



Children's Center

Bridgewater State University

November 2010

Learning to Read and Write

by Nancy Clark, director

Extensive research has found reading and writing skills to be among the best predictors of children's future success in school and later in life. Although these skills continue to develop throughout our lives, the International Reading Association considers the early childhood years, from birth to age eight, to be the most important period for literacy development.

Children begin learning about reading and writing at a very young age. Most children arrive at the Children's Center already knowing quite a bit about print. Long before they are able to demonstrate reading and writing production skills, young children begin to acquire knowledge of the abstract concepts behind the processes. Simply by observing adults they see how verbal language relates to written language, how letters are formed, and that print goes from left to right. They come to understand that letters stand for sounds, which can be put together to form words.

Most important, they learn that print has meaning.

Parents seldom realize how much they have already done to lay the foundations for literacy long before enrolling their children in preschool. Few recognize everyday activities such as reading a story to their child, or writing his/her name on a drawing as informal literacy lessons. These activities seem so natural and ordinary that most do not realize how important they are to children's understandings of reading and writing.

Governor Patrick recently declared November 2010 to be *Family Literacy Month*. In his Proclamation he stated that:

Parents are their children's earliest and most continuous teachers, and are full partners with teachers, principals and administrators in the education of their children.

At the Children's Center we share this view, and provide daily literacy experiences which build upon what you have already taught your child about reading and writing. The strategies we use are based on current knowledge of how *young* children think and learn, and are not just adaptations of what may work for older children. You won't see us focusing on isolated literacy skills through worksheets or intensive drill and practice. Instead we expose children to print in more relevant and meaningful ways. We establish a supportive social environment in which they can test out their growing understanding of how adults "make print work." Throughout the day responsive

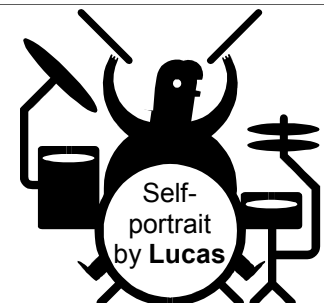
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Early Literacy Skills

The National Early Literacy Panel spent seven years thoroughly reviewing research in an attempt to inform early childhood teaching, and support language and literacy development. Among the key findings in the panel's 2009 final report, are the identification of skills believed to be most important to the process of learning how to read:

- Knowing the names of printed letters;
- Knowing the sounds associated with printed letters;
- Being able to break the sounds of spoken language into smaller sound units, such as syllables or phonemes;
- Being able to rapidly name a sequence, or recognize a pattern of letters, numbers, objects, or colors;
- Being able to write one's own name, or correctly write letters shown on a set of word cards;
- Being able to remember the content of spoken language for a short time.

To download a copy of the Panel's final report, *Developing Early Literacy*, visit <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/NELPReport09.pdf>



Dates to Remember

November 11 - Thursday

Children's Center closed for Veterans' Day
(no college classes)

November 23 - Tuesday

Enrollment Plans for 2011 form due

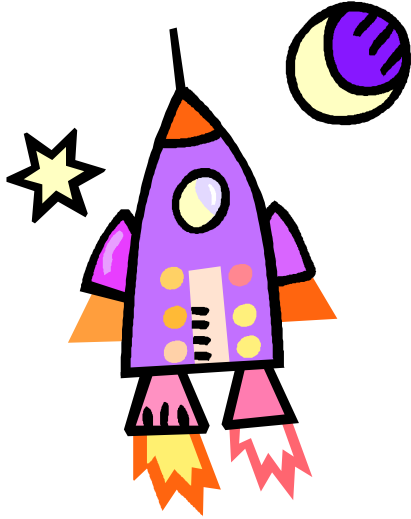
November 25 & 26

Thursday & Friday

Children's Center closed for Thanksgiving
(no college classes)

Curriculum Notes - Investigator Group

by Debbie Drago, teacher



Pre-K Update-

So far this semester, the older children have enjoyed their special time out of the classroom for our Pre-K group. The teachers have been focusing on the following skills: shapes, the alphabet and sight word recognition. We look forward to teaching more kindergarten readiness skills this year.

October Highlights-

As we turn the calendar to November, we say goodbye to the warm weather and welcome the cooler days and the beautiful fall foliage. Please dress your child in layers, as the temperature often changes throughout the day. Also, don't forget to turn your clocks back an hour on November 6 for daylight saving time.

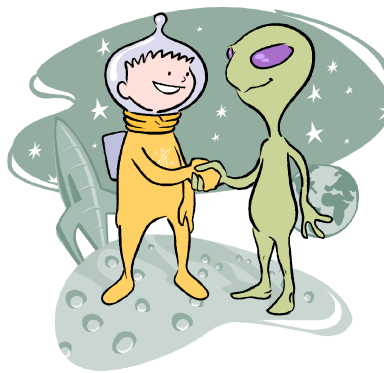
October was a busy month of learning about the different ways we can travel around the world. The first week we focused on the theme of "transportation" in which many children had voiced an interest. We pretended to travel to different states and countries as we played with a variety of cars, trucks, planes and trains. The children pretended that the cardboard boxes in the loft were a train, and traveled to many destinations. They made ramps out of the blocks and

bridges for their trains to travel over our road rug. Some of the art activities included making paper boats and airplanes, street signs and painting with vehicle cookie cutters.

Next, the children focused their learning on "Outer Space and Planets" during the weeks of October 12 - 22. They have enjoyed pretending to be astronauts as they traveled to distant planets. The "space song" was requested several times during these two weeks. They learned some new science words and concepts, such as *gravity, land rover, galaxy, constellations, astronomy and telescopes* as we read many space-related books.

Some of their favorite art activities included star and moon printing, and making rockets and telescopes from paper towel rolls. Outdoors they pretended to be astronauts and aliens with the climbing structure as their spaceships. If you want to further explore outer space with your child, check out the following child-friendly web sites:

www.nasakids.org
www.discoverykids.org
www.kidsastronomy.com



*On October 7, 2010 we participated in the Jumpstart Program's "Read for the Record," an annual campaign aimed at setting a new world record for the greatest number of people reading the same book on the same



Dr. Dave Ostroth, Vice President of Student Affairs

day. We would like to thank Dr. Dave Ostroth, Vice President of Student Affairs, for taking time out of his busy schedule to read Ezra Keats' book The Snowy Day, and for answering all the children's questions. Housed in our campus' Community Service Center, the BSU Jumpstart Program is part of AmeriCorps, a national non-profit organization with the mission to prepare every child in America to enter school prepared to succeed. Those at the Children's Center will have many opportunities to continue enjoying The Snowy Day, since Jumpstart has donated two copies of this classic book to our school library.

*Thank you to Fatima Marcelino, Jed's mother, for helping us with an art project and reading a Halloween story on Friday, Oct.29th. We appreciated the help and hope she enjoyed the time interacting in our classroom.

"The leaves on the trees turn orange, yellow and red." This is one of the songs that you may hear your child singing. We have begun our study of the wonderful fall season in New England. The children have been using their senses to notice and talk about the different "signs of fall." We look forward to taking a nature walk soon to hear, see, smell and touch the changes that have taken place around the playground since the summer. We hope you enjoy the children's art work in the classroom and in the hall.

Curriculum Notes – Explorer Group

by Nicole West, teacher



Happy Birthday

Brennan

November 14

I can't believe November is here already; the fall months are flying by! Everyone seems to be all settled in and comfortable with their school routines. Many close bonds have formed already, which makes school all the more fun!

During the month of October our project was focused on all things fall. We worked on pumpkins, leaves and apples. Throughout the project we did many different activities to cover everything there was to know about each topic. We started off with apples and discussed the different types. During group time we did some apple tasting with Macintosh coming out as the winner. We even used apples as tools to paint with! As we moved on to pumpkins, we thought, "What better way to learn about pumpkins than to carve them." Each pumpkin that we carved was voted on by the children, so no two pumpkins looked the same. We had happy pumpkins, a surprised pumpkin, and even a scary one.

Since the weather cooperated with our study of fall, we went on a few nature walks to see the changes that the new season brought. All the children were given their own bags to fill with fall leaves that were later used

for an art project. They really enjoyed walking through the campus and seeing all the different colored leaves. While out on these walks and even on the playground, the children noticed many different bugs and expressed great interest in them! So it looks like our next project will be drifting towards the study of insects.

Also with the new season came our start of a Pre-K group for those who will be entering kindergarten next year. Our Movement Room is finally ready to use and everyone, including the children, couldn't be happier. We're now in our second week, starting with letter and name recognition.

Additional curriculum news:

In October Professor Greg Nelson from BSU's Elementary and Early Childhood Education department, began visiting weekly with "hands-on" math activities. Dr. Nelson started with the Pre-K children, and recently worked with small groups of the younger Explorers. Each Thursday he did many counting-based activities, which focused on symbolizing the number of objects and recognizing what that numeral meant. Due to the upcoming Thursday holidays, we will discontinue these math groups for the month of November, but they will reconvene in December.

On October 7, the Children's Center participated in Jumpstart's "Read for the Record," a national campaign which strives to break its own world record for the most adults and children reading the same book, on the same day. We were lucky enough to have Diane Bell, director of BSU's Community Service Center, come and read this year's book, The Snowy Day, by Ezra Keats. Jumpstart is a non-profit organiza-

tion garnering national attention for the importance of early learning, and working towards the day that every child in America enters school prepared to succeed.

Reminders:

With the fall weather here, temperatures are sure to drop. Outside play is an important part of our daily routine, so please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Kindly make sure that all clothing is labeled with his/her name.

Please send healthy foods for your child's lunch. Try substituting carrot sticks or other raw vegetables for potato chips, and fresh fruit slices for cookies. Most children like easy-to-eat finger foods, so chop food finely or cut into thin strips; this will also help prevent choking. Offer only one new food at a time, along with familiar favorites. Experts say that children may need to try a new food five to ten times before learning to like it, so be patient and persistent.

Invitations to join the *Teaching Strategies GOLD* web service have been sent out to all parents via email. After accepting and creating an account, you will be able to view documentation that the teachers have posted on your child. If you have any questions about that as well, please don't hesitate to ask!



Learning to Read and Write

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adults are available to read and write for and with children. Our pre-k groups and other teacher-planned activities provide more formal opportunities to promote literacy skills. Children are encouraged to have fun with language through nursery rhymes, finger plays, flannel board stories, poetry, songs, and hand puppets.

We make sure our classrooms are print-rich environments, well stocked with a range of reading and writing materials. Opportunities abound to explore and experiment with print through books, letter puzzles, games, magnetic letters, rubber stamps, and computers. A variety of paper and writing tools are readily available in our two Writing Centers. Reading and writing emerge naturally from drawing and talking in this environment. Children quickly realize that we consider these skills to be important, and that print could be useful to them in their

own activities. From creating simple lists of their classmates' names to dictating stories to teachers, children are given countless opportunities to use print purposefully in their day to day life at the Children's Center.

Learning to read and write are among the most important and powerful achievements in life. The basic skills children acquire as preschoolers form a solid foundation upon which more abstract skills can be built in elementary school. More importantly, these early literacy experiences help children to feel successful, bring them joy, and encourage them to develop a life-long love for books and reading.

Everyone who knows how to read has it in their power to magnify themselves, to multiply the ways in which they exist, and to make their life full, significant, and interesting.

- Aldous Huxley

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Neuman, S., C. Copple, & S. Bredekamp. 2000. *Learning to read and write*. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC.

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Suggestions for Making Print Part of Preschoolers' Everyday Environment

- ◆ *Read stories aloud every day, any time, and any place.* Research consistently identifies this as the single most important literacy activity. Make it an intimate experience at the beginning and end of each day. Keep books in the car and read whenever time allows.
- ◆ *Allow your child to choose the book, hold the book, and to turn the pages. Read and reread his/her favorite stories as often as requested.* Repetition helps children to match the spoken words with the story's written words.
- ◆ *Talk about the story with your child.* Ask her/him to tell you what it says.
- ◆ *Write down things your child has said and reread them later.*
- ◆ *Place books on your child's level for easy and continuous access.*
- ◆ *Leave toys and food in original containers which have pictures and print on them.* Encourage your child to find groceries and make choices based on the print and/or pictures. This will help him/her make connections between print and its meaning.
- ◆ *Give your child ample opportunities to observe you reading and writing.* Hold him/her on your lap to facilitate observations.
- ◆ *Give your child junk mail to explore and manipulate.*
- ◆ *Write messages to your child and encourage a response using whatever form s/he chooses.*

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