Learning About the ABC’s…Teaching about Letters in Words in Authentic Contexts

“Simply training children to memorize letters without providing learning in a larger literacy context has proven unsuccessful as a predictor of beginning reading success” (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004, p. 8)

Children’s Concepts of Print, Alphabet Knowledge, and Phonological Awareness are key predictors of later reading outcomes (National Early Literacy Panel, 2004)

Definitions:

Concepts of Print: Children’s understandings about the functions (e.g., practical uses), structure (e.g., printed words are separated by spaces), and conventions (e.g., left-to-right, top to bottom sequence) of written language.

Concept of Word: The understanding that words are composed of letters and separated by spaces

Concept of Letter: The understanding that letters have distinct shapes, have names, and form word

Early Learning Standards for NC’s Preschoolers:

Alphabet Knowledge
Children begin to…
Know that letters of the alphabet are a special category and are different from pictures and shapes.

Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name and in the names of others who are important to them.

Alphabetic Principle
Children begin to…
Understand that letters function to represent sounds in spoken words.

Make some sound-to-letter matches, using letter name knowledge (e.g., writes “M” and says “This is Mommy”).
Alphabet Knowledge Development (Portfolio Rating Scale: The Bridge, Pierce, Summer, O’DeKirk, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does</th>
<th>interact with/use letters of the alphabet?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explores and plays with alphabet materials</td>
<td>Knows that letters are different from pictures and shapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alphabet Knowledge Teaching Strategies

ABC Materials Around the Room:

- Gel Gems Letters (thegelstore.com) (on windows, mirrors, white boards)
- ABC cookie cutters for dough and play dough (art, writing, pretend play, sand box, water table)
- ABC magnets (can make your own!) (white boards, refrigerator, sand box, water table)
- ABC sponge, rubber, plastic, tile letters (art, writing, water table)
- ABC puzzles (gummylump.com, ) (manipulative center)
- ABC pillows, posters, rugs, curtains, covers, carpets (Kaplan.com;)
- ABCs on the ceiling, shine a flashlight on them and have children name, find Children’s dictionaries (enchantedlearning.com; ) (group time, all centers)

Children’s ABC Books (place in associated learning centers):
(readinga-z.com; innovative-educators.com)
- ABC by William Wegman (writing center)
- Alligators All Around by Maurice Sendak (science center)
- Alpha Bugs by David A. Carter (science center)
- The Butterfly Alphabet by Kjell B. Sandved (science center)
- Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault (writing center; computer center if you have Chicka Chicka Boom Boom software; or art center if you have alphabet letters)
- Eating the Alphabet, Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z (snack, lunch area; dramatic play “kitchen” area)
- Ellsworth’ Extraordinary Electric Ears and Other Amazing Alphabet Anecdotes by Valerie Fisher
- The Graphic Alphabet by David Pelletier (art, writing)
- The Icky Book Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta
- On Market Street by Arnold Lobel (dramatic play)
- Potluck by Anne Shelby
- 26 Letters and 99 Cents by Tana Hoban
- The Z Was Zapped by Chris Van Allsburg
- Where is Everybody? By Eve Merriam

Make personal and class ABC books!

Look at these strategies for teachers and families from Foundations: Early Learning Standards for NC’s Preschoolers and Strategies to Guide their Success:
Example Strategies for Educators:
- Draw children’s attention to print in the environment and discuss what it is communicating (e.g., instructions, labels, menus).
- Assist children in creating their own books, class books, and stories.
- Reread books multiple times, changing the approach as children become familiar with the book. On occasion, ask questions that tap their understanding of why characters are doing things and talk about the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Discuss letter names in the context of daily activities (as opposed to teaching one letter per week) and provide opportunities for children to hear specific letter sounds, particularly beginning sounds.
- Provide opportunities to explore letters and sounds (e.g., with literacy tools and models such as magnetic letters, rubber stamps, alphabet puzzles, sponge letters, clay, ABC molds, and alphabet exploration software).

Example Strategies for Families:
- Read and reread books that have rhymes and refrains. Encourage your child to join in.
- Recite nursery rhymes. Sing songs. Play word games.
- Share alphabet books. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Point out letters in familiar names and signs.
- Use your home language when reading, singing, and playing word games. You will be helping your child learn and enjoy the time you spend together.
- Use children’s names in daily routines (e.g., to mark turns, keep track of who is present, etc.) to help them become familiar with the letters in their names.
- Discuss letter names in the context of daily activities (as opposed to teaching one letter per week) and provide opportunities for children to hear specific letter sounds, particularly beginning sounds.
- Provide opportunities to explore letters and sounds (e.g., with literacy tools and models such as magnetic letters, rubber stamps, alphabet puzzles, sponge letters, clay, ABC molds, and alphabet exploration software).
- As you read, call attention to the many different kinds of written materials in your home (labels, newspapers, magazines, cereal boxes, recipe cards, greeting cards) and in the outside world (billboards, menus, signs).
- Give children magazines, menus, lists, notes, tickets, and other print materials to use in make-believe play.
- Make books available in children’s home languages.

Other ABC strategies/resources:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Name Games: finding, matching, signing in, putting together from individual letters
Example of a name song:
I have a friend whose name is ____
We have fun together,
We learn and play at school,
Learn and play at school,
Learn and play at school,
In any kind of weather (adapted from a Creative Curriculum, 2004)

Post office—children send receive notes, cards, letters

Other Name Games:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Logo Mania:
Logo puzzles in a box
Word walls/trees with logos
Make “billboards” for outdoor play
Have “find the logo” scavenger hunts
Logo menus, labels, games

Other Logo Ideas:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Pretend/Model:
Look up words that you “don’t know” in a children’s dictionary, emphasizing the initial letter;

Look up names, stores, delivery in phone book, emphasizing the initial letter;

Look up movies, shows in paper or TV guide, emphasizing the initial letter;

Make lists of everything!

Help children “file” their work by letter of first name

Engage children in shared writing activities (hand out) and class journals

Websites:

www.abcteach.com
www.learningplanet.com/act/abcorder.asp
www.literacy.uconn.edu/pkhome.htm
www.sesameworkshop.org/sesamestreet/sitemap

Others:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Curricular Programs:

Letter Land (www.letterland.com)
Letter People (www.letterpeople.com)

Others:________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Print Resources for Adults:

Letter Links
High Scope press, ISBN # 1-5739-143-1


Other Ideas/Resources:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

pierce, p. 9/04
The following sections describe the teaching and learning process of how the texts were used in the classroom and analyse students’ work and feedback to two surveys about their experiences of engaging with these authentic resources. Nunan (1988) claims that authentic materials “reflect the outside world and have been produced for purposes other than to teach language” (p. 99). It was pleasing to note that a number of students used phrases and words in their own letters they had learnt from their reading. What was of interest and some concern, though, was that their Chinese letters did not show the personal connection that had been so evident in their English letters. See more ideas about Learning abc, Learning activities, Words. Try the best way to teach sight words in only a few minutes a day with this simple folder method. It doesn't require any fancy supplies and gets results fast! Preschool Learning Activities Play Based Learning Alphabet Activities Hands On Activities Early Learning Abc Alphabet Literacy Games Hands On Learning Kindergarten Preschool Math. With authentic texts, learners are provided with words and expressions used in real-life contexts. When students are confronted with similar situations, they are less likely to shy away from the need to communicate. Third, materials that are published weekly are more informal and socially-centered than those that purely define rules and provide patterns for sentences. With this, it keeps teachers and students aware of changes in language. When craze words and phrases are introduced, students are likely to be interested about how they are used. As opportunities arise, they can understand and give opinions on issues using these words. Answer to Dynamic Linguistic Changes. Language is dynamic. The learning of the foreign language is not only the development of particular skills or the acquisition of knowledge about the language structure and the rules of using them, but also the ability to utilize the language as the main mean of interconnection with the native speakers. The study of the target language culture is considered to be the integral component of foreign language learning. Authentic materials, on the other hand, are real in the sense that they are not created for students as the target audience but for native speakers. The obvious advantage, of course, is that by using authentic materials you present students with actual everyday language, just as it appears in real life.