



Parent & Family Engagement in Student Learning

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS IN KINDERGARTEN

English Language Arts combines instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and effective language use to build literacy. Early literacy skills are foundational in kindergarten instruction.

BUILDING READING SKILLS

Early literacy plays a crucial role in healthy child development. Language development activities such as reading aloud, singing songs, and engaging in conversation help children develop language skills. Reading and writing activities encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and imagination. Families can support and build these reading and writing skills at home throughout the school year.

During the school year, kindergartners are learning specific phonological skills for understanding spoken words, syllables, and sounds (i.e., phonemes), as well as reading comprehension skills in developmentally appropriate texts.

With prompting and support at home, kindergartners can identify characters, settings, and major events in a story. Parents can also ask their child to identify the main topic and details of an informational text (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how). By the end of kindergarten, students will demonstrate an understanding of basic text features (i.e., front cover, back cover, and title page) as well as recognize various types of text (i.e., storybooks, poems, biographies, recipes). Students also begin to recognize the roles of an author and an illustrator.

YOU MAY HEAR YOUR CHILD OR THEIR TEACHER TALK ABOUT...

Decodable text: uses words with phonetic patterns previously and recently taught.

Fluency: The ability to read a text with accuracy, speed, and expression, allowing readers to understand and make meaning of what they are reading.

Long vowel: vowels that sound the same as their name (e.g., the letter “i” in kite).

Phoneme: the smallest unit of sound in a word that can change its meaning.

Phonological skills: the auditory ability to recognize and manipulate phonemes or individual sounds.

Short vowel: vowels have specific sounds that are different from the letter’s name (e.g., the letter “a” in cat).



FUN ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Match letters and sounds to sound out and write simple words. Focus on common consonants and short vowel sounds.

Ask and answer questions about stories and texts read aloud. Retell what happened and explain important ideas.

Read decodable books to practice fluency.



About Learning Standards

The State of New Jersey sets developmentally appropriate learning standards for what every student will know and be able to do when they complete each grade level or grade band. This resource is designed to help families understand those standards and partner with teachers to support their child’s learning during kindergarten.

New Jersey Department of Education | Division of Teaching and Learning Services
Office of Standards | K-3Unit@doe.nj.gov

SUPPORTING LITERACY AT HOME



It is essential to create a positive and supportive environment for reading and writing at home. This can include setting aside time for reading together, drawing, acknowledging the child's efforts, and making literacy activities enjoyable and interactive. Model reading and writing behaviors by demonstrating to your child and using written language in everyday activities as suggested below. Supporting language and early literacy in everyday interactions with children can significantly impact their vocabulary knowledge.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Throughout all stages of a child's growth and development it is essential for families to make time for reading and writing activities. Here are some ideas:

- Encourage independent reading. Children at this age may start reading on their own in addition to taking part in family read alouds. Help independent readers sound out words and understand the meaning of the text.
- Provide writing materials for children to write their name, simple words, and sentences. Support story writing, drawings, lists, and journal entries.
- Create a literacy-rich environment with materials such as alphabet posters, labeled objects, and books within easy reach at home or from the library.
- Incorporate literacy into everyday activities such as cooking, shopping, reading signs, and playing games.
- Build vocabulary skills by engaging in games like charades, Pictionary, or word bingo.
- Celebrate literacy and achievements by creating a reading area at home, displaying artwork and stories, and praising efforts in learning new words and concepts.
- Encourage storytelling by prompting your child to tell their own stories using pictures, story starters, or their imagination. Ask about the beginning, middle, and end of their story.
- Encourage your kindergartner to ask questions about the world around them and answer those questions in detail, using age-appropriate language.

Consistency and enthusiasm are key when implementing these early literacy activities. By integrating language and literacy activities into everyday interactions, families can foster vocabulary and language development in young children.

BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Write and spell simple one-syllable words correctly and try to sound out and spell unfamiliar words.

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to inform, narrate, or give an opinion to convey ideas. Write simple sentences.

Guide and support children to recognize that writing carries a message and should make sense to themselves and others.

Resources

[NJ Student Learning Standards](#) - Details the student learning for English Language Arts at each grade level.

[NJDOE K-3 Early Elementary Alignment](#) - Provides families and educators with valuable resources for early learning success.

[NJDOE Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](#) - Family and educator resources for literacy.

[NJDOE Literacy Series](#) - Videos of helpful tips for families given by NJ educators. PowerPoints are provided with resource links.

[NJDOE Special Education Parent Rights and Engagement](#) - Resources for families.

[NJDOE Title III Guidance for Families](#) - Information to help parents/ guardians fully participate in school events and activities.