But, as we know, from the *Concurrent Model of Literacy/Language Development*, this is not the only language system developing in the child.



#### **BIG IDEA:**

**Children learn they can use symbol systems to share their ideas**

When young children struggle with speech for whatever reason, they do not shut down or lose the drive to make sense or meaning of the surrounding world – *unless adults force this* by not providing the child with active ways to fully interact with people around them. For instance, infants born Deaf do not hear spoken language and so do not begin cooing and babbling in the same way hearing infants do. However, science has shown that Deaf infants who are brought up in homes where American Sign Language (ASL) is consistently used in interaction with the child these children actually begin to *babble* with their hands using the gestures of sign language! This is an example of the drive all children are born with to make meaning and sense of the surrounding world in interaction with others.

Babbling is the term used to describe an infant's early efforts at producing language. Babies who can hear language will try to reproduce sounds by babbling. Deaf babies see language and try to produce the signs they see. In fact, because hand signs require less physical coordination than is required to produce spoken words, Deaf infants actually babble using their hands before hearing babies babble with their voice, and Deaf infants produce words and sentences through signs earlier than hearing infants do through speech.

The key for Deaf infants is that they are brought up from birth surrounded by ASL and are actively involved in interactions. Deaf infants born to hearing parents who may know very little about sign language begin to experience apparent language delays almost immediately and science has demonstrated that it is very difficult for them to catch up. This shows how important language and active interaction are on terms that are effective for the child.

#### **KEY QUESTION:**

**→ What about children with motor, physical, or cognitive differences? What should I know about their use of symbols and their communication development?**

Of course many children are born able to hear but still struggle to speak. Often this is because speech is actually a very complicated physical motor act that requires children to coordinate all sorts of muscular, cardiovascular (breathing), and neurological systems. This coordination of systems is very inefficient for everyone when we are very young. But the tendency is for these systems to begin to work together in more and more efficient ways as we grow and interact with others.

However, some children face more obstacles than others in this process. Children born with cerebral palsy, a physical disability, for instance, may experience difficulties with integrating all the systems required to express spoken words. When a child is born with clear physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, surrounding adults may be (and certainly should be) prepared to recognize that the child may struggle to talk. Adults involved with the child should be exploring Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) systems for the child from birth.

Other children are born with disabilities that are less commonly associated with physical struggles. These might include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, Rett syndrome, etc. While physical struggles

have always been associated with these other disability labels, the tendency among professionals has been to de-emphasize their importance. Other issues are considered central, or most important, to these children's disabilities.

For instance, with the chromosomal disability Down syndrome, or the spectrum disorder called autism, children consistently struggle with movement issues. But the focus among professionals has been on the idea that children with Down syndrome or autism are born with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. This belief among professionals that children born with Down syndrome or autism are naturally delayed in cognition (or making meaning and sense of the surrounding world) often results in an unfortunate lack of focus on support to communicate or AAC. If a child with Down syndrome or autism does not talk, there is a misguided assumption that they simply do not have much to say. This misguided assumption often results in simply waiting for children's speech to emerge which may not happen in a timely manner because of difficulties children face with coordinating all the systems required to use spoken language.

Waiting for communication is devastating to a child's development. This is recognized in the *Concurrent Model of Language/Literacy Development* where the systems of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are understood to develop together from birth and in interaction with one another. Language development requires active participation with others using symbols. If a child is left out of this process they are missing out on vital opportunities to grow in their language skills. This is why it is so important to provide children with AAC systems. See Figure 7: AAC & Young Children

### Figure 7. AAC & Young Children

With infants and young children, AAC is usually introduced through lower tech devices and systems. Sign language in conjunction with speech, sometimes called total communication, has proven effective as a way to develop communication even in infancy. This of course requires that surrounding adults take time to familiarize themselves with sign language and consistently make use of signs throughout all parts of the child's day.

Other devices and systems (listed from low tech to high tech) that have been effective with infants and young children include:

#### LOW Tech AAC

- Photos of toys, important people, actions, and expressions of emotion on display boards. [Photos should always be captioned with written descriptions even for infants]
- Communication books with photos of toys, important people, actions, expressions of emotion, etc.
- Communication books with symbols rather than photos.
- Single, captioned pictures attached with Velcro to familiar toys, places, and activities throughout the home and other important environments.
- Voice output devices with single messages to promote participation [for example, "My turn," in games]
- Voice output devices with sequenced messages to promote participation in songs and stories
- Voice output devices with picture overlays to promote use of core vocabulary or key phonemes in words

#### HIGH Tech AAC

### Two important points need to be considered when thinking about AAC and young children

1) Adults and surrounding children need to **consistently act as models** for the use of the AAC device or system. This is obvious when the focus is on sign language but is often forgotten when communication boards or books are introduced. Rather than simply expecting the child to gesture to symbols, people interacting with the child should also use the symbols while at the same time using spoken language.

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2) As the child becomes familiar with alternative communication, **the systems must grow in complexity**. Low tech options can become very sophisticated. For instance, the first page of a communication book might include important words and phrases, but also might include categories such as “home.” When the child gestures toward a category, a supporting adult can flip to a later section of the communication book that has symbols, words, and phrases associated with the category. With the assistance of AT experts, families might also explore high tech systems. These include an array of computerized, portable devices that can be programmed with symbols, words, phrases, photos, and keyboards allowing children a range of communication options including voice output.

### **KEY QUESTION:**

→ **Will using AAC cause my child not to talk?**

This is a common question and the answer is absolutely not. More than two decades of language research and science has documented that AAC is essential for some children’s communication and that it promotes speech. This relates to the *Concurrent Model of Literacy/ Language Development*. Each language system supports the others. As one system is strengthened, all systems are strengthened. Children use whichever system they have access to that is most efficient and effective. For some children, AAC systems and devices will remain most efficient and effective for their communication and these systems and devices will become more complex as the children develop in their efforts to make sense and meaning of the surrounding world. Other children will move from the early use of AAC systems and devices to speech as speech becomes most effective and efficient.

## SECTION 3

# **Comprehensive Literacy Supports from Birth**

Within a comprehensive language and communication model, the child’s developing literacy must be supported from birth on. Literacy is most often thought about as a child’s skill with **written language** (such as reading and writing). Young children’s early efforts with written language do not look like adult efforts, or what is sometimes described as conventional literacy (because we are following the conventions or rules of written language in our reading and writing). In fact, children’s efforts with written language often do not begin to look conventional until they have been in school for several years.

### **KEY QUESTION:**

→ **What are some things I can see that show me my child is making efforts with written language (reading and writing)?**

### **DEVELOPING FOCUS**

Young children are hard at work from birth developing language skills directly tied to conventional literacy. Infants, for instance, are learning to focus attention and make use of language (initially in the form of sounds) to express wants and needs in interaction with others. The ability to focus attention, participate with others, and use language is essential literacy learning. Children will look at things they like and try to engage others in interactions through smiles and movements.

### **LEARNING ABOUT BOOKS**

Soon after a child is born parents often introduce infants to simple picture books. The time a baby spends on a parent’s lap looking at books further develops the child’s overall focus and ability to interact with others. At the same time, the child is learning about literacy: that stories can be told on paper and through pictures, that stories have a beginning, middle and ending, that stories can be read, reread, and talked about, that common events experienced by the child can be told about in books, and that we can learn about things through books that we have not directly experienced.

As the child grows out of infancy into toddlerhood, the books parents share become more complex. Toddlers begin to recognize that there is a difference between the pictures on a page and the text or written words. They will often seek out favorite books to look at even if an adult is not available. (See Section 4, page 9 for a list of important Daily Literacy Opportunities)

Young children also see their parents making use of text. They are learning that text has many functions. We may learn from or enjoy text in the form of a book, magazine, or TV guide. We may remember using text in the form of a grocery list, calendar, or note. We may purchase things using text and pictures by scrolling through websites and filling in order forms using the keyboard. Remember, young children are naturally driven to make sense and meaning of the world. A part of that world for all children includes text and visual symbols. Young children want to make sense of text and visual symbols.

### **DRAWING AND WRITING**

Early on, children begin drawing on paper or using interactive art software. Drawings are often the child's first efforts to "write" stories in that the drawings often tell whole tales. The child is developing stories and is then expressing stories through visual symbols. Young children who have experiences with books will begin to weave letters into drawings long before they enter elementary school.

### **TELLING STORIES THROUGH PLAY AND SYMBOLS**

In infancy, children begin to play with toys provided. As the child enters into toddlerhood, this play becomes more social in that often it involves other children. In their play, children are creating stories. Play may be considered a very active text! In their play, children begin to create symbols to better tell the story they are creating. For instance, two children pretending in their play to be pirates may find sticks to use as swords. The sticks become symbols for swords. Children begin to understand that one thing, such as a stick, may stand for another thing, such as a sword. This is a vital realization for literacy learning.

**All of these efforts (developing focus, learning to interact with others, learning about books, drawing and writing, and telling stories through play and symbols) foster comprehensive language development, build children's vocabularies, and support literacy development.**



#### **BIG IDEA:**

***Read, write, listen and play together everyday. Find the joy in being together!***

Importantly, in early childhood these all occur without judgment or evaluation from adults. This means that when a child shows a parent a drawing, the parent does not critique or criticize its quality but praises the effort and asks for details. When children play together parents do not interfere to "improve" the play (unless arguments have developed!) but allow the children to develop whatever story is being told.

From birth, many children have three or four years to explore and learn about language in important ways before entering preschool. In a high-quality preschool, the children's earlier language efforts are extended and built on with minimal evaluation or judgment and ample time is provided for children to play with one another. This occurs in high-quality preschools because of the recognition of how important play is in children's language development.



## SECTION 4

# Literacy and Children with Disabilities

### **KEY QUESTION:**

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#### **→ What about literacy and children with disabilities? Will the approach and development be different?**

Young children with disabilities may face obstacles to joining in the kinds of early literacy experiences described above. For instance, as infants they may not look in the direction of a parent who is talking with them or they may not look directly at a book being held. The parent may think this means the child is not paying attention because we tend to associate certain behaviors with particular meanings. In our culture looking means paying attention. Not looking (or appearing not to look) means a lack of attention. If a parent or early intervention teacher assumes an infant is not paying attention, he or she may be less likely to interact with the infant using rich language and may be less likely to share books.

Physical struggles experienced by the young child may inhibit her or his exploration of the world. As the child ages, and perhaps communication struggles become more apparent, joining with siblings and friends in play may be difficult. Grasping and controlling drawing tools such as crayons and markers may be impossible. Controlling a computer mouse, not uncommon even for two-year-olds, may be impossible. Very quickly we can see how children with disabilities might find themselves excluded from the mass of literacy and language opportunities experienced by their peers without disabilities.

### **KEY QUESTION:**

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#### **→ What can I do to help my child with disabilities develop literacy skills? When and how do I begin? He often looks like he is not “paying attention.”**

Children with disabilities must be **involved in comprehensive literacy opportunities from birth**. A comprehensive literacy model involves the following core dimensions on a **daily** basis:

### **DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 1:**

#### ***The chance to participate in play with peers***

**Create and engage through play in stories with other children using a variety of symbol systems.** (See Figure 4: Symbol systems on page 3) This means that all children must have daily opportunities to participate in play with peers. The look of this play will change, of course, as young children transition from infancy to toddlerhood to preschoolers. But it is vital that children are supported in the rich language of young children’s play. This support may require both AAC and AT. It certainly will require surrounding adults who understand the importance of play and how it promotes a child’s ability to make sense and meaning of the surrounding world.

### **DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 2:**

#### ***The chance to experience books***

**Develop book and story comprehension through reading and discussing with others including with groups of children through shared reading in toddler and preschool programs.** This means that all children will have daily opportunities to experience books. This experience may require AAC and AT. Books may be read in traditional ways. Alternatively, many websites now exist that provide children’s e-books (electronic books) in a variety of formats including with animation. What is important is that adults not simply read the book to children but discuss the story as it unfolds. Adults may ask children what they think will happen next, how the story is making them feel, if they have experienced things that come up in the story, etc. In order to actively discuss, many children with disabilities will require an AAC system.

### **DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 3:**

#### ***The chance to experience drawing and writing***

**Express stories through developmentally appropriate writing and drawing opportunities.** This means that all children will have daily opportunities to express stories visually through pen, marker, crayon, paint, or computer software that supports story expression. Not all children will always be able to produce work that is easily recognizable or explainable. That’s true of children with and without disabilities. But opportunity

provides experience and experience leads toward understandability. Remember that as children grow they often begin to incorporate into their drawings designs and squiggles meant to look like the text they see in books. These letter approximations are early efforts with writing and are not judged or evaluated by adults. The same must be true for children with disabilities who may be using AT in the form of a computer program to produce drawings and letters. The important point is to recognize that children have intent in their efforts; they mean to do what they do even if we are uncertain about what that intent is. All efforts must be responded to as intentional and filled with meaning.

#### ***DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 4: The chance to choose books you like***

**Select books and other literacy materials for personal enjoyment.** This means that all children will have daily opportunities to choose books to read or listen to (on CD, the internet, etc.) because they simply want to. Young children without disabilities often are in environments—home, daycare, or preschool—where lots of books are available. They are provided ample time to select and look through the books. This is not always the case for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities need plenty of books surrounding them, both actual books and on the Web. They may need to be supported in choosing books and looking through the books at a pace they choose and in a way they choose. When children without disabilities look at books on their own or with friends, they do not always read them front-to-back or at a pace that makes sense to adults. Children with disabilities need these opportunities to control books as well.

#### ***DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 5: The chance to link written words (text) to pictures***

**Explore written words, letters, and the sounds of words and letters within meaning-based activities.**

This means that at an appropriate time in early childhood, young children must daily be introduced to concepts related to the alphabet and how we use letters to turn ideas, stories, and emotions into text. As toddlers, children begin to see that books have both pictures and text. They begin to understand that words representing ideas can be written down and other people can make sense of them. As this understanding develops, parents and teachers must introduce children to the important ideas about how we make use of letters to create writing.

There are very natural ways to introduce the idea of alphabet letters, sounds, and words. Many children are

very motivated by their names and begin to recognize the written version of their name before they recognize any other word. This motivation allows adults to teach children about how sounds, letters, and words all fit together. Rhyming books and poems are another way to naturally get children thinking about the sounds of our language and how we express those sounds.

Recently a lot of emphasis has been placed on the importance of children demonstrating knowledge of sounds of letters before they are allowed to explore written words and the rules we use to make written words. For children with communication difficulties, this emphasis often referred to as phonics, can be devastating. There are many, many routes into understanding how we create words using letters. Sounding-out a word and applying the letters that make sense is just one route. If sounding out is required in an early literacy program, many children with disabilities will fail.

**Many children with communication difficulties do not need to sound out words.** Adults can teach them to think about how words are put together using AAC and other visual representations of the word. British language scientist Sue Buckley has been working with very young children who experience severe communication struggles for more than a quarter century. She has shown us that young children, all of whom are presumed to have cognitive delays, can recognize, read, and type words even though they may not speak. Sue Buckley suggests that written words for many children with disabilities may be easier to learn than spoken words!

No matter what, it is vital that we engage young children in the ideas of the alphabet, letters, and word formation from a very young age. AAC is a form of literacy and the growth in communication of young children using AAC requires an understanding of building words in order that they can say everything they want to say.

#### ***DAILY LITERACY OPPORTUNITY 6: The chance to experience the JOY of literacy***

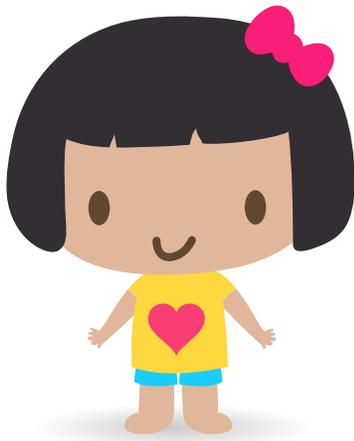
**Experience joy and other emotional forces associated with all young children's literate engagement.** This means that in every effort to support the literacy development of children with disabilities, it is recognized that literacy is a gate through which we open opportunities to learn, think, explore, empathize, expand, and on and on. This is the way we introduce young children without disabilities to literacy. It must be the way we introduce all children to literacy.



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To explore more ideas for daily literacy opportunities, refer to The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) *Practices Guides for Parents* included in the *Let's Play! Building Literacy and Language Into Every Day* resource folder created and distributed by the PEAL Center.

Go to the CELL website:

**[www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org)**

to find many resources for literacy development, including posters, videos and more Practices Guides.