

Children's experiences with nursery rhymes promote early phonological and print-related skills development

What does research tell us about the relationship between nursery rhymes and early literacy?

Mother Goose is more than just another pretty face!

Research in early literacy reveals that Jack and Jill, Hickory Dickory Dock, Humpty Dumpty, and a host of other nursery-rhymes can be instrumental in boosting young children's ability to master pre-reading skills.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute analyzed the results from 12 studies of 5,299 preschoolers to evaluate the relationship between children's nursery rhyme abilities (experiences, awareness, and knowledge) and their literacy skills development. The different studies measured (1) children's ability to recite nursery rhymes, (2) parents' reports of children's experiences with nursery rhymes and rhyming games, and (3) children's ability to supply the last word of familiar nursery rhymes.

The literacy skills measured included phonological skills such as rhyme production, rhyme detection, rhyme oddity (identifying among a group of spoken words the one that does *not* rhyme), phoneme awareness, phoneme detection, and repetition of consonant sounds in stressed parts of groups of words. The print-related skills measured included alphabet knowledge, awareness of letter sounds, the ability to write one's name and age, print concepts (such as book orientation and conventions of print), print knowledge, vocabulary, reading competence, and story retelling.

Nursery rhyme experiences, awareness, and knowledge were found to be positively related to accomplishment in early phonological and print-related skills. This held true for children with identified disabilities as well as it did for typically developing children, and it held true regardless of child age. Results showed that introducing children to nursery rhymes in early childhood can have a beneficial influence on later development of literacy-related abilities.

Free, downloadable practice guides based on these findings are available in versions for parents and early childhood practitioners at www.earlyliteracylearning.org. Please see the back of this sheet for examples of the guidelines and activity ideas they contain.



"...and the dish ran away with the spoon!"
Reciting nursery rhymes can be a natural part of many everyday activities with young children.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., Meter, D., & Hamby, D. W. (2011). Relationship between young children's nursery rhyme experiences and knowledge and phonological and print-related abilities, *CELLreviews* 4(1), 1-12.

Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELL* practices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at www.earlyliteracylearning.org

Staff of CELL have created a number of practice guides especially for parents and early childhood practitioners to encourage putting this research evidence to use in home, community, and classroom settings. All of the two-page practice guides listed below are available for free download on the CELL project web site: www.earlyliteracylearning.org. At this web address you can also find interactive posters called *CELLpops* and multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by this research.



Especially for PARENTS

Infants:
Fingerplays and Rhymes for Little Ones
More Infant Nursery Rhymes
Prime Time Nursery Rhymes

Toddlers:
Moovin' and Groovin' Nursery Rhymes
Toddler Rhymes and Rhythm
Fingerplays All the Way

Preschoolers:
Fun Finger Games
Sounds Like . . .
Listen Hear

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:
Infant Nursery Rhymes
Infant Nursery Rhymes and Finger Plays
Nursery Rhymes for Play and Learning

Toddlers:
Fingerplays and Rhymes with a Punch
Rhyming Games for Toddlers

Preschoolers:
Sound Advice
The First Letter Is . . .