

# What Is Your Research Base for Nellie Edge Online Seminars?

We honor how the young child's brain learns best!



Our vision, philosophy, and research base

# What Is Your Research Base for Nellie Edge Online Seminars?

We honor how the young child's brain learns best!

Our vision, philosophy, and research base



## Table of Contents

Nellie Edge Professional Development: Our Vision and Challenge .....	1
SMILE Approach to Joyful, Accelerated Literacy .....	2
My Philosophy: How Kindergarten Children Learn .....	6
What Is Your Research Base? 7 Practical Principles of the Brain.....	9
Parents: Why We Use Sign Language and Fingerspelling .....	12
Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy: Excerpts from <i>Dancing with Words</i> .....	14
Practices That Make the Biggest Difference in Student Learning .....	15
Excerpts from <i>Visible Learning</i> by John Hattie .....	17
We Build Growth Mindset, Emotional Intelligence, and Metacognition .....	18
Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best: ... "Books That Sing and Rhyme" .....	19
10 Best Practices for Growing Young Writers: Action Research .....	22
Thoughts on Teaching, Learning, and Kindergarten Writing.....	23
Developing Phonemic Awareness: This is What We Know For Sure.....	24
Excerpts from What Really Matters in Teaching Phonics Today .....	25
It Is Developmentally Appropriate to Have High Expectations .....	26
The Wisdom of Regie Routman: Excerpts from <i>Read, Write, Lead</i> .....	27
Excerpts from <i>The Daily 5</i> : Fostering Independence .....	29
Thoughts and Quotes from Master Kindergarten Teacher and Author Bobbi Fisher .....	30
Analyzing Kindergarten Professional Development and Literacy Adoptions .....	31
Meeting Kindergarten ELA Common Core State Standards .....	33
Quotes That Inspire Our Practice.....	36



# Nellie Edge Professional Development: Our Vision and Challenge



Nellie Edge Online Seminars and Professional Development Workshops are committed to helping all children including English Language Learners (ELLs) achieve the rigor of the Common Core State Standards through joyful pathways to learning. Our workshops, presented by outstanding teacher-researchers, are designed to integrate current research and state-of-the-art literacy practices that are meaning-centered and in harmony with how the young child's brain learns best.

Our action-research has proved that joyful writing-to-read strategies within a comprehensive literacy framework accelerate literacy and produce unexpectedly high outcomes. Our purpose is to share best practices" and to inspire reflection, collaboration, and intentional teaching. "How can I do an even better job reaching every child?" and "How do I create a classroom community that recognizes the social nature of learning, the importance of the mentor-apprentice relationship, and the vital role of the educational arts?" When teachers truly understand the writing and reading process and the power of multisensory teaching, they can more easily and effectively create responsive environments that embrace the diverse learning styles and gifts that our children bring to school. **Rigorous standards are reached when children are deeply engaged in authentic literacy experiences and challenged to become ambitious readers, writers, and thinkers.**

Bruno Bettelheim's research reminds us that how children perceive themselves in the act of learning to read generalizes to their whole self-concept. With this in mind, we are committed, through our professional development programs and literacy resources, to assist teachers in creating challenging and caring learning environments that will provide all children with the foundations they need to build on success. **We believe learning to read and write must be a meaning-centered, engaging process.** Our expectation is that every child can and will develop high levels of literacy skills while building belief systems of competence, belonging, and the motivation to do their best.

Our Online Seminars, workshops and resources support our commitment to excellence in literacy, the honoring of childhood, and our belief that educators can and must positively influence the lives of children and the future of our democratic society.

**Our vision is... creating schools worthy of our children:**  
joyful and rigorous learning communities!

## Study Questions for Professional Learning Communities



You will see this symbol in our resource materials. This symbol is for reflection: With our hearts, we know how to apply "best practices" research while we reach for the stars with the lives of our children.



## The SMILE Approach to Accelerated Literacy: Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best

The **SMILE** approach to literacy is **systematic, multisensory and engaging** for young learners. It embraces and supports diverse learning styles and the wide range of language and literacy needs seen in most early childhood classrooms. This accelerated learning model is especially powerful for our high-needs children. In classrooms that incorporate

**SMILE principles, the entire class enjoys literacy experiences with high-quality literature, fascinating nonfiction, songs, poems, rhymes and dances.** This invites them to think, have fun and feel a sense of belonging while enhancing oral language skills and physical coordination. **Then we build on success through differentiated instruction that is active, motivating and appropriate for individual learners while fostering a love of language.** Our comprehensive instructional model acknowledges the social-emotional aspects of learning and children's inherent love of nature. We celebrate the power of music, movement, sign language and the educational arts as translators of meaning. Our teaching makes us smile and it makes children smile. It also delights the hearts of parents as they see their children's enthusiasm for learning. **Brain-friendly literacy™ always evokes a SMILE and thus our acronym:**

Systematic, scaffolded.

Meaningful, multisensory, memorable, motivating.

Integrated (with the arts, science and children's lives), intentional.

Literacy (literature and language with love).

Experiences. Engaging ones!

The **SMILE** instructional model begins with the assumption that **teachers' first concern is in creating a joyful community of learners and bonding with each child and their families.** We recognize the vital role of the emotions and parent collaboration in learning. Our teaching colleagues have proved that once we create a caring community and an engaging curriculum with parents as partners, the levels of learning soar for all children. The intrinsic reward of this type of meaning-centered learning is high motivation for children - and their teachers.

I was honored when the **term SMILE** was first used to describe our **Nellie Edge Seminars** approach to language and literacy instruction by the **Kapa'a Elementary School** primary teachers (on Kauai). After receiving training, they used our accelerated literacy model to create a K-2 "school within a school" in 1995, which they called **SMILE (School for Meaningful Integrated Language Experiences)**. Our expanded acronym is still true to the heart of that original title 10/2018. Remembering my visit to these engaging Kauai classrooms where children sang, signed, and performed language still brings a **SMILE** and warm aloha.





# The SMILE Approach to Joyful and Accelerated Literacy:

## *Principles and Practices That Celebrate Language and Honor Childhood*

*We know how to reach Common Core Standards in kindergarten—a CHILD'S GARDEN!*



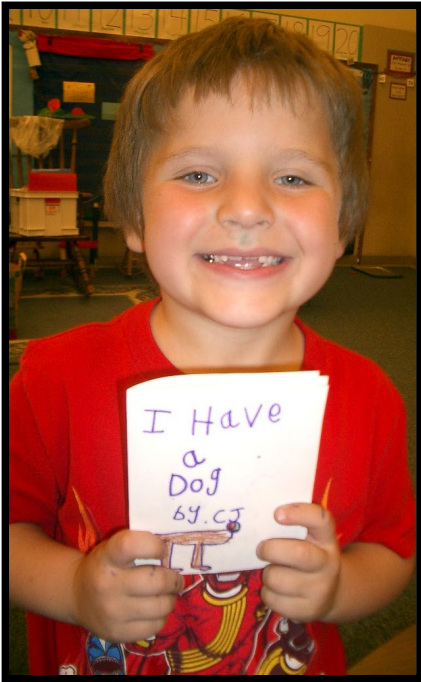
We create **beautiful**, organized, **language-intensive environments** that are **emotionally safe** and noncompetitive. We have **high expectations**. We **weave the educational arts** into all areas of curriculum. Our children develop friendships. They learn to make choices and are involved in **meaningful projects**. As educators we are reflective, continuously learning how to provide the scaffolding needed for every child to build on success, every day. We teach systematically and intuitively. **We take advantage of how the brain learns best** - and we save time for serendipity.

**These 14 principles, within a loving, disciplined and joyful atmosphere, provide a foundation and framework for excellence:**

- **Bond with students and create a joyful community** where children care and share and learn together. Our language build's trust, nurtures self-esteem and develops responsibility.
- **Kindergarten is for language:** Phonemic awareness is "language play - every day, books and songs - all day long." The biggest single kindergarten predictors of phonemic awareness and later reading success are still oral language development. We can be systematic in our teaching - and playful! We know that the body needs to move, the human heart needs to sing and the brain was created to learn through music.
- **Engage "the heart of the kindergarten child":** Create memorable rituals, traditions and celebrations of language that enhance learning. Weaving joy, personal meaning and depth into the learning community creates a love of learning.
- **Use multisensory ABC and phonics immersion strategies:** Children deserve emotionally engaging instruction that is also explicit, systematic and differentiated for their needs. Accelerate mastery of the alphabetic principal through singing, signing and reading one consistent ABC Phonics song several times a day with parent collaboration. Our action-research team demonstrated phenomenal results with these practices.
- **Involve parents as partners:** Multiply your teaching effectiveness. This is not an option. All parents want their children to be successful in school. Parents and teachers jointly share responsibility for educating their children. There will be intergenerational benefits.



## Joyful Accelerated Literacy Makes Children SMILE



- **Teach concepts about print, handwriting, high-frequency words, and reading – their way:** Use auditory spelling strategies, name tickets, word matching, sentence building, singing, signing, “stamp and read books” and “kid writing.” Create literacy work centers where children use reading and writing for real purposes. Skillfully transition from “magical memory reading” to guided reading. Use the Neurological Impress Method (NIM) to build fluent independent reading. Differentiate instruction for diverse learners.
- **Build a systematic and engaging “writing to read” curriculum:** All kindergartners love to draw, write, and make books. Daily “kid writing” teaches reading. It allows children to practice phonics in action. Drawing and writing are reciprocal thinking and symbol systems that honor the child’s voice and vision.
- **Develop comprehension strategies and thinking skills** with quality fiction and nonfiction and meaning-centered activities throughout the curriculum.

Engage children in dialog and develop metacognition (thinking about our thinking).

- **Awaken children’s love of nature:** Connect children with the natural world outside the classroom. Create a classroom of bird watchers, stargazers, rock collectors, tree experts, and animal and plant enthusiasts. Use children’s fascination with nature and their social connections to create a compelling reason to read and write. **Children may decide “I’m gonna be a paleontologist or ornithologist when I grow up!”** (And always there is poetry and song...)
- **Honor the vital role of play in children’s cognitive and social-emotional development.** Put learning in the children’s hands. Give children ownership, responsibility and choices in their learning. Make cooperative learning come alive through dramatic play, block building, group field trips and hands-on experiences. Challenge children to set high personal goals, empower them with “I can’s.” We are developing literacy - and life skills.



- **Build voracious vocabulary learning habits** explicitly, systematically, mindfully and playfully throughout the curriculum. **Create a talking classroom.** Reinforce basic language concepts and expand children’s responses to who, what, where, when, how and why questions. Introduce powerful vocabulary through rich project learning and poetry. **Watch children become collectors of wonderful new words as they play at being architects and engineers.**



## And Teachers SMILE and Parents SMILE...



- **Teach in an emotionally engaging way and celebrate the educational arts as translators of meaning:** Integrate music, drama, art, movement, dance and sign language (and love, joy, laughter, and enthusiasm) throughout the curriculum in everything you do. Bring your passions into the classroom. **Love books, love learning, and love the children.** They remember what we love. Children see a reflection of who they are and who they can become through our eyes.

- **Authentic assessment empowers children to take responsibility for their learning and pride in their accomplishments.** Student-led parent conferences help children set personal goals, evaluate progress and celebrate their accomplishments. We build intrinsic motivation for children to do their best.



- **Create a beautiful learning environment:** Involve the children in creating an environment that is warm, comfortable and home-like. Create order and harmony and give children responsibilities for maintaining the environment. Classrooms need live plants, flowers, good lighting, art prints and photos of the children engaged in meaningful studies and playful explorations. Let the walls of your classroom reflect the lives of the children. Celebrate childhood and celebrate learning.



The S.M.I.L.E. approach to accelerated literacy is joyful, rigorous, and developmentally appropriate. We make heart connections and take advantage of how the young child's brain learns best. (See  video clips of joyful accelerated literacy at [www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com).)

(Systematic [scaffolded], Meaningful [multisensory], and Integrated Literacy Experiences)



**What learning experiences make you smile? How were you taught in the best of your school memories? How will you build more SMILES into your classroom?**

*This symbol is for reflection: With our heart we know how to apply "best practices" research while we reach for the stars with the lives of our children.)*

# How Kindergarten Children Learn: My Teaching Philosophy

Nellie Edge Kindergarten Cadre

**Bonds:** We believe that respectful, caring bonds with children and their families are the vital foundation for an empowering kindergarten experience. As teachers of the young, we share with parents the responsibility for educating their child.



**Differentiation:** We believe that each child has unique strengths, prior language learning experiences, and preferred learning styles. Our instruction within a comprehensive literacy framework must be differentiated to provide enough challenge and support for all children to build on success and develop positive attitudes toward themselves and learning.

**Emotion:** We believe that emotional engagement is the key to all powerful learning. That is why we bring love, laughter, passion, the arts, and meaningful project work into our kindergarten. We seek for ways to personalize learning and engage the child's imagination.

**Language:** We believe childhood is for language. It is the familiarity with the English and Spanish languages that precedes and underlies excellent literacy instruction. This familiarity allows the child's decoding to be error-free and reading to be fluent. While actively and systematically developing language, we encourage children to become "voracious vocabulary learners," master ABC phonics skills, and build reading comprehension to meet rigorous Common Core standards.

**Performing:** We believe that children deserve to memorize, recite, and perform many delightful pieces of language in kindergarten — to turn print into sound and turn the pleasures of sound over to an appreciative audience. Our curriculum invites children to talk, sing, dramatize, and perform language. Developing the child's "I can" attitude and capacity for language and thinking underlies everything we do.

**Creativity:** We believe that rich experiences in the many languages of art, music, drama, dance, storytelling, and play help children develop social-emotional skills and find personal meaning in school. We intentionally develop these multiple "ways of knowing" while nurturing creative and higher-order thinking.

**Environment:** We believe children deserve a beautiful, organized, and nurturing environment that is clutter-free. Our anchor charts show children what learning success looks like. Photos of our students and their art adorn the walls, creating an atmosphere of belonging, friendship, and collaboration.

**Perseverance and Growth Mindset:** We believe positive discipline, dependable routines, and empowering messages help children develop self-discipline, perseverance, and the belief that when they work hard, they can accomplish any new goal. A growth mindset prepares children for success in school—and in life.

**Multisensory Teaching:** We have proved that joyful Multisensory ABC/Phonics Immersion strategies (singing, signing, fingerspelling, and writing) are the fastest way to develop



**mastery of letters and sounds.** These instructional practices are consistent with how the young child's brain learns best. Active art-infused teaching builds motivation and enthusiasm for learning and incorporates an optimal learning framework.

**Proven Kindergarten Phonics:** We have learned that some children need much more systematic, intentional phonics practice to build fluency with phonics-based words and fluency reading and writing high-frequency sight words. **Phonics instruction must be embedded in authentic reading and writing tasks. It must be differentiated** right from the start to allow proficient students to soar and provide a scaffold of success for less experienced learners.

**Literature:** We believe we must choose only the finest literature, nonfiction, songs, poems, and rhymes to give our children. These language models are the seeds that inspire our children to love language and grow into powerful writers and thinkers. We want imaginative language, poetic phrases, and metaphors to become a part of our children's thinking, speaking, and writing. The first books children read must inform and delight the heart and mind.

**Writing to Read:** We have proven the research that shows writing unlocks the key to higher literacy standards in kindergarten. We believe that children deserve strategies to begin drawing, storytelling, and writing from the very first day of school: Our students love to write! Within the context of writing, we systematically provide phonics instruction (encoding sounds to print) that has meaning to each child so they understand how the writing/reading process works.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** We believe that all young children deserve to learn memorable songs in American Sign Language (ASL). Children fortunate enough to learn ASL and experience the joys of performing delightful songs in sign for appreciative audiences have a lifelong advantage in developing dynamic communication skills.

**Memory Reading:** We believe that "magical memory reading" and reading the pictures are essential literacy experiences for young children who may have limited language and print experience. "Memory reading" and reading the pictures with nursery rhymes and song picture books build oral language fluency and allow children to develop concepts of print while learning to read word-for-word. These opportunities to role-play themselves as successful readers while systematically learning phonics skills and sight words must accompany traditional shared and guided reading instruction — especially for children who have not had years of repeated "magical memory reading" experiences at home. One of the ways we develop oral language and reading foundations simultaneously is with our "I Can Read" Anthology Notebooks.

**Books:** We believe that parents and children need to understand that engaging experiences with real books build real readers. Research documents that reading just right "I can read" books of one's own choosing every day at school is the best way to become a better reader. Young children can develop skill in choosing books and take pride in building their stamina as they become proficient readers. We encourage family reading rituals because the best readers have families who read with them every night!

**Scaffolding:** We believe some children need much more carefully scaffolded instruction than we used to consider appropriate. We support these students early in the year. As teacher-

researchers, we love the challenge of building success for each individual learner. We are constantly learning and open to new insights from evidence-based research and our wise teaching colleagues. Our high expectations for children's literacy development, thinking skills, and love of learning keep us challenged and reflective.

**Nature:** We believe that by awakening children's love of nature, we create compelling reasons for them to want to read, write, research, and to meet the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Our goal is to develop a sense of wonder and respect for the natural world. As we bring our connections with nature back into the classroom, we create a more engaging and lively learning environment. Children who learn to observe closely, think deeply, and respect the natural world will make wiser ecological choices now ... and in the future.

**Making Things:** We encourage our budding scientists, engineers, artists, writers, and mathematicians with a curriculum that invites them to make things...to ask, imagine, plan, create. We are intentionally growing creative thinkers for future science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers. Building and making things develop not only the engineering brain but allow children to believe they can do great things!

**Joy:** We believe that the kindergarten experience must nurture social-emotional skills in each child and create joyful school memories. Kindergarten is a magical journey, and one of our jobs is to develop the imagination and create memorable rituals, traditions, and celebrations that honor childhood. We value dramatic play, block building, dance and movement, and the many forms of literacy play. We want children to be active learners and disciplined, creative thinkers; to learn to work hard, make good choices, and be kind. We want children to love coming to school each day.

**SMILE!** We believe that young children deserve a multisensory and differentiated literacy program within a joyful, caring community of learners — a *child's garden*. Their lives must be valued, celebrated, and incorporated into the literacy curriculum so they care about school and develop a love of learning. Authentic, meaningful learning always elicits a SMILE (Systematic, Meaningful, Intentional, Language and Literacy Experiences).

A special thank you to teachers everywhere who are committed to joyful learning with families and Parents as Partners in kindergarten success.



Winter Curry



Celeste Starr



Katie Nelson

Permission granted to use or adapt: Make this document your own!



# What Is Your Research Base for Nellie Edge Online Seminars?

## *Seven Practical Principles of the Brain that Make Dramatic Differences in Student Achievement*

1. **Emotional engagement is the key to all-powerful learning.** For information to go into long-term memory and be available for recall, it must be emotionally charged. It is the "emotional" limbic system that tells the "rational" neo-cortex what to pay attention to.



2. **The brain is a social brain.** Build a **cooperative and non-competitive** learning environment where children feel a sense of belonging. A supportive, non-threatening social-emotional climate allows learning to be maximized. Knowledgeable teachers can "scaffold" children's literacy to a higher level. Vygotsky calls this the "zone of proximal development". The social skills developed in these encounters with teachers and peers are vital for success in school and life. Remember, **talking and singing develop neurons in the brain – not listening.**

Nancy Atwell, director for The Center for Teaching and Learning, says that her school's two essential goals are "to **engage children in authentic activity and engage them in sustained, continuous talk.**" What she and the teachers strive for, she asserts, "is to **have kids lose themselves passionately in tasks.**"

3. **Elaborative rehearsal strategies are necessary for building memory connections.** Children must do something with new information to personalize and integrate it. Engage children in active, authentic learning, or simulations, through singing, signing, dancing, drawing, discussing, creating a play, building a model, or participating in a storyline. Experiences in the educational arts allow information to be stored on a deeper, more memorable level. For new information to be available for recall, it needs to be stored in rich, connected networks of neurons.

***"Mindless busy work doesn't grow dendrites." - NE***

4. **The brain is a musical brain.** The rhythms of sound have a powerful impact on cognition. The only language you remember with word-for-word accuracy from childhood is songs and rhymes. Singing can create a relaxed, joyful mood – the optimal state for language learning. **Songs allow the brain to chunk large amounts of information into a single memory space** thereby accelerating learning naturally. **Music and rhymes are powerful hooks to long-term memory.**
5. **Children actively construct knowledge from experiences and dialog.** Think of classrooms as **language learning workshops or children's museums.** Actively engage learners in deep reflection and authentic tasks—or simulations— using Total Emotional Body Response to Language (TEBRL). **"Saying and doing" increases retention of new information by up to 90%.**

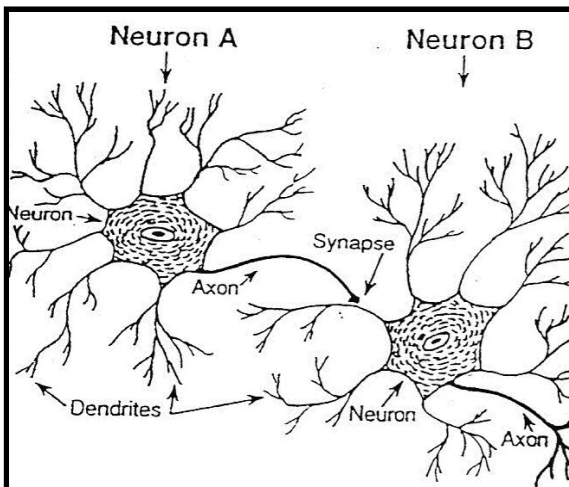
Take field trips or use the power of story, drama, and dialog to create a brain-friendly environment for learning.



6. **We have at least eight distinct intelligences or “avenues for learning”.** Present challenging experiences that engage the child's multiple ways of integrating new information. Develop the capacity for reflection, self-motivation and self-discipline. Recognizing multiple intelligences is respectful of our multi-ethnic classrooms and allows every child to build on success. See Howard Gardner's book *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, and *Dancing with Words* by Marilyn Daniels.

7. **Enriched environments literally change the brain.** There are no neutral learning environments. Intelligence is not static. You can lose brain cells in impoverished environments -

dendrites shrivel up and die! In our enriched kindergarten environments dendrites and neurons grow in increasing density and complexity of connections. Read about Dr. Marian Diamond's work in Jane Healy's book, *Endangered Minds: Why Children Don't Think and What We can Do About It*.



With special thanks to our colleague Pat Wolfe for her important books, *Brain Matters: Translating the Research to Classroom Practices*, ASCD, 2001 and *Building the Reading Brain*, PreK-3, Corwin Press, 2004. See also: *Teaching Struggling Readers: How to Use Brain-Based Research to Maximize Learning*, C.A. Lyons, Heinemann, 2003 and *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got That Way*, Amanda Ripley, Simon and Schuster, 2013.



## Neuroscience Research for Further Study

*A Celebration of Neurons: An Educator's Guide to the Human Brain*, by Robert Sylvester. Joseph Henry Press, 1995.

*Brain Matters: Translating the Research to Classroom Practice*, by Pat Wolfe. ASCD, 2001.

*Building the Reading Brain*, by Pat Wolfe and Pam Nevills. Corwin Press, 2004.

*Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience: Lab of Adele Diamond* by the University of British Columbia, [www.devcogneuro.com](http://www.devcogneuro.com).

*Friday's Footprint: How Society Shapes the Human Mind*, by Leslie Brothers, M.D. Oxford University Press, 2001.

*The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life*, by Joseph Ledoux. Simon and Schuster, 1998.

*The Modular Brain: How New Discoveries in Neuroscience Are Answering Age-Old Questions About Memory, Free Will, Consciousness, and Personal Identity*, by Richard M. Restak, M.D. Scribner's, 1995.

*Teaching Struggling Readers: How to Use Brain-Based Research to Maximize Learning*, by C.A. Lyons. Pearson Education Canada, 2003.

*The Secret Life of the Brain*, Dr. Richard M. Restak. Joseph Henry Press, 2001.

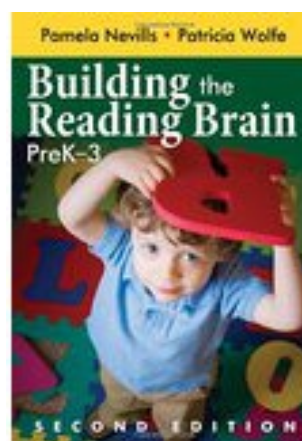
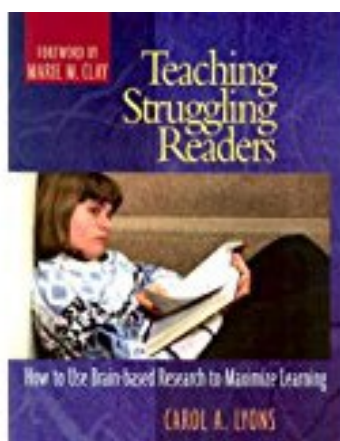
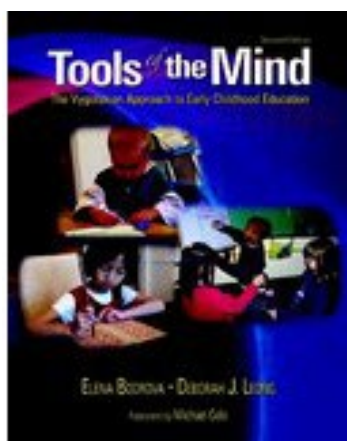
Free Newsletters: "Brain Work" and "The Brain in the News," [rtalley@dana.org](mailto:rtalley@dana.org) or fax 202-737-9204 or phone 202-737-9200.

Article by Pat Wolfe, "Healthy Brains for Health Educators," [www.patwolfe.com/whatsnew.htm](http://www.patwolfe.com/whatsnew.htm).

*The Secret Life of the Brain* series is available on PBS. See [www.pbs.org/wnet/brain](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/brain).

"The Music Instinct: Science and Song" DVD, PBS, 2009.

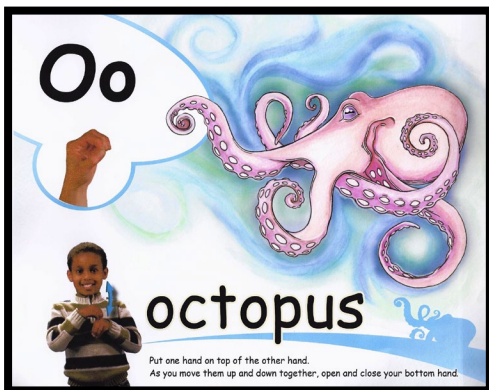
*Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) by Elena Bodrova and Deborah J. Leong, Pearson, 2006.



Take advantage of how the young child's brain learns best:  
sing, sign, and read!

# Parents as Partners: Why We Teach American Sign Language

## Meeting the Challenge of High Common Core Standards: Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best!



### Why We Use Sign Language and Fingerspelling

#### **Signing Songs and Fingerspelling Accelerates Early Literacy Skills.**

Signing songs and manual fingerspelling engage the whole child in joyful learning. They add a kinesthetic memory connection for acquiring new skills and develop the small muscles necessary for writing. Singing and signing is multisensory; it combines "saying and doing," which increases retention of new information and understanding of language concepts up to 90 percent. Research

shows that learning sign language builds confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Reading the three-dimensional language of sign also develops visual skills for reading printed language. **High academic standards are met most easily when children are engaged and motivated.** Enriching children's literacy experiences by signing familiar songs encourages teachers and parents to become learners right along with their children. As an added bonus, children usually learn to sign songs more easily than adults, much to their delight!

#### **Learning Sign Language is a Life Skill.**

Not only does learning American Sign Language (ASL) give children enhanced literacy skills, but it also provides them with an important life skill for communication. **ASL is the third most commonly used language in the United States!** Proficiency in a second language is a requirement for high school and college graduation, and the optimum age to acquire a new language is during early childhood. **Additional language acquired while the child is young enhances their communication skills throughout life.** This is especially true of learning the emotionally rich American Sign Language. New language connections in a child's brain will develop much more quickly through song, as the child communicates whole sentences and phrases rather than isolated words.

#### **Singing and Signing Enhance Speaking Skills.**

Young children who are fortunate enough to learn ASL through accelerated language learning with songs at home, in preschool, and in kindergarten have an early advantage in developing expressive, dynamic speaking skills.

#### **Singing and Signing Makes Learning to Recognize and Spell Words Easier.**

Kindergarten teachers have discovered that singing and signing builds success for "word work" activities and spelling by making learning auditory, kinesthetic, social, and fun! **Most young children first become auditory spellers; they become visual spellers later.** By nature, children love to move their bodies. **Children's memory for the spelling sequence of words is dramatically improved through singing, signing, and fingerspelling.**



They can use fingerspelling more easily and quickly than they can print letters. Kinesthetically forming letters with the fingers dramatically improves recall of letters, especially for the hardest-to-reach children.

### **Signing Songs Accelerates ABC and Phonics Skills.**

ABC and Phonics Immersion through sign language and song has been shown to greatly accelerate the learning of the alphabetic principal, especially for the hardest-to-reach children. Early mastery of these foundational skills is vital to ensure literacy success for all children. Singing and signing allows us to provide multisensory instruction that is simply more memorable and joyful for young learners. In other words, it is "kid friendly." Children quickly learn letters and sounds with *ABC Sing, Sign, and Read!* **The kinesthetic motion of fingerspelling a letter and then signing the key word triggers a response that will help children recall the corresponding sound.** It places explicit, systematic phonics instruction within a rich language learning experience that simultaneously enhances fluency, comprehension skills, and vocabulary. These powerful first teaching strategies are designed to prevent early literacy difficulties and bridge the achievement gap.

### **Group Singing and Signing is a Satisfying Social Experience.**

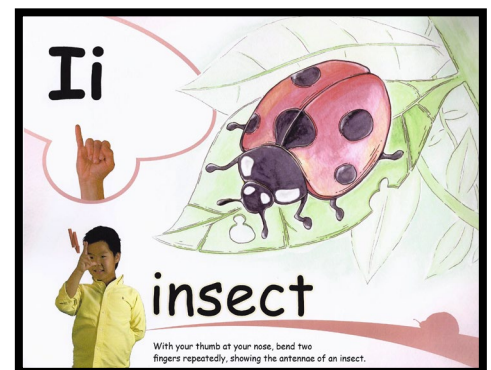
Choral singing, signing, and reading are satisfying social experiences in which every child will a sense of belonging and perceive themselves as successful. **When children are singing and signing, they are joyful, focused, and engaged – the optimum state for language learning.** They acquire language fluency while having the magical "I can read" experience. Skills instruction is accelerated because it is multisensory and placed in a meaningful context that strengthens a child's capacity for listening, speaking, and self-regulated learning behavior.

### **Children's Experience in Learning to Read Generalizes to Their Whole Self-Concept.**

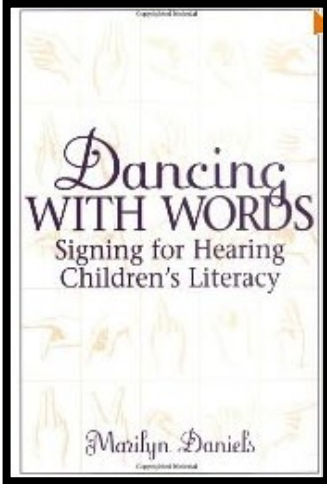
Bruno Bettelheim's research reminds us that how children perceive themselves in the act of learning to read generalizes to their whole self-concept. When teachers engage their students in multisensory literacy through signing familiar songs, the motivation, pleasure, and success they feel not only supports them in learning to read, but also allows them to see themselves as successful individuals who are passionate about learning. These are the positive attitudes that will allow children to begin reaching high Common Core Standards in literacy and beyond.

For additional information, see these Pages: [ABC Phonics](#), [Handwriting](#), and [Sight Words](#)

- *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* by Nellie Edge, Sign2Me publishers, 2010
- Parents: Using the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* Flashcards
- "3 Levels of ABC Phonics Mastery" by Nellie Edge
- *The Magic of Signing Songs: Enhancing All Children's Language and Literacy*, updated, 2019, Nellie Edge
- *Parents as Partners in Kindergarten Success* by Nellie Edge
- A-Z Play Dough Mats with Fingerspelling, FREE on [Nellie Edge Kindergarten TpT](#)
- Kindergarten Sight Word Play Dough Mats with Fingerspelling Bundle on [Nellie Edge Kindergarten TpT](#), 2019.



# Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy Is Supported by Extensive Research



Here are excerpts from a book we highly recommend:

## ***Dancing With Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy*** by Marilyn Daniels

This book is about sign language and how sign language can be used to improve hearing children's English vocabulary, reading ability, spelling proficiency, self-esteem, and comfort with expressing emotions. Sign also facilitates communication, is an effective tool for establishing interaction between home and school, aids teachers with classroom management, has been shown to promote a more comfortable learning environment, and initiates an interest in and enthusiasm for learning on the

part of students...

**The activity of manually fingerspelling a word reinforces a child's ability to write or read or say it.** Spelling a word strengthens existing associations among writing a word, reading a word, and saying a word. Clearly children need solid visual knowledge of letters to read well. When this visual knowledge is overlaid with the feel of the letter, reading becomes easier...

**However, well before children are able to form letters with a pencil, they can form letters with the manual alphabet.** Using the manual alphabet will activate the same formative link to reading as printing, but it may have an even greater effect on children's literacy because it can occur far earlier in their maturation process...

**The feeling signs are nearly all iconic. Because the signs visually represent feelings in discernible form, the child can comprehend the meaning of the word and relate the word to their own feelings.** They are congruent. Children find it easier to identify their feelings, to express their feelings, to discuss their feelings, to understand their feelings, and perform the same operations with the feelings of others...

Become an early partner with your child as together you dance with the words of ASL. Both your fingers and hands and your child's fingers and hands can create meaning in the air as you silently exchange messages in sign language. **For your child this dance will activate formative links in the developing brain; teach phonics, vocabulary, word recognition, and comprehension; become a precursor to the recognition of print; provoke positive feedback from others; give access to deaf people; engender feelings of self-worth; and ultimately aid reading and spelling and communicative ability in general.** It is a dance with words, to be enjoyed from babyhood, through childhood, to adulthood.

Source:

Daniels, Marilyn. *Dancing With Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2001. [www.greenwood.com](http://www.greenwood.com) [www.marilyndaniels.com](http://www.marilyndaniels.com)

Used with permission.



# Practices That Make the Biggest Differences in Student Learning: A Synthesis of Over 30 Years of Educational Research

(Bold headings are from *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action* by Robert J. Marzano, ASCD, 2003)

- **Practice** - The best classrooms are language-learning workshops where children **practice using language** in all its modalities to learn about their world and communicate meaning. Children as authors and illustrators practice their craft. The Neurological Impress Method of oral language read aloud practice provides practice in fluency. Learning experiences are meaningful and differentiated so all children can build on success. When learning is personally engaging, there is intrinsic motivation to practice new skills over and over again.

*"...students also take **music, art, and dance**. They learn to play chess. They almost never skip recess, even in bad weather... they call their strategy '**joyful rigor**'." Amanda Ripley from *The smartest kids in the world: and how they got that way*, 2013.*

- **Nonlinguistic representations** - The arts and sign language are translators of meaning. Multisensory teaching provides multiple hooks to long-term memory. Emotional engagement is the key to all-powerful learning. **We sing, sign, and fingerspell; dramatize, dance, and draw.** We talk about experiences, build models, and move the body. We activate the emotions and personalize the learning experience! The brain is a "musical brain" - it is uniquely wired to allow large bodies of information to be effortlessly stored into one memory space through a song. Children can learn the *ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read!* much easier than learning letters and sounds in isolation.

*"Brain reorganization takes place only when the animal pays attention to the sensory input and to the task. Only when the animal is trying to learn or form a memory does it do so.*

***Active engagement in a task reorganizes the brain. Passive stimulation does not."** -*

*John Brewer*

- **Cooperative learning** - The brain is a social brain (Vygotsky). It is within an emotionally safe social context that learning can be scaffolded, and children can take risks and discover that we are all teachers and learners together. **We encourage children to talk and collaborate.** Emotional intelligence is nurtured when children work together. Literacy—and life skills—are both practiced within a joyful, cooperative learning community.

*"The best predictor of academic performance was not the children's IQ scores but their self-discipline." Amanda Ripley from *The smartest kids in the world:**

*and how they got that way*, 2013.

- **Setting goals and providing feedback** - This assumes meaning-centered learning where the child makes choices and assumes responsibility. **Student-led parent conferences** give children ownership of learning. Thoughtful encouragement and feedback builds self-discipline and a strong work ethic. When a child sets personal goals, the intrinsic motivation accelerates learning.

- **Activating prior knowledge** - Making bridges between the known and unknown is a key principal of learning theory. It requires a learning community that values collaboration, dialog and the scientific process. We teach children to access their schema and use the KWL strategy. **"What do we know** about caterpillars?" **"What do we wonder** about caterpillars?" Wise, caring teachers always build a meaning base for learning. **"What have we learned?"**

*"Only those aspects of experiences that are targets of elaborative encoding processes have a high likelihood of being remembered." -Daniel Schacter from Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past*

- **Reinforcing effort and providing recognition** (without setting up competition) This happens most powerfully within a joyful, non-competitive community of readers, writers and thinkers. Because we honor "multiple intelligences," all children have opportunities to be "experts" and receive recognition; thus building internal motivation, personal confidence and the joy of being valued. Children often perform language for each other. A child might present their study as a book for the entire class to see and comment on. **Classmates honor each other's efforts and are taught to give each other positive feedback** and ask thoughtful questions.
- **Meaningful homework** - "Parents and families as partners" in children's learning activities multiply our teaching effectiveness. Memorizing and reciting Mother Goose rhymes, ABC and phonics immersion activities, and nightly reading build family literacy traditions. We tell parents - **"Dance and sing, talk and explore nature, read and write with your child every day and every night."** We encourage a summer of sciencing walks and trips to the library and—time for serendipity. (We do not send home meaningless worksheets—our goal is joyful family engagement.)

*"Parents: Dance and sing, talk and explore nature, read and write with your child every day and every night." -Nellie Edge from Parents as Partners in Kindergarten Success: Multiply Your Teaching Effectiveness, 2019.*

"The brain does not know the difference between vividly imagined experiences and the real thing. Imagining that you are working through an exercise strengthens muscles. The placebo effect actually changes the physical structure of the brain. Belief is a powerful force in learning. Within a comprehensive approach to literacy, **children can begin to develop the neural pathways and the belief in themselves as a successful reader long before they are independently proficient.** We teach concepts about how print works while the eyes are learning to sweep across the page in big Books, and the writing brain is learning words "by heart." Repeated experiences in memory reading and the Neurological Impress Method build oral language fluency and develop a love of reading. Writing "heart word" sentences for fluency nurtures the disposition of one who can write as surely as learning phonics-based spelling grows writing confidence. This becomes an important bridge to fluent independent reading for many children.

***"Because emotion and cognition are so tightly intertwined in the brain, the learning to read and write experience must be linked with joy, success and the belief 'I can!'"***  
- Nellie Edge, from *Celebrate Language and Accelerate Literacy*, 2019.



Excerpts from *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* by John Hattie, Routledge Publishers, 2009.

**Chapter 3 - The Argument**

...**"Visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is the explicit goal, when it is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained, when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought, and when there are active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, student, peers, and so on) participating in the act of learning...The remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers.**

...**"The act of teaching requires deliberate interventions** to ensure that there is cognitive change in the student: thus the key ingredients are awareness of the learning intentions, knowing when a student is successful in attaining those intentions, having sufficient understanding of the student's understanding as he or she comes to the task, and knowing enough about the content to provide meaningful and challenging experiences..."

...**"Teachers need to be actively engaged in, and passionate about, teaching and learning."**

...**"Teachers must be able to openly discuss the three key feedback questions: "Where are they going?" "How are they going?" and "Where to next?" (The "they" refers to both the teacher and to the student.)...the aim is to make students active in the learning process—through actions by teachers and others—until the students reach the stage where they become their own teachers, they can seek out optimal ways to learn new material and ideas, they can seek resources to help them in this learning, and when they can set appropriate and more challenging goals...**

**"The major argument is that when teaching and learning is visible, there is a greater likelihood of students reaching higher levels of achievement."**

**Chapter 8 - The Contributions From the Curricula**

...**"They concluded that Reading Recovery® "was reaching its fundamental goal of increasing the lowest performing first graders' reading and writing skills to levels comparable with their classroom peers", and there was a "lasting effect, at least by the end of second grade, on broad reading skills."**

...A teacher using a combination of vocabulary, phonics, and comprehensive methods will be much more effective than either a phonics or a whole language teacher.

**"...a lack of fluency and automaticity (that is, quick and accurate recognition of words and phrases) may hamper growth beyond first learning to read..."**

**Drama/Arts programs**

...**"creative drama activities have positive effects on children's achievement at elementary grade levels in oral language skills, self-esteem, moral reasoning, role-taking abilities, and drama skills...reading the repetitive and hence predictable lyrics of songs helps train reading skills..."** 17

# **We Build Growth Mindset, Emotional Intelligence, and Metacognition Through the Community We Create and Thoughtfully Chosen Words**

*Aren't you amazed at how much you've grown as a writer?*

*Wow! How did you train your brain to make those M's so well?*

*The more you practice - the better you get!*

*Your pictures and words tell a story. Tell me about all those details.*

*You knew the first letter/sound in that word. **Good job listening for sounds!***

*What a **prolific writer** you're becoming: You sure love to write!*

*You stayed with the job for a long time even when it was hard. **That's called perseverance!***

***You can work hard! I bet you're proud of yourself...***

***I see you know** how to spell the beginning of...*

*Remember the beginning of the year - when you used all capital letters in your writing? Now look at how you use lower-case letters. **You worked diligently** learning to write those letters. **You've really grown as a writer!***

*Wow! **How did you figure out** how to spell that word?*

*You wanted to shout out your answer when Joshua was talking, but you waited and didn't interrupt. **That's called self-discipline!***

*You came to school on time today. **Thanks for being punctual!***

*Wow! You pushed in all those chairs because you saw it needed to be done. **You sure know how to take care of our classroom!***

*You sure remembered what a **quality illustration** looks like; Look at all the detail and colors.*

***I can see you're the kind of boy who knows how to be a good friend.***

*You worked together with Joshua to build that castle. **That's cooperation!***

*Thank you for holding the door open for us. That shows **kindergarten kindness.***

***Kindergarten friends:** how can we help Marissa...?*

*If you need help tying your shoe, you can **ask one of our kindergarten shoe tying experts!***

To build emotional resilience, research says, "**Praise children's efforts towards a goal, perseverance, and willingness to try new things—NOT how smart they are.**" Specific encouragement is much more helpful than generic praise.



# Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best: Give Children "Books That Sing and Rhyme"

## The Brain is a "Musical Brain"

"What are the best kinds of books to give my children?" When asked this question by kindergarten teachers and parents of young children, the first list I always give them (in addition to "Wonderful Books Every Child Should Have as a Friend") is a list of my favorite "Books That Sing and Rhyme." **These song picture books allow supportive adults to take advantage of how the brain learns best. In fact, the only things we hold in our memory with word-for-word accuracy from childhood are songs and occasionally rhymes. The brain is uniquely wired to effortlessly learn through music; the rhythms of sound have a powerful effect on cognition. Children can develop expressive fluent oral language and the ability to hear and distinguish sounds and understand concepts about print long before their visual systems are able to track and decode individual words. They begin developing the neural pathways and the disposition of confident motivated readers early on, as many parents and early childhood educators will attest to. Engaging young children with picture books of well-loved folk songs and rhymes accelerates their oral language development and builds phonemic awareness naturally, while the child is delighting in the sounds of language and connecting that joy to print. These prolonged rich experiences with oral language are vital if our children are to reach their potential as readers, writers, speakers, and thinkers. A comprehensive and multisensory approach to early literacy develops skills while immersing children in joyful and socially meaningful experiences. Children dance and sing, they use sign language to perform memorable songs, they read together and write class books.**

## "Magical Memory Reading" Provides the Transition to Guided Reading

Young children, repeatedly read to, will begin role-playing themselves as successful readers with the rhythmic and predictable patterns of quality song picture books. Parents are often amazed at how quickly the child memorizes and proudly pretends to read and sing the entire book "just like Mommy." **I call this "magical memory reading." It is an important phase that most children go through as they construct their knowledge of how print works. Through memory reading many young children effortlessly learn the syntax of our language and concepts about how print works, while their eyes are training to sweep the page left to right and top to bottom.** For children who have not had years of "magical memory reading" experiences at home, we must provide this joyful language experience at school as a scaffold upon which to build literacy skills. In the classroom we provide this simulated reading experience by group singing and shared reading from language charts and Big Books of familiar songs. Then we provide whole class "guided reading" instruction with each child having their own paperback copy or child-size Little Book of the song. The teacher skillfully guides the children page by page through the book. Every child feels a sense of belonging and participates at their own level.

Even the **least-able language user perceives himself or herself as successful within the supportive structure of group singing and reading.** Knowledgeable teachers of the young understand that for children with limited book experiences, this "magical memory reading" must be supported while building the comprehensive foundation for reading success. Variations of the Neurological Impress Method will be used as a transition to fluent independent reading. Within the context of the song, teachers provide differentiated skill development to challenge and support the wide range of literacy development seen in today's early childhood classrooms.

## Young Children Love Memorizing and Reading Song Picture Books

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of honoring children's initial memory reading experiences with Read and Sing Little Books or other well-loved song picture books. Children delight in having their own book to read and sing with success and fluency, from "magical memory reading" and developing the sounds of language to independently reading phrase by phrase. **These opportunities when the entire class reads and**

sings together provide powerful social support for the emerging reader. It becomes an important bridge to more formal "guided reading" in preschool, kindergarten and even first grade. Young children enjoy "performing" their reading for any appreciative audience. We encourage their expressive, playful engagement with the rhythmic language of these books, knowing that **children who learn to sing many songs with fluency, rhythm and expression are more likely to become expressive oral readers and fluent, articulate speakers.** When children take their Read and Sing Little Books home to share, the celebration of language continues and the benefits of classroom language and literacy instruction are multiplied.

### **Phonemic Awareness is Enhanced by Memorizing Songs**

Research shows that phonemic awareness is vital to success in beginning reading. This ability to hear and manipulate the smallest units of sounds that make up words, including rhyming, blending, segmenting, deleting and substituting, is developed most efficiently through rich experiences memorizing and "playing with sounds" orally in songs and rhymes. **It is the child's familiarity hearing and speaking the English language that allows their decoding to be error free and their reading to be fluent. Learning many songs and rhymes "by heart" is the most joyful, brain-friendly way we know to develop the language foundation necessary for success in developing essential reading skills.**

### **Emotional Engagement Facilitates Learning**

We often enhance the emotional connection children have with these "books that sing and rhyme" by signing the language, hand-jiving to the beat and dramatizing the action. High-level thinking is encouraged by inviting the child to adapt lyrics and put their own lives into the song. (e.g., they use the *Mary Had a Little Lamb* song book pattern to sing about their animal - "Joshua had a big dog.") **Children's personal involvement with these books supports their desire to be readers.** High-frequency words are practiced. Phonics skills are explicitly taught and reinforced. Vocabulary is expanded and comprehension is deepened. Literacy skills are most easily remembered when hooked to language that children already know and love.

### **Children Deserve to Know Traditional Folk Songs**

Many well-loved song picture books are available in paperback, making it practical to purchase multiple copies for "magical guided reading" and traditional guided reading. Nellie Edge Read and Sing Big Books™ all come with black-line masters for making multiple copies of child-size Little Books to facilitate this reading engagement at home and at school. **Every child in today's diverse classrooms benefits from these multisensory language learning experiences as they practice reading and singing together from their own Little Book of a well-loved song.** This literacy strategy is respectful of the multiple ways of learning that children bring to the reading process and it builds a joyful community. **The bonus gift, received almost effortlessly, is our shared cultural heritage of folk songs that all children deserve to know.** Young children treasure owning and rereading "books that sing and rhyme." These books are a constant reminder of the joys of language and their successful feeling in learning to read. **The memorable lyrics of traditional songs will enrich the child's life today - and for a lifetime. Someday they may pass these songs on - rocking and singing them to another generation.**

### **Song Picture Books Support ABC and Phonics Immersion**

**Learning how to apply the alphabetic principle is vital to success in learning to read and write.**

Whichever multisensory ABC and phonics immersion strategies a teacher uses, the goal is to capture the imagination, engage the brain and build success for each individual learner. However, teachers have found that many "one size fits all" literacy programs simply do not acknowledge the diverse learning styles and differentiated needs of today's young learners. Teachers and parents can supplement and enhance any early literacy approach by adding more brain-friendly literacy™ activities using all of the senses. By repeatedly singing, signing and reading the ABC's in one consistent song picture book format, adults can provide enough support and challenge for a variety of learners. Optimal early reading experiences need to



be as meaningful and memorable as possible. **When the kinesthetic and auditory modalities of singing and signing are used to teach letter sound correspondence, amazing results are seen.** After repeatedly singing and dramatically signing "A 'a' alligator" children remember the letter and sound of "a". **Learning letters and sounds is easier if the child uses an approach that connects music, imagination and sign language.** Connecting letters and sounds through song and sign language has demonstrated excellent results with even the hardest-to-reach children. One consistent ABC and phonics song picture book that incorporates American Sign Language deserve a place in every home and class library.

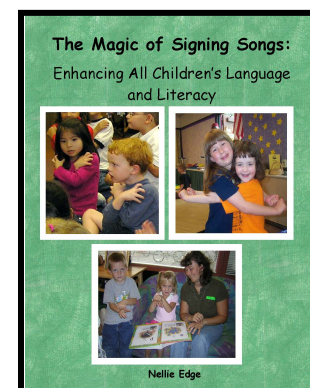
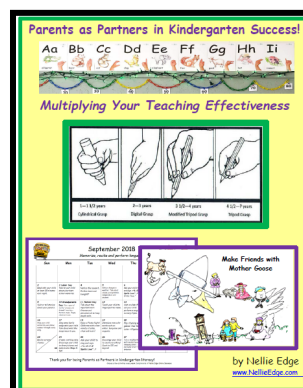
### **Differentiated Literacy Experiences Provide Success and Challenge**

All children can successfully engage in shared reading experiences using familiar read and sing books and language charts. More mature readers can be challenged to read the entire book or chart without the help of the melody, using expression and fluent phrasing. Emergent readers learn to track the words while they sing. They highlight and practice reading high-frequency words. Explicit phonics instruction meets differentiated needs: some children need practice with beginning sounds, all children benefit from focusing on one or two word families. When children discuss, dramatize, or use American Sign Language to further internalize the song lyrics, comprehension and vocabulary is enhanced. **Marie Clay's research reminds us that children come to reading from many paths. A typical kindergarten classroom embraces children who are just beginning to hear and understand the sounds of English and others who are already eager readers and writers.** All children need to perceive themselves as ones who are able to read. **Learning to read must be emotionally connected with pleasure and success as the brain anchors new skills to something that is already known.** If children, early on during their home and school literacy lives, are immersed in the language of songs and rhymes, they will have the vital scaffolding of English grammar structures to hold them up as they embark on their journey as readers. **Once they are "hooked on language" we can use these memory hooks to systematically teach and reinforce the essential reading skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency—and a love of reading!**

### **A Child's Experience in Learning to Read Influences Their Whole Self-Concept**

Bruno Bettelheim's research shows that how a child perceives herself in the act of learning to read generalizes to her whole self-concept. While we are developing language and literacy skills **we must also nurture belief systems that allow young children to see themselves as successful readers and to develop the disposition of ones who love reading right from the start.** Giving children quality "books that sing and rhyme" as a part of a multisensory and comprehensive early literacy program, builds success and confidence for children at all levels on the reading continuum. Connecting singing and reading is respectful of children's diverse learning styles and developmental needs. **It accelerates language development and allows us to bridge the achievement gap by taking advantage of how the young child's brain learns best.**

*Literacy strategies engaging the musical brain are from the following literacy manuals:*



# 10 Best Practices for Growing Young Writers: Action Research

Give students a comprehensive writing program that honors diverse learners!

What are the proven high-impact writing practices that accelerate writing development? How do we differentiate instruction to simultaneously challenge and support diverse learners within the same kindergarten? How do we teach more intentionally, systematically, and create joyful pathways to rigorous state writing standards? **Authentic, meaning-centered literacy is the answer!** [See more.](#)

- Strategy 1 **Bond with Children, and Create a Joyful Learning Community, Rich in Songs, Poetry, Sign Language, and Celebrations.** Use collaborative experiences in the arts and deep connections with nature to engage the child in reading, writing, thinking, speaking, listening, and creating. (Read about the SMILE approach to joyful accelerated literacy.)
- Strategy 2 **Use Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion** with American Sign Language and Parents as Partners: Systematically develop Phonemic Awareness and 3 Levels of ABC Phonics Mastery!
- Strategy 3 **Begin Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting with Student Names and "Heart Words."** Teach basic handwriting motions through memorable songs, chants, dances, and movement. Good handwriting with "heart word" sentences simultaneously builds fluency and stamina for Writing Workshop.
- Strategy 4 **Teach for Student Mastery of High-Frequency "Heart Words" and Phonetically Spelled Words.** Sing, sign, spell, and write real words—systematically, playfully, and with great intention. Choose joyful, multisensory teaching and learning to build the writing brain!
- Strategy 5 **Create a Culture of Engaged and Purposeful Writers** with "Kid Writing" workshop and authentic writing experiences across the curriculum. Provide expert and intensive writing lessons. Use anchor charts and graphic organizers to inform narrative, information, and opinion writing. Nurture a growth mindset with your responsive feedback.
- Strategy 6 **Use Independent Writing and Drawing Centers as Invitations** for children to practice their craft in an authentic context and develop writing stamina and motivation. Write lists, messages, news stories, and make books. Provide meaningful word work that motivates young learners.
- "We can choose to spoon-feed our children or we can teach them to be independent, self-regulated learners." - Nellie Edge*
- Strategy 7 **Build Oral Language Fluency with Well-loved Song Picture Books, Quality Fiction, Nonfiction, and "I Can Read" (Song and Poetry) Notebooks.** Create a culture of book lovers and develop voracious vocabulary learning habits. Involve children in book clubs, science exploration, and family research projects. Integrate Next Generation Science Standards.
- Strategy 8 **Publish Children's Books and Celebrate Young Authors in Simple and Delightful Ways!** Invite children to write, illustrate, revise, edit and publish their own books. Discover the powerful affirmation through word and song, 🎵"Prolific Writers Are We!"
- Strategy 9 **Use Ongoing Authentic Assessment** culminating in student-led parent conferences. Be systematic and intentional. End the year with simple and memorable celebrations of learning!
- Strategy 10 **Involve Parents as Partners** to nurture a love of writing and drawing, and to reinforce foundational literacy skills through authentic writing activities at home. Meaningful family literacy multiplies our teaching effectiveness.



**Create a culture of engaged young writers: Keep writing real!**

# Thoughts on Teaching, Learning, and Kindergarten Writing

**Developmentally—children write before they read.**

-Chomsky, 1971



Accomplished kindergarten teachers intentionally and systematically weave phonemic awareness and phonics lessons into everything they teach and have **absolute instructional clarity about how they build mastery of letters, sounds, and fluency with CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) words**. Teachers use authentic learning and carefully chosen words to teach children how to work hard, be kind, and develop an "I can do it!" growth mindset. N.E.

Recent research has demonstrated that virtually every child who begins kindergarten could be reading on grade level by the end of first grade. Few schools accomplish this because **few schools provide the expert and intensive writing lessons needed**.

-Richard Allington, from Teaching Edge, International Literacy Association (ILA)

Highly knowledgeable and **skillful kindergarten teachers can resolve the reading problems of at-risk students** as well as expert tutorial programs; yet most of our schools do not have a plan to provide the classroom instruction that these kindergartners require. -Regie Routman, Read, Write, Lead, ASCD

**Writing & reading are so intimately connected at the beginning level that they may become impaired when one exists or is presented without the other.**

-Richard Gentry

Unexpectedly high-achieving schools do **two to six times as much authentic reading and writing**. The results speak for themselves. -ILA document

**Kid Writing Workshop is where phonics skills are rehearsed and embedded in long term memory** -Nellie Edge, Kindergarten Writing and the Common Core: Joyful Pathways to Accelerated Writing, 2015.

**...a lack of fluency and automaticity (that is, quick and accurate recognition of words and phrases) may hamper growth beyond first learning to read...** - Excerpts from *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses. Relating to Achievement* by John Hattie, 2009.

We have proven that children are absolutely capable of becoming engaged and purposeful writers in kindergarten. **They not only learn to write...they love to write!**

See **Photo Essays** on our **Writing tab** on [NellieEdge.com](http://NellieEdge.com) for documentation of our action research into highest-impact kindergarten writing practices.



# **Best Practices for Developing Phonemic Awareness: This Is What We Know for Sure**

by Nellie Edge

- **Building a joyful community of learners and developing a love of language** is a powerful foundation for rigorous and appropriate literacy standards.
- **We are all teachers of English language development.** Every day. All day.
- **Some children need much more intentional phonemic awareness instruction** than we used to think was necessary. We must provide the most expert time-efficient, brain-friendly lessons: **listening for, stretching out, and manipulating the sounds of language.**
- All children deserve an **optimum teaching and learning instructional model that is intentional, multisensory, art-rich and assessment driven.**
- We **dramatically accelerate learning** when we give students Total Emotional Body Response to Language (TEBRL).

**The best ways to teach phonemes is while playing with the sounds of familiar and delightful songs** and rhymes. Phonemic awareness is the foundation for ease in acquiring phonics skills, and so we... memorize, recite, and perform language. The repetitive and predictable lyrics of songs helps build the reading and writing brain.

**Through intentional language play, we are building phonemic awareness** while simultaneously developing creative and higher-level thinking, fluency with oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Brain research shows that **when a child is relaxed and singing, language learning** (and phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge) **is accelerated.** And so, we sing and play with the sounds of language—systematically and with great intention.

Under the **Phonological Awareness** component of ELA Foundational Reading Skills, children will “isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowels, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant or CVC) words. **This is best practiced through writing: encoding sounds to print.**

**Students need to know there are two kinds of words:** a growing collection of words they are expected to write “by heart” and words they must listen to, stretch out, and write the sounds for. We teach for fluency with heart words and phonetically spelled words!

## Excerpts from *What Really Matters in Teaching Phonics Today: Laying a Foundation for Reading*

By James W. Cunningham, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Literacy Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, published by Curriculum Associates, 2017

### **\*What Really Matters in Phonics Instruction:**

**The lack of success for Reading First was not because it taught phonemic awareness and phonics/decoding, but because it neglected to teach reading and writing at the same time...the phonics taught must transfer to reading and writing.**

**"Students taught with best practices consistently scored better on the test than students taught in ways that resembled how they would be tested."**

**Students need regular opportunities to apply the phonics knowledge they are learning by decoding phonetically regular words in meaningful texts.**

**\*Spelling unknown words (encoding provides concrete opportunities to apply phonics and improves decoding). Possibly because manipulating letters makes phonics more concrete, or just because doing so adds variety to the application and practice of phonics knowledge, asking students to use phonics knowledge to encode as well as decode words helps them learn to decode better.**

### **The most important kind of phonological awareness:**

- 1. Encourage and support students' encoding (phonetic spelling) during writing...it also helps them develop phonemic segmentation with phonemic sequencing, probably the single most important phonological awareness ability.**
- 2. Use rhymes, chants, jingles, songs, riddles, and help children play with pronunciations; read Dr. Seuss books aloud to them.**
- 3. Teach phonemic segmentation explicitly to those who need it... use stretching, sound boxes, and letter manipulatives.**

**\*It is not enough to use best practices if teachers aren't engaging students. Best practices must be combined with engaging practices so students will sustain their attention and active involvement with instruction.**

**"In order to accomplish everything, the phonics instruction we deliver must be more effective, more engaging, and less time consuming."**

**Taking too much time teaching and assessing phonics in K-2 can actually make it less likely students will become good readers and writers in the long run.**

# It Is "Developmentally Appropriate" to Have High Expectations for Our Kindergartners: First Create a Joyful Learning Community



We always ask:

"How am I developing attitudes, behaviors and the habits of mind needed for children to do well in school - and in life?"

"Is this activity meaningful, multisensory and memorable?"

"How am I developing a love of learning and positive social-emotional skills?"

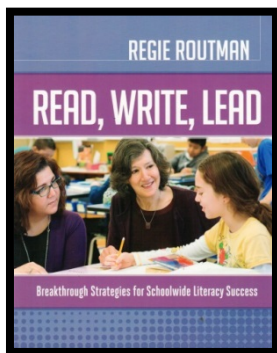
***"We need to grapple long and hard with the concept of 'development,' and consider how learning (and teaching) may enhance and encourage development. We need to recognize that active teaching and active learning go hand in hand."*** - Donald Graves

- **"Developmentally appropriate" practices somehow have been misinterpreted to mean we just wait for a child to develop skills, interests and abilities.** For some of our hardest-to-reach children, this is a great disservice. I wonder how our limiting beliefs might limit the richness of what we offer children? We know how to skillfully scaffold learning so all children can build on success. We understand the power of building a joyful learning community, the social nature of learning and the roles that motivation and parent involvement play in learning. Kindergartners love science explorations. They love to draw and write - and sing and sign. An engaging writing-to-read curriculum teaches reading by taking advantage of how the brain learns best. Workbook sheets and one-size-fits-all curriculum are not **"developmentally appropriate" experiences for young children - active, meaningful engagement in science, the arts and literacy is!**
- Some of us were taught that we would squelch the child's creativity if we provided guidance in teaching them to draw. Yet **experiences learned from the Reggio Emilia's Preschools of Italy have vastly expanded our vision of how the capable young child is to think, plan, draw and create through the many languages of childhood. We can - and must - reach for the stars with our children's minds and skillfully scaffold higher-level learning experiences.**
- I never realized that **young children could be such "voracious vocabulary learners"** until I watched my friend Jan with her 3-year-old son Roger playing the **"antonym game"** (she said "inhale" - he said "exhale"; she said "male" - he said "female"). Later they played the **"homonym game"** and **"synonym game"**. I am continually amazed and delighted by the incredible vocabulary children are capable of developing if they are around adults who have a passion for playing with wonderful words and rich language patterns. Children in such environments have verbalized that they want to be **paleontologists** or **entomologists** when they grow up!
- **Children are capable of metacognition** - "thinking about our thinking" and applying comprehension strategies as they discuss quality literature. Through thoughtful teaching and innovative activities with fiction and nonfiction children can develop higher-level thinking and questioning skills in kindergarten.

**Children deserve our highest expectations.** Becky Leber, a mentor kindergarten teacher who celebrates childhood, explained, ***"I raised my expectations and my students far surpassed them."***

*As we raise the English language arts and literacy standards, we must do it in such a way that we are also raising our expectations for children's social-emotional development and love of learning. **Children deserve to develop attitudes and habits of mind that will support them in being successful in school - and in life.***





# The Wisdom of Regie Routman

Excerpts from *Read, Write, Lead*

by Regie Routman, ASCD, 2014

**Defining demonstrations:** Demonstrations make visible and public for learners the effective actions and language of proficient literacy users. ...“show and tell”, “try and apply” the behaviors we expect from them as thoughtful readers...

Talking and thinking aloud are crucial parts of demonstrations because they enable students—and the teachers we are coaching and mentoring—to know what we're thinking...

**Some tips to ensure demonstrations go well:** ...Leave the bulk of the literacy block for deliberate practice...sustained time to “try and apply,” work through challenges, and self-teach.

**Put the writer before the writing:** *...Putting the writer first is the single most important thing I do in the teaching of writing. When I am working with a student, I am not thinking about getting that student to improve. My thoughts are “What is the writer trying to say?” “What are this writer's strengths to be celebrated?” “What's most important to say, do, and focus on right now to ensure this writer will want to go on writing?”* Putting the writer before the writing means taking a stance that honors a student's best attempts and sees the writer first as a valued person, which ensures that we communicate respectfully.

**Rely on relevant research:** ...There is no one best program; **the highly effective teacher trumps any program or resource every time.** At best, a core program is a helpful resource for providing content, methods, and a useful framework, but we have to know how to effectively use and modify any resource so it **enhances our instruction without controlling it.**

**Emphasize prevention:** ...In education we have yet to nationally embrace the notion that it's a critically worthwhile investment to put our talents, energies, and dollars into preventing reading and learning problems rather than into the costly cleanup we typically do after allowing millions of our students to fail at literacy... Moreover, research concludes that such programs—when they are excellent—yield a dollar-value return to society of \$7-\$12 for every \$1 invested.

**Ensure excellent literacy instruction in kindergarten:** ...when kindergartners are guided to do **meaningful, appropriately challenging, and enjoyable reading and writing all day long, they soar as readers and writers.** That is even high-challenge schools where students have typically been low performing, almost all students leave kindergarten as readers and writers, and only a small number require intervention. **Highly knowledgeable and skillful kindergarten teachers can resolve the reading problems of at-risk students as well as expert tutorial programs; yet most of our schools do not have a plan to provide the classroom instruction that these kindergartners require.** Because a kindergarten student's experience with an exemplary teacher can be transformational for that student's later achievement, self-efficacy, and even future earnings, **the topic of literacy instruction in kindergarten merits much attention...** Their raised expectations and higher results in the earliest elementary grad paved the way for increased expectations and higher results across the grades. Teachers and principals began to ask, **“If this is what students can do in kindergarten, what does this mean for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

and beyond?" Because success in kindergarten is foundational to what's possible in all grades, it's **essential we do everything possible to ensure we have excellent kindergarten teachers in all our schools...** Notice how what these thoughtful teachers have to say applies to all grade levels and all content areas: **enriching language and literacy experiences, raising expectations for what's possible, embedding needed skills and strategies into meaningful and authentic texts,** explicitly demonstrating what we expect students to be able to do, accelerating learning, increasing engagement, making students more accountable for self-checking their work, **increasing enthusiasm and joy in learning...** If we can accomplish these goals in kindergarten in high-challenge schools, surely these are realistic aims for every one of us, no matter where we teach or what we teach.

**Avoid summer reading loss:** ...One 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher noted that despite the fact that most exiting kindergartners in her high-needs school were reading at the end of kindergarten, **a lack of reading practiced over the summer meant that it took two full months for the students to return to a similar reading level in grade 1.** More sobering is the fact that approximately 80 percent of the reading achievement gap between poor and non-poor students at age 14 can be explained by summer reading setback... Yet it is well documented that providing books to primary-grade students in high-poverty schools increases students' reading achievement... **When students read six or more books over the summer, they maintain their reading skills and do not slide.**

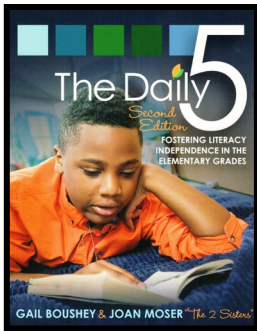
**Celebrate teachers:** Celebration is at the heart of all effective teaching and leading. That is, we honestly let the learner know, whether it's a teacher or student, exactly what he or she has done well or attempted to do. "Celebration is not just the actions we take or the words we use; it's a mindset and demeanor that propel us to primarily see, observe, and value strengths." Starting with genuine celebration is a necessity for creating a school culture in which raising and sustaining student achievement is possible. Celebration must come before evaluation if teachers are to value and benefit from formal evaluations, which compel some teachers into a rigid teaching mold due to fear and pressure to excel.

**Choose programs and resources carefully: Pay attention to research**

...The reading curriculum goals of RTI, like those of No Child Left Behind, continue to focus mostly on skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, with an overemphasis on lower-order reading skills and a heavy reliance on published reading materials... Although I don't have an anti-DIBELS agenda, according to widespread research and data, none of the DIBELS tests are related to improved reading achievement. My best conclusion as to why so many of us continue to ignore that definitive research and persist with DIBELS is that learned helplessness has set in, we don't have enough knowledge to know what else to do, we may be fearful of reprisals, and the numerical data DIBELS provides give us a false sense that we are receiving accurate information when, at best, what we are getting is pseudo-science. DIBELS is just one of many diagnostic assessments that are overly focused on oral reading and low-level skills. A major problem with such assessments is the misuse of valuable time for teachers and students—time that could go toward actually teaching reading and having students read meaningful texts.

## ***We Love The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in The Elementary Grades***

Second Edition by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser "The 2 Sisters" (Enjoy The Daily 5 in Kindergarten DVD!). Excerpts:



**If you are frustrated because you are spending too much time trying to manage students, and not enough time offering the most rigorous and joyful literacy curriculum possible, then the structure of the Daily Five may be what you are looking for.**

**We know each class is different, and we spend at least 20 days building community, defining and practicing behaviors, building stamina, and assessing the needs of this particular group of children.**

**We had to trust that our students** had the skills and desire, even at age five, to accept the challenge of making thoughtful choices during sustained independent work periods.

**Read to Yourself: The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day, with books you choose, on your just-right reading level. It soon becomes a habit.**

**Read to Someone:** Reading to someone allows for more time to practice strategies, helping you **work on fluency and expression**, check for understanding, hear your own voice, and share in the learning community.

**Work on Writing:** Just like reading, the best way to become a better writer is to **practice writing each day.**

**Listen to Reading:** We hear examples of good literature and fluent reading. **We learn more words**, thus expanding our vocabulary and becoming better readers.

**Spelling/Word Work:** Correct spelling allows for more fluent writing, thus **speeding up the ability to write and get thinking down on paper.** This is an essential foundation for writers.

We begin by asking ourselves, **"What meaningful activities does research say my students should be engaging in** that puts them in charge of their own learning, is self-motivating, is worthy of their time and effort, and will improve their skills?"

**Children need to know that researchers say reading each day is the best way to become a better reader** and that the best readers practice each day with books they choose. When done enough, reading will soon become an enjoyable habit.

**We needed to teach children how to build their stamina for independent work.** We had the opportunity to introduce this in a kindergarten classroom. The students were able to read silently for only one minute on the first day. After focused instruction and only one week's practice, they had increased their on-task independent reading time to ten minutes.

The important thing to remember is that if a child, even one, goes off-task during the practice time, the signal should be given to stop and gather students back together to review how it went. **We never want children to continue with the off-task behavior, because that means they are practicing the wrong way and training their muscle memories incorrectly.** It is very difficult to change incorrect behaviors if we allow them to become ingrained.

**One of our goals is to help children become self-reflective about their behaviors and learning.** We've seen that some kids are naturally self-reflective, but all children can learn to become more so. **Effective instruction is about developing learners who actively and independently monitor and regulate their own learning.**

Consider Joining Their Vibrant Online Community at: [www.thedailycafe.com](http://www.thedailycafe.com)

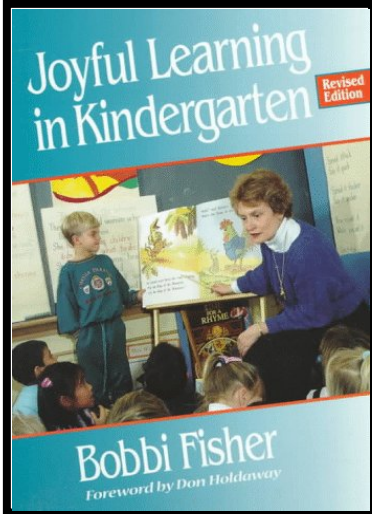


# Teacher-Researchers Who Have Inspired Our Practice

## Thoughts and Quotes from Bobbi Fisher

Author of the classic best-selling book, *Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*

### Quotes:



- *Children learn best when learning is kept whole, meaningful, interesting, and functional.*
- *Children learn best when they make their own choices.*
- *Children learn best as a community of learners in a noncompetitive environment.*

**I believe that optimal learning occurs for all children in an atmosphere free of competition.** The teacher is the catalyst in creating this atmosphere by demonstrating through daily interactions that everyone can learn, that confidence in one's self as a learner is the most important ingredient in learning, that we all can learn from each other, and that children learn best in a social context.

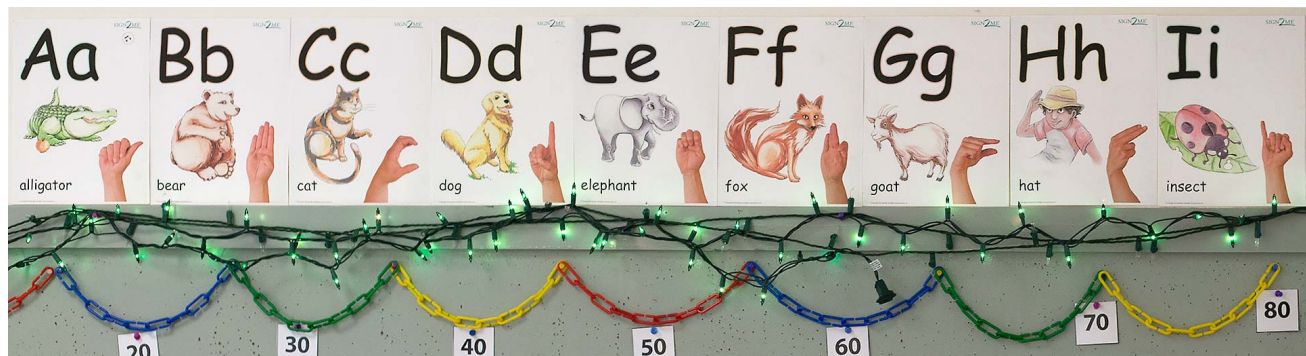
**I work with the children to create a community of learners in which we care about each other, and learn from and with each other.** This sense of community develops during community circle time, when we share what is happening in our everyday lives. It also occurs during shared reading time, when through group singing and reading the children are free to regulate their own learning through sampling, approximating, self-correcting and confirming in the safety of the group. **This noncompetitive atmosphere creates the trust necessary for the children to learn as they collaborate and cooperate with each other during independent choice time.**

### Thoughts:

- **Our children bring many different backgrounds and experiences to the classroom. Our songs and stories provide the commonality that builds community.**
- **I caress books to show kids how much I value them.** Show kids the books you read and talk about your own literacy - you're the bonded adult in the classroom.
- From a writing process point of view, **"letter of the week" is not helpful.**
- **We have got to stand behind what we know about how children learn.** Sometimes that means saying "I'm not going to do this. It is professionally not good!"
- **Children have got to trust me** - that I will never let them look bad in front of their peers.

Quotes and thoughts from *Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*, by Bobbi Fisher. Heinemann, 1998.

# Analyzing Kindergarten Professional Development and Literacy Adoptions in the Light of “Best Practices” Research



When considering an approach to literacy to determine if it will improve student outcomes and create authentic motivation for diverse learners, we recommend looking at the “Best Practices” research and perusing the action-research documentation, sample video tutorials, and teacher support resources at [ABC Phonics](#), [Handwriting](#) and [Sight Words](#) from NellieEdge.com.



## Adopting A New Literacy Programs? Ask the Following Questions:

- Do teachers love it? Children love it? And parents love it?
- Was it developed and tested in real kindergarten classrooms?
- Is it multisensory and engaging: are children using all of their senses to create strong memory hooks?
- Does the program develop **positive attitudes** about school learning and profound literacy gains?
- Does it have a **strong family literacy connection**? Do parent enjoy reinforcing the strategies at home?
- Does it **engage the whole child in art-infused learning** consistent with the 2016 *Every Child Succeeds Act* (ECSA)?
- Is the program **developmentally appropriate** for diverse learners and consistent with how the young child's brain learns best? (The brain is a musical brain. The brain thrives on multisensory learning.)
- Does it **differentiate learning**? Is there enough challenge for the child who is already a proficient writer and support for the harder-to-accelerate learner? **How does it meet the challenges of Talented and Gifted (TAG) learners?**

- Is the program easy to implement for volunteers?
- Is there quality, affordable ongoing online or district support? (No consumable workbooks!)
- Does it inspire feedback and dialog that builds a “growth mindset” for learning?
- Is there a logical and authentic connection to **Common Core State Standards**?
- **Are voracious vocabulary learning experiences** naturally incorporated into the descriptive language children are hearing and repeating from their ABC Phonics book?
- Is the learning experience authentic and worthy of children's time?

### **We Need to Constantly Be Asking: What Is the Impact of Our Teaching?**

If your current school literacy adoption fails to meet several of these criteria for excellence, consider beginning the year with the simple, proven techniques outlined in Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion for the first 20 days as a bridge into any literacy program: Children deserve joyful accelerated literacy! Present essential Kindergarten-Friendly Handwriting lessons simultaneously while teaching engaging and brain-friendly sight word lessons. Peruse the ABC Phonics, Handwriting, and Sight Word pages at [www.nellieedge.com](http://www.nellieedge.com) for additional support and to see how these best practices work in diverse classrooms.



### **What Is Our Research Base for Nellie Edge Online Seminars (NEOS)**

- *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* by John Hattie. Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group, 2012.
- *Best Practice: Bringing Standards to Life in America's Classrooms* by Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde. Heinemann, 2012
- *Using the SIOP Model with Pre-K and Kindergarten English Language Learners* by Jana Echevarria, Deborah J. Short and Carla Peterson. Pearson, 2012.
- *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention* by Richard L. Allington. Pearson, 2008.
- *Kindergarten Writing and the Common Core: Joyful Pathways to Accelerated Literacy* by Nellie Edge, 2015.
- *Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion: Building the Reading Brain Teachers Power Guide*, 2016. Nellie Edge Online Seminar #1.
- *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dewitt, Ballantine Books, 2007.
- *Dancing with Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy* by Marilyn Daniels. Bergen & Garvey, 2001.
- *Reading Recovery®* research and practice





## Meeting the Kindergarten ELA Common Core State Standards

*High Expectations • Authentic Meaning-Centered Literacy • Multisensory Instruction*



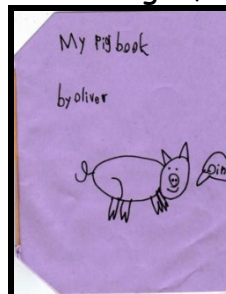
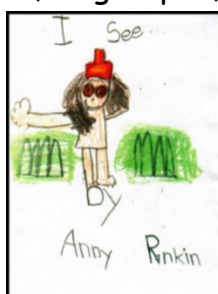
### Nellie Edge CCSS Logo

*We designed this CCSS logo to reflect our vision of implementing Common Core State Standards within a framework of:*

- **Joyful, meaning-centered teaching and learning**—rich in music, drama, sign language, and the arts
- An understanding that kindergarten learning is **active and social** and we **must differentiate learning**
- Strong and respectful **parent and family connections**: *We have a covenant with parents that says we jointly share responsibility for teaching your child* - Ernest Boyer
- A concern for the **whole child** and a commitment to developing **habits of mind** that will help each child do well in school—and in life
- Intentionally building **growth mindset** language and social emotional skills across the curriculum!

### How Foundational Nellie Edge Online Seminars (NEOS) “ABC Phonics”; “Handwriting”; and “Sight Words” build ELA Common Core Standards:

All students love to sing, sign, draw, fingerspell, write messages, and make books!



### Reading: Foundational

#### Print Concepts

#### **RF.K.1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.**

By repeatedly writing (or copying) meaningful sentences, students are actively engaged in using print. Two concepts of print—learning the names of letters and understanding that words are separated by spaces—are most easily learned and accelerated when a student is using print for real purposes that have personal meaning.

#### Phonological Awareness

#### **RF.K.2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).**

#### Phonics and Word Recognition

#### **RF.K.3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.**

Mastery of letter/sound correspondence and CVC words is the goal of Multisensory ABC and Phonics Immersion.

#### **RF.K.4. Read emergent reader texts with purpose and understanding.**

Students can read predictable “heart word” sentences because they have personal meaning, and students have practiced writing them for fluency. Early writing teaches

and informs the reading process! Dramatization of Read and Sing Books supports reading with comprehension.

### **Reading: Literature**

**RL.K.6. With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.**

Students identify themselves as authors, illustrators, and storytellers by making their own books with predictable "heart word" sentences.

**RL.K.10. Actively engages in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.**

Students sing, sign, and/or dramatize predictable Read and Sing Books.

### **Reading: Information Texts**

**RI.K.1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.**

Students share their personally authored books while sitting in the Author's Chair and responding to classmates' questions. They practice who, what, where, when, why, and how questions.

**RI.K.5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.**

Students come to understand the parts of a book by learning to make their own books with front cover and back cover and folds or rubber bands as spines.

### **Writing**

**W.K.1. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces.**

Students learn how to read, write, and spell the "heart words" 'because' and 'favorite.' They practice prolific writer sentences to facilitate Opinion and Narrative Writing.

**W.K.3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.**

We first develop the oral language for narrative, sequential writing by talking students through the guided drawing models and repeatedly singing our ♪ *First, Next, Then, After That, Finally* ♪ song.

### **Language: Conventions of Standard English**

**L.K.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. Print many upper- and lowercase letters.**

Upper- and lowercase letters are introduced within authentic writing activities integrated with handwriting lessons and sight word spelling songs to accelerate learning.

**L.K.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.**

Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun I.

Each of the 5 essential high-frequency "heart word" sentences used in our Independent Book Making Centers begin with the capital "I" pronoun. Students soon develop fluency with common sentence patterns.

**L.K.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.**

Students listen to and practice using words such as prolific writers, anonymous, front cover, back cover, book spine, fancy-up, design, environment, setting, and "the end" page. Students are encouraged to use descriptive words and become **voracious vocabulary learners** throughout the day, across the curriculum.

## **Speaking and Listening**

### **Comprehension and Collaboration**

**SL.K.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts.**

It is much easier to participate in conversations if the curriculum focuses on teaching kindness, collaboration, and friendship. Children sing, dance, handjive, and dramatize language with diverse partners. During "Turn and Share" time, students develop confident, respectful speaking and listening skills.

**SL.K.3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.**

Students internalize the "Question Song" by singing, signing, and using the 6 comprehension words throughout the day. (See RI.K.1.)

**SL.K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.**

In our comprehensive kindergarten writing program, students soon learn, *Your words and pictures tell a story*. Learning to draw is a part of building fluency with high-frequency "heart word" sentences and an important entry into Writing Workshop and Independent Book Making Centers.

**SL.K.6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.**

Everything we do in a meaning-centered, authentic literacy program encourages speaking and builds oral language. Students memorize and perform songs, poems, rhymes, and chants. They regularly turn and talk to their listening partner.





## **Quotes that Inspire our Practice: Reach for the Stars with the Lives of Your Children**

**"I know well that only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young."** Walter de la Mare, from *Bells of Grass*

**"My job is to make every child look good in front of their peers. Children have got to trust that I will never let them look bad."** Bobbi Fisher, from *Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*

**"If we as teachers ache with caring... writing matters because it's done for real reasons by real writers who ache with caring for a real response."**

Mem Fox, from *Radical Reflections*

**"The purpose of education is to learn to love to do what you have to do."** Plato

**"Community in itself is more important to learning than any method or technique."**

Ralph Peterson

**"It should be remembered that we speak more than we write. Throughout our lives we judge others, and we ourselves are judged, by what we say and how we speak."** Ernest Boyer

**"Our job is not to help kids do well in school. It's to help them do well in life."**

Elliott Eisner

**"It is the familiarity with the English language that allows the child's decoding to be error free, their reading to be fluent and their writing to be powerful."**

Nellie Edge, from *Celebrate Language and Accelerate Literacy*

**"Your children will not just learn how to read and write. They will choose to read and write. Now and forever."**

Shelley Harwayne, from *Lifetime Guarantees*

**"Unless we reach into our students hearts, we have no entry into their minds."**

Regie Routman from *Reading Essentials*

**"My goal in reading-writing workshop is to launch ships. My goal is to help youngsters set off on endeavors significant enough that they will want to write and learn with heart and soul. Launching ships."** Lucy McCormick Calkins from *Living Between the Lines*

**"It's the dedication to detail that separates the master craftsman from those with stars in their eyes."** Eric Beall

**The best way to become a better reader is to practice each day, with books you choose, on your just-right reading level. It soon becomes a habit.**

Gail Boushey and Joan Moser from *The Daily Five*