

A Parent/Caregiver's Glossary of Reading Skills

As your child/student's reading skills grow and when she enters school, you will probably hear many different reading terms. Below are words and phrases that your child/student's teacher may use or that you may read about in information sent home from school.

- 🌈 **Alphabet Knowledge.** It's important that children learn the names of the letters of the alphabet and, ultimately, the sounds that the letters represent. As children begin to make the connection between letters and sounds, they also begin to see that letters work together to form words—such as their own name!
- 🌈 **Fluency.** Being able to read accurately, quickly, and with proper expression—fluently—means children can focus on the meaning of the words they are reading. They do not have to work so hard to figure out how to say the words. Building fluency helps children understand what they read.
- 🌈 **Oral Language.** Oral language refers to speaking and listening, but there's more to it than that! Children need oral language skills to express their needs and ideas (speaking) and to understand what others say (listening). In other words, oral language is an important building block for nearly all other communication, including reading and writing.
- 🌈 **Phonemic Awareness.** Children who know that spoken sounds work together to form words are taking early steps in becoming successful readers. Children who have fun with spoken sounds—sort words by their first sound, say the first or last sound in a word, blend the separate sounds in a word, and separate

words into their parts—learn that words are made of sounds and that changing the sounds changes the words.

 **Phonics.** Children hear the sounds of oral language and begin to connect those sounds to the letters of written language. When children understand this relationship between sounds and letters, they are able to recognize familiar words when they are written. They also can figure out how to pronounce and read new written words.

 **Phonological Awareness.** Children need to be able to hear and play with the separate sounds within spoken words as they begin to learn to read. As they recognize the sounds within words—for example, beginning sounds and ending sounds—they learn that words are made up of smaller sounds. They also learn that by changing these sounds, they can create new words.

 **Print Awareness.** Children need to make connections between the words they hear and the words they see in print. As children begin to explore all types of printed materials (like books, magazines, and signs), they begin to see that pictures and written words represent real things. Children also learn how print works, including the direction in which words are read.

 **Reading Comprehension.** Making meaning of written words is necessary for understanding what we read. Children can use various strategies to help them understand what they read. For example, they can use what they already know (background knowledge) to make sense of what they read, use pictures and captions, make predictions, create mental pictures, ask questions, and summarize.

 **Vocabulary.** We need words to be able to communicate—listen, speak, read, and write. The more words children know and

understand, the better they are at expressing their own thoughts. Knowing lots of words also helps children's reading comprehension. Children learn words in two ways—by hearing and seeing words as they listen, talk, and read and by having parents/caregivers and teachers teach them the meanings of words.

 **Writing.** Early writing is connected to reading success. Scribbling, drawing, and pretending to write are beginning steps. Children also may use invented spelling—getting some but not all of the letters correct or leaving out letters—as they begin to make the important connection between the sounds of language and the letters of the alphabet. One of the first words children will want to know how to write is their own name.