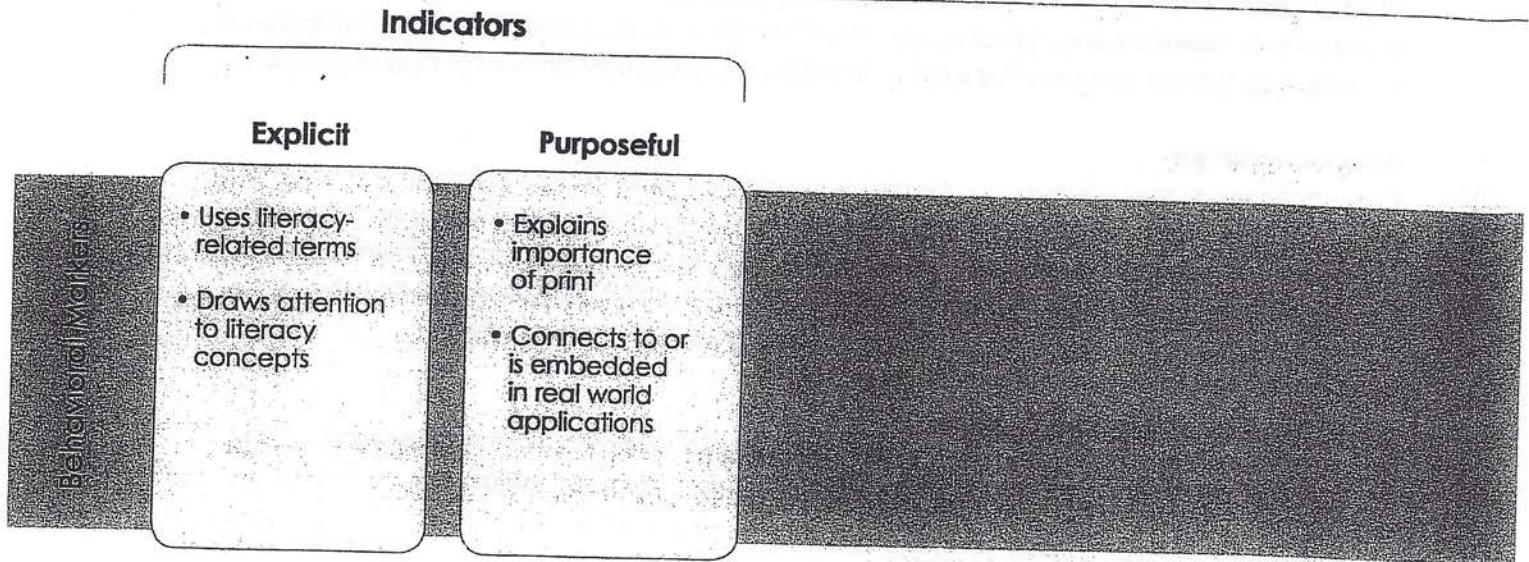


# Literacy Focus\*



\* Note: The Literacy Focus dimension is currently being piloted.

## What is it?

Effective literacy focus occurs when teachers clearly and intentionally help children understand literacy-related concepts of written and spoken language. During effective literacy instruction, teachers deliver well-planned and sequenced literacy activities that engage children in the code units (letter, words, phonemes) of oral and written language. Teachers purposefully link the code-based activities to the broader purpose of written or spoken communication and explicitly focus children's interest on the elements of the code (letters, sounds, etc.) and clearly state the purpose of the activity.

## Why is it important?

Children who start kindergarten with basic early literacy skills, such as knowing some letters and sounds and being able to listen for parts of words, make a more successful transition to the kindergarten classroom. Preschool teachers can help children develop these skills through the provision of frequent, well-planned literacy activities that get children interested in and excited about learning to crack the literacy code.

# How can I best focus on literacy in my classroom?

## **Be on the lookout for print and encourage children to look with you.**

Print is all around your classroom. Point out or ask children to find words, letters, and numbers in your classroom or building. For example, as children are waiting to wash their hands, help them look for places around the sink where they can find the letter that starts their name.

## **Use print in purposeful and meaningful ways with children.**

Help children to learn that print and being able to read and write can help them in their everyday lives. For example, when taking children to the restroom, point to the word "girls" on the door and say, "The word on this door says 'girls'. These letters tell us this is the bathroom for girls." If a child is building a fort and is worried that someone will knock it down, help the child make a sign that says, "Declan's Fort. Please do not knock down."

## **Get students interested and excited about letters, words, and sounds.**

Play games with letters and words. Ask children to think of words that rhyme with one another, reminding them that silly words are okay too. Play word games like the Name Game (also known as "The Banana Song,") or "Willaby Wallaby Woo."

## **Use literacy-related terms to focus children's attention on literacy concepts.**

Use words that explicitly identify literacy concepts (like word, rhyme, sound, and letter) to focus children's attention on the literacy concepts you want them to learn. For example, when opening a box of crayons say, "Listen to the sound at the beginning of this word, 'crayons.' Can you tell me the beginning sound? /c/ is the first sound in the word 'crayons'. The letter 'c' makes the /c/ sound." Or, before reading a recipe with children, identify the letters in a word by saying, "We are going to make bread. This word is bread. There are five letters in the word bread. The letters are b-r-e-a-d."

## **Plan literacy activities that relate to children's lives.**

Connect literacy activities to children's lives. For example, say to the children, "Did you know that the words we say and the songs we sing can be written down? I've written down the words to your favorite song! This is the title. It says, 'Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.' " Track the words with your finger as you read the first verse together. Point out to the children that there is a space between each word, and that's how you know it's a new word. Linking literacy concepts to children's favorite songs will help them to learn the concepts in a more meaningful and memorable way.

## **During story time, take some time to explicitly teach different literacy concepts.**

Plan ahead how you will focus on different literacy concepts during story time. For example, you are teaching the children about rhyming words, so you decide to read a rhyming story to help build their knowledge of rhyming words. You begin the lesson, "Let's listen for all the words that rhyme in this book. The title is, 'The Cat in the Hat.' Did you hear words that rhyme in the title? Remember, words that rhyme sound the same in the middle and the end. 'Cat' has 'at' and 'hat' has 'at'. Now let's read this great story about a cat and we'll stop sometimes and listen for rhymes."



**Plan explicit and purposeful literacy activities for each day throughout the year.**

Over time, plan activities that target children's learning of a variety of literacy concepts in an appropriate sequence. Plan how you will be explicit in using literacy-related terms that draw children's attention to literacy concepts in meaningful ways. For example, rather than just having a general plan to clap out syllables of words with children during meeting time, come up with a more detailed plan like the following: 1. Explain to children that words are made up of different parts that you can hear, called syllables. Some words have one syllable and some have more. 2. Demonstrate clapping syllables for two of the children's names. 3. Ask the children to join as you clap the syllables in other children's names.