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# THE NEW JERSEY LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Connections to Preschool

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# The New Jersey Literacy Framework: Connections to Preschool



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# The New Jersey Literacy Framework: Connections to Preschool

This resource is designed to clarify the connections between New Jersey’s new K–3 literacy legislation, the recently released New Jersey Literacy Framework and the state’s preschool programs. It provides guidance for aligning instructional practices, screening procedures, and developmental progressions beginning in preschool, ensuring a seamless continuum of support for children’s literacy development. Early identification of literacy challenges through preschool screening is especially critical, as it allows educators to implement targeted supports during a period when children’s brains are most receptive to language acquisition. By establishing these practices early, schools can reduce the likelihood of long-term academic struggles and strengthen the foundation for success across students’ K–12 journey.

## Screening

[N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-5.3](#) requires districts to administer screening assessments to preschool students to identify those who may need further evaluation, including the possible administration of a comprehensive diagnostic assessment. Although literacy screening is not mandated for preschool, as the comprehensive curriculum offers ongoing assessments through the on-going student assessment profile, districts may consider administering an untimed Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) and/or letter naming and sound screener for four-year-olds—in addition to the required developmental screener—to align with P.L. 2024, c.52 and support the collection of assessment results that synthesize and showcase each child’s development in letter sound knowledge by the end of the four-year-old school year. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), early engagement with letter sound knowledge lays a foundational pathway for beginning readers. Preschool is a key opportunity to nurture these skills, and districts are encouraged to refer to the screening criteria outlined in [The New Jersey Literacy Framework](#).

## Integration of Literacy Skills

Preschool emergent literacy skills do not just precede reading; they are integral threads in Scarborough’s Rope (2001).<sup>1</sup> By closely examining the [Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards](#) (2014), beginning in preschool, districts can intentionally and strategically provide students with systematic and explicit instruction in foundational literacy skills, laying the groundwork for future reading success.

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<sup>1</sup> Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97–110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

The table below demonstrates how the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards align with the components of Scarborough's Rope. This alignment shows how preschool educators build the skills that evolve into fluent reading over time.

**Table 1. New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards and Scarborough's Rope**

Scarborough's Strand	Preschool Standards	Examples from NJ Preschool Practices
Background Knowledge	RL.PK.1-3 RI.PK.1-3	Build on familiar topics and experiences during read-alouds; connect stories to science and social studies (e.g., comparing snakes and earthworms).
Vocabulary	L.PK.4-6 RL.PK.4 RI.PK.4	Use, repeat, and expand new words during books, play, and conversation; use gestures and visuals to reinforce meaning.
Language Structures	L.PK.1-2 SL.PK.4-6	Emphasize correct grammar in responses; encourage complete sentences and varied sentence types.
Verbal Reasoning	RL.PK.10 RI.PK.10 SL.PK.1-3	Engage in back-and-forth exchanges, predictions, problem-solving, and comparisons during and after read-alouds.
Literacy Knowledge	RL.PK.5-7 RI.PK.5-7 RF.PK.3 W.PK.5-7	Identify book parts, author/illustrator roles, use environmental print, participate in writing and creating class books. Recognize familiar names and common words in environmental print; track print left to right.
Phonological Awareness	RF.PK.2	Clap syllables, recognize rhymes, produce rhymes, play with initial sounds through songs, games, and intentional direct instruction.
Decoding (Phonics)	RF.PK.1c-d	Name and recognize letters that link to the corresponding sounds using alphabet books, props, games, modelled writing and labeling.
Sight Recognition	NA	This strand begins in Kindergarten.

This alignment emphasizes the importance of integrated, language-rich, and play-based preschool instruction in preparing children for future reading success. By intentionally fostering these strands from the earliest years, educators lay the groundwork for lifelong literacy. Districts are encouraged to ask the following questions:

- Are all components of Scarborough’s Rope taught with sufficient intentionality?
- Are students given multiple and meaningful opportunities to revisit and practice these skills daily?
- Do materials support oral language, print awareness, and play-based emergent literacy?

## **Utilizing Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist (PIRS)**

A district’s Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialist (PIRS) plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices in preschool by ensuring all children receive appropriate, individualized, and inclusive support by responding to screening and classroom data. This may include refinement of Tier 1 core instruction, providing an intervention plan for children needing additional support, or providing job-embedded coaching and modeling for teaching staff. It is recommended that the PIRS collaborates with the Preschool Instruction Coach (PIC) to provide support.

## **From Research to Practice**

Recent research has revealed important opportunities to strengthen language and literacy instruction in early childhood settings. The [National Institute for Early Education Research](#) (NIEER) recently completed classroom visits of former Abbott Districts utilizing the [Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition](#) (CASEBA) and Classroom Assessment of Supports for English Language Acquisition (CASELA), which measures the quality of language and literacy supports offered by teachers to children. From this study, NIEER identified several areas to strengthen language and literacy supports in classrooms:

- Increase frequency of planned read-alouds.
- Incorporate frequent use of conversational turns that support children’s understanding of concepts.
- Increase conversations to encourage children to use advanced language.
- Increase use of questions to intentionally support the development of conceptual knowledge.
- Create more language-rich learning environments that are culturally and linguistically responsive to the children enrolled in the classroom.

## Summary

Preschool is a critical time to begin building literacy skills, especially oral language and vocabulary, which lay the foundation for comprehension and later reading success. The New Jersey Literacy Framework shows how preschool standards align with Scarborough's Reading Rope, emphasizing the need for explicit and systematic instruction to ensure coherence and alignment with the K-12 program. Through intentional, language-rich, and play-based instruction, educators can nurture early skills and provide timely support when challenges arise.

## Contact Information

Please email the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery at [LEAR@doe.nj.gov](mailto:LEAR@doe.nj.gov) and the Office of Preschool Education Programs at [doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov](mailto:doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov) with questions.