

Program Overview

What Is *Story Friends*?

Story Friends™ is a research-based, supplemental Tier 2 intervention program for use in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. The program includes interactive storybooks and audio recordings used together to develop vocabulary, concepts, and comprehension skills. At small group listening centers, children listen to recorded stories and lessons that encourage interactive responses. During each 10- to 15-minute session, children listen to a story, engage in vocabulary activities, and respond to comprehension questions that promote critical thinking.

Story Friends Is Easy and Fun to Implement in Your Classroom!

The *Story Friends* program is designed to work in the preschool or kindergarten classroom by fitting into a typical early childhood schedule and requiring minimal advanced preparation—the instruction is all prerecorded. Simply add the program to your daily center rotation or small group time. Children will enjoy the stories, likable characters, and colorful illustrations.



Program Overview

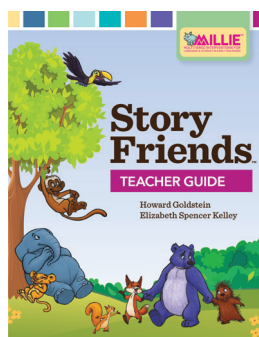
Story Friends Components at a Glance



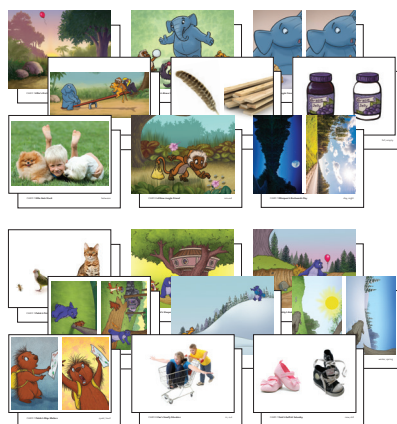
Storybooks



Audio Recordings



Teacher Materials



Professional Development Modules

Story Friends Employs Best Practices to Accelerate Skills Development

Children who participate in *Story Friends* develop oral language skills and acquire challenging vocabulary. They also practice listening comprehension by responding to questions about stories and characters to help develop their critical thinking skills. In addition to vocabulary growth, children gain experience with academic activities common in preschool and kindergarten settings that employ best practices for learning.

Skills

- Oral language
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Critical thinking
- Listening
- Phonological awareness
- Concepts of print
- Social-emotional

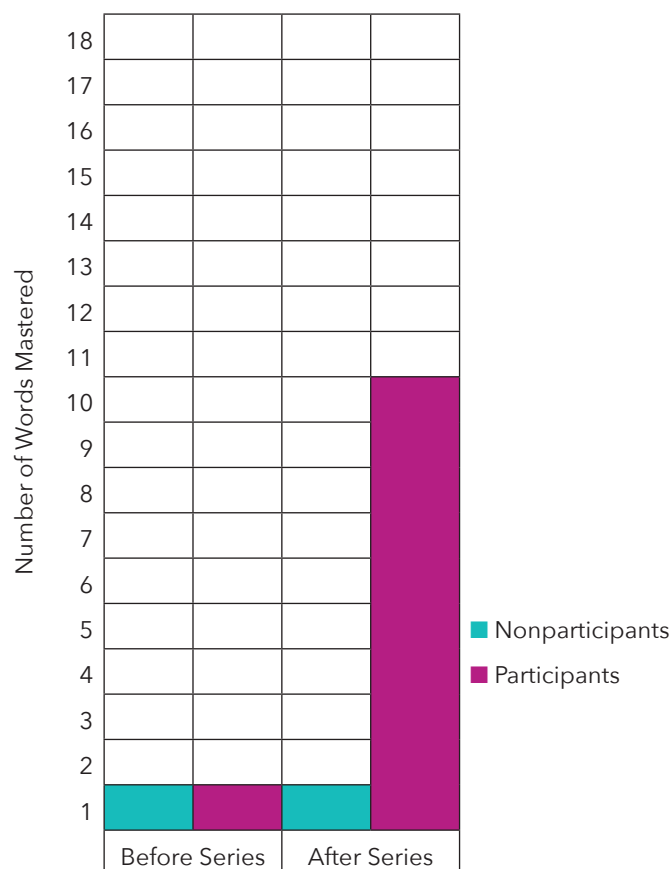
Best Practices

- Explicit teaching and modeling
- Repeated readings
- Multiple exposures to vocabulary
- Student engagement
- Small group intervention
- Recursive instruction
- Formative and summative assessments
- Staff development

Research Base for *Story Friends*

Although *Story Friends* has wide appeal to young children, the embedded lessons in the stories are designed to promote language development among children who are at risk for reading difficulties due to underdeveloped oral language skills. Thus, the research focused on the effects of the program on vocabulary and oral language development with at-risk prekindergarten populations. Also, teachers have implemented this curriculum with kindergarten children who are exhibiting delays in oral language development with good success.

Children's Vocabulary Acquisition Using the *Jungle Friends* Series



From Research to Practice

Years of research show and experts agree on how curriculum best meets the needs of early childhood skills development and classroom practices.

Preschool Developmental and Programmatic Needs	<i>Story Friends</i> Delivers
Language skills	Program vocabulary words with picture supports in each storybook provide child-friendly definitions, multiple opportunities to say the words and definitions, meaning from context, and examples from daily experiences.
Comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills	Inferential questions from each story challenge children to think critically and problem solve. Intervention lessons model responses, and think-alouds explain reasoning.
Listening skills	Small group listening centers provide opportunities to practice listening skills; visual cues guide children to stay on task and focus their attention.
Phonological awareness	Rhyming story text facilitates learning of an important aspect of phonological awareness.
Concepts of print	Explicit instruction guides children to follow the words of a book's title, turn pages, point to elements in images, and manipulate book flaps on cue.
Social-emotional development	A recurring cast of characters fosters children's social awareness and develops their sense of empathy as they relate to everyday occurrences and social situations.
Explicit teaching and modeling	Child-friendly vocabulary definitions are stated explicitly, and modeling and think-alouds provide context and examples of reasoning for appropriate responses.
Multiple exposures to new vocabulary and language	Children receive four vocabulary and two concept words lessons, as well as guided instruction on three comprehension questions, for a total of nine explicit lessons for each 10- to 15-minute Listening Center session.
Repeated readings	Children listen to each storybook three times to ensure multiple exposures to instruction.
Recursive instruction	Intervention lessons model and guide the acquisition of language skills. Children can listen to other responses and have time to reflect on their own, and children can try out new learning during individual progress monitoring opportunities.
Assessments	Children's progress is monitored during Listening Center sessions to ensure that listening and responding occur appropriately. Individually administered assessments evaluate acquisition of vocabulary and concept words.
Professional development	Teachers have access to multimedia modules to ensure program implementation with fidelity.



Program Components

Student Components

Storybooks

The *Story Friends* program provides two series of storybooks, *Jungle Friends* and *Forest Friends*. The *Story Friends* storybooks showcase:

- Embedded vocabulary
- Colorful, engaging illustrations
- Repeating story characters
- Rhyming text
- “Discovery flaps” that promote natural curiosity and critical thinking



Jungle Friends Series

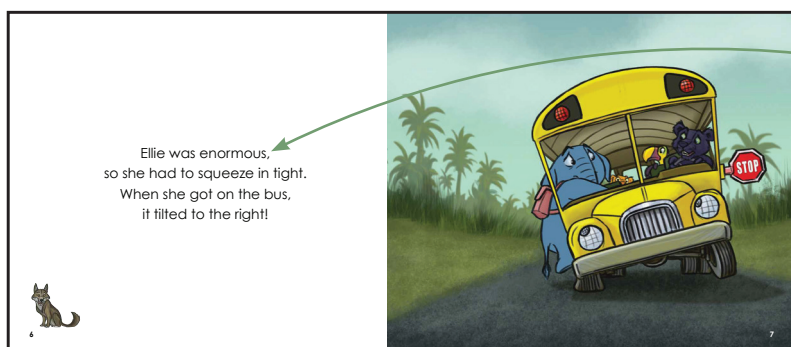


Forest Friends Series



Multiple Opportunities for Practice

The *Story Friends* program is designed to promote active responding. Children participate by answering questions, pointing to pictures, lifting flaps, and using gestures during pantomime activities. Each storybook provides up to 20 opportunities for active response.



Jungle Friends, Ellie's First Day, pp. 6-7

Vocabulary

Story Friends provides explicit instruction for embedded vocabulary within storybooks. High-level vocabulary develops oral language at an accelerated pace to get children on-level. Each vocabulary lesson includes:

- Child-friendly definitions.
- Opportunities to repeat the words and definitions.
- Opportunities to respond in an interactive format.
- Information about word meaning in context.
- Examples from real-life experiences.



Forest Friends, Fae's Nose Knows, pp. 14-15

Comprehension

Interactive story questions help develop critical thinking and comprehension skills, such as predicting and inferring. Each comprehension lesson includes:

- Sample answers to questions.
- Think-alouds that model reasoning.

Discovery Flaps

Discovery flaps promote natural curiosity as children respond to prompts and interact with images.

Explicit Instruction

Wanda the Word Wolf, the program narrator, appears within storybooks to indicate explicit instruction at point of use.

Audio

Audio Recordings

Wanda the Word Wolf, the program narrator, reads the story text as children follow along. She also delivers explicit vocabulary instruction and comprehension lessons that engage children and promote critical thinking about the text and ideas.

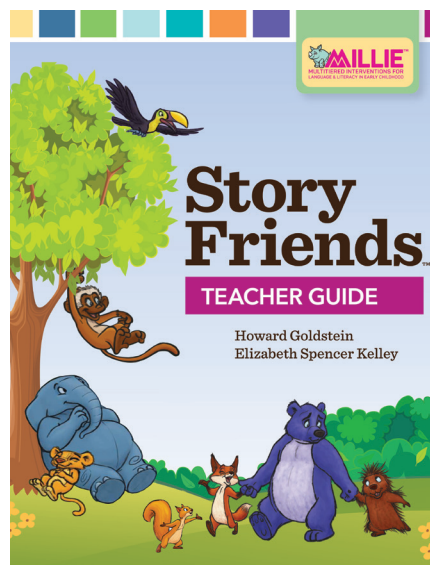


Teacher Components

Teacher Guide

The *Story Friends* Teacher Guide provides everything you need to know about the program and its implementation.

- Program overview and components
- Scope and sequence of skills
- Implementation guidelines
- Audio scripts
- Placement and assessments
- Blackline resource masters
- Research base



Story Friends Teacher Guide



Program Implementation Modules

Story Friends supports staff development by providing multimedia Program Implementation Modules. These modules illustrate helpful tips for implementing the program with fidelity, ensuring that children in your classroom get the support they need to help them get on-level.



USB Content

The *Story Friends* USB includes the MP3 audio files and full audio scripts that correspond with each of the storybooks. Wanda the Word Wolf narrates each story in the *Story Friends* series to the children and leads them through the intervention. The USB also contains reproducible and fillable assessment and tracking forms to help monitor children's progress and log children's attendance and pacing of program implementation.



Assessment

The *Story Friends* progress monitoring assessments appear in the Teacher Guide and on the USB and include Unit Vocabulary and Concept Words Assessments. Assessment Cards are included for use with the Concept Words Pre- and Posttests.

Jungle Friends Unit 1 Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read aloud questions all of the response cards. Write the child's response for each item. Write ME if the child gives no response and DK if the child says, "I don't know." For 3 items, circle the child's response. There are pages 10B of the Teacher Guide for scoring questions. Scoring may occur after administration of the assessment.

Scripted Directions: Hi! I'm going to ask you some questions about the words in the stories. Ready?

Item	Card	Script	Score
1a	1a	Tell me, what does enormous mean?	0 1 2
If the child does not say "really big," then say, Enormous means...			
If the child does not say "really big," then ask:			
1b	1b	Does enormous mean "really big" or "really cold"?	0 1
If the child does not say "really big," then say, Different means...			
2a	2a	Tell me, what does different mean?	0 1 2
If the child does not say "not the same," then say, Different means...			
2b	2b	Does different mean "not the same" or "not the same"?	0 1
If the child does not say "not the same," then ask:			
2c	2c	Does different mean "not at home" or "not at home"?	0 1
If the child does not say "not at home," then say, Home means...			
3a	3a	Tell me, what does home mean?	0 1 2
If the child does not say "not scared," then say, Home means...			
3b	3b	Does home mean "not scared" or "not hungry"?	0 1
If the child does not say "not scared," then ask:			
3c	3c	Tell me, what does go mean?	0 1 2
If the child does not say "to walk," then say, Go means...			
3d	3d	Does go mean "to walk" or "to walk"?	0 1

Jungle Friends
Unit 1 Vocabulary Assessment

Unit Vocabulary Assessment

Unit Vocabulary Assessments evaluate children's acquisition of program vocabulary. Children are assessed before and after each instructional unit.

Concept Words Pre- and Posttests

Concept Words Pre- and Posttests evaluate children's acquisition of basic concept words, such as *high* and *low*. Children are assessed before and after each book series, *Jungle Friends* and *Forest Friends*.

Jungle Friends Concept Words PRETEST

Name: _____ Date: _____

Materials: Jungle Friends Assessment Cards

Directions: Read aloud the directions below. Then read about the script on the back of each Assessment Card as you direct. Use the directions or items listed on a card if the child doesn't know. Circle the child's response to each question below. Score 1 for correct response and 0 for incorrect response.

Scripted Directions: Hi! I'm going to ask you some questions about some pictures. Look at each picture carefully before you answer. Are you ready?

Item	Card	Script	Score
1	1	Circle the ball that is the highest or low ?	
2	2	Now point to the ball on the ground. Is the ball high or low ?	
3	3	Look at the picture of the Jungle Friends. Do you see Leo Lion lay himself or do you see Leo lay himself?	
4	4	Look at the picture in this picture. Does Leo Lion have a few pieces of leaves or leaves ?	
5	5	Now look at the picture in this picture. Does Leo Lion have a leg or leg ?	
6	6	Look at the picture. Is the leg or leg ?	
7	7	Now look at the other friends. Are they leg or leg ?	
8	8	Point to the picture. Is the leg or leg ?	
9	9	Now point to the picture. Are leg or leg ?	
10	10	Look at the picture. Is this leg or leg ?	
11	11	Now look at the picture. Is the leg or leg ?	
12	12	Look at the picture of the leg and the dog. Is the leg on top of the dog or leg or leg ?	
13	13	Look at the picture. Monkey and the lion. Do you see the lion? Are the lion leg or leg ?	
14	14	Look at the picture. Monkey and the lion. Do you see the lion? Are the lion leg or leg ?	
15	15	Now point to the picture when you can see the lion. Is it leg or leg ?	
Total Score			
			(Maximum 15)

Jungle Friends Concept Words Pretest



Jungle Friends Assessment Cards

Assessment Cards

The Concept Words Assessments use picture cards to assess children's acquisition of basic concept words in an interactive format. Each storybook series, *Jungle Friends* and *Forest Friends*, includes a set of nine Assessment Cards.



Implementing *Story Friends*

An Easy Three-Step Model!

The *Story Friends* program makes it easy for you to implement its Tier 2 supplemental intervention curriculum in three easy steps:

- 1 **Identify.**
- 2 **Implement.**
- 3 **Assess.**

STEP 1 Identify. Identify children who will benefit from using *Story Friends*.

The first step in implementing *Story Friends* is to identify children in your classroom who will benefit from using the program. These will be children who have limited oral language skills or are demonstrating delays in oral vocabulary and comprehension. Information from universal screening and progress monitoring assessments can be used to identify children who are good candidates for using the *Story Friends* supplemental curriculum. You can also use the screening questionnaire provided with this program to identify these children. Please see the *Decision-Making Framework Teacher Questionnaire* on page 115 of this Teacher Guide. For information about other universal screening measures, please see page 82.

STEP 2 Implement. Implement the intervention at the Listening Center.

The *Story Friends* intervention is delivered at the Listening Center in 10- to 15-minute sessions. A facilitator—a teacher or another adult such as an assistant teacher, paraprofessional, or parent—is present to guide and monitor children. At the Listening Center, children follow along as they listen to storybooks and participate in interactive vocabulary and comprehension lessons. Optimally, three children in need of intervention gather at the Listening Center at one time. As it fits within your instructional goals and classroom schedule, you may choose to invite another child to the Listening Center or make it part of every child's routine center rotation or free-choice time. Please see pages 18–21 of this Teacher Guide for information about setting up and operating the Listening Center.



STEP 3 Assess. Administer progress monitoring assessments.

In *Story Friends*, learning of instructional targets is assessed using curriculum-based measures. There are two measures for vocabulary. Vocabulary acquisition is measured using Unit Vocabulary Assessments, administered after four weeks of instruction, and Concept Words Assessments, administered before and after each book series, *Jungle Friends* and *Forest Friends*. Please see pages 10–11 of this Teacher Guide for information about administering the *Story Friends* progress monitoring assessments.

Unit Vocabulary Assessment

Concept Words Pretest

Program Pacing

Story Friends contains 26 storybooks, each used across a five-day period. Children listen to each storybook three times—one listening session on each of the first three days of your week. Repeated readings of each book ensure that children receive multiple exposures to the rich vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

If a child is absent for a listening session, provide a make-up session on one of the last two days of the five-day period. If a child misses the make-up days, then he or she will join the group for the beginning of the next storybook.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
1st listen	2nd listen	3rd listen	Make-up	Make-up

Use the Attendance Logs provided for each unit of instruction on pages 108–113 of this Teacher Guide to record each time children listen to a storybook and track their progress toward learning goals. Use the Pacing Charts on pages 106–107 of this Teacher Guide to pace your instruction and progress monitoring schedule.

Attendance Log, p. 108

Pacing Chart, p. 106

Key Program Elements

Important Components of *Story Friends* Instruction

The *Story Friends* program provides intensive instruction to maximize children's learning. Lessons are designed to include multiple exposures to content, explicit teaching and modeling, and many opportunities for engagement and practice.

- **Repeated Readings** Children listen to each *Story Friends* book three times. Repeated readings ensure that children receive multiple exposures to rich content. Four vocabulary, three comprehension, and two Concept Words lessons appear in each storybook for a total of nine meaningful instructional opportunities during each 10- to 15-minute listening session.
- **Explicit Teaching** In guided vocabulary lessons, definitions are explicitly stated in child-friendly language. Additional contexts and examples are embedded in “think-alouds” and other modeling of age- and developmentally appropriate reasoning for story questions.
- **Multiple Opportunities for Practice** Children learn best when they are engaged. The *Story Friends* program is designed to promote active responding. Children participate by answering questions, looking at and pointing to pictures, lifting flaps, and gesturing during lesson activities. One storybook provides up to 20 opportunities to respond to vocabulary prompts and comprehension questions.

Instructional Content

Focus on Vocabulary, Concepts, and Comprehension

Although *Story Friends* promotes mastery of many developmentally appropriate skills for preschoolers, the program contains lessons designed to strengthen children's oral language skills, focusing on vocabulary, concept words, and comprehension.

Frequency of Skills Lessons per Storybook

	Skill Load	Teach	Review
Vocabulary	Two vocabulary words	Two introductory lessons	Two review lessons
Concept Words	One or two concept words	One introductory lesson	One review lesson
Comprehension	Three comprehension questions	Three lessons	



Key Program Elements

- **Vocabulary** In each *Story Friends* instructional book, interactive lessons introduce two new vocabulary words that include explicit, child-friendly definitions and multiple opportunities to respond. The vocabulary words selected for each storybook challenge children to expand their word knowledge in ways that will be useful in a school setting and will have the most impact on their language skills and future reading comprehension. The *Story Friends* vocabulary words are:
 - Relevant to children's daily lives and useful across many content areas.
 - Words that occur frequently in adult conversations and in texts children will encounter in school.
 - Examples of rich language, including descriptive verbs and adjectives that exemplify shades of meaning, such as *leap*, *search*, *gorgeous*, and *enormous*.
 - Likely to be unfamiliar to many preschoolers, but provide opportunities for vocabulary expansion.
 - Difficult to learn from context without explicit instruction and multiple exposures.
- **Concept Words** Each *Story Friends* book provides instruction on one or two basic concepts, such as *up/down*, *many/few*, and *all*. The concept words included in *Story Friends* are selected from preschool curricula and from tests of basic concepts. The concepts are selected to be immediately relevant in the preschool classroom and in future school settings.
- **Comprehension Questions** The *Story Friends* program provides children opportunities to respond to stories and their characters, using comprehension skills. Each storybook prompts children to respond to three comprehension questions. After each prompt, children have time to reflect and respond before hearing a model and the reasoning for an appropriate response.

The comprehension questions are primarily open-ended, inferential questions for which the answer is not explicitly stated in the text. Children must use information in the story and their own background knowledge to make inferences about character emotions and actions, predictions about future events, and connections to their lives, such as *Why was Ellie excited? Do you think Bobby Bear will be scared the next time he goes to the doctor? Why should you share with your friends?* This critical thinking practice will help prepare children for reading comprehension activities in later grades.

