

Foundations for Learning to Read and Write PreK and Kindergarten Learning Labs

Learning labs are 3-hour long sessions that focus on practices and instructional routines from our balanced literacy framework. Our Prekindergarten and Kindergarten balanced literacy framework is specifically designed to support young children's growing proficiencies in speaking and listening while immersing them in print-rich encounters with books and opportunities to draw, dictate and represent ideas on paper. Each of the high impact literacy practices in our framework have a long tradition and extensive research base. The instructional practices develop and support oral language, vocabulary and comprehension, and knowledge about how letters, sounds and words work orally and in print. Each learning lab deepens teachers' knowledge on the connection between oral language and reading and writing. **We will customize a series to fit the needs of your school or district.**

A. Promoting Curiosity, Conversation, and Inquiry in the Classroom

This session examines key developmental principles and research supported instructional practices for teachers that engage young learners in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this session, teachers will focus on how to harness young children's budding imagination through conversations. Teachers will broaden their use of questioning techniques that address higher order thinking and build vocabulary.

B. Pretend Play: Facilitating Oral Language and Imaginative Thinking

Why are opportunities for pretend play in school essential for young children's learning? This session explores the importance and necessity of different kinds of play in the school day. We examine the teacher's role in supporting and making connections between children's play and learning across the curriculum.

C. Fostering Reading: Shared and Dialogic Reading

How can teachers reinforce concepts of print, foster oral language fluency, and build vocabulary? This session offers two strategies for introducing and teaching children the language and structure of text. Teachers learn how to assess and document young children's emergent reading behaviors to support both picture-governed and print-governed readers.

D. The Power of the Read Aloud

What is the most essential literacy routine in any early childhood classroom? Reading aloud initiates young children into the world of reading and writing. This session focuses on the significance of selecting high quality and culturally relevant literature for read alouds, developing questions along a continuum, and facilitating discussions with children.

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E. Engaging with Books

Children spend time reading self-selected books by themselves and with a partner. This critical skill begins in PreK as children learn to sit for longer periods of time while engaging with books. The session continues to examine young children's emergent reading behaviors to support both picture-governed and print-governed readers from shared and dialogic reading. We also focus on guidelines to cultivate a classroom library.

F. Creative Expression: Drawing, Mark-Making, and Writing

This session explores the connection between drawing, mark making, and writing. It sets out strategies for teachers to invite children to express ideas, respond to books, and engage in classroom activities using paint, markers, clay and other materials. Teachers learn to utilize these opportunities for conversations with children to support oral language development.

G. Writing: Story Dictation and Story Acting

This session focuses on utilizing the two practices of story dictation and story acting for a high impact routine that supports oral language, builds narrative skills, and encourages conversations about stories.

Story dictation plays a unique role in children learning how to transfer their ideas into words and watch those words transcribed into print. Acting out stories supports comprehension, vocabulary and developing narrative structures as the teacher guides children through examining the logic and meaning of story characters and events.

H. Alphabet, Sounds, and Words

This session draws attention to effective practices for helping children notice letters, their sounds, and words—patterns in both spoken and written formats. We focus on phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, and phonics while seeking a balance between skill-based instruction and authentic opportunities to play with sounds in words through songs, nursery rhymes, and poetry.

I. Environment for Learning

How do young children know that they are invited to speak, listen, create, read and write in their classrooms? In this session we will examine how teachers can positively affect learning through the physical and social environment of the classroom.

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