

Background of *Building on Patterns Kindergarten*, Second Edition

The first editions of *Building on Patterns*, the successor to the popular *Patterns: The Primary Braille Reading Program* (Caton, Pester, & Bradley, 1980-1983), were published between 2006 and 2012. Although the American Printing House for the Blind intended to begin revisions of *BOP Kindergarten* in 2012, an online survey of teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) supported the need for a prekindergarten literacy program. Recognizing that preschool standards had changed, and that expectations for children entering kindergarten were much higher than when *Patterns* was first developed, the writers and consultants worked with APH to develop an approach to beginning reading that picked up where *On the Way to Literacy* (Wright & Stratton, 2007) left off. The resulting curriculum, *Building on Patterns Pre-Kindergarten (BOP Pre-K)*, was published in 2019.

Building on Patterns Kindergarten, Second Edition (*BOP-K*) follows *BOP Pre-K* in the second edition of *BOP*. Preschoolers who have completed all or some of *BOP Pre-K* will enter kindergarten with an understanding of common braille terms, the ability to read and write some letters of the alphabet, and exposure to reading and writing words with single letters, multiple letters, and a few braille contractions in isolation and in simple sentences. *BOP-K* builds on these skills and concepts using a comprehensive, sequential approach.

Since the publication of the first edition of *BOP-K* over ten years ago, academic expectations for kindergarten children have increased significantly. The second edition of *BOP-K* was written to align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) and with a representative sampling of the standards adopted by states who chose to develop their own (see Kindergarten State Standards on the Kindergarten Teacher Resources page at www.aphbop.org). *BOP-K* consists of 36 lessons, two of which comprise a Beginning (or baseline) Assessment and four of which are quarterly Checkups. The second edition is significantly more comprehensive than the first edition, aligns to current grade level literacy standards, and uses authentic children's literature (both fiction and informational texts) as read-alouds to establish the themes of units and lessons. It also includes explicit, systematic phonics instruction; the reading and writing of numbers; an introduction to punctuation; frequent opportunities to reread motivating text for accuracy, fluency, and comprehension; and a focus on meaningful student writing using invented spelling.

Writers of the *BOP-K* program were guided by these fundamental beliefs:

- Students with visual impairments should meet the same standards as students in general education classrooms.

- Braille reading students have unique learning needs that should be incorporated throughout reading and writing instruction.
- Braille-reading students should read and write throughout the day, at school and at home.

These fundamental beliefs are supported by the following principles, which are incorporated into *BOP-K* in multiple ways.

Principles Followed by *BOP-K* Writers

- Young children learning to read in braille should receive daily, consistent literacy instruction by a qualified teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI).
- Children with visual impairments and additional disabilities, as well as those who are English language learners, should receive consistent, meaningful literacy instruction.
- The service delivery system used with the target population for *Building on Patterns (BOP)* is diverse. It includes teachers/students in general education settings and in specialized classrooms, schools, and agencies.
- As much as possible, literacy instruction for children who are blind should be evidence-grounded, and ongoing research should be conducted on the effectiveness of *BOP*.
- A comprehensive approach to literacy instruction is essential. By comprehensive, we mean the following:
 - a focus on both meaning-centered and skill-centered instruction
 - instruction and activities that address listening, speaking, reading, and writing
 - exposure to a wide variety of age-appropriate literary genres
 - options for structured, flexible, and individualized instruction
- Rich concept development through real-life experiences is an important part of literacy instruction.
- Literacy is connected to all areas of the expanded core curriculum.
- The use of authentic literature enhances the value of a literacy program.
- The structure of *BOP-K*, with clear directions for lesson planning, is beneficial to many teachers. However, teachers should not hesitate to create their own eclectic strategies, materials, and activities that motivate students and meet their specific needs.
- There is a benefit to a carefully controlled introduction to contractions through a systematic, comprehensive literacy program.

- We understand that *BOP-K* will be used in some circumstances in conjunction with another literacy program. We encourage teachers to use *BOP-K* in any way that is helpful to a student.
- Fluency with comprehension is developed through consistent, targeted instruction over a long period of time, starting early.
- Early exposure to and instruction in the use of tactile graphics (including pictures, charts, maps, raised-line drawings, and illustrations) is important.
- Literacy instruction should be based on a diagnostic approach where assessment and instruction are closely tied and teachers gather ongoing data about student progress.
- Braille-reading students should have literacy experiences with many people (not just a TSVI). They benefit from opportunities to meet and interact with successful braille-reading role models.
- Parents are valuable partners in literacy instruction for braille-reading students.

The writers of *Building on Patterns* routinely review research and theoretical work related to current literacy instruction through reading, webinars, and discussions with content experts. As a part of the underlying theoretical base of the program, they endeavor to embed Cambourne's Conditions of Learning into each lesson.

Cambourne's Conditions of Learning

Brian Cambourne (1988) proposed a theory of conditions that are conducive to learning language (both spoken and written). His theory outlines home, school, and community conditions that interact to support learning. While this theory was developed primarily considering young children without disabilities, the writers of *BOP-K* believe that this theory is very applicable to young tactile learners who are beginning to acquire literacy skills. The following is an interpretation of Cambourne's Conditions of Learning as they relate to literacy acquisition for young braille readers:

Immersion: Children should be surrounded by braille in their environment in order to experience many opportunities of exploring labels and books at all times during the day.

Demonstration: Children will benefit from demonstrations of braille reading and writing from a variety of people in their environment. It is important that they have early reading role models from adults and, when possible, other children.

Engagement: It is not enough for children to only observe others reading and writing; they must be actively engaged in meaningful reading and writing themselves.

Expectations: It is important that teachers of students with visual impairments provide children with clear messages of high expectations. Braille-reading children may face the challenge of low expectations from adults in their environment. We believe that this is at least partially the result of misinformation and lack of understanding about braille reading.

Responsibility: Children’s learning is enhanced when they take responsibility for their own use of braille reading and writing. They should have easy access to methods of writing and reading braille independently.

Approximation: Children need to know, and be assured by adults, that their efforts toward acquisition are valued, even if they are not perfect. The development of literacy skills is gradual and moves forward with increasing accuracy over several years.

Use: In order for children to acquire literacy skills, they must be involved in reading and writing in meaningful and functional activities throughout the day and in a variety of environments.

Response: Throughout all of the above conditions, it is important that children receive feedback from adults and other people who the child recognizes as knowledgeable.

References

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