

Emergent Literacy: Helping Young Children's Development Through Reading

Leader's Guide

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Thank you for taking the time to learn about the process of learning to read, emergent literacy, and how to make it more fun and engaging for families.

Purpose

This leader's guide is designed to allow maximum flexibility in how you deliver the lesson, while providing important frameworks and strategies for engaging your audience. As a leader in your community, you have an opportunity to provide useful, evidence-based, and reliable information about how to build resilience in families through shared reading (the act of reading a book together).

Approach to Delivery

It is important when presenting this lesson that the facilitator be sure of two things. First, be well versed in the content of the lesson. This includes the frameworks, as well as the individual scaffolding strategies discussed in the fact sheet. Second, and even more important, is to have fun, be creative, and be very engaged with the audience. This lesson was not designed to be a static lecture; rather it is an interactive and dynamic process of engaging the audience with this material.

Preparing for the Lesson

- Read through the entire leader's guide (MF3162) and fact sheet (MF3161) before presenting.
- Prepare yourself and practice in advance.



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- Have one children’s book for each pair of participants.
- Have an evaluation form available for each participant to complete at the end of the lesson.
- Group leader: Please send completed evaluation forms to Bradford B. Wiles, School of Family Studies and Human Services, 343 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506. Thank you.

Emergent Literacy

Learning to read is a process fundamentally driven by a more experienced person (someone who already knows how to read, usually an adult), with a less experienced individual (usually a child). This lesson presents different ways for the adult to guide the child’s development through a process called scaffolding. In addition, adults are encouraged to think about their child’s thinking while also being creative and open to possibilities for what could happen during the reading activity.

Mindfulness and Mind-Mindedness

Being mindful and mind-minded means being aware of what the child is thinking about when reading and being open to following the child’s imagination and direction during that time. These two concepts work hand-in-hand, allowing you to realize that the book is merely a good excuse to get adults and children together to interact in a rich, meaningful, and fun activity, which demonstrates the importance of books. When taking a mindful and mind-minded approach to adult-child interaction, both adult and child can have fun and learn something new from the other.

Scaffolding

This lesson is broken into six components of scaffolding: Questioning, Explaining and Instructing, Modeling, Feedback, Maintaining Focus, and Structuring. Each has a place in the adult-child interaction, but relying on any single one will not lead to positive results. Encourage participants to mix these strategies as much as possible.

Activities

For each of the scaffolding activities, ask participants to form pairs and practice a strategy. If there is an odd number of participants, you will need to participate with an adult. Ask one person in each of the pairs to be the child (5 years old works well), and the other to

be an adult. Make sure they know they will alternate being the adult and child so neither plays one or the other the whole time. Each activity should last about 5 minutes, leaving time for discussion, presentation, and practice of the next strategy. When practicing, encourage use of the newest strategy, but incorporate all other strategies already presented.

Questioning: Encourage those playing adults to ask open-ended questions such as, “What is that (animal, insect, toy, person) going to do next?” or “What is he/she thinking about?” or “Why do you think she’s doing that?” Asking, “What is that?” may seem open-ended but actually prompts a less imaginative response, such as “a _____.” Try to avoid asking a child to identify what something is, and instead ask her to tell you what it is doing or thinking. Ask pairs to read together and practice asking these kinds of questions to the “child.”

Explaining and Instructing: Encourage adults to explain new things about what they see happening in the book. For example, if a child is looking at something, such as a tree, an adult knows more about a tree than any child. Examples of instruction and explanation include that trees have bark to protect them from insects, trees use the sun to create nutrients for themselves, they have roots that carry water to the tree, and all other kinds of things about trees. Ask pairs to read together and practice asking questions and offering instruction and explaining with the “child.”

Modeling: Modeling occurs on two levels. First, adults are always modeling behavior for children. When adults read with children, they are modeling that books are important and that time together is also important. Secondly, modeling can be a physical demonstration of what is happening in the book. This includes making noises that characters make, using gestures to mimic a character’s action (e.g. spreading one’s arms as if flying), using a funny tone or pitch of one’s voice to model a character in the book. The key here is to have fun! Ask pairs to read together and practice asking questions, offering instruction and explaining, and modeling with the “child.”

Feedback: Feedback lets a child know that the actions he or she just took were appropriate or not. The key to feedback is to provide a because statement. “Good job!” is well understood by adults because they are able to, without it needing to be said, understand why something was done well. However, children are trying to learn why things are the way they are, and providing

feedback with the reason, using “because,” will be infinitely more useful than just the positive or negative statement. Ask pairs to read together and practice asking questions, offering instruction and explaining, modeling, and providing feedback with the “child.”

Maintaining Focus: This can be a challenge for any adult. The key in maintaining focus is to demonstrate your own interest in the book. A simple gasp and then, “look at that!” will often be enough to bring a child back to paying attention to the book. However, always keep in mind that when children get distracted it is not always necessary to bring the focus back to the book immediately. Sometimes it is fun to go along with the distraction, and after some practice adults can learn to tie the book into the child’s distraction. For example, when reading a book the child sees a cat and then begins talking about his own cat at home. Adults can follow along with the story and offer creative ways to tie the child’s cat back to the story. The adult might say, “Yes, your cat has his own story, but let’s see what this cat is going to do.”

Even better, offering choices has been well known to help children maintain focus. Asking if she wants to finish the book now or read a few more pages can provide a sense of independence. Most importantly, encourage the adults to use their position of power only in cases that involve safety. For example, commanding a child to come back over and read is not an effective way of maintaining focus. Using one’s authority when it comes to safety, such as not going into the street, is always appropriate. Ask pairs to read together and practice asking questions, offering instruction and explaining, modeling, and providing feedback with the “child.” Encourage the “child” to be distracted and allow the “adult” to work on ways to maintain focus.

Structuring: Encourage participants to set the stage for things that will happen. For example, providing the structure of books (title, author, illustrator, characters, and story) helps children learn what to expect. Always keep in mind that children are trying to learn what adults already know. Providing structuring can also carry over into the activity itself. For example, explaining that the adult and child will read a book together, will talk about what they see happening, and will even make silly noises prepares the child for what to expect and then things are much more understood.

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Ask pairs to read together and practice asking questions, offering instruction and explanation, modeling, and providing feedback with the child. Encourage the child to be distracted and allow the adult to work on ways to maintain focus, and encourage adults to provide structuring in various forms.

Wrap up: Encourage everyone to review the strategies before reading with children, and please complete the evaluations.

Author

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Reviewers

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***Emergent Literacy: Helping Young Children's Development Through Reading* — Evaluation**

Directions: Please answer the following questions; however, completing this survey is voluntary. You do not have to answer every question and will not be identified with your answers in any way. Please do not put your name on this form. Thank you.

1. How do you rate this lesson? Check one: Excellent___ Good___ Average___ Poor___ No opinion___

2. Do you think this information will be useful to you in your own life? Check one: Yes___ No___ If yes, how?

Please rate your answers to the following questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (circle your response for each question), with 1 indicating "not at all," 2 indicating "a little bit," 3 indicating "a medium amount," 4 indicating "somewhat so," and 5 indicating "very much so."

Because of this lesson, when I read with children:

3. I am more likely to prepare to read with children by thinking about their thinking. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I am more likely to ask open-ended questions when reading with a child. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I am more likely to offer instructions and explanations when reading with a child. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I am more likely to model what happens in the book with gestures and voices when reading with a child. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I am more likely to provide feedback with a because statement when reading with a child. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I feel more comfortable in helping to maintain focus on the reading activity when reading with a child. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I am more likely to provide structuring about the book or books when reading with a child 1 2 3 4 5

10. Are you: Female___ Male___

11. What is your age?___

12. Are you: Single___ Married___ Single, living with partner___ Separated or divorced___ Widowed___
Divorced and Remarried ___

13. Please include any other comments about the lesson.

Thank you! Please give this survey to your lesson leader. The information you provided will help us improve family life education. If you are interested in being contacted in the future about the impact of this lesson in your family life, please provide the following:

Name_____ Address_____ Phone_____

Email_____

For Leaders Only:

Leader's name: _____ Phone number or email: _____ County: _____

Type of group: FCE ___ Other _____ Date when lesson was given: _____

Number of people attending: ___ Number of men: ___ Number of women: ___

Please return completed surveys to your county/district Family and Consumer Sciences agent, or mail directly to:

Bradford B. Wiles, Kansas State University, 343 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506

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