



New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick

Exploring Literacies

— Talk, Sing, Read, Create Through Play Every Day! —



BETLES AND CEDAR BETLES

Acknowledgments

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Framework for Early Learning
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Table of Contents

Let's Explore Literacies	4
An Invitation to Explore Literacies	5
Let's Explore Oral Language	8
Language with Infants	10
Language with Toddlers	13
Language with Preschool Children	15
Expanding Children's Vocabulary	16
Let's Explore Reading	18
Reading with Infants	22
Reading with Toddlers and Preschool Children	23
Choosing Engaging Books	26
Choosing First Nation Books	30
Authors and Illustrators	31
Let's Explore Creating with Children	34
Print Rich Environments	36
Child Made Books	40
Let's Explore Supporting Literacies	42
Symbolic Representation	43
Popular Culture and Books	44
Props and Materials	45
Family and Community Relationships	47
Summary	50
References	51



Let's
Explore
Literacies

An Invitation to Explore Literacies

As a caring adult in a child's life, you play an important role in supporting early learning and development. We invite you to support children as early readers and writers by exploring literacies in all aspects of your daily life at home and in your community.

Children learn to communicate and make meaning of their world through their interactions, relationships and experiences with the people around them. Young children express themselves and represent their thinking in many different ways through *speaking, listening, reading, creating, dancing, singing, and constructing through play.*



Children who are viewed and treated as early readers and writers, and who have their abilities and efforts positively recognized, actually become confident readers and writers.



There are many connections between the home and the community. We all play an important part in encouraging and supporting children's communication and literacies, and their desire to make meaning of the world.



The home, early learning and child care facilities, family resource centres and various community spaces can each be environments that foster the exploration of literacies. Caring adults in these environments can nurture the love of literacy with children through meaningful and playful exchanges. The best literacy rich environments include lots of opportunities for play, books, paper, pencils and mark making materials that are readily available, accessible and inviting.



“Making meaning of the world is at the heart of communication, literacy and language. We are born into relationships, activities, and routines and it is through these relationships, activities, and routines that we learn to communicate and learn about life and living.”

– New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care ~ English



Children communicate through a wide range of literacy practices. As children explore the literacy practices of talking, singing, gesturing, reading, and creating through playing, they express and represent their thoughts, feelings and curiosities. As parents and educators, it is important to provide children with a variety of opportunities and play experiences that foster and support their explorations and interactions.

Exploring Literacies





Let's
Explore
Oral
Language

Oral language is an important foundation in the development of literacies. Just like children’s growth and development benefit from nutritious foods, the development of literacies benefits from strong oral language.

Oral language consists of the following components:

Vocabulary: the words children understand and use.

Grammar: the way that words are put together in a certain order to make a sentence, and/or the endings that are added to words to change the meaning (for example: one boot, two boots).

Pragmatics: the social use of language that includes knowing when and how to ask and answer questions, how to take turns in a conversation and how to use eye contact when communicating with others.



“Sounds, silences, pauses, gestures, movement, eye contact, and body language—our first modes of communication—stay with us throughout our lifetime.”

– New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care ~ English



Sound awareness: the knowledge that words are made up of sounds, how to play with sounds to make rhymes and how to find words that start with the same sound (for example: “The snake slid smoothly across the sand.”).



Language with Infants

Infant language skills are built through interactions. When the important people in their lives talk and interact with them—their parents, educators, siblings and other family members—infants learn. As a special adult in a child’s life, you are important. They want to be with you, hear your voice, and look into your eyes.

Responding to Interests

Infants learn when there is a response to their interests. Responding means knowing what has attracted the infant’s attention and paying close attention to it.

For example, responding may mean talking about what has just made a loud noise, describing the rain that has fallen on their hand or talking to them about the need to be changed because they are wet. Consider the many ways that you can respond to infants.



Responding with Words

Infants benefit from hearing lots of different words. Give them words to label items (such as chair, table, cup and dog), words to describe (such as sticky and cold) and action words (such as hop, sit, run and read).

Responding with Gestures

Responding to children's non-verbal communication supports the development of children's early gestures. For example, when an infant turns their head away to indicate that they do not want a particular food, and you respond by removing the food, this is the beginning of the gesture of them shaking their head to say "no".

Gestures may be used by infants to help bridge the gap between when they know what they want to say but don't have the words to say it. Gestures can also be used to help children understand.

Imitating

Before infants have words, you can imitate both the sounds that they make and their facial expressions. This helps them learn that what they say is important and that someone is paying attention. Imitating an infant's babble helps to establish the soft and fuzzy aspects of communication like back and forth conversation.

Talking and Singing

Talking with infants during play experiences is extremely important. Playing with infants using singing and rhyming games is a great way to foster infant language development. *Peek-a-boo* is a great example of a game infants enjoy.

When you sing a song or a rhyme with an action, you expose infants to hearing the words and to experiencing the words with the actions, as well as to the rhythm of the song which together support new learning.

The actions in songs and rhymes give infants more information. Actions also provide an opportunity to initiate an interaction and to start communication with you. They can tell you which song or rhyme they want to hear through their gestures before they even have the words to tell you.

Infants respond best to interactions when they are in a quiet, alert state. If an infant is falling asleep, just waking up or is being very active, it might not be the best time to try to engage them in a singing or rhyming game.



Reading

Books are a great way to expose infants to new words that they may not experience in their daily environment. For example, reading a book about the zoo if there isn't a zoo in the community will expose infants to animal names that they may not hear in their day-to-day world.

Language with Toddlers

When young children begin to practice their oral language, they attempt words and sentences that may not always sound the same as when you say them. Here are some simple strategies to support toddlers as they explore language.

Guessing Words

When a child uses a sound or a part of a word to tell you something (for example, “tu” for “cup”), you need to interpret or make your best guess as to what he or she may be trying to tell you. Guessing is the best way to get it right. If you don’t guess, then you’ll never know what was meant. When you get it right, the child will tell you and when you guess wrong, the child will tell you too!

Guess using the cues in the environment. If the children are having “tea” and they need another cup, then “tu” may mean “cup” but in another situation or context, “tu” may mean something very different and will require you to guess again.

Responding to Gestures

Similar to infants, when toddlers are beginning to use oral language, they may not always use words to communicate. They may rely more on gestures like pointing. In these cases, you can ask a number of questions that require only a yes or no answer. The alternative to asking these yes or no questions is to comment. Instead of asking, “Is that an elephant?” when you clearly know that it is, you can comment about the elephant: “That is a huge elephant!” Commenting gives children the words we want them to use instead of just giving them opportunities to practice answering “yes” and “no”.

It is still important to ask questions to get children’s opinions and to give them opportunities to make choices. Such questions would include, “Tell me what happened?” and “What would you like for a snack? An apple or orange?”

Encouraging Word Types

As children begin to use more words, the goal is to enhance their oral language. This means helping them move from using single words to using words together in sentences.

Children need exposure to a variety of word types, not just the names for items and people. They also need action words such as “jump”, “hop” and “read”; descriptive words such as “delicious” and “yummy”; and words that talk about location such as “in”, “on” and “over”.

It is much easier for children to begin to combine two ideas (for example, “baby fall”) when they have a variety of words types. This combination of ideas is the start of sentence making.



Expanding Vocabulary

You can help children expand their vocabulary by repeating what they say and adding more words. For example, when a child says “hand” while holding up their dirty hands, you can respond with, “Oh, your hands are dirty!” or “You sure have muddy hands.”

Language with Preschool Children

When children enter the preschool years, they are beginning to communicate using sentences. It is important to recognize that they are still exploring and experimenting with:

- using the new words they've learned.
- putting words together in the proper order to make a sentence.
- adding word endings.
- following the social rules of language.

As a parent or educator, you are modelling social language. You demonstrate how people communicate by:

- taking turns in a conversation.
- telling stories with a beginning middle and end.
- paying close attention when someone is talking.
- answering and asking questions.
- using respectful words such as “please”, “thank you” and “excuse me”.

Other ways that parents and educators can engage children in order to further foster their language include:

- playing with sounds by singing rhyming songs like *Willoughby Walloughby* or *Apples and Bananas*.
- reading books that emphasize

Did You Know?

Talk With Me early language services:

- is available free of charge throughout the province of New Brunswick.
- provides ideas and tools in speech language practices for parents, educators and other service providers.
- is a referral program for parents who have questions about children's language development.

rhyming words.

- playing games like *Simon Says* that playfully explore following directions.
- playing games like *Go Fish* that practice turn taking, and answering and asking questions.

You can support children's continued language growth at all times by listening closely when children are communicating with you, and by modeling correct word order and word endings for children.

Expanding Children's Vocabulary

Because children need to be exposed to rich vocabulary, it is important that you think about the words you use with them. As children develop, they need to hear a variety of words. For example, instead of talking about the children's wet socks after playing outside, you could use the words "damp" or "soggy" to describe the socks.

As a parent or educator, you can interpret, comment and expand on children's language whenever you are:

- Preparing and eating meals, and other daily routines and transitions throughout the day.
- Reading, creating and participating in indoor and outdoor play experiences.
- Cleaning up with the children.
- Walking outdoors or other community experiences.



When thinking about the children in your life, no matter what the age, consider the importance of the language you use when interacting and engaging with them every day.



Language is all around us, and children will benefit from hearing you use language in relation to your day-to-day activities.

It is important to use words with children that talk about both the past (what has happened) and the future (what may happen). It is also important to use words that describe feelings and words that can be used in different play experiences.

Other types of words are also important including words that:

- Describe locations and those that can help with following directions such as "behind", "beside" and "through".
- Compare size such as "largest" and "smallest".
- Compare amounts such as "most" and "least".
- Describe shapes such as "round" and "square".
- Describe colours, animals and types of transportation.



Reflections

Language and Communication

Think about and ask yourself:

Do I respond positively to children's communication? Do I interact by making eye contact on their level? Am I listening, responding to questions, comments and gestures?

Are there lots of conversations and taking turns? Do I use open ended questions that begin with "what if", "why", "tell me"?

Are there conversations about favorite things, food, popular characters from TV or movies, books, songs, jokes and poems?

Do I introduce lots of new vocabulary and words while talking, reading, singing and playing?

Are there conversations about feelings, locations, past and present?



Let's
Explore
Reading

Reading is one of the most important experiences adults can share with children. Read aloud each and every day with children of all ages. Find moments throughout the day to read with a child or to a small group of children.



“The fires of literacy are created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn’t achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who’s reading aloud - it’s the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony.”

– Reading Magic, Mem Fox, 2008



Read, reread, and reread, children’s favorite books as well as books that are new and unfamiliar to children.

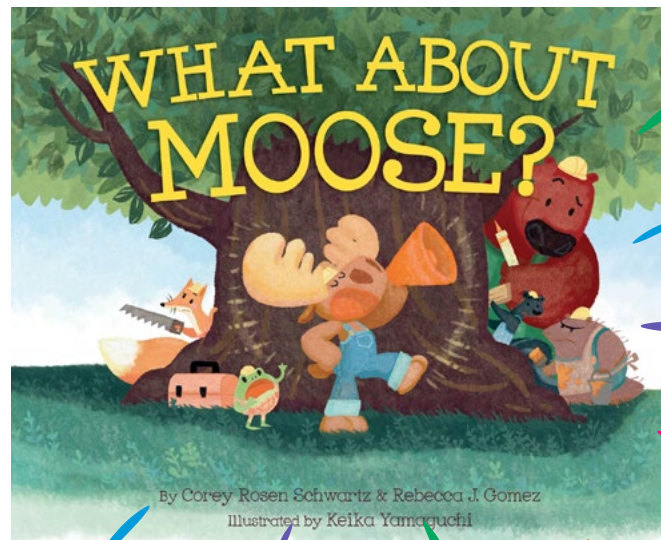
Read every day with each child because you deeply respect each child. Responding to each individual child’s interests, comments and questions means reading with individual children may look very different each time.

Keep a variety of books available and accessible and ensure that children can easily reach them at all times. Books are like treasures and friends. Books should be shared each and every day with all children.

Read books with rich vocabulary. Learn and talk about new words with the children as you read together.



To learn more about rich vocabulary, visit: <https://goo.gl/SpdSYq>



Did you know?

New Brunswick public libraries offer a number of services that can support and enhance the shared reading experiences of educators, parents and children, including:

- a variety of programs for children birth to five years old.
- tours and group visits for children of all ages.
- assistance in choosing engaging books.
- materials in a variety of accessible formats, such as eBooks and audiobooks.
- access to online resources.
- an educator library card that allows you to check out more items and keep them longer.



Rely on your New Brunswick public libraries to support your book selections. The librarians are very happy to help you. To find local libraries, visit: <https://goo.gl/2oQZx8>

Read multiple books by the same author or illustrator over several days so children can learn that there are different author and illustrator styles. Learning the styles of authors and illustrators supports children's reading, drawing and mark-making as they will often borrow ideas when they create.

Books that are well-loved are often damaged by accident or by mistake. This is an opportunity to problem solve with the children in the moment when discovering the damage, and to repair these treasures together.



Reading with Infants

Reading with infants is about being held, feeling good and hearing a familiar, comforting voice of a parent, caregiver or educator. Reading from storybooks, reciting poems and nursery rhymes, and singing songs and lullabies to infants strengthens their literacy development.



Durable board books are wonderful for infants to explore with all their senses. Choose board books with textures, contrasting pictures, one word per page, or short lines of poems or songs on each page.

Invite older infants to “point and say”, hold the books, turn the pages, and look at books on their own. Respond to what infants do with books by describing, repeating or imitating what they do. Observe and listen for clues for infants’ favorite books.

Reading with Toddlers and Preschool Children

Reading experiences with toddlers and preschool children provides them with new vocabulary and expressive language opportunities. Stories support their growing capacities to imagine, represent, and think about emotions and the perspectives of others.

Invite the child to hold the book and turn the pages.

Follow the child's lead in how the book might be read and allow them to set the pace.



Have fun! Read with joy and animation. Act out the characters using your voice, facial expressions and gestures. Build up suspense or anticipation as you turn to the next page.

Talk with the children about the author and the illustrator. Show pictures of the author and illustrator, share a few details about their lives (there are many excellent author sites online), read the book dedication, read the title page of the book and look for clues about the story to come.

Pause in order to allow time for children to read the pictures. Children are often very attentive to the visuals. You can learn a great deal about the illustrations through observing and listening to the children.

Ask open-ended questions about the characters, about what might be happening and what might happen next. Show excitement, interest and curiosity about the children's responses, questions and comments.

As you follow the children's lead, you might find that you will simply read the pictures. You might even skip pages as you read and talk about the pictures with the children.

The child might read the story to you, or you may ask a child "Would you read this book to me?" A child reading is a perfect opportunity to encourage and support the child. This demonstrates that you believe they are a reader. This belief is an extremely important aspect of becoming a reader, and helps form the child's confidence and identity as a reader.



Tips on how to enrich the experience of reading with children

Repeat back the child's words.

Be playful with words when reading. Invite children to repeat new and interesting words.

Point out the print contained on the page.

Talk about the authors and illustrators.

"...and then what happened?"

You can encourage children's reading when you ask them questions, reread their favorite books, and encourage them to read books and the pictures.

"Have you ever...?"

Point out the illustrations and invite the children to tell the story by looking closely at the pictures.

"I wonder what might happen next."

"I would love for you to read this book."

"Let's read this book together."

Choosing Engaging Books

Choose a wide variety of **thoughtfully selected books**. In each of the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning and Child Care Professional Support Documents, there are lists of picture books and authors to support your thoughtful library selections or purchases of engaging books for children.



We invite you to further explore the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework by visiting: <https://goo.gl/Uapc31>



Choosing Books

The selection of children's books is vast. Parents and educators can choose books that will enrich children's literacy experiences by including the following:

- counting books.
- books that tell stories.
- books that teach us something (informational).
- books that rhyme and repeat sentences or refrains.
- books that repeat and add to the sentence with each turn of the page.
- alphabet books.
- poetry.
- song books.
- child made books.

Counting Books

When selecting counting books for children, look for books that:

- represent the same number in a variety of ways.
- show different ways to build numbers.
- include skip counting (2,4,6,8...).
- show number and quantity in other cultures.
- address the relationships between numbers.
- explore mathematical language (more than, less than).

Examples to choose from include:

- *Ten Black Dots*—Donald Crews
- *Canada 1, 2, 3*—Kim Bellefontaine
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*—Eric Carle
- *Ten Little Rabbits*—Virginia Grossman, Sylvia Long
- *1, 2, 3, 4 First Nations Explore*—Kim Soo Goodtrack
- *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*—James Dean
- *Chicka Chicka 1, 2, 3*—Bill Martin Jr., Michael Sampson, Lois Ehlert
- *moja means one*—Muriel Feelings

Wordless Books

Children can read the pictures in wordless books alone or with an adult. Wordless books provide the freedom to imagine and create your own stories.

Examples to choose from include:

- *The Snow Man*—Raymond Briggs
- *Time Flies*—Eric Rothman
- *Rain*— Peter Spier
- *Window*—Jeannie Baker
- *The Yellow Umbrella*—Jae-Soo Liu
- *The Red Book*—Barbara Lehmen
- *The Wave*—Suzy Lee



Predictable Books

There are many different kinds of predictable books:

- **Chain or circular story:** each time a new event occurs, all previous events are repeated.
- **Familiar sequence:** the book is organized around a recognizable theme or concept, such as days of the week, numbers, the alphabet, seasons, opposites and so on.
- **Pattern stories:** scenes in the story are repeated.
- **Question and answer:** the same or similar questions are repeated throughout the story.
- **Repetition of phrase:** the word order in a phrase or sentence is repeated.
- **Rhyme:** the book has rhyming words or patterns that are repeated.

Examples to choose from include:

- *Red is Best*—Kathy Stinson
- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*—Bill Martin
- *Is your Mama a Lama?*—Deborah Guarino
- *Good Night Moon*—Margaret Wise Brown
- *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*—Eileen Christelow

Alphabet Books

Alphabet books are children’s books that have a specific focus on each of the letters of the alphabet. They are useful for children to explore to become familiar with the symbols and sounds of letters and words. Alphabet books come in many different formats including:

- **Word-picture:** one clear picture per letter (often usual choices associated with each letter).
- **Simple narrative:** contain rhyming or poetic text.
- **Riddles and puzzles:** invite children to find objects on the page or predict what will happen next.
- **Theme or topic:** common themes or topics woven throughout the book.

Examples to choose from include:

- *On Market Street* – Pictures by Anita Lobel; words by Arnold Lobel
- *Eating the Alphabet* – Lois Eblert



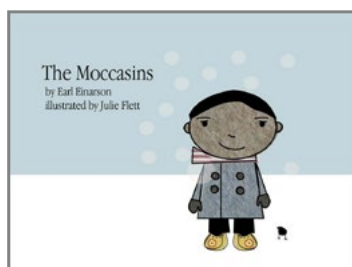
Choosing First Nation Books

To select books that respectfully represent First Nation culture, you need to consider the following questions:

- Does the story contribute to the reader's knowledge of Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and other Indigenous traditions?
- Does the story enhance appreciation and respect of Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and other Indigenous history and culture?
- Does the story familiarize children with Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey and other Indigenous languages?

Examples to choose from include:

- *Weska'qelmut Apje'juanu*—Sheree Fitch & Bernie Francis
- *The Moccasins*—Earl Einarson
- *The Bead Pot*—Thelma Poirier
- *The Mud Family*—Betsy James
- *Fox Song*—Joseph Bruchac
- *The First Strawberries*—Retold by Joseph Bruchac
- *Ancient Thunder*—Leo Yerxa



Authors and Illustrators

Parents and educators can discuss authors and illustrators with young children as they read a variety of books with them. Learning that authors and illustrators are people who create the images and words in the books allows children to understand why people write and draw.

While you reread familiar loved books, discuss with children the strategies that illustrators and authors use to make their books. Eventually you might observe them trying out various strategies in their own creations.

Do you know about author talks?

There are a number of wonderful resources online where authors and illustrators talk about their creative process and even read their books.



Canadian author **Barbara Reid** shares ideas about her creative process: <https://goo.gl/9wJ8Bu>

New Brunswick author **Sheree Fitch** shares an inspirational story of how an educator inspired her to become a writer: <https://goo.gl/WChCFL>



Eric Carle talks about the inspiration behind the children's book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*: <https://goo.gl/2N7zFq>

Illustrations

Most children love to look at the illustrations that accompany a book—for some, it is their favourite part of the story. Illustration styles and strategies vary widely and are a source of many learning opportunities. Here are a few things to point out when reading with children:

- perspective, including zoomed-in, close-up and birds-eye-view.
- interesting use of colour.
- details.
- white spaces.
- how the illustrations say more than the words or match the words.
- how the illustrations are designed across the page.
- lines and shapes that show movement.

Text

The text in children’s books may consist of a wide range of styles, fonts and formats that influence how a book is read. Discussing how text is used to convey a specific idea, expression or feeling with children enhances their literacy development. Be sure to talk about the following written text devices:

- words printed in different ways—bold, italics, large, small—to encourage us to read them with a variety of expressions.
- word placement on the page.
- repetition of phrases and words.
- speech bubbles.
- thought bubbles.
- sound words.
- beautiful, interesting language or unusual vocabulary
- spelling patterns (for example, “Hey! That begins with the same letter as my name.”).



Reflections

Fostering Reading

**How do you engage with books?
Think about and ask yourself:**

Do I read to children every day?

Do I show interest in books and read them aloud with expression, animation, and emotion to inspire and capture children's imagination?

Are there a wide variety of children's books available and can children reach them anytime?

Are children introduced to lots of different authors, styles of illustrators and text used in books?

Are there lots of conversations with children about books, and asking questions about books and stories?

Are children reading books or retelling their favourite stories from books?



Let's
Explore
Creating
with
Children



“Long before kindergarten, children are filled with stories to tell and ideas to express – they want to show the world what they know and see. All they need is a nurturing parent/educator like you to recognize that they are already readers, writers, illustrators and creators of their world.”

– Already Ready–Katie Wood Ray and Matt Glover



Children create stories through playing, talking, mark-making, dancing, singing, building, performing, painting, counting and storytelling.

Using what they know about the world, their knowledge of different kinds of print and their oral language experiences, even the youngest of children can create meaning through their talk, mark-making and actions.



Print Rich Environments

Young children see print everywhere and begin to understand that print is meaningful.

Environmental Print

Environmental print is meaningful, authentic text that provides a visual representation for children's everyday experiences. It includes words, letters, numbers and symbols from children's everyday surroundings. There are three categories of environmental print:

- **Child logos** include familiar text associated with toys, movies and television shows (for example, *Sponge Bob*, *Spiderman* and *Sesame Street*).
- **Community logos** include familiar text associated with the community such as road signs, restaurants and store logos (for example, *STOP*, *McDonalds* and *Walmart*).
- **Household logos** include familiar text associated with the home such as food, health and hygiene brands (for example, *Cheerios*, *Band-Aids* and *Fleecy*).



Children's Names

Children are extremely interested in their own names and the names of their friends and family members. This interest can provide a wonderful opportunity to introduce children to meaningful print experiences.

Consider the many ways that you can display and demonstrate the importance of children’s names, including:

- children’s names posted.
- baskets containing cards with children’s names.
- label drawers, shelves and cubbies.
- games with children’s names.
- pointing out the letters in children’s names (“This word begins with a D—just like your name, David.”).

Functional Print

Functional print is text associated with specific functions such as labels, lists, notes, sign-in sheets, surveys, cards, signs with messages, graphs and “how to” books. Functional print may be inspired by play experiences such as creating menus, writing shopping lists, recipes, receipts and tickets.



Creating Print

Parents and educators can encourage and support children to create functional print by:

- asking children to share their thinking about their block buildings, play dough sculptures, songs, dances, mark making, painting and imaginary play scenarios.
- ensuring that children have access to a wide range of mark making tools, materials and props in all learning areas, indoors and out.
- talking with children about their works-in-progress to help make their thinking visible.
- listening for the connections and comparisons that children make and building upon these.



Mark-making Materials

Mark-making tools and materials are integral to print rich environments as they support and encourage children to communicate and represent their thoughts and feelings through drawing, painting and creating. Tools and materials include crayons, markers, chalk, pencils, paint, brushes, clay and play dough, paper, cardboard, clip boards, scissors, staplers, hole punches and tape.

It is important to ensure that space for mark-making is provided and that materials are accessible to children. This could be at a table, an area on the floor, a sidewalk, the snow or the ground.

You are supporting and engaging young children with print when you:

- understand that all mark-making supports reading and writing development.
- encourage children's efforts at all times to create pictures and print.
- notice when a child is creating and mark making by recognizing their efforts and celebrating their accomplishments, for example, "Look you spelled your name!", "Yes, bird starts with b."
- help children interact with their mark-making and communicate their thoughts and ideas by asking questions about their creations and recording their stories. Ask open-ended questions such as; "I wonder" or "Tell me about..."
- encourage and support children as they read the signs around them. Talk with children about the signs and symbols they see. Ask questions and comment about the print on the signs so that children begin to notice and make meaningful connections to the print around them.
- encourage children to share their work.
- invite children to participate in making birthday cards, grocery lists and 'to do' lists.
- document what you are learning about each child as they create signs, pictures, paintings, books, maps, surveys and cards.
- role model for children by showing ways of using print. For example, you might say, "Look, this sign tells me that I should wash my hands now." and "This sign tells us to stop."
- demonstrate the importance of using the print around us to complete particular tasks such as reading instructions, directions and recipes.



Child Made Books

Child made books provide a wonderful opportunity for children to represent their ideas with mark-making and oral language. Children will often talk about and share the meaning of their marks and creations.

By providing four to six blank pages stapled together and a variety of mark-making tools and materials, you can invite young children to create books similar to the books they read. Blank pages provide them with choice, freedom and opportunities for problem solving and creativity.

Refer to books read together and remind the child of techniques from other authors and illustrators.

"Tell me where you got your idea for your book."

"How long have you been making this book?"

"...and then what happened?"

"I would love for you to read your book to me."

Conversations that support children while they are creating their own books.

"I wonder what your book is going to be about."

"Tell me about your illustrations."

Repeat the child's words.

You respect children's creations by supporting their identity as a writer when you ask questions, reread their books, and share them with others.

Describe what the child has drawn to spark conversations. "Wow! Look at all those colours!"

Toddlers may fill the pages with experimental dots, lines, and circles. Sometimes these marks will have meaning and other times, the marks are made purely out of pleasure.

Preschool children may begin creating books by representing a different idea on each page. Children will begin to create increasingly detailed stories where each of the pages will be connected, telling a story throughout the book.



Reflections

Creations, Mark-making and Print

Think about and ask yourself:

Are mark-making materials accessible to children?

Do you point out areas in the environment that are labeled such as bathrooms, road signs and restaurants?

Do you point out authentic meaningful print such as children's names, menus, posters, lists and brochures?

Are labels on boxes, storage containers and drawers?



Let's
Explore
Supporting
Literacies

Symbolic Representation

When children use materials and props in their play, they are encouraged to use language more extensively. Props and the actions that accompany them encourage children to communicate their ideas to their friends. For example, a child may not need to explain that she is a firefighter extinguishing a fire if she is using a hose, but she may need to explain further if she is using a cardboard tube.

Through play, children realize that one thing can represent another. For example, a feathered scarf can become a fishing rod, a paper plate can become a steering wheel and a rubber tire can become a boat. This also helps children understand that written words can also represent real objects and experiences. This is referred to as symbolic representation.



Imaginary play experiences help children create and tell stories that develop oral language skills. As children role-play in different learning areas, they talk with others about what they are doing. They practice putting thoughts into words. Imaginary play also gives children a chance to act out real-life situations, work through worries and fears, and use their imagination to problem-solve.

Popular Culture and Books

Children also gain information about the world through popular culture and stories from books.

Popular Culture

Children learn a great deal about the world through their engagement with popular culture (for example, television shows, movies and music). They often bring their experiences of popular culture into their play. It is common for children to want to re-enact their favorite movies or television shows, or to imagine that they are their favourite characters from these shows. It's important to encourage children to share their knowledge and experiences about popular culture. This demonstrates that their interests and passions are valued.

Books

Children are also inspired by books. They act out favourite parts, characters or re-enact scenarios. Such re-enactments are visible throughout the home or early learning environment.

It is important to follow the children's lead when participating and engaging with them.

When children re-enact familiar experiences and stories or create their own imaginary scenarios, they gain experience with the structure of a story and storytelling. They become more adept at creating stories with characters and a beginning, middle and end.



Props and Materials

All indoor and outdoor learning areas can offer children many opportunities for rich play experiences. As children explore talking, singing, reading and creating through a variety of play experiences, consider the many opportunities for hands-on exploration and discovery.



Consider using the props and materials you find outdoors that support children's literacies through the exploration of language, reading, singing, painting, drawing, dancing and constructing. Rocks, leaves, twigs and feathers can become literacy props and materials.

Look all around for everyday items that assist children in exploring literacies. Look around for:

- old telephones.
- computer keyboards.
- cards with children's names.
- signs.
- loose parts such as tubing and cardboard rolls and boxes.
- menus and appointment books.
- bills, envelopes, stamps and address books.
- maps, road signs and graphs.
- labels and empty grocery boxes.
- accessible baskets and shelves with a wide variety of mark making materials.

Indoor and outdoor learning areas that support the exploration of literacies might include:

- a playground or back yard
- farmer's market, grocery stores and neighborhoods
- BBQ and picnic areas, sand, water play areas

By pointing out signs, photos and other print in meaningful and creative ways at the eye level of the children, in addition to having mark-making materials and clipboards or notebooks available, children's exploration is supported and encouraged.



Family and Community Relationships

As caring adults, we all have an important role in fostering and supporting children's literacy development.

Family Literacy and Connecting with Community

As parents, you can:

- recognize that literacy develops in the home during all routine activities: bed time, meal times, cooking, bathing, gardening, etc.
- recognize that children explore literacies through play.
- read books with children from the moment they are born.
- sing songs and recite short poems.
- display children's artwork and creations in the home.
- participate in activities in your community. Make library visits a family routine, attend a *Talk With Me* program, or visit a local family resource centre.



Connecting with Families

As educators and early childhood service providers, you can:

- invite parents into the centre or learning environment to co-construct learning with children so that they can witness the richness of hands-on exploration and everyday learning firsthand. Explain how literacies are embedded within children's daily experiences. Demonstrate how concepts like shape, height, weight, balance, and volume are practiced as children build block towers and pour water through funnels.
- share ideas with families about the importance of environmental print by pointing out letters on signs during walks, reading the symbols on storefronts and talking about numbers on mailboxes.
- encourage families to borrow books that have been created by the children. Invite parents to create books with their children.
- discuss with parents how the interactive conversations, stories, rhymes, chants and songs that fill the children's days encourage and support the joys of language.
- discuss with parents the importance of role modeling reading and writing with their children.





Together, we can:

- recognize all caring adults as important partners in children’s literacy development by communicating and sharing ideas with each other.
- share items such as favorite words, favourite foods or cherished items.
- value home literacies such as gardening, cooking, knitting or farming that are unique to children’s families.
- share song lyrics and poems to sing together.
- display artifacts and the children’s mark-making creations.
- share information about children’s interests and experiences, and listen and learn from each other.
- encourage reading with children.
- welcome other family members and friends to read with children.



Summary

Children explore literacies through their interactions with the world and the people all around them.

Through purposefully planned environments rich in print, relationships, props and materials, children are inspired and supported to create and communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Children explore literacies through talking, singing, reading and creating through play experiences in all aspects of daily life at home and in the community. As a caring adult in a child's life, you play a significant role in encouraging and valuing participation in rich literacy experiences.

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