



Emergent Literacy for Complex Kiddos:

The Six Building Blocks

As conceptualized by Patricia Cunningham &
Dorothy Hall

SHORT VERSION 😊

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Emergent Literacy

Definition, Justification
& Research

What is Emergent Literacy?

- Emergent literacy involves the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998)
- Emergent literacy is a gradual process that takes place over time from birth - until a child can read and write in what we consider to be a conventional sense. A key to the term literacy is the interrelatedness of all parts of language: speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing. It is never too early to begin reading to a child. (Florida Center for Reading Research)

Why Literacy?

- Means of building expressive communication
- Builds the understanding of language
- Can help the child make sense of the world
- Evens the playing field in the classroom - inclusion
- Can provide healthy leisure activities
- Can allow an individual more complete communication through writing their own ideas

Why Emergent Literacy?

- Everyone is “emergent” – place to start without prerequisites
- Builds reciprocity – the turn-taking in shared reading is perfect!
- Predictable stories provide repetition in an appropriate format to build expressive responses
- Provides a proven avenue for the introduction of augmentative communication
- Is often in line with the child’s interests to begin with
- Provides essential foundation for later literacy acquisition

Why Emergent Literacy?

- Therefore, need to focus on developing strong skills before begin formal reading instruction – especially for children known to be at-risk for later reading problems
- Study found positive correlations between receptive language at 2-3 years and reading achievement at 6-9. Additionally at 6-9 years of age, positive correlations were found between phonological processing and word reading ability. (Ronski, Sevcik, Barton-Hulsey ISAAC 2014)
- Emergent literacy skills begin developing in early infancy and early childhood through participation with adults in meaningful activities involving talking and print

And.....

Because everyone else is.....



Are they really that different???

No Prerequisites!

“ According to an emergent literacy view, written language learning, like oral language, proceeds from birth. From the reading readiness perspective, this is a particularly important distinction for children with DD. It suggests that all children, including those with DD, learn written language as a by-product of functional, everyday activities involving printed and oral language. Therefore, written language activities should not be withheld while speech, language, and cognition reach a prerequisite level.”

(Koppenhaver, Coleman, Kalman, Yoder 1991)

Three Kinds of Emergent Kiddos

Very Little Ones

- May be in regressive phase
- Need to know and feel we are WITH them
- Need their slightest communications “captured”
- Need interaction to be first goal
- Need to help them regulate before they “HAVE TO HAVE” their music

Older Kiddos Lacking Instruction

- May be a challenge to capture
- May display learned helplessness
- Years of low expectations result in lack of resilience to tasks
- May display more anxiety – not sure of their own abilities
- Afraid to be wrong

Preschoolers & Kindergarteners

- Developmentally at an Emergent Level
- Can be successfully included in preschool
- Can be successfully included in kindergarten
- Ready to be challenged!
- Love interacting with sounds, letters and books
- Social aspects of learning at this age is engaging for girls this age😊
- Get them on the “I can learn” path early!!!

Literacy Challenges that affect Kiddo

- Notion of prerequisite skills
 - Colors and shapes before books/letters
 - Certain level of cognitive ability
- Too much testing not enough teaching
- Often emphasis on mastery of isolated skills – repetition to boredom
- Lack of or decreased expectations

Literacy Challenges - Teacher

- What are our prerequisite skills?
- Testing not teaching - what we know – what is expected???
- We are not sure of skill progression
- Limited training for teachers teaching nonverbal children
- Limited skills in interaction & engagement
- Question/answer model has failed us



We need a different model!

Especially for our older,
emergent students!

Expectations

- Expectations = Access to literacy materials
- Opportunities to participate in reading and writing activities that are engaging, motivating and providing repetition with variety
- Literacy instruction incorporating research-driven best practices
- Communication is an essential component

Rett Characteristics

Emergent Literacy

- First expectation of expression of skills
- Beginning of assessment for 3-5 year olds
- School IEP's need to be measured
- Questions about appropriate goals
- "But how do we know they can.....?"
- Learning sounds they can't say
- Learning time is quick and on the move

Emergent Literacy Advantages

- It is a place to start in the confusion of Rett Diagnosis
- Allows for positive things to do that will help in the long run
- Gives a tangible way to build interaction, begin communication and assure parents their kids are in there
- Begin the road to building thinking, reciprocity, working memory, perseverance to task and the joy of learning



Building Blocks Model

By: Dorothy P. Hall, Elaine
Williams and Patricia M.
Cunningham

Emergent Literacy

- Consistent evidence exists that there are three primary domains of emergent literacy that are causally related to conventional reading & writing:
 - Oral Language and Phonological Awareness
 - Motivation for learning and desire to engage in literacy-based activities
 - Print Knowledge and letter knowledge

Building Block Model

- Made for Emergent Students –
 - younger
 - less skilled
 - beginners
- Built for shorter time frames
- Builds foundation for later reading and writing
- “No 4 Blocks for Kindergarteners”
- Each block contributes to the “BIG 3”

The Building Blocks

Adapted for Girls with Rett Syndrome



Block #1

- *Learn that reading is enjoyable and informative
- *Develop a desire to learn to read and write



Result: Increased reciprocity and engagement

Book Options

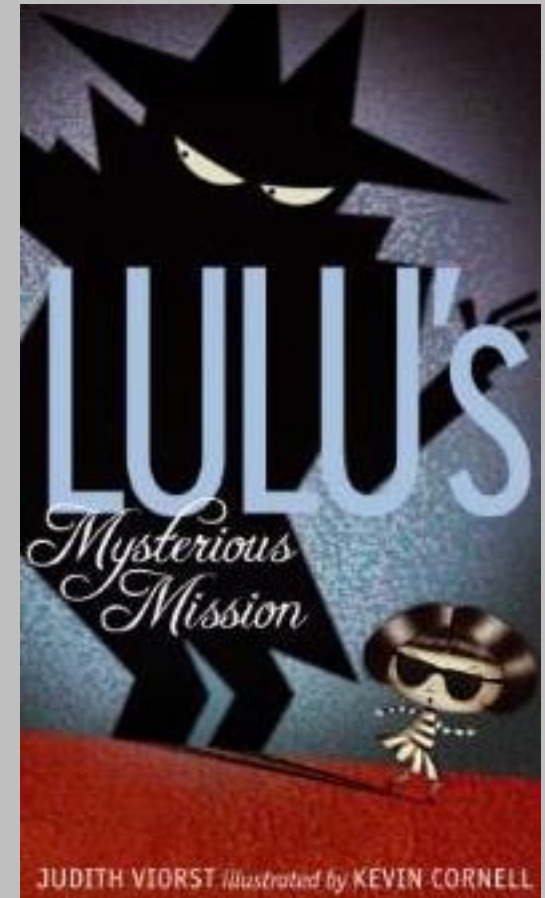
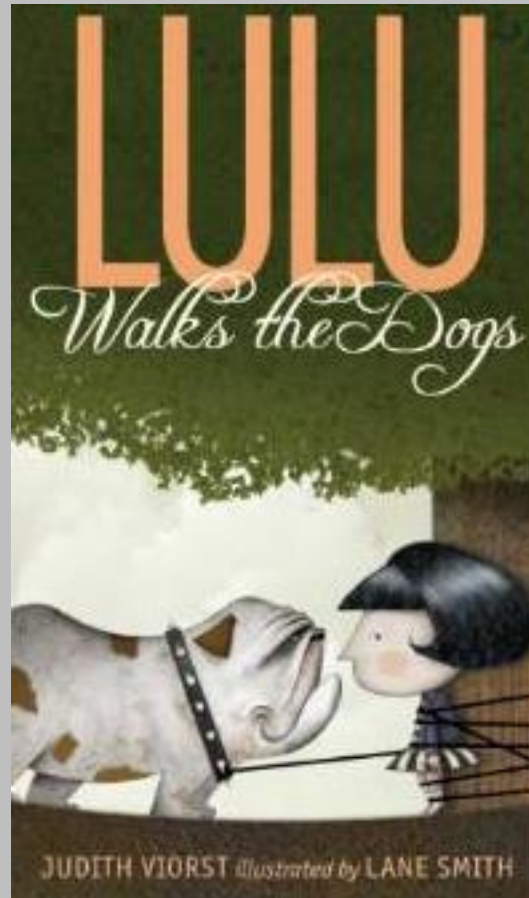
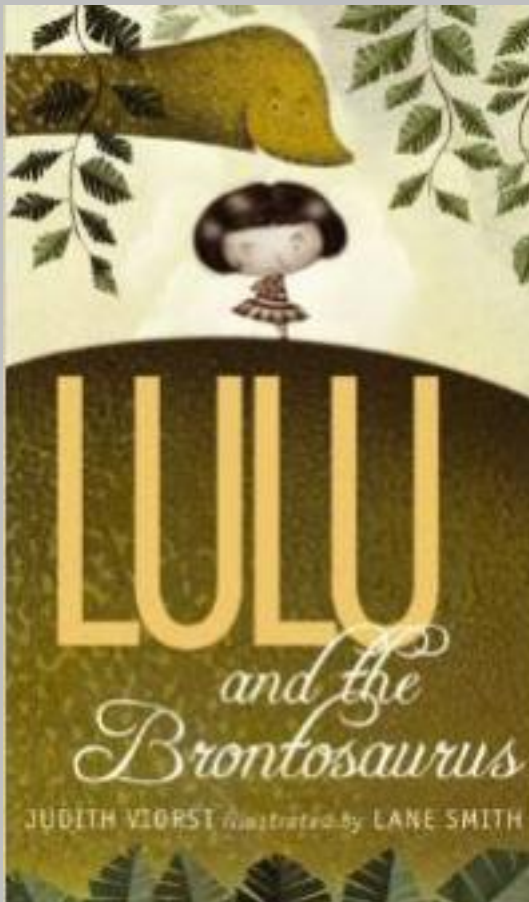
- Need to find what they like (fiction & non-fiction)
- Need to fit the kiddo's communication and developmental needs
- Need EMERGENT books for older kiddos
- Need lots of presentations (paper, ipad, computer, Tobii)
- Access to a variety of books is key
- Need options to personalize the books

Some Personal Favorites

- Pizza Man
- Where is the Green Sheep
- The Gruffalo – The Gruffalo's Child
- Baghead
- Way Down Deep in the Deep Blue Sea
- Knuffle Bunny
- Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus
- Stephanie's Ponytail

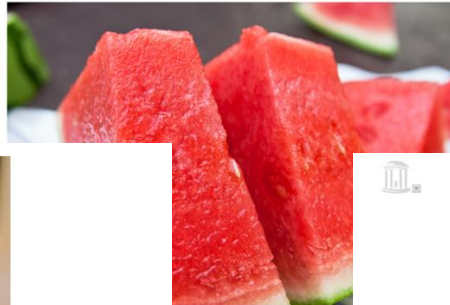
Favorite Series for 3rd grade and up

LULU is a “lulu” and all ages love her antics!!! I look forward to each new book!



Like, Not Like

Reed A. Boone



I do like this.



Back



Next



Look!



Back

4



Next

Good source for older kiddos and even emergent adults

Block #2

- *Learn many new concepts
- *Add words and meaning to their vocabulary



Result: More understanding and communication

Ultimate Communication Goal

- Being able to say what you want to say, when you want to say it, and how you want to say it
- Need independent and easy access to a dynamic display (multiple page) communication device so she can navigate between pages – eye gaze technology”
- In literacy, being able to talk about the book and to be able to write



Her ideas!!

Some-
thing's
wrong



I'm sick.



Something
hurts.



I'm starving.



I have
something
to say.



BACK TO
MAIN



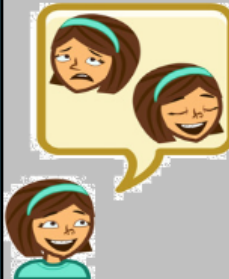
I need a
break.



Leave me
alone.



Let me tell
you
how I feel.



You're mean.



You don't
understand.



not on this
page



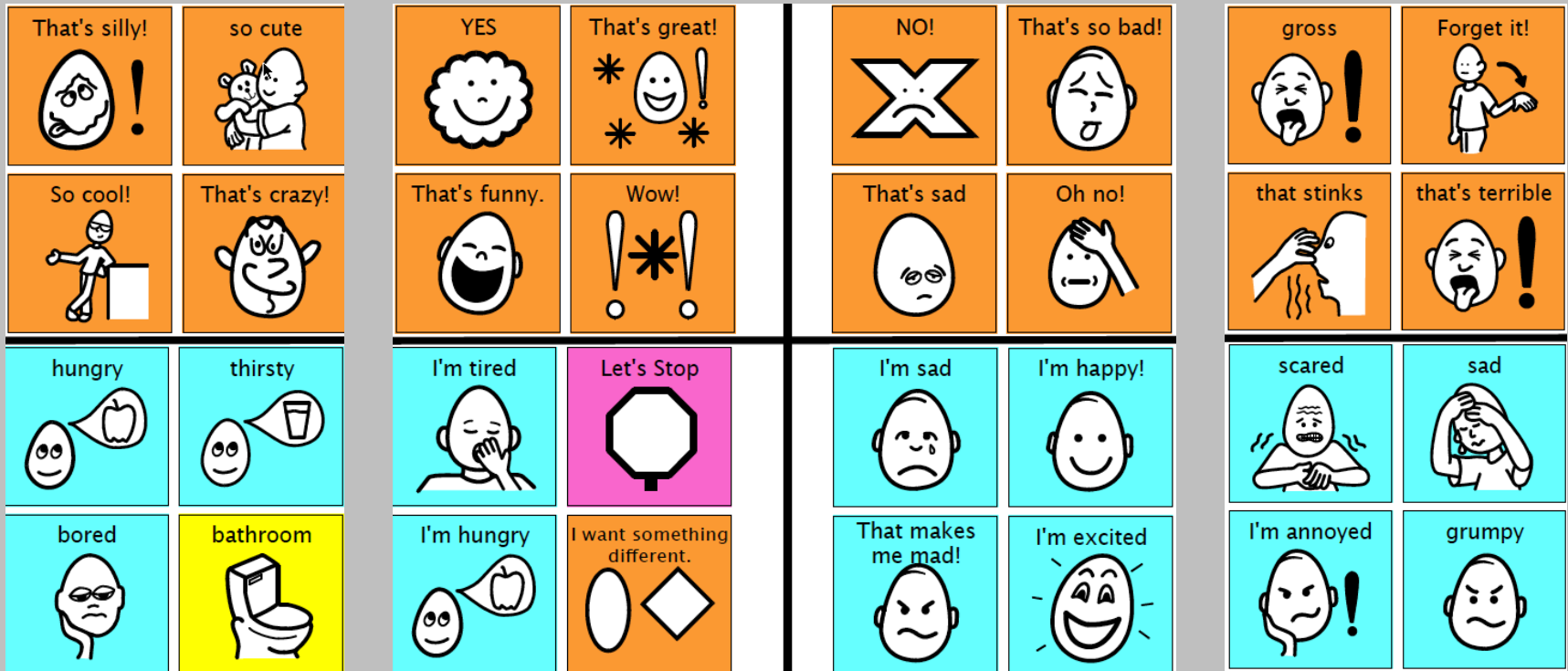
BACK TO
MAIN



Avenues for Building Communication

- Language immersion throughout everyday experiences
 - Effect of “Pivotal Response”
 - Can’t start too soon
- Through play and interaction
 - Suggested activities to enhance communication
 - Suggested Apps to engage without stressing hand use
- Through the controlled vocabulary of Literacy-based experiences to experience and retell
 - Importance of “Dialogic Reading” for our kiddos

Soft-Tech 4-Grid



free download:
www:focusedlearningsolutions.com

Let's Play Tea Party

Sono Flex

TB Tea Party

Clear All

Message Window, Connected to: Active message window

Delete Last

Home

I

get

want

big

little

cookies

cake

you

eat

drink

star

sprinkle

donut

tea

he

spill

put

yummy

gross

coffee

hot chocolate

she

wipe

share

more

different

juice

next page

Clear All

Message Window, Connected to: Active message window

Delete Last

Home

Type to search for a picture. Clear the text box

I love this!

let's do it again

I like it

who

what

This is fun

it's boring

I hate that.

when

where

daddy

happy

let's go

Let's take a new

Let's do another

why

how

previous page

tired

restaurant

I'll message you

I'm done with this

What do you think?

STOP

FINISH

Remember:

Dialogic Reading

- In dialogic reading, the adult helps the child become the teller of the story. The adult becomes the listener, the questioner, the audience for the child.

Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst

Build Concepts Interactively



Block #3

*Learn Print Concepts:

- *how to read from left to right
- *how to read from top to bottom
- *picture vs. print

I like Taylor Swift.



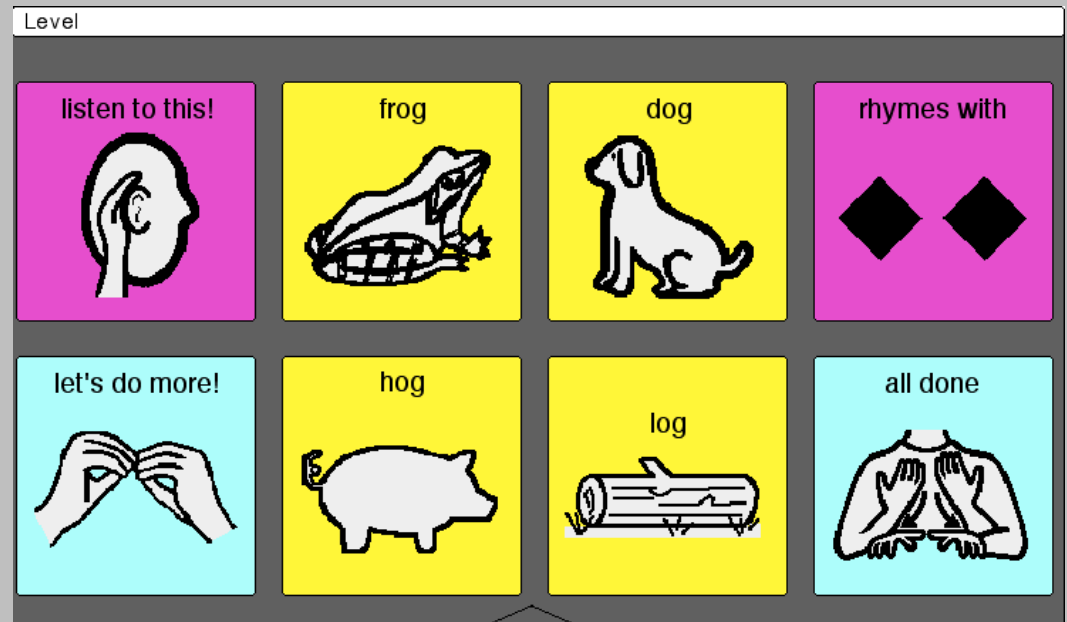
Result: Improve tracking & print processing

Point out text as you read

- Wait until watching – pause to get attention
- Point out larger text
- Point out interesting text
- Watch where they look and join them
- They may begin by getting half way and with practice be able to cross midline

Block #4

- *Develop phonemic awareness -
it is the oral before the written (phonics)
- *Develop the concept of rhyme



Result: foundation for decoding & encoding

We need to build the “ear print” for the sounds with multiple experiences not multiple assessments.

“Earprint” for Sounds

- Young kiddos practice making sounds all the time
- Sounds travel back to their ears
- They learn the sound and where it feels like in their mouth
- Kiddos say “b” a million times before they are expected to know that the letter B say “b”
- Individuals with Rett Syndrome cannot make the sounds on command to practice

Techniques

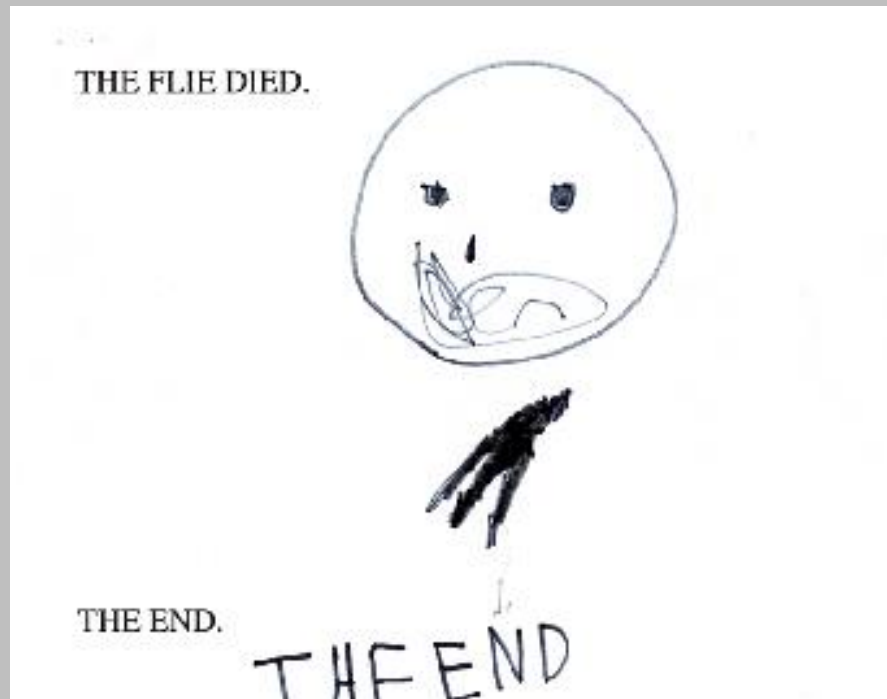
- Environmental sounds
- Nursery Rhymes
- Rhyming books
- Initial sound play - Alliteration
- Making words - making rhyming words
- Clapping sounds

Clicker - Foundations for Reading



Block #5

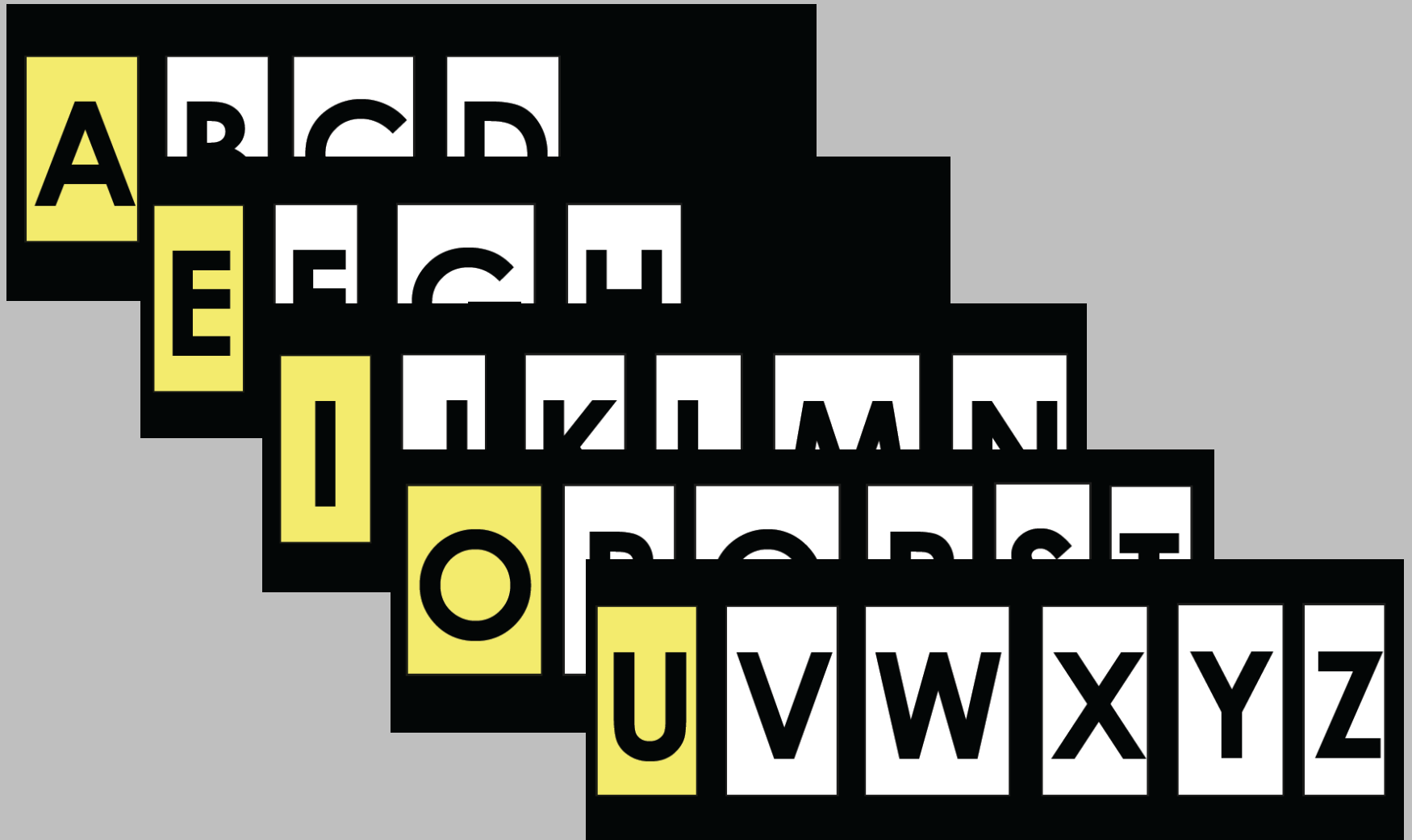
*Children learn to read and write some words that are interesting to them!



Result: Increased control and output

Play with ABC + PAS

For Writing



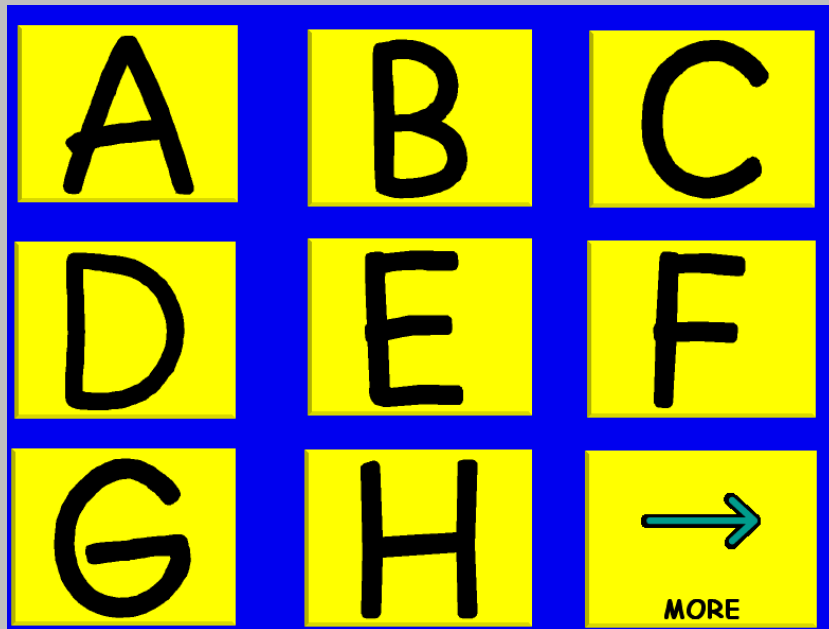
Read About Taylor Swift

I like her shoes.



Block #6

*Children learn some letter names and sounds associated with interesting words they've learned



Result: Decode unknown words/write ideas

Storybots



What We've Learned

- The six blocks are the components of a good Emergent Literacy Program
- The blocks are reflective of foundational skills found to be prerequisites for later conventional reading development
- The blocks are multi-level
- The blocks are not sequential – you don't need to “pass” one to get to the others
- They are appropriate for older students with limited literacy instruction – just change materials to be age respectful

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