

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School
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April 12, 2021

BOOSTING TODDLERS' BRAINS TO AFFECT
SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT AND BEYOND

Abstract of Capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
Ernst and Sara Lane Volgenau College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

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Stanford, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Shane C. Shope, Associate Professor of Education

Morehead, Kentucky

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BOOSTING TODDLERS' BRAINS TO AFFECT
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Impacting students, through caregiver education, at their earliest stages of brain development will help them flourish when they get to school. Caregivers are the first “teachers” of toddlers, be they parents, foster parents, adopted parents, or even family members who are raising the infant, they primarily interact with them from birth to three years of age. Toddler brain stimulation leads to early growth that will impact their lives so they can become not only successful students, but also productive members of society.

This executive summary and capstone project was designed to add to the field of research that centers around increasing caregiver’s ability to support early literacy through education. The series of presentations were designed to assist in developing their knowledge of early childhood literacy interactions. Many students enter kindergarten behind in their knowledge of literacy. The strategies primarily focused on dialogic reading and language development. The presentations was designed to share simple but significant reading strategies that could impact brain development of toddlers through interactions with their caregivers.

KEYWORDS: Reading, Literacy, Strategies, Care-Givers, Infant Brain Stimulation

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this capstone to my family: My husband and son who have endured my crazy schedule. My mother and father who have helped with our meals, transportation, and canines. My sister, a doctor in her own right, who supported me at every turn. Finally, to my friends who encouraged me almost every day. I thank you and love you all immensely!

In memory of Dr. Shane Shope – Thank you for always being understanding, patient, respectful, and supportive of all your students.

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Executive Summary

What is the Core of the Capstone?

As a new middle school English teacher in 2006, I had no idea how students should come prepared to my class. I assumed most of my students were the same and had similar background experiences in literacy. That quickly changed as I realized that my experiences were not the reality of others. We all know that every single child is different and is a product of their past. Many of these experiences are positive, which prepare them to become contributing members of the school, surrounding community, and eventually society. However, some of their life experiences are filled with numerous adverse childhood experiences which affect their future as well. The first three years of life are extremely important for early language, according to neuroscientists as well as developmental psychologists (Li et al., 2013).

Over the years, our community has seen many children being raised by someone other than their biological parents, for a variety of reasons. Many times, they are being raised by grandparents. My own experiences as a middle school teacher, I have seen an increase in other family members, such as aunts and uncles, becoming caregivers. For many of these caregivers, they are simply trying to survive. Many of them are past the age of raising a family and have had to return to the workforce to support their grandchildren. Many of them simply do not have the knowledge, time, resources, or energy to draw upon in order to help their students succeed (Musil et al., 2011).

Problem Statement

Not only are caregivers changing in one community, but communities all over the state. Over the years, middle school students are coming through the doors unable to read on a basic level. It is a frustrating task for students, and makes them use their brain in a way that television and video games do not (Fernandez, 2018; Vanderschuren, 2010). Some students have access to books and technology, while others do not. It is this inconsistency that can affect learning (Talaee & Noroozi, 2019).

Elementary school teachers state that there is a difference in those who come to Kindergarten knowing how to read. Through no fault of their own, many caregivers in our community have not been educated enough to be able to do this. According to the report from The Prichard Committee, 'Teaching Matters Most: Student Success in the Early Grades' (2020), across the state of Kentucky, 49% of students who were not prepared to enter Kindergarten. Perhaps even more of a concern is that according to the Kentucky Department of Education, Lincoln County's number is even higher at 57.2% of all students who are not Kindergarten ready (Lincoln County District Report Card, 2021). (See Appendix A)

That means over half of the students that enter Kindergarten are not performing up to the Kindergarten readiness requirements in Lincoln County. Unfortunately, teachers must give their time and energy to those who are behind, instead of working with those that are Kindergarten ready (Bassok, 2016). This creates frustration for not only the educators, but also the caregivers and ultimately the children.

When thinking about the data and the caregiver situation at hand, it raises questions about student upbringing. Were they read to when they were infants and toddlers? Have they had a good model to learn from? The first three years of life are extremely important for early language development, according to neuroscientists as well as developmental psychologists (Li et al., 2013). It is imperative that caregivers be given a means of learning about literacy interaction that will not overwhelm but will provide much needed information to ensure proper brain development and literacy skills.

Many students are missing that integral key of caregiver involvement. According to the Public Education in Rural Eastern Kentucky: A Region's Way Forward report (2019), "In the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative alone there are 10.49 percent of children that are raised by their grandparents" (p. 24). This needs to be addressed and have a solution to support caregivers. Through a series of "How to" presentations, caregivers will be educated so they can stimulate their developing brains. This will in turn help those children so that they will be more prepared to read at the appropriate time.

Purpose

This capstone provides needed supports to early childhood students through the education of their caregivers in the Lincoln County School System. The ultimate goal is for students to reach middle school with the ability to read and successfully navigate literacy courses. The first steps toward this goal can be taken by supporting caregivers with literacy strategies they can use to impact the future reading abilities of

their children. Providing families reading materials is not enough. It is also not effective to wait until a child is three years of age or older to begin instruction on basic elements of literacy.

Most caregivers do the best they can. Many are not well educated in early literacy strategies. Many cannot, or will not, take the time to understand the best strategies to use with their toddlers. If they have any time to read to their toddlers, they are doing that and not much else. This project takes that stress away from caregivers. The research has been analyzed and will be explained to them in ways they can understand and then implement with their toddlers on their own, in their own homes where they can feel comfortable and confident in their abilities to interact with their toddlers using literacy strategies.

This has never been truer than experiencing this unprecedented time with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Schools were being called upon to be community supports to caregivers in every way. The Lincoln County School System provided food to families through a pick-up program at the schools, but also through a community delivery system. Our Family Resource Centers were overran with requests for food, clothing, and other essential items that families were unable to provide themselves due to the unfamiliar circumstances in which they found themselves (Miller, S., personal communication, November 23, 2020).

Through caregiver education, there will be a positive impact on the early literacy practices in these families. The overall intent is to influence caregivers to interact more with their children, using literacy as a vehicle. It is another area of

support that is so necessary to the caregivers of this community. This will in turn affect the brain development through interactions with literacy and the bond between caregiver and infant.

Review of Literature

This section documents important findings from the literature on the intellectual, social, and academic development of young children. This will establish a background and context for the Boosting Toddlers' Brains presentations. The literature provides a framework for understanding the importance of educating caregivers that will then in turn help to educate their children to impact the children's academic abilities once they attend school.

Toddler Brain Development. As soon as infants are born, they respond to stimuli. Naming objects and individuals in the first year of life has an impact on both perceptual and semantic growth, enabling infants to create associations between words and objects in their visual environment (Pickron et al., 2018). There are sounds, lights, and movements that they have never experienced before. Aspects of postnatal neuronal differentiation can be affected by postnatal experience, which may be one of the processes by which a child's culture, including the parenting to which they are subjected, shapes brain growth (Belsky & de Haan, 2011). It is essential that children be exposed to the best parenting practices that can be provided.

Multiple pathways and structures within the cerebral cortex may be partially triggered by stimuli exposure shortly after birth (Johnson, 2000). Among this stimuli is obviously the exposure to language for the first time through their relationship with

their caregivers. The parent-child caregiving relationship tends to be a strong contender to explain for culturally mediated variation in children's brain growth because it is one of the earliest, most serious, and most lasting experiences in childhood (Bernier et al., 2016). During growth, an infant's ability to comprehend the behavior of others is gradually refined (Turati et al., 2013).

The research supports the fact that toddlers continue to learn from their caregivers' actions, especially when they are repeated, such as repeated reading and literacy activities. The brain becomes a more developed, productive organ as neural links related to daily skills, vocabulary, and comprehension are reinforced through experience (Thompson, 2008). By the age of 20 months, toddlers are consciously seeking guidance from their parents about their culture's "rules of the road," taking advice about themselves and self in relation to others (Lally, 2010, p. 16).

Based on the consistency of parent-child relationships, early relational interactions are closely linked to child neurocognitive growth (Bernier et al., 2010). It is the importance of this caregiver-child relationship that should be the focus for anyone that is responsible for the future of a child. When a baby is born, its brain is only 25% of the size that it grows to be as an adult, and at age three, it is only 85% of the size it will be at maturity (Lally, 2012). Lally continues by affirming that interactions children have with those who care for them in their early years lay the groundwork for literacy competence.

The ability to coordinate focus and involvement on items in the distal visual field with another individual occurs in the second half of the first year of life, and

usually appears around the age of 9 months (Elison et al., 2013). This supports reading to infants during their earliest stages, instead of waiting until they are older. Because a child's brain is more than 80% grown by the time he or she is three years old, there is a great need for services that concentrate on children beginning at birth (Erkel et al., 2019).

There are many different theories of language development in children. Cakiroglu (2018) discusses four theories of language development: Behaviorist, Linguistic, Interactionist, and Vygotsky's Socio-cultural approaches. Whether it is by learning from experiencing language around them, born innately within them, developed from social interactions or a combination of each, it is clear that children are learning language at the earliest stages of their lives.

The brain growth that occurs during pregnancy and the first year of life is much faster and more detailed than previously thought (Starting Points, 1994). The first three years of life are extremely important for early language, according to neuroscientists as well as developmental psychologists (Li et al., 2013). There are fascinating research studies that delve into the development of the infant brain.

“The splenium is one of the three parts of the corpus callosum, which is the main commissural fiber in the human brain connecting the left and right cerebral hemispheres” (Swanson et al., 2017, p. 6). The interesting thing about the splenium is that it is directly tied to language development. Kids with superior language output had higher stages of splenium growth by the age of two (Swanson et al., 2017). One little-known fact about humans is, neurons mature quickly before birth, but no new

neurons are developed after birth (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 1996). According to Marshall (2011),

The circuitry of the brain is developed through stimulation presented with adequate intensity, repetition, and duration to create and amplify the neural connections which are stored in short-term and, eventually, in long-term memory. Learning occurs through successive memories which arise from the connections between neurons that have been strengthened by repeated stimulation. (p. 176)

Therefore, it is imperative for toddlers to be exposed to life experiences, so that the connections (synapse) between the neurons in their brains can be stimulated (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 1996). Further research supports children of the age of nine months can differentiate between words based on their length, stress patterns, and phonotactic properties, and by the age of twelve months, they can monitor the distributional properties of words (Lany & Saffran, 2011). One study shows there is an accelerated growth of communication skills (those are related to later language ability) between six and 18 months, before a child can even speak (Maatta et al., 2016).

The evidence reinforces the concept that when an education program is not introduced until a child is three years of age or older, it is simply too late to make a large impact on the development of their language skills. Toward the end of childhood, the role of both genetics and environmental factors as determinants of intelligence undergoes a significant change (Yeates et al., 1983).

Early interactions and conditions are critical for growth because of this strong plasticity in the first three years of life (Erkel et al., 2019). Bano et al. (2018) add that students who were involved with books when they were three, could excel by the seventh grade. This introduction and reinforcement are the reasons children should be introduced to reading at such an early age.

One important aspect to consider is that tests that were taken over information processing during the first year of childhood, can predict some of the basic learning skills as well as general intellect at the age of six (Rose et al., 1992). Therefore, it is crucial that everyone with an interest in children, (parents, caregivers, educators, economists) understand that what is done during the earliest phases of a child's life, impacts their future. Children who begin reading at a young age are more likely to continue to be avid readers as they mature, according to research (Bano et al., 2018).

Flensburg-Madsen and Mortensen (2018) discovered during the ages of one and three, many developmental milestones took place and were linked to adult IQ with the largest connection being to language. For these reasons, the focus must be brought back to our youngest children's needs, from birth (Hammer, Farkas, & Maczuga, 2010).

The precision of vocabulary used by parents to explain emotions on picture and illustrated faces or to describe objects for children has an immediate and long-term impact on sensory and neural processing (Pickron et al., 2018). Even the way caregivers look at items influences children. "Infants' attention towards novel objects is affected by an adult's emotional expression and eye gaze toward the object" (Hoehl

& Striano, 2010, p. 813). Novel objects are those that the child has never seen or experienced. This supports the fact that if caregivers are negative or ambivalent toward book sharing, the infant will sense this and adjust their own behavior. This is called a “mirror mechanism” which “provides direct understanding of others’ action” and is thought to be part of human’s survival instincts (Turati et al., 2013, p. 793).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) as a Factor. Before 1994, the focus on early childcare was mainly centered around Kindergarten and not on the needs of children from birth to the age of three. However, after the release of the report, *Starting Points: Executive Summary of the Report of the Carnegie Corporation of New York Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children* (1994), that all changed. This groundbreaking report shined a bright spotlight onto the fact that the first three years of life, appear to be a critical starting point—a time when the defensive systems of parental and family care are most vulnerable. One of the largest and longest lasting influences on brain development is that of the early environment. A clear indicator of our environment is our socioeconomic status (SES).

The problem is the fact although the importance of the first three years of a child’s life was reported in 1994, it still remains an ongoing issue. The needs of these toddlers in many of our rural communities are not being addressed. An increasing body of evidence suggests that early growth and learning experiences are critical for children who are at risk of academic difficulties, such as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Phillips & Morse, 2011).

Wolf and McCoy (2019) suggest that low socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to a reduction of cognitive development, academic awareness, social-emotional abilities, and other educational readiness areas, as assessed by pay, wealth, and/or parent education. Early infancy may affect the impact of social inequalities on brain function, possibly indicating an early likelihood of language and focus problems (Tomalski et al., 2013).

Those who think that SES does not affect children until they are older are sadly mistaken. Ballieux et al. (2016) assert that 6-to 9-month-old children from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, show differences in adaptive brain growth. Before starting school, children in the highest socioeconomic group have a developmental ranking that is 60% higher than those in the lowest socioeconomic group (Neuman et al., 2017).

Since many toddlers cannot express themselves through spoken language, some caregivers are inclined not to even talk to young toddlers unless they need to be physically tended. There are ethnic variations in the age at which an infant cease to be a baby and becomes a child in need of training for future progress (Bradley et al., 1989). Sadly, it is at this later point in time that some parents, of that culture, begin to interact with them.

SES plays a huge role in the amount of exposure to language that infant's experience, and should be a concern for society. Parental education, wages, or both are often used to determine SES (Kirby, 1997). McNally and Quigley (2014) found children living in a lower SES had lower vocabulary scores and were not able to

process language adequately. Babies born to parents of a higher socioeconomic status have higher literacy scores than children that are born to parents in lower SES (Strang & Piasta, 2016). Fiester (2010) noted by Kindergarten, a child from low-income household are typically 12 to 14 months behind the national averages in language and pre-reading skills.

When caregivers come from a lower SES, they are less likely to talk to their toddlers. According to the Ounce of Prevention Fund Paper (1996), when parents are too busy just trying to survive on a daily basis, they are not able to provide the interactions that affect the growth of their children's brains. Parents from various socioeconomic backgrounds have varying levels of awareness about child growth, which affects how they interact with their children (Rowe et al., 2016). Social mores are also something that might influence the amount of time that adults interact with their toddlers. Everyone has heard the old adage, "Don't speak unless spoken to." Another one is, "Children should be seen, not heard." Now, those might be antiquated sayings, but there are still some people who tend to isolate small children.

When a person has a lower SES background, they may also experience a higher level of stress and anxiety. Many of the adults in these families are unemployed, or employed at a low wage job, do not have money for any kind of savings, and are constantly purchasing food as there is none in the home (Payne, 1996). Many do not have the emotional or academic resources to address the language or literacy development of their babies, when they are consumed with mere survival. These families may be termed, "hard-to-reach" (Evangelou et al., 2011, p.

127-8). They may be described as, vulnerable, separated, omitted, or disconnected. They can lack self-esteem, trust, work, wages, and/or sufficient housing, among other things. Many people may have issues with drugs and alcohol, as well as domestic violence (Evangelou et al., 2011).

Grandmothers who take on the role of primary caregiver experience, deteriorating physical health, depression, intra-family pressure, and suspected difficulties in family functioning (Musil et al, 2011). It is clear these women are not able to care for young children as well as younger caregivers.

These are just a few of the reasons that adults might not be communicating with their toddlers, which in turn stimulates their knowledge of language. On the other side of this situation is the fact that there can be parents from a high SES, but who are too busy with their own lives to interact with their toddlers. When parents are wealthy, their children can be just as deprived of language as the lower SES children if they are not using language and literacy to stimulate them (Kirby, 1997).

The toddlers, who are exposed to fewer literacy experiences are considered to be “at-risk” (Landry et al., 2014,). Children of mothers with low levels of schooling scored lower on school readiness and achievement assessments at 6 and 7 years than children of highly qualified mothers (Geoffroy et al., 2010). This implies that mothers with more education expose their children to more literacy than those who have less education.

However, the majority of the time, whether it is higher parental education or less stressful living conditions, toddlers from a high SES home background come to

school knowing more vocabulary and have had vocabulary exposure to literally hundreds of thousands more words in their short lifetimes (Hart & Risley, 2011). As compared to children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, children in poverty also had less access to books in their homes and were rarely exposed to public libraries (Terrell & Watson, 2018). Growth in vocabulary and all other literary influences must come from some sort of text. Without it, impoverished toddlers and young children are not getting the necessary exposure.

One seminal study by Hart & Risley (1995) explains that children who experience a lower SES status can be exposed to over 3 million fewer utterances than children from a higher SES by the time they enter school. Even though the school environment is clearly important, it is the home environment where babies receive their earliest language education. Parents serve as mentors and key sources of information for young children as they prepare to enter the future (van Tuijl & Leseman, 2004). Obviously, the lack of vocabulary exposure, from lower SES parents will affect these toddlers for the rest of their lives. One study found

Children who had been raised in globally under-stimulating environments – children who were rarely touched or spoken to and who had little opportunity to explore and experiment with toys – were examined with sophisticated new brain-imaging techniques and other measures of brain growth. The children were found to have brains that were 20 to 30 percent smaller than most children their age and, in over half the cases, parts of the

children's brains appeared to have literally wasted away. (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 1996, p. 5)

Rubin and Balow (1979) found that SES is a better predictor of later intelligence and an accurate predictor of low IQ than other tests for intelligence. This is extremely significant. Children raised in households with fewer resources due to poor socioeconomic status appear to have less understanding of the alphabet and print concepts than children raised in homes with more resources (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010). Perego et al. (2016) noted that early life trauma may contribute to abnormal brain growth and functioning.

Poverty and early adversity have a direct effect on brain growth, increasing the likelihood of negative social conditions and leading to a poverty cycle (Wijeakumar et al., 2018). Knowing how important SES is to the development of young children, the affects can be addressed through interventions that speak to the deficiencies that these children face. It is also necessary to note that these early language skills of children are directly linked to later academic success (McGillion et al., 2017).

The argument that poor children lack the rich and varied vocabulary required to learn in education, for example, is often related to the high rate of reading failure among children living in poverty (Dudley-Marling & Lucas, 2009). Possible interventions, including those with a focus on vocabulary, will be discussed at the end of this literature review. Obviously, it is not enough to throw a book at these people and expect them to know what to do with it. Simply reading it is a start. To mitigate

the fact that many of these families simply cannot afford books in their homes, schools and libraries can be a significant community resource. Print books remain an indispensable resource that classroom teachers can have by book services and the library, despite the fact that digital technology opens up more avenues for literacy growth (Curry et al., 2016).

Responsive Caregivers. The first people that toddlers build strong relationships with and learn from are their caregivers. In a child's life, the first and most important educators are his or her parents (Niklas et al., 2016). It is imperative that these caregivers are responsive in their actions with their toddlers. Early literacy experiences promote the growth of early reading and language skills, which is most commonly determined by the quality of adult-child relationships (Hoffman & Whittingham, 2017).

Improved language learning and cognitive skills have been attributed to more receptive experiences (Mermelshtine & Barnes, 2016). It is this receptive understanding of more vocabulary that works to build these skills. Children's greater vocabularies were linked with more stimulating-responsive relationships with mothers during the first three years (Duncan et al., 2019). Knowing that it makes that much of an impact, caregivers around the world should be interested in becoming as responsive as possible to their children.

Stronger pre-literacy skills, literacy experiences during the preschool years, and eventual reading success have all been linked to parents' interest in their children's early reading experiences (Wambiri et al., 2015). This involvement or

responsiveness might also be called being supportive. Parental involvement is a critical prerequisite for children to partake in reading and learning experiences, and parents who are supportive while working with their children have a positive effect on their children's skill development (Mathis & Bierman, 2014).

Many times caregivers do not understand the importance of their involvement in their infant's reading/literacy development. Children's language and emerging reading skills have been linked to positive and warm partnerships in which parents support their children (van der Pluijm et al., 2019). There is a strong link between parental engagement and children's overall educational achievement, particularly when it comes to literacy growth, according to research (Brown et al., 2019).

Since parents control what, where, and how much literacy is exercised in the household, parental beliefs affect family literacy activities (Kinkead-Clark, 2017). Ergul et al. (2017) found that parents' attitudes toward their children's early literacy growth are a key predictor of the literacy activities they have at home. Knowing the essential role that caregivers play in the introduction and sustainment of literacy, it is imperative that they be taught how to interact with their toddlers as they focus on literacy. Caregivers who are more educated and experienced offer more attentive care, relaxation, and participation in language-rich play (Phillips & Morse, 2011).

Reading books to children without engaging them in meaningful language experiences will not be enough to substantially improve their language skills (Tompkins et al., 2017). It is not enough to read, or even act like caregivers are reading, if they are not being responsive and active participants themselves during

literacy interactions. It is the responsiveness that really makes a difference.

Conversations with children at home are a natural way for young children to get interested in language use and learn from it (van der Pluijm et al., 2019).

Ediger (2015) explains that we master language as babies by listening first, then talking. That is we are first submerged in language in this oral sense, regardless of tradition or dialect. Therefore, it makes sense that caregivers become responsive to their toddlers by interacting with them during book reading.

Being responsive may mean that caregivers label different things in a story book, or some other kind of print that they have available in their homes. Fletcher et al. (2008) discloses that the use of naming, expansions, and queries by caregivers was linked to the interest of 24-month-old children while reading. Labeling is when caregivers tell the toddlers the names/vocabulary in the story. This should be combined with the caregivers pointing out what they are labeling so that it will catch their infant's attention.

An expansion means that caregivers are expanding upon what they are reading. An example could be where a caregiver is reading about a bicycle and an older sibling of the infant has one. The expansion would include the caregiver talking to the infant about their sibling's bicycle and drawing a connection between the infant's real life and the story book.

Many would say the easiest response is to ask the infant questions about what the caregiver is reading. However, it is better to ask Wh- questions than simple yes/no questions. Parents' questions in reading and play situations, especially Wh-questions,

have been shown to predict young children's vocabulary and story retelling ability (Tompkins, 2017). Wh- questions are the one which seeks to get a response to the who, what, where, when, and why questions. They elicit more of a thoughtful open-ended answer than just a simple yes/no answer.

Even when toddlers are too young to verbalize their understanding, they may make noises, or “invented word-like units” that represent familiar objects, these made-up words are called idiomorphs (Neumann & Neumann, 2012). Everyone has heard toddlers, who are just beginning to speak, use made up words/sounds to identify things. Many caregivers understand exactly what the infant is communicating and even add the idiomorph into their own vocabulary (Neumann & Neumann). When a toddler points to an object and says, “Ta-Ta,” that object may forever be known as “Ta-Ta” in that family. It is important that caregivers are responsive to these first attempts at communication and identification.

There is “a positive relationship between parents’ educational level and their child’s emergent literacy skills” (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 11). Which would give the impression that only very educated caregivers can make an impact on their child’s emergent literacy skills. That is simply not the case. The manner in which parents interact with their children has a significant impact on their children's developing oral language skills (Taylor et al., 2016).

Therefore, even if caregivers are not well-educated but are knowledgeable about the impact they can have and can learn techniques that can influence their children, they can mediate much of the issues that undereducated caregivers face.

Regardless, reading to children by parents has long been considered a foundational practice for facilitating language learning in small children, encouraging children's curiosity in reading, and ultimately contributing to children's later reading achievement (Chen et al., 2012).

One final issue with caregivers, when possible, is to make sure that the task of literacy does not just fall to one sex. Interestingly enough, in one study of preschool children, a male said that he could not be a good reader because only girls were good readers (Wagner, 2020). He thought this because his teachers were all female and were the only people that read to him and with him. He said, male teachers just want to have a good time. They let you play on their phones and do whatever you want (Wagner, 2020). Evidently this student had not been exposed to men who helped him with reading. As responsive caregivers, all genders within the house need to be involved with literacy. That way, stereotypes like this do not perpetuate within young children.

Literacy Routines. Many caregivers take their cue from their own personal experiences with emerging literacy. Literacy development is the systematic improvement of skills, expertise, and behaviors prior to the acquisition of traditional reading and writing abilities (Neumann & Neumann, 2012). Many were read to at bedtime. Some had board books that they teethered on. Some had plastic squeaky books in their baths. Family traditions are a means of sense creation, introducing children to learning experiences and literacy development (Niklas et al., 2015). However, others

were not exposed to literacy until they went to some form of preschool or kindergarten. It is for these caregivers that special attention should be devoted.

All children should be exposed to literacy as soon as possible and as much as possible. Not always is this financially feasible. When choosing between food for hungry children versus books for children, the food will take precedence every single time, as it should. Children that grow up in poverty are often introduced to vocabulary that is numerically and graphically different from that of more affluent children (Whitmarsh, 2011). Living in a poverty stricken situation accounts for the limited vocabulary these children are exposed to every day.

One must always remember parent-child book reading has been identified as one of the most effective strategies to encourage preschoolers' language and emergent learning when they start kindergarten (Tompkins et al., 2017). Altun et al. (2018) concur reading is an important basis for academic performance, and explain a child's reading ability in primary school is a good indicator of later reading ability.

Home Literacy Environment and Practices. There are many ways emergent literacy skills of children from all economic walks of life can be influenced to affect later reading achievement. One of these is to change the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) of these young children. Rich HLEs and oral language exposure offer an important base for school's more formal literacy environments (Terrell & Watson, 2018). Christopher et al. (2015) found that parents who have a larger book collection at home or who send their children to the library may be stronger readers themselves.

The family, society, history, and other childhood environments have a huge impact on emerging readers (Kinkead-Clark, 2017). Degotardi et al. (2018) make it clear the first two years of a child's life are a crucial time for language learning, with present and potential language development and academic success reliant on a language-rich climate. The inclusion or exclusion of family literacy practices greatly impact these emergent readers. Since these toddlers are usually home for more hours than they are away, it stands that the literacy at the home would make a large impact, perhaps even larger than what they are being exposed to outside of the home, simply because they are home for more hours than away. The number of books they had at 6 months predicted their verbal language at 24 months and their school entrance assessment (Murray & Egan, 2013).

The learning experience at home projected reading abilities, with parents telling children about letters and sounds being linked to alphabet awareness (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). Another study by Wolf and McCoy (2019) found a wide variety of early abilities, including simple understanding of letters and numbers, ability to get along with classmates, fine motor skills, and the ability to suppress emotions and direct attention, all predict children's school achievement.

The Home Literacy Environment (HLE) is where toddlers are first exposed to literacy (Neumann & Neumann, 2009). Where else would toddlers experience literacy? Perhaps at day care, but that is for caregivers who can afford it. Many times, it is not economically possible for toddlers to be kept outside of the home. For that reason, it is necessary to make sure that caregivers are focused on certain aspects of

literacy that will make an impact on their academic futures. One such aspect is the teaching of the alphabet.

Parents' biggest asset in promoting reading in low-income communities is formal letter instruction at home (Chansa-Kabali, 2017). There are sure to be many caregivers out there who do not know where to start, and therefore do not make the effort to interact with their toddlers using literacy. However, this makes the problem that much easier. Even people who are illiterate have access to the alphabet. Even on ancient flip-phone technology, the alphabet is clearly printed along with the numbers. This gives the most disadvantaged HLEs a place to start.

Positive HLEs focus on literacy enjoyment, literacy frequency, and phonological awareness (Wiescholek et al., 2018). When children like to experience literacy, either physically with a book in their hands, or virtually on a phone or computer screen, it impacts them. Everyone wants to repeat things that they enjoy, as many times as possible. It makes them feel positive and they want to experience that feeling repeatedly. "Children learn attitudes, positive or negative, towards literacy in the home" (Kinkead-Clark, 2017, p. 59).

Numerous negative HLEs are characterized by the large number of underperforming students whose low-income families, overworked households, and verbally deprived circumstances seem to effectively doom many of them to failure and disappointment even before they begin school (Evans et al., 2016). Ergul et al. (2017) explain how kindergarteners from low and partly middle socioeconomic

backgrounds may be at a disadvantage when it comes to receiving high-quality HLEs, so educators must find ways to help these families.

This should be deplorable to our society. Everything within our power should be done to positively affect the lives of our youngest contributors. What can be done as a society to positively influence the academic and social success of our kids? However, this is not a topic for the nightly news. It should be, but it is not.

It is important to foster and strengthen the literacy relationships between caregivers and their toddlers. This should be thought of as a cycle. The more caregivers positively respond to their toddlers during book sharing in the HLE, the more the infant will respond to the caregiver (Abraham et al., 2013). It is through these positive interactions that growth in literacy, as well as relationships with the caregivers can grow.

Although many early educators might balk at the extended student use of technology, one sure way to intervene is to make sure that young children have access, through media, to rhymes, stories, vocabulary, and other language and age appropriate literacy options (Evans et al., 2016). It has been the experience of many teachers that while students are on the free/reduced list for school, their parents, and many times siblings have access to media through cell phones. Even though the importance of books in print cannot be denied, educators must adapt to what their students have available to use to access literacy.

Also, as with the Lincoln County School System, students are provided with a Chromebook that they can use to access the Internet while they are not only at school,

but also while they are at home. It is unreasonable to think that we can influence caregivers so much that they will completely change their stripes. It is essential to use what resources they have at hand, and to help them incorporate them into the lives of their young children.

Print Knowledge. The higher the preschool child's print comprehension and the more involved he or she was in reading, the more parent-initiated literacy programs are being used in the home (Neumann & Neumann, 2009). In our ever-changing world, it is necessary for caregivers to continue to expose their toddlers and young children to actual literary print. Yes, multimedia is important too. However, as we all know, everyone should be able to read text whether it is presented on a page or on a screen.

Once children have been exposed to print, there are other aspects that are important and influence their motivation to want to continue reading. There is a connection between motivating factors like literacy enjoyment, frequency of literacy, early literacy skills, and later reading achievement (Wiescholek et al., 2018). Any caregiver with older children can remember a time when they were asked by their child to read the same book over and over to them. It was because the child enjoyed the book, and their time spent reading it, that they wanted to experience it multiple times.

Children's attitudes toward literacy are inextricably tied to how they use it in their daily lives: at home, at school, and in the neighborhood (Kinkead-Clark, 2017). If a child is never exposed to literature they are not going to understand how

important it is, and instead it will have no meaning. Environmental print is anything that has text in the home environment. It is one example of something that parents can use to increase their infant's print knowledge. It is important for parents to demonstrate the print has meaning and is made up of letters that have names and make sounds (Neumann et al., 2009).

When contemplating environment text, think of the things that come in a mail or post office box. Words and visual cues like logos and pictures make up environmental print (Neumann et al., 2015). Bright colors, logos (think the Target symbol), large print, and pictures are all examples of environmental print that you could find in practically every HLE that could be used to motivate emergent readers. Caregivers should point out everything they see to their toddlers. It is important to draw attention not only to the pictures and colors, but also to the letters and words (Neumann et al., 2015).

When children are successful at something, they tend to want to continue to do whatever felt successful to them. The interest of children in literacy is linked to their literacy participation and success (Carroll et al., 2019). If someone is good at football, they enjoy it, the perception of it is positive. It is exactly the same for literacy. When a young child has success with literacy (letters, sounds, pictures, etc.) they find value in their experiences. However, when children struggle with literacy, they do not like it and do not think that it is valuable in their lives (Kinkead-Clark, 2017).

Book Sharing Through Read Alouds. Mol and Bus (2011) found that preconventional readers can benefit from shared book reading as part of a series of out-of-school reading activities that support children's language, reading, and spelling progress. When young children experience reading with a caregiver at home, this can affect their academic achievement. As children lived in low-income neighborhoods with lower levels of home literacy, regular mutual book reading has a positive effect on children's literacy skills (Levy et al., 2018). Children who have their parents read to them when they are young are more likely to acquire language and literacy skills faster and more easily, as well as attain better reading performance in school (Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011).

Children learn the relationship of letters and sounds, as well as the structure of written tales, through shared reading (Zibulsky et al., 2018). For all ages, shared storybook reading is a fruitful, evidence-based intervention (Zimmer, 2017). Whether a child is normally developing, or has exceptional needs, shared reading works for all children. Children who were exposed to storybook reading at home performed better on reading tests than children who were not exposed to storybook reading at home (LaCour et al., 2011).

Barnes and Puccioni (2017) concur with Mol and Bus (2011) stating the number of times a group reads a book together positively projected reading achievement, implying that mastery of skills like letter recognition, phonemic knowledge, emergent learning, and so on could be linked to frequent exposure to shared book reading. Consequently, Chou and Cheng (2015) found that the

consistency of the parent-child joint reading relationship is more important than the amount. This is in reference to the quality of the conversations that occur naturally between the caregiver and the child during the shared book reading interactions.

Many people may think that toddlers are too young to be read to, or to understand what is being read to them. Even if this were to be true, there is a point when the infant will mature and will eventually understand what the caregiver is reading to them. Even when they do not understand, when a parent or caregiver interacts with a child during read alouds, special relationships are formed (Holland, 2008).

Barone (2011) discovered that the presence of book reading at home and by parents has a positive impact on children's literacy development at home and at school. It is also important that the caregiver try to read books that the children are interested in. A child will develop strong passions in topics that concern them, and these subjects will take up the majority of their mental space (Chou & Cheng, 2015). Children's participation in collaborative reading, both verbally and nonverbally, is seen as critical to their involvement with books and reading, as well as their learning about language and the environment in general (Torr, 2020).

Children benefit from mutual attention through shared storybook reading experiences with adults, which helps set the groundwork for later language and social skills (O'Fallon et al., 2020). Larragueta and Ceballos-Viro (2018) agree that when we tell stories and read aloud, we expose students to the world of literature and it instills a love of reading in them.

Parent-child bonding, cultivating a lifelong love of reading, and learning to maintain focus are all benefits of shared storybook reading (Flack et al., 2018). In this time of attention disorders, this may be something that can be used, without a medical diagnosis, to help maintain young children's attention and to help them learn about paying attention as an action, both physically and mentally. Murray et al. (2016) concur that book-sharing was successful in supporting children's language learning and consistent focus for the caregivers of 14-16-month-olds.

Listening is an essential aspect of learning. Listening to others teaches us many things (Ediger, 2015). It is through these joint reading/listening activities, that children are exposed to oral language, which is another tool for learning language and boosting reading habits. Reading aloud is often viewed as the single most critical thing adults can do to help young children develop emergent literacy skills (Gettinger & Stoiber, 2018).

Literacy games such as story book reading, singing rhymes, and storytelling are used by certain communities on a regular basis. Common literacy activities are the term used to describe these activities (Brown et al., 2012). When adults think about their own experiences with reading, these are usually the time of memories they have. Bedtime reading, telling stories around a campfire, or at dinner time, are examples of traditional literacy activities.

A child who enjoys reading stories or learning letters is more likely to request this practice often and to participate more fully (Carroll et al., 2019). Wagner (2020) observed that children develop more nuanced conceptions of reading as their

encounters with it expand, including texts, letters, and vocabulary, as well as similar ideas and activities like intonation and mutual readings.

Not only is it beneficial for children to interact while shared book reading is happening. Children's efforts during book sharing have predicted their ability to tell stories independently a year later. Their abilities go beyond language ability, and they can tell stories of their own (Luo et al., 2014). This means that the skills they learn with their caregiver carry over to times when they are independently working with literacy.

An immersive read-aloud is where an adult and a child share a book together. The parent reads the book to the child and encourages them to participate in the game (Justice et al., 2015). This is a part of dialogic reading, that involves both the adult and the child for the growth of the child's literary experience. Lennox (2013) explained how read-alouds are related to children's overall academic performance, literacy skills, and participation in reading and writing, particularly when dialogic techniques are used.

The aim of interactive book-reading approaches is to strategically and deliberately involve children in telling and debating the story's characters, incidents, and vocabulary (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2011). Some things that children can do, in order for them to be active participants during the book reading is, identifying and touching pictures, turning covers, joining in with common rhymes, and verbalizing in response to questions and remarks from adults (Torr, 2019).

The act of an adult reading aloud to a young child and having engaging interactions with them has been linked to children's early language and literacy growth (Son & Tineo, 2016). Mem Fox (2013) says that listening to an adult read aloud fosters the captivating interaction with books, tales, rhymes, and songs that every child must have before formal reading instruction can begin.

Some techniques adult readers should incorporate while sharing books, along with dialogic reading, should include, using pictures to describe, providing dictionary meanings before readings, asking questions during readings, and/or using music (Flack et al., 2018). Some other suggestions for caregivers/readers during shared reading are to, ask questions, explain things, and offer prompts Encourage children's spontaneous responses and contributions, highlight story structure elements, construct vocabulary, improve comprehension, and/or describe the subject and main concept. (What Works Clearinghouse, 2015).

Narrative comprehension is one of the most nuanced human talents, but it is also one of the first skills to emerge in the mind of a young person (Braid & Finch, 2015). Narrative comprehension is a fancy way of stating that young children understand stories that are told to them by their caregivers, or that are read aloud.

Whether or not they are thought to be beneficial, Justice et al. (2010) observed that print-focused read-alouds continue to be a research-backed practice that has a net positive effect on children's literacy success. There is simply too much evidence to support and encourage caregivers to spend valuable time reading aloud to their

children. Not only is this time together beneficial for the child, it strengthens the bond between them.

Canfield et al. (2020) found that at 18 months, shared book reading was linked to changes in perceived and confirmed maternal warmth and sensitivity, as well as a reduction in parenting stress. This is great news for all of those stressed out caregivers. It is never easy to raise a child. It is critical for caregivers to understand that there are ways to lessen some of the stress they may be experiencing. Reading with an infant may not seem that important, but the results are irrefutable.

Dialogic Reading Through Phonological Awareness. Vally et al. (2015) and What Works Clearinghouse (2010) both explain dialogic reading can also be called interactive reading. That may be an easier term to explain how adults steer children to open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions, extend their responses by repeating them, and affirm their responses based on the child's needs (Altinkaynak, 2019).

The most important part of the interaction between the responsive caregiver and their child is to make sure that they are interacting with them. It is not simply a time to read something and not ask questions, make comments, and ask for input from their child. Dialogic, or interactive reading is a time for the child to be very involved during their shared reading time. Children's enjoyment of reading, print principles, parent-child reading behaviors, and parental attitudes toward shared storybook reading all benefit from dialogic reading (Pillinger & Wood, 2014). Interactive exercises such as naming letters, creating letter sounds, naming shapes and numerals,

and teaching songs and nursery rhymes are examples of reading methods that develop foundational literacy skills (Chen et al., 2012).

Lederer (2018) suggests four stages for caregivers to support shared book reading: “Ready, read, review, and reflect” (p. 217). The steps involves: “1. Have children guess what the story is about before reading. 2. Read the story together. 3. Challenge children to recall story details and the sequence of events. 4. Connect components of the story to personal experiences” (Lederer, p. 217). Of course, this looks similar to the steps that are mentioned for dialogic reading. As with many new experiences, having a strategy with easy to implement steps, makes it easier for responsive caregivers to grow their confidence as they frequently use it with their children.

One of the most important parts of dialogic reading is for the caregiver to focus on phonological awareness. That is a big term for something that good readers do naturally. It is the capacity to recognize the association between tones, letters, sentences, and their spelling (Wiescholek et al., 2018). When caregivers point to a letter, like ‘H’ or ‘h’ that is represented by a picture of a horse, it is natural for the reader to point to the horse, say the word “horse” or maybe “horsy” and make that ‘h’ sound. They may even make that sound repeatedly until the infant mimics them and makes the sound themselves.

Direct teaching is critical for code-related skills such as letter knowledge, phonological memory, and word recognition, while shared storybook reading is especially effective in improving oral language and comprehension skills (Carroll et

al., 2019). Dixon-Krauss et al. (2010), consider four parts to dialogic reading, attention to text, phonological awareness, comprehension/vocabulary, and print awareness/alphabet knowledge. These are basic parts of dialogic reading that responsive caregivers can use to make sure that they are impacting the later reading performance of their children.

Another example of dialogic reading uses the acronym “CROWD, where C = Completion, R=Recall, O=Open-Ended, W=Wh questions, and D=Distancing” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010, p. 2.) It is important to remember volume and nature of language directed at children has an effect on their present and future language development (Hu et al., 2017). After all, the entire purpose for instituting dialogic reading is to increase a child’s emergent literacy.

Preschool children communicating with adults while playing pretend and learning the language skills needed to engage in longer dialogues contributes to greater language systems that lead to later literacy (Terrell & Watson, 2018). It is not just the actual reading that makes a difference. The dialogue, conversations that occur while reading are extremely important as well. Conversations that arise as a result of mutual reading experiences are valued just as much as the reading itself (Curry et al., 2016).

According to the National Center for Education (2018), caregivers should have discussions before, during, and after reading together. It is these conversations that are considered dialogue. When the reader speaks with the child, it is these conversations that impact their emergent literacy skills. Caregivers who used dialogic

book sharing showed a substantial improvement in the number of terms their children grasped as well as a greater increase in the number of words their child could imagine (Vally et al., 2015). During these conversations, caregivers should assist children in breaking down sentences into words, and words into syllables (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2018). A part of dialogic reading that responsive caregivers should pay particular attention to is the separation of syllables for their toddlers.

Children will echo a line of text while correctly pointing to each word as it is spoken, they show signs of recognizing monosyllabic and multisyllabic terms (Mesmer & Williams, 2015). It is easy for adults to identify when a word has only one syllable (mono) or when it has more than one (multi). It will be necessary for the caregiver to point out the different parts of the words while performing dialogic reading behaviors.

Being a responsive caregiver, while reading, means that when these dialogic conversations occur, children are, predicting, problem-solving, and comparing are examples of higher-level reasoning and language skills that can be developed (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2018).

Niklas et al. (2016), list five stages of dialogic reading:

First, the child is encouraged to complete the blank at the end of a sentence when the adult pauses in a meaningful manner. Second, the adult asks questions about the book in order to encourage the child to recall and retell the story. Third is the asking of open-ended questions to encourage dialogue

during the reading of the story. Fourth is the asking of what, why, when, and where questions in order to expand the child's thinking. Finally, the adult links the pictures and the associated vocabulary with the child's personal lived experience. (p. 123)

Early readers that were given a print-rich early childhood atmosphere and educational environments packed with vivid, engaging dialog when they started kindergarten excelled (Massey, 2012).

Another part of the dialogic reading is to make sure that children understand what is being read to them. One idea of how this happens is the schema theory. According to An (2013), in order to understand the world, everything around the child has to be taken into consideration. "Connecting known information to new information takes place through schema" (Pardo, 2004, p. 273). This includes connecting their own past experiences and knowledge with the story they are reading (An, 2013; Küçükoğlu, 2012; McKee, 2016; Yeigh, 2018).

Most teachers know and utilize comprehension strategies to enhance understanding of their students. Some traditional connections are "text-to-text", "text-to-self", and "text-to-world" (Correia & Bleicher, 2008, Mantei & Fahy, 2018; Küçükoğlu, 2012; Yeigh, 2018). These strategies are as they sound: text-to-text means that you connect one book or story to another, text-to-self is when the story is connected to the child personally, and text-to-world is a connection to the world around them.

An example of “text-to-text” might be if you are reading a book and it has a little boy as a character. When you read another book, if it has a little boy character, you can ask the child if they remember the previous character to make a connection between the two. “Text-to-self” is when connections are made between the story and the child. For example, if your child is wearing a red shirt, or owns a red shirt, and a character is wearing a red shirt, then you can make a connection between the two. “Text-to-world” is when connections are made between the child and the world around them. In a rural area many children see cows. If they are looking at a book with cows, they can make a connection from the book to the cows they see in their world.

A new connection has recently been determined based on the ever-changing field of technology: “Text-to-Web” (Yeigh & Cherner, 2018). Think about connections in the existing world around us and communications between us. A very high percentage of people own and operate cellular phones that double as hand held computers. The rapid changes in technology happen so quickly that as soon as someone makes a purchase, it is being replaced by a new and improved model. It is imperative that technology be taken into consideration when thinking of ways to connect children to reading options. The internet is a part of our lives and it is important that we use it to further their knowledge in all areas.

Because technology is interactive and visually appealing, it is critical for parents to strive to reach and maintain their child’s attention with reading in the same way. The easiest way to do that is to use this technology to interact through reading

stories, watching videos of books and authors, looking up additional information, and helping them to make the important connections that technology can provide (Lysenko & Abrami, 2014).

Vocabulary and Comprehension. Some books geared toward the earliest of readers do not have words on their pages. They are wordless picture books. These allow the caregiver and child to create the words of the story, on their own. According to Lubis (2018), if there is no text in the book, students will have more fun and they will be able to create their own understanding of the book, which will enrich their vocabularies. These books are enjoyable for all age groups. It is interesting to see what children will create on their own, in the absence of words. However, at some point, they must learn letters.

Letters that create words (vocabulary) are the basis of all language. With letter knowledge, word knowledge soon follows. Vocabulary awareness serves as a basis for later reading comprehension. Long-term academic achievement depends on the ability to understand written text fluently and correctly (Torr, 2018). Young children cannot understand what they see, as far as text, if they have no word knowledge.

Vocabulary depth is known as a learner's breadth of information about specific words, and it has been linked to students' capacity to comprehend what they read (Hadley et al., 2016). Once children know words, they can comprehend what is read to them and eventually what they read by themselves. Preschoolers who have their parents read to them on a daily basis have a greater repertoire, which has a significant impact on subsequent literacy achievement (Lingwood et al., 2020).

The level of words used by teachers in the presence of preschoolers is linked to potential reading ability (Christopher et al., 2015). When reading to toddlers, every word read is a vocabulary word. Each word has its own special meaning and through dialogic reading, along with other reading strategies, caregivers can directly impact the vocabulary their children learn.

Norris (2017) found early vocabulary development predicts later academic achievement in children as young as two years old. Ylinen et al. (2017) concur that the first two years of a child's life are characterized by rapid vocabulary development. Is there any other way to impart the significance of early vocabulary education?

Some ways to help children learn vocabulary is to draw their focus to a word by pointing to an image, provide a brief explanation, emphasize meaning with a gesture, and use the word in a way other than the narrative (Hadley et al., 2016). This could really work for any part of speech, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and/or adverbs. For example, "let us look at a character's shirt" (noun). The caregiver would point to the picture of a shirt on the page, then explain what a shirt is, then show the child their own shirt, and finally perhaps talk about the child's favorite shirt so they can make a contextual connection.

A method for vocabulary learning is active picture-text matching during joint book reading (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2013). All of these actions make the vocabulary real to the child. Instead of just being a group of words on a page, that group means something and they can make a connection to the vocabulary word with the picture and with their own personal knowledge.

It is also necessary for the caregiver to “use questioning, context, corrective feedback, and explanations” (Kindle, 2010, p. 84). When these added steps are included during read alouds, children learn more than if they are not incorporated. Something else that is often neglected is what to do once the read aloud is over. Kindle suggests including after-reading activities that give students more chances to hear and use target word. It is important for caregivers to have a plan, even very informal, to follow up once the story is over.

The scale of a child's vocabulary predicts school success, behavior control, and even felony prosecutions later in life (Flack et al., 2018). Norris (2017) agrees that by their second year, children with lower vocabularies are at risk for continuing language deficits and difficulties with literacy-related skills.

It is for this reason that caregivers must take vocabulary instruction into the home instead of relying on preschool instruction. Children's sensitivity to vocabulary is increased by reading picture books between the ages of 8 and 36 months, as they are learning to speak quickly (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Once children enter preschool, at the age of three or four, it may be too late for them to get individual vocabulary instruction, as they would get at home.

The semantic basis of both reading accuracy and reading comprehension is vocabulary (Duff et al., 2015). Dooley (2011) explains before they are traditional readers, children make sense from texts. It is this meaning making that turns into comprehension, which is understanding what they are reading, or what is read to them.

Comprehension begins earlier than most educators think. Understanding context starts at birth, with critical caregivers and friends, and continues throughout life (Dooley, 2011). Because of this extremely early start to comprehension, it is even more crucial for caregivers to help emergent readers focus on vocabulary that leads to comprehension, or understanding of text.

Print Awareness Using Picture Books. One critical part of a young child's print comprehension is learning about letters and how they vary from images (Robins et al., 2012). Children must gain simple understandings of basic print principles such as letters, sounds, sentences, and directionality as they learn to read (top, bottom, left, right, first, last) and handle books (Reutzel, 2015).

Preliteracy abilities are made up of a variety of subskills such as alphabet comprehension, phonological understanding, and print awareness. This preliteracy skills serve as the foundation upon which language and literacy skills in kindergarten and beyond are built (Curby et al., 2015). Lonigan et al. (2011) noted oral vocabulary, phonological memory, and print knowledge acquisition of preschool children predicts how much they can learn to read if they are exposed to standardized reading lessons in grade school.

Toddlers pay attention to images of books and their eyes are attracted to them; they even pay attention to the reader's speech and facial gestures (Isabel et al., 2017). Most picture books are filled with color that naturally attract an infant's eye and attention. The easy part is showing the pictures, responsive caregivers must go further

than that by talking about the pictures; pointing out objects and characters on the page, and making sure to maintain their child's attention.

What seems obvious to us, as adults, is the difference between letters and pictures. However, we were all taught at some point that they were not the same thing. Interestingly enough, before they can write or understand individual letters, children make certain distinctions between letters and pictures in their early discussions about them (Robins et al., 2012).

Many parents start reading picture books to their babies as soon as they are born (Montag et al., 2015). There are many different sizes, shapes, colors, lengths, and contents available in the form of picture books. These can also range from inexpensive picture books from a dollar store, to more expensive ones from book stores or online merchants.

In the first three years of childhood, the practice of reading picture books has an effect on language learning (Fletcher & Reese, 2005). Not only should caregivers focus on picture books with words. Sole picture books, without words, tell a story completely or almost entirely by illustrations, with the reader being required to verbalize the story through prioritizing images (Haese et al., 2018). Beltchenko (2016) found storytelling frameworks, reading processes, and visual techniques can be better introduced to readers of all ages by wordless picture books.

Most children love picture books. They are usually colorful and catch their attention right from the cover. However, one study found that if there are too many pictures, children do not learn as many words as when they can concentrate on only

one picture (Flack & Horst, 2016). Just as adults can become overwhelmed when there are too many pictures or pieces of information on a page, so too can young children. Helping children concentrate on the related material by either decreasing the number of images shown concurrently or focusing their attention to the right illustration improves their word learning (Flack & Horst).

Not only should the caregiver focus solely on the pages of the picture book. Everything in the story, from the cover to the endpapers, gives readers something to think about. The elements in the illustrations that the illustrator employs are hints for the reader to remember when they interact with the whole text (Braid & Finch, 2015). Discussing the front and back covers are a great way to interest the child in what might be included in the book. It is a great conversation starter. Picture books enable students to process knowledge in both the visual and verbal channels, which is advantageous to them (Larragueta & Ceballos-Viro, 2018).

Beltchenko (2016) maintains picture books have a deliberate style of minimal text that is not meticulously designed. Each character's mark, dash, text, and posture are meticulously detailed, and each imaginative illustration has significance. Therefore, it is important for caregivers to point out all of the different aspects of the picture books, instead of glossing over the pages to simply get through it.

Ozdemir et al. (2019) found that when children are given descriptive picture books to read, they get more overwhelmed than when they are given narrative ones. For caregivers, this could mean that using picture books that tell a story might catch

and maintain their child's attention better than a picture book that has more educational or instructive content.

Naptime and Bedtime Routines. Routines are important. Any routines have been linked to improved language learning, academic performance, and social-emotional and behavioral processing in children (Mindell & Williamson, 2018). Many caregivers simply do not understand the importance of creating and maintaining positive sleep routines, whether they be during the day or at night.

Another option that many parents have strayed away from is naptime. The impact of daytime naps for children is critical for proper brain development. Many people do not make the time to rest for themselves, or for their children. Horvath and Plunkett (2016) explain for 9 to 16-month-olds, sleep has been found to help with word comprehension and generalization of word meanings. The importance of day time napping cannot be overlooked. Children who took a nap after learning retained the information for at least 24 hours, according to studies of 15-month-olds and preschoolers. Children who did not take a nap after learning did not maintain the information for at least 24 hours (Horvath & Plunkett, 2016).

Naptime is a perfect time for caregivers to continue their influence on emergent literacy with their toddlers. The rate of expected receptive and vocal vocabulary growth was positively correlated with more frequent daytime napping (Horváth & Plunkett, 2016). What that means is that there is a positive link with daytime naps and how toddlers understand and then use vocabulary. Hupbach et al. (2009) found that sleep in the form of naps is more beneficial for toddlers than

bedtime sleep because toddlers remember things with less processing time than older children and even adults.

Another reason for preschoolers to nap is children who take a nap after learning keep the knowledge for at least 24 hours longer than children who do not take a nap after learning (Horváth & Plunkett, 2016). This is powerful evidence that naps are beneficial for young children, not only physically, but mentally as well. The importance of naps for toddlers should never be underestimated. As their minds are developing, they need naps more than ever.

Toddlers and preschoolers are better at recalling visual stimulus positions, behaviors performed on puppets, object-label comparisons, generalizing information of related yet novel stimuli, and predictive word segmentation retention after a nap (Horváth et al., 2017). Naps are not just to give the caregiver a break, this research demonstrates that preschoolers need naps to process and remember what they have learned. Sleep is essential for learning since memories created during learning are more resilient after a time of wakefulness (Sandoval et al., 2017).

It is imperative for caregivers to ensure that toddlers are getting much needed nap time. They must also look to bedtime routines to aid in emergent literacy. Brown et al. (2015) define a bedtime routine as, a series of pre-sleep exercises designed to help a child transition from wakefulness to sleep, usually consisting of a combination of physical and relaxing practices.

According to Kitsaras et al. (2018) the ideal bedtime routine is one that, consistently meets prescribed nap hours for children's ages, incorporates teeth

brushing, and snacks, limits the use of mobile media and television, and incorporates book reading and book swapping practices. No one says it is easy to be a caregiver in the 21st century. In fact, it is difficult with all of the extra sensory items that can be in a house. It is up to the responsive caregiver to acknowledge these distractions and to minimize them as much as possible so that toddlers and preschoolers get the sleep they so desperately need.

Reading, singing, praying, sharing stories, laughing, or even playing a game are all examples of language-based bedtime rituals (Hale et al., 2011). When caregivers initiate and demonstrate these bedtime practices, preschoolers exhibit better cognitive skills (Hale et al.). There are many positive outcomes due to bedtime routines. There are also negative consequences when sleep difficulties occur. Sleep problems have been linked to a variety of cognitive skills in both adults and toddlers, including memory, attention, intellect, information processing, and verbal abilities (Hoyniak et al., 2019). It is important to make sure that children are getting the sleep they need, to combat any negative effects they may face.

Sleep quality, dental health, school success, including school preparation, as well as socio-emotional and cognitive growth, have all been linked to bedtime routines (Kitsaras et al., 2018). Jones and Ball (2014) found that, children whose parents did not adopt sleep behaviors, longer daytime napping accounted for shorter nighttime sleep. This is great news for caregivers who have trouble getting their preschoolers to sleep at night. Whether it is during the day, or at night, sleep is important for the wellbeing and development of young children.

Thinking Outside the Box. Many caregivers limit themselves to bedtime as the only time to interact with their toddlers using literacy. This is simply not the case. Anytime throughout the day can be used to reinforce emergent literacy in their young children. A few of these options can occur during meal/snack time, bath time, playing with toys, and shifting between/among these activities (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2019).

In unstructured learning contexts, a variety of studies have looked at the importance of offering "authentic resources" for literacy participation and growth (Lee, 2017, p. 522). What is truly amazing is that toddlers, "choose to read in order to satisfy their curiosity, involvement, and social interchange, just as older children do" (Lee, p. 521). This happens even though they do not know how to read. They naturally gravitate toward books when given the opportunity.

Children's subsequent sensitive and verbal vocabulary levels can be predicted by their inclusion in prolonged mealtime discussions involving narration and explanatory speaking, as well as sophisticated vocabulary (Degotardi et al., 2016). A simple conversation can help a child to be a better communicator and eventually understand the printed word.

Another time-consuming activity for children and adults is watching television. In an average day, children watch 115 minutes of television (Konca & Koksalan, 2017). The average child begins watching television at the age of nine months, and 40% of children begin watching at the age of three months (Alloway et al., 2014).

Some television shows attempt to adapt picture books for children. Three semiotic resources that are sometimes incorporated are animation, sound effects, and camera movement (Zhang et al., 2016b). There was a tendency for the memorized text to include more detailed, and supplementary, details about the meanings in the plot, which will help children become more mindful of narrative structure, build suspense and expectation, and support their interaction with the story (Zhang et al., 2016b). In this world of increasing technology, children are drawn to cartoons. By using some of the techniques that cartoons use, picture books and perhaps even regular chapter books can become more interesting to children.

There are some negative aspects to television watching. Heavy exposure to entertainment television may have negative consequences for young children, including emotional, academic, social, and physical issues (Nathanson & Rasmussen, 2011). There was a time, not that long ago, when adults would tell children not to sit too close to the television set because it was bad for their eyes. However, this seems to have stopped. It is necessary for responsive caregivers to weigh the negatives against the positives as their children watch television.

Many people have been exposed to educational television. One of the most famous television shows that is considered educational is Sesame Street. The show's overriding aim has been to train young children for formal education since it first aired in 1969, and several research reports indicate that the creators of the show achieve that goal (Cahill & Bigheart, 2016).

In order for caregivers to alleviate some of the negative effects of watching television, they should co-watch and explore topics and problems before and after episodes, then adapt what they've learned to their own experiences with children (Cahill & Bigheart, 2016). For those busy parents who do use the television as a babysitter sometimes, they should try to sit down with their young children and discuss what they have seen. It is through these conversations that some of the negative aspects of television watching can be lessened.

It is important for caregivers to remember reading-aloud TV shows should be seen as a complement to rather than a replacement for the family tradition of joint reading (Zhang et al., 2016a). There is no substitute for the warm reading environment that can be created by the caregiver for their children. However, that may not always be possible. When television must be utilized, it is important to have conversations about what the children have been watching to aid their literary growth.

Idiomorphs, Rhyme, And Repetition. During toddlers' early language learning, idiomorphs are idiosyncratic invented word-like units that they use to respond to common items (Neumann & Neumann, 2012). These made-up words, or parts of words, allow very young children to start to talk about what they are hearing and seeing through literacy, with their caregivers. Some 2-year-olds create their own vocabulary to describe print, allowing them to confidently engage with adults about the print they've found (Neumann & Neumann). One of the most significant benefits of using these created words, or idiomorphs, is that they are personal to the infant (Neumann & Neumann).

Many adults remember nursery rhymes from their childhood. Many of Mother Goose's rhymes have become a part of storytelling history from past generations. "Baa Baa Black Sheep," "Jack and Jill," "Jack Sprat," "Little Miss Muffet," "Little Boy Blue," "Hickory Dickory Dock," "Humpty Dumpty," and "Georgie Porgie" are just to name a few. These small rhymes have the ability to stick in a child's memory and teach them rhyming sounds and words. Rhyme comprehension is one of the first types of phonological awareness to emerge, and it has been linked to early reading abilities (Wagensveld et al., 2012).

Almost all educators believe that preschoolers who are used to rhymes and stories at home are best suited for reading and education (Evans et al., 2016). Kiraly et al. (2017) found children as young as four years old create a preliterate community that relies on memory for rhythm and rhyme in the oral transmission of their culture. The most interesting part of the Kiraly et al.'s study is parents of 4-year-olds and a group of young adults were exposed to the same rhyming verse as the kids.

Before this study, many people thought that adult memory was superior to children's memory (Kiraly et al., 2017). This study found that when it came to recalling a novel rhyming children's poem, four-year-olds outperformed both their peers and young adults (Kiraly et al.). When a random word list was used, the children and adults performed comparably.

Nursery rhymes, poems, and fingerplays, for example, help to cultivate an understanding of rhyme, prosody, and rhythm, which helps to lay a basis for literacy (Terrell & Watson, 2018). If content that is supposed to be learned is coded in verse,

with rhyme as a limiting literary device, children should be able to remember it easily (Kiraly et al., 2017).

An obvious example of educational rhyme is the alphabet song: A, B, C, D, E, F, G (G being the rhyming letter), H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P (P being the rhyming letter), Q, R, S, T, U, V (V being the rhyming letter) W, X, Y, and Z (Z being the rhyming letter). Kiraly et al. (2017) discovered it is this rhyming that helps children to remember what they have learned, and that they might even remember it “better than their teachers” (p. 7).

There is also definite support for repetition, O’Fallon et al. (2020) found that with elaboration showed signs of receptive word comprehension, but words that were only said once did not. Just as with adults, preschoolers learn what words mean when they are repeatedly said, pointed out, and explained. A single exposure to a word, does not work to help preschoolers learn.

Trivette et al. (2012) add that both story-related vocabulary and story-related comprehension were affected by repeated book reading. Many times, when a child enjoys a particular story or book, they ask to read it repeatedly. Young children's descriptive voice, story-related vocabulary, and story understanding improved after repeated book reading episodes (Trivette et al.). It is for these reasons that responsive caregivers should take the time to read a story to their child repeatedly, even if they have already read it hundreds of times before. It is through this repetition that the child is learning.

Another piece of evidence that supports the use of repetition is the research from Korat et al. (2017). Their research focused on children who were exposed to a story using an electronic book that repeated some words and their definitions six times. The most important thing to understand about repetition is that receiving the repeated support six times was more effective than when they received it only three times. This provides supporting evidence that repetition must be something that caregivers practice frequently.

Home Versus School Literacy. Active participation in literacy programs is a significant parallel and longitudinal indicator of literacy success, according to research on preschoolers' literacy environments at home and at school (Christopher et al., 2015). It is necessary for responsive caregivers to make sure that they are interacting with their young children as much as possible in reference to literacy. They need to try to provide as much exposure to reading and reading strategies as possible.

Families may train their children for school assignments and reduce harmful learning outcomes such as poor test scores by aligning home reading activities with school standards (Brown et al., 2019). There is a connection between the skills that children need and their preparation for education. Academic, cognitive, and communication skills, as well as maturity, communication with parents, and developmental areas, all influence children's preparation for education (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2017). School systems and the teachers that work within them cannot be held responsible for the time that children spend with their families from birth to three

years of age. Some, if not all of the responsibility is going to have to fall squarely on the shoulders of the caregivers.

Head Start. As a country, our educational system has tried to address SES learning deficits by creating the Head Start Program. As previously stated, this is a federal program where the youngest community members can attend an educational program that is provided to those who qualify. There are mixed reviews about the effectiveness of Head Start. According to Ramey (2000), children that are in Head Start, in the first four years of their education made strong academic progress on average with the highest gains in the first two years.

However, as with all educational environments, there can be good or bad experiences based on what education is actually taking place. Another impact on the Head Start program are the interactions of parents at home with their children. Parents who are more interested with their children's education may have an effect on the Head Start program's consistency both at home and at school (Biales, 2018).

Other than parental impact, it is also extremely important to pay attention to the quality of the teachers. One of the most important aspects of classroom content seems to be teacher credentials and power (Biales, 2018). Not only are the teacher qualifications important, but closeness reports were also shown to be strongly linked to literacy outcomes (Biales, 2018). According to Ramey (1999), "We must accelerate and broaden our efforts to accomplish the target of publicly accessible, high-quality services that demonstrably benefit children's, families', and society's lives" (p. 346).

Day Care. What if your child does not qualify for a federally funded program like Head Start? Of course, there are going to be children who do not qualify because of SES, but who should be exposed to literacy as early as possible. One option for families who do not qualify for the Head Start program is to enroll their children in a high-quality day-care center. Unfortunately, during typical day care, the teachers are not able to interact with all of their students in a manner that support proper development.

When there are five or more children to one teacher, that teacher's time is consumed with taking care of their physical needs. In accredited centers for toddlers, the average adult-to-toddler ratio is one adult to five toddlers, with groups of ten or more children being standard practice (Murray et al., 2006). When there is one adult to 10 children, they are not going to get the individual attention they need.

Another issue is that the teachers may not have the education to understand they really need to make time to pay attention to the children as individuals. Early childhood education degrees are uncommon for teachers of infant-toddler centers (Murray et al., 2006). Teachers might feel they do not have time to pay individual attention to children who do not seem to understand what they are reading.

Staff members continue to speak to many children at once, restricting their ability to participate in the forms of prolonged interactions that have been found to facilitate language development with particular children (Torr & Pham, 2016). However, research supports that these toddlers are making connections with what they hear and experience (Starting Points, 1994).

Literacy Interventions. There are many intervention options for caregivers of children age zero to five that can be incorporated into their everyday routines. Most guardians want to do what is best for their children. Many of them simply have not been educated on what they need to do to help their toddlers become ready for school. They also might not be aware of the link between the literacy they are exposed to before school with their later achievement in school. Identifying skills of prereaders that anticipate future reading standards may help researchers better understand why children's later reading abilities differ, as well as how to help children who are at risk of future reading difficulties. (Christopher et al., 2015).

According to Dr. Honig (2014), toddlers need to be cuddled on a caregiver's lap, and be read to, even though they will not understand the words. Honig states that caregivers should be using "self-talk, parallel talk, and open-ended questions" to help young children think more, and then be able to better express themselves (p. 30).

It is easy for caregivers to ask yes or no questions to their children. These closed end questions do not allow for any kind of extended thinking on the part of the child. With coaching, caregivers can learn how to change their questioning techniques. Early exposure to books can lay the groundwork for the development of language, self-control, and phonological knowledge, all of which are important for later reading success (Gardner-Neblett et al., 2017).

Many caregivers already know that picture books, or books that are mostly pictures, are more appropriate for toddlers. One study used picture books not only to engage them in learning, but actually taught the caregivers about toddler development

using the same picture books (Albarran & Reich, 2014). Educational knowledge about normal infant growth and optimal parental behaviors are embedded in baby books (Albarran & Reich, 2014). This is a noteworthy study, and something that could be used in future interventions to educate caregivers, while they read to their preschoolers.

Along with instruction embedded in picture books, teaching caregivers how to speak and interact with the toddlers is also crucial.

Dialogic reading refers to adults' use of evocative or interactive behaviors during book sharing with their child, including following the child's interest, asking open-ended questions, repeating and expanding on child's responses, and providing praise and encouragement of the child's participation. Book sharing programmes are associated with the greatest gains in infants' language skills. (Cooper et al., 2014, p. 2013)

It is this type of reading that allowed some low SES children to become more proficient than other children who were not exposed to it. It is likely that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, will benefit from home literacy experiences that encourage the growth of language and literacy skills (Bennett et al., 2002).

When children participate in this kind of talk/reading strategy, they actually perform at higher and complex levels in English literature (van der Veen et al., 2016). It is also important to note, early parenting programs adopted during the first two years of a child's life in developing countries are maintained longitudinally to improve social abilities in preschoolers (Obradovic et al., 2016).

Lingwood et al. (2020) explain trending strategies, especially shared reading interventions that teach caregivers to have discussions about what could be occurring in the book rather than merely reading the text, may be successful in improving children's language. Those conversations are part of dialogic reading that has been previously discussed. Children who underwent small group conversational literacy, linguistic sensitivity, or letter recognition therapies grew faster than children who did not receive these interventions (Lonigan et al., 2013).

While caregivers are interacting with toddlers during reading they should also pay attention to vocabulary. The basis for domain-specific understanding and later reading comprehension, is vocabulary. It is at the forefront of oral language comprehension (Marulis & Neuman, 2010). This type of speaking with children, while reading with them, is crucial. Children's language is improved by interventions that teach parents to enable their children to speak about the images in a book, while children's story talk is improved by interventions that teach parents to encourage their children to share richer tales (Reese et al., 2010).

Knowing the vital importance of the power that reading with children provides; instruction should be given to all caregivers for them to become successful in their later school years and on into their adult lives. According to Bus et al. (1995), language development, emergent learning, and reading success are all linked to parent-preschooler book reading.

In order for parents to be able to interact with their children effectively, they need to become more responsive to their needs. When parents are responsive to their

children, from the time they are born, toddlers have more successful results in both their academic and social lives (Landry et al., 2001). Reese et al. (2010) found using specific types of questions to follow up on the child's conversation, reinforcing and building on the child's utterances, and using affirmation and motivation are also standard strategies. These strategies provide a basis for responsive caregivers to utilize each day with their child.

Questioning is another avenue that needs to be a focus for caregivers. In order to be considered responsive, the child must react to the stimuli provided. The caregiver must also respond to their children in a positive manner, show interest in what they are doing, and promptly meet their needs (Landry et al., 2001). Early childhood responsiveness that was stable projected higher rates of cognitive and social development than responsiveness that was inconsistent or low (Landry et al., 2003). When caregivers are more responsive, children begin to feel that they are respected and loved (Guttentag et al., 2014).

Another phrase that is similar to responsive parenting is sensitive parenting. When parents are sensitive to the needs of their children, by paying attention to their toddlers, naming things surrounding them, speaking with them, encouraging them to speak, and truly just allow their children to enjoy language in a comfortable space, they have better rates of development than those children who are not exposed in this more sensitive manner (Barnett et al., 2012). It is this nurturing environment that parents can give their children, which has been shown to help them understand more

vocabulary words, and understand what they are reading when they get to elementary school (Van Voorhis et al., 2013).

It is important to note when families are in a lower SES class, caregivers are not usually very responsive. In fact, according to Stock (2002) this group of caregivers allow their children less chances to talk, make more demands, and ask fewer questions. For this reason alone, caregivers must be taught how to interact with their toddlers, especially if they come from a more restricted financial situation.

Another strategy for caregivers can be as simple as talking with their children while they are watching the television. One study found that when adults watch television with their children and interact with them, the negative effects of the media can be lessened while the child's language development can actually be stimulated (Mendelsohn et al., 2010). This is especially important for those toddlers as they tend to experience more media exposure because of their lower SES (Mendelsohn et al., 2010). In some cases, caregivers can be provided prompts to support their child's literacy development. Caregivers can learn how to talk to their children while they are watching television, so it can become a learning experience, which is active, instead of just sitting, which is passive.

Finally, the power of community resources cannot be overlooked. Local libraries and school systems as well as preschools, daycare, and other resources can provide much needed support to caregivers. Many library programs exist to stimulate the youngest members of society. Story hour, or story time, is a local option for many community members. Peterson et al. (2012) attest that library programs have had

success encouraging kids to learn and getting them ready for kindergarten.

Participating children displayed a knowledge of language rhymes and sounds, acquired new vocabulary, and demonstrated comprehension of narratives read by library staff. This is powerful evidence that library services should be used by caregivers to help their children in ways they may not be capable.

Any parents may be hesitant to use such facilities or visit "third places" such as libraries or community centers. As a result, it's important to schedule meetings at a reasonable time and in a familiar location – their child's nursery (Lingwood et al., 2020, p. 264). It is imperative to make sure that any interventions caregivers seek can be provided at times and places that are convenient for them and their families. When school systems can offer family reading interventions within a school setting, caregivers may feel more comfortable getting involved.

Future Outcomes with Media and Technology. Society should not think that the only way to literacy for young children is through the literal printed word from a book. Children, even before they learn to talk, are very comfortable with technology (Harrison & McTavish, 2018). Digital entertainment on portable media, mostly portable and mobile in the immediate environment, is increasingly displacing traditionally built sports, novels, and instructional television programs (Bus et al., 2020).

We do not serve the best interests of children who are at risk when we insist that their access to the most valuable of all preliteracy resources, rhymes and stories, must be mediated via an adult reader who, experience compels us to

conclude, has been and will remain absent for most of these children. (Evans et al., 2016, p. 223)

Children's technology use, including not just the amount of time spent but also the quantity and content of time spent as well as parental interest in technology use, can all be analyzed as contextual factors to determine the impact of media consumption (Altun et al., 2019). Children's experiences with tablets and other portable gadgets at home offer opportunities for exploration, learning, and ingenuity that are not available at school (Harrison & McTavish, 2018).

According to Harrison and McTavish (2018), “75% of children in the US have access to mobile devices at home and 63% have access to smartphones” (p. 164). It is through this access that more and more young children, including toddlers, can be exposed to literacy. Literacy no longer stands for physical books. Neuman et al. (2019) explained in recent years children aged 8 and younger have spent an average of 48 minutes a day watching screen video on handheld devices.

In the grand scheme of things, 48 minutes may not seem like that much. However, that could be 48 minutes of educational instruction that young children could pay attention to versus 48 minutes that they ignore. New ways of literacy, such as those used in computer and video games, the Internet, electronic toys, email, and chat rooms, are available to children born in the 21st century on a daily basis (Harrison & McTavish, 2018).

An increasing variety of baby media devices, aimed at infants as young as three months old claim to teach babies to learn (Neuman et al., 2014). It is the

responsibility of responsible and responsive caregivers to not be deceived by these kinds of media products. Neuman et al. (2014) found despite some parents' high trust in the program's success, results showed that babies did not learn to read using baby media. Even though it is not possible to teach infants how to read, digital tales, when well-designed, can aid in the acquisition of new vocabulary and understanding of stories (Neuman et al., 2019).

Families have adopted emerging innovations that integrate print-based materials with expressive and responsive applications, such as computers and cell phones. Techno-literacy is a term used to describe this form of literacy (Brown et al., 2012). Not only is technology acceptable for teaching students. It is also a way that parents can learn these strategies to implement with their children, as well as to monitor themselves.

Reading electronic books encourages conventional literacy skills and is predominantly beneficial for vocabulary growth (Cahill & McGill-Franzen, 2013). This is a wonderful way for children to be introduced to literacy and for caregivers, who may not be that comfortable with literacy, to feel more comfortable. The engagement of young children with improved digital books improves their ability to communicate and comprehend through modes and channels, a process known as trans-literacy growth (Cahill & McGill-Franzen, 2013). When opposed to static images, video and realistic-based simulations will have significant learning benefits (Broemmel et al., 2015).

Sound, animation, zooming in/out effects, and touch-initiated input in multimedia have the potential to enable children to independently receive rich sensory knowledge and effectively render sense of words and story material (Zhou & Yadav, 2017).

Video technology has become an open and highly useful platform for optimizing learning by encouraging learners to screen videos of themselves and criticize their own practice as it has become technologically sophisticated, compact, and affordable (Guttentag, 2014). It is difficult to know whether a person is performing reading strategies correctly or not, if they have not seen themselves actually implementing the strategies with their children.

With the ease of cell phone use, which usually have excellent cameras, caregivers can record and then watch themselves while trying out reading strategies for their toddlers. Another positive aspect of this is that it can be completely private. There is no embarrassment when the caregiver is able to watch and correct themselves from their own personal video. Another technology that cell phones provide is text messaging.

Cabell et al. (2019) discovered when caregivers were sent texts that promoted language and reading experiences in the form of everyday family activities, children did benefit. Many people set reminders on their phones, for a multitude of reasons. There are many families who have access to text messaging through cell phones or through email. It is interesting that sending encouraging text messages to families, focused on literacy, directly impacted the literacy of their children.

Reading skills are important for academic achievement, and they have become even more so as careers have moved away from service and industrial jobs and more into technological and informational jobs (Lonigan et al., 2013). Even jobs that once were considered “hands-on” such as mechanics or plumbing, now have a growing aspect of increased technology.

Elementary School Connection to High School Graduation. During primary school, children go through a crucial transition: most students are able to read before the end of third grade. Students, on the other hand, begin reading to learn in fourth grade (Lesnick et al., 2010; Fiester, 2010; & Hernandez, 2011). If students do not have a strong foundation in reading by third grade, they will most certainly struggle with reading throughout their academic careers.

It is at this point that readers and non-readers are separated in school, and receive interventions necessary for their reading success. However, Lesnick et al. (2010) also found 75% of students who were reported as having reading difficulties in third grade also suffered with reading in ninth grade. This means if those students received any type of reading interventions, they did not work. The percentage of children who did not complete school increased to 26% because they could not read proficiently in third grade. This is about six times the average of all proficient readers (Hernandez, 2011).

According to Fiester (2010), since millions of American children do not learn to read proficiently by fourth grade, the pool on which businesses, schools, and the military draw is thin and continues to diminish. As a result, these children are on the

verge of dropping out. Everyone knows that doing the same thing, in the same way, will produce the same results. Why then is the American system of education not changing? When considering the above-mentioned research, it would seem that reading instruction in the primary grades, pre-school through third grade, would be the most important job for teachers.

Hernandez (2011) adds that one out of every six students who are unable to read proficiently in third grade will not complete high school on time, a figure four times higher than proficient readers. Individually, a high school dropout's median annual salary in 2007 was \$23,000, compared to \$48,000 for those with a bachelor's or higher degree (Fiester, 2011). Not only should we think about the impact that novice readers have on the economy of the United States as a whole, we must consider what this does to these children when they become adults and cannot hope to become productive members of society.

Abecedarian Project. One of the most famous longitudinal studies about the impact of childcare on adolescence, and as a precursor to adulthood, came from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The Abecedarian Project (AP). In this study, gains in cognitive test scores and better academic achievement was observed up to the age of 15 (Campbell et al., 2001).

The main strength of the project is how low-income youth started a highly specialized child care intervention when they were toddlers. Fundamentally, the AP started in 1972, and the subjects were identified as “at risk” before they were even born (Ramey & Others, 1974). This allowed them to be targeted from birth, not when

they were older. “The mean age of subjects was 4.4 months (Campbell et al., 2012, p. 1034).

Other projects have not shown the longevity that the AP has, in fact, this means that beginning care for vulnerable children before the age of three years may have made a difference in the impact on cognitive development's long-term persistence (Campbell et al., 2001). If you look up the project online, you can see that not only were data points taken early, they were also taken at the ages of 5, 8, 12, 15, 21, 30, and 35.

Ramey and Farran (1983) states two important conclusions from the AP. Early intervention may be one of the most significant environmental determinants of intelligence in high-risk children. Systematic educational daycare starting in infancy may prevent decreases in assessed intelligence during early adolescence, and may be one of the most important environmental determinants of intelligence in high-risk children (Ramey & Farran). Not only were the effects of the AP noticeable at the age of 15, as has been previously stated but by the age of 30, the AP-treated population outperformed the control group in terms of educational attainment (Campbell et al., 2012).

The subjects were almost five times more likely to have earned a college degree, worked, and not have received public assistance (Campbell et al., 2012). The implications of this study are enormous! Some other benefits for the subjects of the AP were: they received more money, were more likely to buy their own houses, were

less likely to access social assistance, and were less likely to have been incarcerated than the control group (Campbell & Pungello, 2000).

The evidence from this program clearly demonstrates that the AP is an example of one of the few effective early detection interventions that has had a greater and longer-lasting impact on intelligence test scores than Head Start (Spitz, 1997). Something worth noting about the AP project is the fact parents were shown how to use materials so they could reinforce the information their children were receiving during the day (Campbell & Ramey, 1991).

Why Early Introduction to Literacy Matters. Preschool-aged children's literacy ability predict primary grade reading skills, indicating that the antecedents of reading skills are developed in the early childhood years (Altun et al., 2018). Fletcher and Reese (2005) explain children who do not learn to read early in their school careers are at risk of being held behind in class and being placed in special education.

In many places, as in Lincoln County, Kentucky, it is the low income, low SES students who seem to be the most at-risk. Fiester (2010) determined low-income fourth-graders who fail to reach NAEP's proficient reading standard today are all too likely to become our country's lowest-income, least-skilled, least-productive, and most expensive people tomorrow.

Many seventh graders are coming to school unprepared. So are many sixth, fifth, fourth graders, and so on. It seems that educators are constantly passing the buck. Once they blame the grade before, they eventually end up blaming the parents, guardians, and/or caregivers. Some call this the "trickle-down effect." "Since the

standard of children's early, informal education varies greatly, they enter school with a diverse set of cognitive abilities, which can persist into later school years” (Niklas et al., 2015, p. 122).

Instead of playing the blame game, it is time to do something about educating these adults and families, so children can begin to learn about literacy from the moment they become a presence on this planet. Not only does this exposure to early literacy help children succeed at school, it can also help them contribute more to their communities as they mature into adulthood.

Summary

Caregivers must communicate to their toddlers through the use of literacy. It is clear that no matter what child care they choose, early literacy exposure has an impact on the rest of their academic careers. Time must be set aside for them to interact with their children using reading materials and strategies that will impact them.

When Will the Capstone be Implemented?

The implementation of this capstone required a lot of planning and cooperation between various organizations.. The target participants, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, will be sought from the Lincoln County Health Department, The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, along with the Lincoln County School District through the Family Resource Centers. Target caregivers will be mailed invitations to participate. A notice will also be put in the local newspaper and announced on the local radio station, WPBK. Even though there

is a target audience in mind, this series of presentations is for any interested caregiver of young children, or anyone else who would like to participate.

Once invitations have been issued, and RSVPs have been recorded, times will be reserved at the Lincoln County Library for the four presentations. The times for the presentations will occur in the early evening, approximately six to seven p.m., since that should work better for parents who work during the day. However, if there is enough interest, a possible daytime series could be offered. Each session will be scheduled for approximately one hour. Depending on the amount of discussion, they could last past or before that estimate.

Who is the Capstone Meant to Impact?

For caregivers that are looking to stimulate their child's brain at a young age, there are not many options. An online search led to a discovery of what early literacy interaction strategies resources caregivers could access. The search yielded an old used example "Creative Curriculum Learning Games: Birth-12 months." The pictures are out of date, as is the wording (Sparling & Dodge, 2008). In our society, old things are not valued. A modern presentation that looks new, uses more recent vernacular, and will appeal to the technology consumers that are now caregivers to many toddlers in our community.

A series of presentations have been created for caregivers so they can learn how to interact with their children through literacy. Ultimately, this will be presented in an information workshop environment utilizing local community buildings. Through the aforementioned community resources, food and babysitting services will

be provided for free. During these presentations, there will be time for caregivers to practice the literacy strategies with their children in a stress-free area. During caregiver practice, it will be crucial to circulate to make sure that caregivers feel they have access if a question arises. Free board books and small reference posters will be provided for practice at home.

There are many examples of research on the topic of infant brain stimulation. Naming objects and individuals in the first year of life has an impact on both perceptual and semantic growth, enabling infants to create associations between words and objects in their visual environment (Pickron et al., 2018). The bond and connection between caregiver and child, the early, lasting, and intensity is what sets the difference in a child's individual differences in the brain (Bernier et al., 2016). One of the most distressing pieces of information explains how the brain of children who are not stimulated, actually shrink, as compared to those of infants who are stimulated (Ounce of Prevention Fund, 1996). It is imperative for those of us in education to make as much of an impact on the lives of students, as early as possible, so that they can become successful students which will hopefully lead to their success in society.

Context of the capstone. According to the latest data from the United States Census Bureau (2021), Lincoln County has a total population of 24,549. Ninety-six percent of those citizens are White. The median household income is \$39,833, which accounts for the 20.6% of the population of persons in poverty. While 78.2% of the

population has graduated from high school, only 11.1% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

On average, students come from a low socioeconomic background. The school district qualifies for all students to receive free breakfast and lunch on a daily basis, called Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Lincoln County is on the third year in the cycle, (four years are a cycle). For a school to qualify there must be at least 65% of students who qualify for free. All of the district schools qualified. Lincoln County was at 96% free and 4 percent paid and now this year, which started a new cycle, is at 98% free and 2 percent paid (Hettmansperger, 2020).

According to the Lincoln County DPP Diana Hart (2020), a current concern is the number of students in the county who are being homeschooled. When homeschool is accountable and enforced it is a positive aspect of education. However, many caregivers in our county use it as a way for older students to drop out of school, and younger students to stay at home with minimal education. Many caregivers in this county do not understand the importance of early literacy exposure. They need a resource that will provide them with valid literacy strategies they can implement in their own homes and will not cost them a lot of time or money.

How was the Capstone Project Developed?

The completed capstone project consists of four presentations comprised of literacy information and strategies for caregivers.

Step 1

The first developmental step for this capstone was to brainstorm and research information about literacy that would make the biggest impact with caregivers. It is important to provide education about beliefs and attitudes, so that they can recognize and address them when interacting with their children. They must establish literacy routines that include book-sharing and dialogic reading while using a predictable routine in their home environment. It is imperative for them to understand the concrete stage of development and how picture books can stimulate infant-caregiver interactions. Understanding how this affects the academic future of their toddlers is one of the most important reasons for the creation of this capstone. These presentations are intended to provide support that will enrich the lives of the children in Lincoln County and will allow them to achieve at a higher academic level once they are in school.

Step 2

The second developmental step for this capstone was to draft the “Boosting Toddlers’ Brains” (BTB) Power Point Presentations. The presentations needed to contain the literacy research from Step 1, but not be overwhelming to caregivers. Therefore, it was necessary to use attractive font, add colorful pictures, and use plain language when possible.

Step 3

Once drafted, the BTB presentations were shared with two educators who have toddlers. Their suggestions were taken into consideration and applied throughout the revising and editing process.

Why Were This Capstone and Related Strategies Selected?

At no time in our recent history has online communication been more important. It is imperative for caregivers of toddlers to be educated on the importance that early literacy strategies play in the lives of the toddlers in their charge.

The BTB presentations can be printed off and dropped off at locations or mailed to homes. Also, by placing the strategies from the presentations as well as the actual presentation slides online on a website, all barriers have been removed. Whether caregivers choose to get a physical paper copy, or to just download a pdf copy, they can easily have the strategic literacy information they need.

Impact of the Capstone

This capstone is intended to bridge the gap in early childhood reading levels. By educating caregivers on how to interact with their children, using literacy in the home, they will be able to read better than their classmates who did not receive this literacy intervention.

Toddlers who experience cuddling while being read to, who listen to the caregivers' self-talk, and who are asked open-ended questions experience more brain stimulation. It is through this brain stimulation that neurons are activated and toddlers learn.

By learning more literacy practices at such an early age, when the toddlers go to school, they will be able to understand the work at their grade level. No longer will Kindergarten teachers be required to focus on remedial instruction, because these young children will already be capable of understanding basic literacy requirements.

Capstone Project

Overview of Presentations

Each of the capstone's presentations focus on specific research-based reading strategies caregivers can easily use with their children. The Boosting Toddlers' Brains presentations do not have specific formal titles, other than Presentation 1-4. Each lesson is designed to teach caregivers reading strategies, give them time to practice in a relaxed atmosphere, and check for understanding. The overall focus of each lesson will be to learn a strategy or two the participant can immediately take home and implement. Each participant will receive a board book at each presentation to use while they are there and to take home at the end of the night.

Each of the presentations are discussed in its section following this overview. After reviewing the summaries of each lesson, the presentations with presenter's notes can be found in the Appendix section.

Boosting Toddlers' Brains Presentation 1

Time. Approximately one hour, depending on the length of discussion, practice time, and questions.

Points of Emphasis. One of the most important aspects of teaching caregivers about reading strategies is to start with those that will not intimidate them. Each

family lives in their own personal environment. This presentation includes reading materials they may have on hand that they can use with their children. Home Literacy Environment will be the first topic discussed and practiced.

The second strategy will focus on literacy routines including book sharing and read alouds. Examples will be given and caregivers will have ample time to practice. Many caregivers have experience with these strategies. They may already utilize them with their children, or they may remember if they were used when they were children themselves. Most adults already understand how to share books with their children while reading aloud to them.

Finally, the last strategy in this first presentation that will be explained is dialogic, otherwise known as interactive, reading.

Necessary Materials for Implementation.

- Enough age appropriate board books for families of young children (approximately 30).
- Computer with projector and screen for capstone presentations.
- Seats for caregivers and their child(ren).
- Printed handouts of notes from presentations for families to take home as reminders.
- Aldi Grocery Flyers for each family.

Presentation Layout.

1. Participants will be welcomed to the presentation. “Ten Tiny Babies” will be playing on the screen as families get settled.

2. As families arrive, they will be encouraged to pick up a board book and an Aldi grocery flyer from a table near the door.
3. Once there has been ample time for families to arrive, the facilitator will introduce themselves and explain the basics of the capstone.
4. The three goals for the first presentation will be to learn about: Home Literacy Environment (HLE), Literacy Routines / Book Sharing / Read Alouds, and Dialogic / Interactive Reading.
5. HLE will be the first focus area. After it is explained, examples will be given and then caregivers will have an opportunity to practice with a flyer on the screen or in their hand.
6. Literacy routines will be the second focus area. After they are explained, examples will be given and then there will be a brief discussion of families' experiences.
7. The final strategy will be focused on dialogic or interactive reading. It will be explained, a video will be watched, examples will be given, and caregivers will be given plenty of time to practice with their children.
8. To conclude the event, caregivers will be given time to ask questions and have a time for discussion. The facilitator will thank them for their attendance.

Boosting Toddlers' Brains Presentation 2

Time. Approximately one hour, depending on the length of discussion, practice time, and questions.

Points of Emphasis. One of the most important aspects of teaching caregivers about reading strategies is to start with their role and the importance of their involvement while reading with their children.

The second strategy will focus on infant brain development research which is ever changing to include the many ways that the brain develops from birth to three.

The third strategy will focus on labeling and expanding while reading. Before children can read, it is important for them to understand letters, numbers, colors, etc. when they are labeled and then expanded upon.

Finally, the last strategy in this second presentation that will be explained is open ended questioning.

Necessary Materials for Implementation.

- Enough age appropriate board books for families of young children (approximately 30).
- Computer with projector and screen for capstone presentations.
- Seats for caregivers and children.
- Printed handouts of notes from presentations for families to take home as reminders.

Presentation Layout.

1. Participants will be welcomed to the presentation. “Your Baby’s First Word Will Be Dada” will be playing on the screen as families get settled.
2. As families arrive, they will be encouraged to pick up a board book from a table near the door.

3. Once there has been ample time for families to arrive, the facilitator will introduce themselves and explain the basics of the capstone.
4. The strategies from the first presentation will be briefly touched on and reviewed.
5. The four goals for the second presentation will be to learn about: Responsive Caregivers, Infant Brain Development, Labeling / Expanding, and Open-Ended Questions.
6. Responsive caregivers will be the first focus area. After it is explained, examples will be given and then caregivers will watch a video.
7. Infant brain development will be the second focus area. After it is explained, examples will be given and then there will be a brief discussion of families' experiences.
8. The third strategy that will be focused on is labeling and expanding. It will be explained, examples will be given, and caregivers will be given plenty of time to practice using the example on the screen and the board book with their children.
9. The final strategy that will be focused on is open ended questions. It will be explained, examples will be given, a video will be watched, and caregivers will be given plenty of time to practice using the example on the screen and the board book with their children.

To conclude the event, caregivers will be given time to ask questions and have a time for discussion. The facilitator will thank them for their attendance.

Boosting Toddlers' Brains Presentation 3

Time. Approximately one hour, depending on the length of discussion, practice time, and questions.

Points of Emphasis. Many toddlers create their own sounds or words that represent objects. These are called idiomorphs and are important to early understanding of literacy. A video will be shown and a brief discussion will follow.

The second strategy will focus on book sharing and read alouds. Examples will be given and caregivers will have ample time to practice. Many caregivers have experience with these strategies. They may already utilize them with their children, or they may remember if they were used when they were children themselves. Most adults already understand how to share books with their children while reading aloud to them.

Finally, the last strategy in this third presentation that will be explained is making connections to text using 'text-to-text', 'text-to-self', 'text-to-world', and 'text-to-media' strategies.

Necessary Materials for Implementation.

- Enough age appropriate board books for families of young children (approximately 30).
- Computer with projector and screen for capstone presentations.
- Seats for caregivers and children.
- Printed handouts of notes from presentations for families to take home as reminders.

Presentation Layout.

1. Participants will be welcomed to the presentation. “Goodnight Duggee” will be playing on the screen as families get settled.
2. As families arrive, they will be encouraged to pick up a board book from a table near the door.
3. Once there has been ample time for families to arrive, the facilitator will introduce themselves and explain the basics of the capstone.
4. The strategies from the first two presentations will be briefly touched on and reviewed.
5. The three goals for the third presentation will be to learn about: Idiomorphs, book sharing, read alouds, and text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-media connections.
6. Idiomorphs will be the first focus area. After it is explained, examples will be given and a video will be watched.
7. Book sharing and read alouds will be the second focus area. After they are explained, examples will be given and then there will be a brief discussion of families’ experiences.
8. The final strategy will be focused on making connections with the text. The four connections will be explained, examples will be given, and caregivers will be given plenty of time to practice with their children.
9. To conclude the event, caregivers will be given time to ask questions and have a time for discussion. The facilitator will thank them for their attendance.

Boosting Toddlers' Brains Presentation 4

Time. Approximately one hour, depending on the length of discussion, practice time, and questions.

Points of Emphasis. One of the most important aspects of teaching caregivers about reading strategies is to make the reading easily accessible, by using picture books. No matter what the adult reading level is, picture books are easy to use to communicate with their children.

The second strategy will focus on letter sound and shape recognition. Letters are the building blocks of reading. Their sound and shape have to be reinforced as much as possible by caregivers.

The third strategy will focus on rhyme. Rhyme is a basic element of memory. When things rhyme they are easier to remember and easier to share with others.

Finally, the last strategy in this fourth and final presentation is repetition. No one can learn something on the first try. It is especially important to repeat as much as possible with children so that they can learn.

Necessary Materials for Implementation.

- Enough age appropriate board books for families of young children (approximately 30).
- Computer with projector and screen for capstone presentations.
- Seats for caregivers and children.
- Printed handouts of notes from presentations for families to take home as reminders.

- List of age appropriate picture books for families to take home.

Presentation Layout.

1. Participants will be welcomed to the presentation. “Good Night Moon” will be playing on the screen as families get settled.
2. As families arrive, they will be encouraged to pick up a board book from a table near the door.
3. Once there has been ample time for families to arrive, the facilitator will introduce themselves and explain the basics of the capstone.
4. The strategies from the first three presentations will be briefly touched on and reviewed.
5. The four goals for the fourth presentation will be to learn about: Picture books, letter sounds, shapes, and recognition, rhyme, and repetition.
6. Picture books will be the first focus area. After it is explained, examples will be given and then caregivers will have a brief discussion.
7. Letter sounds and recognition will be the second focus area. After it is explained, examples and time to practice will be given before caregivers watch two videos.
8. The third strategy that will be focused on is rhyme. It will be explained, examples will be given, before caregivers watch a video.
9. The final strategy that will be focused on is repetition. It will be explained, examples will be given, and caregivers will be given plenty of time discuss.
10. To conclude the event, caregivers will be given time to ask questions and have a time for discussion. The facilitator will thank them for their attendance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Lincoln County Kindergarten Readiness Data

Prior Setting to Kindergarten	2013-2014 Actual Score	2014-2015 Actual Score	2015-2016 Actual Score	2016-2017 Actual Score
State Funded	All: 66.7% Male: 47.2% Female: 54.4% Free/Red:45.6% Dis/IEP: 21.1%	All: 44.9% Male: 37.5% Female: 48.5% Free/Red:37.5% Dis/IEP: 22.2% District Delivery Target: 70% State Delivery Target: 50.4%	All: 63.0% Male: 28.6% Female: 61.0% Free/Red: 36.8% Dis/IEP: 21.7% District Delivery Target: 73.4% State Delivery Target: 55.9%	All: 44.8% Male: 45.7% Female: 67.3% Free/Red: 54.8% Dis/IEP: 12.5% District Delivery Target: 76.7% State Delivery Target: 61.4%
Head Start	All: 65.5% Male: 30.8% Female: % Free/Red: 21.4% Dis/IEP: %	All: 44.7% Male: % Female: 35.7% Free/Red: 29.4% Dis/IEP: % District Delivery Target: 69.0% State Delivery Target: 48.2%	All: 65.8% Male: 42.9% Female:36.8 % Free/Red: 37.9% Dis/IEP: % District Delivery Target: 72.4% State Delivery Target: 53.9%	All: 45.6% Male: 75% Female: 36.8% Free/Red:37.5 % Dis/IEP: % District Delivery Target: 75.9% State Delivery Target: 59.7%

<p>Child Care</p>	<p>All: 57.6 % Male: % Female: % Free/Red: % Dis/IEP: %</p>	<p>All: 37.5% Male: % Female: 63.6% Free/Red: 30% Dis/IEP: %</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 61.8%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 73%</p>	<p>All: 64.3% Male: 57.1% Female: 78.6% Free/Red: 56.3% Dis/IEP: %</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 66.1%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 76%</p>	<p>All: 51.9% Male: 76.9% Female: 83.3% Free/Red: % Dis/IEP: %</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 70.3%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 79%</p>
<p>Home</p>	<p>All: 39.6% Male: 22.9% Female: % Free/Red: 17.3% Dis/IEP: %</p>	<p>All: 27.4% Male: 34.8% Female: 34% Free/Red: 31.7% Dis/IEP: 22.2%</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 45.6%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 43.7%</p>	<p>All: 28% Male: 26.4% Female: 41.4% Free/Red: 27.4% Dis/IEP: 20%</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 51.7%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 49.9%</p>	<p>All: 31.8% Male: 34.8% Female: 48.7% Free/Red: 40.5% Dis/IEP: 13%</p> <p>District Delivery Target: 57.7%</p> <p>State Delivery Target: 56.2%</p>

Appendix B

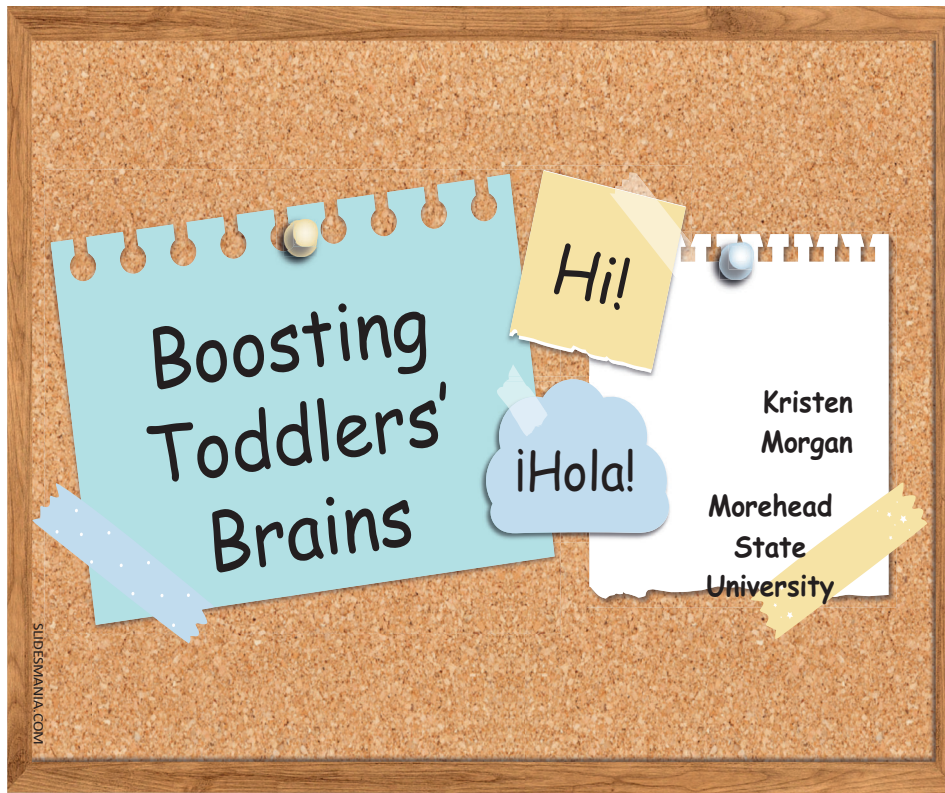
Boosting Toddlers' Brains

Presentation 1

Presentation; Notes; Supplementary Materials



- Welcome everyone! I am so glad that you could make it tonight. While everyone is getting settled, each family should have picked up one book off of the table. This book is for you to keep. We will be using the book to discuss and practice the reading strategies that I will be talking about.
- While we are all coming together, I thought it would be fun to watch a little video of someone reading a board book. This is “Ten Tiny Babies” which is a very simple book for very young children.
- After we look at some reading strategies, we will come back to this video and practice with it, if we have time. Enjoy!
- (I plan on having a place at a table in the room with a display of books from these lists. If they don’t have a library card, there will also be forms to apply for those.)



- Hello! I am Kristen Morgan. I am going to be talking about how you can help to boost your toddler's brain by reading to them and using literacy to activate their
- When I started this program, I thought of all of the needs in Lincoln County. I wanted to impact the future students of Lincoln County by providing a literacy program to caregivers. This program will give you the tools that you need to help your child's brain boost with literacy knowledge.



- First off, I want you to know that I am from Lincoln County. My parents and grandparents have and continue to live here.
- I graduated from LCHS in 1994.
- I moved away for college, but I ended up moving home in 2005.
- I graduated from the MAT (Master's in Teaching) program from MSU and started teaching at LCMS.
- I have been an English Teacher for the past 15 years, and have taught 6, 7, 8, grades.
- What drew me to the topic of working with small children through reading is the fact that I have had many students who struggle with reading at the middle school level. It is important to stimulate their minds through reading and literacy well before they are in school.
- I developed this series of presentations to teach parents and caregivers how to do just that.
- I have you and your child's very best interest at heart. We are all here to learn and have fun!



For tonight, I want to focus on three topics:

- Home Literacy Environment (Which is a fancy way of saying the reading materials or books you have at home.)
- Literacy Routines (What are your reading routines? When do you read? Do you read something with your infant every day?)
- Dialogic Reading (You guys have probably heard of a dialogue, when people speak to each other. I am going to talk to you about reading and using a dialogue with your child to increase their knowledge of reading.)



- The first thing I want to talk about is the reading materials you might have at home. “Home Literacy Environment” is a fancy way of saying that. The first 4 years of your child’s life are greatly influenced by the interactions they have with you and the reading materials you offer them. The majority of their time, at this age, is spent at home, which is a great place to introduce reading materials to them.
- When you teach your child about the alphabet, letters, sounds, numbers, colors, and other things you point out from books, pictures, etc. you impact their later reading skills. You are setting them up for success once they start school.
- If you look at the picture on the slideshow, you see two little girls with books in their hands and bookshelves behind them. This is not what families have to have.
- Environmental text is anything you can read or use to get the attention of your children. Even if you might not have access to books, you can use whatever you have to get your children’s attention!



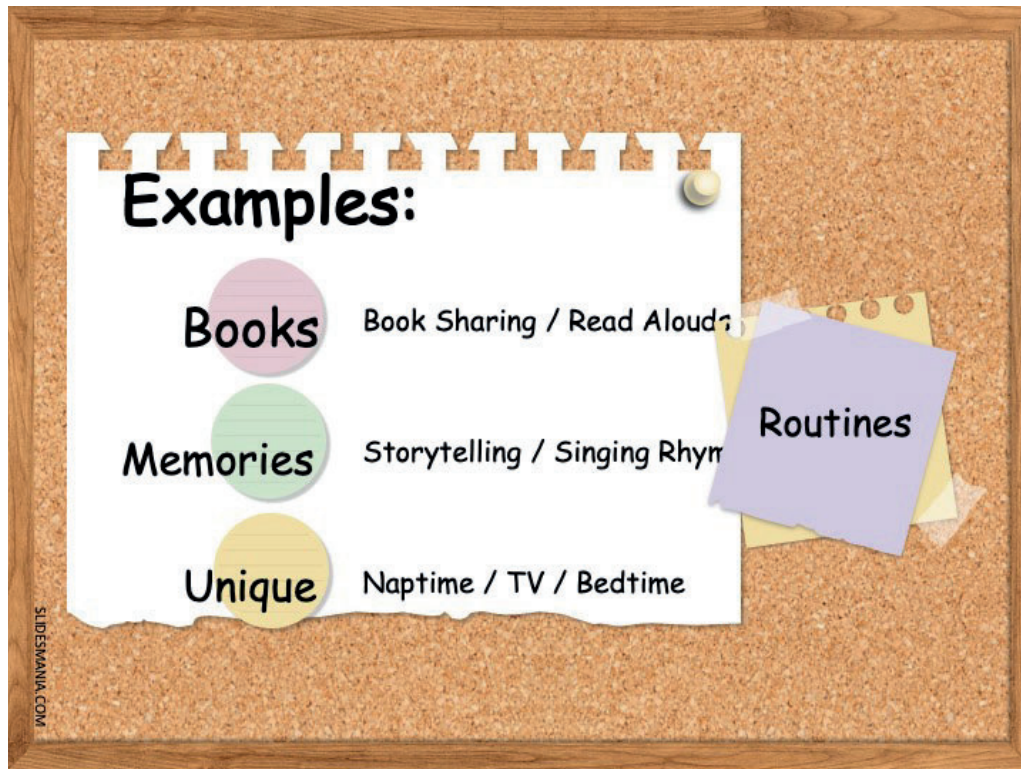
- Even if you might not have access to books, you can use whatever you have!
- There are many flyers, that come in the mail, for all Lincoln County Residents.
- You can look and point out different letters (point out letters - W A L M A R T), colors (red, blue, green, etc.), numbers (1, 5, 0, etc.), counting items (how many boxes, bottles? Days (Friday, Sunday), Months (January, February).
- There are many different flyers that come in the mail for all the Lincoln County Residents.
- Anything you have would work!



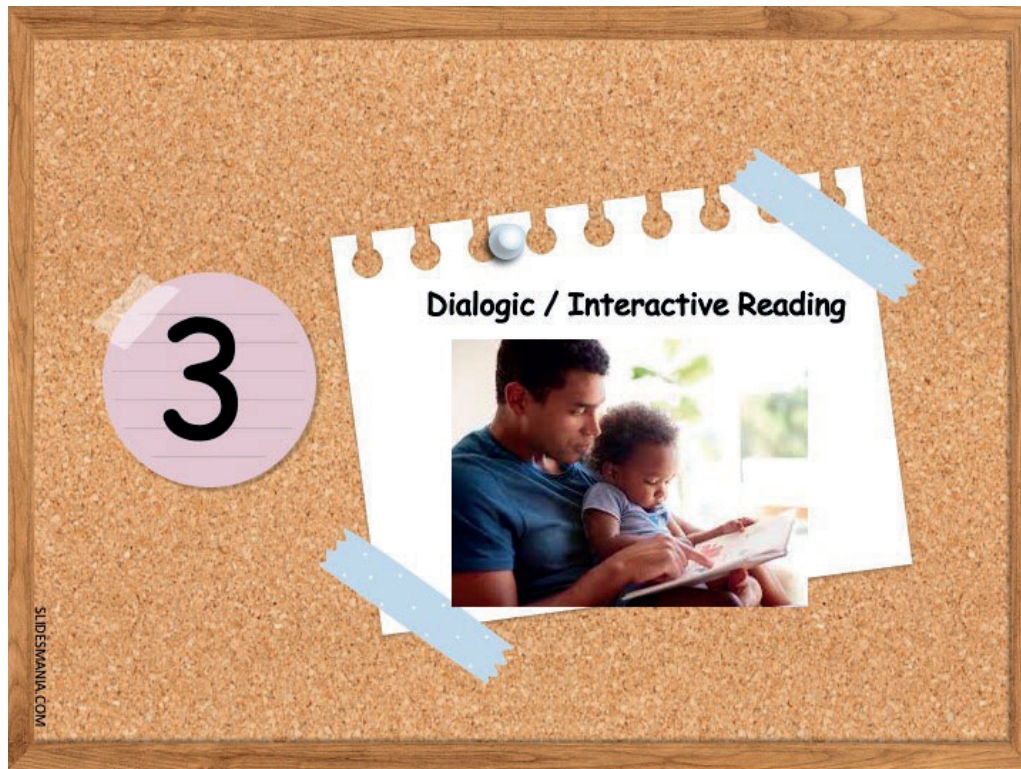
- (I will pass out extra Aldi grocery flyers. Caregivers will share with their child and point out what they are talking about. They can choose from anything on the bulleted list on the slide. This will take 5-7 minutes. I want to make sure they have plenty of time to try to point out more than one thing.)
- I am going to pass out some Aldi's flyers so that you can practice looking and talking about them with your infant.
- The most important part of this is making sure that your child is paying attention and enjoying themselves. You should use yours and their finger to point out what you are talking about. This will help them stay focused.
- (I will be walking around the room to make sure that I am available to anyone who might have a question or need support.)
- Ok. How did that go? Does anyone have any questions or comments about using literacy that you can find around your house?



- Next is Literacy Routines. What kind of routines do you already have at your house? Do you read before bedtime? Before or during bath time? How about nap time? When you get home from work? Any time your child brings you a book?
- Many times, we tend to only have one adult in the house that reads to the kids. However, it is important for children to see as many people in the home reading as possible. It should not be the job of just one parent. Children need to see older people, younger people, moms and dads, as well as grandparents and siblings reading. They need to know that this is a valuable tool for everyone and that everyone participates.



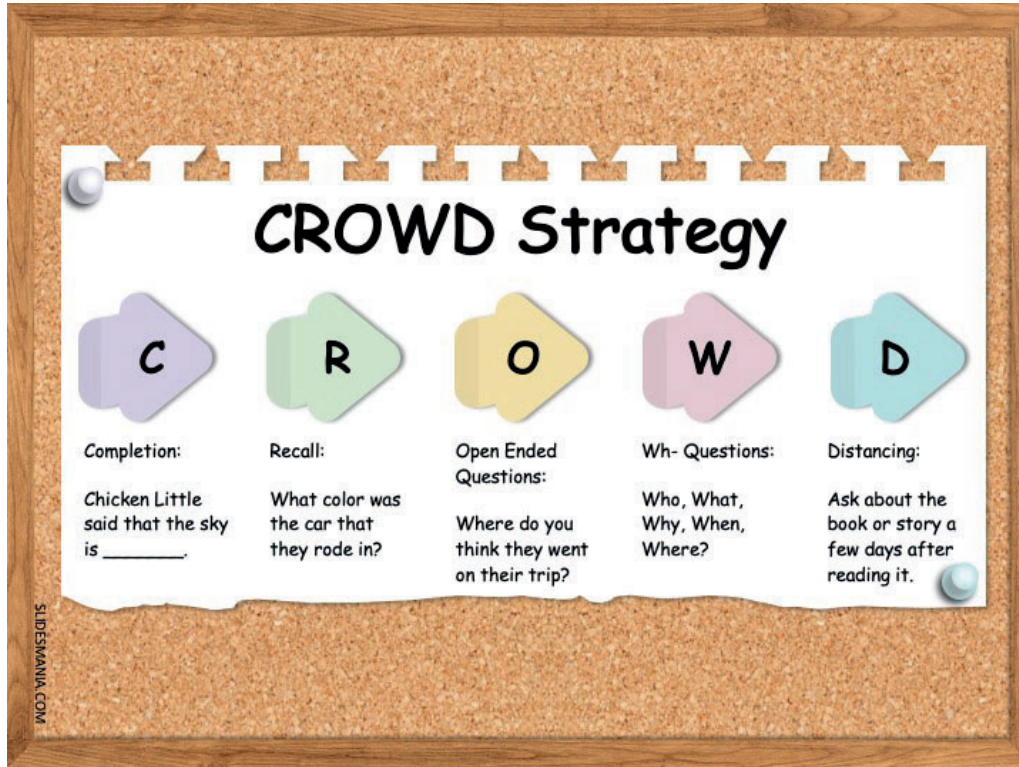
- Each of these routines can be used to introduce and maintain your child's attention during reading.
- You can read to them or you can use multimedia (read alouds) to read to them.
- If you don't have access to a book, you can tell them a story. Kids love stories! You can tell them about a time when you were a child.
- You can also read or sing nursery rhymes to them. Humpty Dumpty, and other Mother Goose Rhymes are great for kids. They are not very long and the rhyming words help them remember the words for next time.
- Using nap time and bed time are traditional times when caregivers might have children wind down from their activities so that they can fall asleep.
- However, it is also a great idea to just talk to your children about what they think may happen next while watching television. This will get their minds to think about what they are watching instead of just watching it without really thinking about it.



- The last item I want to discuss tonight is dialogic or interactive reading. What do you think it means to be interactive? It means your child is not just sitting with you and listening while you do all the talking. They are actively participating with you while you are reading.
- We won't just be focusing on this tonight. We will be practicing and looking at this reading strategy during the next session as well.
- As you can see in the picture, the parent is pointing to the book while they are reading to their child. That baby is paying close attention because there are no outside distractions.



- All of this can be simply explained as having a conversation about reading with your child!
- Interactive Reading
 - Characters
 - Events
 - Vocabulary
- Naming / Touching Pictures.
- Handling books.
- Flipping Pages.
- Chiming in with familiar rhymes.
- Answering questions and making comments.
- Let's watch a video that shows us what this looks like.



- The CROWD strategy is one easy way to remember some easy things we can do to keep our infant's attention.
- C - stands for Completion (I will read the example.) It is easy to remove a word or phrase of words to see how your child will complete the sentence.
- R - is Recall (I will read the example.) After you read a page you can ask any question that your child should be able to remember about the page you just read.
- O - Open Ended Questions (I will read the example.) Open Ended Questions are those where a child must think about the answer, instead of just a simple "Yes" or "No" answer.
- W – Wh - Questions (I will read the example.) These are questions that begin with those Wh- letters. They will make your child think more about their answers.
- D – Distancing (I will read the example.) We can't practice this tonight, but wait a few days and ask questions about the story then.

Now you try it!

		
Ask	Action	CROWD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characters • Events • Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming / Touching • Handling Book • Flipping Pages • Chiming and Rhyming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion • Recall • Open Ended Questions • Wh- Questions

SLIDEMANIA.COM

- Ok! Now we are going to use the board book you picked up at the beginning of the evening.
- I would like for everyone to practice any of the examples on the screen. Take your time and have fun with your child!
- I will walk around and if anyone has any questions, I would be happy to help!
- (I will walk around and give them plenty of time to try out the different techniques on the screen. This should take at least 5 minutes. I will ask if anyone needs more time and give them an additional 2-3 minutes if they ask for it.)



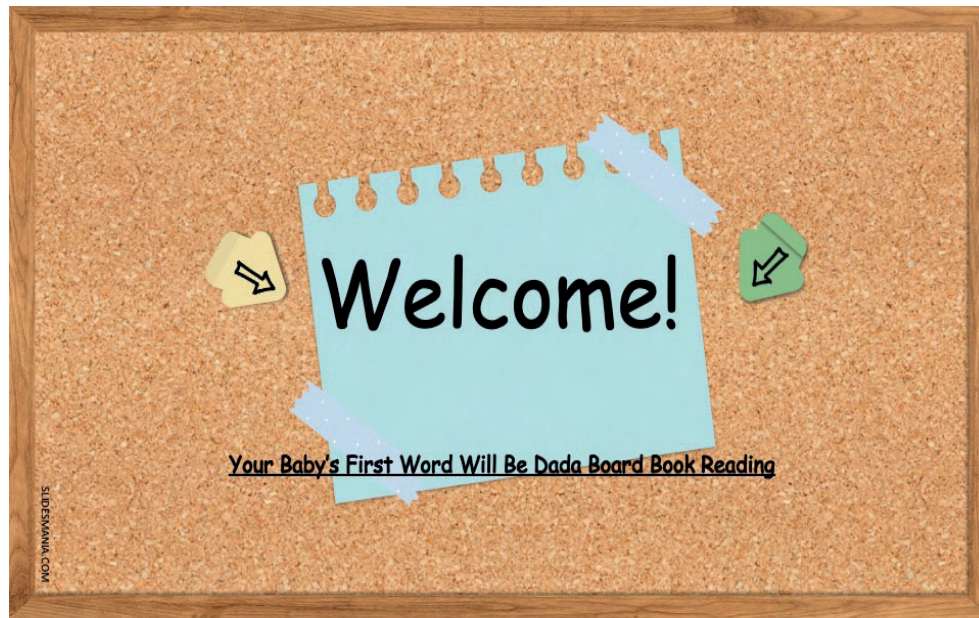
- I would like to thank each of you for coming tonight and sharing your children with me.
- This is the first of a four-part series.
- I would love to see you next time! Be careful going home. Please take the board book with you, they are for you to keep and to practice the strategies we learned tonight with your child.

Appendix C

Boosting Toddlers' Brains

Presentation 2

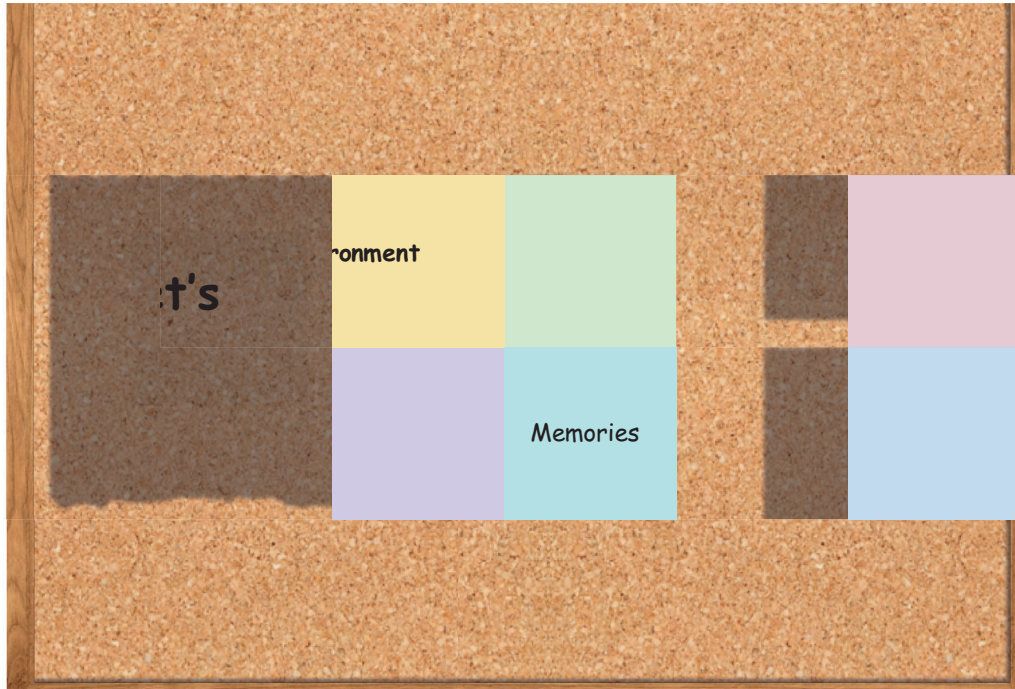
Presentation; Notes; Supplementary Materials



- Welcome everyone! I am so glad that you could make it tonight. This is our second session, but do not worry if this is your first night! I am so happy you are here.
- While everyone is getting settled, each family should have picked up a board book off the table. Those are for you to keep. We will be using them to discuss and practice the reading strategies that I will be talking about.
- While we are all coming together, I thought it would be fun to watch a little video of someone reading a board book. This is “Your First Word Will Be Dada” by Jimmy Fallon, you know the host from one of the Late Night talk shows? It is a very simple book for very young children, and fun for parents to read too. (<https://youtu.be/VrfIOILKuzI>)
- After we look at some reading strategies, we will come back to this video and practice with it, if we have time. Enjoy!
- (I plan on having a place at a table in the room with a display of books from these lists. If they don't have a library card, there will also be forms to apply for those.)



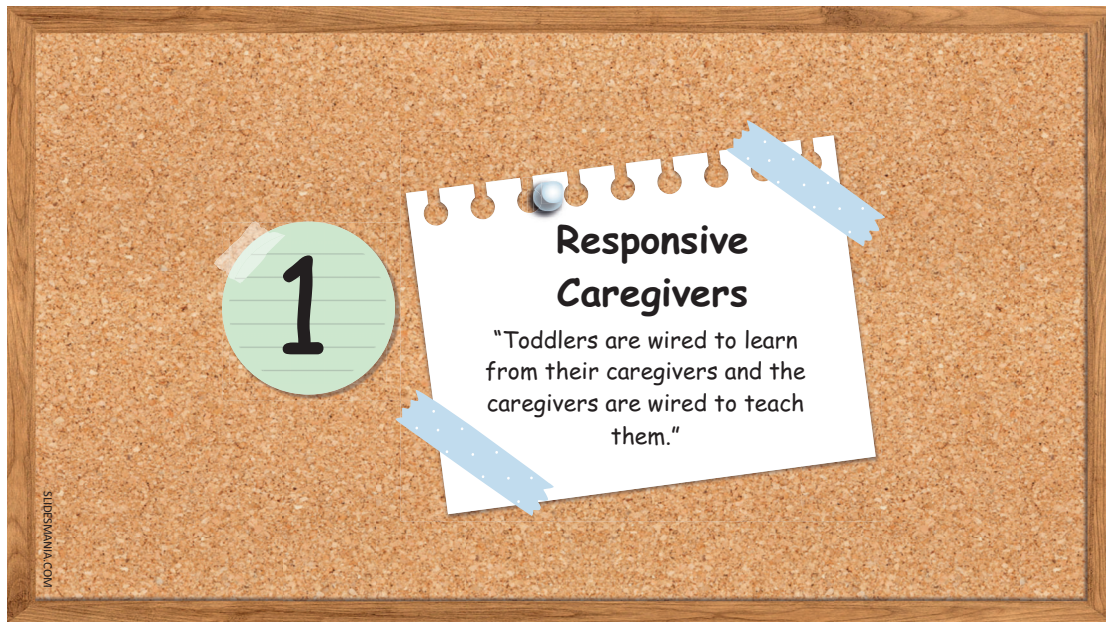
- Please bear with me, if you were here last time. I am going to quickly introduce myself to anyone who is new.
- I was born and raised in Lincoln County and my entire family continues to live here.
- I graduated from LCHS in 1994 to pursue my teaching degree.
- I have been an English teacher for the past 15 years for grades 6th, 7th, and 8th.
- I developed this series of presentations to teach parents and caregivers how to stimulate a child's mind.



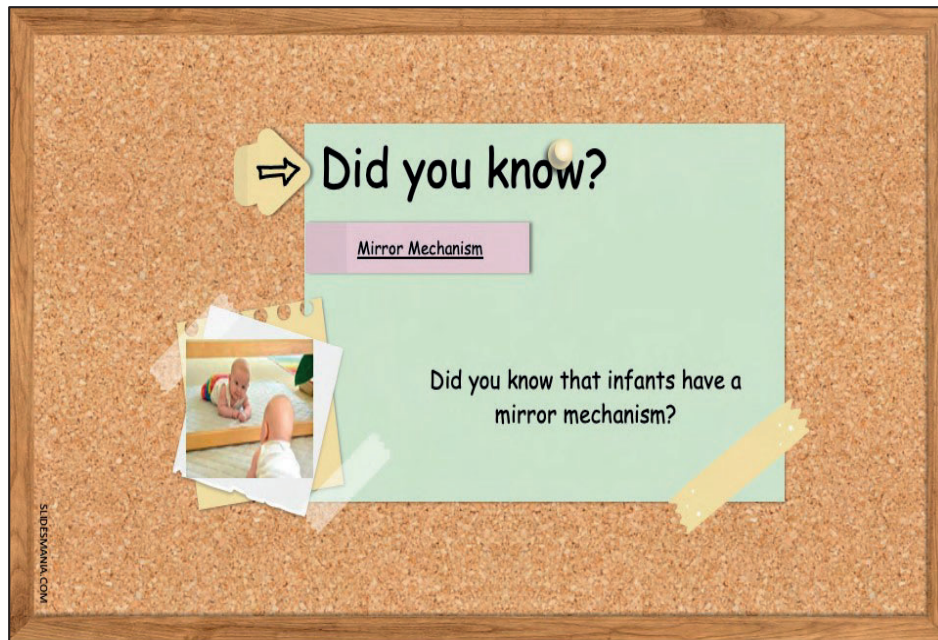
- Last session we looked at the different kinds of reading that you could do with just the things you get in the mail. We talked about different literacy routines you could practice with your infant: reading books, telling stories based on memories, and using times such as nap time, bed time, snack time, and even television time, to talk to them about what they were reading, listening to, or watching.
- Some of the interactive reading suggestions were for infants to name and touch pictures, handle the books themselves (of course young children do not need paperback books; however, board books are designed especially for them to explore. They can flip the pages and answer questions that they are asked.
- Finally, we discussed using the CROWD strategy to help with dialogic (interactive) reading. Having the child complete the thought or sentence, recall information from previous pages, asking open-ended questions (which we will focus more on tonight) and asking Wh-questions are all excellent. Distancing, and asking questions few days after finishing the book will help them work on their memory.



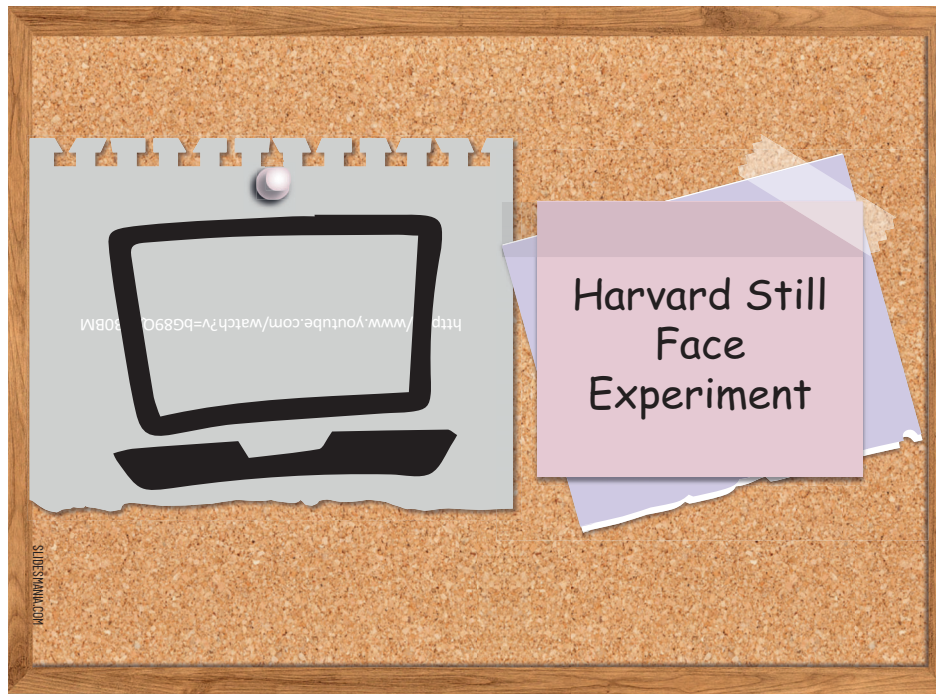
- For tonight, I want to focus on four topics:
 - Responsive Caregivers (Which is where you respond to your child when you are reading together.)
 - Infant Brain Development (As I was researching for this project, I discovered many interesting facts about the way that an infant's brain develops from birth to three years of age.)
 - Labeling / Expanding (We talked about reading strategies last time that would help to keep the attention of little ones. These are two more excellent strategies to try.)
 - Open-Ended Questions (Using these types of questions helps your child to think about what they are reading and to give more detailed answers to questions that are asked than simple "yes" or "no" answers.)



- Responsive caregivers are those who are in tune with the needs of their infants. You each know what it is like to help an infant that is crying. You ask yourself what they need: food, potty, attention, etc. and then you help them.
- Responsive caregivers are one of the strongest measures of children's earliest educational success.
- You are the first and most influential educators they will have. While they may only have a teacher for 9 months, they will have you throughout their life time.
- When children have stimulating interactions with their parents and guardians from birth to three, they actually have better vocabulary skills when they reach the age of 15.
- There is a connection between how involved parents are with their child and that same child's overall educational achievement.



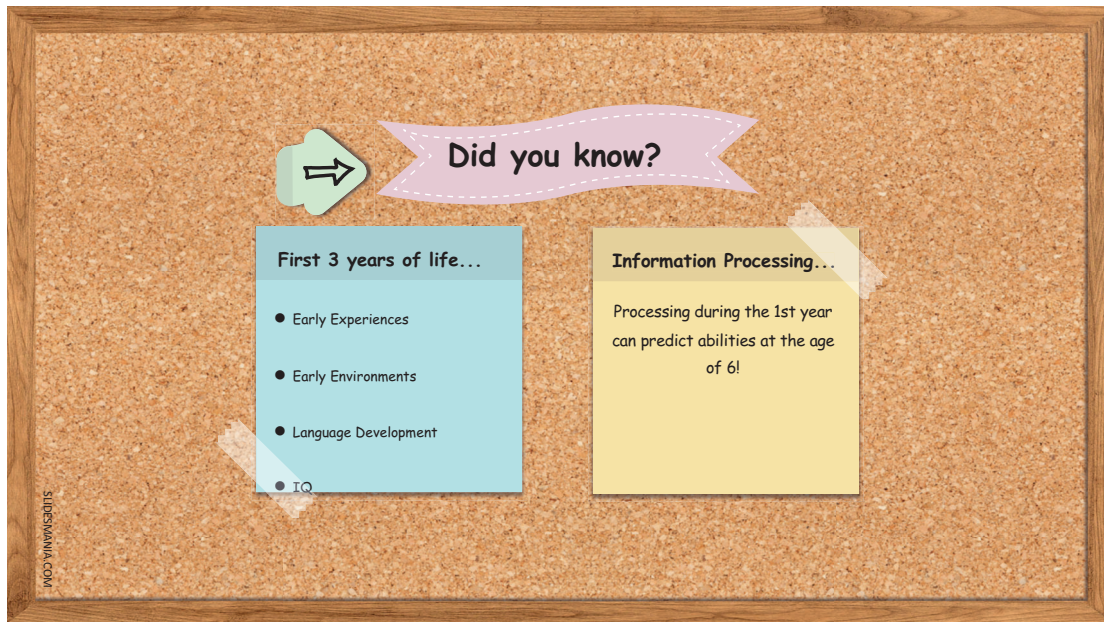
- Infants pay attention to their surrounds, and the people in their direct surroundings, much more than some might think.
- We will watch a quick video to see what this infant does when their mother becomes busy with her cell phone. (<https://youtu.be/bOR7jId8wYk>)
- What did you notice?
 - (Baby became agitated when mother was no longer paying attention.)
 - (Baby understands that something took those good feeling interactions away).
 - (Baby reacted by trying to gain the mother's attention back by moving and smiling and making noise.)
 - (Baby starts to cry when their actions do not gain the mother's attention.)
 - (Once the mother puts down the phone and starts paying attention to the infant, the infant calms down and stops being upset.)



- Here is another example of the Still Face Experiment. (<https://youtu.be/bG89Qxw30BM>)
- The main reason I want to emphasize this toddler reaction is because just as the infant knows the caregiver is not paying them attention, they are also aware that their attention has been moved to something else, away from them.
- Ultimately, if a parent is preoccupied when it should be a time for reading a book, the infant will sense that and will internalize the fact that the parent doesn't value reading. This attitude will then be passed on from the parent to the child.



- Next is Literacy Routines. What kind of routines do you already have at your house? Do you read before bedtime? Before or during bath time? How about nap time? When you get home from work? Any time your child brings you a book?
- Literacy routines help with a child’s brain development. Communication greatly helps with the brain development.
- Many times we tend to only have one adult in the house that reads to the infant. However, it is important for children to see as many people in the home reading as possible. It should not be the job of just one parent. Children need to see older people, younger people, moms and dads, as well as grandparents and siblings reading. They need to know that this is a valuable tool for everyone and that everyone participates.



It is the early experiences that children have, along with the environments where they are raised that influence their language development. I don't mean just the ability to speak English, or any other language that might be used at home. Language development means how the letters make sounds, which make up words, and those words create sentences, paragraphs, stories and so on.

It is also interesting to note here that those same early experiences and environments affect their IQ.

This all starts much earlier in an child's life than ever thought before. (I will read the quote about information processing.)

It is amazing to think that what we do during the first year of their lives can predict their abilities when they are six!



- What do you think it means to be interactive? It means your child is not just sitting with you and listening while you do all the talking. They are actively participating with you while you are reading.
- We won't just be focusing on this tonight. We will be practicing and looking at this reading strategy during the next session as well.
- As you can see in the picture, the parent is pointing to the book while they are reading to their infant. That baby is paying close attention because there are no outside distractions.



Let's take a look at this picture. Since your children are so young, you will mostly be pointing out information on pictures until they are older and can identify letters and numbers. It never hurts to point out those things early, but many picture books are just that, full of pictures.

Labeling is when you identify and name different parts of a picture.

For example, you could easily talk and point out the different colors in this picture. Blue, Red, White, Green, Purple, etc. You could point out the stack of books. You could count them together. You could point out the dog, lady, bicycle, and basket. You could even point out what she is wearing and how she looks (hat, scarf, gloves, jacket, purse, smiling/happy).

Expanding is where you take what you see and connect it to their lives.

For example, you could talk about your dog if you have one. You could remind them that they wear jackets, gloves, and scarves when it is cold. You could talk about a sibling's bicycle, flowers in your yard, and books you read at home.



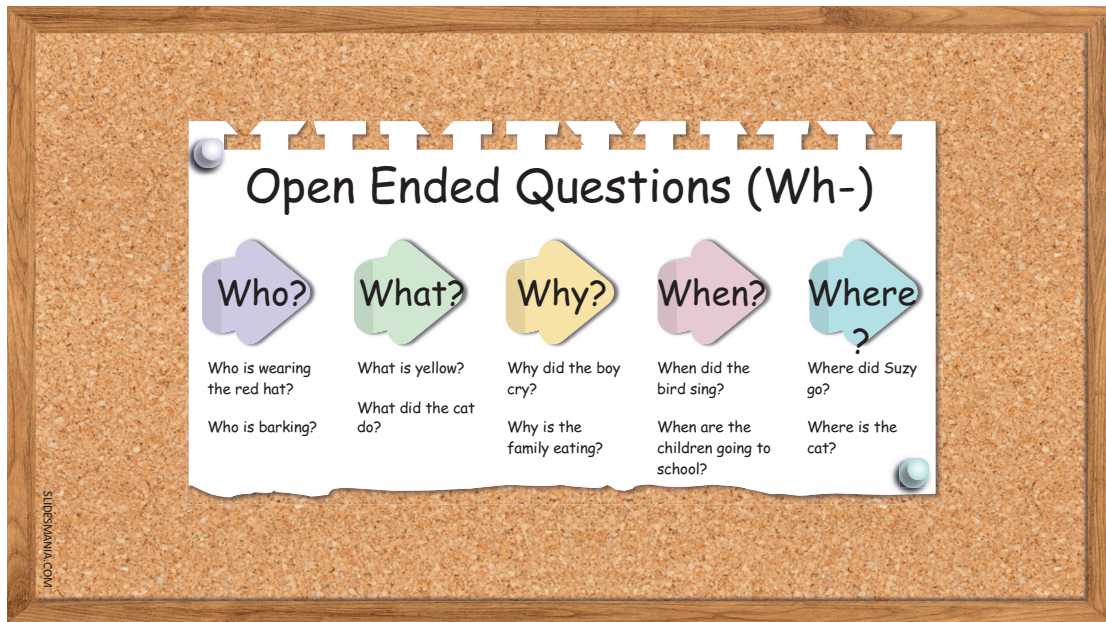
- If You Give A Mouse A...is a very popular series of books. When we look at these two pages, there are many things that we can label and then expand on.
- What do you think the little boy looking for? What do you see on the counter? What color are the canisters? Look at his yellow shirt, blue pants, red shoes. What color is the cabinet? How many doors does the cabinet have?
- Look at the little mouse's overalls, don't you have a pair of overalls? What color are they? Blue.
- Have you ever drank out of a straw? Is his glass empty or full? How does the mouse look? Is he still thirsty? Why do you think that?



Now you guys are going to try labeling and expanding on your own. Please use the board book you picked up on your way in. Take your time and have fun!

I will walk around and make sure you don't have any questions. If you need me, just let me know and I will be right over.

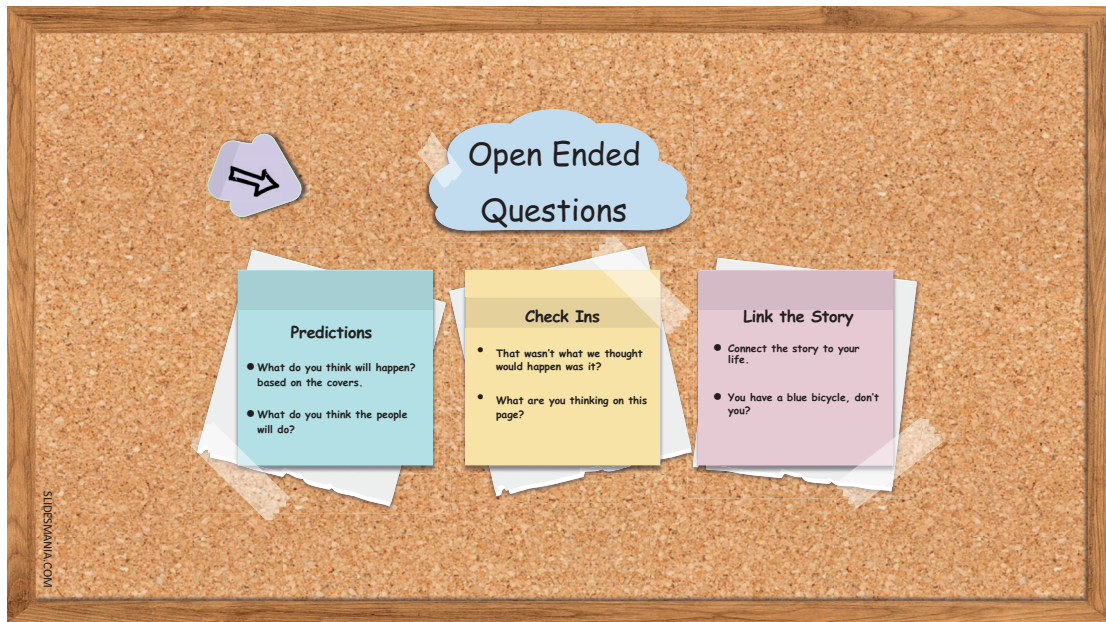
(This will take 5-7 minutes. I will let the parents read through the books with their infants and make sure they are comfortable labeling and expanding using their board books.



- The next strategy we will focus on tonight is asking Open Ended Questions.
- These questions are those that encourage your child to talk and think. When you ask a simple “yes” or no “question”, you are not activating all of their little brains to think about what they have heard and seen. Open Ended Questions encourage more thinking.
- Of course we all know these Wh- questions. It is interesting that sometimes we don't stop to think about asking these types of questions. (At this point I will read the examples from the slide.)



- Now we will watch a short video that uses the Open Ended Questioning strategy.
- (I will show the video.) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fPCRCtSF7o>)



- You can basically ask a lot of questions that can have more than one correct answer.
- Making predictions is fun for you and your child. You can look at the cover of a book and ask them what they think it will be about.
- After you have read the beginning of the story, you can talk to them about what they think will happen next (which is predicting the next part.)
- You can ask specific questions about the characters or events.
- You can also randomly ask them what they are thinking when they see a picture or when you say a word.
- How can you connect whatever you are reading to the child's life? There are always connections to be made. We will discuss this more in depth during our next session.



- I would like to thank each of you for coming tonight and sharing your children with me.
- This is the second of a four part series.
- I would love to see you next time! Be careful going home. Please take the board book with you, they are for you to keep and to practice the strategies we learned tonight with your child.

Appendix D

Boosting Toddlers' Brains

Presentation 3

Presentation; Notes; Supplementary Materials

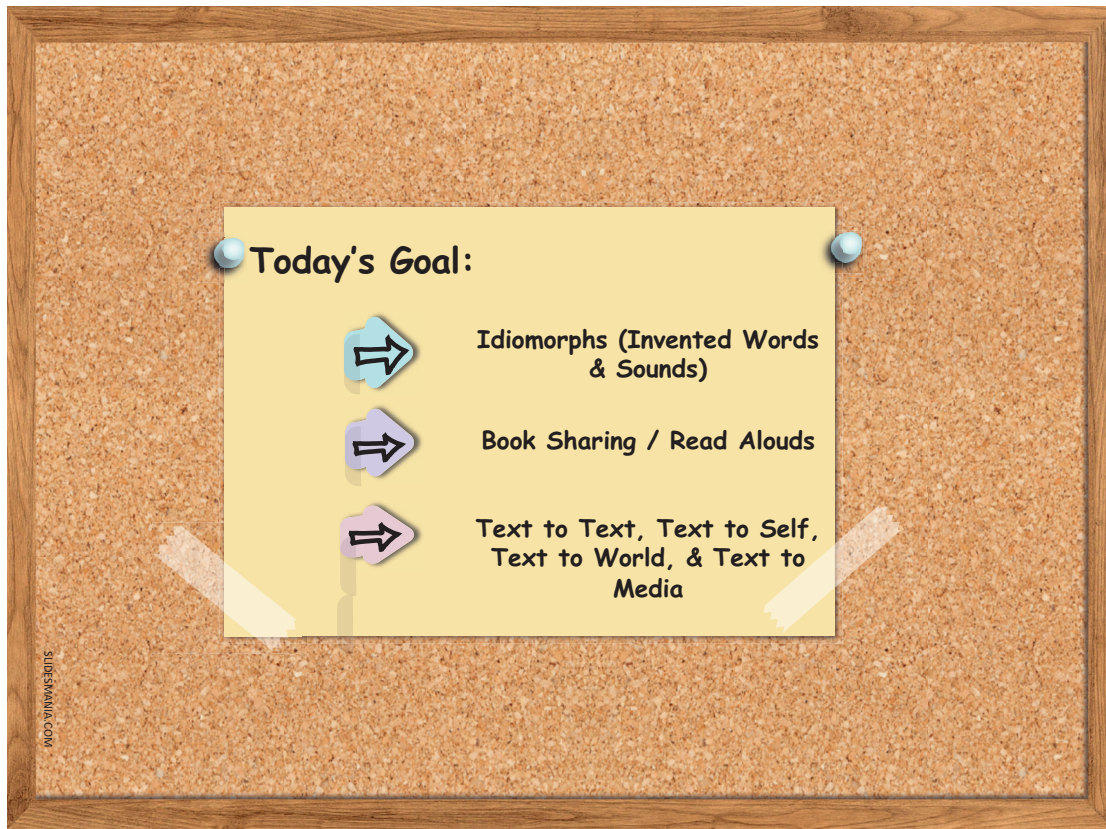


- Welcome everyone! I am so glad that you could make it tonight. This is our third session, but do not worry if this is your first night! I am so happy you are here.
- While everyone is getting settled, I want to make sure that you picked up a board book off the table. This is for you to keep. We will be using them to discuss and practice the reading strategies that I will be talking about.
- While we are all coming together, I thought it would be fun to watch a little video of someone reading a board book. This is “Goodnight Duggee.” It is a very simple book for very young children, and fun for parents to read too.
- After we look at some reading strategies, we will come back to this video and practice with it, if we have time. Enjoy! (<https://youtu.be/5VOI86z6FVU>)

(I plan on having a place at a table in the room with a display of books from these lists. If they don't have a library card, there will also be forms to apply for those.)



- During the past two sessions, we have learned a lot!
- A few things that are worth mentioning again are:
 - Having an environment at home that includes books.
 - Making sure you have set routines with your child, whether it be nap time, snack time, tv time, and/or bedtime.
 - If you don't have a book on hand, just tell them a story.
 - Use what you have! If you only have junk mail...use it!
 - Have them touch the pages while you point things out to them, such as colors, numbers, shapes, and emotions on character's faces. By labeling those things and expanding on the book with their lives, you are linking the information in their brains.
 - Remember that their brains are developing at a really rapid pace, feed their brains with information from books!
 - Be as responsive as you can. Talk to them, even if they can't talk to you. They are always learning!
 - Ask them open ended questions, use those Wh- questions to get their little minds thinking instead of yes / no questions.



For tonight, I want to focus on three topics:

- I know “idiomorphs” sounds like a crazy word, but you already know what it is. Do you know any child who uses a part of a word to represent something? When my son was a baby, he would say “Ba-Ba” for his bottle. That is an example of an idiomorph.
- I briefly touched on book sharing and read alouds during the first presentation. However, we are going to get more in depth tonight.
- Text to Text, Text to Self, Text to World, & Text to Media are reading connections that we need to make for our children to understand how they relate to the stories we are reading. These strategies help with their comprehension, or understanding what the story says about their own lives.



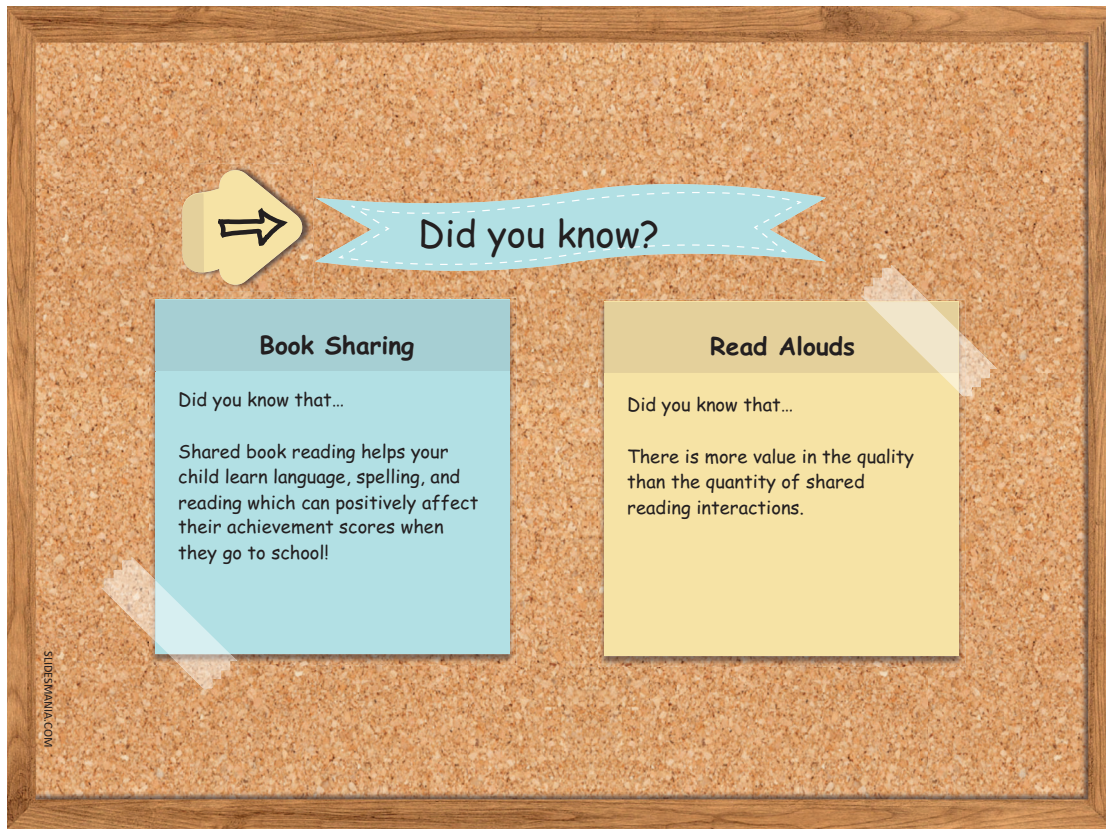
- The first thing I want to talk about are the parts of words or sounds that your infant uses to represent someone or something.
- When my son was a baby, my mother wanted him to call her “Mama-Sandy.” I had a friend who called her grandmother “Mama-Gene.” However, that was way too much for my son to say so he ended up calling her “Monna.” Even to this day, and he is 18 years old now, he calls her Monna.



- When most infants begin to truly communicate using words, they sometimes use parts of words, instead of the whole word.
- As I said earlier, "Bottle" can become "Ba-Ba."
- We are going to watch a video that explains the way that infants learn words and word parts and the importance of communication at this early stage of their lives.
- (Show Video) (<https://youtu.be/5Z0rvMbLP2o>)
- What did you guys think? (We will discuss what they think.)
- Has anyone here had an infant that created an idiomorph to represent an item or a person?



- Next up we have book sharing and read alouds. Since the very first session, our discussion has revolved around reading to our children and sharing books with them. I am going to give you some interesting facts about that.
- Before we move on to the next slide, I just want to jog your memory about how important it is to have children see all people in the home reading. This shows them that there is value in that activity and that everyone should participate.
- An interesting piece of research I read when I was getting ready for this presentation said that a young boy always wanted a woman to read to him. When asked about men, he said they just like to have fun. He didn't connect the fact that both men and women are readers and that he could grow up to read as well.



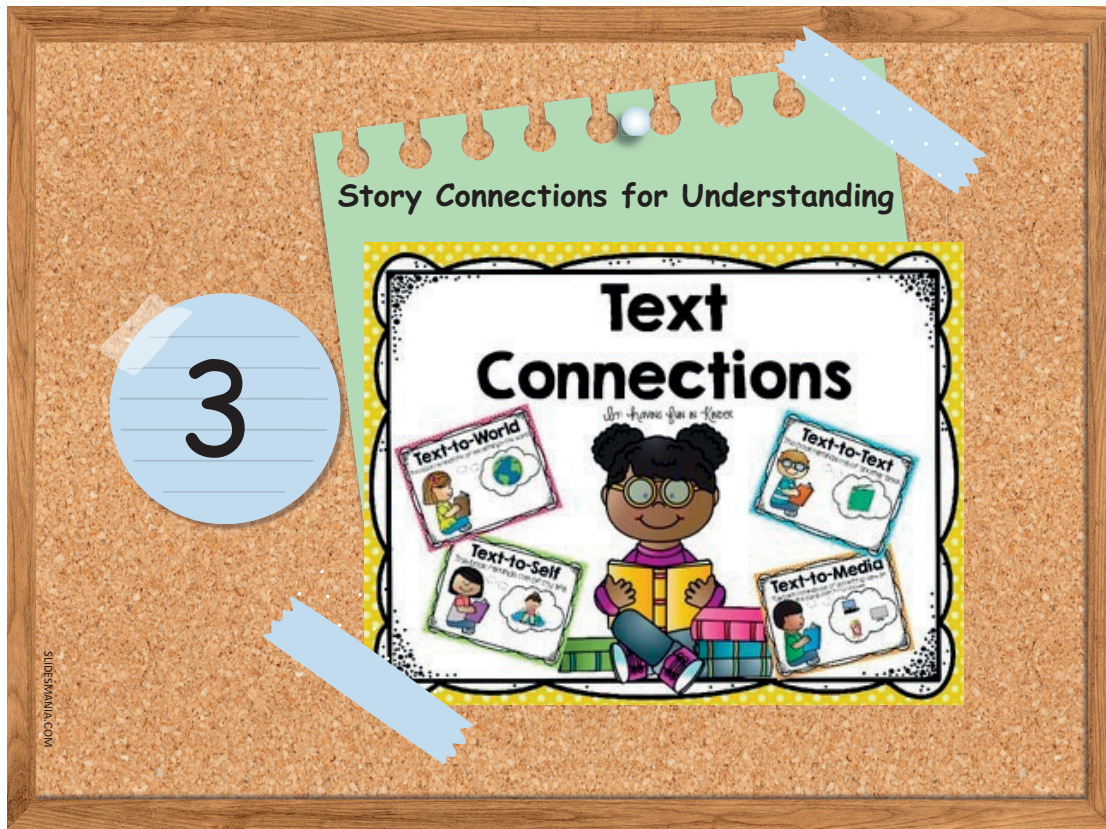
There are so many reasons to share books with your child!

(I will read the first note.)

- As parents and caregivers, we always want the best for our children. An easy way to help them to be successful in school, is to share books with them from an early age.
- In order to be successful in school, they will have to be able to read. All of the content areas, even math, revolve around the ability to read to gather information.

(I will read the second note.)

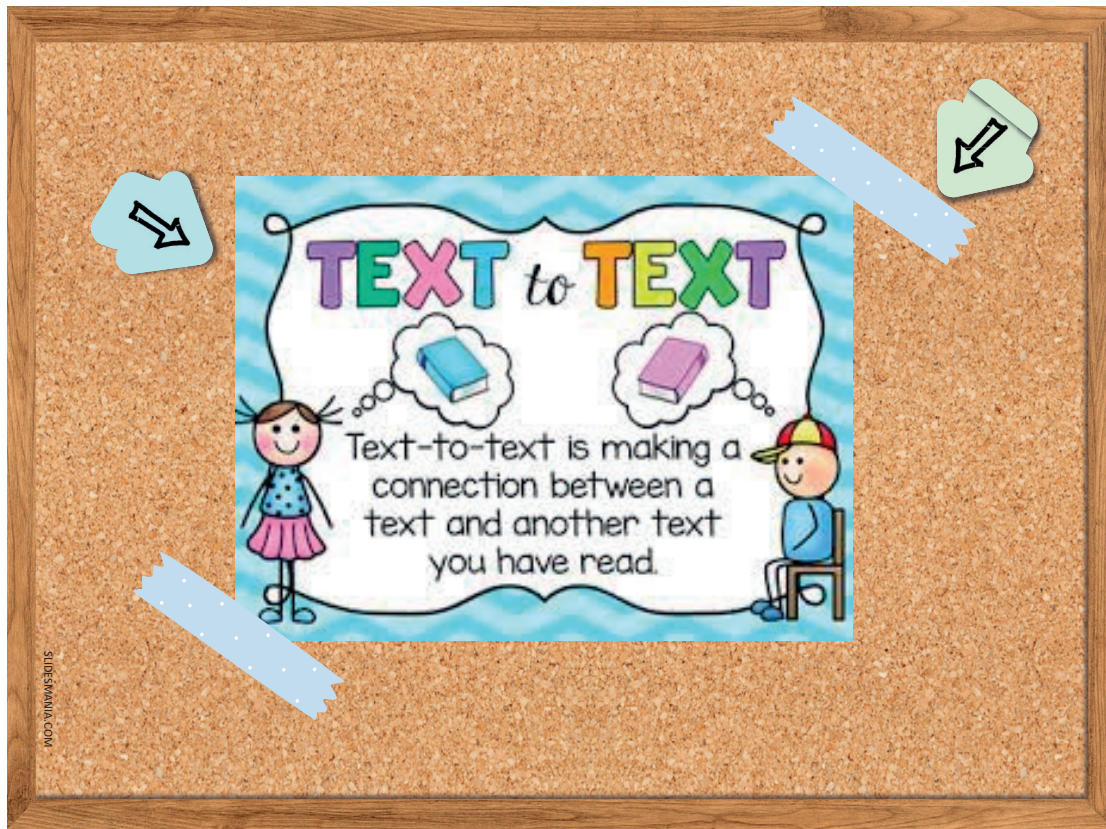
- As a busy parent, I really appreciated this fact. Even if I can only find time in my day to read one book to my child, it isn't really the amount of books we read that matters. It is the quality of our time together that makes a difference. It matters if we have a conversation and if I ask questions and we talk about what we are reading more than if we get to finish 10 books every night.



- I want to end our night by talking about four ways you can help your child make connections to what they are reading.
 - Those are connections that you make to them (self).
 - Connections you make to other books (text).
 - Connections you make to world.
 - And connections they make to media (web).



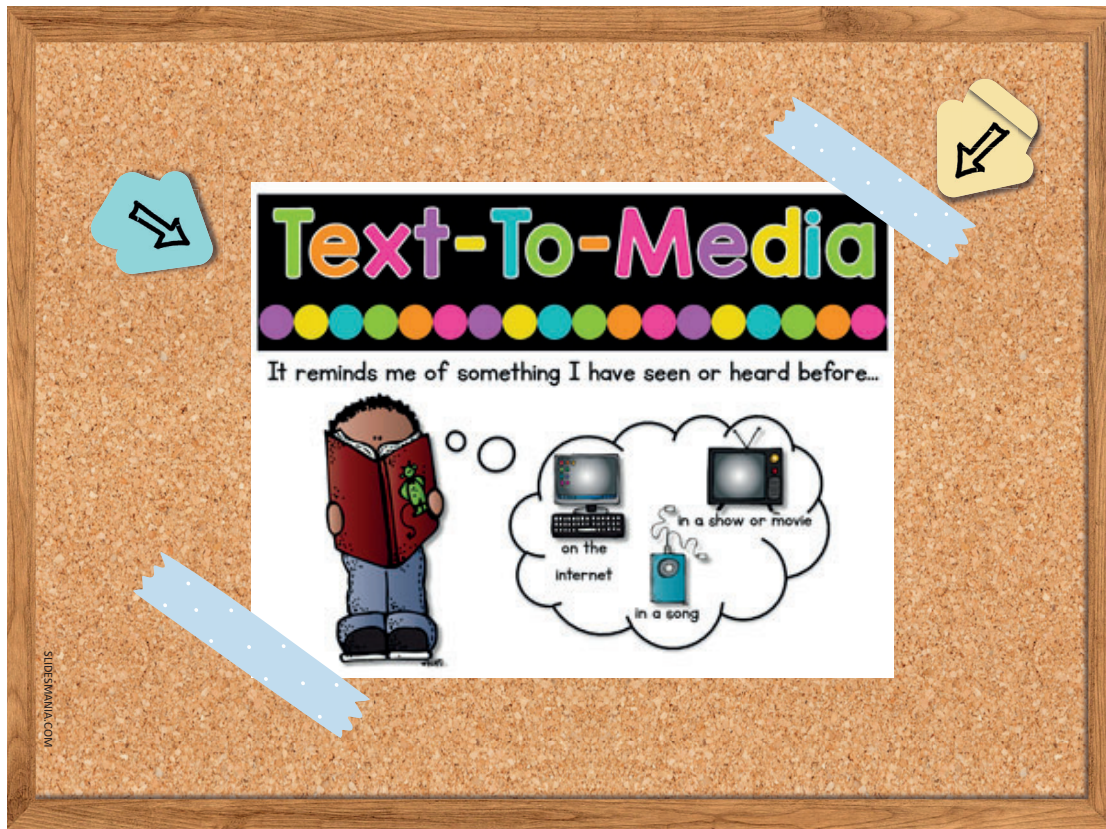
- **Text-to-Self** connections are those that caregivers can help toddlers to make between what they are reading and themselves.
- For example, the little girl on the screen has pink bows in her hair. “You have pink bows that you wear in your hair sometimes.” Or if you don’t have a girl, you could say, “Have you ever seen a little girl with bows in their hair? Or remember when your sister, cousin, aunt, etc. wears bows in their hair?” This picture also shows a yellow book and the girl playing hop scotch. You can make connections between your child and any pictures in the books you read.
- **Text-to-Self** is where the child can think about something they know, or have done, that is in the story or book that they are reading. These connections help children to understand what they are reading.
- We will try this in a few minutes with our board books.



- **Text-to-Text** connections are those that caregivers can help infants to make between what they are reading and other books or stories they have read.
- For example, if you are reading a book to your child about kittens and you previously read a story about cats, that is a perfect opportunity to make a text-to-text connection. "Do you remember that book about the black cat? That is like this book about the kittens. Kittens grow into cats."
- We will try this in a few minutes with our board books.



- **Text-to-World** connections are those that connect what you are reading to the world around you.
- For example, you could connect a story about Curious George, the monkey, to the fact that monkeys don't live in Kentucky. Monkeys live in other places. You could look up different types of monkeys and the lands where they live in the wild. You could also look up zoos that are close, the Louisville Zoo for example, and show the kinds of monkeys they have there.



- **Text-to-Media** are those connections that I believe children are becoming more and more interested in as these utilize technology. This is where you can connect what they are reading with something that they have seen or can find on social media.
- Because so many children learn by seeing and hearing, media is a great way to get and keep their attention. For example, if you were reading a book about a famous person, you could then go online and look up pictures and stories about their lives. Think about any of the US Presidents, or other people your child might be interested in. You could also watch a documentary about them. You would be using media to find out more information.
- Now I am going to use each of these different ways of creating connections. I will use the same story example for each of these connections. Let's think about "Charlotte's Web", the story by E.B. White about Charlotte the spider and Wilbur the pig.



- When I look at these images, I think about all of the different kinds of connections children can make with the story:
- **Text-to-Self**: Especially here in this rural part of the state, our students have seen farms and many live on farms themselves. They can also look around and see rural areas on their way around the county. “Wilbur reminds me of the piglets we used to raise when I was a child.”
- **Text-to-Text**: This is a great story to use to connect to other stories. You can ask questions, such as, “Do you remember how the main character in “Because of Winn Dixie” became friends with a dog? It’s like when Fern becomes friends with Wilbur.”
- **Text-to-World**: We know that Wilbur’s character as a pig is lovable, but we also know that we use animals for other purposes. Some animals are raised to provide food for people.
- **Text-to-Media**: “Charlotte’s Web” is a great story to connect to media. There is a cartoon movie version of the book that was produced in 1973 it is interesting to compare the story to this film. There is another movie that was produced in 2006 and could be used.



- Now you guys are going to try making text connections on your own. Please use the board book you picked up on your way in. Take your time and have fun!
- I will walk around and make sure you don't have any questions. If you need me, just let me know and I will be right over.
- (This will take 5-7 minutes. I will let the parents read through the books with their child and make sure they are comfortable making text-to-text, self, world, and media connections using their board books.)



- I would like to thank each of you for coming tonight and sharing your children with me.
- I have enjoyed our time together and I hope that you have learned some reading strategies that will help you to interact with your child through reading.
- Be careful going home. Please take the board book with you, they are for you to keep and to practice.
- Thank you, and good night.

Appendix E

Boosting Toddlers' Brains

Presentation 4

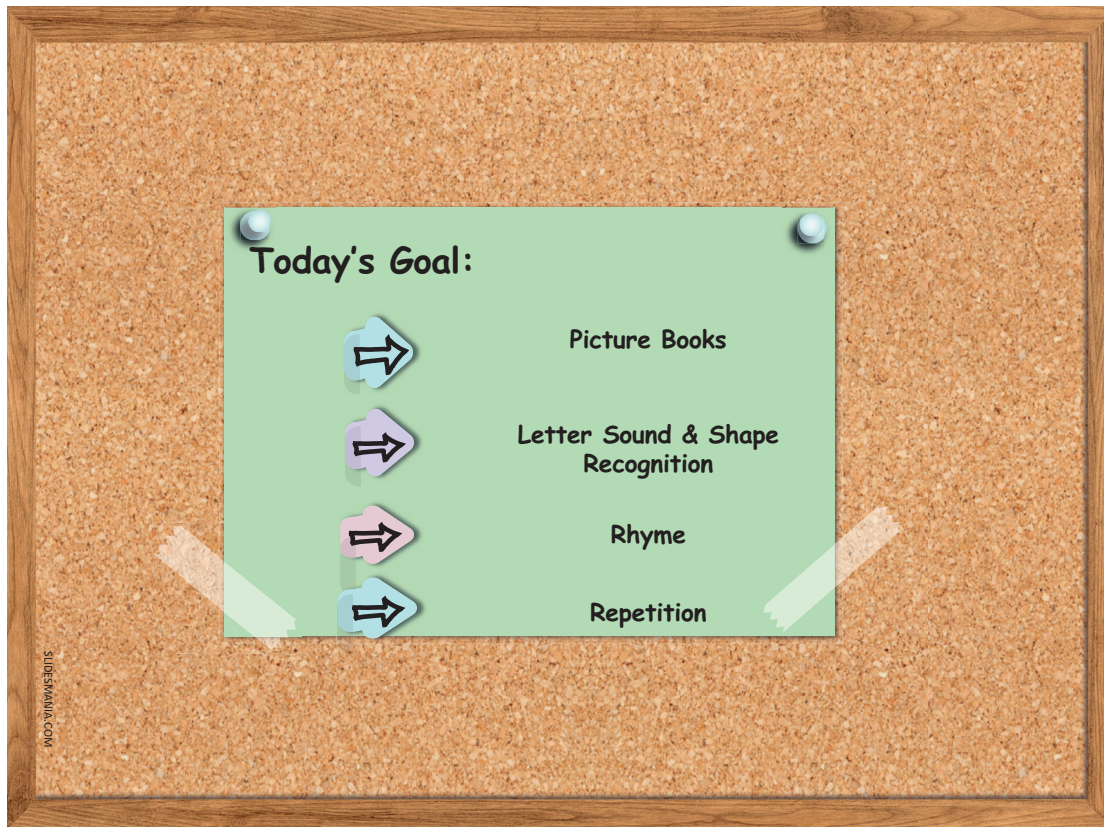
Presentation; Notes; Supplementary Materials



- Welcome everyone! I am so glad that you could make it tonight. While everyone is getting settled, I want to make sure that you picked up a board book off the table. This book is for you to keep. We will be using the book to discuss and practice the reading strategies that I will be talking about.
- While we are all coming together, I thought it would be fun to watch a little video of someone reading a picture book. Board books are picture books for very young children. This was one of my son's favorites.
- After we look at some reading strategies, we will come back to this video and practice with it, if we have time. Enjoy!



- During the past three sessions, we have learned a lot!
- A few things that are worth mentioning again are:
 - Having an environment at home that includes books to share.
 - Making sure you have set routines with your child, whether it be nap time, snack time, tv time, and/or bedtime.
 - If you don't have a book on hand, just tell them a story.
 - Use what you have! If you only have junk mail...use it!
 - Have them touch the pages, by labeling and expanding, you are linking information.
 - Be as responsive as you can. Talk to them, even if they can't talk to you. They are always learning!
 - Ask them open ended questions, use those Wh- questions to get their little minds thinking instead of yes / no questions.
 - Make connections with the story to themselves, other stories, the world and even media.
 - Use those word parts they say to teach them.
 - Use different strategies, like CROWD, to get your infant involved in your conversation with them about the book.



For tonight, I want to focus on four topics:

Picture Books: Books especially designed for young children with few words and large colorful pictures to catch and hold their attention.

Letter sound & shape recognition: All learning starts with the foundation of words, the letters. Children need to learn them, their sounds, shapes, and sizes in order to put them together to form words.

Rhyme: It is an unmistakable way to learn things. Songs stick in our heads. Has anyone heard of an earwig? Those things that get in our minds and we just cannot stop thinking of? That is what rhyme does for us.

Repetition: Hearing something over and over is a great way to learn. Seeing the same pictures, using the same words, looking at the same letters are things that work to teach children. Repetition helps strengthen the connections in their brains.



- The first thing I want to talk about are picture books. Now, just because a book is a board book, doesn't mean it isn't a picture book.
- As you can see, board books are picture books. They have colorful pictures and few words so that infant, and caregivers can make connections and stories up as they go.
- (I plan on having a place at a table in the room with a display of books from these lists. If they don't have a library card, there will also be forms to apply for those. I will also have a list of popular picture/board books and hopefully a display of those that they can check out after our session.)



- I hope you all noticed as you arrived that not only were there books for you to pick up tonight for you to keep. If you haven't had a chance to get a library book, you can do that tonight. You can choose from the books on the table, or you are welcome to explore the children's section downstairs (this will be worked out with the librarians ahead of time).
- I have also created a list of books that you can take home to use to choose easy to read books for your child.
- “Brown Bear, Piggies, Littles, Where the Wild Things Are, and The Very Hungry Caterpillar” (I will point out each book on the slide), are just a few examples of the great number of books that your child would love.



- Letter sounds and recognition are some of the beginning steps that you can help your child take to begin their journey to become great readers.
- By working on these things before school, your child will be ready to learn at the Preschool and Kindergarten level.
- As you can see, there are many different “things” that can be used to reinforce letters. For example, for the letter A, you can use alligator, acorn, and apple. These are simple pictures and they can help your child remember the letter and the sounds that it can make. Notice that alligator and apple have the short A sound, ahhh. While acorn had the long a, AAAAcorn.
- I would like you to take a few minutes to look at these different images and think about the sounds that go along with the pictures and the words that they then create. (I want to give them 3 minutes to read the different posters).



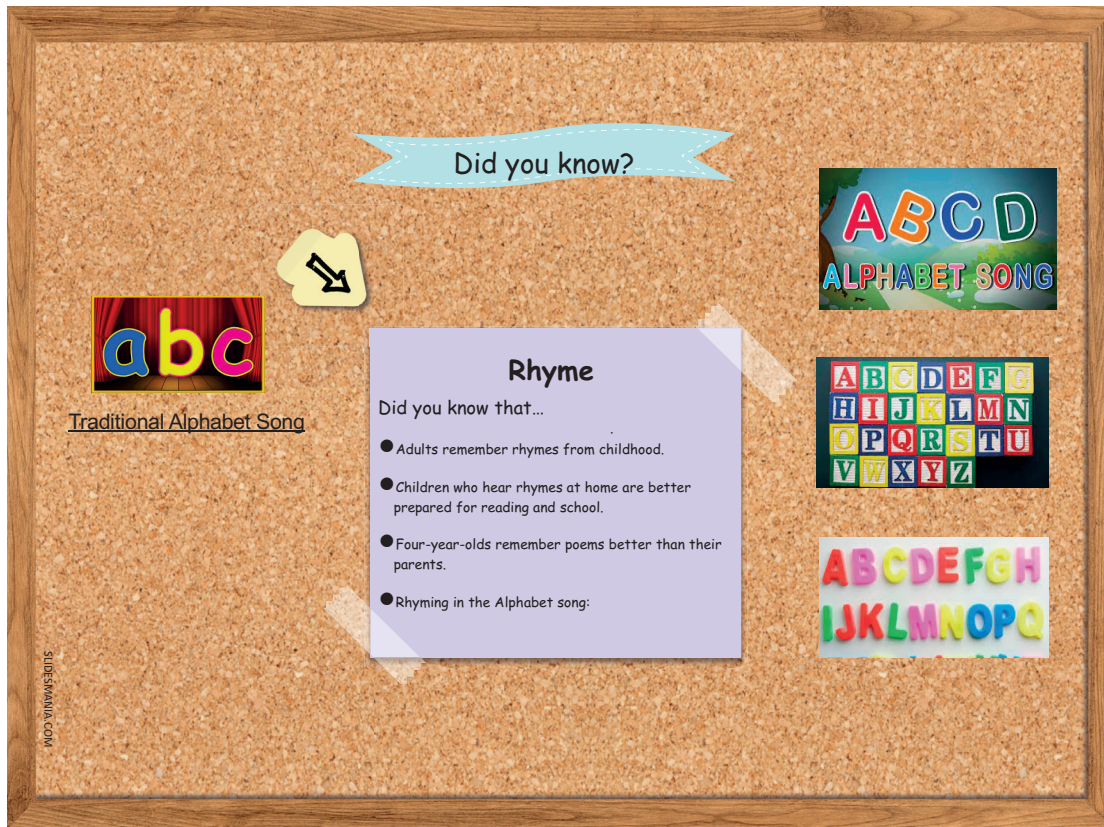
- Letter shapes are easy to teach your child. You can even put one letter on one piece of paper to make it simple. You can have them trace the letter with their little pointer fingers. It is an easy and fun activity for you to do together. (I will have a worksheet for each family with the letter A on it. This will take approximately 5 minutes to let them practice with their child a few times.)
- While you are tracing and talking about a letter, it is important to make the sounds that letter can make. Toddlers love to make sounds and especially to hear you make them.
- By learning the shapes and sounds of letters, you are helping them to learn the building blocks of words, which sets them on the path to reading.
- The alphabet can be reinforced by working on it with your child through alphabet books, songs, and videos. We will look at a few of these on the next slide.



- Now we will look at some examples of the ABCs:
- The first video is of an ABC song where they give the sounds. (<https://youtu.be/tKsli1MH4lw>)
- The second video is of the classic Dr. Seuss Alphabet Book. (<https://youtu.be/CrmX7I88VQk>)
- (I will show the videos.)
- Aren't those powerful even though they are simple? There are many different songs and videos out there. I found these on YouTube.



- Rhyme is a powerful teaching tool. If we can make a rhyme out of information, we are more likely to remember it.
- Most of us can remember some kind of rhyme from our childhood. The sad thing is that many kids don't know the old Mother Goose rhymes.
- (I will point these out as we talk about them.). Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, Hey Diddle Diddle, Little Bo Peep, and One Two Buckle My Shoe are just a few examples. Do you know any more from your childhood? (I will wait for answers.)



- Rhyme is not something that works for adults only. Kids remember things when they rhyme, even better than their parents!
- (I will read the information from the slide here.)
- The Alphabet Song is something that children are exposed to at an early age and that rhymes. Let's take a look at it. (I will show the video.)
- Many of us had access to the kind of blocks and letters on the slide. The more that children are exposed to the alphabet, the better they will learn those shapes and sounds that will influence them as they go to school.



- The last topic I want to discuss tonight is repetition.
- It is really not enough for us to show our children a picture of an apple, one time, and then expect them to know what an apple is. It is important for us to repeat letters, sounds, and pictures with our infants.
- As you can see (I will point out the image on the lower left of the slide) as we are exposed to something more times, we can remember it better. I don't know about you, but my cell phone has destroyed my memory. I used to know many numbers off the top of my head. Now, because of my cell phone saving those numbers by name, I no longer even attempt to memorize those numbers.
- I know that I could learn them again, but I would have to repeat them to me many, many times.

Meet the repetition dream team!



Vocabulary

- Is the foundation for reading.
- Larger vocabulary = ability to learn more at school.



Comprehension

- Must understand words to become successful in school.
- First understand what others read, then what they read themselves.



Fun!

- Reading the same story over and over.
- Watching the same TV show.
- Playing the same game.

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Three things that repetition does for kids:

- **Vocabulary**
 - (I will read the slide.)
 - The letters that you repeatedly teach become words that kids will know and be prepared to recognize when they go to school.
- **Comprehension**
 - (I will read the slide.)
 - The only way children will understand, or comprehend, the letters and words they see, is if it repeatedly shown to them.
 - This is also true for sounds. It is important for the sounds to be repeated by you and also by them.
- **Fun!**
 - (I will read the slide.)
 - When my son was an infant, he drove me crazy because he wanted to see the same cartoons, movies, and tv shows over and over.
 - Little did I know that he was learning different things every time it was repeated.
 - It is the repetition that strengthens the connections in their brains.



- Now you all are going to try rhyming, repeating, and using sounds on your own. Please use the board book you picked up on your way in. Take your time and have fun!
- I will walk around and make sure you don't have any questions. IF you need me, just let me know and I will be right over.
- (This will take 5-7 minutes. I will let the parents read through the books with their children and make sure they are comfortable rhyming, repeating, and using sounds.



- I would like to thank each of you for coming tonight and sharing your children with me.
- This is final session. I have enjoyed every session and hope that you have learned something that you didn't know before.
- Don't forget to sign up for your library card if you haven't already. The list of picture books is for you to keep.
- Please be careful going home. Take the board book with you, it is for you to keep and to practice the strategies we learned tonight with your child.

VITA

KRISTEN C. MORGAN

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