

EARLY LITERACY

At CLASS, Inc., we offer a series of Language and Literacy building sessions beginning with the very young child through the elementary school years. Why do we do this? Because CLASS, Inc. understands that children's success in school and in life depends upon their ability to read and write and that the foundational skills are laid at a very young age.

In fact, during the first three years of life, literacy begins its emergence as children interact with books, stories, writing instruments and language. These early experiences shape brain development in a way that influences the acquisition of later reading and writing skills. This is "Early Literacy".

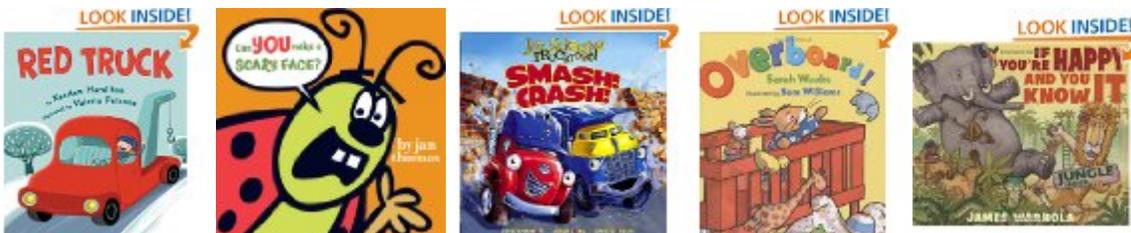


Reading and writing performance during the school years is greatly influenced by the child's very early and seemingly simple experiences with language and books. Young infants and small children mouth the corners of books, bang them, stand on them, etc. These are the initial "early literacy" experiences on which others will build. There is meaning in these early interactions and experiences which formulate the pavers along the path to literacy. According to research, there are six essential Early Literacy Skills that act as pavers to reading.



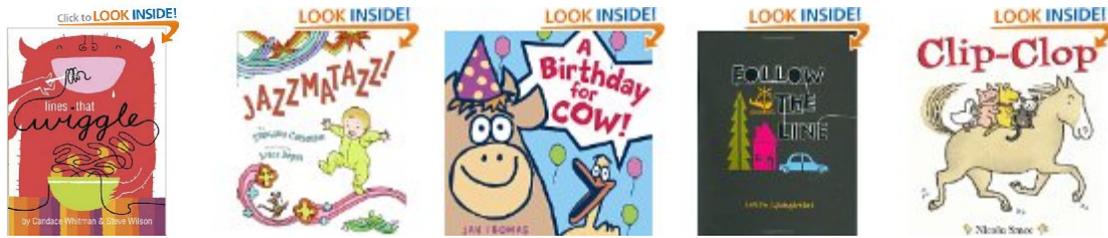
Motivation is the first paver- this is enjoyment, interest and curiosity about print material, especially books. At this stage, engagement in interacting with the book is more important than conventional use of the book, i.e. Reading. This is the stage where you will see the child using all of his senses to explore books. Critical activities at this stage is exposure to books, experiencing reading as a special time with parents/caregivers and seeing others in the family reading.

Great books for this stage are:



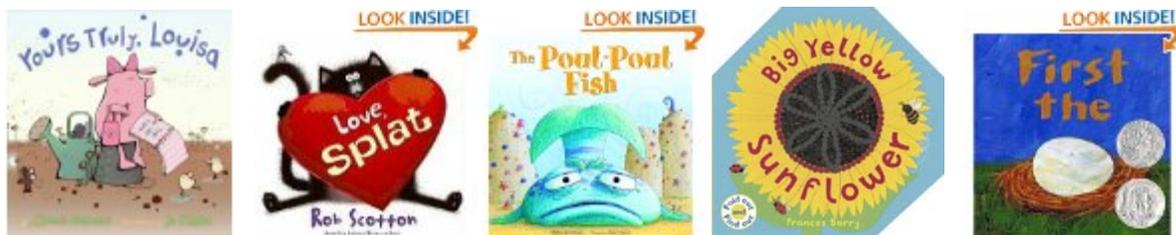
The next paver is Print Awareness. Print awareness is the understanding that printed words abound in our environments and that these printed words have meaning. As children engage with the books and listen to others read to them, an understanding that those squiggles and lines on the paper actually represent words which in turn represent objects and ideas. It is important during this stage that children are given books to hold while they are being read to. It is also helpful if the adult reader points to the individual words on the pages. Ususally books for this stage have a word or two per page- draw your child's attention to them.

Suggested books for this stage include:

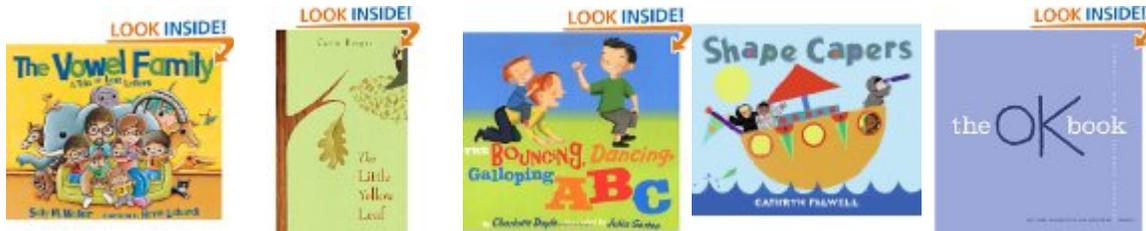


Vocabulary Expansion is the third paver. As adults sit with a child and “look” at books, they name the pictures. This capitalizes on the natural curiosity of children; they become curious about language, (labels of things) and their vocabulary explodes.

Some different books to facilitate vocabulary expansion are:



Soon, as children interact with books, they begin to understand that the squiggles on the page have a consistency. This observation is the flowering of Letter Awareness, the fourth literacy path paver. In order to children to learn to read, they must be able to identify the individual letters that make up words.



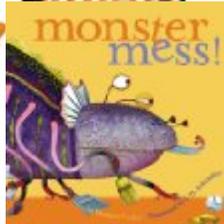
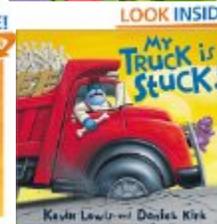
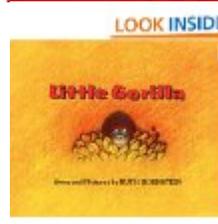
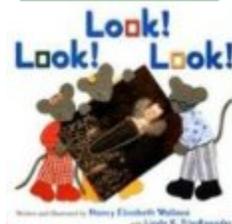
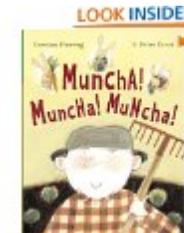
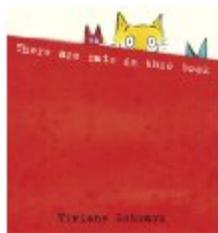
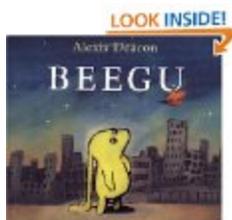
Phonological Awareness comes next. This involves the manipulation of sounds, letters and letter combinations to make up different words. Children enjoy rhyming, playing with letter sounds and taking apart words. These activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of language in print. Morphological understanding emerges; there is conceptualization of plurality represented by the addition of an /s/ and that events took place in the past as represented by the addition of /ed/ to the end of words. At this stage, helpful activities include saying Nursery Rhymes, singing songs, participating in finger plays and adding actions to songs or stories.

Fun books for this stage include:



Later, the Narrative paver is formed as children begin to predict sequential events in stories. This is the stage when children want to read the same book repeatedly. It is important to read these books over and over again. They are learning the format of narratives and start creating small stories of their own.

Terrific reading choices for this stage are:



Additional ideas for engaging in stimulating early literacy activities with young children is accessible at the Center For Early Literacy and Learning, <http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org>

Children's Book Council. Reading lists: Books to grow on. Available online at: <http://www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists/bookstogrow.html>

Org/readinglists/bookstogrow.html

Jalongo, M. R. (2004). Young children and picture books. Washington, DC: National

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