

PARENT LITERACY HANDBOOK

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP
DEVELOP READING SKILLS



GEORGE W. MILLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NANUET UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear Families,

A strong and positive relationship between home and school is an important factor in helping your children succeed. The old adage "It takes a village to raise a child" holds true today especially in these busy times.

Here at George W. Miller, we focus on developing the whole child. In addition to learning math, reading, social studies, and science, all teachers focus on developing the social/emotional and behavioral characteristics that will help our students be successful not only in school, but in our ever-growing global community.

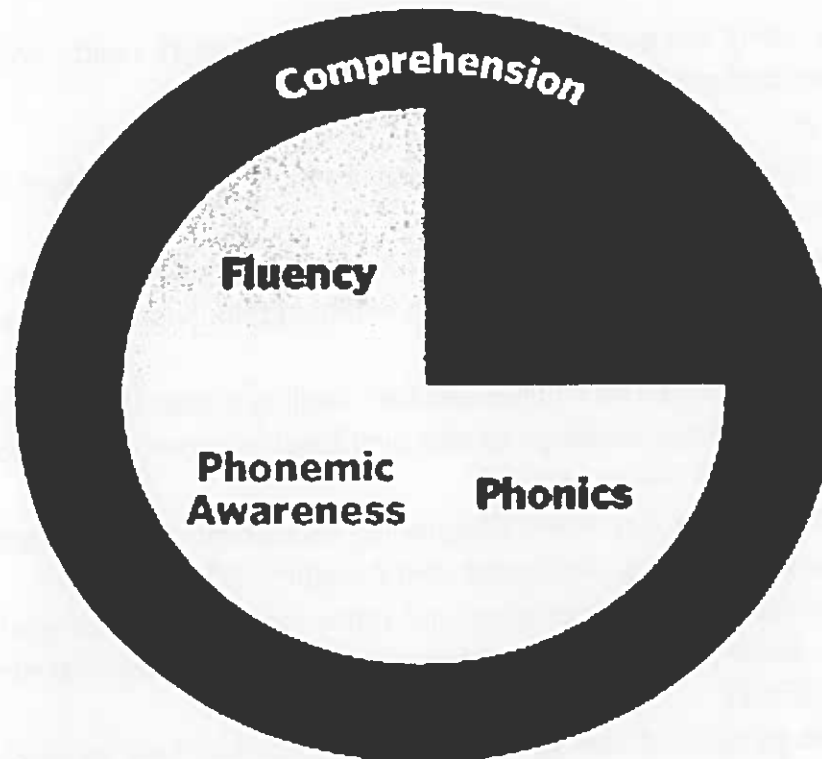
That said, a big focus of the early elementary years is learning to read. Reading begins at home way before the students come to kindergarten. Research tells us the connection between family literacy and school is a strong predictor of academic achievement. With that in mind, this handbook offers families various ways to engage in literacy activities as a parent, not a teacher. Leave the technical aspects to us, you have the fun!

This handbook will outline the Five Pillars of Literacy Instruction (plus Oral Language skills) that are focused on throughout the school day. Oral Language skills involve speaking and listening, which develop before reading! It offers you ways to explore those reading elements as a family with activities that can be included in your everyday chores and tasks.

Please enjoy your summer. Make **READING** your #1 activity!

READ-READ-READ, THEN READ SOME MORE!

Essential Components of Reading



- These are the 5 elements of reading instruction your children learn everyday. While school may separate the components for lessons, at home they can be combined.
- Oral Language Skills (speaking and listening) play an important part in reading development as well.
- Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for success in reading.
- Reading aloud — with children participating actively — helps children learn new words, learn more about the world they live in, learn more about written language (sometimes more than one language!), and see the connections between words that are spoken and words that are written. Source: National Institute for Family Literacy www.nifl.gov/nifl/publications.html
- Research also shows that the earlier parents become involved in their child's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille et al., 2004)

ORAL LANGUAGE SKILLS

Oral Language Skills are a critical component in learning to read. Children learn to speak and listen before they read.

Research tell us:

- Oral language development and vocabulary are directly linked to reading comprehension.
- The point of learning language and interacting socially, then, is not to master rules, but to make connections with other people and to make sense of experiences (Wells, 1986).
- Oral Language lays the foundation for reading comprehension; you must be able to understand language at the oral level in order to be expected to understand it at the text level.
- Oral vocabulary is key when a beginning reader makes the transition from oral to written forms (McCardle and Chhabra, 2004).
- Large numbers of children at school entry lack the critical oral language skills necessary for them to benefit from early literacy instruction. (Paulson,2001)
- The average child of low socioeconomic status had half as much experience in hearing words as a child of middle socioeconomic status, and less than one third that of the average child of high socioeconomic status.

What Can Families Do:

- **Talk, talk, and talk some more!** Research also shows excessive time spent with electronics detracts from social interaction and the opportunity to hear, listen, speak, and be spoken to.
- Learning vocabulary about spatial concepts (in, on, under, between), time concepts (before, after, first, next, last) is important to helping a child understand a story being read aloud as well as be able to retell a story.
- Discuss your activities for the day by using vocabulary such as First, then, next, last.
- Use pictures to sequence your child's morning and evening routines.
- Create ongoing bedtime stories about your child's favorite stuffed animal. This builds your child's listening skills, vocabulary, and imagination.
- Play Who am I?: choose a favorite character/person, and give clues for your child to guess, then switch roles and have them give the clue. This can be done with simple objects as well.
- Retell your favorite books by acting them out using costumes or props.

Exaggerate your speech and gestures.

- Play the games described in the Vocabulary section as they are all interrelated.
- Use picture stories so they can create their own story (Tomie DePaola books are great for this).
- Sing songs! Down by the Bay, The Ants Go Marching, Itsy Bitsy Spider, I'm a Little TeaPot, Old McDonald Had a Farm, and many more.

VOCABULARY

There are four types of vocabulary your child will learn:

- Listening: words they hear in conversation or during a read aloud
- Speaking: words they use to verbally communicate
- Reading: words they see when reading printed material
- Writing: words they use to to express themselves in writing

Why is Vocabulary Important?

- Research suggests that a young child's ability to use language, as well as attune to and understand the meaning of spoken and written words, is related to later achievement in reading, writing, and spelling.

What Families Can Do:

- READ to your children EVERYDAY. Young children love to read the same book over and over. This gives them the opportunity to see new words many times.
- TALK to each other. Conversation is a great way to stimulate questions about words as well as expose children to new words.
- USE adult vocabulary when answering questions for them. Simplify your vocabulary when necessary, but not all the time.
- PLAY language games. Helping them understand categories of words, and associations (relationships between words) expands their vocabularies.
 - Guess What I'm Holding: Describe a word and have them guess it. Put small objects or pictures in a paper bag, pull one out and the other person must guess what it is: e.g. " I have a yellow fruit that you peel; it grows in a bunch; monkeys love them".
 - While grocery shopping, talk about the ways the food is grouped by meat, dairy, frozen, fruits, vegetables, etc.
 - What goes together? Have them complete a phrase such as ' shoes

- and ____; brush and ____; peanut butter and ____;
- Which one doesn't belong? Using three words or pictures, have them choose which doesn't go with the others. (e.g.: cat, dog, baseball bat)
- Play games such as Scattergories Jr., Scrabble and/or Balderdash, Guess Who?.

FLUENCY

What is Fluency?

Reading fluency is the ability to read quickly and easily. It means a child can recognize and decode words automatically, accurately, and understand the words as they read. Children who have to work hard to decode a word may not have the energy to comprehend what they read.

Why is Fluency important?

Being a fluent reader helps your **COMPREHENSION** (understanding) of the story.

Aspects of Fluency:

- Accuracy- recognizing and reading a word correctly
- Rate- the pace at which someone reads a text
- Expression- the vocal intonation used to read (e.g.: monotone or excited)

What Families Can Do:

- Model fluent reading to your child. Reading aloud at the appropriate pace and with expression provides them with an example.
- Let them hear what fast/slow reading sounds like as well as with expression versus monotone (flat voice).
- Have your child practice reading aloud if they are at this stage. Reading the same book many times has proven to increase reading fluency.
- Teach high frequency words (e.g.: the, and, he, it). These are words that are memorized and children can recognize without sounding them out.
- Listen to books on tape while following along with the story in the book.
- Tape yourself reading on your iPhone or iPad and play it back for your child. Older children can tape themselves.
- Play it back on slow motion to show them the difference.
- Discuss the events and plot of the story, using open-ended questions - e.g: "What did you think of that part?; What do you think will happen next?". State your own opinions and connect the story to your own life. This encourages conversation.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Phonological awareness: The ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. This is the umbrella term that involves working with the sounds of language at the word, syllable, and phoneme level. Phonemic Awareness is a skill that falls under this blanket term.

Phonemic Awareness is an understanding about and attention to spoken language. It refers to the child's ability to recognize and manipulate speech sounds in words, syllables, and at the phoneme level (single sounds).

Phonological Awareness involves the following skills:

- Words in Sentences
- Syllables
- Onset-Rime
- Rhyme/Alliteration
- Phonemic Awareness
 - Isolation- recognizing individual sounds in a word
 - Blending- putting together separate sounds to form a word
 - Segmenting- breaking a word into separate sounds
 - Addition/Deletion/Substitution- playing with the sounds of a word and recognizing that new words are formed.

Why is Phonemic Awareness (PA) important?

- Research tells us this skill is one of the strongest predictors of how well a child will learn to read during their first two years of school, along with letter knowledge (Ehri & Nunes, 2002).
- PA teaches students to attend to sounds. It primes the connection of sound to print.
- PA gives students a way to approach reading new words.
- PA helps students understand the alphabetic principle, that letters in words are systematically represented by sounds.

Activities that teachers do within the classroom to teach this skill include:

- Rhyming: making sure a child understands when two words sound alike; making sure children can tell which words does not rhyme.
- Clapping or tapping out syllables in words (eg. tur-tle (2); dog (1))
- Blends Onset and Rime (eg: /m/ + /at/= mat; /b/+ /oat/=boat)
- Identifying beginning sounds in words
- Identifying ending sounds in words
- Segmenting words - breaking them apart into separate sounds

What Families Can Do:

- Read books that focus on rhyming (Dr. Seuss series, Sheep in a Jeep series, Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes)
- Silly Rhymes: choose a one syllable word and make word strings : bat, mat, cat; hair, bare, mare; cut, jut, mutt.
- Clap it out: Parents can clap out their requests: 'Make-your-bed'; 'Get-your-shoes'. Ask the child how many words are in your sentence. Clap out single words to identify how many syllables. You can whistle or hum, or beat a drum instead of clapping!
- Play 'I Spy' choosing a specific letter: "I spy things that start with the sound /t/".
- Guess My Word: 'I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with /pot/'.
- Which word is different? Change the beginning sound of a word and have them choose the one that doesn't belong (eg: sandwich, sun, bottle).
- For pre-schoolers and kindergarteners, these games should be done orally. You can use alphabet cards and writing to play these with older children.

For Older Children:

- How Many Words? Using a multi-syllabic word such as Involvement or Hippopotamus, have children find as many small words within the word. For example, in Hippopotamus, there is pot, mat, sat, hip, hit, etc.
- Change One Letter: Using a CVC word (e.g. cap), change or add one letter at a time, making a list of words (e.g.: cap, cup, cut, cute, mute, mite, mit, pit, pig, pug)

PHONICS

Phonics refers to the set of rules that specify the relationship between letters in the spelling of words and the sounds of spoken language. Phonics instruction helps children learn the relationship between letters of the written language and the sounds of the spoken language.

Research tells us that:

- Phonemic Awareness instruction improves phonics skills and phonics skills improves phonemic awareness: the relationship is reciprocal." (Lane & Pullen, 2004)
- There are 26 letters in the English alphabet; however, there are approximately 40 phonemes (sounds), represented by over 250 different spellings (e.g.: /ough/, /ph/, /f/).

What Can Families Do:

- Sing the Alphabet song **FREQUENTLY** to young children.
- Use alphabet magnets on the fridge for young children to play.
- Use alphabet shaped sponges in the bathtub.
- Use shaving cream on the bath walls to make letters.
- Make letters in the sand.
- Help your child understand that each letter makes a corresponding sound.
- Scavenger Hunts to find things that begin with a chosen **letter**.
- Teach them the letters of their name and the letter sounds.
- Sing **B-I-N-G-O**; make up songs with their name letters.
- Choose a **Letter-of-the-Week** and make foods that go with it, play games with that letter, etc; point out the **Letter-of-the-Week** in signs around town.
- **Jump!** Write letters in chalk on the driveway in a grid and have the children jump to the letter/sound you say.
- Make your own alphabet book, having the children cut pictures from magazines or draw pictures to go with the letters.
- Take out picture dictionaries from the library and keep in the car for them to browse through while you drive.

COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is the final goal of reading instruction; being able to apply meaning and understanding to what you read.

Research tells us:

- The biggest barrier to comprehension is lack of fluency. It is like teaching a child how to steer a bike before they learn how to pedal.
- Listening skills (including phonemic awareness, auditory attention, auditory sequencing, and listening vocabulary) are the most important factors in natural reading.

Teachers use various strategies to help develop comprehension skills:

- **Activate Background Knowledge:** discuss what a student's knows about a topic before beginning to read a book.
- Make connections to a text by talking about similar experiences they have had or relating one book to another book that has been read.
- Using visualization, or mental imagery. Encourage students to 'make a movie in their head' as they listen to a story.
- **Question, Clarify, Summarize, Retell**

- They show these strategies to students by modelling the expectations of what to do.

What Can Families Do:

- Take a picture walk before you read. Look at the cover, talk about the title and the author.
- Make connections to the story from your own experiences.
- Relate events in the story to your own life and memories.
- Make predictions about what might happen. Ask your child to make a prediction of what might come next in the story.
- Ask open-ended questions instead of yes/no questions. For example: "How would you feel if this happened to you?"; 'Does this remind you of the time...?'
- Reflect on the story with " I wonder if/why/what..."
- Encourage your child to ask their own questions.
- At the end, recount your favorite parts of the story. Explain WHY it's your favorite part.
- Describe the characters personalities (builds vocabulary too!).
- Act out their favorite books.
- Use household items or props to help in a retell of the story.
- Read the story more than once.

General Suggestion:

- Read to your child EVERYDAY. Read at bathtime. Put books in the pockets of the car in front of your child so they can browse while you drive.
- Talk to your child EVERYDAY. Engage in conversation. Share your day with them and what you did.
- Expose them to all types of reading material: books, magazines (Highlights, Ranger Rick, Sports Illustrated for Kids), newspapers.
- Ask your local librarian for suggestions!

Rhyming Books: Dr. Seuss Sheep in a Jeep Sandra Boynton Books My Granny Went to Market How Big is a Pig? The Hungry Thing Ten Cats Have Hats	Predictable Books: If you give a Mouse a Cookie. It's a Tiger Rosie's Walk Henny Penny Pinkerton Behave	Cumulative Stories: Mr. Gumpy's Outing This is the House that Jack Built Little Pink Pig Knock, Knock, Teremok! The Great Big Enormous Turnip	Familiar Sequence: The Grouchy Ladybug Cookie's Week The Artist Who Painted a Horse Blue Raindrop, Plop!
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High-frequency sight words (trick words) at each grade level. This is not a complete list.

Kindergarten: a in the am is to An it up and like we at me you can my do no go on he see I so	First Grade: K words plus- All be big has how if not she as back by came come did get had have her him his look make now of one or out was are away been but from here	Second Grade: K and 1st grade words plus- above across again almost always any anything during each eat end enough even every much must name new night than their them through wrong wrote year you're
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It's important to be relaxed and have fun! Building a love of books and reading is an ongoing endeavor that will enhance their lives.

Thank you! See you in September.

RESOURCES

Aghayan, C & Heroman, C (2013). How to Support Teachers' Use of Story Retelling. Retrieved 2/8/16:

<http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/how-to-support-teachers-use-of-story-retelling-to-build-comprehension-and-oral-language-in-early-learning-programs-by-cate-heroman-and-carol-aghayan/>

Early Language and Literacy Development

www.zerotothree.org/.../early-literacywebmarch1-6.pdf

The Measured Mom

<http://www.themeasuredmom.com/10-playful-alphabet-activities/>

The Road to Literacy, Oral Language Links to Literacy.

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/coloradoliteracy/crf/downloads/resources/presentations/orallanguage.pdf>

Sound Reading Solutions

<http://soundreading.com/reading-comprehension-strategies/facts-about-reading->

www.blog.maketaketeach.com

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/nurseryrhymes.htm>