

Developing Literacy in the Early Stages

Staff Development Activities

Children's Emergent Literacy

In the nursery school we can see children in the process of emerging in to literacy. The nursery school offers children a stimulating environment and a rich variety of enjoyable learning experiences through which we can help children build on their home and community learning. Children acquire literacy through a range of experiences and in the nursery these are an integral and natural part of the curriculum. Language is not offered as a separate, discrete activity but is an intrinsic aspect of all the curricular areas. The challenges we are presented with are:

- to ensure that we plan and provide for a wide range of literacy experiences
- to capitalise and exploit spontaneous, child-led opportunities for literacy development in a natural, enjoyable and meaningful way.

Activity 1

Children grow up in an environment saturated in print and research shows that their awareness of and attention to this has an important part to play in the development of reading.

- Do you provide a print rich environment in your school?
- Take a walk around the school with a partner and make a note of the strengths and weaknesses in the school in terms of environmental print. Have you seized all of the opportunities you can to display words and phrases which children might take an interest in?
- Draw up a checklist which might help to inform a policy on environmental print in the nursery. You may wish to focus on aspects such as:
 - messages about the current day
 - functional labels
 - captions for pictures and objects
 - explanatory labels
 - opportunities to use the children's names
 - children's work
 - scribing children's stories
 - displays: can the children see the print?; is it at their own height?
- Organise an 'Environmental Print' walk for the children in your local neighbourhood. Make a note of the words which the children already recognise or take an interest in. Can you incorporate these into the nursery activities?

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Creating a community of readers

As well as ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of books available to children in school, we need to ensure that reading is promoted as a highly valued activity. There are a number of ways in which we can actively demonstrate that reading has a high priority and show children that they are joining a community of readers.

Activity 8

- How do you currently create a sense of ‘reading community’?
e.g.
 - displays of books
 - author of the week
 - book weeks
 - lunchtime reading clubs.

- List all the ways in which you could extend your approaches?
e.g.
 - visits to publishers
 - including children in selection of books and book events
 - visits from illustrators.

List any ideas and discuss them in your groups.