

A Letter to Families About the Library Area

Dear Families,

The Library area is a very important part of our classroom and of your child's life. It is where children gain the foundation for reading and writing. It is also a place where children can relax and enjoy the wonderful world of children's books.

We encourage children to look at books, listen to recorded stories, retell stories, and scribble and "write" throughout the day. Sometimes children dictate stories that we write down and bind as books.

We read with the children every day. Reading introduces new ideas, helps children learn how to handle problems, and encourages them to love books. As children listen to us read, their own reading skills begin to develop. Here are some of the things we do as we read:

We look at pictures and ask, "What do you see?"

We encourage children to predict what will happen next. For example, we ask, "What do you suppose will happen now?"

We encourage children to repeat words, rhymes, and phrases they are learning.

What You Can Do at Home

Research has shown us the important role families play in helping children learn to read and write. The single most important thing you can do is to read to your child every day. When your child sits next to you as you read, he or she begins to connect books with good feelings. Here are a few more things you can do with your child:

Encourage your child to talk about the stories you read together.

Use prompts like "I wonder what will happen next" or "I wonder why..."

Try to relate the story to something in your child's life.

Visit the library and check out books that interest your child.

Give your child paper and pencils, pens, or markers. Let him or her experiment with writing; don't worry if your child's writing isn't perfect!

If you'd like some help with choosing books or guidance about how to read with your child, please talk with us. To keep your child's home library stocked, you can borrow books from the public library. When you take time to read to your child every day, you are doing the very best thing to help your child become a successful reader.

What Children Learn in the Library Area

With guidance, children use language and literacy skills to gain content knowledge. Here are some of the many ways that content learning is addressed in the Library area:

Literacy

Encourage your child to experience literacy as a source of enjoyment by reading and rereading favorite stories aloud. Speak with expression and show your passion for good books.

Expand your child's vocabulary and other language skills by reading and talking about a variety of high-quality books. Relate the words they are learning to their own experiences. Help your child expand their general knowledge by offering them books about many topics.

Promote your child's phonological awareness by reading stories that play with language, such as Dr. Seuss's books and other rhyming books. As your child begins to write, help them think about the sounds of words.

Increase their knowledge of print by sweeping your hand under the words as you read. Create opportunities for children to watch you write, and point out your top-to-bottom and left-to-right progression. Set up a message board or mailboxes to encourage your child to write someone else. Teach your child about letters and words by talking about them as they read and write.

Support your child's comprehension by asking open-ended questions during storybook readings. To promote their sense of story, encourage your child to use props to retell familiar stories.

Enhance your child's understanding of books and other texts by drawing their attention to various forms of print, including a variety of reading materials such as magazines, nonfiction books, story and alphabet and counting books.

Mathematics

Support your child's understanding of number concepts by including counting books. Read a book in which a particular number is important such as *The Three Little Pigs* to help your child understand quantity. Talk about and compare quantities as you read your story. For example, in *The Doorbell Rang*, 12 cookies have to be re-divided

differently in order to be shared equally each time more children ring the doorbell. Talk about big numbers as you read *How Much Is a Million*.

Teach your child about geometry and spatial sense in their world by talking about the photographs of ordinary places in such books as *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes*, and *Over, Under, & Through*.

Promote understanding about measurement by pointing out words that describe size, such as enormous turnip and teeny-tiny women. Introduce time concepts by repeating words and phrases such as “a long, long time ago,” “tomorrow,” or “many days later.”

Science

Encourage your child to use informational books to learn about plants and animals, which are the core topics of life science. For example, you can address all areas of science through cooking, activity after reading *Stone Soup*. Your child will learn about healthy foods (life science), how to boil water and use tools (physical science), and about stones (Earth and the environment).

Help your child learn about physical science by sharing nonfiction books about how things work and fiction that mentions gadgets.

Support your child in using what they have learned about Earth and the environment by having them dictate a letter urging the city to take good care of the trees in their favorite park.

Social Studies

Promote an understanding of people and how they live by reading stories from other lands and about different occupations. Share books with your child that help them manage their emotions and that show examples of friendship. Books can help your child understand how people look alike and different. Provide opportunities for your child to write a thank-you note, letter, or greeting card to family members.

Show your child how they can use writing to advocate for a better environment. Have your child create a sign urging others to recycle.

The Arts

Promote your child’s appreciation of the visual arts by talking about book illustrations. Point out the name of the illustrator on the cover each time you read a book. Talk about art media and techniques such as Leo Lionni’s torn-paper or Alexandra Day’s watercolors of the dog Carl.

Nourish your child's interest in music by reading picture books based on songs such as "This Land Is Your Land" and "Down by the Bay." Encourage children to explore drama and dance by acting out familiar stories.

Technology

Help your child develop an awareness of technology by pointing out computers, phones, faxes, and other tools in stories. Provide opportunities for your child to use audio equipment and computers to listen to stories.

How the Library Area Promotes Development and Learning

Social-emotional

From books and conversations, children learn about people who are similar to and different from them. They are comforted by knowing that others have managed experiences and fears similar to their own. They develop empathy for those who have challenges that make life difficult. Children also learn other social skills as they share books together, reenact stories, and write messages.

Physical

Children strengthen their hand muscles when they use tools for writing and illustrating. They use their eye muscles as they follow the pictures and words in books.

Language and literacy

All aspects of language (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) can be strengthened in the Library area. When children hear stories, they learn new words, and their comprehension grows. Children develop phonological awareness when they hear and explore the sounds of language in books. They learn how to follow the direction of print on a page, to progress from left to right and top to bottom. Children use language in meaningful ways in the Library area when they dictate or scribble messages for classmates and letters to family members.

Cognitive

Books help children gain a better understanding of the world around them. They begin to interpret symbols. They learn to make predictions and think about cause and effect. When they hear a story, children make connections between the story and what they already know. When they retell stories, they learn to relate the story events in a particular sequence. Through books, children also develop understandings about counting, numeral recognition, color, size, and shape.