

Activities for Supporting Early Writing Development Level III

Activity One: Share-An-Experience Books

Young children's experiences outside of the home and classroom—no matter how simple—certainly add a great deal to each child's learning! And...talking, drawing, and writing about their experiences serve to foster emergent literacy development.

Through this activity, children:

- Gain an increased awareness of details and language associated with various locations outside of the home and classroom
- Learn to use new words associated with various locations outside of the home and classroom
- Begin to associate their oral words with the written words recorded by the adult
- See their experiences, pictures and words made into a book that they can share again and again

Directions: Following are suggestions for making simple Share-An-Experience books with young children. These books can be made after any experience away from the home or classroom. These trips might include: an outing to a park or playground, a picnic, a shopping trip, a ride on a bus (train, truck, airplane), a trip to the doctor or dentist's office, a visit to a relative's house, a visit to the post office, a visit to a fire or police station, a visit to an airport, a visit to a pet store, zoo or farm.

1. Have on hand ample supply of blank paper, all cut the same size. Invite children to draw pictures of their experience. (They may also cut pictures from magazines or catalogs to use as illustrations. In addition, actual photographs taken on the trip make nice illustrations for these books.)
2. Ask the child about each picture. Tell the child that these pages will be made into a book, and that you will write the words the child uses to describe each picture. Ask the child if the words should go on the picture (if so, at the top? or, at the bottom?) If the child does not want words on the same page as the pictures, please respect this. Other pages can be used and inserted into the book in the correct order opposite each picture page.
3. Ask the child open-ended questions, such as "Tell me about this part of your trip to the fire station. What was happening in this picture?" Write down the child's words exactly as they are spoken, using manuscript print. Then, reread the child's speech aloud, pointing to each word you read.
4. Ask the child to help you put the pictures in the right order, according to what happened first, next, and so on during the trip. Bind the pages together by stapling, sewing, etc. inside of a simple cover made from cardboard, poster board or construction paper.

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Activity Two: “Create-A-Card” Making Center

Save those old birthday, get well or holiday greeting cards for young children to use in making their own special cards. Children will enjoy looking at the pictures and then recycling them for their own creative and original use.

Through this activity, children will:

- Use their creative and expressive language, drawing and writing skills to make their own cards
- Use their emergent writing skills to fulfill a real-life purpose—sending cards to their family members and friends.

Directions: Have on hand a nice variety of old greeting and holiday cards, and a supply of blank paper or card stock. Invite children to cut out the pictures and use them in the writing/art center to make their own cards. Encourage children to add their own words and pictures to accompany the cut-outs. They might also combine pictures to make new ones, or even use the pictures from the front of greeting cards to make a collage. Following are some additional suggestions in using greeting and holiday cards to support early writing development.

1. Show children a variety of cards and read aloud the verses in each one.
2. Invite children to set up a “card-making shop” in the writing/art area of the classroom. Ask: “What kinds of cards might you create?” Make a list of their suggestions. Then ask for the kinds of materials.
3. Encourage children to write messages in their cards. Their personal script (scribbling, mock-handwriting, mock letters, letter strings, invented spellings) should be accepted.
4. Set up a classroom post office for children to mail letters to each other. Don’t forget to have mailboxes for the adults in the room, as well!

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Activity Three: He Said...She Said

As children acquire greater speaking skills, they become more aware of the conversations around them. As adults, we often hear children say “He said...” or “She said...” This awareness of conversational speech is the first step toward writing dialogue—or words for characters in stories.

Through this activity, children will:

- Gain an awareness of written words as “talk written down”
- Use their expressive language to suggest what characters in pictures and in their own drawings might say if they could talk.

Directions: Gather a collection of pictures showing people or animals. You may wish to use pictures that go along with a unit or theme that children are learning about. For example, pictures of farm animals, zoo animals, family members, people around the world. Following is a step-by-step procedure for using the pictures to support early writing development.

1. Read the book aloud with the children, allowing plenty of time for discussion about the pictures, words, and action.
2. Reread the book aloud a number of times, inviting children to join in on the repetitive parts.
3. Once the children are very familiar with the book’s pattern (that day, or on a following day) call attention to the repetitive parts by writing them on a chart. For example, if using the book *Polar Bear, Polar Bear* by Bill Marting, Jr., you might write “_____, _____ what do you hear? I hear _____ in my ear.” Show the children the blanks and explain that words are missing. Ask them to help you find missing words to make up a new story. Model by using your own name, or the name of another adult in the room. You might say “Let’s put Mrs. Manual’s name here in these blanks. Now, we can read: Mrs. Manual, Mrs. Manual, what do you hear?” (Mrs. Manual responds, for example, “I hear a yellow bus honking in my ear.”)
4. Let children tell what they hear and make a book with a page for each child: “Mary, Mary, what do you hear? I hear a _____ in my ear.” Fill in the blanks, using the children’s words, and invite the children to illustrate their own page. Display along a wall so children can reread and enjoy for a period of time, then compile into a class book.