

4 Emergent Literacy: Activities in a Print Rich Environment

Overview

In this module we explore the environment and activities which support children's use of written and spoken language.

First we observe a variety of situations in which teachers introduce and read books to children. Then we see the children retelling the stories using several different methods: dramatization, puppetry, drawing dictation.

Activities that help children increase their vocabularies are presented along with a detailed description of how to take dictation and produce experience charts with children.

A classroom library is demonstrated by a resourceful teacher to bridge the gap between home and school and to encourage parents to read to their children.

Finally we see children using their growing knowledge of print in activities which are meaningful to them, which arise out of their own experiences.

Research tells us that children who are read to each day and who are exposed to activities with print will become readers and writer. In these classrooms, children are enthusiastically choosing the activities which enhance their progress in the process of learning to read and write.

Questions to consider

1. What makes a good story time?
2. What does it mean when children act out a story?
3. How do children increase their vocabularies?
4. How do adults help children keep track of their experiences?
5. How may teachers assist children who have little experience with books at home?
6. What do teachers do to stimulate children's interest in reading and writing?

Vocabulary

Read these terms with their definitions before viewing the program.

Environmental print - print which occurs in surrounding such as billboards, posters, labels.

Experience chart - a chart which is based on children's dictation about an experience: a happening at home or school, a visitor to the classroom, a trip. The dictation may be an individual or group effort.

Journals - books in which a child makes a daily entry. Entries may be drawings, dictation, or child's own invented spelling.

Meaningful context - a situation a experience that makes sense to the child, is important to that child.

Picture file - a collection of pictures on subjects of interest to children, related to topics children are exploring. The pictures are used to provide information and to elicit discussion.

Print rich environment - an environment in which children are exposed to books, read to daily, provide with writing materials, their writing is displayed at children's eye level, and meaningful reading and writing experiences are presented.

Vocabulary - the words one understands and uses in speaking and writing.

Instructional objectives

When you have completed this module you will be able to:

1. Describe the different types of groups for story time.
2. State how children consolidate their understandings of stories.
3. Name the activities which build vocabulary and describe how they are related to other curriculum areas.
4. Describe and evaluate the development of an experience chart.
5. Describe the function and operation of a classroom library and its importance to the children and their parents.
6. Define the term "meaningful context" and "print rich environment".
7. Describe activities which are meaningful to children and how they contribute to the development of literacy.

Self-Test

After studying he objectives and watching the video take a self-test to check your progress.

1. There are three basic types if groups for story time. Name all three and describe each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. State how children consolidate their understandings of stories.

3. a. Name three activities in the video which help build vocabulary and how they relate to other curriculum areas.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

b. Name additional activities to build vocabulary which you have observed in this or other videos or in classrooms you have visited:

4. Review the selection of the video where teacher Carol is taking dictation from the child. Describe and evaluate her method of developing an experience chart.

5. Review the selection of the video where teacher Pam and the children are in the class library. Listen to Pam's comments about the importance of the library to her children. Describe how the library functions and what its value is to the children.

6. Define the terms *meaningful context* and *print rich environment*.

7. Review the final section of the video. Select from the following and describe why these activities are meaningful to the children and how they contribute to the children's ability to read and write.

- a. keeping a daily journal
- b. creating a book
- c. making a mail box

Materials for the Print Rich Environment

Compiled by Rhoda Olenick

In the videos **Teacher Strategies and Assessments and Activities in a Print Rich Environment** you were introduced to the many ways teachers integrated literacy materials into all the activity centers in the classrooms. This list is intended to supplement that information and focuses on the reading and writing tools.

Writing or Art Center

- All kinds of paper, pads, notebooks, journals, scraps from businesses, computers
- pencils - regular and primary type
- pens, markers, crayons
- envelopes - all sizes
- rubber stamps and stamp pads
- postage" stamps, address labels
- clip boards - assorted sizes
- staples, paper clips, hole punchers
- tape - masking, transparent
- rulers

Block Areas

- Books and pictures of buildings and blocks, markers, paper, cardboard, tape
- photos or sketches of children's constructions.

Math and Science Areas

- clipboards, tapes, pencils, pens, pads,
- books related to current topics being in the classroom
- rulers, tape measures, thermometers

Music Center

- books which illustrate songs
- music books
- movement and rhythm instrument charts
- large pieces of paper to record movements and activities
- markers, crayons, pencils, pens

Housekeeping Center

- Teacher and child made cook books: pictures of ingredients and measuring cups and spoons.
- Teacher made phone books: of each child with phone number and address.
- Prop boxes (or dramatic play kits) - contents of each box may be identified from a picture on the outside. Other related props will enhance dramatic play.
 - a. Restaurant - teacher and class made menus (pictures of foods), pad, pencils, credit card, play money.
 - b. Post Office - envelopes, stamps, mail box, stationary, stickers, rubber stamps, and pads.
 - c. Office - computer keyboards, typewriters, phone books, card index, file folders, paper, pens, pencils.
 - d. Bank - check books, play money, deposit/withdraw slips, bank books.
 - e. Store or Market - credit cards, check books, play money, newspaper ads, bags with logos.
 - f. Beauty salon - note pads and pencils, product bottles and jars with print, magazines, credit cards, check book, play money.

This is not an exhaustive list. Imagine the literacy materials you could include in the following boxes. Hospital, doctor or dentist office, picnic, birthday, library, TV studio, airline desk and on and on and on...

Reading and Writing - the Inseparable Process

Leah Shapiro

Reading and writing is a process that cannot be separated. Children increase their vocabularies and their command of the language through a variety of early literacy experiences. These encounters include storytelling, book reading, flannel board stories and experience charts as well as dictating stories, journaling and writing tales. These circumstances are enhanced through the Golden Rules listed below.

First Golden Rule - Reading Time is Sacred. Stories should be read in a cozy, quiet corner during free play or in small groups throughout the day. It is recommended that reading should not be an extension of large group or music time. Young children have short attention spans and quiet time separate from music or large group activities helps children focus on the story. As pre-school children work best in small groups it is helpful to divide the story group into two smaller groups based on their attention spans. Children can be observed in a larger group the first week of school. Some children may be capable of sitting only for finger plays. Others can listen to a short story with colorful illustrations such as *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats and others may be able to attend to longer more detailed books such as *Big Bad Bruce* by Bill Peet.

Children should be divided by attention and not by age as they may be the same age but at different developmental levels. The groups do not have to be equal in size. It is important that story time not be interrupted by noise in the room or by daily routines such as toileting or washing of hands. Children should be able to continue to lengthen their attention spans and develop their vocabulary and listening skills. They should see this as a time to share their own experiences with their peers and their teacher.

Second Golden Rule - All print and wall displays should be at the Child's Eye Level so the child can read them. The type should be in print script and written straight across in large letters; not on an angle or against a confusing background. Children should be able to *read* the words or symbols. It is useful to provide real photos and pictures as displays in order to help children have a deeper, more meaningful understanding of words. In addition, wall displays should present concepts and ideas that children can relate to and at a level that the child can understand.

Examples of appropriate wall displays are:

- A pictorial Daily Routine Chart that uses real pictures to illustrate the schedule.
- A chore chart that uses a picture of the chore, the days of the week and the children's first names
- Birthday Charts at the child's eye level that have only the current month and the first names of the children listed under that month.
- Rebus Charts - Utilize pictures and symbols to depict recipes that the children can read — such as play dough.
- Label children's lockers or cubbies with symbols or their pictures and their first name.
- Have children set the table using a Place Setting Chart.
- Interest Areas should be labeled with either a picture of the children in the room playing in the area or by cutting pictures of children playing from a toy catalog.
- Use traffic signs, food can stickers, and coupons in the block and dramatic play area.
- Avoid or limit use of commercial cartoon character displays.

Third Cardinal Rule - Converse with children, ask open ended questions and pursue their interest. Do not test them. Encourage children to communicate freely with each other and with other adults in the classroom. Engage children in small groups or individual discussions based on experiences that are familiar to the child. Sit at the child's level, listen attentively and talk with them. Encourage children's spontaneous language at meal times and throughout the day. Encourage children to take turns talking and listening during one-to-one conversations and small group discussions.

It is important to ask open ended questions throughout the day. These questions encourage problem solving skills, creative ability and divergent thinking skills. In life there are many different answers to the same problem or question. Children's cognitive skills grow when they are asked: "How do you think you can get that block to balance"? " Why is the caterpillar on every page"? (*In the tall tall grass*) "What did Stellaluna think when she found her mother"? (*Stellaluna*)

Setting the Stage for Literacy

Good quality hardbound books should be displayed at the child's eye level, upright in their own place. Children should be able to see the cover, title, author and illustrator of the book.

- Books should be in good condition. Take torn raggedy books off the shelf.
- Children should have time to *read* the books that you have read to them.
- Children learn to handle books as they turn the pages and how to put them back on the shelf.
- The book area should be large enough to accommodate 10 children for a story.
- The book area should be away from the line of traffic and noise.
- Musical instruments and record players should be placed away from the quiet area.
- Story tapes, pictures files, puppets and flannel boards should be available for children's use.
- Leave books on the shelf for a month so children can read them.