



Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness
 Mission: Every child in Pottstown will enter Kindergarten ready to learn and achieve

PEAK Connections

PEAK 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
Teacher Newsletter**



March 2007

Spring is on the Way!

Rhymes

PA ELS: Develop an understanding of the sounds of language

Although there is still snow on the ground, spring will arrive on March 21. Here are some rhymes and finger plays for spring. Remember to include activities to develop phonological awareness daily in the instructional program.

March Rhyme

March winds blow the kites around,
 Blow them right up off the ground.
 March means spring is almost here,
 Sounds of birds you soon will hear.
 Watch the leaves sprout on the trees,
 Soon you'll see some honeybees.

Spring

Spring is here, spring is here,
 Winter days are past.
 Little flowers raise their heads,
 Snow is gone at last!
 See the trees all in green,
 Dressed up just for spring.
 See the robins fly about,
 Listen to them sing!

Special points of interest:

- ☉ Spring is on the Way!
- ☉ Read Across America
- ☉ Finger Plays and Rhymes
- ☉ Math Ideas
- ☉ Spring Ideas
- ☉ Creating a Literate Classroom



Read Across America

The National Education Association (NEA) sponsors a one-day event to celebrate the joy of reading. This is the 10th anniversary of Read Across America and it will be celebrated on March 2, 2007. This is also the 50th anniversary of Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*. For more information on Read Across America and for a classroom activity guide, visit:

<http://www.nea.org/readacross/index.html>

Use Read Across America as an opportunity to introduce students to the fun of books by Dr. Seuss. While not all of his books are appropriate for young children, many of his books are an excellent way to introduce or reinforce rhyming words.

Here are some ideas for Dr. Seuss books: *Dr. Seuss's ABC* book is good for reinforcing ABCs, in the classroom. After reading the book, have the children create your own class ABC book.

My Many Colored Days is a great way to begin discussions of feelings, emotions and to reinforce colors. You can create

your own class book or make a chart about how colors make you feel.

The Shape of Me and Other Stuff can help reinforce the concepts of shapes.

Other age-appropriate books by Dr. Seuss include:

- Hop on Pop*
- Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?*
- Green Eggs and Ham*
- The Footbook*

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March Finger Plays and Rhymes—PA ELS Literacy

Develop an understanding of the sounds of language (phonological awareness)

Growing Seeds

Seeds are buried deep, deep, deep.
(crouch down)
In the ground they sleep, sleep, sleep.
(Pretend to sleep)
Yellow sun shines bright, bright, bright.
(Circle arms overhead)
Raindrops fall so light, light, light.
(Flutter flingers downward)
Gentle breezes blow, blow, blow.
(Sweep arms from side to side)
Little plants begin to grow.
(Rise slowly)



Five Pretty Flowers

Five pretty flowers,
Standing in a row.
(Spread fingers)
Each with its head.
Hanging so low.
(Let hand go limp)
I sprinkled them with water
As gentle as the rain.
(Wiggle fingers over "wilted flowers")
One, two, three, four, five—
Up they popped again!
(Lift fingers and spread apart)



Five Little Bluebirds

(Cut five bluebird shapes out of felt. As you recite the poem below, place the bird shapes on a flannel board.)
Five little bluebirds waiting for spring—
The first little bluebird began to sing.
The second little bluebird flapped its wings.
The third little bluebird said, "Tweet, tweet, tweet,"
The fourth little bluebird sang so sweet,
The fifth little bluebird said,
"It's a beautiful day."
Then all five bluebirds flew away.



March MATH IDEAS

Egg Patterns

PA ELS Logical Mathematical: Understands patterns, relations and functions

Colorful plastic eggs are great addition to the math center for patterning and sorting activities. Provide a basket of assorted colors of plastic eggs and a few empty egg cartons. Cut construction-paper egg shapes in colors that match your plastic eggs. Glue the egg shapes in various patterns onto tagboard cards. Have the students select a pattern card, then extend the pattern by placing plastic eggs in an egg carton. After copying patterns, encourage them to create their own patterns using either the plastic eggs or construction paper egg shapes.

Spring Lotto

Make lotto gameboards, by cutting posterboard into nine squares. With a marker, divide each gameboard into nine squares and place a different spring sticker in each square. For each gameboard, make a set of nine matching game cards on 3-inch squares cut from posterboard. Have the children play by matching game cards to the game boards.



Jelly Bean Math

Introduce these math jelly bean math activities by using this rhyme by Margaret Thompson.

Jelly Beans

Jelly beans, jelly beans, nice and sweet.
Jelly beans, jelly beans, yummy to eat!
Jelly beans, jelly beans, colors so bright.
Jelly beans, jelly beans except black and white.
Jelly beans, jelly beans, oval-shaped and chewy.

Jelly beans, jelly beans, but hardly every gooney.

Jelly Bean Estimation

PA ELS Logical Mathematical: Reason, predict and problem solve; Learn about numbers, numerical representation, and simple numerical operations

Display a quart jar filled with jelly beans for several days. Encourage children to study the jar and estimate how many jelly beans are in the jar. Place jelly bean shaped paper you have pre-cut by the jar for children to record their responses. After everyone has made their guess, plan a small group to count the jelly beans. Let children use small cups to place sets of 10 jelly beans into the cups. Now, practice

counting by 10s to see who had the closest estimate. You can now reuse the small cups to allow children to sort the jelly beans by colors. This is a great time to reinforce color recognition.

Jelly Bean Patterning

PA ELS: Logical Mathematical: Understand patterns, relations and functions

Allow children to copy, extend and create patterns with jelly beans.

Jelly Bean Measurement

PA ELS: Logical Mathematical: Develop and use measurement concepts

Measure objects with jelly beans and practice more estimating. How many jelly beans long is the _____?

Jelly Bean Graphing

PA ELS: Logical Mathematical: Represent and interpret data

Graph the favorite color or favorite flavor of jelly beans. Students can write their name on a sticky note and put under the favorite color or flavor. After the graph is completed talk about which has the most votes, the least votes and other comparisons.



INTEGRATING "SPRING" IN THE LEARNING CENTERS

It is important to rotate materials and add new items to center areas that relate to the current topic of study or theme. Bring spring into your classroom by integrating spring props in all of the learning centers.

Dramatic Play

Lightweight clothing for men or women

Hats

Spring shoes

Straw purses

Baskets

Cellophane grass

Plastic eggs

Flowers

Spring tablecloth/napkins/décor

Science Area

Magnifying glasses

Insects

Various seeds

Butterfly Garden kit or Grow a Frog kit

Place a wet sponge in the science area and sprinkle with grass seeds. Within a few days the seeds will begin to sprout.

Manipulative Area

Plastic eggs in small, medium and large to

sort using tongs

Plastic eggs and egg carton match. Place a colored dot in the bottom of each section of an egg carton. The child places the plastic egg that is the same color as the dot into the section.

Sort small, medium and large pompoms using a strawberry huller

Sort pompoms by color

Book Area

Seed, flower and plant catalogs

Books about spring, flowers, insects, caterpillars

Add puppets, flannel board stories and other props related to the books to extend the literacy experiences.

Block Area

Barn

Farm animals

Plastic insects

Hats

Plastic gardening tools

Gardening gloves

Cellophane grass



Art Area

Feathers for painting

Pompoms

Wiggle eyes

Cellophane grass

Ribbon

Seeds

Pastel colored paint

Pastel colored chalk

Eggshells (plain or dyed)

Writing Area

Pastel chalk

Small chalkboards

Stamp pads

Stamps, stickers and or stencils of flowers, umbrellas, rabbits, chickens, ducks, cows, sheep, pigs, children, baskets, raindrops, clouds, etc.

When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become.

Louis Pasteur

Books for Spring

Use high quality children's literature for introducing lessons and focusing on specific instructional skills. After using the book during large group or small group activities, place it in the library center for the children to use independently.

First Comes Spring by Anne Rockwell

This is a good book to illustrate the differences between winter and spring. After reading the book, make a chart with children identifying winter activities and spring activities. You can also reinforce math skills by counting all of the spring activities.

The Snail's Spell by Joanne Ryder

Use this book to help children imagine they are part of a garden. Have children pretend that they are the various animals in the book. Include word cards with pictures of the animals in the writing area.

Sleepy Bear by Lydia Dabocovich

Enjoy movement with this book as children pretend to be bears sleeping. Then they can wake up and stretch and slowly walk around the room.

The Green Grass Grows All Around, a Traditional Folk Song illustrated by Hilde Hoffman

This story has an easy rhythmic cadence. Because of the repetition, the children can quickly join in reading the book. The book can also be used to reinforce sequencing skills as the story moves from a hole in the ground to finally birds nesting in the tree.

Spring is Here! by Taro Gomi

A little boy celebrates all the things he can do because it is spring. Have children draw pictures of their favorite spring activities and record their dictation on the picture.



The Literate Classroom

The Literate Environment

A literate classroom offers abundant opportunities for children to make use of print and practice literacy habits and skills through the environment. For instance, when dramatic play areas contain literacy-related props, children write (or pretend to write) lists, notes, signs, prescriptions, price tags, menus and more. When teachers rotate materials to stimulate and support varying play themes children get fresh opportunities to broaden their vocabulary and social knowledge.

As children cook, they consult recipes and examine the marks on measuring spoons. In the block area they use writing materials to make signs. Where children do science, notepads, drawing paper and writing tools are on hand for recording observations, sketching and labeling specimens. And so, throughout the room and across the curriculum teachers find ways to add print, props, and writing materials to enhance the language and literacy learning that occurs in play.

Where Are the Letters in an Appropriate, Literacy-Promoting Classroom?

Where children can see them...

Alphabet displays way above children's heads are of little use. Letters need to be at eye level where children can examine them.

Where children can refer to them as they work and play...

When they are writing, children are far more likely to make use of letter guides that are close at hand.

Where children can handle them...

Children notice the shapes of letters when they do alphabet puzzles or use letter-shaped cookie cutters in damp sand or dough. Magnetic letters and alphabet blocks allow children to explore letter/sound connections, arrange and rearrange letters to form words, and become more aware of the sequences of sounds within words. *

**Learning to Read and Write: Neuman, Copple and Bredekamp*

Creating a Print Rich Environment

A "print-rich" classroom is one in which many different kinds of print are displayed. Signs, labeled centers, wall stories, word displays, labeled murals, bulletin boards, displaying children's favorite food products, charts and poems are just a few ways to display print.

The Teacher's Role in a Print Rich Environment

- Provides time and opportunity for multiple literacy activities during the day
- Models reading and writing
- Introduces students to a wide variety of literature
- Works with students during writing time
- Arranges print displays that are at students' eye level

More Ideas to Promote Literacy

Environmental Print

Environmental print is the print we see all around us—the print on commercial signs, labels and products we use everyday. Displaying environmental print in the classroom helps children feel successful "reading" at an early age.

Functional Print

Functional print gives children a reason to read by providing information they need: schedules, routines, center labels, graphs, sign-in sheets. Functional print can also elicit responses from children, for example, "I Painted Today or My Favorite Food."

Good Morning Messages

Lunch Count

Calendar

Daily Schedule

Center Chart

Cooking Chart

Print Rich Environment Checklist

- Books and writing materials are in a variety of centers and placed throughout the room.
- Many opportunities are given to students to read and write throughout the day.
- Print is displayed at each center.
- A wide variety of writing tools and materials are available for the students to use.
- Print displays are changed periodically.
- Songs, poetry, student print are displayed around the room
- Comfortable places are provided to read and write



Check your classroom to see if you have literacy opportunities in each center area and incorporated throughout the daily schedule. Create a writing center with a variety of writing materials to further encourage writing. If you do not have room for a separate center area, create a portable writing center using a small writing tub or briefcase to hold the writing materials.

Encourage your families to donate empty food containers to use in the dramatic play area. Use the containers and labels, also, to create class books and games for the classroom.