

The Big 5 *The Big Picture*



Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

1. Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing
2. Background Knowledge
3. **Book Knowledge and Print Concepts**
4. Oral Language and Vocabulary
5. Phonological Awareness

Sue, the family childcare provider, knows that even very young children develop knowledge about books and print. Six-month-old Sam mouths and explores a book that Sue read to him earlier. He pats the picture of a whale. Three-year-old Mohammed walks over to the bookshelf and takes out a book about bugs that Sue read yesterday. He pages through the book saying “bug” as he points to different types of bugs.



Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

Book knowledge and print concepts include the following:

- ▶ Understanding that print is speech written down (Justice & Kadaravek, 2004)
 - ▶ Learning the various purposes of print
 - ▶ Communicating with others
 - ▶ Finding information
 - ▶ Recording our ideas (documentation)
 - ▶ Providing pleasure or entertainment
 - ▶ Recognizing common signs, symbols, and logos
 - ▶ Having experiences with different types of print materials, such as books, pamphlets, lists, letters, journals, etc.
 - ▶ Knowing how to use books appropriately, including how to hold books, turn pages, etc.
 - ▶ Asking and answering questions about what is read during shared reading and other experiences with print
- ▶ Identifying basic story elements, such as characters, sequence, main events, and setting
 - ▶ Discussing the characters and events in stories, making predictions, and retelling the story
 - ▶ Understanding that some books provide information rather than tell a story
 - ▶ Enjoying books and other experiences with print, having favorite books, and requesting that some books be re-read
 - ▶ Pretending to read books (emergent reading)



Spotlight on languages!

Children learn book knowledge and print concepts in the languages that are read to and shared with them. Some print concepts may differ across languages in the following ways:

- Some languages are read from right to left, and others are read from left to right.
- Some languages are read from the back of a book to the front, and others are read from the front of a book to the back.
- Some languages do not have a written form.

Book Knowledge and Print Concepts across languages

Book knowledge and print concepts developed in *any* language support children's book knowledge and print concepts in English. For example, the central insight that print is speech written down (Justice & Kadaravek, 2004) can happen in any language and transfer from one language to another.

Children may develop knowledge of print, and how books work, in a home

language with a written form that is different from English. Therefore, children may expect English language books to look and work like books in their home language. This prior knowledge of the home language is not wrong, but the child may need support in understanding how the written system of English works.

Miss Karen notices that Chen opens books to the back. This is how books open in his home language, Chinese. She does not correct him. However, when she reads aloud to Chen, she shows him how she opens English books and explains, "English books open to the front." After modeling this for a few days, she sees Chen opening an English book to the front.





Similarities and differences between English and other languages*

	Arabic and English	Chinese and English	Spanish and English	Twi and English
Written form of the language	Letters represent sounds. However, the letters look quite different from English letters.	Chinese does not use letters to represent sounds. Words are symbolized by characters.	Letters represent sounds. Although Spanish uses many of the same letters as English, the letters do not always make the same sounds as in English.	Letters represent sounds. Although Twi uses many of the same letters as English, the letters do not always make the same sounds as in English.
Print concepts	Arabic, unlike English, is read from right to left and from the bottom to the top of the page. Readers turn pages from left to right.	Chinese, like English, is read from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.	Spanish, like English, is read left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.	Twi, like English, is read left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page. Readers turn pages from right to left.

* Please note that this chart provides general information on how languages are similar to and different from English. Speakers of these languages may or may not need additional support in written English, depending on their prior experiences.

Why Book Knowledge and Print Concepts matter

- ▶ Helping very young children to engage with print and to learn as much as possible about its forms and functions will ease children's transition into reading and writing (Justice & Piasta, 2011).



- ▶ Reading-related behaviors—including book handling, language, comprehension, and emergent reading—lead to actual reading later in childhood (Hoffman & Cassano, 2013).

- ▶ “Books and other print materials can help children explore and come to understand better the people, places, and things they encounter in everyday life. They can also help children learn about the world beyond their own” (Bennett-Armistead, Duke, & Moses, 2005, p. 12).



- ▶ “Reading with adults, looking at books independently, and sharing reading experiences with peers are some of the ways that children experience books... Knowledge about print is built from children’s experiences with books and other written materials” (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006, “Children’s Experiences With Books,” para. 1)

How do Book Knowledge and Print Concepts develop?

Alicia develops book knowledge and print concepts throughout her early childhood. This knowledge directly supports her school readiness. Alicia, a dual language learner, is learning Spanish and English at home and English at school. She will develop skills in each language based on how each language is used with her, and how she uses each language. Here we see how the skills she develops from birth directly support her school readiness.

INFANT/TODDLER

Infants and toddlers develop book knowledge and print concepts by sharing interactive print experiences with caring adults and by observing how written language is used in their environments. Adults share books with children by following the child's gaze and interest.

- Alicia cuddles on her mother's lap while her mother reads her a picture book.
- Alicia points to her favorite cereal in the grocery store, recognizing the label on the box.
- Alicia points at her name on the label on her cubby. She knows her name and says "Alicia."

PRESCHOOL

With the support of responsive adults, preschoolers begin to pay more attention to print. They learn that print carries meaning and that the meaning stays the same over multiple readings. Preschoolers can ask and answer both simple and complex questions about the books that are read to them. Many preschoolers also practice their emerging understanding of print by pretending to read books.

- Alicia pretends to read books by holding them correctly, turning the pages, and even retelling the story.
- Story time is one of Alicia's favorite parts of the day. She likes to predict what will happen next in the story.
- Alicia sees a red bird outside and races to a book called *Birds*. With adult support, she identifies the bird as a cardinal.
- Alicia uses the printed labels and signs in the classroom, even though she does not really "read" them yet.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Children's early experiences with books and other materials support them to enjoy print and motivate them to learn to read. Asking and answering questions about books also supports later reading comprehension.

- Alicia sees books as sources of enjoyment and information.
- Alicia is very excited to finally learn to read books, as well as menus, magazines, catalogs, and other print.
- Alicia learns to use new parts of books, such as tables of content and indexes.
- Alicia asks questions and summarizes as she reads. This supports her reading comprehension.

Book Knowledge and Print Concepts and Dual Language Learners

Alicia speaks Spanish and English and Xiao speaks Chinese and English. They each know different things about print through their experiences at home. They bring this knowledge with them to preschool.

Alicia

Magazines are fun! They have great pictures and my mom lets me choose my haircut.

Magazine pages are turned from right to left. You look at the pictures and see lots of people wearing different kinds of clothes and with different hair.



Xiao

My father gets the newspaper from the store every week. He shows me how to fold the paper without crumpling it.

The print in the newspaper is written in many directions. My father reads the newspaper to learn about things. He tells me what is happening in China, where he was born.



Alicia and Xiao have both developed print concepts based on their print experiences in their home languages. Alicia looks at magazines in Spanish with her mother and uses them to choose hairstyles. Since Spanish and English have similar print systems, many of her print concepts will transfer directly to English. Xiao looks at newspapers in Chinese and notes how important they are to his father. English and Chinese have quite different print systems. While Xiao's insight that print is "read" and used to "learn about things" will transfer to English, he will need experiences with written English in order to understand that in English, newspapers are read from left to right.



Book Knowledge and Print Concepts, culture, and funds of knowledge

Children develop “funds of knowledge” about books and print based on their experiences with their families, cultures, and communities. Funds of knowledge is a way of thinking about the skills and attitudes that children have developed based on their



experiences with their families and communities (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). For example, some children may have families in which picture book reading is a daily activity. Other children may have developed print concepts by using signs and labels found in their homes and neighborhoods. Some children may have little direct experience with print in their families but use rich oral language to tell detailed stories about their experiences.

When teachers and caregivers develop trusting relationships with families, they can ask families about children’s experiences with books and print. These discussions, paired with observations of each child, can inform teachers and caregivers as they plan experiences with print that build on and extend children’s existing knowledge and experiences. For example:

- Children with extensive experience reading picture books may use and build on this knowledge by participating in interactive and dialogic reading. Using these types of reading, adults encourage children to talk about the books by making predictions about what will happen next, summarizing what has happened, or talking about character’s feelings. The teacher may also use dictation (writing down the children’s own stories) to help them make their own books.
- Children who develop print concepts by using signs, logos, and other symbols may use and build on this knowledge through the environmental print in the classroom. The teacher may ask these children to demonstrate how to use labels and signs, while supporting them in creating labels and signs. If book reading is not familiar to children, the teacher may keep initial book readings short, interactive, and on topics of great interest. As children become more familiar with books, the readings become longer and more involved.

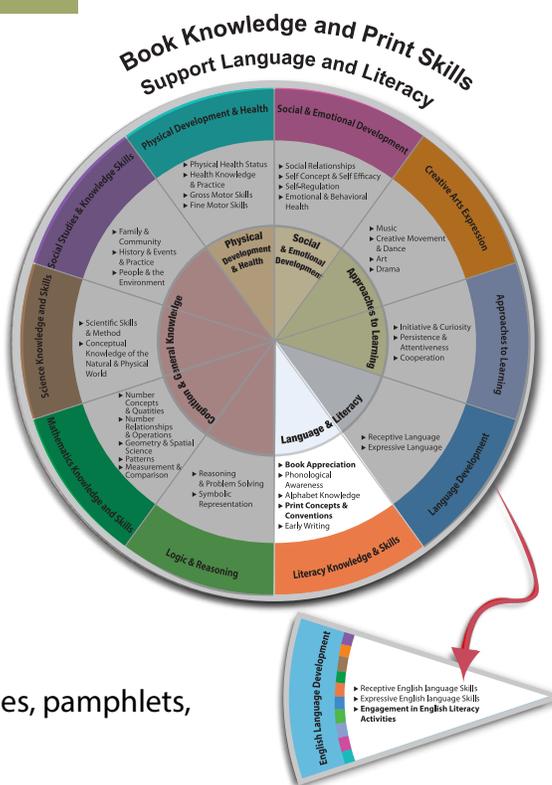


- ▶ Children who have little experience with print may deepen and expand their knowledge through dictation activities. Teachers write down children’s own speech, making a book. The book could be a story or a personal experience of great interest, such as a child’s last birthday. The teacher and children can read these books, as well as other (short) books. The teacher draws children’s attention to concepts of print, such as how to hold a book and turn pages, but the focus is on connecting speech to print and building children’s excitement for reading.
- ▶ It is important for teachers to learn about the ways language and literacy are used and valued in children’s families. These experiences may differ from those that the teacher expects to see in the classroom. Teachers can learn about, honor, build on, and extend these experiences.

Supporting Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

Provide children with many different types of print experiences throughout the day.

- ▶ Children of all ages will benefit from being read to daily in groups of one to four.
- ▶ Babies and toddlers enjoy books that can be mouthed and explored, such as board books.
- ▶ Children may enjoy stories, rhymes, illustrated songs, wordless books, and books that provide information about the world.
- ▶ Families should be encouraged to share print materials with children both at home and in the center, and in children's home languages.
 - ▶ These materials include books, magazines, pamphlets, and other print.



Create and use a print-rich environment.

- ▶ Allow children time to explore books and other print materials on their own and in groups.
 - ▶ Include books in play areas for infants and toddlers to discover and explore.
 - ▶ Provide a library of books in a cozy space where all children can choose and enjoy books in the languages spoken in the room.
 - ▶ Include print in the kitchen play area, such as food containers, recipes, menus, etc.
 - ▶ Include print in the block area, with books about construction and child-made signs.
 - ▶ Include print in the science area, with picture reference books and child-made observation journals.
- ▶ Draw children's attention to the features and uses of print.
 - ▶ Label classroom materials with words and pictures and help toddlers and preschoolers use the labels.
 - ▶ Use pocket charts with words and pictures to display a classroom schedule and to assign children to center activities.
 - ▶ Point out and talk about letters and words beginning in infancy, including the

- ▶ letters in children's names and in environmental print.
- ▶ Emphasize print on the page during shared reading, beginning with toddlers. Indicate what print looks like and what it does.
- ▶ Create environmental print with toddlers or preschoolers, such as a sign for a block structure they made or a snail house they found.
- ▶ Provide support for emergent writing at any age.



Book Knowledge and Print Concepts in action for infants and toddlers

Isabel notices that the children in her class love to touch their food. Alejandro is very interested in pulling the bread into smaller pieces. Isabel provides Alejandro with opportunities to explore bread.

Isabel is reading books about food, including bread. A favorite is *My Food/Mi Comida*. She shares this book with Alejandro. As she holds him in her lap, he immediately starts turning pages.



Isabel is impressed that at 12 months old Alejandro is already learning how books work. After he turns a few pages, Isabel starts to note the illustrations. She says, "Where is the bread?" as Alejandro points to the loaf. She says, "Yes, that's a whole loaf of bread! It's a lot bigger than the pieces..." She does not finish talking before Alejandro has turned the page. Isabel follows his lead, but tries to slow him down a little bit. She watches as Alejandro looks at the page. She asks, "What is this?" Alejandro says, "Ahh." Isabel says, "Yes, it's an apple. Look, you can see the seeds!" She points to the seeds in the apple. Alejandro touches them too. He puts down the book and goes to get the toy apple from the kitchen. He proudly holds it up for Isabel. "Ahh," he says. Isabel smiles as Alejandro returns to the kitchen to play with (and try to name) the other fruit.

She knows that although they only read a few pages of the book, it is important to follow Alejandro's lead. He is clearly enthusiastic about reading and is making connections between the book and his toys. She will read the book again at a quieter time of day, when he might sit for a longer time.

Book Knowledge and Print Concepts in action for preschoolers

Karun's class is culturally and linguistically diverse, with Spanish-speaking, Punjabi-speaking, and Hmong-speaking children. Karun follows the children's interests into a rich and engaging exploration.

She notices that her preschoolers all mention eating bread at home. She decides to explore bread and bread-making with the children. She talks to families about the bread they eat. They respond by providing her with the names of the breads in their home languages, recipes for making the breads, and descriptions of how the breads are used in their cultural traditions (for example, for certain holidays or at particular times of the day or year). Karun makes picture recipes for the children to follow as they make different breads at school. The first bread they make is *naan*, a flat bread many of the children eat at home.



Karun and the children make an illustrated recipe book together that they give to their families. In order to do this, Karun and the children:

- ▶ Look at other recipe books to decide what they need to make their book
- ▶ Decide to have a cover, title page, and list of recipes for their book
- ▶ Decide that each recipe will have its own page and picture
- ▶ Discuss the role of print and pictures in the book and how the print and pictures differ
- ▶ Decide that some recipes will be in two languages
- ▶ Decide that a child or children will write the title of each recipe, make the picture, and glue a computer printout of the recipe to the page

The new recipe book is kept in the kitchen play area, and the children enjoy using it as they pretend to cook the different breads. Karun also uses it with different literacy activities, looking up specific recipes and identifying letters.



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