

Module 2A: Session Handouts

*Providing Engaged Instructional Support for Learning –
Focus on Language and Early Literacy*

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Pre- and Post-Assessment

Module 2A: *Providing Engaged Instructional Support for Learning*

Date: _____

Trainer's Name: _____ Participant's Name: _____

Job Title: Teacher Assistant Teacher Director Other: _____
(circle one)

Ages you work with: infants toddler: ones toddler: twos preschool pre-k
(circle all that apply) 6 weeks to 12 months 13 to 23 months 24 to 35 months 3 to 4 years 4 to 5 years

Instructions: Think about the following statements in relation to what you understand BEFORE and AFTER the training. Please check the box that best describes how you would rate your level of knowledge and skills based on the training topic: 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

STATEMENTS	BEFORE THE TRAINING						AFTER THE TRAINING					
	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I understand how literacy develops in preschool												
I know specific interaction strategies and behaviors associated with the CLASS® Instructional Support domain												
I can recognize when those strategies are being used in others' literacy lesson												
I can plan read aloud and shared writing activities that incorporate instructional support strategies												

Concept Development Overview

Use this reminder of the CLASS® Concept Development indicators and behavior markers as you watch the read aloud video. Which behavior markers do you notice as the teacher is reading with the children? Use the bottom of the page to jot down any observation as you watch the video.

Analysis and Reasoning

- “Why” and “how” questions
- Problem solving
- Prediction/Experimentation
- Classification
- Evaluation

Integration

- Connecting Concepts
- Integrating previous knowledge

Creation

- Brainstorming
- Planning
- Producing

Connecting to the Real World

- Real world applications
- Relating to children’s lives

Quality of Feedback Overview

Use this reminder of the CLASS® Quality of Feedback indicators and behavior markers as you review your assigned portion of a transcript of the read aloud video. Which behavior markers can you identify as the teacher is reading with the children?

Scaffolding

- Hints
- Assistance

Feedback Loops

- Back-and-forth exchanges
- Persistence by teacher
- Follow-up questions

Prompting Thought Processes

- Asks children to explain thinking
- Queries responses and actions

Providing Information

- Expansion
- Clarification
- Specific feedback

Encouragement and Affirmation

- Recognition
- Reinforcement
- Child persistence

Things We Play Together Shared Writing

Teacher: In the Matthew and Tilly book we read yesterday, we saw lots of things that they liked to play together because they were such good friends. I know you're all friends at school and I bet you have friends that you play with at home, too.

Child: I play with my brother.

Child: My cousins come to play with me.

Teacher: Sometimes the people in our families like our brothers, sisters, and cousins, are the best friends we have! I played all the time with my sister when we were little. We still do lots of things together – and we're grown-ups! Sometimes we go to the beach together, and sometimes we play cards. Let's think about the things that you play with your friends, either at home or at school. We'll make a chart that you can read together later and write on if you want during center time. I'm going to write at the top, "Things we play with friends." (*Saying each word slowly while writing.*) So, this says, "things we play with friends." (*Reading while pointing to each word when finished writing.*) What is something you like to do with your friends?

Child: We play hide and seek. I'm good at hiding. It takes a long time to find me. And sometimes I have to just come out when they give up.

Teacher: You must know lots of great hiding places! Ok. I'll write "hide and seek" first. /H/, /H/, /H/ – what letter says /H/, /H/?

Child: H!

Teacher: H. Yes – hide starts with H. H – i – d – e, hide! I'm writing "hide and seek." (*Speaking slowly while writing, the rereading the line while pointing to the words.*) What else do you like to do with your friends?

Child: We play fort in the backyard.

Teacher: I know you and Annie like to make a restaurant when you choose housekeeping. I think it is your favorite thing to play there! Let's write "play restaurant." (*Repeats process as for other lines.*) Does anyone else want to tell us what you play?

Child: My little pony.

Teacher: You pretend to be ponies?

Child: No. I have lots of My Little Ponies. We like to play with them and comb their hair.

Teacher: Oh, My Little Pony! They do have pretty colors for their hair. Ok, I'm writing "My Little Pony" right here. This says: "My Little Pony."

Child: We play Lego supercars.

Teacher: Lego supercars?

Child: We build supercars. They go really fast. We see who can make the fastest one.

Teacher: That sounds like lots of fun. First you build cars, and then you race them. So, Lego supercars? I'll write that here. This says: "Lego supercars." Let's put one more thing you play with friends and then we can read our chart together.

Child: We play princesses and castles.

Teacher: You pretend like you are princesses in castles? I bet you have lots of fun. Do you dress up like princesses?

Child: We build castles with Legos. I have pink and purple Legos. We pretend we live in the castle.

Teacher: I'd like to see one of your princess castles! So, what should I write?

Child: Princess castle.

Teacher: Ok. I'm writing "princess castle" here. Now let's all read our chart together while I point to the words. (*Children read the chart in unison with the teacher as she moves a pointer smoothly below the words on each line.*)

Matthew and Tilly Together/Alone Shared Writing

Teacher: In the story we just read, Matthew and Tilly were best friends who did everything together. But one day they got mad at each other. Let's think about the things they did together in the book and the things they did by themselves. I'm going to write Matthew and Tilly at the top. (*Slowly saying each word while writing.*) We'll make a column for things they did when they played together. I'm writing "together" here. Then we'll do a column for what they did when they were by themselves! I'm writing "alone" at the top of this column. Alone means by themselves. Who can think of something they liked to do together?

Child: Bikes!

Teacher: Bikes. Yes. They did like to ride bikes together. They rode all around their neighborhood. I'm going to write "rode bikes" here under "together" because they rode bikes together. I'm writing "rode" – r – o – d – e, "bikes" – b – i – k – e – s. (*Saying each letter aloud while writing.*) This says "sold lemonade." What else did they do together?

Child: They ate ice cream at the store.

Teacher: Good. There was a picture of them eating ice cream at the ice cream parlor. Let's write "ate ice cream" here. (*Again, repeats words slowly while writing, and then rereads while pointing to each word when finished.*) Can we think of one more thing they did together?

Child: Hopscotch.

Teacher: Hopscotch? The book says they played sidewalk games, but we could see in the picture that they had made a hopscotch on the sidewalk. So I'll write "hopscotch" – h – o – p – s – c – o – t – c – h. That says hopscotch!

Child: They also climbed up and got the cat out of the tree.

Teacher: Yes, they did get a cat out of the tree. They rescued it. Remember? Rescue means they save it. Ok, let's put "rescued a cat." I'll write that last under hopscotch. (*Again, repeats words slowly while writing, and then rereads while pointing to each word when finished.*) Now, let's think about what they did when they were alone – when they were mad and went to play by themselves.

Child: Tilly drew on the sidewalk with chalk.

Teacher: Yes, while Matthew was upstairs, Tilly drew on the sidewalk by herself. I'll write "drew on sidewalk" under alone. (*Saying each word slowly while writing.*) This says, "drew on sidewalk." (*Reading while pointing to the words.*) What else?

Child: Matthew played grocery.

Teacher: He played grocery. He got out cans and things you could buy at the grocery and set up a cash register so he could play store. I'm writing "played grocery." (*Slowly saying words while writing.*) Anything else?

Child: He was sad on the steps.

Child: He was mad.

Teacher: He was sad or maybe mad. He sat on the steps by himself. Let's put, "sat on stairs." (*Speaking slowly while writing.*) I put "sat on stairs" under things they did alone – by themselves. Now, let's read the whole chart together!

Language Modeling Overview

Use this reminder of the Language Modeling indicators and behavioral markers as you review your assigned transcript of a shared writing interaction. Which behavioral markers can you identify as the teacher constructs the shared chart with the children?

Frequent Conversation

- Back-and-forth exchanges
- Peer conversations

Self- and Parallel Talk

- Maps own actions with language
- Maps child actions with language

Open-ended Questions

- Questions require more than a one-word response
- Children respond

Advanced Language

- Variety of words
- Connected to familiar words and/or ideas

Repetition and Extension

- Repeats what children say
- Extends and/or elaborates children's utterances

Read Aloud/Shared Writing Planning Form

Concept Development during Read Aloud:

Book Title:

I will introduce the book by talking about (*connection to children's experiences – real world connection, or connection to a book they have already read – integration*):

Analysis and reasoning questions I will ask (*including why and how questions, problem solving questions, predictions, or evaluation; include the page number from the book so you know when to ask each question*):

Connections I can make to children's experiences to prior knowledge (*including page numbers where you can make these connections*):

Language Modeling during Read Aloud:

Open-ended questions I can ask (*include page numbers*):

Advanced language I will point out and define or demonstrate for children (*include page numbers*):

Quality of Feedback during Read Aloud or Shared Writing:

Additional information I will be prepared to provide based on children's questions or responses:

Planning for Shared Writing:

The first shared writing activity I will do to help children recall events in the story will be titled:

A second shared writing I can do to extend the children's understanding of the story will be titled:

Ready for Kindergarten? Rethinking Early Literacy in the Common Core Era

Renée M. Casbergue

The Office of Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

A Typical Morning in Preschool

As the day begins, 20 children gather on the carpet in their preschool classroom. After greeting the children warmly, their teacher begins her morning message routine. Moving a pointer under lines of text that she printed neatly before the children arrived, she reads until she reaches a blank: “Yesterday was Sunday. Today is ____.” Some of the children call out, “Monday!” The teacher confirms their response, saying, “Yes, Monday. *Monday* starts with an *m*: /m/, /m/, /m/, *Monday*. I’m going to write it here: *M-o-n-d-a-y*.”

She continues reading: “Outside, the weather is ____.” Different children chime in: “Cloudy!” “Raining!” or “Cold!” She responds, “I think it is cloudy. It’s not raining yet. Let’s write *cloudy*.” Saying each letter again as she writes, she fills in the word, then reads the last sentence aloud while pointing to the print. “We will have a great day!” She then guides the children through the entire message while pointing to each word as they read aloud with her in unison.

After completing a calendar routine in which the children count the days of the month and repeat the date (“Today is Monday, December 5”), she reminds the children that the letter they will work with all week is *m*. She calls their attention to a video on the smartboard, and the children stand up, chanting along with the music, “*M, m, m* is a letter of the alphabet, /m/, /m/, /m/, letter *m*!”

They dance in place as a monkey wearing a sweater with the letter *m* on it jigs across the screen. Laughing and dancing, children call out *m* words for pictures that appear on the screen: *moon, man, map, magician*. They conclude with the same chant that began the video, then settle back into their places to begin their transition to free-choice centers.

Attention to Print in Preschool

For two mornings each week over the past two years, I have spent the first two hours of the school day in preschool classrooms conducting program evaluations. Routines such as those described previously are ubiquitous, whether in Head Start classrooms, state-funded preschools, or private child-care centers, as teachers work to infuse early literacy learning into their curriculum.

Rare is the classroom without frequent attention to print, especially alphabet letters and their sounds. Whether in response to the joint position statement by the International Reading Association (now the International Literacy Association) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998) that called for more explicit attention to early literacy instruction prior to kindergarten, to the National Early Literacy Panel’s (2008) findings about research-based early literacy skills that support decoding, spelling, and comprehension in primary grades, or to the International Reading Association’s (2006) position statement *Literacy Development in the Preschool Years*, learning about print is now an entrenched part of most preschool programs.

Not all early literacy instruction is equally effective, however, and some potentially effective strategies seem to have devolved into rote, largely empty routines from which children gain little usable knowledge. Consider the morning routines previously described. The teacher is to be lauded for incorporating a version of shared writing into her daily routine. When done well, morning message

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activities can encourage children's engagement with print and contribute to their burgeoning understanding of how print functions (Wasik & Hindman, 2011).

In this example, however, children's engagement is minimal. Much of the message is written outside their presence, and they are mostly cast into the role of passive observers, watching as the teacher writes two words and reads the message aloud. Although they read with her, the repetitive nature of the message suggests that children have learned to parrot back memorized text, devoting little attention to the actual print.

The alphabet routine using video projected on the smartboard is unlikely to be any more effective. Setting aside long-standing concerns about curricula that use a "letter of the week" approach (for early critiques of this approach, see Wagstaff, 1998; Wuori, 1999; for research-based alternatives, see McKay & Teale, 2015), the activity described here, although enjoyable to the children, does little to help them understand how or why they might use the letter *m* themselves. At best, some of the children may come to recognize the letter and associate it with its sound through repetition of the chant. There is no way to know, however, how many children even attend to the letter as they enjoy the silliness of moving with a dancing monkey in time to the music.

Effective Practices for Learning About Print

Resources that address more effective practices for teaching the youngest learners about print abound. Table 1 provides a number of books illustrating

research-based strategies that support early literacy in preschool classrooms. Although most include opportunities for targeted explicit instruction, all stress the importance of meaningful contextualized instruction that encourages children to explore print for their own authentic purposes.

The highest quality early literacy environments are filled with opportunities for children to engage with print. Teachers lead children in meaningful shared writing that incorporates children's ideas. Books and writing materials are an important part of every center so that children can use print when they want, whether taking messages in the house-keeping center, writing prescriptions in the veterinarian's office dramatic play center, or making street signs for their block cities.

Recent evidence has suggested that a mix of explicit instruction, teacher-directed shared reading and writing, and free exploration of print does in fact lead to increased understanding of print concepts. As these practices have become more widespread, increasing numbers of preschool children are able to recognize a significant number of alphabet letters, with the percentage of 3-6-year-old children (not yet enrolled in kindergarten) recognizing all 26 letters increasing from 21% to 38% between 1993 and 2012 (Child Trends Data Bank, 2015). My own work with preschool children in an Early Reading First project from 2008 to 2012 reflected this level of achievement. In addition, most of the children displayed age-appropriate phonemic awareness and usually were able to discern beginning and ending sounds in words and hear and create rhymes. According to the National Early Literacy Panel (2008), alphabet knowledge and phonemic awareness skills such

Table 1
Resources for Effective Preschool Print Instruction

- Casbergue, R.M., & Strickland, D.S. (2016). *Reading and writing in preschool: Teaching the essentials*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- McGee, L. (2007). *Transforming literacy practice in preschool*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- McKay, R., & Teale, W.H. (2015). *Not this but that: No more teaching a letter a week*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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- Morrow, L.M. (2015). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Roskos, K.A., Tabors, P., & Lenhart, L. (2009). *Oral language and early literacy in preschool: Talking, reading, and writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Schickedanz, J.A., & Casbergue, R.M. (2008). *Writing in preschool: Learning to orchestrate meaning and marks*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

as these are critically important to children's later literacy learning, so we might expect that children entering kindergarten from high-quality preschool environments that increase those skills will do well moving forward.

Yet, is knowledge of the alphabet and phonemic awareness, to which many preschool classrooms devote so much attention, sufficient to provide children with what they need to be successful in the primary grades? Will they truly be ready for the literacy demands of 21st-century classrooms?

More than a decade ago, Neuman and Roskos (2005) raised concerns about the nature of early literacy instruction that focused too heavily on print-related skills to the exclusion of broader notions of literacy, especially with repetitive, rote activities:

This type of instruction may inevitably consign children to a narrow, limited view of reading that is antithetical to their long-term success not only in school but throughout their lifetime. In other words, we believe that such instruction might actually undermine, rather than promote, the very goals of improving literacy learning. (p. 23)

Today, it appears that not much has changed in many classrooms, where there is often overemphasis on print to the detriment of systematic attention to other aspects of literacy development.

Others have continued to question whether a narrow emphasis on constrained skills (Paris, 2005), such as many of those identified by the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) as predictive of later conventional literacy skills of decoding, spelling, and comprehension, have resulted in positive change for preschool children (Teale, Hoffman, & Paciga, 2010). They also raised concerns about a narrowing definition of early literacy and a narrowing of children's preschool experience in general.

Raising the Stakes With the Common Core

Now that curriculum and standards across the United States have been influenced by the Common Core State Standards, expectations for literacy achievement in the primary grades have risen. In the era of federal policy driven primarily by No Child Left Behind legislation, success in primary grades was largely defined as the ability to read independently by the end of third grade, with reading mostly understood to mean fluent decoding with adequate comprehension. Although that level

of skill is still desirable under the Common Core, competency has been redefined to include the ability to gather and analyze information from multiple sources, cite evidence for responses to text, and write stories and nonfiction text that draw on a variety of related texts, including multimedia presentations.

By the time children take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers or Smarter Balanced standardized assessments connected to the Common Core in third grade, they are expected to read entire stories and related informational texts independently, give evidence-based responses to each piece of literature, verify the source of their answers, and compose an extended response citing information from both readings. Most children will encounter these assessments in digital format, either on computers or using tablets.

This expanded definition of basic literacy begs the question of what constitutes readiness for formal schooling and how it can be achieved. It is worth considering, within the context of developmentally appropriate practice, what teachers can do to help children begin to think and respond to text in ways required under the Common Core.

Promoting Deeper Literacy

It seems clear that if children are to meet new standards with confidence, we can begin preparing them to think about reading in ways that move them well beyond learning about print. Of course, there are those who argue with some merit that the Common Core Standards are too difficult for children in early primary grades, particularly with regard to emphasis on complex texts that many believe to be too difficult for developing readers.

This is less a concern for preschool children, however, because they are never expected to read texts themselves. Once independent decoding is taken out of the equation, there is no reason to limit children to simple texts. Preschool children can and do enjoy meaty stories and informational texts. In fact, they are often sponges who soak up interesting content about the world around them and enjoy using sophisticated vocabulary to describe their discoveries. As E.B. White once said,

Anyone who writes *down* to children is simply wasting his time. You have to write *up*. Children are demanding. They are the most attentive, curious, eager, observant, sensitive, quick, and generally congenial readers

on earth....Children are game for anything. I throw them hard words, and they backhand them over the net. (as quoted in Sweet, 2016, p. 130)

Although White most likely referred to older readers of books such as his own *Charlotte's Web*, he could just as well have described preschoolers. In one classroom I visited, I heard a 4-year-old exclaim about her painting, "Look, I painted you a chrysanthemum!" Her teacher confirmed that the children knew the mouse in *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes, a picture book that they often asked for, but then described how they were in the midst of an exploration of gardening and flowers. The class had planted a small garden in their play yard, and the teacher had shared many stories and nonfiction books about plants and gardens.

Over the course of 40 minutes in free-choice centers, I saw children sorting and talking about seeds at a science discovery center, reading books with garden themes in the library center, and pretending to plant a garden and pick flowers in dramatic play. All the while, they named favorite flowers, gave out "bouquets," and talked about the need to pull up weeds "with all their roots" and being careful not to "overwater." Backhanding hard words over the net, indeed!

In another classroom, I watched as children used construction books found in a bin in the block center. One child wanted to begin her building with a "foundation, like in the book." She found the book she wanted, opened it to a specific page, and proceeded to lay out blocks to mimic the illustration.

When two other children asked for the book so they could look at the picture of the architect, she said, "That's in a different book." Getting it for them, she quickly turned to the page with the architect sharing blueprints with a construction crew. "Here he is," she said, pointing to the illustration.

Although these seem like simple interactions that occur naturally during play, consider the skills involved. As children engaged in their exploration of gardens and flowers during center time, they applied knowledge from many different sources of information, drawing on hands-on gardening activities, frequent talk about a topic of great interest, and books shared by their teacher. The children in the block center displayed equally sophisticated skills. They knew that they could use books as sources of information to support their play. They were also able to remember which specific books included the information they wanted, and they were able

to locate it with ease. Both groups of children demonstrated the ability to use high-level vocabulary appropriately.

Promoting Sophisticated Engagement

These kinds of interactions surrounding books and interesting content knowledge do not happen by accident. Teachers engaged in best practices for preschool literacy select books that will challenge children and then make them accessible by scaffolding children's engagement. That challenge may be interesting vocabulary, as in *Alphabetical Sydney* by Antonia Pesenti and Hilary Bell (2013): "B is for bats, who sojourn after dark / To the gardens across from Centennial Park" (n.p.). Or it may be content that is challenging, perhaps with themes of cooperation and achievement, for example, as in *The Little Red Hen (Makes a Pizza)* by Philemon Sturges and *Duck Says Moo* by Thomas D. Cashell.

Although children will enjoy these books on many levels, teachers can deepen their understanding of the vocabulary or themes by explicitly calling attention to each through well-planned discussion. Asking children to repeat and use interesting vocabulary and having them seek out similar themes in two seemingly different books will stretch their understanding of what can be derived from texts.

Children can be invited to write with teachers after reading, creating summaries of stories, lists of important information, or diagrams comparing and contrasting two different books. They can be challenged to explain how they know their answers when teachers encourage them to find the page that contains the information they share. For example, when children compare when the animals refused to cooperate with the Little Red Hen (as she shopped for and prepared the pizza) with when they were helpful (when they ate the pizza and cleaned up), they can locate pages that illustrate each idea.

That is not to say that teachers should no longer be concerned with preparing children to develop knowledge about print and the specific alphabetic knowledge that will support their early decoding and spelling. But attention to development of print knowledge need not be devoid of a focus on enriching content and higher level thinking.

Instead of the rote, predictable shared writing that often accompanies morning message activities, consider the following shared writing, completed with a group of 4-year-olds after the teacher

had read aloud an alphabet book about construction equipment (Casbergue & Strickland, 2016):

Teacher: We learned about some new construction equipment that I don't think we have seen before. Let's write about some of the equipment. I'm going to write a title at the top of our page: "Construction Equipment" (*speaking slowly as she writes each word on chart paper while the children watch*). Now, what should we write first?

Michael: Backhoe!

Teacher: What does the backhoe do? Let's look at that page. (*Shows the children the picture of the backhoe.*)

Michael: It digs up lots of dirt.

Teacher: That's right. It says here, "The backhoe pushes into the earth and pulls back a pile of dirt and rock." So what should we write?

Michael: A backhoe pulls up dirt. (p. 49)

Although this interaction shares some characteristics with the morning message activity described earlier, there are many differences. First, the writing is related to ongoing exploration of construction, a study initiated after children were enthralled by a building going up across the street from their playground. Thus, both the read-aloud and the shared writing that followed it were contextualized and therefore had meaning for the children.

The teacher repeated this exchange with four more children who volunteered names of construction equipment they were interested in. Each time, she returned to the book to verify information and then invited the children to summarize again. For each child's contribution, she modeled a number of print concepts, including letter formation, spaces between words, and spelling. But the emphasis was on the information shared and extending the children's interest.

She concluded the shared writing activity by leaving the newly created chart for children to add to as they liked at center time. Of course, those independent contributions were a mix of scribbles, drawings, and copied words, as one would expect from preschool children. Yet, children had one more opportunity to engage with the rich content and talk with each other and their teacher about construction.

In this example, the teacher modeled the process of referring back to the text to confirm information suggested by the children. After many experiences with this procedure, she can invite children themselves to find supporting pages in the book. Children will usually use pictures to guide their

choice of pages, and the teacher can then read the relevant supportive text. Over time, even preschoolers will become accustomed to finding evidence to support their responses.

Ready for the Common Core?

The Common Core State Standards require that children in primary grades approach reading with more sophistication than in the past. Children will be called upon to find and interpret information from a variety of related sources. They will be asked to cite evidence for their responses from within the texts they read. They will be asked to write in response to multiple related texts.

In addition to helping children learn about print concepts and develop the alphabetic principle, preschool teachers can ensure that children are ready for these new challenges through developmentally appropriate activities around shared reading and writing that help children become accustomed to comparing information from many sources and finding evidence in books to support what they say and write. And all can be done within rich experiences surrounding content of interest to children.

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by Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, Ph.D.



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