



B.C. First Nations Head Start Literacy and Young Children

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THOSE WHO WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN FACILITATING EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT and can promote literacy by providing as many opportunities as possible for children to use the printed word in real-life, purposeful situations.

Create an inviting reading corner

Make it user-friendly! Children will use a reading corner if it is comfy and quiet, and there is a variety of things to read (books, magazines, catalogues, home-made books, children-made books, etc.)

Let children experiment with writing

- Chalkboard and chalk
- Magnetic letters
- Unlined and lined paper of different colours, sizes, shapes and textures
- Blank, stapled paper “books” for children to do their own story-writing
- Typewriters or computers
- Cards, postcards, notepaper
- Stamps and envelopes
- Markers, pencils, crayons, pens
- Ink stamps

Post print at the children’s level

Children learn best when they can see, touch and experiment with materials. Use signs and labels that relate to your daily routines and activities.

- Labels for cubbies, toy containers, activity centers, cupboards, etc.
- Signs with care instructions for plants or pets
- Signs children make for their own purposes (ex. “Do Not Touch”)
- Sign-in sheet when children arrive
- Sign-in/out sheets for book bags
- Reminder/Supplies lists—keep in visible places, let children help you compose the lists, draw pictures to help children “read” the list

- Charts of children's names and birthdays (they can help you make it—make sure you post it at their eye-level)
- Announcements can be posted in a special place. These are exciting to children, especially if they are about them! (Ex. "Jade has a new baby sister")
- Encourage children to write their names on their artwork, and respond positively to their attempt to "write" their own names, even if you can't read them.

Make books with the children

Children love being the topic of a book and using their drawings or photos to illustrate it. Work with children, letting them tell you the story.

Use print materials in dramatic play

If you provide materials, children will always include print in their dramatic play. Always make paper and pencil available. If children are playing "store," "bank," or "post office," they will enjoy labeling things, writing prices, and addressing letters, etc.

Use print to communicate with others

Create and give letters and cards to friends and family. Ask parents to tell you their birthdays and have children make cards for them.

Make thank you letters and invitations

Children can contribute to a letter written on a large sheet of paper (by dictating or by writing or drawing themselves)

Parent support: write personal letters to parents, sharing something positive that happened with their child that day. Tell the child why you are writing the letter—even let him help you compose it. Then address it with him, and make him feel important as the "letter carrier."

The excellent suggestions for creating an environment which encourages literacy are adapted from an article by Elaine Weitzman—"Making Literacy Part of Every Day in Child Care," excerpted from the Child & Family Canada website: <http://www.cfc-efc.ca>.

Elaine's book *Learning Language and Loving It: A Guide to Promoting Children's Social and Language Development in Early Childhood Settings* (397 pages, full color)—as well as an accompanying videotape—is available from:

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