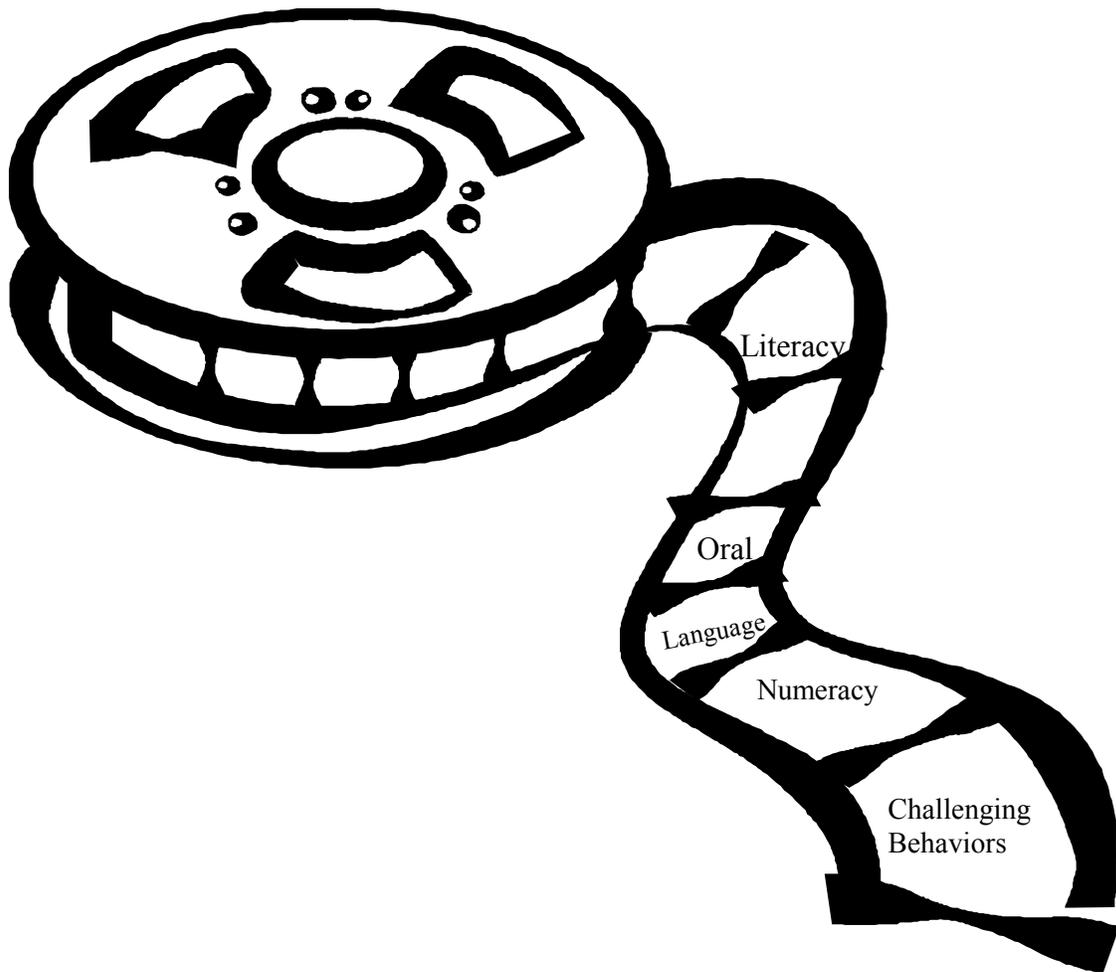


Project REEL



Resources for Early Educator Learning

FIVE BIG, FAT IDEAS

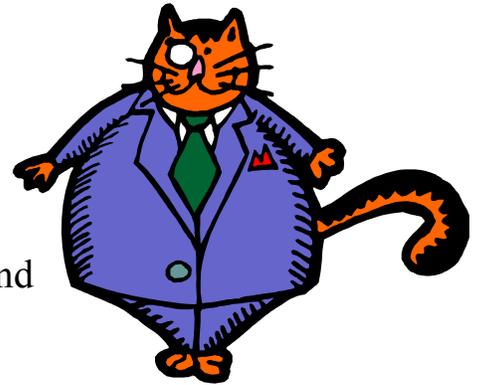
to remember about young children's learning:

1. Children learn best in a social setting.

Therefore, avoid independent seat work.

2. Children learn best through play.

Therefore, immerse them in a richly active play and avoid worksheets.



3. Children learn best when they are allowed to approximate adult behaviors.

Therefore, demonstrate adult practices and accept children's attempts at those adult practices **as if** they were already conventional efforts.

4. Children learn best in an atmosphere of respect where their dignity is protected.

Therefore, establish appropriately high expectations for children, focusing on positive guidance instead of punishment.

5. Children learn best when they have daily opportunities to use diverse social, language, literacy, and numeracy practices and receive extensive feedback from the caring adults in their classroom.

Therefore, offer children time to use new ideas and respond to them in ways that enriches their understandings.

Project REEL: Workshop 7 CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS

WHAT ARE THE “BIG IDEAS” FOR HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP STRONG CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS?

We can help support children’s development of concepts about books by:

- ❖ Making the atmosphere of the setting as much like the home environment as possible so that the setting supports, enriches, and expands children’s experiences with books.
- ❖ Ensuring that the teacher is “the foremost reading model as he or she appropriately uses enthusiasm, drama, inflections, and fluency to heighten the children’s involvement and enjoyment” (Venn & Jahn, 2003, p. 79).
- ❖ Integrating books into the interest areas and showing children how they can be used in the area: construction books in the block center, song books in the music center, books about food and cooking in the restaurant center, magazines about hair in the beauty salon, alphabet books in the writing center, etc.
- ❖ Reading aloud to small groups of children using high-quality books that interest them (you’ll know because they ask for multiple re-readings!), that mirror their experiences, that are developmentally appropriate, and that provide new information and extend the children’s experiences.
- ❖ Utilizing small group shared reading experiences of Big Books. With the enlarged format of Big Books children are able to see the words and the illustrations in great detail, so shared reading is the optimal time to teach such concepts as
 - ❖ book cover (front and back)
 - ❖ title, author, and illustrator
 - ❖ title page
 - ❖ one-to-one correspondence between oral words and printed words
 - ❖ page turning from right to left
 - ❖ pictures support the story or share more information
 - ❖ reading takes place from left to right across and top to bottom down a page
 - ❖ left page is read before the right page
 - ❖ reading to the end of the line and “sweeping” back to the left margin
 - ❖ concepts of letter, word, sentence, and story (or informational text)



- ❖ Time for children to independently browse books, both in interest areas and in the library is critical. They must have the opportunity to experiment, or “rehearse,” the book behaviors that they have observed from the teachers and other adults in their settings. The term “independent reading” is inclusive of buddy reading experiences, in which several children sit down with a book, interacting with it and with one another. In this case, “independent” simply means that the book experiences between and among children are independent of the teacher.
- ❖ Perhaps most importantly, we should not lose sight of the main goal of reading in the early childhood setting, that of nurturing positive attitudes by young children to reading. It deserves mention here that when the child or children become distracted or disinterested, we should try only one time to re-engage the child in the book reading. We may wish to abbreviate the remainder of the text or simply end the reading, with a plan to continue or restart when the child is ready to participate again. Insisting on children’s participation in a reading even could potentially result in their perceptions of book sharing as unpleasant or negative experiences.

WHAT TYPES OF BOOKS DO DIFFERENT AGE-LEVELS OF CHILDREN ENJOY?

Infants 0-6 months

- Books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors
- Stiff cardboard, “chunky” books, or fold out books that can be propped up in the bed
- Cloth and vinyl books with simple pictures of people or familiar objects that can go in the bath or get washed

Infants 6-12 months

- Board books with photos of babies
- Brightly colored board books to touch and taste
- Books with photos of familiar objects like balls and bottles
- Books with sturdy pages that can be propped up or spread out in the crib or on a blanket
- Plastic/vinyl books for bath time
- Washable cloth books to cuddle and mouth
- Small plastic photo albums of family and friends



Young toddlers 12-24 months

- Sturdy board books that they can carry
- Books with photos of children doing familiar things like sleeping or playing
- Goodnight books for bed time
- Books about saying good-bye and hello
- Books with only a few words on each page
- Books with simple rhymes or predictable text
- Animal books of all sizes and shapes

Toddlers 2-3 years

- Books that tell simple stories
- Simple rhyming books that they can memorize
- Bed time books
- Books about counting, the alphabet, shapes, or sizes
- Animal books, vehicle books, books about playtime
- Books with favorite TV characters
- Books about saying hello and goodbye



Preschoolers 3-5

- Books about children that look and live like them
- Counting books or other ‘concept’ books about things like size or time
- Simple science books about things and how they work, like garbage trucks, flowers, or tools
- Books about things in which they have a special interest, like trains, animals, or cooking
- Books about making friends
- Books about going to school or to the doctor
- Books about having brothers or sisters
- Books with simple text they can memorize or read

(<http://www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders/EarlyLiteracy/kidslike.html>)

ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR ALL CHILDREN

Reading aloud to children is the most important thing you can do to teach children how to read. Here are some steps to take give children the best read-aloud experience:



Before the reading . . .

- 1) Read the book before you read it to the children. Decide how you can use different voices and gestures to bring the story to life for the children. Now's the time to prepare for your Academy Award!
- 2) Small group read-alouds are superior to whole-group readings, as the children have the opportunities to talk about the book, and the teachers are more able to meet individual children's needs within that small group.
- 3) Predict what the story will be about from the cover illustration.
- 4) Talk about the author, illustrator, title, and cover art.
- 5) Make a connection between the story and your children, if you can.
- 6) Give older children a "pre-telling" of the story. Tell them in your own words what the story will be. The more background knowledge children have going into the story, the more likely they will comprehend the text.

During the reading . . .

- 7) Read the story with enthusiasm, changing your voice to fit the characters.
- 8) Stop occasionally to ask children questions, to get them to predict what will happen next in the story, or to get them to tell what has happened in the story up to that stopping point. For children who are not yet ready to respond, go on and ask the questions, then respond yourself. This modeling will show children what is expected during book reading events.
- 9) Stop at interesting words and those that might be unfamiliar to children and talk about the concepts.

After the reading . . .

- 10) After the reading have older children talk about the characters, where the story took place, favorite part, the funny part, the sad part, the scary part, etc. Support them in making connections between their own lives and the book.
- 11) For older children, compare the story with other stories you've read.
- 12) Extend the story into one or more centers. Have the children retell the story on a felt board or with small plastic figures. Have them draw a picture from the story. The children can dress up like the characters and act out the story.

We need to make sure that they are using **book-focused vocabulary** with young children. With each reading they need to be calling children's attention to print and book features by using the following terms:

cover	author
title	illustrator
title page	page
top	bottom
letter	word
sentence	front
back	beginning
middle	end



After a great deal of modeling by the teacher, s/he should begin encouraging the children to identify the aspects of books and print that they have experienced.



Reading **predictable pattern books** to children (Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, I Went Walking, It Looked Like Spilt Milk) will help children gain print awareness through books as they match the memorized text to first the illustrations, and then the text. Following the pattern first created in the book can be a great springboard to you and your class creating a similar-patterned book.

One value of **repeated readings** is the effect they have on children's vocabulary building, and clearly a rich vocabulary provides a foundation for literacy. van Kleeck, et al. (2003) report on a study that found that new vocabulary words used by the caregiver in multiple readings of a particular book "were often adopted by the child during later discussions, particularly of those words had been repeated by the child when first used by the mother. The child was also more likely to acquire items for use if they had been used more than once by the mother, that is, if a particular picture was discussed several times and the same words were used in discussing it every time" (Snow and Goldfield [1983] in van Kleeck, et al., 2003, p. 28). The implications of this study?

- 1) Read high quality books that engage children's interest on multiple occasions.
- 2) Use the same words for describing elements of the illustrations.
- 3) Have the child repeat the new words, particularly during the first introduction of the new item.



👂 Encourage **storytelling** with young children, both original stories from their experiences (“Dat man in a truck bring-ded me a box from Mamaw!”) to retellings inspired by books (“Dis girl, she went into a bears’ house and ate their, umm, cereal and sat in their chairs with, umm, those things on the bottom and then she gots in their beds”). The teacher’s role is critical in helping children communicate their stories. Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff (2003, p. 105) remind ECEs to

- listen attentively. “Much of what children say has value and needs to be treated that way.”
- respond substantively. “Ask questions and listen with an ear toward understanding, not correcting.”
- collaborate. “The very best stories come when we work with our children to expand upon what they say.”



A plush reading partner. Suggest to children that they select a stuffed animal, a book that the animal would REALLY enjoy, and then read to it on a cozy pillow in the library center. They will have the opportunity to practice their book handling skills with a reading “partner” who will not be critical if a child is not yet proficient at turning pages or telling stories from the pictures!

🏠 Create a **home lending library**. It is highly motivating for children to have book experiences with family members. Explain to family members the importance of reading together, and how children’s vocabulary and understanding about print will increase when they spend time together reading at home.

- 1) Buy as many gallon-sized zippered plastic bags as you have books to lend, or you may wish to use canvas bags. Books go into these bags when they are checked out by the children so that they are protected in transit.
- 2) Start small, even if you have only one book per child to lend. For example, if children bring home two books each week and you have 15 books in your lending library, they will still go over 7 weeks before they begin repeating books. Add to your collection when you get a new book. Rely heavily on yard sales and used book stores to build your collections.
- 3) When a child brings back the previous night’s book, s/he may select a new one to take home. You may wish to let children keep a book over the weekend when caregivers might have more time for repeated readings.
- 4) Create a system for keeping track of which child has which book. Suggestion: put an index card with the book’s title in a library pocket envelope. Make a lending library chart that also has library pocket envelope on it with the child’s name on it. All the child has to do is take the index card with the book title on it and place it in the envelope that bears her name. See the picture below.
- 5) Demonstrate several times how the children are to return or check out their books.
- 6) Make sure that you have read each book out loud to the children so that have familiarity with the book when they bring it home.

OUR HOME LENDING LIBRARY			
Allison	Karissa	Darnell	Samuel
Julietta	Matt	Raven	Yeshua
Mason	Olivia	Chris	Katlyn

REMEMBER:

- (1) Be kind to the books.
- (2) Use clean hands.
- (3) Keep the books away from food, pets, and babies.
- (4) Share the books with grownups and older children who can read.
- (5) Bring books back in the baggies!

--adapted from Children's Literacy Initiative (2002), p. 38

When preschoolers come in first thing in the morning, or perhaps at some other part of the day, children can share their books either with one another or in small group "book talk" groups.



CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS: ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN (INFANTS AND TODDLERS)

Picture books and infants:

“Because things are still blurry for newborns, they seem to prefer looking at brightly colored objects or objects that have sharp contrasts—like black and white patterns. Even very young babies are able to focus on and pay attention to pictures in a book, although they don’t yet know what the pictures mean. This is a first step in picture recognition, an important early literacy skill that leads to understanding the meaning of pictures and words.

“Beginning at about 4 months, many infants show a focused interest in pictures in a book. Infants at this age and older will gaze at a picture in a book for several moments and show obvious interest in the colors and shapes. They don’t yet know that the pictures are symbols that represent things and ideas, but they are drawn to look at it longer than other pages. By the time a baby is about 6 months old, he may be able to reach, grasp, and mouth books and other objects. But it is a baby’s ‘looking and learning’ skills that are the first tool he uses to explore and learn about books.” (<http://www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders/EarlyLiteracy/recognize.html>)

“The 9-month-olds poked and prodded and patted the pictures as if they were real objects. Many were very persistent at trying to grasp the picture as if to pull it off the page. . . . Their lack of success at pulling pictures off the page teaches them that pictures are not real objects but mere representations of real objects. By 19 months, however, babies’ manual activities were mostly replaced by pointing. The function of pointing is to single something out, to take notice of it. Pointing is not the same as trying to pull the picture off the page and reveals a more mature understanding of its two-dimensional status” (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2003, p. 110)



“The ideal book for babies from birth to three months has simple, large pictures or designs set against a contrasting background. The books should also be designed to stand up. **Stiff cardboard books** are usually a good choice” (Schickedanz, 1999, p. 14). Putting these books on the floor beside Baby or along the crib rail will give her so thing to examine when she chooses.



 **Cloth and soft vinyl books** are useful for babies from four to six months since everything goes in their mouths! They are also lightweight and collapse easily, which makes it easier for Baby to pick up. From about seven to nine months, it’s good to move back to board books, as Baby is now able to grasp and turn the pages of the book (Schickedanz, 1999). How does chewing on books lead to reading and writing?

“Babies who mouth books are learning about what a book is—how it feels, how it looks, how it tastes, and maybe what is inside it. If a baby can freely explore books and is being read to, she will begin to associate books with warm, positive interactions with you and other caregivers” (<http://www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders/EarlyLiteracy/chew.html>).



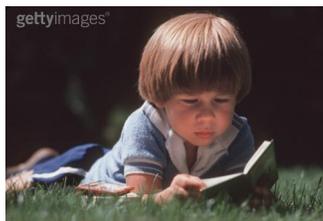
Encourage “**book babble**” with toddlers. ‘Book babble’ is an important literacy skill in toddlers. When young children jabber in a tone and pattern that sounds like reading, they are practicing language in a new and different way. Children learn by doing, and once you have modeled reading aloud, singing, and oral storytelling for them, this kind of vocal exploration helps toddlers learn more about words and the structure of language” (www.zerotothree.org). Teachers can respond to book babble

by sayings things like

- Michael, you’re reading so well!!
- Tell me more, A.J.
- Is that so, Drew? What happened next? Wow!

As in **ALL** early attempts at language, literacy, and numeracy, we praise young children’s approximations of literacy tasks as if they have met conventional (or adult) levels of competence.

We point out and label objects in books with babies from birth; however, as children are approaching their first birthdays, some children are **ready to respond to questions** from their teachers by pointing at images: “Where’s the dog’s tail?” “Where is that baby’s mouth?” “What’s that lion going to do?” Babies may be joining in by pointing at a picture and asking, “Dat?”, seeing labeling information from the teacher.



Crawlers and walkers love to be read to. **“Read babies’ favorite books again and again.** Doing this helps babies remember the pictures and words. They are comforted by familiar activities such as this. Babies enjoy joining in by naming the pictures on a page. www.ed.gov/Family/RSRforCaregvr/crawlers.html

- ☞ Read to crawlers and walkers when they ask. Go to the next page when the children are ready, and read only for as long as the child is interested. You can also talk or sing about the pictures; you do not have to read the words to tell a story. (www.ed.gov/Family/RSRforCaregvr/crawlers.html; www.zerotothree.org)



Beginning between 18-36 months book-familiar babies may begin to be interested in actual stories. The books teachers choose should be simple and related to the baby's own experience. We don't give up labeling pictures, but some babies are ready to attend to a story now.

(Schickedanz, 1999)

☞ Have lots of **books in multiple places** around the room, not just in the library/reading center area:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| By babies' floor play area | In the dress up center |
| Near the changing table | In home living center |
| In the grocery center | By the block area |
| By crib rails | Etc. |

See additional information about literacy materials in centers in the section of this manual entitled "Concepts About Print."

Active **toddlers may want to leave the teacher's lap** to go play with toys, but may be fully prepared to continue listening to the story. The teacher may want to continue reading if the child can easily hear, or may want to relocate to be closer to the playing child.



CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS: ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR OLDER CHILDREN (PRESCHOOL AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN)

☞ The "BDA" (Before—during—after) read aloud experience

Children need the opportunity 1) to prepare for the reading event, 2) to be supported in their comprehension as they are listening, and 3) to deepen/broaden their comprehension after the book as been read. This format needs to be followed with every read aloud, as it will deepen children's understanding of the text and help "hard wire" new information into children's memories. Some suggestions for "before," "during," and "after" strategies for oral reading are as follows:

Before reading to children, we should use one or more of the following strategies:

- Predict the story or information from the cover illustration or photograph
 - "Let's look at the cover illustration. Here is a boy and here is a girl, and they're building a sand castle. I think our story will be about these children and the different ways they play at the beach."
- Ask questions about the title and predict how it relates to the book
 - "Our book's title is Mr. Carey's Garden. Do you think this is Mr. Carey here? How can you tell this garden belongs to him? Here is a snail and there are holes in the leaves where the snail has been. What do you think snails eat? I think our book is going to be about Mr. Carey and the naughty snails that chew holes in the leaves of his plants. What do you think he'll do to the snails?"

- Connect the content to children’s lives
 - “Here’s the title of our book, Unicorn Dreams. When I was little I always dreamed that my mom and dad bought me a horse. And sometimes I dreamed that I could fly and didn’t need wings. Who can tell us about the dream you had and when you woke up you still thought it was real? (children respond) Our book this morning is about a little boy who sees a unicorn following him everywhere, and there are no unicorns. They’re make-believe, but the little boy is sure his is real.”

During the reading of the book, we should use one or more of the following prompts to encourage children’ participation and comprehension of the book:

Think of the acronym of CROWD:

C *Completion prompts:* Leave a blank at the end of the sentence and ask the children to fill it in. “Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see? I see a red bird looking at ____.” completion prompts help children learn about the structure of language.

R *Recall prompts:* These kinds of prompts are questions about the story’s plot, sequence of events, or characters. Questions such as ‘What did the children see looking at them?’ help children focus on their understanding of the story.

O *Open-ended prompts:* Prompts like ‘Tell me about what you see happening in this picture’ encourage children to attend to details.

W *What, where, when, why, and how questions:* These prompts are intended to teach vocabulary. The teacher might point to each of the animals in the book and ask the children to name each one.

D *Distancing prompts:* These kinds of prompts ask the children to relate to what was read to events outside the book, for example, ‘Remember the brown bear we saw at the zoo?’ Distancing prompts like the book’s text and the children’s experiences.”

(from Vukelich & Christie, 2004, p. 17)

After the reading of the book, we should use one or more of the following strategies related to the book:

- Go back through the illustrations and have the children retell the story or share the information they learned by re-examining the images.
- Have the children participate in retellings of the story through use of puppets, felt boards, small plastic figures, dramatizing, a “twice-told tale” (children’s original book as a retelling of the published text), etc.
- Lead children’s thinking about the text through open-ended questions, such as the following question starters:

What did you see?
What does that look like
Why did he/she/it do that?
What are you thinking about ___?
What do you know about ___?
How are they alike?
What do you think will happen?
Why do you like this?
Tell me more about ___.

What do you think that is?
Tell me what happened.
Where have you seen that before?
What did you learn about ___?
How do you know that?
How are they different
Is this like something at your house?
Why don't you like this?
Etc.

 **Big Books** are a terrific way to clearly demonstrate to a group of children the concepts about books that they will need to come to understand. Through the enlarged print and the large illustrations or photographs, we can show:

- the title, author, and illustrator
- that when we read we move from left to right
- that when we turn pages they move from right to left
- that when we read we start at the top to the bottom of the page
- that print carries the meaning and the pictures support the text
- that print is stable and will not change from reading to reading



An important point to remember:

“Children do not learn simply from their parents [or teachers] reading a text aloud. Particularly in the youngest age groups, stories may not be attractive by themselves. . . . A child’s interest in books and joint reading is rooted in adults’ ability to engage the child, rather than in some biologically endowed trait urging children to explore uncharted territories and stimulate their own development. As the parent-child [or teacher-child] relationship becomes more secure, children derive more enjoyment from being read to and become more engaged during these sessions.”

(from Bus in van Kleeck, Stahl, & Bauer [Eds.], 2003, p. 12)

LITERACY MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

Regarding Gordon Wells' 15 year study of 32 young children:

"It is clear that the number of stories children heard before schooling had a lasting effect. Rosie, who listened to no stories prior to school entrance, continued to lag at the end of elementary school. Jonathan, who had listened to more than 5,000 stories in that same period, was at the top of the class in literacy-related activities. Jonathan understood his world in a way that Rosie never could know."

"Neither race, ethnicity, socio-economic level, nor IQ distinguished between readers and nonreaders; the differences lay in access to print, being read to, valuing education, and early writing."

--from Strickland & Morrow's *Emergent Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write* (1989), p. 36

ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING LITERACY THROUGH QUALITY LITERATURE AND TECHNOLOGY



We have mentioned earlier the need for children to hear many different types of books in their early childhood classrooms. Read many **high quality story picture books** to children, because they need to hear about "times, cultures, and peoples other than their own; stories can help them understand how others think, act, and feel" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 10). Read **high quality, interesting informational books** to children so that they will learn important facts about people, societies, the sciences, math, the arts, etc. Read **high quality poetry** to children so that they will come to better understand metaphoric language and the wonderful differences between narrative and poetic ways of writing.

What is the definition of high quality? It is a story that is written in a way that is so compelling that, even though it was written for children, you as an adult can't put it down! The characters are complex and the plot is logical, worthwhile, and satisfying. A high quality information book includes such clearly written, interesting text and excellent color photography that once you begin the book, you find it hard to put it down. Excellent poetry begs to be read again and again, and you continue to enjoy sharing it. It helps to ask yourself: Would this poem introduce exciting language choices and word play that children would enjoy? Would this poem inspire their imagination? Help them better understand themselves and their emotions?

The best judges of quality literature are children. If they quickly become bored with a book, it's possible that the book is 1) poorly written, 2) does not capture their interest, or 3) uses language or concepts that are not developmentally appropriate for young children. The books that they ask to be read to them over and over again are very often the pieces of high quality literature that we refer to above. Children know junk when they hear it! As a rule, avoid purchasing the children's books that you find in a grocery store, and try instead to find book sales at book stores and through book clubs.

You may have heard the term, “**balanced literacy**.” This means that we provide children multiple ways to experience text by both reading and writing. These 7 ways for young children are as follows:

Reading

Reading aloud

(the teacher reads aloud to the children)

Shared reading

(the teacher reads aloud from print that is large enough for all children to see and participate)

Word analysis

(the teacher calls attention to features of print: words, spaces between words, sounds, letters, etc.)

Independent reading

(the children have the opportunity to explore texts on their own or with buddies)

Writing

Writing aloud

(the teacher writes a text [a story, a list, a journal entry, etc.] while thinking aloud about her writing process)

Shared writing

(the teacher writes what the children dictate to her)

Guided writing

(the teacher supports young children’s efforts in communicating in print)

The following is an example of how we could use each of these important elements by using just one book.

Wemberly Worried, by Kevin Henkes

Read aloud: Teacher reads the book out loud to children

Shared reading: Teacher takes a repeating phrase from the book and writes it on chart paper so that children can see the print as it is read and may join in

Word analysis: Children go on a “w” search to match the beginning letters of “Wemberly” and “Worried.”

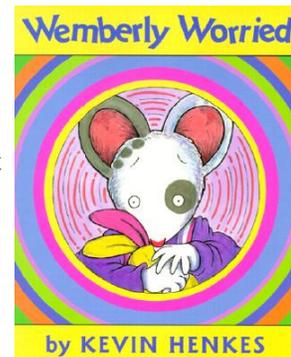
Independent reading: Children retell the text by reviewing the pictures of Wemberly Worried; children look through other texts written by Kevin Henkes

Writing aloud: Teacher writes a list of what she likes about the book OR writes a summary of the story OR writes about her favorite part OR writes any other text that logically springs from the reading.

Shared writing: Children will dictate to the teacher the things that may them worry.

Guided writing: Teacher will support children’s writing about their illustrations of the book OR will help them write about their favorite part OR will help them write their own mouse story OR any other text that the children wish to create.

When we “balance” out the different ways of reading with the different ways of writing, we will be providing the kind of instruction that supports ALL children in their literacy learning needs.



Books published decades ago that have **only black and white illustrations** or only one or two colors used in the printing may not be visually interesting enough to keep children attentive to the text. For preschool children who are not yet readers, the illustrations are critical because the illustrations tell the story for the children, not the print. Although there are classic texts that children still love that have limited visual appeal (think of *Make Way For Ducklings!*), share books with your children that not only have compelling story lines but that are also visually exciting.



We need to **teach children how to handle books** by (you guessed it!) modeling, modeling, modeling. You need to demonstrate and have children demonstrate how to pick a book off the shelf, how to open it and turn pages carefully, and how to return them to their original place. If you talk regularly about how important you consider books to be and remind them frequently how we need to treat books with special care, children will learn how to handle books properly.

“Allow children to practice! The only way children can learn to handle books responsibly is to spend time holding and reading books. If your children are very young, or have no prior experience with books, begin with board books, which are more durable.”

“Involve the children in developing book handling rules, then write and post them in the library center. Phrase the rules in positive language: ‘We handle the books with clean hands’ rather than ‘Don’t get the books dirty.’ Review the rules and demonstrate book handling frequently.”

“Make ‘Librarian’ a classroom job. The Librarian can help put books away, keep them neatly arranged on the book racks, and place ‘hurt’ books in the ‘Book Hospital’ or other special box to be repaired.”

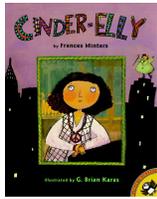
(Children’s Literacy Initiative, 2002, p. 45)



Having a **Book Hospital** in your setting is a valuable way to demonstrate how we as teachers value books and how we can take care of them. In this way we can hopefully help children learn to take responsibility for fixing books they want to enjoy in the future. Neuman, Copple, & Bredecamp (2000) suggest the following:

“In a corner of the library area or the [writing] center, use an old crate or sturdy box as a container to collect books that are in need of repair. Useful items to include in the hospital: invisible tape for ripped pages or flaps, art gum erasers to remove crayon and pencil marks from glossy pages, and glue to repair paper torn off cardboard book covers or board book pages. Also keep heavy-duty book tape on hand to repair broken spines—glue the tape down the outside of the spine, on the inside front and back seams, and on the center seam.

... when first introducing the book hospital, invite a few children at a time to watch you do repairs. Then they can take turns helping or make simple repairs as you look on or assist in determining what each book needs.” (p. 37)



Read two versions of the same story to children within one or two days.

When children discuss what was the same about the two versions and what was different, and when they extend that conversation to include which version they liked better, they are using high level thinking processes. It is also fun for the children to compare the traditional story with an updated version of a story. For example, the classic Cinderella fairytale has been updated to modern versions. One of our favorites is Cinder-Elly, by Frances Minter, is about an inner-city, basketball loving girl who drops her glass basketball shoe outside the court. There is an updated version of a classic tale entitled, Snow White in New York, one called The Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig, and hundreds of others that children will love comparing to the classic versions.



Preschool children are not too young to become engaged in an **author or illustrator study**. There's really nothing that you need to do, except gather together three or more books by the same author and demonstrate to children how you find similarities among the books. In reading a series of Donald Crews books, children will begin picking up on his style as a writer and as an illustrator. Eric Carle's books, as well, with their tissue paper collage illustrations, will inspire children to look across books and compare and contrast what they know about his work. The writing of Bill Martin, Jr., is distinctly rhythmic and playful, as is the poetry of Jack Prelutsky. Tana Hoban's simple and colorful photography work is immediately recognizable, as is Jan Brett's use of page borders that have action embedded in them.



Don't forget to do author studies of those who write informational books: Gail Gibbons writes science books for the early childhood crowd, and Ailiki writes informational books that are quite appealing to young children. National Geographic (see their literacy web site) has started publishing science books for the emergent literacy set, so you might find books you wish to order from them.

There are benefits to children's writing when they do an extended author focus. They will start adopting characteristics of that author's work into their own writing. We've had children point out to us that they created a border around their page "like Jan Brett does in her illustrations" or used torn paper to create an illustration "the way that Eric Carle does in his books." Like painters borrowing visual techniques from those who have gone before them, writers need to borrow ideas from other writers. By the way, children find it very satisfying to be called "Writers" when they are in the writing center. It gives them an official and grown-up title, and children will rise to meet the responsibility of that very adult label.

There are **different types of books that children will need to hear** every day to become experienced in language and literature. Make sure that you read:

 **Picture story books** represent both modern/realistic and traditional stories of people and animals in a variety of times, diverse places, and unique situations. Although we want to be culturally responsive and share books that represent our children's faces and experiences, we also want to read to them about "people, places, and problems" that are very different from our children's lives. Fairy tales, fables, folktales, myths, and legends are all appropriate for the preschool listener.

 **Alphabet books** need to play a critical role in the preschool classroom. Sharing an alphabet book every day that shows the upper and lower case forms of the letters, as well as objects that begin with that letter, will give children the experience they need in identifying the letter and the sound(s) it makes. Sharing alphabet books will also do in a fun way what worksheets do a boring and ineffective way. There is a wonderful variety of alphabet books in every possible subject and style. Look in your Scholastic catalog for book sets alphabet books.

 **Predictable pattern books** are invaluable in helping children learn about language through repeated, rhythmic, and rhyming texts. Equally important they offer the opportunity to participate in the book reading. Joining in on the phrases that they have memorized helps children have fun in the reading experience (which will motivate them to pick up books on their own) and develop a sense of success early on in their reading. Some of our favorite predictable pattern titles for early childhood classrooms include [It Looked Like Spilt Milk](#), [Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?](#), [Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?](#), [I Went Walking](#), [The Napping House](#), [Hattie and the Fox](#), and many more that you'll find in your Scholastic catalog.

 **Concept books** are a necessary element in any preschool environment. Concept books address such subjects as color, opposites (big: little, high: low, near: far, up: down, etc.), shapes, emotions (anger, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise) etc. These books might also address classifying items like objects found in a doctor's office, animals found in a zoo, vehicles found on a construction site, etc.

 **Poetry and nursery rhymes** help children enjoy language play and come to understand metaphoric language. The rhythm and rhyme in many poems written for a very young audience are fun for children. We've found several collections of poetry just recently that are great for a preschool audience: [Read-Aloud Rhymes For the Very Young](#), by Jack Prelutsky, and [Good Morning, Sweetie Pie, and Other Poems for Little Children](#), by Cynthia Rylant. As we suggested earlier, read a poem every day to children, so that the poetic style will not be foreign to children as they enter school.

 **Counting books** are also necessary in a preschool environment and can help you create your mathematics curriculum. They range from a very simple text with matching objects ( one apple,  two fish, etc.) to more complex counting books like [My Little Sister Ate One Hare](#), by Bill Grossman. The text begins like this:



My little sister ate one hare.
We thought she'd throw up then and there.
But she didn't.



My little sister ate two shrews.
She ate their smelly socks and shoes.
She ate two shrews. She ate one hare.
We thought she'd throw up then and there.
But she didn't.



Etc.

Stuart Murphy has made a career out of creating mathematical picture books for young readers. You might want to order some of his work for the preschoolers.

 **Wordless picture books** are exactly that: picture books that have no—or at least very few—words. These are wonderful for inspiring storytelling from children. There is no pressure to read the words; children's only responsibility is to tell what they see in the illustrations. One great strategy we know of uses sticky notes. Place one at the bottom of the page of a wordless picture book, and working with a small group of children, write the story dictated by the children on the sticky note. Wordless picture books are also valuable to send home with children whose parents have limited literacy skills. A shared book experience between caregiver and child will not be intimidating to a limited literacy parent if they are not required to do an accurate reading of a text.

A word of caution: Be careful about sharing any group of books to the exclusion of story books with complex characters and plots. Linda Leonard Lamme (2002) reports of a study in which volunteers working with low-income children fell into the trap of “teaching children” with alphabet and number books and shared far too few story books. She writes, “Instead of giving the lowest achieving students the finest literature with the best stories and the most enjoyable plots, we tend to provide them with bland material to teach them how to read. . . . Unless books are enjoyable, children won’t learn to love reading and won’t generate the powerful internal motivation for learning how to read”

(Lamme, 2002, in *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, p. 20).

In another historically important Appalachian literacy study done by Shirley Brice Heath (1983), the children who were “taught” to read before school using school-related materials (instead of quality story-books) were no better off by third grade than the children who had received no book experiences prior to entering school. Heath found, as did the longitudinal study by Gordon Wells referenced earlier, that children who had entered school with no previous book experiences never did catch up to children who had literacy histories upon school entry.



This is a wonderfully diverse country we live in, so let’s assure that children see that **diversity represented in the literature** that is in their classrooms. African-American children need to see their faces and experiences represented in the books they hold and hear, but they and all children also need to see and hear about the experiences of other diverse groups: Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, Anglo-Americans, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups. None of these groups can be lumped into one identity as a people, but it is valuable to celebrate not so much the differences among peoples, but the similarities we share simply by being human. The more that children understand the similarities between diverse cultures, the less children will be fearful of differences. The less fearful children are of differences, the less prejudice we will see in their futures.

If you have a computer in your room, **remember that there are electronic books** that your children may enjoy and which might be highly motivating to children who are curious about computers.

There are two main ways to read books electronically. The first way is to read what are called “**e-books**,” or electronic books, on the Internet that you can download and read on your computer. You may need special software to be able to download the books. Some sites offer free downloads of the software, while other sites charge for it. Some of these e-books are text-only and some include illustrations. The second way is to purchase **books on CD-ROM**, where you just pop a CD into your computer and the book is displayed on the screen. As with e-books, some CD-ROM books have text and illustrations, and some are text-only. There are several books on CD with incredible animated pictures that most children will love. In most cases, regarding e-books and books on CD, there is an option to have the text read aloud by your choice of voices (female, male, younger child, etc.). This way, children can follow along with the words as the voice reads them. Many programs highlight the words as they are being read so the children can begin to connect the words with their sounds. Electronic books give children yet another method in which to access good literature.



The following Internet sites have excellent e-books for either free downloads or monthly fees:

<http://www.ongoing-tales.com/SERIALS/oldtime/index.html>

<http://www.storyplace.org>

http://www.ebooksnbytes.com/child_ebooks.html



These Internet sites are great resources for ordering books on CD:

<http://www.broderbund.com>

<http://livingbooks.com/>

<http://www.antelope-ebooks.com/>

<http://www.alfy.com/>

And these Internet sites are wonderful tools to use in the classroom and even suggest to parents. Children can browse around on the site, interact with different characters, and play games in a secure, protected website.

<http://sesamestreet.com>

<http://www.alfy.com>

<http://funschool.com>

<http://www.tlckids.com>



When using the computer as part of classroom activities, keep in mind the following things:

☐ The majority of learning that takes place in children under 3 when working on computers stems from the interactions between the teacher or parent and the child, not the child and the computer. Remember not to treat the computer as a “babysitter” but to interact with the child as he/she is going through the different activities on the computer to facilitate the greatest amount of learning.

☐ Computer work can facilitate social development by allowing 2 or 3 children to sit around a computer together and work on activities that require peer input. Ask open-ended questions about their work. If possible, print out their work and display it around the room.

☐ Computer work can encourage creativity, independence, cooperation, imagination, and determination if used correctly. These skills will be even more helpful in the child’s transition to school.

☐ Long periods of time spent in front of a computer or television screen can affect a child’s ability to sustain attention. Limit time at these activities and be sure to balance that time out with activities that require sustained attention.

☐ When using the computer for activities, be sure to plan for other sensory activities that go along with it. For instance, if using a musical software, allow the children to play and hear real instruments in the classroom as well.

from <http://www.netc.org/earlyconnections/preschool/technology.html>

Remember that “technology” is not limited to the use of computers and computer software. Technology includes such things as digital cameras, educational television programs, electronic microscopes and telescopes, voice recorders, etc. It is wonderful to be able to use new advances in technology to facilitate learning in our classrooms. Let us keep in mind that technology will never substitute for a good teacher.

Suggestions for evaluation:

See *Creative Curriculum's Literacy* text "Print and Book Concepts Observation Form," as well as the Developmental Continuum sections on "listening and speaking" for infants and toddlers, and "reading and writing" for ages three through five.

 You can track a child's progress in book and print awareness by taking brief notes on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. You may wish to take notes on 2-3 children per day; one easy way to do this is to record your notes and the date on Post-its. Then you only have to place that note in the child's folder. You may wish to record information about whether a child can:

- pay attention to and interact with pictures in books
 - gaze at or show interest in pictures
 - show physically that s/he understands the pictures and events in a book
 - pat or point to pictures, name pictures, match pictures to objects, etc.
 - babble when given a familiar book
 - hold the book properly
 - successfully turn pages from left to right
- (Threes and fours and older)
- "read" the book from front to back
 - differentiate between the words and the illustrations
 - understand what is meant by the "beginning" of a book and the "end"
 - identify the front and back covers of a book
 - understands the terms of "author" and "illustrator"
 - "read" from top-to-bottom and from left-to-right
 - point to the words and not the pictures while being read to
 - touch each word as it is being read
 - Know where to begin reading
 - Know concepts of "letter," "word," "sentence," "story," "information"



(Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004; www.zerotothree.org)

Strategies for ESL learners:

- 🌐 Of course, if you possibly can, find books in the child's language or have family members bring in native language books from home. If the family members cannot or do not have the opportunity to read books to their children during the day, perhaps you could find community volunteers who speak the child's language to visit your setting and read with these children.
- 🌐 Suggest that ESL learners create books in their home language (alphabet, labeling, pattern, informational, or original story) and share them with their peers. (Morrow, 2001).
- 🌐 Ask ESL children's parents to come to your classroom to share stories, songs, art, and experiences from their culture.
- 🌐 Ask ESL children's parents to share in classroom events and be monitors on field trips.
- 🌐 Find electronic books that have text in both English and the child's language. Many CD-ROMs have stories in multiple languages: Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, etc.



Suggestions for children with special needs:

- 🌀 Parents who have had reading problems themselves are more likely to have children who experience difficulties in learning to read (31-62% greater chance of reading problems vs. 5-10% in the general population) (National Research Council, 1998). Although it is not assured that a child will have problems based on parental history, teachers need to closely monitor the child's reading progress in early language and literacy development and intervene with appropriate services, such as TEIS or TIPS for children under three, or the local school system if the child is three years old or older.
- 🌀 Children with special needs may be more interested in books that present realistic pictures of people/objects/things rather than cartoon drawings, sketches or paintings.
- 🌀 It may also be important to consider the "busy-ness" of illustrations in a book. Some children may be distracted by many people/objects/things on one page and may pay better attention to a book that has one simple picture per page.
- 🌀 Also remember the option to paraphrase a book that may have too much text for the child to attend to in a read aloud situation.

Promoting family involvement in the literacy development of their child:

 Include family members in helping to assess their child’s progress. Provide forms for family members to fill out about their child’s literacy activities and the things they do with their child at home. The questions might include the following:

Concepts About Print Checklist (check one)	Always	Sometimes	Never
• My child asks to be read to.			
• My child looks at books alone.			
• My child understands what is read to him/her, or what he/she reads alone.			
• My child will pretend to read to me.			
• My child participates in the reading of a story with rhymes or repeated phrases.			
• My child will write with me.			
• My child will write alone.			
• My child will talk about what was written.			
• My child reads environmental print.			

 Suggest to family members that they try the following to enhance their children’s understanding of and appreciation for book reading in the home:

- Read lots of different kinds of books to their children: stories, factual books, poems and nursery rhymes
- Read books over and over again. This helps children learn oral language and reading skills.
- Talk about the book before they read to the children; stop and talk about what’s happening in the books and what children see in the illustrations; and take time to talk about the book after the reading.
- Try to make changes in their voices that fit the story and use different voices for the different characters. This will help children understand the story better and will motivate them to ask for more reading opportunities because the reading time with the parent was so enjoyable.
- Use gestures to help bring the story to life and point to the illustrations to help the child understand the story.
- Make connections between the books read to children and their real-life experiences.
- If family members read in their spare time, children will see them as reading role models.

Children will be more likely to pick up a book for entertainment purposes.



(Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Morrow & Gambrell, 2004)

 **Have parents and guests come** to your setting to share their favorite books from childhood. It is a powerful influence on a child to hear an adult talk about how important a book was to them when they were a young child. Often, those very books become the class favorite for an amount of time. Because of the majority of women as teaching staff of early childhood and elementary school classrooms, let's make sure that we have **frequent male role models** come to read to our children. Little boys, in particular, need to perceive that literacy is a "male thing" as much as it is a "female thing."

 Send home newsletters that include information about the book experiences that children have had that week. If you are exploring a particular unit, share what the children have learned through books about the topic. This information will help parents make connections between what children are learning at school and what they can talk about with parents at home.

 Suggest to parents that they take their child to the library regularly to check out books for reading at home. Suggest that they ask a librarian to give them a tour of the closest library branch to their homes. Have him/her show the parents where to find the books that would be most appropriate for a young child. Parents can then let the children choose from the appropriate books and make the act of taking home library books to be an exciting event.