

Inclusion and Literacy
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Supporting Emergent Literacy in Children with Special Needs

Important elements for supporting emergent literacy:

- Comfortable places for children to sit (e.g. small couches, floor pillows).
- Places for adults and children to sit together.
- Different types of books (e.g., noisy, alphabet, touch and feel, and rhyming books; books with repetitive phrases; books featuring children with disabilities; books featuring children of various ethnic and cultural identities).
- Five books for each child in the class, rotated frequently.
- A listening center with tape player, headphones, and cassettes.
- A writing center with individual journals and many writing implements.
- Books made by the children in the class
- A book repair box
- Scheduled times for children to look at books independently and to be read to.
- Print that is displayed purposefully around the room (not just clutter).
- Parents involved in literacy activities.
- Access to books children can take home with them.
- Meaningful conversations between adults and children throughout the day.
- Letter and sound games that teachers play with children (e.g. rhyming, clapping syllables of names).

Tips for teaching emergent literacy skills:

Child-focused instructional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systematically teach a child to look at a book using prompting and reinforcement techniques.• Teach a child who is making the transition to kindergarten to write his or her name using direct instruction and graduated guidance.• Use time delays to increase commenting when a child is looking at a preferred book.• Address matching skills by using examples of environmental print and discrete trail teaching techniques.• Teach a child to answer questions about a story by using visual support strategies and systematically fade those prompts.
Embedded learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address holding a writing utensil through a preferred activity such as signing up to use the computer.• Address language comprehension through reading stories and asking questions about preferred to piece.• Teach awareness of environmental print through art projects, including collages from magazines and newspaper circulars.• Target letter sounds by using alphabet blocks in the construction area• Use sound lotto games to enhance listening skills• Use a scrabble board to enhance matching skills and pattering skills.
Curriculum modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use books about highly preferred topics• Use modified writing materials (e.g. foam grips on pens)• Use modified writing surfaces (e.g. slant boards and table top easels.• Include writing materials in many different centers• Increase name recognition by requiring children to “sign up” for highly preferred centers and jobs using name tags.
High-quality early childhood environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construct literacy-rich centers including, but not limited to, a library center, a writing center, and literacy and writing props in dramatic play• Create a print-rich classroom• Schedule regular story times• Conduct phonological awareness activities including rhyming and sound awareness.

Reference: Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs: Susan R. Sandall & Ilene S. Schwartz, 2002, Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.

Opportunities to Support Literacy:

1. Environmental Print:

- Bring in items such as napkins, paper cups, bags and wrappers with familiar commercial logos, such as McDonalds, Kmart, and Coca Cola.
- Use items with logos in pretend play activities, such as grocery store and restaurant.
- Look for matching logos in newspapers and magazines.
- Look for matching logos on walks in the community and on field trips.

2. Functional Print:

- Taking attendance
- Assigning jobs
- Writing notes
- Ordering from a catalog
- Using labels.

3. Play Activities:

- Treasure Hunt
- Writing letters in pretend play.
- Multiple copies of familiar books
- Making Picture Albums

Literacy Activities throughout the Daily Schedule:

1. Arrival:
 - Cubbies with name and picture
 - Read any notes
2. Posting the Daily Schedule:
 - Large print, include a photo or drawing of each major daily activity
3. Circle Time:
 - Identify carpet squares or chairs with children's names and /or pictures.
 - Name cards
 - Job headings
 - Snack or Lunch menu
 - Card representing each favorite song or storybook
4. Story time:
 - Repeat stories frequently
 - Include stories with developmentally simple themes.
 - Make photo albums
 - Add props to stories to help maintain children's attention
 - Select books with rhymes and predictable phrases
 - Include books with large print.
 - Place extra copies of frequently read books in the library corner
 - Encourage active participation as story is read.
 - Help children act out the story
5. Snack Time:
 - Written menu with pictures
 - Interesting snack foods (alphabet soup, crackers, cereal, small cookies shaped like letters)
 - Read labels of food containers
 - Follow simple recipes
 - Write recipe ingredients on large chart paper
 - Children's names on the back of placemats.
6. Art Activities:
 - Drawing representations of familiar things
 - Be fairly dramatic about writing a child's name on her artwork (use marking pen)
 - Look for there artwork
 - Write something about the picture on the bottom
 - Label art material
7. Outside Play:
 - Chart with pictures and labels of outside play areas
 - Label major storage areas
 - Play Simon Says using picture cards
8. Departure:
 - Look for names on artwork

- Locate cubbies
- Give children notes to take home, read them to the child

Assisting Children with Special Needs by Using Pictures and Print:

Examples of Ways to Use Pictures and Print to support Expressive Language:

- Select a song or story during circle time by pointing to or removing a picture card from a large poster board.
- Make cards with pictures and key words representing things that the child will most likely need to say
- Post pictures on the wall at eye level in various areas to depict important messages for that activity.
- Use Communication Boards or picture Exchange systems

Using Pictures to Assist Comprehension and Memory:

Strategies:

- Post pictures at eye level above the sink to help children remember the sequence of hand washing or brushing teeth.
- At each transition, show the child a picture of the event that comes next or design a picture sequence board to represent the steps necessary in a particular transition
- At beginning of free play, show the children pictures of options and ask them to indicate the activity they prefer.
- At the end of the day show pictures cards representing major activities of the day. Ask the child to point to photos representing the things she enjoyed most.

Reference:

- Strategies for Including Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Settings: M. Diane Klein, Ruth E. Cook and Anne Marie Richardson-Gibbs, 2001, published by Delmar, Thomson Learning