

# Communication

## Overview Guide



# Waterford Early Learning's **Six Instructional Strands for Literacy**



# Research-Based Principles

The National Literacy Trust defines literacy as “the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world” (retrieved from <https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/>). Communication encompasses the four domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. We receive information through the receptive domains (reading and listening) and share information through the expressive domains (writing and speaking). The domains can also be paired as reciprocals: reading/writing and speaking/listening. Below are some observations about how speaking, listening, and writing relate to each other and to the development of skilled reading.

## Speaking

Early oral language skills are a strong predictor of later outcomes related to reading comprehension (e.g., Hart & Risley, 1995; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Students need oral communication experiences in which “language is linked to content, in which knowledge structures are built and elaborated and in which, because they get answers to the questions they pose, children become increasingly curious” (Snow, 2017). Extensive oral language experience builds verbal reasoning, one of the strands in Scarborough’s Rope (2001), and supports students’ ability to make inferences. Oral language skills play a role in learning to read, and reading plays a role in the development of oral language skills (Seidenberg, 2014).

## Listening

Listening is the mirror of speaking. Together, listening and speaking create meaningful conversation. The connection between listening comprehension and reading comprehension is clear (Hogan et al., 2014). Read-aloud experiences provide students with opportunities to build their listening and comprehension skills and act as models for fluent reading.



## Writing

The National Early Literacy Panel identified “the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one’s own name” as an early literacy skill that is predictive of later reading outcomes (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Dehaene explains that “teaching the gestures of writing can improve reading, perhaps because it helps store view-specific memories of the letters and their corresponding phonemes” (2011, p. 28). Transcription skills are essential for the development of writing fluency, which allows students to focus on ideation (Berninger & Amtmann, 2003).

Exposure to language structures in reading can foster students’ ability to use those structures in their writing. Studies show that reading and writing require many of the same cognitive processes and types of knowledge (Shanahan, 2016).

Learning is strengthened when students engage in reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences related to the same topics and ideas (Goodwin, et. al., 2021; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2021; Jones & Hodson, 2011).

Building communication skills in any language builds those skills across languages. Communication skills are transferable from one language to another, and we can build upon students’ skills in a first language to support a second.



# Communication Skills Development



| <b>Beginning</b>  | <b>Developing</b> | <b>Advanced</b> |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Immerse students in a language-rich environment, fostering their ability to use increasingly complex language structures in their speech and building their active listening skills.</li><li>● Develop transcription fluency so that students can focus on sharing their message as they engage in writing.</li><li>● Teach the stages of the writing process: ideate/plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish/share.</li><li>● Engage students in structured and purposeful experiences with narrative, informative, and persuasive writing.</li><li>● Support student learning about topics and ideas through combined reading, writing, listening, and speaking experiences.</li></ul> |                   |                 |



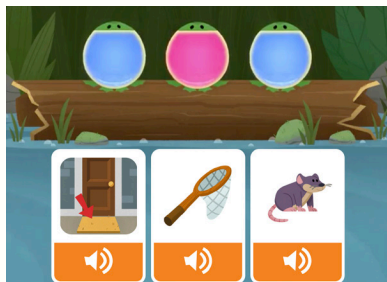
# Waterford Early Learning Instruction

## → Communication Skills Taught and Scope & Sequence

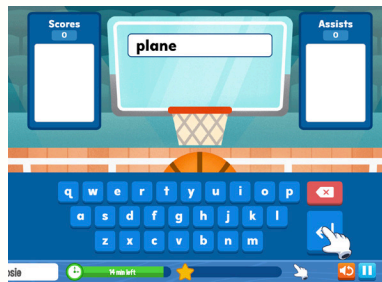
View example communications activities from Waterford's adaptive learning path → [here](#).

Waterford's Communication strand focuses on the convergence of the four domains of language—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—to build students' ability to effectively receive and share information through language. Instruction is provided in the adaptive learning path and through offline resources.

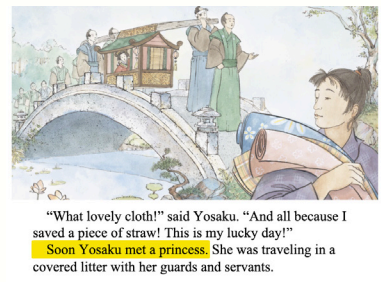
In the adaptive learning path, students hone their listening skills through following directions, listening to explicit instruction, and engaging with narrated stories and songs.



Phonological awareness activities, among others, provide students practice with discreet listening.



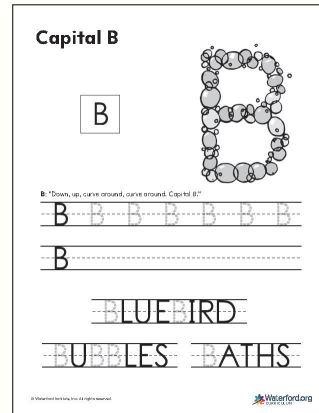
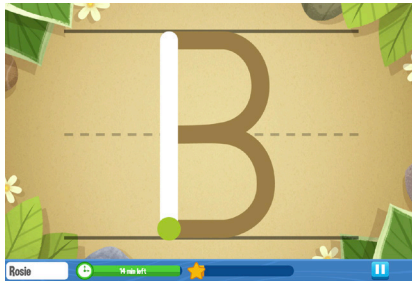
Active listening is required for students to successfully complete learning activities.



Students listen to narrated stories and informational texts that include complex language structure and new vocabulary.

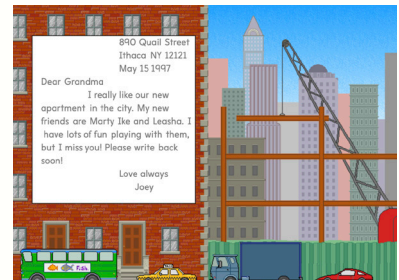
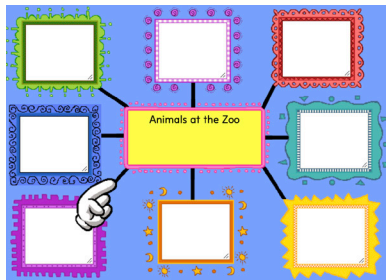


Students learn and practice letter formations, building transcription fluency to achieve automaticity with the physical act of writing letters and words. This automaticity allows students to focus on conveying meaning as they engage in the writing process.



Students gain experience in these steps of the writing process:

- Ideate and plan
- Draft
- Gather feedback
- Revise
- Edit
- Publish and share



Students brainstorm topics for writing in this **ideation and planning** activity.

This **revising** activity guides students to think about adding variety in word choice to engage their audience.

Students learn about the correct use of commas in a personal letter in this **editing** activity.



Offline resources provide a large selection of additional listening, speaking, and writing opportunities for individual tasks, group work, and whole-class activities. These resources focus on contemporary and authentic texts.

**José Three**  
CLASS ACTIVITIES

Pre-Reading | Pre-K-Kindergarten

LITERACY HINSET

**What role does family play in our lives?**  
*Use this essential question to guide student learning with class discussion and inquiry activities.*

**1. EXPLORE FAMILIES AND GENERATIONS (30 MINUTES)**  
Model José's family tree, which includes Abuelita (Grandma), Abuelito (Grandpa), Mamá, Papá, José, and José Four (optional). Then model a family tree for a family with a different structure (inspired from another story the class has read or make one up). This is a great opportunity to highlight the fact that family trees can look very different because each person's family is unique.

Help students follow the models to create their own family tree. Ask them to label each family member with a name and relationship to the student (for example, David, brother). Then have students share their family trees and talk about the generations in their own families. To help students understand relationships and pronouns, ask them questions about their family trees using a variety of pronouns. For example:

- David is your brother. Who is his father?
- Your mom's name is Carissa. Who is her mom?
- Your cousins are Melissa and Andres. Who are their parents?

Help students answer in complete sentences using the appropriate pronouns.

**Support:** Have students draw a portrait of each person in their family first, either on separate sheets of paper or on a piece of paper split into six boxes. Allow them to cut them out and physically organize their own family tree. Offer a similar activity for them to do with José's family.

**ELL SUPPORT**  
Talk about family vocabulary: son, daughter, grandma, dad, etc. Ensure ELL students understand what each word means.

**José Tres**  
*Use the bilingual book José Tres to help support Spanish-speaking ELL students with the activities.*

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Class activity sheets are designed for use with specific books and are aligned to writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Paragraph Organizer**

Topic Sentence

Supporting Detail 1

Supporting Detail 2

Supporting Detail 3

Conclusion

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This paragraph organizer is one of the many charts and graphic organizers available.

**Writing with Opinions** TEACHER RESOURCES

BASIC READING

LITERACY HINSET

**Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply the reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.**

**Opinion Writing Activities**

**WRITE ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE PLACE**  
To help students build their self-awareness skills, have them write about their favorite place. Ask them some preliminary questions to spark their imaginations.

For example, you may ask:

- Is there a special place you like to play?
- What do you see when you are at your special place?
- What do you hear when you are there?
- How does it make you feel when you are there?
- What do you like about your favorite place?
- Tell the students that their opinion piece should include the topic, their opinion on the place they are writing about, the reason for their opinion, and an ending.

**WRITE ABOUT BEING UNIQUE**  
Have students write about being unique. You may want to discuss the topic first to help them get ideas. You can ask questions such as:

- What are you really good at?
- What is the person beside you really good at?
- Imagine that everyone is good at the same thing. What do you think would happen?

Tell the students that their opinion piece should include the topic, their opinion on what they are good at, the reason for their opinion, and an ending.

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Step-by-step project outlines provide authentic experiences with writing and presentation.





# Resources

Resources to support communication skills development in the classroom and at home include the following:

## Transcription Fluency

→ In [Resources & Activities](#),

- SEARCH “**Letter Formations: Teacher Observation Tool.**”
- SEARCH “**letter writing practice.**”
- SEARCH “**letter formation.**”

## Writing

- [Journal Page](#)
- [Journal Page: Draw & Write](#)
- [The Writing Process](#)
- [Collaborative Writing](#)
- [Editing](#)
- [Writing Narratives](#)
- [Writing with Opinions](#) / [Opinion Writing](#)
- [Writing with Facts](#)
- **Graphic Organizers**
  - [Writing Web](#)
  - [Paragraph Organizer](#)
  - [Paragraph Template](#)
  - [Essay Map](#)
  - [Just the Facts!](#)
  - [Letter Outline](#)
  - [Write a Letter](#)
  - [Linking Words](#)
  - [Opinion Writing](#)
  - [Persuasion Map](#)

A Waterford account is required to access program hyperlinks (displayed in orange). If you do not have an account, you can request a demo account [here](#).



## Speaking & Listening

- [Conversation Building](#)
- [Ask Questions](#)
- [Comprehension Dice Game](#)
- [Class Discussion](#)
- [Interview Notes](#)
- [Gathering Additional Information Through Questions](#)
- [Use Relevant Details to Express Ideas and Feelings](#)
- [Think-Pair-Share](#)

## Book Extension Activities: Read, Write, Listen, and Speak

- In [Resources & Activities](#), go to **Collections>Reading Extension Activities**.

## Family Resources

- [Family Fact Sheet: Communication](#)
- [Hoja de datos familiares—Comunicación](#)
- [Family Video: Communication](#)
- [Video de elemento de instrucción de comunicación](#)
- [Family Writing Activities](#)
- [Actividades de escritura en familia](#)
- [Family Reading and Writing Activities](#)
- [Actividades familiares de lectura y escritura](#)
- In [Resources & Activities](#), go to **Collections>Reading Together Activities (Families)**.



# Instructional Routines

The following instructional routines can serve as frameworks for whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. These routines leverage the elements of effective instruction that are built into the adaptive learning path for Waterford Early Learning.

## Letter Formation Practice

Use this instructional routine to guide students as they practice letter formations. This routine builds students' automaticity with transcription fluency, which will allow them to focus on conveying meaning as they engage in the writing process.

1. Show the Waterford Early Learning instructional video for the target letters (for example, → [Capital Letter Z](#) and → [Lowercase Letter z](#)), guiding students to participate by using a finger to trace the letter formation.
2. Use practice pages (→ [Capital Z Practice](#), → [Lowercase z Practice](#)), monitoring to ensure correct letter formation and providing feedback as needed.
3. Connect to the reading code by brainstorming words that begin with the /z/ sound. Connect to meaning by sharing images and “study-friendly” definitions.
4. Look for the target letter in connected text. Use books from Waterford Early Learning’s Read with Me series (for example, [The Zebra](#)).
5. Share the resources above with families for reinforcement at home. Read With Me books are available with English and Spanish text on the same page (for example, [La cebra](#)).



## Dictation

Use this instructional routine to guide students through explicit practice with writing sentences from dictation. This routine reinforces phonological awareness and phonics skills and builds transcription fluency at the word and sentence level, which will allow students to focus on conveying meaning as they engage in the writing process.

1. Provide each student with a notebook to use for dictation practice. This will allow you to monitor student progress over time. However, students can also use paper/pencil or a whiteboard.
2. Choose a simple sentence that aligns with the phonics and Power Word instruction students have received. For example, if students have received instruction for the *-at* word family and the Power Words *on* and *the*, you might use the sentence “The cat sat on the mat.”
3. Say the sentence slowly and clearly.
4. Ask students to repeat the sentence.
5. Say the sentence again as a group, counting the words on fingers. For the sentence in this example, tell students, “There are six words in this sentence.”
6. For scaffolded support, students can draw six lines before writing.
7. Say the sentence several more times as students write it. Encourage students to sound out the words and say the sentence aloud as they write.
8. Monitor as students write, providing corrective feedback as needed. For example:
  - Support students as they identify and say the phonemes in individual words.
  - Model the correct formations for letters.
  - Guide students to begin the sentence with a capital letter and end with the correct sentence mark.



## Writing Process

Use this instructional routine to provide students with structured experiences with the writing process.

1. Define the purpose and audience for writing. For example, say, “You will write about someone who is special to you. When your writing is finished, you will share it with that person as a gift. You could write about someone in your family, a friend, or someone in your neighborhood or school. Think about who you would like to write about. What makes that person special?”
2. Share exemplars and/or mentor texts that can help students generate ideas or serve as models for their writing. For example, the books [Mine](#) and [José Three](#) convey the connections each of the main characters has with special people.
3. Give students a framework for ideation and planning. For example, use the → [Writing Web](#), → [Paragraph Organizer](#), or → [Paragraph Template](#). Guide students to talk in pairs about what they will write. Oral rehearsal is akin to “writing out loud” or “creating an oral draft.”
4. Provide time for drafting, encouraging students to elaborate and expand on their ideas as they write.
5. Guide students to share their writing with a partner to gather feedback. Encourage the student providing feedback to share some positive observations and to ask questions that will help the writer expand and refine their message.
6. Provide time for students to revise their writing based on the feedback they received and to make edits.
7. Guide students through the publication process as they create a final version with illustrations. Invite students to share their writing!



# Classroom Discussion

Use this instructional routine as a framework for classroom discussions that will build students' experience and proficiency with speaking and listening.

1. Establish guidelines for classroom discussions. These guidelines might include the following:
  - Take turns speaking.
  - Speak clearly and with respect.
  - Use complete sentences to express your ideas.
  - Listen actively, showing your attention by looking at the speaker.
  - To better understand what the speaker has said, ask questions or repeat what they said to check your understanding.
2. Role play with students to demonstrate how to follow the guidelines.
3. Display the guidelines in the classroom. Include visuals as a support for understanding.
4. Divide students into small groups and establish the purpose of the discussion.
5. Provide a framework by writing discussion stems that students will use as they share and respond to others.

Example discussion stems for sharing:

- I agree (or disagree) with what the character did because...
- I like (or dislike) the way the story ended because...
- If I were in the story, I would...

Example discussion stems for responding:

- I agree because...
- My idea is different because...
- Can you explain more about...



6. Role play how to use the discussion stems.
7. Establish a timeframe for the discussion and display a timer.
8. Monitor students as they engage in discussion, providing positive feedback as well as redirection to groups and individuals as needed.
9. Return to the whole-group setting when time is up. Ask a member of each group to share out with the whole group to summarize the content of their discussion. Revisit the guidelines through frequent role-play exercises.

## **Corrective Feedback**

Corrective feedback has been shown to be a particularly powerful form of feedback (Hattie & Jaeger, 1998). It has a substantial effect size, meaning it can significantly improve learning outcomes. Within Waterford's adaptive learning path, corrective feedback helps students build new understandings through productive struggle.

**As you engage students in the instructional routines outlined above, provide corrective feedback that**

- is immediate and timely;
- is targeted and specific;
- is asset-based and encouraging;
- provides additional information, as applicable (e.g., displaying a word bank during a writing task so that students have access to the correct spellings of relevant words, allowing them to focus on the message they want to convey);
- approaches the task in a new way, as applicable (e.g., modeling how to use complete sentences in a conversation or how to use a graphic organizer to plan for writing);
- is shared through multiple modalities (e.g., visual and auditory); and
- does not simply provide the correct answer, but instead guides students to confirm or self-correct their thinking to arrive at the correct answer.



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→ A full list of references is included in the [\*\*Educator Overview Guide for Waterford Early Learning: Reading Curriculum\*\*](#).

