

PRESCHOOL LITERACY

Strategies to Teach Literacy Skills in the Preschool Classroom



Preschool teachers play a vital role in nurturing literacy development in young children. Expanding on children's language, building on their vocabulary and background knowledge, expanding on concepts about print, and moving into conventional writing is referred to as Emergent Literacy. Children need opportunities to expand listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills by engaging in a social rich language environment provided by their teachers and parents.

The classroom environment can be an important and useful tool to stimulate language. From the clock on the wall, chairs, bus tubs, printed materials and colors etc. can be discussed, compared, and explored to encourage and improve language and literacy skills. Teachable moments need to be included in the daily instruction plan utilizing items within the classroom and the playground.

Components of a balanced literacy environment include:

- Well-designed preschool space
- Regular daily routine
- Strong parent-teacher communication
- Strong teaching methods
- Teamwork among teachers
- Varied curriculum
- Language experiences
- Adequate supplies
- Literacy experiences

The classroom teacher plays a pivotal role that encourages the development of language arts and literacy skills. According to Jeanne M. Machado in *Early Childhood Experiences in Language Arts* stated that the teacher serves as a model in language instruction. They are a provider of experiences for the children. The teacher is an interactor who shares experiences and communicates activities and events encouraging conversation. The teacher models not only speech but also attitudes and behaviors in listening, writing, speaking, and reading. The teacher can provide purposeful approaches for these behaviors and attitudes by:

Components of Good Preschool Teachers

- Modeling
- Providing meaningful experiences
- Interacting and encouraging

The Partnership For Reading states that school success begins with good readers. If our children are good readers they become better learners and can achieve greater academic success in the classroom. Children become good readers in the early years by development of the following important skills, including learning to:

- Use language in conversation
- Listen and respond to stories read aloud
- Recognize and name the letters of the alphabet
- Listen to the sounds of spoken language
- Connect sound to letters to figure out the “code” of reading
- Read often so that recognizing words becomes easy and automatic
- Learn and use new words
- Understand what is read.

To develop an emergent literacy program, the preschool teacher provides a print rich environment, opportunities and experiences that promote literacy development in an inviting and fun way.

The following benchmarks for language and literacy development are provided by the Arkansas Early Childhood Framework Benchmarks—Strategies and Activities July 1999.

Oral communication

The teacher models speaking in complete sentences and with correct grammar.

Expands vocabulary through meaningful conversation.

Recognizes and identifies by name both verbally and in print.

Participates in songs, finger plays, rhyming activities and games.

Uses words to communicate ideas and feelings

Uses expression during oral communication.

Engaging in two-way conversation with children and adults.

Using language to solve problems.

Follows directions in sequence.

Visual discrimination

Provide materials that promote the development of visual discrimination skills.

These materials include games and manipulatives that involve children in visual

discrimination activities. Some examples include puzzles, pegs and pegboards, stringing beads, lacing cards, classifying and sorting games and activities.

Understanding that print conveys a message

Teacher’s model writing, labeled environment, charts, Language Experience Approaches, and dictated writing, environmental print, reading experiences.

Interest in writing for a purpose

Establish a writing center including a variety of writing tools, types of paper, and printing tools.

Identify letters and signs in the environment

Using letters as they come up in real situations such as children’s names, and print seen everyday in the children’s environment (environmental print)

Identify letters, make letter-sound matches and use known letters to represent written language

Language Experience Approaches, dictated writing, independent writing using invented spelling.

Talking and Listening

Teachers need to teach the sounds of language by providing opportunities to play with words, sounds, and language through **talking and listening activities.**

Singing and finger plays
Nursery rhymes and riddles
Real conversation

Reads books

In small groups
One on one
With a child



Expand vocabulary by

- Speaking and listening in real conversation.
- Reading books and having discussions about them.
- Make connections between what children see and hear.

Teaches phonemic awareness by:

- Pointing out and discussing words and print in the environment.
- Having a print rich environment.
- Labeling objects in the classroom.
- Using children’s names whenever possible in writing.

Provide writing opportunities through:

- Writing center with writing utensils, paper, etc. available for independent writing opportunities.
- Teacher needs to model proper writing.
- Utilize drawing and invented writing techniques.

According to “A Framework for Quality Care and Education for Children from Three to Five.” distributed by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services, children in a balanced emergent literacy classroom, children can participate in many language arts activities throughout the day.

- They enjoy listening to books and stories and talking about them.
- They tell a story as they look at pictures in a book.
- Show an interest in writing.
- Recognize signs and labels in their environment.
- Identify some letters of the alphabet, especially letters in their names.
- Provide ample opportunities for writing.

Machado shared in her book “Early Childhood Experiences in Language Arts” that the classroom teacher may be the first person to offer some children their first contact with stories and books as some parents do not read to their children,

According to the Department of Education “Helping Your Child Become a Reader” stated that your baby starts on the road to becoming a reader on the day your child is born and first hears the sounds of your voice. Every time you speak to your child, sing to your child, and respond to the sounds that your child makes, you strengthen your child’s understanding of language. With good role modeling from parents and the preschool teacher to guide and teach, your child(ren) will become excellent readers.

To understand the connection between a child’s early experiences with spoken language and learning to read, you might think of language as a four-legged stool. The four legs are talking, listening, reading, and writing. All four legs are important: each leg helps to support and balance the others.

This booklet gives you information about how you can use your language skills to build your skills. It offers suggestions about how you can:

Talk with and listen to your child.

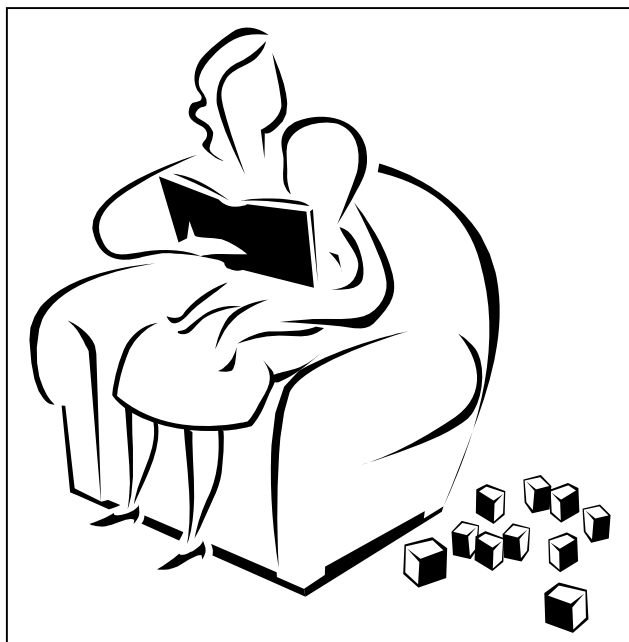
Read together with them.

Help your child learn about books and print.

Encourage your child’s early writing efforts.

Help your child learn to read if his/her first language is not English.

Prepare your child for success in school.



"The ages between birth and age 5 are the foundation upon which successful lives are built." - Laura Bush

This information contains activities that parents or preschool teachers can use with your child(ren) to strengthen their language skills and encourage their love of reading.

1. Talk to and listen to your child(ren)

Engage in meaningful conversation with your child(ren) about what is happening in their daily routines and lives. Talk about upcoming events and past experiences. Relate new experiences to past experiences.

For example: *When picking your child up from child care, notice what happened that day, ask the teacher questions about daily events. In the car, engage your child in conversation about their day by asking specific questions about what you observed. The beginnings of the conversations may include "Tell me about your field trip?" What was your favorite game outside today?*

2. Read with your child often

Schedule a regular routine of reading to and with your child(ren). Have favorite books or visit the library and check out books with your child.

For example: *During reading activities predict what might happen next in the book. Talk about pictures. Let your child(ren) "read" the book to you. Relate the story to experiences the child had. Let your child(ren) turn pages, repeat words, point to letters and look for details in pictures. While reading with your child(ren), let them turn the pages, make comments or ask questions about the print such as "look there is the letter that your name starts with!" or "can you find a letter that starts with your name?" Pause during the reading to talk about the story and pictures.*

Parents, caregivers, preschool teachers, next to hugging your child(ren), reading aloud is probably one of the most positive and longest-lasting experience that you can give to your child(ren).

3. Let your child see you reading

Read the newspaper, books, signs, directions, etc in front of your child(ren).

For example: *When cooking, talk to your child about reading recipes, or directions on the box or package, read directions out loud to the children.*

4. Read in a special place

Children like to read and be read to. We encourage you to be creative when you are looking for a special place to read. It may be an old cardboard box or under a blanket.

For example: *Have a basket of books and soft cushions for children to sit and read away from distractions. Read with your child(ren) whenever possible.*

5. Hold your child close

A child's first relationship with parents and caregivers really does matter. During the first months and years, the groundwork is being laid for all aspects of the child's future development. Preschool teachers need to nurture each child that is placed in their care.

6. Sing, recite nursery rhymes, and finger plays to develop language

Music is a language builder and the rhythmic patterns of music which contain repetition and melodies encourage reading. Traditional nursery songs are easy to teach and children love to sing them.

For example: *Old MacDonald Had a Farm, Eensy Weensy Spider, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Ring Around a Rosy, If You're Happy, Yankee Doodle Dandy and many others.*

7. Talk about the story

Parents, teachers or caregivers need to talk with their children to reinforce their children's language skills.

For example: *Make predictions "What do you think will happen next?" ask questions and make correlations "Do you know another story with a bear in it?"*



8. Read your child's favorite books over and over

Repetition of the same book may increase your child's interest in reading. Children learn repetition by hearing the same story

over and over, and "pretend to read" by reciting their favorite book.

For example: *Make up a new ending. Change the names in the story. You may want to interject a child's name to encourage participation and to highlight your child. This makes children feel special and can build self-esteem in children.*

9. Connect words to objects in everyday living

Engaging the children in everyday conversation will build the vocabulary of children, which will result in strong readers and writers.

For example: *Point out store names and signs, call attention to advertisements, etc. Show shapes and colors and ask children to identify them. Take every opportunity to practice the children's counting skills to improve Math and reasoning skills. Teach children to identify their body parts and to name them*

10. Visit the library often

Parents, preschool teachers, caregivers need to schedule regular visits to your local library. Make sure that your children possess a library card when they are developmentally ready to handle this responsibility.

For example: *Libraries offer more than books, they are places of learning and discovery for everyone.*