

How schools teach a balanced literacy program to 21st century learners

For parents of students in the primary and junior grades

PLAY – TALK – THINK

Play all the time! Spending time with your child is crucial for the development of a good literacy and numeracy base. The more experiences your child has, the more he or she will have to connect to when reading, writing, and talking. Don't forget to make things FUN!

Talk is the beginning of all language. It is how children experience sounds together with meaning.

Think about everything! Be curious, wonder, imagine, and ask questions that allow the mind to explore new things!

It all starts with *Talk*

- enjoy spontaneous play as well as thoughtful, special times together
- read aloud. Read all sorts of books as often as you can
- talk with your child – about play, books, plans and ideas
- play singing games and number games
- learn new words and patterns – names of things, describing words, number words, funny or unusual words (at the store, skating rink, library, etc.)
- express a point of view. Talk out loud about your reasoning and logic, appreciate and value your child's reasoning, logic, and problem solving
- play with and enjoy words to songs, counting, rhymes, alliterative sounds (e.g., **big, black bear**), rhythmic patterns (e.g. nursery rhymes – To market, to market, to buy a fat pig...home again, home again, jiggety jig!)
- have fun, enjoy language and math

Bring in the alphabet and numbers...

As their experience grows, children begin to understand that letters represent sounds and numbers represent amounts, and help them understand the world around them.

- listen to and sing alphabet songs and number songs (e.g. to nursery rhyme tunes)
- recognize letters and numbers
- say letter and number 'sounds'
- say beginning sounds of words – the ending sounds, the middle sounds

- letter-finding and number- finding – make it a game
- play games using letters and as well as numbers (e.g. 'I Spy something that starts with "T"; I spy something that is in sets of 2")
- notice letter combinations (e.g. endings – 'ing', 'ed', 's'; word families - *at, *ed, *ate, etc.)
- learn prefixes to help understand properties in math (e.g., tri- means 3 of something, quad means 4)

Read to, read with...keep on reading

A terrific benefit of reading aloud is that familiar words heard often are always easier to read than unfamiliar words. Children need to hear and see words and numbers over and over again, in an enjoyable, relaxed way with a loved adult.

- re-read favourite books
- read picture books (e.g., numeracy focus – Chicka, Chicka 123, How Much is a Million)
- make up different endings for favourite books
- read information books – get excited about your child's interests
- read magazines and newspapers, share your reading
- celebrate success, attempts and learning in both literacy and numeracy
- show your child how to find things out, look for answers and research questions
- use the Internet...wisely
- share the Internet with your child...wisely
- help your child experience all kinds of reading materials – e.g. TV guide, cereal boxes, street and traffic signs, letters, recipes that have both words and numbers; understand how units are used
- ask questions and find the answers together
- value your child's ideas and opinions - there is not always just one solution
- model an interest in reading, writing and mathematics by doing activities with your child that promote these skills

Visit "Parents Boost Learning" at www.peelschools.org for more *Parent Tip Sheets*.

Express ideas with crayons, paint and plasticine

In the first stages of writing, children do not understand that letters represent sounds and numbers represent quantities, although they do know that print represents spoken messages.

- link your child's ideas with his/her scribbles, painting, models, etc.
- let your child 'read back' his/her 'writing'
- celebrate their attempts at making letters and numbers
- use sand, pudding, mud, etc. to make letters and numbers, and talk and laugh and make the letter and number sounds as you do it together
- play 'I Spy' with letter and number sounds in the grocery store, on a trip, etc.
- show your child that writing and numeracy is important. Messages and communication are real.

Making words and Numbers

From their growing awareness of speech sounds, letter forms, children begin to spell by sounding out parts of words. From their growing awareness of numbers, children begin to see how numbers are used in everyday life

- have lots of magnetic letters and numbers around – on cookie trays, burner covers, your fridge, freezer or file cabinet
- informally, and as they occur, notice letter and number patterns
- play with endings like *ed*, *ing*, and *s*
- play with number patterns
- find little words in big words
- find small numbers in big numbers
- compare numbers
- find numbers in text. What do these numbers mean?
- begin a 'high frequency' word collection (e.g. and, but, where, when, because, the...)
- begin a "high frequency" word collection of math terms (e.g., sum, difference, estimate, compare)
- find the words from your lists in your reading
- keep a list of 'words to chew on' – really good, big, meaty words!
- find out how many words you can find that mean...
- play with opposites

Writing for a purpose and doing math for a purpose

Children's writing develops when they write in real-life situations, for reasons that they clearly understand. Children's math skills develop when they examine math concepts in real-life situations.

- write notes and read the notes your child leaves for you. Don't forget to write back!
- write invitations
- label pictures
- Write shopping lists and compare prices
- notice different forms of writing – advertisements, letters, signs, instructions

- look at the meaning of numbers in various forms of writing
- encourage your child to write down ideas, opinion, wonderings, questions...
- keep a trip diary
- keep a daily diary
- respect your child's private writings

Resources:

- Sharon, Lois, and Bram (cd)
- Raffi (cd)
- Eric Nagler (cd)
- Nursery rhymes
- Newspaper games
- Cooking, recipes, instructions
- Cleaning and sharing jobs
- Going for walks
- Discovering nature, planting flowers, gardening
- Planning parties, lists,
- Grocery shopping, food packaging
- Playing board games
- Talking about your day and asking questions
- Q-Chart, Literacy grid
- Science Centre, Royal Ontario Museum, Zoo

Websites:

- www.crayola.com/
- www.canada.funschool.com/
- www.cbcbooks.org/
- www.ala.org/parents/
- www.goodnightstories.com/
- www.howstuffworks.com/
- www.storyplace.org/
- www.billybear4kids.com/

*Workshop presented by Lorie Drew and Percy Patel,
Teachers, Champlain Trail Public School
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