



Principals as Early Learning Leaders: Effectively Supporting Our Youngest Learners

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Agenda

Principals as Instructional Leaders for Early Learning

Young Children as Learners

Play-Based Learning

Supporting Language and Literacy in Early Childhood

Disrupting Suspension and Expulsion in Preschool



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The Urgent Need for Principals to Become Early Learning Leaders

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A growing number of principals responsible for overseeing early childhood programs and classrooms.

It is essential that they gain the skills and knowledge needed to become effective and equitable early learning leaders.



Yet, a 50-state review revealed that **only 9 states** explicitly require principal preparation programs to offer coursework in early learning and/or child development, and state principal preparation policies do not adequately address the role of principals as early learning leaders (Lieberman, 2017).

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What Does Research Tell Us about How Young Children Learn?

Children are active learners.

Children learn best when their social and emotional needs are met and they are surrounded by responsive and caring adults.

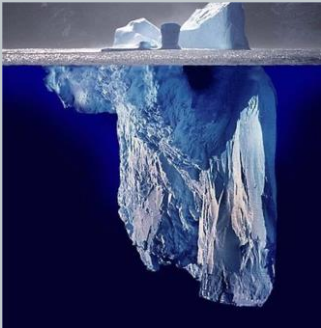
Children learn best when new information is presented in a meaningful context.

The process of learning is as important as the outcome of learning for young children.

All children have diverse needs and different backgrounds that influence their learning.

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**Why is Play Important for Young Children?
What are the Benefits of Play?**



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- Healthy brain and body development
- Imagination
- Perspective taking
- Share, negotiating, problem-solving
- Creativity
- Self-regulation
- Self-advocacy
- Mathematical and scientific thinking
- Language and vocabulary
- Fine motor control
- Physical development
- Identity development
- Healing trauma; managing anxiety



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Young Children Learn in an Integrated Manner

- Filling containers: fine motor skills
- Sequencing, volume: mathematical thinking
- Story narrative, oral language
- Understands that speech can be written down and read back: literacy/symbolic representation
- Deep engagement and high level of sustained attention as well as enjoyment in the activity: cognitive and social emotional skills.



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Play-Based Learning Across a Continuum

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Play Based Learning Across a Continuum



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Child Self-Determined Play

Play is voluntary and intrinsically motivated.

Centered on capacities, skills, and interests of the children.

Teachers observe, listen to, document and acknowledge children. Support and extend children's interests and skills.



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Adult-Child Collaborative Play



Children and adults share responsibility for the meaning, direction, flow, and outcomes associated with the play



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Adult Planned and Directed Play

Adults plan, initiate and direct the play. The role of the child is to follow along with adult directions.

Practice in specific concepts, skills and dispositions. Instruction towards a predetermined outcome.

- o Freeze dance
- o Letter Bingo
- o Playdough Bugs

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Young Children...

Need many opportunities to engage in child self-determined play

And should be continuously supported through adult-child collaborative play.

Adult planned and directed play should be limited, especially for children birth-kindergarten.

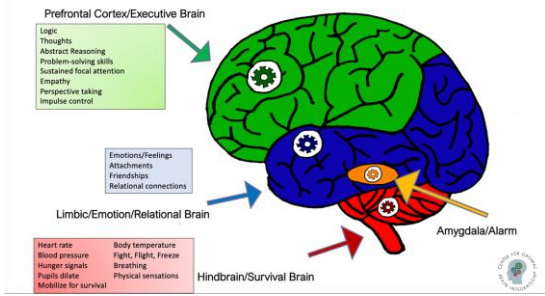


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Arousal Staircase



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Play is Essential for Reducing Stress, Building Resilience and Improving Regulation



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Sensory Play



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Structured Play



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Loose Parts and Expressive Arts



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Support Children to Engage in Repetitive Rhythmic Movements



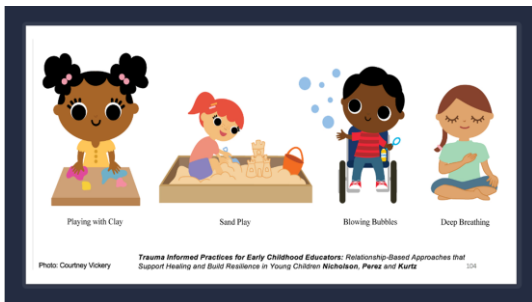
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Outdoor Play



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Building Children's Regulation Toolkit



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Supporting
Young
Children's
Language
and Literacy
Development

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How can we
make early
literacy
a "site of
belonging &
joy?"

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Literacy development begins at birth and grows in the contexts of home, school, and community through authentic experiences. **Literacy "emerges."**

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What makes a child "ready" to read?

- language development
- cognitive development
- physical development
- social-emotional development
- exposure to literacies in their home communities
- guidance by caring adults
- a system that supports their health and well-being



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Your Reading Autobiography

What are your earliest memories of language?

What languages did you hear as a 4 year-old?

Do you remember songs, rhymes, sayings, stories people told &/or favorite books?



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It's all about language.

Literacy =

listening,
speaking,
reading,
& writing

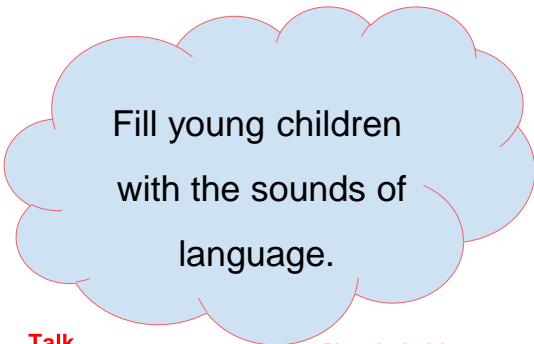
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Can emergent literacy be accelerated to meet the demands of kindergarten?

Consider the "opportunity costs." Less time and/or less emphasis on oral language development, experiential learning, and phonological awareness can leave students with gaps in their understanding of print that cause them to struggle with reading and writing later.



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Talk **Read alouds** **Phonological Awareness**
Drawing and writing

32

.....

Walking by a preK- early childhood classroom, look and listen for...

- Children talking in home language & in English
- Teachers talking in response to children
- Teachers reading to and with children
- Movement around the classroom
- Children absorbed in play
- Hands-on materials accessible & in use

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What do children learn about reading from repeated readings of **predictable books**?



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Picture Books

Children need books that are **mirrors** where they can see themselves and books that are **windows** to other worlds and **sliding glass doors** to enter those worlds (Bishop, 1999).



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Interactive Read Aloud

Carefully choose books & plan...

- What's remarkable about this book?
- What opportunities does this book offer for expanding language? (home language and/or English)



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Browsing a Preschool Class Library, Look For...

- Books that reflect students' experiences
- Books that include students' languages
- Informational text as well as storybooks
- Access to books adult have read loud so they can "reread"



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Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is a broad skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language –

- identify and create rhymes
- clap out syllables in a word
- recognize words with the same beginning sounds

Play with sounds in home language; transferable across languages!



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You can teach phonological awareness with your eyes closed.

No print or text is involved in phonological awareness.



Phonics refers to the relationship between **print (letters)** and **sounds**.

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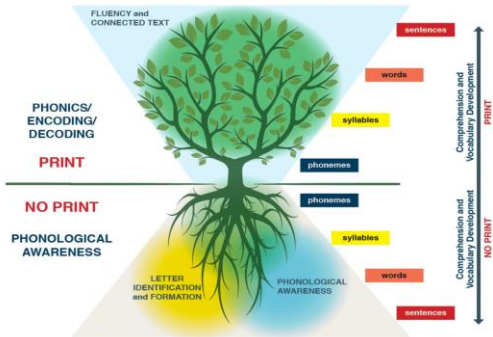
How does phonological awareness help children learn to read?

If children learn to hear the individual sounds of language, they will be able to understand that these sounds are represented by letters.

This is called the "alphabetic principle."

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PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS: ROOTS TO READING and SPELLING



<https://brainspring.com/ortongillinghamweekly/the-roots-to-reading-and-spelling/>

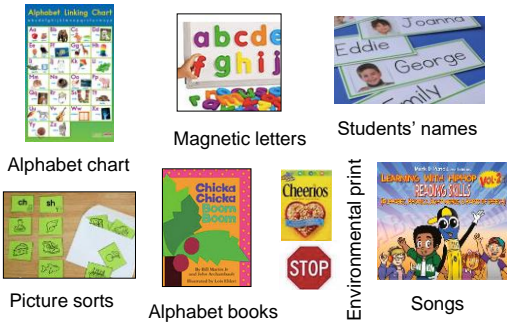
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This has almost nothing to do with learning the alphabet &/or letter sounds.

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Exposure to Letters and Sounds



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Writing makes thoughts visible.

talk > draw > write



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What is the story being told here?

<https://www.readingrockets.org/>

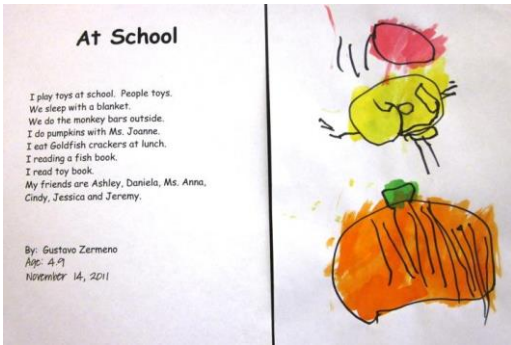
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Writing is developmental.

Talk > draw > write

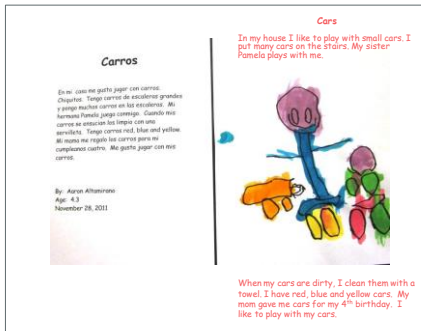
- Adult takes dictation
"print carries meaning"
- Adult coaches student to label
"concept of word"
- Student approximates sentences
complete thoughts, punctuation
- Student writes multiple sentences in organized sequence.

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Adult takes dictation, reads child's story back to them.

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Adult takes dictation in child's home language, reads child's story back to them, translates it for display.

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What to look for in children's writing...

- Scribbles imitating writing, letter-like forms
- Random letters
- Representing sounds with letters
- Approximating conventional spelling
- Conventional spelling

Gentry & Ouellette, 2019
<https://blog.stenhouse.com/how-the-brain-makes-sense-of-words-as-it-learns-to-read>

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<https://www.readingrockets.org/>



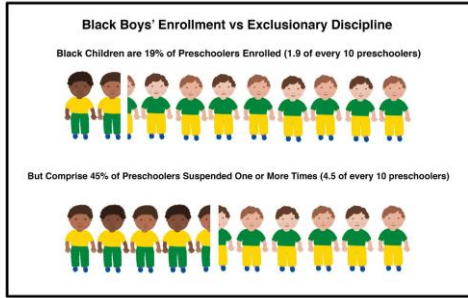
<http://www.colorincolorado.org/>

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The Urgent
 Need to
 Disrupt
 Suspension
 and
 Expulsion
 In Preschool

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Disproportionate Rates of Exclusionary Discipline by Race in Preschool



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Also, coming soon...

10 PROMISING PRACTICES

In Early Learning for Black Boys



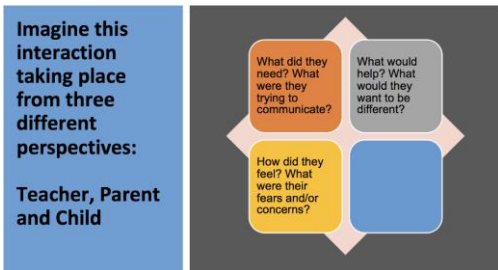
Creating Equitable Early Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes

A free groundbreaking digital resource for early childhood educators committed to improving race equity within their classrooms.

- Topics include:**
- Building racial equity awareness
 - Strategies to address implicit bias
 - Responsive relationships with love at the center
 - Culturally responsive practice
 - Effective research-informed strategies for the classroom and
 - The importance of building reciprocal partnerships with families

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Perspective-Taking



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Individuating: Learning More about the Individual Child

Think of a young Boy of Color you know....

- What do you know about his family? His interests? His strengths?
- What family member does he talk about the most fondly?
- What is his favorite activity or area in the classroom to play or be by himself?
- What makes him scared, worried or angry? What brings him joy?
- What helps him to become regulated?
- Does he have a favorite food? Toy? Story to tell?
- Who is most likely to play with in the morning and/or afternoon?
- Who does he look up to?
- How does he act when you are talking to him? Interacting with him?



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Principals who are Effective Early Learning Leaders Understand...

There has never been a more urgent and important time for the nation's principals to become effective and equitable early learning leaders.

- How young children learn.
- What powerful learning looks and sounds like in preschool classrooms.
- The complex role of preschool teachers who guide, scaffold, and direct children's learning through play.
- That parents and families are positioned as reciprocal partners.
- And the importance of providing ongoing support and meaningful feedback to early childhood educators, including them as equally valued and respected professionals who are integral to the school community.

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Thank you! We would love to hear from you.



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