

Classroom Literacy Activities for Preschool Children

Oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, and letter knowledge are highly correlated with reading success. The only way to be sure children are gaining in these areas is to intentionally plan to have something from each area everyday!

Ways to support oral language:

- Model appropriate grammar and the use of rich vocabulary.
- Maintain positive, nurturing relationships with children and engage them individually in responsive, conversations throughout the day.
- Use instructional dialogue that fosters thinking about words and concepts.
- Answer children's questions and provide explanations.
- Provide real experiences that expand children's vocabulary, such as field trips in the community and exposure to various tools, objects, and materials.
- Read daily a variety of high-quality fiction and nonfiction books to individual children or small groups. Include books that positively reflect children's identity, home, language, and culture.
- While reading to children, give them opportunities to actively participate, relate stories to their every day lives, and answer analytical questions about stories.
- Provide opportunities for children to discuss stories, hear repeated readings of stories, retell familiar stories, act out stories, and create their own stories.
- Encourage communication among children by helping them learn to take turns listening and talking to one another and use language to solve problems.
- Respect the culture and language of children who are learning English as a second language by ensuring that children are able to maintain their home language while also learning to speak and read English.

Ways to develop phonological awareness:

- Share stories, poems, nursery rhymes, chants, finger plays, and songs in which phonemic patterns such as rhyme and alliteration are present.
- Read frequently books with patterned, predictable texts.
- Engage children in choral readings of rhymes and rhythms in order to help them associate the symbols with the sounds they hear in these words. Play listening games with children such as taking a "listening

walk" or making sounds with common objects behind a barrier and asking children to guess the object.

- Engage the children in games that encourage word play and rhyming such as making a list of words that rhyme with a child's name.
- Call attention to words that begin with the same sound by using activities such as saying tongue twisters like the "Pretty Pink Pig Picked Purple Plums."
- Give experiences with sentence segmenting such as asking the child to move a penny when each word in a sentence is said.
- Help children understand that words have syllables by using activities such as clapping the syllables in their names.
- Offer exposure to onset rime blending and segmenting with games such as "Guess the Word." For example, "Guess the birthday child's name. B--- ob. Yes, it's Bob's birthday."

Ways to develop **print awareness**:

- Talk about how a book works by pointing out the cover, back, title, authors, illustrators, and familiar words or names, during read aloud sessions. Teach page arrangement, story grammar, and directionality of print with repeated readings and modeling with big books.
- Use teacher modeling to demonstrate the form and function of writing and print such as the concepts that words can be spoken or written, print corresponds to speech, and print carries a message. Writing a thank you note with the children to a classroom visitor is an example of how these concepts can be taught.
- Take dictation from children. Write their words exactly as they say them while they watch you form the letters.
- Model reading and writing as a way to investigate theories. Provide a classroom full of print that is varied and demonstrates the practical uses of written language. Direct their attention to the print in their environment.
- Promote literacy based play activities such as setting up a restaurant in the dramatic play area where children can take orders for food and "record" them on a pad.
- Provide non-English materials whenever possible in order to support children's first language while they learn to speak English.

Ways to teach **alphabet knowledge**:

- Develop visual memory and visual discrimination by playing games such as, "I Spy," "Concentration," and matching games.
- Model reading and writing behavior as a way to promote children's interest in and enjoyment of reading and writing

- Play games with children's names.
- Post children's names in a variety of meaningful places in the classrooms.
- Describe actions as letters are written, say names of letters, and talk about specific letter-sound associations during shared reading and writing.
- Familiarize children with the alphabet by teaching them alphabet songs, reading alphabet books, and playing alphabet matching games.
- Provide tactile, kinesthetic manipulatives such as magnetic letters, sandpaper letters, alphabet puzzles, and alphabet stamps.
- Assist children in learning about the differences in the shapes of letters through activities such as playing alphabet matching games, sorting letters with curved lines from letters with only straight lines, and forming letters with playdough.
- Give children opportunities to practice writing letters of the alphabet using large motor skills such as writing in sand, finger-paint, and rice, or writing with sidewalk chalk.
- Help children learn to print their names and encourage them to label their work.
- Accept each child's developmental level while encouraging attempts at writing and invented spelling to communicate.

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