

Inclusive
LITERACY LESSONS
Helping Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Clarissa Willis, Ph.D.
clarissa@clarissawillis.com.

1

Research Shows these factors to be critical for children with ASD

- Oral language
- Sound letter recognition
- Environmental Print
- Print Concepts
- Emergent Writing
- Phonological Awareness
- Print Motivation

2

What does a literacy rich environment look like?



3

You may have tangible wealth untold,
Caskets of jewels and coffer of gold,
Richer than I you will never be,
I had a mother who read to me.

Strickland Gillilan
(1869-1954)

4

Singing Enhances Learning

- Increases alertness (oxygen)
- Enhances memories (endorphins)
- Energizes thinking (cross-lateral movements)
- Provides a transition
- Encourages pattern processing.
- Provides support for literacy skills.

5




For Children with Autism

1. Builds new skills
2. Practice previously learned skills
3. Builds self-esteem

6

Welcome Song (sung to the tune of *Three Visually Challenged Mice*)



Hello _____ (child's name)
 Hello _____ (child's name)
 I'm glad you're here.
 I'm glad you're here.

Let's put your things away and find out what to do today. I'm glad you're here! I'm glad you're here!

7

Acquisition of Language

Age	Activity
Birth	Responds to prosody (rhythm, cadence, pitch)
6 months	Recognizes phonemes (genes and environment)
8 months	Recognize word boundaries (intonations)
12 months	Attaches meaning to words Rate: 7 to 10 words per day
18 months	Recognizes noun/verbs differences Nouns/verbs create mental images (concrete images)
24 months	Recognizes other grammatical functions
30-36 months	Most language activity moves to left hemisphere

8

Children with Autism

Communication	Definition	Example
Form	A way to communicate	Crying, talking, gestures, sign language, pointing to picture cards
Function	A reason to communicate	Hungry, want something, need something or someone, need attention
Content	Something to communicate about	The child needs experiences and opportunities to explore, so that he will have something to communicate about


9

Brain Compatible Strategies

- Be knowledgeable
- Be intentional
- Follow a continuum.
- Use a lesson cycle that enhances processing
- Keep activities hands-on
- Engage both hemispheres
- Use developmentally appropriate activities as a springboard.
- Nurture disposition. Make it joyful!

10

Complexities of Learning



- Genes
- Environment
- “Windows of Opportunity”

Mozart (1756-1791)

11

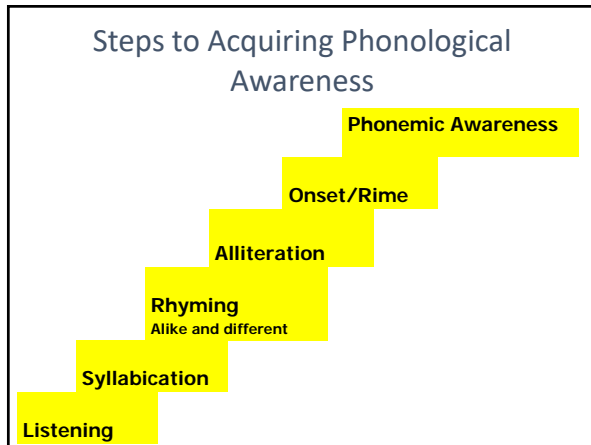
Windows of Opportunity

Window	Wiring Opportunity	Enhancement
Emotional Intelligence	0- 48 months	4 years to seven
Trust	0- 14 months	
Impulse Control	16-48 months	
Social Development	0-48 months	4 years to puberty
Attachment	0-12 months	
Independence	18-36 months	
Cooperation	24-48 months	
Thinking Skills	0-48 months	4 years to puberty
Cause and Effect	0-16 months	
Problem-Solving	16-48 months	
Motor Development	0-24 months	2-5 years
Vision	0-24 months	4 years to puberty
Reading Skills	0-24 months	2-7 years
Early Sounds	4- 8 months	8 months-10 years
Vocabulary	0-16 months	2-5 years

12

Literacy and Language Continuums	
Stages of Literacy Development	Stages of Language Development
Getting Ready Listening Falling in Love with Sounds	Responds to prosody Phoneme recognition
Developing Oral Language Extending and Enriching Vocabulary Matching Words to Thoughts and Actions	Attaches meaning to words Recognizes word boundaries Recognizes and uses nouns and verbs <i>Phonemic awareness is a stronger predictor of reading success than intelligence.</i>
Comprehending Enacting, Dramatizing, Recreating Stories Answering Multi-level Questions Mastering syntax	Recognizing other grammatical functions <i>Spoken comprehension correlates to written comprehension.</i>
Understanding Functions of Print Environmental Print Spatial Orientation Part/Whole Relationships Putting Thoughts on Paper	Most language activity moves to left hemisphere
Acquiring Reading Skills Reading Predictable Text Developing Sight Words Phonemic Awareness	Most language activity moves to left hemisphere

13



14

General Guidelines for Working with Children with Special Needs

1. All children can participate
2. Children learn best in natural environments with typically developing peers.
3. Each child is unique, and may exhibit one or more of the characteristics of a specific special needs
4. Always put the child first (People first language)
5. Parents know what their child can't do, tell them about the things he can do!

15



16

Research to Practice: Lesson Cycle

- **Focus**
 - Questions
 - Interesting statements
 - Photos
- **Develop**
 - Tap into prior knowledge
 - Point out likenesses and differences
 - Identify patterns
 - Demonstrate or discuss relevance of the material
- **Practice**
 - Hands-on
 - Follows the lesson as closely as possible
- **Reflect**
 - How will I use this information?
 - How has my thinking changed?

17

Inclusive Literacy Lessons

- Based on knowledge of literacy development
- Developmental continuum
- Appropriate lesson cycle
- Hands on and movement activities

Intentional instruction makes a difference!

18

Preschool Skill Focus

- Oral Language
- Phonological Awareness
- Letter Knowledge
- Print Awareness
- Comprehension

Taught with a measure of joy!

19

Research to Practice: Song as a Springboard

Literacy Skill	Songs
Oral Language	Itsy Bitsy Spider
Phonological Awareness Falling in Love Playing with Language	Down by the Bay Miss Mary Mack All Around My Yard Catalina Magnalina
Letter Knowledge	Bingo The Weather Song The Alphabet Song S-M-I-L-E
Print Awareness	Any short song Any song title

20



Name: Sung to the Tune of *The Farmer in The Dell*

My name is _____ (insert child's first name)

My name is _____ (insert child's first name)

My name is _____ (insert child's first name) and I live on _____ (insert name of the child's street)

The following is an example of how the song might go:

My name is Latisha. My name is Latisha My name is Latisha

And I live on 34th Street. (or)

I live with my grandmother, I live with my grandmother

I live with my grandmother --Her name is Clara Brownlow.




21

Lesson Examples

Skill	Lesson
Listening	Loud and Soft
Oral Language-vocabulary	Opposites
Oral Language sentence structure	What do you see?
Phonological Awareness-Segmentation	Animal Syllables
Phonological Awareness Rhyming words	Packing Rhymes
Alphabet Knowledge	E-I-E-I-O Change-o

22

Hands at Home 

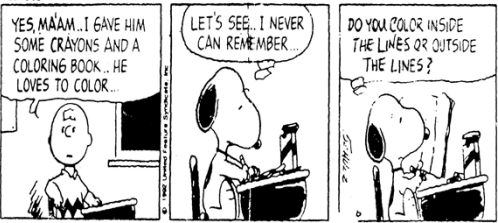
Objective: The child learns a strategy to keep her hands at *home*, therefore reducing stereotypical behaviors such as hand-flapping and hand-wringing.

Materials needed: Paper, scissors, glue, laminator, string or yarn, and hole-punch.

When to use this strategy: When you want the child to attend to what you are saying and during times of transition. This strategy is particularly effective when you are moving the child from one setting to another. This strategy is least effective when the child has already become so stressed he is tensing his body and preparing for an outburst.

23

PEANUTS



Sensory Issues can occur across all ages, all types of disabilities and often result in chaos in and out of the classroom!

24

Sensory Integration



- Organization of sensation for use
- Organizing information coming in from the senses: visual, tactile, auditory, vestibular and proprioceptive to make an adaptive response.

25



26
