

# Ready to Succeed

An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

## Key Elements in Early Literacy

September / October  
2006

Volume 5, Issue 5

This article is the first of three in a series that will cover the key elements in early literacy.

### ✓ **Early Literacy and Pre-reading**

In the field of early literacy, considerable emphasis has shifted away from reading readiness theories to emergent literacy concepts. Earlier theories insisted that children did not learn to read until they had mastered certain skills that allowed them to then be formally taught how to read. Emergent literacy, on the other hand, refers to a developmental continuum in which young children acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are the developmental precursors to reading and writing (Whitehurst

& Lonigan, 1998). An emergent literacy view contends that reading, writing, and oral language develop concurrently and interdependently from birth and from children's exposure to interactions in their social environment. Research indicates that learning to read is easier for children with higher levels of emergent literacy skills (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).



Much of children's literacy development starts even before the preschool classroom and parents are responsible for this learning. Hannon (1998) suggests that research has given us a fuller understanding of the early literacy development that parents foster and that the extent of these learning experiences,

and how they relate to school literacy are of great importance for children's later academic achievement. Predictors of school success from as early as age three, include knowledge of nursery rhymes (Maclean, Bryant & Bradley, 1987) and having favorite books (Weinberger, 1996). Home factors and family literacy experiences have a powerful influence in children's academic capacity and any variation in children's abilities at school entry is due to what parents do or don't do (Hannon, 1998).

### ✓ **Enthusiasm for Reading and Learning**

The social-emotional context of children's early literacy development is related to children's motivation to learn and read. There is a correlation

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Ready to Succeed aims to assist everyone involved with the development of young children to value and embrace their role in fostering early literacy and school readiness.

# Creating Peaceful Environments for Young Children

Children have the opportunity to hear and see many unsettling, often violent images through television, newspapers, radio, and video games. Unfortunately, exposure to violence may even come from their homes.

As caregivers to young children, we can make a conscious decision to create and support peaceful environments. Young children need to feel safe and well cared for. Take some time to carefully think about what your children are exposed to. Also think about how you would create a peaceful environment.

The following are suggestions on creating and supporting *peaceful environments* for children:

- **Offer a welcoming environment.** Always greet children by name and welcome them with a warm greeting at eye level. The children can help make a welcome sign to hang up in the room. Display photographs of the children and their families. Display the children's work. Have a special place for each child to put their belongings.
- **Include beautiful and calming items to the environment.** Try hanging a soft wind chime, playing soothing music, or displaying a beautiful item from nature such as a sea shell or an interesting stick or leaf.
- **Create "living ideas" together as a group.** Have the children, along with the adults, come up with rules or "living ideas" for the environment. State the rules

in a positive manner: "We walk." vs. "No running;" "We use kind words" vs. "No yelling." This is an important time for both children and adults to create limits. Make sure to write the rules down and display them in the room for all to see and be reminded of.

- **Create routines, schedules, and responsibilities.** Have a consistent routine or schedule to help children know what to expect during the day. Children find comfort in routine. It should be everyone's responsibility to care for each other and to care for their environment. Talk about ideas and ways to help: "We all help clean up;" "We take turns with our toys."
- **Create a sense of "group."** Children need to feel part of a group or family. Have group times such as circle time, snack time, and meeting time, where children become familiar with one another. Sing songs with everyone's name. Create small group projects, such as painting a mural together. Display a group photograph, or group projects, such as a block building that four friends worked on together.
- **Support conflict resolution and problem solving.** Even at an early age, children can learn to start problem solving and resolving conflicts. Model choices of words to encourage sharing and turn taking, such as, "Tim is using the car. Did

you want to ask him for a turn?" or "Tell Sally you are using the car, but you will give it to her as soon as you are finished." Role playing is

important in practicing problem solving. Offer the children problems to try and solve using puppets or small animal (or people) figures. Guiding and offering peaceful solutions to



children during conflict is one of the most important skills we can offer them in violent times.

- **Be a peaceful role model.** You are the model in the environment. What you do and say sends powerful messages. Be positive. Know your children's abilities and have clear expectations. Know that children's ideas are different from those of adults. Support and respect each child and help others do so.

Source: *Better Kid Care Newsletter* February 2004, Christine Belinda, Penn State Cooperative Extension.

## Books about Peace:

*Peace Begins With You*

Katherine Scholes

*Peace is a Circle of Love*

Joan Walsh Anglund

*Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace*

Shelley Moore Thomas

*We Can Get Along: A Child's Book of Choices*

Lauren Murphy Payne

## Key Elements in Early Literacy *continued*

between children's development of important literacy skills and their enthusiasm for learning, (Snow & Tabors, 1996; Baker, Serpell & Sonnenschein, 1995). Children whose parents emphasize early literacy and reading as a recreational activity and as a source of enjoyment have a greater orientation towards print and are more competent in narrative and phonological awareness than are children whose parents approach early literacy and reading as a set of skills that must be learned (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Scher, & Fernandez-Fein, 1996). Middle income parents are

more likely to use this approach, while lower income parents are more likely to view literacy as a set of skills to be acquired (Lancy & Bergin, 1992).

### ✓ **Reading in the Home**

Experts agree, the single most

important activity that parents can do to support their children's reading success is to read aloud to their children everyday (Anderson, Hiebert, Wilkinson & Scott,

1985). Research indicates that daily reading aloud activities promote an understanding of language, pre-reading skill development, and later reading



achievement (Wells, 1985; Bus and van Ijendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996). Furthermore, children's vocabulary development, story comprehension, and later educational achievement is related to early experiences of story reading (Cullinan, 1991; Dickenson & Smith, 1994).

Article Source: *Let's Read Together, An Early Literacy Curriculum*, 2004, Junge and Manglallan.

### **Coming in the Next Issue:**

The second article in this series appearing in the November-December issue will cover *Oral Language Skills and Environments, Phonological Awareness, and Understanding Print and Print Rich Environments.*

## Ghostly Good Sandwiches

This simple and nutritious recipe can add fun to lunch or snack preparation. The kids will love making their ghostly good sandwiches themselves!

### **WHAT YOU NEED:**

tuna (can or pouch - enough to feed your group)  
mixing bowl  
spoon  
low fat mayonnaise  
lemon juice  
celery  
whole grain white bread (2 each)  
raisins  
ghost cookie cutter

### **WHAT YOU DO:**

1. Prepare the tuna for mixing.

Drain if using canned. Use a spoon to break the tuna into small pieces if using pouch.

2. Add enough mayonnaise to make the tuna slightly moist and mix.
3. Stir in 1 teaspoon of lemon juice.
4. Dice the celery into small pieces and add to the tuna.
5. Set the tuna aside in the refrigerator.
6. Use the ghost cookie cutter to cut the amount of bread slices you need into ghost shapes. Each child will need two slices of bread. Cutting the bread before spreading the tuna will eliminate wasting tuna. (Save the leftover bread scraps to

feed to the birds.)

7. Spread one slice of the bread with tuna and cover with another slice of bread.
8. Use the raisins to create the eyes and mouth of the ghost sandwich.
9. Serve with carrot sticks or apple slices and milk or water.

### Variations:

- Use diced apple in the tuna instead of the celery.
- Try any sandwich fixings the children enjoy ~ peanut butter and jelly, turkey, egg salad, etc.



## Books for the Season

### APPLES

*The Mouse and the Apple*  
Stephen Butler

*Season's of Arnold's Apple Tree*  
Gail Gibbons

*Apples and Pumpkins*  
Anne Rockwell

*Picking Apples and Pumpkins*  
Amy & Richard Hutchings

*What's So Terrible About Swallowing  
an Apple Seed?*  
Harriet Lerner & Susan  
Goldhor

*Making Plum Jam*  
John W. Stewig

*Apples to Oregon*  
Deborah Hopkinson

*Up, Up, Up! It's Apple-Picking Time*  
Jody Fickes Shapiro

*Ten Red Apples*  
Virginia Miller

*Apples Here!*  
Will Hubbell

*Apple Farmer Annie*  
Monica Wellington



### HALLOWEEN

(October 31st)

*What is Halloween?*  
Harriet Ziefert

*Mouse's First Halloween*  
Lauren Thompson

*Clifford and the Halloween Parade*  
Norman Bridwell

*10 Trick-or-Treaters: a Halloween*

*The Halloween Play*  
Felicia Bond

*Counting Book*  
Janet Schulman

*In the Haunted House*  
Eve Bunting

*Franklin's Halloween*  
Paulette Bourgeois

*On Halloween*  
Lark Carrier

*Shake Dem Halloween Bones*  
W. Nikola-Lisa, et al

*Rattlebone Rock*  
Sylvia Andrews

*Happy Halloween, Biscuit!*  
Alyssa Satin Capucilli



### AUTUMN / HARVEST

*Tractor*  
Craig McFarland Brown

*Farmers' Market*  
Paul Brett Johnson

*The Little Farm*  
Lois Lenski

*Autumn*  
Ruth Thomson

*Autumn Story*  
Jill Barklem

*When Autumn Comes*  
Robert Maass

*Autumn: An Alphabet Acrostic*  
Steven Schnur

*Possum's Harvest Moon*  
Anne Hunter

*Leaf Man*  
Lois Ehlert

*When Autumn Falls*  
Kelli Nidey

*I Know It's Autumn*  
Eileen Spinelli

*Fall is Not Easy*  
Marty Kelley



## Sing...Song a Song

### THE LEAVES ON THE TREES

Sung to: *The Wheels on the Bus*  
By: Irmgard Fuertges

The leaves of the trees turn  
orange and red, orange and  
red, orange and red

The leaves of the  
trees turn  
orange and red  
All through the  
town.



The leaves of the trees come  
tumbling down, tumbling  
down, tumbling down  
The leaves of the trees come

tumbling down  
All through the town.

The leaves on the ground go  
swish, swish, swish, swish,  
swish, swish, swish, swish,  
swish

The leaves on the ground go  
swish, swish swish  
All through the town.

### FALLING LEAVES

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*  
By: Paula R. Anderson

Look around you and you will see  
All the pretty falling leaves

Red ones, orange, and yellow, too  
Some still green, but will turn, too  
Rake them up and jump right in  
Rake them up and jump again

### HARVEST TIME

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*  
By: Paula R. Anderson

Harvest time is here again.  
In the garden we dig in.  
Pumpkins, apples, mandarins, too  
All so fresh and good for you.  
Harvest time  
is here again  
This is where  
the fun begins.



# Spider Web Art

Choose a Halloween or other book that includes information about spiders and webs to read to the children. Extend the story artistically by having the children create their own wacky webs.

## WHAT YOU NEED:

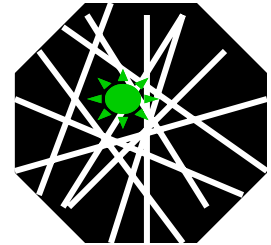
black construction paper  
scissors  
white art paint  
marble  
white or silver glitter (optional)  
newspaper  
construction paper scraps in a variety of colors  
shallow cardboard box with sides (such as a soda flat)

## WHAT YOU DO:

1. Cut the black construction paper in the shape of a hexagon or octagon.
2. Lay the paper in the bottom of the box.
3. Pour a small amount of white paint in the center of the paper.
4. Place the marble in the middle of the paint.
5. Pick up the box and gently tip it different directions so that the marble rolls through the paint spreading it in lines across the paper.
6. When finished lay the web on the newspaper to dry. If you

- choose to use glitter, sprinkle it on now while the paint is wet.
7. Use the construction paper scraps to free hand cut a spider to put in the center of the paint (no glue is necessary as the paint will still be wet enough.)
  8. When they are dry, use the wacky webs to decorate your room.

Note: This activity helps children build important hand-eye coordination and it is lots of fun!



# Talking and Infant Brain Research

One thing brain research tells us is that **talking** with infants is important! Don't be shy about talking often with infants. Make these conversations warm and pleasant. You many think that they won't understand what you are saying, but talking with infants helps them to learn a great deal about language and communication. Remember, infants need to hear language in order to be able to speak it. In your communication with infants, you're also teaching them the pleasure of interacting with others.



Here are some ways that high

quality infant caregivers talk with infants:

## Talk about actions as children are doing them.

Use words to describe what the infant is doing, such as climbing, crawling, pushing, sliding, filling, dumping, throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing, sliding. "You are pushing the wagon. It's hard. The wagon is heavy."

## Put feelings into words.

When children cry, fight, become frustrated, or jump with joy, these are great times to teach children. By describing their feelings with



words, you help infants to make sense of their feelings and to learn how to talk about their feelings.

## Help infants do what they want to do safely.

Watch what an infant wants to do. Help the infant to do it for herself if it is safe. You can say, "You want the ball that is under the crib, you can crawl to get it yourself."

## Build secure relationships with each child in your care.

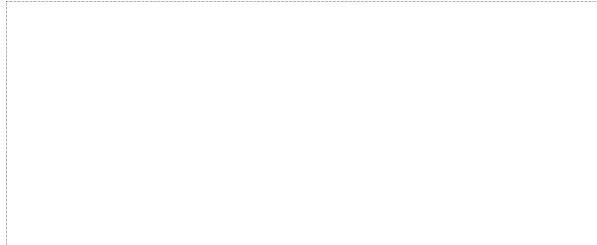
The best way to do this is to respond to the child's cues. Even though they can't talk yet, infants have many ways of telling you what they need. Children become securely attached when caregivers learn to read these signals and respond quickly to the messages sent by the children.



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Is there something you want to see more or less? Do you have a great idea about a series of articles? What are you looking for more information about. What do you feel is working and what's not?

I would love to hear about your thoughts and ideas. Please take a moment to call 530 889-7350 or drop me an email at [pranderson@ucdavis.edu](mailto:pranderson@ucdavis.edu).

### Information/Activity Booth...

Do you have an event coming up for parents or other providers? Are you in need of agencies to host a booth for disseminating useful information or providing an activity for children or both?

**Ready to Succeed** is available within Placer County to provide quality early literacy development and school readiness information for parents or providers. We can also provide fun, age-appropriate activities for children that tie into the theme/purpose of your event.

Please phone 530 889-7350 or drop me an email at [pranderson@ucdavis.edu](mailto:pranderson@ucdavis.edu) so we can discuss it.

**Sharon K. Junge**  
County Director

**Paula R. Anderson**  
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