

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 they enter school (National Early 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 multilingual 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 multilingual 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 RIELDS* use research-based age ranges 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, their 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 other special needs and considerations may reach many of these same goals, but at a different pace, in a different way, with a different degree of accomplishment, or in a different order than their peers. 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 standards at their own pace and in their own way.



- L1: Phonological Awareness
- L2: Print Concepts
- L3: Comprehension and Interest
- L4: Literacy Development for Multilingual Learners
- L5: Emergent Writing

Component 1: Phonological Awareness

Standard 1.a: Children demonstrate awareness of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:

0-9m	9-18m	18-24m	24-36m	36-48m	48-60m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Experiment and play with sound › Respond differently to different sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Listen attentively to familiar stories, rhymes, and songs › Use sounds for a variety of purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Engage in word and sound play with adults (e.g., rhymes, nonsense words) › Distinguish between words that contain similar-sounding phonemes (“make-mat,” “sit-lot”) › Fill in repeating phrases of familiar songs, stories, and finger plays › Sing simple songs and lullabies (such as those with repeating initial sounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Demonstrate an awareness of words as separate units › Identify whether two words rhyme › Engage in rhyming games and songs; can complete a familiar rhyme › With modeling and support, blend onsets and rimes in single-syllable words (e.g., hard “c” sound with “ook” to make “cook”) › Comprehend and use new words introduced within thematic units, stories, and daily activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Match beginning sounds of some words; are able to name several words that begin with the same initial sound › Produce words (real or nonsense) that rhyme with other common words (e.g., “dance, ants, krance”) › Identify whether two words begin with the same sound (e.g., 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, count, pronounce, blend, and segment onsets and rimes of single syllable spoken words (e.g., “say map; say map again without the /m/”)

Component 2: Print Concepts

Standard 2.a: Children develop letter-sound correspondence and identify letters by sounds (phonemes) and names.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:

0-9m	9-18m	18-24m	24-36m	36-48m	48-60m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Respond to visual stimuli in their environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Point to pictures in a book › Engage with easy-to-hold books, such as board books, when not able to be active (e.g., sitting in a car seat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Point to pictures and groupings of words (e.g., paragraphs) in books › Recognize simple environmental print (e.g., McDonalds' "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 quacking duck or a crying baby) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Recognize more symbols and logos in the environment › Recognize letters as a special form of symbol that can be individually named and produce a sound › Recognize a few letters in their own name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Recognize and produce the sound of some letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name as well as letters that occur frequently in environmental print › With support, begin to produce the sound for some of the letters they recognize › Recognize their own name or other common words in print (e.g., STOP) › Recognize words that start with the same letter as their name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Recognize and name at least half of the letters in the alphabet, including upper- and lower-case letters, letters in their own name (first name and last name) as well as letters that occur frequently in environmental print › With support, recognize and produce the sound for letters › Relate letters to specific sounds that the letters represent › Recognize beginning sound in familiar words › Demonstrate an understanding that strings of letters represent a sequence of spoken sounds

Component 2: Print Concepts

Standard 2.b: Children demonstrate book awareness and knowledge of basic print conventions; they understand that print carries meaning and spoken words are represented by text.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:

0-9m	9-18m	18-24m	24-36m	36-48m	48-60m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Explore physical features of books › Demonstrate an interest in books from among a collection of toys › Demonstrate an interest in books by looking intently at or reaching for colorful pictures in books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 <i>Pat the Bunny</i>) › Actively participate in shared reading experiences by pointing to and turning pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 › Point to pictures and groupings of words (e.g., paragraphs) in books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 some letters and numerals › Choose to look at books, magazines, and other print materials without assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 › Imitate the act of reading a book and demonstrate appropriate book-handling skills › Handle and care for books in a respectful manner › 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identifies and describes the role of an author/illustrator of a book › Identify familiar words in books and the environment › Make connections between illustrations and text › Recognize their own 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



Component 3: Comprehension and Interest

Standard 3.a: Children show interest and an understanding of a variety of literacy experiences.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



0-9m

- › 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)



9-18m

- › 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



18-24m

- › Use words, gestures, signs, 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, signs and/or body actions to indicate their interest in having a book read (e.g., nodding their head, raising eyebrows, and pointing)

Continued



24-36m

- › Actively participate in shared reading experiences by asking questions, making comments, and responding to prompts
- › Demonstrate an interest in a variety of early literacy experiences, such as telling and listening to stories, singing and saying rhymes, and engaging with writing materials
- › Demonstrate a preference for conventional books over board books
- › Enjoy books about a variety of topics
- › Incorporate books or other print materials into their play
- › Enjoy and ask to engage in book reading, book writing, or other literacy-related activities

Continued



36-48m

- › 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
- › 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

Continued



48-60m

- › Attend to and request longer and more complex books or stories
- › 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

Continued

Component 3: Comprehension and Interest

Standard 3.a: Children show interest and an understanding of a variety of literacy experiences.

Continued from previous:

0-9m	9-18m	18-24m	24-36m	36-48m	48-60m
<i>See previous</i>	<i>See previous</i>	<i>Continued from previous</i>	<i>Continued from previous</i>	<i>Continued from previous</i>	<i>Continued from previous</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Prefer to listen to familiar or favorite books multiple times (at a single setting or each day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 › Ask and answer questions about pictures in a book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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 › With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unfamiliar words in a story or informational text read aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Demonstrate knowledge from informational texts in a variety of ways (e.g., recognizing and describing the life cycle of a butterfly) › With guidance and support, relate events and information from stories to their own experiences › Ask and answer questions about unfamiliar words in a story, poem, or informational text read aloud › Use new vocabulary acquired through reading › Act out characters and events from a story, poem, or informational text read aloud



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 informal lessons

- Lev Vygotsky



Component 4: Literacy Development for Multilingual Learners

Standard 4.a: Multilingual children become increasingly engaged in literacy experiences in English and in their home language(s).

In early-stage sequential multilingual development, multilingual, children:

- › Attend to an adult reading a short storybook written in their home language(s) or 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 their home language or in English) when encouraged by others and use their home language(s) to talk about the books
- › Begin to identify and relate to a story from their own life experiences in their home language(s)
- › Retell a story in their home language when read or told a story in their home language(s)

In mid-stage sequential multilingual development, multilingual, children:

- › Participate in reading activities, using books written in English when the language is predictable
- › Choose to read familiar books written in their home language(s) or in English with increasing independence and to talk about the books in either their home language(s) 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 their home language(s) and some English when read or told the story in English

In late-stage sequential multilingual development, multilingual, children:

- › Participate in reading activities, using a variety of genres that are written in English or their home language(s)
- › 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 sequential multilingual development do not follow specific age thresholds. Multilingual Learners are exposed to second (or third) languages for the first time at different stages. One child may start the process of sequential multilingual learning at birth and another child may start at age four, making the age thresholds inappropriate. So instead of using age, the RIELDS use research-based stages to outline a child’s sequential multilingual development. There is no set time for how long it will take a given child to progress through these stages. Progress depends upon the child’s exposure to each language (English and home language(s)) in the home and other environments, the child’s motivation to learn English and their home language(s), and other factors. Practitioners (especially those who do not speak multiple languages) are encouraged to learn about multilingual children’s sequential multilingual development progress from parents and other family members.

Component 5: Emergent Writing

Standard 5.a: Children use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to show knowledge of writing conventions and demonstrate writing as a means of communication.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:

0-9m	9-18m	18-24m	24-36m	36-48m	48-60m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Focus on people and express particular interest in facial contours and expressions › Attend to visual stimuli in their environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Make marks or scribbles spontaneously on paper using a variety of media (e.g., chalk, pencil, markers, paint) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Make intentional scribbles and shapes when offered paper and crayons or other writing instruments and show their drawings to others › Use things the way they are intended to be used (e.g., scribbling on paper rather than on table surfaces) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Explore a variety of writing tools › Dictate names, labels, single words (e.g., mommy, house, dog) › Watch when adults write › Imitate the act of writing during play › Describe drawings and paintings simply (e.g., “that’s Mama”) › Use scribbles as representations of oral language (e.g., describing scribbles as writing or language by telling adult what they mean) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 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, write some letters › With modeling and support, write some numerals › With modeling and support, discuss or answer questions about their writing and drawings › Use letter-like symbols to create written materials during play or to express an idea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › With modeling and support, use writing and/or digital tools to communicate information, tell a story, or answer a question › Dictate longer and more complex ideas, sentences, and stories › Write their first name nearly correctly (may switch the order of letters or write some letters backwards) › With modeling and support, write numerals one through ten › With modeling and support, print some letters of meaningful words, sometimes using letters and sometimes using letter-like forms

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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.

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- David Elkind

Continued

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Component 5: Emergent Writing

Standard 5.a: Children use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to show knowledge of writing conventions and demonstrate writing as a means of communication.

Continued from previous:

0-9m

See previous

9-18m

See previous

18-24m

See previous

24-36m

See previous

36-48m

Continued from previous

- › Understand that writing carries a message and use scribbles, shapes, letter-like symbols, letters, and numerals to write or represent words or ideas
- › With assistance and support, engage in writing activities (e.g., labeling a picture)

48-60m

Continued from previous

- › 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; writing a grocery list on a play cell-phone)
- › Engage in independent writing activities during routine times, (e.g., intentionally writing in their own journal, at developmental level)
- › Generate a plan for writing (e.g., articulate a purpose for writing)

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

- Moore-Hart, 2010

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