

LITERACY HAPPENS AT HOME!



This document was created by early childhood teachers from Monroe County Michigan as a part of ongoing professional study regarding early literacy skills.



MCISD Early Childhood Programs



In our classroom, we focus on developing **literacy skills all day**, because we know that this is the best way to prepare our students for **success in kindergarten**.

We teach **phonological awareness skills** through songs, rhymes and actions, because we know that a **child's ability to hear the sounds** of words is an important first step in learning to read and write.

We teach **letter recognition, letter-sound connections and letter formation** all together because we know that **alphabet skills are the single biggest predictor** of a child's later **success** in learning to read.

We provide many opportunities for students to **write for authentic purposes** throughout the day because we know that writing skills are important; not just on their own, but they also **strengthen reading, vocabulary and language skills**.

We **read aloud** to students every day for two different purposes: 1) to help them understand basic **print concepts** about books and reading; and 2) to help develop **comprehension and vocabulary skills** because we know that these skills provide an important foundation for independent reading.

We engage our students in **extended conversations** with the goal to expand vocabulary and thinking skills in children because we know **spoken language** provides an important **foundation** for developing reading and writing skills.

We fill our classroom not only with **interesting books** but also with lots of **authentic reading materials** because we want our children to understand that **reading** is not just for fun, but also necessary to **accomplish real tasks**.

We watch our students carefully in many different settings to **check on their progress** in developing literacy skills because it provides us with information about how to **meet individual needs**.

We **provide parents with ideas** for helping to develop literacy skills at home because we know that **parents are children's first, and best teachers** who can be of great assistance in practicing the skills we are working on at school.

We know that by applying all of these skills and strategies, we can provide our students with the greatest opportunity for success when they enter kindergarten.



Head Start
of Monroe County



We know that we can make a difference...we are early childhood educators !

Contents

Letter to Parents.....	4 & 5
• Literacy Happens in the Kitchen.....	6
• Literacy Happens in the Living Room.....	7
• Literacy Happens in the Bedroom, Bathroom, Laundry Area	8
• Literacy Happens Outdoors	9
• Literacy Happens All Around Town	10
One Final Note.....	11

Dear Parents,

Even though most children do not learn to read on their own until kindergarten or later, the preschool years provide an opportunity for them to develop important foundational skills, which help them learn to read more quickly and easily once formal instruction begins.

Here are some important skills that lead to success in learning to read:

Phonological Awareness

This is fancy term for a simple concept. It just means helping children become aware of the *sounds* in words, which is a very important skill in learning how to *sound out* words once children begin to read. Some ways phonological awareness skills can be developed are:

- helping children listen for and identify the beginning sounds in words and then trying to think of other words that start the same way
- paying attention to rhyming words and coming up with new rhymes
- clapping out all of the sounds in longer words

Oral Language

Having extended conversations with your child helps them develop vocabulary and an understanding of longer sentence patterns. These conversations do not have to be planned or about any special topic—just talking with children about daily events can have a great impact on how well they learn to read and write.

Letter-Sound Knowledge

Letter-sound knowledge means knowing the names and sounds of letters. Being able to recognize letters and match letters with the sounds they represent is a strong predictor of success in learning how read.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the reason for reading! You can help your child make sense of text by talking to them about what you are reading and asking questions like: “What do you think will happen next?” “Why do you think the character said that?” “How do you think the character is feeling?”

Writing

Young children learn to write by drawing, scribbling, trying to write the letters that they know, and making guesses about how words might be spelled. You can help your child develop writing skills by providing real reasons to write – like creating a greeting card, writing a grocery list, or making a sign for their room.

The most important thing to remember about helping to develop these important foundations for literacy is to MAKE IT FUN! You don’t need to find any extra time in your busy day to work on literacy skills because literacy can happen in little ways all throughout your day. But those little ways can make a *big* difference in your child’s later success in learning how to read and write. Here are some suggestions for how you can make literacy happen in your home.

*Sincerely,
Monroe County Early Childhood Teachers*

Literacy Happens in the Kitchen

- Look at cookbooks and draw attention to how they are organized, for example the list of ingredients, directions for the recipe, illustrations, checking the index to find a recipe, etc.
- Play with rhyming words such as “cake-bake,” “book-cook” while you work in the kitchen. Have fun making silly rhymes as well
- Have your child look for and say the beginning letters of various ingredients: **b**utter, **e**ggs, **s**ugar, **f**lour, **v**anilla
- Practice classifying foods types: vegetables, fruits, grains, meat
- Emphasize the order of following a recipe: first, next, then
- Talk about cause and effect: we need to heat up the oven first *because* ..., we need to beat the eggs *because*...
- Encourage your child to talk about favorite types of foods (favorite type of cookie, cake, vegetable) and tell why
- Have your child “write” a grocery list or recipe
- Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator and encourage play while you are together in the kitchen
- Look for kid-friendly recipes and have your child read and follow the steps with you
- Look through the mail for take-out menus and coupons
- Talk about measuring tools and have your child help you measure
- Ask questions like: what do you think will happen if we mix these two things together?
- Play “I Spy”: can you find something that starts with “b”?
- Tap out syllables with a wooden spoon
- Practice forming letters with pretzels or other foods
- Teach the child kitchen “vocabulary” words: measuring cups and spoons, bowls, spatula, colander, timer, mixer etc.
- Have your child point out and/or sort food by colors

Literacy Happens in the Living Room

- Have a comfortable chair and a basket of books in the living room
- Encourage family reading time with the TV turned off
- Have paper/pencils/crayons available and “write” stories about events that happen in your everyday life: “Today we...”
- Make greeting cards or write notes to send to relatives
- Look for toys and puzzles that focus on letters and word building (alphabet puzzles, Magna-Doodle, alphabet blocks)
- Watch videos together and talk about what you see: “why do you think he did that?” “what do you think will happen next?” “how do you think he is feeling?”
- Point out interesting words used in a TV show or video
- Encourage your child to draw pictures of events that happened in a TV show or video and then talk about what they drew
- Have a basket of some simple props for children to act out stories they have read or make up stories
- Use finger puppets or flannel boards for children to re-tell a story
- Play listening games such as “Simon Says”
- Play simple board games with focus on following directions, taking turns, learning how to be a good winner and loser
- Have fun watching children’s music videos and singing the songs together—especially when active movement is involved!
- Put magnetic letters on a cookie sheet and encourage your child to play with finding the beginning sounds of furniture and other objects in the room: **couch, lamp, rug**

Literacy Happens in the Bedroom, Bathroom, Laundry Area

- Read a special story or two before going to bed is a wonderful way to build a love of books. Be sure to talk about what you are reading with your child, and remember that children love to hear their favorite stories over and over again
- As you are reading, point out interesting shapes of words and illustrations
- Ask your child: “what comes next?” “how do you think that character is feeling?” “what did you like about the story?”
- Encourage your child to re-tell a favorite story in their words
- Put labels for familiar items in the child’s bedroom and bathroom, and point out words to child
- Make a picture schedule for morning and/or evening routine, and teach your child to follow it independently
- Read labels on shampoo and soap bottles and other items
- Sing songs and rhymes while in the bathtub
- Play “I Spy” looking for objects starting with different letters
- Look for some waterproof books and bath paint to have in the bath tub
- Use bath time as an opportunity to talk about the day’s events
- Put measuring cups and other containers in the tub, and talk about concepts such as *more, less, same, equal*
- Have your child help to sort out laundry by colors and types
- As you are folding clothes, have fun talking about the beginning sounds of various items: socks, **p**ants, **t**-shirt
- Label drawers where folded items should be put away. Have the child sort folded clothes according to the labels and help to put the clothes away

Literacy Happens Outdoors

- Have fun writing on sidewalk with chalk or rocks
- Use sticks to “write” words
- Make a map of the neighborhood and follow it to take a walk
- Go on a scavenger hunt with a list of objects to find
- Think of rhymes for items spotted on a walk
- Have a conversation about what is going on around you
- Discuss what you see, hear, feel, smell
- Take photos on your cell phone of various things and then talk about the pictures when you return home
- Play “I Spy” to look for things that begin with letters, rhyming words, colors, etc.
- Talk about the weather, point out evidence of the change of seasons
- Look at books on different kinds of animals and then visit a petting farm or zoo to see them in real life
- Look at books on different kinds of trees and plants, and then go on a nature walk to see how many different kinds you can find
- Plant some seeds making sure to talk through the steps in the process and what the seeds will need to grow
- Go on a “book picnic”! In addition to packing the food, pack some favorite books to share in the great outdoors
- Look at books about birds and insects – see how many you can find in their natural environment. Ask your child: “what do you notice...about color? shape? size?”
- Take a day trip to an orchard, a farm, or a lake. Find books that talk about what you see there and have conversations about it

Literacy Happens All Around Town

- Point out the beginning letter in signs all around town
- As your child begins to recognize familiar signs such as “McDonald’s”, ask if they can think of any other words that start with the same sound
- Have a “scavenger hunt” for letters on signs...how many different letters can they spot?
- Play “I Spy” looking for letters on signs
- As you are driving, point out different buildings or landmarks along the way as well as street and traffic signs
- Focus on print in various locations: church, menus, magazines in waiting rooms, post office labels, bank deposit slips
- Take a grocery list to the store and have your child look for various items to check off the list
- Grocery shopping is also a great time to talk about shapes, colors, sizes, categories of foods
- Have conversations while eating at a restaurant—“what do you want on your hamburger?” “what do you like about...?” “is it sweet or salty?”
- At the mall, look for signs or find items that start with a certain sound
- Read sale ads for various stores
- After running errands, talk about where you went first, next, then, last. Be sure to discuss interesting things that were seen and heard
- Visit your local library often and be sure to take advantage of free events there such as story time
- Enjoy going to a movie theater with your child. Plan ahead of time what you will see, and discuss the movie afterwards
- Bring dry erase board along for student to draw or write while driving or waiting

One final note...

Although it is not necessary to worry about doing all or even most of these activities to help your child develop a strong foundation for literacy skills, what is important is knowing that you, as parents, are your child's first teachers. By reading to your child frequently, talking with him or her about books and events, and showing the importance of print in all of life's daily activities, you will go a long way in promoting your child's success in kindergarten and beyond. Enjoy every moment of this important journey!



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