

## ***Language and Literacy:*** **Exploring Our Early Connections to the Language and Literacy Foundations**

<b>Strands:</b>	<b><i>Listening &amp; Speaking</i></b>	<b><i>Reading</i></b>	<b><i>Writing</i></b>
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### **GETTING READY**

**Instructional Component(s):** Motivator and/or Connection to Experience; In-Class Activity; Out-of-Class Activity; Assessment

**Strands:** This activity can be used to deepen understanding of all strands, especially the *Reading* and *Writing* strands.

**Focus:** Students explore their early literacy experiences and how these might be affecting their approach to working with young children who are developing literacy skills.

### **AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THIS ACTIVITY**

Students will demonstrate **knowledge** and **skills** that are consistent with an increased understanding and application of the concepts addressed in this activity.

**Students will demonstrate an understanding of:**

- How their own early language and literacy experiences may affect their current literacy beliefs, attitudes, and practices (*Standards 1, 4, & 6*)\*
- How children acquire language and literacy skills through a wide variety of everyday interactions with others and their environment, as well as through intentional teaching activities (*Standards 1, 4, & 5*)\*

**Students will be able to:**

- Reflect on their own early language and literacy experiences (*Standards 4 & 6*)\*
- Identify everyday experiences and interactions that support children's language and literacy development (*Standards 1 & 4*)\*
- Consider how their own experiences may influence how they support young children's language and literacy development (*Standards 1, 4, & 6*)\*

\*See Appendix A

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### ***Before you start***

There is considerable research regarding the relationship between children's early language and literacy experiences and their development of oral language and reading skills and practices. It may be helpful for students to reflect on their own childhood literacy experiences. By examining how these experiences may have influenced their current literacy beliefs, attitudes, and practices, students may gain some insight into their work with young children and families.

This activity may trigger some memories that are uncomfortable or painful for students. Therefore, it is important to let students know that they can choose to share as much or little as they like and to plan this activity when there is an opportunity for students to have a break afterwards.

### **Getting it started**



Slides 2-3

Ask students to think back to some of their earliest literacy experiences from childhood. Remind students that these do not necessarily have to relate to reading or books. Listening to relatives tell stories at family gatherings, telling jokes and riddles, singing songs and reciting poems, and family conversations at mealtimes are other kinds of early literacy activities. Then have students find a partner with whom to share one of their experiences. As students share their experiences, ask them to include responses to the following questions:

- What details stand out for you about this experience? Who was a key part of this experience?
- Is this a pleasant and happy memory or one that makes you feel sad or uncomfortable?
- How do you think this early literacy experience has impacted your interest in literacy activities as an adult?
- What lesson from this experience would you use in your work with young children?

### **Keeping it going**

Ask for volunteers to share some of their experiences and responses to the questions.

Then ask students to write a few words or a phrase about what they learned from their early literacy experience that they want to keep in mind in their work with children. Have students write their words on large Post-it® notes and place them on the wall.

Have the class review the words and phrases by asking a few students to read them aloud. Then ask the class to identify any words that are the same or similar to others and group them together. You can prompt students by asking if they see any words or phrases that are similar or express a similar feeling or idea. Ask students to come up with a short name or label for each group of words that captures the main theme of those words (e.g., make reading fun).

### Putting it together

Ask the class to think about ways they would apply these early literacy life lessons to their work with children and families. Because this is not a curriculum activity, keep the responses fairly general (e.g., provide lots of literacy materials, keep language and literacy activities fun for children, plan ways to incorporate literacy into children's play).

### Another way



Slides 4-5

Students can write a brief paper about an early literacy experience that they feel comfortable posting online and sharing with the class. During a class session, have a discussion about the papers. Some of the following questions could be used:

- What experiences do you remember from the papers?
- Which ones were familiar to yours?
- What details stood out for you from these experiences? Who were key adults in some of the experiences?
- How do you think early literacy experiences impact our interest in literacy activities as adults?
- What lessons from these experiences could you use in your work with young children?

### Taking it out of class

Have students ask family members of children they work with or family members of friends to share early language and literacy activities that they do with their children. Have students post a brief description of the activity online and ask each student to read all the postings.

At a class session, discuss the similarities and unique aspects of these early literacy activities. Ask students to compare these activities with their own early literacy experiences.

**Assessment**



Slide 6

Have students work in pairs for about 15 minutes to prepare a written response to the following questions:

- Do you think it's important to learn about the early literacy experiences of the parents of children you work with? Why or why not?