

Creating A Turbine of Home Language that Leads to School Readiness

Presenters



Shonda Bragg



Michael Rowe



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Presenters



Shonda Bragg

Shonda Bragg is an Early Childhood Educator with nine years of experience working closely with infants, toddlers, and families. She enjoys engaging with families and sharing different language and literacy experiences to help build a strong foundation for children's development and growth.

Presenters



Malika Walters

Malika Walters serves as the Registrar and Homeless Liaison at BASIS Washington DC, bringing over 20 years of experience in school administration. In addition to her administrative duties, she ensures that families facing housing instability receive the emergency assistance and resources needed.

Expected Outcomes

The session will focus on practical, relationship-based strategies for integrating early literacy experiences into home environments. Attendees will learn how to:

1

Use everyday interactions to strengthen oral language, vocabulary, and background knowledge—key strands of the Reading Rope.

2

Support parents in recognizing and fostering early literacy behaviors in their young children.

3

Encourage playful and engaging book-sharing experiences that promote comprehension and emergent word recognition skills.

4

Adapt strategies for working with both parents and home-based childcare providers to create literacy-rich environments.

Session Components

We will cover the following during the session:



Overview of
Scarborough's
Reading Rope



Research &
Breakdown of
Strands



Special
Contexts



Supporting
Families



School
Readiness

Session Warm Up

Observations in Your Practice



A real example you've observed of a toddler (or preschooler) showing oral language development (e.g., describing something, asking a question, using complex grammar). **What did that tell you about where they were in their language development?**



A moment where a child demonstrated word knowledge or vocabulary growth (e.g., using a new word, pointing and labeling something, repeating a book phrase). **How did you reinforce this moment?**



A time you've heard a child *misuse* a word in a funny or insightful way. **What does that tell you about how they're learning language?**



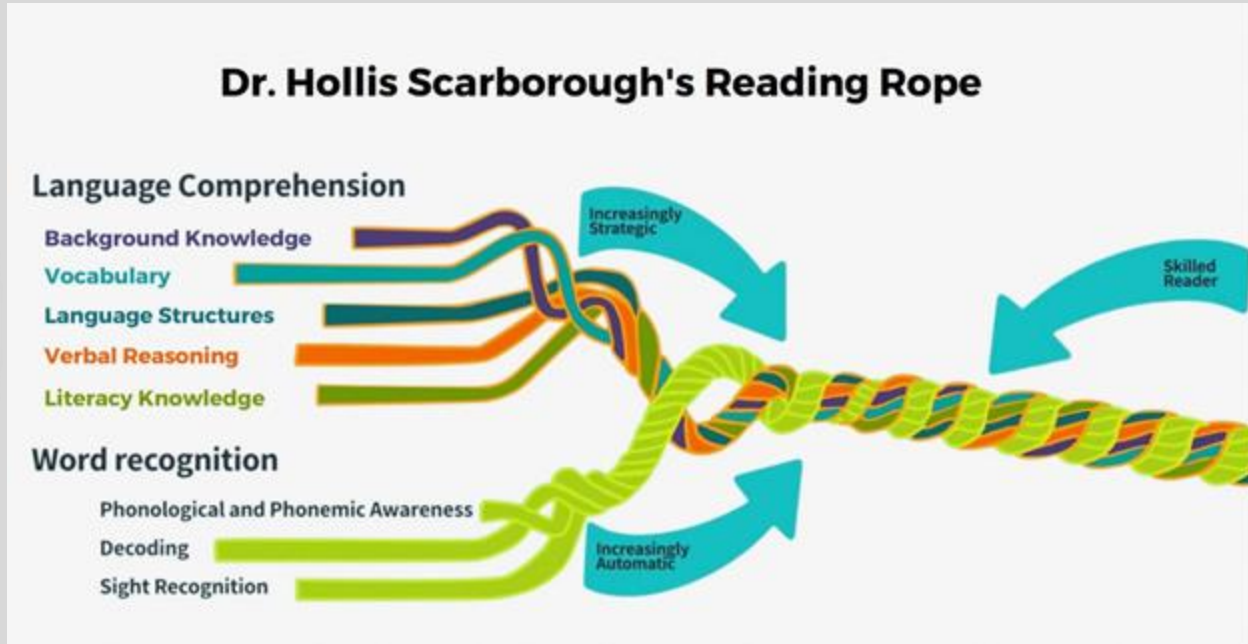
Connection to Reading Rope

Home Visitor Observation	Reading Rope Strand	Explanation
Child says “I goed to the park!”	Language structures	Shows awareness of past tense grammar, even if not yet mastered.
Toddler says “That’s gigantic!” after hearing it in a book	Vocabulary	Child is absorbing and using rich, precise language.
Child retells a story with “first... then...”	Verbal reasoning	Shows narrative structure and cause/effect understanding.

Background and Research

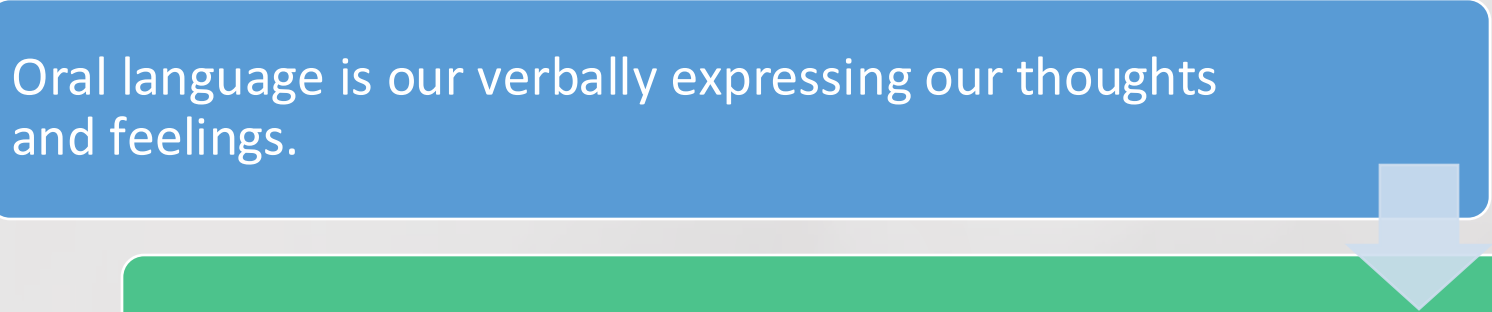
Background and Overview

- Developed by Dr. Hollis Scarborough to illustrate the complexity of skilled reading.
- Uses a rope metaphor to show how multiple strands work together to support fluent reading with comprehension.



Background and Overview

Oral language is our verbally expressing our thoughts and feelings.



Written language is our communication without being in real time.



Reading is our digesting the written communication that mirrors our oral language communication

Research

Oral Language Development is Critical:

- Research (Snow, 2001) shows a strong link between early oral language and later reading comprehension.
- Vocabulary gaps appear as early as 18 months between children from higher- and lower-income families (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Phonological Awareness Predicts Reading Success:

- Skills like rhyming, identifying beginning sounds, and syllables are early predictors of decoding ability (National Early Literacy Panel).

Research

Shared Reading & Conversational Turn-Taking:

- Regular conversations and story-sharing improve children's brain development and school readiness (Serve & Return model—Harvard Center on the Developing Child).

Implications for Practice:

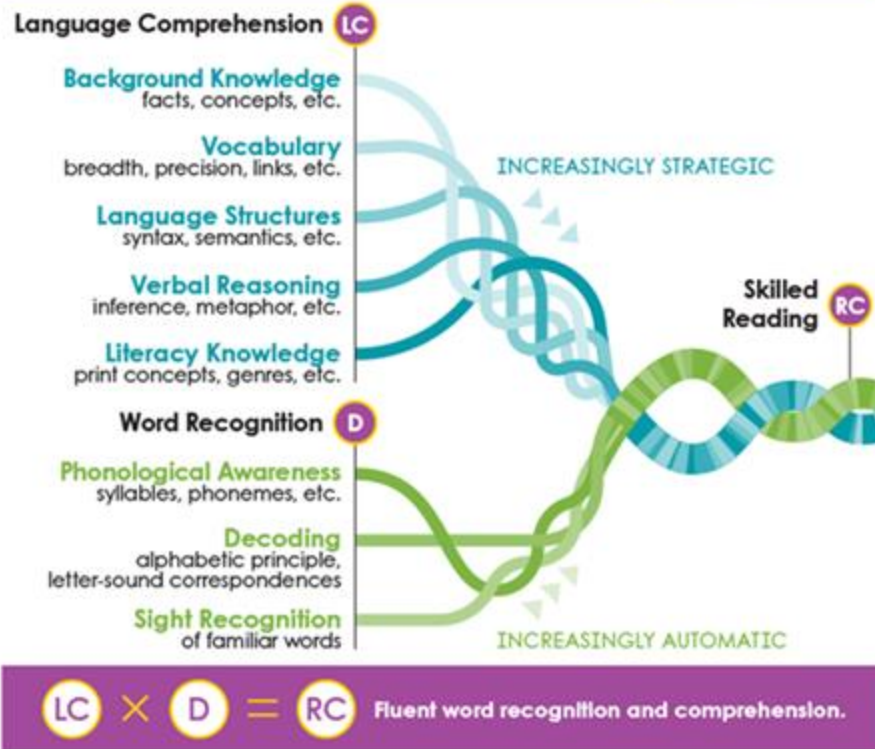
- Home visitors can play a crucial role in closing opportunity gaps by modeling and encouraging literacy-rich, interactive routines.

Reading Rope: Language Comprehension

As we go through each area, write down 1-2:

- Ideas
- Activities to Try
- Strategies to Support Families

Scarborough's Reading Rope



This interpretation of the Reading Rope incorporates Gough & Tunmer's (1986) Simple View of Reading.

Language Comprehension:

Background Knowledge

What it means: General knowledge about the world (animals, routines, weather, family, food, etc.) that helps children understand what they hear and read later.

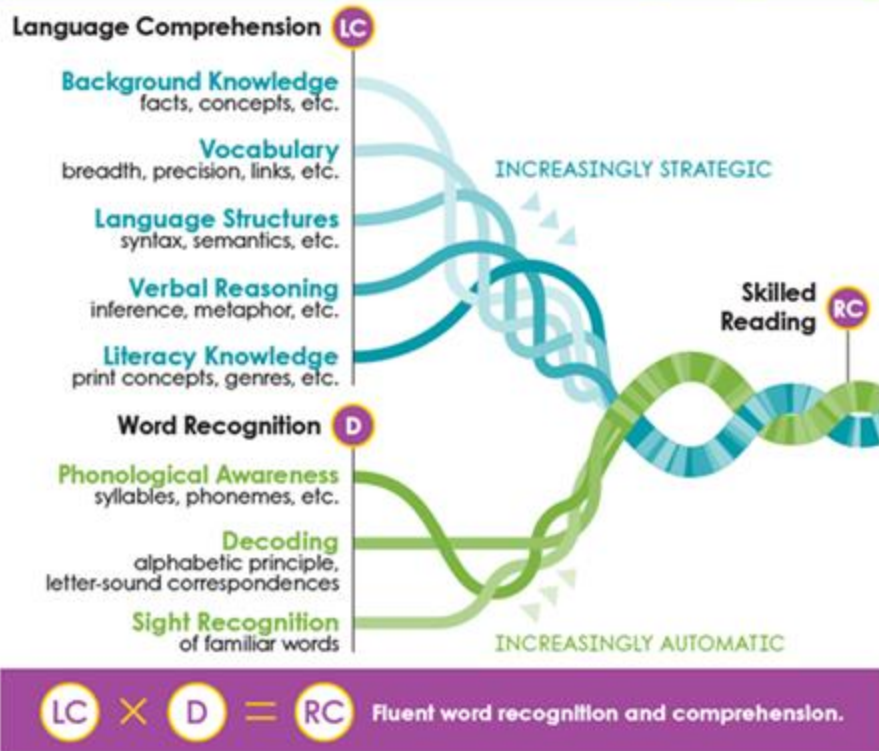
Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

- Recognizing animals, objects, or people in books or real life.
- Connecting new stories to personal experiences (“We saw a duck too!”).
- Understanding basic concepts (hot/cold, big/little, up/down).

Home support:

- Go on nature walks and name what you see.
- Talk about routines (“Now we brush our teeth!”).
- Use pretend play to explore everyday life (“You be the cook!”).

Scarborough's Reading Rope



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Language Comprehension:

Vocabulary

What it means: Knowing the meaning of lots of words, including new and more complex ones.

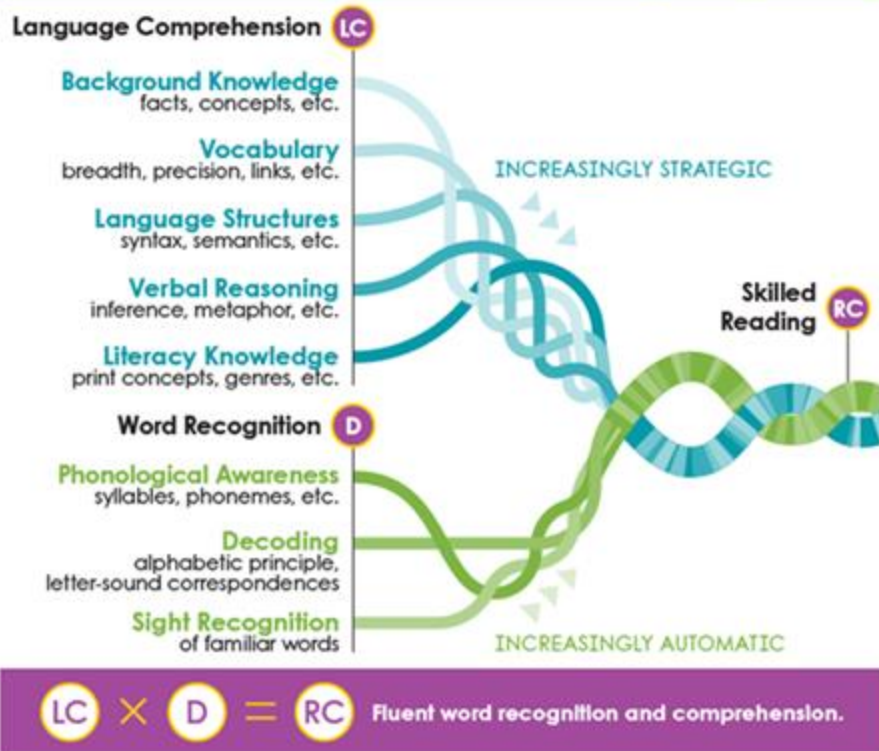
Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

- Learning and using new words daily.
- Using descriptive words (“That’s a tall tower!”).
- Asking “What’s that?” or “Why?”

Home support:

- Use real words, even if they seem “big” (“That’s enormous!”).
- Label objects in books and daily routines.
- Repeat and expand on what the child says: “Dog!” → “Yes, that’s a brown dog.”

Scarborough's Reading Rope



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Language Comprehension:

Language Structures

What it means: Understanding how words are put together in sentences and phrases (grammar, verb tense, sentence complexity).

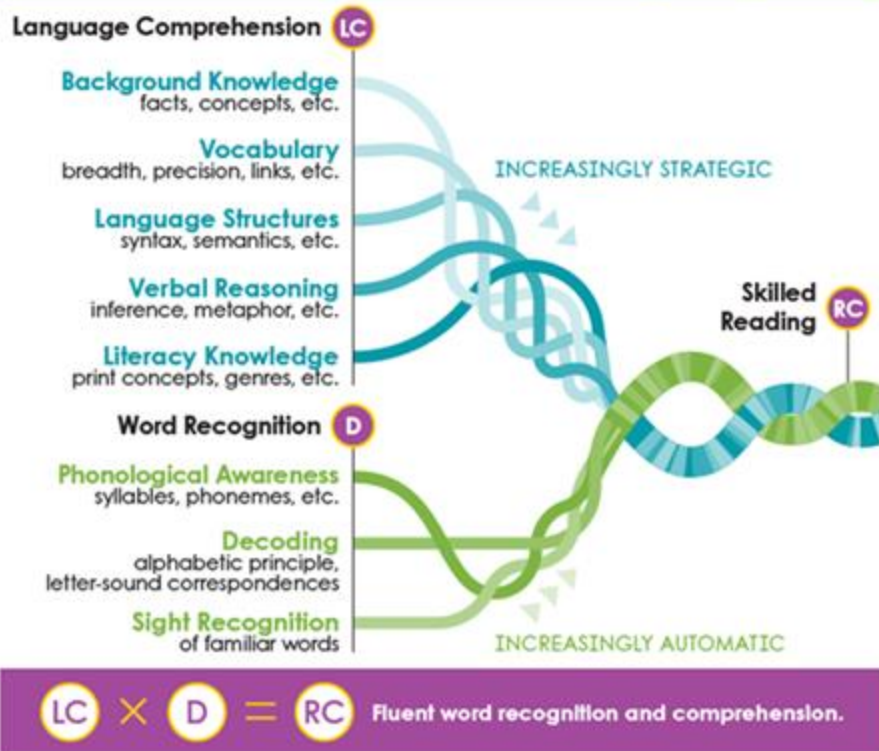
Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

- Moving from simple words to full sentences.
- Beginning to use correct grammar (“He *is* jumping,” instead of “He jumping”).
- Following multi-step directions.

Home support:

- Model correct grammar without correction (“He jumping?” → “Yes, he **is** jumping!”).
- Play games with “first...then” (“First wash hands, then snack!”).
- Read books with rich sentence structure and repeat phrases together.

Scarborough's Reading Rope



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Language Comprehension:

Verbal Reasoning

What it means: Using language to think through ideas, explain, predict, and solve problems.

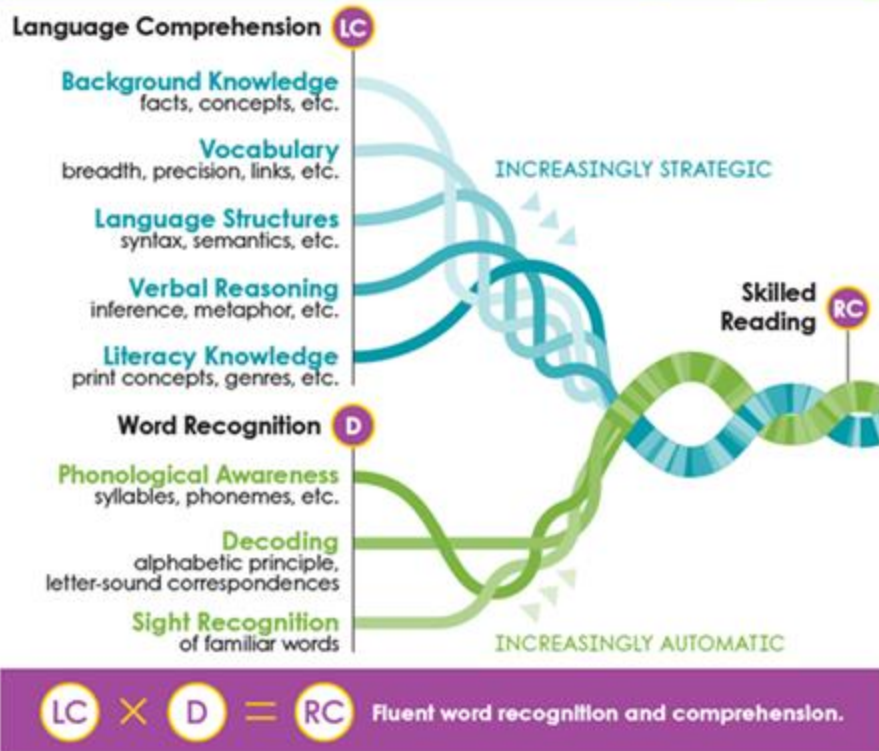
Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

- Making guesses (“Maybe he’s hiding!”).
- Understanding cause and effect (“He cried because he fell.”).
- Asking and answering “why” and “how” questions.

Home support:

- Ask questions while reading: “Why do you think she’s sad?”
- Talk through real-life problems: “How can we fix this?”
- Use open-ended toys to support storytelling and predicting.

Scarborough's Reading Rope



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Language Comprehension:

Literacy Knowledge

What it means: Understanding how books, stories, and print work.

Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

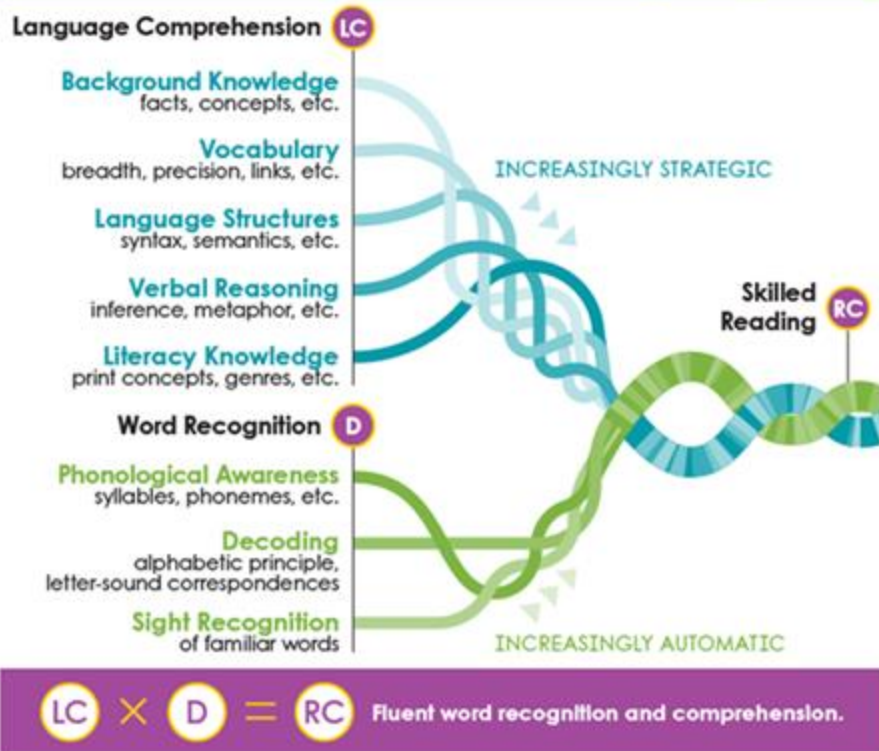
- Holding a book right-side up, turning pages left to right.
- Knowing that print has meaning.
- Pretending to read or telling a story from pictures.

Home support:

- Read daily and point to the words as you read.
- Let the child “read” or tell the story from memory or pictures.
- Talk about parts of the book (title, author, cover, end).

Reading Rope: Word Recognition

Scarborough's Reading Rope



This interpretation of the Reading Rope incorporates Gough & Tunmer's (1986) Simple View of Reading.

Word Recognition:

Phonological Awareness

What it means: Hearing and playing with sounds in words (rhymes, syllables, beginning sounds).

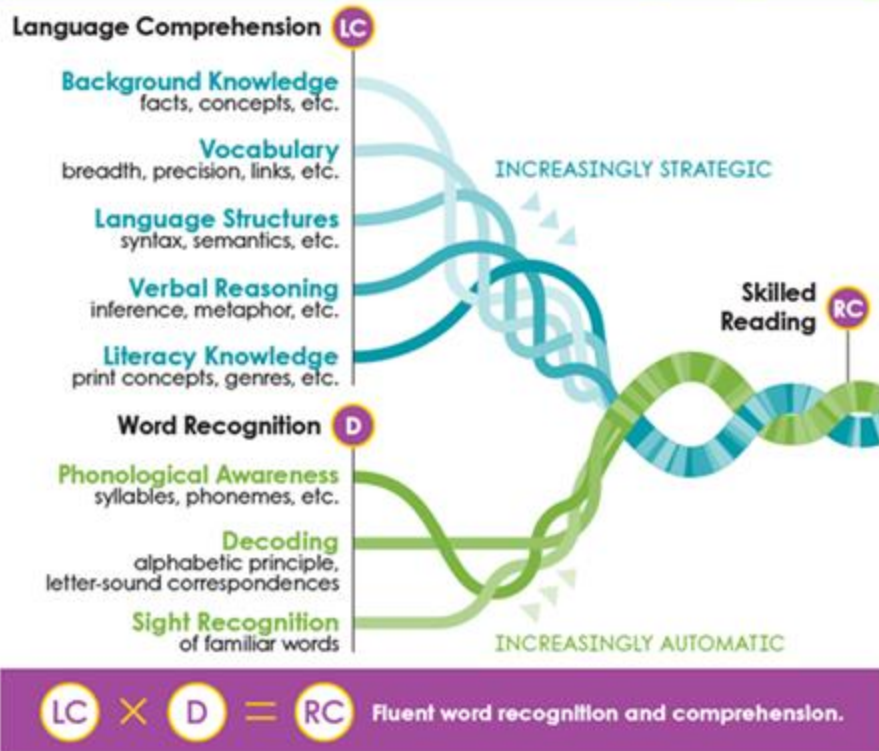
Ages 2–6 example behaviors:

- Clapping out syllables: “ba-na-na” (3 claps).
- Recognizing rhymes (“Cat rhymes with hat!”).
- Hearing beginning sounds: “Ball starts with /b/!”

Home support:

- Play rhyming games (“What rhymes with tree?”).
- Sing nursery rhymes and clap syllables.
- Use toys to talk about first sounds: “This is a lion—what sound does *lion* start with?”

Scarborough's Reading Rope



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Word Recognition:

Decoding

What it means: Using letter-sound knowledge to sound out simple words.

Ages 4–6 example behaviors:

- Matching sounds to letters (“M is for /mmm/”).
- Sounding out simple CVC words like “cat” or “dog.”
- Beginning to write letters and try spelling.

Home support:

- Use magnetic letters for names and simple words.
- Play “What sound does ____ start with?” using books or objects.
- Let children explore writing letters and sounding out words—even if it’s not perfect.

Scarborough's Reading Rope



This interpretation of the Reading Rope incorporates Gough & Tunmer's (1986) Simple View of Reading.

Word Recognition:

Sight Recognition

What it means: Automatically recognizing familiar words (e.g., “stop,” “mom,” “dog”) without sounding them out.

Ages 4–6 example behaviors:

- Recognizing their name in print.
- Identifying common words in books or signs.
- Reading memorized parts of familiar books.

Home support:

- Point out print in the environment (store signs, labels).
- Label items in the home (“door,” “bed,” “cup”).
- Make name cards or signs for the child’s belongings.

Considerations for Children with Developmental Delays, Disabilities, and English Language Learners

Developmental Delays and Disabilities

- Provide **multisensory experiences**: use visual, tactile, and auditory supports (e.g., picture cards, songs, real objects).
- Use **predictable routines** with repeated language to support memory and learning.
- **Celebrate all attempts** at communication—gestures, vocalizations, words.
- **Collaborate** with therapists and support specialists if the child receives services.

English Language Learners

- Encourage use of the **home language**: strengthening the first language supports English development.
- Provide books and songs in **both English and the home language** when possible.
- **Model** simple, clear language paired with gestures or visuals.
- Celebrate **cultural traditions and stories**—ask families to share songs or rhymes from their culture.

Connecting with Families

Connecting with Families

Language Comprehension (even for toddlers):

- **Talk, talk, talk:** narrate what you're doing ("I'm washing the red cup."), describe what the child sees or touches.
- **Read books often:** make it interactive—ask questions ("What do you see?"), connect the story to their life ("Remember when we saw a duck at the park?").
- **Use rich vocabulary:** don't simplify too much—use real words like "enormous" or "gently" and explain as needed.
- **Play pretend games:** tea parties, animal play, or doctor play all build background knowledge and story structure.
- **Sing songs and nursery rhymes:** supports verbal reasoning, rhyme recognition, and memory.

Connecting with Families

Foundations of Word Recognition:

- **Rhyming games:** “What rhymes with cat?” or “Can you find something that rhymes with ‘ball’?”
- **Clapping syllables:** break names and words into beats (“Hel-en,” “ba-na-na”).
- **Point out letters:** on cereal boxes, signs, books—name them and talk about the sounds.
- **Alphabet songs and puzzles:** connect letter names to fun and play.
- **Use the child’s name:** talk about the letters and sounds in their name—it’s personally meaningful and motivating.

Connecting with Families

- **Ensure you provide a place of respect and empathy:** Be vulnerable and share your journey through education. Do not be ashamed of your lived experiences. Ask questions and encourage them to ask them as well.
- **Honor Home Language:** Welcome their language into the environment.
- **Connect School with Home Life:** Provide tools and resources that are typically seen within the classroom and can be used at home with ease. Make sure the directions are provided in a simple and realistic manner for manipulation.

School Readiness

School Readiness

What Are School Readiness Skills?

- Not just ABCs—includes language skills, attention, memory, and social-emotional development.
- Early literacy-related readiness includes:
 - Understanding and using a variety of words
 - Engaging in back-and-forth conversations
 - Recognizing letters or sounds
 - Listening to and retelling simple stories
 - Demonstrating interest in books and print

School Readiness

How Parents Can Support These Skills:

- Create reading routines: even 5–10 minutes daily makes a difference.
- Use everyday moments: bath time, meals, and walks can become learning times (“Look at the bubbles! Big bubbles!”).
- Provide choices: let children pick which book or toy to play with—builds motivation and confidence.
- Encourage effort: praise the process (“You really listened!” or “You tried to say ‘giraffe’!”).
- Be responsive: follow the child’s lead and build on their interests to support language and learning.

School Readiness

Tips and Ownership

Empower Families: “You are your child’s first and most important teacher.”

Small Moments Matter: Reading and language development happen in the everyday—not just in books or school settings.

Home Visitors are Literacy Coaches: Model, encourage, and celebrate every small step.

School Readiness: Making Learning a Part of Daily Life

- **Read together every day**
 - 10 mins a day
 - some days have child read to parents
 - make predictions and ask questions
- **Talk throughout the day**
 - during morning routines
 - while cooking and preparing meals
 - while visiting the doctors or grocery store
- **Remember to celebrate child and make learning fun and exciting**

School Readiness:

Apps to Support Children & Families

- **PBS KIDS Game app-**

Offers educational games that promotes literacy and problem-solving for early learners

- **Starfall ABCs app-**

Offers letter recognition, sounds, and early phonics. Promotes independent learning

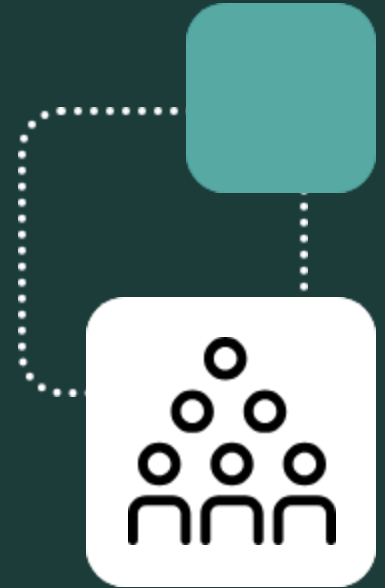
- **Endless Alphabet app-** Offers new vocabulary through puzzles and uses animated characters that explain word meanings.

Putting It Together



Where to go from here?

Based on what you have learned, and ideas that were reinforced, what are 2-3 items you plan to implement or strengthen?



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