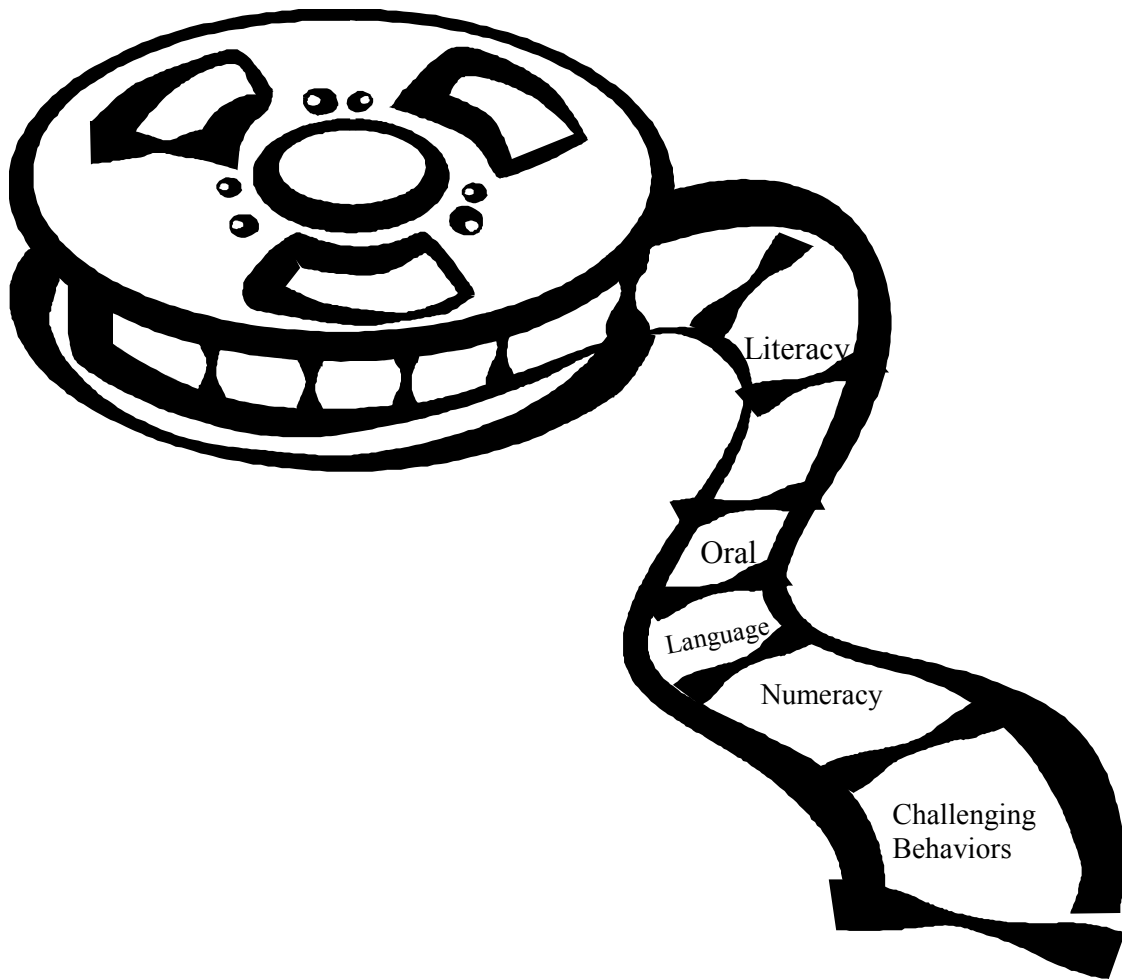


Project REEL



Resources for Early Educator Learning

FIVE BIG, FAT IDEAS

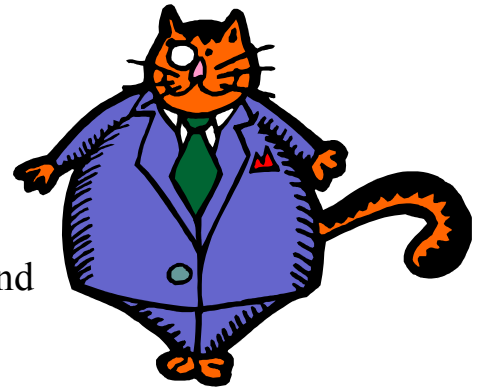
to remember about young children's learning:

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.

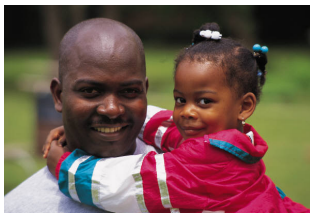
Therefore, offer children time to use new ideas and respond to them in ways that enriches their understandings.

Project REEL: Workshop 4

A FOCUS ON CHILDREN’S CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS AND PRINT

“Through experiences in their homes and communities, young children learn that print carries meaning and that reading and writing are used for a variety of purposes. They read menus in restaurants to know what foods are being served, write and receive letters to communicate with friends and relatives, and read (and listen to) stories for enjoyment. Children also learn as they observe parents and teachers using written language for all these purposes.”

(Tompkins, 2002, p. 142-143)



“By focusing on the importance of the first years of life, we give new meaning to the interactions young children have with books and stories. Looking at early literacy development as a dynamic developmental process, we can see the connection (and meaning) between an infant mouthing a book, the book handling behavior of a two year old, and the page turning of a five year old. We can see that the first three years of exploring and playing with books, singing nursery rhymes, listening to stories, recognizing words, and scribbling are truly the building blocks for language and literacy development.”

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

The highlighted lines on the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (from birth to age three, and from ages three to five) indicate the targeted objectives for this workshop:

Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (Birth to Age Three)
<p>Section 2: Early Literacy Component: Book Handling Skills Component: Looking and Recognition Skills Component: Picture and Story Comprehension Skills Component: Early Writing Behaviors and Skills</p>
LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:
Eyes focus on simple pictures in books or drawings (0-4 mos.)
Begins to explore the physical properties of a book (5-8 mos.)
Holds a board, cloth, or plastic book and manipulates the pages (5-8 mos.)
Shows increased involvement and enjoyment with books (9-12 mos.)
Begins to interact with story and recognize pictures of everyday familiar objects (9-12 mos.)
Begins to make associations about familiar objects (9-12 mos.)
Begins to recognize symbols for objects (9-12 mos.)
Begins to show interest in exploring writing tools (9-12 mos.)
Begins to show interest in exploring books (13-18 mos.)
Begins to show awareness and interest in familiar pictures (13-18 mos.)
Begins to recognize “favorite books” and repeatedly requests to read them (13-18 mos.)
Pretends to read books (13-18 mos.)

Shows increased interest in exploring writing tools (13-18 mos.)
Shows interest in exploring books (19-24 mos.)
Shows awareness and interest in familiar pictures (19-24 mos.)
Begins to interact with story through familiar hand motions and expression of emotions (19-24 mos.)
Enjoys books that relate to personal experience (19-24 mos.)
Enjoys looking at book by self, while sitting by peers or when being read to by an adult; begins to connect familiar books to play experiences (19-24 mos.)
Begins to use writing tools to make marks on paper (19-24 mos.)
Begins to understand the connection between books and personal experiences (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Recognizes and enjoys reading familiar books (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Uses a variety of writing tools to make scribbles (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Is aware of and can identify many sounds in the environment (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Begins to distinguish between words with similar phonemes, such as <i>pat</i> and <i>path</i> (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Engages in and enjoys word play with silly sounds and real and nonsense words (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Begins to recite from memory familiar books (2 1/2 – 3 yrs.)
Scribbles and draws intentionally (2 1/2 – 3 yrs.)
Is aware of and can identify many sounds in the environment (2 1/2 – 3 yrs.)
Continues to distinguish between words with similar phonemes, such as <i>pat</i> and <i>path</i> (2 – 2 1/2 yrs.)
Discriminates among sounds based on volume and pitch—loud vs. soft, high vs. low, long vs. short (2 1/2 – 3 yrs.)
Engages in and enjoys word play with silly sounds and real and nonsense words (2 1/2 – 3 yrs.)

Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (ages 3-5) Aligned with The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5	
Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (ages 3-5)	The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5
Section 2: Early Literacy Component: Print Awareness	
LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:	
Demonstrates interest in books and what they contain	See #45
Understands how books work and the way they are handled	See #45
Begins to attend to print in the environment, especially own name	See #47
Shows awareness that print conveys a message, that print is read rather than the pictures	See #45
Understands concept of spoken and written word and that alphabet letters have individual names (ages 4-5)	See #s 45 & 46
Shows interest in purposeful writing (ages 4-5)	See #49
Shows good understanding of conventions of print (ages 4-5)	See #45
Demonstrates good word awareness, calls attention to print in the environment, and recognizes some common words (ages 4-5)	See #47
Routinely engages in purposeful reading and writing (ages 4-5)	See #s 44, 49, & 50

Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (ages 3-5) Aligned with The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5	
Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (ages 3-5) Section 2: Early Literacy Component: Visual Discrimination Component: Visual Whole-Part-Whole Relationships Component: Visual Sequencing (Patterning)	The Creative Curriculum® Developmental Continuum for Ages 3-5
LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:	
Discriminates likenesses/differences in real objects	See #s 27 & 28
Discriminates likenesses/differences in pictured objects	See #s 27 & 28
Develops awareness of parts and wholes and how the parts relate to the whole	See #s 32 & 47
Uses left-to-right and top-to-bottom scanning and observes and reproduces each element in a patterns of a 3-dimensional objects	See #s 30 & 45
Discriminates likenesses and differences in black & white shapes, figures, and designs with subtle differences in detail or orientation (ages 4-5)	See #s 44, 49, 50
Discriminates likenesses and differences in symbols (ages 4-5)	See #s 27, 28, & 47
Further develops awareness of relationships of parts and wholes using more abstract figures (ages 4-5)	See #s 32 & 47
Uses left-to-right and top-to-bottom scanning; observes and reproduces a pattern with 3-dimensional objects by using a 2-dimensional paper model (ages 4-5)	See #s 30 & 45

Training Objectives

Early Childhood Educators will

- ✓ describe the characteristics of a child (infant, toddler, or pre-kindergartner) who has well-developed concepts about books
- ✓ describe the characteristics of a child (infant, toddler, or pre-kindergartner) who has well-developed concepts about print
- ✓ demonstrate using book/print awareness activities with small groups and individual children, avoiding whole-group teaching scenarios
- ✓ Incorporate reading aloud, shared reading, and opportunities for independent reading multiple times each day in children’s schedules (in abbreviated sessions based on children’s engagement and through experiences in interest areas)
- ✓ incorporate writing aloud and shared writing into the daily schedule for older children so that they may see an “expert” at work, modeling both conventions of print and genre conventions (e.g., lists, postcards, letters, memos, phone messages, etc., each look different from one another)
- ✓ Create a print-rich environment that is developmentally appropriate for their age-level focus
- ✓ select appropriate books for the varying age levels of children in their settings
- ✓ create and effectively utilize library and writing centers based on best practices in supporting emergent literacy development



- ✓ collect and integrate literacy materials into interest areas in addition to the library and writing centers (phone books, TV Guides, magazines, labels, product boxes, menus, newspapers, catalogs, junk mail, drawing paper, phone message pads, pencils & markers, books, etc.)
- ✓ demonstrate to children how to use the materials in the library/writing centers and interest areas and model how to integrate literacy experiences into play scenarios
- ✓ model beneficial read aloud strategies with young children using the “B-D-A” sequence of supporting children before, during, and after a book reading
- ✓ demonstrate that children with special needs require more frequent and intensive experiences in emergent literacy activities and responsive scaffolding of their present abilities
- ✓ actively support families’ involvement in their children’s literacy development
- ✓ demonstrate strategies to provide additional support to a child who is learning English as a second language

List of training materials:


- Participant manuals
- IDPs for participants and directors
- Children’s literature from Project REEL collection (including board books)
- Big Books
- Examples of environmental print for modeling (product labels, chart texts)
- Doll or stuffed animal for modeling infant reading strategies
- Model of a home lending library board
- Examples of environmental print for interest areas
- Example of rebus chart
- Photographs of literacy events in well-designed interest areas (if possible)
- Prop box from CCR&R (to show participants the availability of book-related themes)

Supporting research for Project REEL Specialists:

- 📖 International Reading Association (IRA) and National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1998). Position statement: Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.
- 📖 National Research Council. (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- 📖 National Research Council. (1999). *Starting out right: A guide to promoting children’s reading success*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- 📖 Notari-Syverson, A., O’Connor, R.E., & Vadasy, P.F. (1998). *Ladders to literacy: A preschool activity book*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- 📖 Schickedanz, J.A. (1999). *Much more than the ABCs: The early stages of reading and writing*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

- 📖 Strickland, D.S., & Schickedanz, J.A. (2004). *Learning about print in preschool: Working with letters, words, and beginning links with phonemic awareness*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- 📖 Venn, E.C., & Jahn, M.D. (2003) *Teaching and learning in preschool; Using individually appropriate practices in early childhood literacy instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- 📖 Vukelich, C., & Christie, J. (2004). *Building a foundation for preschool literacy: Effective instruction for children's reading and writing development*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- 📖 Retrieved August 11, 2006, from <http://www.zerotothree.org/brainwonders/EarlyLiteracy>

WHAT DO CHILDREN KNOW AND WHAT ARE THEY ABLE TO DO IF THEY HAVE A WELL-FORMED CONCEPT ABOUT BOOKS?

	“A child’s sensitivity to print is a major first step toward reading. . . . Children quickly settle into book-sharing routines with primary caregivers. Toddlers start recognizing favorite books by their cover, pretend to read books, and understand that books are handled in certain ways. As they reach their fourth and fifth years, children increasingly come to understand that it is the print that is read in stories, and that this print contains alphabet letters [and other features of print]” (National Research Council, 2001).
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Specifically, children with well-developed concepts about books

- know that a book is for reading
- can identify the front and the back of a book, as well as the top and the bottom
- can turn the pages of a book properly in the right direction
- know the difference between print and the illustrations or photographs
- know that images on a page are related to what the print says
- know where one begins reading on a page
- know what a title is
- know what an author is
- know what an illustrator is
- know how to handle and care for books

(Morrow, 2001, p. 203)



WHAT DO CHILDREN KNOW AND WHAT ARE THEY ABLE TO DO IF THEY HAVE WELL-FORMED CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT?

Children who have well-formed concepts of print

- recognize print in their surroundings
 - point out familiar letters
 - recognize words that they see frequently
 - inquire about letters and words they don't know
- understand that print carries meaning
 - the words—not the pictures—are read
 - words said in oral language can be represented in a series of letters
- understand conventions of print
 - spaces between words, reading from top-to-bottom and left-to-right, etc.
- know that print is used for many purposes
 - road signs are different from menus which are different from newspapers, etc.
- practice print through exploratory writing
 - letters are grouped together to form words, and words combine together for phrases and sentences.



(Early Childhood-Head Start Task Force, et al., 2002; Justice & Pence, 2005)

WHAT IS AN ABBREVIATED LIST OF THE EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTICULAR AGE RANGES?

In addition to the details of the TN-ELDS, there are other generally accepted “**Birth to Three-Year-Old Accomplishments**” for infants and toddlers worth repeating here:

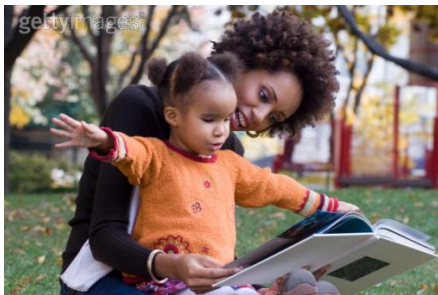
- Recognizes specific books by cover.
- Pretends to read books.
- Understands that books are handled in particular ways.
- Enters into a book-sharing routine with primary caregivers.
- Vocalization play in crib gives way to enjoyment of rhyming language, nonsense word play, etc.
- Labels objects in books.
- Comments on characters in books.
- Looks at picture in book and realizes it is a symbol for real object.
- Listens to stories.
- Requests/commands adult to read or write.
- May begin attending to specific print, such as letters in names.
- Uses increasingly purposeful scribbling.
- Occasionally seems to distinguish between drawing and writing.
- Produces some letter-like forms and scribbles with some features of English writing.

The following list of “**Three- to Four-Year-Old Accomplishments,**” again closely aligned with the Tennessee Standards, suggests that our literacy objectives for the typically-developing preschooler and pre-kindergartner involve them in:

- Knowing that alphabet letters [are different from pictures] and can be individually named.
- Recognizing print in the local environment.
- Knowing that it is the print that is read in stories.
- Understanding that different text forms are used for different functions of print (e.g., a list for groceries is different than the list on a menu).
- Paying attention to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g., in Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater).
- Using new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in own speech.
- Understanding and following oral directions.
- Becoming sensitive to some sequences of events in stories.
- Showing an interest in books and reading.
- When being read a story, connecting information and events to real-life experiences.
- Questioning and commenting demonstrate an understanding of literal meaning of story being told.
- Displaying reading and writing attempts, calling attention to self: “Look at my story.”
- Identifying about 10 alphabet letters, especially those from own name.
- Writing (scribbling) messages as part of playful activity.
- Beginning to attend to beginning or rhyming sounds in salient words.

(National Research Council, 1999, p. 59)

This workshop will focus specifically on **concepts about books and print** as a critical aspect of a young child’s literacy development. This manual will be divided into three sections: “A Focus on Concepts About Books,” “A Focus on Concepts About Print,” and “Creating a Print Rich Environment: Integrating Literacy into Interest Areas.” As a child’s concepts about books is a specific type of print awareness, and as book concepts are often children’s primary print experiences, we will (somewhat artificially) separate out “concepts about books” from “concepts about print.”



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)
- ❖ Commercial Big Books can be fairly expensive; support the ECEs in creating their own with help from the children as illustrators.
- ❖ ECEs don’t need Big Books if they are reading one-on-one with a child. All of the concepts listed above can be taught between a teacher and a child with a regular-sized book or even a small-format board book.

- ❖ 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 ECEs 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, early childhood teachers 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, ECEs should try only one time to re-engage the child in the book reading. They 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.

ECEs 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 ECE, 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 ECEs’ 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. 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>).



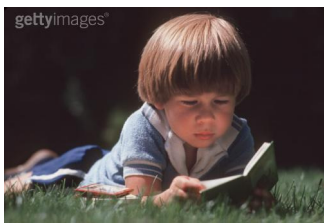
Encourage “**book babble**” with toddlers. ‘Book babble’ is an important literacy skill in toddlers. When young children jabber in a tone and pattern that sounds like reading, they are practicing language in a new and different way. Children learn by doing, and once you have modeled reading aloud, singing, 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 saying 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, the teacher 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, the teacher 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, the teacher 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 6 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.”

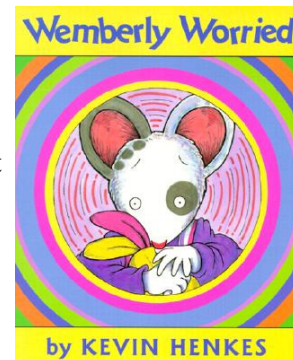
Independent reading: Children retell the text by reviewing the pictures of Wemberly Worried; children look through other texts written by Kevin Henkes

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.”

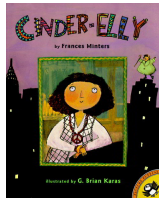
(Children’s Literacy Initiative, 2002, p. 45)



Having a **Book Hospital** in your classroom 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 re-presented 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 2 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.

CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT

“Researchers discovered that many 3-year-olds come to expect print to be meaningful. This understanding becomes evident when children point to words on signs, cereal boxes, or menus and ask, ‘What does that say?’ After making marks on a piece of paper, they ask, ‘What did I write?’

Research also revealed that young children quickly discover that print is functional and can be used to get things done in everyday life. For example, many 3-year-olds are familiar with the purposes of different types of print, such as store signs, restaurant menus, and name labels on presents. Young children’s knowledge of the functional uses of literacy also is demonstrated during dramatic play. Researchers have reported numerous incidents of preschoolers engaging in a variety of functional literacy activities while engaging in dramatic play, including jotting down phone messages, writing checks to pay for purchases, looking up recipes in cookbooks, and making shopping lists” (Vukelich & Christie, 2004, p. 6).



“It is essential that preschool teachers recognize and understand that a child’s sensitivity to print is the first major step toward reading. . . . This does not mean that teachers should watch and wait for these magical moments to occur before they instruct. On the contrary, . . . careful, thoughtful planning within a stimulating environment can facilitate cognitive growth and learning in young children” (Venn & Jahn, 2003, p. 120).



WHAT TYPES OF PRINT IN ADDITION TO BOOKS DO EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS NEED TO HAVE IN THEIR SETTINGS?

Print can be categorized into basically four different types: environmental, occupational, informational, and recreational.

- “**Environmental print** refers to print that is evident throughout one’s surroundings such as billboards and store signs.
- **Occupational print** means print that is necessary to a specific occupation such as a teacher’s class list, an architect’s blueprints, and an auto mechanic’s work orders.
- **Informational print** can organize, store, and retrieve the information that helps in every day life; examples are calendars and clocks.
- Finally, **recreational print** involves printed material that is associated with relaxation and leisure pursuits such as reading for pleasure, searching the Internet, and playing computer games” (Venn & Jahn, 2003, p. 121).

Teachers will want to have many books available to children in the setting, but will also want to have a generous sampling of print from each of the four categories above.

ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN (INFANTS AND TODDLERS)

Note: Because we predominantly share books with infants and toddlers, most of the strategies for print awareness are in this workshop manual under the “Infants and Toddlers” section of “Concepts About Books.” However, several other types of print awareness experiences valuable for older children are also beneficial for the literacy experiences of infants and toddlers.

Encourage young toddlers to play with **alphabet blocks** and **magnetic letters** on cookie sheets or other metal surfaces, and talk to them about the letters, even though the children may be too young to repeat the spoken letter or recognize the printed form. These are enjoyable ways to create conversations between teachers and children about print, while engaging the child in moving and manipulating small objects.



Show babies such environmental print as words printed on their bibs and on baby food jars, words printed on cereal boxes and the boxes in which toys come wrapped. Of course, be prepared for any piece of print to go into Baby’s mouth! This focus with babies on environmental print has far less to do with preparing infants for actual reading than it does with immersing infants and toddlers in oral language that

- 1) creates bonds between children and adults, and
- 2) supports their oral language production, both of which are foundational elements for learning to read.



ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR OLDER CHILDREN (PRESCHOOL AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN)

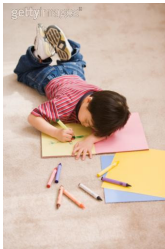
One of the most powerful literacy connections that children make is that oral language can be written down and accessed in the future, creating a record that is permanent. Therefore, **Taking Dictation** from children is a crucial strategy for children’s understanding of communicating on paper using print conventions. Often called “Shared Writing” or the “Language Experience Approach,” recording children’s comments as they watch supports their knowledge in directionality, use of capital letters and end punctuation, the spelling of children’s names and familiar words, etc. In this shared writing strategy novice children are free to do the hard thinking of what to say, and the teacher/“expert” can print the children’s words say. Listed below are some representative scenarios in which teachers could take dictation from the children:

- Writing a caption for an illustration that a child completed
- Creating a chart of child-related rules for the interest areas
- A retelling of a story
- An original story
- An “I wish....” poem

- A list of favorite foods or games
- A thank you letter to recent guest
- An announcement for a child’s new sibling or pet
- An invitation to parents for a special event
- Etc.

Just because children have little or no book experience by preschool doesn’t mean they haven’t seen literacy in their homes. They have likely seen a wide variety of literacy activities (paying bills, filling out forms/applications, writing letters, clipping coupons, reading grocery store ads, etc.) that are often not valued in school. Let’s do our best to build bridges between the literacy they’ve seen at home and the literacy they need for a successful schooling experience. This connection between home and school can be supported in any setting through dramatic play in the interest areas: checking ads for sale items at Bi-Lo, clipping coupons for a visit to Toys ‘R’ Us, filling out an application to work at the veterinarian’s office, etc.

Emergent writing and concepts about print



“When children begin to write, they reveal what they already notice and understand about print because those items are evident in their writing, whether the writing is in scribble form or letters. They also gain more control of and build their visual perceptual skills in looking at print as they construct their own messages. Clay (1991) states that ‘the first explorations of print in the preschool years may occur in writing rather than in reading.’ Therefore, effective pre-school teachers offer children many opportunities to write on a daily basis in addition to providing plentiful graphic-practice activities to help strengthen their ability to attend to print features. After children practice making tunnels for cars to drive through and drawing hooks to catch fish with, they may be able to notice more easily the ‘tunnels’ and ‘hooks’ in letter forms” (Venn & Jahn, 2003, p. 123).

Writing the room

The sole purpose of this activity is for children to distinguish print from pictures in their classroom.

- 1) “Each child takes a pencil and a journal or blank piece of paper on a clipboard and walks around the room, looking for print to copy onto his or her paper.
- 2) The students do this activity for about 5-10 minutes, and then they come together to share their writing.
- 3) The first steps in sharing are for each child to find a buddy and tell the buddy both what print he or she found and where it is located in the room. This procedure allows for every child to talk and be on task. Then, there is a brief whole-class sharing session in which a few volunteers tell what print they found and where it is located in the room. This whole-class share allows children to practice their speaking and listening skills in addition to directing their attention to print in the room that some children would not have noticed yet.”
(from Venn & Jahn, 2003, p. 122).

Nothing in a child's world is more important to see in print than her or his name! A child's name is often the first word a child will read out of context, and it is certainly the starting point for children in their explorations into writing. One of the first steps to take in creating a literacy-rich environment is using the **children's names as labels in several places in the room**. Labels identifying their cubbies, their mailboxes, their attendance chart, their toothbrushes, etc., give them a sense of belonging and ownership, but more importantly it is a child's first example that people and things can be represented in a series of letters that construct a meaningful word.



Environmental print. Often one of the first pieces of symbolic print that young children come to read is the “golden arches” of the McDonald's sign. You have probably noticed also that they are able to identify the logos of Domino's, Wal-mart, or Bi-Lo, as well as other stores where their families frequently shop. We can take advantage of children's interest in **environmental print** by bringing in materials that display these logos, as well as multiple products that they see in grocery and other stores, such as cracker boxes, milk cartons, detergent labels, soda bottles, etc. It is important to remember that it is not enough for teachers to bring print into their settings that children see in their worlds (cereal boxes, food & household products, fast food materials, cardboard road signs, etc.). “Print-rich environments require that children actually interact with the print, not just look at it.” (Campbell, 1998, p. 124)

Here's a fine idea from Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp (2000) that you might wish to use in your setting:



❖ “Seeing a menu of snack or lunch gives children a meaningful experience—what is more meaningful than food?—with letters, words, and getting information from print. On menus for younger children and English-language learners, include pictures or photographs of the food items next to the words. Consulting the menu becomes a daily habit, and some children begin to recognize simple words and name single letters. For older children use print-only menus, or try an in-between version in which children try to identify each item from print alone but then can open a flap to look at the picture and see if they were right” (p. 69).

❖ Using a pocket chart with the words displayed and the pictures hidden, have children predict what the food will be, ask what they notice about the words or letters, and ask them about beginning letters of words. The teacher can then reveal the picture of the food item and talk about their predictions.

Show young children that there is **print all around them**:

Teacher: “Tucker, there is a word on your shoe. Can everybody see the word on Tucker’s shoe? I’m going to write it on the dry erase board. What do you think this word means?”



Teacher: “There is a sign on the street outside our school and it looks like this: (teacher draws a rectangle on her white board and writes NO PARKING). What do you think the words on this sign mean?”

Teacher: “There is a word on this box that I brought from home. This box was on the shelves above my washing machine. What do you know about this word right here?”

Teacher: “There is a sign over here in our block center by the electrical outlets. It reads, ‘Do not remove outlet protectors.’ What do you think that sign means?”

Make **signs and labels for the settings** *when children are present* so that they may observe and talk with you about the purpose for that sign/label. When you need to remind the assigned rabbit caregiver to change the rabbit’s water, give the children the benefit of seeing you write “REMINDER: BUNNICULA NEEDS FRESH WATER EACH DAY” and place the sign on his cage. This is a great opportunity to talk about signs and how they’re used to give us information, to warn us of potential danger, to give us instructions, etc.



Go for a **print walk around the neighborhood!** Look at the signs, street signs, flyers, notices on shops, etc. There are several benefits of this activity. Children will gain awareness of all the print in their environment. Teachers who do not live in the neighborhood will have a clearer picture of the children’s community and culture. Children will feel valued that the print in their environment is valued and important. You can focus on the messages, on the function of the print, of the letters and words included, etc. It would be a valuable literacy event if you could take pictures of the print you and your class discover so that you can retell the experience of your print walk at a later time.

Make many of your charts **rebus charts**, in which you draw a picture of key words immediately following a key word. This is particularly helpful when children must access the chart to carry out instructions or follow directions. One of your rebus charts might be an original child-dictated story that looks something like this:

Our Transportation Adventure Story

Once upon a time there was a boy 👤 Daquon who was given a shiny red bicycle 🚲 for his birthday. He wanted to visit his grandmother 👤 in Oregon. So his parents bought him a ticket on an airplane ✈️, but he missed his plane! So Daquon took a taxi 🚗 to the bus 🚌 station 🏠, bought his ticket 🎫 and hopped on, but then the bus broke down. Oh, no! What was he going to do? Daquon heard a train 🚂 coming down the tracks, so he flagged down the engineer 👤 and boarded the passenger car. There was just one problem: the train 🚂 was headed for Oklahoma, not Oregon!
Etc.

Your rebus charts could be original stories, like the example, or they might be retellings of favorite or new stories. You might make a chart for directions on how to make a snowman desert out of lemon cookies, expectations for clean up time, the morning message that tells them what to expect for the day's schedule, or any other text that children can dictate or you can write for children's multiple uses.

Obstacle Course

In using this activity children will learn that symbols and print contain information about objects and their uses and can guide actions and behaviors.

- 1) Set up an obstacle course in which children can practice a variety of motor skills (walking, running, balancing, crawling, climbing).
- 2) Prepare written labels and instructions with pictures, signs, and words for each part of the course. Post a label on the stairs that reads "steps" and the directions "walk up steps" and then a sketch of a stick figure climbing the stairs.
- 3) Continue labeling the course this way, with the children following written directions to jump, throw a beach ball into a wastebasket, walk on a strip of masking tape, etc.
- 4) Children who need low support will read and say signs fairly independently after teacher modeling, and children who need high support will need scaffolding by the teacher ("Which way does this arrow point?" "What is Marisol doing?" "This sign is on the ball. What do you think you could do with this ball that looks like the picture?")

(Notari-Syverson, et al., 1998, p. 111)



Show children on a daily basis **the many reasons we use print** :

Teacher: "I've got to remind Miss Arnelle that we need to go to Home Depot to get our flowers tomorrow. She might have forgotten our plans. Will you help me write a note to Miss Arnelle?"

Teacher: "I'm going to the grocery store before I go home tonight, and I'll need a **list**. I'm going to write down all the things I know I'll need to buy. I know I'll need tomatoes. T-t-t, tomatoes. What letter do you think begins the word tomatoes?" Talk about the items that you write and about the sounds of those words.

Teacher: "I'm going to send an **e-mail message** to my son at college. I want him to know that I love him and miss him, but that I'm going to rent out his room."

Teacher: "We have a guest coming next week. Let's write out the **directions** to our school from Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., so she'll know where to turn and where to park when she gets here!"

Teacher: “I want to remember what items are in our office supplies drawer. You name off the items that we find in the drawer, and I’ll put them on a **list** that we can tape to the outside of the drawer.”

Bring in the **newspaper** and show the many purposes you use it: for information, for coupons, for movie schedules, for the weather, to check the obituaries for your name, etc.

Go to a book or the Internet to **answer a question** that is raised during the day.

Bring in a **menu** from a restaurant they are familiar with, and show children how you use it to determine what the restaurant is offering and how you make your selection.

Don’t forget about all the daily printed materials you could share with children: grocery store ads, coupons, receipts, church bulletins, flyers, notices, recipes, directions for making cake or Jell-o, plane tickets, game directions, etc.



CREATING A PRINT-RICH ENVIRONMENT; INTEGRATING LITERACY MATERIALS INTO INTEREST AREAS



“Careful selection and placement of materials can make a big difference in how well children make use of the environment to learn about print. Materials for reading, drawing, and writing should be available in many areas of the classroom. Materials should allow children to make choices, work independently or with others to complete a task, and develop both creativity and skills.”

(Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004, p. 21).

Below is a general checklist by Strickland & Schickedanz (2004) outlining the qualities of the environment that is supportive of children’s literacy development:

Checklist for Print Exposure and Use

- _____ Print is visible on open charts and bulletin boards around the room.
- _____ Print is incorporated into each area of the classroom.
- _____ Environmental print is clear, easy to read, and displayed at children’s eye level.
- _____ Environmental print represents words that are familiar to children because of daily activities, thematic inquiries, and special experiences.
- _____ Children’s names are printed on their cubbies, placemats, and other items.
- _____ Name cards and other carefully printed words are available for children to copy or “read.”
- _____ Children are encouraged to write their own names or letters from their names on their paintings and drawings [which are displayed at children’s eye level].
- _____ Some print is written in languages other than English.
- _____ Mailboxes are available for each child and family, encouraging communication between home and school and showing children that written messages are an integral part of classroom life.
- _____ A newsletter describing children’s activities is shared with the children and sent home regularly.

(from Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004, p. 23)

WHAT CAN ECEs DO IN THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN TO SUPPORT THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS OF PRINT FUNCTIONS?

ECEs are supporting children's understandings about literacy when they

- respond to children's questions about print in positive, supportive ways
- model the functions of print so children are aware of its use
- take care to provide inviting displays that include print
- offer praise and encouragement when children attempt to read and write
- take advantage of 'teachable moments' to extend children's knowledge by relating new discoveries to what children already know
- are aware that children need time to express their thoughts and ideas
- build on what is known about children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds to help them move from the known to the unknown.

(Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004, p. 24)

WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE LIBRARY AND WRITING CENTERS TO SUPPORT YOUNG CHILDREN'S CONCEPTS ABOUT BOOKS AND PRINT?

In terms of concepts about print and books, two centers in your ECEs setting will need to be the focal point of the children's experiences and will need to remain in active use no matter what other centers are established. Those are, of course, the library center and the writing center.

The **Library Center** should have as many of the following characteristic as possible:

- child sized table and chairs
- books shelved with their spines out (so children can learn some kind of coding system)
- books shared in class or that are child favorites are displayed with their covers out
- 5-8 books for every child in the setting
- books on multiple genres, from predictable pattern books, poetry, science books, picture books, wordless picture books, biographies, etc.
- a large box or two for privacy in reading
- pillows to rest against and stuffed animals to read to
- a Literacy Chair of Honor where teachers and others read out loud
- check-out system for books
- puppets, flannel board, dry erase board, and other original storytelling or retelling props
- listening library (a book and an audio tape of the book) and table so that children can select audio tapes and follow along in the book
- library book return cards
- date stamp for returned books
- sign-in/sign-out sheet
- posters of children's books on the wall



The **Writing Center** should have these characteristics:

- child sized table and chairs
- extensive writing materials: pencils, felt-tipped markers, crayons, colored pencils, and more
- both lined and unlined paper; 3x5 cards
- spiral bound small notebooks for each child as their personal journal (time should be set aside each day for children to record their thoughts, activities, and drawings in their journals)
- ABC and number books
- alphabet boards
- child sized chalkboards and chalk or dry erase boards with markers
- magnetic letters and boards or cookie sheets
- picture dictionaries
- pictures of objects to pair, classify, and match
- computer(s) (if possible)
- typewriter
- Wikki Stix (wax covered yarn) for children to shape into letters
- letter stamps with washable ink pad
- display board for children's work
- book making materials: paper, hole punch, stapler, construction paper



(Morrow, 2001; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004)

Be thoughtful about where ECEs place their centers. A quiet center, like the Library Center, should not be next to the block center, which can get a bit noisy when buildings are being demolished!

LITERACY IN OTHER INTEREST AREAS

“Findings from Singer and Singer’s (1990) studies of 3- and 4-year-olds indicated that the children who engaged more often in pretend play were more persistent, engaged in more cooperative play, and were less likely to be angry or aggressive. As children make believe in their social role playing, they create, learn to think divergently, and learn to solve problems that emerge in the play.”

Klass (1999), p. 175



In addition to rich demonstrations by parent/caregivers and teachers, children need to practice literacy behaviors in multiple reading/writing opportunities every day. Particularly, they need to gain knowledge and skills in using literacy in many different adult settings that they observe.

Below are listed many center ideas and the literacy materials ECEs might include in that center. It is generally considered to be good practice to set up several centers (2-3) and then rotate in new centers. If ECEs are unaccustomed to creating centers, just create one at a time. Children may become bored with a center after it has been used for several weeks, and changing materials in the center and the centers themselves will hold their interest and keep their play fresh.

Try to select the scenarios with which ECEs children have had the most experience. However, the children will still need the ECE to step into the interest area “in role” (as customer, cook, veterinarian, salon owner, etc.) to show them how the literacy materials are used: the appointment book for the doctor’s office, the menu for the restaurant, the money in the grocery store, etc. Remember from the workshop on oral language (see Workshop #2) that two- and three-year-olds’ play language increases with adult participation, but with three-and-a-half year olds and older, ECEs will need to show the children how to use the materials and then exit from the play. Research suggests that preschoolers and pre-kindergarten children’s language become more sophisticated *without* an adult present (Pellegrini, 1984; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989). The centers need to be large enough so that 4-5 children can participate. Of course, a field trip to observe and talk about these businesses would build up children’s understandings so that they could better re-enact the experiences:

Post Office

mailboxes, envelopes
stickers for stamps, pens
tape, packages, boxes,
scale, address labels, cash
register, play money



Doctor’s Office

appointment book, white
shirt, medical bag, stetho-
scope, play syringe, play
thermometer, tweezers,
bandages, prescription pad,
folders, bottles & labels,
clip board with paper

Hair Salon

curlers, brush & comb,
hair magazines, mirror
empty shampoo bottle,
towel, wig & stand,
appointment book, open/
closed sign



Vet’s Office

stuffed animals, books
about pets, cardboard boxes
for cages, white shirt, other
medical tools from doctor’s
office, labels for labeling
pets in cages, records for
feedings, cleanings, &
medications, appointment
books, prescription pads

Travel Agency

travel posters, brochures
maps, tickets, wallet w/play money
& credit cards, cash register,
suitcases, receipt book



Grocery Store Center

Food packages, plastic fruit &
artificial foods, grocery cart, price
stickers, cash register, money,
grocery bags, marking pen,
coupons, advertisements



Restaurant Center

table cloth, dishes, glasses, silverware, napkins, menus, order pad & pencil, apron, tray, vest for waiter, hat for chef, cooking magazines, recipe books, 3 x 5 cards for recipes

Blocks Center

many different sized blocks, paper for designing buildings, books with pictures of a variety of structures, architecture magazines with blueprints large newsprint for recording landscapes (cities, rivers, mountains, etc.) colored paper



Bakery Center

cookie sheets, muffin tins, measuring cups & spoons, cookie cutters, rolling pins, empty food packages, empty spice containers, containers labeled flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, homemade or commercial play-dough, recipe books, cards for new recipes, materials for writing orders and labeling prices



Other Center Ideas:

Space Center

Auto or Body Shop

Movie Theatre

Race Track

Gas Station

Fire Station

Police Station

Construction Site


(developed from suggestions in Tompkins [2001], Owocki [2001])

Model, model, model . . . and then model some more!

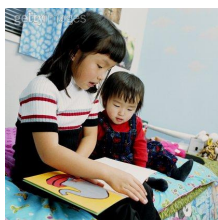
We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to **model, model, model** the use of the centers. You must show children every step of the process they are to follow: how to move from an activity to the centers, how to use the materials and re-enact the activities that logically occur in the center, how to use language that is appropriate for that center, how to keep their voices low, how to work collaboratively, how to put materials back in their proper place after use, how to move from one center to the next, how to follow the rule that prevents too children in one center, etc. If teaching experiences are less than successful, then it is usually because of our failure to model our expectations to children.

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)

 You might wish to gather together some environmental print, such as empty milk cartons, cereal boxes, soup labels, baby food jars, soda labels, laundry detergent labels, bar soap packages, toothpaste boxes, magazine covers, fast food labels, traffic signs, school signs, etc.

You would then ask a series of questions about the responses and check them against responses that you take over the next several weeks or months:

- “Have you ever seen this before? Where?
- What do you think it is? What do you think it says?
- How do you know? What makes you think so?
- What tells you that it says _____? Show me with your finger where it says_____.”

(Owocki & Goodman, 2002, p. 34)

 Keep track of children’s progress on the computer. Sit down with each child once each month and monitor how their computer skills are improving. Ask such questions as:

How fast are they able to move around the screen compared to the last time I observed them?

How well do they handle the mouse?


What activities are they able to do now that they were not able to do last month?


How well do they use the keyboard?

When they encounter a problem, how do they handle it? Can they get around it on their own or do they still request the help of a teacher?

Etc.

Strategies for ESL learners:

 Have family members or community volunteers help you label objects in the environment in your children’s home languages. Creating signs, directions, and other print in children’s native language will help them grow cognitively and will demonstrate your appreciation of their home language and culture. It also helps remind us that bilingualism is a cognitive benefit—not a deficit—and that children benefit in many ways from being able to speak two or more languages.

 Children learn language best when it is embedded in an authentic activity in which they are working with other children. Playing in centers with other native speakers is an excellent ways for ESL children to learn new vocabulary that is associated with concrete items and embedded in a rich context. It would be even more beneficial for children if they could be using their home language simultaneously with their experimentations in English. Having a bilingual adult would be most favorable, of course, but an older bilingual child would also be helpful to help the ESL child practice his/her home language while learning the second.











- 🌐 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:

-  Suggest to family members that they talk with children about the different literacy practices they use every day (bill paying, writing lists, writing phone messages, letters, recipes, forms & applications, etc.).
-  Suggest to family members that they demonstrate to their children how they could include literacy activities in their play. For example, if the child is pretending to cook, then the parent could give paper and pencil and suggest they write down the recipe. The parent could give a cookbook to the child and have them find a recipe for what the child is pretending to make.
-  Suggest to family members that they point out letters and words that they run across in daily life. “Make an obvious effort to read aloud traffic signs, billboards, notices, labels on packages, maps, and phone numbers” (<http://ericec.org/ptips.html>).
-  Encourage families to assist in the setting. Invite family members to help with literacy activities such as bookbinding, reading with children, taking written dictation of children’s stories, and supervising independent activities while teachers work with small groups and individuals.
-  Send home reading and writing activities and encourage families’ feedback.
-  Celebrate the families in your setting. Invite parents and grandparents to share special skills they have, to talk about their cultural heritage, etc.
-  Send notes home occasionally to praise a literacy achievement by 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 classroom 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.