

# Critical Elements of Early and Primary-Focused Education

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# Questions from Philanthropy New York

- What are critical elements of early and primary literacy-focused education?
- What elements need greater attention if New York City is going to prepare its young children not just to learn to decode but to read to learn?
- What is needed to ensure that those elements are effectively implemented in New York City's early education programs and primary schools?

# Critical Elements of Early and Primary Literacy-Focused Education

- Addresses at least these contributors to literacy development:
  - **oral language**, including vocabulary
    - vocabulary knowledge is even needed for decoding: “A snail slid up to his pal, the slug.”  
– Megan Linke
    - Vocabulary knowledge is even needed for content learning: Observe the veins in the leaf.
  - **concepts of print**
    - example: door hinge vs. restroom sign
    - example: directionality

- **genre**

Shared this example: A  
Shopping List and A Story  
Hannah, Age 3, page 157  
from Harste, J. C.,  
Woodward, V. A., & Burke, C.  
L. (1984). *Language stories  
and literacy lessons*.  
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- **phonological awareness**, especially  
phonemic awareness, especially  
phonemic segmentation and blending
  - dropping purse example
  - /j/ /u/ /m/ /p/

- **sound-letter relationships**

- *A is for Airplane? S is for Shell?*
- *Not really – there’s a lot to understand about sound-letter relationships in English in order to teach them effectively.*

Block, M. K., & Duke, N. K. (in press). Letter names can cause confusion and other things every early childhood educator should know about English orthography. To appear in *Young Children*.

- **word reading**

(by decoding, analogy, and sight)

- **reading fluency**

- accuracy
- rate
- prosody

- **composition**

Shared this example: Birthday List, Letter, Map, Story Page by Stephanie, prior to first grade, from page 84 of Harste, J. C., Woodward, V. A., & Burke, C. L. (1984). *Language stories and literacy lessons*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- **comprehension**

- A released fourth-grade NAEP item:
  - Students read an article on the blue crab.
  - They are asked the following question, with the answer not explicitly stated in the text:

*The growth of a blue crab larva into a full-grown blue crab is most like the development of*

*A) a human baby into a teen-ager*

*B) an egg into a chicken*

*C) a tadpole into a frog*

*D) a seed into a tree*

- What does a student need to know and be able to do to answer this question correctly?

# Contributors to successful comprehension and composition include:

- **not only** alphabet knowledge, **but also**
- underlying concepts of print, genre knowledge, phonological awareness, word reading, fluency
- broad world knowledge
- thinking and reasoning skills
- a rich base of oral language and vocabulary
- social-emotional skills
- executive function
- motivation and engagement
- And reading and writing development are affected by a broad range of health-related factors as well.

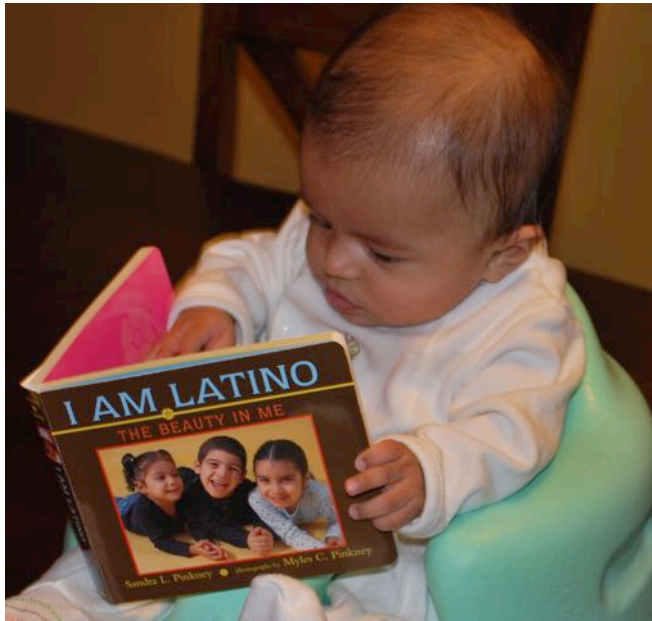


- Analysis, published by Duke and Block in *The Future of Children* (2012), of implementation of recommendations from the National Research Council *Preventing Reading Difficulties Report* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998):

Recommendation Topic	Yes	To some degree	No
Kindergarten access		√	
Word-reading skill	√		
Vocabulary			√
Conceptual and content knowledge			√
Comprehension strategies			√
Outside-of-school reading	?	?	?

# What Do We Need to Do?

# Start Early



# Build Strong Family Ties around Literacy

- Many family literacy programs are not effective.
- Not just “read to your kids.”
- Work with families’ assets and routines
  - literacy in the living room
  - literacy in the kitchen
  - literacy in the bedroom and bathroom
  - literacy out and about



(Roberts, Jordan, & Duke, 2014, in press)

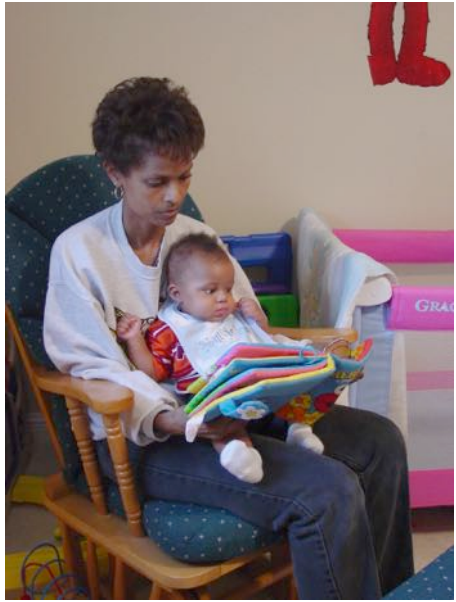
# Build Strong Community Ties around Literacy

- More than 60% of U.S. children under 6 receive nonparental child care on a weekly basis.
- On average children spend 31 hours per week in child care.
- Substantial portions of children of all levels of SES receive such care.

(Mulligan, Brimhall, West, & Chapman, 2005)

- Child care quality matters a great deal.
- Nonparental child care is often of poor quality.  
(e.g., Lamb & Anhert, 2006; McGill-Franzen, Lanford, & Adams, 2002; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network [NICHD ECCRN], 2005; Neuman, 1999)

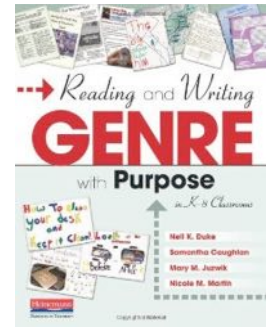
# Supportive Environments & Rigorous Instruction In Child Care



# Leverage Outside-of-School-Time Programming

- On average, small positive impacts on reading as well as mathematics (e.g., Akiba, Wilkerson, & Apthorp, 2005).
- Need:
  - research-based practice
  - standards alignment
  - attention to engagement

# The Zoo Guide Project



Credit to Kathryn Roberts for curriculum development



# Advance School-Time Programming

- Effective school leadership and collaborative teachers focused on:
  - Research-based practice
    - Not. . . letter of the week
    - Not. . . *When two vowels. . .*
    - Not. . . vocabulary sentences
    - Not. . . always composing on paper
  - Standards alignment
  - Attention to engagement
- Need: Professional Development, Professional Development, Professional Development

# What Do We Need to Do?

(among other things)

- Start early
- Build strong family ties around literacy
- Build strong community ties around literacy
- Leverage outside-of-school-time programming
- Advance school-time programming