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Continuum of Children's Development in Early Reading and Writing


Tables 1.1 through 1.3 list the end-of-year literacy skills and understandings for preschool, kindergarten, and Grade 1 children. This list is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Children at any grade level will function at a variety of phases along the reading–writing continuum. Since it is important for kindergarten teachers to be aware of developmentally appropriate expectations before and after preschool and Grade 1, goals for those levels have also been included.

Table 1.1 Continuum of Literacy Skills: Phase 1

PHASE 1: Awareness and exploration (goals for preschool) Children explore their environment and build the foundations for learning to read and write.		
<i>Preschoolers . . .</i>	<i>So preschool teachers . . .</i>	 <i>And family members should be encouraged to . . .</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoy listening to and discussing storybooks • understand that print carries a message • engage in reading and writing attempts • identify labels and signs in their environment • participate in rhyming games • identify some letters and make some letter–sound matches • use known letters or approximations of letters to represent written language (especially meaningful words like their name and phrases such as <i>I love you</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share books with children (including Big Books) and model reading behaviors • talk about letters by name and sounds • establish a literacy-rich environment • reread favorite stories • engage children in language games • promote literacy-related play activities • encourage children to experiment with writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage their child in conversation, provide the names for things, and show interest in what their child says • read and reread stories with predictable texts • encourage their child to recount experiences and describe ideas and events that are important • visit the library regularly • provide opportunities to draw and print using markers, crayons, and pencils


PHASE 2: Experimental reading and writing (goals for kindergarten)

Children develop basic concepts of print and begin to engage in and experiment with reading and writing.

<i>Kindergarteners . . .</i>	<i>So kindergarten teachers . . .</i>	 <i>And family members should be encouraged to . . .</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoy being read to and can retell simple narrative stories and nonfiction text • use descriptive language to explain and explore • recognize letters and letter–sound matches • show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds • understand left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation and familiar concepts of print • match spoken words with written words • begin to write letters of the alphabet and some high-frequency words • begin to see themselves as writers and illustrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage children to talk about reading and writing experiences • provide many opportunities for children to explore and identify sound–symbol relationships in meaningful contexts • help children to segment spoken words into individual sounds and blend the sounds into whole words (for example, by slowly writing a word and saying its sound) • frequently read aloud interesting and conceptually rich stories • provide daily opportunities for children to write • help children to build a sight vocabulary • create a literacy-rich environment for children to engage independently in reading and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and/or reread narrative stories and nonfiction texts to their child daily • encourage their child’s attempts at reading and writing • allow their child to participate in activities that involve reading and writing (for example, cooking, making grocery lists) • play games with their child that involve specific directions (such as Simon Says) • have conversations with their child during mealtimes and throughout the day

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

PHASE 3: Early reading and writing (goals for Grade 1) Children begin to read simple stories and can write about a topic that is meaningful to them.		
<i>Grade 1 children . . .</i>	<i>So Grade 1 teachers . . .</i>	 <i>And family members should be encouraged to . . .</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read and retell familiar stories • use strategies (rereading, predicting, questioning, contextualizing) when comprehension breaks down • use reading and writing for various purposes on their own initiative • orally read with reasonable fluency • use letter–sound correspondence, word parts, and context to identify new words • identify an increasing number of words by sight • sound out and represent all substantial sounds in spelling a word • write about topics that are personally meaningful • attempt to use some punctuation and capitalization • see themselves as writers and illustrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the development of vocabulary by reading daily to the children, transcribing their language, and selecting materials that expand children’s knowledge and language development • model strategies and provide practice for identifying unknown words • give children opportunities for independent reading and writing practice • read, write, and discuss a range of different text types (poems, informational books) • introduce new words and teach strategies for learning to spell new words • demonstrate and model strategies to use when comprehension breaks down • help children build lists of commonly used words from their writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about favorite storybooks • read to their child and encourage the child to read to them • suggest that their child write to friends and relatives • bring to a parent–teacher conference evidence of what their child can do in writing and reading • encourage their child to share what he or she has learned about writing and reading

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