



Introduction to Language Development and Emergent Literacy Domains for Young Infants

Domain Components:

- L1. Receptive Language
- L2. Expressive Language
- L3. Communication Skills
- L4. English Language Development of Dual Language Learners
- EL1. Engagement in literacy experiences and understandings of stories and books
- EL2. Phonological awareness
- EL3. Knowledge and use of books, print, and letters

Here are some important things to know about young infants and their language development and emergent literacy

- They have an inborn ability to communicate by crying to signal pain or distress. Later they smile and coo to show pleasure.
- They soon develop different cries to communicate hunger, pain, rage, and boredom, for example.
- They respond to voices, watch facial expressions, and turn their head to locate the speaker visually.
- They will often stop crying when someone speaks in a comforting way or they may be frightened by angry intonations.
- They often smile and coo when a parent or other caregiver is holding and talking and/or singing with them, especially when they are fully awake and alert. They enjoy “cooing conversations,” taking turns with a loving adult.
- They experiment with the sounds of language. For example, they babble, using all types of sounds and then combine babbling sounds.
- They listen to conversations and begin to recognize the names of familiar people and things.
- They become quiet or show pleasure when listening to a familiar story, rhyme or song.
- They attend to caregiver’s voice when being held and read to.

By knowing these special things about young infants, families and caregivers can better understand how to promote their language development and emergent literacy experiences.

Here is what happens when families and other caregivers help young infants learn to communicate and involve them in literacy experiences.

- They are learning to communicate with others.
- They are acquiring a love for literacy experiences such as stories, rhymes and songs.

Teacher Note: *Because the domains of Language and Emergent Literacy are so intertwined, they are combined in the Connecting with Infants curriculum.*



Connecting with Young Infants

LD Activity: “Talk, Talk, Talk”

Learning Goal: LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child’s home language)

You will need: You, each infant, and language at every opportunity throughout the day

Before you begin:

- Review your daily schedule and think of all the times you are involved in routines such as diapering, changing clothes, feeding and rocking each infant, times when they are on the floor playing with toys, plus other times such as taking them to the playground, or walking around the room or strolling them around the building.
- Begin to think of all of these times as opportunities for infants to hear, understand and respond to language. Their response will not be in words, but rather with eye contact, smiles, cooing and babbling, for example.

Try these language opportunities:

- Talk with each infant about what you are doing as you are diapering or changing the infant’s clothes, or dressing to go outside.
- Sit in a rocking chair or glider with an infant and talk in a soothing voice about nap time.
- Point to and name things in the environment. For example, name the toys the infant is playing with, talk about the sound a rattle makes.
- Call the infant’s attention to what other infants in the room are doing.
- Take an infant to the window and describe what he is seeing and hearing.
- Show an infant the pictures on the wall and name and talk about what the infant is seeing and what is happening in a picture.
- Describe what the infant is seeing and hearing as you transition to the playground. Call the infant’s attention to the cool breeze blowing on her or the birds singing in the trees.
- Greet the infant and her family by name as they bring the infant into your room. Talk about how glad you are to see them.
- Gain the infant’s attention when a family member comes in the room to pick up the infant. Say, “Selena, looks whose here. I know you’re excited to see Daddy.”



Connecting with Young Infants

LD Activity: “Making Sounds Together” “Look, Listen, Say”

Learning Goal: LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child’s home language)

You will need: You and an alert infant

Before you begin:

- Remember, “Look, Listen and Say” when talking with an infant.
- Closely observe the infant’s babblings. (**Look**)
- Ask yourself, “What sounds am I hearing?” (**Listen**)
(By 7 or 8 months, babies around the world typically make four basic sounds: “ba, ba”, “da, da”, “ma, ma” and “wa, wa”.)
- Echo the sounds and add new sounds. (**Say**)

Try this nurturing ritual!

- Listen to the infant’s babblings and then imitate the same sounds the infant is making. For example, if the infant says “*ba, ba, ba*”, then you echo back “*ba. ba, ba.*”
- Take turns talking with your infant. When it’s again your turn in the conversation, add one new sound for the infant to imitate. For example, say “*Wo, wo, wo*” or “*mu, mu, mu.*”
- Listen to the infant. If he repeats your sounds, echo them back to him.

Try this variation of the activity!

- Show him a favorite stuffed toy to “talk with the infant.”
- Show him a stuffed dog and say, “*Bow, wow, wow.*”





Connecting with Young Infants

EL Activity: “Looking at Books Together”

Learning Goals: LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child’s home language)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

You will need: Board or cloth books with simple, colorful pictures

Before you begin:

- Make sure the infant is rested and alert. A tired, hungry or cranky infant will not enjoy the reading experience
- Find a position that is comfortable for both of you. Place the infant on your lap so her head is supported. Hold the book within the infant’s visual range, about 12” or so.
- Remember, “Look, Listen, and Say.”

Try this nurturing ritual!

- Observe the infant’s interest in the book. Offer to read the book by asking, for example, “Laurie, would you like to read the book?” “We can read together.”
- Read the book if she shows interest. If she doesn’t show interest, just watch and wait a little while.
- Show her the pictures. Name and point to each object on the page.
- Make comments about the pictures and make the animal sounds. Listen for a response. Praise any babbling sounds or gestures. For example say, “Laurie, *that’s a cat*. A cat says ‘meow’.” Pause. “It’s a big yellow cat.”
- Watch what the infant does with the book. Let her handle and explore it. It’s okay for young infants to mouth books just as they do other toys and objects.
- Read books daily. Read books an infant loves again and again. Infants like familiar things.

Books to read with your young infant:

Refer to the Introduction and Tips and Techniques: What to Look for in Books for Young Infants and Examples of Some Books for Young Infants for a list of books.





Connecting with Young Infants

EL Activity: "I Like Rhymes and Songs"

Learning Goals: LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)
EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

You will need: You and an infant, time together

Before you begin:

- Become familiar with songs and rhymes that you can say and sing to the infant.

Try this!

- Take every opportunity to sing and say rhymes with infants each day; when you are rocking a infant, when you and the infant are on the floor together, when the infant is sleepy, for example.

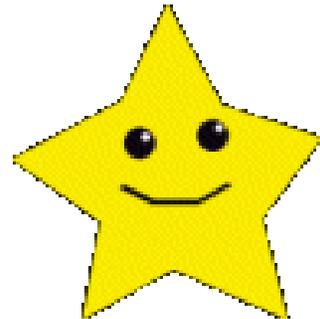
Try this with a sleepy infant!

- Sit in a rocker or glider and hold the infant comfortably in your arms
- Look into the infant's eyes and say or sing the rhyme you have selected.

Here are two examples of songs and rhymes:

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.



Good Night, Good Night

By Dennis Lee
The dark is dreaming.
Day is done.
Good night, good night to everyone.
Good night to the birds, and the fish in the sea,
Good night to the bears and good night to me.

Teacher Note: *A Child's Gift of Lullabies by Tanya Goodman, Wee Sing Nursery Rhymes & Lullabies, and Classic Nursery Rhymes by Hap Palmer are excellent resources for songs and rhymes.*

Teacher Note: *Refer to a book of nursery rhymes and select and learn those that you think the infants in your care will enjoy.*