

e-clips

Transcript for the [Video:](#) ***Five Predictors of Early Literacy***

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Dr. Jeffrey Trawick-Smith (Host): Whether you've had formal training in literacy or not, chances are that you already do many activities with your children throughout the day that researchers have shown to be effective in preparing young children to become readers and writers. Watch while early childhood educator Dr. Theresa Bouley shows you what you're doing right, and why it works.

Dr. Theresa Bouley (Expert): There's a great deal of research in early childhood focusing on early literacy that has produced five predictors or characteristics that are known to predict later reading and writing achievement. So, if children have a lot of rich experiences in these five areas, they'll learn to read and write with more ease. Those five areas are: oral language, phonemic awareness, alphabet awareness, concepts about print, and early writing with inventive spelling. It's really important that preschool teachers are aware of these five predictors, and are thinking about them in their planning, as well as throughout the day, and looking for spontaneous teachable moments.

Girl: What's that?

Teacher: That's called an anchor.

Girl: anchor?

Teacher: (mm hmm) And they lower it down into the water and it lands on the ground and it keeps the boat...to stay in one place.

Dr. Bouley: A teachable moment is when a child is really interested in something, it's purposeful to him, and the teacher sees that and takes that opportunity to come in and to help the child to further understand or expose the child to a new aspect of literacy. Oral language is a foundation for future reading and writing. There is a lot of research that shows there is a correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Patty Gardner (Teacher): You make eye contact, and you know that it's all about them, and they want to share that, they want to make the eye contact, and talk about all the things that you're talking about, and they just get into it.

Teacher: Willoughby, Wallabee, Wannon. The elephant sat on...

Dr. Bouley: Phonemic awareness is ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds or phonemes in a language. It's an ear-like skill, so children using phonemic awareness are able to hear and identify how sounds are the same or how they are similar.

Teacher: Willoughby, Wallabee, wee. The elephant sat on me. Willoughby, Wallabee, wattrick. The elephant sat on...

Children: Patrick!

Teacher: Her name ends with an "e" sound. "eee" sound

Teacher: Can you spell "Kaela?"

Child: K, A,

Dr. Bouley: When discussing alphabet awareness, it's important to remember that we're not just talking about children's awareness of letters, the names of the letters, and the sounds of the letters, but really, it's extremely important to remember that children need to understand the purpose of those letters: What are those symbols? How do I use them?

Patty Gardner: Take those basic letter recognitions, and you just incorporate it into your day. We had a child come in and she was talking about the tooth fairy; she had lost a tooth. So we go on the big screen TV in our classroom, and we Google teeth and we spell it out together, and "Oh what letter do you think teeth begins with?" They guess T, and the next two letters are tricky because, you know, they are three and four and five, although they could get the E sound but not two E's, and we put in "teeth" and then we hit search and it comes back with this amazing picture of teeth. And they could find teeth and they could recognize mouth, I think it was, because they talked about how it was in your mouth. And now it turns into a counting activity and you just take it wherever the kids are and just run with it.

Dr. Bouley: Children should be bumping into opportunities to see print in their environment, in their centers, in their dramatic play centers, their names on their cubbies, signs around the room, so they understand the purpose of the function of print and they learn a lot about print and how it works.

Patty Gardner: In our classroom we have environmental print all the time. We have the exit door; we have all the toys labeled in English and Spanish. We have children that have their names, they come in and sign-in in the morning; all the names are on the cubbies. The pictures that we do over the course of the day, any activity we do we take pictures and everything is labeled underneath, so it's like they're constantly being inundated with words and letters and letter sounds.

Dr. Bouley: To expand children's print knowledge and concepts about print, teachers need to be really careful or explicit in their read-aloud practice. If they're reading a book to children, be aware of using words like, "the title is..." or "the author is..." or use words to describe what they're doing.

Teacher: “Apples and Pumpkins,” by Anne Rockwell. Pictures by Lizzy Rockwell.

Dr. Bouley: Or help children to look carefully at the illustrations.

Teacher: I wonder if they’re going to go anywhere. Antonio says there’s a car.

Child: There are color trees!

Teacher: *gasp* Color trees!

Teacher: I need you to be able to see the story.

Dr. Bouley: Teachers can follow along with their finger with the text to demonstrate that there is something there they are reading, that that text is important. Even though children aren’t able to read that yet, they learn that the text tells the story.

Teacher: Antonio, can you point to the father in the picture?

Dr. Bouley: There are a lot of ways that teachers can encourage children to get meaningful, purposeful writing experiences. Sign-ins are a wonderful way where children can understand the purpose of writing. When they come to the classroom in the morning they know that no one will know they are there if they don’t sign in.

Patty Gardner: One of the first things that the children tune in to when they’re learning how to write is how to write their name. They usually start with the first letter of their name. Then they progress to the first letter in people that are close to them.

Dr. Bouley: There is so much research that shows that these five predictors are critical in children’s future reading and writing development; oral language, phonemic awareness, alphabet awareness, concepts about print, and early writing with inventive spelling. It’s really important that the teacher be aware of them and be able to think about them and sort of think through the lens of these five predictors throughout the day.