



Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness

Mission: Every child in Pottstown will enter Kindergarten ready to learn and achieve

PEAK Classroom Connections

PEAK Classroom Connections: Creating a professional learning community for the early learning teachers in Pottstown to share ideas, improve instructional practices and implement researched-based best practices in the delivery of quality early learning experiences



PEAK NEWS

CDA Class

The PEAK CDA class continues with 29 participants. Thank you to all of the teachers enrolled in the class for your continuing participation.

Upcoming Professional Development

Literacy training for PEAK teachers/assistants is being planned for late January. A session on com-

municating with parents and supporting family involvement is in the planning stages for February. Watch the PEAK web site for more information or call (610) 970-6655.

Assistance and Resources

For assistance in your classroom or resources to enhance the instructional program, contact Emily Baddeley at (610) 718-8635.

Developing Phonological Awareness

Teachers nurture children's phonological awareness through the language-rich environments they create in their classrooms. As they sing songs, chant rhymes, read aloud wordplay books and play games, children have many opportunities to orally match, isolate, blend, and substitute sounds and to segment words into sounds.

What are some criteria for phonological awareness instruction?

Activities should involve songs, nursery rhymes riddles, and wordplay books to encourage active experimentation with oral language.

Early activities to develop phonological awareness should always be oral. Objects and pictures are used instead of word or letter cards.

Allow for developmental differences. Within any given group of children of similar age, there will be children at different levels of understanding.

Plan purposeful instruction. When teachers have an objective in mind as they are teaching phonological awareness, they are more likely to be effective in focusing children's attention on the sound structure of oral language.

Conduct most activities with small groups of children, not individually or in large groups.

Include opportunities for children to observe the teacher's use of letters, as well as opportunities for the children to manipulate letters. It is important that children perceive the connection between oral and written language.

PA Early Learning Standards Literacy

Standard L1.1: Develop an understanding of the sounds of language

Indicators

L1.1A: Recognize similarities and differences in environmental and speech sounds

L1.1B: Develop understanding of word awareness

L1.1C: Progress from matching sounds and rhymes in familiar words, games, songs, finger plays, stories and poems

L1.1D: Recognize that two or more words begin with the same sound (alliteration)

L1.1E: Segment and blend, words into syllables then phonemes

L1.1F: Segment onset and rime

L1.1G: Identify initial sounds in words

L1.1H: Demonstrate understanding that speech sounds are represented in print by letter sounds

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Special points of interest:

- ☉ Phonological Awareness
- ☉ Gingerbread Ideas
- ☉ Finger Plays and Songs
- ☉ Letter Recognition
- ☉ More Holiday Ideas
- ☉ Parent-Teacher Conferences
- ☉ Flu Season

NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES

Mary:
mrieck@pottstownsd.org

Emily:
ebadde@pottstownsd.org

Contact Information:

Mary Rieck

PEAK Coordinator
610-970-6655

Emily Baddeley

PEAK Pre-K Coach
610-718-8635

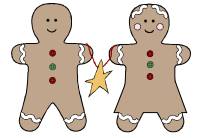
Lori Davidson

Family Engagement
610-718-5372

www.peakonline.org



GINGERBREAD IDEAS



Decorating Gingerbread People

PA ELS Creative Arts: Use a variety of visual art forms for creative expression and representation

Cut gingerbread people shapes out of brown construction paper or brown paper bags. Give one to each child. Have the children decorate their shapes with felt pieces, rickrack, sequins, fabric or paper scraps, buttons, etc.

Making Brown Paint

PA ELS Science: Acquire knowledge about the physical properties of objects

Let the children experiment with mixing together different colors of paint to make the color brown. Then have them use their brown paint to paint giant gingerbread people shapes on pieces of butcher paper. Display their gingerbread people pictures around the room.

Sequencing Language Experience Chart

PA ELS Language and Literacy/Comprehension: Comprehend information from written and oral stories and texts

Reread your favorite version of *The Gingerbread Man*. Make a language experience chart of who chased the Gingerbread Man first, second, third, and so on. Make simple cards to use in the Pocket Chart to retell the story

Counting Fun

PA ELS Logical Mathematics: Learn about numbers, numerical representation and simple numerical operations

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Cut ten small gingerbread people shapes out of felt. Let the children use the shapes on a flannel board to practice counting.

Gingerbread People Match-Ups

PA ELS Science: Acquire knowledge about the physical properties of objects

Cut four pairs of gingerbread people shapes out of felt or construction paper. Decorate each pair differently. Then mix up the shapes and let the children take turns finding the matching pairs.

Predictable Charts

Here is an idea for a predictable book or chart.

PA ELS Language and Literacy/Comprehension: Comprehend information from written and oral stories and texts

"Run, run as fast as you can,

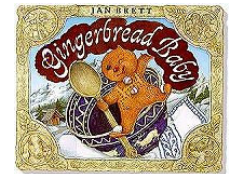
You can't catch (student name),

She's (He's) the Gingerbread Girl (Boy!)"

Great Book for the Classroom

Gingerbread Baby by Jan Brett

Visit www.janbrett.com for ideas and props to use with the book.



Finger Plays and Songs

The Gingerbread Man

(Tune: The Muffin Man)

Oh, do you know the Gingerbread Man,
Gingerbread Man, Gingerbread Man?

Oh, do you know the Gingerbread Man,

Who ran and ran and ran?

He said, "Catch me if you can, if you can,
if you can,

He said, "Catch me if you can,"

Then ran and ran and ran.

I can run like the Gingerbread Man,
Gingerbread Man, Gingerbread Man.

I can run like the Gingerbread Man,
Now catch me if you can.

Five Little Gingerbread Men

Five little gingerbread men on the tray,

(place 5 fingers on one hand onto the

open palm of the other hand—the tray.)

One jumped up and ran away.

("run" one finger away)

Catch me, oh catch me, oh catch me if
you can!

I'm pretty fast, I am the gingerbread
man!

Four little gingerbread men on the tray,
(4 fingers on the tray.. etc.)

One jumped up and ran away.

Catch me, oh catch me, oh catch me if
you can!

I'm pretty fast, I am the gingerbread
man!

[Continue to zero...]

No little gingerbread men on the tray

I will have to bake more on another day!

Gingerbread Bowl

Stir a bowl of gingerbread (stir as in
a bowl)

Smooth and spicy brown

Roll it with a rolling pin (roll as if with
a rolling pin)

Up and up and down

With a cookie cutter (pretend to cut
cookie)

Make some little men.

Put them in the oven (put pan in oven)

Until half past ten.



LETTER RECOGNITION

Recognizing letters should be encouraged in the Pre-K classroom, but only in appropriate ways. These are some activities that might help your children begin to learn the names and sounds of letters they are manipulating, forming and writing.

Accessible Materials

Encourage letter identification and identify letter sounds by having materials accessible to the children such as letters made of plastic, wood, etc. You might have letter beads for stringing, magnetic letters, 3-D foam letters, alphabet puzzles, alphabet blocks, letter flash cards, letter tiles, alphabet books, alphabet songs and finger plays, environmental print, etc. Try to have something in each center area to address the alphabetic principle which in turn provides the teacher an opportunity to guide learning when children are using the materials.

Games

Play games to make letter identification interesting. Try this for small group. Place about ten or twelve letters in a basket for each child in the group. Say something like, "I'm wondering who can find the letter ___ in their basket?" or "Who can find the first letter of their name?" Be patient and adjust the activity for children who are at varying developmental levels.

Tactile Experiences

Provide letter shapes, stampers, and cookie cutters with playdough. Encourage children to form letters with playdough during center

time. This provides a hands-on tactile experience for the children which makes learning more meaningful.

Memory Game

Place about three letter manipulatives on a tray, cover with a cloth, and take one away. Uncover the letters and have children guess which letter is missing. Children can find the letter that is missing among their own set of letter manipulatives. If the children are very interested in writing, they can write the letter that is missing on a dry erase board.

Environmental Print

Create a Cereal Book by inviting children to bring in empty boxes of their favorite cereal. Cut the fronts off the boxes and bind them together into a book. Children can "read" the book by recognizing the logos and individual letters can be pointed out on the box fronts. Make another inexpensive book by cutting out familiar logos from the Sunday paper advertisement supplement and placing them in a sticky photo album.

Another idea—create a Lunch Bunch Chart by placing 3-4 bags or logos from favorite local restaurants at the top of a piece of chart paper. Invite children to write their names under all the places they like to eat and point out the common letters.



More Holiday Ideas



Santa's Bean Bag Toss

Decorate a large paper bag or cardboard box with Christmas wrap, ribbons, and pictures of toys and candy. Tie ribbons around bean bags and to make "gifts" to toss into Santa's bag.

Ring the Bell Game

Using a large (4 foot x 3 foot) piece of heavy duty cardboard, cut a large bell shape from the center. Add ribbons with jingle bells attached to hang from the open middle area. The children throw bean bags through the bell to "Ring the Bell".

Feely Box

Create a feely box containing Christmas items such as bows, cookie cutters, wrapping paper, non-breakable ornaments, stockings, bells, candles, and place on the science table.

Design Wrapping Paper

The children can design their own wrapping paper using newsprint, ink stampers, felt-tip colored markers, tempera paint, etc. Glitter can also be glued onto the paper.

Pine Branch Painting

Collect short pine boughs to use as painting tools. The tools can be placed at the easel or used with a shallow pan of tempera paint at the tables.

Cookie Cutter Painting

Provide Christmas cookies cutters, paper and shallow pans containing red and green paint. The children can apply the paint to the paper using the cookie cutters as printing tools.

Science Area Ideas

Create interest in the science area by adding pine needles and branches with magnifying glasses; add pine cones with a balance scale; add red, green, and white materials representing different textures.

Christmas Card Puzzles

Collect two sets of identical Christmas cards. Cut the covers off the cards. Cut one of each of the identical sets of cards into puzzle pieces. The matching card can be used as a form for the children to match the pieces on.

Christmas Card Sort

Place a variety of Christmas cards on a table in the math area. During center-time, the children can sort by color, pictures, size, etc.

Candy Cane Marble Painting

Cut red construction paper into candy cane shapes. Marble paint with white tempera paint.



Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are the ideal time to share the observational assessment information that has been collected throughout the year. What parent will not revel in the accomplishments of a child presented in a positive, concrete form? When observation and records of children's progress are used with an attitude of building on abilities rather than correcting deficits, we appreciate a child's uniqueness and encourage appropriate best practices. Parents' involvement in their children's education is critical to success in school. One way to include parents is through parent-teacher conferences. Here are some guidelines for conducting these important meetings.

Prior to the Conference

- Prepare an organized collection of work samples. The work samples should illustrate and support the teacher's comments.
- Maintain accurate and meaningful assessment of child's progress.
- Send home a preconference form to

the parent. This will give you a heads up or any information the parent may want to discuss so you can be prepared.

The Conference

- Begin the conference with something positive about the child. (Discuss the child's strengths, something you like about the child, and some specific accomplishments.)
- Emphasize the child's individual progress rather than making comparisons with other children.
- Share information and suggestions that would meet the child's individual needs and abilities.
- Report only the behaviors that you observe! This is not the time for diagnosing. Refer parents to other resources if necessary.
- Present information about the child in terms of "strengths and needs."
- Keep vocabulary simple and to the point.

- Present work samples that support your comments as well as show evidence of the child's progress.
- Give parents examples of ideas they can do at home with their child. (Refer to the *PA Pre-K Counts Family Handbook* for ideas.)
- A fun idea for the end of the year conference is to invite the child to the "kindergarten" conference. You will be amazed at how much they love to go through their portfolio and show the parent what they think is most important.

Etiquette

- Present information in a positive, supportive manner.
- Maintain a pleasant facial expression and good eye contact.
- Know when to speak and when to listen.
- Close the conference on a positive note.

It's Here—Flu Season!

The single best way to protect yourself and children in your classroom from getting influenza is to get the flu vaccine.

The Center for Disease Control recommends flu vaccinations for:

- All children age 6 months until their 5th birthday
- **People who care for children 0-5 years of age...this is you!**
- Members living in the same household with young children
- Children less than 6 months that are at high risk of flu complications. The best way to protect infants is to vaccinate everyone around them
- People of any age that are at high risk for flu complications

Two types of vaccines are available, a flu shot and a nasal spray flu vaccine. The spray can be used by children 5-17 years old and adults. Children under 5 years old must get the shot. Children up to 8 years old need two doses of the shot if this is the first time they are getting it.

Call your family health provider, your health insurance carrier, or the local Health Bureau for information on local flu vaccination locations and costs.

Remember.....Get plenty of sleep and physical activity, drink water, and eat good food to stay healthy all winter!!!

For information or resources, contact Sandy Leh, PEAK Early Childhood Health Specialist at (610) 858-9310.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Mary, Emily, Lori and Sandy