

Linda Warren: Now that we have had some time to think about supporting early literacy and language, we are going to see what it looks like in a toddler classroom. We visited a teacher in Chicago, Illinois to see some of the ways that she supports early literacy and language in her classroom.

[Video Starts]

Narrator: In Chicago, teacher Michaelyn Bettasso reads to a small group of toddlers.

Michaelyn Bettasso: From head to toe. See he's got his head and there's his toes. Narrator: Michaelyn uses the reading to build vocabulary, background knowledge, and to enhance language development. Michaelyn Bettasso: I felt that reading with the children really brought out the vocabulary and I really focus on vocabulary, with just pointing out things for them and even if they're not pointing to the picture I'll show them, "Oh there's the cat." Or you know, "There's the dog." And then they might respond with the barking or, "Meow," or try and reproduce the word.

Even if the children don't respond I really think it's important to still label what I'm seeing. So then later when they go back they may remember and point to it themselves. Ladrina started in our classroom when she was 12 months, and when she came to the classroom she really didn't seem to have any familiarity with books. So she really recently has become involved in books by picking them up and opening them, and actually looking in them in a meaningful way -- just really for her familiarity with books, and what to do with them.

Lanyay got another book. Drina did, too. Michael Forinlanya, she's just starting to talk. She's repeating a lot of words. She's really into sitting down and reading a book. It's about interacting with her and getting her to interact with me about really vocabulary, and familiarity with the book. And just how to treat the books in general.

Michaelyn Bettasso: [Baby talking] You're reading you're story?

[Baby screeches] She wants to hold her own story.

Narrator: Michaelyn is careful to follow the children's lead, taking cues from them throughout the reading experience.

Michaelyn Bettasso: What's that? [Child talking]

Child: Cat

Michaelyn Bettasso: Cat. Look Lanyay, cat.

Child: Cat

Michaelyn Bettasso: Cat

Michaelyn Bettasso: There's a big cat. That's a lion.

Child: Lion.

Michaelyn Bettasso: Daddy, and mommy, and a baby. Thank you.

Michaelyn Bettasso: Freight train. It's got trains in it. Trains in it -- let's look.

Michaelyn Bettasso: Something that I really had to get used to -- especially with this book time -- is to sit down and really let them explore and just let them do what they need to do just as long as, you know, they're enjoying the books. Going through tunnels. B-b-b-b whooo. Going to cities. Whooo. Crossing trestles. Moving in the darkness. The end.

Narrator: Mentor-coach, Janet Price.

Janet Price: I'm excited that we were able to see this teacher working with children this age because she gave us a wonderful example of best practice working with toddlers around literacy development. It's important for teachers to think about what's appropriate working with young children. They often don't have a very long attention span; often are just being introduced to books and want to hold them, open them, shut them, point at pictures, get up and get another one -- we saw all of that happening with that teacher. And she did a wonderful job of showing us how to respond to that in a way that encourages literacy development. So she, you know, encouraged that -- she

welcomed it. When the child came back with another book, then she started focusing on that book with the child.

Michaelyn Bettasso: [Baby talking] You're reading your story?

[Baby screeches]

Janet Price: That one boy wanted to shut the book, and so he had fun jumping to the end. And she was able to go with that flow, you know, be excited with him that they'd come to the end, and name that and label that for him, "That's the end." She also responded when the children were looking at pictures so when one child saw the cat, and so she got excited with the child about...that that was a cat. At that point, we saw her try to pull in one of the other children to focus two on the cat which is a nice foundation for being able to sit through reading a book is being able to focus together on what's happening inside the book.

If I were working with this teacher as a mentor-coach, I would start out by sharing with her all of the positives that I saw in that observation. And knowing that we have an ongoing relationship

and I'd be meeting with her on a regular basis, that would be where I would want to start with each meeting.

I might suggest to her, as a mentor-coach, to build on their beginning understanding of books and now begin to look at what is a book: that it brings a story. So, I would encourage her to think about how she could start to tell the story of the book. One way that she could do that is to think about using, encouraging the children to use their whole bodies as they're listening to the books.

You know, young children need to get up, and move around and jump, and move their arms. So even finding a book written for this age group that has pictures of children touching their head, and reaching for the floor and jumping, and those would be ways to get them involved in -- with their whole body, and start to understand that a book does tell a story. So, I would be excited as a mentor-coach to give her some of those ideas, and think about how to move forward in encouraging the literacy development for this age group.

Michaelyn Bettasso: The end. All done. Linda Warren: In that video we saw Michaelyn reading with a small group of toddlers in her Chicago classroom. Michaelyn manages to simultaneously follow the lead of two different toddlers while the children are reading two different books with her. Literacy activities with infants and toddlers are different from the ones we would use with preschool children. Linda and Patty, in what ways do early literacy activities start with infants and toddlers?

Patty Hnatiuk: Well I have to say, I really enjoyed this clip very much. Having been a toddler teacher for many years myself, I particularly noticed how the children gravitated towards the books. They wanted to feel them. They wanted to look at them. And they were very engrossed in the literature itself.

I found that to be so typical. And what I would suggest is that we consider how to integrate early literacy activities into everything that happens in the classroom and home. During routine care such as diapering, feeding, during playtimes -- integrating those activities throughout the day. And another one is -- I'm coming back to music because I think music is so important. It's really about helping children to identify varieties of sounds, and by identifying varieties of sounds they begin to speak the sounds, hear the sounds, identify the sounds with words, and enjoy it in the process -- get a tune, you know. I think music would be a very important part of every infant and toddler's day.

Linda Campanaro-Glover: And that segues right into hearing language, and hearing the words in the songs. And hearing all of the rhythm and the rhyme, and just the ability to be able to listen. The whole beginning of phonological awareness is so critical for infants and toddlers -- it lays the foundation for that early learning. Having a lot of fun with what you do, it helps children start to learn that there are symbols for sounds and pointing and making those connections with music and the books that you read.

And that things have -- there's a sense of coding that's going on and happening for infants and toddlers as they do the reading over and over again. And the fun part that they have when they bring you a book with one page. And they point at something that becomes a sound or that they recognize for "moo" or "cow" or...

Patty Hnatiuk: You know, you mentioned a book earlier that made me think of one of my favorite things to get friends who have new babies are these little cloth books -- colorful cloth books -- that children can feel the textures of.

And I think that that's another important piece of equipment or supplies to have in our classrooms and homes to allow children to read -- especially the youngest ones -- to feel the textures and to be able to turn the pages. And really... it's so tactile with infants and toddlers. They just want to touch it and connect with it.

Linda Campanaro-Glover: And it makes that wonderful family connection. And I'm sure you've all had the experience of a toddler sort of making their way to you and then suddenly just plopping on your lap with a book in hand. And just engaging in the process of learning early literacy.

Patty Hnatiuk: They're precious opportunities.

Linda Warren: And I can't have -- I really want to go back to what you were saying about phonological awareness because it's such an important child outcome in the Head Start Child Outcomes Language and Literacy Framework, which we will be looking at in Unit 4.

You answered a question that I was going to ask you about -- is it really possible to lay the foundation for later reading and writing, you know, with infants and toddlers? And, I think, you really have pointed out some ways that it does, and thank you for sharing. Okay, Linda and Patty, let's now turn our thoughts to home visitors and the ways that they can support the development of literacy skills for infants and toddlers.

Linda Campanaro-Glover: In my experience as a home visitor and mentoring home visitors as protégés, really the most important

part is focusing on the parent as the most important and first teacher for children at home visits. And then utilizing the environment which is rich and filled with print and what they have available in their home and having fun doing it, and encouraging the parent to look at what is available, where is the literacy in the environment.

On a walk, what are the stop signs? All kinds of things that there are opportunities for in the home visit. And the home visitors focus on meeting the needs of the children through the parents,

and modeling that behavior. And having lots of opportunity to discuss that and setting goals for literacy and getting a library card, and just using everything that is so available to us.

Patty Hnatiuk: And I would add, the child development experiences which focus on the interaction and relationship of the children and parents would be very essential for every home visit.

Linda Warren: That's a good point. You know, oftentimes, we, we tend to look at the quantity of the relationship -- how much of it is occurring, how much interaction is occurring -- but there is a quality that we need to attend to. You made some excellent points: keeping in mind that parent is the first teacher; utilizing the print that's available in the home; and using community resources and simply having fun in those interactions. Thank you.

Now you are going to have some time to think about toddler reading and the video we just saw. Stop the tape now, and resume playing at the conclusion of your discussions.

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