

Alphabetic literacy in kindergarten

Transcript of video

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Research in prior-to-school settings suggests that children actually learn about the alphabet — that's phonemes or sounds, graphemes, letters — through play-based experiences, and shared reciprocal conversations with adults as well.

Research also suggests that children can actually learn about alphabet letters and sounds through what we call intentional teaching. That's not explicit instruction. It's where maybe working with a group of children ... say a child's name is Tom, and we might sort of start talking about the sound 't' as in Tom and the letter 't'. So therefore, the educator is actually introducing the sound, but actually in a meaningful context for the child.

When we're looking at alphabetic literacy, it's the awareness of the sounds and print in the English language. Alphabetic literacy is quite complex for young children to learn, and it can take children a long time to develop this particular skill.

Early childhood teachers can also recognise teachable moments, and when they find these teachable moments they can actually use that time to do intentional teaching of alphabetic literacy.

So, for example, early childhood educators can be reading a book. You might come up with the words 'swish, swash, swoosh', and the educators can actually draw attention to these sounds like 'swish, swash, swoosh' and 'Sally, that has that same sound as you — "s" — as well.

Some of the strategies that kindergarten teachers can use in the kindergarten years to teach alphabetic literacy is, for example, reading alphabet books to children. Or they can actually make their own alphabet books. I think that's what's really important because not all alphabet books are specifically designed to teach sound and letter correspondences.

So, for example, if you've got the letter 'a' in an alphabet book you might actually have an image of an astronaut. A lot of children would maybe think it's a spaceperson or a spaceman, so we need to be very careful of the actual children in our context in our classroom that they actually have that understanding first.

It's the same with the commercially produced alphabet charts that you'll often see in kindergarten environments. The children can actually make their own alphabet charts and drawing the images that are meaningful to them.

So that way we're actually making the linking of that specific sound in that letter something that actually the child can put into a context that they'll actually understand, and it's not so abstract.

I think the main thing that we need to remember that research says

that quality kindergarten environments are ones where educators are providing a language-rich environment — that there's lots of opportunities for conversations and interactions.