Early Childhood Parent Education Day

September 25, 2026

What is sensory play?

- Exploration of play through a child's senses.
- Sensory play stimulates our senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste.
- It helps children interact with and make sense of the world that surrounds them
- Encourages learning through exploration, curiosity, problem solving and creativity.



Why do we do sensory activities in preschool?



- Stimulates all senses
- Encourages language
  - Ask questions:
    - How does it feel?
    - What are you making?
    - Is this soft or hard?
    - What colors are you using?
  - Questions can be simple and easy to answer just to encourage language from your child
- Adaptability- different sensory activities can help students understand different textures and how to adapt to the new materials they are experiencing
- Motor skills (fine motor) - strengthen hands through the use of different materials
- Social-emotional- sharing materials with others, taking turns

What do you need?

- Large washable container
- One or more fillers
- Sensory toys and tools to go inside
  - Small plastic toys to hide/search for (play insects or animals, blocks, magnetic letters)
  - Tongs, tweezers, and spoons
  - Muffin tray
  - Ice cube tray
  - Funnel
  - Wisk
  - Cookie cutters
  - Fake gems/rhinestones
  - Measuring cups and bowls











Sensory Materials



- Sand
- Water
- Leaves
- Cotton balls
- Shaving cream
- Raffia/crinkle grass
- Packing peanuts
- Dirt

- Shredded paper
- Slime
- Play dough
- Pom poms
- Cut plastic straws
- Essential oils



Kitchen/Dramatic play

Why is dramatic play important?

The benefits of dramatic play include: **Learning conflict resolution, helping children to learn creative problem-solving skills alongside their peers**. Exploring self-empowerment, allowing kids the opportunity to make choices, act out their feelings, and find a new connection to themselves.

- Learning math and literacy, particularly in play that includes playing with numbers (like the grocery store game)
- Blowing off steam, so overly energetic children have another outlet to decompress and have fun
- Engaging in language development, encouraging kids to express themselves in different ways, whether playing a role or playing as themselves
- Embracing self-regulation, especially in role-playing where children are expected to fulfill a particular part in the play scenario

How to Encourage Dramatic Play in the Classroom and at Home

There are many ways that educators and parents like you can encourage dramatic play, both in a school setting and at home. For example, you can:

- We make time for dramatic play in the classroom, using a theme as a guide and giving kids an outline to follow within that theme. Theme examples: Pumpkin patch, flower shop, animal Hospital, and Pizza shop.
- Engage in your own form of dramatic play at home and encourage your kids to join in, whether it's opening a pretend restaurant where you make pizza or going hunting for monsters in the house
- Buy some fun clothes from a thrift store and suggest playing dress up at home, encouraging your child to embrace role playing and drive the play narrative
- Ask open ended questions when playing. For example if your playing restaurant you can ask them what kind of food do they have? How much does it cost? How did you make that?

Dramatic Play Material

Kitchen
- Food
- Eating utensils
- Pretend food
- Cups
- Table and chairs
- Dress up clothes



Pumpkin Patch
- Pumpkins (Real and pretend)
- Dry corn
- Hay bale (Made out of a box)
- Money
- Cash register
- Order forms

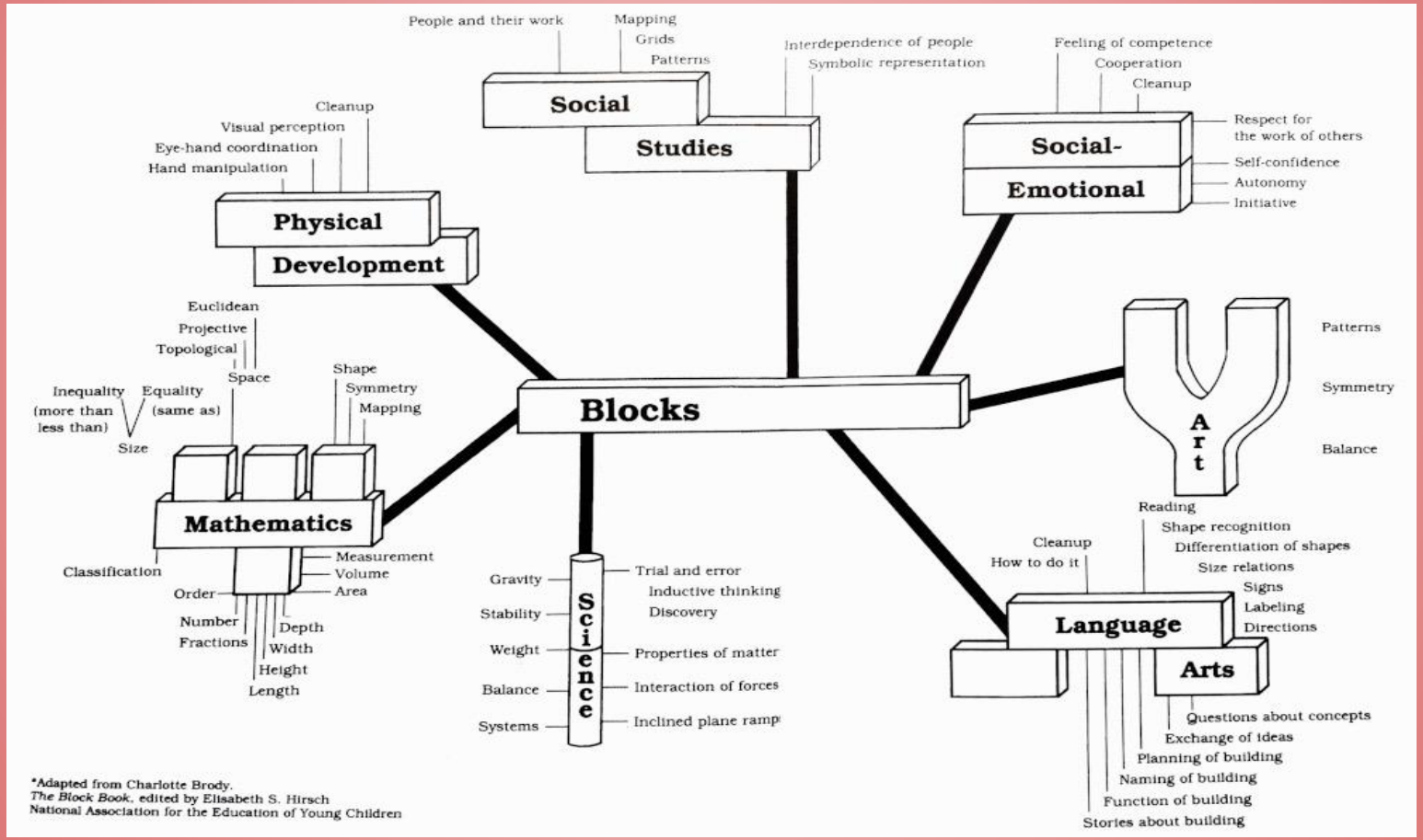


Dress up
- Old halloween costumes
- Fun dresses or suits
- Doctor
- Veterinarian
- Teacher





Blocks and Cars



*Adapted from Charlotte Brody.
The Block Book, edited by Elisabeth S. Hirsch
National Association for the Education of Young Children

Blocks and Cars

Why is block play important?

Students LOVE it! Block play fosters growth in every area of development.

We have been focusing on the following social skills:

Sharing

Taking Turns

Responsibility

Cooperation



Blocks and Cars

Asking questions encourages mathematical thinking and develops language skills:

Tell me about your structure? Who lives/works there?

What else could you build?

Which is bigger/ smaller or taller/shorter?

How many red/ blue/ long blocks did you use?

How many more do you need?



Blocks and Cars

Considerations for Materials at Home

Open ended sets encourage creativity

Size of pieces: younger children and frustration

Durability

Grows with the child

Storage



Books and Reading

Reading to young children provides significant cognitive benefits by expanding vocabulary, improving concentration, and stimulating imagination, while also enhancing social-emotional development, strengthening the parent-child bond, and building a foundation for academic success. Regular reading fosters a lifelong love of learning and helps children develop critical thinking and empathy skills necessary for navigating the world.

There are a variety of times in the school day that students have the opportunity to engage with books and reading.

**Whole group (circle time)

** Small group

**Book related activities at centers

**Classroom library

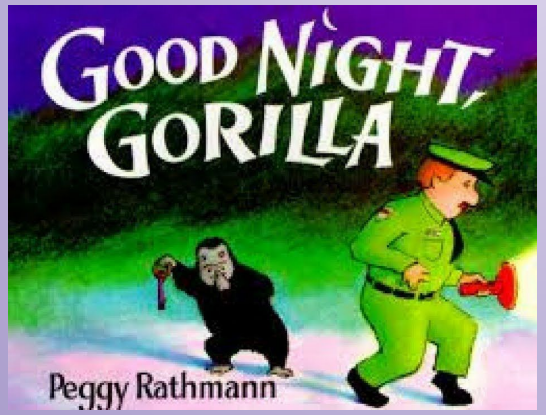
**Therapy groups

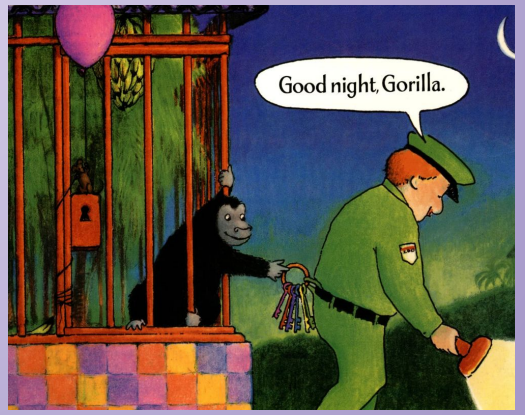
**Poplar Creek Library Time

Books and Reading: Picture Walk

In preschool we are aiming to create a love of books and reading, without it being a stressful activity for the kids. Kids may say “I don’t know how to read.” or show little interest in reading. These are some ways we help them engage with books other than reading to them.

Picture Walk





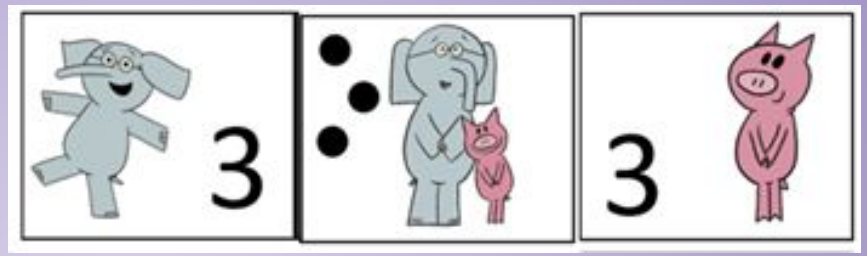
Books and Reading: Songs and Music

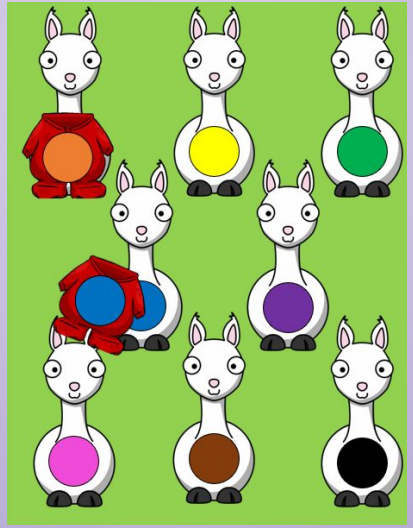




Books and Reading: Book Games

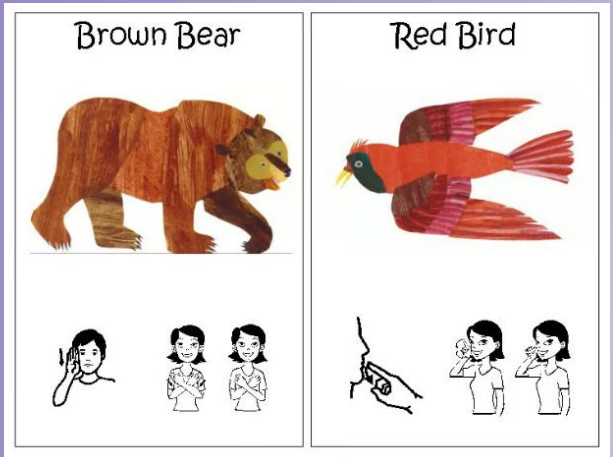


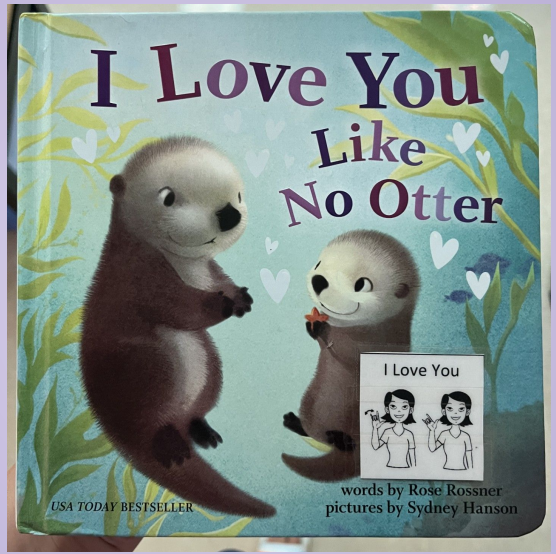


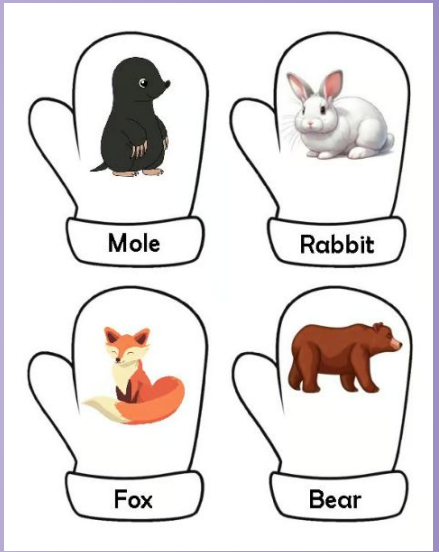




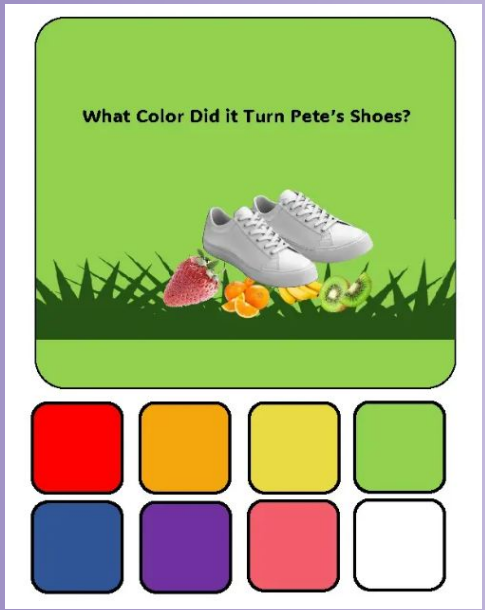
Books and Reading: Communication and Vocab

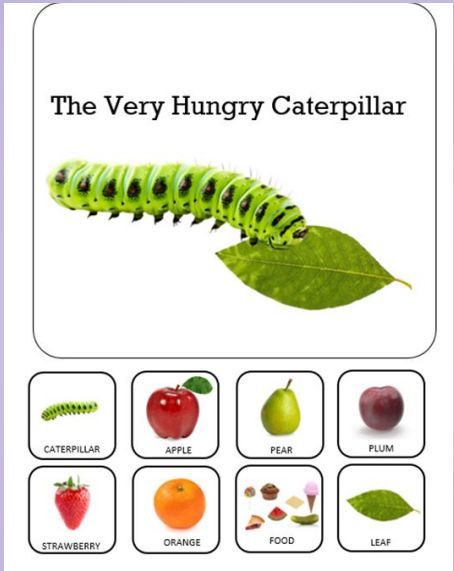


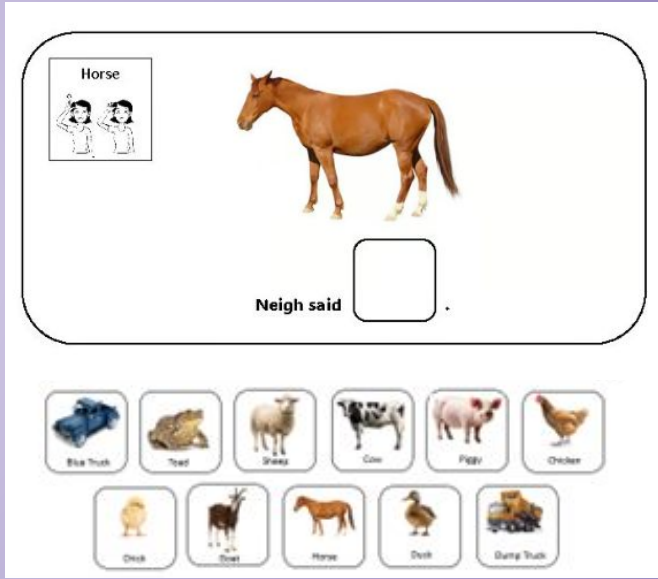




Books and Reading: Adapted Books



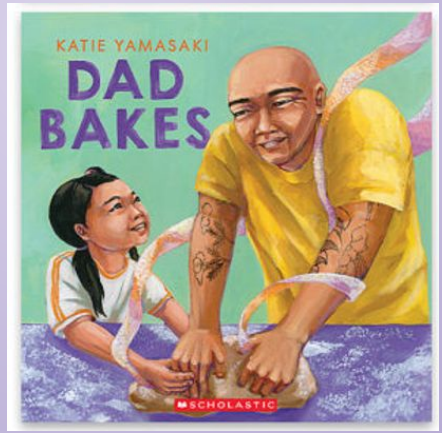


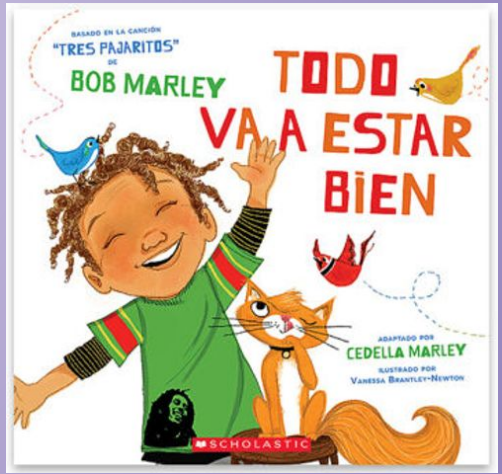


Introducing!!!

The Keeneyville Early Childhood Center Home Literacy Program

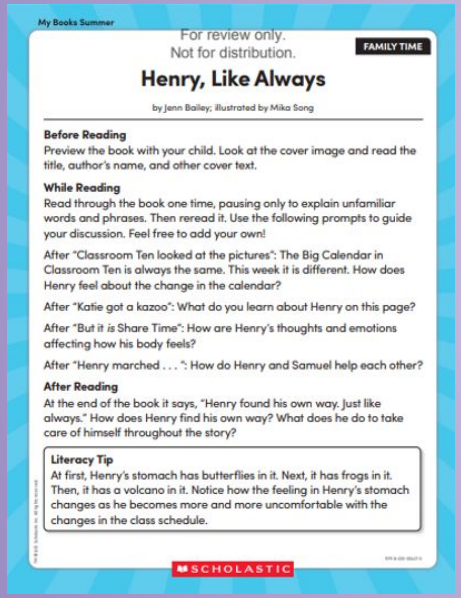
Each month your child will bring a book home. This book is for your family to keep.





Think Sheets

Family Time



My Books Summer

For review only.
Not for distribution.

FAMILY TIME

Henry, Like Always

by Jenn Bailey; illustrated by Mika Song

Before Reading
Preview the book with your child. Look at the cover image and read the title, author's name, and other cover text.

While Reading
Read through the book one time, pausing only to explain unfamiliar words and phrases. Then reread it. Use the following prompts to guide your discussion. Feel free to add your own!

After "Classroom Ten looked at the pictures": The Big Calendar in Classroom Ten is always the same. This week it is different. How does Henry feel about the change in the calendar?

After "Katie got a kazoo": What do you learn about Henry on this page?

After "But it *is* Share Time": How are Henry's thoughts and emotions affecting how his body feels?

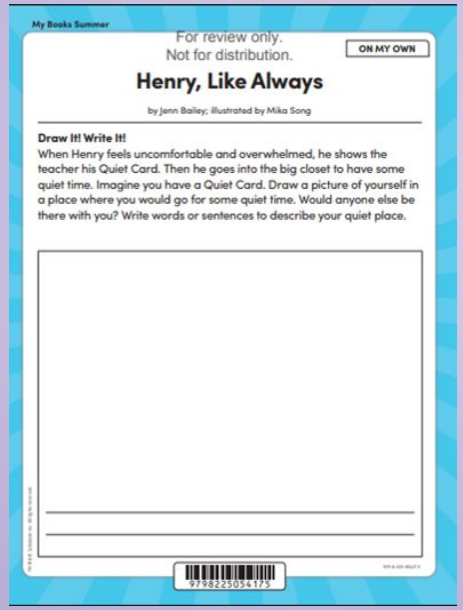
After "Henry marched . . . ": How do Henry and Samuel help each other?

After Reading
At the end of the book it says, "Henry found his own way. Just like always." How does Henry find his own way? What does he do to take care of himself throughout the story?

Literacy Tip
At first, Henry's stomach has butterflies in it. Next, it has frogs in it. Then, it has a volcano in it. Notice how the feeling in Henry's stomach changes as he becomes more and more uncomfortable with the changes in the class schedule.

SCHOLASTIC

On My Own



My Books Summer

For review only.
Not for distribution.

ON MY OWN

Henry, Like Always

by Jenn Bailey; illustrated by Mika Song

Draw It! Write It!
When Henry feels uncomfortable and overwhelmed, he shows the teacher his Quiet Card. Then he goes into the big closet to have some quiet time. Imagine you have a Quiet Card. Draw a picture of yourself in a place where you would go for some quiet time. Would anyone else be there with you? Write words or sentences to describe your quiet place.

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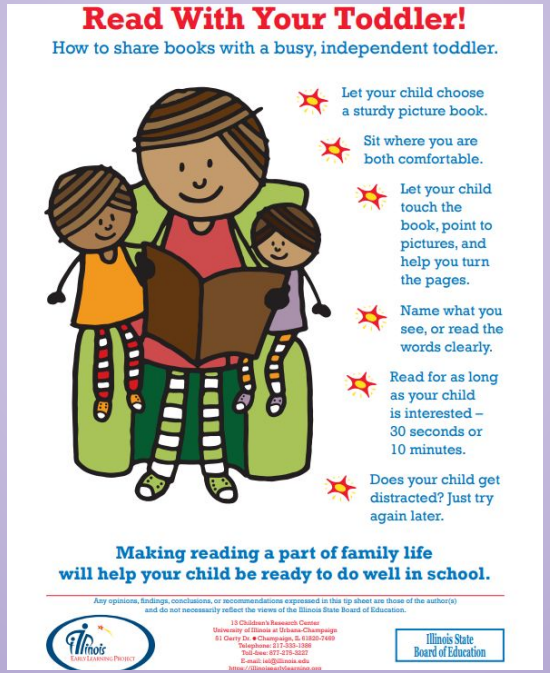
Each book will come home with a think sheet.

Read the book together using the FAMILY TIME side as a guide.

Do the ON MY OWN activity together and return it to school to be entered into a raffle!
We are **NOT** expecting the students to do the On My Own portion without help.

Tip Sheets

Each month we will include a tip sheet full of different ways to foster reading and literacy skills at home.



Read With Your Toddler!

How to share books with a busy, independent toddler.

- Let your child choose a sturdy picture book.
- Sit where you are both comfortable.
- Let your child touch the book, point to pictures, and help you turn the pages.
- Name what you see, or read the words clearly.
- Read for as long as your child is interested – 30 seconds or 10 minutes.
- Does your child get distracted? Just try again later.

Making reading a part of family life will help your child be ready to do well in school.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.

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https://illinoisearlylearning.org

Illinois State Board of Education



Talk It Out

Family Conversation Starters

We can all use a little help when it comes to getting kids to talk about what they're reading. The conversation prompts on these pages will help you get the conversation started—anytime, anywhere. Want to get the whole family involved? Take turns choosing a prompt to start a conversation at mealtimes, on the way to school or an appointment, or at the end of the day. Best of all? You can use these prompts to spark a discussion about whatever you happen to be reading—whether it's a book, an article, or the back of a cereal box!

Describe your favorite place to read. Where is it?

What title would you give the story of YOUR life?

Which character from a book would you like to be friends with, and why?

If you could visit a place you've read about in a book, where would you go? Why?

With a friend or family member, act out your favorite scene from a story.

What is your superpower?

If you could be any character in a book, who would you be, and why?

What is something you want to learn about?

Which book that you've read would you recommend to a friend or family member?

Tell a friend or family member about one goal you have for yourself as a reader.

What story made you laugh?

How was a book you read a mirror (you saw yourself) or a window (you saw the world)?

What questions do you have for someone you read about?

Imagine yourself in the middle of the action in a story you read. Where are you and what are you doing?

What is something new you learned in your reading that you want to share with someone?

Has a story ever made you cry? What was it about?

Offer to read a story out loud to someone you love.

Tell about a time you couldn't put down the book you were reading. What was the book?

What character or person in a book you read reminded you most of yourself?

How has a book you've read inspired you to try something new?

Mystery Readers!!!



We will be inviting family members in to read the books to the classes!

Speech & Language

Tori Hemp

M.A., CCC-SLP

Speech-Language Pathologist

Speech and Language: Let's Compare

Speech:

- the sounds in words
- how we say the sounds
- Speech sound errors can make it difficult to understand what is being said

Language:

- the words we use
- how we use words to share ideas, express wants and needs, and communicate
- what we understand

Speech

Articulation: how we make sounds using our tongue, lips, teeth, and palate

- e.g., making a “t” sound

Phonology: how sound are combined to form words

- Errors may be simplified sound patterns
- E.g., “fly” may be reduced to “fy”

Fluency: continuity, rate, effort, “smooth” speech

Developmental Speech Norms



Supporting Speech at Home

- Work on placement
  - Make it playful
  - Talk about letters and sounds
- Practice in a hierarchy
  - Sound
  - Syllable
  - Word
  - Sentence

- **Use a mirror**
- Model correct pronunciation
  - No need to correct every time
- **A little bit, every day**

Language

Language

Language: the words we use and how we use them to communicate ideas, wants, needs, etc.

Expressive: Ability to express wants and ideas (sentence length, grammar, content of the message, vocabulary)

Receptive: Ability to listen and understand

Pragmatic: topic maintenance, appropriate social interactions, conversational discourse

Language Areas

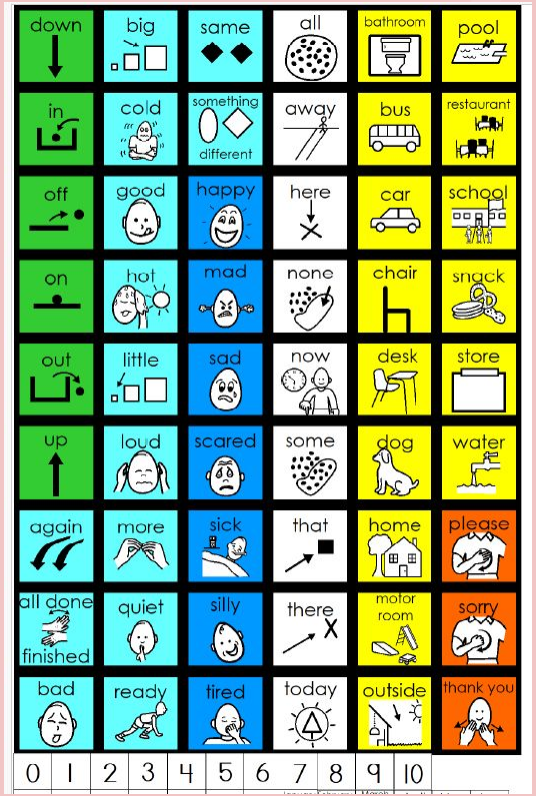
- **Vocabulary**
  - verbs (actions), adjectives (describing words), nouns (person/place/thing)
- **Functions** of Language
  - Comment, requesting, protesting, asking for help
- Answer or **Ask Questions**
  - who, what, where, when, how, and why
- **Directions** and spatial concepts (in, on, under)
- **Pre-academic concepts** (color, size, shape, etc)
- Communicate simple stories/ideas



AAC and visuals - additional tools

When students need a little more support to gain language





Developmental Language Norms



Why is Language So Important??

- Language is in EVERY academic subject
- Improves reading comprehension
- Builds relationships with peers, teachers, and family members
- Regulate their emotions, wants, and needs
- Reduce frustration by communicating wants and needs

Strategies to Support Language Development



- Break down information into small parts
- Model language across various settings
- Utilize **wait time**
- Provide **choices**
- Read books
- Sing songs with repetitive words
- Ask & answer questions
- Encourage and accept all communicative attempts
- Use the “one step more” approach
    - If your child is saying one word - model 2!

Incorporating Language into Meal Time

- Request using words and gestures
- Offer choices
- Label items during the meal
- Comment using simple words
- Describe food and drinks
- Use gestures and simple signs
- Familiar routines
- Instead of anticipating - **see if they ask and give wait time**

Incorporating Language into Meal Time

-Usually a relaxed time when kids are sitting and engaged

-Also very motivating!



Incorporating Language Into Play

Language = motivation and fun!

- Joint attention
- Taking turns
- Making choices
- Following directions
- Requesting, labeling, **commenting**
- Imitating actions or sounds
- Answering questions



Pop the Pig Demo

What are some comments we could make as a play partner? (Beyond colors/numbers)

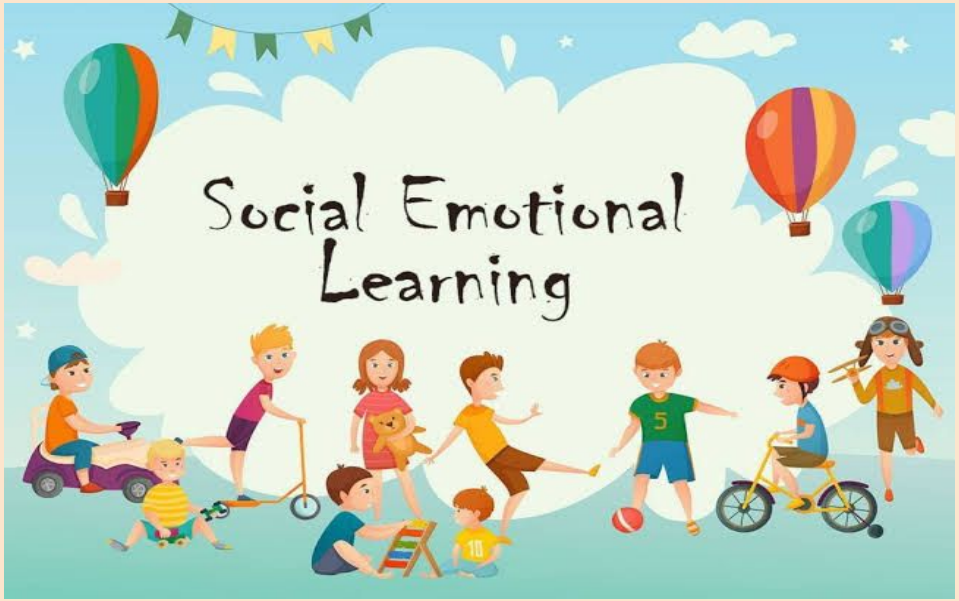
- Control the environment (can they open the box?)
- What happens if one color runs out?
- Actions in the game (e.g. push, feed, pop!)



What questions do you have?



Social and Emotional Learning



Introduction

- Social and Emotional Learning
  - What is it?
- Social Work Groups
- Zones of Regulation
  - What each zone means
  - How to use it at home



Social And Emotional Learning



Social and Emotional Learning

- Consists of 5 competencies
  - Self Awareness
  - Self Management
  - Social Awareness
  - Relationship Skills
  - Responsible Decision Making
- Focus at ECC
  - Self Awareness
  - Social Awareness
  - Relationship Skills



Social Work Groups

- Each Group may consist of:
  - Welcome
  - Yoga
  - Feelings Check-in
  - Mini Lesson
  - Practice Activity
  - Goodbye
- Each Group Looks different



Matt and Molly

- Uses two characters that become part of the class
- Matt and Molly teaches appropriate behaviors in everyday situations
- Simple, four part picture cards that show a sequence of an event like sharing, being afraid
- Engaging, questions



ZONES OF REGULATION:

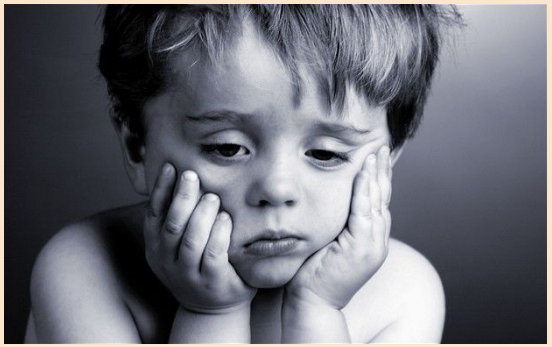
SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH THE ZONES



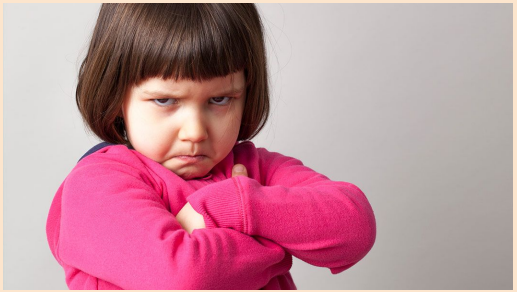
What Are Zones?

- What it means
- How we do it
  - Matching
  - Imitating faces
  - Coping Skills

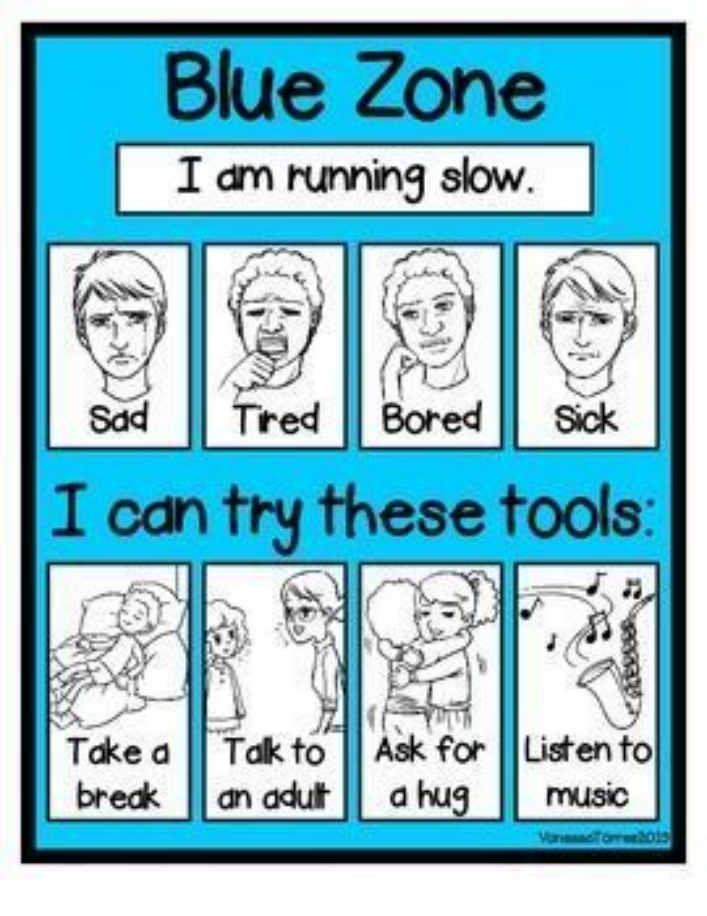




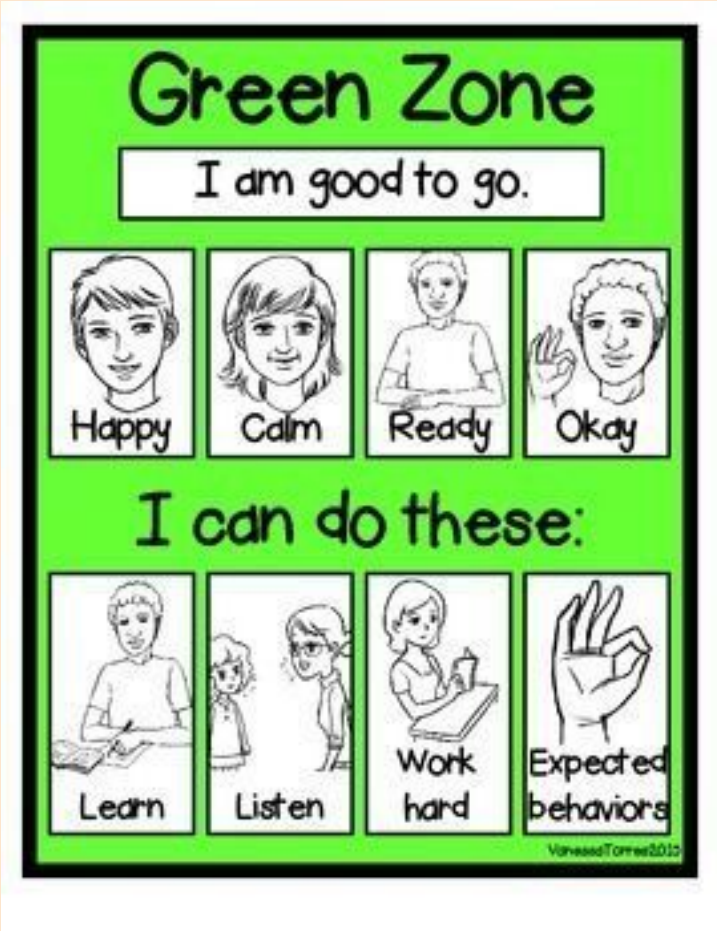




Blue Zone


Blue Zone
I am running slow.
Sad
Tired
Bored
Sick
I can try these tools:
Take a break
Talk to an adult
Ask for a hug
Listen to music

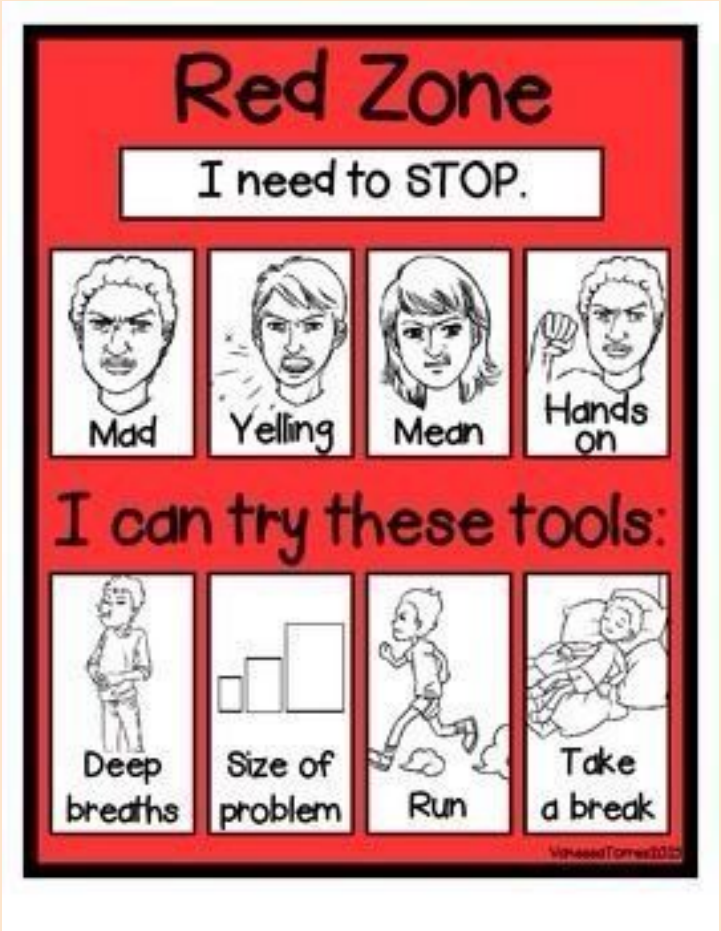
Green Zone


Green Zone
I am good to go.
Happy
Calm
Ready
Okay
I can do these:
Learn
Listen
Work hard
Expected behaviors

Yellow Zone


Yellow Zone
I need to take caution.
Worried
Nervous
Annoyed
Upset
I can try these tools:
Take a break
Get a drink
Walk
Inner coach

Red Zone


Red Zone
I need to STOP.
Mad
Yelling
Mean
Hands on
I can try these tools:
Deep breaths
Size of problem
Run
Take a break

Zones at Home

- When you are upset
- When your child is upset
- During Play
- Use Visual
- Practice Calming Strategies



https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MRCqp27-IsxHgaRDiTTuqxwWhjce_01GUOfl7jDRh5A/preview

Resources

For family resources visit:

- District Website has excellent Parent and Family Resources.
- Examples:
  - Community Activities
  - Health
  - Stress/Trauma
  - Additional Mental Health Topics
  - DuPage Community Resources Link
  - Grandparent



PBIS

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

We are introducing PBIS to our students here at school. Just like the older schools in the district, the ECC has developed a set of expectations for behavior at school. We will teach these expectations to all of our students, and we will recognize students who meet them. We will be doing this by using visuals of expectations throughout the classroom and the building, and giving individual, whole class incentives, and whole building incentives.

Our foundational principles are learning to 1) Be Kind 2) Be Safe and 3) Be a good friend.



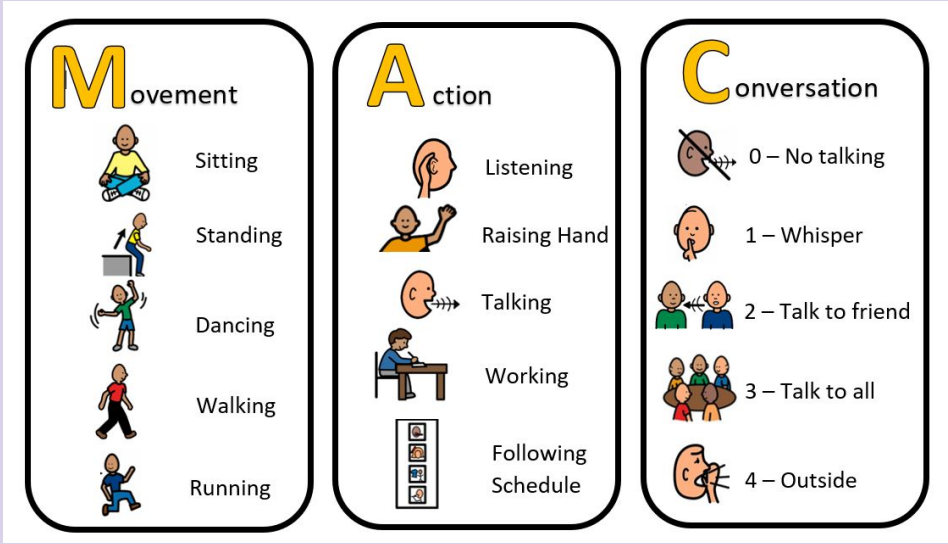
PBIS

MAC - Movement, Action, and Conversation

In order to directly teach school expectations we utilize a MAC program. This allows us to break down the different activities during the day and teach the students what level of Movement, Action, and Conversation is expected to participate in the activity.

At this age, repetition and visual supports are very important for understanding and learning skills.

Because of this, we have created visual supports that we review regularly with the students.



PBIS

Rewards and Celebrations

Celebrations are bigger rewards to reinforce the whole group's positive choices and get the students excited about PBIS and supporting one another.



In Class

The class works together to fill a reward jar and work up to a in class celebration for the group's positive choices.

Examples:
Extra motor time
Favorite class activity
Prize day
Special snack

Whole School

When every class meets their in class goal, the whole school will have a celebration.

Examples:
Popcorn day
Pajama day
Dance party
Movie day





PBIS

Supporting at Home

Encouraging your child to make positive choices and using the phrases be kind, be safe, and be a good friend can help connect what they are learning at school to home.




Questions?

Posture, Stability and Strength

The “tree trunk” of fine motor skills!

- Effective arm movement and control is only possible when core (trunk) strength and stability are present.



How to promote....
Posture, Strength and Stability

- Crawling (obstacle course)
- Animal walking
- Scooter board
- Climbing
- Wheel Barrow walking








Life skills
Self care skills
Fine motor skills
dexterity, hand-eye coordination, bilateral coordination
Gross motor skills
postural stability/control, strength, balance, muscle tone
Sensory skills
Tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive, auditory, visual and tactile
Developmental Progression
gQTherapy

WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE FINE MOTOR SKILLS FOR MY CHILD



HOW DOES MY CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

- **Strength** → **control** → **precision**
- **Whole-hand movements** (infants) → **finger isolation** (toddlers) → **skilled tool use** (preschool and early school age)
- Children develop fine motor skills gradually through everyday play, exploration, and hands-on practice. These skills involve the small muscles of the hands, fingers, and wrists.
- Everyday activities like dressing themselves (zippers, buttons), helping in the kitchen, water play, using tools like tongs or clothespins, and chores like wiping surfaces or squeezing sponges help motor skill development

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Include Art and Writing Tools in Daily Play

Art invites creativity while building fine motor control. Make supplies available on a reachable shelf so kids can choose them on their own.

- Broken crayons, markers, chalk
- Paint with brushes, sponges, cotton swabs
- Stickers (peeling and placing)
- Stamps
- Dot markers
- Tracing shapes or simple letters







HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Encourage Cutting, Gluing, and Crafting

Crafts help children practice precision and bilateral coordination (using both hands). Keep materials in a small bin for easy access.

- Cutting straight and curved lines
- Collage work with glue sticks
- Folding paper (basic origami)
- Making simple crafts like paper chains, puppets, or cards







HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Use Everyday Routines as Skill Builders

Daily life offers endless fine motor practice. These tasks build both strength and independence.

- Helping prepare food: tearing lettuce, stirring batter, pouring water, spreading butter with a dull knife
- Dressing themselves: zippers, buttons, snaps
- House chores: squeezing sponges, spraying water, wiping surfaces







HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Build Hand Strength Through Play

Strong muscles = better pencil control later. Preschoolers need play, not drills. Avoid forcing writing; instead, offer opportunities and let interest guide the child.

- Squeezing clothespins or tongs, water toys in the bath
- Using play tools (toy screwdrivers, hammers)
- Carrying or moving small objects with tweezers
- Pushing, pulling, and gripping on playground equipment









HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Encourage Two-Handed Tasks

Many preschool tasks require both hands working together. This develops the coordination necessary for writing and self-care.

- Holding paper with one hand and coloring with the other
- Cutting with scissors
- Beading/lacing
- Building with blocks
- Holding a bowl while stirring







HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILD DEVELOP FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

Limit Screen Time

Screens reduce hands-on play. Encourage real materials that engage fingers, wrists, and hands.

Please take a moment to let us know how we did today!!

