



Literacy for All Children

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Why Literacy for Young Children With Disabilities?

- Societal outcomes
- Individual outcomes



Societal Outcomes

- We are a society that has committed to equal opportunity and access to the benefits of public education for all.
- This has been embodied in:
 - PL94-142 (1975) Public education for all children
 - ADA (1991) Access to full participation in society
 - IDEA (1997) Access to education for all



Societal Outcomes

“If we are to prepare (all) children for success in Western technological societies, we must help them obtain the literacy skills required to function in such societies.”
Dickinson, St. Pierre, and Pettengill



Individual Outcomes

“At David’s workplace, there are about 20 people with disabilities...he and four other people do the mail route because they are the only ones who can read.”



Individual Outcomes

“He also reads the headlines of the sports page and the box scores, which gives him things to talk about with other people. He can look at a menu and order food or find a movie that is playing at the local theater.”



Expanding Our Definition of Literacy

- Early literacy activities engage children in social activities with peers.
- Early literacy activities engage children with emotional expression and understanding.



The Importance of Expanding Our Definition of Literacy

- Early literacy activities can provide a door to interaction and friendship and a more inclusive life for all children.



All Children Benefit

- All children benefit from high-quality early childhood programs.
- High quality preschools can ensure that all children are prepared for school and are developing literacy skills.



Literacy For All

- In high quality programs, most of what is considered appropriate for promoting literacy development in young children is also appropriate for promoting literacy development in young children with IEPs.
- This is one way in which all children benefit from high quality programs.



Specific Reading Disabilities

- It is important not to think too much about “specific reading disabilities” in early childhood.
- We know that many young children with IEPs will have “specific reading disabilities” in later years.



Literacy for All

- There is research evidence that high quality early literacy experiences will help prepare all children for whatever kind of reading instruction is later needed.



Literacy for All

- In a report published by the National Research Council in 1998, a research panel found:
(Early intervention) “does not look very different from primary prevention, differing primarily in intensity, quantity, and maintenance of the highest possible quality of interactions around language and literacy.”



Literacy for All

- Children with disabilities often do not have the same exposure to literacy experiences as children without disabilities.

Affleck (1984); Light, Binger, & Kelford-Smith (1994); Light & Kelford-Smith (1993); Marvin & Mirenda (1994); Mirenda (2003); Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman (2002)



Opportunity and Access

- These two words can guide our approach to providing literacy for *all* children.
- How can we promote opportunity?
- How can we promote access?



Supporting Children With IEPs

- Be actively involved with the family and the IEP team.
- Know the child as a child first.
- Think about what will be appropriate early literacy experiences for all children, and then think about how the child can access them.



Some General Instructional Strategies to Support Children With IEPs

- Repeat things (maybe many times).
- Slow the pace.
- Break the task or activity into smaller parts.
- Work on 'precursors'.



Opportunity and Access to Early Literacy: Young Children With IEPs

- First, do what will support early literacy in all children.
- Next, do what will support early literacy for many children with IEPs.
- Then, do what else is needed for a specific child (with the help of the IEP team).



How Do We Promote Opportunity and Access to Early Literacy?

Focus on the following components of early literacy:

- Oral language development
- Concepts of Print
- Alphabetic Knowledge
- Phonological Awareness
- Early Writing



Opportunity and Access: Oral Language for All Children

- Plan conversation times.
- Listen carefully to children's talk and respond.
- Talk about art work and books.
- Talk using puppets, dramatic play.
- Introduce new words and extend children's vocabulary.



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Oral Language

- Speak clearly, slowly, and listen carefully.
- Describe what is happening in simple sentences. This could be self talk.
- Repetition with praise and encouragement.
- Use expansion strategy.
- Emphasize single words: toys, objects, names.



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Oral Language

- Wait several seconds for a response.
- Remember that children communicate in many ways: signs, computers, or pictures to express themselves.
- Be sure that all children communicate to one another.



Opportunity and Access: Concepts of Print for All Children

Teaching strategies that support concepts of print:

- Have books available in several areas.
- Talk about the common features of books, such as front/back, top/bottom, author.
- Have children turn pages as you read.



Opportunity and Access: Concepts of Print for All Children

- Comment and/or ask questions about the pictures or story in a book.
- Point out the text that tells the story.
- Have print visible in forms other than books (names, charts, schedules).



Opportunities and Access for Young Children with IEPs: Concepts of Print

Make books easy to handle:

- Put tabs on pages for easier turning.
- Put pages in plastic sheets in binders.
- Provide book stands.

Simplify stories:

- Point out and label just one object on each page.
- Shorten the story to three or four pages.



Opportunities and Access for Young Children with IEPs: Concepts of Print (continued)

- Have children turn pages as you read.
- Focus on child's recognition of own written name.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat: words, stories, print.



Putting Theory into Practice



IN YOUR TABLE GROUPS:

- Look at your assigned topic.
- Read the descriptor of your child.
- Using the worksheet, consider the environment, the routine, and strategies that will promote access and opportunity for children with IEPs.



Opportunity and Access: Alphabetic Knowledge for All Children

- Find opportunities to write as you say the letters: names, signs, mail, labels.
- Make letters visible around the room.
- Make children's names visible.



Opportunity and Access: Alphabetic Knowledge for All Children

- Put labels on common objects or areas.
- Use letters in play areas (e.g. letters in the water table or with playdoh).
- Play letter matching games.



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Alphabetic Knowledge

- Point out individual letters rather than words, especially the first letters of names and labels (repeatedly).
- Keep letters at eye level.
- Provide letters of different textures and colors.




Opportunity and Access: Phonological Awareness for All

- Play rhyming games (find words that rhyme, put cards in sequence for short nursery rhymes or songs).
- Engage the children in rhyming songs and finger plays.
- Make rhyme books.



Opportunity and Access: Phonological Awareness for All

- Use pictures of animals to sound out syllables (e.g. ti-ger, li-zard).
- Use children's names to clap out syllables.



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Phonological Awareness

- Repeat rhymes over and over.
- Use feet and hands to sound out syllables (begin with child's name or names of family members).
- Use cards of different textures and high contrast color in rhyming games (e.g. put a rhyming word on each card).
- Make rhyming books with Velcro objects.



Opportunity and Access: Early Writing for All

- Have writing materials available.
- Designate an area for writing.
- Share adult writing with children: functional writing (notes, calendars, recipes) as well as writing in play.
- Use writing in play (names, labels, stories).



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Early Writing

- Have writing tools available in a variety of sizes and textures.
- Be a scribe: write down (or use computer) words that the child says and words for the child to see.



Opportunity and Access for Young Children With IEPs: Early Writing

- Look for and appreciate early forms of writing.
- Break the writing down into simple parts: use letters instead of words, work on simple strokes.



How Will This Change What I Do?

- Not much. We still strive for high quality programs.
- Within high quality programs, there will be ways to provide access to all. It does not “slow down” or “water down” the program, but provides ways for each child to be part of it to the best of each child’s ability.



Recapping Opportunity and Access

- All children benefit from high quality early literacy programs.
- How can we promote opportunity for all young children?
- How can we promote access for all young children?



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