

# Social, Environmental, and Adapted Literacy: Looking at Literacy Opportunities from a New Perspective



July 22, 2020

Suzanne Dinwiddie, M.Ed., COMS, CTVI, CEIM

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H326T150002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

# Today's Focus

- **Children who are not responding to traditional forms of learning, literacy or communicating due to complex learning/medical needs**
- **Literacy is so much more than the ability to read and write**
- **Three important factors to consider before engaging in learning, literacy, and communication with a young child with complex needs.**



Vision, hearing &/or complex medical/learning requirements create limited, inaccurate, or incomplete access to people, the environment, and traditional literacy materials

**Social Literacy**

**Environmental Literacy**

**Adapted Literacy**



# Literacy is more than mastery of a skill

Begin with a child's experiences and the concepts they have already acquired.

Use this knowledge to extend their world beyond their arm's reach

Use a communication format they understand

Literacy cannot be accomplished in isolation; it requires a relationship to share this journey

## Where Do We Begin.....

- **Our brain is wired to process our “likes” quicker and more completely**
- **Clear understanding of individual’s sensory and positioning requirements**
- **Consistent use of the same communication modalities, vocabulary, routines, and daily routes**

# A child's preferences and interests provides a basis for all beginning learning strategies <http://literacy.nationaldb.org>

**WSDS** Washington Sensory Disabilities Services

**"LIKES" INFORMATION**

Child:

Date:



FOODS taste/ texture	SMELLS	TOUCH texture/ hugs/ fabrics light - heavy	MOVEMENT rock/ bounce swing	VIBRATION car ride toys/ appliances	SIGHTS lights/colors	SOUNDS voices/ music pitch/ loudness environmental

MUSCLES push - pull bear weight	PEOPLE	PLACES	ACTIVITIES	TOYS	SELF STIMULATION BEHAVIORS	OTHER

Page 1 of 2

WEB Rev 10/06

**Any information presented outside a child's visual range, without regard to auditory skill level or sensory system needs is ineffective.**



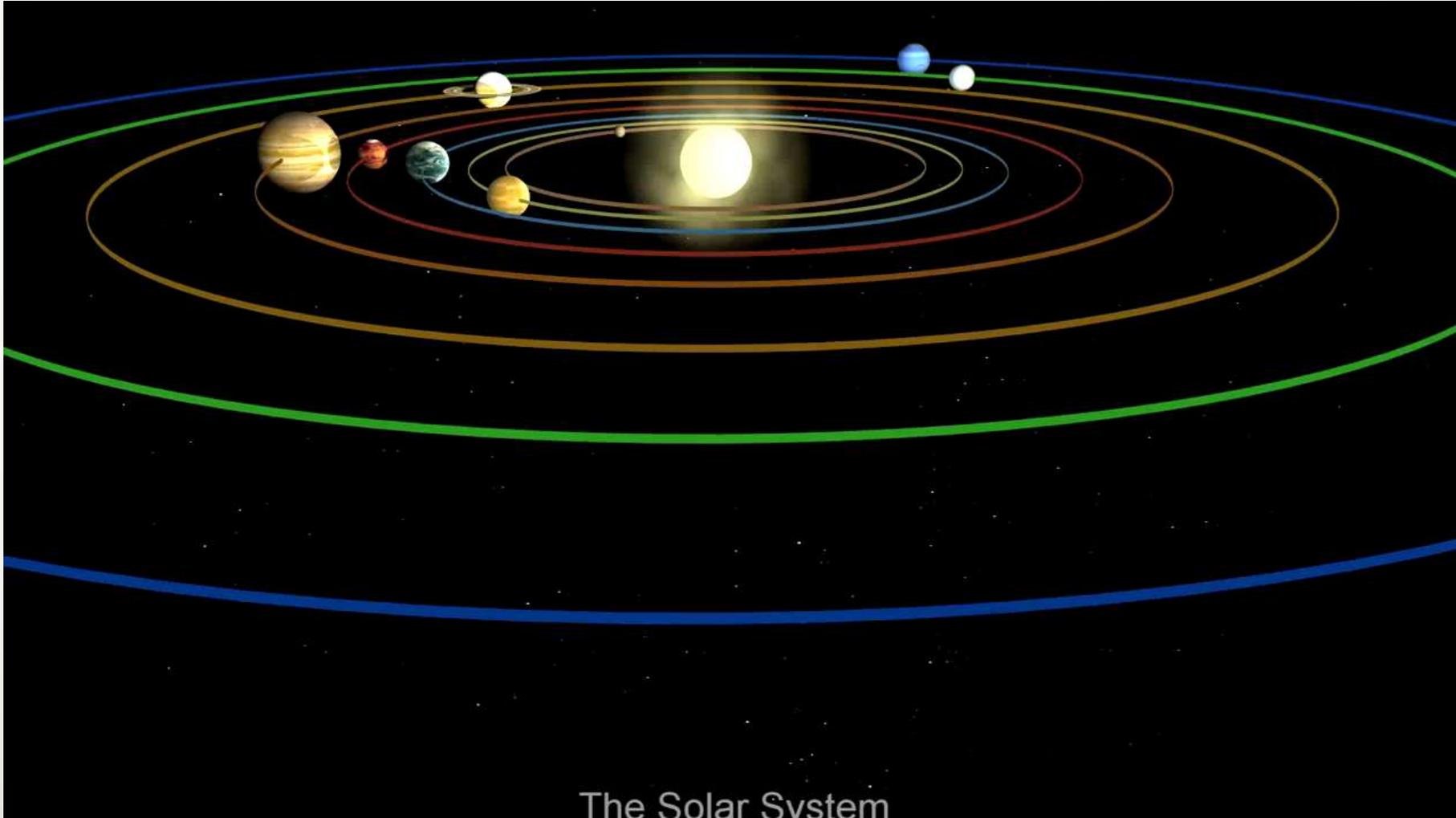


# Hearing is a sense- Listening is a skill

- **70%-80% of our waking hours are spend in some form of communication**
- **Listening is the communication skill used most frequently but has the least amount of training.**

**Awareness Location Recognition**  
**Discrimination Comprehension**

# Social Literacy and Relationships:



# The need for touch to connect with the world

**Touch communicates faster than hearing or vision.**

**Meaningful touch has significance, purpose, or value to the person being touched.**

**Begin interactions within arm's reach, joint attention, touch, & eye contact (when able)**

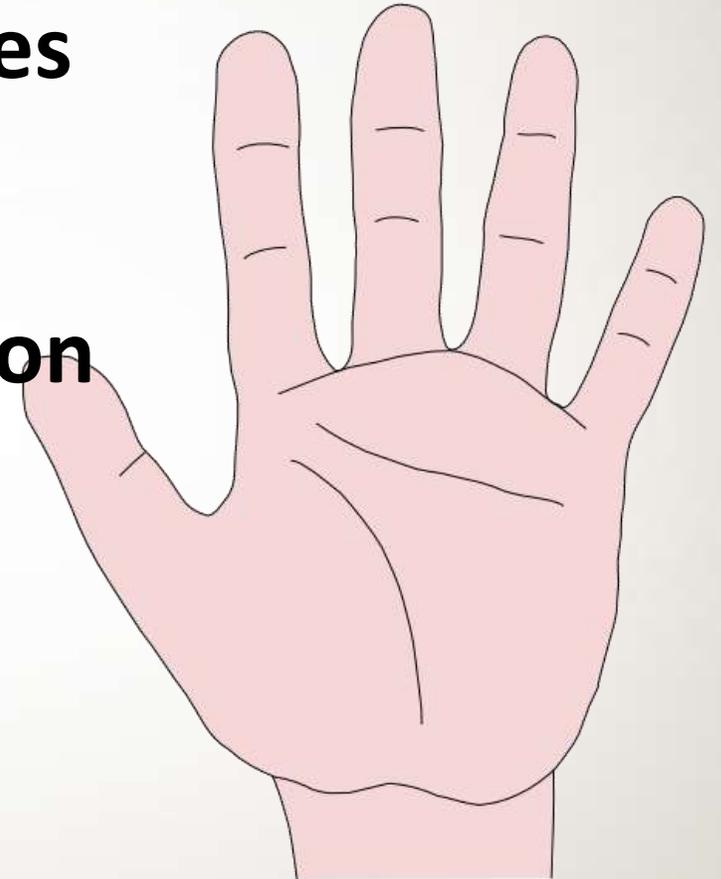


# Touch Cues

- **Touch made in a consistent manner and communicates desired action**
- **Informational: communication of upcoming action or activity**
- **May reduce startle or inappropriate behaviors**
- **Used consistently as an identifier: Greeting/departure, wait for response from literacy partner**

## Simple acronym to remember adaptations

- C** Contrast, Color, to create defined spaces
- L** Lighting
- A** Amount of visual & auditory information
- P** Positioning of materials and person  
Presentation of information



**Know visual and  
auditory requirements  
to assist in positioning  
the body and materials**





at Vanderbilt



# Environmental Literacy

## Defined Spaces:

- Creates holistic mental image of area
- Breaks surroundings into “chunks” of manageable space
- Addresses concepts of size, shape, distance



**Anchor to  
known element  
in environment**

**Body as “point  
of reference”**

**Assist in  
orientation**

**Increase balance**



# Adapted Literacy



Beginning literacy does not look like a traditional book.

Real and familiar objects that a child has explored are presented sequential to tell a story that is directly related to the child's life.

# “Story Telling” with concrete objects used throughout the day

- Are you looking at things from the child's perspective and selecting objects and symbols that match the child's experience of what you are trying to represent?
- Information or materials that has not been seen, touched, heard, or used numerous times is meaningless. Start with what they know



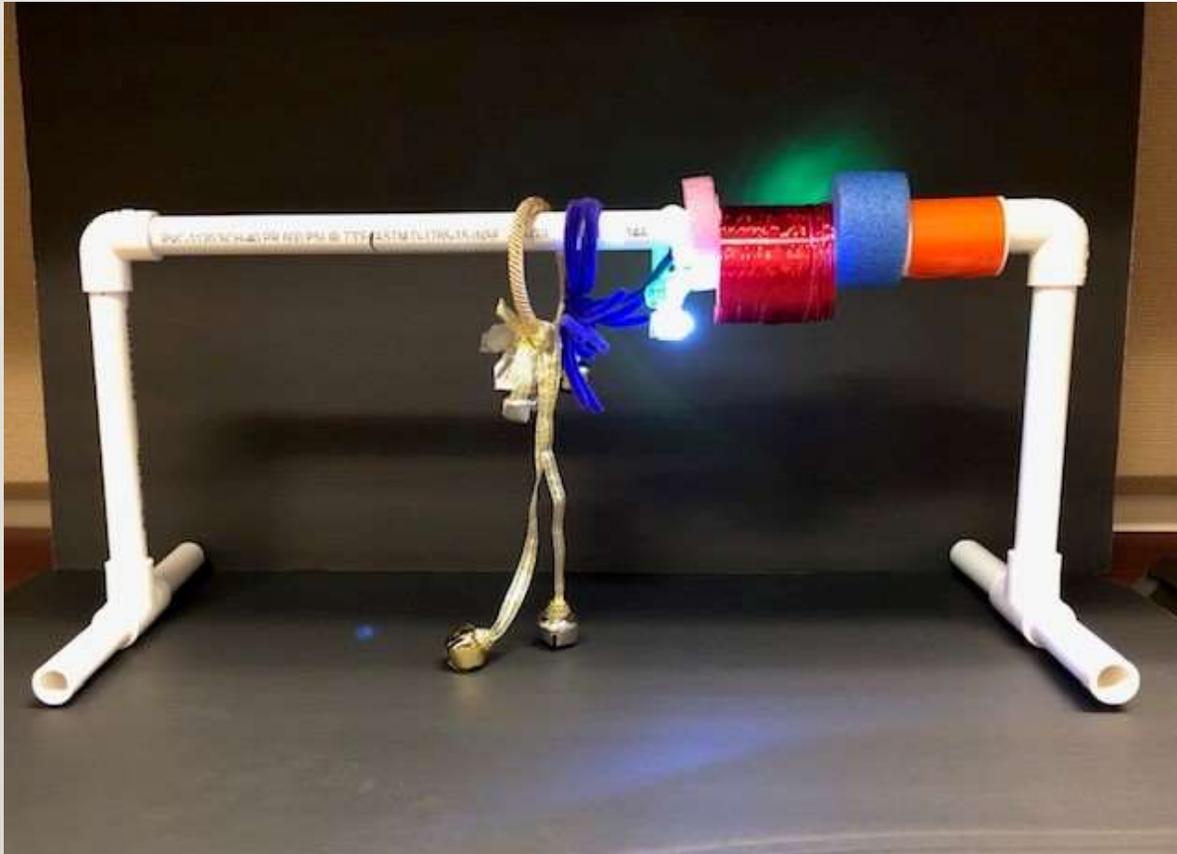
**Routines are the best way to tell a story. A “finished basket” is the period at the end of your sentence.**



# Help the environment “communicate”



# Focus on the process and concept, not the product

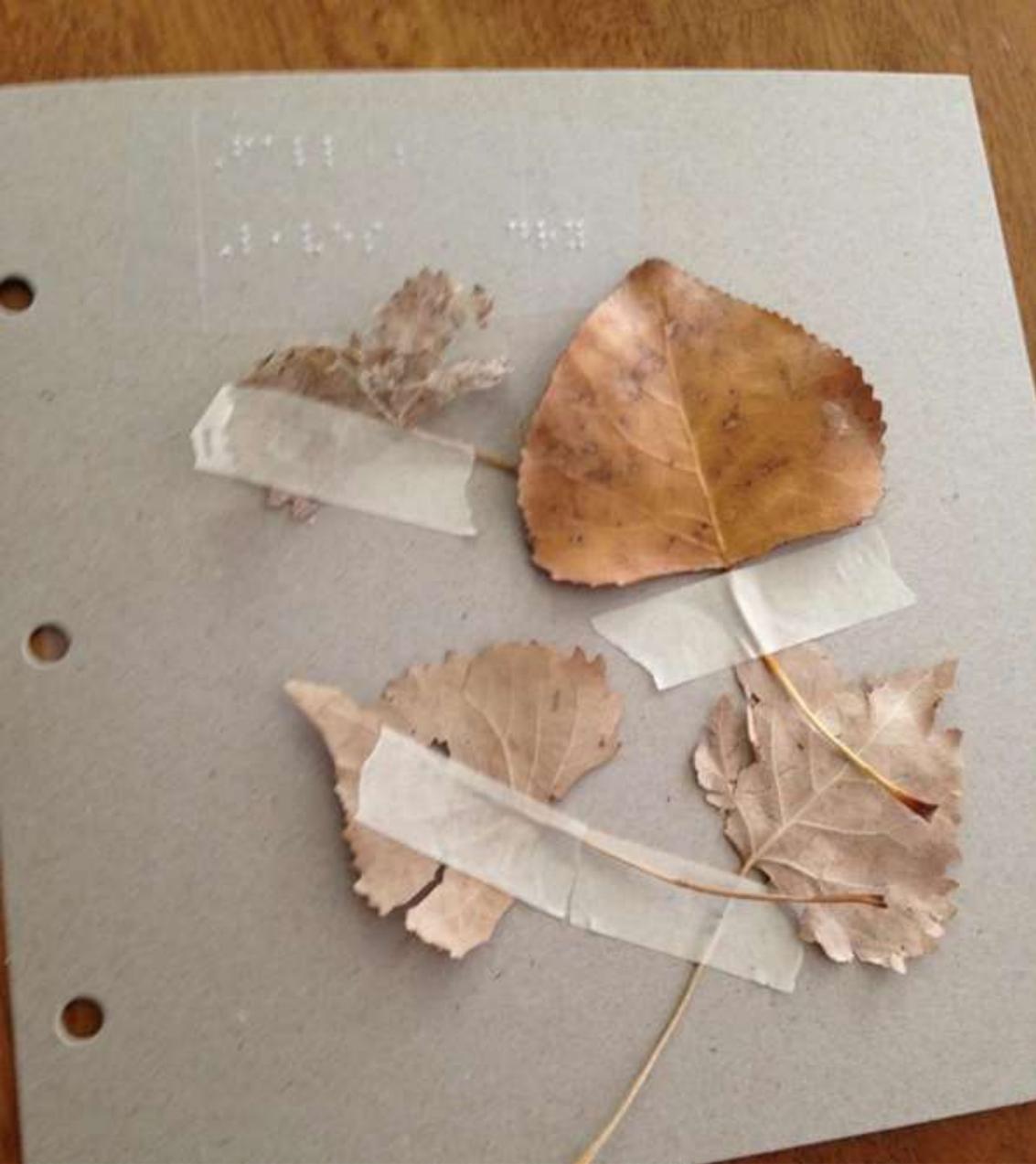


- Let the child help make the literacy activities
- If for classroom use, make more than one
- Convenient, manageable size
- Hungry Caterpillar-less/more

# Focus on a single concept- Wet & Dry

(Five Little Speckled Frogs Sitting on a Speckled Log)





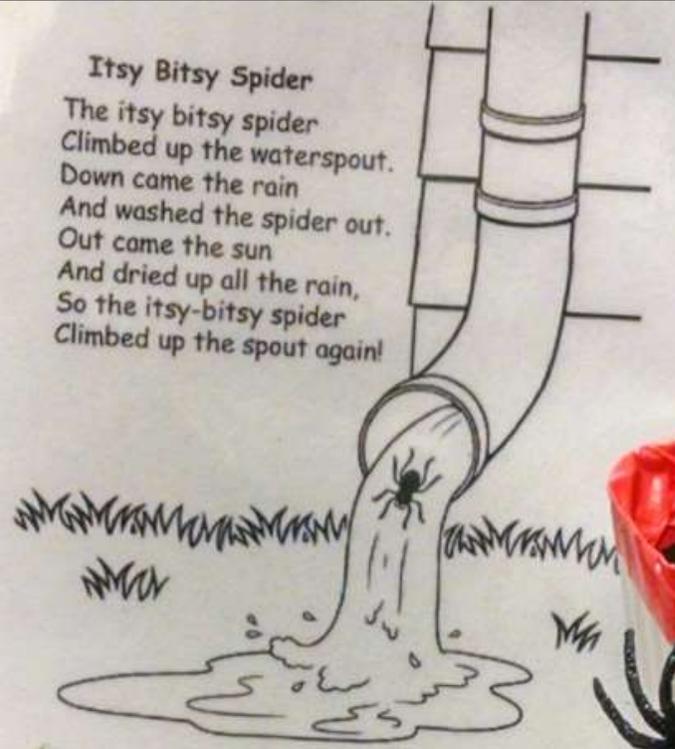
**Something to touch  
that is related to an  
experience, a story  
being read, or  
concept being  
taught.**

Mary found seashells.



- Broaden child's world beyond "self"
- Perspective taking
- Enjoyment
- Story telling
- Choices
- Fun
- Is not a straight line of instruction
- Time to explore, manipulate
- SLOW DOWN

**Itsy Bitsy Spider**  
The itsy bitsy spider  
Climbed up the waterspout.  
Down came the rain  
And washed the spider out.  
Out came the sun  
And dried up all the rain,  
So the itsy-bitsy spider  
Climbed up the spout again!



## Where's Elmo?



- Read with the literacy partner, not to
- Eliminate auditory and visual “clutter”
- Sit beside the person
- Wait for joint attention
- Position people/materials
- Keep both communications modalities visible: print and sign
- Focus on concepts and main characters-then expand when you re-read

# Modifying Content





## Resources

- <https://nationaldb.org>
- <http://www.tsbvi.edu>
- <http://www.wsdsonline.org>
- <http://www.pathstoliteracy.org>
- <http://www.perkins.org>
- <http://cviscotland.org>