

Kindergarten

Literacy for Learning



Before going to school, children have already had a wide range of experiences with spoken, written, and visual communication, and have used language in familiar contexts. They have also developed ways of using language that are specific to their cultural and linguistic contexts. A child's success in school and throughout life depends in large part on the ability to be literate.

Oral language is the basis for literacy, thinking and relating in any language. Children first learn to use oral forms of language by listening and speaking, and then begin to explore the written forms of language by reading and writing. If a child's first language is a language other than English, families should continue to use their first language at home (e.g., for telling and reading stories, for talking about their experiences).

Literacy learning begins even before children are born (when we talk to our unborn babies, when we read stories to them) and continues into adulthood. It is a gradual ongoing process of learning to use and understand language.

When children are engaged in literacy, you might see them:

- sorting and comparing magnetic letters and using them to make their name;
- sharing their solution for joining the structures they made with blocks;
- dramatizing a familiar story;
- holding books the right way up, using a finger to demonstrate left to right directionality;
- beginning to recognize the difference between letters and words;
- following the print using a finger or a pointer and recognizing some words;
- writing random strings of letters and beginning to leave a space between words.

... or you might hear them:

- saying "I knew it said 'spider' 'cause I used the picture.'";
- saying "It is a 'T'. It starts just like my name.'";
- asking to hear familiar stories over and over again;
- expressing their thoughts, ideas, and opinions;
- asking questions;
- retelling familiar events or stories.

"In essence, children learn language and how it works from being immersed in language with many demonstrations, from listening, and from using language independently. Responses to their use of language provide encouragement and refinements."

Thinking It Through: Teaching and Learning in the Kindergarten Classroom: Literacy and the Young Child, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario,

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Effective ways in which parents can support children’s literacy learning at home and in the community:

Some sample ideas:

- Read aloud with your child every day. Read a variety of books, including wordless picture books, dual-language and first language books. While reading, ask open-ended questions about the story such as “Where do you think they might be going on the bus?” or “What do you think they will do when they get to the park?” Hearing a story read aloud helps children learn to focus and concentrate, and to appreciate the rhythm and cadence of the language. Most of all, reading aloud is fun for everyone involved.
- Be a role model. Let children see you reading a wide variety of materials (books, magazines, recipes, instruction manuals) and writing for a variety of purposes (shopping lists, notes to others, instructions). Talk with your child about what you see other people reading and why. They will learn that reading and writing are fun and interesting things to do.

Talking With Children

Children begin to communicate at birth using sounds and then gestures. Oral language expands their repertoire for communication as they acquire the abilities to express their needs, exchange ideas, express feelings and connect with others. When adults engage with children, and listen and respond to what they say, it helps children to shape and articulate their thoughts and reinforces oral language and vocabulary development. By providing ample time for children to initiate conversations and respond to questions, adults demonstrate respect for the children’s thoughts, opinions, ideas and wonderings.

Parents are encouraged to share observations or information about their child with the educator team.

Parents as partners in learning:

Ask the educator(s):

- What are some ways to support my child’s oral language development at home?
- What are some ways to support my child’s reading at home?
- What are some ways to support my child’s writing at home?
- How can I decide what literacy materials to provide for my child at home?

Ask a child:

- What was the name of the book you read today?
- Did you draw or paint today? Tell me about your picture.
- When reading a story- “What does it remind you of? What do you think will happen?”

Learn more

For a list of resources, visit

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/index.html>

Or call:

Toll-free in Ontario,

1-800-387-5514

From Toronto and from outside Ontario,

(416) 325-2929

TDD/TTY

This toll-free number provides accessible information for the hearing-impaired, in both English and French languages

1-800-263-2892

