

The background features several large, overlapping, colorful swirls in shades of green, purple, and blue. Scattered throughout are numerous small, yellow, triangular shapes that resemble confetti or starbursts.

Emergent Literacy: What It Is & Why It Matters

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Reading is Key

- Children who learn to read early and well experience more exposure to print, which solidifies reading and writing skill
- Reading provides the foundation for much of other learning in school -content areas
- Much of the vocabulary and language skill children and adults acquire comes from reading



Reading is Key

- Significant progress has been made in the past several decades in understanding how reading really works and how we learn to read
- Now know for sure that to read well, have to be able to identify ALL words, can't just guess meaning from context



Reading is Key

- Conventional Literacy includes:

- Receptive Components

- Decoding Accuracy
- Decoding Fluency
- Reading Comprehension

- Expressive Components

- Spelling
 - Composition Skills
- 



Reading is Key

- 2 components to successful reading:

- Accurate and fluent identification of printed word

- Good language comprehension skills

You can decode what you cannot comprehend,
but...

you cannot comprehend what you cannot
decode





Reading is Key

Sure, but can't children develop solid reading skills if they start learning this all in elementary school?

Not all of them.....


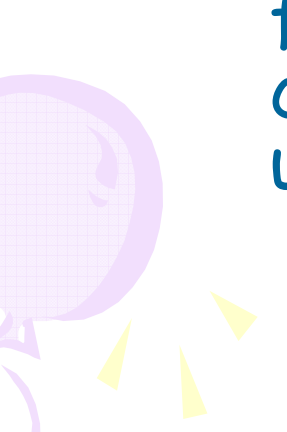


Reading is Key

- Children who lag behind in reading skill development
 - Have less exposure to print and opportunities to practice reading and writing
 - Miss opportunities to develop reading comprehension strategies
 - Often encounter reading material that is too difficult for their reading skill level
 - Develop negative attitudes about reading and school
 - Are less likely to graduate from high school
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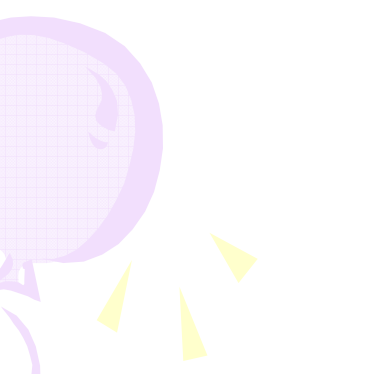


Reading is Key

- What do we know about children who fall behind or start behind...
 - Children who remain poor readers by the end of the first grade almost never acquire average-level reading skills by the end of elementary school
 - Children who are poor readers are frequently referred to special education classes- where they typically do not catch up to peers even with intensive help
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Reading is Key

- What do we know about children who fall behind or start behind...
 - Children who are poor readers actually fall further and further behind peers in reading and content areas -because they depend so much on reading
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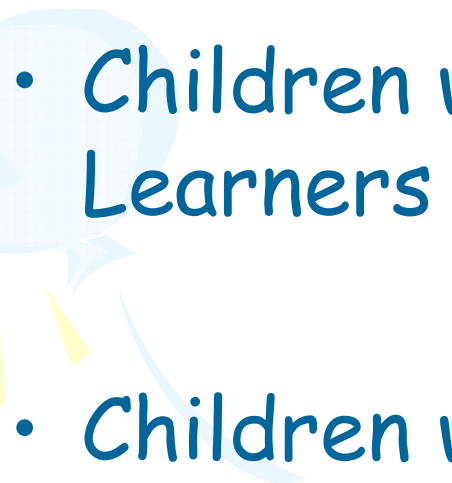

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features three balloons in shades of green, blue, and purple, each with a string of yellow streamers and small yellow triangular flags.

Reading is Key

Therefore, need to focus on developing strong skills before begin formal reading instruction - especially for children known to be at-risk for later reading problems



Children at Risk

- Children from lower SES backgrounds
 - Children who are English Language Learners
 - Children with Language Delays
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Reading is Key

- Does that mean teaching reading in preschool?



- **NO**

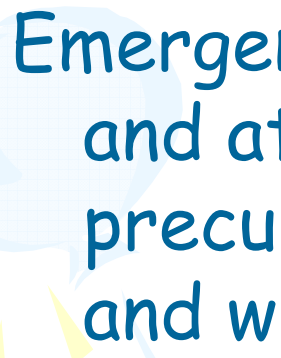
- Not teaching reading
- Not teaching phonics




- Not Conventional Literacy...Emergent Literacy



Emergent Literacy



Emergent literacy involves the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)





Emergent Literacy



Emergent literacy skills are the basic building blocks for learning to read and write

Emergent literacy skills begin developing in early infancy and early childhood through participation with adults in meaningful activities involving talking and print



Emergent Literacy

Many candidate emergent literacy skills have been suggested, including

- 
- oral language
 - concepts about print
 - environmental print
 - alphabet knowledge
 - phonological processing skills
 - visual-perceptual skills
 - emergent (pretend) reading
 - emergent (pretend) writing
- 



Emergent Literacy

Need to recognize that **not** all the skills and capabilities that are important for emergent literacy are going to look like **Authentic Reading....**

In fact, some of the most important skills for this age group have nothing to do with "reading" at all....




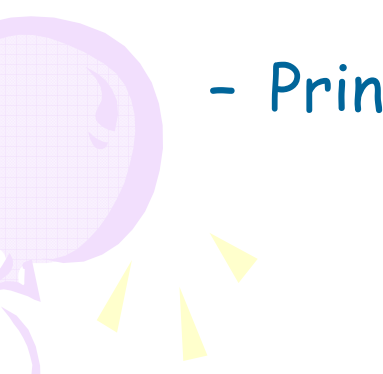
Emergent Literacy

Need to differentiate between those skills that are predictive of conventional reading ability

and the smaller group of these skills that are actually **CAUSALLY** related to reading ability



Emergent Literacy

- Consistent evidence exists that there are three primary domains of emergent literacy that are causally related to conventional reading & writing:
 - Oral Language
 - Phonological Processing
 - Print Knowledge
- 
- 



Emergent Literacy

Oral Language



Reading-Related Oral Language Skills

Why are oral language skills important to literacy?

- Knowing words is key to learning to read
- Reading is a different way of communicating
- Difficult to learn to read words if you do not know words (i.e., what they mean; what they represent)



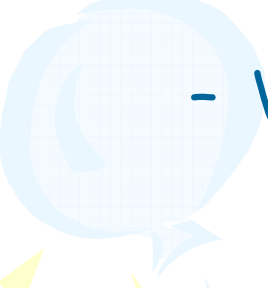
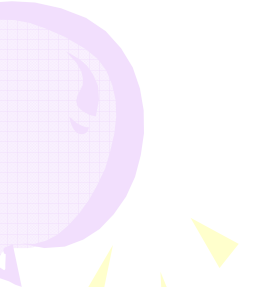
Reading-Related Oral Language Skills

- Vocabulary Knowledge
 - Syntactic Knowledge
 - Narrative Understanding
- 
- 



Reading-Related Oral Language Skills

- Different Skills have Major Influence at Different Points in the Reading Process

- 
- Vocabulary has some role early in the process - - indirectly affects decoding
 - More complex oral language skills have a role later on in the process - directly affect comprehension
- 



Reading-Related Oral Language Skills

- Very clear that Oral Language Skills are important for later reading achievement and for general academic success
- However, also very clear that strong oral language skills alone are **not sufficient...**



Emergent Literacy

Phonological Processing



Phonological Processing

- alphabetic languages like English represent sounds at the phoneme level
 - “alphabetic principle” of letter-sound correspondences
- almost all poor readers have problems with phonological processing



Phonological Processing

- 3 primary aspects of Phonological Processing:



- Phonological Memory

- Phonological Access



- Phonological Awareness/Sensitivity



Phonological Memory

the ability to hold sound-based information in immediate memory—

the better can hold sound-letter match in memory while decoding...

the more cognitive resources have for decoding and comprehension



Phonological Access

the retrieval of sound-based codes from memory—


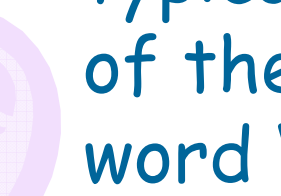
the faster and more efficiently can call up phonological sound codes associated with letters, word segments, & whole words from memory...

the easier it will be to decode and to develop reading fluency



Phonological Sensitivity

involves understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds, like...

- 
- **syllables** (the natural breaks in spoken words, like "but" "er" "fly" in the word "butterfly")
 - **phonemes** (the smallest speech sounds; sounds typically depicted by letters - like the sound of the letter B is the first phoneme in the word "bat")
- 




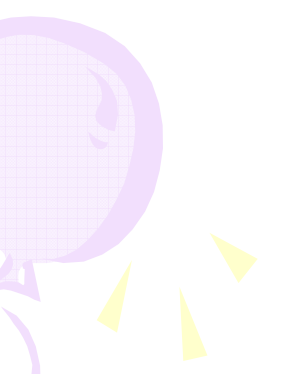
Phonological Sensitivity

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds helps children break “the code” between written language (the letters) and spoken language (the sounds).



Phonological Sensitivity

Developing phonological sensitivity is hard!

- 
- Phonemes **do not** really exist!
 - We co-articulate the phonemes in words when we speak
- 

Development of Phonological Sensitivity

Phonological sensitivity develops in a progressive fashion with sensitivity to smaller and smaller units of sound across the preschool period

Development of Phonological Sensitivity

Words

batman = "bat" + "man"

cowboy = "cow" + "boy"

Syllables

candy = "can" + "dee"

donut = "doe" + "nut"

Development of Phonological Sensitivity

Onset - Rime

cat = /k/ + "at"

man = /m/ + "an"

Phonemes

cat = /k/ + /a/ + /t/

fast = /f/ + /æ/ + /s/ + /t/

mop = /m/ + /o/ + /p/

A decorative vertical column of three balloons on the left side of the page. The top balloon is light green, the middle one is light blue, and the bottom one is light purple. Each balloon has a small yellow starburst at its base. The balloons are connected by thin, wavy lines.

Emergent Literacy

Print Knowledge


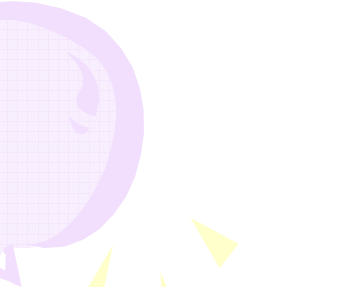


Print Knowledge

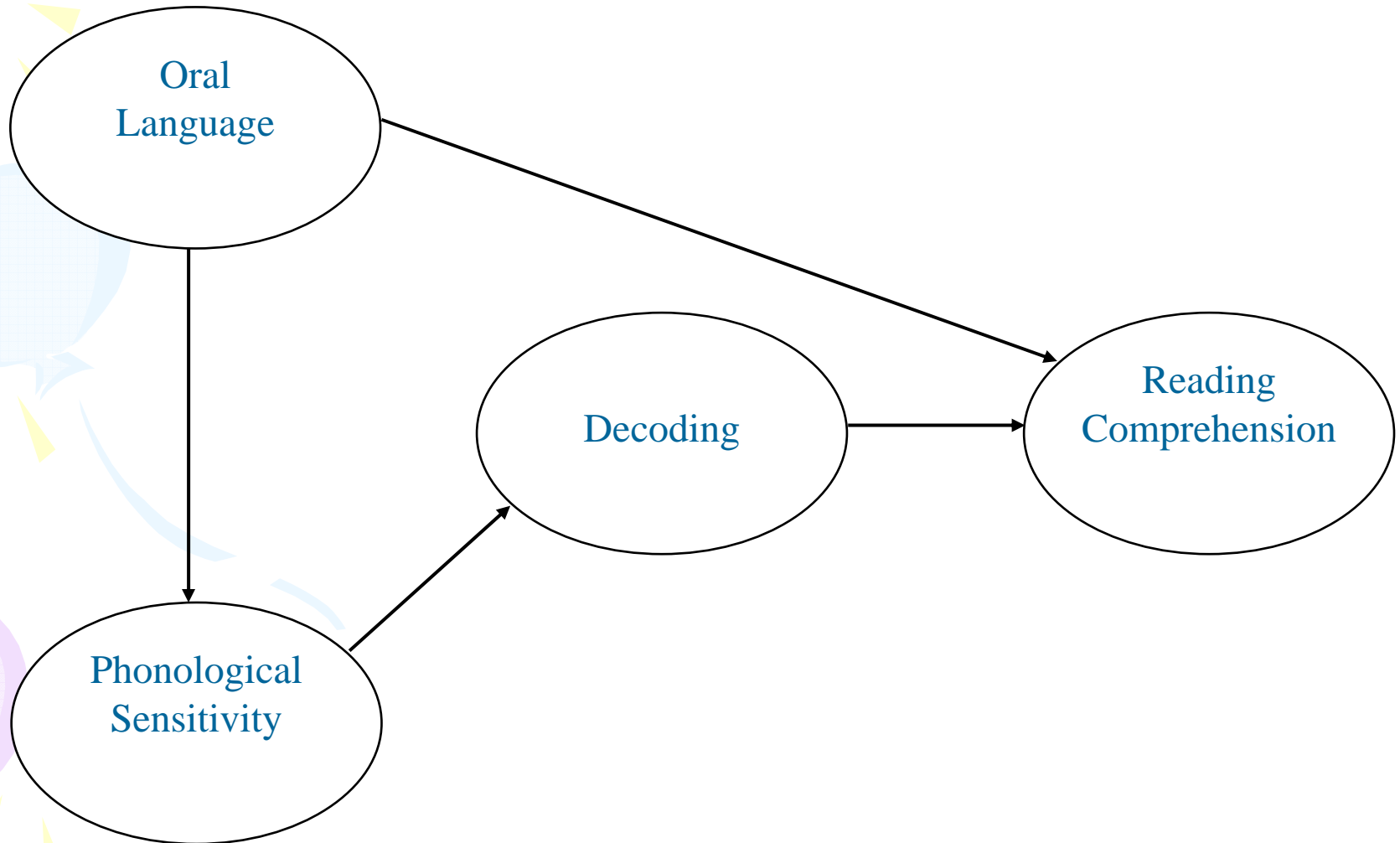
- Understanding that it is the print that reflects the words and not other parts of books, like the pictures or the spaces between words
- Understanding that there are 26 different letters in English and that letters can look different and still be the same letter, as is the case for upper and lower case letters (or different print styles)



Print Knowledge



- Children need to learn that there are different sounds associated with each letter
 - This task is difficult because sometimes each letter can represent multiple sounds (e.g., g and s), or the same sound can be associated with different letters (e.g., c and k)!
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Emergent Literacy





Emergent Literacy

- Evidence shows that these 3 skill areas are modular, meaning that their development is distinct...
 - Means that teaching in one area will not necessarily promote development in others
 - Means that ideally would focus efforts on all three areas across preschool years
 - Evidence suggests that focused instruction in all three areas can be successful
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Three balloons are visible on the left side of the slide. The top one is green, the middle one is light blue, and the bottom one is purple. Each balloon has a string and several yellow triangular streamers hanging from it.

Thank You!

Beth Phillips

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