Domain I: English Language Arts and Reading

Competency 001 (Oral Language)

The teacher understands the importance of oral language, knows the developmental processes of oral language, and provides children with varied opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills.

Review

Understand basic linguistic concepts

The beginning teacher understands basic linguistic concepts (for example, phonemes, semantics, syntax, pragmatics).

Language can be divided into several components:

- **Phonology** refers to the sounds of a language. **Phonemes** are the basic units of sound. Each language uses only a subset of all possible phonemes, and these subsets vary across languages. R and L, for example, are two different phonemes in English, but are not distinguished in Japanese. As they grow up, babies and young children must identify the subset of phonemes used in their native language. Although babies are good at hearing important phonemic distinctions, the ability to produce those distinctions in speech emerges slowly, and early pronunciation errors are common.
- **Morphology** is the set of rules for combining sounds into meaningful units. The smallest units of meaning in a language are called **morphemes.** For example, "cat" is a single morpheme in English. When prefixes and suffixes are added, the number of morphemes in a word increases, because the prefixes and suffixes are themselves meaningful units. For example, the word "cats" consists of two morphemes, because the "-s" is a morpheme meaning "more than one." As children get older, the length of their utterances increases, and the number of morphemes per utterance gets larger, too.
- **Syntax** refers to the structure of a phrase or sentence. The sentence "John smiles at Mary" contains exactly the same words as the sentence "Mary smiles at John," but the meaning is different, because each sentence has a different syntax. Taken together, syntax and morphology constitute the **grammar** of a language, and children's understanding of grammatical rules increases gradually as they get older.
- **Semantics** refers to the meanings of words and phrases. The link between a word and its meaning is a matter of convention. In English, the word "cat" identifies a particular mammal, but some other combination of sounds could have been used. There is no inherent similarity between the word "cat" and a real cat. In order to achieve fluency, a child must learn the meanings of tens of thousands of individual words. Children's understanding of word meanings increases over time, but at any age their **comprehension** of word meanings tends to be more advanced than their **production** of words in speech and writing. In short, children tend to understand more than they can express in words.
- **Pragmatics** consists of rules for effective communication in different contexts. Pragmatics covers many aspects of language, including humor, style, turn-taking, the use of nonverbal gestures such as pointing, and the use of figurative speech such as metaphors—all of which must be used appropriately in order for a person to be truly fluent. Recognizing the importance of politeness when asking a favor, and choosing polite language as well as a polite tone of voice, would illustrate one type of pragmatic competence. As children develop, they gradually learn more about the pragmatics of communicating with others in their particular culture.

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Recognize developmental stages in acquiring oral language

The beginning teacher recognizes developmental stages in acquiring oral language, including stages in phonology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, and recognizes that individual variations occur within and across languages.

Language develops in predictable stages:

- **Phonological development:** At 2 to 3 months of age, babies begin cooing. **Cooing** consists of simple vowel sounds such as "ahhh" and "oooh." After several months of cooing, consonant sounds are added. The resulting mix of vowels and consonants is called **babbling,** which becomes increasingly complex and speech-like in later months. In the second half of the first year, babies begin to direct sounds toward objects, sometimes while pointing at them. Between 8 and 18 months of age, most babies begin to produce their **first words.**

  Although infants can hear all the phonemic distinctions in their native language, the ability to speak fluently takes years to develop. Beginning with their first words, children's speech reflects several kinds of pronunciation errors. These "errors" are actually strategies for making words easier to say. An early talker may leave out a phoneme ("appo" instead of "apple") or an entire syllable ("bana" for 'banana"). In other cases, adding a syllable makes a word easier to say—as in the case of the child who says "Jaguwar" when pronouncing the word "Jaguar." These pronunciation errors gradually diminish throughout early childhood.
- **Semantic development:** Early talkers tend to use one word at a time. Each of the first words is a **holophrase,** meaning that it stands for an entire idea or sentence. A toddler may use the word "milk" to mean "I want more milk," or "I love milk!," or "I just spilled milk on myself."

  By age 2, most children have begun to say two words at a time, and longer combinations soon follow. The rate at which new words are learned begins to accelerate. However, children's understanding of word meanings is sometimes inaccurate. An example would be the toddler who uses the word "doggy" to refer to dogs, cats, and squirrels. This example illustrates one of many kinds of semantic errors that are common in early oral language development.
- **Grammatical development:** As the length of their utterances increases, preschoolers also begin to make grammatical mistakes, such as **overregularization.** Overregularization occurs when children treat irregular forms according to the rules for ordinary cases. Examples include "mouses," "foots," "goed," and "builded." In each example, the child applies an ordinary grammatical rule to an exceptional case. Overregularization errors tell us that young children are active language learners, spontaneously coming up with general rules rather than passively copying what they hear. These occurences diminish over time but are still heard among elementary school students.
- **Pragmatic development:** Infants understand that language is used for communication. They make sounds to attract their parents' attention, and they babble in response to parental speech. Throughout early development, children's understanding of communication gradually increases. An important source of learning about communication is conversations with adults. Adults provide conversational structure, explanations of figurative speech, and explicit guidance on how to communicate effectively. Pragmatic development occurs gradually, as children learn about turn-taking, politeness, and some of the ways that language is used in a figurative, or non-literal, sense.

  Sensitivity to phonemic distinctions in words, comprehension of word meanings, and awareness of pragmatic conventions, are examples of **receptive language,** or the ability to understand a message. The ability to express oneself in language—to pronounce words, to choose correct vocabulary and grammar, and to follow pragmatic conventions—constitutes **expressive language.** Although receptive and expressive language develop in predictable sequences, there are many variations in the development of individual children. Children differ in verbal skills, in maturational level, and in the cultural, linguistic, and family environments in which they are raised. As a result, early childhood teachers must anticipate—and be receptive to—considerable variability in the oral language experiences and abilities of their students.

Assess and address individual oral language development

The beginning teacher plans and implements systematic oral language instruction based on informal and formal assessment of children's oral language development and addresses individual children's strengths, needs, and interests.

The instructional methods that teachers plan must take into account their student's age. Younger children will tend to need more help with basic skills, such as knowing how to respond when spoken to and how to listen when others are speaking. Older children will need more help with advanced skills, such as evaluating the content of their own and others' speech.

The instructional methods that teachers plan and implement should be sensitive to individual differences among children in each age group. Some children are more verbally skilled than others; some children are more attentive than others; some children have had more experience with conversation than others; and some children need more encouragement than others to express themselves. Teachers can obtain information about individual children through discussions with parents, through conversations with children, and from both informal and formal assessments of each child's oral language abilities. Formal assessments of oral language development include standardized tests such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and the Test of Oral Language Development (TOLD).

Although it is important for teachers to monitor the progress of their students over time, assessment is particularly important at the beginning of the year. Assessment during the first few weeks of the year provides baseline information for planning the most effective oral language instruction for individual students.

Recognize speech or language delays

The beginning teacher recognizes when speech or language delays or differences warrant in-depth evaluations and additional help or interventions.

Children vary in the rate at which they acquire oral language skills. For example, by age 4, some children are able to articulate all of the basic sounds in English. Other children will continue to struggle for several more years with sounds such as *l, r*, *s*, and *th.* It can be difficult for a teacher to tell the difference between a developmental lag and an actual disorder. Some children with comparatively limited skills catch up to their peers naturally, while others need additional intervention. A number of informal and formal assessment practices are available to help teachers discern whether an oral language problem exists in a child's receptive and/or expressive language.

Design activities to build language skills

The beginning teacher designs a variety of one-on-one and group activities (for example, meaningful and purposeful conversations, dramatic play, language play, stories, song, rhymes, games, discussions, questioning, sharing information) to build on children's current oral language skills.

Scaffolding refers to the way that adults help children learn complex skills such as language. For example, when talking with a young child, a parent may help the child participate in the conversation by asking key questions such as "What happened next?" The parent may then elaborate on the child's response. If the child says "He threw hats," the parent may reply "Yes, the monkeys threw the hats out of the tree." In these examples, the parent is providing a scaffold, or structure, in which the child can develop his or her language skills. One of the goals of the early childhood teacher is to choose instructional methods that provide the best scaffold for the oral language development of each child. Asking questions and elaborating on what children say are two of the important general methods that can be used. Some other instructional methods are as follows:

- **Reading to children:** When reading a story, teachers should involve the class by discussing what happens in the story and by asking about children's reactions. **Shared reading**, in which children participate in the telling of the story, also increases children's interest and involvement. Reading to children gives teachers the opportunity to discuss the meanings of new words and to engage in a variety of literacy-related activities.
- **Involving children in songs, rhymes, and games:** Teachers should use a variety of activities to keep children interested while reinforcing their oral language skills. Activities such as singing, rhyming, choral recitation, and language play help maintain children's interest while teaching new words as well as sensitivity to the sounds and rhythms of language.
- **Encouraging children to participate in conversation:** Teachers should find opportunities to talk with children about what they think and feel. Asking questions is one way of engaging children in conversation. During conversations, the teacher can provide appropriate scaffolding for a variety of language-related skills.
- **Thinking out loud:** Teachers should provide verbal descriptions of what they are thinking as they make decisions, solve problems, and observe what is happening in the classroom. "Let's see," a teacher may say, "I need to cut this paper into four pieces. How am I going to do this? I know. I'll fold the paper like this, and . . ." In other cases, the teacher may look around and talk about what various children in the classroom are doing. Thinking out loud provides children with models for oral language usage.
- **Using props:** Teachers should promote oral language activities in which children can make use of props. Talking to a puppet, or having a puppet speak for them, can sometimes help young children who are otherwise reluctant to express themselves in class. Show-and-tell facilitates oral expression among both younger and older children, because it allows children to talk about something that is both important and familiar to them. Role-play is an engaging way of involving children of all ages in oral language expression. Each of these activities is useful not only for encouraging individual children to talk, but also for stimulating conversation among students.

Reflect cultural diversity and build on individual strengths

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional materials and strategies that promote children's oral language development, reflect cultural diversity, and respond to the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children, including English Language Learners.

English Language Learners are children whose native language is not English, and whose oral language skills (in English) are less advanced than their classmates. To some extent, the same instructional methods used for the rest of the class are appropriate for these children. At first, however, the teacher will need to do more of the talking.

As English Language Learners progress toward effective communication in English, there is a predictable sequence. At first, these children use their native language to communicate with the teacher and other students. When they realize they are unable to communicate with others in their native language, many of these children enter a period of silence in which their main attempts at communication are nonverbal (for example, through gestures). This progression is normal. English Language Learners need time to adjust to the new language. They need time to figure out what others are saying and what they themselves should say. They need time to feel comfortable expressing themselves in English. The teacher should be sensitive to these needs, while providing English Language Learners with verbal scaffolding and other forms of support. Eventually, English Language Learners will begin to communicate with the teacher and other students in English.

The English Language Learner may participate in **bilingual education,** meaning that academic content is provided in the child's native language at the same time that English language instruction is given. In some cases, the child will be placed in an English class with other English Language Learners who speak a variety of different languages. This is an **English-as-a-Second-Language** (**ESL**) classroom, and ESL teachers must be sensitive to the different backgrounds and skill levels of their students.

Acknowledging a student's cultural background, whether or not the student is an English Language Learner, helps make the student feel important and respected. There are many ways that teachers can incorporate cultural backgrounds into instructional practice. Instructional units on different cultures or subcultures would be one type of example. Another would be the use of instructional materials such as stories, reference books, and pictures that reflect cultural differences. Show-and-tell, as well as conversations about home and family, are other activities that reflect cultural diversity in ways that facilitate oral language development and help students fit into the classroom.

Build on non-English backgrounds

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies to build on children's cultural, linguistic, and home backgrounds to enhance their oral language development, including using the home language to develop English.

Standard English is the dialect of English that is taught in school and used in many contexts outside the classroom. There are many kinds of nonstandard English. It is important for the teacher to realize that nonstandard dialects are not inferior to Standard English. Linguistically, each dialect is comparable in richness and complexity. The key difference between dialects is that Standard English is more prevalent in certain contexts, such as the classroom.

The teacher should also realize that the language that a child speaks is a reflection of his or her home environment. The child who speaks a nonstandard dialect is not speaking incorrectly. Rather, the child's speech is an accurate reflection of the vocabulary and grammar that he or she has been exposed to. The teacher must find ways to teach Standard English while maintaining respect for the child's home language. It is potentially harmful for the child to feel that the home language is inferior in some sense.

When interacting with a child who speaks a nonstandard dialect, the teacher should model and encourage Standard English without being critical of the child's usage. The teacher should focus on the idea that the child is trying to convey, and restate or paraphrase the child's remarks in Standard English. By restating or paraphrasing what the child has said, the teacher is able to model standard usage without being critical of the child. In addition, the teacher can praise the child for standard usage without being openly critical of nonstandard expressions.

Although students are exposed to Standard English in school, the teacher should provide opportunities to build on the linguistic cultural practices the child is familiar with at home. Oral reports on home life, show-and-tell, and discussions of differences in dialect are among the ways that teachers can incorporate children's background into instructional practice.

Provide instruction that interrelates oral and written language

The beginning teacher understands relationships between oral language and literacy development and provides instruction that interrelates oral and written language to promote children's reading proficiency (for example, preview-review, discussion, questioning).

Oral language and literacy do not develop independently. Speaking, reading, and writing are interrelated, and effective instructional methods rarely contribute to the development of one without contributing to the development of the others.

For example, the **language experience approach** (**LEA**) is a commonly used instructional method that integrates oral and written language skills. For younger children, the LEA often involves a dictation activity. Students dictate a story to the teacher, who writes the story down in front of the students and reads it back later. LEA stories often focus on shared experiences, such as a field trip or a special event. However, the stories can be about personal experiences, imagined events, or anything else that students are interested in relating. As students get older, they play an increasingly central role in the creation of LEA text.

The LEA allows younger students to see connections between oral expression and writing. Students observe the correspondence between what they say and what the teacher does while writing the story. They notice the sequencing of words from left to right and top to bottom, as well as the spellings of individual words, the spacing between words, and other characteristics of written text. The LEA allows each student to feel that he or she has contributed to the story and provides an opportunity for the teacher to call attention to many different aspects of oral language and print.

Other activities that link oral and written language in the promotion of reading proficiency are discussed under Competencies 003 and 004.

Help children connect spoken and printed language

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional materials, strategies, and activities to strengthen children's oral vocabulary and narrative skills in spoken language and to help children connect spoken and printed language (for example, planned read-alouds).

Children's vocabulary and narrative skills can be strengthened through a variety of methods. For example, the teacher can make use of **textless books** (also known as **wordless books**), which consist of sequences of pictures but no print. Asking young children to "read" a textless book out loud allows them to practice vocabulary and to apply their emerging appreciation of narrative.

Encouraging children to tell or retell stories also reinforces vocabulary and strengthens narrative skills. Props such as puppets may provide helpful support for younger children as they learn how to tell and retell stories.

There are many ways for teachers to emphasize connections between the spoken and written word. For younger children, observing the teacher read a book out loud provides opportunities to see connections between what the teacher says and what is printed on each page of the book. In addition, children's narrative skills can be enhanced through discussions of story events and characters. **Dialogic reading** refers to conversations between a teacher and students about a story that has just been read.

The younger the child, the more a teacher must rely on prompts to sustain dialogic reading. For example, the teacher can use open-ended prompts. A simple but effective open-ended prompt would be to show children a picture from the story and ask what is happening. Other kinds of prompts provide more verbal scaffolding. For example, the teacher may read a sentence from the story but leave a blank at the end for children to fill in ("Johnny gave his teacher an ____"). In addition, the teacher may ask specific questions ("Do you remember what Johnny did after school?").

Dialogic reading is an effective instructional activity at any age. As children get older, their participation in the reading of the stories naturally increases, and the extent to which they need to be prompted, or guided in their responses, naturally declines.

During the elementary years, greater reliance can be placed on written materials as a means for strengthening vocabulary and narrative skills. Elementary school students learn vocabulary from books and other written materials. For example, the teacher may post **word walls**, which are lists of words that students are currently learning, in places that the entire class can see.

New vocabulary words are often learned through receptive language, but teachers should give students as many opportunities as possible to use new words and thereby incorporate them into their expressive vocabularies.

Provide opportunities to adapt spoken language to various audiences

The beginning teacher provides instruction and opportunities for children to develop skills for adapting spoken language for various audiences, purposes, and occasions.

Pragmatics includes the ability to adapt one's speech to fit the needs of a particular context. The early childhood teacher helps students appreciate a number of pragmatic conventions.

Teachers of younger children focus on basic conventions, such as the importance of a polite tone of voice, and the need for responding to a teacher's question (even if only to say, "I don't know"). Teachers also help younger children appreciate the differences between communicating with a group of people versus communicating one-on-one. When addressing the entire class for an oral report or show-and-tell, the teacher will help students understand the need to speak up, make eye contact with the group, and provide an appropriate amount of information—neither too much nor too little.

Perspective-taking is a skill that increases with age. Younger children may not appreciate that other people think differently, or have different knowledge and experiences than they do. Teachers must help students appreciate some of these differences in order to tailor their speech to their particular audience. Role-playing is one kind of activity that helps children appreciate other points of view.

Teachers of older children help refine the basic skills acquired by younger children. For example, elementary school students may understand the difference between polite and impolite speech, yet still find it difficult to express constructive criticism without being excessively negative. Elementary school students will also need help appreciating some of the differences between formal and informal speech styles.

Provide opportunities to develop listening skills

The beginning teacher understands listening skills for various purposes (for example, critical listening to evaluate a speaker's message, listening to enjoy and appreciate spoken language) and provides children with opportunities to engage in active, purposeful listening in a variety of contexts.

Different types of listening are used for different purposes. **Critical listening** is used to understand and evaluate the content of what someone is saying, while **listening for appreciation** is used to appreciate and enjoy the message. Both types of listening may be needed for the same material. An example would be the strategies a teacher uses to introduce a poem. The first time the teacher reads the poem out loud, he or she may encourage listening for appreciation by alerting students to the rhymes and rhythms of the poem, and by asking students to imagine some of the scenes and situations that the poem expresses in figurative language. In subsequent readings of the poem, the teacher may encourage critical listening by asking students to think about the ideas that the poet is trying to convey, and to consider how clearly the ideas are expressed.

Because children are active learners, they tend to learn best when their listening is active rather than passive. **Active listening** is a way of focusing attention on a speaker through participation in activities relevant to the message. The goal of active listening is to keep children attentive and actively engaged. The teacher can promote active listening in a number of ways. While telling a story, for example, the teacher may ask children to contribute a repeated phrase at appropriate times. Active listening can also be encouraged by helping children to retell simple stories, to paraphrase important instructions, and to ask appropriate questions when the teacher or another student is making a presentation. For elementary school students, taking notes is one of the most important forms of active listening that develops. (Note taking is discussed further under Competency 008.)

Encourage evaluation of spoken messages

The beginning teacher provides instruction and opportunities for children to evaluate the content and effectiveness of their own spoken messages and those of others.

Metacognition refers to the ability to reflect on and evaluate one's own thought process. Examples of metacognition include the understanding that taking notes can help one remember, that people can draw different conclusions from the same evidence, and that learning is more difficult when one is tired. **Metalinguistic knowledge** is a form of metacognition that pertains to the ability to reflect on and evaluate language.

An example of metalinguistic knowledge would be the ability to evaluate a spoken message on dimensions such as clarity, relevance, and effectiveness. Teachers can encourage children to evaluate messages by asking key questions about content. For example, if there are several different red objects in a box and a child makes reference to "the red one," the teacher can ask whether anything else needs to be said about the object in order to find it.

Teachers can also encourage students to consider the effectiveness of a message. A student who has just made a request may be asked whether he or she thinks the request was loud enough, clear enough, or framed in a way that someone else can understand. With younger students, teachers may need to provide answers to some of these questions. As students progress through elementary school, they become increasing capable of evaluating the logic, style, and persuasiveness of spoken messages and, consequently, more independent in their evaluation of content and effectiveness.

Select appropriate technologies to build oral skills

The beginning teacher selects and uses appropriate technologies to develop children's oral communication skills.

The teacher has many resources to draw from to help develop children's oral language. Books, pictures, audio and video recordings, computer software, art supplies, games, puppets, and dolls are among the many materials and technologies that teachers can use.

Some resources are explicitly designed for children of particular groups or levels. For example, a **basal reader** is a collection of stories and other materials that is appropriate for children of a particular grade level. Basal readers, worksheets, games, and software programs are often designed with a particular age group in mind. Other resources, such as picture books and puppets, must be used by the teacher in age-appropriate ways to develop oral language skills.

Oral language is often taught in conjunction with some content area, and multiple resources are used. For example, **thematic units** (or thematic organizers) are designed to teach several subjects through sustained focus on a particular topic. An example of a thematic unit would be a unit on dinosaurs in which children learn about biology (for example, differences between meat-eaters and plant-eaters), geography (for example, the habitats of different dinosaurs), and math (for example, changes in the size of dinosaur populations over time). A variety of different materials and activities would be used to help children make sense out of this information.

In a thematic unit on dinosaurs, oral language skills could be developed as children engage in discussions about dinosaurs, present oral reports to the class about dinosaurs, and learn dinosaur names. For younger students, the learning of dinosaur names could be an opportunity to practice identifying the initial sounds of words ("What letter does Tyrannosaurus start with?"). For older students, the learning of dinosaur names could be an opportunity to work on spelling relatively challenging words.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's oral language development.

From birth, babies are spoken to and overhear speech. Children develop in a language-rich environment created by parents, siblings, teachers, peers, and the media. The home environment tends to have the most significant influence on the oral language development of individual children.

It is important for teachers to maintain contact with each child's parents or guardians. Information about the home environment can be a source of useful information about the child's functioning in the classroom. Academic and behavioral problems are sometimes a reflection of problems at home. For example, young children sometimes respond to stress by regressing to more rudimentary forms of speech.

It is also important for parents to be encouraged to participate in their children's oral language development. Reading aloud, talking about stories, engaging in conversations, and many of the other activities discussed under this competency are appropriate not only for teachers but also parents. Teachers can suggest activities to parents, and encourage parents to work with their children on oral language activities that the child is participating in at school.

Sample Questions

1. During the first week of school, a pre-kindergarten teacher asks each child to bring something blue from home to talk about in a show-and-tell format. What is the main purpose of this activity?

   A. to strengthen children's pronunciation skills
   B. to provide new vocabulary words for the class to learn
   C. to help children become comfortable about talking in front of the group
   D. to support the development of critical listening

   C Any use of oral language allows children to exercise their pronunciation skills. Asking children to discuss something they have brought from home does not help pronunciation more than other ordinary uses of oral language. Hence, option A would not be the main purpose of the activity. For the same reason, option B would not be the main purpose, because there are so many opportunities, both planned and unplanned, for teaching new vocabulary. Pre-kindergarten teachers would probably not emphasize critical-listening skills so early in the school year, so option D would not be the main purpose either. Option C is the best answer. During the early weeks of school, it is important for the pre-kindergarten teacher to help children become comfortable with expressing themselves in front of their classmates. In this example, the teacher has chosen an activity that bridges the gap between school and home and also allows children to discuss something familiar to them.

2. When asking children to tell a story using a textless book, which of the following should a kindergarten teacher expect?

   A. grammatical errors
   B. irrelevant details
   C. nonstandard English
   D. all of the above

   D Option A is correct, because grammatical errors such as overregularization are normal among kindergarten students. Option B is correct, because limitations in narrative and pragmatic skills sometimes result in children speaking off-topic. Option C is also correct, because Nonstandard English is a common occurrence in the classroom. Hence, option D is the best answer.

Competency 002 (Phonological and Phonemic Awareness)

The teacher understands phonological and phonemic awareness and employs a variety of approaches to help children develop phonological and phonemic awareness.

Review

Understand how phonological and phonemic awareness develop

The beginning teacher understands the significance of phonological and phonemic awareness for reading, is familiar with typical patterns in the development of phonological and phonemic awareness, and recognizes that individual variations occur.

There is some variation among experts in how phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are defined and distinguished from each other.

Generally, **phonological awareness** refers to the ability to notice and think about the sounds of language. These sounds include words, syllables, letters, and individual phonemes. For example, the ability to count the syllables in a word reflects phonological awareness, as does the ability to distinguish between the parts of a syllable. Specifically, the consonant(s) at the beginning of a syllable are referred to as the **onset,** and the vowel(s) and consonants that follow are called the **rime.** In the word "book," the /b/ sound is the onset, and the /ook/ sound is the rime. In the word "bring," the /br/ is the onset, and the /ing/ is the rime.

Recall that phonemes are the basic units of sound in a language. The word "bat" consists of three phonemes: /b/ /a/ /t/. The word "ball" also consists of three phonemes: /b/ /a/ /l/. The word "tax" consists of four phonemes: /t/ /a/ /k/ /s/. **Phonemic awareness** is the ability to identify the phonemes that make up words, to distinguish between phonemes, and to make use of phonemes. Thus, according to some experts, phonemic awareness is one aspect of phonological awareness.

Phonemic awareness enables specific skills such as rhyming, alliteration, blending, and segmentation.

- **Rhyming** refers to repetition of sounds at the ends of words.
- **Alliteration** refers to the repetition of sounds in stressed syllables or at the beginnings of words (as in "Tick, tock . . ." or "Peter Piper picked a peck . . .").
- **Blending** is the combination of individual sounds, as when a teacher asks what /p/, /a/, /t/ spell and a child replies "pat."
- **Segmentation** is the division of words into sounds, as when a teacher asks a child to identify the first sound in "pat" and the child says "p" or makes a /p/ sound.

Phonological and phonemic awareness can be distinguished from **auditory discrimination,** or the ability to hear differences between phonemes and other units of sound. Auditory discrimination matures in infancy. It is not difficult for infants and children with normal hearing to discriminate between all of the phonemes in their native language. A young child can respond appropriately to a request for a "bat" as opposed to a "ball," because the child can hear the difference in the final phoneme of each word. Likewise, a young child can hear that the word "banana" is longer than the word "ball."

In contrast to auditory discrimination, phonological and phonemic awareness do not automatically mature at an early age. These skills must be taught to children over a period of time.

Phonological and phonemic awareness are difficult skills to master, and some children struggle more than others. The child who can hear the difference between "bat" and "ball" may not be able to describe the difference between the two words. The child who can hear that "banana" is longer than "ball" may not be able to count the syllables, even with help from a teacher. It is normal for preschoolers to have difficulty making these phonological distinctions.

Teachers of pre-readers and early readers help children develop phonological and phonemic awareness. Phonological and phonemic awareness are prerequisites for reading. Reading depends in part on the ability to break words down into individual units of sound such as syllables, letters, and phonemes, and to understand how these units are combined. Studies show that such abilities are predictors of reading achievement—the more advanced a child's phonemic awareness, for example, the greater the child's later success at reading.

Build on individual and non-English backgrounds

The beginning teacher understands differences in children's development of phonological and phonemic awareness and adjusts instruction to meet the needs of individual children, including English Language Learners.

The development of phonological and phonemic awareness varies widely from child to child. Teachers must be sensitive to developmental differences, and must keep pace with more advanced children while providing extra support for children who are struggling.

Children who seem to be struggling can be helped by extra time and attention, a focus on familiar letters and words, the use of concrete objects as props, and the incorporation of more cues into phonological activities. For example, the teacher may help a child who is having difficulty with segmentation by using the child's name as an example. The teacher may say "Let's say your name. Robert. Rrrrrrrrrrobert. Do you hear that Rrrrrrrrrr sound? Isn't that like the sound a tiger makes—Grrrrrrrrrr? Can you say Grrrrrrrrrr? Now say Rrrrrrrrrrobert with me."

Teachers of English Language Learners should remember that these children do have experience with a language, even if it is not the English language. English Language Learners can benefit from phonological and phonemic awareness activities that build on their native language. At the same time, some activities can sharpen phonological and phonemic awareness even when the English Language Learner is uncertain about the meanings of the words. Simple rhymes and chants, for example, focus children's attention on similarities and differences in sounds. It is important, however, to help English Language Learners gain a foundation in oral language and appreciate the meanings of the words they are working with. Emphasis on isolated phonological properties of words is not recommended for any type of student.

Along with English Language Learners, teachers will encounter students who speak dialects that are different from Standard English. In classrooms where more than one dialect is spoken, teachers can develop activities that call attention to differences in sounds across dialects. Doing so helps children feel respected and avoids giving them the impression that their way of speaking is wrong.

Incorporate assessments of phonological development

The beginning teacher plans, implements, and adjusts instruction based on the continuous use of formal and informal assessments of individual children's phonological development.

Teachers can informally assess phonological and phonemic awareness through observation, as well as by involving children in simple tasks, games, and other activities. Teachers can develop checklists and other forms for keeping track of the progress of individual students. For example, a kindergarten teacher may observe how well individual children can clap along with the syllables in a word as it is articulated. Or, the teacher may monitor how well children can generate rhymes for simple words. Informal assessments can be made in group settings or in private conferences with children. Experts recommend the use of multiple methods to identify an individual child's strengths as well as areas that need work.

Formal assessment may be called for if a child does not seem to be making progress. One formal assessment of phonological development currently used in Texas is the **Texas Primary Reading Inventory** (**TPRI**). The TPRI is used for assessing skills such as phonemic awareness, listening comprehension, and reading, among children ranging from kindergarten through 2nd grade. Several other formal assessments are available to help teachers identify students who need additional support for emerging phonological and phonemic awareness skills.

Use a variety of instructional approaches

The beginning teacher uses a variety of instructional approaches and materials (for example, language games, informal interactions, direct instruction) to promote children's phonological and phonemic awareness.

Phonological and phonemic awareness can be promoted through a variety of activities:

- **Songs, stories, chants, and rhymes:** Rhymes such as "Hickory, dickory, dock, the mouse ran up the clock . . . ," for example, help refine phonological awareness by calling children's attention to similarities in the final sounds of words. Songs such as "Old MacDonald" and chants such as "Pease porridge hot . . ." also call attention to alliteration. Shared reading provides an excellent opportunity for interactive activities that promote phonological skills.
- **Motor activities:** During a singalong, for example, children can be encouraged to raise their hands, tap their feet, or clap when they hear the rhyming words: "Ding dong, bell [clap], pussy's in the well [clap] . . ." Clapping is commonly used to help children count the syllables in familiar words such as their own names.
- **Language games:** Word play and other language games help develop specific aspects of children's phonological and phonemic awareness. Asking children to generate rhymes, even if what they produce are nonsense words, is one example of a useful language game. Asking children what you get when you say "ball" without the /b/ sound would be another example. As children begin to learn the alphabet and the sounds of individual letters, written materials can be incorporated into language games. For example, showing children a simple word such as "cat" and asking what you get when you replace the first letter with a "b," is an activity that promotes segmentation.
- **Word boxes:** A **word box** (also referred to as an **Elkonin box**) is a row of boxes that correspond to different sounds in a word. The word box for "hat," for example, would consist of three boxes in a row (or a rectangle divided into three parts). A picture of a hat would be present, and each child would have markers such as plastic counters or pennies. As the teacher pronounces each sound in "hat," children would place a counter in the appropriate box (or part of the rectangle). Older children would be asked to write the appropriate letter in each box.
- **Writing:** As discussed under Competency 009, children learn about the phonology of their language through writing, beginning with their earliest efforts to create written text. The attempt to write letters that correspond to the sounds of words helps children appreciate letter-sound correspondences and improves phonological awareness.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's phonological and phonemic awareness both at school and at home.

Generally, parents or caregivers should be kept up-to-date about what happens in the classroom. The teacher can prepare a letter that describes key classroom activities and explains how these activities promote phonological skills. Parents can be encouraged in this letter, and during conferences with teachers, to engage in specific activities with children at home. Reading in general should be encouraged, as should other materials, games, and activities that contribute to phonological development. The goal is not to have parents "drill" children, but rather to help them appreciate that many activities children enjoy can contribute to emerging phonological skills. The messages to parents should be to have fun and to focus on what their children can do rather than on what they cannot do.

Along with descriptions of the overall classroom experience, it is important for teachers to keep parents informed about individual children's progress. Parents can be given specific suggestions for games and other activities that may help their children in areas that need work. Again, parents should be encouraged to be positive and nurturing and to keep in mind that anything they do to help their child will be most effective if the child views it as a fun activity rather than a chore.

Sample Questions

1. Which of the following would be most helpful in developing phonemic awareness among preschoolers?

   A. During circle time, the teacher reads a list of words and asks children to clap each time they hear the name of an animal, but not when they hear the name of a food.
   B. During shared reading of a story about a snake, children are told that the first letter of the word "snake" is an "s," and they are asked to make an /sssss/ sound each time they hear the word.
   C. During show-and-tell, the teacher writes the name of each object on the board and pronounces it several times for the class.
   D. On the first day of class, during circle time, children take turns saying their own names, and then saying the first letter of their names.

   B Phonological awareness activities help children notice the sounds that make up words. Option A is incorrect, because the only phonological skill required is auditory discrimination of the differences between animal names. Option C is incorrect as well. By writing the names of each object on the board, the teacher demonstrates correspondences between spoken and written language, but in itself does not contribute to phonemic awareness. Option D is inappropriate, because on the first day of preschool, at least some children will not know the first letter of their name. Option B is correct. By telling children that "snake" begins with an "s," and then asking them to make an /sssss/ sound each time they hear "snake," children can become better at segmenting that particular word by identifying its initial phoneme.

2. A teacher recites "Peter Piper" very slowly for her kindergarten class. Afterward, she asks the class which sound they heard a lot of. What aspect of language is the teacher trying to sensitize her class to?

   A. rime
   B. blending
   C. phonology
   D. alliteration

   D Option A is incorrect, because rime consists of the vowel(s) and consonant(s) that follow an onset sound. The rimes in "Peter Piper" tend to be different from word to word. Option B is incorrect, because children are not given the opportunity to hear or engage in blending. Option C is incorrect, because it is much too general. Option D is the correct answer. "Peter Piper" is extremely alliterative, owing to the numerous repetitions of the /p/ sound.

Competency 003 (Alphabetic Principle)

The teacher understands the importance of the alphabetic principle for reading English and provides instruction that helps children understand the relationship between printed words and spoken language.

Review

Understand the alphabetical principle

The beginning teacher understands the elements of the alphabetic principle, including letter names, graphophonemic knowledge, and the relationship of the letters in printed words to spoken language.

English is an **alphabetic language,** because each sound or phoneme in the language is written with a letter or set of letters. For example, the /t/ sound is represented in written English by the letter "t." In contrast, a single Chinese character stands for an entire morpheme or word. In Chinese, a word such as "talk" is represented by one or two characters, and none of the characters contains a part that corresponds to the /t/ sound or any other specific sound in the word.

In alphabetic languages, the **alphabetic principle** is the idea that there are consistent relationships between sounds and letters. Understanding the alphabetic principle means appreciating that each sound or phoneme in one's language is written with a single letter or set of letters. A **grapheme** is the letter or letters that represent a phoneme. For example, the word "bay" consists of two graphemes: a "b" for the first phoneme, and an "ay" for the second one. The word "ball consists of three graphemes: a "b" for the /b/ sound, an "a" for the /a/ sound, and an "ll" for the /l/ sound.

Graphophonemic knowledge refers to knowledge about specific relationships between graphemes and phonemes; that is, between letters and sounds. In the process of acquiring literacy, children learn the names of letters as well as correspondences between each letter or set of letters and particular sounds. Adults know many rules—and many exceptions—for the ways language sounds are represented in writing.

Phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and graphophonemic knowledge about letter-sound correspondences are examples of skills and knowledge that are acquired in the process of becoming literate. These terms should not be confused with **phonics,** which refers to a method of teaching children specific letter-sound correspondences. Phonics conveys graphophonemic skills and contributes to phonological and phonemic awareness. Although educators sometimes refer to phonics as the method that children use to sound out words, a distinction can be made between phonics as a teaching method versus the phonic strategies that children use when sounding out words. These issues are discussed further under Competency 005.

Understand alphabetic skills development

The beginning teacher understands expected patterns of children's alphabetic skills development and knows that individual variations may occur.

Oral language is acquired naturally, in the sense that even if adults did not make deliberate attempts at instruction, children would gradually learn how to comprehend and produce speech. In contrast, alphabetic skills and other knowledge about writing would probably not be acquired unless some instruction were given. Children learn the names of letters, the way letters are written, and specific letter-sound correspondences through books, songs, games, and other activities.

In the process of acquiring literacy, children learn the names of the 26 letters in our alphabet. Children may learn many or all of these names by rote, before they understand that letter names are related to writing. In other words, acquisition of letter names may or may not go along with the acquisition of graphophonemic knowledge.

In order to read, children must know not only the names of letters but also how to recognize them in print. **Alphabetic recognition** is the ability to recognize printed letters based on their distinctive shapes. Alphabetic recognition tends to develop in tandem with graphophonemic knowledge, in the sense that as children learn what letters look like, they also learn how the letters sound. Teachers should remember that just as children may learn letter names without understanding how the letters are written (or the fact that letters are written in the first place), so there will be children who have alphabetic recognition before they appreciate specific links between letters and sounds.

Distinguishing between the physical appearance of letters can be difficult at first. It is common for children to confuse letters of similar appearance (for example, "p" and "q" or "E" and "F"). Not all children are equally quick to appreciate these distinctions. Although children with learning differences such as dyslexia may continue to confuse similar-looking letters, it is not necessarily indicative of a problem when young children experience such confusions.

As alphabetic recognition improves, children show increasing appreciation of the idea that the same letter can be written in a variety of different sizes and fonts, and they learn the distinction between upper- and lowercase forms of each letter. Many educators believe that by the end of kindergarten, children should be able to recognize the upper- and lowercase forms of the entire alphabet. The ability to distinguish between block letters and cursive tends to be a later development.

Understand differences among languages

The beginning teacher understands that many alphabetic languages are more phonetically regular than English, that not all written languages are alphabetic, and that English Language Learners' use of the alphabetic principle may vary based on language background.

Not all written languages are alphabetic. In Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese, for example, a single character stands for an entire morpheme or word. Other languages use alphabets that differ to a greater or lesser extent from our own.

Languages such as French, German, and Spanish use the same alphabet as English but make regular use of **diacritic marks** to guide pronunciation. Diacritic marks (also called **diacriticals**) that are common in Spanish are the **cedilla** beneath the letter "c" to indicate an /s/ sound (as in Curaçao), and the **tilde** above the letter "n" to indicate a /ny/ sound (as in mañana).

Other alphabetic languages, such as Russian and Greek, contain some letters that are similar to or the same as our own, as well as many letters that are different. Korean is written with characters that are composed of geometric units, with each unit standing for a particular sound. In short, there are many systems for representing sounds with letters or phonemic units.

Among alphabetic languages, English is one of the most phonetically irregular. The /s/ sound, for example, can be represented by the letters "s," "c," "sc," or "ss," as in the words "soft," "ice," "science," and "mossy." Adding to the irregularity is the fact that these letters do not only convey the /s/ sound:

- An "s" is sometimes pronounced /z/, as in the word "busy."
- A "c" is sometimes pronounced /k/, as in the word "cat," and at other times, it is pronounced /sh/, as in the word "appreciate."
- An "sc" is sometimes pronounced /sk/, as in the word "screen," and at other times it is pronounced /sh/, as in the word "fascism."
- An "ss" is sometimes pronounced /sh/, as in the word "passion."

Notice that the sound /sh/ can be represented by "sh," "c," "sc," "ss," "sch," "ch," or "ti" (as in the word "motion"). These are just a few of the many examples of phonetic irregularities in English. These irregularities occur not only across words but also within them—in the word "discussions," for example, there are three different pronunciations of the "s." From these examples, it should be understandable why learning the alphabetic principle and mastering graphophonemic applications can be difficult for children.

English Language Learners face the additional challenge of applying the alphabetic principle to a language with which they are relatively unfamiliar. The specific ways that English Language Learners apply the alphabetic principle may be influenced by their home language. For example, a child whose native language is Spanish may tend to equate the letter "j" with the /y/ or /h/ sounds, as in Spanish. Teachers must be patient as they sensitize children to the differences in graphophonemic specifics between languages.

Focus instruction on letter-sound relationships

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies and materials to provide focused instruction on the letters of the alphabet and the relationships between sounds and letters.

Many strategies and materials can be used to teach letter names, alphabetic recognition, and graphophonemic correspondences between letters and sounds. Generally, the teacher should begin by teaching high frequency consonants such as "m," "t," and "b." At some point, short vowel sounds should be introduced, so that children can quickly progress to the reading of simple **CVC** (**consonant-vowel-consonant**) words, such as "bat."

- **Songs, rhymes, and storytelling:** The alphabet song is probably the most common source of learning about English letter names. (Some adults have difficulty reciting the alphabet without thinking of the song or unconsciously following its phrasing.) One source of the alphabet song's effectiveness is that it incorporates rhyme by pausing after the rhyming letter names "g," "p," "v" and "z." There are many other songs and rhymes that can be used to teach letter names, alphabet recognition, and letter-song correspondences. Stories, especially when interactive, always provide a good opportunity for alphabetic and graphophonemic instruction.
- **Alphabet books:** Alphabet books support alphabetic recognition and can be used to teach letter-sound correspondences. Teachers should read these books with children and help children create their own alphabet books with letters and pictures.
- **Word boxes:** Word boxes are a good method of helping children isolate the letters that constitute familiar words and to appreciate the connections between the letters and the way they sound in each word.
- **Alphabet displays and word walls:** Word walls are lists of words posted where all students can easily see them. Word walls provide support for the acquisition of graphophonemic knowledge. Alphabet displays, whether on walls or flashcards or anywhere else in the classroom, help reinforce letter names and support letter recognition. Like alphabet books, alphabet displays are particularly helpful for learning letters, because the letters are strongly emphasized.
- **Other activities:** A variety of activities can provide opportunities for learning about letters and letter-sound correspondences. Matching games encourage children to link pictures or objects with their initial letters. Simple crossword puzzles focus attention on individual letters. Writing, show and tell, and guided play can all be modified to teach or reinforce alphabetic and graphophonemic knowledge.

Use a variety of instructional approaches

The beginning teacher uses a variety of instructional materials and strategies, including multisensory techniques, to promote children's understanding of the elements of the alphabetic principle.

It is important for teachers to work with a variety of materials and strategies when teaching children about letters and letter-sound correspondences. **Multisensory techniques** teach literacy by engaging more than just the visual sense. These techniques can help children focus on the shapes and sounds of letters. Manipulable representations such as magnetic letters allow children to literally handle letters as they work with them. Letter-shaped cookie cutters can be used to cut letters out of soft materials. Sand trays can be used for writing practice, as can **skywriting** (the method of writing letters in the air). Children are active, concrete learners who benefit from these kinds of hands-on activities.

Emphasis on variety is important for several reasons. Varying materials and strategies helps maintain interest while reinforcing the same idea from different perspectives. Variety helps ensure that children with different learning styles receive at least some information that best suits their particular style. And variety tends to reflect some of the natural variation in spoken and written language that children must contend with, such as differences in font as well as phonetic irregularities.

In choosing activities, it is important for teachers to keep in mind that the ultimate goal is successful reading. Instructional methods that focus on individual letters are helpful but should be integrated as much as possible with meaningful activities that link letters to words, and words to broader uses of language. For example, if the teacher chooses to spend a week focusing on the letter "d," alphabetic activities should be linked with other aspects of instruction. If the class is learning about animals that week, the teacher can create activities in which children identify and talk about animals whose names begin with "d." Any children whose names begin with "d" or have a "d" in them can be identified. In this way, a specific letter is linked to specific words, and the words are used in meaningful and personally relevant ways.

Use formal and informal assessments

The beginning teacher uses formal and informal assessments to analyze individual children's alphabetic skills, monitor learning, and plan instruction.

Teachers should use a variety of informal assessments to monitor children's progress. Early on, children can be asked to point to the letters in a set of letters and numbers. Children can be asked to say or sing the alphabet as a way of evaluating whether they know letter names. Simply asking children to name letters, or to make a sound associated with each letter, is a straightforward approach to assessing knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. Alternatively, the teacher can point to a letter and ask children to say what they know about it. This open-ended approach gives children the opportunity to say something if they only know the letter name, and/or its sound, and/or a word that begins with it.

As children get older, increasingly sophisticated assessments of alphabetic skills can be conducted. Children can be given sets of letters and asked to separate upper- from lowercase forms or vowels from consonants. Children can be asked to write all the letters they can think of that make a particular sound or asked to write all the sounds associated with a particular letter.

The results of both formal and informal assessments can guide instructional planning for the entire class, and can be used to identify specific areas where individual students need additional support. Some students may simply need help distinguishing between two particular letters. Other students may have more general needs.

Foster collaboration with parents and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with parents and with other professionals to promote all children's development of alphabetic knowledge.

As with other aspects of literacy, teachers should keep each parent informed about key classroom activities that involve all children, as well as his or her particular child's progress. Teachers can suggest activities that reinforce and extend what children are learning in class and can help parents support skills that need extra work. As with other literacy-related skills, parents should be encouraged to be enthusiastic and to make sure that alphabetic activities conducted at home are fun for everyone.

Sample Questions

1. Which of the following can be expected in a preschool classroom?

A. Children struggle with the distinction between the way "b" and "d" are written.
B. When children are shown pictures of a cat, a bat, and a hat, they find it difficult to point to the "cat."
C. Children who know the names of the 26 letters also know how to write them.
D. All children acquire graphophonemic knowledge at about the same pace.

A Option B is incorrect, because accurate performance relies on auditory discrimination skills that all preschoolers should have. Children with normal hearing will have no difficulty pointing to the "cat." A child who is unable to do so may have a hearing deficit, or some other problem that should be evaluated. Option C is incorrect, because it is unlikely that by preschool age most children know how to write all 26 letters. Likewise, Option D is incorrect, because individual differences in the acquisition of graphophonemic knowledge can be expected. Option A is correct. It is normal for preschoolers to experience some difficulty distinguishing between the way highly similar-looking letters are printed.

2. Assuming that a kindergarten class already has alphabetic recognition for six high-frequency consonants, what should the teacher do next?

A. Teach children how to recognize low-frequency consonants, such as "q" and "z."
B. Continue teaching high-frequency consonants and make a "letter list" of consonants already learned that can be posted at the front of the room.
C. Teach children high-frequency vowels so that they can begin to read simple words in picture books.
D. Have children make drawings of the consonants and vowels that they already know, and then post the drawings around the room.

C All of the options would promote literacy development. However, it is important that literacy instruction takes place in a meaningful context. The focus should not be on isolated skills but rather on the application of these skills to meaningful, interesting activities. As children acquire letter names and alphabetic recognition skills, they should be given the opportunity to apply these skills to reading as soon as possible. Options A, B, and D all reinforce children's understanding of individual letters. In contrast, option C would allow children to apply their understanding of individual letters to the task of reading actual words. Hence, option C is the best answer.

Competency 004 (Literacy Development)

The teacher understands that literacy develops over time, progressing from emergent to proficient stages, and uses a variety of approaches to support the development of children's literacy.

Review

Understand the process of acquiring literacy

The beginning teacher understands that literacy acquisition develops in an often predictable pattern from prereading (sometimes referred to as emergent literacy) to conventional literacy and that individual variations occur in literacy acquisition.

Traditionally, it was assumed that formal instruction marks a sharp distinction between pre-readers and readers. It was believed that children require about five years of maturation and exposure to oral language before they could be ready to learn reading and writing. At that point, it was believed that children should be taught **reading readiness skills,** such as alphabetic knowledge. Once they acquired reading readiness skills, children would be prepared to enter the world of literacy through formal instruction in reading and, later, writing.

Experts increasingly reject this sharp distinction between pre-readers and readers. It is believed now that the development of literacy begins at birth, because infants and children are raised in print-rich environments, and throughout childhood have meaningful interactions with adults in the context of print. Young children notice that people respond to marks printed on signs. They see their parents look at books and tell stories that seem to be "in" the books. They hear people talk about reading, and they see people writing. At some point before children learn how to read and write, they may look at books and pretend to tell stories, and they may scribble and say they have written a story.

Emergent literacy refers to children's beliefs about and experiences with reading and writing prior to formal instruction. The knowledge, skills, behaviors, and interests that fall under the heading of emergent literacy contribute to the development of **conventional literacy,** or the kind of reading and writing that is taught in elementary school. Both emergent and conventional literacy develop in predictable ways, but specific patterns of development vary across individual children as a result of differences in both maturation as well as experience.

Emergent literacy includes children's earliest efforts to create or retell stories, to convey meaning through drawing and writing, and to notice and express interest in print. Emergent literacy thus encompasses both oral and written language. Experts assume now that emergent literacy activities are not simply childish behaviors but rather important precursors to conventional literacy. It is assumed that there is a continuum of development from emergent to conventional literacy rather than a sharp distinction between the two. For example, educators once believed that children should have a foundation in reading before they are taught how to write. Experts now believe that emergent reading and writing both contribute to conventional literacy, and that writing should be encouraged among pre-readers, because it gives children practice at expressing themselves, helps them understand the relationship between reading and writing, and increases their phonological sensitivity as they try to express the sounds of familiar words with written letters.

Recognize the emergence of print awareness

The beginning teacher understands that the developing reader has a growing awareness of print in the environment, the sounds in spoken words, and the uses of print.

Print awareness is the understanding of the nature of print, the functions it serves, and the conventions governing its use. Print awareness allows children to distinguish between words and other forms of representation, such as pictures. Print awareness includes the understanding that print conveys meaning, and that its meaningfulness is enabled by conventions of punctuation, spacing between words, left-right orientation, regular spelling, and so on.

Print awareness is fostered by many sources. For example, **environmental print** is the written text that is observable in one's surroundings, such as signs, labels, stickers, billboards, and brand names. By age 2, children recognize environmental print, although at first they attend to it in a global way. That is, young children may recognize the logo for "Coke," but they attend to the design, shape, and color of the can or bottle as well as the print. As children get older, they develop the ability to focus on the printed word. This example illustrates that experience with environmental print contributes to the emergence of print awareness.

Print awareness is also facilitated by the experience of being read to by parents and other adults. As children look on, they notice that the rows of marks in storybooks are related to the story that the parent is telling. Being read to thus conveys the idea that print consists of marks that are arranged in linear rows. Being read to also reinforces the idea that print is a source of meaning. As children look on, there are opportunities to learn the alphabetic principle and to notice connections between the way familiar words sound and how they are printed.

There are many other opportunities besides storytelling for children to learn about the uses of print. Children who observe their parents as they consult menus, select programs from the TV guide, follow recipes, read street signs, and write checks or letters are afforded many opportunities to learn about the many functions of print.

As children pass from emergent to conventional literacy, their print awareness also increases, because they receive a great deal of information about print through classroom activities.

Use instructional approaches that distinguish text from non-text

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to assist young children in distinguishing letter forms from number forms and text from pictures.

Children's earliest attention to print is global. The child who is looking on while a parent reads a story may not pay much attention to the print, or may not distinguish clearly between the print and the pictures. However, the child may be developing the sense that both the text and the pictures contribute to what the parent is saying. The preschool teacher can engage in a variety of activities to help children distinguish written text from pictures. While reading, the teacher can call attention to the text by occasionally tracing it with a finger. When a question arises, the teacher can show children how the text provides an answer (for example, "Let's look back at this page. It says here that . . .").

There are many opportunities for teachers to spontaneously reinforce children's understanding of what is text versus what is not. Calling attention to environmental print is a common occurrence in the classroom (for example, "Let's see who this belongs to. It says right here that this is Maria's . . ."). And whenever the teacher writes in the vicinity of a related picture, the difference between the text and the picture is emphasized.

Initially, children will find it difficult to distinguish between letter and number forms. In some cases, letters and numbers are similar (for example, the number "2" and the letter "Z"), and in other cases, they are virtually identical (for example, the number "0" and the letter "O," or the number "1" and the letter "l"). The teacher can help children distinguish letters from numbers by pointing out contextual cues, such as the idea that names would not contain numbers, while phone numbers would not contain letters. A variety of activities can help children make the letter-number distinction. For example, sorting tasks can be used in which children are asked to select letters from a pile of forms that include both letters and numbers.

Recognize the multiple levels of literacy development

The beginning teacher understands that literacy development occurs in multiple contexts through reading, writing, and the use of oral language.

One of the key assumptions of emergent literacy is that literacy development begins at birth and is fostered through interactions with people in a variety of contexts, including conversations, games, and other oral language activities.

Being read to provides young children with the opportunity to learn new vocabulary. At first, infants simply listen to the stories that are told to them. As children take an increasingly active role in reading interactions, they ask questions about stories, talk about new words and phrases, and practice their emerging narrative skills as they attempt to retell part or all of the stories that are familiar to them. The pre-reader who picks up a book and "reads" it by looking at the pictures and telling a story is exercising early narrative skills that have been learned through storytelling interactions.

Reading to children provides a great deal of information about the nature and conventions of print. Reading to children also helps convey a sense of what stories are. Through listening to stories, children learn about narrative conventions, including the idea that stories have a beginning, middle, and end; that stories often focus on a character or group of characters; and that stories tend to present a coherent sequence of events rather than fragmentary descriptions. Understanding conventions of narrative structure helps children when they begin to read, by providing guidance about what to expect when trying to identify specific words. (This topic is discussed further under Competency 005). Awareness of narrative structure also helps children learn about differences among the various genres of stories, including an important distinction between works of fiction and expository texts (that is, texts that convey information directly).

Just as pretend reading helps exercise early narrative skills, pretend writing allows children to practice expressing themselves by making marks on paper. Children's earliest "writing" consists of random scribbles. Over time, letter-like forms begin to replace the scribbled marks. As the capacity to write letters emerges, children produce one letter at a time, often the first letter of a word, such as "d" for "dad." Combinations of letters then appear, such as "Mk" for "Mike" or "bsbl" for "baseball." The strings of letters that children create will probably not be exclusively linear and horizontal, and pictures may be incorporated into the text. Gradually, children learn to form letters more clearly, to write entire words, and to follow some of the conventions of print such as linearity, left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation, and the introduction of spaces between words. But even before these conventions are mastered, children's writing represents an effort to convey meaning—it is a reflection of emergent literacy, and it contributes to the development of conventional literacy skills.

Once writing has developed to the point that children can form words, much of what they write consists of **invented spelling** (also known as developmental or phonetic spelling). Teachers should encourage children rather than insisting on correct spelling at this point. If the child asks for the correct spelling of a word, the teacher can provide it. Otherwise, invented spelling need not be corrected. Invented spelling contributes to conventional literacy development, because it allows children to practice expressing themselves through writing. Children develop a positive attitude about writing if they feel they are capable of expressing themselves in this medium. Moreover, the effort to write down letters that correspond to the sounds of familiar words sensitizes children to phonemic distinctions and letter-sound correspondences.

Use instructional approaches that focus on the functions of print

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities that focus on functions of print, including concepts involving book handling, parts of a book, orientation, directionality, and the relationships between written and spoken words.

There are many strategies, materials and activities that can teach children about the nature and function of print.

During storytelling and shared reading, the teacher can call attention to some of the conventions of print, identifying the title before reading, pointing out how the book is held and which direction the pages are turned, and using a finger to trace the words as they are read in order to emphasize their linearity, their horizontal alignment, and their left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation.

Wordless books, which consist of a sequence of pictures, give children the opportunity to handle books, to be the storytellers, and to express their emerging narrative skills. Teachers can write down the stories that children are composing. A **language experience approach** (see Competency 001) allows children to observe teachers in the act of writing and to experience some of the specific letter-sound correspondences in familiar words.

Along with book-oriented activities, conversation about classroom procedures and events is a source of information about print. The teacher may say "I'm writing your name on this so everyone knows that it's yours." Or, "Let's see what's written under this picture. Oh, it says 'apple' there."

As children get older, teachers can be increasingly explicit about conventions of print, such as the spacing between words, punctuation, paragraph structure, and so on.

Incorporate children's literature into instruction

The beginning teacher demonstrates familiarity with children's literature and provides multiple opportunities for children to listen and respond to a wide variety of children's literature, both fiction and nonfiction, and to interact with others about literature.

Teachers should be familiar with a variety of fiction and nonfiction genres and specific books. The teacher will need to select books written at an appropriate level of difficulty for the entire class, as well as for individual students. The teacher will also need to choose books that are relevant to various classroom activities and thematic units.

In addition, the teacher needs to have ready access to books that fit the interests and needs of particular students. A student may request more information about a topic or find another book from a particular genre or author. If the teacher notices that a student is extremely interested in a particular author, the teacher may suggest other books by that author or try to broaden the child's interest in other authors within the same genre. Having familiarity with a variety of children's literature helps teachers achieve instructional objectives by keeping individual students engaged, thereby fostering a positive attitude about reading.

The books that teachers choose for their classroom can be used for storytelling, shared reading, and dialogic reading (see Competency 001). Repeated reading of stories is helpful, because children become familiar with the stories and thereby have more basis for engaging in retells, discussions, dramatic reenactments, and other meaningful activities.

With older students, teachers will also be selecting books that the children themselves read. **Choral reading** takes place when a group of students or the entire class reads out loud. In **guided reading,** the teacher explains the purpose for reading a particular text as well as the structure for how to respond to what is read. Students are also encouraged to engage in independent reading. Choral, guided, and independent reading do not replace storytelling, shared reading, and dialogic reading but are added to them as children's own reading skills advance.

Apart from group activities, teachers can help individual students with independent reading selections, and with the choice of books for their book bags. Teachers can provide suggestions and guidance for the selection of books that fit each child's skill level and that match, or broaden, the child's interests. A "library" of books should be available to students in the classroom, as well as lists of books that can be found in the school or community library or at a local bookstore.

The genres that can be represented in teachers' book selections include folklore, realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, biographies, essays, and **expository texts** (that is, informational books). In addition, teachers may make use of **basal readers** (also called **basal reading programs**), which consist of narratives and supplemental instructional materials, including workbooks, skill sheets, and teacher manuals, that are designed to foster a sequence of skills. Extensive or inflexible reliance on basal readers, however, is not recommended.

Teach children about authorship

The beginning teacher teaches children about authors and their purposes for writing.

Literacy includes the understanding that books are created by authors who have some purpose for writing them (entertainment, instruction, edification, and so on). Naming the author of each book read to a preschool class helps children understand the connection between reading and writing. Discussions of authors' lives and their purposes in writing particular books helps children understand concepts of narrative and **story grammar** (the underlying structure of a story that links episodes), as well as the nature of differences between genres. Specific events and characters in a work of fiction, as well as specific topics of discussion in an expository text, can be understood more clearly if the child realizes what purpose the author had in mind when creating the book.

Use technology to enable access to texts

The beginning teacher selects and uses appropriate technology to help children gain access to a wide range of narrative and expository texts.

There are many sources for written texts of interest to students. Along with books and other kinds of written materials available for use in the classroom, the teacher can provide both students and parents with information about the use of the school and local libraries, bookstores and book swaps in the community, and Internet sites designed to promote early literacy through interactive use.

Electronic books, educational videos, and educational computer games are sources of narrative and expository text that can contribute to literacy development through interactive, multisensory methods. Audiotapes are another alternative to conventional books as sources of narrative and expository information.

Personal computers are increasingly prevalent at home and in the classroom. PCs provide a variety of new opportunities for literacy development. Among the many kinds of software currently available are CD-ROM **talking books,** which are interactive versions of stories that contain multimedia features such as animation, music, and narrated text. The interactive nature of talking books is helpful, in that children can use a mouse to respond to prompts, influence the type of information presented, and repeat information as needed.

As with any other kind of material, guidance from teachers and parents is needed for children to make the most out of technological alternatives to conventional books.

Use assessments to meet individual needs

The beginning teacher uses formal and informal assessments of children's literacy development to plan, implement, and adjust instruction to meet the needs of individual children, including English Language Learners.

Both informal and formal assessments should be used to track children's literacy development and to both plan and adjust instructional methods. Both emergent literacy skills as well as attitudes toward literacy should be assessed. It is critical for young children to have a positive attitude about reading and writing, given the importance of these skills as well as the extent of time and effort needed for mastery.

English Language Learners can benefit from the use of concrete objects and multimedia displays to help establish an oral language foundation during the development of emergent literacy. As appropriate, teachers can use nonverbal gestures, repeat key words, avoid slang, and anticipate unfamiliar words to help these children. English Language Learners may find play and small-group activities to be especially helpful.

Foster collaboration with parents and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's literacy development.

Teachers should communicate regularly with parents about classroom activities. Parents should be given information about emergent literacy to help them appreciate the importance of children's interest in storytelling, reading, writing, drawing, and other literacy-related activities. Parents should be encouraged to be positive and supportive rather than correcting children or pushing them toward conventional literacy skills.

Teachers should ask parents about their children's interests and activities in order to help plan instructional activities that are most relevant to students. In addition, teachers should convey information about individual children's progress.

Teachers should also make available to parents lists of age-appropriate books, tapes, Internet sites, and computer software, along with guidance about interacting with children in the context of storytelling, shared reading, and other literacy-related activities.

Sample Questions

1. A kindergarten teacher encourages his class to tell stories from wordless books using narrative and role-play. What skill does this activity nurture?

A. phonological awareness
B. print awareness
C. graphophonemic knowledge
D. emergent literacy

D Option A is incorrect, because this activity provides no particular exercise for the ability to notice sounds in words. Likewise, option C is incorrect, because the activity does not call children's attention to letter-sound correspondences. Although the activity does reinforce the understanding that books contain stories, the teacher uses wordless books and, thus, option B is incorrect. The correct answer is option D. By looking at the pictures in wordless books and both describing and acting out a sequence of events, children have an opportunity to practice their narrative skills and link an unfolding narrative to a sequence of pages in a book. The understanding of narrative and how it is expressed in books is one aspect of emergent literacy.

2. Which of the following would be most effective in fostering print awareness among preschoolers?

A. a guided reading activity in which children practice identifying the main point in a passage
B. an invented spelling activity, in which children are encouraged to write a story (children are told they can write what they want and use any spelling they prefer)
C. a book making activity, in which each member of the class draws a picture on a "page;" the pages are then combined and jointly "read" by teachers and students
D. a choral reading activity based on a very simple text

C Options A and D are incorrect, because guided and choral reading are too advanced for preschoolers. Option B is incorrect for a similar reason. Some preschoolers engage in invented spelling and in spontaneously doing so, they exercise their emerging knowledge of print. But not all children are capable of making letters by preschool age and, thus, asking them to write a story may result in confusion. Option C is correct. By combining pages in a book and reading each page in succession, the teacher reinforces some basic conventions of print, such as the idea that books contain pages, the pages of books contain information, and readers examine pages in a left-to-right sequence.

Competency 005 (Word Analysis and Decoding)

The teacher understands the importance of word analysis and decoding for reading and provides many opportunities for children to improve their word-analysis and decoding abilities.

Review

Understand the development of word analysis and decoding

The beginning teacher understands that many children develop word-analysis and decoding skills in a predictable sequence but that individual variations may occur.

Word analysis refers to the recognition of written words. There are many different methods of recognizing a word. **Sight words** are recognized instantly, without analysis of the word's components. Words that are not immediately recognized may be guessed on the basis of contextual cues, such as a nearby picture. If the child can read other words in a passage, the child may be able to use syntactic cues to recognize a particular word. Likewise, if the child understands the meaning of the passage, semantic cues can be helpful.

Decoding refers to the recognition of how written words sound. Sight words can be pronounced without analysis or other conscious effort. For words that cannot be recognized by sight, children use **phonic analysis** to identify the sounds in each word and to blend the sounds together. Phonic analysis is commonly referred to as "sounding out" a word. Many different parts of a word can be attended to during the process of phonic analysis: syllables, letters, consonants, vowels, phonemes, onsets, and rimes. Phonic analysis also includes attention to **diphthongs** (pairs of adjacent vowels that are both heard, such as the "oy" in "toy"), **consonant blends** (pairs of adjacent consonants that are both heard, such as the "br" in "break"), and **digraphs** (pairs of adjacent vowels or consonants that are heard as a single sound, such as the "ch" in "cherry" or the "ee" in "meet").

The terms "word analysis" and "decoding" are not used in a consistent way by educators and educational experts. Here, word analysis refers to any strategy by which a child recognizes a written word. One of the many methods of recognizing a word is to decode it through phonic analysis.

To some extent, the development of word analysis and decoding are predictable. Three broad, overlapping phases have been observed.

1. At first, as children notice environmental print, they begin to recognize entire words that have significance for them, such as their names, the names of favorite restaurants, or the model name of the family car. At this time, children attend to the fonts, colors, designs, and backgrounds of the words they recognize. Their attention is not restricted to the words themselves or the constituent letters.
2. In the next phase, children view words in an increasingly analytical way. They begin to understand grapho-phonemic patterns of association between letters and sounds, and they develop a variety of word-analysis and decoding strategies. Preschool and kindergarten instruction fosters the increasingly broad and skillful use of these strategies.
3. Finally, children begin to recognize words in a relatively automatic way, without having to take time to deliberately apply decoding strategies such as phonic analysis.

Successful readers tend to rely on the components of words rather than on pictorial and contextual cues as a basis for word recognition. Their early decoding strategies tend to be consistently focused on letters and letter groups. Over time, they recognize an increasing number of words in an automatic way. Although the progression from emergent to successful reading is somewhat predictable, there will be variations from child to child in the types of strategies used, the types of errors made, and the extent of comprehension for particular passages.

Promote the use of word-recognition skills

The beginning teacher understands the importance of word-recognition skills (for example, decoding, blending, structural analysis, sight-word vocabulary) for reading comprehension and knows a variety of strategies for helping young children develop and apply word-analysis skills.

There are many ways to foster word-analysis skills in group as well as individual interactions. Word-analysis skills can be taught through direct instruction as well as by modeling and guided practice. Typically, more than one method is appropriate. For example, a teacher may explain what blending is (see Competency 002), model several examples of blending, and then guide children as they practice blending on their own.

For early readers, sorting words is an activity that helps emphasize similarities and differences between words on key dimensions. Words can be sorted according to length, common letters, common sounds, and common onsets or rimes. The teacher can identify dimensions on which words should be sorted, or children can come up with their own categories.

Word walls, spelling pattern lists, and other written materials can be incorporated into classroom activities that foster early word-analysis development. Written materials may focus on particular components of words, such as common affixes or rimes, or they may emphasize entire words. At least some materials should be manipulable, and children should be given opportunities to write as well as read.

Reading with children provides opportunities to teach virtually every aspect of literacy, including word-analysis skills. During shared reading, for example, teachers can point to words in big books and sound them out with children.

As children's own reading skills progress, teachers can introduce strategies that guide reading behavior. Pausing to think about what has been read, rereading, and skipping difficult words until more of the text has been read and understood are some of the broad strategies that support word analysis.

Teachers can also help children master word-analysis strategies that apply to individual words. A variety of semantic, syntactic, structural, and contextual cues are available. Some of these cues help children recognize difficult words based on what they already know about the content or grammar of a passage. For example, in a story about a swim in the ocean, the child can be encouraged to realize that when a character is about to "swim in" or "jump into" something, that something is probably a word such as "ocean" or "water." Other cues help children focus on the constituents of individual words. For example, when attempting to identify a difficult word, children can be taught to look for a spelling pattern (such as a rime) or an entire word embedded in the difficult word (for example, "bookstore").

Along with word-analysis strategies, young children need to acquire sight words. Being able to recognize at least a few words by sight at the outset of reading instruction helps children appreciate that written words convey meaning. In addition, it helps children maintain a positive attitude toward reading and gives them a context for applying word-analysis strategies to unfamiliar words.

Finally, teachers can teach decoding strategies based on **phonics,** a method of instruction that emphasizes specific letter-sound relationships. Phonics helps children sound out words through phonic analysis. Although appropriate phonics instruction has a positive impact on reading, teachers should not focus on phonics to the exclusion of reading for meaning. Phonics should be part of instructional activities that focus on all aspects of literacy development, from oral language to specific decoding strategies. Neither teachers nor students should lose sight of the goal of literacy instruction: meaningful communication through reading and writing.

Use assessments to meet individual needs

The beginning teacher knows a variety of formal and informal procedures for assessing children's word-analysis and decoding skills and adjusts instruction to meet the needs of individual children, including English Language Learners.

Teachers should monitor the progress of individual students as they acquire word-analysis and decoding skills. A variety of assessments can be made during both group and one-on-one interactions, and instruction should be adjusted to fit the needs and interests of individual students.

Recall that oral language is the basis of emergent and conventional literacy skills. English Language Learners may not understand spoken English well enough to appreciate word-analysis and decoding activities. These children may be unable to recognize a particular word, because they lack oral experience with the word in either English or their native language. They may struggle with the word, because it contains a sound or letter that does not appear in their native language.

English Language Learners should not be involved in word-analysis activities that focus on parts of words in isolation from their meaning. It is critical for all children to understand what they are attempting to read. English Language Learners need a foundation in spoken English, including oral experience with specific words that are being taught, before they can benefit from word-analysis instruction.

Teach word analysis in a simple-to-complex progression

The beginning teacher teaches the analysis of phonetically regular words in simple-to-complex progression (that is, phonemes, blending onsets and rimes, short vowels, consonant blends, other common vowel and consonant patterns, syllables).

As children learn how to read, teachers should introduce phonetically regular words before gradually incorporating words of greater complexity. Experts have offered a number of recommendations:

- At first, emphasis should be on words written in lowercase, unless upper- and lowercase forms are similar (for example, "S" and "s").
- At first, the words introduced to children should be familiar to them through spoken language.
- Monosyllabic words should be introduced before multisyllabic words.
- Simple consonant-vowel-consonant combinations such as "mat" or "rug" should be introduced first.
- Words with continuous sounds (such as "m") should be introduced before words with stop sounds (such as "p"), unless the stop sounds appear at the ends of the words.
- At first, words containing highly similar letters, such as the "b" and "d" in "bed," should be avoided.
- Words with single consonants should be introduced before words with consonant clusters.
- Words with high frequency consonants such as "t" should be introduced before words with low frequency consonants.
- Finally, it has been observed that 37 rimes such as "ack," "ell," and "ump" make up nearly 500 simple words that are common in elementary-level written materials. Children's earliest word lists should include at least some words created from these rimes.

Use decodable texts

The beginning teacher teaches children to read passages using decodable texts as appropriate and provides opportunities for children to progress from sounding out words orally to decoding words silently.

Decodable texts are written materials that reflect the letter-sound relationships a particular child already knows. Exclusive reliance on decodable texts is considered too restrictive, but the choice of books and other written materials provided to beginning readers should be linked as closely as possible to each child's graphophonemic skill level.

Decodable texts help children progress toward silent reading. Repeated exposure to particular words allows children to become more familiar with them and to progress from sounding them out to reading them silently. Practice with reading generally fosters silent decoding.

Although children may be capable of silent reading, there are times when reading out loud is appropriate. Oral reading is a major source of information for assessment. In addition, reading out loud as a group (**choral reading**) is appropriate for activities that involve modeling. For early readers, teachers should model strategies such as blending. Teachers should also model the reading of passages to help children appreciate phrasing and its relationship to punctuation, grammar, and meaning. However, **round-robin** techniques, in which children take turns while others follow along, have been criticized for inefficiency and for the embarrassment experienced by some children with limited skills. It is important to help children develop positive attitudes toward reading and other aspects of literacy.

Select and review irregular words

The beginning teacher teaches children to recognize high-frequency irregular words by selecting words that appear frequently in children's books and reviewing difficult words often.

Explicit instruction and modeling can help students master irregular words. Word walls and other lists are also useful. Teachers should keep track of the irregular words that they introduce in class and review these words frequently.

The teaching of irregular words should focus on examples that are most common in elementary-level books and other written materials. Although the introduction of irregular words should be sequenced, teachers should make note of groups involving simple examples (for example, "fight," "tight," "right," and "sight").

Teach children to identify vowel sounds and multisyllabics

The beginning teacher teaches children ways to identify vowel-sound combinations and multisyllabic words.

Vowel-sound combinations should be introduced after children have some facility with consonants and consonant clusters. At first, vowels can be introduced in combination with rimes. For example, the teacher can introduce the word "man" as consisting of the onset "m" combined with the rime "an." Later, the teacher can subdivide the rime into its two phonemes /a/ and /n/.

Multisyllabic words should be avoided until after children have mastered some monosyllabic words. It is helpful if the first multisyllabic words introduced to children are familiar to them, and if these words are constructed out of simpler words, as in the examples "football" and "horseshoe." It is also helpful if the earliest multisyllabic words incorporate affixes, syllables, and/or rimes that the class is already familiar with. For example, if the students have already learned the "-an" spelling pattern (used for words such as "man," "can," and "plan"), then the teacher can introduce words such as "candy" and "candle."

Teach children how to use structural cues

The beginning teacher provides instruction in how to use structural cues to recognize compound words, base words, prefixes and suffixes, and inflections.

One strategy for word recognition is structural analysis. **Structural analysis** consists of the identification of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in a word. Morphemes include **base words** (also known as roots), which are the primary source of meaning in a word and cannot be further subdivided. Morphemes also include **affixes** (prefixes and suffixes), inflections, contractions, and other grammatical elements.

Teachers can help children use structural analysis to divide words into morphemes. Structural analysis can help in many ways to make word recognition easier. For example, compound words such as "baseball" can be divided into their constituent words. Suffixes that indicate case and tense can be identified and temporarily "removed" so that students can focus on decoding the base word. Generally, the goal of structural analysis is to identify parts of words that are familiar, so that identification of the entire word can be facilitated.

Help children make use of syntax and context

The beginning teacher teaches children to use knowledge of English word order (syntax) and context to support word identification and confirm word meaning.

Syntax is a source of information that supports word identification in the context of individual sentences. A child who has successfully read that "Ricky is going to the . . ." can expect the next word to be a place or an event rather than, say, a color or an action. In other words, the syntax as well as the meaning of this sentence creates an expectation for what the final word will be. Teachers can help early readers notice and make use of syntactic cues that support word identification.

Teachers can also help early readers use syntax as a basis of monitoring their reading. Students can be encouraged to listen to themselves as they read and to make adjustments when the result for a particular word does not seem accurate or sensible. A child who reads the sentence "Mary wants a cookie" as "Mary walks a cookie" can be encouraged to question whether that reading makes sense. Although early readers cannot articulate the underlying grammatical rule that has been violated in this instance, upon reflection they would be able to tell that the sentence does not sound right, and they would know which word seems out of place and requires another look.

Context is another important source of information that can be used to support word recognition and to evaluate the accuracy of a particular word once it has been read. A child who reads about Goldilocks finding three "beads" can be encouraged to think about what happens in the story (and, perhaps, what the accompanying picture shows), and to consider whether they have read the word correctly. Goldilocks may have found three bears or three beds, but it is unlikely, given the context, that she has found three "beads."

Use assessment to plan instruction

The beginning teacher uses formal and informal assessments to plan and adjust instruction based on individual children's word-analysis and decoding skills.

Assessments should be used to evaluate skill levels at particular times, as well as progress in skill levels over time. Informal assessments can be conducted in group as well as individual settings, while formal assessments require one-on-one interaction. Although it is important to monitor each child's progress, teachers should avoid over-testing children.

Running records are written accounts of changes in a specific behavior over time. Running records are a good source of information about progress in word-analysis and decoding skills, in that they allow teachers to track the specific strategies that each child uses at different times, as well as the kinds of mistakes the child makes and the extent of the child's improvement over time.

Oral reading serves as the basis of both formal and informal assessments. The teacher can listen to each child read and make note of tempo, accuracy, omissions, repetitions, and self-monitoring behaviors such as self-correction. In addition, the teacher can make note of specific mistakes or mispronunciations in decoding.

When teachers analyze children's reading, the goal is not merely to quantify accuracy, but to keep track of the kinds of strategies children use and the kinds of words or word elements they tend to struggle with. Often, a given reading behavior can be interpreted in more than one way, depending on the situation and the student. For example, mispronunciations could indicate decoding errors, or they could be attributed to an accent, a difference in dialect, or a speech impediment. Hesitation could indicate difficulty applying a word-analysis skill, or it could show that the child notices an especially difficult word and wants to be very careful about sounding it out. Substitution may occur when the child cannot sound out a word, or it may occur when the child recognizes a word but replaces it with a synonym that is easier to pronounce.

As reading progresses, assessment shifts from emphasis on word-analysis and decoding skills to comprehension. (Assessment of comprehension is discussed at length under Competency 007.) Teachers use standardized and informal test results, reading response notebooks, conversations, and other sources of information to determine how well children understand what they read. With beginning readers, comprehension can be a useful indicator of how well word-analysis and decoding skills are applied.

Assessment also includes keeping track of what each child is reading so that appropriate adjustments can be suggested. As noted earlier, word-analysis and decoding skills are fostered when reading materials are closely matched to the skills that the child has already acquired. The teacher can use the results of assessment to suggest books for independent reading and home use that are more or less difficult than what the child has been reading or represent a closer fit with the child's interests.

Further details about assessment are discussed under Competencies 006 and 011.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's word-analysis and decoding skills.

It is important for teachers to keep parents informed about their children's progress and to suggest home activities that reinforce the word-analysis strategies being taught at school. Parents can be encouraged to engage in shared reading and to work with children on materials they bring home from school. Specific guidance can be given for working with these materials in a positive and supportive way. Parents can also be given lists of books, games, software, and Internet sites that provide decodable text that matches their child's skill level and that can be used interactively to foster the development of word-analysis strategies.

Sample Questions

1. A 2nd grader would benefit most from structural analysis of which of the following difficult words?

A. jacket
B. sneaker
C. underwear
D. tuxedo

C Structural analysis allows children to identify morphemic constituents of words. Option C, unlike the other options, contains a word that is composed of two simpler words. By breaking the word down into "under" and "wear" the child may be able to read the entire word more easily. The other words in the list cannot be broken down into simpler morphemic units. Hence, option C is the correct answer.

2. Which of the following lists reflects an appropriate order for the introduction of written vocabulary to kindergarteners as they first begin to read?

A. match, mad, map, man
B. rat, run, red, runner
C. pillow, pot, pear, pond
D. man, mango, apple, cat

B Option A is incorrect, because the first word contains a consonant cluster. Option C is incorrect, because the first word is multisyllabic and begins with a stop sound. Option D is incorrect, because the first word contains two visually similar consonants, and because the second word is multisyllabic and may be an unfamiliar term for some children. Option B is the best answer. The first three words are simple consonant-vowel-consonant combinations that are monosyllabic, begin with continuous sounds, and represent words that are familiar to children in oral language. The fourth word builds on the first one in the list.

Competency 006 (Reading Fluency)

The teacher understands the importance of fluency for reading comprehension and provides many opportunities for children to improve their reading fluency.

Review

Understand the role of rate, accuracy, and intonation in fluency

The beginning teacher understands that fluency involves rate, accuracy, and intonation.

Fluent reading is the ability to read quickly, accurately, smoothly, and with expression. The term "smoothly" indicates that fluent readers do not usually hesitate between words, although they may pause in appropriate places (for example, between paragraphs) or for the purpose of emphasis (for example, "Then George saw . . . a *snake*.")

Fluent reading is an automatic and relatively effortless process. Automaticity and effortlessness become possible when the reader can accurately identify many words by sight (rather than having to sound them out). However, reading fluency is not just a matter of accurate word identification. Fluency also depends on the ability to make use of prosodic cues.

Prosody refers to the pitch, loudness, tempo, and rhythm of language. Both the meaning of a written sentence as well as its punctuation are sources of prosodic cues. For example, the passage "Could that be a flower? Here?" should be read with a pause between the sentences, and with emphasis on the key words ("flower" and "here"). Prosodic information is conveyed by the meaning of these sentences as well as the question marks at the end of each one.

One aspect of prosody is **intonation,** or patterns of pitch that contribute to the meanings of phrases and sentences. For example, different intonations should be used for the sentences "Go over there!" and "Go over there?" because the former is a demand while the latter is a question. The last word in the sentence "Go over there?" should be read with a very different pitch from the first two words. (If a tone of amazement is intended, "there" may be read with a rapidly rising pitch. If a tone of complaint is intended, "there" may begin with a high pitch that rapidly drops.) As this example illustrates, correct intonation depends in part on sensitivity to intended meaning as well as punctuation.

Generally, fluent readers are able to read with expression, because they are sensitive to prosodic cues conveyed by textual meaning and punctuation, and because they have had experience with breath control, phrasing, and other contributors to fluency.

Understand how rate and fluency affect comprehension

The beginning teacher understands how children's reading rate and fluency affect their comprehension.

Before children can recognize a word by sight, they must decode the word through phonic analysis. Sounding out words, one by one, is a slow process and tends to result in limited fluency. Because early readers must devote a great deal of attention and energy to the decoding of individual words, they will find it challenging, if not overwhelming, to combine words in order to appreciate the meanings of phrases, sentences, and passages. As children get older, reading rate and fluency increase, and comprehension increases accordingly.

Studies show that children whose reading is slower and less fluent than that of their peers also tend to have poorer comprehension. However, some children who read slowly have good comprehension. Other children may be fairly quick and accurate in decoding words without clearly understanding the content of the text. It is important for teachers to realize that although reading rate and fluency affect comprehension, they are not synonymous.

Fluency is a dimension of oral reading. The discussions of Competencies 007 and 008 provide further detail on reading comprehension.

Understand the development of fluency

The beginning teacher understands how children develop reading fluency.

The emergence of reading is sometimes described in terms of four stages: Pre-reading, initial reading, fluency, and reading to learn.

- Children in the **pre-reading stage** may have alphabetic and graphophonemic knowledge, and they may be in the process of learning word-analysis skills, but they do not yet have the ability to read unfamiliar words. Their ability to "read" is limited to the recognition of a few sight words, such as their own names.
- First and 2nd graders, who must sound out many of the words they read, are typically in the **initial reading stage.** This stage is also known as the **decoding stage,** because children tend to focus on the decoding of individual words. For children at this stage, each word is a problem that must be consciously and deliberately solved. As a result, children's reading has an awkward, halting quality, because they are putting a great deal of effort into sounding words out, one by one, through phonic analysis.
- As children progress through elementary school, they enter the **fluency stage.** During this time, they become more familiar with written language, and their decoding becomes more automatic as a result of learning more sight words. Greater automaticity allows children to pay more attention to combinations of words, to levels of meaning beyond individual words, and to punctuation and other elements of orthography. As a result, children become more fluent and expressive in their reading.
- By the end of elementary school, fluent reading has become relatively easy for most children, and they enter the **reading to learn stage,** in which their attention is focused primarily on content rather than the act of reading itself. This stage points to an important shift that takes place as word recognition and other aspects of fluent reading become even more automatic. It is often said that when children enter the fourth stage, they shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." However, it should be kept in mind that readers of any age can learn from the content of a text.

The four stages describe what happens as children learn word-analysis skills and progress from sounding out individual words to reading fluently. Progress toward fluent reading is facilitated by vocabulary development, by the learning of sight words, and by the ability to make use of semantic and grammatical cues. For example, a fluent reader who instantly recognizes the first five words of the sentence, "The hungry lion saw a gazelle" may be able to quickly decode the word "gazelle" if that word is part of her vocabulary and if she makes use of the available syntactic and semantic cues. The syntax of the sentence implies that the last word is a noun, while the semantic context established by the first five words suggests that the last word could be the name for something edible.

Apply norms to monitor fluency

The beginning teacher applies norms to identify and monitor children's fluency levels.

It is important for EC–4 teachers to identify and monitor their students' levels of reading fluency. Fluency can be assessed through informal observation, and in a more formal way through the use of standardized tests, which are based on norms. A **norm** is a typical score or range of scores found within a particular group of individuals. Standardized tests of fluency allow an individual student's score to be compared to the norms that have been identified for a comparison group, such as other students of the same age, grade, or gender.

Norms give teachers a sense of what to expect among students of a particular age, grade, or demographic background. Norms for reading fluency can be used to identify students with learning differences, as well as students who are beginning to fall behind their peers. Norms can also be used as benchmarks, or goals to be achieved by a particular time (for example, the end of an academic year).

Standardized assessments of reading fluency pertain to rate, accuracy, and/or expression. For example, on the **Test of Reading Fluency** (**TORF**), students receive timed reading samples (one minute per sample), and the number of words pronounced correctly is recorded. Most standardized assessments of fluency also record other information such as comprehension. For example, on the **Gray Oral Reading Test-3** (**GORT-3**), students read passages of increasing length and difficulty. Reading rate, accuracy, and comprehension are recorded, along with information about errors and pauses.

Teachers often evaluate reading fluency through informal assessments that are not scored with reference to norms. These assessments are described under Competency 011.

Use instructional approaches to develop fluency

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to develop fluency (for example, reading independent-level materials, reading orally from familiar texts, repeated reading, partner reading, silent reading for increasingly longer periods, self-correction).

Teachers should use a variety of strategies, materials, and activities to foster reading fluency.

- **Effective models:** It is important for EC–4 teachers to model fluent oral reading. Teachers of younger students will naturally do so as part of their daily reading to students. Teachers of older students may need to be more deliberate about identifying difficult passages and reading them out loud. In some cases, more advanced students can model fluent reading for less advanced ones. Whether a teacher or an advanced student is modeling oral reading, each reading should consist of an entire passage rather than one or two sentences, so that the rest of the class can hear the phrasing that is used.
- **Repeated reading:** Repeated reading is a method in which children reread a short, meaningful passage until a degree of fluency is achieved. The assumption underlying this method is that each time the child reads the text, decoding will be quicker and more automatic. As the speed and automaticity of decoding increases, children will be able to devote more attention to prosody, and their reading will become more expressive. The teacher may choose to model the oral reading of a passage before students engage in repeated reading.
- **Oral Recitation Lessons:** An Oral Recitation Lesson (ORL) is a kind of repeated reading exercise based on interactions between teacher and students. At the beginning of the ORL, the teacher models the oral reading of a text. Next, the teacher leads a discussion of the meaning of the text as well as its prosodic features. Students then practice reading the text before engaging in a performance in which individual students read the text for the rest of the class.
- **Partner reading:** Partner reading, also known as **paired reading,** requires students to work in pairs. Each student takes turns reading a passage. If one partner encounters a difficulty, he/she asks the other partner for help. At some point, partners take turns asking each other questions about what was read. Initially, the teacher may choose to model partner reading with the help of a student volunteer. The teacher can model each component of partner reading, including the oral reading of passages, the use of verbal strategies for asking for and giving help, and the use of strategies for asking and answering questions.
- **Familiar texts:** Students will have many opportunities to read familiar texts through repeated reading, oral recitation lessons, partner reading, and other activities. These activities promote reading fluency in part by reducing word-identification and comprehension demands. That is, as texts become familiar to students, their oral reading can focus increasingly on fluency.
- **Independent-level materials:** It is important for students to have texts that match their particular reading level. If a book is too advanced, for example, the student will struggle with word-identification and have little opportunity to read for fluency. The assessment of independent reading level is discussed at length under Competency 011.
- **Silent reading:** Silent reading contributes to fluency by allowing children to familiarize themselves with key vocabulary, so that oral reading of the same passage can be based on a higher proportion of sight words. **Sustained Silent Reading** (**SSR**) or **Drop Everything and Read** (**DEAR**) are silent reading activities in which the teacher sets aside a short period of time each day for silent reading. To facilitate a positive response to SSR or DEAR, teachers make a variety of books available for students to choose from. Although there is no assessment at the end of an SSR or DEAR period, these activities have benefits for fluency as well as comprehension.
- **Self-correction and feedback:** Self-correction by the reader, as well as feedback from the teacher, both contribute to greater fluency. In either case, it is important for teachers to help students maintain a positive attitude.

Foster collaboration with families and professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's reading fluency.

Oral reading can be frustrating or frightening to students, and they sometimes become reluctant to read out loud. Teachers should encourage parents to be supportive. Parents should understand that it is more important to help young children feel comfortable about reading out loud than it is to try to directly improve their fluency.

Sample Questions

1. In order to promote reading fluency, which of the following is the best approach for introducing a 2nd-grade class to a play that has been written for their grade level?

A. paired reading
B. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)
C. Oral Recitation Lesson (ORL)
D. repeated reading

C Options A, B, and D all represent useful approaches to the promotion of reading fluency. However, an Oral Recitation Lesson is probably best for introducing a new text to this age group. The ORL would give students guidance in the oral reading of the play, because the teacher would model fluent reading, and then discuss semantic and prosodic issues of pertinence, before students read the play out loud. Thus, option C is the best answer. The other options reflect methods that would be more effectively used after the ORL had been implemented.

2. Stacy is a 3-year-old who is capable of reading and gleaning simple information from 2nd-grade books, although her oral reading is slow and somewhat labored. What stage of reading fluency has she achieved?

A. pre-reading
B. initial reading
C. fluency
D. reading to learn

B Although Stacy is only 3 years old, the fact that she can read and understand elementary-level books indicates that she has surpassed the pre-reading stage. Hence, option A is incorrect. At the same time, it is clear that she is still sounding out words and, thus, options C and D are incorrect too. Option B is the correct answer. Although it is unusual for 3-year-olds to be so advanced, there is considerable variability in the development of reading fluency. Stacy is an extremely precocious child who has already reached the initial reading stage—but not a higher stage, because she is still decoding words one by one.

Competency 007 (Reading Comprehension)

The teacher understands the importance of reading for understanding, knows the components of comprehension, and teaches children strategies for improving their comprehension.

Review

Understand influences on reading comprehension

The beginning teacher understands factors affecting reading comprehension, such as oral language development, prior reading experiences, language background, and characteristics of specific texts (for example, structure, vocabulary, story grammar).

Reading comprehension refers to the reconstruction of the meaning of a written text.

Influences on reading comprehension include characteristics of individual readers, such as world knowledge, life experiences, size of vocabulary, reading ability, logical skills, and schemata. **Schemata** are clusters of ideas about objects, places, and events. Schemata can be very specific and concrete (for example, knowledge of dinosaurs) or relatively abstract (for example, views on democracy). Among the schemata that children develop is a **story schema,** or set of expectations about the internal structure of stories. Story schemata allow readers to appreciate, for example, that the main character in a story has goals, that the character will attempt to achieve those goals, and that the character's actions will influence the outcome of the story. When a story schema is activated, it will enhance comprehension, because the reader will be trying to figure out what the main character's goals are and how they fit into the story.

Reading comprehension is not only influenced by story schema and other characteristics of individual readers, but also by characteristics of the text being read, including its structure, content, and vocabulary. Structural elements include the **story grammar,** which is the set of elements that constitute a story as well as the rules that relate those elements. Experts have described a number of different story grammars. For example, in one of the simpler analyses, the elements of a story consist of the setting, characters, theme, plot, and resolution.

Ultimately, reading comprehension reflects the interaction between the characteristics of the individual reader and the characteristics of the particular text being read. Reading comprehension is facilitated when the background, the interests, and the skills of the reader match the content and other characteristics of the text.

Understand and teach different levels of comprehension

The beginning teacher understands levels of reading comprehension and knows how to model and teach skills for literal comprehension (for example, identifying the stated main idea or recalling details), inferential comprehension (for example, inferring cause-and-effect relationships or making predictions), and evaluative comprehension (for example, analyzing character development and use of language or detecting faulty reasoning).

When reading a text, several levels of comprehension are possible. **Literal comprehension** refers to the understanding of information that is explicitly stated in a written passage. This information includes the main idea of the passage (if explicitly stated) as well as the details and the sequence of events. Literal comprehension of a text is important as a source of information as well as a prerequisite for higher levels of understanding. Teachers can promote literal comprehension by making sure that students have the necessary background information, including knowledge of the vocabulary that is used in a text.

Inferential comprehension is the understanding of information that is not explicitly given but rather implied in a written passage. For example, inferential comprehension is needed to understand **anaphora,** or the use of one word or phrase in place of another one. Pronouns are commonly used in place of nouns without an explicit connection between them, as in the following passage: "Mary jumped into the pool. The water felt cool on her skin." Inferential comprehension allows the reader to understand that "her" in the second sentence refers to "Mary" in the first one.

One of the most common applications of inferential comprehension is the identification of **cause-effect relationships.** A simple example would be the sentence "When the dog barked, the cat ran away." In this example, inferential comprehension is needed in order to understand that the cat ran away *because* the dog barked, because this relationship is implied rather than explicitly stated.

Readers also use inferential comprehension to make predictions. The sentence "The mouse saw the cat" suggests the prediction that the mouse will become afraid and run away. A reader's ability to make inferences depends on the information given in the text as well as the reader's background knowledge and inferential skills. For example, consider the following passage: "It was February in Nome. Cecilia got dressed and went outside." It can be inferred that Cecilia probably put on a warm jacket, gloves, hat, and boots, and that it was very cold and possibly even snowing outside. Making such inferences is dependent on background knowledge, such as the fact that Nome is in Alaska, and that Alaska is very cold and snowy in the winter. These inferences also depend on the ability of the reader to predict that an individual's choice of clothing is likely to match the weather.

As with literal comprehension, inferential comprehension is an important source of information as well as a prerequisite for further understanding. Teachers can promote inferential comprehension by providing children with background knowledge of relevance to a text, and by modeling the kinds of inferences that can be made during the reading. ("It was February in Nome. Let's see, Nome is in Alaska, so it must've been cold. It says that Cecilia got dressed and went outside. What do you think she wore?")

Evaluative comprehension refers to the ability to use critical thinking skills, logical analysis, and aesthetic considerations to evaluate a text. Students need a great deal of direct support from teachers in order to develop evaluative comprehension skills. Following is a list of some of the uses of evaluative comprehension:

- Detecting contradictions and other weaknesses in the way the author develops an argument.
- Judging the accuracy of information in a text based on background knowledge, reasoning, and information obtained from other texts.
- Differentiating facts from opinions, evidence from conclusions, and relevant information from irrelevant information.
- Appreciating mood, foreshadowing, character development, and other literary qualities.
- Recognizing the ideological, moral, and rhetorical intentions of authors.

Facilitate the transition to "reading to learn"

The beginning teacher provides instruction in comprehension skills that support children's transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (for example, recognizing different types of texts, understanding how a text is organized, using textual features such as headings and glossaries).

The transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" is described under Competency 006. Teachers can support this transition by helping children appreciate aspects of a text other than the meanings of individual words and sentences. For example, teachers can call attention to the basic purpose of a text. A distinction can be made between **narrative texts** (those that relate a story or sequence of events) and **expository texts** (texts that provide factual information and explanations).

Narrative and expository texts tend to differ in organization as well as purpose. Narrative texts tend to have a story grammar, while expository texts tend to begin with introductory material, followed by topical material and, finally, a summary. Textual features such as the table of contents, headings, and glossaries contribute to the organization of expository texts. (These features are also discussed under Competency 008.)

Use instructional approaches that build comprehension

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities that facilitate children's comprehension before, during, and after reading (for example, providing background knowledge for written text, previewing the organization of a text, making predictions, questioning, guiding discussions).

Reading should never be a process of mindless decoding. Teachers should use strategies, materials, and activities that encourage children to actively attempt to make sense out of the texts they read.

Before reading a text, students may need to be provided with background knowledge, definitions of key vocabulary, previews of textual organization and intent, and other information that can help facilitate comprehension. It may be necessary to help children understand the appropriate schemata to use when reading a story. Moreover, the teacher may need to help children understand the purpose of reading a particular text. It is important for students to be clear about whether they are reading for enjoyment, for obtaining specific information, for exploring new ideas, for developing a critical judgment, or for some other purpose(s).

After reading a text, comprehension at all levels can be facilitated by encouraging children to summarize or retell what they have read, either orally or in writing. Interactive activities such as group discussion are extremely useful. In some cases, encouraging children to reread all or part of a text can promote comprehension, particularly when specific information is being sought.

Before, during, and after children's reading of a text, teachers should use questioning strategies that facilitate comprehension. Questions about main ideas, details, and sequences of events can be used to promote literal as well as inferential comprehension. Questions can also be used to facilitate evaluative comprehension. Particularly with younger students, it is important for teachers to model the entire process of understanding and answering questions. That is, teachers should help students understand what a particular question is asking, how a text should be examined to find the answer, and how to phrase the answer in formulating a reply. Four types of **Question-Answer Relationships** (**QARs**) that students should know are as follows:

- **Right there** questions can be answered from information explicitly given in a text.
- **Think and search** questions require looking at information in a text, and then drawing a conclusion.
- **Author and you** questions require the combination of information in a text and the student's background knowledge.
- **On your own** questions call for evaluative responses.

The suggestions described in this section have been incorporated into a number of instructional methods for enhancing reading comprehension. Some of these methods are described in the following section.

Help children monitor and improve their comprehension

The beginning teacher models and teaches a range of instructional strategies that children can use to monitor and improve their reading comprehension (for example, self-questioning, rereading, mapping, using reading journals, discussing texts).

A commonly used instructional strategy is the **Directed Reading Activity** (**DRA**). At the outset of the DRA, the teacher activates and develops schemata by linking the topic of the text to students' own experiences or by finding ways to get students interested in an unfamiliar topic. It may be necessary at this point for teachers to introduce new concepts and vocabulary that are used in the text. Next, the teacher supports silent and oral reading by providing students with **study-guide questions** (questions that aid comprehension by helping to clarify the purpose, structure, and content of a text). At any point, instruction may be provided in word-recognition and comprehension. After the reading, children are given opportunities to practice the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Finally, enrichment activities are provided in which children can link the topic of the reading to additional reading material or to writing, art, and/or music projects of their own creation.

The DRA is a teacher-directed activity. A widely used alternative is the **Directed Reading-Thinking Activity** (**DR-TA**), which is more student-guided. In the DR-TA, the teacher asks students to examine the title of a story and predict what the story is about. Next, the teacher has students examine an illustration at the outset of the story and check whether initial predictions about the story need to be revised. During silent reading, students continue to check and revise their predictions, while making notes for subsequent group discussion. Following discussion, silent and/or oral rereading may be encouraged, in conjunction with additional discussion and instruction from the teacher. The entire process is repeated after each section of the text.

The **K-W-L** teaching model is a general strategy for supporting comprehension of expository text before and after reading. Each letter in the name of this model represents a self-questioning strategy that teachers should encourage students to use. The "K" stands for "What I *know,*" the "W" stands for "What I *want* to learn," and the "L" stands for "What I *learned.*" Prior to reading a text, the teacher should help students think about what they know and what they want to learn from the text. After reading the text, the teacher should help students reflect on what they learned. Like the DRA and DR-TA strategies, the K-W-L model can be used with virtually any sort of text.

The K-W-L model relies on the use of **metacognition,** or awareness of mental contents and processes (see Competency 001 for additional discussion). If the term "cognition" refers to thinking, the term "metacognition" refers to thinking about thinking. Knowing the name of the first president is an example of cognition. Metacognition includes your awareness that you know the name of the first president, your realization that you have momentarily forgotten the name of the first president, your understanding that you could learn about the first president by reading a book about him, and your recognition that the more carefully you read, the more you will learn. K-W-L questions promote metacognition, because they encourage students to reflect on their own knowledge.

Metacognition allows readers to monitor their level of comprehension as they read and to appreciate when improvements in comprehension are needed. As a consequence, the use of metacognitive monitoring strategies is associated with good comprehension.

Teachers can facilitate monitoring in a variety of ways. Students can be taught how to self-question to determine whether they understand key concepts and passages. They can be taught how to reread difficult passages or to read such passages more slowly. Discussion is a particularly good method for encouraging students to compare and reflect on different understandings of stories.

It is important for younger students to understand that reading is not simply a process of decoding, but also a process of seeking meaning. Understanding the broader purpose of reading is a form of metacognition that indicates the need for ongoing monitoring. Older students also need support for more specific monitoring activities, such as the need to check for inconsistencies in their understanding.

A general approach to monitoring and improving comprehension is to encourage story mapping. A **story map** is a graphic representation of the elements of a story. A story map for a particular story could consist of a timeline showing the sequence of events in the story. Alternatively, the story map could represent relationships between all the important

events, concepts, and characters in a story without following a chronological sequence. The terms "semantic map," "semantic web," and "story web" are often used to describe a story map that depicts these various elements.

Along with story maps, other written and graphic representations of story content can facilitate monitoring and comprehension. For example, as discussed under Competency 010, students can be encouraged to create journals that summarize the content of what they read or that describe their reactions to the content.

Use multicultural instructional approaches

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to guide children to increase knowledge of their own culture and the cultures of others through reading.

As children progress from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," it becomes increasingly important for them to be exposed to information about their own and other cultures. A multicultural approach to reading is essential, owing to the vast cultural diversity reflected in each Texas classroom. Each child needs to have access to reading materials and activities that are related to his or her own particular background. In addition, a better academic experience and classroom atmosphere will result from children being exposed to the cultural backgrounds of their peers.

Use assessments to meet individual needs

The beginning teacher selects and uses a variety of formal and informal procedures for monitoring children's reading comprehension and adjusts instruction to meet the needs of individual children, including English Language Learners.

Formal and informal procedures for monitoring children's reading comprehension are briefly described under this competency and under Competency 011. Often these procedures are appropriate for working with English Language Learners. In addition, there are a number of specific strategies that teachers can use to monitor the progress of ELLs and to adjust instruction accordingly. For example, group activities can provide support for children with limited English skills. Through group discussion, and through the joint creation of story maps, ELLs will be exposed to many channels of information about the meaning of a particular story. More broadly, **sheltered instruction** (also known as specially designed academic instruction in English, or SDAIE) can be used to help children with limited English learn both grade-level content as well as content-related language.

Teach elements of literary analysis

The beginning teacher teaches elements of literary analysis, such as story elements and features of different literary genres.

A **genre** is a category that is used to classify a literary work. Genres can be defined in terms of form, content, or technique. It is important for students to appreciate some of the key distinctions among genres, which include fiction, folklore, poetry, drama, and nonfiction.

Students should also have some appreciation of the story elements in each genre:

- **Setting:** Students should be able to identify the setting of a story, and to think about how the setting influences the events and atmosphere of the story.
- **Characterization:** Students should be able to discuss the motivations and personalities of different characters and to describe any changes that the characters experience during the course of a story.
- **Plot:** Students should be able to see how a story is introduced, developed through a series of events, and then brought to a conclusion. Students should understand how the main events of the story are connected.
- **Style:** Students should be able to understand how certain kinds of word choice and modes of expression give a literary work a particular style.
- **Theme:** As abstract-thinking skills develop, students should be able to identify recurrent themes in a literary work.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's reading comprehension.

Teachers should convey to parents the importance of providing a literate home environment for children, in which children observe their parents reading and have opportunities to participate in meaningful reading-related interactions. Such interactions include storytelling and shared reading, as well as other activities such as reading letters, instructions, and recipes with family members. As children's reading skills develop, parents can be encouraged to have discussions with children about what they are reading or have read. Parents can ask friends and relatives to write notes, letters, holiday cards, and other missives to children. Parents themselves can occasionally leave notes for children.

Sample Questions

1. A 2nd-grade class is asked to read a famous nursery rhyme: "Little Miss Muffet / sat on a tuffet / eating her curds and whey. / Along came a spider / who sat down beside her / scaring Miss Muffet away." After reading the nursery rhyme, the teacher asks students what Miss Muffet sat on. Then, the teacher asks the class what they think a "tuffet" is. What sort of comprehension is the teacher's second question intended to tap into?

   A. literal
   B. inferential
   C. evaluative
   D. all of the above

   B The literal meaning of a tuffet is neither given in the nursery rhyme nor familiar to contemporary American children and, thus, option A is incorrect. Because the question is about the likely meaning of a word, option C is also incorrect. Because options A and C are incorrect, option D could not be correct, either. Option B is the best answer. The teacher's question encourages children to make a simple inference based on the semantic and syntactic context established by the first two lines.

2. After reading "Miss Muffet" and discussing what a "tuffet" may be, the teacher asks students why they suppose the author of the rhyme used such an unusual word. The teacher then leads a class discussion of this question. To help fuel discussion, the teacher intends to inform students that the rhyme was created in England a long time ago. The teacher also intends to say something about the process of creating rhymes. What sort of comprehension is the teacher trying to stimulate through class discussion?

   A. literal
   B. inferential
   C. evaluative
   D. all of the above

   C Students have not been given a direct answer to the teacher's question, so option A is incorrect. If option A is incorrect, option D must be incorrect too. Although one can infer from the teacher's comment that the word "tuffet" reflects the particular time and place of the rhyme's creation, inference is not the sole focus of the class discussion and, thus, option B is not the best answer. That is, option B is not the best answer because it is only partially true. Option C is the best answer. In order to arrive at some sense of why the word "tuffet" was used, students will have to explore the possibility that English speakers from different times and places use different vocabulary, and they will have to consider the role of end rhyme in poetry. Looking at the poem from historical and literary perspectives reflects evaluative comprehension.

Competency 008 (Research and Comprehension Skills in the Content Areas)

The teacher understands the importance of research and comprehension skills to children's academic success and provides children with instruction that promotes their acquisition and effective use of these skills in the content areas.

Review

Teach children how to obtain information from a range of texts

The beginning teacher teaches children how to locate, retrieve, and retain information from a range of content-area and expository texts.

The term **content literacy** is used to describe the ability to use written texts (as well as other forms of communication) as sources of information about a given topic or area. Experts acknowledge the importance of not only teaching young children how to read narratives, but also how to read for comprehension in content areas.

Teachers promote content literacy by showing children how to obtain and retain information from content-area materials and expository texts (texts whose primary intent is to provide factual information and explanations). The teacher's role may range from introducing students to the school library to modeling strategies for using reference materials to providing support for comprehension monitoring during the reading of expository texts to guiding discussion of difficult concepts, and so on.

In the discussion of Competency 007, several comprehension monitoring and facilitating strategies are discussed. Those strategies tended to be at least somewhat teacher-directed. The **SQ3R method** is a student-directed approach in which students are taught five steps for studying content-area and expository texts:

1. **Survey.** The first step is to survey the title, headings, introductory materials, and any pedagogical devices such as figures and tables that may contribute to the understanding of a text.
2. **Question.** The next step is to formulate a list of questions that will hopefully be answered by reading the text. (This is similar to the "W" in the K-W-L model described under Competency 007.)
3. **Read.** After formulating a list of questions, the next step is to try to answer them by reading the text.
4. **Recite.** After reading, the next step is to try to state the answers to each of the original questions, without looking at the text.
5. **Review.** The final step is to reread to verify that the original questions were satisfactorily answered and to make corrections as needed.

Teach the use of text organizers

The beginning teacher teaches children how to use text organizers (for example, headings, tables of contents) to locate and organize information.

In the discussion of Competency 004, it is noted that pre-readers gradually learn about conventions of print, such as the idea that books convey information and that some of the information in books is conveyed through words. As the ability to read emerges, children continue to learn about the conventions of printed texts. Some of these conventions pertain to the way texts are organized.

Content literacy includes the ability to make use of the organizational elements in books and other printed materials. Tables of contents, summaries, headings, page numbers, glossaries, and bibliographies are among the organizers that are intended to help readers obtain information from expository texts. Teachers should help children identify these text organizers and to understand where each one is likely to be found. In addition, teachers should help children understand what kinds of information can be obtained from each organizer and to know when each one should be used.

Help children use graphics

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to help children use graphics (for example, tables, charts, maps, diagrams, timelines) and other sources of information and technologies to acquire information.

Graphics are an important source of information that early readers may disregard, or be distracted by, if they have not been taught how to make use of them. Generally, students need to understand that graphics convey information. Teachers should explain how to use the title of a graphic feature, as well as other information, to determine how the graphic is related to the text. Teachers should also help students understand the features of specific types of graphics and how they can be used. Following are some key examples.

For map reading, teachers should help students follow a sequence of appropriate actions.

1. First, the student should examine the title in order to determine what the map represents.
2. In many cases, the next step is to identify the four directions depicted in the map.
3. Next, the student should identify any legend on the map that would explain the various symbols.
4. Finally, the student should attempt to grasp the scale of the map, to relate the map to a larger area if appropriate, and to return to a consideration of how the map is connected to the text.

For the reading of graphs, teachers should make students aware of the four basic types of graphs and the kinds of information they convey. Specifically, students should know that **picture graphs** illustrate quantities, **bar graphs** use horizontal or vertical bars to contrast quantities, **line graphs** show changes in quantity and other variables over time, and **pie charts** show part-whole relationships.

Teachers should help students understand the specific features of other types of graphics as well, such as the schematics used in a diagram, the rows and columns of a table, and the chronological structure of a timeline.

Encourage the use of multiple sources

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to help children use multiple sources, including electronic texts, experts, and print resources, to locate information.

Children should be encouraged to use multiple sources of information, including printed materials, electronic materials, and expert individuals. One reason for encouraging the use of multiple sources is simply that variety helps maintain student interest. Another reason is that each source of information can be somewhat unique in the learning experience that it sustains. For example, electronic texts differ from printed texts in a number of important respects.

- The control that readers have over the flow of information is greater for electronic texts, given the interactive nature of many software and Internet-based programs currently available.
- Electronic texts are searchable in distinctive and powerful ways that are not possible with printed texts.
- Electronic texts tend to be part of multimedia environments, in which text, illustrations, audio, and video are integrated.
- Electronic texts such as e-mail sustain communication with other writers and readers.

Help children summarize and organize information

The beginning teacher understands how to help children summarize and organize information from multiple sources (for example, by taking notes, outlining, creating graphic organizers).

Note-taking is an important academic skill. Notes can used to paraphrase or summarize information, to keep a record of important details, and to record critical comments or questions. Notes can be recorded in learning logs, on paper or index cards, or on computers. Where appropriate, making annotations to a text serves a note-taking function.

Students need to understand that the general purpose of taking notes is to aid one's memory. Without notes, most students would forget a great deal of what they have read. Students also need to learn specific note-taking strategies. Following are some useful strategies and guidelines:

- Identify the source of the notes.
- Write down key words and phrases.
- Don't focus too much on punctuation, grammar, and so on.
- Include enough information so that the notes will be comprehensible later.
- Distinguish between quotations and paraphrasings.

Like note-taking, the creation of outlines is a way of summarizing information. Outlines also serve an important organizational function. The outline can be structured as sentence format (each point is a complete sentence) or a topic format (each point is a key word or phrase).

A **graphic organizer** is a visual representation of textual content. Graphic organizers can be used before, during, or after reading to summarize a text, to show the relationships between concepts in a text, to relate new concepts to familiar ones, or to assist comprehension in other ways. A simple example would be a series of boxes linked by arrows (that is, a flow chart), each representing a significant event in a historical sequence. (See the discussion of semantic webs under Competency 007).

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's ability to develop effective research and comprehension skills in the content areas.

As children's ability to read develops, parents can be encouraged to support research and comprehension skills by taking their children to the library, exposing children to a variety of expository print forms, knowing about and perhaps helping their children with reports and other content area homework, engaging in various activities that support content area reading, and helping introduce children to text features that are pertinent to research and comprehension.

Sample Questions

1. Which of the following instructional strategies most directly supports content literacy?

   A. use of both expository and narrative texts in a thematic unit
   B. use of the K-W-L teaching model
   C. encouragement of comprehension monitoring during reading
   D. all of the above

   B Although option A describes a good instructional strategy, it is not the best option, because it is too broad. It reflects a strategy that would promote literacy development in general, not just in the area of content literacy. Option C is also too general, because it describes a strategy that teachers should encourage during all sorts of reading, not just reading in content areas. Option D is incorrect, because option B is more directly supportive of content literacy than the other options. That is, option B is the best answer. The K-W-L teaching model encourages students to reflect on what they know and want to learn before reading an expository text and to consider what they learned after reading it. (See discussion of Competency 007 for further details.) Option B is the best answer in part because it is the only option that focuses specifically on comprehension of expository texts.

2. Which of the following can a parent do to help a 4th grader research a class project on whales?

   A. Encourage the child to use the school library and to ask the librarian for assistance.
   B. Help the child use the Internet as a resource.
   C. Help the child decide which index selections of a student encyclopedia would be most relevant.
   D. all of the above

   D A is a correct option. Although the parent would not be directly helping the child, encouraging the child to use the library and seek expert assistance would be beneficial. B and C are correct options, because in each case, the parent would be providing expert guidance. Hence, option D is the best answer.

Competency 009 (Writing Conventions)

The teacher understands the conventions of writing in English and provides instruction that helps children develop proficiency in using writing conventions.

Review

Understand the development of writing

The beginning teacher understands that many children go through predictable stages in acquiring writing conventions, including the physical and cognitive processes involved in scribbling, recognition of environmental print, mock letters, letter formation, word writing, sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, and grammatical expression, but that individual children vary in their development of these conventions.

Children begin to recognize environmental print at around age two. In subsequent years, children become more sensitive to the specific characteristics of the words they see, including the shapes of individual letters. At the same time, children gradually develop the ability to produce words through writing. A combination of physical maturation, experience and, in some cases, instruction, allows children to hold writing implements and create marks.

During the preschool years, children begin to produce representational drawings. At this time, there is not a clear distinction between drawing and writing. Children often tell stories or convey information through drawings, scribbles, and other marks that they use to express themselves.

Gradually, children's scribbling becomes more reminiscent of writing. The scribbles may become somewhat linear, and may contain **mock letters** (letter-like forms). At this point, the scribbles are not comprehensible to others, but children may talk about the scribbles as if they are words or even stories. Scribbling and mock letters may accompany pictures or be created separately.

By kindergarten age, most children have begun to write individual letters, followed by letter combinations. At first, children's writing tends to lack conventional left-to-right and top-to-bottom orientation. It is common for children to leave out punctuation as well as spaces between words, and to be inconsistent in the relative size and position of their letters. It is also common for children to generate reversals, or letters that are written with incorrect orientation. Some reversals are made along a horizontal dimension, as when a "b" is written as a "d," or a "p" is written as a "q." Other reversals are vertical, as when an "m" is written as a "w," or an "n" is written as a "u."

Through literacy instruction in school, children gradually learn to form words and sentences that reflect correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Although the stages described here are somewhat predictable, individual children differ in the rate at which they progress through the stages, as well as in the kinds of writing and miswriting they most commonly produce at each stage.

Understand how spelling is influenced by phonological awareness

The beginning teacher understands the relationship between spelling and phonological and alphabetic awareness.

Phonological awareness allows children to notice and think about the sounds of language (see discussion of Competency 002). Appreciation of the alphabetic principle allows children to learn graphophonemic correspondences between letters and sounds (see discussion of Competency 003). As children's phonological and alphabetic awareness increase, they become capable of sounding out written words one letter at a time (see discussion of Competency 005). The development of these skills also contributes to spelling. When children spell unfamiliar words, they can also "sound out" the words they intend to write. Phonological and alphabetic awareness help young spellers think about the phonemic constituents of a word and to choose a sequence of letters to represent those constituents. At the same time, practice with spelling also contributes to phonological and alphabetic awareness.

Understand and nurture the development of spelling

The beginning teacher understands the stages of spelling development (precommunicative "writing" [understands the function of writing but cannot make the forms], prephonemic, phonemic, transitional, and conventional) and knows how and when to support children's development from one stage to the next.

Orthography refers to the nature and use of written symbols in a language. Knowledge of orthography includes appreciation of the rules governing spelling and punctuation. Like other aspects of orthography, spelling develops in a somewhat predictable sequence:

1. In the **precommunicative stage,** writing consists of scribbling, mock letters, and other marks that preschoolers use to convey meaning. Any attempt to represent words consists of random letter strings. Thus, spelling is not a characteristic of this stage, although children appreciate the general idea that creating and talking about written marks is a way of telling stories and sharing information with others.
2. Once children learn the alphabetic principle (see Competency 003), they are able to enter the **prephonemic stage**, in which letters are used to represent sounds and words. Writing at this stage contains **phonemic spellings** (also referred to as **invented** or **developmental spellings**). At first, phonemic spellings consist of one or two letters that are intended to represent an entire word. These letters are often consonants and often include the first letter of the word. Thus, a child may write "d" for the word "dog" or "ck" for the word "cake." As children progress to higher stages, phonemic spellings become more complex.
3. In the **phonemic stage,** children tend to represent all the basic sounds in a word. However, their spelling is still frequently incorrect. Short vowel sounds are typically miswritten, as when a child writes "buk" for the word "book." Vowels are often excluded when the basic sound is conveyed by an adjacent consonant. Thus, a child may write "bakr" for the word "baker" or "cak" for the word "cake." In these examples ("buk," "bakr," "cak") it can be seen that all the phonemes of each word are represented, even though the representations are partially incorrect.
4. As children's understanding of orthography increases, they distinguish more clearly between the way words look and the way they sound. This growing attention to the visual appearance of words ushers in the **transitional stage.** Children now appreciate some basic orthographic conventions, such as the principle that every syllable contains a vowel (and/or a "y"). The word "baker," for example, may be spelled "bakur" or "bakor" in the transitional stage. Children are now capable of representing certain vowel sounds with digraphs (pairs of vowels), as when the word "fifty" is written as "fiftee." In some cases, children overuse silent vowels, as when the word "soup" is written as "supe." These examples show that transitional stage children have learned spelling patterns. The double "ee" is incorrect when used to spell the word "fifty," but it is a pattern that frequently occurs in other words. Likewise, the final "e" in "supe" is incorrect, but it is extremely common in English for the final consonant of a word to be followed by a silent "e," as in the words "cape," "broke," and "ride." Phonemic spellings are still frequent during the transitional stage, but the proportion of correct spellings is beginning to increase.
5. In the **conventional stage,** children's knowledge of orthography continues to increase as they make use of a variety of information to guide spelling, including structural cues (prefixes, suffixes, compound words), knowledge about silent consonants, appreciation of stress patterns in oral language, and so on.

Teachers should support development from one stage to the next without discouraging children from expressing themselves through writing.

Base spelling instruction on phonics skills

The beginning teacher selects and uses systematic spelling instruction in common spelling patterns based on previously taught phonics skills.

As discussed under Competency 005, phonics is a method of instruction that focuses on linking phonemes with written letters. Through phonics, children learn how to engage in phonic analysis.

Although English is a highly irregular language (see Competency 003 for further discussion), phonics does provide some support for reading. The same phonics skills that are used to sound out written words can be used to sound out words that the student is attempting to spell.

Use instructional approaches that build fine-motor skills

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and hands-on activities for the development of the fine motor skills necessary for writing (for example, tearing, cutting, puzzles, clay, painting, drawing).

A variety of hands-on materials and activities foster the fine-motor skill development that is needed for writing. These activities include tearing or cutting paper, playing with finger puppets, working with modeling clay, and stringing beads. Games that require a pinching motion (such as pick-up-sticks) and activities that require the use of pencils and other writing implements (such as drawing) are especially helpful.

Teach the mechanics of handwriting

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to teach pencil grip, paper position, and beginning strokes.

Ultimately, the goal of writing is to communicate, whether one chooses to write with a crayon, a pencil, or a computer. Handwriting is not an end in itself but simply a means of conveying information. The purpose of writing fluently (that is, quickly and easily) is to help writers express themselves. The purpose of writing legibly is to facilitate communication between writer and reader. Hence, the mechanics of handwriting should be taught in a meaningful context.

Many variables should be considered when teaching children the mechanics of handwriting. It is important for children to have good posture and support. The lighting should be adequate, the desk at which each child works should be an appropriate height, and the paper should be appropriately positioned. Children should be encouraged to use the dominant hand, and appropriate adjustments should be made for left-handed children. Children's pencil grip should be closely monitored to ensure that it is neither too loose nor too tight. Likewise, the pressure of the pencil on the paper should neither be too light or too heavy.

Teachers should use a variety of instructional approaches to help children master the basic mechanics of handwriting. Some of the activities that are helpful include air-writing, finger-tracing, and writing with one's eyes closed. Patience is especially important in the teaching of good handwriting technique, and teachers should remember that children may be more comfortable about writing with some kinds of implements as opposed to others.

Although the process of writing is important, children's attention should also be directed to the product—that is, the physical appearance of the strokes, letters, and words they are creating.

- Each stroke should begin at the correct position, and the writer should form the correct vertical, horizontal, slanted, and/or curved strokes that form each letter.
- The strokes should be steady and consistent in thickness.
- Each letter should touch the baseline.
- Letters should be uniform in size, and the proportional difference in size between upper- and lowercase letters should be the same.
- Letters should be appropriately oriented. (In printed writing, the letters are vertical. In cursive, letters slant slightly to the right for right-handed students, and slightly to the left or not all for left-handed students.)
- The spacing between letters in words, between words, and between sentences and paragraphs should be consistent.

The preceding list describes ideals of good handwriting. Teachers should not expect students to achieve these ideals in each case. In some cases, it is not desirable for students to even attempt their best handwriting. When students are taking notes or brainstorming, for example, too much emphasis on handwriting is detrimental. In such instances, the goals are merely quickness and minimal legibility.

Help all children use English writing conventions

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to help all children, including English Language Learners, use English writing conventions (for example, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation) in connected discourse.

Literacy development involves the emergence and refinement of multiple, interrelated skills. Writing depends on the ability to comprehend as well as produce oral and written language. Although the writing skills of English Language Learners may be limited owing to weaknesses in oral language skills (such as knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar), these children should receive support for both oral and written English. Some writing activities are appropriate even for English Language Learners who have little or no understanding of English. For example, ELLs can participate in cooperative learning groups in which their contributions match their particular skill level. When working on their own, ELLs can use their native language to do some writing activities, such as journaling.

Recognize differences between spoken and written English

The beginning teacher recognizes the similarities and differences between spoken and written English (for example, in syntax and in vocabulary choice) and uses instructional strategies to help children apply English writing conventions effectively.

Although spoken and written English share basic similarities, writers need to be aware of how they differ in grammar and vocabulary. In particular, spoken English consists of a relatively large number of sentence fragments, informal idioms, and slang. These characteristics are illustrated in the following dialogue:

A: Where'd you go this morning?

B: To get a Nintendo.

A: Yeah? Where?

B: Tucker's. You know, the one at the mall.

A: Yeah, that's my favorite. Cool place.

B: Yeah. Way cool.

This is an ordinary, natural-sounding dialogue between two native English speakers. Notice that each sentence, except for the first one, is a fragment rather than a complete sentence. The use of the phrase "You know" is highly idiomatic, and the "yeah" and "way cool" are examples of slang.

Students must understand that unless their writing is intended to represent spoken dialogue, their finished products should contain complete sentences and avoid excessively idiomatic or slang words and phrases.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote all children's effective use of writing conventions.

Fostering collaborations to promote effective use of writing conventions, as well as other writing skills, is discussed at the end of Competency 010.

Sample Questions

1. Mark's 1st-grade teacher notices that although he has good handwriting, Mark sometimes complains that his hand hurts when he writes. What should the teacher do first?

   A. Send Mark to the school nurse.
   B. Call Mark's parents to get their feedback.
   C. Observe Mark's pencil grip closely.
   D. Ignore Mark's complaints unless they persist.

   C Option D is clearly incorrect, because a child's physical complaints should not be ignored. Options A and B are not the best initial actions on the teacher's part. Although it is important to refer students to the nurse if a physical problem is suspected and to keep lines of communication with parents open, the first thing to do in this particular case is to simply check whether Mark is holding the pencil too tightly, "hooking" his wrist, or doing something else as he writes that could be easily corrected.

2. Which of the following activities is best for promoting the development of writing among 1st graders?

   A. Each child is encouraged to make a Christmas letter for a family member, describing something special that the child has experienced. The letter contains a mix of artwork and writing that the child creates.
   B. Each child keeps a notebook in which he or she writes each letter of the alphabet ten times. The notebook is assembled over a period of weeks and upon completion, children can see how their handwriting has progressed.
   C. Children are taught how to air-write each letter of the alphabet. Then, the class plays a game in which teacher sings the alphabet song very slowly while the children trace each letter in the air.
   D. Each week, the teacher focuses on the writing of a different letter. Children are encouraged to write, paint, and draw the letter using different media.

   A Options B, C, and D may contribute to improvement in writing, but they focus on handwriting in isolation from a meaningful use of language. Option A is the best answer, because the creation of letters to relatives would allow children to practice writing about topics that interest them, and to incorporate the writing into meaningful communication.

Competency 010 (Development of Written Communication)

The teacher understands that writing to communicate is a developmental process and provides instruction that promotes children's competence in written communication.

Review

Understand the stages of writing development

The beginning teacher knows that many children exhibit predictable stages in developing written language but that individual variation may occur.

The stages through which children develop writing are discussed in several places under Competencies 004 and 009.

Encourage written expression of ideas

The beginning teacher provides materials, activities, and experiences for children to construct an understanding of the writing system in an environment that nurtures the expression of ideas.

Writing is a set of conventions about the formation of letters and words, as well as the use of orthographic strategies such as capitalization and punctuation. Writing is also a means of communication. The role of the teacher is not only to teach the conventions of writing but also to help students understand the relationship between the conventions and the purposes of written text. With the teacher's assistance, students come to realize that using punctuation in a conventional way, for example, helps a reader understand their ideas.

As students learn the mechanics and conventions of writing, it is important that they be nurtured in the written expression of their ideas. Accordingly, EC–4 teachers are encouraged to focus more on the process than the product of children's writing; in other words, teachers are encouraged to place more emphasis on the steps and strategies that students use to generate a piece of writing than the quality of the final product.

Students should be given the opportunity to write every day. Some of the activities that teachers choose should focus primarily on helping students express themselves. One such activity is journal writing, in which students make regular entries in their journals. Journals can focus on personal experiences, as diaries do, or they can serve a variety of other purposes.

- In a **response journal,** the student records his or her thoughts and feelings as a text is read. Students may be given prompts for their response journals, or they may be asked to freely record whatever comes to mind as they read.
- In a **learning log,** the student records what he or she is learning. Students use their own words in learning logs, because these journals are not primarily intended for sharing.
- In a **simulated journal** (also known as a character journal), the student writes journal entries from the perspective of a historical or literary figure.
- In a **dialogue journal,** a written conversation between student and teacher (or between students) takes place in the student's journal as it is passed back and forth between them. Teachers do not provide corrections in the dialogue journal, although they will be modeling correct use of language through their written comments.

Journals can be private or shared with the teacher. When evaluating journal writing, the teacher should keep in mind that the writing is informal and may not have been edited.

Another activity that promotes the expression of ideas is **freewriting,** in which students write their thoughts freely, without concern for mechanics or revision. During freewriting, students are encouraged to write continuously for 5 to 10 minutes without pausing, rereading, making corrections, or worrying about spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. Freewriting helps students express themselves. It can be a particularly useful method for students who freeze at the outset of writing (the blank-page syndrome), for students who are overly concerned about creating perfect sentences, and for students who struggle with spelling and other orthographic considerations to the extent that the expression of their ideas is diminished.

An activity that can be carried out individually or in groups is **brainstorming,** in which students choose a topic and then write down all the words and phrases that come to mind with respect to the topic. As with freewriting, students are encouraged to write whatever comes to mind during the brainstorming process, without concern for whether the words and phrases are "correct" or not. By inspecting the lists that are created through brainstorming, students will often find good ideas for writing.

A variant of brainstorming is **clustering,** in which the words and phrases in the list are circled and linked to the topic word. The result is a diagram that conveys some sense of how the different words and phrases are connected.

Teach purposeful, meaningful writing

The beginning teacher teaches purposeful, meaningful writing in connection with listening, reading, and speaking.

In traditional approaches to writing, students receive a topic from the teacher, and then write a single-draft composition for the teacher to evaluate. Younger students may be asked to copy down passages from the blackboard or a worksheet. Experts now believe that, because writing is a form of communication, traditional activities such as copying down passages are unlikely to benefit writing skills in a meaningful way, while asking students to write about uninteresting topics, or to focus on both mechanics and content simultaneously through single-draft writing, will stifle the written expression of ideas. It is believed that students can obtain sufficient practice with the mechanics of writing through meaningful uses of the skill, such as writing about their own experiences and relating their writing activities to listening, reading, and speaking experiences both in and outside of class.

In a **process writing approach,** students choose a topic and develop a piece of writing for a particular audience (typically not just the teacher). Process writing develops over a period of days as students revise what they have written. In contrast to traditional approaches, the process and not just the product of writing is emphasized. The teacher's role is not only to examine the final product but also to monitor and support the process by which that product is created. By allowing students to choose their topics and by encouraging revisions with a final publication in mind, the teacher helps students appreciate that writing can be a purposeful, meaningful activity.

Monitor and motivate the writing development of individual children

The beginning teacher monitors children's writing development and provides motivational instruction that addresses the strengths, needs, and interests of individual children, including English Language Learners.

Writing development can be monitored formally or informally, in order to provide each student with the best and most engaging instruction. Following are four general methods.

- Teachers can evaluate student writing through **holistic scoring,** in which an overall impression of the writing is formed. Teachers may use holistic scoring to divide student compositions into groups ranging from strongest to weakest.
- **Primary trait scoring** is used to evaluate a specific characteristic of writing. A primary trait is the most important characteristic in a particular form of writing. For example, the primary trait of a story may be level of interest, while the primary trait of a letter to the president may be degree of persuasiveness.
- **Analytic scoring** is used to compare student performance on key dimensions of writing to some standard, typically performance by other students of the same age.
- **Error analysis** is used to identify specific weaknesses in a student's writing.

Students whose writing development is limited, such as English Language Learners, may feel frustrated or incompetent if they see their classmates creating written text that they are unable to produce. If their writing skills in the native language are limited, they may be overwhelmed by the prospect of writing in English. It is important for teachers to encourage English Language Learners to engage in writing, even if in the native language, and to help these students become comfortable with the idea of expressing themselves in this medium. The teacher may need to speak with the child, the child's parents, or other knowledgeable individuals about the child's abilities and interests.

Teach the components of the writing process

The beginning teacher selects and uses instructional strategies, materials, and activities to teach the components of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, editing, and revising.

The components of the writing process can be distinguished as follows:

1. **Prewriting:** During prewriting, the student chooses a topic, identifies a purpose (whether to instruct, to entertain, and/or to persuade), decides on a format, considers the intended audience, and generates ideas. Some students find prewriting difficult, because they struggle to convey their ideas in writing, even in a preliminary way. The teacher may encourage students to use drawing, conversation with others, and other methods such as brainstorming to help students make prewriting decisions.
2. **Drafting:** During the drafting stage, students write their ideas down. They should be encouraged to do so without worrying about orthographic dimensions such as spelling and grammar or about the quality of their ideas, because the purpose of drafting is to generate text that can be edited later. Students should be encouraged to label their drafts and to leave spaces between lines for revision.
3. **Revising:** When revising, students make changes to the content of what they have written on the basis of rereading their drafts, as well as suggestions from the teacher and/or other students. Writing groups may be formed in which students share their work with classmates. The teacher should help students understand the importance of feedback and should model appropriate feedback, both negative and positive. Suggestions for improvement should be polite and constructive, while positive feedback should be specific.
4. **Editing:** The editing stage focuses on proofreading in order to identify and correct errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. Students may use checklists to monitor whether each dimension of their writing contains errors.
5. **Sharing:** In the final stage, the student shares his or her work with others. In this stage, the student learns more about the concept of author by playing the authorial role. Books can be created in which the pages have been bound together in some fashion, and the final product can be shared with classmates, parents, and other individuals.

Use technologies that facilitate writing

The beginning teacher provides instruction in the use of appropriate technologies that facilitate written communication.

Along with instruction in the use of writing implements such as pencils and pens, teachers help students understand how to use the computer to write. Word processing is a powerful tool that facilitates revision and editing and frees students from the physical constraints of handwriting. In our society using the computer effectively has also become an important academic skill in its own right.

Teach the differences between drafting and final products

The beginning teacher teaches children the differences between first-draft writing and writing for publication and helps them apply writing conventions to their own written products.

During the revising and editing stages, the teacher helps students understand the differences between drafts and shared products. The teacher plays the role of audience and asks questions when information is ambiguous or insufficient. The teacher may indicate that some aspect of content is unclear or that something about the orthography makes a passage difficult to understand. The teacher may express interest in reading more details about a particular topic or may question the relevance of details that are provided.

Encourage writing in a variety of forms

The beginning teacher provides opportunities for children to write in a variety of forms and modes and for various purposes and audiences.

A distinction can be made between narrative writing, poetic writing, expository writing, and persuasive writing. Each form of writing has a different purpose and may speak to a different audience. Students should have opportunities to engage in each type of writing. Differences in the content and purpose of each type should be discussed.

The audience for student writing can be the teacher, the class or other classes, parents, pen pals, and so on. By exploring each type of writing, the meaningfulness of writing as a form of communication is reinforced.

Teach children to assess their own writing

The beginning teacher teaches children to apply criteria (for example, clarity, comprehensiveness, interest to audience) for assessing their own written work.

Just as early readers are encouraged to monitor and evaluate their own comprehension, so early writers should be encouraged to monitor and evaluate their written work. Students should be encouraged to self-assess drafts as well as finished products. Self-assessment can be informal or carried out by means of checklists. Following are some of the questions students should ask:

- Is my topic interesting?
- Did I stick to the topic?
- Did I cover everything I was supposed to cover?
- Were my ideas organized?
- Was my writing understandable?
- Did I use descriptive words?
- Was my conclusion clear?
- Did I check my grammar, spelling, and punctuation?

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher understands how to foster collaboration with families and with other professionals to promote children's development of writing skills.

Teachers should encourage parents to visit the classroom, to look at videotapes of children's writing activities (if available), and to have positive discussions with children about their writing samples that are sent home with them.

Parents may assume that the purpose of writing instruction is to teach children the mechanics and conventions of writing in English. Parents may be concerned that not enough structured activities such as workbooks are used to teach writing. In such cases, teachers should help parents understand the rationale for giving children autonomy and flexibility, for emphasizing the writing process and not just the product, and for encouraging the free expression of ideas.

At home, parents should be encouraged to let children see them write. Space and materials should be made available for children to engage in writing themselves. Criticism should be avoided. Parents should understand that they need to be encouraging and focus on the content of what children write.

Sample Questions

1. In a unit on Texas history, Mrs. Jones asks her 4th graders to work in groups to create written descriptions of the social, military, and political importance of the Alamo. Once each of the groups has generated some ideas to work from, which of the following would be a good strategy for proceeding?

   A. freewriting
   B. brainstorming
   C. revising
   D. drafting

   C Options A, B, and D are useful for generating ideas, but they are not designed to refine existing ideas. Option C is the best answer. Once students have ideas to work from, revision is the next step if the ultimate goal is a finished product that will be shared with others.

2. Which of the following types of writing would most directly help 2nd graders take the perspective of someone from a very different culture?

   A. learning log
   B. simulated journal
   C. response journal
   D. dialogue journal

   B Options A, C, and D could help students take someone else's perspective. A learning log could be used to describe an inhabitant of a different culture, while a response journal could record the student's thoughts and feelings about that person. The exchanges in a dialogue journal could also focus on the life of an individual in a distant culture. However, option B is the best answer, because a simulated journal would require the student to take the other person's perspective throughout the entire writing process.

Competency 011 (Assessment of Developing Literacy)

The teacher understands the basic principles of literacy assessment and uses a variety of assessments to guide literacy instruction.

Review

Understand formal and informal literacy-assessment techniques

The beginning teacher understands characteristics and appropriate uses of a wide range of formal and informal literacy-assessment techniques, including techniques for assessing oral language, and uses assessment results to adapt instruction to address the needs of individual children, including English Language Learners.

A variety of formal and informal assessments are available for evaluating children's literacy as well as their **oracy** (fluency in speaking and listening).

- The **norm-referenced test** is a type of formal assessment that measures a student's performance relative to a large group of individuals, such as other students of the same age across the nation. Scores on such tests can be used to describe a student in terms of grade level, percentile rank, or stanine.
- **Criterion-referenced tests** measure how well a student meets a set of standards or expectations for a particular group, such as age or grade level. Criterion-referenced tests are not usually normed. They indicate what a student can or cannot do, rather than how well the student is performing relative to others of the same age. The TExES EC–4 Generalist test is an example of a criterion-referenced test, because it yields information about how well the test-taker has mastered basic knowledge and principles of EC–4 pedagogy.

Base instruction on children's reading and writing performance

The beginning teacher analyzes children's reading and writing performance and uses it as a basis for instruction.

Teachers use a variety of informal methods to assess and analyze children's reading and writing performance. The purpose of these assessments is not only to record accuracy levels but also to understand the basis of student performance. Tallying errors is not as useful as analyzing the source of the errors, so that instruction can be modified appropriately.

- **Assessing reading level: Informal Reading Inventories** (**IRIs**) are used to assess general reading level. When administering an IRI, the teacher records how accurately the student pronounces words during oral reading, as well as how accurately the student answers comprehension questions after oral as well as silent reading.
- **Uncovering difficulties with reading:** The **Reading Miscue Inventory** (**RMI**) can provide specific information about the difficulties students have with reading as well as the specific reading strategies they use. The RMI provides information about **miscues,** or cases in which a student reads a word that is different from the one that is printed. Through an analysis of miscues, the teacher may be able to identify patterns of error. For example, it can be observed whether or not the student makes use of semantic and/or syntactic cues. The student who reads the passage "The plate fell to the floor with a crash" as "The plate fell to the floor with a bang" is making use of semantic cues, because the word "bang" makes sense in the context of this sentence. However, the student who reads the passage as "The plate fell to the floor with a car" is not taking advantage of the semantic context established by the sentence.
- **Tracking reading progress:** Similar to IRIs and RMIs, **running records** are used to track students' reading progress. To create a running record, the teacher examines a passage that a student is reading and places a mark by each word that the student pronounces incorrectly. Miscues and self-corrections are also recorded. One advantage of running records is that they can be made relatively easily in any ordinary classroom situation in which the teacher has a copy of the text that a student is reading out loud.
- **Assessing writing:** Writing can be assessed through a variety of observational methods. Teachers can record student progress **anecdotally.** In addition, teachers can use **checklists** to record student performance on various dimensions, including mechanics, handwriting, spelling, punctuation, revision activities, and content (including vocabulary, grammar, thematic development, and so on). A **portfolio** consists of a collection of materials that shows student progress over time. Portfolio assessment can be done to evaluate progress in reading and/or writing. The portfolio may consist of tests and results of formal and informal assessments, journal writings, illustrations, projects, and writing samples ranging from drafts to final products.

Know TEKS content and performance standards

The beginning teacher knows the state content and performance standards for reading, writing, listening, and speaking that comprise the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and recognizes when a child needs additional help or intervention to bring performance up to grade level.

EC–4 Teachers should know that the TEKS provides guidelines for determining whether a child is reading, writing, listening, and speaking at his or her particular grade level. Teachers should be familiar with TEKS content and performance standards that are provided for each grade and should be able to use the standards to determine when a child is functioning below grade level and consequently needs support. Teachers should know where to find the TEKS on the Internet.

Identify and make use of children's reading levels

The beginning teacher knows how to determine children's independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels, and uses this information to select appropriate materials for individual children and to guide children's selection of independent reading materials.

Teachers often use an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) to assess children's general reading level as well as particular strengths and weaknesses in word identification and comprehension. Typically, the IRI consists of a sequence of paragraphs that are graded in difficulty, and the teacher will analyze oral reading, silent reading, and listening comprehension.

During the administration of an IRI, a sight word test is given first in order to determine which paragraph the student should use to begin the oral reading. Following the oral reading, the teacher asks questions. The student then engages in silent reading, followed by further questions. The questions posed to students typically focus on both literal and inferential comprehension of main ideas, details, sequences of events, cause-effect relations, and key vocabulary. Students' reading performance and responses to the comprehension questions are used to identify different reading levels.

- Material is written at a student's **Independent Reading Level** if the student pronounces 95% or more of the words correctly and shows more than 90% accuracy in response to comprehension questions. As the name suggests, the Independent Reading Level refers to material that the student can read on his or her own, without assistance.
- Material is written at a student's **Instructional Reading Level** if the student pronounces 90 to 94% of the words correctly, and answers 70 to 89% of the questions correctly. The Instructional Reading Level refers to challenging material that the student can read with assistance from the teacher. As the name suggests, the Instructional Reading Level is the level at which instruction can take place. Instruction is not needed for Independent Reading Level materials. At the same time, instruction will not be effective for the Frustration Reading Level, in which material is too difficult for the student.
- Material is written at the **Frustration Reading Level** if the student pronounces less than 50% of the words correctly and answers less than 70% of the questions correctly. Materials at the Frustration Reading Level are too difficult for a student and should be avoided until the student is ready for them.

Teachers should use the results of IRIs to help determine the texts that are appropriate for individual children. Teachers should also monitor students' progress with the texts that the teacher or student chooses, because IRIs provide estimates rather than infallible indicators of children's reading levels.

Use ongoing assessments

The beginning teacher uses ongoing assessments to determine when a child may be in need of classroom interventions or specialized reading instruction and to develop appropriate instructional plans.

Reading assessments can be administered on an ongoing basis to monitor progress and serve as the basis of instructional planning. Interventions and specialized reading activities, which are tailored to individual children, may take into account learning disabilities, differences in learning style, differences in cultural background, or differences in student interests. As with all learners, it is important for teachers who develop such interventions or activities to be positive, to use varied methods, and to provide each student with opportunities for success.

Foster collaboration with families and other professionals

The beginning teacher communicates children's progress in literacy development to parents/caregivers and to other professionals through a variety of means, including the use of examples of children's work.

Parents should be kept informed about their children's progress through oral and written communication from the teacher, as well as through samples of their children's work that are assembled in portfolios, displayed during open house, and sent home with children on a regular basis. The teacher should coordinate efforts with everyone involved in the delivery of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Various strategies for conveying information to parents, and for helping parents promote literacy development at home, are discussed under earlier competencies.

Sample Questions

1. A verbal intelligence test such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) exemplifies what type of test?

A. norm-referenced
B. criterion-referenced
C. running record
D. oracy

A By themselves, intelligence tests do not indicate how well the test-taker meets a set of criteria or standards and, thus, option B is incorrect. Option C is incorrect, because running records are informal assessments obtained by teachers. Option D is incorrect, because oracy is an abstract concept. Option A is the correct answer. Intelligence tests yield scores that indicate each student's ability relative to other students of the same age.

2. Mr. Smith gives each student in his 3rd-grade class an IRI near the beginning of the year in order to determine each student's independent reading level. He then identifies a set of books that each student will be allowed to choose from for free-reading throughout the year. What else should Mr. Smith be doing?

A. Keeping running records for each student.
B. Allowing students some input into their choice of free-reading texts.
C. Sharing information about student progress with parents.
D. all of the above

D Option A is correct, because each student's reading ability will change over time, and it will be important for Mr. Smith to re-administer IRIs, keep running records, and otherwise monitor student progress in order to adjust his expectations about what each student is capable of reading. However, it is important for students to be able to read what they like during free-reading time and, thus, option B is correct. Option C is correct too, because parents should be kept informed about their student's progress in reading as well as other aspects of academic and social functioning. Thus, option D is the correct answer.