

Graciela: Hello. Welcome to Segment Two: What Does It Look Like? What we're going to do in this segment is explain the elements of literacy development and we're going to give examples of young children who are acquiring literacy in two or more languages. To introduce this segment, we're going to start by watching a clip. It's teacher Melissa Kolb's classroom and it's in the same Head Start program in Portland, Oregon and how she intentionally integrates social skills while children are learning to recognize the letters in their names.

[Video begins] Melissa Kolb: Come on over, buddy. We've missed you. You've been gone for a few days. Come on in here. Hi, sweetie. We've missed you, too. Glad you made it today. The kids are going to be happy to play with you today. Would you like to go ahead and sign in? Right over there. Morning sign-in works different with different groups of kids. So what I'm doing this year is having the children come in and they will find their name on the sign-in sheets and then they write their name to the best of their ability.

For some of the children their whole name is written there. For some of them, it's just their first name so that they can practice different types of writing. With this particular group of learners, they've really needed to work hard to practice their social skills. We have several different languages in the classroom so that's another piece that I want to bring in and help them talk to one another. What I have them do is come, find their names, sign in, and then they're responsible for looking to see if another child on that list is there.

They're practicing their literacy skills by identifying names of other children even if they're just doing that by the first letter but they're also practicing their social skills because they're then responsible for going and finding that other child, asking them politely to come and sign in and then taking care of that. Nice work. Who can you get? Do you know one of these people?

Child: Leo isn't here.

Teacher: Who is that do you suppose? Who can you get? Who is that? Daniella. That's correct. [Video ends]

Ruth: This is such a wonderful, welcoming classroom environment. And you can see that one of the things that teacher Melissa Kolb stresses is that literacy is just part of the whole child, it's part of their social development and identity and the way that she's supporting all the languages and creating that wonderful language oasis.

Carola: In terms of what teachers can do to support children who are dual language learners in developing early literacy skills in the classroom regardless of the language is to take advantage and capitalize on what they're curious about. So for example, children are naturally interested in recognizing and learning to write their own names and of others.

So using children's names is also important because it ties all the social-emotional development that is crucial at this age. And also by using children's names, teachers can introduce many literacy concepts and make connections between letters and sounds, understanding the functions of print, recognizing letters and words and also incorporate math concepts such as having classification of names, long and short names, etc.

Graciela: Thank you Carola. So let's start with the main elements of literacy development. What are the main elements of literacy development? Sharon, will you help us with that?

Sharon: Sure, Graciela. There's a fair amount of consensus in the learning field about the main ideas or domains that predict children's success in reading and writing in elementary school and in Head Start we refer the Child Outcomes Framework as a guide in their curriculum planning and ongoing assessment of the progress and accomplishments of 3 to 5-year-olds in literacy.

And again, I want to remind, as we said in the beginning, although the Child Outcomes Framework does not apply to infants and toddlers, those early literacy experiences in Early Head Start and Migrant Head Start that you've heard Eileen talk about already provides a foundation for literacy development, literacy outcomes for preschoolers and we will discuss those in context in the segment as well.

There are five elements in literacy development highlighted in the framework that we're going to look at in depth. You'll see examples of how they're addressed in Head Start programs with intentional planning on the part of staff and with respect for individual differences.

Again, we're going to be looking at those special considerations for children who are dual language learners. So the slide you see the elements of literacy development, you have a phonological awareness, book knowledge and appreciation, print awareness and concepts, early writing and alphabet knowledge. Those are the ones we're going to clue in today.

Graciela: Thank you, Sharon. Let's start looking at them more closely. So what is phonological awareness and what does it look like for children who are learning in two languages?

Carola: Well, phonological awareness is the understanding that spoken language is composed of smaller units of sound. For a young child this involves the understanding that some languages are organized into words, words into syllables, and syllables into sounds. This is the case for Spanish and English but there are other languages that children bring into the classroom that do not have an alphabet based language, and in that sense, teachers need to know the basics of the languages that children bring into the classroom.

Let me share with you an example that I love from a child in -- a 4-year-old child in a Head Start classroom who gave me a piece of paper and he had written the letter p, b, n, and a. And what he said was that that read banana. And he said that that was in English. And that was very interesting to me.

And I thought, well, how would that look -- how would you write that in Spanish? What he said was that Spanish was different because it was banana, it was banana. You barely pronounce the "b" sound but this was in English and that's why banana had almost like a "p" sound and he included the "p" before the rest of the letters. And this shows the level of -- the high level thinking that this child was bringing into that experience - phonological awareness, letters, sounds, concepts of print, everything in it, not just the phonological awareness skill.

A nice strategy for those programs that are offering daily support in Spanish and English is to teach cognates. Cognates are words from different languages that share and have similar pronunciation in spelling and meaning and these are excellent strategies for children to use as a tool for understanding English. So, for example, tren and train, carro and car, with a difference with other words that don't have cognates and that's -- for example Manzana and apple.

Graciela: And there are some that are tricky, too, because libreria is bookstore, not library. So as it gets more complex but it is important also there are endings that can be recognized. All of the C-Y, like emergency or Cia in Spanish, emergencia. The teachers that can recognize those patterns can support their children in understanding how you go from one language to the other and how you transfer that knowledge. Eileen, would you want to add something to that?

Eileen: Well, it's important with infants and toddlers that you include a lot of things in the learning environment that emphasize the kind of the melody of language. Many rhymes, finger plays, songs that make all of it a really language rich communication environment for the children. And preferably done in the child's first language, especially on that birth to 3 continuum. Those -- the awareness of the phonology develops gradually over time but it's really important that children learn that phonology in their first language.

Ruth: That reminds me of an interesting story that happened in a Head Start classroom that I was working in around Russian. Because the phonological awareness, of course, comes into the written language as well. And a young girl, Veda her name was, was writing in Cyrillic and using the English alphabet and she had written a story about Christmas and she had written c, what looked like a p to the teacher and me, m-s...

... and what we discovered when we looked into the Cyrillic language was that the symbol that looks like a p actually makes what is in English an "r" sound so what was wonderful is she was using her phonological awareness in her writing and it's important for teachers to understand a little bit about the written language that their children are bringing to the classroom.

Graciela: That's such an important concept, Ruth. Thank you for bringing it up. We have a lot of resources that if teachers are aware of basically the orthography of the home language, the spelling, how the sounds are represented in written form - they can not only support and guide children along their learning but they can understand what children are doing in their writing a lot better like in Carola's example. So let's look at the following clip where we see Daniella spell the name of her brother, Kevin.

Watch how the teacher respects this child's learning process. This is a beautiful example of how a teacher can promote a child's confidence and positive approach to learning without interfering with too much correction.

[Video begins] Teacher: Look in this area and see if you see a k. What about on top of something here.

Child: You find it!

Teacher: Oh, my goodness, you found it! Ok. Now you're going to need an e. There are times when I really need to just sit down and stay at a center or work with kids at a particular area and I was working at the letter center because I wanted to see what one of the children was going to do with the letters. She's been someone that hasn't been interested at all in letters and has really grown to have more interest.

So I wanted to sit down with her and spend some time talking about what she was doing and what she wanted to do. You're going to need a V. Yeah. A v.

New Speaker: V.

Teacher: You found a v? Terrific. There's a v. And the next letter you're gonna need is going to be an i. And you know, I think the i's in these letters are just straight. That one has a little tail on it that curves so we know that's a j. Let's see if we can find one that doesn't curve. Keep looking. You see an i anywhere? It's not going to have a tail on it. There's one with a tail. Hmm. What do you think? Does that look a little bit like this one?

Child: Yes.

Teacher: Yeah. Ok. Now the last one in Kevin is an n. Kevin. Can I play here too? Why don't you finish your card so you can take it home today?

Child: n.n. an n. N-n-n-n-n.

Teacher: You found it already. I didn't even see you. Ok. K-e-v-m-i-n. Is there something extra? Sure. Come and join us. You want to write names or something else?

Child: Write the name.

Teacher: Ok, well, you can find it in there and then see if you can find all your letters.

Child: Kevin.

Teacher: Kevin. Ok -- k-e-v- and then you have an i and an n. And then you have an m. Do you need this one? Yes. Ok, you need that one. What Daniela wanted to do when she was writing her brother's name was to keep the m inside. And in looking at it, I decided that it would be good for her to do that because she was so definite about it needing to be there.

I tried to prompt her, I tried to push to see if she really needed it there and she told me that she did. So what was important in that context was that she felt good about what she had written with the letters and that she was able to feel successful during that activity. [Video ends]

Eileen: What a wonderful video and many of those same practices and techniques we see in the video can be broken down for the birth to 3 continuum. With infants and toddlers, it's using shapes and sequences and if you'll notice in that particular video clip, there's a very interesting feature that I think could be duplicated in other programs and that is the fact that there are straight lines all the way around the table so the children have the opportunity to line up the letters which helps support the idea of writing and spelling...

...and you can do the same thing with infants and toddlers with shapes for the idea of sequences. So a very good clip all in all with something to be learned for all.

José: That a very good point, Eileen and very well made. I love how the teacher is incorporating not only mentioning the letters, the names of the letters but the sounds as well. There are many reports on how important this is for children developing any language in the early stages.

The NELP Report, the National Early Literacy Panel Report, for example, says that as Head Start programs we excel in alphabet knowledge and identifying the letters but we need a little boost, a little help with phonological awareness and incorporating that into every daily routine and activity so that that can be incorporated as well.

Eileen: I couldn't have said it better myself José, a very important point.

Graciela: Thank you very much, both of you. Let's move on to the next element. What is book knowledge and appreciation, and why is it important to young children? And what are the special considerations for children who are learning in two languages?

José: I think as we discussed, book appreciation, we do need to keep in mind those non-roman alphabetic languages because those children, perhaps we just have one of those in our classrooms, one German family, one Asian family, one of the languages that are not roman alphabet languages but aren't

they just as important as any other child in our classroom? If I were the parent I would expect an absolute yes.

Every child is important in our classroom, no matter what the age or what their background may be. We live in a very scriptural society, reading is so important in our society and it's everywhere. Because it is so important we have to focus on this from a positive perspective, a positive beginning.

There are many dialogic reading strategies that are presented; one that is known by Head Start programs across the country and are used by many programs is entitled "Follow the car." It's a mnemonic device, it's an acronym that helps us remember how important it is to have dialogue when enjoying books and appreciating books. Car, follow the car.

We start with follow because the first step to the strategy is follow the child's lead. Whatever that child's interest, whether it's dinosaurs or foods or dogs, whatever it is at that age, we follow their lead. The c in car stands for comment and wait. Two important points about this is we tend to start off with a question. We want to come up to a child and ask, what are you doing, what is that? That's great. However, this strategy is saying start off with a comment.

Just make a comment about what the child is doing and then another important component, wait. Wait is so difficult for adults in our society because we want to move on and get things done. We have so much to do but it is crucial in the strategy to just wait, allow yourself to be silent and allow that child to express him or herself in any way the child feels appropriate. And then the a in car stand for ask a question.

Now we can ask something because we have the child's attention, we have their interest and we know they have our attention so let's ask them something to provoke more thinking and critical thinking. And then the r is respond by adding a little more information. Introduce that new juicy word the child may not be familiar with.

Here's a great opportunity to increase the child's vocabulary. So follow the car. In Spanish, when we present this -- [speaking in Spanish] and the last row is repeat again so the child really understands the importance of this process.

Ruth: And the car strategy that José is describing can be used with children all along the birth to 5 continuum. And it can be used also to build on children's vocabulary, introduce new vocabulary and even revisit some subjects that you've already talked about.

Carola: And if you want to learn more about dialogic reading, this wonderful strategy that focuses on reading interactively with children, you can visit the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, the ECLKC, where you will find activities that focus -- that are specifically for teachers and these are available in English and Spanish to work with teachers and parents.

Graciela: Great. Thank you very much. All of you. For those wonderful examples and stories. Let's look at the next video clip where we see the teacher Kolb intentionally create opportunities for children to hear stories read to them and interact with print many times each day and this is an important concept because it doesn't happen just once and it shouldn't happen just once.

It's many times during the day children should have opportunities to tell and listen to stories in different languages, their home language and English which is often the language of the classroom. Let's watch.

[Video begins] [Speaking in different languages]

Teacher: During the time when the children's routine involves tooth brushing, which is after our morning meal, they are on the rug looking at books and we call it book time. What we're doing at that time is having every available adult in the room reading books to children.

That is a time when we can get things set up in the room so things are ready for their centers which come after that. But it's a really important time when they can be read to and read books in pairs, alone or in small groups, when teacher Gnoc is here she's supporting them by reading to them in Vietnamese. She may be reading books that we've read all week and she may read the book that we're going to read that day so that she can front load whatever it is we're going to talk about.

When we have visitors or guests, they're pulled into that reading as well so that the children have the opportunity to hear four or five or even six stories a day rather than just one at large group time being read to them. [Video ends]

Graciela: Great. You saw how she just explained beautifully what her intention was in doing what she was doing. And I think it's a good example for all of us to follow and it works from birth to 5. So let's move on to what is print awareness and concepts and what are, again, the special considerations for children who are learning in two or more languages.

Carola: Well, print awareness includes several skills like how children conceptualize print, directionality, letters are different than numbers, print has different functions, and print carries meaning as well as books have different rules in how we read them and go about them. So for children who are dual language learners these concepts might be transferable such as in Spanish and English, but this might not be true in languages that are not alphabetic.

So it's very important for teachers to know about the uniqueness of those languages represented in the classroom and include and engage parents early on and throughout the whole year in the activities that are happening in the classroom and at home.

Graciela: Great. Thank you very much Carola. Let's watch the next video which is a little girl, Ivy, using all of these skills that Carola just mentioned to read a story about whales. To Ruth, actually.

[Video begins] Teacher: Ok, so Ivy, can you read this book to me?

Ivy: [Ivy reads book]

Narrator: During the book browsing time, Ivy brought over a book over to me and she wanted to read it to me and I was really so pleased that she wanted to do that because it's such an important step in young children's reading development. It's just really part of them becoming readers is to use the book almost like a conversation starter.

She looked at the print and she used her finger and underlined each word and pointed to it as she made up a different story that was on the same topic. It was still about whales but it wasn't the story in the book.

Ivy: The whales. Baby beluga. They can't smell flowers. But they can smell humans. So they always have different kinds of energy.

Narrator: This is a close-up of the page that Ivy just read showing the actual words rather than the story that Ivy chose to relate.

Ivy: There are always people watching the ocean. See there are one person and his house. Once there was one born and he was so cute they always [Inaudible]

Ivy: Whales take very good care of their babies.

Teacher: Yeah.

Ivy: And this is all the rest of the pictures.

Narrator: And this is the last page that Ivy read where she used her knowledge of the book to talk about the labels on another page in the book that said what she knew about whales, and if you remember, she pointed to each line as she finished reading the end of the book.

Ivy: Whales take very good care of their babies.

Narrator: Someone might say oh, well, that's not really reading. Well it's a very, very important stage of reading because she's developing her story sense along with the book and she felt very proud of what she had read.

Ivy: The pictures.

Teacher: Very nice reading. Have you read it before, Ivy? [Video ends]

José: That's a great example, Ruth. I love how you're demonstrating to the child that it's ok to be creative and make up that language and develop their own story sense. Research says - if we associate this with the family, research says that whatever is being done in the classroom, if done at home as well increases learning and it's optimized.

Learning is so important and you can get a parent that may think well, she's not reading the story. Gosh, she's not really doing a good job. But if the parent understands this concept behind reading and making

up the story or creating their own story from the child's perspective, it's ok and it's wonderful and it increases their vocabulary and has so many benefits, doesn't it Graciela?

Graciela: Great, great examples, José. You just reminded me, it's about as adults letting go of our concepts of reading and writing. We have such contrived and narrow concepts. They will get there but all of these are very, very important stages and steps that they need to take in understanding which is pretty abstract as Ruth is going to demonstrate with us as she describes the next slides. Will you, Ruth, for us please?

Ruth: Oh sure, I would be delighted to. I love talking about children's examples, they get me very excited. I already mentioned to you about Fuad's writing which shows how he was using his understanding of Arabic written language to put spoken words on the page, but in the next slide, you can see Bujin is also doing inventive spelling in her language which is Chinese and some of those characters are actually Chinese but others aren't.

She's still inventing in that very inventive stage of making her own meaning on the page. And then in the next slide, this is a wonderful example I think of a child who is truly a dual language learner both as an oral speaker and as a written language user. At the top of the page she's written in some Chinese and at the bottom of the page she's drawn a river and she's using her phonological awareness and her sound-symbol correspondence to actually write those sounds down, river, r-v-r.

And the last slide, we have a wonderful example from Ming who is a Chinese speaker and Chinese writer. And his writing is actually Chinese. He's been learning it at home and some days he writes in Chinese and some days he writes in English and he always has drawings with his work.

Graciela: Great. Thank you very much. Those are excellent examples of what children do as all of this emerges in their understanding. Let's move on to our next element in the literacy development continuum. What is alphabet knowledge and how do children who are learning in two languages develop this alphabet knowledge?

José: Thank you, Graciela. I think in order to understand how children develop the two languages, it's important to define what alphabet knowledge is. One definition that is widely known by many programs and many early childhood education institutions is as follows. Alphabet knowledge is when a child not only recognizes but really identifies the letters of the alphabet.

This can include making a connection between units of print and units of sound. And really an understanding of the definition is integral as we talk about the languages developed by children.

Carola: It's also important to demonstrate the connection between the two languages and drawing attention to those differences and those similarities between the languages. And it's critical that we do the work. We need to find authentic materials and seek reliable sources to assist us in finding those authentic materials, for example, the alphabet in Spanish.

We want to find -- make sure we use an alphabet or expose children to the alphabet in that language that we find one that is correct, that it doesn't have the double r, for example, which does not exist but we usually find in those commercially sold alphabets.

And the same with other languages like Mixteco. Mixteco is not a written language and our first inclination might be to write it down as we hear it however we have to be very careful because we are not aware of that phonetic expression and what -- the way we might pronounce it might actually be a completely different word in the Mixteco language.

Ruth: And alphabet knowledge in infants and toddlers should be developed gradually and over time in a very age appropriate way. It can be as simple as having letter blocks in your classroom. Any time you're going to introduce anything, it shouldn't be too many letters at one time and again a very integral part of what you're doing. Remember, the learning environment for infants and toddlers is a daily routine.

Graciela: Thank you all. It's a very, very interesting how we're getting to this important concept of what is reading and writing from the perspective of an infant, a toddler, and a preschooler. In this next video, we'll see exemplified how children are hearing letter names and sounds in Spanish.

[Video begins] [Speaking in Spanish]

Narrator: We do have bilingual assistants who come into our classroom and Tanya is our Spanish speaking bilingual assistant and she comes in one day a week and so she reads to the children in Spanish and she's a really good translator so she actually translates on the spot whatever book they want her to

read to them even if it's not written in Spanish, so that's really nice and then she can have conversations with the Spanish Speaking children about the books that they're reading and learning about. [Video ends]

Graciela: Excellent example of a teacher that uses the versatility with the languages and you know, I was thinking if a family doesn't have a great translator, they can just interpret the pictures and have conversations about the pictures.

I wanted to go back to a comment Carola made that when she said that the double r as a letter does not exist in Spanish, so the alphabet only recognizes the r as a letter. However, we do have the sound of a double r in the middle of a word we put two r's to make the rolling r. So this also happens in English with a little bit older children who are now using letters in different alphabets to actually do some writing. Let's watch these two little girls in the writing center.

[Video begins] Narrator: The writing center in the room changes from time to time. Sometimes it will be more theme related, so for instance when we went to the fire station there were a lot of different fire station props in there, there was a fire hat and some badges, there were some papers to write on with fire trucks, so it was more theme related and the children were interested in writing about fire trucks and things like that.

Lately they've been interested in letters and letter writing so that's what the center reflects right now. They're using stickers for stamps and have different types of materials in there. For instance, I just put some index cards in the baskets and they were very interested in that new medium.

Child 1: Our alphabet.

Child 2: Yeah. Right Tina. I want some stickers.

Child 1: For my mom. I need to get some ladybugs, me too.

Teacher: You want another color?

Child 1: Same... And I gonna write something for my mom.

[Inaudible] Just think about it Tina.

Child 2: We can look at the alphabet.

Child 1: We can't do that.

Child 2: We don't know what letter is it. [Video ends]

Ruth: What stands out for me in this clip is just the joy of writing and how important it is for children to feel successful at every level of writing development along the continuum as they're just playing and practicing and learning to write.

Children are going to develop slowly that understanding that writing does convey a message and records experiences and helps somebody to recall and retell, but it's so important that it's in a very happy and joyful atmosphere and it can be a great strategy to help them develop their oral and print skills.

Carola: That's exactly what we want to foster. And I wanted to also say that writing development may look different based on the child's first language. It's crucial, it's so important for teachers to celebrate what they have accomplished every single time but also to scaffold so that the child is motivated to continue learning and to foster new and more advanced understanding.

Graciela: Great. Thank you very much, all. I think the clips and our panelists have really shown us the importance of following the child, of allowing the child's interests to lead us and provide a variety of joyful experiences for them and for us as they progress through their continuum.

If you remember back to our clip of Hannah, the little girl who was drawing the story and making it up as she went along to Ruth, there was joy in her retelling of her story and in her inventing it as she went along and then being able to draw it right then and there. We have come to the end of our Segment Number Two: What Does It Look Like. We hope we have given you a variety and richness of examples and I'm going to ask Sharon Yandian to review and give us the takeaways for this segment.

Sharon: Sure, thanks, Graciela. Really, there was quite a lot packed in Segment Two. Let's see if we can just highlight a few of those. I think the first thing we need to remember is children who are learning in two languages develop early literacy skills in the context of their everyday experiences with adults, peers, and materials.

You heard Graciela and others talking about that and they do it in a joyful way. It has to be fun for them. The second is literacy learning has many elements that can be integrated and should be integrated in learning experiences in the classroom and at home. You heard José talk a lot about how we support the family in their understanding of what we're doing in the classroom and in our home-based settings.

The third is communication, relationships, and that print rich environments foster an integrated approach to language and literacy development that are optimal for all children especially those who are learning in two languages. So it's that integration that's really key. Last is that all families weave literacy into their everyday days and programs can support that connection with the children's home experiences and we heard several of the panelists talk about that.

As we close this segment, I just want to remind those participants that we did provide the link to the leader's guide that really supports the Child Outcomes Framework in what we've been discussing today and there's particular attention in that resource page of children who are dual language learners as well. Graciela?

Graciela: Thank you very much, Sharon and concludes our Segment Two. Please stay tuned and come back for our Segment Three where we will do the big picture and how you systemically can support all of this for teachers and children and families.