GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Speech, Literacy, Play (SLP): Immersive play-based strategies that promote language and pre-literacy acquisition in early childhood settings

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

This initiative is a grant-funded program aimed at improving early literacy outcomes among pre-k and kindergarten aged children by leveraging the expertise and collaboration of educators and speech language pathologists. The initiative is grounded in the science of reading and seeks to create a dynamic, engaging, and equitable literacy culture, no matter the child's background. The grant supports innovative approaches to early literacy by empowering educators to design and implement engaging programming that enhances students' reading readiness and enjoyment through play-based strategies. It focuses on equitable access to high-quality books, professional learning, and partnerships that reinforce literacy development at school and home.

THE SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST'S AND TEACHER'S ROLE IN LITERACY

SLPs play a crucial role in the development of literacy skills for children with communication disorders as well as for children at-risk within the school community (ASHA, 2010; Ukrainetz, 2015). The role of the SLP in literacy acquisition includes prevention, identification, assessment, intervention, and collaboration with other professionals such as teachers. Teachers often feel solely responsible for the transition from emergent reading to mastery of literacy skills through explicit instruction, creating literacy-rich classroom environments, fostering a love for reading, and progress monitoring. However, influencing complete literacy acquisition for children is a much more collaborative effort. The goal of this project was to demonstrate the possible ways for teachers and SLPs to collaborate in the implementation of language and emergent literacy strategies in early childhood classrooms. Additionally, support was provided to facilitate both in-classroom and off-classroom collaborations, enhancing the expertise of early childhood educators and SLPs to optimize the quality of implementation practices.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Increase access to high-quality, diverse books for young readers.

- Foster collaboration between classroom teachers and SLPs.

- Provide students with engaging, culturally responsive literacy experiences.

- Promote family and community engagement in early literacy.

- Support educator professional development in literacy strategies.

- Stronger classroom-library collaboration.

- Increased student engagement and motivation to read.

- More informed and supported families in fostering literacy.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Emergent Literacy: The early "pre-reading" stages of skills and knowledge that are necessary for children to develop their ability to read. This includes things like recognizing that print carries meaning, pretending to read books, and beginning to play with sounds in words.

Print Awareness: A child's understanding of how print works. This includes knowing that we read from left to right, recognizing print in the environment, and understanding that books have titles, words, and pictures. Print awareness is one of many Emergent Literacy skills.

Dialogic Reading: An interactive way of reading with children that encourages the child to interact with, discuss, and ask questions about the story. Instead of just reading, the adult may ask questions, add information, exaggerate their inflection, and overall help the child become a storyteller.

Scaffolding: Providing support to help a child learn a new skill, then gradually reducing that help as the child becomes more independent. For example, giving hints or modeling a response before expecting the child to try it on their own.

Recasting: A strategy where the adult repeats what the child says and develops it by improving grammar or adding missing parts of speech.

Free Play: A type of child-directed play where children are able to choose their own materials, partners, and activities, and promotes imagination.

Open Play: A type of child-directed play where there are no predetermined goals or rules. Conversely to free play, open play may have a general structure, such as informal sports.
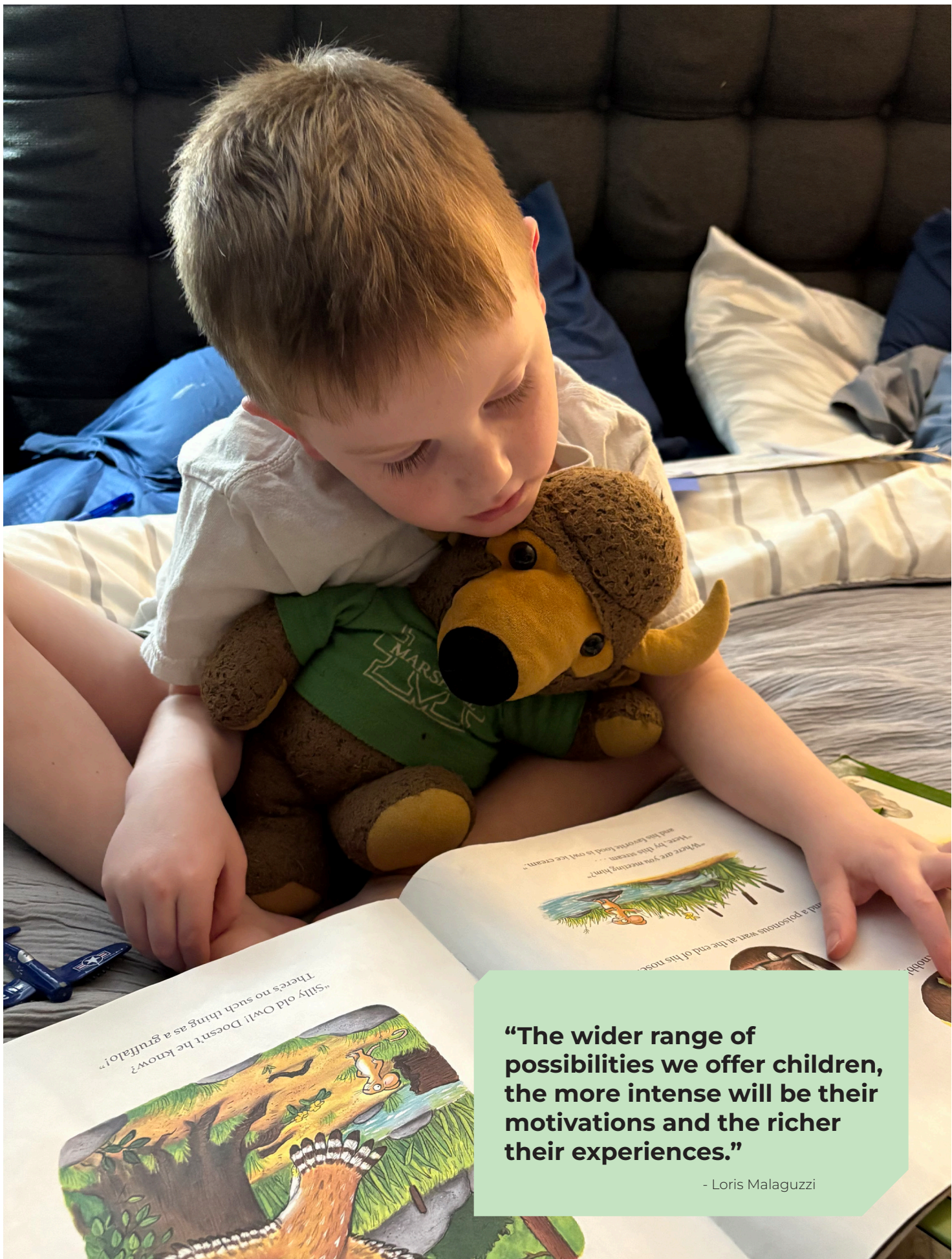
"The wider range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences."

- Loris Malaguzzi

POP STRATEGY

Some of the things that children need to learn about print are:

- Print is a form of communication

- Books are used in specific ways

    o Examples: held upright, have a beginning and an end

- Print is read in a specific order

    o Examples: left to right, top to bottom

- Print includes letters, words, spaces, and punctuation marks

    o Examples: Letters combine to make words, letters can be uppercase or lowercase, words combine to make sentences and separated by spaces, punctuation marks have meaning

To implement POP, you do not need any materials! Some ways that you can implement POP without materials during reading are:

- finger tracking while reading

- pointing to the title

- pointing to the names of the author and illustrator

- explaining the meaning of punctuation marks

POP is a print knowledge strategy that calls attention to print in the child's environment, to allow the child to learn how print works.

Throughout the day, implementing POP could look like:

- talking about street signs while on a walk

- showing examples of uppercase and lowercase letters in the environment

- finding the letters of their name in the environment

While materials are not necessary to implement this strategy, they can be useful! Some open-ended materials we have found helpful when implementing POP are Play-Doh, a writing utensil and paper, dry erase markers and a whiteboard, and magnetic letters/letter blocks. Creating and drawing letters or their name with these materials can be an engaging way to implement this strategy (Greenberg & Weitzman, 2014).

**POP
Example Video**

CSPAR STRATEGY

Characters, Setting, Problem, Actions, Resolution

SCSPAR is a story comprehension strategy that helps children understand the basic elements of a story to better make sense of it. CSPAR involves emphasizing five key elements of the story that will enable children to develop their understanding of the story you are reading with them, and everything else they read!

- **Characters**

  o Who the story is about

- **Setting**

  o Where the story takes place

- **Problem**

  o What the main point of the story is, or what problem is being solved

- **Actions**

  o What the characters do to solve the problem

- **Resolution**

  o How the problem gets solved at the end of the story

**CSPAR
Example Video**

To implement CSPAR, the only required material is a book or verbal story! This can look like:

- During reading: pointing out the illustrations and make comments about them, such as pointing to a character and saying, "He/She is a nice character!"

- After reading: asking the child questions about each of the five elements such as, "Who are the characters in this story?"

Having additional materials available can be useful when implementing CSPAR! Some materials that are useful for this strategy are: Play-Doh, writing utensils and paper, blocks, and a story-map for older children. These materials can be used to recreate some or all of the key elements of the story. For example, you could ask children to draw or use Play-Doh to make the main character or their favorite character or make the setting with blocks (Greenberg & Weitzman, 2014). (Greenberg & Weitzman, 2014).

SSTARS STRATEGY

Stress, Show/Tell, and Relate, Say

SSTaRS is a vocabulary strategy that highlights new vocabulary words by drawing attention to them. Highlighting the vocabulary words in this way allows a child to develop a dynamic understanding of the word and enables them to use the word on their own.

STRESS

- o When reading or using the new word, emphasize it by pausing before you say it, changing volume, and pausing after saying the word. If you are reading or there is some form of print available, an additional way to emphasize the word is by pointing

SHOW AND TELL

- o *Show* the child what the word means by using: an object, facial expressions, actions, or changing your inflection.

- ■ For example, if the target word was exhausted, you could yawn, lay your head on your hands, and draw out the word using a "tired" tone.

- o Tell the child what the word means by talking about: the category of the word, what the word means, what the word is, and what the word is not.

SSTaRS Video Example

AND RELATE

- o Establishing relationships between the new vocabulary word and previous experiences or knowledge that the child has can deepen their understanding of the word.

SAY

- o Continue to use and read the new vocabulary word to solidify the child's understanding of the word. This can be accomplished by reading the same book multiple times, and using the new word before, during, and after reading.

When implementing SSTaRS, using a book is highly suggested. With this strategy, the new vocabulary word is typically initially introduced during book-reading. However, no additional materials are necessary. Implementing SSTaRS with additional materials could involve using pictures for the "and Relate" step, or using blocks, Play Doh, or drawing materials to create the word or its meaning for the "Show and Tell" step (Greenberg & Weitzman, 2014).

ASSESSMENT & OBSERVATION TOOLS

The following tools have been selected because they measure early literacy objectives that align with the purpose of this project. These tools are suggestions for teachers and speech language pathologists to use as part of collaborative efforts to understand the current strengths and areas of necessary improvement for children in their classrooms. The following are not meant to be formal diagnostic assessments, but rather suggestions for supplemental tools if there is a need for further observation into any individual student.

Sulzby's Stages of Emergent Literacy (Sulzby, 1985)

STAGE 1
LABELING AND COMMENTING

☐ Turn to a page, point to a pictured object, label or describe it

☐ Accompanied by gestures, motions, or pointing to make meaning of the story

☐ Commenting: Giving information based on the pictured action

☐ Provides a few meta-statements in reference to the story (e.g. "I like this")

STAGE 2
FOLLOWING THE ACTION

☐ Focus is on the depicted action, rather than the object

☐ Contains story-like language but does not cohesively tell a story from beginning to end

☐ Speech often paired with an indicating finger that traces the action

☐ Re-enacts actions and sound effects

☐ Uses conversational intonation

☐ Words fit the context of the picture and listener's ability to see the pictures

STAGE 3
DIALOGIC STORYTELLING

☐ Listener can infer a story of sorts

☐ The story is disjointed

☐ Uses techniques appropriate to oral language (e.g. voices for the dialogue)

☐ May use dialogic comments directed to the listener

☐ There is some awareness of audience needs

☐ Language is contextualized to the print

☐ An overall story-like sequence begins to emerge

STAGE 4
MONOLOGIC STORYTELLING

☐ Listener can understand a complete story

☐ Story delivered in storytelling intonation

☐ Story is context dependent

☐ Consistently provides meta-statements in reference to the story

☐ Often ends coda with "The end" or "I'm done"

STAGE 5
READING AND STORYTELLING MIXED

☐ Transition between oral and written language

☐ Child inserts parts that sound like written language

☐ Story may depart from actual story, but contains many portions that are decontextualized/ understood without pictures

Westby's Symbolic Play Scale (Westby, 2000)

PRE-K

☐ Child uses language to create scene and use props

☐ Child uses blocks to build structures

☐ Child plans scripts and schemas during play

☐ Child says things like, "What would happen if..." to hypothesize

☐ Child or other participant has multiple roles in play

☐ Child takes on roles during play, becomes the "stage manager", or author of the story, and uses language to express that role

☐ Child uses modals, such as can, will, and could (may not match adult model)

☐ Child uses conjunctions, such as: and, but, so (may not match adult model)

☐ Child appropriately responds to why/how questions and include reasoning

KINDERGARTEN

☐ Child uses language to prepare the parts of story/play (e.g. setting, actions, delegating roles)

☐ Child combines parts of pre-established schemas/scripts that the child themself has never taken part in or seen (e.g. Fireman gets a call, puts on the uniform, drives the truck, saves a person/pet, puts out a fire)

☐ Child sequences events in play, and prepares the necessary objects, participants, and scripts, and plans co-occurring events

☐ Child takes part in collaborative play

☐ Child uses relational temporal terms, such as when, next, and last (may not match adult model)

Observing Use of Emergent Literacy Strategies

PRINT AWARENESS

Does the child know that:
- ☐ Print has meaning
- ☐ Print represents spoken language
- ☐ Print is a form of communication
- ☐ Books are held upright
- ☐ Books are read front to back
- ☐ Books have a beginning and an end
- ☐ Books have a title, illustrator, and author
- ☐ We read from left to right, and top to bottom
- ☐ Letters combine to make words
- ☐ Letters can be uppercase or lowercase
- ☐ Letters have names
- ☐ Words are separated by spaces
- ☐ Words combine to make sentences

STORY COMPREHENSION

Can the child accurately:
- ☐ Identify characters in the story
- ☐ Identify where the story takes place
- ☐ Identify the problem
- ☐ State what the characters are doing
- ☐ Identify how the problem is solved
- ☐ Make sense of the overarching theme of the story

VOCABULARY

Does the child:
- ☐ Use new vocabulary words in play
- ☐ Use new vocabulary words to describe their environment

FAMILY CONNECTION TIPS

Marco's Strategies– POP

P- *Point*   O- *Out*   P- *Print*

Drawing attention to print in your child's environment builds print awareness! POP can be used during book reading and other daily activities.

Things your child needs to learn about print:
- Books are used in specific ways
  - They are held right side up
  - They are read front to back
- Print is read in a specific order
  - We read from left to right and top to bottom
- Print includes letters, words, spaces, and punctuation marks
  - Letters have names
  - Words are separated by spaces

Here are some ideas for using POP in book reading:
- Point out the front of the book
- Point out the title
- Point out the names of the author and illustrator
- Tracking with your finger as you read
- Explain that print in speech balloons tells us what the character is saying
- Explain the meaning of punctuation marks

Marco's Strategies– CSPAR

Using the names of story parts can help your child develop a sense of how stories come together. The following examples use *The Three Little Pigs.*

C- Characters	This story is about three little pigs. They are the *characters.* The *characters* are who the story is about.
S- Setting	These little pigs live in the country. The country is the *setting* of this story. The *setting* is where the story happens.
P- Problem	Uh-oh, there's a *problem*! The wolf is trying to get into the pig's house.
A- Actions	Let's read about the *actions* that the pig does to try to keep the wolf out of his house.
R- Resolution	The wolf ran away and the pigs can live happily ever after! That is the *resolution.* The *resolution* is how the story ends.

Adapted from (Greenberg & Weitzman, 2014).

Marco's Strategies– SSTaRS

S- Stress. Pause before and after the word to draw attention to it. Example: "She could see many .....*pedestrians*.... on the sidewalk."

S- Show. Point to a picture and act it out

T- Tell. Name the category or define the word. Then use familiar words with the new word. Provide more details. Talk about what the word is and what it is not.

aR- and Relate. Relate the word to experiences that your child has had. Talk about other ways that the word could be used.

S- Say it again. Use the word before, during, and after book-reading. Read the book again. Use the word throughout the day

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