

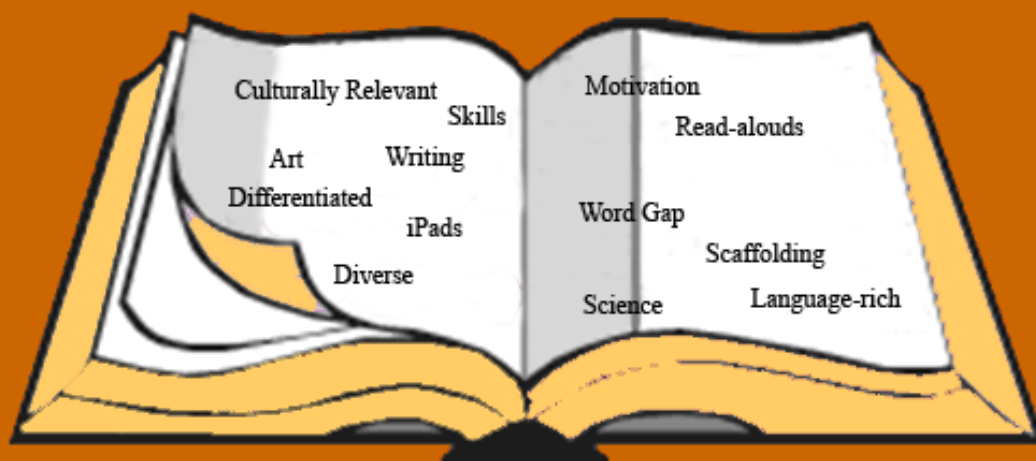
Teachers on the Cutting Edge

Volume 27

Studies and Research Committee

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Early Literacy



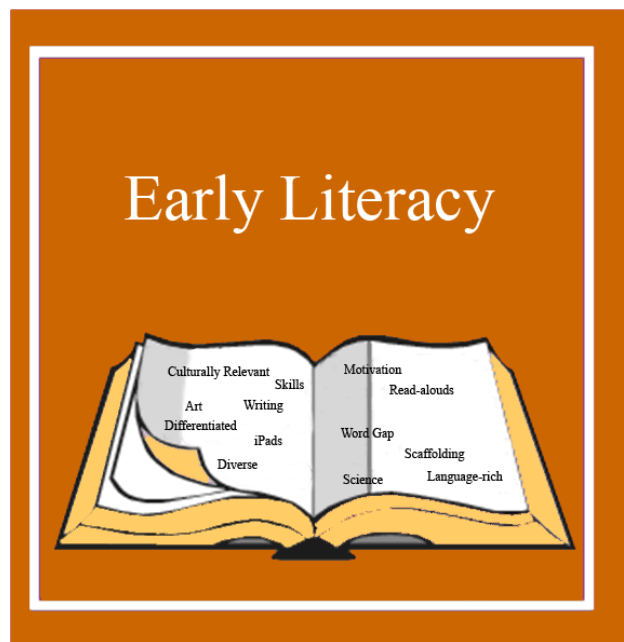
Leading the Way to Literacy

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TEACHERS ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Early Literacy

*Florida Reading Association
2017*



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President's Message

**Kathleen Fontaine, Ed.D. – Florida Reading Association President
Palm Bay Education Group, Inc.
Bay District Schools**

The 2017 edition of *Teachers on the Cutting Edge* is respectfully offered to educators by the Florida Reading Association. Early Literacy is the hot topic presented in the 2017 edition. Developing early literacy is relevant to the reading and language arts process coupled with the integration of technology. Meeting the needs of the 21st century implications and applications, requires scrutiny of educational frameworks that motivate and engage young learners.

The reviewers have done a marvelous job of analyzing each article. Information provided within each review includes where and when the article was published, a short synopsis of the article, implications of the research, and practical classroom application of the research. Comments are embedded in the reviews to further define the findings of the research.

Teachers on the Cutting Edge, published by the Florida Reading Association, is a quality publication outlining current research. The Florida Reading Association is a group of professionals whose focus and energy center on reading issues and other literacy concerns; by coming together to promote our common interest, we create a dynamic presence and a collective voice that can be heard throughout Florida. We invite all who share our common vision to join in our effort.

Enjoy *Teachers on the Cutting Edge*,

Kathleen Fontaine, Ed.D.



Editors' Foreword

Yvonne C. Campbell, Ph.D.
Florida, Memorial University

Jennie Ricketts-Duncan,
Ph.D. Barry University



Research shows that one of the best investments we can make in a child's life is high-quality early education...

President Barack Obama, 2013

High quality early education starts with early literacy development. Early literacy development is one of the most important phases of literacy development. But, kindergarteners begin school with significant differences in their literacy development. In his seminal article *Catch them before they fall*, Torgesen (1998) points out that children who get off to a poor start in reading seldom catch up with their peers and the effects of a slow start in reading build up over time and becomes immense.

We know that young children instructed in essential early literacy practices have a better chance of becoming successful in their academic lives as well as in their lives beyond formal schooling. In their position statement on *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8*, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009), appeal to educators (including child care providers) to help close the achievement gap by providing young children with developmentally appropriate practices. Current research on early childhood have consistently juxtaposed development appropriate practices with empirically-supported teaching strategies that enhance young children's early literacy development. Research-based strategies should include language-related instruction in reading and writing which should extend into the content area subjects (IRA & NEAYC, 1998). These emergent reading and writing activities should incorporate children books which help young children to develop and use language as the needed tool for learning (Flynn, 2016; Piasta, 2016; Watanabe & Hall-Kenyon, 2011). Children's books pique young children's interest and motivate them into building awareness for literacy learning (Marinak, Malloy, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2015).

This edition of *Teachers on the Cutting Edge* contains some of the most recent research-based articles that have proven successful in the early childhood classroom. The topics span ideas for teaching emergent literacy skills which also includes alphabet knowledge, and other numerous ideas that support diversity in the classroom. We thought that with the emphasis on technology

use as a teaching and learning tool, it would be helpful to include ideas on how technology is being used with young children. We anticipate that the contents herein will help teachers enrich their teaching and improve their learning environment to meet the needs of their young students.

Thank you!

Yvonne & Jennie

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Invited Foreword

Lilia DiBello, Ed.D. - Chair, Curriculum and Instruction Department
Associate Dean, Professor of Education
Barry University

Developing a strong foundation in early literacy is the best gift one could possibly give to a young child. It is the basis upon which all learning is built and we know that children begin to develop literacy skills from the day they are born. Language skills are established through many common interactions with babies and toddlers - such as singing songs, reading books, and sharing rhymes. “Early literacy behaviors have implications for instructional practice and later reading success” (Mandel Morrow, 2015, p. 2). It is through these natural interactions that parents, grandparents, teachers, and caregivers all play important roles in preparing children for a positive educational experience in the future. The Zero to Three Foundation highlights how the ‘magic of everyday moments’ can make for fostering strong early literacy skills (Zero to Three, n.d.).

The more words children hear, the more likely they are to begin to wonder about and understand language. Babies babble as they experiment with sounds and they imitate the facial expressions of those around them who play games like ‘peek-a-boo’ or sing familiar songs during feeding, or bedtime routines. When making the most of these moments with young children, adults are impacting the vocabulary of young children and providing a foundation for early literacy which is invaluable. Although babies do not read themselves, the foundation for reading is established through read-alouds when book handling skills are informally taught, along with an appreciation for the structure of stories, the development of predictive skills, distinguishing letters and the distinct sounds made by each, subsequently establishing phonemic awareness in young children. The key is establishing a language-rich environment. “A language-rich environment is a place in which children have many opportunities to see how print is used for a variety of purposes. And it's a place where language and print are incorporated in playful ways into everyday activities” (Snow, 1998).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association (now known as the International Literacy Association) published a joint position statement on *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children* (1998). Although a bit dated, it was a comprehensive position statement based on research which established a true continuum in the development of language and literacy skills. In 2000, the National Reading Panel concluded their work and submitted the final reports of their findings in reviewing over 100,000 reading studies on how children learn to read. It was clear that the best approach to reading instruction incorporated:

- explicit instruction in phonemic awareness
- systematic phonics instruction
- methods to improve fluency
- ways to enhance comprehension

This was followed by the National Early Literacy Panel Report in 2008 which synthesized scientific research done which was focused on the development of early literacy skills between

the ages of zero to five. It was found that conventional reading and writing skills that are developed from 0-5 are strongly related to later conventional literacy skills. Specifically 6 variables show a high correlation:

- alphabet knowledge (AK): knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters
- phonological awareness (PA): the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning
- rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of random letters or digits
- RAN of objects or colors: the ability to rapidly name a sequence of repeating random sets of pictures of objects (e.g., “car,” “tree,” “house,” “man”) or colors
- writing or writing name: the ability to write letters in isolation on request or to write one’s own name
- phonological memory: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time.

Each of these components has been highlighted in many educational reform efforts which have begun since the publication of these findings. Our goal now as educators is to take from this extensive research and build upon these initiatives in order to reach more children during the critical years. To acquire and develop literacy skills, we know that young children require good role models who appreciate a child centered emergent literacy approach to teaching and learning which assumes that early exposure to books and a social constructivist approach to learning highlights the dynamic interaction between reading, writing, speaking and listening which occurs naturally when meaningful experiences with language are provided daily.

This issue of *Teachers on the Cutting Edge* is focused on Early Literacy. The authors have all dedicated their work in this edition to the latest in research and resources for literacy development in the early years. No doubt, their contributions to the field are important to establishing a foundation which will impact the lives of young children in meaningful ways.

Lilia Dibello, Ed.D.



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A Framework for Using iPads to Build Early Literacy Skills

Source

Northrop, L., & Killeen, E. (2013). A framework for using iPads to build early literacy skills, *The Reading Teacher*, 66(7), 531-537.

Summary

The authors describe a framework to integrate iPads into the classroom setting to teach early literacy skills in an authentic manner. For students to understand 21st century literacies, technology is vital for emergent and beginning readers. Northrop and Killeen (2013) offer an instructional framework for iPad integration using the gradual release of responsibility framework as a guideline. The authors recommend that students work at their instructional level or independent level for this technology to be most successful. A student may be savvy with technology, but he or she may not comprehend the literacy content of the application. Therefore, careful consideration must be rendered when integrating iPads into the classroom as an instructional and learning tool.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The authors suggest the following framework for effective teaching with apps:

- Step 1: Teach the targeted literacy skill without the app;
- Step 2: Explain and model the app;
- Step 3: Guided practice with the app and with the targeted literacy skill; and
- Step 4: Independent practice with the app.

Recommended Apps

- iWrite Words - Letter Identification
- Abc Pocket Phonics - Phonics
- Fry Sight Words - Sight Words
- Toontastic - Comprehension

Comment

The article emphasizes the gradual integration of technology into the classroom for early literacy skills in a responsible and authentic manner. The iPad can be a wonderful instructional tool and motivational tool for the classroom.

Artistic Technology Integration: Stories from Primary and Elementary Classrooms

Source

Steckel, B., Shinas, V. H., & Vaerenwyck, L. V. (2015). Artistic technology integration: stories from primary and elementary classrooms. *The Reading Teacher* 69(1), 41-49.

Summary

This article describes an exploration of a conceptual technology model referred to as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) which was implemented through a sociocultural lens to integrate technology and language arts within prekindergarten, primary, and elementary grades. By including the sociocultural lens, the authors extended the TPACK model to a new framework called TPACK+ which provided them with the opportunity to answer their research question of whether teaching is a skill or an art. The two authors and three teachers who experimented with the model alluded to the successful outcome of teaching a unit topic on Journeys, using selected children's books which were read aloud, blogging, emails, iPods, Ipads, Web 2.0 tools, document cameras, interactive whiteboards, wireless listening center, picture collages, and the digital bookmarking site Symbaloo to plan and implement interactive language arts lessons that brought together their idea of artistic integration of technology integration into primary and elementary classrooms.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Technology integration in language art instruction promote development of language and vocabulary within authentic highly relevant shared experiences.
- Children are enthusiastic when they are given authentic purposes to write for real audiences.
- Including digital tools and texts coexists harmoniously with the traditional paper-and-pencil activities students engage in.
- Visuals tools and texts enhance multimodal activities that yield clearer messages to nonreaders or those students with hearing impairments.
- Digital tools facilitate the home-school connection.
- Highly skilled teachers model and scaffold literacy instruction that encourages young readers and writers to become literate.

Comment

Technology was used to enable these students to engage in developmentally appropriate language and literacy activities. Teachers do not have to be highly adept with technology skills to be able to integrate it successfully in their teaching. When the gradual release of responsibility approach is used to model and scaffold how to compose a writing piece, first in the traditional format then convert it into digital forms, teachers are better able to differentiate instruction that will build connections between classroom and the global communities.

E-Books and E-Book Apps: Considerations for Beginning Readers

Source

Bates, C. C., Klein, A., Schubert, B., McGee, L., Anderson, N., Dorn, L., McClure, E., & Ross, R. H. (2016). E-Books and E-Book Apps: Considerations for beginning readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(4), 401-411.

Summary

Many school districts across the country are embracing technology and providing students with the opportunity to use electronic devices to access digital text. Some districts are not only utilizing e-books for independent reading, but some are utilizing digital text to provide guided reading instruction. The authors of this article caution that the transition from using printed books to using e-books can be challenging for beginning readers. Students who are at the very beginning stages of reading are just learning how print works. The features of e-books may help or hinder these students and awareness of these features is critical when teachers are selecting texts.

The authors of this article provide a brief overview of the typical reading behaviors demonstrated by students at the emergent and early phases of reading and the characteristics of texts that are supportive of students' reading at each phase. They suggest a framework for examining the digital features of texts that should be considered when using e-books for instructional purposes, they review a sample of e-book apps, and finally, the authors highlight how to use e-books to extend learning opportunities and support English learners.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

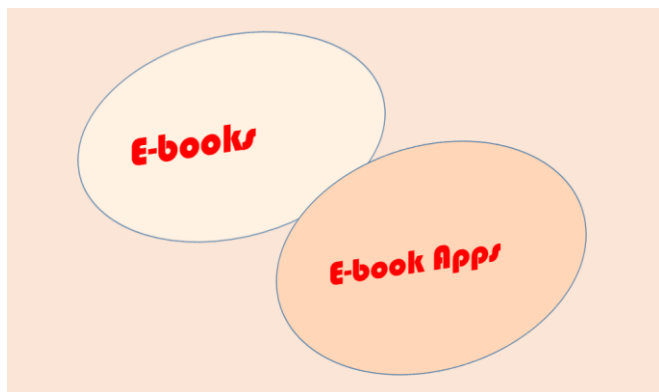
The article provides summaries and examples of the following:

- **Matching E-Books and Beginning Readers** – The article delineates several characteristics of text created for beginning readers, such as containing repeated sentence patterns and patterns that follow children's language patterns. This helps students to learn that print contains a message and that there is a connection between oral language and print. The text also uses a larger font, exaggerated spacing between words, and consistent placement of words on the page. E-Books must provide the same kinds of support for these students.
- **Review of E-Book Apps** – The article examines text supplied by Pioneer Valley, Raz-Kids, and PM E-Books. While the authors do not intend to recommend any one publisher, there are examples of the texts and charts detailing features of the books so that teachers may make their own decisions.
- **Extensions and Support of English Learners** – The authors provide rationale for using e-books to extend a lesson and describe features that help teachers utilize e-books for this purpose. They also provide rationale and a description of features for support English learners. Teachers may wish to consider this information as they implement the use of e-books in their classrooms.

Comment

The article highlights considerations for teachers as they contemplate utilizing e-books in their classrooms. It helps teachers consider the various features of e-books and how they might impact

beginning readers. The article contains a review of several e-book apps and provides examples of how text is presented in each. It also contains a step-by-step plan for implementing e-books for instruction and independent reading. Finally, the author highlights several specific characteristics of e-books that might be useful in extending reading activities and scaffolding English learners.



Exploring Culturally Relevant Texts with Kindergartners and Their Families

Source

Schrodt, K., Fain, G. J., & Hasty, M., (2015). Exploring culturally relevant texts with kindergartners and their families. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(8), 589–598.

Summary

This article shares the findings of a kindergarten classroom teacher who used The Family Backpack Project to explore different cultures to encourage her students to see their diversities as a resource not a hindrance. The students are from different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds and include African American, Sudanese African, Honduran, European American, Jamaican American, and adopted Chinese and Russian students. The Family Backpack Project's main goals are to: provide access to books, encourage reading and writing in response to the books, spend literacy time with families and honor their diversities, increase vocabulary and create text connections, and to strengthen the home to school connections. The teacher's four-week plan includes the use of four different texts on a particular theme. Each week she introduces a book, reads it aloud and has the students respond verbally and in writing. This is done with all four books during the four weeks. When the last book cycle is complete, the students chose their favorite one to take home with instructions for the family to work with the students. The results of this program are positive for both students and their families with the families becoming part of the school and their child's education.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

This article highlights:

- The Family Backpack Program
- Ways to reach your diverse classroom
- Methods to include families in instruction
- Building schema so students honor their own and others' diversities

Comment

This article provides a step-by-step description of how the author uses the Family Backpack Program in her classroom. It would be easy to follow her diagrams and explanations to create this in any classroom. This is aimed at kindergartners, but it can be adapted to any grade level.

Culturally Relevant Texts
with Kindergartners

Getting Students Hooked on the Reading Habit

Source

Gambrell, L. B. (2015). Getting students hooked on the reading habit. *The Reading Teacher*. 69(3), 259-263.

Summary

In classrooms today, the importance of motivating students to want to read has become as important as teaching students how to read. In this article, Gambrell explains that practices and principles in motivating students to read should be provided along with teaching students how to read. Such critical practices include providing access to a wide range of reading materials, giving opportunities for students to self-select books, and providing experiences that engage students in social interactions about what they are reading. Classroom reading instruction and interventions need to include these principles of motivation i.e., interest, challenge, collaboration and self-efficacy. Gambrell further describes several studies done with elementary students that strongly suggest that, incorporating instruction based on the practices and principles of motivation along with authentic real world activities, will help students develop the reading habit. The more students we can get hooked on reading, the more students will reach their literacy potential.

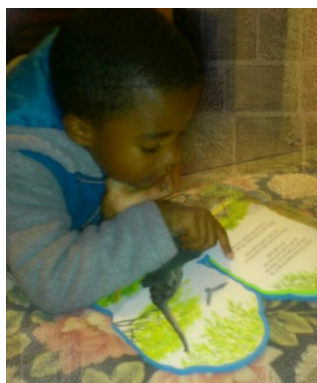
Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The author provides practical suggestions to incorporate simulated real world authentic tasks and activities to help students develop a reading habit. Such activities and tasks should be thought of as ranging from more authentic to less authentic and include the following:

- Involving students and adult pen pals to exchange letters about high-quality books followed up with small group discussions about their exchanges
- Using books checked out from the library rather than worksheets
- simulating tweeting with book tweets on a twitter board (using sticky notes and a bulletin board)
- Incorporating moderately challenging texts that are of high topic interest

Comment

The author provides details on how to help students develop a reading habit based on the principles of motivation and making reading relevant to the real world with practical suggestions to incorporate in the classroom



How Can Book Reading Close the Word Gap? Five Key Practices from Research

Source

Hindman, A., Snell, E. & Wasik, B. (2015). How can book reading close the word gap? Five key practices from research. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(7), 560-568.

Summary

This meticulously researched article reviews 34 experimental studies of book reading interventions for Pre-K to early elementary students and provides methodological details of each study to support the author's analyses. During their research, the authors found that vocabulary instruction during the earliest educational years is often "infrequent and cursory" and does not reflect the best practices of multiple, meaningful exposures to words. The authors said that while book reading is essential for early vocabulary development, it needs to have "active ingredients" to be successful. The authors outline five practices for classroom instruction to enhance vocabulary instruction that have been proven to close the word gap.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article discusses the following five strategies for vocabulary instruction that have been proven to raise children's vocabulary knowledge.

- Define new words
- Discuss and ask questions
- Reread books
- Retell stories
- Integrate new words throughout the classroom

An excerpt from a teaching guide for the book *Bear Snores On* provides step-by-step instruction as well as links to Common Core standards. Also, within the discussion of each strategy are links to websites that provide additional support and classroom activities.

Comment

The impeccable research was matched only by the accessibility of this article to teaching practitioners. The authors employ "Pause & Ponder" reflections, a best practice in itself, pullout quotes and guidelines on word choice. A discussion of the shocking difference in word exposure in a low income (616 words per hour) and a professional (2,153 words per hour) household segues into classroom implications for students of all abilities.

How Do I Write...? Scaffolding Preschoolers' Early Writing Skills

Source

Cabell, S., Tortorelli, L., & Gerde, H. (2013). How do I write...? Scaffolding preschoolers' early writing skills. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(8), 650-659.

Summary

Typical preschool classrooms are diverse and vary in skill levels. This presents a challenge for teachers to offer explicit instruction in early writing. Preschool teachers receive limited guidance to apply research on early writing in order to individualize instruction. It is important for teachers to understand typical writing development and use this knowledge to identify what children already know and what they are ready to learn next. Cabell, Tortorelli, and Gerde (2013) provide a framework that teachers can use to evaluate children's writing and select appropriate individualized strategies for scaffolding instruction. The framework is designed around four levels of early writing development. In the first level, drawing and scribbling, children are not able to make a distinction between the illustration and the writing. In the second level, letter, and letter-like forms, children begin to write letter-like forms and some letter shapes. In the third level, salient and beginning sounds, children represent sounds they hear in the spoken language. The fourth level is beginning and ending sounds, where children begin to attend to individual sounds in words. The authors explain that writing progresses in a developmental order, but children may not master one level before moving on to the next level. Children can move back and forth between levels depending on the writing task. Examining a child's writing thoughtfully can inform decisions for productive instruction that will support children at each level of early writing development.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides summaries and examples of the following:

- Classroom Examples – four student samples of how a teacher individualized instruction for each student at their level
- Goals for Children – provides teachers with goals at each level for early writing development
- Centers – opportunities for play and writing at each level, activities to promote letter-sound correspondence
- Journals – ideas to incorporate journal writing at each level
- Morning Message – engages all children in the writing process by modeling and co-creating a meaningful message for the class

Instructional Challenges in Developing Young Children's Science Concepts: Using Informational Text Read- Alouds

Source

Hoffman, J. L., Collins, M. F., & Schickedanz, J. A. (2015). Instructional challenges in developing young children's science concepts. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(5), 363-372.

Summary

The time spent focused on teaching literacy has caused a significant decline in the time devoted to content area instruction, with some schools eliminating it altogether in the early grades. Due to this decline, educators in the primary grades have been encouraged to integrate science and social studies into the literacy block. The authors start off by discussing why narrative texts are not the most appropriate texts for teaching scientific concepts as informational texts. They then present four guiding principles to support concept development in science read-alouds and illustrate those principles with actual classroom experiences.

Implications/Applications for the classroom

The article provides summaries and examples of the following:

- Questions to allow educators to reflect on their current approach to content area literacy instruction
- Advantages of using informational texts rather than narrative texts for content area read-alouds
- Inclusion of four guiding principles and practical challenges for teaching science concepts through read-alouds of informational text
- Criteria for selecting quality informational literature plus an example of quality informational literature
- Excerpts of actual informational literature read-alouds

Comment

The article provides clear guidelines for choosing quality informational text for use in productive read-alouds, especially in the science genre. Authentic detailed classroom experiences are also included.



Jump-Starting Preschoolers' Emergent Literacy: The Entomologist Tool Kit

Source

Byington, T. A., & Kim, Y. (2016). Jump-starting preschoolers' emergent literacy: The entomologist tool kit. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(5), 601-604. doi:10.1002/trtr.1540

Summary

It is important for teachers of preschoolers to create literacy-rich environments. Literacy-rich environments extend students vocabulary, oral language, and writing development. Developing experiences around a theme or topic of student interest can enhance engagement and facilitate literacy development. One method for integrating content specific literacy experiences is to create a tool kit for student's use during center time. For example, one teacher created an entomologist tool kit that included props intended to jump-start students' engagement in literacy activities. The strategic use of props (journals, pencils, vocabulary picture cards, and informational texts), along with teacher mediated dialogue, promoted the use of new vocabulary, oral development, and emergent writing skills. The authors provide explicit steps for creating similar tool kits that promote preschoolers' language and literacy development within meaningful contexts.

The Article Offers:

The authors provide explicit steps, along with an example, for creating a variety of content-specific tool kits. The steps guide teachers' planning from start to finish and include the following:

- generating a career topic
- brainstorming prompts
- gathering materials
- selecting target vocabulary
- generating literacy activities
- introducing tool kits to students
- extending and expanding on learning

Implications/Applications for the classroom

It is critical to facilitate the development of emergent literacy skills in the early childhood. Teachers should ensure that they provide literacy-rich classrooms that build preschoolers' oral language, phonological awareness, fluency, emergent writing, vocabulary, and comprehension. Language and literacy skills can be enhanced through the use of content specific props.

Comment

The authors provide details on how one teacher created and implemented an entomologist tool kit, along with explicit steps for creating a variety of content-specific toolkits.

Language-Rich Early Childhood Classroom: Simple but Powerful Beginnings

Source:

Flynn, E. E. (2016). Language-rich early childhood classroom: Simple but powerful beginnings. *The Reading Teacher*. 70(2), 159-166.

Summary

Literacy language routines in the preschool and kindergarten classrooms can provide children with needed exposure to language that they might not otherwise be experiencing at home, especially if those students are from lower socioeconomic status (SES) families. Flynn suggests that incorporating a daily routine of Story Circles, as a way of story-telling, can provide children with rich opportunities to be exposed to language as a foundation to literacy. Flynn explains that this story-telling process may seem very simple but is a specialized way of using language. For example, looking closer at student samples reveals the use of syntactically complex utterances and variations in ways of telling a story. Story Circles can also foster classroom collaboration in that students become motivated by other students' stories to participate in conversations of asking each other about their stories. It is noted that the examples used in the article were drawn from a study of Story Circles in preschool classrooms serving English, Spanish, and Ukrainian children from low SES families. The author also describes strategies and common story-telling devices within the use of Story Circles such as abstract and orientation which help with understanding and meaning. Flynn closes with a focus on promoting, extending, and capturing the language learning process of Story Circles by tapping into students' experiences and engaging them as sources of authority with valuable knowledge to bring to the classroom from outside of the classroom.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The author describes steps and student examples for the use of Story Circles for preschool and kindergarten classroom language learning. The steps can help teachers to replicate story circles in their classrooms. The steps are:

- “Organize children into small groups of four or five, considering children’s strengths and areas in need of further support.
- Incorporate story circles into your weekly routine, dedicating at least one day for small-group storytelling.
- Audio record and listen to children’s stories, noting valued themes and prominent ways of using language.
- Build on children’s stories through either a writing activity or a thematic study based on their ideas and interests.
- Reflect on the opportunities for children to use language in extended turns in the classroom. Be sure to engage each child in an extended conversation during the week” (Flynn, 2016, p. 7).”

Comment

The author describes advantages, steps for implementation, and student examples of using Story Circles as a daily routine to engage children in literacy through language-rich learning environments in the preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

Me and My Reading Profile: A Tool for Assessing Early Reading Motivation

Source

Marinak, B. A., Malloy, J. B., Gambrell, L. B. & Mazzoni, S. A. (2015). Me and my reading profile: A tool for assessing early reading motivation. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(1), 51-62.

Summary

This article builds on the previous work of the authors, which addresses motivation for literacy learning and presents an instrument for assessing early reading motivation. Citing past research that suggests “motivation plays a central role in literacy development and that reading preferences develop...along with... foundational skills...” (p.51). The authors note that decades of research have described the motivation of literacy development in students in grades 3 and beyond but, very little attention has been paid to the literacy learning motivation of students in grades K-2. Given this, these authors recognized the need for a “developmentally appropriate motivation tool” for grades K-2 (p.51). They determined that by asking young students to self-report about their likes/dislike, as well as their comfort so teachers might use this specific knowledge to plan literacy instruction with motivation in mind. The article shares the development and validation of the *Me and My Reading Profile* tool (MMRP) and provides:

- a rationale for promoting the use of the MMRP; “reading motivation begins to erode as early as second grade” (p.52)
- a discussion regarding the ability of young children to separate motivation from other concepts
- the development of MMRP and its field testing of final product
- the actual measurement tool with instructions for administration and scoring.

This Article Offers:

- Insights into the study’s development and process
- A usable product as well as administration instructions (with a script) and scoring protocol

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- The article offers several implications for classroom use, such as:
- knowledge of young students’ motivation for literacy learning provides insight for planning instruction
- it confirms that reading motivation is a valid construct to examine in the primary grades
- and that it can be reliably assessed
- the MMRP is developmentally appropriate for young readers

Comment

I was very impressed with this article, not only with the concept, but also that its information is immediately applicable. Very user friendly! I think that primary classroom teachers will find it very helpful.

Moving to Assessment-Guided Differentiated Instruction to Support Young Children's Alphabet Knowledge

Source

Piasta, S. B. (2014). Moving to assessment-guided differentiated instruction to support young children's alphabet knowledge. *The Reading Teacher* 68(3), 202–211.

Summary

Children's alphabet knowledge is a strong predictor of their success in learning to read. However, children enter the early literacy classroom with varied literacy experiences and consequently exhibit significant differences in their alphabet knowledge. This article attempts to encourage early childhood educators to move beyond whole-class instructional practices and implement alphabet instruction that is aligned with current emphases on assessment-driven decision making and differentiated instruction. The author first provides a brief review of the importance of alphabet knowledge as it relates to theory, research, and the current educational context. Next, the author presents research evidence that suggest that children's alphabet knowledge development is influenced by both differences among children as well as by inter-letter differences that make some letters easier or more difficult to learn. Lastly, the author provides a framework in which assessment guides differentiated alphabet instruction and empirically-validated practices to support such instruction.

Implications/Applications for the classroom

- Letters and corresponding sounds are the basic building blocks of alphabetic languages such as English.
- Children who understand the “alphabetic principle,” or insight that printed words consist of letters that can be mapped to sounds, have achieved an important first step in learning to read and write.
- Children who are provided alphabet learning opportunities make greater gains in early literacy development.
- In addition to differences across children, accumulating research demonstrates differences across letters in how readily these are learned.
- Research suggests setting a goal of knowing at least 18 uppercase and 15 lowercase letters by name at the end of preschool.
- Educators are encouraged to use assessment-guided differentiated instruction to support children's letter name and sound development rather than traditional one-size-fits-all whole-class approaches.

Comment

The article offers a step-by step framework for assessment-guided differentiated alphabet instruction to support children's letter name and sound development rather than traditional one-size-fits-all whole-class approaches. The framework includes, in tabular form, (1) established alphabet screening assessments to identify children likely to experience difficulties in acquiring alphabet knowledge and (2) tips for conducting effective diagnostic alphabet assessment.

Planning Literacy Environments for Diverse Preschoolers

Source

Dennis, L.R., Lynch, S.A., & Stockall, N. (2012). Planning literacy environments for diverse preschoolers. *Young Exceptional Childhood*, 15(3), 3-19.

Summary

Emergent literacy is recognized as a developmental process beginning at birth, during which children acquire foundational skills for reading and writing. It is important that children are immersed in a literacy-rich environment which allows them to learn about language, reading, and writing, through participation in a wide variety of meaningful activities, including the opportunity to handle books and to listen to stories being read aloud. The authors explore some ideas to help teachers with each of these responsibilities given the fact that classrooms are extremely diverse and oftentimes include not only students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, but also students with disabilities and English learners.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

- Classroom library centers - Teachers should place the center away from noise and distractions and emphasize that books should be included in all centers in the classroom. The use of audio books is encouraged to support children's interest. Seating arrangements should be comfortable for all children. Pictures may be included to foster children's language and vocabulary development. An adjacent writing center allows for the use of books as references and models for writing and should include activities that encourage children to engage in conversation while drawing and writing.
- Selecting appropriate books – Teachers need to consider the cultures and primary language of the children in their classrooms when they select books. Books that relate to the culture of children allow them to connect with the texts as they read. Teachers should consider potential gender bias and critically evaluate the messages conveyed in the books they select. Teachers should also consider the length of the books they select to ensure that they are consistent with their children's ability to attend. Children with visual disabilities may require large print or braille. Predictable books seem to appeal to all children.
- Engaging Children During Book Reading –Reading books should be an interactive experience. Teachers may need to provide supports for children with disabilities, or linguistically diverse children to enable them to participate in conversations or respond to questions about the book. Supports may include pictures or sentence starters. Teachers should be aware that the questions they pose to children during book reading may need to be elementary at first and then become more complex as students become familiar with the story.

Comment

This article provides preschool teachers with practical suggestions on how to prepare their classrooms so that ALL students (including students with developmental delays or disabilities and students who are culturally and linguistically diverse) may be immersed in literacy and develop the foundational skills they need for reading and writing. The article also provides considerations for selecting multicultural literature.

Using Print in the Environment to Promote Early Writing

Source

Gerde, H, Goetsch, M., & Bingham, G. (2016). Using print in the environment to promote early writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(3), 283-293.

Summary

Although most early childhood educators recognize the importance of print in their classrooms, the opportunities to provide children with meaningful print and intentionally engage them in using this print has some limitations. One limitation is that the print posted in classrooms lacks relevance and purpose. The print in classrooms should not function as decoration or background, it should serve as model print of what teachers want children to write. Another limitation is classroom print is not often used by the teachers or children. Because print knowledge and early writing skills are predictors of later literacy achievement it is important for teachers to create a print rich environment that is used by both teachers and students. Recent studies have found that print is often not referenced and therefore does not support children's writing. The authors describe research-based strategies for creating meaningful print and engaging children with print in the classroom to promote early writing.

Implications/Applications for the Classroom

The article provides summaries and examples of the following:

- Meaningful Places to Post Names – engages students in print that is related to them and their interests
- Concept Maps – creates meaningful opportunities for children to write with the teacher and is relevant to the classroom's current topic
- Cocreating Print with Children – student may compose, draw, or write parts of classroom documents
- Point to Print – highlights how pointing to words helps children understand that we read the print
- Think-Alouds – helps children understand how to approach print and the writing process
- Use Print as a Resource – encourages using print as a model for letter introduction and instruction
- Post Child Generated Print – helps celebrate the writing process, reinforces that writing has a purpose, and strengthens the presences of student writing in the classroom
- Create Print That Is Culturally Relevant – engages families in creating print for the classroom
- Use Print Throughout the Day – ideas to create more writing opportunities in routines

Comment

The article provides several examples of how to create a print rich environment that is used by both teachers and students. A photo is provided for each example.

Writing and Writers: The Perceptions of Young Children and Their Parents

Source:

Bradford, H., & Wyse, D. (2013). Writing and writers: The perceptions of young children and their parents. *Early Years*, 33(3), 252-265.

Summary

This study shares conclusions of a qualitative collective case study focused on a better understanding of how six English children between three and four years old perceived themselves as writers through prompted writing activities with the children and semi-structured interviews with parents. The authors found that young children do have clear perceptions of themselves as writers and that there is a connection between parents' positive perception of their children's writing and their attempts to understand the meanings their children try to convey.

Implications/Applications for the classroom

The article provides the following recommendations regarding implications:

- Early educators may benefit from identifying parents' perceptions of their students' writing
- Early childhood educators may benefit from helping parents understand that having positive perceptions of their children's writing may lead to a greater focus on meaning and, subsequently, better literacy outcomes for their children
- Keeping a writing portfolio of young children's work and sharing and discussing samples of that work with parents may be beneficial for educators of young children

Comment

The article provides several examples of how early childhood educators may have better outcomes teaching parents about their children's literacy development.



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