

Print-Rich Environments

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

IV. Supporting Children's Development

- G. The provider ensures that children hear language around them and engage in a wide range of early language and literacy experiences.
2. The provider reads to children daily.
 5. The provider introduces, models, and supports opportunities for children to use and understand written and oral language.



The Basics

Print is written language, and it is found everywhere in society. From books to street signs, food labels, menus, posters, and mail, children are surrounded by print. Print awareness is a child's understanding of the particular organization of a written language. This includes concepts like reading text from left to right and top to bottom, recognizing that words are made up of letters, and identifying spaces between words. Pre-writing is the fundamental fine motor skills required to learn to write. Children must learn to hold and manipulate writing materials before learning to write, which includes strength and visual-motor coordination in children's hands, fingers, and shoulders.

Why focus on print and writing in early childhood? Children learn print awareness and develop pre-writing skills through interactions with adults in print-rich environments. Unlike verbal language acquisition, which develops naturally through spoken language exposure, print awareness and writing must be taught. When adults and children jointly focus on environmental print (Examples: signs, labels, and books), young children begin to recognize the value and identify features of written language. Children learn to associate visual symbols, or letters, with language when adults repeatedly recognize it through playful, naturally occurring interactions. Pre-writing begins early in life through experience – engaging with writing materials, small manipulatives, and sensory play to develop the necessary fine motor skills.

[How do I create a print-rich environment?](#) Adults support the development of print awareness and pre-writing through offering, scaffolding, and modeling engagement with print and writing (Gerde, Bingham, & Wasik, 2012). To do this:

- ❖ Offer children a variety of print and writing materials throughout the program’s environment to be incorporated during play. Examples include:
 - Offer a notebook and crayons near the block and manipulatives areas.
 - Provide board or cloth books for infants to explore.
 - Create homemade books with toddlers and preschoolers.
 - Offer dramatic play writing options like blank recipe cards and shopping lists.
- ❖ Scaffold children to use print and practice writing. Examples include:
 - Point to images while reading with infants.
 - Narrate and ask questions about images in books with toddlers.
 - Ask preschoolers creating mock letters to read their writing.
 - Remind children to sign their artwork.
- ❖ Model print engagement and writing to children every day. Examples include:
 - Point out letters on labels for preschoolers.
 - Write children’s names.
 - Read books that children find interesting and engaging.
 - When given permission, write children’s ideas about their art on their art.

[I want to learn more!](#)

- [Promoting Preschoolers’ Emergent Writing](#) (Article)
- [Print Awareness: Guidelines for Instruction](#) (Article)
- [Writing Readiness \(Pre-Writing\) Skills](#) (Resource)
- [Everyday Steps to Reading and Writing](#) (Article)
- [Where We Stand on Learning to Read and Write](#) (Position Statement)

[Books available through Satellite’s lending library:](#)

(for Satellite participating programs only)

- Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practice for Young Children (Neuman, 2000)
- Already Ready: Nurturing Writers in Preschool and Kindergarten (Wood & Glover, 2008)
- Love to read: Essays in developing and enhancing early literacy skills of African American children (Bowman, 2002)