Today, in our short time together, we’ll present research that shows the impact of early literacy on the general public. The bulk of our time will be spent going over a storytime outline that lends itself to demonstrating early literacy skills easily in an enjoyable format that works for our library and me personally. Everyone wants the children in their community to be successful, research has shown that incorporating early literacy elements in your storytime will ease their transition into reading and long term success.
Reading is the fundamental skill for learning.
—Dipesh Navsaria
WHY ARE EARLY LITERACY SKILLS IMPORTANT? EVIDENCE FROM THE RESEARCH

Note: We will move quickly through these. Each piece of research is cited here in the presentation, which will be available on the ISLOC section of the Iowa Library Services website.
Disparities in vocabulary between kids raised in literacy-rich environments and literacy-poor environments begin to appear at **18 months**

Children from lower-income families have been exposed to as many as 30 million fewer words by age 4 than children from higher-income families.

Note: these studies link low income with literacy-poor environments (though literacy poor environments can occur in ANY socio-economic class)

The average middle-income 5-year-old recognizes 22 letters of the alphabet, while the average lower-income 5-year-old recognizes only 9 letters of the alphabet.

Note: these studies link low income with literacy-poor environments (though literacy poor environments can occur in ANY socio-economic class)

Children's books have 50% more rare words in them than adult prime-time television, or the conversation of college graduates.

Our library has a list of the **100 Books to Read Before Kindergarten** available on our blog and in print form. This gives parents/caregivers a wide range of books to increase their child’s vocabulary.


What’s the bottom line?
The consequences of a slow start in reading become monumental as they accumulate exponentially over time.

What can we do?
The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.


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Studies have shown that children who are competent in these 6 Early Literacy Skills are more prepared for reading success. These six skills provide the framework for how we discuss early literacy at our library. The new *Every Child Ready to Read* program from the ALA converts these six skills into five practices (*talking, singing, reading, writing, playing*) using everyday language instead of literacy terminology. For more information on ECRR, see [http://www.everychildreadytoread.org/](http://www.everychildreadytoread.org/)

We have a collection of early literacy information and resources on our blog, so to read more, visit [http://www.wdmlibrarykids.com/early-literacy-overview/](http://www.wdmlibrarykids.com/early-literacy-overview/)

**Letter Knowledge** – knowing that letters are different from each other, that the same letter can look different, and that each letter has a name and is related to sounds.  
**Narrative Skills** – the ability to describe things & events and to tell stories.  
**Phonological Awareness** – The ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.  
**Print Awareness** – noticing print, knowing how to handle a book, and understanding how to follow the written words across the page.  
**Print Motivation** – a child’s interest and enjoyment of books.  
**Vocabulary** – knowing the names of things.
Early literacy is not about teaching your child how to read, but rather building the skills they need to be successful when they begin reading instruction later on. Motivate them by making their experiences with books and reading fun!
Tips and tricks: what works for us!
This is a flexible storytime outline that you can change to suit your storytime audience.
It is designed primarily for the 2-6 age group. We tend to pull more materials than we actually need so we can be ready if our group gets restless.
Consistency and repetition are key! Having a consistent opening song signals to your listeners that storytime is about to begin. This gives your audience the chance to settle into their seats and get themselves ready to listen to stories. Having an active opening song might also be helpful to get those last wiggles out before the stories begin.

The opening song or rhyme is also a great opportunity to bring in your library mascot, if you have one. Our toddler mascot is Lily Lamb and our preschool mascot is Oliver the Sheepdog, and we use those characters each week as we begin their respective storytimes.
Themes are not necessary, but can be helpful. Do what works for you.
Show selected books and materials to create excitement. I have been known to have children reach inside a discovery box to feel objects that relate to the theme.
Let the kids guess what the theme will be!
Give time for children to talk about the theme—sharing their knowledge, using vocabulary
Tell a neighbor or your caregiver something about what you know
Bring everyone back together with a pre-arranged signal
This activity should be fun and targeted to your audience.
Predicting what the theme will be highlights both NARRATIVE SKILLS and VOCABULARY
• Use your longest story first (Note: Sometimes it’s better to end with it if it’s participatory, a puppet show, etc.)
• Dialogic reading tactics (Note: This often works better with smaller groups. Large groups run into a problem of EVERYONE wanting to share)
• Be animated!
• Choose books and stories you love. Your enthusiasm is easily communicated to your audience and will help them be enthusiastic too. This is great for building print motivation!
• Focus on a single early literacy skill to discuss and promote during your program. Don’t overwhelm yourself or your audience.
• Use quick asides for the caregivers while kids are transitioning from segment to segment. This helps keep everyone engaged in what’s happening in your program.
• We have books displayed here with tips on early literacy asides to use during storytime. During your own programs, you can display books with bookmarks or sticky notes on why they relate to the early literacy skill you are using for that day.

Books shown here:
The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear / Don and Audrey Wood
My Lucky Day / Keiko Kasza
Old Bear / Kevin Henkes
Watch Out! Big Bro’s Coming / Jez Alborough
Where the Wild Things Are / Maurice Sendak
Bear Snores On / Karma Wilson
Do Like a Duck Does! / Judy Hindley
The Giant Jam Sandwich / John Vernon Lord
The Gruffalo / Julia Donaldson
Harry the Dirty Dog / Gene Zion
Action or Transition Rhymes
We use the books shown and other resources as well.

Early Literacy information to share with parents and caregivers:
• Fingerplays and other action rhymes help children develop fine motor skills which will eventually aid them as they hold writing utensils and scissors.
• Playing rhyming games like these will build your child’s ability to play with parts of words also known as Phonological Awareness and increase their Vocabulary; rhymes and poetry include rare words not used in everyday speech.
• Use counting and alphabet rhymes to help with school readiness, but remember to keep the activity fun.
• Use rhymes to get kids up and moving, research has shown that exercise (even short bursts of activity) help stimulate the brain and get it ready to receive new information.
• Include the full text and your source for all rhymes on a handout for parents. That way parents can repeat the rhymes at home for continued literacy exposure.

One of my favorites is “Shake Your Hands Up High” by Jane Kitson

**Shake your Hands Up High**
(tune: Turkey in the Straw)
Shake your hands up high,
Stomp your feet down low,
Rub your tummy in the middle,
And around you go.
Pat your knees in the front,
Tap your heels in the back,
Put your hands together
And clap, clap, clap.
• Build gross motor skills (jumping, dancing, walking)
• Exhaust pent-up energy
• Build internal rhythm and demonstrate rhyme structure. These two skills help young listeners understand the rhythm of language later when they are learning to read.
• Vocabulary—songs often use unusual words, or long words with slower pace so you can hear them better
• Phonological awareness—music slows down language and allows children to better hear the smaller (often rhyming) parts of words.
• Use CDs instead of acapella when your voice needs a rest! (Or if you aren’t comfortable singing.)
• Include all song titles on a handout for parents

Albums shown here:
*Rhyming Circus* by Ralph’s World
*Oh Baby!* by Rainbow Songs
*One Light One Sun* by Raffi
*Rockin’ Red* by The Learning Groove (Eric Litwin, author of *Pete the Cat*)
*Yellow Collection* by Ladybug Music
*Songs for Wiggleworms* by Old Town School of Folk Music
*The Best of the Laurie Berkner Band* by Laurie Berkner
*More Please!* by Caspar Babypants
*Sunny Day* by Elizabeth Mitchell
*Jim Gills Makes It Noisy in Boise, Idaho* by Jim Gill
• These can be made with very basic supplies—felt, glue, wiggle eyes, etc.
• Use story extensions to build narrative skills
• Flannel Friday and Pinterest are awesome (free) resources
• These are a great vehicle for story *telling* (as opposed to story reading)
• Make it work for you!
Puppets are a great way to get children involved in a story you are telling and help them build literacy skills! You can buy puppets or make your own—we have had great success with a caterpillar sock puppet and popsicle stick puppets made from clipart online. 😊

- Letting children hear and make animal sounds is one enjoyable way to help develop Phonological Awareness or the ability to hear the smaller sounds in words.
- Animal sounds count as words in a young child’s vocabulary.
Interactive Learning Activities that work for us:

- Counting activities: counting activities provide opportunities for your children to work on fine motor skills, Letter Knowledge, and Vocabulary.
  - Eric Carle Counting Activity (adapted from the book *My Very First Numbers* by Eric Carle)
    - Place the numbers on the board in random order and have the children help you say the numbers and put them in numerical order.
    - Show the pictures and say the word printed at the bottom while running your finger along the word.
    - Count up the number of pieces of fruit on each page and match the picture with the number.
  - Whole Bed (5 in the Bed) by Rob Reid
    - I made a bed using the top of a paper box covered in felt. Add animals of any kind and get ready to sing!
- Memory games and sound activities: activities like these stimulate conversation which in turn increases your child’s Vocabulary.
  - Memory Games: bring 5 or so things out of a box. Name the objects, then cover the objects and take one away. Show the objects and see if they can remember what was removed.
  - Sound Activity: use boxes with different objects in them, shake the box have kids guess what the object is.
• Rhyming games: rhyming games allow children an entertaining way to play with rhyming words. Playing games like this allows your child to play with the smaller sounds in words, aka Phonological Awareness and increases their Letter Knowledge.
  • Ricket Rocket, Put it in my Pocket - I have adapted it from “Put it in Your Backpack!” from Glad Rags by Irving and Currie
    • I have the kids help me say the names of the objects (vocabulary) as I place them on the flannelboard in no particular order.
    • I often have the children help me match up the rhyming words as we say the chant together.
    • It is good to point out the words that are printed below the object.
      • Things to ask include:
        • How many letters are in these two words? If they aren’t the same, ask if the children if they think that the words rhyme. After letting the children predict, say the word and let them help you decide if they rhyme.
        • Are the end letters the same? Can words with different letters at the end rhyme?
  • Sequencing activities: putting pictures or other materials in sequential order helps build Narrative Skills and Vocabulary.
    • This activity should relate to a story that was told or is an action that has a specific sequence.
Using an interactive story to engage your audience is a great way to build print motivation and keep kids of all ages involved in your storytime program. I like to use a story like this toward the end of my classes. It’s a great way to keep the attention of your wiggliest listeners.

Stories shown here:

Bark, George! by Jules Feiffer
The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
The Wide Mouthed Bullfrog by Mar Harmon
The Three Little Pigs
The Soup Opera by Jim Gill
Too Much Noise by Ann McGovern
Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina
The Mitten by Jan Brett
One Dog Canoe by Mary Casanova
Can You Make a Scary Face? by Jan Thomas
Books that encourage involvement from your child help promote their interest and enjoyment of books, aka Print Motivation.

I love to sing, I don’t worry about being the best singer in the world – I know I am not, kids don’t care and you shouldn’t either. Remember that in most songs each note has a different syllable. This allows children to hear words being broken down into smaller parts. This skills known as Phonological Awareness has been shown to aid children as they begin to read.

When children are involved in singing a section of a story they are more likely to remember the story and be able to retell it. Narrative Skills like this one are important for children to master before they begin to read.

Stories shown here:

*Mabella the Clever* by Margaret Read MacDonald  
*100 Hungry Ants* by Elinor Pinczes  
*Pete the Cat* by Eric Litwin  
*The Pout-Pout Fish* by Deborah Diesen  
*Down by the Station* by Jennifer Riggs Vetter  
*Fix-It Duck* by Jez Alborough  
*Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester  
*King Bidgood’s in the Bathtub* by Audrey Wood  
*Mary had a Little Lamb* by Mary Ann Hoberman  
*Hush Little Digger* by Ellen Olson-Brown
Consistency and repetition are key
Library/storytime mascot

Use this transition time to make a quick aside to the caregivers in the room: remind them about early literacy tip, books on display to check out as they leave, handouts to take home, etc.

Example: “Round of Applause” by Rob Reid
You’re so great!
Now please stand,
And give yourself
A great big hand!

Clap the floor.
Clap your hair.
Clap your kneecaps.
Now the air.

Clap your elbows.
Clap your feet.
Clap your pinkies.
Clap your seat.

Let’s pretend we’re seals
And clap with flippers.
Let’s pretend we’re crabs
And clap with claws.
Now a great big
Round of applause.
Not everyone does a craft project, and that’s okay! If you choose to, think about these things:

• Crafts can be wonderful story extensions. Use projects to help kids re-tell a story you used in your class.

• Choose projects that allow kids to demonstrate their creativity and imagination. If it doesn’t look like what you had in mind, that’s GREAT! In my class, I tell the kids there are no rules about how the project looks. If they like it, that’s what matters. (There are, of course, rules about scissor safety and where you are allowed to use your crayons. 😊)

• When you explain your selected project, you can tell the adults in the room how it helps with school readiness and fine motor skills—cutting, gluing, assembling pieces, coloring, following directions, sequencing.

• Use this time to interact with kids and parents. Ask about their favorite stories, point out available display books and handouts, etc. Building relationships is the best part of what we do!
• We use mostly rhymes and songs in storytime for children under three.
• Babies: this is your most parent-focused class. Spend time telling the parents why you are doing this rhyme or that song.
  • Invest in class sets of board books, then model parent-child reading with the pairs in your baby class (if possible), or make your own, or offer a variety of board books from your collection to share.
  • Remember it is important for your child to hear you read, talk, and sing with them. They will be comforted by this familiar voice they heard in utero.
  • Babies can only see objects that are held about 12 inches from their face.
• Toddlers: this class can be chaotic. Give parents small bits of information while keeping the children engaged. Use shorter stories with simple, bright pictures and repetitive structures; remember—it’s not important to read the entire book. Keep it fun! I read one story at the beginning of class and do one alternate format story near the end of class after plenty of gross motor skill activity.
• Provide handouts with information on the importance of the different rhymes and songs for parents to use home and use them there too.

What we incorporate into our programs for these ages and what we tell parents.
• Animal sounds: letting children hear and make animal sounds aids them in developing phonological awareness. At this age animal sounds count as words!
• Body part identification rhymes: helping a child touch the body part indicated will
increase their vocabulary and create those ever important brain synapses.

- **Bouncing rhymes**: these help your child feel the rhythm of the language, they also break words apart in a way your child can physically feel, and playing bouncing games with your child gives you important time to connect with her.

- **Fine and gross motor skills**: moving your child’s body will help them begin to develop muscles that will aid them in everyday life for years to come.

- **Lullabies**: rocking your child back and forth will put them in and out of balance, being exposed to this frequently at a young age will aid your child when they begin to crawl, walk, and eventually run.

- **Sensory stimulation rhymes**: rhymes like these create synapses in your child’s brain that will eventually aid them when they start to read.

- **Songs**: singing relaxes both the child and the adult. Babies can sing melodies and do the motions associated long before they can speak. Singing with them when they start making the hand movements is a way you can let your child know you understand him.

Note: For more information and to find handouts from our classes, check our blog: www.wdmlibrarykids.com
• Find additional resource lists
• Download the handouts we use for our classes each week
• Check out our Early Literacy pages for more information about each age group and a list of additional online resources
Questions?