

## Planned Language Approach Big 5: Focus on Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing

Deborah Mazzeo: Hello, and welcome. Thank you all for joining us today for the first Planned Language Approach Big 5 webinar with a focus on alphabet knowledge and early writing. The Big 5 is one of the five components of the Planned Language Approach, and alphabet knowledge and early writing is one of the topics under the Big 5 for All. They are the key skills that are critical for later school success, including grade-level reading. This webinar is the first in a five-part series where you'll be able to hear in-depth content on each of the Big 5 skills. So, be sure to join us again in February on the 21st at the same time for the second one. I'd like to go ahead and introduce myself. My name is Deborah Mazzeo, and I am the cultural and linguistic practices coordinator here at the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And I'll ask my colleagues to say hello, too.

Jan Greenberg: Hi, everyone. My name is Jan Greenberg. I'm a senior subject matter expert, child development. I also work at the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and I actually work several offices down from Deborah.

Karen Nemeth: And this is Karen Nemeth, and I'm the senior training and technical assistance specialist for dual language learners at the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And I'm calling in remotely from the Philadelphia area.

Deborah: Thank you, both. So, before we begin, I'd just like to go over some information regarding the webinar. We'll be using some of the features of this webinar platform to help us interact, so at the bottom of your screen you'll notice these widgets. If you any questions during the webcast, you can send them through the purple Q&A widget. We'll try to answer these during the webcast, and please know that we do capture all questions. Our dear colleague, Jen Crandell, is also on and responding to those questions and contributed greatly to this presentation, so we thank her for that. If you have any tech questions, please enter them here as well, as we have Noelle on who will be able to answer those. A copy of today's slide deck and additional resources are available in the Resource List, which is the green widget. We encourage you to download any resources or links that you may find useful.

Throughout this session, we'll be using the blue Group Chat widget to engage with each other, and I thank you all for entering your favorite alphabet books already in there. You can also find additional answers to some common technical issues located in the yellow Help widget at the bottom of your screen. Each of these widgets are resizable and movable for a customized experience; simply click on the widget, move it by dragging and dropping, and resize using the arrows at the top corners. Finally, if you have any trouble, try refreshing your browser by pressing F5. Be sure to log off of your VPN and exit out of any other browsers. That will be useful. So, here is what we're covering today. During the introduction, I'll be making some connections to PLA, which is the Planned Language Approach for short. We'll be connecting to coordinated approaches and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

We'll be sharing the research on alphabet knowledge and early writing, including some important information around language and culture. We'll be talking about the developmental progression from infants and toddlers up to preschool age. There will be information on effective practices that support alphabet knowledge and early writing throughout the different stages of development from birth to 5. And then we'll show examples of alphabet knowledge and early writing in various early learning settings.

So, these topics are going to be interwoven and connected throughout the course of the hour that we're together. By now, you may have noticed in the resource list that there is a multipage PDF titled "Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing." You are all the first to receive this newly updated document that we are so excited to make available, and that is the basis for this webinar. There is also a link to the new Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing webpage on ECLKC, which is the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, and eventually there will be a page for each of the Big 5 skills. By the end of the presentation,

we're hoping you'll be able to understand the connections to a Planned Language Approach, coordinated approaches, and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or the ELOF for short; that you'll be able to explain what the research says about alphabet knowledge and early writing.

Hopefully you'll be able to describe the developmental trajectory from birth to age 5, identify strategies to support children who are dual language learners, and identify effective practices for supporting each skill and different early learning settings. So, when we talk about alphabet knowledge and early writing, we include the points that you see on the slide.

These are the skills and concepts that we want young children to understand and be able to do as a result of the support and teaching practices that we provide in our programs, and the nature of that support and those teaching practices will, of course, depend on the children's ages and abilities. For instance, infants and toddlers will begin to recognize pictures and some symbols before they begin to use them purposefully. So, we'll be talking about the developmental progressions and practices later in this webinar. Just for now, here's what we want to include and discuss – is that alphabet knowledge and early writing include communicating through print, so that's from the little scribbles through first letters and words. It includes understanding that letters are symbols used to read and write in English and in other alphabetic languages, like Spanish and Arabic and Portuguese, and these languages also use letters and sounds to form words.

So, that's really what the definition of an alphabetic language is, and I think it's important to note here, too, that some languages are not alphabetic. For example, Mandarin uses pictorial characters that represent a word or a phrase, so that's really important to note. Understanding that writing is purposeful. Those purposes include communicating with others, writing to remember, documenting – so like, for example, when an adult might mark the height of a child on a growth chart – and then writing for pleasure or entertainment, when children receive just a large blank page of paper and they begin making strokes with different colors.

So, those are the different purposes. And then there's recognizing upper and lowercase letters in English and other alphabetic languages; and here too, I want to also point out that not all alphabetic languages have upper or lowercase letters. So an example of that might be, like, Arabic, which – when you see the Arabic language written, it's like a cursive script, so that's important to note. And then lastly here, associating individual letters of the English alphabet and other alphabetic languages with their specific sound correspondences. So, that's really what we're talking about with alphabet knowledge and early writing. Next, I'd like to talk briefly about how alphabet knowledge and early writing fit into an coordinated approach. So, hopefully, education staff are supporting alphabet knowledge and early writing every day throughout the day as part of your curriculum, that you're assessing children's learning of the skills in order to know what to teach, and that you're supporting families to develop children's alphabet knowledge and early writing. All of these activities involve implementing a coordinated approach, and a coordinated approach should be built into your program's systems and services.

Head Start requires a coordinated approach for the full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families, as well as some other areas, and you can read about that further on. There's a one-pager that is provided for you on coordinated approaches in the resource list, so I recommend you checking that out. I want to mention a new tool. It's called the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment, and you see the link on the slide there, but it's also in the resource list. This is a great way to assess where you or your program is at implementing a coordinated approach for dual language learners. In this tool, there are three sections that are very applicable to our topic on alphabet knowledge and early writing that are found within the education services portion, and those are teaching and the learning environments, curricula, and child screenings and assessments. And once you have the opportunity to dig into that tool, as you read the items in those sections, you'll want to think about the

degree to which you're implementing them. Here on this slide, you see the front cover of the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment, or the DLLPA as we say for short, and on the right-hand side, you see the Planned Language Approach pie, as we call it.

The Big 5 for All, of which alphabet knowledge and early writing is one of those Big 5s, is only a slice of that pie for a Planned Language Approach. So again, the Big 5 for All addresses the five key elements of early language and literacy development, and that ties to the curriculum section of the DLLPA. These are the skills that are supported by research and connected to the language and literacy domain of the Early Learning Outcomes Framework. I also want to make some explicit connection between the other pieces of the PLA pie and the DLLPA; so you'll see that there's the Research Base as another slice of that pie, and there is research that is available on brain development that is applicable to all children.

The next piece of the pie is the Home Language Support, which serves as a foundation for learning English language skills. That ties in with the family and community engagement section of the DLLPA. Another slice of the PLA pie is the Strategies to Support DLLs, and this ties in with the teaching and learning environment section of the DLLPA. And then lastly are the Policies, Practices, and Systems slice of the pie, and these are important to sustain language and literacy development throughout all aspects of your program. This is actually where the link to the DLLPA exists, and this is where sections like human resources, professional development, and program planning of the DLLPA come into play. If you're implementing a Planned Language Approach, then you're implementing a coordinated approach to serving dual language learners, so I just want to be sure to state that. All right.

So, here on this slide, I want to state that Early Head Start and Head Start must align their practices with the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and since alphabet knowledge and early writing are key literacy skills, they will also align with states' early learning and development standards. So, the image you see here on the screen is from the interactive ELOF online, and these are the goals for infants and toddlers as it relates to alphabet knowledge and early writing, and they appear in the Language and Communication domain and the Emergent Literacy sub-domain. These goals that address alphabet knowledge and early writing are number 13, which states that the child recognizes pictures and some symbols, signs, or words, and number 13. And you'll see the two little red arrows there identifying those. Number 13 is that the child makes marks and uses them to represent objects or actions.

And then on the next slide here, these are the goals for preschoolers, and the alphabet knowledge and early writing goals for preschool are in the Literacy domain and two sub-domains: the Print and Alphabet Knowledge and Writing. The primary goals that address these skills are number two: Child demonstrates an understanding of how print is used, functions of print, and how the rules that govern how prints works or the convention of print. Goal number three: The child identifies letters of the alphabet and produces correct sounds associated with letters. And goal number six: The child writes for a variety of purposes using increasingly sophisticated marks. And I just want to state, too, that these goals are relevant for children in classrooms, family child care, and home visiting settings. So, with that, I think I will turn it over to my colleague, Karen.

Karen: Thank you, Deb. Now that you've sort of set the stage for what we need to do to support children, it's my turn to talk a little bit about why. Why do we say those strategies will work? What do we know about how to make those transitions through the developmental progressions work? And the research – boy, there's a lot of research about early literacy and early learning, and so a lot of work has gone into reviewing the top research and pulling together the most useful and the most prominent research to support the recommendations that you get in the ELOF and the recommendations that you get in the Dual Language Learners Program Assessment.

So, I'm going to talk a little bit about where this all comes from, but some of the key points that we come across again and again are that alphabet knowledge helps children understand the letter-sound connection, which is key to reading and writing in English and for other languages that use alphabets, right? So, it's not just about recognizing what the letters look like but about understanding how an alphabet works. That's what the research really has shown us, that recognizing what the letter looks like and the name of the letter is only one small part of alphabet knowledge. The real key is, can we help children understand what's the point of an alphabet? That it's not just a bunch of swiggles; it's a bunch of swiggles that help us communicate, right? And that is the big task of alphabet learning, and so writing is an important part of that.

Like, sometimes we think of, "Well, if I could just keep saying the alphabet or pointing to the alphabet letters, I'll be teaching the alphabet." But we've found through – the research has shown that when children are actively processing the alphabet – right? – like when they have opportunities to try to write things out or when they have opportunities to talk about the letter-sound connection and the meaningful connections with words, that's when the real learning about alphabet knowledge can happen. And so, this reminds me of a funny story when I was doing a presentation at a big education conference, and in the room I had half elementary school teachers and half preschool teachers, and I asked that

question: What's the first letter of the alphabet that you teach to young children? And I'm going to ask you. If you're in the group chat or the questions, see how you would answer my question. So, I asked this whole room, "What's the first letter of the alphabet that we teach to young children?" And you know, the elementary school teachers, every single one of them shouted out, "A! You start with A, the first letter of the alphabet," but I'm waiting for you to write in the chat – either the group chat or the question, what's your idea of the first letter that you teach? Ah! Angela was the first one. Angela is right. See, now you're all typing, typing, typing, typing, typing. We all know in early childhood, we teach children... Well, it doesn't matter what we plan to teach.

So many times, the first letter they learn is the first letter of their own name. We know that inside scoop that the research has affirmed. It's about the meaningful connection. It's not the letters themselves; it's how they connect with meaning for those kids, and also giving them a chance to practice writing and using the writing to communicate that meaning, what it means to them, for them to try to write something that they're thinking about, that's when we really get that active processing. We also know that we work a lot on teaching we call phonological connections – right? – or phonetic awareness, where we're trying to help children understand letter-sound connection. But there's some research that shows that the words children say and the words that children talk about are one of the most powerful supports for how they learn phonological awareness. It's not just what we say to children, but it's what we encourage children to expect in themselves, okay? So, we know that alphabet knowledge also helps children understand those letter-sound relationships, and that is important in English and languages like Spanish or Arabic or Portuguese where the letters stand for sound, but some languages do not use alphabets. They use characters that connect to meaning rather than sound. Right?

So, we pronounce the sounds of the letters in the English alphabet. We pronounce the sounds of the letters in the Spanish alphabet. But in other character languages, like Chinese, the characters connect to a piece of meaning that composes the word instead of an individual letter; but children still have to learn how to say the sounds correctly so that they communicate what they want to communicate and how to hear the sounds. And so, that listening part of that sound-meaning connection is also important in addition to recognizing the letters, recognizing characters, and making those connections, as well.

Okay, so we have as part of the alphabet knowledge and early writing document, we make these key points. English letters and sounds may be new to children who are dual language learners, and that's true for children who come from languages that have alphabets and children from languages that have

characters, but we have found through the research that if a child can understand how an alphabet works in any language, it's much easier for them to transfer that knowledge to a new alphabet, right? So, it's not critical to start the child learning the English alphabet. If you want them to learn an alphabet, one of the best ways is to start them learning the alphabet in the home language with words that they understand and that are really meaningful to them, and then when they catch on to how these letters and sounds go together, and that's how I can communicate and that's how I can learn to write and that's how I can read these words on this page, that connection is easier to then say, "Oh, well, if I understand that in Spanish, I can understand how to do it in English, too." We don't have to start with the English alphabet. Any alphabet knowledge provides a good foundation. Also, we want to say the concept that print is like speech written down also transfers across writing systems.

So, when you take dictation of what children are saying and when children try to write down what they are saying or what other people are saying, that really makes a difference. We also say that building on children's home languages by noting similarities and differences between the languages is very useful, actually pointing out things that are alike and things that are different, right? So, like, in English, we say, "Boat." In Spanish, we say, "Barco." We can say, "Oh, look, the 'b' sound, 'b' for boat, 'b' for barco." But if we're talking about that fruit that we usually use on an alphabet chart, right, in English we say, "A is for apple," but is it really? Because if you're Spanish, you're wondering how that letter A connects to the sound M in manzana. So, we really want to draw children's attention to when those things are alike and when they're different and talk about them to get them thinking about those things.

Keep in mind that children from different countries with different languages have different early language experiences – not early language experience, but early language learning. So, when families are new to the United States that come to your program, they remember their early learning of early reading and literacy, using different strategies and different practices than what they see in your program. And so, it's important to get to know what families have experienced in their own childhoods and what they expect and what they can do to support early literacy at home; and we also want to make connections with the cultural traditions around language and literacy in the home. It's a good idea to use familiar stories or songs or chants as ways to bring each child's culture into their early literacy learning and use those as models to make those letter-sound connections and those connections between sounds and the meanings of words.

Now, I'm about to show a video, and before we start I want to give you something to think about. Can you watch carefully in this video? There are some specific strategies that the teacher is using, and there are some specific behaviors that the child is doing in this interaction. And what I want... I'm going to ask you, either in the chat or the questions when the video is done, can you identify, can you describe a specific strategy that the teacher used or the child used? And some things are obvious, some things might not be so obvious, and it'll be interesting for you to take a look. So, I'm getting ready to play that video now.

[Video begins]

Woman 1: ¿Otra vez? What is it?

Girl 1: It's a pumpkin.

Woman 1: Oh, there's a pumpkin.

Girl 1: [Speaking Spanish]

Woman 1: Oh, look at all the writing you did, and your name, too. Pumpkin. Is this the pumpkin here?

Girl 1: Yes.

Woman 1: Pumpkin, yes; okay.

Girl 1: Esta es mi mama.

Woman 1: Yes. Esta es mi mama; mi mama.

Girl 1: Y esta mi papa.

Woman 1: Mi papa, mi papa, mi papa.

Girl 1: Y esta es mi casa.

Woman 1: Esta es mi casa. Esta es mi casa.

Girl 1: Esta mi hermanita.

Woman 1: Esta es mi hermanita.

Girl 1: Esta es mi wind-er.

Woman 1: That's your window. You can look out your window. Window.

Girl 1: Nombre.

Woman 1: Esta es tu nombre, nombre.

[Video ends]

Karen: Okay, now I can see people are already starting to write into the group chat: writing in both languages, dictating and repeating the words, repeating the child's words in English and Spanish, right, and also code-switching back and forth.

Well, that's the topic of a whole other webinar, for sure. Labeling her drawing and really making it meaningful. But the teacher is not telling the child what to write, and you're all capturing that in a lot of your comments, that the writing is coming from the child what she wants to talk about, and so the connection that child makes between the sounds and the words is more meaningful because it's coming from her own interests.

So, watching that video gives us some good ideas, and I'll bet you would like to watch it again, and I can tell you how to do that because we borrowed this video from a collection that's available on YouTube from the organization called Teaching at the Beginning, and the link for Teaching at the Beginning is, I believe, in your resource list and it's also in our last slide.

And Teaching at the Beginning has collected a whole group of these similar videos capturing early childhood activities and interactions that support dual language learners across the many different components of early literacy and language learning. And so, that's Teaching at the Beginning on YouTube or we have their website listed also in our chat. And now, I'm going to be handing over the slides to Jan Greenberg. Jan, are you ready?

Jan: Sorry. I was on mute. Thanks for reminding me, Karen; and in addition, I also want to thank Deb and Karen for giving us the big picture of alphabet knowledge and early writing, what it includes, the research that supports its inclusion in the Big 5 and the ELOF, and including its relevance for children who are dual language learners.

So now, we're going to get into children's development related to alphabet knowledge and early writing and strategies that support children in developing these important concepts and skills, and we're going to start with babies and toddlers and the relevant ELOF goals and progression. So, we see the first one here about children recognizing pictures and some symbols, signs, and words. We see what the progression looks like from birth to 3 years. So in thinking about how children begin to develop this skill, which is a

foundation part of alphabet knowledge and early writing, we think about adults forming secure relationships with babies by responding to their interests and needs to sleep and eat.

We think about cuddling up and looking at books with babies. Every day, we're labeling and describing pictures. When we think about toddlers, we think about how they're developing their alphabet knowledge and early writing skills; when adults point out written names and letters in names, when parents sign in for their children in a group care setting or at a group socialization, when adults talk about how writing works, including the alphabet and words. So, for example, I might say, "Oh, look. The P on the pizza box is just like the P in your name, Pilar," or I might say, "The sign says, 'Wet paint,' so we don't want to touch it and get paint on our clothes." And we might also point out letters when we're reading alphabet books or the letter of the child's first name; and you all gave us such a great list of your favorite alphabet books, and I think I'm going to be checking a few of those out. And when we're thinking about the strategies that I just mentioned, these are strategies that can be done in any group care setting; and if you are a home visitor, these are strategies that you can talk with parents about and how and when they might try these strategies during home visits and during group socializations.

Okay, so we have a short, little poll for you. So, the question is, "How can you support babies' alphabet knowledge and early writing?" And we want you to take a moment to click on your answer, and use the scroll bar to see all of your choices. So, we'll just give you a moment or two to put your responses in. Okay. Is anybody putting responses in? I don't see anybody putting responses in. Ah, there we go. I see somebody has put a response in. Ah, now I see responses coming in. Oh, my goodness. Okay. All right. I'm just going to give it another moment. All righty. In the interest of time, I'm going to move on. And okay. Yes. Okay, great. And we can see that we've got answers in all of the categories, but most of them are in "D. All of the above;" and in fact, the answer is D. All of the above.

All of those strategies support infants in building a foundation for alphabet knowledge and early writing, and so how might these help do that? Well, we know that babies develop language and motor skills as they watch and listen and touch everything around them. So through meaningful interactions with adults, like when they respond to children's interests and label objects and animals and people and pictures and even familiar signs and symbols in the environment and describe the textures of toys and provide opportunities to explore their environment, all of these experiences give babies an opportunity to hear the sounds of language and learn new words and begin to develop ideas that someday they're going to write about. And because early writing is both a literacy activity and a fine motor skill, providing objects for babies to touch and reach and grab and shake and bang helps them develop the motor skills and hand-eye coordination they will need to hold the tools that they will eventually use to write.

So, what are some more strategies that we can use to support babies around alphabet knowledge and early writing? Well, we can talk or sign to them as they discover how objects work, so we name them. We describe the textures and shapes. We demonstrate the sounds and actions that the objects make. And I want to make a note here about the sign part and to encourage you to keep in mind that, as stated in the ELOF book – and this is on page 38 – some children may communicate primarily or only by using sign language rather than speaking, but young infants from birth to about 9 months who are hearing-impaired are likely not to use sign language as a reliable means of communicating back to others. However, adults can still sign to those babies because that will help the babies begin to learn the signs, and as their development grows, they will be able to start using those signs more reliably to communicate. So, we already talked about cuddling and looking at books and labeling, describing pictures. Hopefully, you're making book reading and sharing an everyday experience with infants.

You can give older babies writing materials and show them how to use them; so for example, you can give them large crayons and non-toxic markers. You can offer daily opportunities for using those writing materials, and where can very young children write? Well, they could write on paper while sitting in a

chair or in someone's lap or on the floor. And again, you know, when we're talking about these strategies, these are ones that can be used in group care settings, and again, home visitors can be talking with parents about how they might use these practices at home and in group socializations. Okay, so the next thing that we're going to show you is a video, and you're going to see two teachers and several infants engaging in a finger play, and you'll see that the infants have maracas in their hands. And so, as you are looking at this video, be thinking about – and we're thinking about the foundation for alphabet knowledge and early writing – what do you see the teachers doing and what do you see the children doing? And then pop your responses into the group chat as you're thinking of them.

[Video begins]

Teachers: ♪ A, B, C, D, E, F, G ♪

♪ H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P ♪

♪ Q, R, S, T, U, V ♪

♪ W, X, Y, and Z ♪

♪ Now I know my ABCs ♪

♪ Next time, won't you sing with me? ♪

Teacher 1: You going to shake that one, too? Oh. There you go.

[Video ends]

Jan: Okay. So, okay. So, yes. Participating by imitating. We're talking about babies; we're talking about the foundational things that are happening for them around alphabet knowledge and early writing and beginning to learn some of those foundational concepts and skills. So, teacher moving child on lap to beat to the song. They're imitating the teachers, mouthing, eye contact, repetitive words, singing, enunciating for children, signing and gesturing, modeling, music, and singing.

Okay. This is great. You definitely have down some of the strategies, and you might not think that these strategies are ones that would support the foundational skills for alphabet knowledge and early writing, but they are, so think about it. The education staffer offering babies safe toys and encouraging them to use a fist to grasp, shake, and bang objects, that's going to strengthen fine motor skills, including those that children will someday use to hold and use writing tools and to eventually write in their home languages and in English. They're also introducing words for letter names, so think about this.

As children get older and you're making concrete, explicit connections between letter names and letters themselves, children are going to begin to make those connections too. And although the staff in this video are singing in English to the children, you can adapt a song like this for other alphabetic language, and the same point about making concrete, explicit connections between letter names and the letters themselves applies there, as well.

Okay. So this is the second of the ELOF goals about children making marks and using them to represent objects or actions, and some of the things that we talked about already for babies and older infants before apply here. So, I want to make a quick point about toddlers, and we know toddlers enjoy making marks. You've probably seen them giggling or staring in surprise when they accidentally draw by jabbing or poking at paper with a marker. We know their hands are stronger than they were a few months ago. We know they're learning how to use and control writing tools, and we know that they're learning about writing in print when they see adults writing and hear them talk about print. And when we do that,



toddlers are learning that writing is meaningful and important. So what are some strategies? Well, one is modeling writing and describing what you're doing and why.

So you could be texting, you could be writing notes and emails, you could be making shopping and to-do lists. We know that children imitate what they see us do, and when we explain – when we talk about what we're doing and explaining why we're doing, that helps children understand some of the functions of print; for example, to communicate ideas and to remember things. And related to that, we can encourage children to write in meaningful ways, and of course, they might be imitating what we are doing, so if we're writing a thank you note or if we're writing a shopping list, we might be giving children the opportunities and materials to do that with us and we're supporting them in beginning to make those marks.

And another strategy we can do, and we kind of talked about this earlier, about dictation, we can write down what they're saying or signing and read it back to them in English and their home language. We know that when we write down what children say or sign, it helps them make connections between speech and print or writing, and that print and writing are another way to communicate what they're thinking and what they're feeling. For children who aren't talking or signing but they're giving you gestures, their facial expressions. and other kinds of gestures, we can interpret what those are and we can write them down, and we can read those back to children, as well. So, some additional strategies: When they are writing and drawing and scribbling and painting, we can talk about what they're doing and we can build on their explanations.

So, for example, I could ask a child, "Tell me about your drawing," and a child might say to me, "I draw tree." So, I might say back, "Oh, wow. You're drawing a tree, and I noticed that you put all the fall colors – red, yellow, and brown – in your tree." That's actually a strategy called parallel talk, when you are describing what children are doing and saying, but it's a great strategy for helping them build that connection between talking and writing. We can create places where children can write and we can offer them lots of opportunities and writing materials for them to begin practicing these important skills. And then as we've mentioned already, we're pointing out names and letters, and we're noticing various languages if these are represented in the children in our group. And so with that, we have another video for you to see, and this one takes place in a socialization. And you'll see an adult sitting and you'll see a toddler come over to the adult; and so watch what the child does, watch what the teacher does, and tell us what you notice. What is the child doing? What is the teacher doing as you watch this video?

[Video begins]

[Indistinct conversations]

Woman 2: Yeah, I see that. I can see that. A dot and another dot and a line. Very good! You're so proud! All done.

[Video ends]

Jan: Okay. So, what things did you see? Okay. Child is happy. Teacher is responding to everything she's doing. That might have been a parent. That might have been a home visitor. The teacher is reinforcing the children's attempts to write. The children is looking at the adult for approval. Yep, we saw that. Child is proud of what she's able to do, and we notice that the child knows something about writing. She knows how to hold a writing tool. She's making lines. She's making dots, so one can make all kinds of connections between what she's doing to letters of an alphabet. Yes, warmth and tone, lots of relationship-building there.

Okay. Great responses. Okay, so these are some questions for you all to think about. We have been talking about what we see the child doing and what we see the adult doing, but we also want to think

about parents and how we are supporting parents in supporting skills around alphabet knowledge and early writing, so think about them. How are you supporting parents, and does the language spoken by the parents and children affect how you support parents and how they support their children? And then be thinking how you're incorporating children's home language provided – whether you're in a group care setting or perhaps in your group socialization setting. And with that, I am going to pass this on to Karen, who will continue talking about development of alphabet knowledge and early writing with preschool children.

Karen: Thanks a lot, Jan, but you had a lot to teach us about infants and toddlers, and we have a lot to talk about preschool alphabet knowledge and early writing that I wish we could have another maybe six hours to talk about. But I do want to just highlight some of the key points that we want to really elevate in the practice of what happens in early childhood, and you can see on your screen the developmental progression about how a child identifies letters of the alphabet and produces the correct sounds associated with those letters from 3 years old to 4 years old and then transitioning into the kindergarten age.

So, we want to remember that alphabet knowledge includes both the knowledge of the letter names, in both capitals and lowercase, as well as that letter-sound connection and that early letter-writing practice and ability. And the way children begin to recognize the features of the things they see, the details in what they see, we start seeing in those infant/toddler years, right? When a toddler starts to be able to tell – when you hold out several books and they can pick the one they like because they can recognize the details of what they see on the cover of the book, or when you put out two yogurts and a child can pick the one they like and they know the one they don't like because they're beginning to recognize the colors, the features, and maybe even some of the letters, and we can build on those skills to recognize letters and then start writing letters. And so it's a good idea to have a lot of activities around, but think about having activities that come from what's meaningful to the child, like the things they like to eat or the places they like to go. I once visited a preschool classroom that was working on letter of the week for letter K – and I was very excited because, you know, that's my letter because I'm Karen – and to demonstrate, the teacher had put out boxes of Kix cereal, that begins with a K, and the first child I talked to said, "Yeah, we're learning K. K is for cereal." So, just because the connections mean something to the adults doesn't necessarily mean they make a connection for the children, and that's something you really want to pay attention to. Also, helping children point out the letters they see in their favorite books or the words that they always know on a certain page in the book and to remember that they need time to process those things and to actively process it.

They don't learn it very well just from hearing you say it. They need opportunities to do the talking, as well. Here are some additional strategies, and if we went back and opened up all the suggestions you put in the chat, don't you see them here on this screen already, right? You all know a lot of these things, so we just want to make sure we are all moving these forward. Talking and signing, excellent ideas; sharing the alphabet in songs and books, including songs and books that connect to children's cultures. Provide children with magnet letters, alphabet puzzles, and other alphabet games.

So, I'm interested. If you want to type into the chat, how many of you have strategies for words that you put out in the morning when children come in, like magnet letters on a board, you know, word of the day like "duck" if you're going to visit the duck pond or something like that? So, those are some of the things that we see in classrooms that draw children's attention to the print in their environment, and make sure that they have plenty of opportunities to practice.

We also want to make sure that we help children focus on the beginning sounds in words and notice the difference. Like, there's a difference between a buh-ball, and a duh-doll, and sometimes if you use a little humor and hand them a doll when they think they want to play with a ball, that could really highlight the

difference in how important being clear with those sounds can be. Encouraging children to write for real and important reasons. I carry paper and pencil around with me when I'm working with little kids, so if they say, "Oh, you know, Ms. Karen, I really like this Play-Doh. Can we play with it tomorrow?" I might hand them a paper and crayon and say, "Oh, can you write me a note to remind me?" And add writing materials to all different parts of the room to give them plenty of opportunities in real time when it comes to them, when it's their idea, "I want to write this down," to build those habits of learning. And some people are mentioning lots of journal books and sign-in books. If you just follow that group chat, you almost don't need me because there's so many great ideas flying around. And now, to give one more illustration, I'm going to just show a brief clip of a video and then we're going to come back and come to our closing slides.

[Video begins]

Girl 1: Oh yeah, and this is the chicken. They already hatched out from there, so they took him out and then [inaudible] at the farm, they put more eggs.

Woman 3: And they do, so then there will be more hatching out. So, they'll have their friends or their brothers or sisters. Yeah, okay. Do you want to write a letter?

Girl 1: Mm-hmm.

Woman 3: Hi. Okay. Hi, Pedro. I'll get you a pencil.

Pedro: I want that.

Woman 3: Do you want to try and write it yourself? Do you want to trace? What do you want to do? Do you want to try that "deer" like you were doing before?

Girl 1: Deer?

Woman 3: Deer. Mm-hmm. Da.

Woman 4: Jasmine?

Girl 1: A "D?"

Woman 3: Mm-hmm, great.

Pedro: Deer!

Woman 3: Say, "Deer," mm-hmm, "Deer."

Pedro: The cat, a horse.

Girl 1: What comes after?

Woman 3: I don't know.

Pedro: What is this?

Woman 3: Put an E. Ducks.

Pedro: E. And this?

Woman 3: Cows.

Woman 4: Jasmine?

Woman 3: Mm-hmm.

Woman 4: Jasmine?

Woman 3: Deer.

Pedro: And this?

Woman 3: Lamb.

Girl 1: R?

Karen: Okay. Let's cut the video here.

Pedro: What's that?

Woman 3: Lamb is here for the sheep. You want to color this?

Girl 1: Yes. I already looked in there.

Woman 3: Who are you writing a letter to today?

[Video ends]

Karen: Let me get changed to the next slide. Let's see if this works. Okay. Okay. We just used that video to give you some more ideas of how this can look when it bubbles up from the child's own interests and motivations to communicate.

And there's so much more to talk about on this topic, but we're coming to a close so we want to make sure we remind you that these are all the resources that we've shared with you in the resource area and give you another chance to notice all these links.

We're also reminding you what it's going to look like when you receive the resource box from the Dual Language Learner's Celebration Week that's coming up, February 19 to the 22. One box like this will be sent to the ed. manager at every Head Start program, and regional field specialists and early childhood specialists will also get these similar boxes. They will have printed resources and links to resources that will support the work you do, and it is for dual language learners and all of the language and literacy work you do.

And we want to thank you for joining with us on this webinar today, because this really was a group effort. The suggestions you all shared were so exciting and motivating to get us all to try new things, and we invite you to stay in contact with us using the email or the toll-free number on the screen and to use the link for the evaluation at the end of this program so that you can also get your certificate.

We want to thank you again for participating in our Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing webinar, and thanks to Deborah and Jan and all of our colleagues that have supported this webinar today and to all of you for your awesome ideas.

See you next time!