The Story of

Reading Readiness

Fall 2025







Enjoying books with beloved adults from the earliest of ages provides an important foundation for love of reading. The process by which children learn to read independently is fascinating and begins long before they join us as students at The Brick Church School. We are pleased to share a brief look into how children develop the skills they need to become successful readers and writers, which is at the core of all we do to foster their reading readiness.

Book Awareness

Babies love picture books with bold illustrations or photos. These books most often provide little or no text, as babies neither need nor have the attention span for hearing more than brief labeling or descriptions to accompany the pictures. But looking at the pictures, holding the book, turning the pages, and being entertained by its contents are all part of developing book awareness. As babies become toddlers, the books we read to them provide longer stories, and often include repeated refrains and playful, rhyming language. They learn that just as the pictures are the same each time we open a familiar book, so are the accompanying words.

Children love hearing the same books over and over, and this serves an important purpose beyond being enjoyable for the child. Rereading the same story helps develop their understanding that printed text represents specific and fixed words. While it can get tiresome for adults, it is important to indulge children's innate desire to hear the same books read repeatedly, and when they notice that you skipped a part and make you go back and read it, know that is a very good thing in their preparation to one day learn to read!

Environmental Print

Children develop additional understanding of the purpose of text beyond what they see in books from an early age as well. Most children learn that a red octagon means stop long before they can read the printed word on the sign. As children experience familiar text in the world, what educators call environmental print, they further develop their understanding that the written word communicates

information. Children take great pride in “reading” familiar signs and logos, and begin asking, “What does that say?” as they notice more and more environmental print in their everyday lives.

Phonological Awareness
The foundation for developing strong sound-symbol associations (knowing what sound each letter or combination of letters makes) does not involve any text at all. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds of spoken language, and well-developed phonological awareness is essential for the development of decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) skills. Children with strong phonological awareness understand that words are made of constituent parts that can be put together and taken apart.

Children develop phonological awareness through a vast array of auditory activities that are a daily part of the preschool experience. Rhyming, alliteration, sound substitutions, and playing with words to break them apart and put them back together all support phonological awareness. So do activities such as segmenting spoken sentences into individual words, spoken words into syllables, and eventually, identifying and manipulating the smallest individual sounds in spoken language, called phonemes.

Phonemic Awareness
Reading readiness requires strong phonemic awareness, the most advanced skill within phonological awareness. A child with well-developed phonemic awareness can hear that the spoken word “cat” is made up of three distinct sounds, can isolate each of those sounds, and knows that each of those sounds corresponds to an individual letter. Interestingly, knowing the names of each letter of the alphabet is less important than knowing the sounds each one makes. Children need a solid understanding of sound-symbol correspondence to begin decoding words on the page as well as to encode words they wish to write.

Teachers support children each step of the way in their journey towards reading. In Brick’s classrooms, children develop the auditory skills needed for reading readiness and learn to identify printed letters and what sound each makes. They also learn how to write each letter, first by forming them with materials like clay or other manipulatives and eventually with a pencil on paper. This all happens in a literacy rich environment where the value of reading and writing is evident to students each and every day.

Further Information
Parents will hear more about how reading readiness is approached at the individual age level during Curriculum Night, including information about Sounds in Motion and Learning Without Tears, two programs we use at Brick. For more information about how to support children’s reading readiness, here are a few excellent resources.

Read Together to Support Early Literacy
Executive Function and Early Literacy: Play-Based Strategies to Promote Reading-Related Skills
https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/supporting-your-child-s-literacy-at-home
The Science of Reading