

**What Can I Say? FROM: Saroj Ghoting/www.earlylit.net**  
**Sampling of Early Literacy Asides**

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Another effective aside: Singing with children helps to hear the smaller sounds in words because there is a different note for each syllable. This skill (is called phonological awareness and it) will help them when they try to sound out words as they learn to read.

Until we become comfortable with new information, it helps to have a kind of “script” of what we want to tell others. Perhaps some of the following suggestions will be helpful. Feel free to reword them to suit your own style. These suggestions are NOT meant to be limiting. The asides are written in a variety of styles to show that there is more than one way to state research, so there is some repetition.

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## **Leading with the Early Literacy Component**

### **Phonological Awareness**

1. Researchers have found that one of the early literacy skills children need to be able to learn to read is phonological awareness. There are many ways to support your children’s ability to hear sounds as you sing, talk, read, write and play with them throughout the day. Today in storytime I’ll be pointing out some ways to help children with rhyming words, breaking words into syllables, and hearing the beginning sounds in words [choose one]. (ET,T,PR)
2. Hearing the rhythm of language and when you read or say rhymes with your child contribute to phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear the smaller sounds in words. It is one of the skills that researchers have found helps children sound out words when they learn to read. (ET)
3. Parents, our early literacy tip of the day today is on hearing the smaller sounds in words [which is called phonological awareness.] Singing, talking, reading, and playing with [choose one: beginning sounds, rhymes, syllables, environmental sounds or animal sounds] are ways to support this pre-reading [or use the term early literacy] skill which will later help your children as they sound out words when they learn to read. I’ll point out some of the things we do in storytime to support this skill. Saying the sounds of animals and encouraging your children to make those sounds is the beginning of phonological awareness, hearing the smaller sounds in words. (ET, T, PR)

4. In today's storytime I'll be talking about the importance of **singing** to language development. Many of us cannot sing on key. Don't let that stop you! Singing slows down language and there is often a different note for each syllable. Both of these help children hear the smaller sounds in words. This will later help them sound out words as they learn to read.
5. **Singing** nursery rhymes helps children get ready to read. Listening to rhymes helps them hear the smaller sounds in words (develop phonological awareness.) Phonological awareness is the term used for the ability to play with sounds in words), an important skill for learning to read. (ET,T)
6. **Talking** with your babies is so important –they need to hear the sounds of your language! Until about six months of age your babies are “universal linguists” They can distinguish among each of the 150 sounds of human speech. By 12 months, they recognize the speech sounds only of the languages they hear from the people who talk and play with them. (ET)
7. Saying nursery rhymes is one good way for your children to hear the sounds of language. If you are comfortable talking with your children in a language other than English, **talk** with them in that language, so they hear all the sounds. (ET)
8. Researchers find that speaking in “parentese” keeps your babies’ attention longer than using your regular voice. Your babies will respond to your voice and to the rhythm of language. Watch your children as we read the book together. (ET)
9. [When using a big book with infants] **Talking** with babies in a special way, called “parentese,” helps them get ready to read. Don't worry about whether or not your children can see this big book. We'll read it together. Your children love the sound of your voice. We use a slightly higher pitched voice and speak more clearly and slowly than we do when speaking with adults.
10. [Rhyming book] **Reading** and **talking** about what you read help your child get ready to read. After you've read a rhyming book with your children, come back to a page with rhyming words and talk about two words that rhyme] Children sometimes like to fill in the rhyming word, especially if they have heard the book before. If your children are able, then stop just before you say the second word of the rhyming pair and let your children fill in the word. Recognizing and making rhymes will help them sound out words when they get ready to read. (T,PR)
11. **Talking** about words that rhyme helps children become more aware of the smaller sounds in words, (which is the early literacy skill, phonological awareness). Pick a word (tree) and see if your children can think of a rhyming word. If that is too hard, then see if your children can recognize a rhyming word, which is easier—does tree rhyme with cat? Does tree rhyme with me? (T,PR)
12. Even though young children do not understand the meanings of the rhymes, it is important for them to hear them. By six months babies are already able to recognize the sounds of the languages that you use when you **talk** with them. Talking with your babies makes their brains more efficient in processing and learning the languages they hear. (ET)

13. Rhyming is one way children learn to hear that words are made up of smaller parts. By saying rhymes and **singing** songs with them you are supporting phonological awareness. This will help them when they later try to sound out words to read. (ET,T,PR)
14. One way that you support phonological awareness, hearing the smaller sounds in words, starts with just hearing sounds. When you are **playing** or **reading** together, you can say animal sounds, the sounds of cars, a doorbell, any sound, and have your children try to repeat what you say. Did you know that animals make different sounds in different languages? (ET,T)
15. **Playing** rhyming games in the car, while waiting for an appointment, or anywhere can be a fun way to help your child hear the smaller sounds in words. Remember, children can *recognize* a rhyme before they can *make* the rhyme. So, if it's too hard to make rhymes, let them start with hearing rhymes and recognizing them. For example, the question "Does cat rhyme with bat?" is easier for young children to answer than the question, "What rhymes with cat?" Children enjoy playing with words and their sounds. (T, PR)
16. You may not realize it, but **singing** songs with your baby/ toddler helps them hear words being broken up into smaller sounds because there is a different note for each syllable. (This skill is part of phonological awareness). (ET,T)
17. Your handout has some ideas on how to work on this skill. Since you are your child's biggest fan who better to help them learn to read than you!
18. Preschoolers love silliness including silliness around words. You can play with words—making up nonsense words as you make up as many rhymes to one word as you can. Hearing those smaller sounds in words is so important to being able to sound out words when they learn to read. (PR)
19. [The *Eeensy Weensy Spider* by Maryann Hoberman or piggyback songbook of your choice] **Singing** helps children hear the smaller sounds in words, (which is part of the early literacy skill, phonological awareness.) One way to sing songs is to share song books together. Preschoolers and older children often like to make up their own verses. By choosing sentences that fit the rhythm of the song and that use rhyming words, they are developing phonological awareness in enjoyable ways. (T,PR)
20. **Sing** to your children even if you don't have perfect pitch. In songs, each syllable has a different note. Without really thinking about it, children are hearing words being broken down into parts. This helps them when they have to sound out words. (ET,T,PR)
21. At home, have your children think of other words that start with the same sound as the first sound in your children's names. Children learn best by doing activities that have meaning to them. (PR)
22. **Singing** slows down language. Let's say the words to this song [example London Bridge Is Falling Down]. Now let's sing the song. Hear the difference in the way we hear the words? Because children can hear the sounds of the words more easily, you are helping them develop phonological awareness. (ET,T)

23. [Example: *Row Your Boat* and have each word start with same sound—Bow bow bow bour boat . . .] Today we are going to be changing the first sounds in words, and breaking words into their smaller parts. These skills are part of phonological awareness, the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. These are skills that will help the children once they have to try to sound out words later when they learn to read. Let's **sing** together and you'll see what I mean! (PR)
24. Changing the beginning sound in a word helps children understand that words are made up of sounds. This will help them when they need to sound out words. Four and five year olds enjoy silliness including nonsense words. We can mix in word play when we talk with our children. (PR)
25. (When we separate a word into its sounds it is called *segmentation*, which is part of phonological awareness.) Playing with breaking words into parts, like clapping out the parts of words, will help your children later when they have to break words into syllables as a way of sounding out (decoding) words. (PR)
26. Take advantage of every opportunity to play with rhyme and the sounds of words. Have fun this week as you rhyme around town! (T,PR)
27. Take advantage of every opportunity to play with words. Make up riddles or play "I Spy" as you wait in the doctor's office, or anywhere else. Not only will your children learn to hear sounds in words, but also it will lessen the boredom and tension of waiting! (T,PR)
28. [Clap out names of children and adults as an introduction] Clapping names helps children hear words divided into parts. This fun activity helps develop their phonological awareness, breaking words into parts. This is one of the skills researchers say is important for children to be able to learn to read. There are lots of informal opportunities for us to play with words with our children. (PR)
29. The roots of phonemic awareness, hearing each individual sound in a word, can be found in the nursery rhymes, movements and word games that we play with our young children. Just by singing songs and playing with words we are helping them get ready to read. (ET, T)
30. I am handing out a sheet with the words to the songs and rhymes we did today. We will be repeating many of them next week as well as doing some new ones. Keep **singing** and saying your favorites with your children. This is one way to strengthen their phonological awareness, hearing those smaller sounds in words. (ET)
31. As you go about your day, stop for a moment and listen to the sounds around you. Ask your children what they hear. **Talk** about what you hear. Try to imitate the sounds. Even little activities like this one help your children develop (phonological awareness) the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. (ET, T, PR)
32. Remember, with rhyming we only concentrate on the sounds, not how things are spelled. In English, the spelling and the sound don't always match. And with rhyming the "words" don't have to make sense, so there's lots of room for silliness and word play all through the day while you're developing your children's phonological awareness. In other words, you can use nonsense words, too! (T, PR)

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## Leading with the Early Literacy Component

### Print Conventions/Print Awareness

1. Print Conventions includes knowing how to handle a book, and noticing print all around us. It is one of the skills researchers say is important to know before children learn to read. As you talk, sing, read, play and write with your children throughout the day, you can find ways to support your children’s awareness of print. I’ll point out some of the ways you can do this in storytime today. (ET, T, PR)
2. [Book with fonts that support word meaning or expression, large font for yelling, for example.] The underlying principle of conventions of print or print awareness is recognizing that print has meaning. When we **talk** about the words on the page as we read them, children are making the connection between the written word and the meaning of the word. (T,PR)
3. Today I’ll be pointing out some ways that the early literacy practice, **writing**, supports language development. Writing can be anything from drawing and scribbling to writing captions on made-up stories together. A key concept that children need to learn to read is the connection between the spoken word and the written word, knowing that print has meaning and writing activities help them understand this.
4. When children are young, they treat books as they would any other toy – they **play** with them! This means they put them in their mouths and explore them by pushing and pulling and sometimes

tearing them. When you allow your young children to explore books, they are learning how to handle them. Keep some in their toy box. You are helping your children develop print awareness. They are learning how books work, with pages that turn. This is one of the skills that researchers have shown is an important part of a strong foundation for reading. (ET)

5. Today's early literacy skill is focusing on print awareness, helping your children understand that print has meaning. We see print all around us. Signs, t-shirts, banners, fliers—this is called environmental print. When your children notice a stop sign or the sign for your favorite restaurant, that's print awareness. They are "**reading**" the sign! (T)
6. When you are reading with your child, you can run your finger under the words of the title or a repeated phrase as you say it. This helps children understand that you are reading the text, not the pictures. (T,PR)
7. Did you all pick up (or write) a name tag? When we do things like make grocery lists or use name tags, the children see that print has a purpose. This helps them develop print awareness, one of the early literacy skills children need to have to be ready to read. (T,PR)
8. [When demonstrating with a board book with one picture per page] Babies like books that have pictures of things that are familiar to them. So, here is one with a picture of an apple. You can **talk** about the apple in the picture, its color. Then get a real apple and show it to your children. Talk about how it tastes—sweet, how it feels—round and smooth, how it feels when you bite it—crunchy. It's too hard for you to eat because you don't have teeth yet, but you eat applesauce, which is made from apples! By showing children the real object, you are helping them realize that pictures represent real things. Later they will also understand that printed words represent real things. (ET)
9. As you **read** books with your children, even babies, they will try turning the pages of the book. Even though they might not be too coordinated yet and even though it may take a little longer to share the book, taking the time to let them turn the pages is developing their print awareness, knowing how a book works. (ET)
10. I pointed to some of the words as we **read** them. I did that not just to help us read together, but also because pointing to the words helps children understand that we are reading the text not the pictures. (ET)
11. When we **read** picture books to children, researchers have found that 95% of their attention is on the pictures. By occasionally pointing to the words in the book, you are helping them realize that it is the text we are reading, not the pictures. Pictures are wonderful, of course! (PR)
12. [Example: *Bunny Cakes* by Rosemary Wells] Here is a book where writing is important to the story. You can have your children draw pictures and "**write**" lists. They become aware that print is related to the spoken word—print awareness. (T,PR)
13. When you **read** with your children, from time to time hold the book upside down or backwards. See if children notice that it is upside down. If not, point it out. Children need to know how to hold a book, which is the cover, which is the back. This is one fun way to find out if they know this. (T,PR)

14. Our early literacy tip today is on print awareness, one of the early literacy skills children need before they learn to read. **Reading** with children and helping them become comfortable with turning pages and seeing how books work is the beginning of print awareness. (ET, T, PR)
15. Have your children draw a picture. When they tell you about it **write** down their words. This helps them understand that the written word represents the spoken word, one aspect of print awareness. (T,PR)
16. Children can learn the connection between the written and spoken word, print awareness, with this personal activity. Have your children tell you a story or something they have learned. **Write** down what they say as they tell it to you. You and your child can make your own books by stapling sheets of paper together. Then have your children read the book (tell the story) to you. (T,PR)
17. You can help your children see the relationship between the written and spoken word by using what is called *environmental print*, words that are part of everyday life, like signs and labels that you can point out to your child as you **read** them. This is part of print awareness. (T,PR)
18. **Writing**, including scribbling, is one way to develop print awareness. Encourage your child to “read” you what he has written. This helps to reinforce that writing and print have meaning.
19. **Writing** can be very motivating. It helps children make the connection between the spoken and the written word. Encourage your children to write. Begin by making a shopping list together the next time you go shopping. (T,PR)
20. Talk about **writing** when you make and send cards for people. Have your child help and remember to ask her to sign her name along with yours! Don’t worry if it is not legible. They are getting the idea that what they write means something. (T,PR)

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## Leading with the Early Literacy Component

### Letter Knowledge

1. Letter knowledge is knowing that letters are different from each other and that the same letter can look different ways. It also includes knowing that letters represent sounds. There are many activities that you can do throughout the day to help develop your children’s letter knowledge in enjoyable ways—by singing, talking, reading, writing, and playing with them. I’ll mention a few of these as we go through out storytime today. (ET, T, PR)
2. The early literacy skill I’ll be highlighting in today’s storytime is letter knowledge. [For younger children]: letter knowledge starts with talking about shapes and comparing things, like figuring out what’s alike and different between two things. For preschool children]: letter knowledge is knowing that the same letter can look different, that letters have names and are related to sounds. I’ll point out some ways you can help your children develop letter knowledge in today’s storytime. (ET,T,PR)
3. You don’t need an alphabet book to talk about letters. With any book you are **reading** together, let your child look for the first letter or any of the letters in his or her name. (PR)
4. Many alphabet books do not have a story that goes in order. When you share that kind of alphabet book with your child, you needn’t **read** it through from beginning to end. Let your children choose a page that looks interesting to them. Talk about the letter and the picture(s) that go with it. (T,PR)



5. The letter your children and are likely to be the most interested in is the first letter of their name. Make sure you point out that letter when you come to it in a book you **read**. When you go out, have your child look for the letters in his or her name. (T,PR)
6. Letter knowledge starts with seeing and recognizing shapes. A baby playing with a ball feels its roundness. Later that will mean a circle and then the letter O. Lots of letters use the circle shape. Others use triangle or other shapes. Researchers have found that children identify letters by their shapes. **Playing** and exploring are a part of learning how to read! (ET)
7. In order to identify letters, they have to be able to distinguish alike and different. For example a lower case n and a lower case h look almost the same—just the height of the line is different. So, noticing things that are alike and different, **playing** matching games, all help later with letter knowledge. (ET,T)
8. Young children learn through their senses. Touching, smelling and tasting are as important as hearing and seeing. Give them opportunities to feel different textures and shapes. When you **talk** with them ask questions like, “What feels the same, what feels different?” These opportunities help them later when they are trying to make out differences in the shapes of letters and when they try to figure out what is the same and what is different among them. (So, now as we **play** with these shakers, let them feel the shape and the texture. If their hands are too small to hold them, then roll them on their bodies.) (ET)
9. What is the beginning of letter knowledge for very young children? It is not doing letter flash cards with your baby. Your baby learns through all his/her senses. Letting your children feel shapes will later help them make out shapes in letters. **Talking** to your children about what is alike and different in pictures or in the things you see around you helps your children distinguish similarities and differences which will help later in distinguishing differences in letters. (ET,T)
10. You can name the letters and their sounds based on things you are doing throughout the day. Even using signs, like STOP signs, when you are **playing** with your child, or driving or walking around helps children learn letters. (T,PR)
11. Before children learn actual letters, they are aware of shapes. Before they have the coordination to hold a crayon and **write** they can move their whole arms and bodies. Let’s see you make a circle shape with your whole body! (T,PR)
12. **Talk** about subjects your child is interested in. Then show them the letters in those words—like motorcycle or princess. By doing this, children are more likely to remember letters than if you drill them with flashcards. (PR)
13. Point out and **talk** about letters and their sounds wherever you go. The most interesting letters for most children are the ones in their names, so begin there and have fun! (PR)
14. Children can learn letters in many ways that are fun and that will keep their attention. For example, they can make letters using their bodies, then their fingers. They can draw letters in the water when they take a bath, with chalk on the sidewalk, or with playdough. Keep it fun. **Talk** about the letters

in your children's names or in the names of a topic they might be interested in (trucks, volcanoes, kittens)

15. Eventually your children will be writing letters. Writing starts with scribbling, so encourage your child to try to draw. (T)
16. Research indicates that children benefit most from learning both the sound and the letter name, at the same time. When you teach them their letters, explain that the letter is called \_\_\_\_ and makes the sound \_\_\_\_\_. Start with letters that have meaning to your children (like their name). You can **write** them on paper or in the air as you say them too! (PR)
17. Children learn best by doing. Remember that letter **play** should be meaningful. Show letters in the context of objects and words that they know and are interested in—what letters are in the word motorcycle? (PR)
18. **Singing** the alphabet song is one way that children learn the names of the letters. You can sing the alphabet to different tunes—try singing it to Mary Had a Little Lamb. It's not as easy as it sounds! Let's try it together. (PR)
19. When your children are **playing**, think about what words you might **write** or what signs you can make to make the play more language-rich. For example, if children are playing restaurant, you might ask what the name of the restaurant is and then make a sign for it, saying the letters as you spell the words. (T,PR)
20. When you and your children go shopping there are so many opportunities to point out letters. If you like, choose a letter from your children's names and have your children find it wherever they can. (T,PR)
21. Children are very interested in themselves! Learning how to **write** their names is a great way to introduce your child to the alphabet in a meaningful way. (T,PR)
22. Show your child how everyone in your family writes their names. **Talk** about who has the most letters in their names, what letters they have in common. Let your child help write lists or draw pictures of things they want to do or make a card for a relative or friend. (T,PR)

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## Leading with the Early Literacy Component

### Vocabulary

1. Our early literacy tip of the day today is on **vocabulary**, which is knowing the meanings of words. Researchers have noted that children with large vocabularies, who know lots of different words, find it easier to read when that time comes. As you **sing**, **talk**, **read**, **write** and **play** with your children throughout the day, you can build your children’s vocabulary. In today’s storytime, I’ll point out some ways you can expand your child’s vocabulary using books. (ET, T, PR)
2. Today I’ll be pointing out some activities we are doing that support early literacy in the area of **vocabulary**. This is the term that researchers give to knowing the meanings of words. You can see what we do here in storytime, and you may get some ideas of what you can do with your children throughout the day when you play and talk together. (T,PR)

3. As you sing, talk, read, write and play with your children throughout the day, you can introduce them to new words. The more words they know, the easier it will be for them to understand what they read when they learn to read in school. Today I'll point out some things we are doing here in storytime and some things you can do at home to help your children learn new words in enjoyable ways. (ET, T, PR)
4. One of the early literacy components is vocabulary—knowing the meanings of words. Young children, especially those under age two, need direct, personal interaction to learn language and to understand words. Babies also read your gestures and facial expressions. These are clues to the meanings of words. As you **talk** directly with your children throughout the day, you are helping to build their vocabulary and language skills. (ET)
5. Having a large vocabulary helps with reading in two ways. When children are learning to read, they sound out words. It is easier for them to know they sounded out the word correctly if they have heard the word before. The second is that they need to understand what they read. If there are too many words in a text that a child doesn't know, then understanding the whole paragraph or story will be difficult. I will point out some ways to help the children's vocabularies grow when we talk, read, write, sing and play [choose whichever practices you will be pointing out] with them. (T,PR)
6. Our youngest children learn words that name things they can see, like milk, bottle, juice. As children get older they understand words for feelings and concepts, and as they get older still, they understand words for ideas. By **talking** with our children, adding some new words, we help them understand their world, and later to make sense of what they read. (ET, T, PR)
7. Go ahead and use words that are unfamiliar to your children. Don't replace words in books that they may not understand. Explain them. When you **talk** with them try to use the word for a specific thing. For example, if you see a dog on the street, call it a dog, but also the breed if you know it, like a cocker spaniel. (ET, T, PR)
8. **Talking** with your children, especially as you share books, is one of the best ways to develop your children's vocabulary. In books they see things they might not otherwise see, like different kinds of animals. Take advantage of expanding their vocabulary by **talking** with them about the pictures in books. (ET, T)
9. What happens when YOU don't know the meaning of a word? What a great opportunity to show your children what we do when we don't know something! There's the dictionary, of course, but also you might be able to figure out what the word means from what else is going on, from a picture, or if not, feel free to call the library to find out! **Talk** through your thought process so your child will understand how we find out the answers to questions!(T,PR)
10. [Handout board books] When you **read** with your children, don't JUST read the words. Talk about the pictures. Describe what is going on. Perhaps a picture makes you remember something. Hearing you **talk** is one of the best ways for your young children to develop a strong vocabulary. (ET)

11. The richness of your **talk** when you talk with your child makes a difference in your child's vocabulary. Business talk, talk to get something done, is not rich talk. Rich talk comes from the extra talk, telling your child a story or talking about something that happened, something you remember, something you're going to do. Each bit of extra talking may not seem like a lot, but it all adds up to make a big difference in how much your child will understand when he learns to read. (ET,T,PR)
12. We just went through the book from start to finish, feeling the rhythm of the text and noticing the sequence between each action. Now let's go through it again. This time we'll read it but also talk about what is happening in the pictures, the way you would with your baby or toddler. This way of sharing books helps your children develop vocabulary. (ET,T)
13. [Rhyme or song that names body parts.] This is a good rhyme to do as you are bathing or diapering your children. Use different parts of the body, such as wrist, elbow, eyebrow, and words for different actions while you talk and sing together. This will help increase your children's vocabulary. Even though your babies don't understand everything you say, it is important for them to hear you speak. The more different words they hear, the larger their vocabulary will be, and the more easily they will later be able to read. (ET,T)
14. One way you can help increase your children's vocabulary is by "narrating your day." That simply means to **talk** about what you are doing while you are doing it. Or you can say what your children are doing as they are doing it. You might even add little stories about when you were a child. By doing this, you are exposing your children to lots of language! Leave your children time to respond, even if you cannot understand what s/he is saying. (ET,T,PR)
15. [Using nursery rhyme or song that has some unfamiliar words—ex. Jack and Jill] As you can see, **singing** or saying nursery rhymes expose children to words that are not used in everyday conversation. Researchers have found that children who know nursery rhymes find it easier to learn to read. (ET,T,PR)
16. By using specific names for things when we **talk** with our children, like cat and kitten, you help your children learn new words and you help them understand differences between similar things. This is one way to increase their vocabulary. (ET,T)
17. [Introducing a book.] You can help children understand words they may not know by offering a little explanation as you go along. If you prefer, you can **talk** about or explain some words before you start **reading** the book. Research notes that the more words your children know and understand, the more vocabulary they have, the easier it will be for them when they begin to read. (T, PR)
18. Children like to hear books over and over again. Every time we **read** the same book to them we can **talk** about different words or pictures. This makes repeating the book more interesting and will also help your children build their vocabulary. (T,PR)
19. [Any book where character shows feelings] This book allows you to **talk** about feelings. You can turn to a page and **talk** about what is happening in the picture. How does the child feel? You help your child **talk** about how he feels if you use the words for both what your child is feeling and what

you yourself are feeling. Using words for feelings not only develops your child's vocabulary, it is also the first step in helping young children identify and then manage their feelings. (T,PR)

20. Ask us to help you find some true books on things your children are interested in. We can all learn new words and new things together when we read these books! True books often have words that are not found in story books, so your children are learning more words. (T,PR)
21. [Book such as *Dinosaur Roar* by Stickland] Even when **reading** a fairly simple story, there are many words that we don't use in everyday conversation. Even if you don't talk about the meaning of all the unfamiliar words, your children hear the words in the story and get an idea of what they mean from hearing the story and from looking at the pictures. (T, PR)
22. Children's books have about 31 rare words per thousand words. That's 3 times more than in conversation and 25% more rare words than what is on television programs. The more of these rare words children know, the easier it will be when it comes time for school and formal learning. This is just one more great reason to **read** books with our children! [*Read Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease] (ET,T,PR)
23. When we talk about a story after reading it with children, we are helping them remember what they heard, and to review it. It helps to reinforce new vocabulary words because they have the opportunity to use the words again. (T,PR)
24. When you and your children are playing together, add more words. Children learn words best in context—in the situation. Pretending while you play gives us lots of opportunities to use new words. (ET,T,PR)
25. The more words your children know, the better off they will be when they learn to read. Research tells us that it is easier to read a word that you know. You can use books to help expand your children's vocabulary. As you **read** together, look for words in the book that have the same meaning, or are synonyms. If there are none used in the book, choose a word from the book and think of a word with a similar meaning. Building on words your child knows makes it easier to learn new words which will make it easier for your child to understand what he reads when he learns to read. (T,PR)
26. When you go to the store, look at the names of different brands. Lots of them, like Hefty trash bags, have meanings aside from the product itself. **Talk** about the meanings of these words—what does hefty mean?. (T,PR)
27. **Play** gives you and your children lots of opportunities to pretend. As you are playing with your children, make a point of adding in a word or two they may not know. You are adding to their vocabulary in a fun way, teaching new words without sitting down to memorize what words mean. Children will remember these words because they are hearing them and using them while being involved in the situation. (T,PR)
28. There are many ways at home that you can help your children understand the words for spatial relationships. You can tell your children where to put something—please, put this pot on top of the counter or in the cabinet or underneath the sink. You can make a game as you **play** with blocks.

You can **talk** about what you are doing as you do it. “I am putting your clean pants next to your red shirt.” Or “Your sock is *under* the bed.” All these little activities put together over time help your children understand what these words mean. (T)

29. **Talk** with your children in the language that is most comfortable for you. It is best for children to hear language spoken fluently. If children know one language well, they can learn another more easily. (ET,T,PR)
30. **Talk** with your children in the language that is most comfortable for you. Tell them stories, talk about what they are doing, tell them information in your language, the language of the heart. When children go to classes in English they will very quickly learn the English words. It is MUCH harder to learn both the ideas and the new words at the same time. It is easier to just translate into English the words they already know in your language. (ET,T,PR)
31. Children enter school knowing anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 words depending on how much they have been spoken and read to. They can't know “too many” words! (ET,T,PR)
32. When we **read** to children they are being exposed to the language of books. This helps children learn to read more easily once they go to school because the language of books is richer and uses more different words, than the language of conversation. Also, books use more complicated sentences. (T,PR)
33. When we adults **talk** with children we most often use nouns, the names of things, with young children. However, to build vocabulary, children must also be exposed to verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and spatial prepositions. So, when a child asks, “What’s that?” We might say microwave and then define it as a kind of machine or appliance that cooks and warms up our food. (ET,T,PR)
34. Children learn words for things and events that interest them. **Reading** informational books is one way to build on a child’s interest while building vocabulary. (ET,T,PR)
35. When babies observe things they use all of their senses. They learn a lot of new words when we talk and play with them. To learn the words, they need to hear the words over and over again over time. (ET)
36. Children first learn the meanings of words of those things they can see—like cup or Mommy. When they are preschoolers, they begin to understand the meanings of things that are abstract or not physically visible, like courage or responsibility. However, we can still use these abstract words when they are younger. They will not understand all the words we use, but exposure to the words is a first step as children learn language and the meanings of words. (ET,T,PR)
37. Children need language, or vocabulary, to think about mathematics. Children need to know the words for numbers and the language of geometry (shapes) and words for quantity (more, less, etc.). The more mathematical language children hear as young children, the more their mathematical knowledge increases over the school year. They can learn a lot of these kinds of words from the way we **read** picture books as well as informational books with them. (T,PR)

38. Children learn words best in a meaningful context. Children need clear information about words; hearing an unfamiliar word is not enough to gain a true understanding of the word. It is important to relate the meaning of the word on the child's level, relating it to something he or she already knows. When we **talk** with them we can help fill in the blanks in their understanding. (PR)
39. After reading together you can ask your child to draw a picture of what you read. Ask your child what the story means and **write** his words down. When you read it back to him you can read his words and then add new words to help his vocabulary grow. (T,PR)
40. When a child **writes** or draws a picture we can talk with him or her about their picture. By rephrasing what they say we can introduce them to new words. (T,PR)
41. Sometimes we are learning along with our children when we **read** informational books! It is an easy way for us to **talk** about interesting and unfamiliar words, ask what your child knows on the topic, and to learn together. Sharing factual books offers us many opportunities to add to children's vocabularies. (T,PR)
42. We should not be afraid to use difficult ideas and words with our children. Information books have a lot to offer! Research shows that when children are exposed to language that is complex, it has a positive effect both on children's ability to use language themselves at higher levels and on their later literacy abilities. (T,PR)
43. When children have hands-on experiences that use both real items and science experiments, they learn new words. When we talk with children about the informational books we read and combine them with hands-on activities young children are getting the necessary context, language and to help them more completely understand scientific processes. (PR)
44. When we **read** with our children, we shouldn't dumb down new words. Research indicates that young children can learn scientific names for complex ideas. (T,PR)



## What Can I Say? Sampling of Early Literacy Asides

What makes an effective aside? An effective aside gives a research-based reason for how or why an activity (playing rhyming games, saying a repeated phrase) or practice (singing, talking, reading, writing, playing) supports an early literacy component or reading skill (decoding—relating letters and sounds to formulate words or comprehension)

An ineffective aside is “Singing will help your child learn to read.” This type of aside is too general; it does not give a reason for why the practice is important.

An effective aside is “Singing slows down language so children hear the smaller sounds in words. This will help them later to sound out words when they learn to read.”

Another effective aside: Singing with children helps to hear the smaller sounds in words because there is a different note for each syllable. This skill (is called phonological awareness and it) will help them when they try to sound out words as they learn to read.

Until we become comfortable with new information, it helps to have a kind of “script” of what we want to tell others. Perhaps some of the following suggestions will be helpful. Feel free to reword them to suit your own style. These suggestions are NOT meant to be limiting. The asides are written in a variety of styles to show that there is more than one way to state research, so there is some repetition.

The words for the five practices (sing, talk, read, write, play) are in **bold** when information is given on how that practice supports early literacy or later reading. The word for the practice does not appear in bold if it is only mentioned.

## Leading with the Early Literacy Component

### Background Knowledge

1. The more your children know, the easier it will be for them to understand what they will read. Children are naturally curious. When you talk with them, you can find out what they already know on a topic of interest to them and then build on their curiosity by telling them what you know. Today I'll point out some ways we can encourage their curiosity and add to their knowledge as we share books together. (ET,T,PR)
2. Background knowledge is information children are taught and gain through experience. It includes different kinds of knowledge. Today I'll be pointing out ways children can learn [choose one of the following: about information on a particular topic; about how stories work; about the enjoyment of reading; concepts such as opposites or spatial relationships.] Researchers have found that it is easier for children with strong background knowledge to understand what they read when they are older. It starts now! There are many ways you can develop your child's background knowledge as you sing, talk, read, write and play with your children every day. (ET, T, PR)
3. One of the best ways you can help your child become a good reader later is to help them enjoy reading and sharing books together now. For many children learning to read can be difficult. Researchers have noted that children who enjoy books are more likely to stick with learning to read, even if it is difficult. That enjoyment of books starts now; and in today's storytime, I'll be pointing out some ways to make booksharing time interactive and enjoyable. (ET,T,PR)

4. In order to learn, children need a lot of repetition. They need to hear words over and over again as you are doing things together. They also like you to read favorite books read over and over again. It may get boring for you, but their brains need repetition to learn language. (ET,T)
5. Children need background knowledge, knowledge about the world, in order to later understand what they read. Background knowledge includes knowing information about things, understanding ideas and concepts like opposites, thinking skills like problem solving and predicting, and knowing how stories work. Today I'll be pointing out some ways we can share information with our children when we talk, read, write, sing and play with them. (T,PR)
6. Children must have a lot of background knowledge, knowledge about the world around them, in order to later understand what they read. Gaining background knowledge begins from birth. Children with strong background knowledge are more likely to understand what they read in grades four and up. They are more likely to become successful readers. One way for them to accumulate knowledge is by **talking** with them about everything you see and do together. (ET,T,PR)
7. Even very young children are learning background knowledge. They learn how different items feel, for example. The carpet feels different from the floor. They learn that when they let go of an object it falls. And, by **talking** about their world, you are giving them the background knowledge they need to understand it. (ET)
8. Helping your children associate books and **reading** with something enjoyable and positive is supporting print motivation, a child's interest in and enjoyment of books and reading. Researchers have noted that children who have enjoyable experiences around books are more likely to stick with learning to read even if it difficult. (ET,T,PR)
9. When children say a phrase that is repeated throughout the book with you, they are involved with the story. They also learn the structure of stories. By making an enjoyable experience for your children around books and **reading**, you are helping them to connect reading with enjoyment. Researchers have noted that this helps them stick longer with learning to read when they get to school. (T,PR)
10. Children are curious about their world. There is so much to know! You help them learn when you share with them what you know, and when you help them find new information, by **reading** books, for example. All their knowledge will help them understand what they read when they learn to read in school. (ET,T,PR)
11. Choose books that YOU enjoy. Your children pick up on your feelings and understand the enjoyment of books. **Talk** with your children about why you enjoy the book. You are helping your children connect books and reading with enjoyment so that they will want to learn to read. (ET,T, PR)
12. Did you know that talking with your children and giving them time to talk back with you is one way to develop your children's speaking skills? Even though your children may only be babbling or we may not understand all of what they say to us, we still want to encourage their talking. Children who can express themselves with words are better able to later understand what they read. (ET, T)

13. Often when we **talk** with children, we simply are telling them what to do—please pick up your toys, or it's time to take a nap. This is called business talk. Researchers have found that it is the extra talk that makes a difference in the amount of language and knowledge that children have. Adding information or talking about experiences helps children learn more about their world. (ET,T)
14. When you're looking at and reading books with your toddlers and even your babies, ask a simple question like "What's that?" or "What's happening?" Give them time to respond even if you don't understand what they have said. Then give them the answer by saying, "That's right, it's a frog. Frogs live in ponds." or whatever the picture is. These little tidbits of conversation are helping children learn how language works—that we take turns when we have a conversation. (ET)
15. The ability to retell stories is one of the early literacy skills that researchers say children need to understand what they read. Using things you have around the house to **play** with as props can help children remember a story and retell it. (T,PR)
16. You may often hear the phrase, "Read with your child 15 minutes a day," or "Read with your child 20 minutes a day." No one expects young children to sit and be read to for that long at one sitting. It is more important for the interaction between you and your children to be positive than it is to be long. Keeping the interaction around books enjoyable helps children understand that reading is fun and will keep them motivated to learn to read. (ET, T, PR)
17. The language used in story books is different from what we use when we are speaking. Stories also have a certain structure, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. By reading storybooks with your children, you help them become familiar with written language and story structure. This will make it easier for them to understand the stories they learn to read in school. (ET,T,PR)
18. Encouraging your children to **talk** will help them later understand what they read. Leaving time for your babies to babble back to you when you talk with them encourages them to talk. For children who are just learning to talk, being patient while they say words is important. When your children are talking fluently, the next step is to help them recount stories or things that have happened in order, in sequence. (ET,T,PR)
19. When you ask your children questions, give them extra time to think and to answer you. **Talking** back and forth uses four different parts of the brain, so it takes them some time to form their responses. (ET,T)
20. One kind of **play** is to act out stories. Having young children use their whole bodies when they move and play, helps them internalize and understand what is happening in the story. They will be able to tell the story back to you, especially their favorites, which they like to hear over and over again. This process helps them understand the story, and will later help them understand what they read. (T,PR)
21. Sharing informational books with your children is one way to build background knowledge. Often, we adults also learn things as we **read** this kind of book with our children. The more they know about topics, the easier it will be for them to understand what they read about it when they get to school. Children are naturally curious about all kinds of things. Take advantage of it! (T,PR)

22. Some children who don't listen to stories will listen well to informational books. Ask us to show you books on topics of interest to your children. You don't need to **read** all the words in these books and you don't have to read them cover-to-cover. Using informational books helps children see that books can be used for different purposes, an important aspect of background knowledge. (T,PR)
23. Informational books are not shelved in with the picture books. I would be happy to help you find books on topics of interest to your child and to you. Sharing factual information with children is one of the best ways to develop their background knowledge which will later help them understand what they read. (T,PR)
24. By relating what is happening in the book to your child's experiences, or asking your child to make those connections, you help develop their comprehension. (ET,T,PR)
25. If you let your children watch television, talk about the shows that you watch together. Listen as your children talks about what is happening. Add your own information and ideas. When you clarify and add information, you are supporting your children's background knowledge. (PR)
26. It is important to **talk** with children to help them understand concepts like positions-- over, under, top, bottom, between, left and right. This is part of giving them the background knowledge they will draw from as they learn to read and write. (T,PR)
27. When your children **play**, they are often using one object for another—a block to represent a telephone. This kind of symbolic play is the same type of thinking that allows them to understand that a picture or the written word represents a real thing. This is conceptual thinking, part of building your child's background knowledge. (T,PR)
28. Today we are going to look at a fun early literacy practice: **play**. Play offers many enjoyable opportunities to develop language. The most critical aspect of play as it relates to language development is that children learn to think symbolically. They learn that one thing, like a block, can represent another thing, like a phone. It is this very kind of thinking that is used in language. A picture of an apple or the written word a-p-p-l-e represents the real apple. Play is not just fun, but it is how children learn and understand new concepts and ideas. Today I'll point out some ways you can support language through play.
29. When you ask children open-ended questions, ones that cannot be answered with yes or no, you have a way to learn what they are thinking and what they already know. By listening to what they say, you can build their background knowledge by adding more information or ideas as you talk together. (T,PR)
30. It is helpful for children to see that we **read** information books differently from the way we read story books. We read them in a non-linear way, dipping in and out of them, using an index. We can **talk** about this when we use this kind of book with them. (T,PR)
31. Researchers have learned that children who have been read informational texts at a young age are better able to read and write this kind of texts later on in school.<sup>1</sup>(PR)

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<sup>1</sup> Preschoolers' Acquisition of Scientific Vocabulary Through Repeated Read-Aloud Events, Retellings, and Hands-On Science Activities by Cynthia B. Leung, Reading Psychology, 29: 165-193, 2008

## Sample Early Literacy Asides Leading with the Practice

### Talk

1. In our next book, \_\_\_\_\_, there is a repeated phrase: \_\_\_\_\_. Let's practice it together. . . . Good! Each time that phrase comes up in the book, you say it with me. I'll point so you know when it's coming. [Read book with their participation.] [After the book] Adults, when you help children say a repeated phrase, they learn about the structure of story. Many stories have a repeated word or phrase. Understanding how stories work will help them read and write stories later in school.
2. Having your child retell a story is one way to help them understand the story. However, sometimes retelling the whole story can be hard. You can start off with having your child say a repeated phrase as we will do with our next book.
3. Having children retell stories or events is one way to help them understand the story. Offering them props or aids can help them remember the sequence in a story.
4. When talking with young children, asking open-ended questions, questions that cannot be answered with yes or no, helps them develop their narrative skills, their speaking skills. Be sure to give them plenty of time to respond. It can take from five to twelve seconds for young children to think and answer.
5. When you ask your children questions, give them extra time to think and to answer you. Talking back and forth uses four different parts of the brain, so it takes them some time to form their responses. (ET,T)
6. One way you can ask open-ended questions to help develop understanding is to relate what is happening in a book or in a situation to something that happened before. Encourage your children to talk about a similar experience or feeling.
7. Our youngest children learn words that name things they can see, like milk, bottle, juice. As children get older they understand words for feelings and concepts, and as they get older still, they understand words for ideas. By talking with our children, adding some new words, we help them understand their world, and later to make sense of what they read. (ET,T,PR)
8. Go ahead and use words that are unfamiliar to your children. Don't replace words in books that they may not understand. Explain them. When you talk with them try to use the word for a specific thing. For example, if you see a dog on the street, call it a dog, but also the breed if you know it, like a cocker spaniel. (ET,T,PR)

## Sing

1. By singing songs with your children [or singing songbooks], you are helping them hear the smaller sounds in words because there is a distinct note for each syllable. This will help them when they later to sound out words when they learn to read.
2. As you sing songs and say rhymes together, over and over again, children come to know these rhymes and songs. It becomes part of their world knowledge.
3. Some songs tell a story or have a logical sequence, like this next song we will sing . . . Children learn what comes next. By having them retell a story using a song helps them understand how stories work and what is happening in the story.
4. You can use songs to help children learn the names of letters in the alphabet. Letter knowledge helps children later sound out words as they learn to read.

## Read

1. Part of reading books with young children is simply helping them become comfortable with how books work. Your baby will bat at the pages, trying to imitate your turning the page. Your toddler will know what a book is for and may babble a story while turning pages. Older children will benefit from your running your finger under the text to show that you are reading the words, not the pictures. All these activities help support your children's print awareness.
2. You may notice that as I read a book I point to the words in the title or to the words of a repeated phrase. By drawing attention to the text while saying the words children are learning that it is the text we read, not the pictures. This helps them develop print awareness, one of the skills that helps them when they learn to read.
3. One of the best things you can give your children is the enjoyment of books and reading. By allowing your children to participate as you share books with them, you can keep them engaged around the book. Feel free to have them turn the pages, to stop and talk about a picture, or ask an open-ended question, as I did, to keep their interest.
4. Factual books are a great way to expand children's knowledge about the world. You can read the whole book or choose certain pages your child might be interested in, as I am doing with this book.
5. [Introducing a book.] You can help children understand words they may not know by offering a little explanation as you go along. If you prefer, you can talk about or explain some words before you start reading the book. Research notes that the more words your children know and understand, the more vocabulary they have, the easier it will be for them when they begin to read. (T, PR)
6. Books are very rich in vocabulary—they have words that we do not use in everyday conversation with young children. So, children hear many more words when we read books to them. You may notice, though, that with board books for babies, there are often only a couple of words on a page. In that case, YOU are the one who must provide extra words by using the pictures as conversation starters—to tell a little story or to tell your baby about an experience you remember. It is the little things you do that build their vocabulary which will later help them understand what they read.

## **Write**

1. As we do this fingerplay [or craft activity] you will notice that children have to use finger motions. These motions help them later when they are learning to write.
2. As we do motions to this song [or movement activity], children are gaining a sense of themselves in space. [This is called proprioception.] It will help them as they are learning to write.
3. Writing is not just writing letters. Learning to scribble and draw are first steps to writing letters. Offer your children many opportunities to write throughout the day, from scribbling on paper, to making lists, to writing you a note.

## **Play**

1. Providing props and toys for children to retell a story as they play is one way to help them understand the story. You may ask a question or two that helps them build on the story. Follow your child's lead.
2. Try acting out a story with your child, taking on the roles of different characters. This kind of dramatic play is one way that children internalize and understand the story.
3. Even if your child cannot act out or retell a longer story, see if they can repeat a phrase or action. This is the beginning of acting out the whole story which helps them understand how stories work.