Building Preschool Children's Language and Literacy One Storybook at a Time

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Preschool educators often come to their classrooms without formal training in language and literacy pedagogy. The professional development tool featured here can help facilitate the literacy success of their students through shared storybook reading.

Preschool classrooms are dynamic and challenging places facilitated by a group of teachers and teaching assistants who are different in many ways from their elementary school peers. The call for efforts in prevention and early intervention in preschool must be answered with the needs of that workforce in mind. In this article, we share a practical tool to help teachers maximize the language and literacy benefits of shared storybook reading through planning and reflection. We begin by describing the audience we are targeting. Next we define shared storybook reading. We share our strategy for designing the tool. And finally we share the tool itself, along with some of the research that guided us, and how to use the tool for planning and reflecting on instruction.

The Reality of Preschool

Preschool teachers are charged with multiple responsibilities. Early childhood settings serve children who are still developing basic social and emotional strategies, fine and gross motor skills, and cognitive understandings. Preschool teachers teach strategies for health and personal hygiene. They introduce children to new expectations about interactions with peers and with adults. These multiple duties aside, preschool teachers must consciously develop oral language and emergent literacy skills. The literacy and language attainments children have at the start of kindergarten set the stage for their short- and long-term reading success (Adams, 1990).

Many preschool teachers develop their craft over time, but this is the exception rather than the rule. The complexity of the job, coupled with the historically low wages offered to the preschool teacher, produce high rates of turnover in preschool centers. At times, preschools serve as temporary training grounds for teachers who are in the process of earning elementary school credentials. For other teachers, the preschool setting proves too taxing and they move out of education. Providing a professional incentive system, livable wages, and opportunities for career building might tempt some teachers to remain in preschool; providing a professional support system to build confidence and competence might encourage others to remain. A systematic effort to curb the high staff turnover in preschool settings is a priority if preschools across the country are to realize their potential (Landry, Swank, Smith, Assel, & Gunnewig, 2006; Ryan & Ackerman, 2004). In the meantime, though, we are committed to sharing lessons from research that current preschool teachers can use right away.

There is mounting evidence that such initiatives can work. Preschool teachers who are provided with high-quality professional development are more likely to have students prepared for success in kindergarten (e.g., Dickinson & Caswell, 2007). The challenge is for the literacy research community and the early childhood research community to work together to design professional development for preschool teachers

specifically. For most, this work must be entirely job embedded; preschool teachers rarely have any paid planning time. For these reasons, we are sharing a practical tool for focusing attention on language and literacy during shared storybook reading.

Shared Storybook Reading

Shared storybook reading is a broad term, including all instances when an adult reads to a child or children, pausing to engage children in discussion about the text (Holdaway, 1979). That discussion includes items inside the text—the story and pictures and words and letters—and outside the text—responses and connections to experience. Preschool teachers can engage in shared storybook reading when they read to groups from big books or from children's literature trade books.

Shared storybook reading is relaxed and participatory, but it is not trivial. Opportunities to participate in shared storybook reading during the preschool years have been associated with gains in children's emergent literacy and future reading development (Bus, Van IJzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995; Wells, 1985). We choose shared storybook reading as a vehicle for improving language and literacy instruction because it represents a common, natural, and highly valued early literacy experience rather than an addition to the typical preschool day.

A shared storybook reading experience begins with selection of any text that will be engaging to children. It continues with teachers realizing the special potential of that text for building language or literacy. Although shared reading *can* target multiple emergent literacy skills, a single shared reading experience *should not* target every emergent language and literacy skill. Table 1 presents the areas of focus that we will consider.

We propose that teachers address all of these areas over time. That way they can free themselves to maximize the potential of a particular text on a particular day to serve as a vehicle for language and literacy for a particular group of preschoolers. We think that we can link research and practice to make their choices more concrete.

Our Research Strategy

We employed a research strategy that is part of a larger system called Concerns-Based Adoption Model

Table 1
Potential Language and Literacy Targets for Shared Storybook Reading

- Oral language development
- Vocabulary development
- Comprehension development
- Phonological awareness
- Print awareness

(CBAM). In this model, researchers assume that as a new practice is introduced, individuals tend to move from a focus on how the new practice will affect them to how they will enact it to whether it is working. Innovation Configuration (IC) is an observation tool that was designed in concert with CBAM work (Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1977; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987). It assumes that individuals implement any innovation in different ways and with varying levels of quality. The IC identifies the essential components of the practice and provides concrete examples from ideal implementation to least effective (Hord, 1986; Roy & Hord, 2004). This tool resonated with us because we expect that in an instructional environment as rich as shared storybook reading, preschool teachers will employ a wide range of practices.

Our IC was constructed systematically (Beauchat, 2009). We located research studies where storybook reading was used to bolster one or more early language or literacy skills. We identified specific practices associated with improved achievement. Next we prepared a concrete model of teacher talk during a shared storybook reading to illustrate each of those practices. We tested our model against actual shared reading practices in 15 different classrooms, captured on video. We organized teachers' real-world examples from least like to most like our model. When the video analysis was completed, we conducted a reliability check to see whether two raters could view one shared storybook event and apply the IC similarly. We achieved inter-rater reliability of 0.94.

Shared Story Book Reading Innovation Configuration

Here we share each section of our IC along with a selection of the research that informed it. For those

who would like to use the IC, an uninterrupted online version is available at dx.doi.org/10.1598/RT.63.1.3. We used a particular storybook, *Tabby Tiger's Saw*, to illustrate teacher language. This Big Book is designed for shared reading (Wright Group/McGraw-Hill, 2001). It features Tabby Tiger, a recurring character in a series of books, who uses her expertise as a carpenter to make several objects for her neighbors.

Oral Language Development

The oral language section of the IC is presented in Figure 1. During shared storybook reading, teachers develop children's language when they reflect upon and seize oral language development opportunities before, during, and after reading. The teacher has a captive audience and a context to model rich and descriptive language (e.g., Whitehurst, Arnold, et al., 1994). For example, you might hear a teacher add a comment like "I notice that Tabby Tiger has a lot of tools in her toolbag and a lot of materials in her work truck. I think that she is quite prepared to do some work today." Hearing sophisticated comments provides children models for their own language. Surely, this is the goal of oral language development.

Teachers can also ask open-ended questions that allow for multiple responses and connections to story content (e.g., Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000) and seize opportunities to repeat children's responses by building upon them with additional rich language (e.g., Whitehurst, Arnold, et al., 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1988). Teachers can use follow-up questions as a means to extend oral language when children offer only a one- or two-word response to a prompt or question (e.g., Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000). For example, a teacher could encourage a child by saying, "Yes, you're right. Bertie Bear does need a door. Why do you think he might need a door to his cottage?" Teachers can also play the role of active listener to engage children in deeper and richer conversation. The long-term goal of this type of language interaction is for children to learn to expand their explanations (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006).

Comprehension Development

The comprehension development section of the IC is presented in Figure 2. Teachers target comprehension when they ask children questions before, during, and after reading. These questions surely develop oral language, but that language is about text meaning. The questions they ask should include a range of thinking tasks. Whitehurst, Epstein, et al. (1994) suggested CROWD as an acronym for that range. Completion (C) questions, ask children to fill in a one-word answer to a question taken directly from the text (e.g., The cat was ____). Recall (R) questions ask children to remember a sequence of events from the text in order (e.g., First, the dog ate an apple. What did the dog eat second? Third? Last?). Open-ended (O) questions have no right or wrong answer but instead ask children to make comments or predictions (e.g., What do you think the character will do next?). Wh-prompts (W) use the traditional who, what, when, where question starters and normally require only one- or two-word answers (e.g., What kind of tool is this?). Finally, distancing (D) questions ask children to make connections between their lives and the text (e.g., Have you ever been as hungry as the bear? What did you do?).

Our IC targets a range of comprehension questions, and it may be useful for teachers to think about a before, during, and after structure. Before reading, the teacher may ask children to predict what they think the story will be about or model predicting using the picture on the front cover as a clue. During reading, the teacher can pose numerous open-ended questions, questions connecting the text to the readers, and questions connecting the text to other texts. The teacher can show children how to answer questions by thinking-aloud: "I wonder why Bobby needs a chair? He might need a chair because..." or pose open-ended questions to the children, such as "Why does Bobby bear need a chair for his table?"

After reading, the teacher can ask questions that cause the children to reflect on or connect to the story that they just heard. A teacher might ask, "Can you tell me something you remember?" Or the teacher can ask the children to connect the story to their own lives, "What are some things that you would like to build? Who would need to help you? Why?" By including a range of questions before, during, and after reading, the teacher can use each shared storybook to develop children's general comprehension.

Vocabulary Instruction

The vocabulary instruction section of the IC is presented in Figure 3. During shared storybook reading, teachers build children's vocabulary when they teach word meanings explicitly. Teachers can easily

Figure 1
Oral Language Development IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made		Least effective

Component: Rich Language Modeled

☐ Teacher intersperses descriptive language while reading and explaining story content.	☐ Teacher uses rich language, but children do not discuss the story.	☐ Teacher uses rich language, but it is not purposeful or related to the story.	☐ Teacher reads the words in the story and does not add any language (i.e., reads only the words).

Component: Open-Ended Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions that include use of why, how, or other open-ended questions through the majority of the reading.	☐ Teacher poses questions that elicit a one- or two-word response.	☐ Teacher poses questions that require children to fill in the blank.	☐ Teacher poses closed questions during the entire story.	☐ Teacher poses no questions during the reading of the story (i.e., reads only the words).

Component: Language Repetition and Expansion

☐ Teacher repeats a child's response and expands upon that response with rich language.	☐ Teacher repeats child's response but does not provide an expansion.	☐ Teacher does not repeat child's response nor does the teacher expand upon that response.

Component: Language Follow-Up Prompts

☐ After initial question, teacher prompts children to increase the sophistication of their description of the story.	☐ After initial question, teacher poses a follow-up question, but it does not allow for full explanation of the story.	☐ After initial question, teacher poses no follow-up questions or prompts to increase child's description of the story.

Component: Role of Listener

☐ Teacher listens to children's comments and uses them to engage children in conversation surrounding the story.	☐ Teacher listens to children's comments but does not use them to engage children in conversation.	☐ Teacher does not use group comments to engage children in conversation.

Component: Praise and Encouragement

☐ Teacher provides specific praise and encouragement for children's successes, participation, approximations, etc.	☐ Teacher provides praise that is not specific to children's successes, participation, approximations, etc.	☐ Teacher does not provide specific praise and encouragement for children's successes, participation, approximations, etc.

Figure 2
Comprehension Development IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made	Least effective

Component: Prediction Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions that elicit children to predict what a story may be about, what might happen next, or how the story might end.	☐ Teacher asks prediction questions during reading but does not use responses to engage children in the story.	☐ Teacher neither models nor elicits prediction questions during the shared reading session.

Component: Open-Ended Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions that include use of why, how, or other open-ended questions through the majority of the reading.	☐ Teacher poses questions that elicit a one- or two-word response.	☐ Teacher poses questions that require children to fill in the blank.	☐ Teacher poses closed questions during the entire story.	☐ Teacher poses no questions during the reading of the story (i.e., reads only the words).

Component: Text-to-Self Connection Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions that elicit children to make text-to-self connections to characters, setting, or story events.	☐ Teacher poses general text-to-self connection questions but does not have students explain personal connection.	☐ Teacher neither models nor poses text-to-self connection questions during the shared reading.

Component: Text-to-Text Connection Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions that elicit children to make connections to other texts that they have read.	☐ Teacher acknowledges similarities to another story but does not have students explain.	☐ Teacher neither models nor poses questions that elicit children to make connections to other texts that they have read.

Component: Reflection and Recall Questions

☐ Teacher models or poses questions at the end of the story that elicited children to reflect, summarize, or connect to the story just read.	☐ Teacher poses reflection questions that elicit a one- or two-word response.	☐ Teacher provides a summary of the story but does not elicit children to explain, reflect, or retell.	☐ Teacher ends reading by having students identify pictures on back cover as a means of ending the shared reading session.	☐ Teacher neither models nor poses reflection questions after reading.

Figure 3
Specific Word Vocabulary Instruction IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made		Least effective

Component: Specific Vocabulary Identification (during)

☐ Teacher asks questions during reading that request children to label or point to pictures of specific words.	☐ Teacher labels the pictures of specific words but does not have children label.	☐ Teacher does not draw attention or request children to label specific words represented in illustrations.

Component: Specific Vocabulary Infused Into Story (during)

☐ Teacher infuses specific word explanations as they occur during the story.	☐ Teacher draws attention to specific words but does not define or provide a clear explanation.	☐ Teacher responds to student interests but does not highlight any specific words. Specific words were not planned to be discussed.	☐ Teacher does not draw attention to words during the shared reading.

Component: Specific Vocabulary Introduction (before/after)

☐ Teacher introduces specific vocabulary using picture cards or props and poses questions about the word and encourages children to comment on the word.	☐ Teacher introduces each specific word on a card and children name each word.	☐ Teacher displays each specific word on a card and identifies each card.	☐ Teacher does not draw attention to any specific words on cards or props.

Component: Specific Vocabulary Repeated (before/after)

☐ Teacher asks children to repeat the specific words after the teacher has said them to establish a phonological representation.	☐ Teacher asks children to repeat some of the specific words after the teacher has said them.	☐ Teacher does not ask children to repeat the word after hearing the word.

Component: Specific Vocabulary in Child-Friendly Terms (before/after)

☐ Teacher explains all specific word meanings in child-friendly terms.	☐ Teacher explains some of the specific word meanings in child-friendly terms.	☐ Teacher provides explanation but it is not child friendly.	☐ Teacher provides no definitions of specific words.

Component: Specific Vocabulary Contextualized (before/after)

☐ Teacher explains meaning of specific words as they were used in or related to the story.	☐ Teacher explains the meaning of some of the specific words as they were used in or related to the story.	☐ Teacher does not explain meaning of specific words as they were used in the story.

(continued)

Figure 3 (continued)
Specific Word Vocabulary Instruction IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made	Least effective
Component: Specific Vocabulary in Other Contexts (before/after)		
☐ Teacher provides examples of each of the specific words outside of the story context.	☐ Teacher provides examples of some of the specific words outside of the story context.	☐ Teacher does not provide examples of specific words outside of story context.
Component: Specific Vocabulary Extended (before/after)		
☐ Teacher encourages students to construct their own examples or make judgments about the specific words.	☐ Teacher asks children questions about the specific words but does not have children explain word or experiences.	☐ Teacher does not encourage children to construct examples or make judgments about the words.

weave vocabulary instruction into shared reading. One way is to draw students' attention to target words by requesting that they either point to or label pictures (e.g., Wasik & Bond, 2001). A teacher may pause and ask, "Can you point to the magnifying glass?" Building upon the labeling or pointing, teachers can then provide a meaning of that specific word (e.g., Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003) saying, "I see that he is using a magnifying glass to look at the insect. A magnifying glass makes small things bigger so that we can see them better."

Teachers can engage students in vocabulary instruction directly before or after the shared reading event. The teacher might introduce a specific word using picture cards or props and then prompt students to discuss their understandings (Wasik & Bond, 2001). After introducing the word, the teacher can guide the children to say the word to establish a phonological representation (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). This procedure helps children to root that word in memory.

In the next step, the teacher can provide a child-friendly definition. A child-friendly definition uses language that children can easily understand (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2007). A teacher might say, "Safety goggles are a special kind of glasses we wear to protect our eyes, to keep them safe when we are using tools." Lastly, the teacher can provide a definition of the word as it was used in the story and then real-world examples of how that word could be used outside of the story (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2007). Teachers can provide their own examples and then prompt children to add additional examples. These procedures help children to see that words from inside the story can live outside it.

Phonological Awareness

The phonological awareness section of the IC is presented in Figure 4. Phonological awareness is the ability to attend to the sound structure of spoken language. Research indicates a sequence of phonological awareness skills from easiest (segmenting and blending the parts of compound words) to hardest (segmenting and blending the individual phonemes in words); however, research also stresses the importance of developing children's skills in these areas simultaneously (Lonigan, 2008). Preschoolers who are given training in phonological awareness have accelerated reading acquisition (Adams, 1990), but we target only the simplest tasks. These include work with rhyme, syllables, and initial sounds.

The preschool teacher can target children's phonological awareness during and after reading. During reading, the teacher may draw children's attention to rhyming words in the text, "What do you notice about the words *lunch* and *munch*?" or "Who can tell me two words that rhyme in the sentence I just

Figure 4
Phonological Awareness IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made	Least effective
Component: Rhyme Identification		Rhyming
☐ Teacher draws attention to the rhyming words and asks students what they notice about the words or has them identify a set of rhyming words just read.	☐ Teacher provides the rhyming words and asks students what they are called.	☐ Teacher reads a rhyming poem or story but draws no attention to any rhyming words.
Component: Rhyme Completion		Rhyming
☐ Teacher leaves off the last word of a sentence that requires children to fill in a possible rhyming word and discusses the pair of rhyming words.	☐ Teacher leaves off the last word of a sentence that requires children to fill in a possible rhyming word.	☐ Teacher does not provide opportunity for children to complete a rhyme.
Component: Rhyme Production		Rhyming
☐ Teacher models or elicits children to produce rhyming words and extends by writing them on a chart.	☐ Teacher models or elicits children to produce rhyming words but does not write them on a chart.	☐ Teacher does not provide opportunity for children to produce rhyming words.
Component: Counting Words		Word and Syllable Awareness
☐ Teacher models or elicits children to clap, tap, or snap words in a sentence and asks how many words they heard.	☐ Teacher models or elicits children to clap, tap, or snap words.	☐ Teacher does not model nor elicit children to clap, tap, or snap words in a sentence.
Component: Segmenting Syllables		Word and Syllable Awareness
☐ Teacher models or elicits children to segment the syllables in a word and count them.	☐ Teacher models or elicits children to segment the syllables in a word.	☐ Teacher does not model or elicit children to segment the syllables in a word.
Component: Blending Syllables		Word and Syllable Awareness
☐ Teacher models or elicits children to blend the segmented syllables of a word.		☐ Teacher does not model or elicit children to blend the segmented syllables of a word.
Component: Alliteration/Initial Sound Identification		Sound Awareness
☐ Teacher focuses on beginning sounds by drawing attention to words that have the same beginning sounds.	☐ Teacher says words with the same initial sound but does not draw attention to sounds.	☐ Teacher does not attend to opportunities to focus attention on beginning sounds.

read?" While reading the teacher can leave off the last word of a sentence that requires children to fill in a possible rhyming word and then discuss the pair of rhyming words. The discussion may sound like this:

Teacher: "She wants to run outside and play on this bright and beautiful sunny _____."

Children: Day.

Teacher: Yes, you helped me complete the sentence with a rhyming word. Our rhyming words are *play* and *day*.

After reading a text that uses rhyme, a teacher may engage children in producing new rhymes: "I am thinking about words that rhyme with *run*. They would have the same ending sound. Let's see...run... fun...run...sun," and then encourage children to join in: "Can you think of any words that might rhyme with *run*?" Similarly, the teacher can work with words, syllables, and initial sounds during or after reading. For example, a teacher can work at the word level by asking children to clap the number of words in a sentence, "Let's clap the words in the sentence. *Bertie Boar needs a door.* How many words did we hear? How many times did we clap?" This type of embedded word play (rather than out-of-context phonological awareness exercises) can become a natural part of shared storybook reading.

Book and Print Conventions

The book conventions section of the IC is presented in Figure 5. During shared storybook reading, teachers develop book conventions when they teach the forms, features, and functions of print (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). The storybook reading format complements instruction in concepts of print, providing a natural platform for modeling behaviors such as how to hold a book, turning pages from left to right, identifying a title, and differentiating between words and pictures (International Reading Association [IRA] & National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1998). Knowledge of book and print concepts may seem trivial; however, research indicates the importance of book and print awareness for later reading success (National Center for Family Literacy, 2007; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

To target children's development of book and print conventions, the preschool teacher could plan a repeating schedule for focusing on several conventions each day. For example, the teacher could designate Mondays for being explicit about how to hold a book and identifying the front cover and title page, Tuesdays for discussing the role of author and illustrator, Wednesdays for counting the number of words in the title and locating where to begin reading, Thursdays for demonstrating return sweep, and Fridays for counting the words in a sentence and letters in words. Following this schedule, the teacher focuses on each convention in the course of a week, and across several weeks children benefit from repeated exposures to the same skills.

In addition, the teacher can begin the school year mostly modeling the behaviors he or she is teaching and as children begin to grasp the concepts the teacher can elicit children's participation. For example, a teacher at the beginning of the year may model, "When I read, I start here and then I move this way (sliding finger from left to right)," and then progress to eliciting children's participation, "Which way do I read?"

Concept of Letter and Word

The concept of letter/word section of the IC is presented in Figure 6. Concept of letter is not the same thing as knowing the alphabet. Rather, it is the more rudimentary understanding that the individual marks that are used in a book are called letters. Likewise, concept of word is not the ability to read a word. Rather, it is the understanding that letters are used to represent words and that words are units of meaning. These concepts are fairly simple to teach during shared storybook reading, and they are the bedrock to early understandings (Morris, Bloodgood, & Perney, 2003).

During shared storybook reading, teachers develop concept of letter and concept of word when they tell children that they are tracking print: "While I read, I am putting my finger under each of the words I am saying. I just read the word *bear*. Now I am going to touch each of the letters in that word. Count the letters with me." As with concepts of print, concepts of word and letter can evolve from teacher modeling to student participation as children become comfortable with the terms.

Alphabet Knowledge

The alphabet knowledge section of the IC is presented in Figure 7. During shared storybook reading, teachers develop alphabet knowledge when they target

Figure 5
Book and Print Awareness IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made		Least effective

Component: Front of Book

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to identify front of book and encourages entire group to name the part of the book. | ☐ Teacher models or invites students to identify the front of the book but does not encourage group to label the part of the book. | | ☐ Teacher neither models nor invites students to identify the front of the book. |

Component: Back of Book

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to identify back of book and encourages entire group to name the part of the book. | ☐ Teacher models or invites students to identify the back of the book but does not encourage group to label the part of the book. | | ☐ Teacher neither models nor invites students to identify the back of a book. |

Component: Title of Book

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to point to the title of book. | ☐ Teacher invites a student to find the title. The student points, but the teacher does not point to the title and read it for the class or encourage class to repeat the title. | ☐ Teacher reads and points to the title of the book but does not say that it is the title. | ☐ Teacher reads title but does not point to words in the title as it was read. |

Component: Title Page

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to point to or name the title page. | ☐ Teacher discusses content on the title page (i.e. the pictures) but does not call it the title page. | | ☐ Teacher does not draw attention to title page. |

Component: Role of the Author

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to discuss the role of the author. | ☐ Teacher identifies a specific person as an author but does not discuss the role of an author. | | ☐ Teacher does not draw attention to the role of the author or name the author of the book. |

Component: Role of the Illustrator/Photographer

| ☐ Teacher models or invites students to discuss the role of the illustrator. | ☐ Teacher identifies the illustrator's name but does not discuss the role of an illustrator. | | ☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to discuss the role of the illustrator. |

Component: Top-to-Bottom Progression

| ☐ Teacher models and/or invites students to demonstrate top-to-bottom progression. | ☐ Teacher tracks print, but does not discuss the process. | | ☐ Teacher does not track print during shared reading. |

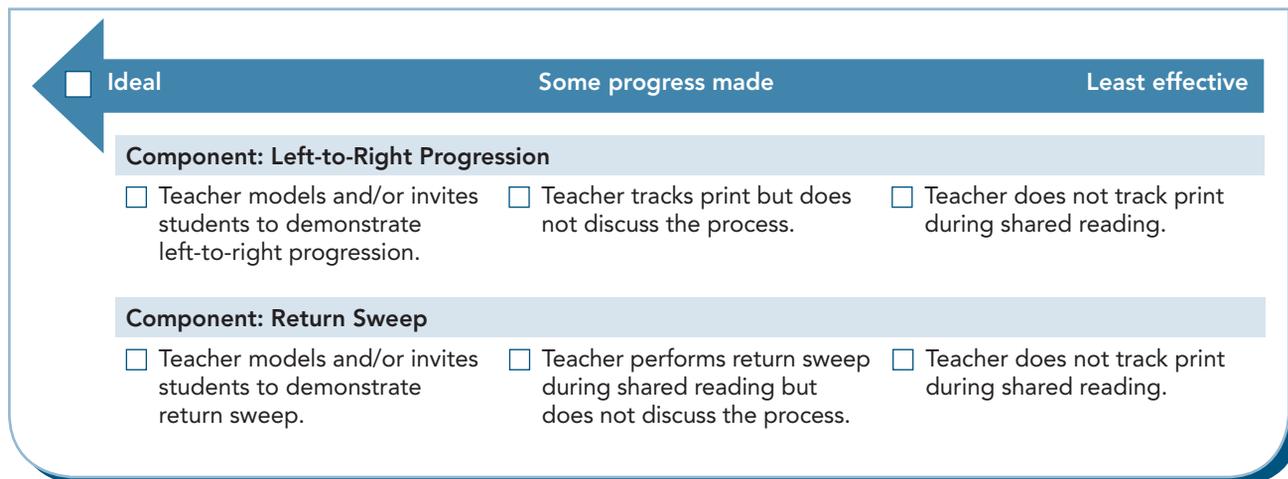*(continued)*

Figure 5 (continued)
Book and Print Awareness IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made	Least effective
Component: Left-to-Right Progression		
☐ Teacher models and/or invites students to demonstrate left-to-right progression.	☐ Teacher tracks print but does not discuss the process.	☐ Teacher does not track print during shared reading.
Component: Return Sweep		
☐ Teacher models and/or invites students to demonstrate return sweep.	☐ Teacher performs return sweep during shared reading but does not discuss the process.	☐ Teacher does not track print during shared reading.

Figure 6
Concept of Letter/Word IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made	Least effective
Component: Teacher Tracks Print		
☐ Teacher tracks print while reading shared storybook (i.e., teacher points to each word as he or she reads).	☐ Teacher tracks print partially during shared reading (i.e., not during the entire reading).	☐ Teacher does not track print during shared reading.
Component: Students Track Print		
☐ Teacher invites children to track print on a page while the teacher reads.	☐ Teacher invites all children to chant memorized text segment while he or she points to the words.	☐ Teacher does not invite children to track print on a page while reading.
Component: Count Words		
☐ Teacher models or invites students to count words on a title or page.	☐ Teacher counts the words in the title or sentence or invites a child to count the words but does not encourage students to count along or repeat.	☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to count words in title or page.
Component: Count Letters in a Word		
☐ Teacher models or invites students to count the letters in a word.	☐ Teacher counts the letters in a word or invites a child to count the letters but does not encourage students to count along or repeat.	☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to count the letters in a word.

Figure 7
Alphabet Knowledge IC Components

Ideal	Some progress made		Least effective
Component: Identify Any Letter			
☐ Teacher models or invites students to name any letter on a page or chart.	☐ Teacher points to and names a letter (or letters) but does not have students name the letter or letters.		☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to name any letter on a page or chart.
Component: Identify Specific Letter/Letters			
☐ Teacher models or invites students to name a specific letter/letters on a page or chart.	☐ Teacher points to and names specific letter/letters, but does not have students name the letter or letters.		☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to name a specific letter/letters on a page or chart.
Component: Identify a Letter in Child's Own Name			
☐ Teacher models or invites students to name a letter on a page or chart that contains a letter in their own names.		☐ Teacher does not model or invite students to name a letter on a page or chart that contains a letter in their own names.	
Component: Sound–Symbol Correspondence			
☐ Teacher makes a direct connection to a letter and the sound that it makes by showing the letter, having the students name the letter and sound, and by providing words that begin with that sound.	☐ Teacher provides letter example and asks students to name and make sound only.	☐ Teacher provides examples of words that begin with sound but does not provide the letter representation.	☐ Teacher did not draw attention to any letter–sound correspondences surrounding shared reading.

specific letters of the alphabet before, during, or after shared storybook reading. Alphabet recognition is one of the major early literacy skills that are predictive of children's later reading development (IRA/NAEYC, 1998; National Center for Family Literacy, 2007).

Teachers can model or invite children to identify any letter or letters on a page, a specific letter or letters on a page, or even a identify a letter in a child's name (IRA/NAEYC, 1998; Morris et al., 2003; National Center for Family Literacy, 2007). A teacher might pause on a page and say, "Can you find the letter *B* on this page?" or ask, "Can you name a letter on this page that is also a letter in your name?"

Putting It All Together

Using the IC to Plan a Shared Storybook Reading

The shared reading IC serves as a focused planning tool. A teacher can use the IC as a method of planning a shared reading and aligning the IC components to a specific Big Book or storybook. After selecting a Big Book, for example, *Tabby Tiger's Saw*, a teacher can use the IC planning chart (see Figure 8) to select the components to target. For example, the teacher may choose to focus on comprehension development, concept of letter/word, and phonological awareness.

Figure 8
Shared Reading IC Planning

This shared storybook reading is ideal to develop:

☐ Oral language development   ☐ Book and print conventions

☐ Comprehension development   ☐ Concept of letter or word

☐ Specific word instruction   ☐ Alphabet knowledge

☐ Phonological awareness

The IC can then be scaffolded for planning a shared reading that is purposeful and focused.

Using the IC to Reflect on a Shared Storybook Reading

The shared reading IC also serves as a means of focused reflection. It provides a powerful context for a teacher to engage in reflective practice; this is an essential component of teacher change. After a teacher has used the IC to *plan* a shared reading, it can be used to *reflect* on that shared reading. In a sense, the IC is a strategy that teachers can use for reflection before, during, and after reading (see Table 2).

One way for a teacher to engage in self-reflection is to videotape a shared reading. The teacher can then watch the shared reading session and consider his or her position on its continuum of practice and plan for the very next session.

Preschool teachers are charged with the responsibility to introduce children to classrooms. We acknowledge the responsibilities preschool teachers have. By sharing a practical tool that can be used in multiple ways to plan and reflect on shared storybook reading, it is our hope that preschool teachers feel supported in their efforts to provide high-quality oral language and literacy instruction.

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Table 2
Using the IC Before, During, and After Reading

Before Reading: Plan!
- Use IC planning chart to target components
- Use IC to plan shared reading

During Reading: Target!
- Target the identified components while conducting shared reading

After Reading: Reflect!
- Use the IC to chart current implementation
- Use the IC to reflect and plan for next session

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