INSPIRING THE ZEST FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS in Kindergarten

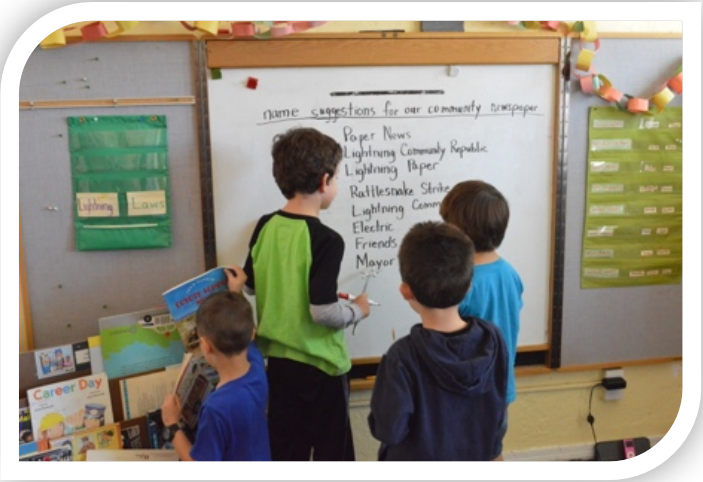
IN THIS LEARNER'S GUIDE

Brain development research identifies the first five years in life as critical years. It is when the brain is the most active, creating neural pathways that establish important networks for continued learning and development. Developing brains fire in many regions at once, creating a "firestorm" of connections with every action and interaction. The purpose of this English Language Arts training module is to identify approaches that optimize children's opportunities for developing early language and literacy skills. The focus is on integrating language and literacy development throughout the classroom, throughout the day. Literacy is everywhere! When teachers support children in developing an awareness that their ability to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, connects them to the world, children find purpose in developing those skills.

Arizona Department of Education, Early Childhood

INSPIRING THE ZEST FOR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

As we explore language arts for kindergartners, we understand that kindergartners come to school at varying stages of their development. By the age of five, children engage in talking and listening experiences which are unique to each individual child. From the time they were infants, some children have had adults in their lives who consistently engage in meaningful conversations with them. Talking about their day-to-day experiences, saying what they notice, and using complex sentence structures and expansive vocabulary helps children develop extensive oral language skills.



Contrary to this, some children may not have had a great deal of meaningful, reflective conversations with adults. The bulk of their language interactions are simple directives ("Pick up your clothes.") and/or are closed-ended questions, requiring merely a yes-no response (Are you hungry?").

When families **consistently** engage in rich conversations, sing songs, read and tell stories to their young child, they are supporting oral language development, the precursor for literacy development. Children who come from highly-literate home environments are exposed to a great deal of language as well as an array of experiences that encourage understanding of complex language structures. Even further, when parents have meaningful conversations with their child where they encourage them to wonder out loud, ask complex questions, describe their experiences, and extend their opportunities with books and information, they support the foundation for higher-order thinking skills.

As young children exhibit interests in their world including recreational activities, sports, art, or animals, families can build upon these budding interests. Inherent in each activity is a wide span of terminology (expanded vocabulary) that children must develop and understand in order to fully engage and participate in the event or activity. They might buy equipment or materials, books to read, arrange for lessons or take classes. To illustrate this point, if a child loves to turn cartwheels and somersaults, parents may arrange for a child to start a gymnastic class. During this class, a child might learn words including: aerial, balance, base, competition, freestyle, front handspring, front tuck, high bar, pommel horse, round offs, and rings. She will also learn words and phrases like, "over, under, higher, lower." These types of experiences enhance a child's exposure to the sounds of language. Young children with rich early experiences during their first five years in life including dynamic conversations where adults are interested in their perspectives develop approximately 20,000 vocabulary words by the time they enter first grade. Contrary to this, children who are in circumstances of poverty often do not have many opportunities that expose them to new and different experiences. Their instances for complex

conversations that include expanded vocabulary during their first five years in life are more limited. Unfortunately, the lack of these experiences limits the vocabulary knowledge to about 5,000 words-that is a deficit of about 15,000 words upon entering first grade.

This is where the kindergarten teacher can help! The kindergarten year is a formative year where teachers can intentionally provide opportunities for children that expose children to real and meaningful experiences that promote rich language usage, including extended blocks of time to play with language with others in their classroom community. This language use is necessary practice that develops the foundations needed for children to become proficient readers. Yet, some classroom models have children engaging in isolated assignments for long periods of time. When children are asked to complete worksheets as a modality for learning, children with limited language exposure oftentimes never "catch up" to their peers. Although sometimes children fair well during the kindergarten year, as they progress in age and grade, the missing foundational skills become more apparent as the educational experiences become more sophisticated.

WHAT GUIDES OUR PRACTICE?

The **opportunity** kindergarten teachers have is to:

- Understand that listening, speaking, reading, writing skills are on a continuum of development that begins at birth.
- Have an in-depth understanding of the developmental progressions of skills in the areas of oral language, reading and writing for young children.
- Encourage children to talk, talk and talk some more.
- Create relevant and meaningful opportunities for learning that deepen the purpose for listening, talking, reading and writing.
- Identify authentic opportunities for supporting language arts throughout the classroom and throughout the entire day.
- Help children see themselves as a member of a literate community.
- Learn to observe children within the context of their experiences and assess where each child is on the continuum of development.
- Use the information gleaned (i.e. formative assessment data) to inform planning to best support children's continued growth and development.

The intent of this English Language Arts Training Module is not to replace your language arts curriculum or to identify which curriculum or program you should be implementing. Likewise, it is not intended to provide specific strategies for teaching reading or writing skills. The Arizona Department of Education has a series of trainings that offer an in-depth exploration of these specific areas of learning. Check out their website for available trainings.

The purpose of this training module is to identify approaches that optimize children's opportunities for developing early language and literacy skills. Kindergarten is the time when children start to understand who they are as learners. This is when children's beliefs about their educational capabilities and competence begin to develop. The focus of this English Language Arts module is to identify approaches that support the integration of language and literacy development in all areas of learning. Optimizing the classroom environment to support language and literacy development is multi-faceted and it requires an understanding of what kindergartners needs developmentally.

OPTIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES: SCHEDULE

Five- and six-year-old children need to be actively engaged in their learning. Aligning the schedule to provide blocks of time for children to have choices in their learning and to provide experiences that are engaging and exciting encourages children to want to do more and know more. The 90-minute block recommended for English Language Arts is an excellent time for children to engage in a variety of meaningful experiences that support their developing knowledge and interests. This might include retelling or reenacting a familiar story or writing a thank you letter to a parent who helped with a classroom project. This is also the time where teachers may provide Tier 2 intervention, working with a small group of children while others are busy working in small groups. Opportunities for language and literacy, however, extend beyond this 90-minute block. Just as in life, talking, listening, reading, and writing extend into all parts of the day, every day. We will explore ways to authentically and intentionally support children's development of language skills throughout the entire school day.

FULL DAY Scheduled Times of the Day EXAMPLE*

10-15 Minutes **Welcome Routines/Arrival**

Sign-in, Wash hands, Welcome routines & rituals

15 Minutes **Whole Group Gathering**

Build a sense of community

Welcome songs

Announcements

Reflections of prior experiences/learning

Plan for the day

15 Minutes **Breakfast**

90 Minutes **Focused Area: English Language Arts**

Children's literature, shared reading, guided reading

Tier 2 Intervention; small groups

Oral language stations

Literacy & writing stations

ELA related experiences in Learning Areas

Practice, practice, practice developing skills

25 Minutes **Outdoor Exploration/Recess**

45 Minutes **Learning Areas: Project-Based Learning, Exploration & Investigations**

Opportunity to freely engage within the learning environment & small groups

Complete specific tasks & challenges

Project work/ on-going investigations-integrated approach (integrating all content areas)

Tier 2 interventions; small groups

Practice, practice, practice developing skills

35 Minutes **Lunch/Recess**

15 Minutes **Whole Group**

Children's literature, read-aloud, journals

50 Minutes **Specials**

50 Minutes **Focused Area: Math**

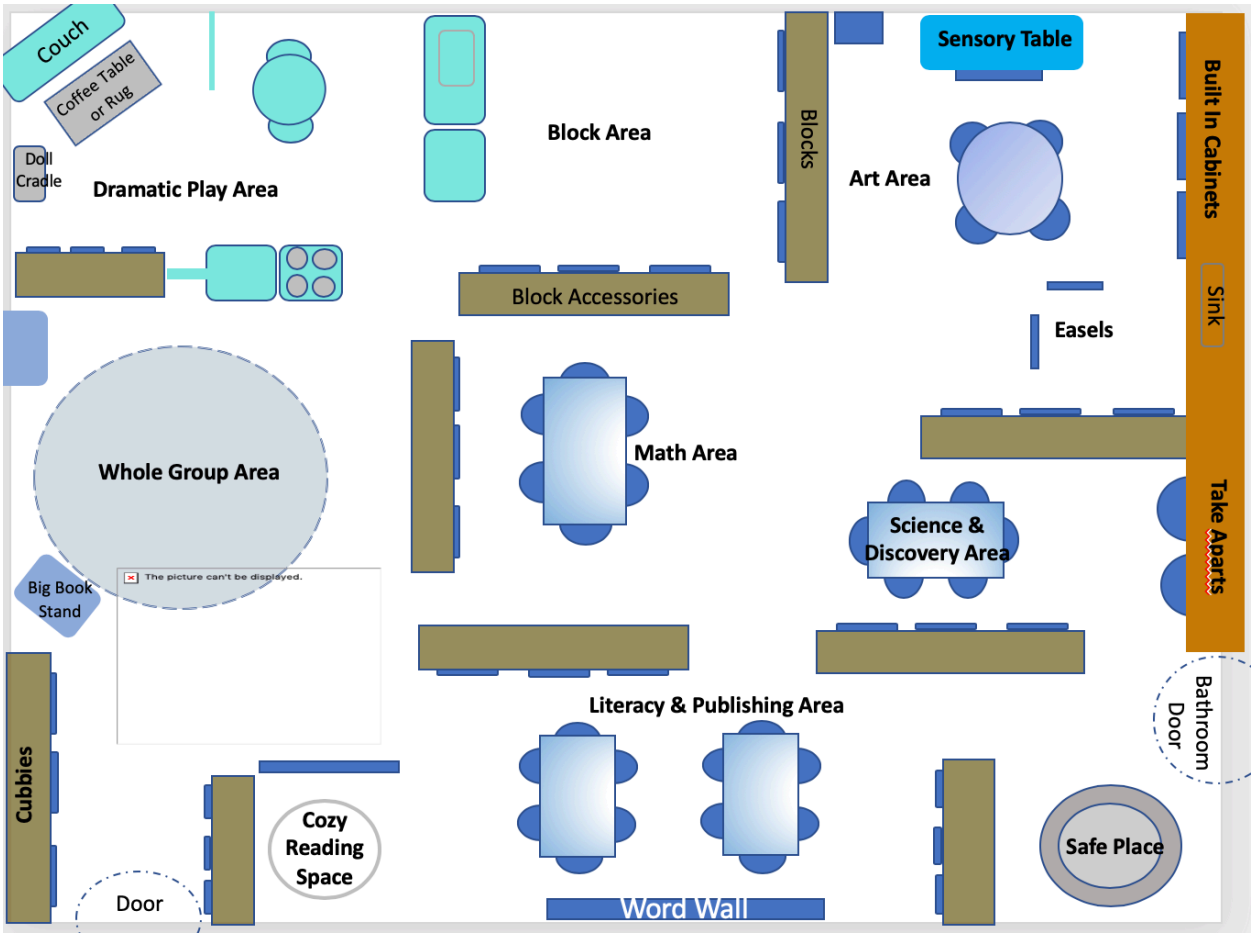
- Math stations
- Math tasks/challenges
- Small group guided opportunities
- Practice, practice, practice developing skills

15 Minutes **Reflection, Anticipation, Closure**

- Reflection of the day; what's to come
- End of day routines
- Good-bye rituals

OPTIMIZING OPPORTUNITY: ENVIRONMENT

Creating a room arrangement that allows children to not only work independently, but in small groups, supports their social and emotional development and promotes their need to practice and play with language. Opportunities for authentic language learning and literacy development is most evident in Learning Areas that are interesting, well-stocked with materials, and have a meaningful purpose in children's lives.



The following Learning Areas are recommended in a kindergarten classroom:

- **Publishing & Literacy**
- **Math**
- **Socio-Dramatic Play**
- **Science & Discovery**
- **Whole Group**
- **Visual Arts**
- **Sand & Water Play**



If you have not already done so, consider attending our Organization of Space & Time training for specific information about room arrangement, classroom materials, and Learning Areas and Learning Stations in a kindergarten classroom. Although we will identify opportunities for reading, writing, speaking and listening in each of these areas, we will not explore the specific details for each of the Learning Areas in this module.

Working in Learning Areas is not to be perceived as "free time" that children get to do when they are done with their "work". Both child-led and teacher-supported tasks in well-planned and well-equipped Learning Areas, **is** their work. But it doesn't stop there. Teachers must become careful observers, watching intently and listening with ears and heart to know children intimately. Acquiring an in-depth understanding of each child within the context of their experiences opens up a truer understanding of the child's strengths and interests. With an extensive understanding of the developmental progressions of skills, knowing how children grow and learn, teachers can identify where children are developmentally and can better determine next steps and goals for each child. Incredibly, when teachers observe children engaging in activities that are meaningful to them, they develop insight into their interests and motivations. They are then able to create individualized, authentic learning opportunities that foster the development of children's learning and understanding.

CAMBOURNE'S CONDITIONS OF LEARNING

Adapted from the work of Dr. Brian Cambourne

*After years of researching the conditions that promote literacy development in young children, Dr. Brian Cambourne identified seven **Conditions of Learning + Engagement**: Immersion, Demonstration, Expectation, Responsibility, Employment, Approximation, and Response. Brian Cambourne found these conditions to be both dynamic and interwoven, as well as aligned with brain development research and evidence-based best practices in early childhood education. The likelihood of engagement is vastly increased when these conditions are present.*

I M M E R S I O N

Immersion:

Children's interest in new learning skills is sparked by what they see and hear. Children are members of a classroom community that features rich and authentic literacy events and opportunities.

When children are immersed in a literacy-rich environment, they are surrounded with a great deal of purposeful language. Conversations that are engaging, as well as purposeful writing, are forms of literacy that are meaningful to them. Immersion is most effective when children have real opportunities for exploration and discovery, as it creates authentic connections to the language they hear and the text they see. We want children to tune into language, so they must be given ample time to talk and talk some more. Teachers must also provide interesting experiences that will give them something meaningful to talk about. We want children to be a part of a culture of discovery.

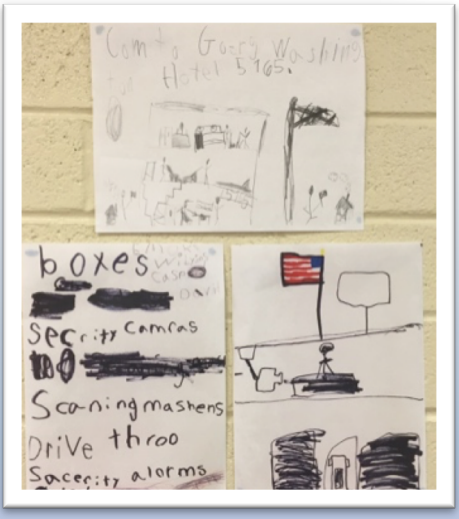
- What did you discover? Let's write down your thoughts.
- Tell me about your thinking…. Let's take a picture of your work.
- Here's some paper. Write down the story about how your figured it out.
- Why do you suppose that's true? I'm wondering if we have resources in this classroom that will help us find different perspectives?
- If we attempted this instead, what do you think will happen? Let's chart these steps, so we can reflect on what we discover.
- What did you find challenging? I'm wondering what you might do next time. Let's record your ideas on our iPad so you'll have them for next time.

Multiple regions of the brain are activated when teachers provide active experiences that engage multiple learning modalities. With continued practice, synaptic connections in the brain are strengthened, contributing to necessary foundations for further learning. When a

teacher incorporates **rich language experiences** and provides relevant opportunities to capture their discoveries, ideas, and perspectives, children begin to recognize the significance of becoming a literate member of their classroom community.

Immersion in Action

- Relevant informational texts
- An array of books available in all learning areas including reference books, fiction and nonfiction, predictable text, class-made books, authentic text, leveled readers, decodable texts
- Magazines, cookbooks, grocery ads, and other examples of print relevant to children's lives
- Meaningful labels throughout the room
- Song charts
- Signs and environmental print
- Music, books on CD, puppets, role playing costumes, etc.
- Teacher-created charts including anchor charts
- Interactive pocket charts that children use
- Teacher and children's writing displayed throughout the room
- Highly engaging experiences, activities, and materials accessible to children
- Opportunities to engage, to talk, and to engage and to talk some more about their discoveries, ideas, and time to play with adult language (PRETEND OR SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY)



DEMONSTRATION

Demonstration:
Teachers must demonstrate the skills, actions, and knowledge that is to be learned. Children engage fully in experiences with all of their senses.

When teachers intentionally model language, kindergartners are not only listening to the single units of sound in the words we use, but they are becoming more aware of the conventions that are used to express meaning. Kindergarten teachers help children develop an awareness of the sounds of spoken words and can playfully demonstrate (through such things as songs, rhymes, and chants) ways to manipulate these sounds (phonemic awareness). Likewise, kindergarten teachers help children develop sophisticated vocabulary best by authentically *using sophisticated vocabulary* when she/he engages with children. These are merely a few examples of language demonstrations that occur in kindergarten classrooms.

Teachers recognize their role in *teaching* specific reading and writing skills, and even though formal demonstrations *are* necessary and often are identified in the chosen curriculum, there's a great deal of value in the informal yet intentional modeling of writing and reading. That is to say, teachers must not only TEACH skills, but demonstrate and model being someone who loves to read and write. Reading aloud, with expression and excitement as opposed to just reading the words in the book, conveys the important message that reading is ENJOYABLE, even if it's the 6,234th time the teacher's read *The Little Mouse, The Red Ripe Strawberry and The Big Hungry Bear!*

To illustrate this point, imagine for a moment that you went to a concert to see your favorite music artist of all time, who happened to be on tour for six months, Arizona being his last stop of the tour. Having performed in 60 cities in six months, the same ol' songs, he's just exhausted and quite frankly, a little tired of his own songs. So, he performs with some energy and a bit of excitement here and there and then decides not to sing a few of his most popular songs. He apologizes, and says, "It's been a long tour. I just want to go home". What might your experience be like?

For young children, teachers convey messages about reading all day long! When young children understand that learning how to read opens a portal for vast amounts of information AND that reading can be an incredibly enjoyable experience, the motivation to become a proficient reader is internalized and magnified.

As with reading, when teachers demonstrate a significant purpose for writing, kindergartners not only begin to understand that print carries messages, but that their perspectives can be captured and shared

with others. Writing should occur all day long in large groups, small groups, on charts, in journals, in Writer's Workshop, to capture ideas and discoveries, to give messages, to write "We wish you well" cards, to create recipes, and more. When a teacher demonstrates meaningful expressions of writing by thinking out loud as he/she writes, children are given access to how the mind processes and translates information into written form. Internalizing and acting upon this new information requires some level of risk by the student. When teachers express sincere interest in what children are writing, they begin to see themselves as competent learners who have something important to say.

Demonstration in Action: Examples of Intentional Language

- I need to remember to email Ms. Peterson about our project. I will write that down so I don't forget. **Reminder to self: Email Ms. Peterson about our garden project. (said out loud)**
- You're thinking of some new ideas. Let's create a "Journal of Ideas" where we can capture these. What will we need to do that?
- This is one of my favorite books EVER! Take a look at the cover. Just by looking at the illustrations, what do you predict this book might be about?
- Sometimes when I get stuck coming up with an idea to write about, I close my eyes, take a deep breath and imagine a story in my mind. If I want a fun experience, I think about what experiences are fun for me. Then I open my eyes and try to tell that story on my paper.
- Let's look at our predictions and let's determine which ones were accurate and which ones were not. We wrote these ideas down so we could refer back to them. Does anyone know what I mean when I say, 'refer back to them'?
- I read this fabulous book this weekend! It was about a dog who was rescued by a family by accident! It was so sad and then it was so funny. I wanted to read it all day long!
- I'm going to research that online. I want to learn more about bookmaking for our classroom books. I'll find a few articles to read and then share the information I learn with you.

When children are immersed in a language and literacy rich environment with authentic demonstrations by the teacher, they begin to demonstrate their learning, particularly when they have opportunities to be self-directed in their learning. That is not to say that there isn't structure. It is to say that children need opportunities to be in charge of their own learning. By carefully observing children as they demonstrate their learning, teachers can truly obtain an accurate understanding of what a child has learned.

E N G A G E M E N T

Immersion and Demonstration must be accompanied with ENGAGEMENT:

Neural pathways are activated, stimulated and strengthened when the learner is actively engaged in multi-sensory experiences. Learning experiences that connect to the learner's prior knowledge and personal history enhance recall as well as create strong foundations for future learning.

True opportunities for engagement cannot be confined to paper-pencil, sit-down-to-work tasks. These types of experiences generally don't help children learn the necessary skills to solve complex problems and to think critically. Developmentally speaking, kindergartners need to move...a lot. The bulk of the day should be spent in small flexible groups where children can actively practice the skills they are still developing. Writing, in this context, becomes meaningful as it reflects their thinking, their questions, their ideas, and their discoveries.

The key, however, is that for children to develop the confidence they need to become proficient readers and writers, the environment established by the teachers must be emotionally supportive. Every child should feel safe to experiment freely with language and literacy. When children are afraid of being publicly corrected or labeled as a child who is struggling, it diminishes the child's willingness to risk writing words that might not be spelled right, or to read words that seem just too big, or even to try new experiences, particularly if they appear challenging. When teachers create a safe classroom climate, a community of learners where everyone is there to be helpful and to learn from one another, children perceive themselves as a member of a literate community that will go beyond their kindergarten experience.

Engagement in Action

- Real, meaningful and relevant activities
- A balance between opportunities for children to work independently and to work collaboratively with peers
- Time for child-led exploration as well as teacher-guided activities where children have specific goals and tasks to accomplish
- Teachers engage with individual children and in small groups throughout the room
- Teachers ask open-ended questions that promote thinking, speaking, and listening
- Teachers offer specific positive feedback and guidance to children who need additional support or clarification
- Teachers teach specific concepts to small groups or individuals as needed, preferably in the context of their experiences

EXPECTATIONS

Expectations:

The teacher's positive beliefs and expectations in the learner's abilities are critical to develop the child's interest in, and aspirations to, success. We achieve what we expect to achieve.

When typically developing babies become mobile, oftentimes by first rolling, then scooting, crawling and pulling themselves up to a standing position, adults in their world offer encouraging words for them to attempt those first few walking steps. Everyone believes that the baby is going to learn to walk, yet, learning to walk is complex; it's a combination of required movements in addition to the ability to balance while in motion. But we all believe that the child is going to walk. So, the child believes he can walk....and HE DOES!

Expectations conveyed by the teacher are subtle and incredibly powerful.

We can look at expectations from two angles. First, teachers must be very clear about the intent of an activity, lesson, or assigned task. Questions that help teachers become clear in their expectations are:

1. What is the intent of this activity or task?
2. What developmental skill(s) will this support?
3. Is this a small group activity, or should it be presented to the whole group and then children work in pairs or small groups?
4. Are there children who might need specific support?
5. What accommodations need to be made and how will that be done?
6. How will the purpose of the activity be explained in a way that 5- and 6-year-old children can understand?
7. How will I authentically assess children's learning?
8. If there's an additional need or if children are very interested in the lesson, how might this be extended over the course of a few days, weeks, or months?

Teachers must have clear intentions and convey those expectations. That's not to say activities/lessons should be rigid, rather that the goals (what we hope to support and/or accomplish) are clear. Flexibility within those guidelines give children space to try out new ideas or new approaches in their learning.

Expectations are also the beliefs the teacher holds about each child's proficiencies, and capabilities. Just as parents believe that their baby will indeed learn to walk, kindergartners need adults who will believe that they will, without question, learn to be proficient listeners, speakers, readers, and writers.

It is important teachers become very aware of their beliefs about each child as these beliefs are often conveyed in ways that are not explicit. Sometimes the message is subtle, but children are able to pick up on whether their teacher believes in them or not. Ideally, teachers simply believe not only that children CAN become proficient speakers, readers, and writers, but that they WILL.

EXAMPLES OF INTENTIONALLY SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE

I truly believe in you.

I know you can do this.

We all get stuck sometimes. I'm here to help whenever you get stuck.

You'll get this. I'm sure of it.

You'll figure it out.

As a classroom community of learners, we are here to help one another, to learn from one another and to celebrate our successes together!

How can I help you?

We're in this together. Let's figure out what will help.

Tell me what you're thinking. I want to understand.

Having an expectation that all children WILL become proficient speakers, readers, and writers is best captured with the message, "I truly believe in you". When teachers create a climate where children feel as though they are a part of a classroom community, where **every** child is a contributing member, they begin to feel safe enough to engage in demonstrations. Moreover, children learn to perceive challenges as opportunities for learning.

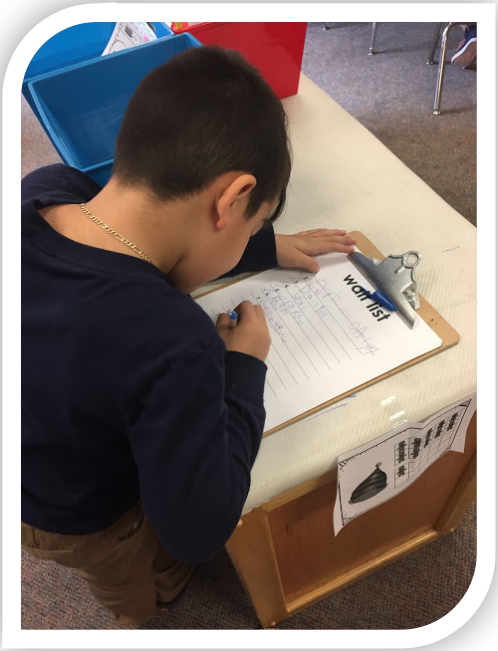
Conversely, when there is a perceived threat, the brain shifts into being prepared to defend itself. Emotions, learning, and memory are closely linked. Each play a role in the learning process. If there is a perceived threat the brain responds by releasing the fight or flight hormone cortisol and learning is impeded. High levels of cortisol affect both memory and the brain's ability to organize thinking. It is important to remember *that the perception belongs to a child*-if the child *perceives* a threat, real or imagined, it can have a profound effect on the learning process.

Ideally, teachers create a learning environment that fosters children's interests in learning and discovery while providing a forum where children can freely exchange their ideas and express their feelings with all members of their classroom community.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility: Learning is the responsibility of the learner

When young children are responsible for their learning, they have opportunities to make decisions about the directions they are going to take and to try out new ideas and solutions to a problem. Student learning often increases when they are given choices about their learning, due in part to an increase in self-efficacy. When children find purpose and relevance in their learning, they often become thoroughly engaged in the experience. This excitement for discovery and learning releases good feeling chemicals in the brain, including serotonin and dopamine. These chemicals stimulate a feeling of well-being thereby optimizing the *emotional* well-being for continued learning.



Responsibility in Action

- Real, meaningful, and relevant experiences where children have choices in problem solving
- Children are responsible for a task or a series of tasks, but have freedom to choose when to complete the tasks within an allotted time frame
- A topic of study emerges from an expressed interest of the children
- Children are given time to research information about topics that are of interest to them
- Children can choose how they will demonstrate their learning (teachers may provide options to choose from)
- Opportunities for **ALL** children to be leaders-offering their gifts/strengths to the classroom community.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment:

Learners need time and opportunity to use and practice their control of developing cognitive processes and understanding. Teachers provide time and opportunity for learners to employ their intellectual growth in functional and realistic ways.

Learning is enhanced when learners discuss their ideas and personal reflections with others. As children engage with new ideas or go through the process of problem solving, they need time to construct new knowledge. This occurs when children are given opportunities to have meaningful discussions about their thinking. When kindergartners have time for individual reflection, paired discussions, small group dialogue and brainstorming, and whole group reflections, it helps them work through intellectual disequilibrium as they try to make sense of new information as it relates to prior knowledge and understanding. Children need meaningful experiences in order to have meaningful discussions. This process of reflection and discussion is about scaffolding their learning, extending into the next stage of understanding. It helps create the experience of excitement when children discover something new or when they figure out there are many solutions to any given problem!

This same process activates many parts of the brain simultaneously. A whole child approach recognizes the innate need for social engagement in the learning process, not only because it is invigorating to share your ideas with others, but the process helps to make "it stick". That is to say, the neural connections in the brain are strengthened when kindergartners are able to approach learning holistically and when they are given time to apply their developing knowledge by practicing, practicing and practicing some more.

Employment in Action

- REAL and meaningful activities that children get to engage in (repeatedly, if there is interest)
- An array of materials, easily accessible to children to capture their experiences (i.e. paper, writing tools, cameras, audio recorders, iPads/tablets, etc.)
- Opportunities for children to work together-in pairs or small groups
- Structured opportunities where children are encouraged to describe their process, discoveries, and learning with their peers
- Time to AUTHENTICALLY apply new information, knowledge, and understanding-practice, practice and more practice

APPROXIMATION

Approximation:

The brain is designed to perceive and generate patterns. The learning process works on a continuum.

Every child is a unique individual with very specific life experiences. These experiences create the lens through which the child experiences the world. An important lesson for kindergartners is that the learning process works on a continuum and each little step is a movement on this continuum of learning. Too often learning is perceived as right-versus-wrong, instead of acknowledging what children can do and building upon those experiences in ways that are supportive and responsive to individual needs. It is important that teachers accept children's unique perspectives as well as their expressions of the skills and concepts they are working to develop. Knowing every child as a unique individual, their strengths as well their goals (which are the developmental progression of skills in all areas), is a significant factor in planning opportunities that push beyond current abilities.

Having feedback systems to guide, scaffold and challenge the attainment of skills helps deepen experiences of learning. As children develop a process for checking their own learning, either independently, working with others, or with the support of the teacher, they develop the understanding that mistakes are simply a part of the learning process. These types of experiences, the process of self-reflection and self-checking with available resources to self-correct, aligns with the brain's natural inclination to perceive and generate patterns.

By being respectfully responsive to children's developmental needs, teachers understand feedback is an experience that builds upon current knowledge and understanding. When teachers embrace the individualized perspectives each child brings, specific individualized goals may be better supported.

Approximation in Action

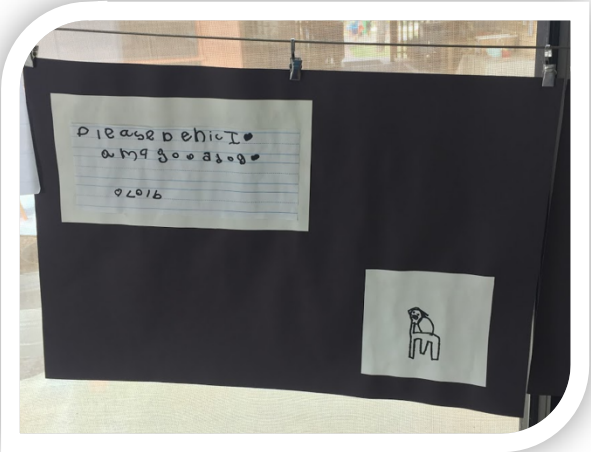
- Interactive Word Walls that children can use
- Personal word lists for each child
- System for self-checking and self-reflecting
- Print-rich environment (experiential charts, anchor charts, mind maps, environmental print, etc.)

R E S P O N S E

Response:

Celebrate successes, provide concrete feedback and continue to develop next steps as children grow and learn.

On-going, positive response or feedback is an integral part of authentically supporting a learner's growth and development. By creating a culture of support, children become accustomed to the process of providing and receiving feedback. Teaching children appropriate supportive language, for both compliments and suggestions, helps them to participate in giving constructive responses to their peers. This is best taught by modelling supportive language which may include explicitly teaching specific words or scripts. The experience should feel safe and non-threatening. Effective feedback is specific, relevant, appropriate, and given within a timely manner.



Guiding questions for the teacher when responding to children and their work are:

- Is my response related to the intent of the message?
- Am I responding to the child as a capable reader or writer?

Response in Action

The part that works really well is…
You really worked hard at…
You used a lot of detail to describe…
You really got this part right…
A way to do this is…
I'm wondering where you might find the answer to this.
I remember reading a book about this. Let's look for a book that might have the answer to your question.
Let's figure this one out…
You're getting this...I know you can do it.
Tell me about what you're thinking…
Tell me what you want it to say...

CAMBOURNE'S CONDITIONS IN PRACTICE

We've identified examples of Cambourne's Conditions of Learning in parenthesis to help illustrate what they might look like in practice.

Some children come to kindergarten having had rich literacy experiences at home or preschool. Conversations around varied experiences where frequent and cherished stories were read and reread. Children saw adults read to themselves for pleasure or for information; modeling the enjoyment as well as the function of reading. Children with rich literacy backgrounds may have received cards in the mail, "written" letters to someone far away, or helped create grocery lists. But for some children this chance to learn to love literacy, to look forward to hearing stories, to understand its function in our world and see themselves as capable consumers and producers in a literate community begins when they enter school. The English Language Arts Block is filled with opportunities to model, teach, and employ the strategies and skills needed to be a proficient reader and writer and as highly social beings, enjoy the experience of communication, literacy and learning.

Often during the English Language Arts Block, children work in small groups or with a partner at a literacy workstation. As part of a Tier Two Intervention, a small group meets with the teacher that could be in the form of a reader's or writer's workshop.

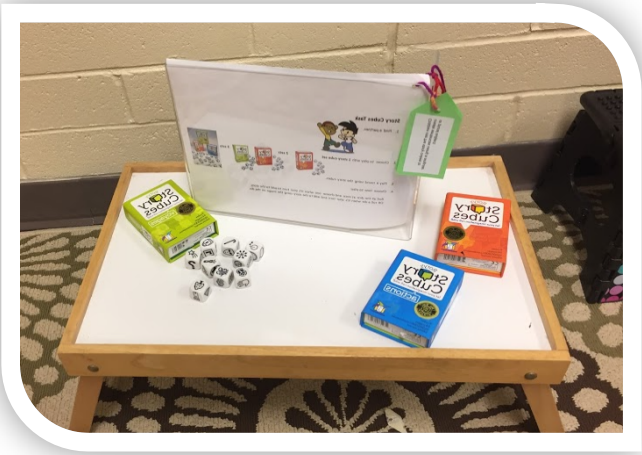
Reading and writing workshops begin with a mini lesson in which the teacher models reading or writing around an idea, concept, genre, or a skill. **(Demonstration)** Children are introduced to what good readers and writers do. **(Expectation)** In both types of workshops, the mini lesson is followed by time for children to apply the new learning independently **(Employment and Engagement)** and then time to share their work and discoveries with others. **(Expectation)** It also opens up the opportunity for feedback from both the teacher and from peers. **(Response)**

A reading workshop might focus on concepts of print, how to choose a "just right" book, or formally introduce a skill and its application. A writing workshop may have a similar focus,
but with applications specific to writing: learning the conventions of writing a letter, applying emergent letter/sound correspondence knowledge to express an idea, or creating procedural writing. The mini lesson at the beginning of the workshop lasts no more than 10 to 15 minutes. During this time, a specific skill or concept is modeled. **(Immersion)** As an introduction, the teacher may think aloud--a strategy where the teacher intentionally thinks out loud, describing the strategy or process being employed with the purpose of having children hear fluent reading **(Immersion)** and to have an insight into the decoding or comprehension strategy being used. **(Demonstration)** This process, helps children be aware of their own thinking and become increasingly more metacognitive as they engage with the strategies**.** **(Expectation)** If the lesson focus is questioning as a comprehension strategy, the teacher may read some text and then talk about the questions she had or what she was wondering as she was reading. The children actively participate **(Engagement)** after watching the think aloud as they are given an opportunity to employ the same strategy with a partner or small group. **(Approximation)** The teacher may continue reading the text or have the children read and apply the strategy with questions that are meaningful to them. The children can then move to more independent work, practicing the strategy. **(Engagement and Employment)** During this part of the lesson, children have time for independent reading practice so they can work on implementing the strategy or skills. It is important to vary the experiences by providing a variety of texts based on the interests of children while considering the level of difficulty needed to encourage their continued development. As the workshop ends, there is an

opportunity for children to share and respond to others about their experience as they practiced applying the new concepts/skills. **(Response)**

To assess during the reader's workshop, teachers may use running records, conferencing, student-self-reflection journals, and open-ended questions that reflect children's use and comprehension. Each tool gives the teacher valuable information about the child's emerging accuracy and fluency which is used to give positive, specific and timely feedback to the young reader/writer. **(Response)**

LEARNING AREAS & LEARNING STATIONS



During the English Language Arts Block, children are applying their developing literacy skills as they interact at learning stations and learning areas. Well-equipped and intentionally organized learning stations and areas provide powerful opportunities for kindergarten children to be surrounded with the conditions of literacy learning (Immersion, Demonstration, Engagement, Expectation, Employment, Approximation, and Response). Learning areas are permanent areas that are recommended in a kindergarten classroom. This includes the block area, socio-dramatic play area, math area, creative arts area, whole group area, science & discovery area and the publishing and literacy area. Although some of the materials in these areas may change over the course of a school year based on children's interest and growing abilities, the areas and basic materials and furnishings remain fairly consistent.

Learning stations are a collection of materials that have an identified purpose. They change throughout the year, based on the interests of children, the projects being studied, or to support children's goals based on data from formative assessments. They are intentional, may be temporary, and can be an addition to a learning area or may stand on their own.

Examples of Learning Stations That Support English Language Arts

Story Retelling Props

One type of a literacy learning station may be a collection of props to encourage children in the retelling or reenacting of a familiar story. A box in the whole group area containing a variety of hats may encourage children to retell *Caps for Sale*, by Esphyr Slobodkina. Adding three bears of different sizes to the socio-dramatic play area may encourage children to tell, and retell the story of Goldilocks and the Three Little Bears. Children practice the language of books as they retell stories, an important distinction for children to grasp as story language differs from our everyday conversational language. When familiar with this, children may be heard saying, "Once upon a time" or "In a land far, far away" as they have learned the repeated phrases found in storybooks. Adding a small bridge in the block area or whole group area, for example, may spark an interest in "trolls" reciting, "Trip, Trap, Trip, Trap-Who's that tripping over my bridge?" Having props for stories children love not only encourages children to retell stories they love, but also opens up the magical experience of reading!

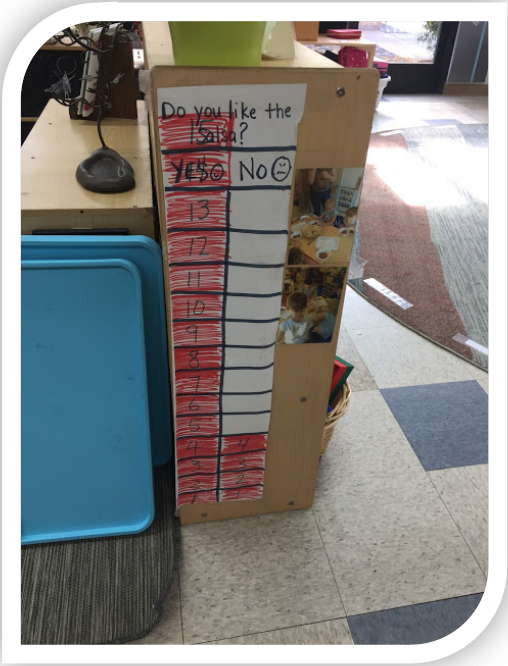
The Important Work of The Illustrator

Part of the power and endearment of a picture book are the illustrations. After children's attention has been brought to the style or techniques of a specific illustrator, a learning station may be created for children to emulate the style used by a familiar illustrator. Author and illustrator Eric Carle, for example, uses a very recognizable collage technique very much like cutting and collaging images from finger paintings. Learning about his techniques by researching Eric Carle and by providing opportunities for children to pay close attention to the illustration details in his books are rich experiences that highlight the work that goes into creating quality picture books. Asking questions that encourage children to think critically about the illustration style used by Eric

Carle and by providing materials to replicate or emulate his style, supports children's creativity and makes the work of Eric Carle even more meaningful to the young reader.

Survey Station

A survey station encourages children to talk with each other, ask questions, and record answers. Questions generated by children tend to be what they are most interested in, as opposed to questions created by the teacher. Their questions are usually about their immediate lives: "Have you lost any teeth? How many? Can you tie your shoe? Do you have a bike? Do you have a new bed? Can you run fast?" A survey learning station might include clipboards, paper, and writing instruments where children are given the task of being the interviewer, to ask the questions on the survey and to be interviewed-responding to the questions being asked. This is a wonderful station for supporting children's oral language development. Once the surveys are conducted, children then determine how to best organize and represent the data collected. This might be a narrative, a picture, graph or chart, that is shared when reporting the findings to the classroom community.



Poetry Station

A poetry learning station may be created based on a concept or genre children have been introduced to during a reader's or writer's workshop. After learning about poetry, children may be encouraged to create their own poetry. The learning station might include poetry magnets with words children have learned or are beginning to decode. Children may use phonetic spelling or draw their poem as their first draft and then they can edit their work if they want to publish the poem for others to read. Poetry magnet words may be purchased or be handmade where teacher and the children create the words, backing them with magnet strips.

Story Rocks Learning Station

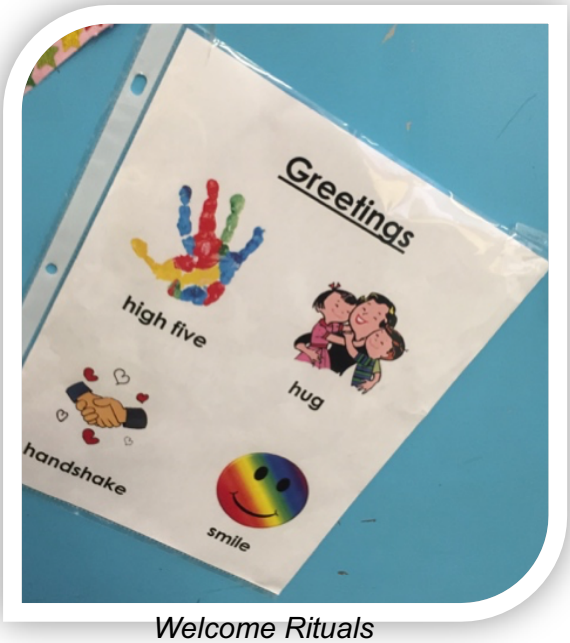
Story Rocks are flat stones with simple pictures drawn on them with permanent markers. The images might include houses, people, animals, flowers, cars, or other images children are familiar with. These rocks are then used for children to create stories around the pictures that they choose. Using an audio recording device, children can record their stories for others to hear later. These recordings can become incredibly useful data for teachers if samples of children's oral language skills are collected several times throughout the school year.

INTEGRATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

THROUGHOUT THE DAY

ELA during ARRIVALS, GREETINGS, and FAREWELLS

Engagement with literacy begins as soon as a child arrives at school. This is a time to practice language associated with social/emotional development, specifically the language of friendship and community. Immediately upon arrival, children are surrounded by language, oral and written. Children are spoken to, books, charts and labels are present, and children have multiple tools and opportunities to write. **(Immersion)** Social conventions of language (pragmatics) are demonstrated as **each** child is greeted warmly and individually, using the child's name: "Good morning Joshua! I remembered that yesterday you asked about the big trucks that you saw at the construction site across the street. I found a book that has pictures of the trucks and tells about what they do. I put the book in your cubby for you. Let me know what you think of it!" **(Expectation)** Just as when adults get together and greetings generally begin with hellos and brief conversations, children are invited to use these social language conventions as they individually check in with the teacher and classmates, returning greetings, making plans, relating recent events, and touching base. **(Demonstration and Employment)** A greeting ritual allows children to predict and be familiar with the transition from home to school, lowering anxiety that may accompany some children at the beginning of a day. A ritual may include children being given a choice of a type of greeting, perhaps a hug, a high five, or a smile. In kindergarten, these choices might be presented as a visual accompanied with print. Add and change types of greetings giving children more ways of greeting each other and the teacher. Toward the end of the year, it may be possible to remove the visuals leaving just the text. The child indicates how he or she would like to be greeted. Initially, this may be by the child pointing or giving a partial description **(Approximation)** of their choice. Accepting approximations lets children know that they are accepted as learners on the literacy continuum. Narrating the actions of the child adds understanding and is a form of scaffolding to support the child's continued development. "I see you pointing to the picture and words that say 'I would like a high five'. Here is a high five for you!" **(Feedback and Celebration)**



Welcome Rituals

Children engage briefly in writing as they sign in as they enter the classroom. (**Employment and Approximation)** In the beginning of the school year this may simply entail each child writing their name

to indicate that they are at school. For some children writing may consist of letter like forms **(Approximation)** showing that they are understanding that symbols are used to represent word and sounds. As the year progresses, signing in may include answering questions that require "reading" environmental print. "Does your family shop at Target or Walmart?"

Or it may serve as a method for surveying the class:
Do you have a pet at your house?

Or include a more complex question:
Have you ever eaten breakfast for dinner?

These questions might be answered by a name being printed on paper that has been divided into two columns labeled "Yes" and "No".

Children use their emerging literacy skill to decipher the question **(Employment)**, which could include sound symbol correspondence, sight words (signing in under boy or girl) **(Expectation)** or enlisting a more knowledgeable peer to support their understanding **(Responsibility).** If children have a difficult time decoding the question, consider only telling one child what it says. That child then becomes "the expert", the person others seek out for information. This is a wonderful strategy to use with children who have difficulty with social relationships. Being the more "knowledgeable expert" creates a platform for positive engagement with peers.

Moving further into the classroom, literacy tools continue to play a function in supporting each child's role as an important and valued member of the community. Having a personal space, a cubby, a basket or a hook labeled with both a picture and written name **(Immersion)**, welcomes the child and acknowledges him or her as an integral part of the classroom community.

If children have borrowed books, this may be a time to find library cards and return books to the appropriate bin or basket and choosing the next book they will take home. **(Responsibility)**

By each sink, a handwashing chart with photos of a current class member modeling handwashing steps with accompanying simple text for children to read acts as a visual reminder for the procedure. Teachers prompt students to self-check by using the chart which helps to focus attention on the meaning of the visuals and text. **(Expectation, Demonstration and Employment)**

Once children get settled, there should be a very clear routine to begin the day. Children might choose books for Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), a time dedicated to reading, (everybody reading!) favorite books, charts, or magazines. Small social groups may form as favorite books are shared. Some children may gather around the teacher as she joins the children to also read. It's a great time and way for the teacher to convey a love for reading and reading for the incredible joy of reading.

Language to model and intentionally teach children the language of:

Receiving Greeting:

I'm well, thank you.

I'm a little tired this morning.

I'm excited to be here.

I feel great this morning, thank you for asking.

Greeting others:

Good morning. How are you today?

Were you sick yesterday? We missed you!

I will fill you in about what we did yesterday.

I'm glad you're back.

It's good to see you today.

Would you like a handshake, high five, smile, or a hug?

Expressing needs:

I would like a turn at ….. today.

I hope I have time to finish my illustrations for my author study today.

Would you help me? I'm still learning how to….

How can I help?

Opportunities for Reading:

Children choose a greeting symbolically represented on an apron or chart with an illustration and text (high five, handshake, smile, hug)

Children read the sign-in question of the day (For example: How do you get to school each day? What do you know about dogs?)

Children look at message board for notes from teacher or other students

Opportunities for Writing:

Children sign in each day on sign-in board or clipboards

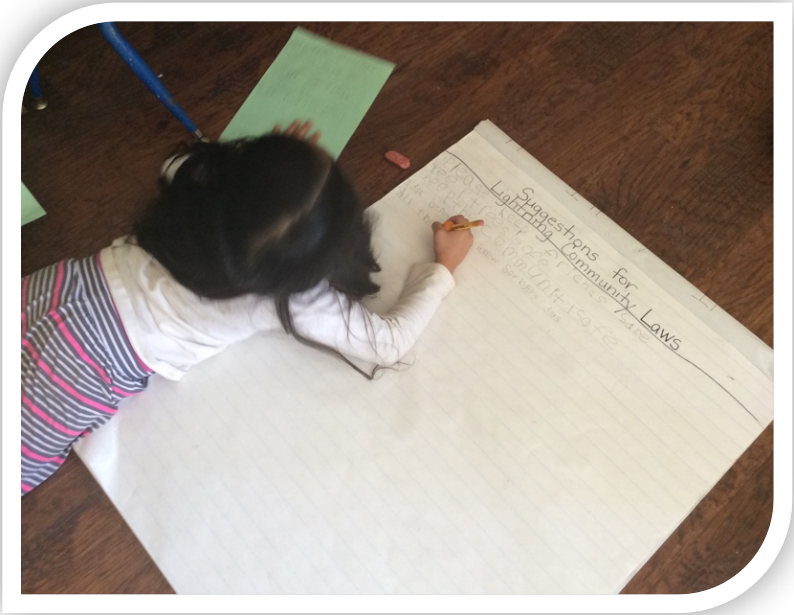
*Children write "**I want to talk to you about"** notes to teacher or others in the class*

Children sign up for turns at popular activities

Children create "We wish you well" cards

ELA in PROJECT BASED STUDIES

Project based learning brings multiple disciplines together as children consider and explore their world with their authentic questions and problems. It is an opportunity for kindergartners to fully investigate what they are most interested in, what they know about best - themselves, their immediate environment, and their community. Using communication, social skills, and the tools of literacy, students are escorted through stages of project development:



1. Define the project
2. Gather information through hands-on experience
3. Transform, organize, and synthesize their learning into tangible products and artifacts
4. Create a celebration of discoveries by presenting a culmination of the project work
5. Share their learning with an audience beyond the classroom (i.e. other classrooms, school-wide, families, or community)

Projects often begin as a class discussion. They may be sparked by an interest, question, or problem that children have expressed or a series of observations made by the teacher. It's important to note that project topics are real and relevant in the lives of children which may be vastly different from themes or topics chosen by the teacher that may not be consistently relevant in the lives of children (an idea or concept children have not personally experienced).

To illustrate this point, a teacher observes several kindergartners building in the Block Area where a few children expressed frustration after constructing buildings that were consistently unstable came crashing down as they reached about 36 inches. She watched as they tried to figure out what the problem was, focusing primarily on the size and placement of blocks on the top end of the structure. The children appeared perplexed as each of their attempts yielded a crash of blocks. The teacher observed their actions and interactions with one another and with the materials they were using, and listened intently to understand their thinking. This may lead to a discussion, either with the whole group or a small group of children about their curiosities, the problem as they perceive it which may lead to a building project.

Another possible scenario might be that a new section of the school is being developed, not too far from the playground, where children watch with excitement and anticipation about what will be constructed day-to-day. (**Immersion).**

A project may begin with the teacher charting children's ideas and questions- What do we know? What do we wonder? **(Expectation)**

From the children's ideas, knowledge, and questions about a topic, a web or mind map begins to form. The children's language is captured as they share their background knowledge and questions. Later, after further experiences, it is helpful to revisit the charts with the children to reflect upon whether there is more that they want to add. Are there additional questions that they may investigate? Using a different color marker each time to chart the learning and wondering helps both adults and children see the progression of thinking that occurs over time.

The children may use the chart to think about how and what they will begin to probe; which part of the topic is of most interest to them. Not all children will investigate the same aspects or in the same way (**Responsibility).** The chart may serve as a visual for understanding different categories that are part of the larger topic.

The teacher may use the web to consider how children will access information and how they might communicate their learning. How will specific content standards be addressed? In terms of literacy, how and when and where are the opportunities for children to speak and listen, read and write? How will each standard be accessible to children at varying skill levels?

Meeting and interviewing a "content" expert in the topic being studied helps children deepen their understanding while developing literacy skills. While studying buildings, five- and six-year-old children might interview a carpenter, plumber, or an architect. A wonderful source for experts is family or close community members. Children generate questions that are charted and a determination is made of how to record new information. Children might draw pictures, dictate stories, or use their understanding of print, sight words and phonics to write down gathered information. Before conducting an interview, children learn and practice the skills needed for a successful interview. Afterward, children may write a thank you letter to their interviewees.

Using literature from various genres brings additional perspectives and information. Looking for information or answers about a specific topic or question in books or online conveys the message that being able to read is an open door for a wealth of information-the ability to read is not only beneficial, but enjoyable as well. Throughout the project, children may listen to specific texts related to the topic including informational text, folktales, reference books, wordless books, or poetry. The introduction of various genres also gives children new options to consider as they become classroom authors and illustrators.

It's important to have informational texts as well as storybooks on the featured topic in the classroom library so children can access real information when working on a project. There is no need to limit books to children's books only. There are many books about architecture, building, and construction, as well as other topics, with incredible pictures and information that may spark a greater interest in the topic being studied.

Books to spark an interest in the building project include:

- *The Three Little Pigs,* Paul Galdone
- *The Three Little Pigs: An Architectural Tale,* Steven Guarnaccia
- *Iggy Peck, Architect,* Harry Abrams
- *Earth Movers and Diggers,* Mary Kate Doman
- *How a House is Built,* Gail Gibbons

A rich variety of hands-on experiences to explore the topic provides additional opportunities for addressing kindergarten standards. Consider the following question:

What experiences can children take part in that deepen their understanding and ability to think critically about the topic?

Children benefit most as active participants in demonstrations. They may be given opportunities to meet and interview experts but must also have opportunities to try out ideas first hand. If children are grappling with how to make a steadier building, for instance, they need to have the time and materials to try out their ideas. Much is learned from the unsuccessful trials; giving reason for persistence, additional problem solving, and critical thinking (**Demonstration).** During class time children may recreate or *document* experiences by making models, reenacting stories, ideas, or perspectives as they try on new hats and put themselves in the role of the expert **(Expectation).**

If children are studying architecture, it is important they get to observe, read, design, build and rebuild with varying purposes and materials, in essence, becoming architects with the intent to deepen their understanding **(Approximation)**.

To capture children's learning and to practice new skills, children might draw pictures, create a skit, make books, pamphlets, narrate photos, or develop models that help tell the story of their newly acquired knowledge and understanding **(Employment).**

Throughout the project, teachers guide children through the process of reflecting upon their experiences and their learning. These reflections are both a collaborative undertaking (whole group, peer-to peer, small group) as well as an individual effort. In addition to the teacher, feedback may come from beyond the classroom. Community resources from content experts or those who work in the field related to the project topic often prove to be invaluable collaborators. **(Feedback).**

At the culmination of the project, students share their work and their learning with others. The presentation created by children potentially can incorporate all aspects of literacy. With the task of capturing their journey, investigations and discoveries, children have to make critical decisions about what to share and how to share the information with others.

Opportunities to assess children authentically during project work are great, particularly if the experiences are meaningful, offer some degree of challenge, and are multi-sensory. This formative assessment can be conducted throughout the scope of a project. When kindergartners are in an environment where it is understood that learning is a process, that each child has her own successes as well as challenges, they begin to acknowledge feedback as simply part of this learning process. Children receive feedback from both classmates as well as their teacher. The collection of work may include journal entries, class made and individual books, discussions of their learning with others, and other artifacts that involve listening and speaking, reading and writing.

ELA OPPORTUNITIES in MATH

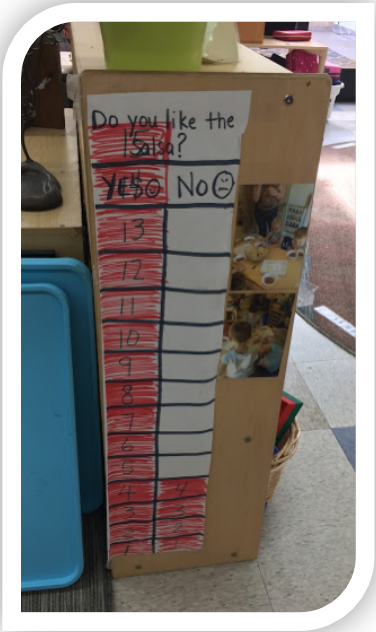
In teaching math, teachers may use skills and strategies that are very similar to those used in teaching reading (Burns, 2005). In both subjects, comprehension is key and in both, oral communication and writing play important roles. Listening to students discuss math allows teachers to "see into their thinking" and assess understandings and misunderstandings. When students write down and discuss math ideas, it helps to develop and extend their ideas and understandings of important mathematical concepts. Vocabulary development is also a significant part of mathematics and read-aloud books may provide some support as they work to understand mathematical problems. When a teacher can identify the opportunities for language and literacy support while engaging in math, he/she can intentionally foster the continued development in listening, speaking, writing, reading AND MATH.

During math, while the teacher works with a small group for a guided mathematical experience or Tier Two intervention, other students work at math stations often with a partner or in small group. In the area of Operations and Algebraic Thinking, children may retell or reenact a story such as *Go Away Big Green Monster*, by Ed Emberley playing with the concepts of addition and subtraction. Multiplication and division can be practiced in determining how many cookies each character receives in *The Door Bell Rang*, by Pat Hutchins.

Engaging in a math station focused on Measurement and Data gives kindergartners opportunities to integrate the skills of math and literacy. Five- and six-year-olds can collect, organize, and display data based on surveys they have conducted. First, children determine a question that has real relevance to them. "What is your favorite food for lunch?" "Do you know how to tie your shoes?" "How many teeth have you lost?" Given a clipboard, paper and pencils, children ask these questions to each member of the classroom community. Children will need to create a way to record the answer that is given. Depending on the developmental level of writing of the survey

taker, the recording may be pictures, scribbles, phonetic or conventional writing. It is necessary for the one conducting the survey to be able to decode their marks and then choose a way to organize and display the data so that it may be presented and explained to others, perhaps at the end of the math block. As data is displayed, children interpret the data to determine the "story" that it tells.

Counting and cardinality can be practiced through literacy-based activities, as well. Children may follow a simple recipe for a playdough or make a snack that requires basic counting. Many picture books are based on counting patterns and give opportunities to count forward and backwards. Children may work with comparing sets when looking at familiar literature like *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. A question posed might be, "Did the Hungry Caterpillar eat more fruit or more junk food?"



Picture books may also be used to support geometry. *So Many Circles and So Many Squares and Shapes*, *Shapes, Shapes,* by Tana Hoban, *Round as a Mooncake*, by Roseanne Thong, and *I Spy Shapes in Art*, by Lucy Micklethwait introduce shapes in a variety of ways. Tana Hoban's books find shapes in the environment, something that children can easily do, finding their own examples of shapes in their environment. *Round as a Mooncake*, and *I Spy Shapes in Art* display shapes found in more specific contexts. Children can play with these ideas as they begin to recognize and identify shapes in their world.

Children having meaningful conversations about mathematics (AKA Mathematical Discourse) is an important part of developing their mathematical learning. It encourages them to be reflective of their own learning and to receive feedback and give critical responses. When facilitated respectfully by the teacher, children learn the art of reflective discussions including the exchange of ideas and the art of giving and receiving feedback. In order for this process to be effective, the teacher and the children must know the language and vocabulary of mathematics as children share how they solved a problem and why they used this approach or strategy.

Clearly, language and literacy can be an integral part of mathematics. When children have been taught the skills to discuss their ideas, their thoughts, and their reflections, they are more equipped to work effectively in small groups or with partners. This includes the ability to relate the strategies used and to listen to others, responding appropriately and critically. Using teacher-made charts with simple text and visuals **(Immersion),** children can read the details about a task that is to be completed at math learning stations. **(Expectation)** Anchor charts are also a valuable tool that can be helpful to children as they are

learning to problem solve. **(Responsibility)** Children should be encouraged (and taught) to discuss their ideas **(Demonstration)** and justify their thinking with others in the group. **(Feedback, Support)**

ELA OPPORTUNITIES in SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY

When children engage in socio-dramatic play, they assume many, many roles. They may try on being a mother, father, aunt, baby, or other roles they are familiar with from home. They may become someone from their community such as a pizza maker, a barista, a grocery checker, a firefighter or salesperson. As children's worlds expand, so does their understanding of the roles people play in life. Socio-dramatic play opportunities encourage children to experience being a veterinarian, a teacher, or a construction worker and use their emerging literacy skills in related ways. Specific language is inherent in every position, job or role. A doctor, for example, is familiar with parts of the body, diagnosis, and medications and uses language to discuss symptoms, ask questions, and suggest treatment options. This complex language used by doctors consists of rich vocabulary words, particularly for those of us who are not doctors. Likewise, doctors have authentic reasons to read and write. They write prescriptions, read charts and patient history forms, and look up information in medical reference books.

When children pretend to be a teacher, they read books to their class, give assignments, teach specific concepts, write morning messages, and talk with students as they have seen modeled in their own experiences.

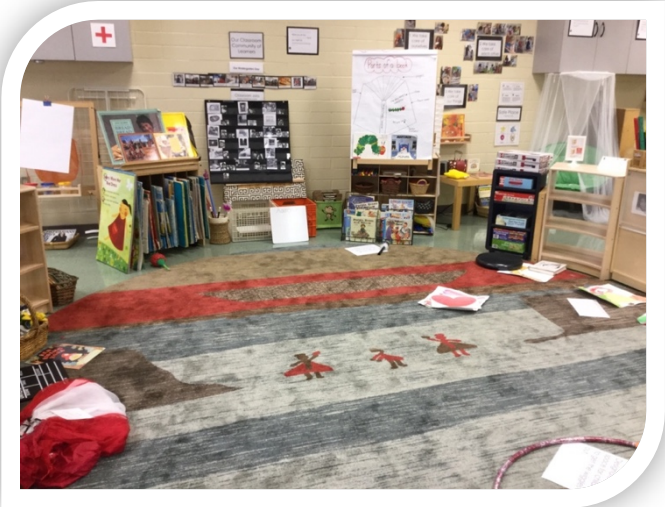
Another example is the work of a construction worker. They use words specific to their tasks: levels, pipes, foundation, plumb lines, and miter box. As children are exposed to this complex language, they need opportunities to play with using this new vocabulary. In their experiences, they will often begin to recognize that some words have different meanings in different settings. Words like "square" or "drywall" can mean different things

and as they practice using this complex language through socio-dramatic experiences, their understanding is deepened. They are developing complex social and critical thinking skills, as well as, experiencing each of the components of literacy.

In socio-dramatic play, children use language to work through problems, learn to appropriately interact with others, and practice speaking and listening (AKA serve and return) of effective communication.

Do not underestimate the power of socio-dramatic play. It provides meaningful practice for oral language development; the foundation for literacy development. Children need opportunities to talk, talk, talk, and talk some more. They are able to do that more successfully when experiences are meaningful to them and when they become excited about trying on different roles.

ELA OPPORTUNITIES in the WHOLE GROUP AREA



Each classroom community is unique. Both knowledge and the shared history of the classroom community are generated collaboratively. The whole group area and what happens there houses all facets of literacy. It is an area for the authentic application of language and literacy skills. Here, literacy is used as a tool for communicating, for supporting critical thinking, to remember ideas, and to enjoy and play with producing and consuming language. This is where many whole group discussions take place about topics of real concern to kindergarten children. Engagement is high when children perceive that they have a voice in solving problems and in sharing ideas. Group problem solving calls upon children to use the language of negotiation and productive feedback, both necessary skills in learning to become effective communicators. When there is a concern, conflict, divergent perspectives, or a difference of opinion among the group, a facilitated discussion about the perceived problem touches many areas. This may include who is impacted by the problem, opportunities to brainstorm possible solutions, and consensus solutions to try. These are powerful approaches in supporting speaking and listening skills, problem-solving skills, and many facets of social and emotional development.

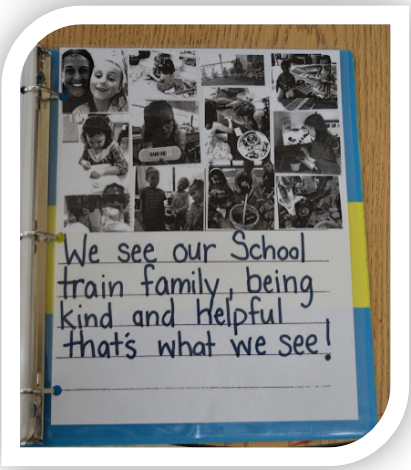
An example of this in practice: During Learning Area Work Time several children have been choosing to construct a very complex marble run. In their excitement, they might sometimes step on or knock over block structures other children have constructed. Even though the children using the marble run aren't intentionally bothering the builders, the builders are frustrated and the conflict begins to escalate. This is a "problem" a teacher might want to bring to the whole group, allowing children to talk about their perspectives and possible resolutions. It's important to understand that this problem belongs to the

children; it is their problem to resolve. The teacher's role is not to determine the resolution, but rather to respectfully facilitate the process of conflict resolution and to ensure that there is follow-through.

Oral language is further employed during whole group time through songs and finger plays, both wonderful techniques that encourage play with the sounds and rhythms of language. Children hear rhyme in songs such as "Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack, all dressed in black, black, black…" or "Down by the bay, where the watermelon grow, back to my home, I dare not go, for if I do, my mother will say, did you ever see a goose-kissing a moose down by the bay?" Children can also play with initial sounds in songs such as "I like to eat, eat, eat, apple and bananas, I like to oat, oat, oat, opples and bononos." knowing an array of songs that encourage children to play with sounds is tremendously important for oral language development. As a rule of thumb, it is far more effective to sing with children rather than rely on CDs or digital recordings. When we sing with children, they are better able to pay attention to the nuances of every sound they hear. Also, teachers can slow a song down and speed it up, which is very important, particularly for those with speech and language concerns and for English Language Learners. As the class learns songs, poems, chants, and fingerplays, the teacher can add to an ongoing bibliography of these titles on chart paper kept in the whole group area for future reference throughout the year.

During whole group, children may be exposed to wonderful stories. Carefully selected read-alouds introduce children to storybook language, "Once upon a time...", "The end" or other language that primarily exists in text such as" '...'she said". New stories familiarizing children with new genres, vocabulary, language structures, and enchanting plots while repeated stories may be ones that children know well and love. These are often the stories that children enjoy telling, retelling, and acting out, all of which enhance comprehension.

Reading class-made books and books written and/or illustrated by children during whole group times gives them a forum for sharing their creative work. For many children, writing creatively may feel scary, as it is a risk to write or draw one's private thoughts and ideas. When children perceive themselves as members of a classroom community of learners where children are helpful to one another, they begin to understand feedback from both the teacher and their peers as an integral part of the learning process. Teaching children appropriate script or language when offering feedback helps to create a positive experience for children. Make a positive statement ("The car sounds were exciting!") or offer a suggestion ("I'm wondering why the boy isn't at the end of the book? What happened to him?").



The whole group area is also a place for functional language skills to be modeled and put into real use. The following are some examples of what this might look like:

- After having a content expert or guest speaker visit the classroom, the teacher might help children to write a collaborative thank you letter or the visit may have sparked a new conversation where children generate a new list of questions.
- Children might create written requests for needed materials to send to families, administration, the community, or other classes.
- Invitations may be made for class or school events-the culmination of a project, an authors' night, or request for chaperones on a field trip.
- Lists might be created to remind children of class procedures or rules.
- As projects develop, mind maps or webs may be created, helping children see their ideas in print and make connections within the subtopics of a larger topic.
- A posted daily schedule in both pictures and text allows children to anticipate the course of the day, easing anxiety over transitions.

The Large Group Area is a place for everyone to share and communicate with each other. It is a place to talk, think, and act collaboratively. Using all the tools of literacy, it is a place for building a learning community.

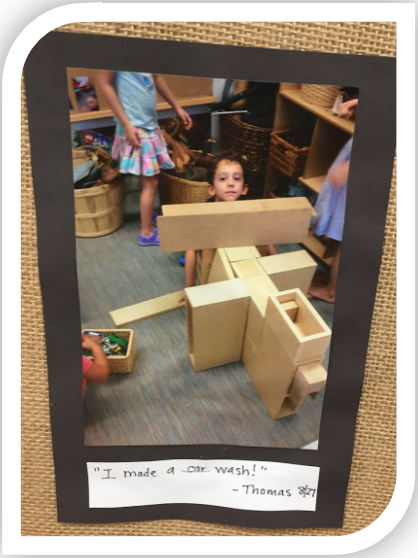
ELA OPPORTUNITIES in the VISUAL ARTS AREA

The art area is a learning area designed specifically for creative expression. In this carefully planned area, children choose from a wide variety of open-ended materials to create original works of art. The process of creativity that occurs in an art area, where children are encouraged to represent their own

ideas, supports their developing ability to use creativity for writing, problem solving and other tasks that require out-of-the-box thinking.

Kindergartners are beginning to realize that their thoughts can be represented with symbols. Like reading, writing, speaking and listening, visual arts offers opportunities to use and manipulate complex symbols, problem solve, demonstrate understanding and connections, and make meaning. They even begin to learn that their creativity can be a form of communication with others.

In the kindergarten classroom, art is an avenue for developing a culture of wonder, imagination, and creativity. This is the same culture that authentically supports kindergartners as readers and writers. **To artistically create is to take risks.** Putting your ideas on paper is taking a RISK. In a classroom where children feel safe to take risks and try new ideas, children are likely to have increased self-esteem and motivation which then increases the likelihood for greater achievement. The creative learning culture is advanced through open-ended art experiences. Children are provided with materials and learn authentic artistic techniques, but most importantly, it is the young artist that makes the decisions about how to use the materials and techniques to create their own form of expression.



Art helps children develop reflective and expressive skills. During the kindergarten year, children become increasingly observant of their world which can be seen in their increasingly detailed art. They are learning how to represent what they think and what is important to them. Looking at children's drawings gives an insight into their unique perspectives. As a part of emerging literacy, young language learners are finding powerful ways of expressing these ideas visually and verbally. This creative expression aligns with communication and literacy in other areas of the room. In the science area, children may draw the results of an investigation recording the growth of a seed or the creation of a channel in the sand. Blueprints of a building, bridge, or tunnel may show plans developed in the block area. Drawings allow children to record the details of their observations and ideas. These details may later be heard in conversations or seen in their writing as children become more proficient in language production.

In the art area, children have the materials to fully assume the role of an illustrator. They may develop their own style of illustration or emulate a known

children's book illustrator, collaging pieces of finger paintings like Eric Carle or use chalk pastel rubbings to create a silhouette effect in the style of Donald Crew's in his book *Freight Train*. As children create illustrations for their writing, they are learning the relationship between print and illustrations. Illustrations often give information about characters, setting, or the story line. For some children the drawings will come before the writing and may serve as a way of generating and organizing ideas. As children use illustrations to expand and enhance their own words, they are also learning about art as a form of storytelling. Most children experience scribbling and drawing as an early form of writing; using it to express ideas and stories before learning conventional print, showing their understanding that symbols hold meaning, a foundational understanding of literacy.

As children are expressing themselves artistically, they are also developing fine motor skills that will help them with the physical demands of writing. Repeated practice of movement with mark makers helps children attain meaningful control and intentionality, the motor skills needed to create lines and curves, starting and stopping as needed to create conventional print. To support this development, give children:

A wide variety of materials to make marks on

- Cardboard
- Tissue paper
- Contact paper
- Crepe paper
- Doilies
- Gift wrapping paper
- Rice paper
- Paper plates
- Sand paper
- Tracing paper
- Watercolor paper
- Butcher paper
- Finger paint paper
- Tag board
- Newsprint
- Newspaper
- Wax paper

A wide variety of mark makers

- *Crayons*
- *Colored pencils*
- *Felt tipped markers*
- *Chalk*
- *Charcoal pastels*
- *Watercolors*
- *Tempera paint*
- *Sharpies*

Tools for applying paint

- *Fingers*
- *Q-tips*
- *Twigs*
- *Flowers*
- *Brushes of many sizes*
- *Chenille sticks*
- *Sponges (may attach a clothespin as a handle)*
- *Matchbox car (drive the wheels through paint, then onto paper)*

Books

- *Beautiful Oops,* Barney Saltzberg
- *Willy's Pictures,* Anthony Browne
- *The Art Lesson,* Tomi dePaulo
- *Not the Box,* Antoinette Portis
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon,* Crockett Johnson
- *Mouse Paint,* Ellen Stoll Walsh
- *Little Blue and Little Yellow,* Leo Lionni
- *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More!* Karen Beaumont
- *Henri Mattise: Drawing with Scissors,* Jeanette Winter
- *Seen Art?* Jon Scieszka

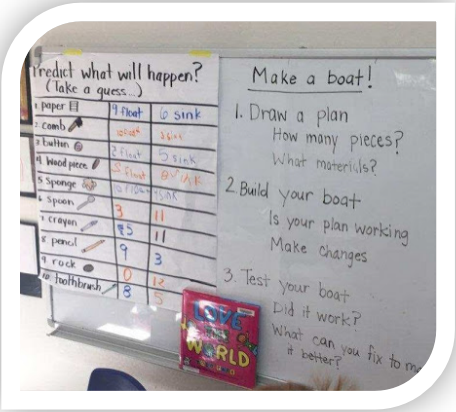
ELA OPPORTUNITY in the SCIENCE AREA

In the science area, children do what scientists do: question, observe, classify, measure, make inferences and predictions, collect data and communicate. Using the tools and skills of literacy, children deepen their knowledge of science, and simultaneously, they practice listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Kindergartners are curious about their world and explore everyday materials and phenomenon in the science area. Working in small groups or pairs encourages conversations about what they see, what they wonder, and what they might try in the science area. Mixing baking soda and vinegar, for example, creates an amazing chemical reaction that can be done again and again as children experiment changing amounts, looking for differences, and predicting outcomes. Recording and transcribing their questions and observations helps children focus on the task and recognize their thoughts transformed to print. After rain, children might look at the effect of a stream of water on sand or dirt, experiencing erosion and making connections to what they have seen in a field or playground. Encouraging children to justify their ideas in a script such as "I think_____ because _____" asks them to articulate their ideas, which initially can be challenging. Observations and experiences in the science area may be captured in writing or drawings.

Collections give children reasons to sort and classify (Which rocks are smooth, shiny, bumpy, or splotchy?). Paying close attention to details provides the necessary practice for becoming intentional observers. As they explore rocks closely, children begin to develop vocabulary to describe groups of their own invention.

The science area is rich in opportunities for print, both adults' and children's print. Asking children to find ways to record their findings, their observations and discoveries, gives reason to write and reason for others to read what was written. Preparing charts for children to add their ideas and questions such as "I notice_____" and "I wonder_____" encourages children to capture what they are thinking and gives the teacher insight about the child. Additionally, all children should have a science journal or notebook easily available. Including various relevant books in the science area provides them an additional resource. Real science materials should be clearly labeled and easily accessible to children. Display photos of children engaged in experiences that include text (written by the child or dictated) that describes what they are doing, using children's language when possible. Many times, science collections spring from the current studies. Families are invited to contribute to the relevant collections.



ROLE OF THE TEACHER:

It is important that teachers model curiosity and wonder. Teachers must remember that many school experiences are a first for kindergartners. It is easy to "teach" and "tell" why things happen, but what young children need is someone to help them be interested and curious and to help them learn to become keen observers. This is enhanced with questions like, "I wonder what would happen if…?", "I'm curious about that…", "Tell me what you're observing…", "What do you notice…" or "I'm really interested to know more about that…" In kindergarten, the key is to support children's expression of curiosity and provide resources and information to help them learn more about what is of interest to them.

ELA in the BLOCK AREA

The building area provides a setting for kindergartners to develop and practice a range of literacy skills. As they engage in cooperative play, ideas and space have to be negotiated. Plans are created, discussed, attempted, and revised. Five- and six-year-old children are learning the skills of self-regulation, of being able to hear the perspective of others, to express their ideas, consider the ideas of others, to be tolerant and use the language of negotiation.
Block play allows children to learn about the physical world through first-hand experiences. Tumbling buildings and challenging bridges are real problems for builders to solve using critical and creative thinking skills. The language of adults can further the thinking process and encourages dialogue rather than a one-word answer. Ask children, "Is there another way of…?", "What would happen if ....?" or "What else have you tried?" to encourage them to put ideas and actions around problem-solving into words.

The block area is well known for its importance in laying foundational knowledge in mathematics. Unit blocks have a vocabulary associated specifically with the shapes and sizes that align with mathematical terms and concepts. Kindergartners can learn about elliptical curves, units and half units, quarter circles, and intersections from the names of the unit blocks. Outlining block silhouettes and writing the term for the blocks facilitates sorting and classifying blocks as part of clean-up and allows adults and children to use the correct terminology. Topic specific vocabulary may also be added as children express interest in a variety of building types. Castles have turrets, moats, and catapults. Pirate ships have bows, sterns and planks. As builders, children express their understanding through the forms and use the vocabulary to discuss it. At times, a child may become a character in the structure that was built, using associated language, thereby increasing their comprehension.

Reading and writing can play a functional role in the block area. Labels are used to indicate where blocks and accessories are stored. Children may make signs asking others to not knock down a building, or to designate a No Parking Zone. As the need for signs arise, children may create them with markers and notecards. Some types of structures, like zoos, use signs to organize and designate the layout. Children may use books in the block area as a reference for architectural styles and to expand their understanding of their building explorations.

When setting up and maintaining the block area, consider what tools of literacy are available for the children to use. Can children name and read the names of the unit blocks? Are children invited to make signs and dictate stories about their structures? Are books available in the block area to extend understanding and interest, stimulate conversation, and serve as a model for text?

ELA OPPORTUNITIES in the OUTDOORS

Literacy learning extends well beyond the classroom walls. The outdoors can provide a unique and stimulating setting for literacy activities that allow for moving bodies in large ways and fewer constraints on noise levels. Exploring the playscape, children may find signs, symbols, and directions to read; outdoor experiences may give reason for an expanded vocabulary reflected in children's conversations and stories. Writing may occur with conventional mark makers, with sticks or paint brushes. Teachers can dramatically increase children's interactions with language with the intentional addition of tools and props outdoors.

A Case Study: Kindergarten Roadways

As adults drive from one location to the next, we make frequent use of literacy to guide us, keep order, and remind us of the rules of the road. We are required to have a driver's license and license plates, we make frequent stops at gas stations to refuel and go to repair shops and car washes as needed. These literacy experiences may be imitated as children ride tricycles on paths and sidewalks utilizing child-made replicas of the materials, tools and experiences and provide opportunities for interacting with spoken language and text.

Road Signs for Tricycle Paths

Encourage children to look at road signs on the way to and from school, or on a walking fieldtrip pointing out various road signs and talking about their various functions. Ask children why and how the signs are helpful. The signs children know and are exposed to will vary depending on location. Begin with signs that children are familiar with, adding new signs as children discover more or find new reasons that they are needed on the path. Discussions may

be needed to expose children to the meaning and purpose of additional signs and where they may be found. Brainstorm about ways to make their own signs. Materials to make signs may include the tubing from paper towels, wrapping paper, laminating film, card stock or cardboard, markers and tape. Children will need to look closely at signs to recreate likeness. Additional immersion will occur as signs become a part of the "Tricycle Roadways". **(Immersion)**

Creating signs gives children a chance to demonstrate writing skills, and as the kindergarten drivers move through the "roadways", they may demonstrate their understanding of the meaning (or the reading) of each sign **(Demonstration).**

Expertise in sign making will vary with the skill level of each child. It's important that teachers model true acceptance of approximations by remarking on the intent of the child's work and how it demonstrates literacy accomplishments perhaps remarking, "I see you used letters on the stop sign to give a message to drivers!", even if the letters are not yet the conventional S-T-O-P! (**Approximation)**

Notice whether children are stopping for pedestrians at crosswalks. Will slowing down around curves reduce the number of tumbles and crashes and resulting scrapes and bruises? At class meetings, discuss any problem areas in traffic patterns. Have children problem solve as to whether signs might be helpful? Once that is determined, the children can decide who will make the signs and how they need to be made. Give children as much of the responsibility for all aspects as is possible. **(Responsibility)**

Response to an expectation is highest when the need is authentic and understood by the child. Children can establish the need for signs and collaboratively create class-wide expectations that signs are understood and followed. **(Expectation)**

Children will have repeated practice in writing as old signs fade and new reasons for signs are created. Riders will practice reading the signs each time they pass by and are reminded of meaning by doing so. **(Engagement and Practice)**

Opportunity for feedback occurs during the sign making as well as the use of signs. Relevant questions about use of signs, whether it has helped the traffic and traffic problems, can be asked of the children. Feedback and responses can come in real time as children create and use the traffic signs from both children and the teacher. Celebrate with children as they display their handmade signs and add them to the roads. **(Feedback, Support, and Celebrations)**

Outdoor Literacy Searches

- Letter Hunt: Children look for naturally-occurring examples of letter shapes. (See *Discovering Nature's Alphabet*, Krystina Catella and Brian Boyl)
- Word Hunt: Take photos of print (letters, words, or phrases) that may be found outdoors. Give children the picture (or to make it more difficult a portion of the picture) and have them hunt for the location of the print. When it is found, can children read the print or decipher its meaning?

ELA and GENERAL FIELD TRIPS

Children should be equipped with a field journal and pencil. Thoughtful planning for literacy development includes what happens before, during and after a field trip.

- **Literacy Opportunities Before**: Developing children's schema or background knowledge increases what will be noticed and taken in during the field trip. It gives them a base for making new connections. Before the field trip, read books, look at photos, chart predictions of what may be seen, who they talk with, and collectively create questions they hope to have answered. Talk about all aspects of what they will encounter.
- **Literacy Opportunities During**: While on the fieldtrip, intentionally highlight all aspects of literacy. Is there a sign displayed that names the location? What tools of literacy are used at the destination? Is there a map showing different areas? Remember to notice familiar signs that are often present: Enter, Exit, Open, Closed, Store Hours.
- **Literacy Opportunities After**: Document the experience with the children using photos, their drawings and writings. These may be displayed on a bulletin board or class book capturing both their experience and the language children use around the experience. Additionally, this is a wonderful and authentic time to practice the conventions of writing to express thanks to those who helped with the field trip!

TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD, K-3 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

LANGUAGE:

Listens to and understands increasingly complex language

Uses language to express thoughts and needs

Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

LITERACY:

Demonstrates phonological awareness, phonics skills and word recognition

Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet

Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses

Comprehends and responds to books and other texts

Demonstrates writing skills

This guide accompanies *INSPIRING THE ZEST FOR ENGLISH LANGAUGE ARTS in Kindergarten* training module and is to be used as a supplemental resource for teachers as they learn to implement strategies that support children's English Language Arts skills. The content of the training module and the guide serves as examples of how to support listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills throughout the entire school day. For support in teaching children how to learn to read and write, check the Arizona Department of Education's website for Teaching Reading Effectively (TRE) professional development sessions.

This training module and guide were written by Dr. Isela Garcia and Debra Everett, M.Ed. of Alesi Group and edited by Linda Shepard. The guide was designed by Dr. Isela Garcia.

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The trailblazing kindergarten teachers who work tirelessly to intentionally support children's learning, growth and development in English Language Arts…and beyond!

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Additional Resources:

http://www.readingrockets.org/

https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=583c67e3aadebe13d87d426c