Development in the domain of literacy serves as a foundation for reading and writing acquisition. The development of early literacy skills is critically important for children’s future academic and personal success. Yet children enter kindergarten varying considerably in these skills; and it is difficult for a child who starts behind to close the gap once he or she enters school (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). The components within this domain address phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, text comprehension and interest, and emergent writing.

As a growing number of children live in households where the primary spoken language is not English, this domain also addresses the literacy development of dual language learners. However, specific age thresholds do not define the indicators for literacy development in English, unlike most of the other developmental progressions. Children who become dual language learners are exposed to English (in this country) for the first time at different ages. As a result, one child may start the process of developing English literacy skills very early in life and another child not until age four, making the age thresholds inappropriate. So instead of using age, The Standards use research-based stages to outline a child’s progress in literacy development. It is important to note that there is no set time for how long it will take a given child to progress through these stages. Progress depends upon the unique characteristics of the child, his or her exposure to English in the home and other environments, the child’s motivation to learn English, and other factors.

Children with disabilities may demonstrate alternate ways of meeting the goals of literacy development. For example, a child with a visual impairment will demonstrate a relationship to books and tactile experiences that is significantly different from that of children who can see. As well, children with a cognitive impairment may reach many of these same goals, but at a different pace, with a different degree of accomplishment, and in a different order than typically developing children. However, the goals for all children are the same, even though the path and the pace toward realizing the goals may be different. Principles of universal design for learning (UDL) offer the least restrictive and most inclusive approach to developing environments and curricula that best support the literacy development of all children.

Remember: While this domain represents general expectations for literacy development, each child will reach the individual learning goals at his or her own pace and in his or her own way.

L1: Phonological Awareness  
L2: Alphabet Knowledge  
L3: Print Knowledge  
L4: Comprehension and Interest  
L5: Literacy Development for Dual Language Learners  
L6: Emergent Writing
Component 1: Phonological Awareness
Learning Goal 1.a: Children notice and discriminate the sounds of spoken language.

By the following age, most children will:

- **9m**
  - Experiment and play with sound
  - Listen attentively to familiar stories, rhymes, and songs
  - Use sounds for a variety of purposes

- **18m**
  - Repeat words in rhymes and chants with prompting
  - Identify familiar melodies and rhythms in music (in the way that early readers listen for sound-alike words and patterns)
  - Recognize combinations of words
  - Use two- to three-word sentences (e.g., “Go bye-bye,” “Mommy’s car”)
  - Repeat new words adults say

- **24m**
  - Engage in word and sound play with adults (e.g., rhymes, nonsense words)
  - Distinguish between words that contain similar-sounding phonemes (“cat-mat,” “pig-jig”)
  - Fill in repeating phrases of familiar songs, stories, and finger plays
  - Sing simple songs and lullabies (such as those with repeating initial sounds)

- **36m**
  - Demonstrate an awareness of words as separate units
  - Identify whether two words rhyme
  - Engage in rhyming games and songs; can complete a familiar rhyme
  - Orally blend and segment familiar compound words, with modeling and support
  - Comprehend and use new words introduced within thematic units, stories, and daily activities

- **48m**
  - Match beginning sounds of some words; are able to name several words that begin with the letter sound of their name
  - Produce words (real or nonsense) that rhyme with other common words (e.g., “dance, prance, krance”)
  - Identity whether or not two words begin with the same sound (i.e., when an adult gives three or four oral words, children can select those that begin with same sound, although they may not be able to identify the letter)
  - Blend and delete compound words without the support of pictures or objects (e.g., “butterfly, butter crunch, butter sandwich, butter bear”)
  - With modeling and support, identify, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words
  - With modeling and support, delete the onsets of words (e.g., “pair-air, fruit-root”)
  - With modeling and support, blend onsets and rimes in single-syllable words (e.g., the hard “c” sound with “-ook” to make “cook”)

- **60m**
  - Match beginning sounds of some words; are able to name several words that begin with the letter sound of their name
By the following ages, most children will:

9m
› Respond to visual stimuli in their environment

18m
› Demonstrate an increasing awareness of and interest in the sounds of spoken language by focusing on the speaker

24m
› Point to pictures in a book
› Point to pictures and groupings of words (e.g., paragraphs) in books
› Recognize simple environmental print (e.g., McDonald’s “M” and Wal-Mart “W,” although they may not say the letter)
› Imitate the sounds of animals and people pointed to in books (e.g., making the sound of a squawking duck or a crying baby)

36m
› Recognize more symbols and logos in the environment
› Recognize letters as a special form of symbol that can be individually named
› Recognize and identify a few letters in their own name

48m
› Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name as well as letters that occur frequently in environmental print
› Produce the sound for some of the letters they recognize
› Recognize, with modeling and support, their own name or other common words in print

60m
› Recognize and name at least half of the letters in the alphabet, including letters in their own name (first name and last name) as well as letters that occur frequently in environmental print
› Produce the sound for many of the letters they recognize
› Correctly sort letters and find words that contain specified letters
› Demonstrate an understanding that strings of letters represent a sequence of spoken sounds

Component 2: Alphabet Knowledge

Learning Goal 2.a: Children recognize and identify letters and make letter-sound connections.
By the following ages, most children will:

- 9m
  - Explore physical features of books
  - Demonstrate an interest in books from among a collection of toys
  - Demonstrate an increasing ability to handle books without assistance

- 18m
  - Demonstrate an increasing ability to handle books without assistance
  - Hold books and look at pictures as if reading
  - Respond to features of books, such as pictures and sensory features (e.g., the fluffy cotton in Pat the Bunny)
  - Actively participate in shared reading experiences by making one- or two-word comments and continuing to point to and turn pages

- 24m
  - Open books and bring books to an adult to read
  - Point out pictures in books and say the names of items in the pictures
  - Actively participate in shared reading experiences by making one- or two-word comments and continuing to point to and turn pages

- 36m
  - Recognize specific books by their covers and seek out specific pages in familiar books
  - Know where books are kept, take them to an adult reader, and return books to their designated place when finished
  - Make scribble marks on paper and “read” the meaning they assign to the marks
  - Recognize letters and numerals as a special form of symbol that can be individually named

- 48m
  - Hold a book in correct orientation and turn pages from front to back, usually one at a time
  - Demonstrate an understanding that print carries meaning and can be read (e.g., dictating words to adults, recognizing their own name or a sibling’s name, pointing to a street sign and asking an adult, “What does that say?”)
  - Imitate the act of reading a book and demonstrate appropriate book-handling skills
  - Handle and care for books in a respectful manner

- 60m
  - Demonstrate an awareness of various conventions of print (e.g., upper- and lower-case letters, different fonts) and indicate where to start reading on a page and how to progress across and down a page
  - Describe roles of authors and illustrators and connect books to specific authors of illustrators
  - Identify familiar words in books and the environment
  - Recognize their own printed name and those of their siblings or friends

Learning to read and write is an ongoing process from infancy. Contrary to popular belief, it does not suddenly begin in kindergarten or first grade. From the earliest years, everything that adults do to support children’s language and literacy is critical.

- Strickland & Riley-Ayers
By the following ages, most children will:

- **9m**
  - Attend to their caregiver’s voice when being held and read to
  - Become quiet or show pleasure when an adult tells or reads a familiar story or rhyme or sings a familiar song
  - Explore books with various senses (sight, touch, even taste)

- **18m**
  - Focus their attention for short periods of time on, and actively participate in, shared reading experiences by pointing to pages, turning pages, and making sounds or saying simple words
  - Request that adults read to them
  - Point to and make sounds for familiar pictures, objects, and characters in books and photographs
  - Make movements and sounds in response to cues in songs and finger plays
  - Demonstrate preferences for favorite books

- **24m**
  - Use words, gestures, and/or expressions to request rhymes and rhythm games from adults (e.g., asking an adult by demonstrating part of a rhyme’s movement and combining the movement with words)
  - Request adults to read books or certain pages in books to them (e.g., bringing a book to an adult while speaking words of request or making facial expressions that indicate the request)
  - Use gestures and body actions to indicate their interest in having a book read (e.g., nodding their head, raising eyebrows, and pointing)
  - Prefer to listen to familiar or favorite books multiple times (at a single setting or each day)

- **36m**
  - Actively participate in shared reading experiences by asking questions, making comments, and responding to prompts
  - Demonstrate a preference for conventional books over board books
  - Enjoy books about a variety of topics
  - Choose to look at books, magazines, and other print materials without assistance
  - Incorporate books or other print materials into their play

- **48m**
  - Enjoy and ask to engage in book reading, book writing, or other literacy-related activities
  - Explore a variety of literary genres, such as fiction, fantasy, informational texts
  - Share opinions about what they did or did not like about a book or story
  - With assistance and support, engage in writing activities (e.g., labeling a picture)
  - Begin to understand the sequence of a story
  - With support, retell or reenact familiar stories with pictures or props as prompts
  - Ask and answer questions about main characters or events in a familiar story

- **60m**
  - Attend to and request longer and more complex books or stories
  - Engage in independent writing activities during routine times, such as pretending to write in their own journal
  - Demonstrate knowledge of details from familiar stories (e.g., about characters, events, story-related problems, and resolutions)
  - Engage in higher-order thinking during shared reading experiences, such as making predictions and inferences, determining cause-and-effect relationships, and summarizing stories
  - Retell a familiar story in the proper sequence, including major events and cause-and-effect relationships

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**Component 4: Comprehension and Interest**

**Learning Goal 4.a:** Children show interest and an understanding of a variety of literacy experiences.
Fantasy play, rather than being a distraction, helps children achieve the goal of having an open mind, whether in the service of further storytelling or in formal lessons.

- Lev Vygotsky

### Component 4: Comprehension and Interest

**Learning Goal 4.a:** Children show interest and an understanding of a variety of literacy experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9m</th>
<th>18m</th>
<th>24m</th>
<th>36m</th>
<th>48m</th>
<th>60m</th>
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<tr>
<td>See previous</td>
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<td>See previous</td>
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</table>

- Recite some words of a familiar book when read to (especially from books with repeating text)
- Recall specific characters or events from familiar stories and retell some parts of a story with prompting and support
- With modeling and support, anticipate what comes next in familiar stories
- With modeling and support, make predictions about what might happen next in a story and determine if their predictions were confirmed
- With modeling and support, demonstrate knowledge from informational texts
- Respond to the question “what made you think so?” in response to their ideas about books and stories, with more depth and detail
- Demonstrate knowledge from informational texts in a variety of ways (e.g., recognizing and naming a plastic model of a Triceratops after being read a book about dinosaurs
- With guidance and support, relate events and information from stories to their own experiences
Component 5: Literacy Development for Dual Language Learners

**Learning Goal 5.a:** Children become increasingly engaged in literacy experiences in English.

### In **early-stage** English language development, children:
- Attend to an adult reading a short storybook written in the home language or to a storybook written in English if the English story has been read in the home language first and especially if the book contains cues (pictures)
- “Read” familiar books (written in the home language or in English) when encouraged by others and use the home language to talk about the books
- Begin to identify and relate to a story from their own life experiences in their home language
- Retell a story in their home language when read or told a story in the home language

### In **mid-stage** English language development, children:
- Participate in reading activities, using books written in English when the language is predictable
- Choose to read familiar books written in the home language or in English with increasing independence and to talk about the books in either their home language or English
- Describe their own experiences related to the topic of a story, sometimes using telegraphic and/or formulaic speech in English
- Begin to narrate using English that reflects an increasingly larger vocabulary and more complex grammar
- Retell a story using the home language and some English when read or told the story in English

### In **late-stage** English language development, children:
- Participate in reading activities, using a variety of genres that are written in English
- Choose to read familiar books written in English with increasing independence and to talk about the books in English
- Engage in extended conversations in English about stories
- Retell in English the majority of a story read or told in English

**Note:** Unlike most of the other developmental progressions in this document, the indicators for English language development (or for development in any other language) do not follow specific age thresholds. Children who become dual language learners are exposed to their second language for the first time at different ages. As a result, one child may start the process of developing English language skills at birth and another child may start at age four, making the age thresholds inappropriate. So instead of using age, *The Standards* use research-based stages to outline a child’s progress in English language development. It is important to note that there is no set time for how long it will take a given child to progress through these stages. Progress depends upon the unique characteristics of the child, his or her exposure to English in the home and other environments, the child’s motivation to learn English, and other factors.
**Component 6: Emergent Writing**

**Learning Goal 6.a:** Children learn writing skills and show knowledge of writing conventions; they demonstrate an understanding of writing as a means of communication.

Certainly, young children can begin to practice making letters and numbers and solving problems, but this should be done without …workbooks. Young children need to learn initiative, autonomy, industry, and competence before they learn that answers can be right or wrong.

> David Elkind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9m</td>
<td>Focus on people and express particular interest in facial contours and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18m</td>
<td>Scribble spontaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24m</td>
<td>Use things the way they are intended to be used (e.g., scribbling on paper rather than on table surfaces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36m</td>
<td>Explore a variety of writing tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48m</td>
<td>Understand that writing carries a message and use scribbles, shapes, letter-like symbols, letters, and numerals to write or represent words or ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60m</td>
<td>With modeling and support, print some letters of meaningful words, sometimes using letters and sometimes using letter-like forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With invented spelling:

> Write their first name nearly correctly (may switch the order of letters or write some letters backwards)

> Use invented spelling

> With modeling and support, write numerals one through twenty
By the following ages, most children will:

9m
- Attend to visual stimuli in their environment

18m
- Make marks or scribbles on paper using a variety of media (e.g., chalk, pencil, markers, paint)

24m
- Make intentional scribbles and shapes when offered paper and crayons or other writing instruments and show their drawings to others
- Use scribbles as representations of oral language (e.g., describing scribbles as writing or language by telling adult what they mean)
- Create drawings and assign meaning to them
- Imitate the act of writing during play

36m
- Use letter-like symbols to create written materials during play or to express an idea
- Use writing tools and materials in various centers or learning environments (e.g., dramatic play, block area, science center)
- Dictate ideas, sentences, and stories
- With modeling and support, discuss or answer questions about their writing and drawings

48m
- With modeling and support, use writing and or digital tools to communicate information, tell a story, or answer a question
- Use writing to convey meaning (e.g., writing a note to themselves during play, writing a note to their mother, taking a restaurant “order” in a dramatic play area, writing a grocery list)

54m

60m

Component 6: Emergent Writing

Learning Goal 6.b: Children use writing to represent and communicate ideas in a variety of contexts; they use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to communicate; they participate in shared writing

Many young writers naturally begin writing about themselves and their lives, representing their experiences through drawing and writing.

- Moore-Hart, 2010