



Scholastic

Building Language for Literacy

Building Language for Literacy (BLL) is a foundational research-based program by Catherine E. Snow, Ph.D., and Susan B. Neuman, Ed.D., that guides children through the early stages of language and literacy development. Independent research shows that the program significantly increases vocabulary, language, and letter-word identification skills for all children.

BLL works because it:

- Puts research findings from the National Reading Panel into practice.
- Includes embedded professional development and ongoing assessment.
- Focuses on essential early literacy skills: oral language, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and concepts of print.
- Provides real-world connections by organizing the program around places.
- Features high-quality books, songs, and word cards with photographs.

Instructional Content

Independent research has shown that the program significantly increases vocabulary, language, and letter and word identification skills for English- and Spanish-speaking children. BLL is integrated with science, social studies, math, writing, music, and other curriculum and content areas.

Oral Language

- Nina the Naming Newt™ provides song- and text-related vocabulary words for building concepts.
- Students develop oral language through stories, dramatic play props, picture vocabulary, and learning center activities.
- Children link new learning experiences and vocabulary to what is already known.

Phonological Awareness

- Reggie the Rhyming Rhino™ sings and plays rhyming games.
- Children develop an awareness of patterns and differences in sounds of language through rhyme, song, poetry, and rhythm.
- Students isolate beginning and ending sounds in words, create and invent words by substituting sounds, and identify the order of sounds in words.

Alphabet Knowledge

- Leo the Letter-Loving Lobster™ helps children learn the letters of the alphabet.
- Children identify printed letters and make connections between letters and sounds through experiences with literature, games, and activities.
- Students learn to write their first and last names.

Print Awareness

- Nina, Reggie, and Leo expose children to different kinds of print and literature genres.
- Students develop an understanding that print and illustrations carry a message, and they recognize the sequence and flow of stories.
- Children learn that books are handled in certain ways and that print is arranged from left to right and top to bottom.

Instructional Design

BLL introduces developmental skills in a systematic way. Specific goals and objectives spelled out in the BLL Unit Guides form the basis of all activities. Children have experiences that develop oral language, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and print knowledge on a daily basis. Lessons present key skills multiple times to give children many opportunities to build a deep foundation in language development. BLL centers around a “Places” theme, which builds on children’s own experiences in the community. Phase 1 targets Pre-Kindergarten three- and four-year-old children and Phase 2 meets the needs of Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten children. Each Phase provides at least 24 weeks of instruction.

Each Unit of a Phase follows a 60-minute routine divided into the following activities:

- Song and Poem Time, which uses audiocassettes and song and poem charts to help students expand their vocabulary, explore the sounds of language, and build concepts
- Story Time, during which students listen to, read, and reread high-quality literature in a variety of genres
- Choice Time, which integrates small-group, hands-on learning with concepts explored during Story Time
- Transition Time, which integrates language and literacy activities into classroom routines, such as setting-up and winding-down periods

Unit Guides include planning and pacing charts, and they detail instructional strategies, objectives, activities, and materials for each classroom routine.

BLL is a flexible program that can become the basis for a complete early literacy curriculum or provide an intense language and early literacy supplement to the core curriculum.

- PHASE 1—The primary focus is on oral language to help children develop effective communication skills. In addition, each unit helps develop phonological awareness, concepts of print, and alphabetic knowledge.
- PHASE 2—While still emphasizing oral language development with more challenging vocabulary and ideas, this phase provides more opportunities for children to improve their letter knowledge, concepts of print, phonological awareness, and writing skills.

Assessments

The BLL Assessment Handbook provides formal unit-by-unit assessment, as well as mid- and end-of-year measures. The formal assessments measure student mastery of skills, and informal assessments can be used to develop individual and class profiles. Both assessments inform instruction and teacher decision-making.

The Assessment Handbook contains these components:

- Overview of early literacy assessment
- Unit assessments
- Mid-year and end-of-year assessments
- Suggested follow-up activities
- Progress reports

Formal Assessment

The formal assessment instruments measure these skills:

- Oral Language: Vocabulary, listening/responding, using language, and speaking
- Phonological Awareness: Sounds, letter/sounds, and word parts
- Letter Knowledge: Letters, letter/sounds, and writing name
- Print Knowledge: Responding to print and concepts of print

Informal Assessment

At the end of each unit of the program, there are informal assessment techniques and suggestions. These include:

- Suggestions for both individual and class profiles
- Suggestions for evaluating the literacy environment of the classroom

Motivation and Engagement

BLL offers an integrated program of instruction with early childhood activities that include cross-curricular experiences in literature and music. The program presents themes that are relevant to the children's life, such as Home, Store, Farm, and Supermarket. Direct instruction and well-developed learning center activities significantly engage students in the learning process.

Students identify with the BLL real-world themes, and they enjoy learning through singing songs, hearing poetry, and reading engaging books in different genres. Puppets, toys, and hands-on activities motivate them to participate. The program's four classroom routine times—Song & Poem Time, Story Time, Choice Time and Transition Time—keep children's attention and give them a variety of meaningful experiences.

Differentiated Instructional Strategies

BLL introduces developmental skills in a systematic way. Specific goals and objectives spelled out in the BLL Unit Guides form the basis of all activities. Children have experiences that develop oral language, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and print knowledge on a daily basis. Lessons present key skills multiple times to give children many opportunities to build a deep foundation in language development.

Second-language support and strategies are embedded in the *BLL* instruction and directly addressed in the *Unit Guides*. A Special Needs section presents strategies to use with students who have cognitive or physical challenges, such as hearing impairment. Mid-year assessment results help teachers plan instruction for the rest of the year, and the *Assessment* handbook provides them with suggestions for follow-up activities for children at different levels of progress.

Home-School Connection

The *Parent Involvement* Handbook, which is available in Spanish and English, provides parents and teachers with activities, ideas, and support to build an important bridge between home and school. The handbook contains family letters, which inform parents of activities going on in school, and take-home, hands-on activities. Teachers receive a wealth of tips, activities, and suggestions for how to involve parents in classroom life.

Professional Development

Professional development for the BLL program is integrated into the curriculum through the *Blueprint for Literacy* model lessons. Each of the 10 units in the program contains four professional development workshops. Each workshop covers these areas:

- **Research Shows:** This section provides examples from 1) the NAEYC/IRA Joint Position Statement and/or 2) Report on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties research that supports the classroom activities.
- **What You Can Do:** This section presents specific tips for maximizing children's learning potential through the activity.
- **Informal Assessment:** This section provides a model of classroom dialogue with annotated insights about the discussion.
- **Observing Children:** This section offers specific suggestions for responding to children's understandings and literacy behaviors.
- **Good Teaching Practices:** This section offers practical classroom management tips.

BLL is also supported with the optional *Scholastic RED* online course, *Developing Foundations for Early Childhood Success*. This course presents the research foundations for teaching young children and provides Pre-K teachers with the tools to set up their classrooms and structure learning activities based on children's needs. Participants learn effective ways to enhance children's development and offer support at all levels of readiness.

Scholastic also offers half-day Scholastic Early Literacy Seminars that can be customized to meet district needs. This series of seminars engages early childhood educators in the essentials necessary for creating language- and literacy-rich classrooms.

- Managing Your Classroom and Small Group Instruction
- Developing Oral Language
- Building Letter Knowledge and Phonological Awareness
- Supporting English Language Learners
- Building Content Area Knowledge
- Connecting School and Home
- Developing Print-Awareness and Writing
- Teaching Each Child

 For additional information about *Building Language for Literacy*, visit www.scholastic.com/bll.