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## *The Development of Early Literacy Learners*

Thursday, October 29, 2020, 1:30-3:00 PM  
Presented by Donna M. Scanlon, PhD  
with an introduction by Sharon B. Phillips,  
Project Director for Ready to Read at New York Libraries

**New York State  
Library**

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### Welcome!

- Today's program is part of the New York State Library's *Ready to Read at New York Libraries* initiative
- For more info, please visit:  
<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/earlylit/index.html>




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### Today's Speaker

- Donna M. Scanlon, PhD, Professor in the Department of Literacy Teaching and Learning at Albany, State University of New York




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### My background

- Literacy researcher – focused on literacy learning difficulties:
  - Causes
  - Prevention
  - Remediation
- Psychologist – focused on helping schools/teachers/parents address the instructional needs of children with literacy learning difficulties.
  - Parent booklet:
    - <https://www.elp.org/parentbooklet.cfm>
- Teacher educator
  - Academic settings
  - Professional settings




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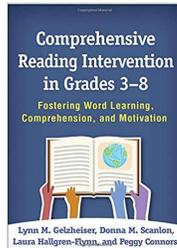
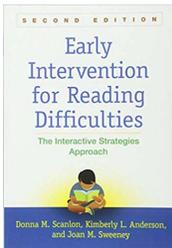
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### Teacher and Teacher Educator Resources




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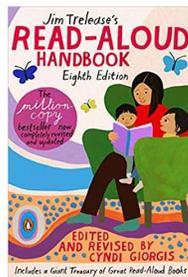
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Highly recommended for parents!




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Parental beliefs/perspectives about literacy development

- Meaning focused
- Skills focused

Parent resources that promote reading to with children:

- Reach Out and Read – [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)
- Raising a Reader – [www.raisingreader.org](http://www.raisingreader.org)
- Zero to Three – [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

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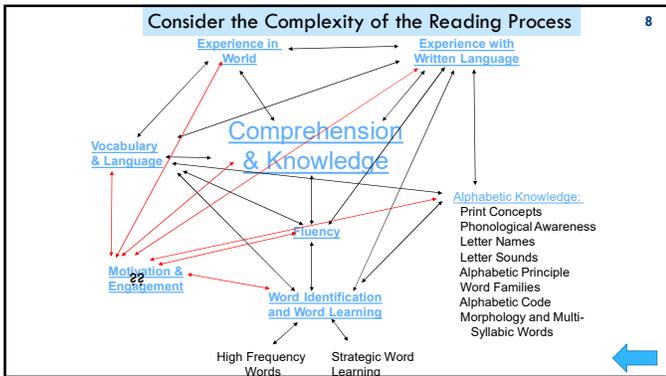
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The Relationships between Comprehension and Knowledge

- Comprehension depends on knowledge:
  - When reading/listening to text, the reader/listener draws on a diverse set of knowledge sources and constructs an interpretation of the text that integrates information in the text with existing knowledge.
  - Limitations in knowledge lead to limited comprehension.
- Knowledge develops through comprehension:
  - Active engagement with texts and other media, particularly information-rich texts/media, contributes to knowledge development.

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### The Relationships between Comprehension and Knowledge

- Knowledge building is facilitated through:
  - Encountering inter-related information through
    - Real life experiences
    - Thematically organize text/media sets
  - Moving from introductory to more in-depth sources of information
  - Opportunities to engage with, discuss, react to, ask questions....in relation to new and developing knowledge

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### Contributors to comprehension

- Background knowledge
  - Multiple texts on same or related topics
- Meaning focus
- Collaborative conversation

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### Contributors to comprehension

- Example: Learning about bears...

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### Reading is a Language Skill

- If children have limited oral language skills they will have difficulty comprehending spoken and written language.
- If children have limited opportunities to use spoken language, their ability to comprehend written texts may be negatively impacted overtime.
- Listening to and discussing books is a strong context for developing language skills
  - Vocabulary
  - Syntax

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### Reading is a Language Skill

#### A Bear Example

- Vocabulary and syntax in books tends to be more sophisticated than in everyday conversation...
- From *Bears in the Forest* by Karen Wallace (1994)
  - "Snow slips from the trees and melts on the ground. The ice has broken on the lake. Mother bear wakes...." (p. 8)
  - "Mother bear **snorts**. She is **angry**. She **strides** across the **meadow** and **whacks** them with a heavy **paw**." (p.14)

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### Reading is a language skill

- Language develops through use
  - Conversations
    - Multiple turns
    - Opportunities for multi-word responses
    - Concurrent
    - Retrospective
  - Interactive read alouds
    - Not totally under control of the reader

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### The Link between Vocabulary and Comprehension

- Several studies demonstrate that vocabulary, measured pre-kindergarten and early primary grades, is a good predictor of reading comprehension in subsequent grades.
- Ex: The number of words a child understands in first grade is a fairly good predictor of the child's reading comprehension in 11th grade.
  - - Cunningham & Stanovich (1997)



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### The Links with Experience in the World

- Children's experiences play a large role in developing their knowledge base which, in turn, influences how they understand texts read or heard.
- Comprehension of texts helps to develop learners' knowledge base.
- Children's language skills:
  - Develop through the experiences they have.
  - Influence what they take away from the experiences they have.



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### Experience with Written Language

- Experience with written language – read, heard, and/or produced – influences and is influenced by:
  - Comprehension and knowledge development
  - Vocabulary and language skills
  - Experience in the world
- Experience with written language – reading and writing – has a huge influence on the development of skill with written language.
- Research suggests that, in settings within and beyond school, students sometimes (often) engage in far too little (authentic) reading and writing to develop proficiency.




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### Alphabets

- Skill with the alphabetic code is critical to literacy development and learners need to learn to apply this knowledge in conjunction with contextual information in the process of word solving during authentic literacy engagement.

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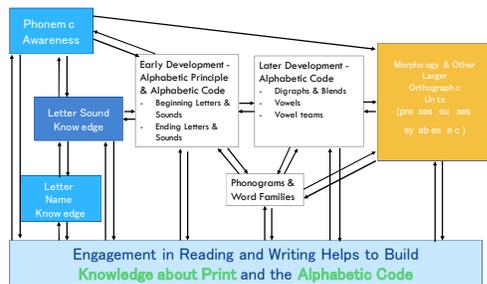
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### Developmental Progression in Learning About Print and the Alphabetic Code




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Sensitivity to phonological components for language facilitates learning about print.

- Spoken words are made up of somewhat separable sounds
- Development of phonological awareness progression
  - Syllables
  - Onsets and rimes
  - Individual sounds/phonemes
- Texts/songs/poems with rhythm, rhyme, and/or alliteration facilitate the development of phonological awareness




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Why is phonemic awareness important?

Phonemic awareness is related to the ease with which children acquire phonics skills.

- It enables them to understand the correspondences between the letters in printed words and the sounds in spoken words.
- It enables them to use the names of letters to derive the letters' sounds.

**For example:**

- The name for the letter "B" is comprised of the phonemes /b/ and /ee/.

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Instruction for children who have difficulty learning to attend to phonemes

Three types of instruction to promote phonological skills:

- Sorting by sound similarities
- Blending sounds to form words
- Segmenting words into their component sounds

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### Print Concepts

- Concepts of letter and word
- Conventions
  - Directionality
    - Letters
      - – e.g., b/d
    - Words
      - – e.g., was/saw
  - Spaces
  - Continuous text
    - Return sweep

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### Learning about the alphabet

- Progression
  - Letter names
  - Letter sounds
  - Use in word solving

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Why do some children have difficulty learning about the alphabet?



In a "Letter of the Week" instructional format, children who know the least are asked to learn the most.

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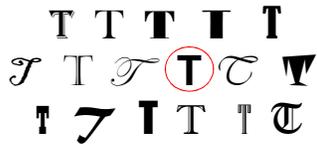
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### Alphabet books and font issues




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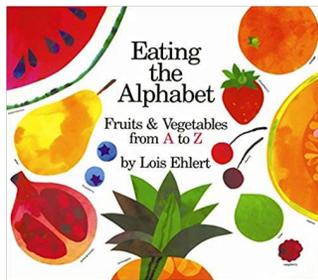
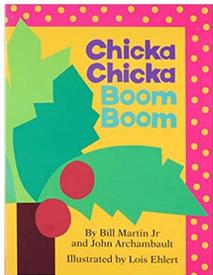
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### Word Identification and Word Learning

- Well-developed skill with Alphabetics allows the reader to puzzle through unfamiliar words encountered while reading to derive at least an approximation of the words' pronunciations.
  - English has many words that are not fully decodable. Therefore, word solving often requires attention to both the code and the context.

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### The need to focus on word identification...

- To comprehend written material, the reader needs to read most of the words accurately and automatically.
- Effortless word identification allows the reader to devote most of her attention to constructing the meaning of text.
- How many different words can a proficient reader read effortlessly?

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### The Impact of Limited Sight Vocabulary

- Cognitive resources need to be devoted to the word solving process.
- Limited cognitive resources are available to devote to meaning construction.
- Reading is frustrating and may therefore be avoided – thereby exacerbating reading difficulties.

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### Strategic Word Learning

- Most words that become part of a reader's sight vocabulary are not explicitly taught. They are learned through effective word solving while reading.
- Many readers who struggle do not have effective word solving skills/strategies. They may:
  - Rely too heavily on the code
  - Rely too heavily on context
  - Simply skip over unknown words
  - ....
- Readers who do not have effective word solving strategies have limited opportunity to build their sight vocabularies.

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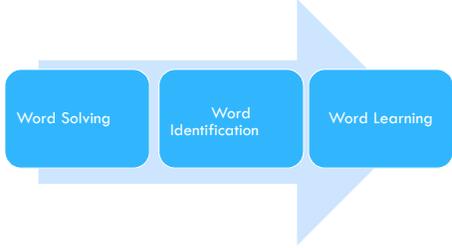


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### The Development of Sight Vocabulary



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### Early development in learning to read words

- Patterned and predictable books
- "Sight word readers"
- Decodable books (e.g., Bob books)

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Changing patterns promote learning of high frequency words.

I see my dog.	
See my cat.	
I see my duck.	
I see my fish.	
See my mouse.	

Consistent patterns can promote development of print concepts.

I see my dog.	
I see my cat.	
I see my duck.	
I see my fish.	
I see my mouse.	



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## Fluency

- Fluency is sometimes interpreted simply as speed and accuracy of word identification.
- If the goal is comprehension, assessment of fluency needs to take into account phrasing and intonation.
- Concern:
  - Recent emphases on speed and accuracy have, in some instances, sent the message that speed and accuracy are more important than comprehension.
- Reality:
  - Fluency is important only to the extent that it enhances and reveals comprehension.



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## Motivation for Literacy

### Instructional Goals:

- Students will develop the belief that reading and writing are enjoyable and informative activities which are not beyond their capabilities.
- Students will understand the relationship between practice and progress.
  - Boy gives speech about learning to ride a bike:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PozVPZBykSE>



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## Conclusion

- Thank you for participating.
- A survey will be emailed to you shortly – please take a few minutes to respond. We truly appreciate your feedback!
- Contact information for speakers:
  - Donna M. Scanlon: [dscanlon@albany.edu](mailto:dscanlon@albany.edu)
  - Sharon B. Phillips: [Sharon.Phillips@nysed.gov](mailto:Sharon.Phillips@nysed.gov)

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