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In the field of education, benchmarks refer to certain stages of achievement or development. The achievement of a benchmark is determined by observing the presence or absence of one or more behaviors. Literacy mostly develops through the stages we have presented in this book, though that development varies from child to child in terms of rate. Children often have, in effect, one foot in each of two stages.

Following are the stages we presented in Chapters 8 through 12, along with behaviors to help you determine whether a child has achieved a benchmark. In the chapters, we gave suggestions for assessing and recording these behaviors as well as suggestions for planning instruction based on this assessment.

Separating oral language, reading, and writing is almost impossible because they work together and, in part, develop together. For purposes of discussion, however, it is necessary to present the language systems separately. The overlap is apparent.

While benchmarks guide instruction for all students, English-language learners may develop differently from native speakers. Getting at the true competence of diverse learners may require special methods. We have addressed these differences throughout our discussion of assessing benchmarks.

## Early Emergent Literacy

### *Oral Language*

The child shows through both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) behaviors that language development is occurring.

#### **□ The child shows pleasure in stories, poems, and informational texts.**

- Attends to read-alouds
- Attends to CD-ROMs and to programs on television and will predict future events during commercials
- Can retell stories in sequence or tell what a story or an expository text is "about"
- Uses book language when retelling a story or informational text
- Likes to make up stories
- Tells a story or gives information to go with a picture

☐ **The child shows growing facility with the functions (uses) of language.**

- Retains oral directions to do more than one thing; usually can tell the directions back
- Makes verbal requests or gives verbal orders that others understand
- Asks questions for information and for permission
- Converses with peers and adults
- Reports orally on events in his or her life

☐ **The child enjoys word play.**

- Likes to play word games
- Pretends or role-plays using appropriate language
- Repeats and uses (sometimes inappropriately) new words

☐ **The child shows increasing knowledge of grammar and other language conventions.**

- Tells you a sentence doesn't make sense or sound right if incorrect syntax or incorrect facts are presented
- Is generalizing about such language oddities as irregular plurals and verb forms
- May be able to identify what is or is not a complete sentence, though cannot tell why

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*Reading and Book Knowledge*

☐ **The child has acquired many concepts about print.**

- Understands concepts about books and print
- Knows that labels name products or tell something about them
- Knows the purpose of some print
- Likes playing with movable and/or magnetic letters
- Asks questions about print and about own writing, scribbling, or drawing

☐ **The child is familiar with various genres.**

- Knows several/many nursery rhymes
- Knows several/many traditional stories such as fairy tales

☐ **The child begins to construct meaning.**

- Predicts what will happen next or what word or phrase comes next during a read-aloud
- Makes up stories to go with pictures

- Can retell a story he or she has heard
- Can play games such as “what if ...?”

▣ **The child enjoys literature and language.**

- Enjoys listening to stories read aloud
- Wants favorite stories read over and over
- Looks at books independently
- Pretends to read
- Enjoys playing with sounds and words

### *Writing and the Uses of Writing*

▣ **The child knows the purpose of writing.**

- Understands that the marks on a paper mean something
- Wants to write messages, letters, greeting cards, and shopping lists

▣ **The child tries to communicate in writing.**

- Uses paper and pencil (marker, crayon, chalk, typewriter, computer) to attempt to write
- Arranges movable letters, writes string of letterlike shapes, or hits random strings of letters on a keyboard and then asks, “What did I say?”

▣ **The child connects reading and writing.**

- Wants to label own pictures
- Understands that stories are made up by a person who thought of the story and then wrote it down, and that he or she can do this also
- Can spin out a story to go with attempts at writing and with drawings

## Emergent Literacy

### *Oral Language*

▣ **The student exhibits behaviors of Early Emergent Literacy to a greater degree.**

▣ **The student uses standard sentence construction and grammar.**

- Is recognizing use of nonstandard language in self and others
- Is developing a sense that school/book language is perhaps different from home or neighborhood language

- ▣ **The student's facility with oral language is growing.**
  - Makes self understood by peers and adults
  - Follows "rules" for conversation and discussion
  - Paraphrases what others have said
  - Participates in sharing
  - Retains oral directions
  - Can ask questions for clarification
  
- ▣ **The student's oral language reflects literature to which he or she is exposed.**
  - Uses new words from stories
  - Uses "book language" when appropriate; that is, storytelling narrative is clearly different from conversation or simply relating an event
  - Enjoys "making a play" of a favorite story
  
- ▣ **The student shows pleasure in language.**
  - Enjoys jokes related to words, such as puns
  - Enjoys tongue twisters
  - Enjoys hearing humorous books related to idioms
  - Is proud of learning new words
  - Tries out new words and asks what words mean

## *Reading*

- ▣ **The student exhibits behaviors of the Early Emergent Literacy stage to a greater degree.**
  
- ▣ **The student has acquired most or all of the concepts about print.**
  - Handles book in correct position; knows where to begin reading and in what direction to read
  - Can point to a word, two words, a letter, two letters
  - Knows that print should match the voice of the reader
  - Knows about such book parts as title, author, and illustrator
  
- ▣ **The student is using print in everyday life.**
  - Can locate a specific book, record, CD, audiotape, and so forth
  - Recognizes some environmental print, such as brand names and fast-food restaurant signs

- ◻ **The student is learning decoding skills: letters and words.**
  - Recognizes and can name most letters
  - Can match many upper- and lower-case letters
  - Recognizes and can name some words
  - Recognizes own name in print and perhaps other names
- ◻ **The student shows evidence of phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle.**
- ◻ **The student is beginning to use phonics; knows many letter-sound associations, both consonants and vowels.**
- ◻ **The student is beginning to use other decoding strategies to begin to build fluency: sight words, context, graphics, and word structure.**
- ◻ **The student is constructing meaning.**
  - Can retell a story page by page
  - Can summarize
  - Participates in small-group and whole-class discussions about books and stories
  - Talks about books with others
  - Responds to books in writing
  - Begins to see self as a reader

## Writing

- ◻ **The student exhibits continued growth in many of the Early Emergent Literacy behaviors.**
- ◻ **The student knows and writes his or her name and some letters and uses some other writing conventions.**
  - Can write own name (perhaps first name only), with all or most of the letters present, though not necessarily formed correctly
  - Can name most letters in random presentation
  - Forms letterlike shapes and some correct letters
  - Uses some punctuation
- ◻ **The student is using phonemic awareness in writing.**
- ◻ **The student is using sound/symbol association in writing.**
  - Can give a letter sound or say a word that begins with the letter sound
- ◻ **The student is using writing for own purposes.**
  - Can keep a journal that may combine drawing and writing

- Shows interest in practicing writing, often through copying favorite stories from books
- Shares writing with others
- Attempts to read others' writing

▣ **The student is becoming familiar with the writing process.**

- Uses the steps of the process appropriately with guidance
- Understands that the author of what is read has also gone through a process of some kind

▣ **The student is constructing meaning in writing.**

- Responds to reading
- Composes both narrative and expository pieces
- Expresses and reports on personal events and feelings

## Beginning Reading and Writing

### *Oral Language*

▣ **The student exhibits behaviors from Emergent Literacy to a greater degree.**

▣ **The student's use of standard English continues to develop.**

- If speaker of nonstandard English, is learning to switch between two languages
- Self-corrects while speaking

▣ **The student's vocabulary is growing.**

- Is using increased vocabulary
- Will ask for meaning of unknown words in class

▣ **The student's facility with language is growing.**

- Listens to classmates and can paraphrase what others have said
- Is interested in collaborative work with classmates
- Can participate in a discussion
- Can plan and ask oral questions
- Will plan and present an oral report

▣ **student continues to show pleasure in words.**

- Makes jokes related to plays on words
- Shows interest in the history of words
- Enjoys nonsense and silly poems
- Enjoys making own dictionary

## Reading

- ▣ **The student continues to show growth in many of the behaviors from Emergent Literacy.**
- ▣ **The student knows letters and many sight words.**
  - Recognizes and can name all letters in random order
  - Recognizes and can name many words at sight
- ▣ **The student uses phonics and structural elements to determine the pronunciations of words.**
  - Chooses appropriate strategies and skills to identify unfamiliar words
- ▣ **The student uses context to determine word meaning and build vocabulary.**
- ▣ **The student is beginning to use critical comprehension strategies such as visualizing, predicting, identifying important information, self-questioning, monitoring, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating.**
- ▣ **The student exhibits fluency and comprehension of a variety of materials.**
  - Can read and retell familiar stories
  - Reads own writing
  - Attempts to read and retell unfamiliar texts (narrative and expository)
  - Self-corrects when reading
- ▣ **The student is confident about reading ability.**
  - Is willing to take risks
  - Chooses to read during free time
  - Sees self as a reader
  - Likes to read to others
- ▣ **The student begins to explore using research tools and skills.**
  - Uses glossary, table of contents, dictionary or picture dictionary, beginning encyclopedias, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and the library

## Writing

- ▣ **The student exhibits continued growth in many of the Emergent Literacy behaviors.**

□ **The student exhibits a variety of general writing behaviors.**

- Enjoys writing
- Is confident about own writing
- Communicates with others spontaneously
- Attempts to read others' writing
- Writes in a variety of formats for different purposes, such as journals, learning logs, notes, lists, stories, poems, reports, and labels

□ **The student is growing in the use of the mechanics and conventions of writing.**

- Forms letters conventionally (mostly)
- Shows increased use of phonemic awareness, along with increased visual memory and spelling sense
- Invents spelling using knowledge of sound/symbol relationships when conventional spelling not known
- Is beginning to learn spelling patterns that reflect phonics knowledge
- Edits and proofreads spelling and conventions if writing is to be published
- Recognizes nonstandard usage and grammar in own writing and edits/proofreads
- Uses word processing

□ **The student uses the writing process.**

- Participates in and understands the purpose of all steps of the writing process
- Uses the writing process collaboratively and independently
- Listens to or reads the writing of others and makes positive comments related to story parts or text structure

## Almost Fluent Reading and Writing

### *Oral Language*

□ **The student exhibits continued growth in many behaviors from Beginning Reading and Writing.**

□ **The student's use of standard English continues to develop.**

- Is aware of own problem areas
- Accepts diverse usage or varieties of English from others without criticism

- ▣ **The student's facility with language is growing.**
  - Collaborates with classmates in speaking and listening situations
  - Participates in discussion without adult supervision
  - Can listen to and then question or respond to (use an idea expressed by) a speaker
  - Speaks in front of a group using written notes but no script
  
- ▣ **The student's oral and listening vocabulary reflects increased growth and pleasure in language.**
  - Uses new vocabulary
  - Appreciates symbolic language such as metaphor
  - Enjoys listening to and telling riddles and jokes
  - Begins to appreciate shades of meaning, connotation, precise word choice, and the evocative power of certain words
  - Recognizes and begins to use persuasive techniques

## *Reading*

- ▣ **The student exhibits continued growth in behaviors from Beginning Reading and Writing.**
  
- ▣ **The student shows increasing fluency and appropriate use of all word recognition strategies.**
  - Uses structure, phonics, and syntax (language structure) to determine word pronunciation
  - Uses context to determine word meaning
  - Selects appropriate skills and strategies to sound out unknown words
  - Reads orally with 90 percent accuracy in grade-level materials
  - Self-corrects
  - Takes risks
  - Uses a dictionary both for pronunciation and for meaning
  
- ▣ **The student's comprehension, or construction of meaning, is growing.**
  - Enjoys listening to selections that may be beyond his or her reading ability
  - Reads independently
  - Enjoys reading a variety of genres
  - Chooses to read outside of school
  - Prefers to read silently
  - Continues to grow in the use of comprehension strategies: visualizing, predicting, identifying important information, self-questioning, monitoring, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating

▣ **The student reads for a variety of purposes.**

- Appreciates levels of meaning in stories
- Has a growing interest in authors, illustrators, and genres
- Is aware of own purposes(s) for reading
- Is beginning to understand text structure in expository text
- Uses a variety of print sources for information
- Is learning to synthesize information from more than one source

▣ **The student is learning research skills.**

- Uses card catalog or computer search engine
- Is learning to narrow search in print and online sources
- Operates a computer, including keyboarding
- Is learning to read graphic materials such as graphs, charts, tables, timelines, and maps
- Uses dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, and other references in print, on CD-ROM, or online

## Writing

▣ **The student exhibits continued growth in behaviors from Beginning Reading and Writing.**

▣ **The student writes for a variety of purposes.**

- Is aware of the power of the written word
- Can identify a topic and theme and develop a paper to fit a given rubric
- Can plan and put together a report
- Writes stories with all the literary elements present

▣ **The student shows growth in the mechanics and conventions of writing.**

- Uses spelling patterns to attempt to spell words
- Uses increasingly conventional spelling, demonstrating increased visual memory and spelling sense
- Uses increasingly appropriate grammar and punctuation in writing
- Uses word processing tools to check spelling, to format, to revise, and to edit

▣ **The student shows pleasure and confidence in writing.**

- Sees self as a writer
- Chooses to write in free time and at home
- Seeks suggestions for revision during peer and teacher conferences

- Enjoys sharing writing with peers by reading aloud or by publishing in print or on disk
- Enjoys and supports the writing of classmates, offering constructive comments when asked

▣ **The student connects reading and writing.**

- Uses elements of narrative writing, such as form, theme, literary techniques, style, idioms, and colorful language, in own writing
- Uses various text structures to organize information in expository writing
- Appreciates poetry forms and attempts to write them

## Fluent Reading and Writing

### *Oral Language*

▣ **The student exhibits continued growth in behaviors from previous stages.**

▣ **The student's vocabulary and facility with language are growing.**

- Shows increasing vocabulary in oral language
- Shifts from formal to informal usage to suit occasion
- Listens to oral presentations with understanding

▣ **The student uses oral language for a variety of purposes.**

- Discusses literature with pleasure and understanding
- Enjoys role playing and Readers Theater
- May enjoy debate or speech competition

▣ **The student continues to enjoy language.**

- Is sensitive to body language and tone of others and self
- Appreciates the importance of speech in interpreting the written word; for example, news reports, actors, comedians

### *Reading*

▣ **The student continues to display many of the behaviors from the Almost Fluent Reading and Writing stage.**

▣ **The student seldom seeks or needs assistance with word recognition.**

▣ **The student uses a wide variety of comprehension strategies to construct meaning.**

- Grasps differences among genres
- Perceives text structure
- Appreciates levels of meaning in a story
- Varies reading according to purpose for reading
- Effectively uses strategies: visualizing, predicting, identifying important information, self-questioning, monitoring, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating
- Can verbalize process used to construct meaning; that is, is aware of own thinking (metacognition)
- Is learning study strategies such as taking notes
- Uses graphic material to construct meaning

▣ **The student enjoys reading.**

- Recommends books to others
- Is exploring young adult and adult fiction and nonfiction
- Sees self as a competent reader
- Sets goals and self-evaluates
- Is aware of own purposes for reading

▣ **The student is refining research skills begun at the previous stage.**

- Can plan a research project
- Knows how to locate print and electronic information
- Takes notes in a variety of ways; attributes sources
- Synthesizes information into a final product

## Writing

▣ **Prior writing behaviors strengthen and deepen.**

▣ **The student writes for a variety of purposes and reasons.**

- Is aware of how writing can contribute to self-awareness
- Uses writing to persuade
- Can write in response to a prompt to fit a given rubric

▣ **The student is growing in the mechanics of writing.**

- Edits own work
- Can edit the work of others
- Can independently verify spelling, grammar, and usage

- ▣ **The student is using the writing process.**
  - Uses all steps of the writing process independently
  - Varies prewriting techniques according to task
  - Revises own work extensively
  - Is developing a personal writing style, or voice
  
- ▣ **The student sees self as a competent writer.**
  - Sets goals and evaluates own writing
  
- ▣ **The student connects reading and writing.**
  - Recognizes author's craft and uses in own writing
  - Is experimenting with writing in many forms