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**The importance of developing
pre-literacy skills in children
and what these skills are**

Pre-literacy skills

- According to the National Institute for Literacy, 2018 as cited in Morgan, 2017, page 15, pre-literacy skills are “reading skills developed between birth and five years and later used as literacy skills. Learners learn to read and later use reading to learn” (Morgan, 2017, page 15).
- Essentially, pre-literacy skills are both technical skills and comprehension skills children need to acquire before being able to read and write, as they have no knowledge of sound and letter association as yet.



PRE-LITERACY SKILLS



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Phonological Awareness

hearing and playing with the smaller sounds of words

Print Awareness

noticing print everywhere, knowing how to handle a book, and knowing how to follow the written word on the page

Letter Knowledge

knowing that letters are different from each other, knowing letter names and sounds, and recognizing letters everywhere

Vocabulary

knowing all kinds of words

Print Motivation

being interested in and enjoying books

Narrative Skills

describing things and events, telling stories, knowing the order of events and making predictions

Phonological and phonemic awareness

- **Phonological awareness** is when a child can hear how words "come apart" into separate sounds, including sounds, syllables, rhymes, alliteration, etc.
- **Phonemic awareness** is when the child can identify single sounds in spoken language, e.g. M-A-T
- The importance of these skills is that it develops the child's ability to break down and build words into their individual sounds.
- Considered as the building blocks of reading.

NB! Phonic awareness is when the child can identify letter symbols by sight in written text. The child can match the sound to its grapheme (letter) e.g. can point to M for /m/, to A for /a/, and to T for /t/, etc.



Phonemic awareness activities

- Play games that match sounds to letters.
- For EFAL, play listening games targeting beginning, middle and end sounds, e.g. *c-a-t*, *d-o-g*, *f-i-sh*.
- For EFAL, also have activities which help with the identification of onset (initial consonant/s) and rime (word ending beginning with the vowel). This develops their CVC understanding of language structure, e.g. *c-at*, *f-at*, *m-at*, *p-at*; *d-og*, *l-og*, *fr-og*; *w-ish*, *f-ish*, *d-ish*, etc.
- Play games which encourage the child to syllabicate – to break down words into sound blocks.
- For African languages especially, play listening games targeting different syllables in words, e.g. children's names: *No-nhla-nhla*, *u-ma-ma*, *i-bho-lo*.
- Play games which differentiate between similar and dissimilar sounds, e.g. b/d, b/p, t/d, etc.



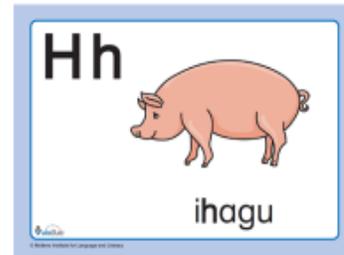
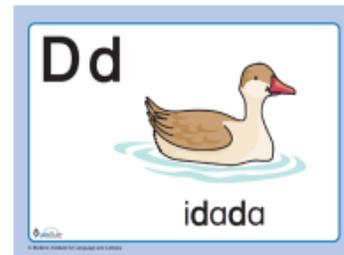
Print-rich environment

- Build the child's ability to identify words in their environment e.g. KFC, STOP sign, bus stops, street names, shop names, etc.



Print-rich environment activities

- use of flashcards – revision of the letters, sounds, and words which promotes reading / talking / writing
- develop sequencing skills (to form oral sentences and to tell stories)
- use charts to represent the weather, birthdays, emotions, etc.
- use Big Books



| Numbers | | | Days of the week | |
|---------|---|---------|------------------|--|
| one | 1 | • | Monday | |
| two | 2 | •• | Tuesday | |
| three | 3 | ••• | Wednesday | |
| four | 4 | •••• | Thursday | |
| five | 5 | ••••• | Friday | |
| six | 6 | •••••• | Saturday | |
| seven | 7 | ••••••• | Sunday | |

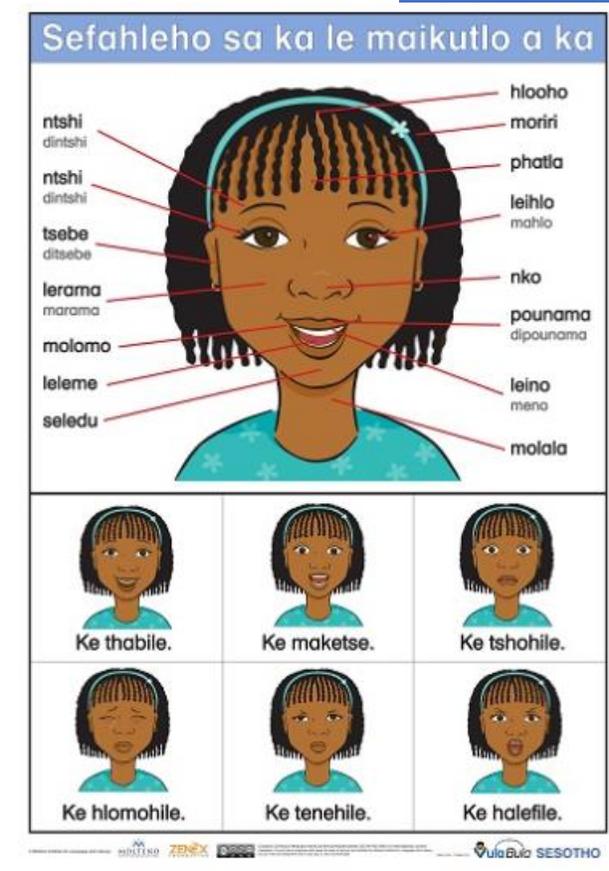
Vocabulary development

- Developed through daily conversations from birth (parent-child interaction)
- New words must be explained with examples, and children can apply the new knowledge in writing and conversation
- It is also enabled through home literacy experiences e.g. cooking together (explaining ingredients and steps etc)



Vocabulary development activities

- Posters of colours, shapes, numbers, days of the week, months of the year, mathematical words such as time, measurement, mass, etc.
- Use “grown up” talk and clearly expressed, detailed instructions. Talk about things in the environment to share vocabulary and knowledge.
- Through shared reading – use of Big Books in Grade R



**How do we know that
pre-literacy skills have
been acquired?**



A learner who has acquired pre-literacy skills:

- Can read from left to right, and from top to the bottom of the page (directionality)
- Can use visual cues to make meaning of the text
- Has comprehension skills
 - can ask and give answers to different comprehension questions: simple – who are the story characters?, logical – what would have happened if...?, predictive – why you think this happened...?/ specific – what happened before or after such and such happened...?



A learner who has acquired pre-literacy skills:

- has a broadened vocabulary
- can infer knowledge relating to their personal/lived experiences
- has prior knowledge around different topics being taught
- can read words by sight
- can narrate a story in a sequential manner
- can look for details and make corrections in a heard text
- is aware that spoken words can be written as text
- is aware of text in their environment
- can start to write their own name
- can use pictures to tell a story
- is ready to use analytic phonics (*knowing which letters make up a word e.g. dog = d-o-g*)
- is ready to use synthetic phonics (*breaking a word apart into its different sounds e.g. d-o-g = dog*)



The development of pre-literacy skills enables a positive transition for the emergent reader into Grade 1.

With this knowledge, the emergent reader will be well equipped to learn to read and should make good progress in their literacy.



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