



Early Literacy Newsletter



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What is Early Literacy?

Early Literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Research shows that children get ready to read years before they start school. There are five early literacy practices that parents can incorporate into their children's daily life.

These five practices are:

Talking, Writing, Reading, Playing,
and Singing

This newsletter's purpose is to help parents of children from birth to age five put early literacy principles into practice. You can help your baby, toddler and preschooler learn important skills now so they can become good readers.

Over the course of the next five newsletters we will look at how the basic concepts of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) can be incorporated with early literacy activities!

What is STEAM? "STEAM" stands for science, technology, engineering, art, and math. For young children, we focus on STEAM through exploration, play and building curiosity about the world and the way things work. The real-life skills that people develop when learning STEAM help make them better problem-solvers and learners.

This issue is all about:

Early Literacy and Art

Early literacy doesn't just revolve around teaching children how to recite letters, read, and count – art can have a profound affect on their literacy, and development as well. Exposing kids to art early in life encourages exploration, self expression, logical thinking, self-esteem, imagination, and creativity.

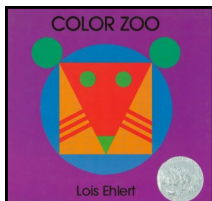
Art activities that promote literacy:

- Use fruits and vegetables to do print making. Cut the fruits and veggies in half, then have your child dip them in paint and print them onto a sheet of construction paper. Talk about each fruit and vegetable that you use. What color is it? Is it bigger or smaller than the others? What letter does its name start with?
- Make a collage menu by cutting out pictures of food and pasting them on sheets of paper. You might make pages for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Have your child "read" the menu.
- Create characters from a favorite book using cardboard tubes. Color, draw or glue on construction paper to make the tubes into a dog, cat, person, etc. Then use the characters to act out the story from the book!
- Use vanilla pudding, dyed with food coloring for an edible finger painting art project. Finger painting strengthens the finger and small hand muscles, helping to develop pre-writing skills.
- Through the weeks, do an art project for each letter of the alphabet. Decorate a big construction paper letter each week with something that starts with that letter. For example, decorate a big letter "B" with glued on buttons or make your letter "S" into a snake!

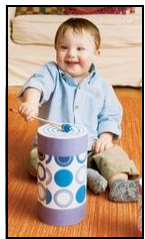
Here are some art activities to do that go along with the five early literacy practices !

Talking

As children describe and share their artwork, as well as their process, they develop language skills. You can encourage this development by actively listening and asking open-ended questions in return. Ask questions like "Tell me about your picture." You can also describe specific things your child is doing by saying things such as, "You're making short lines, I see you are using red, green and blue." You can also describe the actions your child is taking or the materials they are using by saying things such as, "You are using a soft paintbrush, I noticed you are making small circles, you are using two crayons at the same time!" As you read together, you can also talk about the art work in the book. Read a book like *Color Zoo* by Lois Ehlert. Then talk about the colors, shapes, etc. that you see in the illustrations.

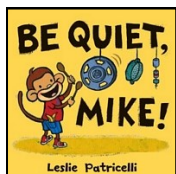


Singing



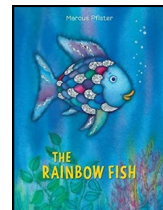
Making a drum out of everyday household items is a fun art activity to do with your child. And when you use it with your favorite music, it becomes an Early Literacy tool! Save a canister with a lid, such as an oatmeal container. Using

watercolor, crayons, colored pencils or cut out shapes, have your child decorate a piece of construction paper big enough to cover the outside of the canister. Then glue the construction paper art work to the outside of the container. Put the lid on the canister and your little one is ready to play her drum while singing along to her favorite tunes! After your child sings and plays her drum for awhile, take a moment to read *Be Quiet, Mike!* by Leslie Patricelli, a book about a monkey who just can't stop drumming on everything he sees!



Reading

Success in reading is linked to early experiences reading-aloud to children and reading aloud as often as possible. Following up that reading time with related activities such as art increases a child's love and appreciation of books, and inspires children to return to their favorites with deeper understanding and comprehension. Read the classic book *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister. Then follow it up by having your child create her own sparkly crayon drawing. Provide small scraps of aluminum foil, scissors, paper, crayons and glue and see what your child will create!

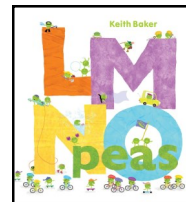


Playing

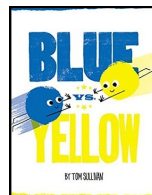


Provide your child with clay or playdough to play with. As he plays, he will not only be expressing his creativity, he will also be strengthening the small muscles of his hands.

Clay and playdough can also be used to shape different letters and objects that you see around you or in the books that you read together. Read the book *LMNO Peas* by Keith Baker. Then, use your clay or playdough to create peas, letters and other objects pictured in the book.



Writing



After reading the book *Blue vs. Yellow* by Tom Sullivan, use blue and yellow paint to explore the art concept of color mixing. Help your child see that blue and yellow make green. Then, allow them to paint with their newly mixed color! Experiment with other colors and see what happens. Using paintbrushes helps children develop their fine motor muscles. This development will help your child with writing, buttoning a coat and other tasks that require controlled movements.