

Claire Vallotton, PhD



Associate Professor, Human Development & Family Studies, Michigan State University

Scientist of Child Development, helping the world better understand babies and support their families and educators.



BIRTH TO AGE 3
Practitioner Version
General Education Leadership Network
Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3
This document was developed by the **Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF)**, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 36 Intermediate School Districts.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Purpose
The purpose of this document is to assist in improving children's literacy by using research-supported literacy practices. professional development throughout the document is on practices in schools rather than on content- or outcome-based focuses on infants and toddlers, as this is when children learn the basics and as adults that will support their development of their lives. Improving language in the infant and toddler years has the "building by three grade" outcomes. It can also help to address disparities in literacy.

Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones
Library starts early. Did you know you can support your child's future reading and writing before they can even talk?
Babies come into the world ready to learn. Everything young children learn about communication, language, books, and printed words on their way to formal reading and writing is part of emergent literacy. Find out what you can do to build a strong literacy foundation for your child in the first three years of life. Families have literacy experiences. Do you know the many ways you already support your child's language and emergent literacy?
It doesn't take flash cards, labels, or fancy books. There are many ways you support language and emergent literacy in your everyday interactions with your baby or toddler. Whether you know it or not, you have literacy experiences. Use the Michigan Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones to discover yours, and build more!
Library starts early. You can start now!

Set the Stage for Love and Learning
Children need to feel safe and loved to learn and reach their full potential in language and literacy. Families can provide safe, caring, and playful environments to help children feel loved and ready to learn by:
- giving children lots of one-on-one with adults, peers, and siblings
- providing consistent daily routines for meals, rest, and play
- providing safe play spaces for children to explore and play with things that interest them most

Back-and-Forth Conversations with Babies and Toddlers
Beginning at birth, babies can hear part of back and forth conversations with their most important language support: their parents. Families support children's language when they turn babies' cues and toddlers' talk into conversations by:
- looking at what baby or toddler says and words
- copying and adding to children's sounds and words
- making gestures
- making eye contact
- making the conversation going

Literacy in Your Family Life and Culture
You play the most important role in your child's early learning. No matter where you are, you can talk with your child and create an engaging language environment for your child by talking, reading, talking, singing, or playing. Doing these activities in your culture is best!
- Bathing
- Bedtime
- Going from place to place
- Getting dressed
- Dropping
- What time do you do with your child every day?
The tools you need are already in your home and daily life!

Print in All Around!
Print includes letters, words, and other symbols like road signs. Knowing how print works is an important early step in reading and writing. Families can help children understand print by:
- pointing out printed words, symbols, or graphics around
- looking at books on items in home
- looking at other printed words they see on signs in everyday tasks and what print is used for

33 Essential's Handbook: Language & Literacy in Early Childhood
Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones

33 Essential's Handbook: Language & Literacy in All Around



E Literacy
Essentials



Emergent Literacy Birth to 3 Years



Research on Opportunity, Practices, and Supports
for Families and Educators

<https://literacyessentials.org/>



Main points

1. Emergent Literacy Starts Early: The opportunity of the first 3 years
2. Research-based practices to support language and emergent literacy
3. Families and educators have literacy superpowers, but need support to use them



#LiteracyStartsEarly.
#LetsStartNow.

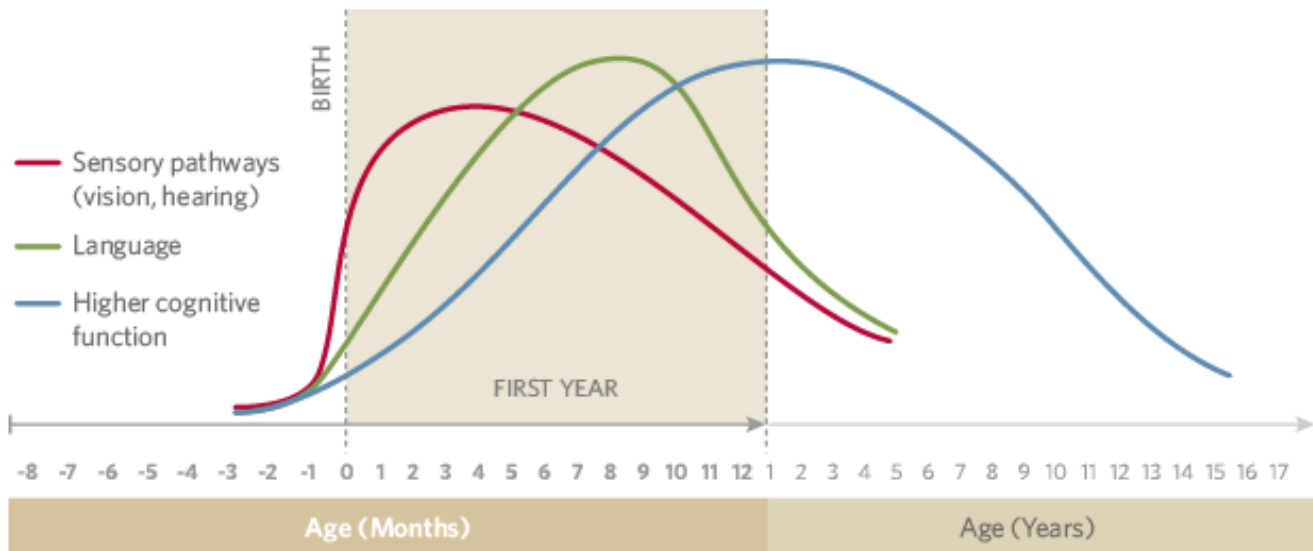
The Opportunity of the First 3 Years

Why is supporting language & literacy for infants and toddlers so important?

#LiteracyStartsEarly



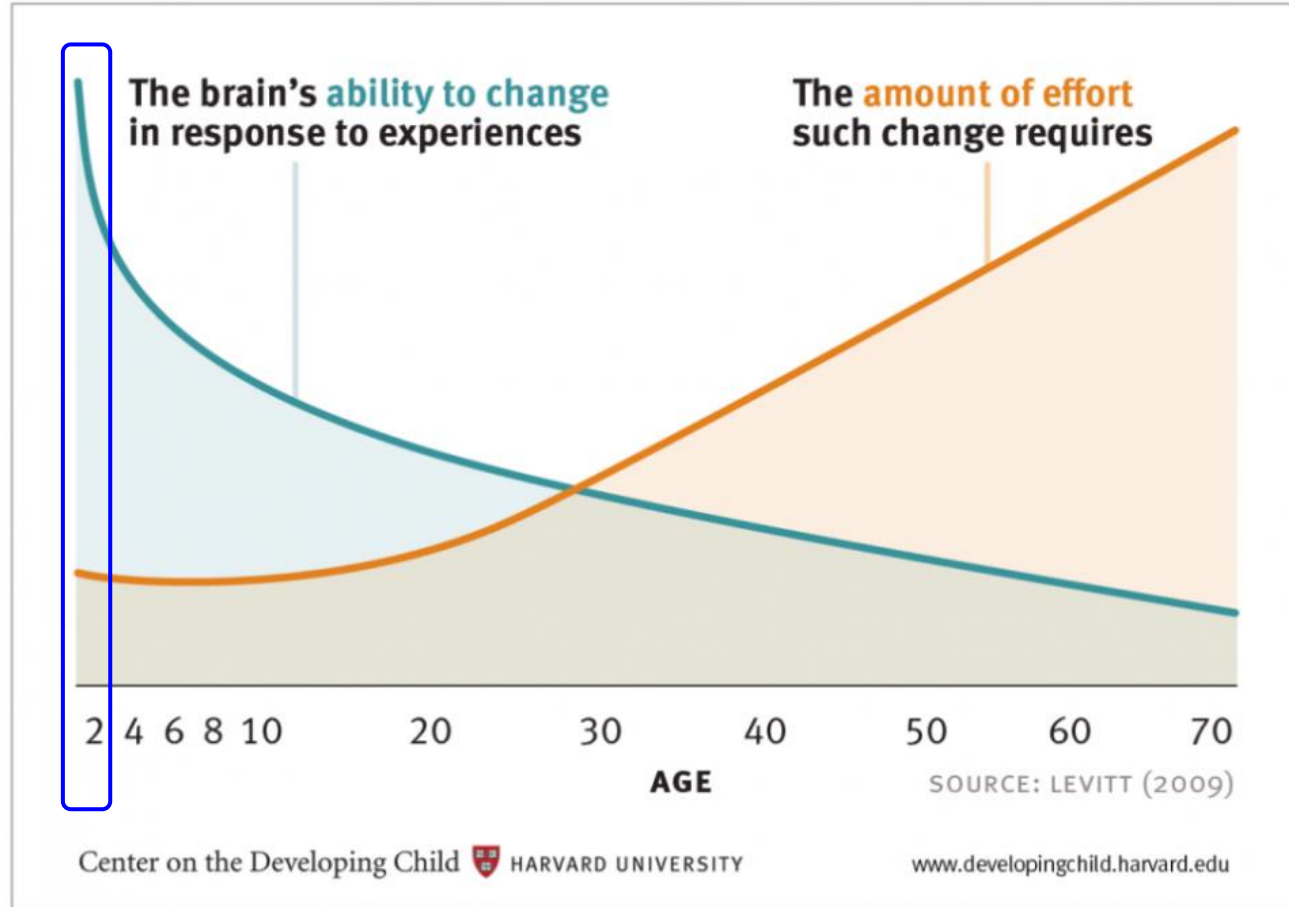
Human Brain Development



Source: Nelson, C. (2000). From *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Why is supporting language & literacy for infants and toddlers so important?

#Let'sStartNow.



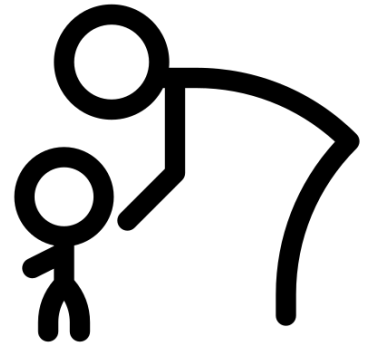
If language develops naturally, why do we need to intentionally support it?

Language and communication are “experience-expectant”

Caregivers must provide input for children to develop optimally

Variation in input shapes development

Development in the first three years is the foundation of learning for a lifetime



Created by DigitalShards
from the Noun Project



#Let'sStartNow.

What is emergent literacy for infants and toddlers?

Emergent literacy is everything young children learn about communication, language, books, and writing on their way to formal reading and writing.



#LiteracyStartsEarly.

Goals for Emergent Literacy by Age 3

Children with a strong emergent literacy skills can:

- repeat rhymes or phrases from stories or songs
- handle books and relate them to the stories or information inside
- recognize familiar pictures and signs and some letters
- understand some meaning from pictures and stories
- make marks, such as scribbles or pictures, to represent their ideas

*Head Start
Early Learning
Outcomes
Framework*



#LiteracyStartsEarly.

Developmental Background of Emergent Literacy

Birth - 9 mo

Social interaction!
First intentional non-verbal communication
First simple gestures

8 - 18 mo

Non-verbal communication!
Receptive language
Gross motor growth
Emotional expression

16 - 36 mo

Verbal communication!
Symbolic understanding
Fine motor skills
Goal-directed behavior
Emotional experience and expression!



#LiteracyStartsEarly.

Research-Based Practices to Support Language & Emergent Literacy

geln

a MAISA General Education Leadership Network

Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

This document was developed by the Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF), a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Educational School Administrators (MAESA), General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 18 Intermediate School Districts.

BIRTH TO AGE 3

Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

Instructional Practices

The document is intended to be used in concert with the Essential Instructional Practices in Early and Elementary Literacy, Pre-K-Kindergarten, First Grade, and Second Grade, which were commissioned from the MAISA GELN Early Literacy Task Force. This document may be revised or updated only by the entity.

To reference this document, Michigan Association of Educational School Administrators-General Education Leadership Network Early Literacy Task Force (2016). Essential instructional practices to language and emergent literacy: Birth to age 3. Lansing, MI: Michigan.

Page 1 | Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

Attention to Print Concepts in Books and the Environment

concepts are understandings about how print works, and the functions it serves in our lives. Infants and young children learn about print as they interact with the written world around them. They learn about the various ways that print is used when we point out print concepts and printed words about the environment; creating a print-rich environment encourages adults to do this. Children learn print concepts about the mechanics of reading during book-sharing experiences.

Use Developmentally Appropriate Literacy Experiences!

Avoid pushing children to read in this developmental period. There is no evidence that infants and toddlers can learn to read words conventionally, write when parents or educators use programs or materials, attempting to teach infants or toddlers to read. Instead, there is evidence that having engaging and emotionally supportive book-sharing interactions with caregivers supports later reading development. Encourage children to read not to learn, but to enjoy reading books and understand their motivation to read. Instead, focus on creating fun learning experiences with books and print.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to increase Michigan's capacity to improve children's literacy by identifying a small set of research-informed literacy practices that should be a focus of professional development throughout the state. The focus of the document is on practices in individual interactions with children, rather than on center- or expense-level practices. The document focuses on infants and toddlers, as the first 3 years of life are when children learn the basics and acquire the foundational skills that will support their development and learning for the rest of their lives. Improving language and literacy experiences in the infant and toddler years has the potential to improve "reading by third grade" outcomes. Early childhood programs can also help to address disparities in literacy achievement.

Page 3 | Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

General Education Leadership Network

Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones

ELTF

BIRTH TO AGE 3

12.20.20

Literacy starts early. Did you know you can support your child's future reading and writing before they can even talk?

Babies come into the world ready to learn. Every living young child can absorb communication, language, books, and printed words on their way to formal reading and writing, a part of emergent literacy. Find out what you can do to build a strong literacy foundation for your child in the first three years of life.

Families have literacy responders. *You know the many ways you already support your child's language and emergent literacy?*

It doesn't take flash cards, tablets, or fancy books. There are many ways you support language and emergent literacy in your everyday interactions with your baby or toddler. Whether you know or not, you have literacy responders. Use the Michigan Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones to discover yours, and build more!

Literacy starts early. You can start now!

Get the Stage for Love and Learning

Children need to feel safe and loved to learn and reach their full potential in language and literacy. Families can provide safe, caring, and playful environments to help children feel loved and ready to learn by:

- giving children time to play with soft, cuddly, books, and hand puppets
- creating consistent daily routines for reading, and play
- providing with physical space for children to explore and play with things that interest them

Set the Stage for Love and Learning

Children need to feel safe and loved to learn and reach their full potential in language and literacy. Families can provide safe, caring, and playful environments to help children feel loved and ready to learn by:

- giving children time to play with soft, cuddly, books, and hand puppets
- creating consistent daily routines for reading, and play
- providing with physical space for children to explore and play with things that interest them

Read and Discuss Stories

Reading to birth babies can be part of both and both communication with their loved ones. Families support children's language when they:

- look at the book baby when they do so
- copying and adding to children's sounds and words
- narrating children's actions and sounds into words
- singing songlines
- creating play scenarios
- keeping the conversation going

With Point, and Sing

Pointing to birth babies can be part of both and both communication with their loved ones. Families support children's language when they:

- point out the first sounds of familiar words
- imitating their first words
- reading labels on items at home
- singing about the printed words they see or write in everyday tasks and what they print as used for

Play Every Day

Playing with words helps children notice the sounds of language, learn to recognize and create those sounds, and eventually connect sounds with letters. You can:

- use "ba" words with babies: babble, rhythmic, sing using speech, use QR codes for videos
- read simple children's books and share books with others, rhythmic, and/or
- point out the first sounds of familiar words

Parenting Credits: Babies learn sounds and words from you

Parents receive 15 parenting credits for completing this course. A QR code for videos is provided.

Language in Body Language

Children learn to read words, can "talk" with their face, and their body. You can help your child learn language as you:

- point and use other gestures as you talk, and sing with your baby, and encourage babies and toddlers to use their hands, face, and bodies to communicate
- use "baby sign" in everyday routines like meals and bedtime (use QR code for video)
- pointing and "baby sign" with books, stories, and songs

33 Essentials Handout: Print is all around

33 Essentials Handout: Language & Literacy in Daily Routines

33 Essentials Handout: Print is all around

33 Essentials Handout: Language & Literacy in Daily Routines

Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones

With Books & Storytelling

Babies and toddlers who share books and listen to stories with their families have stronger language and literacy later in life. You can help build these skills by:

- reading books with babies and toddlers from birth
- looking at and talking about pictures while holding printed text
- singing songs and poems to talk, sing, and read
- providing and modeling for infants and toddlers to play with their toys, including playing, exploring, and writing

So Much More Than Storybook!

Children start to understand that writing is a way to communicate long before they can write letters or words. Children begin to "write" with marks, scribbles, and pictures. Families can support children's writing by:

- asking about their own writing ideas, such as their own words
- looking at and talking about pictures while holding printed text
- singing songs and poems to talk, sing, and read
- providing and modeling for infants and toddlers to play with their toys, including playing, exploring, and writing

Read and Discuss Stories

Reading to birth babies can be part of both and both communication with their loved ones. Families support children's language when they:

- look at the book baby when they do so
- copying and adding to children's sounds and words
- narrating children's actions and sounds into words
- singing songlines
- creating play scenarios
- keeping the conversation going

With Point, and Sing

Pointing to birth babies can be part of both and both communication with their loved ones. Families support children's language when they:

- point out the first sounds of familiar words
- imitating their first words
- reading labels on items at home
- singing about the printed words they see or write in everyday tasks and what they print as used for

Play Every Day

Playing with words helps children notice the sounds of language, learn to recognize and create those sounds, and eventually connect sounds with letters. You can:

- use "ba" words with babies: babble, rhythmic, sing using speech, use QR codes for videos
- read simple children's books and share books with others, rhythmic, and/or
- point out the first sounds of familiar words

Parenting Credits: Babies learn sounds and words from you

Parents receive 15 parenting credits for completing this course. A QR code for videos is provided.

Language in Body Language

Children learn to read words, can "talk" with their face, and their body. You can help your child learn language as you:

- point and use other gestures as you talk, and sing with your baby, and encourage babies and toddlers to use their hands, face, and bodies to communicate
- use "baby sign" in everyday routines like meals and bedtime (use QR code for video)
- pointing and "baby sign" with books, stories, and songs

33 Essentials Handout: Supporting Writing Birth to Age 3

33 Essentials Handout: Supporting Writing Birth to Age 3

It Takes a Village: Who's & Whom to Do for Help?

You have questions about your child's language, play, or interactions? You're not alone. We have experts ready to help. If you're worried about your child's development, reach out to the resources that are here to help. Contact ELTF@geln.org or call 517-487-5555. We'll help you find the resources you need to support your child's development. We can help you provide the best support for your child.

Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3

Michigan Department of Education

Michigan Department of Education

Michigan Department of Education

Michigan Department of Education

#Let'sStartNow.

General Education Leadership Network

Michigan Association of Educational School Administrators

MAISA

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MICHIGAN EDUCATION

Research-Based Essential Practices to Support Early Language & Emergent Literacy

| Topic | Educator Practice | Family Practice |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Environments | Create safe, secure, and stimulating environments | Set the stage for love and learning |
| Sounds | Play with sounds and invite children to play with you | Sound play every day |
| Conversations | Converse with children, responding to their cues and letting them choose the topics | Back-and-forth conversations with babies and toddlers |
| Gestures | Enhance two-way communication with gestures | Baby language is body language |
| Books & Storytelling | Share books in engaging ways | Fun with books and storytelling |

Research-Based Essential Practices to Support Early Language & Emergent Literacy

| Topic | Educator Practice | Family Practice |
|------------------|--|---|
| Materials | Provide materials for reading and writing that are always available to children | Reading and writing within their reach |
| Monitor | Monitor language development, screen for early delays, and refer families to services as needed | It takes a village: Where and when to go for help |
| Print | Bring attention to print concepts in books and the environment | Print is all around |
| Writing | Support skills across developmental domains that are important for writing | Reading and writing within their reach |
| Families | Work with families to promote home language and literacy environments that are rich and responsive | Literacy in your family life and culture |

We support language when we recognize and respond to children's cues



Steps for *Serve & Return* to Support Language:

1. Share the focus
2. Support & encourage
3. Name it
4. Take turns, back & forth
5. Practice endings & beginnings



Supporting Families & Early Child Educators



Families and Educators Have Literacy Superpowers

Families, educators, and other loved ones are the most important people in children's lives.

Any effective supports must leverage these relationships for long-term impact.



Use Your
Superpowers



Families and Educators Have Literacy Superpowers

Families have goals and priorities for their children; linking interventions/ supports to those goals will motivate them to.

Families and educators have literacy superpowers, but need help to identify what it is they do well, and find additional resources to meet their own goals for their children.



Next Steps



Take-Aways from the Research

1. Emergent literacy starts at birth, but children don't have the same opportunities. We need to support them now to impact long-term outcomes.
2. Research-based practices focus on responsive interactions > communication > language skills > reading & writing skills
3. Families and educators are the most important people in children's lives; they have literacy superpowers, but need help to identify and use them, and encouragement to build more.



THANK YOU!

**Thank you for your attention and all of your efforts
to do what is best for children, families, and
communities!**



Use Your
Superpowers



Next Steps



Key References & Resources

- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000). From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy Birth to Age 3. Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF), Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) and the General Education Leadership Network (GELN). https://www.gomaisa.org/downloads/literacy_essentials/emergentliteracy_b-3_061919.pdf
- Language and Literacy for Littles and Loved Ones. Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF), Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) and the General Education Leadership Network (GELN). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZzcpQmuh2_tlqcU-onkGTUYyY5TujXfq/view
- Head start early learning outcomes framework <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>



Q&A

What questions do you have about...?

How we can promote emergent literacy in the first 3 years

What emergent literacy means for babies and toddlers

How we can support families and educators to promote emergent literacy

