

Creating a Literacy Learning Curriculum for Your Child

Introduction

There are many benefits of a well-developed literacy curriculum. It really is a system for decoding language and the thought process is foundational for problem solving in all areas of education and life long learning. This highlights the positive impact of a structured literacy curriculum on language development, communication skills, and cognitive abilities in general.

Assessing the Child's Current Literacy Level

A. Observing reading and writing skills: Observe your child while reading aloud or writing to understand their current abilities, such as decoding, fluency, and writing conventions. You need this to see where your child is at, so that you are not targeting too difficult or too easy place to start.

Too difficult and your son or daughter does not have the foundations for working on the words and the concepts. Too easy and they do not have the engagement to keep their interest. There needs to be a slight challenge so that they feel a sense of success when they get through a reading selection.

B. Identifying strengths and areas for improvement: Take note of your child's strengths in reading and writing, as well as any specific areas that require attention, such as phonics, vocabulary, or comprehension.

I would suggest that you take actual notes that you can refer to as the best way, but parents are busy and it may only be mental notes, and you may just be looking for signs of improvement.

Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment at Home

A. Designating a quiet reading area: Set up a cozy and inviting space in the house with comfortable seating and good lighting, dedicated to reading. Depending on your circumstances and the age of your child this may vary. If very young a simple reading nook in their bedroom with a comfortable chair for two and good lighting would allow for reading of bedtime stories with focus on the child sounding out some letters and words.

At later ages this could be a separate reading room in the house or their bedroom rearranged so they have space they can call “Their’s”

B. Stocking a variety of age-appropriate books: Provide a diverse collection of books, including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and picture books, catering to your child's interests and reading level.

Although being old school I love actual books. There has always been something rewarding, for me, about actually turning the pages of a real book. Tactile and satisfying. Each page a sense of accomplishment.

Digital books can be just as rewarding and you can keep a whole library on a tablet. I would also suggest looking into if your library service offers down-loadable e books. These generally last for a specific time on your device then disappear once their borrow time is up. It is a great service for all ages. It also adds a time limit, a sense of urgency for your child to finish the book before it disappears.

C. Encouraging regular reading habits: Establish a daily reading routine where your child reads independently or with a caregiver for a designated period. With busy schedules this is hard. Bedtime is a great start if they are young. Part of the key is to not make it a chore

but make it an adventure, and discovery. Eg. “Let’s see what ***insert main character here*** is up to tonight. What will they find?” Remember the feeling of adventure and discovery? It is a hugely motivating force and is FUN.

D. Promoting discussions about books: Engage your child in conversations about the books they read, asking open-ended questions and encouraging critical thinking and reflection.

I am a strong believer in critical thinking. This skill can be enhanced at any age simply by asking “what do you think will happen when the ***main character*** does that?” Get them thinking! Of course more detailed analysis when they are older.

Building Phonics and Word Recognition Skills

A. Introducing letter sounds and names: Teach your child the sounds and names of each letter of the alphabet, using interactive and multisensory methods like songs, flashcards, and letter manipulatives.

This is a fundamental part of the system. Recognizing the graphic of the letter and the related sound. Each of us may learn better with different techniques, visual, auditory, tactile (tracing letter shape with a finger), combinations. Here you may have to experiment and see what best reaches your son or daughter.

B. Practicing phonemic awareness activities: Engage your child in activities that focus on recognizing and manipulating individual sounds, such as rhyming, blending, and segmenting.

It is not automatic to hear sounds and be able to make the exact same sound. Some children are gifted that they can easily mimic an exact

sound. Others you may have to work a bit more with. If you run into significant troubles a speech therapist might be helpful.

C. Teaching sight words and high-frequency words: Introduce common sight words through flashcards or word games and practice their recognition and use in context.

D. Incorporating word-building exercises: Provide opportunities for your child to build words using letter tiles, magnetic letters, or word-building apps to reinforce phonics skills.

One of the most fun word building exercises I have seen is magnetic letters on a refrigerator. With everyone in the household leaving messages for each other. This can be a fun game if there is often a new message for your child to discover. (Adults like this too). Another variation for older kids is to make a crossword of it.

Enhancing Reading Comprehension

A. Reading aloud to your child: Read aloud to your child regularly, using expressive and engaging voices, pausing to ask questions, and discussing the story together.

Our children know many more words by ear than they typically do reading or are able to write. At early ages they are soaking up thousands of words. When you explain the meaning of words and phrases clearly your child can start to piece together the whole meaning of the text, or story.

B. Encouraging your child to read independently: Gradually encourage your child to read independently, starting with books at their reading level and gradually introducing more challenging texts.

Like any new skill once your child develops the foundation they may be able to read on their own and just come to you for challenging words or phrases. At this stage they can explore new stories and find what really interests them. Also at this stage introducing them to using a dictionary is a great help. This might just be online such as Google “define plesiosaur” or an actual dictionary book.

C. Asking questions about the story: Prompt your child to think critically about the text by asking questions about characters, plot, setting, and their own interpretations.

This more for older children with more developed reading skills. Any questions that help develop critical thinking or what if scenarios helps them to learn how to process larger questions.

D. Discussing characters, plot, and themes: Engage in discussions that go beyond the surface level, exploring deeper meanings, character motivations, and themes present in the books.

My wife was an English major at university and this is one of her favorite past times. We are fans of some series on Netflix and we often discuss hidden plot lines and deeper meanings of various character developments before the next episode in the series. Some times we are right others we are surprised. The same with kids. They may have some ideas that you never thought of. Again it is all about exploring.

Developing Writing Skills

A. Practicing letter formation and handwriting: Teach your child proper letter formation using tracing sheets, lined paper, or interactive writing tools, gradually progressing to more complex writing tasks.

My daughter who is a grade school teacher tells me that cursive writing is no longer taught. I personally believe that this is a loss. Not only is there a loss in the repetition of the hand skill that reinforces the shape of each letter in a person's brain but there is the loss of the art of the skill. My handwriting is poor but my father had the most beautiful hand writing. I was in awe.

The loss of cursive writing may not be the same in your area. I hope your schools still teach it.

B. Promoting creative writing exercises: Encourage your children to engage in imaginative and creative writing activities, such as writing stories, poems, or journal entries.

This can be such a fun activity. Most children enjoy drawing pictures. They can start adding a small story to their pictures. This can progress to making cartoon strips with attached dialogue or explanations.

C. Guiding your child in writing stories or journal entries: Provide prompts or story starters to inspire your child's writing and offer guidance and feedback throughout the writing process.

As a child I always like the creative writing days. One of the prompts that the teacher had was a stack of photos of different images. A boy with a ball. A girl with a kite etc. etc. The teacher would line them up on the blackboard ledge and we would each pick one to write about.

One day I was the last one to pick my image and what was left was an all black photo with a small nondescript irregularly shaped white

blob off center. That was a tough one to creatively write about.

D. Providing constructive feedback on writing samples: Review your child's writing samples, focusing on strengths and areas for improvement, providing specific feedback and suggestions for growth.

Constructive feedback is important. They are trying their hardest and put a lot of effort in. Definitely praise the good parts and gently correct the areas that need a bit of work. This is a skill for parents to learn well. It is a tricky balance.

Expanding Vocabulary and Language Skills

A. Introducing new words through reading and discussions: Introduce new vocabulary words while reading together, discuss their meanings, and provide examples to help your children understand and use them in context.

This goes back to comprehension. I was fascinated with space (I still am) and science, and drove my parents crazy because I had many questions that they could not easily answer. If you have the time and interest it might be worth pre-reading any advanced books your child is reading to be prepared for the questions. Again some form of dictionary is a great resource.

B. Playing word games and puzzles: Engage in word games like crossword puzzles, word searches, or vocabulary-building apps to make learning new words interactive and fun.

Keywords here are fun, game interactive, engaging. Do you remember classes at school where you were board out of your mind and just not engaged? I certainly do. I also remember teachers that

found a way to make things active, and interactive, a sense of discovery. Then it was not a chore to be in their class but I actually looked forward to it.

It is a lot of work but so worth it to have your children asking for more reading and learning experiences.

C. Encouraging conversations and storytelling: Foster a language-rich environment by engaging in conversations with your child, encouraging them to express their thoughts and ideas, and telling and listening to stories together.

Stories around a campfire, stories from when you were little, “when I was your age I had to walk to school and home and it was up hill both ways and in the winter we had to shovel the snow to school first” Use lots of description. Really paint a picture for your children to immerse themselves in. Story telling is an art in itself.

D. Engaging in activities that explore synonyms and antonyms: Encourage your child to explore words with similar or opposite meanings, playing games that involve finding synonyms or antonyms for given words.

As your children advance you can use more parts of language and greater depth and richness in content. At this stage I hope the school system is shouldering some of the responsibility of these details but they can be introduced at a fairly young age.

An example would be a variation on the Eye Spy game. Often traveling in a vehicle is so boring for kids. You may know the Eye Spy game where you and your child are looking out the window and describe what they see and you have to guess what it is. You can add

a twist to it by having to guess the same or opposite without naming the actual thing.

Utilizing Technology and Online Resources

A. Identifying educational websites and apps: Research and identify reputable educational websites and apps that offer interactive and age-appropriate literacy activities, such as reading games, spelling apps, or digital libraries.

Look for ones that have age level libraries and interest libraries. There are some listed in the [Reading Head Start Resources](#) section on the website.

B. Incorporating interactive learning games: Allow your child to engage in educational games that reinforce literacy skills, such as phonics-based games, vocabulary quizzes, or reading comprehension activities.

Don't forget math skills as well. Once language skills develop the next phase would be math. If children are comfortable with simple math early on it is not as foreboding in later years.

C. Exploring online reading platforms and e-books: Introduce your children to online reading platforms that offer a wide range of e-books, allowing them to explore different genres and read on digital devices.

Of course the [Reading Head Start](#) program and [Children Learning to Read](#) are great places to start.

Collaborating with the School and Teachers

A. Communicating with your child's teachers: Maintain open communication with the child's teachers to stay informed about the curriculum and to seek guidance on supporting the child's literacy development.

My daughter (who is a elementary teacher) tells me of curriculum changes that happen almost yearly. It is tough for the teachers to keep up with all the new expectations let alone parents. It is worth while to dig in and learn what the expectations are for your children.

B. Participating in school literacy programs or events: Take part in school literacy programs, book fairs, or reading challenges that foster a sense of community and encourage a love for reading.

I my area once or twice a year there is a used book sale. People donate books for all ages and interests then they are sold at very reduced prices and the profits usually go to a local literacy or school program. A great place to find kids books at fantastic prices.

C. Seeking recommendations for additional resources: Ask the teachers for book recommendations, educational websites, or other resources that align with your child's interests and can further support their literacy growth.

Teachers that are engaged will often have many insights into your child's interests and preferences. Teachers also often have networks of communications that the average parents don't have and may be able to provide suggestions for often hidden resources.

Monitoring Progress and Celebrating Achievements

A. Tracking your child's literacy growth: Keep a record of the child's progress by maintaining a journal or portfolio of their reading and writing samples, noting milestones and areas of improvement.

It is great for your children to look back at the previous work and be able to say to them “See how far you have come” there is a huge reinforcement that past success leads to positive results.

I often ask my blacksmithing students when they are struggling with a concept “ How does an blacksmith eat an elephant? Like everyone else one bite at a time” The point is to break things down into small manageable components and then add them together. (By they way I do not condone eating elephants.)

B. Recognizing milestones and improvements: Celebrate your child's achievements, such as mastering a new phonics skill, completing a book independently, or writing a well-structured story. Provide positive reinforcement, rewards, or special privileges to motivate the child and foster a positive attitude towards literacy.

There are many possible reward systems. This would have to be worked out with your family dynamics. It is useful for motivation but has to be fairly consistent. If you can develop a sense of accomplishment in your child as the reward, then this becomes self rewarding endeavor. Better than having to rely on external rewards.

A pet peeve of mine is that society is so focused on external rewards that it prevents a self sufficiency. I feel it is better that a person can say to themselves “That was a job well done.” as opposed to having to look for someone to say it, although it never hurts to hear it from someone else.

Adjusting and Adapting the Curriculum

A. Identifying areas of struggle or lack of interest: Continuously assess your child's engagement and progress in different literacy areas, and identify any areas where they may be struggling or showing less interest.

You can see that this can require a certain level of dedication. The good news is that once your son or daughter has the fundamentals down they can often run with the next steps as their interest allows. Asking questions as they go.

B. Modifying activities to suit your child's needs: Adapt the curriculum by providing additional support, alternative learning materials, or adjusting the level of difficulty to meet the child's specific needs and learning style.

I would suggest here this could include finding reading material that is strongly in their interest line. Perhaps you have a son or daughter that is passionate about baseball or sports in general. Finding reading material in this subject might be the ticket to getting them engaged in learning.

C. Seeking professional guidance if necessary: If your child consistently faces challenges in literacy development, consider seeking guidance from professionals such as teachers, reading specialists, or educational psychologists.

Also don't forget there can be very real physical issues with hearing, and eyesight. A pair of glasses at an early age may open the doors right away. Explore what services are available in your area.

I am hoping that I have not overwhelmed you with this list. I do also hope I have given you some insights into some things to try. You would not be here unless you agree that literacy is important for children to grasp and you understand it really does create a foundation for not only academic skills but life skills. This system of analyzing information then critically applying meaning to it and acting upon it is the basis for all of life's decisions.

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And

Thank you for your commitment to increasing literacy overall as I do believe that it benefits all of us.