

Strengthening Emergent Literacy and Oral Language



Caregivers and teachers can learn a great deal from parents and families about how to support emergent literacy and oral language in young children. The following questions, when asked of family members, are useful in helping teachers learn more about what children already know and enjoy in their home language and in helping them better plan ways to promote each child’s learning in the classroom.

Emergent Literacy Experiences		
What you might ask	What you learn	Why it matters—you can . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does your child have favorite songs or rhymes in English? If so, what are they? Does your child have favorite songs or rhymes in his or her home language? If so, what are they? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children’s knowledge of English songs and rhymes Children’s knowledge of songs and rhymes in the home language Songs and rhymes that are culturally and linguistically appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and build on children’s experiences with songs and rhymes Expand on children’s knowledge of songs and rhymes by using familiar songs and rhymes with them (in the home language or English) Extend children’s knowledge of songs and rhymes by introducing new songs and rhymes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has your child had experience with others reading books to him or her? In which languages? Does your child have favorite books or types of books? If so, what are they? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children’s prior experiences with reading books The language children have seen and heard in books Children’s favorite books or types of books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and build on children’s experiences with book reading, if any Expand on children’s prior experience with books by providing additional support for those with little experience (e.g., shorter book readings, directing attention to words and pictures) Include children’s favorite books or types of books in the classroom, while also introducing new books Make connections between books in the home language and in English, if children have been exposed to both types of books



Emergent Literacy Experiences		
What you might ask	What you learn	Why it matters—you can . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your child like to look at print or writing in books, magazines, letters, etc.? In which language(s)? • Does your child see adults in the family using print or writing? In what ways? In which language(s)? • Does your child write or attempt to write? In which language(s)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s interest in print or writing • Children’s experiences with print and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on children’s experiences with print and writing in their language(s) • Expand children’s experiences with print and writing by including similar experiences in the classroom • Extend children’s experiences with print and writing by providing new print and writing activities

Oral Languages Experiences		
<i>Before a child is talking</i>		
What you might ask	What you learn	Why it matters—you can . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your child respond when you speak with him or her? • Do you have any concerns about how your child responds to talk? • What are your expectations for when children should talk and when they should not talk? • What are your goals for when your child starts talking? Which languages do you expect your child to speak? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s responses to speech • The family’s expectations and goals for when and how children will use language(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on families’ goals and expectations for children’s language use • Support children by understanding how language use and expectations may be similar and different at home and in the classroom • Support families in meeting their language goals for their children

Oral Languages Experiences		
<i>When a child is talking</i>		
What you might ask	What you learn	Why it matters—you can . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy with how your child is talking, or do you have any concerns? • When does your child talk the most? • Are there times you expect your child to be quiet and not talk? When? • What does your child like to talk about? • Is your child shy or slow to start talking? If so, what helps your child start to talk? • When does your child use each of his or her languages? With whom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families' experiences with children's oral language • Children's habits and expectations of when and how to speak • Topics of conversation that are of interest to children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on children's oral language experiences at home • Support children to understand that expectations for how and when to use language may be the same or different at home and in the classroom • Expand children's oral language experiences by supporting children in using language in familiar ways (at familiar times and on familiar topics) • Extend children's oral language by introducing new ways of using language



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