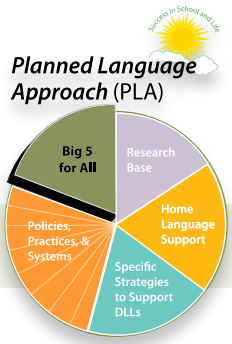
Joan Talks About the Big 5

Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing



Toddlers and preschoolers enjoy finding and talking about the letters of the alphabet. They are especially fond of the letters in their own name (the first letter of their name is a special favorite), and letters from the following places:

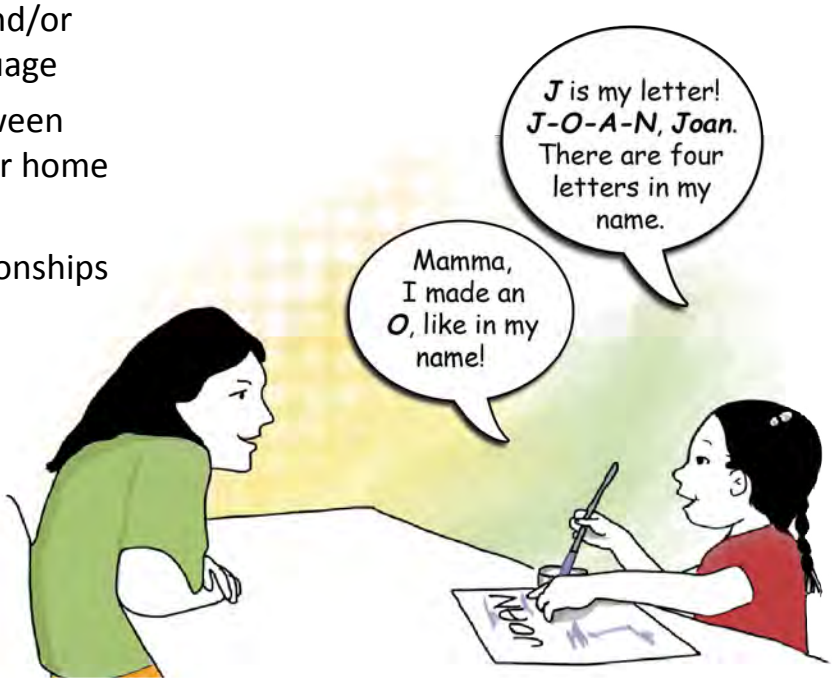
- Favorite books
- Signs and other environmental print
- Words they write or see others write

Understanding that the letters in their name don't just belong to them, but are shared and can be used in other words, helps children develop their word-making skills (Schickedanz and Casbergue, 2004).

Dual language learners (DLLs) may also be learning about the written system of their home language, if the home language has a written form.

These skills would include:

- Identifying the alphabet, signs, and/or symbols used in their home language
- Recognizing the relationship between the written and oral forms of their home language
- Learning the sound-symbol relationships within their home language



Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing Meet Background Knowledge

Children are interested in using writing to convey meaning and information. This interest becomes intertwined with their thirst for knowledge, which they pursue both on their own and with the encouragement of adults.

Ideal opportunities for children to develop their writing skills and enhance their background knowledge include:

- Writing letters
- Putting together recipe cards
- Making their own books

Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing with Book Knowledge and Print Concepts

Children are more likely to recognize and name letters when adults identify them in environmental print and books. All books and print materials provide opportunities for alphabet recognition and motivate children to engage in writing activities. These opportunities are both incidental (child-initiated) and intentional (teacher-initiated/guided).

Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing Meet Oral Language and Vocabulary

A good vocabulary is as important for writing as it is for reading, if not more so (Johnson, 2000). Children have a toolbox of language and literacy skills that allow them to read and write. Oral language and vocabulary are critical tools in this toolbox. These tools are collected from the very early years and, with nurture and support, continue to build through the school years and beyond. DLLs develop their language skills and vocabulary in their home language(s) and English at the same time. They display an awareness of the similarities among words in both languages—and, of course, the differences.

Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing meet Phonological Awareness

In preschool, children learn both letter names and letter sounds. They do not need to consciously analyze the phonetics of a language in order to communicate. However, as they learn to read and write, they need to be aware of the units of sound, especially in such languages as English and Arabic. Teachers engage children in a variety of tasks to develop their awareness of different sound units in words, including phonemes (Yopp, 1992). As children grow to understand the link between the sounds in language, words, and letters, they are able to actively participate in learning to write.

Professional References

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