

and language by focusing on things that are meaningful to the children and their families. No single component of any curriculum will have more impact on a preschooler's development than language.

Preschool is also an exciting time for written language development and for promoting interest in reading. If the social and physical environments in preschool and the home support the development of reading and written language, children will want to hear stories from books and to use books to find out more about things of interest. They will also be inclined to create marks that approximate letters and to learn how to write their own names. They will enjoy playing with the sounds of language, as well. All of these experiences are foundations for the conventional reading and writing that come later.

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## Guiding Principles

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### ► **Language and literacy work together**

Language and literacy support each other. Children with well-developed oral language are likely to succeed in reading comprehension in later grade levels than children with less well-developed oral language.<sup>15</sup> Children with strong oral vocabularies are likely to make more progress in developing phonological awareness.<sup>16</sup> In addition, language and literacy learning often occur together in the same context. For example, talking with a child about what happened the day before supports both language development and **narrative** skills.<sup>17</sup> Helping children find their names on the helper chart and explaining how the helper chart system works support both literacy and language.

### ► **Children say or sign what they hear or see**

A rich language environment is key for preschool children's language learning as well as for their development as readers and writers. The more language children hear, the more their language grows.<sup>18, 19, 20</sup> Children say, sign, or use touch screens to express what they hear or see. When teachers use conventional language, they provide a model from which children learn how to use language themselves. The same is true for reading and writing. The more adults read and write with children and show children how they use reading and writing in their own lives, the more children grow in their understanding of what it means to be a reader and writer. Adults also have many opportunities to answer children's questions about how print works.

### ► **Children learn everywhere**

Adults can act as detectives to find language and literacy opportunities everywhere and then use them as teachable moments. For example, when a child relates a personal experience and leaves out information critical for a listener's understanding, asking a question that prompts the child to provide this information helps develop narrative skills (e.g., "Where were you when the wind blew your hat off?").<sup>21</sup> Caregiving situations can provide strong physical support for word meanings and help children learn new vocabulary (e.g., "Rub the *palms* of your hands together, like this, to work up a *lather*").<sup>22</sup> Teachers may refer to the label on the soup can a child tips into the play pan in the house area to cook soup (e.g., "I see we're having tomato soup for lunch") to support print skills. Finding these everyday moments also