



Research Base for Read, Play, and Learn!®

A Brief Overview

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Boost children's cognitive, sensorimotor, communication and language, social, and emerging literacy skills with this third component of the transdisciplinary play-based system. Created by the author of the highly acclaimed *Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment* and *Transdisciplinary Play-Based Intervention*, this innovative storybook-based curriculum gives teachers a whole school year of activities that encourage play with spoken language—just the kind of curriculum researchers recommend for promoting all areas of general development in young children.

Read, Play, and Learn!® components include

- **16 Storybook Modules**—includes 16 fun-filled planning guides, boxed 8 booklets to a Collection. Each guide gives teachers 2–3 weeks of story-related activities and learning experiences for young children. Linked to storybooks children love, they're built around themes like enjoying seasonal festivities, sharing emotions, making friends, and understanding other cultures. Teachers get storybook summaries, planning sheets, a list of key words, ideas for modifying the activities for children of varying ability levels, activities for every center in the classroom, and sample letters to help keep families informed of classroom activities. To help teachers individualize instruction, each guide also include a list of alternative storybooks, songs, fingerplays, and software. With *Read, Play, and Learn!*®, teachers will have the creativity and freedom to choose activities and materials that work best for their students.
- **Teacher's Guide**—walks teachers through the process of creating a literacy-rich environment for preschool and kindergarten children of all ability levels. It includes all the basics: how to arrange the classroom, organize the school day, teach children with varying levels of ability, involve families, and encourage learning and development. Background information on the importance of play and literature in early learning gives teachers an overview of developmental domains and tells them what to expect at various levels of children's development. The guide also includes modifications so teachers can individualize instruction and capitalize on the strengths of every child.

Teacher's Guide

Stock Number: 4005 Price: \$45.00
1999 • 256 pages • 8 1/2 x 11 • spiral-bound • ISBN 1-55766-400-5

Collection 1 (includes 8 modules and accompanying box)

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Emerging literacy—awareness of print and writing and other uses of language—is multidimensional and complex, involving linguistic, social, and psychological aspects. Emerging literacy evolves from the child’s active participation in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. With the active support of adults, these skills should develop in an integrated manner (Ollila & Mayfield, 1992). Components of literacy (Depree & Iversen, 1994) include

- Oral language with the subcomponents of listening (accessing information from speech) and speaking (expressing information orally)
- Written language with the subcomponents of reading (accessing information from print) and writing (expressing information in print)
- Visual language with the subcomponents of viewing (accessing information from sources other than print, e.g., pictures, maps) and presenting (expressing information in visual form other than print, e.g., art, charts)

The *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum is founded on important research findings about how children learn early literacy skills. A brief description of research support for these aspects within the *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum is elucidated below.

RESEARCH ON ORAL LANGUAGE

In order to have facility with oral language, children need to be constantly exposed to an environment rich in language and interact with adults using language in a social context (Bruner, 1975; Cazden, 1992; Chomsky, 1965; Halliday, 1975; McNeill, 1970; Menyuk, 1977; Morrow, 1991).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

The *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum explores new literature themes every 2 weeks, ensuring that language is constantly changing. Adults help children use new language concepts in dialogue and exploration of each center throughout the day. Language concepts are thus learned in meaningful contexts and generalized. Children demonstrate dramatic gains in vocabulary and language usage (Linder, in progress).

RESEARCH ON LISTENING

Research demonstrates that storytelling strongly attracts children to books (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986) and that children who frequently listen to stories develop more sophisticated language structures and a larger vocabulary (Lenz, 1992). Listening to stories establishes favorite storybooks and encourages children to want to read and actively pursue the necessary skills to read by themselves (Sulzby, 1985). Research has also shown that listening to stories 1) enhances comprehension and knowledge about books and print (Mason, 1980), 2) develops a sense of story structure (Morrow, 1985), 3) develops positive attitudes toward reading and writing, and 4) helps children develop their own stories (Morrow, 1985).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

With the *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum, children are read to at the beginning of each day and numerous times throughout the day. Repetition gives the child mastery over story sequence and vocabulary. The stories soon become favorites and are sought out by children for rereading throughout the year (Linder, in progress). During story time and individual reading interactions, children learn the conventions of reading and print.

RESEARCH ON SPEAKING

When telling stories, children tend to mimic the intonation of adults reading stories. This “book language” takes children beyond talking into understanding the language of reading (Cazden, 1992; Snow, 1991). Children’s ability to question also develops, with questions about the book relating to the pictures and meanings of the story. With additional maturation and practice, the questions children ask relate to the letters, words, and sounds of letters in print on the storybook page (Morrow, 1985; Roser & Martinez, 1985). Parents report dramatic gains in vocabulary and discussion about books when a storybook curriculum is used (Linder, in progress).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

Each day the *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum has the teacher and children reading the focus book together and then opportunities for children to review many other books, giving them the opportunity to practice “book language.” In addition, with increasing exposure to the books and interaction with the teacher, either individually or in small or large groups, the children develop an increasing repertoire of literacy-related questions, vocabulary, and concepts related to a broad range of topics.

RESEARCH ON WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Young children first attach meaning to reading through functional uses. When children use functional forms of literacy in their play, they begin to understand the forms’ purpose. McCormick and Mason (1981) established three developmental levels of word recognition in learning to read: 1) identifying words through context, 2) using sound–letter cues, and 3) sounding out words. Children begin to figure out what the meaning of print using syntactic cues, semantic cues, and graphophonic rules (Morrow, 1991).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

Children use a variety of functional literacy forms throughout all of the centers in the *Read, Play, and Learn* classroom. Each child is encouraged to work at his or her own level of learning, with teachers’ facilitating the child’s acquisition of the next stage of learning. Parents and teachers report gains in children’s book knowledge and understanding of basic reading skills, such as letter recognition, phonological awareness, and basic sight vocabulary.

RESEARCH ON WRITING

As a first step in reading and writing, children learn that print has functions (Mason, 1980). Children next express interest in the forms of print—including names, sounds, and configurations of letters and words—and then learn the conventions of print—including reading from right to left and the purpose of punctuation and spacing. Sulzby (1985) identified six steps in the development of children’s writing behavior: 1) use of drawings for writing, 2) scribble writing, 3) use of letter-like forms, 4) use of well-learned units or letter strings, 5) use of invented spelling, and 6) writing conventionally.

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

All forms of literacy are incorporated into the *Read, Play, and Learn* activity centers. For example, children illustrate story concepts, construct charts and maps, follow recipes, create books, make signs for dramatic play, and write notes or messages for peers and parents. Each child’s attempts are accepted at his or her developmental level and scaffolded to the next level. Children show an increase in representational abilities in symbolic expression, dramatic play, art, and print.

RESEARCH ON VISUAL LANGUAGE: VIEWING

Pictures and symbols introduce children to literacy (Schickedanz, 1999). Along with signs and gestures, children need opportunities to gain information through pictures, maps, charts, and symbols. In addition, dramatic representations of story concepts assist in the development of memory (Rowe, 1998), syntactic skills (Vedelar, 1997), book comprehension (Rowe, 1998), and phonological awareness (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, & Schmidt, 2000) and build connections between oral and written modes of expression (Roskos & Christie, 2001).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

The *Read, Play, and Learn* classroom uses a variety of visual representations of emerging literacy and print. Charts of daily routines, recipes and instructions, children’s preferences; symbols for print in books; and maps of the classroom are integrated into each module. In addition, children learn signs and visual symbols associated with each of the stories in the curriculum. Adaptations are made for children at the symbolic, functional, and sensorimotor levels. Dramatizations of each story are central to the curriculum, with the teacher facilitating by introducing story props and materials; modeling and encouraging functional use of literacy tools; and mediating the social interactions

among children as they integrate story, props, and dramatic interactions. The complexity of children's dramatic play and use of literacy props increases with the *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum.

RESEARCH ON VISUAL LANGUAGE: PRESENTING

Emerging literacy requires presentation of the following language and literacy components at a developmentally appropriate level for each child: vocabulary, phonological awareness, syntax, semantics, story sequence. These concepts are introduced through multidimensional means, including pictures, dramatization, songs and fingerplays, gestures, signs, charts, symbols, and other visual methods. Opportunities for children to express their conceptual understanding through a variety of visual means, including gestural, dramatic, and artistic, enables the child to connect oral and written modes of expression (Neumann & Roskos, 1990; Rowe, 1998; Shickedanz, 1999).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

Presenting visual information is integral to each of the *Read, Play, and Learn* modules. A group art mural depicting story elements, sequences, and concepts is developed for each story. In addition, children create individual art projects, drawings with dictations, charts in science projects, and two- and three-dimensional representations related to the stories. Children also render dramatic representation of story characters, concepts, actions, and sequence. Activities and expectations are modified for children at the symbolic, functional, and sensorimotor levels. Children's ability to represent ideas pictorially increases.

RESEARCH ON LITERACY AND PLAY

Research shows that literacy and play are compatible and that play, in fact, can support the application of literacy skills. Play provides a meaningful setting, supportive peer interactions, and functional opportunities for using skills (Morrow, 1990; Neumann & Roskos, 1990, 1992, 1997). Play can support literacy by providing settings that promote literacy activities, skills, and strategies; offering language experiences that build associations between oral and written modes of expression; and providing opportunities for teachers to instruct children in functional literacy skills (Neumann & Roskos, 1990) and incorporate literacy concepts, skills, and processes (Neumann & Roskos, 1992, 1997). When appropriately facilitated by an adult, play and literacy can be integrated to comprehend books and increase memory for stories (Rowe, 1998), assist children in learning to read environmental print (Neumann & Roskos, 1993; Vukelich, 1994), and develop phonological awareness and motivation to read print (Sonnenschein et al., 2000).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

The *Read, Play, and Learn* curriculum integrates play and literacy throughout the day. Representation of ideas is emphasized through both two- and three-dimensional means.

RESEARCH ON SCAFFOLDING LITERACY

Adult involvement in the early childhood environment is critical to children's learning. Adult involvement and intervention infuse literacy ideas, processes, and skills into play (Neumann, 2000; Vukelich, 1994). Scaffolding for emerging literacy skills should incorporate a sequence of developmental strategies, including shared language experiences, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. Concurrently, scaffolding of writing needs to incorporate a corresponding sequence of developmental strategies that include language experience, writing for children, shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing (Deprey & Iversen, 1994).

Application in the Read, Play, and Learn! Curriculum

The *Read, Play, and Learn* modules incorporate all of these strategies. Specific strategies for literacy are addressed in a chapter on the development of literacy skills in the teacher's guide (Jones & Crabtree, 1999). Scaffolding of emerging literacy skills is integrated into the entire *Read, Play, and Learn* day.

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