Encouraging Literacy Development in Young Children:
Therapy Ideas for Early Intervention Providers

An Honors Thesis
HONRS 499

by

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Abstract

As early intervention providers, occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech-language pathologists have the opportunity to work with children ranging in age from birth to three. This is the best time for children to soak up the knowledge needed to develop literacy skills. Although the responsibility for laying the groundwork for emergent literacy would typically be considered the job of the speech-language pathologist, it is critical for any early intervention professional who works with a child to incorporate literacy activities into therapy.

I compiled several handouts for early intervention providers which give specific activities that can be used to encourage literacy development during their therapy sessions. I also made lists of the items that should be included in a therapy kit in order to carry out the ideas on the handouts. Finally, I created a power point presentation that could be used with early intervention professionals or students outlining the importance of literacy skills for children as well as things to keep in mind when administering therapy.
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Acknowledgements

- I want to thank Dr. Karen Thatcher for inspiring my interest in this topic and for lending me advice and reading materials throughout my brainstorming and writing process.

- I would also like to thank Carole Clohessy and Cheryl Wolfert for allowing me to observe two of their First Steps therapy sessions.
Rationale

I have always been interested in the topic of literacy. As a speech-language pathology major I knew that there were many professionals in my field passionate about educating others on the importance of literacy development in children. One of these people is Dr. Karen Thatcher. After taking an independent study with Dr. Thatcher during spring semester, 2005, I realized that I was beginning to become increasingly interested in this topic and decided to explore it even further through my honors thesis.

Through the course of my project I hoped to gain an even greater understanding about why literacy development is so critical during a child's early years, and about easy ways that early intervention providers could work on literacy skills while still accomplishing their therapy objectives. Since I already had a pretty good understanding about what speech-language pathologists could do with children to develop their literacy skills, I knew that I was going to have to learn more about the jobs of physical therapists and occupational therapists, two other professionals actively involved with the birth to three population through early intervention.

Observing Carole Clohessy and Cheryl Wolfert during their First Steps therapy sessions was a huge help in my brainstorming process. Being able to see what kinds of things they do on the job allowed me to think of activities that would be applicable to them and that they could use easily in conjunction with what they are already doing. After I finished my observations I was much better equipped to begin making the handouts for my project.

At the beginning, I had several decisions to make concerning the handouts. First, should I base the ideas on books or on nursery rhymes and children's songs? While
not be as effective. By defining literacy, talking about the problems children with poor literacy skills face, and by giving simple suggestions to keep in mind and to share with parents, I feel that early intervention providers will be more likely to take the ideas seriously and make a conscious effort to incorporate literacy activities into their sessions.

One big message I would like to share with those reading the handouts is that the ideas I have given do not need to be limited to what is typed on the paper. They can all be adapted in so many different ways to fit children of all ages and disability levels. The books used, foods eaten, and games played must all be appropriate for the child. Using the expertise gained from experience I am confident that professionals will be able to look at my suggestions and find ways to adapt them for use with their clients.

The knowledge that I have gained through my research for this project has only further reinforced my feelings about the importance of literacy. I feel that this is an area that all people who interact with children need to be aware of. By targeting early intervention providers, we can be sure that at least children and parents in this program can be aware of the things they need to be doing with their child, and hopefully they will pass this information on to others.

We want to give children the best chance for success, and early literacy development is a strong predictor of how well they will do in school and beyond. In the slide show I challenge early intervention providers to think outside the lines of their profession. By being aware of all of the needs of a child – social, emotional, physical, and cognitive – early intervention providers can give a more balanced and well rounded approach to treating the individual.
Do Your Ears Hang Low?

Do your ears hang low? (point to your ears)
Do they wobble to and fro? (move your hands side to side)
Can you tie them in a knot? (make a tying motion)
Can you tie them in a bow? (pretend to tie a bow)
Can you throw them o’er your shoulder. (toss your clasped hands over your shoulder)
Like a Continental soldier? (salute)
Do your ears hang low?

Activity Ideas

*While you're administering therapy, talk about animals with long ears (rabbits, donkeys, elephants, etc.)

*Fine motor and gross motor activities can also be done while singing

*Substitute ears for other body parts (*Do your arms hang low?)*

*Experiment with objects that make different sounds and describe what you hear (bubble wrap, bell, cellophane, etc.)*

*Talk about how important it is to have ears and to hear. Ask questions such as “What is your favorite sound? Why are our ears so important? Can you think of some animals that have long ears?”*

*Point out the words that rhyme in the song: low/fro/bow. See if they can think of other words that rhyme.*

*Have the child paint with a Q-tip. This can help with fine motor as well as gross motor.*

*Go outside and practice marching like a continental soldier or do their therapy objectives.*

*Practice making knots and bows as a fine motor activity.*

*Color animals with long ears.*

*Use play dough to make animals with long ears, short ears, etc.*

*Make ants on a log (spread peanut butter on the inside of celery and place raisins on top) to be dog treats or bunny treats or a treat for whatever animal you are talking about.*

*Read a book about animals and have the child point out the animals with long ears.*
Five Little Ducks

Five little ducks went out one day
Over the hills and far away.
Papa duck called with a "Quack, quack, quack."
Four little ducks came swimming back.

Repeat, losing one more duck each time until you are left with one duck. Have mother duck call and end with "five little ducks came swimming back."

Activity Ideas:
* Go for a walk outside like the ducks did. Incorporate the different exercises the child does into the song.
* Have them show you how a duck moves.
* As you are outside or inside singing the song and doing your exercises, play I Spy with the child.
* Paint with a feather for work with fine motor skills.
* Ask the child questions about ducks such as "Where have you seen ducks before? What do ducks look like? What sounds do ducks make? What do ducks eat?"
* Make "duck feed" by mixing together Trix cereal, peanuts, raisins and pretzel sticks. You can talk about all the different colors, and the child can work on fine motor by picking up the individual pieces and stirring the mix together.
* Talk about other animals you might see around a pond.
* Have a rubber duck that the child can hold and talk about while you're administering therapy.
* Create different things the child must do with the duck such as placing it in different positions around the room to work on prepositions (On the couch, under the table, etc.).
  * Play "Hide and Seek."
  * Play "Duck, Duck, Goose."
* Name other animals in the song (Five little cats, dogs, cows went out to play...).
* Use cookie cutters to cut out ducks from play dough.
* Hide "duck eggs" (Easter eggs) for the child to find.
* Teach the child the American Sign Language sign for duck (finger placed as shown below under chin). You can also teach them signs for many other animals.
Head and Shoulders

Head, shoulders, knees and toes
Knees and toes
Head, shoulders, knees and toes
Knees and toes
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose
Head, shoulders, knees and toes
Knees and toes.

Activity Ideas:

Have the child point to his body parts while singing the song, or point to his body parts for him.

Point out the rhyming words (nose, toes). Think of more words that rhyme.

Have the child draw a picture of himself. Name several parts of his body.

Read a book about body parts. Point them out in the book and on the child.

Talk about what you do with your various body parts while working on fine and gross motor exercises. For example, what do your eyes, mouth, nose and hands help you do?

Allow the child to explore his five senses by providing different items for him to feel, smell, see and taste.

Explore the concept of soft and hard. Let him feel something soft such as fleece or a cotton ball, then give him something hard to feel such as a rock. Explore different temperatures by allowing him to feel something cool, like finger paint or ice, and something warm like a heating pad or a rice bag that was warmed up in the microwave.

Have the child smell a scented candle or a strong smelling cheese and taste foods of many different textures such as pudding, cereal, carrots, marshmallows, etc.

Have the child crawl on their knees to get a toy.

Count the child’s toes, fingers, knees, mouth, ears, eyes, nose, etc.
Hickory, Dickory, Dock

Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock.  
The clock struck one,  
The mouse ran down,  
Hickory, dickory, dock.

(stand, swing arm like pendulum)  
(bend over; run hand up body)  
(clap hands over head once)  
(run hand down to feet)  
(stand; swing arm like pendulum)

You may continue through the numbers as high as you want to go.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

Point out the rhyming words (hickory/dickory, dock/clock). See if the child can think up some of his own or just model more rhyming words for him.

Talk about the numbers on a clock. Get magnetic numbers to stick on the fridge or lay out on the floor. Have the child identify the numbers or just play with them. If the numbers are on the fridge the child can reach up high for them or squat down low, or if they are spread out on the floor the child can move around to get them.

Count items in the child’s environment such as their baby dolis, their fingers, their hands, etc.

Read a book about a mouse such as “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie.”

Talk about what a mouse looks like (is it big or small? soft or hard?).

Pretend to make cookies or bring the ingredients to actually make them. The child can pour, measure, mix, taste and bake with you. Narrate the experience for the child as it is happening.

Go outside and practice running like the mouse did. You can outline a clock on the driveway and as you sing the song the child can act out the rhyme.

If the child is using sign language you can have them practice signing the different numbers in the rhyme.

Sing the song with different animals being substituted for the mouse. The child will probably get a kick out of a cow, horse, or elephant running up a clock.
Hokey Pokey
You put your right hand in,
You put your right hand out,
You put your right hand in,
And you shake it all about. (wiggle)
You do the Hokey Pokey
And you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about.

Continue with other verses that put in other parts of the body and finish up with your whole self.

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

Have the child practice the concept of "in" and "out" by putting a toy inside of something and then taking it out (for example: putting a shape in a toy, putting a doll in the dollhouse, etc.).

Practice "up" and "down" by having the child crouch down low and then stand up, or by having him step up onto a stool.

Read a book about body parts and as you come to each part incorporate it into the song.

Make an instrument by pouring some beads into a Pringles can or pop bottle. Have the child shake it and make music while singing.

Modify the Hokey Pokey for children who cannot stand by having other motions they can do from the sitting position. Or have a motion that involves them going from a crouching to a standing position or a sitting to a standing position.

Have the child blow a bubble and then while singing the Hokey Pokey have them pop it with whatever body part they put in the middle (hand, foot, whole self, etc.).

Keep up the dancing to the tune of other songs such as the ABC's. You can make up other body motions to go along with your new song (for example, if the child is working on standing or standing on one leg you can have them go from sitting to standing as you sing each letter of the alphabet or alternate legs every so many letters.

Read Dr. Seuss books such as "The Foot Book" which will reinforce the concept of body parts as well as expose the child to several rhyming words. Another good Dr. Seuss book is "Wet Foot, Dry Foot, Low Foot, High Foot: Learn About Opposites."
If You’re Happy and You Know It

If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.  (clap hands twice)
If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.  (clap hands twice)
If you’re happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it.  (point to face)
If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.  (clap hands twice)

Other verses:
-If you’re happy and you know it, stomp your feet.  (stomp feet twice)
-If you’re happy and you know it, shout “Hurray!”  (shout “hurray!”)
-If you’re happy and you know it, do all three.  (clap hands twice, stomp feet twice, shout “hurray!”)

Activity Ideas:

Talk about different emotions people can have such as happy, sad, angry, etc. Make faces to convey each emotion.

Change emotions each time you sing the song. (“If you’re sad and you know it, say ‘boo-hoo!’” or “If you’re surprised and you know it say ‘oh my.’”)

Practice making other loud noises besides clapping hands and stomping feet. Have the child pop bubble wrap, pound on a drum, shake a noise maker, etc. Talk about loud sounds. Ask the child if loud sounds hurt their ears.

Change the requests in the song, for example, “If you’re happy and you know it, point to something red.” You could even have the requests be one of your therapy objectives such as, “If you’re happy and you know it stand up straight.”

Have the child draw or paint a picture of a happy person, sad person, surprised person, etc.

Have the child think about things that make them happy.

Have the child look in the mirror and make a happy face, sad face, surprised face, etc. Have them point to their eyes, nose, mouth, etc.

Show the child several pictures of people and have them decide if they look happy or sad.

Blow bubbles during the song and when the child is supposed to clap their hands or stomp their feet have them pop the bubbles. Say, “If you’re happy and you know it, pop the bubbles.”

Make up other patterns of clapping and stomping your feet. For example, clap three times and then stomp once and have the child do the same.

Hide something around the room and as the child gets close clap your hands louder.
Itsy Bitsy Spider

The itsy bitsy spider
Went up the water spout.
Down came the rain
And washed the spider out.
Out came the sun
And dried up all the rain.
And the itsy bitsy spider
Went up the spout again.

Activity Ideas:

*Say the rhyme while you are administering therapy.*

*Have the child make the hand motions or make up motions the child can do with their entire body to go along with therapy objectives.*

*Point out the rhyming words (spout/out). Try to think of more words that rhyme.*

*Go for a “spider hunt” in the house or outside.*

*Read a book about spiders. Have the child identify the pictures in the book and talk about any words they may not be familiar with.*

*Talk about places that spiders live, what they look like, and what they might eat.*

*Make “spider food” with raisins, m&ms, peanuts, and sunflower seeds, or with whatever food you like. Have the child pour and mix the ingredients together and then pick up the individual pieces to eat.*

*Talk about how the weather can change. Talk about what it’s like when the sun is out, when it’s cloudy, rainy, nighttime, etc.*

*Play with magnetic letters. Have the child practice picking them up and identifying what they are. Then spell out spider, sun and spout and talk point out that they all start with the “s” sound. Pick a different sound and spell more words.*

*Count the number of legs a spider has. Count the number of legs other animals have. Talk about legs and other body parts such as head, arms, feet, etc.*

*Draw a picture of a spider*

*Make a spider out of clay or play dough.*
Old MacDonald Had a Farm

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O
And on his farm he had a cow, E-I-E-I-O
With a "moo-moo" here and a "moo-moo" there
Here a "moo" there a "moo"
Everywhere a "moo-moo"
Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O

Additional Verses:
Pig - oink oink, Cat - meow, meow, Dog - bow-wow, Horse - neigh neigh, Duck - quack quack, Hen - cluck cluck, Sheep - baa baa

Activity Ideas:
Sing the song and talk about other things you might see on a farm while doing fine and gross motor exercises.

Read a book about animals. When you come to each animal insert it into the song.

Talk about the noises animals make. Make a noise and have the child tell you what animal it is and vice versa.

Make "animal feed" with a variety of foods such as cereal, seeds, nuts, miniature marshmallows, and raisins. Have the child pour, stir, and pick up the individual pieces.

Draw pictures of animals. Make animal tracks with stencils and finger paint. Cut animals out of play dough with cookie cutters.

Place farm animal figurines around the room. Have the child crawl or walk around to get them. Practice making the sound of each animal when he brings them back.

Teach the child the American Sign Language signs for the animals in the song.

Talk about vegetables Old MacDonald might grow on his farm. You could cut up and bring real carrots, celery, lettuce and tomatoes or use pretend food. Talk about what color each of the vegetables are. Give a descriptor word for each, such as "orange carrot, leafy lettuce, juicy tomato," etc.

Incorporate the foods into the song. (Old MacDonald had farm, E-I-E-I-O. And on that farm he had some carrots, E-I-E-I-O. With an orange carrot here and an orange carrot there. Here a carrot, there a carrot, everywhere an orange carrot.)

Make farm animals such as a sheep by gluing cotton balls on a piece of paper. Talk about how the cotton balls feel. Are they soft or rough?
Pat-a-Cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man. (clap hands together)
Bake me a cake as fast as you can.
Roll it. (roll hands over each other)
And pat it. (pat hands together)
And mark it with a B. (draw B in the air)
And put it in the oven for baby and me. (touch tummy)

Activity Ideas

Sing the song and practice making doing the hand motions.

Bring the ingredients to make a cake together. Practice pouring, stirring, measuring and tasting.
Ask the child questions about what he or she is experiencing or just narrate the experience.

An alternative to the above is to pretend to make a cake. Have the items the child needs spread around the room and have them gather them at your request. Once you have all of the “ingredients” you can pretend to measure, pour, stir, bake and taste.

Play with a baby doll. Identify the baby’s body parts. Get the baby dressed and pretend to take her somewhere. Feed her the cake.

Play with letter tiles or magnetic letters. Put the “B” up high on the refrigerator and have the child reach for it. Or put the letter out of the child’s reach on the floor so that they must move to get it.

Put different magnetic letters on the fridge and have the child spray them with a squirt gun. Either identify the letters as he sprays them, or say a letter and have the child aim for it.

Practice singing the song when crouched down low, standing up tall, putting one leg up, turning their waist back and forth, etc.

Point out the rhyming words (man/can, B/me) and model more words that rhyme.

Have the child color a picture of their favorite kind of cake. Talk about what the cake looks like, what colors it is, and how it tastes.

Talk about other foods the child likes to eat.
The Alphabet Song

A - B - C - D - E - F - G
H - I - J - K - L - M - N - O - P
Q - R - S - T - U and V
W - X - Y and Z.

Now I know my ABCs,
Next time won't you sing with me?

Activity Ideas:

Sing the ABCs while doing fine and gross motor exercises with the child.

Play with foam or magnetic letters while singing the song.

Put magnetic letters on the fridge and have the child reach up high to get them.

Put the magnetic letters on the fridge and have the child squirt them with a squirt gun. Give him a specific letter to aim for.

Have the child color a picture of himself and point out what letter of the alphabet his name starts with.

Have the child put together a wood puzzle that has cut outs of the letters of the alphabet.

Have the child try to pick up the alphabet letters with tweezers or ice tongs.

Place letters around the room and have the child crawl the get them. Have him put the letters inside of a box and then reach in and grab them or dump the box upside down to get more. Talk about “in and out” and “up and down.”

Make up actions the child must do for each letter of the alphabet to go along with your therapy objectives. For example, A - Arch your back, B - Bounce up and down, C - Crawl on your knees, D - Dance around, etc.

Have the child try to make the letters of the alphabet with his body. For example, standing straight up would look like an “I” and curving your arms and body to the side would look like a “C.”

Teach the child the American Sign Language signs for the letters.
The Ants Go Marching

The ants go marching one by one,
Hurrah, hurrah.
The ants go marching one by one,
Hurrah, hurrah.
The ants go marching one by one,
The little one stops to suck his thumb.
And they all go marching down,
To the ground,
To get out,
Of the rain.
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

...two...tie her shoe...
...three...climb a tree...
...four...shut the door...
...five...take a dive...
...six...pick up sticks...
...seven...pray to heaven...
...eight...shut the gate...
...nine...check the time...
...ten...say "The End!"

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Pretend to be ants marching and parade outside or indoors while singing the song.

Identify all of the rhyming words (one/thumb, two/shoe, three/tree, etc.).

Practice counting by playing with foam or magnetic numbers. Put them different places around the room and have the child walk or crawl over to them. Or put them high above the child's head so they have to reach for them from a standing position and then have them crouch down low to get more.

Experiment with different objects that could produce the loud "BOOM!" in the song. (For example, hit a plastic drum, bowl, or pop bottle with a wood spoon.) Talk about the different sounds each object produces.

Make "ants on a log" with celery, peanut butter and raisins.

Make up hand and body motions to go with the different lines of the song to fit with therapy objectives.

Talk about why the ants might want to get out of the rain. Ask "what would happen to them?"

Ask the child if he knows what "hurrah" means. If not, define it for him and try to think of other words that could mean the same thing.

Put raisins for "ants" up on the couch and have the child try to pick them up. Or put them down on the floor for the child to crawl to.
The Three Little Kittens

The three little kittens, they lost their mittens,
And they began to cry,
Oh, Mother dear, we sadly fear
Our mittens we have lost.
What! Lost your mittens, you naughty kittens
Then you shall have no pie.
Mee-ow, mee-ow, mee-ow.
No, you shall have no pie.

The three little kittens, they found their mittens,
And they began to cry,
Oh, mother dear, see here, see here,
Our mittens we have found.
Put on your mittens, you silly kittens,
And you shall have some pie.
Purr-r, purr-r, purr-r,
Oh, let us have some pie.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

~Practice fine motor by picking up animal crackers and identifying what animal they are.

~Act out the rhyme by having the child make cat noises and move as a cat would. Hide mittens somewhere in the room for him to find. Give clues about where they might be.

~Make puppets and have the child act out the rhyme in a puppet show.

~Have the child decorate their own mittens on construction paper and then describe the colors and textures.

~Have a simple pie recipe the child can follow in order to make their own pie.

~Ask the child about his favorite kind of pie and what is in it.

~Ask open-ended questions about the rhyme such as:
   - What do you think happened to the kitten's mittens?
   - How do you think the kittens felt when they thought they could not have pie?
   - What could the kittens do to make sure they never lost their mittens again?
   - How do you think they felt after their mother said they could have pie?

~Talk about what a cat looks like. Is it big or little? Soft or rough?

~Point out the rhyming words in (kitten/mitten, pie/cry). Try to think of more words that rhyme.

~Play a matching game with mittens that have different patterns and have the children tell you what is the same or different about each pair.

~Play Simon Says and have the children copy different cat-like movements or sounds that you make.
This Little Piggy

This little piggy went to market,
This little piggy stayed home,
This little piggy had roast beef,
This little piggy had none,
And this little piggy cried
"Wee-wee-wee!" all the way home.

(wiggle big toe or finger)
(wiggle second toe)
(wiggle middle toe)
(wiggle fourth toe)
(wiggle little toe)

Activity Ideas:

Have the child take his socks off and say the rhyme while you wiggle his toes. Then see if he can wiggle his toes while you say it.

Act out the rhyme with the child. Either act it out together or have five pig puppets that you can act out the rhyme with.

Pretend to go to the market. Either set up play food around the room so the child can go shopping or just talk about what kinds of foods you can buy at the store. Name different vegetables and fruits. Talk about the child’s favorite food.

Make "pig feed." Mix together cereal, raisins, nuts, marshmallows, etc. Have the child practice pouring, stirring, and picking up the individual pieces to eat.

Cut out pigs from play dough with cookie cutters.

Draw pictures of animals. Talk about what color each animal is.

Read a book about a farm. Point out the pigs and other animals you see. Talk about what sounds the animals make. Substitute the names of the other animals into the rhyme.

Put toy pigs around the room. Have the child walk or crawl to get them.

Talk about the concept of big and little. Their toes are little. Have them show you which one is the smallest.

Have different items on the ground such as a handkerchief, a block, a marker, etc. and have the child try to pick them up with his feet and toes.

Dip the child’s feet in paint and have him make footprints on a big sheet of paper. Ask him how having paint between his toes feels.
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

ACTIVITY IDEAS:

*Point out the rhyming words in the song (star/are, high/sky). Try to think of more words that rhyme*

*Talk about other things you can see in the sky at night (moon, clouds, etc.). Then talk about things you can see in the sky during the day (cloud, sun, airplane, bird)*

*Have the child paint, color, or draw stars. Talk about what color stars usually are and then make stars that are several different colors*

*Roll out play dough and have the child use a star cookie cutter to make lots of stars*

*Hold a star high above the child’s head or put it on the couch and have the child stand up to get it. Or put the star on the floor and have the child crawl or walk to get it*

*Talk about what time of day it is when the stars come out. Talk about bedtime and read a book about going to sleep such as “Goodnight Moon”*

*Talk about the concept of “big” and “little.” Draw little stars and big stars, play with little toys and big toys, etc.*

*Teach the concept of “wondering” by showing the child several toys and then putting them in a box. Have the child reach in and feel them in order to guess what they are. Explain that before they can feel and identify them they are “wondering” what toys are in the box and what toy they are going to feel*

*Using magnets of the sun, moon, stars and clouds, make a scene on the refrigerator. You can put it high for the child to reach up and grab the magnets, or low so they have to crouch down*
Where is Thumbkin?
Tune: “Frere Jacques”

Where is thumbkin? (hands behind back)
Where is thumbkin?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today, sir?
Very well, I thank you.
Run away. Run away.

Other verses:
Where is Pointer?
Where is Middle One?
Where is Ring Finger?
Where is Pinky?
Where are all of them?

ACTIVITY IDEAS:
Have the child follow along with the hand motions. You could also sing it with their toes.

Trace the child’s hand on a piece of paper and label the names of each of their fingers.

Have the child touch or point to their toys with different fingers.

Count all of the fingers on one hand. Then count how many fingers they have on both hands. You can even count their toes too.

Provide different textured items for the child to feel with their hands such as sandpaper, pudding, fleece, satin, etc. Talk about how each of the items feel. You could put the items up on a couch or in the air so the child has to stand and reach for them. You could also have them stand on one leg while they are feeling them.

Play “Hide and Seek” or hide a toy and have the child move around the room to find it.

Play “I Spy” with the child while you are administering therapy.

Make up other conversations for your fingers to have. Talk about how to be polite like they are in the song by saying “please” and “thank you.” Practice your manners while having a tea party or snack together.

Make a hand out of play dough or clay. Talk about fingers and toes and other body parts.

Read a book about body parts. Point to the parts in the pictures as well as on your body and the child’s body. For a child who has difficulty turning the pages of the book on their own, tape something to the corner of each page such as foam or a piece of sponge.

Go outside and say the rhyme so that the child can really run away at the end of each verse.
List of Therapy Items Needed for Each Handout

Do Your Ears Hang Low?
-Items that make different sounds such as bubble wrap, bells, cellophane, etc.
- Q-tips
- Paint
- String, ribbon or rope
- Paper and crayons
- Play dough
- Celery, peanut butter, raisins
- Book about animals

Five Little Ducks
- Feather
- Paint
- Rubber duck
- Trix cereal, peanuts, raisins, pretzel sticks
- Duck cookie cutter
- Easter eggs

Head and Shoulders
- Paper and crayons or markers
- Book about body parts
- Something soft such as fleece or a cotton ball, and something hard such as a rock
- Something cool such as finger paint or ice
- Something warm such as a heating pad or rice bag
- Things for the child to smell such as a scented candle and/or a strong smelling cheese

Hickory Dickory Dock
- Magnetic numbers
- Book such as “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie”
- Ingredients to make cookies
- Sidewalk chalk

Hokey Pokey
- Toy you can take things in and out of such as a dollhouse or shape toy
- Book about body parts
- Pringles can or pop can and beads
- Bubbles
- Dr. Seuss book such as “The Foot Book” or “Wet Foot, Dry Foot, Low Foot, High Foot: Learn about Opposites”
What is literacy?

- Literacy is more than simply being able to read and write.
- It is a set of complex, multidimensional skills that begin at birth and develop over a person's life from childhood to adulthood.
If You’re Happy and You Know It

- Something loud such as bubble wrap, a toy drum, or a noise maker
- Paper and markers or crayons
- Mirror
- Several pictures of people conveying various emotions
- Bubbles

Itsy Bitsy Spider

- Book about spiders
- Raisins, m&ms, peanuts, sunflower seeds
- Magnetic letters
- Paper and crayons and/or play dough or clay

Old MacDonald Had a Farm

- Book about animals
- Ingredients for “animal feed” such as cereal, seeds, nuts, miniature marshmallows and raisins
- Paper and crayons or markers
- Finger paint and animal stencils
- Play dough and animal cookie cutters
- Farm animal figurines
- Cotton balls, paper and glue

Pat-a-Cake

- Ingredients to make a cake or pretend ingredients to make a cake (play food)
- Baby doll and clothes
- Letter tiles or magnetic letters
- Paper and crayons or markers

The Alphabet Song

- Magnetic letters
- Foam letters (optional)
- Paper and crayons or markers
- Alphabet puzzle
- Tweezers and/or ice tongs
- Box
The Ants Go Marching

- Foam or magnetic numbers
- Wooden spoon and plastic drum, bowl, and/or pop bottle
- Celery, peanut butter, raisins

The Three Little Kittens

- Animal crackers
- Pair of mittens
- Kitten puppets
- Construction paper and crayons or markers
- Ingredients to make a pie
- Paper cut-outs of mittens for a matching game (each mitten must have another that matches it in some way – color, pattern, etc.)

This Little Piggy

- Five pig puppets (optional)
- Pretend food
- Ingredients for “pig feed” such as cereal, raisins, nuts, marshmallows, etc.
- Play dough and a pig cookie cutter
- Paper and crayons or markers
- Book about a farm
- Toy pigs
- Items for the child to pick up with their feet such as a handkerchief, a block, or a marker
- Paint to dip the child’s feet in and a big sheet of paper

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

- Paper and paint, crayons or markers
- Play dough
- Star cookie cutter
- Pretend star (it can be paper, plush, plastic, etc.)
- Book such as “Goodnight Moon”
- Several different toys and a box they can reach into to feel them, maybe even a blindfold
- Sun, moon, stars, and clouds magnets

Where is Thumbkin?

- Paper and crayons or markers
- Textured items such as fleece, satin, sandpaper, pudding, etc.
- Items for a tea party or snack
- Play dough or clay
- Book about body parts
Encouraging Emergent Literacy

What every First Steps provider needs to know
What is emergent literacy?

- The skills, knowledge and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing.
Why is literacy so important?

- Children with low literacy skills are less prepared for school and perform poorly in later elementary grades and high school.
- Many of these children continue to have low literacy skills when they reach adulthood.
- Adults with low literacy skills are more likely to be poor, earn a lower income, be frequently unemployed, participate in crime and be in poor health.
- Adults with low literacy skills are also parents of young children.
- They need to be educated so that their children can have the best opportunity to develop literacy skills.
How does this affect me as a First Steps provider?

- Professionals and parents can easily fall into the pattern of thinking that there are no early aspects of literacy or that these early aspects happen automatically and we do not need to be concerned about literacy until later in the preschool years.
- It is likely that the earliest literacy skills do not look much like reading or writing because they are not yet well differentiated from other cognitive and social behaviors.
How does this affect me continued

- The family setting is where almost everyone learns the basic skills that form the foundation for later learning.
- Many parents or caregivers will not be aware of how they can encourage literacy development in their children.
- It is critical for First Steps providers not only lay the foundation for literacy in their sessions, but to educate families about what they can do to work on literacy skills with their child.
What can I do?

- As physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists there are so many activities that can be incorporated into therapy to encourage emergent literacy.

- When coming up with ideas, there are a few key components to keep in mind.
Things to keep in mind for therapy*

- Children need the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the context and meaning of text.

- These include:
  - Oral language (vocabulary, syntactic, and narrative understanding)
  - Print motivation (interest in print)

*See handout for more specific ideas
Things to keep in mind continued

- Children also need the knowledge and skills required to translate text into meaningful sounds (or sounds into text)
- This includes:
  - Phonological processing
  - Letter knowledge (letter identification and discrimination, letter-sound knowledge)
Oral language

- Oral language provides the foundation for reading skills.
- Vocabulary development sets the stage for the emergence of phonological processing and early decoding skills.
- Oral language is crucial for reading comprehension after reading has moved beyond the initial “learning to decode” stage.
Print motivation

- Early on, child interest facilitates interactions that provide opportunities for learning about print such as:
  - Shared reading
  - Noticing
  - Asking about print in the environment
- Later when the child is already reading, interest results in more reading practice and greater gains in reading achievement.
What is phonological processing?

- Listening to and understanding speech involves identifying the individual sounds that make up words. These sounds are called phonemes, and the process is identifying those sounds and subsequently identifying the words that the sounds combine to make is phonological processing.

- This is different from phonics, which is the relationship between sounds and letters in written language.
Letter knowledge

- Higher levels of letter knowledge facilitate the development of phonological sensitivity and the acquisition of decoding skills.
The next step: Getting parents involved

- Parents need specific things they can do with their child to lay a foundation for literacy.
- Leaving activity sheets and ideas for them to do, or creating a literacy calendar with a task that they can complete each day with their child are great ways to encourage literacy development to continue even after you leave.
Getting parents involved continued

- The most important thing to remember is that parents need things they can do during their ordinary daily routine.
- In the busyness of everyday life it is unlikely that an extra task will be done unless it can be completed at the same time as routine parts of their day such as, bath time, preparing and eating a meal, bed time, etc.
Educating yourself

- There are several resources available outlining specific ways to develop literacy skills in children.
- Internet searches, journal articles and books make great resources.
- Have fun, be creative and don’t forget to think outside lines of your profession!
Sources

References


