**Conceptual Understandings: Early Childhood Literacy**

* Early literacy begins at birth as the infant listens and views the world and tries to make sense of her environment and most importantly the people that care for her.
* Early literacy is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with rich language interactions with books and stories. The interactions that young children have with literacy materials – all types of print (books, signs digital images) paper and writing implements, and with the adults in their lives are the building blocks for listening, speaking, reading and writing development.
* Early literacy development complements the current research supporting the critical role of these early literacy experiences in shaping brain development. Early literacy practices and products of early childhood are acknowledged as valid in their own right rather than perceived as inadequate manifestations of adult literacy.
* Early literacy focuses on literacy as sets of social practices that are different for different individuals in diverse groups within varied context.
* Early literacy involves teachers sharing their practices with families and learning about and building on home community literacy practices.
* Early literacy theory emphasizes the more natural unfolding of skills through the enjoyment of books, the importance of positive interactions between young children and adults, and the critical role of literacy-rich experiences.
* Children gain significant knowledge of language, reading, and writing long before they enter school. Children learn to talk, read, and write through social literacy experiences with adults or older children interacting with them using varied literacy materials, including magazines, markers, and paper**. Language, reading, and writing skills develop at the same time and are intimately linked.**
* Current understandings of early language and literacy development have provided new ways of helping children learn to talk, read, and write. The teaching of reading to younger and younger children is not advocated.
* Formal instruction to require young children who are not developmentally ready to read is counter productive and potentially damaging to children, who may begin to associate reading and books with failure.
* When young children enter school they come with complex family and community histories that is reflected in the their words. School instruction should develop bonds with family literacies.

**Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction**

**Rich Teacher Talk**

Rare words

Extend children’s comments

**Interactive Story Book Reading**

Read Aloud once or twice a day

Build background knowledge through pre, during and post reading discussions

Repeated readings

Model comprehension strategies Reciprocal Teaching

**Phonological Awareness** – **Word Play**

Rhyme

Alliteration

Sound Match (Sound in Motion)

**Alphabet Activities Word Play**

ABC books

Magnetic letters

Name study

**Support Emergent Reading**

Well designed library

Functional print linked to class activities

**Support Emergent Writing**

Shared writing demonstrations

Functional writing opportunities

**Shared book experience**

Concepts of print (Clay,1998)

**Reflection/ Self talk**

**Language Development: How Children Learn Vocabulary**

**How children learn vocabulary is as important as what vocabulary children learn**

**Children learn the words that they hear most.**

Parents and teachers who engage young children in conversational turn taking that relates to a joint focus provide children with the scaffold needed to facilitate language and cognitive growth.

Repeated book reading provides exposure to words children are not likely to know.

When children hear varied and complex language, they have more opportunities to discover grammatical patterns.

The density of novel words that children hear is a better predictor of vocabulary growth than is a simple count of word types.

**Children learn words for things and events that interest them**

When adults pay attention to what children are paying attention to and engage them in conversation around their focus, it builds their vocabulary.

Socio-dramatic play enables children to develop vocabulary because children often duplicate the talk of the role they are taking on such as a doctor caring for a patient.

In addition, children use language to negotiate the play itself, including ideas such as what role each child will take on and what is allowable in these roles.

**Children learn words in interactive and responsive ways**

Adults’ involvement in play increases the language interactions. Adults might take on variety of roles when interacting with children such as onlooker, co-player, or, sometimes, play leader. When the adults draw children’s attention to the language in the play, children’s abilities to engage with new vocabulary is enhanced.

The frequency of warmth and sensitivity in teacher-child conversations in preschool classrooms was found to correlated with the same teacher’s tendency to engage in cognitively and linguistically enriching conversations with children.

**Children learn words best in meaningful contexts**

An integrated social studies/science curriculum gives children the opportunity to learn new vocabulary in meaningful ways as they investigate new content like in a car study, apple study or market study. They learn to research by thinking about what they know, observing on trips, recording with words and pictures, and learning concepts and words that are connected. Their observations and recording lead to questions. Books, pictures, charts, digital resources and videos provide answers to some of these questions. Children become invested in the study and are motivated to learn the vocabulary associated with the study.

Teachers need to be conscious of ways to extend children's language, be more aware of themselves as language models, and be committed to the importance of giving children the time they need to express their ideas in group meetings, with the teacher, and when working collaboratively with their peers. These teaching behaviors motivate children’s desire to talk about their experiences and be a part of the group meetings because the work is important and meaningful to them.

**Free play and guided play provide opportunities for children to develop their vocabulary.**

Han, Moore, Vukelich and Buell (2010) found that children given the opportunity to use vocabulary in a playful context learn it better than those who learn only under explicit instruction. Children’s literacy knowledge and behavior increase in literacy-enriched play settings.

Correlational studies in language play and memory research converge to suggest that teaching vocabulary in integrated and meaningful contexts enriches and deepens children’s background knowledge (Hirsh- Pasek et al, 2009).

**Vocabulary Learning and Grammatical Development are reciprocal processes.**

By noting the linguistic context in which a word appears children can gain information about a word’s part of speech

To claim that children really know a word, they must be able to transfer the word to different contexts and retain the word over time.

**Children need clear information and word meaning**

Young children learn words rapidly through a process called *fast mapping* as

well as through word association. Adults explicitly link

spoken words with concrete referents. Booth (2009) suggests that providing definitions to 3 year olds about what one can do with an object or action promotes better vocabulary learning. Acting out meaning of words with props in pretend play contributes to children understanding of word meaning.

**How Children Learning Decoding: Phonological Awareness**

The size of children’s vocabularies supports the development of decoding skills because it provides linguistic information (sounds, rhymes, and meanings) to map onto printed words and sharpens phonological sensitivity.

**Sounds in Motion** [**www.soundsinmotionprogram.com**](http://www.soundsinmotionprogram.com)

* Interventional phonemic awareness and early literacy program
* Used primarily with pre-kindergarten through first grade students
* Supplemental, it can be used to augment most reading programs.
* 15 weekly sessions, each lasting 30 minutes
* Every session includes:
  + Review of the body movements for previously taught phonemes
  + Introduction of movements for 2 new phonemes and practice combining these movements with those previously learned to create syllables and words
  + Specific listening activity (such as following directions, or auditory discrimination)
  + Language activity in the form of a Rebus story, or rhyme

**How Children Develop Comprehension Strategies**

**Reciprocal Teaching:** **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jm4mSVXDCjE**

* Instructional method that that involves guided practice of reading comprehension
* Teacher provides modeling, scaffolding, and feedback so students can learn strategies to deepen their comprehension
* Five Strategies are used:
  + Activate background knowledge: Examine pictures, review title and think about how all these things relate to what you know
  + Prediction: Use what you know (schema) to consider what might happen next
  + Clarify: Be aware of when unfamiliar vocabulary or an idea confuses you. What can you do to help you understand better?
  + Questioning: Asking Who, What Where, When, Why and How questions empowers you to think about what is in the text and beyond the text
  + Retell/ Summarize: In your own words talk about the important ideas that you heard or read.

**Self- regulation and Early Literacy development**

Effective self-regulatory skills are central to children's mastery of difficult tasks such as those associated with literacy learning.

**Tools of the Mind http://www.toolsofthemind.org**

* Curriculum designed to promote executive functions and self-regulation as learned behaviors that can be facilitated
* Vygotsky’s theory through the use of 20th century media—books, flash cards, puppets, and scripted drama activities—
* Purposeful play is at the center of classroom learning. Daily activities promote self-regulatory behaviors in children not as a strategy, but as the primary goal of education.

**Some Activities include:**

* **Buddy reading**: Children work in pairs; taking turns reading from a book and listening. This serves as an important way to build literacy skills that incorporate reflective and self-monitoring activities.
* **Symbolic mediators**: Cue cards, graphic organizers, finger puppets with special roles and messages, and games designed to help young children transition from one activity to another, or assist in enrolling them into play characters.
* **Play plans:** Children write a plan at the beginning of the day. It serves as a plan that will guide drama play activities that the child will engage in for the day. The student and teacher meet each week to review the plans.

**Conclusion: Early Childhood Literacy**

* Children learn through integrated instruction project thematic teaching with coherence and depth
* Balance instructional planning- explicit and exploratory
* High levels of teacher interaction modeling and demonstrating ongoing feedback observation
* Teachers construct learning and play environments that involve children using literacy in practice that engage children in content -related activities like trips, construction and role plays.

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