

# Strength-Based Coaching:

Empowering teachers to  
create upward spirals  
of quality that build  
language and literacy

Presented by  
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&  
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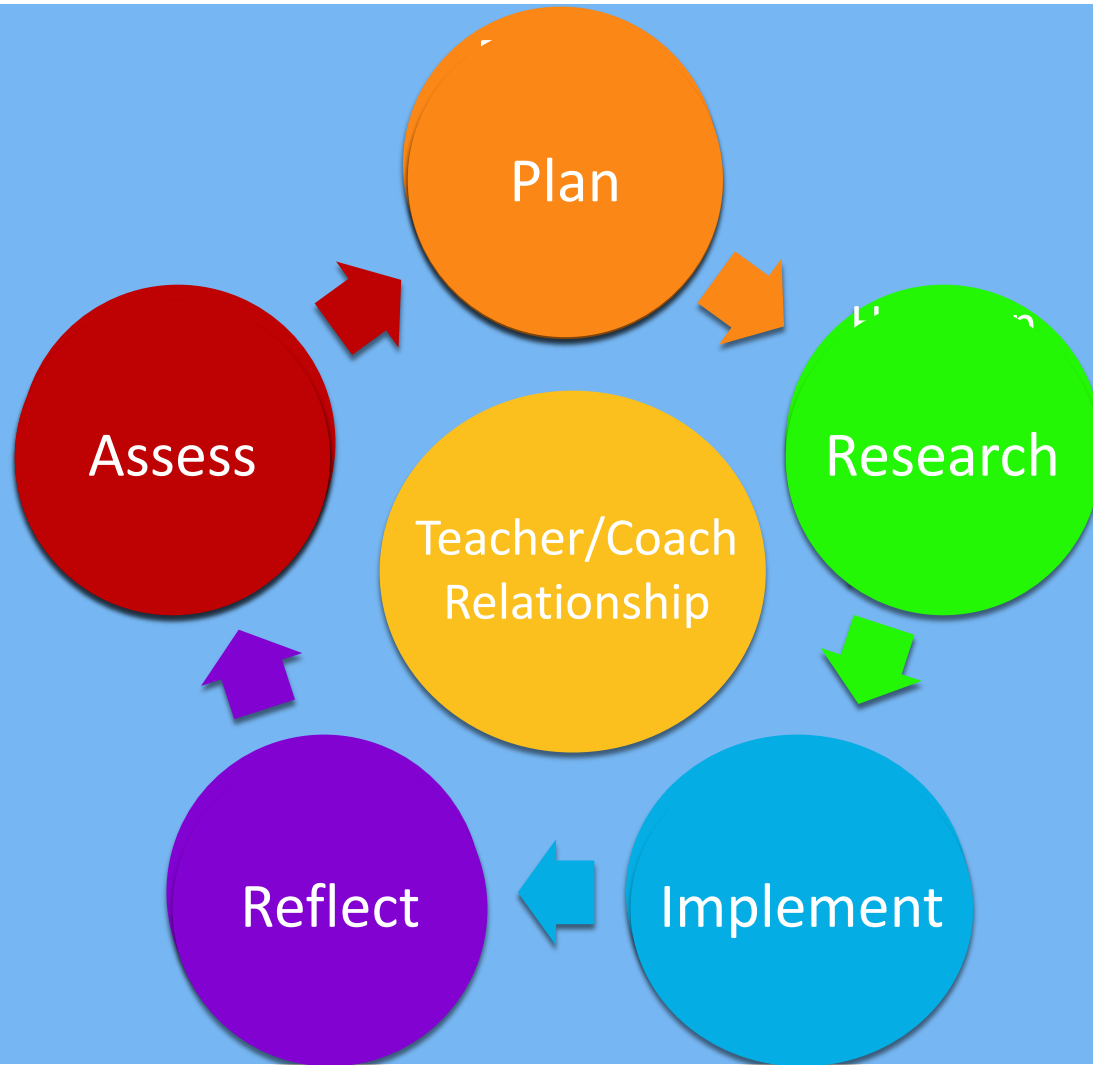
# THE PRACTICE-RESEARCH DIALOG

**Evidence-Based Practice:** “A decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values.” (Buysse & Wesley).



**Practice-Based Evidence:** Documentation of child and group learning, coupled with reflection that leads to new questions.

# STRENGTH-BASED COACHING CYCLE



# STRENGTH-BASED COACHING STORY



# MY INITIAL OBSERVATIONS...



PRESCHOOL  
THEME OF  
THE WEEK

# BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE **WHY**

Teach children to follow directions - use time out to curb behavior

Have generic materials accessible that relate to many themes

Minimize free play to maximize academic learning time

Provide worksheets for children to practice identifying and writing letters



Success in  
Kindergarten

# Where would you start?

- **Focus on social-emotional development:** Work together to improve children's self-regulation, and reduce challenging behaviors
- **Focus on environment and schedule:** Work together to reduce clutter; organize areas so that children can be more independent; decrease interruptions and time-outs and increase learning time
- **Focus on DAP:** Work together to increase, strengthen, and integrate play-based and hands-on learning activities.
- **Focus on language and literacy:** Work together to strengthen children's foundations for reading



# POLL

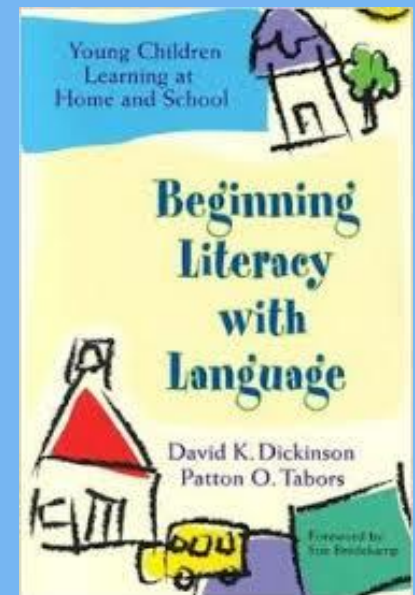
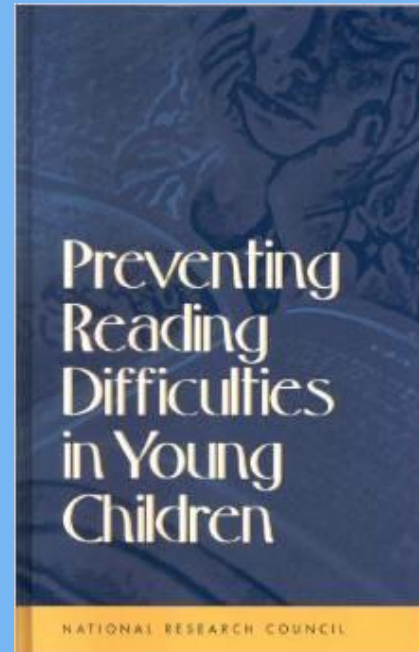
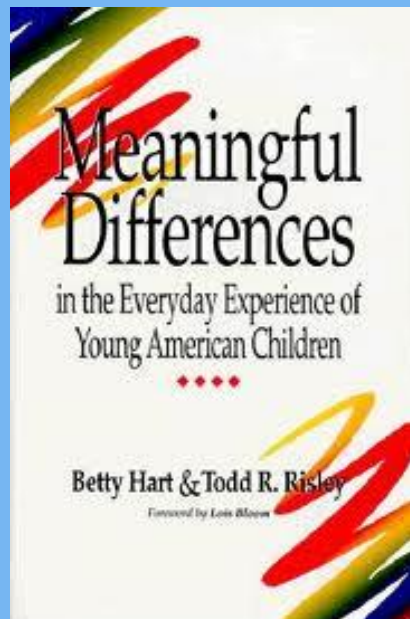




# Where did WE start?

- **Focus on social-emotional development:** Work together to improve children's self-regulation, and reduce challenging behaviors
- **Focus on environment and schedule:** Work together to reduce clutter; organize areas so that children can be more independent; decrease interruptions and time-outs and increase learning time
- **Focus on DAP:** Work together to increase, strengthen, and integrate play-based and hands-on learning activities.
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# HOW CAN RESEARCH INFORM OUR PRACTICE?



# A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LITERACY FOUNDATIONS

- What Really Matters for Literacy
- Closing the Vocabulary Gap
- The Power of Play Talk & Decontextualized Language
- Some Evidence-Based Language & Literacy Practices:
  - Dialogic Reading
  - Content-Rich Conversations: Science & Pretend Play
  - Meaningful Print & Alphabet Learning
  - Sound and Word Play
  - Writing

# STEPS TO LITERACY



5. Independent Reading

4. Phonics and Decoding Skills

3. Phonemic Awareness & Concepts of Print

2. Oral Language, Vocabulary, and Storytelling

1. Seeing, Hearing, Connecting, and Communicating

# RICH LANGUAGE IS FOUNDATIONAL TO READING COMPREHENSION

“Children are natural knowledge seekers. Whether it’s orca whales, dinosaurs, or the latest technological doo-dad, children’s activities are often guided by their need to know. “

“To be successful in reading comprehension, students must acquire knowledge.”

“Children need time--to actively play with ideas, experience and ask questions, connect new learning with what they already know. Activities that pose problems, get children immersed in interesting topics, allow them the time to develop expertise -- all contribute to knowledge gains.”

Neuman, S. B. (2010). Lessons From My Mother Reflections on the National Early Literacy Panel Report. *Educational Researcher*, 39(4), 301-304.

**Language** develops in caring relationships, through back-and-forth conversations that build on children's natural curiosity and desire to connect.



# LANGUAGE IS KEY



**To literacy:** storytelling, vocabulary, how sounds combine to make words



**To learning:** questions, step-by-step problem solving, concepts, reasoning, memory

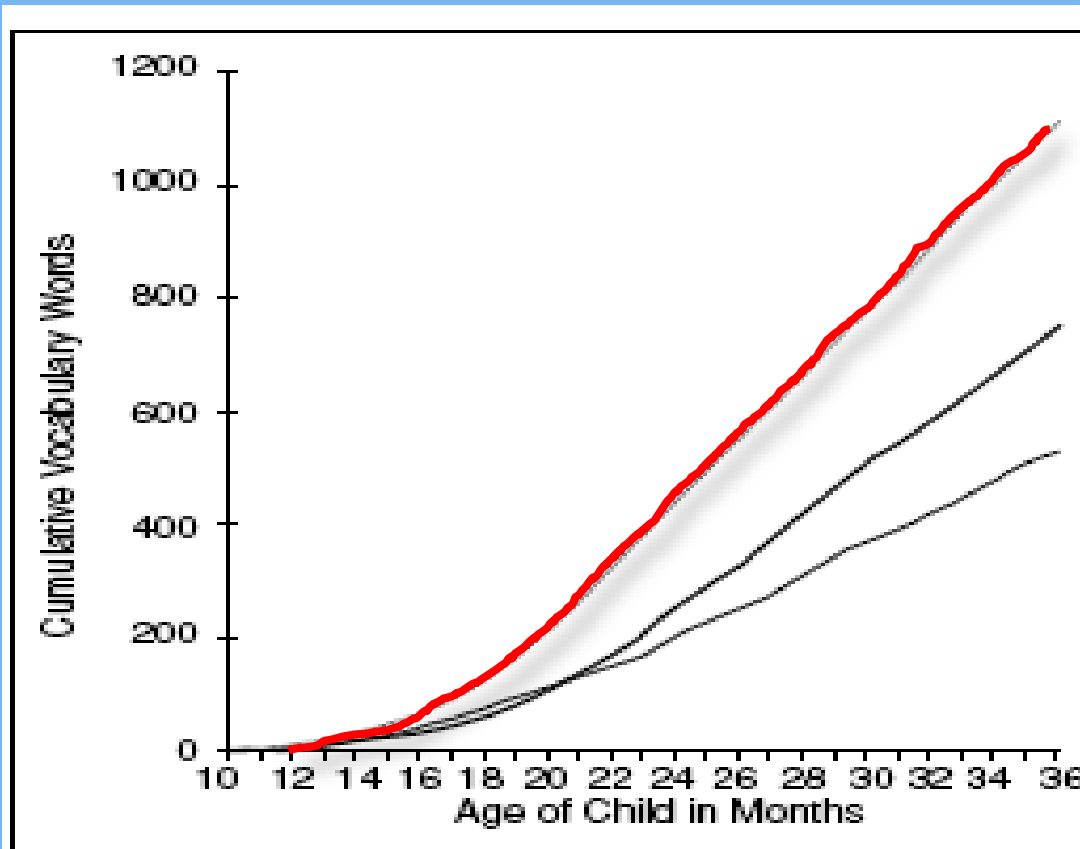


**To social/emotional development:** making friends, negotiating, expressing feelings, self-control, resilience



# THE VOCABULARY GAP

Source: Hart, B., and Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company



**50M words**  
heard by age 4

**30M words**  
heard by age 4

**15M words**  
heard by age 4

# PLAY TALK MAKES THE DIFFERENCE FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT!

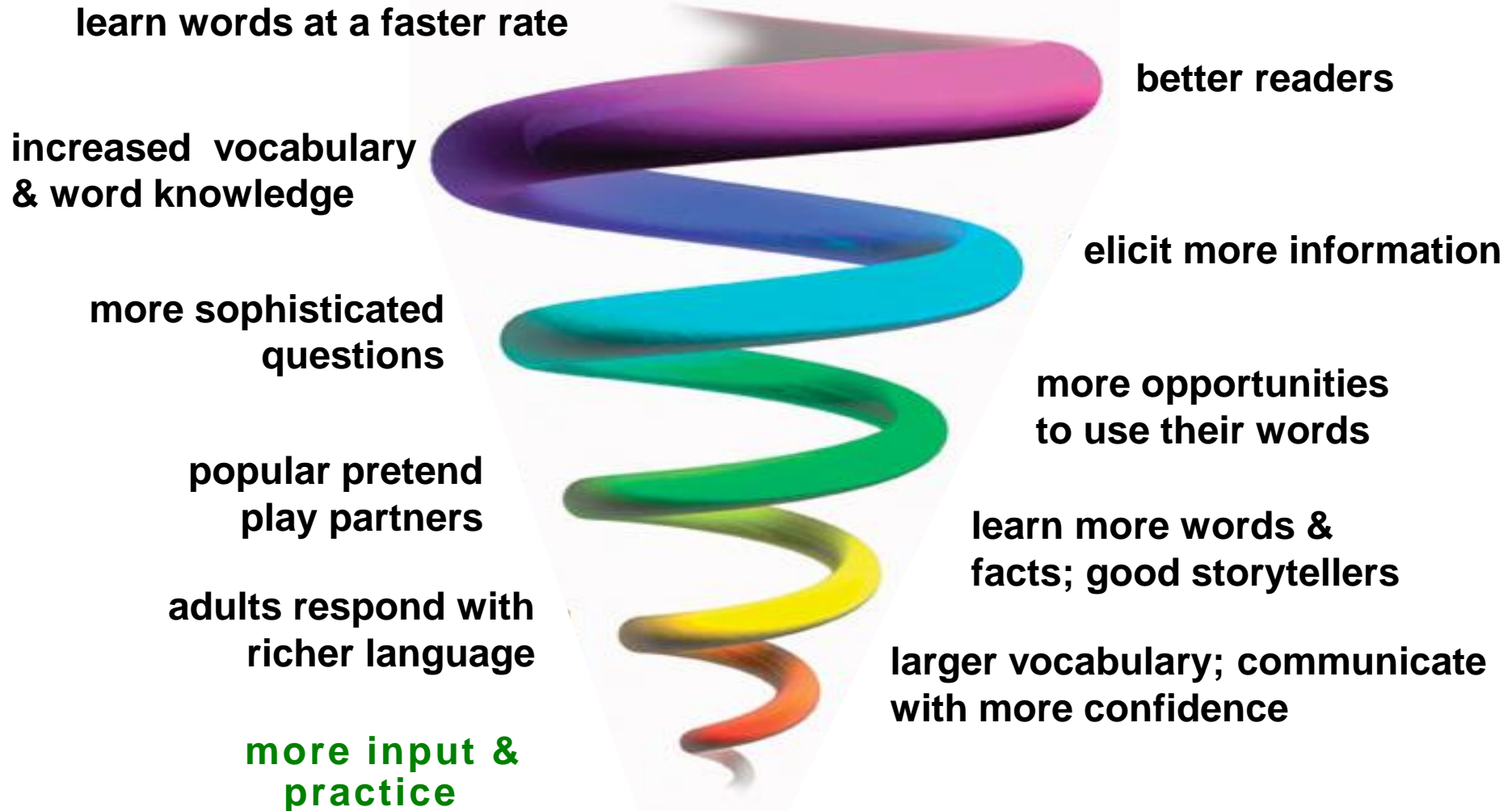
- Chit-chat
- Conversation
- Singing
- Silliness
- Story-telling
- Word Play



# ...BECAUSE PLAY TALK IS RICH TALK!

- Responsive – Follows the child's lead
- Imaginative and often silly
- Open-ended and encouraging
- Asks and explores questions
- Includes talk about past, future, what if...
- Models thinking and reasoning
- Richer vocabulary
- Longer conversations with more information
- More elaborate sentences and descriptions
- Word play, songs, & rhymes

# PLAY TALK CREATES AN UPWARD SPIRAL



# DECONTEXTUALIZED LANGUAGE

**Extended conversations include talk about:**

- Past
- Future
- What might be
- Imaginary
- Abstract
- What if ...



Dickinson, D.K., & Tabors, P.O. (2001). *Beginning literacy with language: Young children learning at home and school*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

# DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- Go through the same developmental steps in both languages
- May know some words in just one language and some in both
- Develop total vocabularies just as large as those of children with similar experience learning only one language
- Gain many advantages – **as long as at least one language is strong!**

Learning more than one language can boost verbal and nonverbal IQ and cognitive flexibility.





# EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

Reading



Science Vocabulary



Writing



Pretend Play





# DIALOGIC READING

- Use books as springboards for conversation
- Read aloud with small groups so you can really talk
- Engage child with questions and prompts as you read
- Increase participation and learning with repeated readings



**It is the talk that surrounds  
the storybook reading that  
gives it power.**

**- NAEYC & International Reading  
Association**

# VOCABULARY-RICH CONTENT

## My Hamster

rodent

handle

omnivorous

gentle

store food

cheek pouches

curious

burrow

active



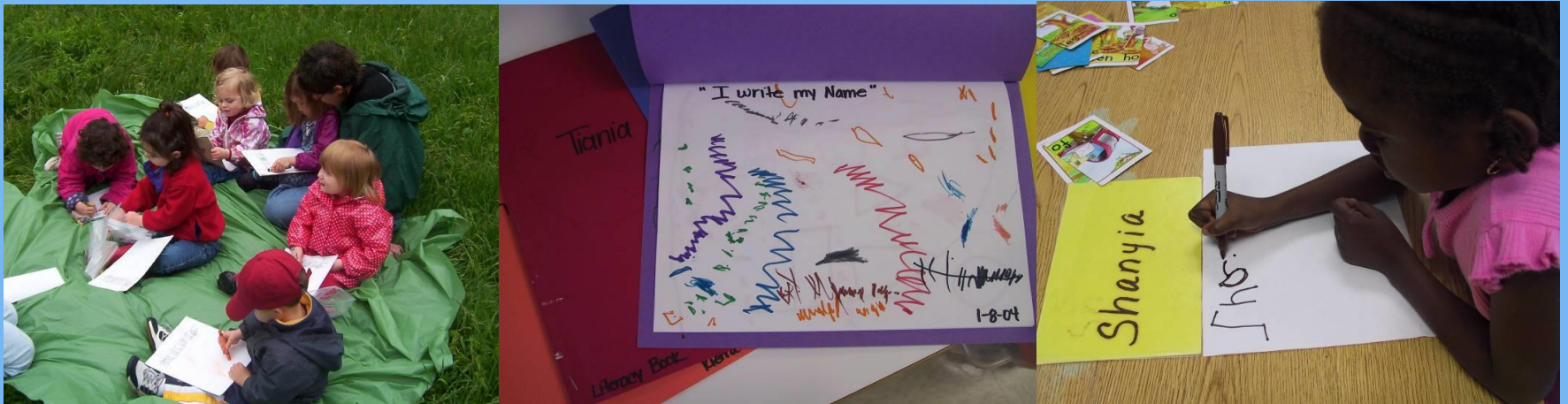
desert

nocturnal

hibernate

# WRITING

- Give children reasons to write and a variety of materials to write with.
- Write children's words and read them back together.
- Provide models and supports for writing.
- Help children represent the sounds they hear.



# MATURE PRETEND PLAY

## **Mature pretend play:**

Dramatic or constructive (building, setting up miniature worlds) play in which children co-construct a story or scenario.



Usually it takes about 30-40 minutes to gather props, negotiate roles, and play out a story. Children who play together frequently often return to the same play themes, elaborating stories over weeks or even months.



# TALKING LIKE A TRAVEL AGENT



# WHAT DO WE WANT TO PUT INTO PRACTICE?

- What struck you most from the language and literacy training?
  - What are you interested in learning more about?
  - What ideas do you want to incorporate into your practice?



# USING SCIENCE TO INFUSE VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

- Began with planning curiosity-provoking science activities
- Teacher became frustrated that there wasn't enough time for children to explore the activity and wondered about changing the structure of free play
- Teacher lengthened free play and had more time to engage children in science conversations
- She got excited about the children's questions and used those as provocations for her next science activity





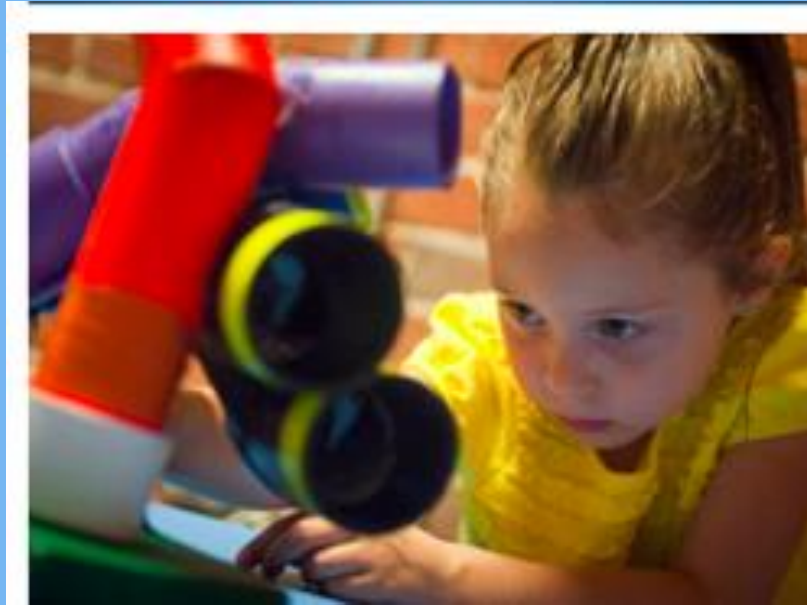
# REFLECT: WHAT SUCCESSES DID WE ACHIEVE?



# ASSESS: WHAT ARE OUR NEXT STEPS?



# CHILDREN LEARN MORE WHEN TEACHERS WONDER MORE & INSTRUCT LESS



Bonawitz, E.B., Shafto, P. et al. (2011) The double-edged sword of pedagogy: Teaching limits children's spontaneous exploration and discovery. *Cognition*, 120(3), 322-330.

# HIGH/SCOPE STUDY: PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN 10 COUNTRIES



Montie, J. E., Xiang, Z., & Schweinhart, L. J. (2006). Preschool experience in 10 countries: Cognitive and language performance at age 7. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21, 313–331.

# HIGH/SCOPE 10 COUNTRY FINDINGS: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Bring in new materials.
- Arrange and combine items to invite to suggest new ways for children to explore
- Wonder and reason aloud.
- Help children put their questions, hypotheses, discoveries, and explanations into words.
- Introduce vocabulary and concepts that will expand children's ideas.





# ASK AND ENCOURAGE INTERESTING QUESTIONS

- Find out what children want to know!
- Ask Genuine Questions – whose answers you really want to know
- Ask Reflective Questions – that make children think
  - “I have been watching you build and I’m curious. How could you get the blocks to balance so the tower could stand on its own?”

**Give children time to think –**

**really listen and**

**respond to their ideas**



# MAKING MORE CHANGES: UPWARD SPIRALS

- Teacher began rearranging her environment to make more room for the science center that had previously been in a small corner of the room.
- In doing so she created spaces where children could explore independently and had materials that prompted their own investigations





# POWERFUL INTERACTIONS

## Powerful Interactions

HOW TO CONNECT WITH CHILDREN  
TO EXTEND THEIR LEARNING



Amy Laura Dombro, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson



Be Present

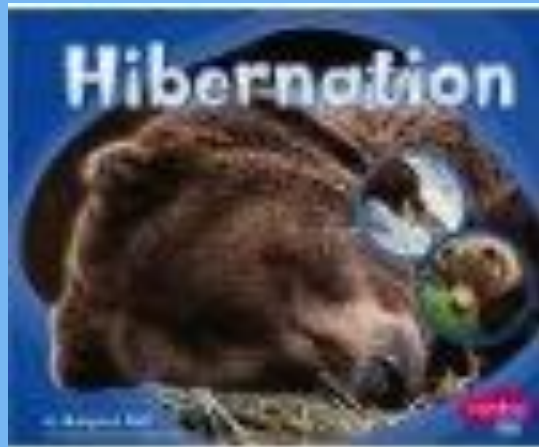
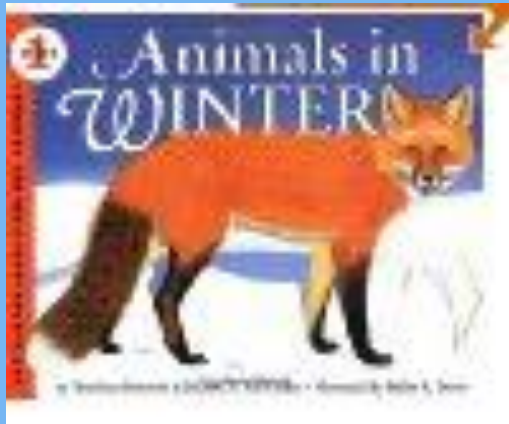


Connect



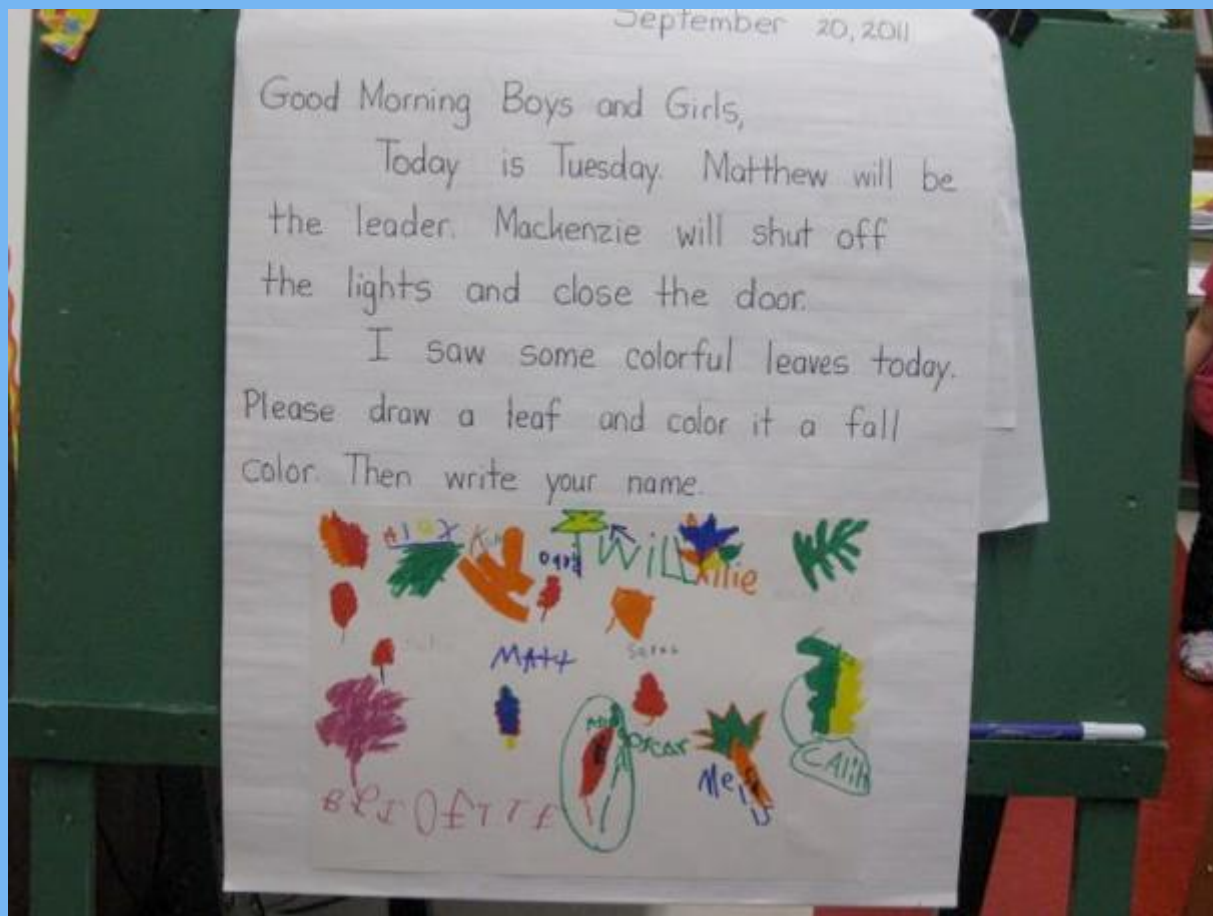
Extend Learning

# MAKING THE SHIFT FROM WEEKLY THEMES TO EXTENDED STUDIES



# CREATING UPWARD SPIRALS OF LITERACY

- Adding morning message and enhancing circle time



# NEXT STEPS TO LITERACY



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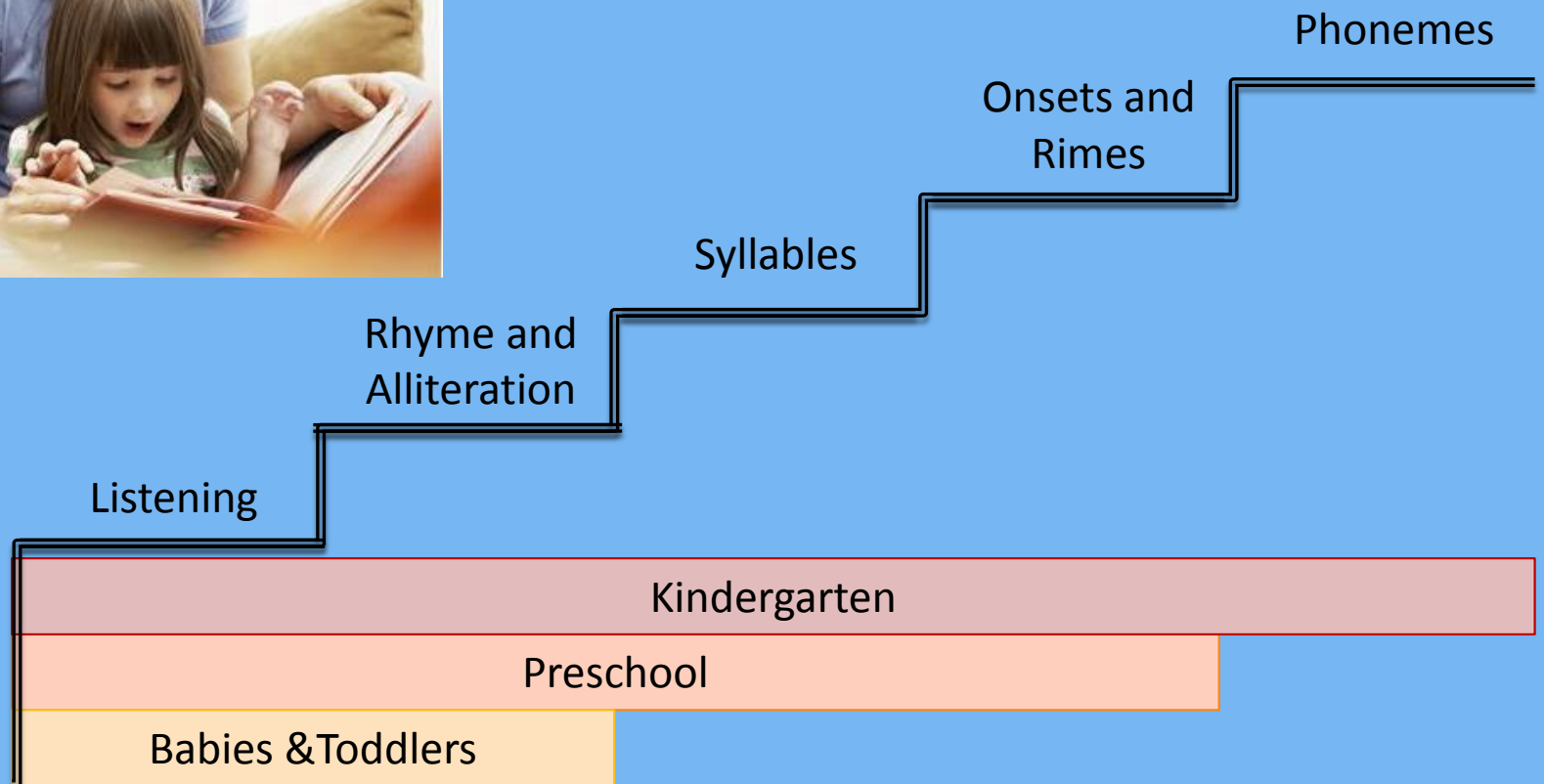
# THE ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE

Phonemic Awareness + Concepts of Print = Alphabetic Principle



- The **ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE** is the idea that letters (or letter combinations) represent the individual phonemes that make up words.
- In order to grasp this idea, children must be able to **identify the individual sounds in words** and **blend them together**, and also **recognize letters and their associated sounds**.

# BUILDING PHONEMIC AWARENESS





# MEANINGFUL PRINT: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



# LABEL AND ORGANIZE MATERIALS



# ORGANIZE BEHAVIOR

We decided:

1. Know the fire drill rules
2. Say you're sorry after an accident.
3. Listen and stay with your teacher.
4. Be careful in the blocks area.
5. Do only what you can do.
6. Think about what you're going to do before you do it.
7. Do what you're supposed to do at school.
8. Clean up your mess.
9. Walk inside.
10. Use an inside voice.

<u>LYDIA</u>	<u>QUINN</u>
<u>LIAM</u>	<u>AMEN</u>
<u>Nicole</u>	<u>MAX</u>
<u>ZOE</u>	<u>RUBY</u>
<u>CHLOE</u>	<u>ZEPHER</u>

our schedule

- morning meeting 
- snack 
- language arts 
- math 
- dramatic play/blocks 
- outside play 
- lunch 
- drama 
- art 
- quiet time 
- closing meeting 

*Handwritten notes and drawings are visible on the schedule board.*



# GIVE DIRECTIONS



# SHARE INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCES

## Writers Workshop



Writers think before they write.



We have writing folders.



We draw and write.



Owen is thinking about the sounds in "cluckhouse."



Authors tell stories with pictures and words.



Sometimes teachers meet with the writers.

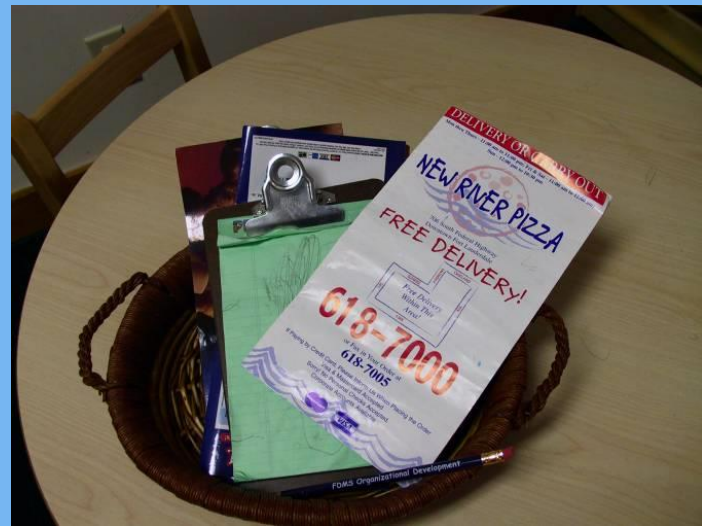


We are thinking, sounding out, and writing.



Writers use a lot of detail.

# ENHANCE PRETEND PLAY





# SHOW CHILDREN HOW PRINT WORKS

Give children many reasons to write, a variety of tools and supports, and lots of time to practice!



# WRITING PROVIDES AN OUTLET FOR CHILDREN'S IDEAS

## Story Paper

1

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# PARENTS WERE THRILLED!





# LOOK HOW FAR WE'VE COME! CONTINUING THE SPIRAL

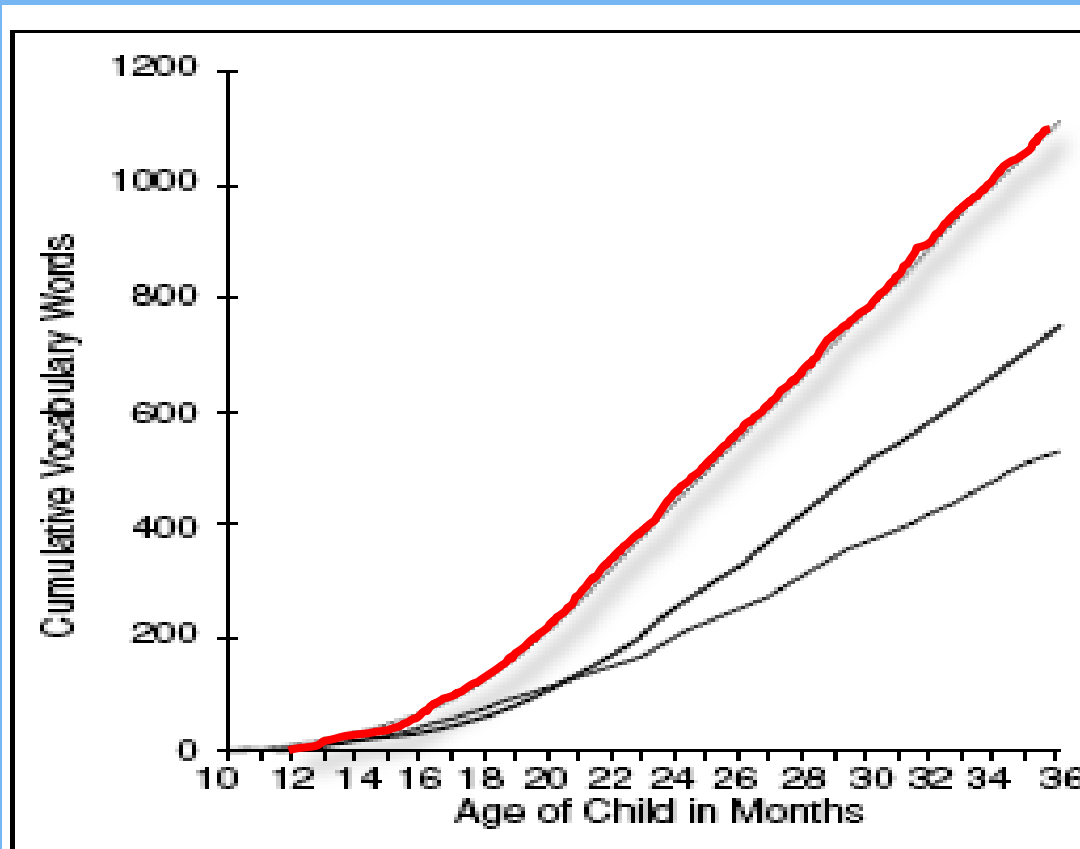


# TEACHER'S EXCITEMENT SPURS PROBLEM SOLVING



# THE ENCOURAGEMENT GAP

Source: Hart, B., and Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company



**800K encouragements**  
heard by age 4

**200K encouragements**  
heard by age 4

**100K encouragements**  
heard by age 4



# READY FOR K: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL & EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

- Ability to consider others' points of view
- Expressing emotions appropriately – without undue tantrums or meltdowns
- Holding a goal and steps in mind – working memory
- Deferred gratification – waiting a turn, etc.
- Ability to focus – or deliberately shift attention
- Strategies for self-control, such as self-talk, relaxation techniques, stop and think, breathe
- Knowing how and when to ask for help

# VISITING KINDERGARTEN



# FINAL VISIT: CULMINATION OF OUR COLLABORATION



# Strength-Based Coaching:

Empowering teachers to create upward spirals of quality that build language and literacy

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