

Language and Literacy: Exploring Family Experiences Relating to Literacy

Strands:	<i>Listening & Speaking</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>
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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 *Reading*.

Focus: Students explore the many kinds of language and literacy experiences that occur in the home and how these support children’s development of knowledge and skills described in the language and literacy foundations.

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:

- The ways context and culture, including experiences within home, family, and community, may influence language and literacy development (*Standards 1 & 2*)*
- How children develop language and gain literacy skills by building on prior experiences with their family and community (*Standards 1, 2, & 4*)*
- The language and literacy domain of the PLF, V1 including strands, substrands, foundations, and examples of foundations (*Standards 1, 5, & 6*)*

Students will be able to:

- Identify and reflect on their own experiences with language and literacy activities in their families (*Standards 4, 5, & 6*)*
- Connect their own experiences with language and literacy activities to the experiences of the children and families with whom they work or know (*Standards 4, 5 & 6*)*
- Discuss the concepts and content in the language and literacy domain, including strands, substrands foundations, and examples of the foundations (*Standards 1 & 5*)*
- Communicate with families about the types of language and literacy experiences and exposure they have at home (*Standard 2*)*
- Identify common opportunities for experiences in language and literacy between the classroom setting and those reported by families (*Standards 1, 2, 4, & 5*)*

*See Appendix A

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Before you start

Children begin developing language and literacy skills long before they enter preschool programs. It is important for students to become familiar with the kinds of literacy experiences children have at home and to think about ways they can gather this information and how they can forge a home-school connection relating specifically to literacy.

Getting it started

Ask students to list as many literacy activities that they can remember doing or observing in their families when they were growing up. Students can do this individually or in pairs; sometimes working in pairs will help students think of a wider variety of activities.

Keeping it going

Ask students to take turns describing one item from their lists, first choosing an activity that has not already been mentioned. Record the activities so that everyone can see them. Once all the students have shared their unique activities, review the items and ask students to indicate by a show of hands who else has that item on their lists. Place a check by the item for each additional occurrence.

Putting it together



Slide 2

For each activity or experience on the list, discuss how it supports children’s literacy development as described in the foundations. This can be done as pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class.

This is a good opportunity to explore the progressions from “at around 48 months” to “at around 60 months of age.”

Conclude the activity with these questions:

- What do you notice about the lists of activities and experiences?
- What surprised you?
- Why do you think certain activities were common experiences among many families? Why did fewer families do certain activities?
- Do you think some experiences are more important than others?

Taking it further

Slide 3

Ask students to think about changes in the last 20 years that have had an effect on family life. How might these changes have influenced the literacy activities or experiences that families provide for their young children?

Taking it out of class

Ask students to interview families with young children about the literacy experiences they engage in at home. The students could generate some interview questions in class as a large or small group activity.

Then provide an opportunity in class for the students to share their findings. The findings could also be posted online prior to class. Have the students discuss what similarities and differences they see between their own experiences and those that children have now.

Assessment

Slide 4

The following questions could be used for an assessment activity such as a short paper or written response in class:

- What links do you see between the literacy experiences children have at home and those in preschool?
- How can teachers use this information to strengthen their communications with families about children's literacy development?