

CHAPTER 21 – Planning and managing literacy learning

Classroom Activity: Alphabet centre

The alphabet centre is for emergent and early readers. As children move through the early and extending levels of reading, the alphabet centre will be replaced by other learning centres. The alphabet centre focuses on activities for phonemic awareness, print awareness and sound-to-letter relationships.

Phonemic awareness activities

Phonemic awareness is the awareness of the sounds or phonemes heard in spoken language. It involves recognition of words, syllables, rhyme, alliteration and phonemes.

Clapping games

Children can listen to songs and jingles read aloud on CDs and either clap for each beat or word in the songs. In ‘Clap around the room’, a child points to an object such as a pencil or a box and their partner claps the syllables *pen-cil* or *box* in the word. Becoming conscious of syllables is important when children begin to read and write words.

Picture card games

Phonemic awareness picture card games focus on the sounds of the spoken word and for this reason picture cards made from stickers, magazines and catalogues are used. Snap, Concentration and Fish can be played using cards with pictures glued to the front. Rhyming Snap is played with words that have a sound that rhymes, like *cat, mat, sat*; or *sky, pie, I*. It is the sound of the phonemes that rhyme and not the visual pattern of letters that is important here. First Sound Snap is played when pictures have the same initial sound, such as *fish, five, four, fan*.

More complex picture card games involve pictures or objects where one word doesn't fit; for example, in rhyme (*fish, sand, dish*) or in first sounds (*dog, doughnut, snake, dinner*).

Print awareness activities

Print awareness involves learning about letter formation, different letter fonts, and recognition and matching of letters. Letters can be cut from magazines and pasted to make collages.

Sound-to-letter games

Sound-to-letter games can be made by writing words and illustrating them, when possible, on cards. It is helpful if a picture cue is placed near the word.



Snap, Memory or Concentration and Fish games can be played with cards. You will need 20 to 30 paired cards.

Snap games are played by pairs or small groups of children who have been dealt 5 to 10 cards. The children take turns to place a card face up on the pile. If two cards in a row match, the first to correctly call 'Snap!' takes all the cards. The person who wins is the one with the most cards. Once the game is over, the winner deals the cards again and encourages a new winner.

Memory or Concentration is played by pairs, small groups or individuals. A set of 20 to 30 cards with matching pairs is laid out face down. One at a time, children turn two cards over, trying to make a match. If the match is correct, they take the pair. If the match is incorrect, they turn the cards face down again. The winner has the most pairs when there are no cards left to turn over. The cards are then shuffled and placed face down for the next game.

Fish is similar to Snap except 10 cards are dealt to pairs or a small group of children. In turns, children try to make pairs of matching cards by asking other players in their group for a card. If the group members do not have a card, they say 'Fish' and the person asking picks up a new card from a pile in the centre of the group.

Card games can be played with:

- words with the same onset
- words with the same rime
- words with the same vowel sounds.