

CHAPTER 3 – Assessing funds of knowledge

Classroom Activity: The funds of knowledge A–Z

The following is a brainstormed list of possible items, events and everyday activities that teachers can use to connect the children’s funds of knowledge in families and communities with school literacy.

A Alphabets

Make an alphabet frieze. Cut out letters and pictures of objects from catalogues and magazines, and paste the cut-out letters and pictures of objects that begin with the letter onto squares of paper.

An alphabet book can be made using plastic folders with plastic sleeves inside. Inside each plastic sleeve, the child can place lolly wrappers and other packaging saved from home, as well as pictures from magazines and catalogues. For example, in the ‘C’ page there might be pictures of carrots, a Crunchie bar wrapper, a Coco Pops box and so on.

B Books

Visit the local library and borrow a variety of books on topics that will interest the children. Select information texts as well as story books, as many children, especially boys, prefer to read books on topics such as animal welfare, fixing and making things or cooking. Such community resources are likely to contain material of local interest that can be read together.

C Comics and graphic books

Comics contain pictures and words, and can be found in newspapers and comic books. Comics can be read aloud, or cut up into frames and made into games and puzzles to be remade or to change the storyline. Children can draw comics and make up new versions.

D Digital photographs

Many families use their phones to record family holidays and events. Children can use apps to make books about their family holidays and events. They could dictate the words and have parents or caregivers write them down.

E Environmental print

The pictures, symbols and words in environmental print such as street signs, car number plates, signs at shopping centres or petrol stations, billboards, traffic signs and brand names on cars, clothing and other items can be used to teach children to read print.

F Food—recipes and food packets

Cooking together with a recipe, or just talking about what to cook and how to cook, teaches children vocabulary about ingredients and the processes used in food preparation. Shopping for food also provides written signs and symbols where children experience how symbols, either alphabetic or numeric, can communicate information.

G Games

Games and activities linked to television shows and movies are sometimes available free of cost in supermarkets or larger department stores. Alternatively, visit your local toy library and borrow from a wide range of literacy games and activities.

H Home maintenance

Some families like to renovate and repair at home, using knowledge passed on from family members or DIY manuals. The diagrams and instructions are useful for learning to read and write. Encourage children to take an active and safe part in these activities.

I Internet

Many children with access to computers and tablets like to search the internet to find answers to their questions. Children are reading screens and the various symbols and logos, as well as using keyboards and keypads where they may recognise upper- and lower-case letters, numerals and other symbols.

J Junk mail

The catalogues and advertising leaflets that come into homes and schools can be used to make word walls and posters, and added to folders of what children can read. These folders can be used as a portfolio of 'I can read this', to store all the symbols and logos the children can read, for example, those on milk cartons and pizza leaflets.

K Knitting, sewing and knots

Many families engage in knitting and sewing clothes. Some use books or manuals and others may share information by talking about it. The patterns and instructions can be shared at school, as well as the different design choices. Knots are used in gardening, in fishing when the line is tied and in many household tasks. The types of knots can be discussed and the instructions about how to tie knots could be read together.

L Library

The community library is a resource available to most families and it is a place where CDs, talking books, the internet and books of all descriptions can be accessed for little or no cost. Many libraries have regular programs for infants and toddlers and the librarians themselves are involved in storytelling activities.

M Movies

There are often spin-off products from movies targeted at children. Some of the books or booklets produced may be just at the right time and at the right level to get children to want to read and write. Associating reading and writing with a great experience at the movies is an excellent idea.

N Newspapers

Newspapers are relatively inexpensive and can be used for many different literacy activities, from cutting and pasting to searching for information about TV programs, the weather or local events. Newspapers are a cheap source of paper for children to draw and scribble on and it doesn't matter if it gets torn. Children soon learn the difference between paper to draw on and good books.

O Other literacy things

Make a game of finding other literacy-related things in the community and environment. Collect bus and train timetables, signs in shop windows, advertisements on community noticeboards, opening times to the local library, oral stories, traffic signs, recycling signs and so on.

P Pasting

Provide children with a scrapbook to paste in a range of pictures cut out of newspapers, magazines and junk mail. This will enable you to have a chat about the pictures in their book while you are also developing their oral language skills.

Q Quizzes

Ask children to think of two or three things they know about their local community, and to make up questions related to this information. The questions could then be combined into a class 'community quiz'.

R Restaurants

Restaurants and fast-food stores often have placemats and napkins that children can draw on or play games with. Collect menus for children and cut up their pictures and words.

S Shopping, supermarkets, signs

Products in supermarkets usually have brightly coloured labels and use a range of different fonts to describe the name of the product and product details. There are often promotions with large posters and banners and these can be used in literacy. Many children's parents work in retail, and talking about items for sale, and how they are advertised and marketed may be information that children hear at home. Bringing the shopping topic into school could take the form of setting up a shop or inviting parents to talk about their work.

T Talk, dialogue, conversation, vocabulary

Talking with children is a taken-for-granted 'fund of knowledge' in communities (Moll et al. 1992). Parents, grandparents and other family members share ideas about fixing household appliances, maintaining cars, shopping, cooking and other domestic matters. The more interesting words the child hears on a range of topics, the more likely they are to have a good-sized vocabulary.

U Under, up and over

Make literacy fun and look for ways to include language in everyday things. Go to the local park and use directional language to move *under*, *along* and *over* the equipment. By using language in context, children expand their vocabulary and understanding of the meaning of different words. When you are out walking, always look up to see what signs you can see and talk about them with your child.

V Video to book

Children enjoy viewing TV programs and videos. Tap into this enthusiasm by letting children view a particular program and then read the book/s as well. There is a lovely video version of *The Borrowers* (Mary Norton) which would suit older children, while younger children would enjoy the *Hairy Maclary* stories (Lynley Dodd). You could also read the books first before viewing the video.

W Write

Children learn by seeing things modelled for them. Let children see things such as words, stories, poems, lists and notes. Provide appropriate writing materials for them to use and allow time for them to explore print.

X Boxes

Milk cartons, pizza boxes, biscuit boxes and other boxes found around the home provide a lot of words and pictures. You could compare these different products and find out what is the same and what is different.

Y Yes

'Yes' is a positive response that can be used over and over again as children extend on the literacies used at home. It is important to respond positively to what children notice in the environment and share reading and writing at school so that children's ideas are encouraged.

Z Zoos and other excursions

Children gain a lot from new experiences. Take children on a trip to the zoo or just a walk to the local park. Talk about what you are doing and seeing. Children could write about the experience or make a simple book using photos taken on the trip.