

Resources for Developing Alphabetic Knowledge in Young Children

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Introduction

Resources for Developing Alphabetic Knowledge in Young Children is a set of learning and teaching materials tailored for kindergarten teachers to expose young children to alphabetic knowledge. Alphabetic knowledge comprises the following elements: letter-name knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, letter recognition and letter production (Puranik et al., 2011; Scanlon et al., 2010). These elements are manifested by children's abilities to name the letters, to understand the letter-sound correspondences and say the corresponding letter sounds, to identify the letters, and to write the letters in proper form and shape.

Research findings indicate that letter-name knowledge is the single independent predictor of letter-sound knowledge but not the reverse (McBride-Chang, 1999; Evans et al., 2006). To optimise young children's learning of alphabetic knowledge, it is recommended that knowledge of letter names should be acquired before that of letter sounds. The resources aim at building young children's letter-name knowledge and to familiarise children with the letter form and shape in an effort to help them lay a good foundation for later literacy development. For exposing young children to letter-sound knowledge, teachers could refer to *Exposing Young Children to Phonics* (SCOLAR, 2012).

Learning of the English letters is abstract to young children, hence teaching English letters in isolation should be avoided. Teachers should conduct developmentally appropriate learning activities that link letters and objects that associate with the letters to children's daily life and interests in order to facilitate their mastery of alphabetic knowledge (Bloodgood, 1999). This set of materials provides teachers with ideas on some effective teaching strategies, learning activities, exemplars of activity plans and printable puppets for exposing young children to alphabetic knowledge in meaningful contexts at the pre-primary level. The 26 letter pairs of the English alphabet are included in the set and each letter pair includes a story script, a real-life experience activity, the possible extended activities and a suggested book list.

The set includes –

- an overview of various options of activity arrangement
- a list of suggested activities and their possible themes
- activity plans for the 26 letter pairs
- 52 letter puppets
- 12 pairs of facial features for the letter puppets

Use of the Materials

Resources for Developing Alphabetic Knowledge in Young Children is developed for teachers' use in the school setting. Teachers are advised to help children develop alphabetic knowledge and enjoy the learning process through the use of the materials for storytelling and real-life experience activities. The content of the activity plans such as the story scripts and the associated words are suggested but not prescriptive. Teachers are encouraged to make adaptations according to children's learning needs and abilities.

Reproduction of the Materials

The CD-ROM provides soft copies of all the resource materials. Please refer to the Production Guidelines in the CD-ROM for the production of letter puppets.

References

- Bloodgood, J. W. (1999). What's in the name? Children's name writing and literacy acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34, 342-367.
- McBride-Chang, C. (1999). The ABC's of the ABC's: The development of letter-name and letter-sound knowledge. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 45, 285-308.
- Puranik, C. S., Lonigan, C. J., & Kim, Y. S. (2011). Contributions of emergent literacy skills to name writing, letter writing, and spelling in preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26, 465-474.
- Scanlon, D. M., Anderson, K. L., & Sweeney, J. M. (2010). *Early intervention for reading difficulties: the interactive strategies approach*. Guilford Press.
- Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (2012). *Exposing Young Children to Phonics*. Education Bureau.

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Resources for Developing Alphabetic Knowledge in Young Children

Contents of the CD-ROM

1. An overview of activity arrangement

The overview shows various options of arranging the storytelling and real-life experience activities in a theme-based unit. The planning of the activities is based on the letter pair Ll as an example and its content is suggested but not prescriptive. Teachers should keep in mind that the learning activities of each unit should be interrelated, and more importantly, the learning objectives such as the associated words and the letter form and shape should be chosen and built upon children's prior knowledge and daily experiences. Teachers should take into consideration the language, cognitive and physical development of young children while planning the activities.

2. A list of suggested activities on possible learning themes of the 26 letter pairs

The summary sheet shows a list of suggested activities including stories and real-life experience activities for introducing the 26 English letter pairs in the classroom. All the activities are designed around themes, which can be integrated into the school-based curriculum.

3. Activity plans for the 26 letter pairs

There are activity plans for each letter pair. Detailed plans are provided for the following eight letter pairs: Dd, Ff, Ii, Ll, Nn, Pp, Qq and Vv. Simplified plans are provided for the remaining 18 letter pairs. Both the detailed and simplified plans include story scripts, suggested real-life experience activities and the possible extended activities, and a suggested book list. The detailed plans provide teachers with information such as the learning objectives, teaching procedures and teaching aids of the activities, as well as the rationales for certain teaching steps for exposing young children to alphabetic knowledge.

4. 52 letter puppets and 12 pairs of facial features

Templates of 52 letter puppets and 12 pairs of facial features are included. Teachers are encouraged to print the letter puppets and design the puppets with their own choice of facial features. The letter puppets can be laminated and used in storytelling and real-life experience activities to stimulate young children's interest in learning the English letters. Teachers can display the letter puppets in the classroom to reinforce the learning of the form and shape of the letters. Teachers may consider making the letter puppets with materials of different textures such as sand paper to promote sensory stimulation. Most importantly, the design of each letter puppet needs to be clean, distinctive, and in an appropriate size so that young children can easily recognise the shape of a letter. Teachers may refer to the Production Guidelines in the CD-ROM for the production of the letter puppets.

Format Guide for the Detailed/Simplified Plans

Italic:

to indicate target language features (letter names, words, phrases or sentence patterns), classroom language, story titles, book titles and song titles

bold:

to indicate repeated patterns in stories

capitalised

letter names

(e.g., Big Letter A,

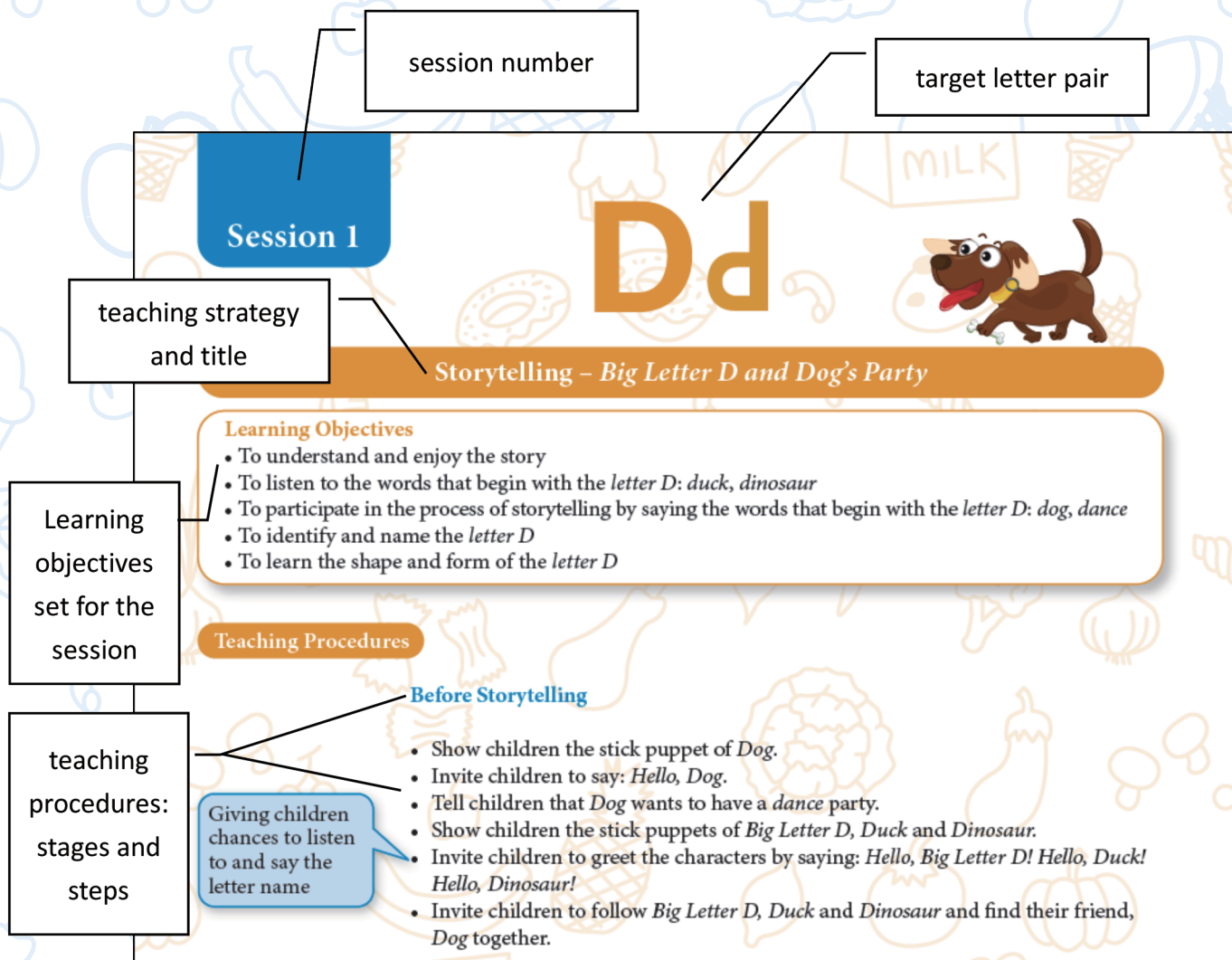
Small Letter a):

to represent characters in stories or letter figures in real-life experience activities/extended activities

annotated
bubbles:

to reveal the underlying purpose of some important teaching steps

Detailed Activity Plan



Simplified Activity Plan

target letter pair

teaching strategy
and title

Aa



Real-life experience activity – Making apple juice

- Tell children that you are thirsty.
- Invite Big Letter A to provide children with apples to make apple juice.
- Invite Big Letter A to demonstrate how to make apple juice.
- Invite children to make apple juice together by guiding them to:
 - take a piece (a quarter) of apple.
 - use a plastic knife to cut the apple into smaller pieces.
 - put the apple pieces into the blender.
 - add some water into the blender and start the blender.
 - pour some apple juice into the cups.
- Provide children with ample chances to listen to and say the names of the objects: apple, apple juice.
- Guide children to make association between the letter and the words (e.g., apple, apple juice).
- Guide children to thank Big Letter A for helping us make apple juice.
- Invite Big Letter A to drink the apple juice with children.

simplified
teaching
steps for
*RLEA



Mm



Storytelling – Big Letter M Meets a Mouse

One day, Big Letter M was invited to Monkey's birthday party. Big Letter M remembered that Monkey liked milk, mangoes and marshmallows, so she put a carton of milk, a mango and a bag of marshmallows into her bag as birthday gifts for Monkey.

On her way to Monkey's home, Big Letter M met her friend, Mouse. Mouse was not happy because she was hungry. Big Letter M wanted to help Mouse so she looked into her bag.

Big Letter M took out the bag of marshmallows. She waved at Mouse and said, 'Mouse! Mouse! Come here.' Big Letter M showed Mouse the bag of marshmallows and asked, 'Do you want some marshmallows?' Mouse said, 'Oh yes! Thank you. I like marshmallows.' Mouse ate the marshmallows right away but she was still hungry, so she walked away trying to look for more food.

Big Letter M looked into her bag again and took out the mango. She waved at Mouse and said, 'Mouse! Mouse! Come here.' Big Letter M showed Mouse the mango and asked, 'Do you want a mango?' Mouse said, 'Oh yes! Thank you. I like mangoes.' Mouse ate the mango right away but she was still hungry, so she walked away trying to look for more food.

Big Letter M looked into her bag again and took out the carton of milk. She waved at Mouse and said, 'Mouse! Mouse! Come here.' Big Letter M showed Mouse the carton of milk and asked, 'Do you want some milk?' Mouse said, 'Oh yes! Thank you. I like milk.' Mouse finished the milk right away but she was still hungry.

Big Letter M had an idea. Big Letter M invited Mouse to the birthday party so she could enjoy more food there. Mouse was very happy and followed Big Letter M to Monkey's home.

Extended activities related to the story

- Art-and-craft activity: Decorating the letter M
 - Invite children to stick mouse stickers onto a letter M template by following the stroke order.
- Game: What's the time, Mouse?
 - Invite one child to be Mouse and stand at one end of the room with his/her back to the other children.
 - Guide the children on the opposite end (the starting point) to ask: 'What's the time, Mouse?'
 - Invite Mouse to reply with a time and the children take that number of steps towards Mouse.
 - Prompt the children to run back to the starting point if Mouse answers 'it's dinner time' before they are caught by Mouse.
 - Invite the first child who gets caught by Mouse to be Mouse in the next round.



story script
and suggested
extended activities

*RLEA with
simplified
teaching
steps,
other possible
activities
and a
suggested
book list as
reference

Real-life experience activity – Making mango jelly

- Show children the stick puppet of Big Letter M and tell children that she wants to make some mango jelly for Monkey. Tell children that Big Letter M's sister, Small Letter m, can help.
- Show a stick puppet of Small Letter m and invite children to greet her.
- Invite Small Letter m to demonstrate how to make mango jelly.
- Invite children to make mango jelly by guiding them to:
 - take a slice of mango and cut it into small pieces with a plastic knife.
 - use a spoon to put some mango jelly powder into a big bowl.
 - pour water into the big bowl and start stirring.
 - pour the mixture into some small bowls.
 - add the mango pieces into the small bowls and place them in the refrigerator.
- Provide children with ample chances to listen to and say the names of the objects: mango, mango jelly, and mango jelly powder.
- Guide children to make association between the letter and the words (e.g., mango, mango jelly).
- Invite children to thank Small Letter m and enjoy the mango jelly together when ready.



Other possible real-life experience activities and extended activities

- Making meatballs or muffins with brown play dough
- Playing a game: Matching mittens
 - Prepare four to six different kinds of materials (e.g., sand paper, fabric).
 - Cut two mitten shapes from each material.
 - Mix up the mittens.
 - Invite children to take turns picking out the mitten pairs.
- Making a mouse mask
- Making a cup of marshmallow milk



Suggested books

Book Title	Author(s)	ISBN
1. If You Give a Mouse a Cookie	Laura Numeroff	9780060245863
2. Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me	Eric Carle	9780887081774
3. Ten Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed	Annie Kubler	9780859537988
4. The Mitten	Jan Brett	9780399231094

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Letter pair: M m 2

*Real-life experience activity

Verbal Paths for the Formation of Letters

A “verbal path” is saying aloud the directions of strokes and curves when forming a letter. It helps children understand the distinctive features of different letters and get familiarised with the formation of letters. The table below shows the suggested verbal paths for both cases of the 26 letters. Teachers are advised to adopt these verbal paths as reference and adapt them in accordance with children’s learning needs.

Upper case letter formation		Lower case letter formation	
A	slant down, slant down, across	a	pull back, around, up, and down
B	pull down, up, around, and around	b	pull down, up, around
C	pull back and around	c	pull back and around
D	pull down, up, and around	d	pull back, around, up, and down
E	pull down, across, across, and across	e	across, pull back, and around
F	pull down, across, across	f	pull back, down, and across
G	pull back, around, across and down	g	pull back, around, up, down and curve around
H	pull down, pull down, across	h	pull down, up, over and down
I	pull down, across, across	i	pull down, dot
J	pull down, curve around, across	j	pull down, curve around, dot
K	pull down, slant in, slant out	k	pull down, slant in, slant out
L	pull down, across	l	pull down
M	pull down, slant down, slant down, pull down	m	pull down, up, over and down, over and down
N	pull down, slant down, up and down	n	pull down, up over, and down
O	pull back and around	o	pull back and around
P	pull down, up, and around	p	pull down, up, and around
Q	pull back and around, cross	q	pull back, around, up, and down
R	pull down, up, around, and slant down	r	pull down, up, and over
S	pull back, in, and around	s	pull back, in, and around
T	pull down, across	t	pull down, curve around, and across
U	pull down, around and up	u	pull down, around, up and down
V	slant down and up	v	slant down and up
W	slant down and up, slant down and up	w	slant down and up, slant down and up
X	slant down, slant down	x	slant down, slant down
Y	slant in, slant, and down	y	slant in, slant and down
Z	across, slant down, across	z	across, slant down, across

Adapted from:

Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (2018). *Leveled Literacy Intervention Green System*. (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

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Hong Kong Christian Service Lei Cheng Uk Nursery School
Hong Kong Christian Service Pario Kindergarten
Hong Kong Christian Service Shek Kip Mei Nursery School
Hong Kong Christian Service Times Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Ma Tau Chung Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Ocean Shores Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Operation Santa Claus Fanling Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Park'N Shop Staff Charitable Fund Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Portland Street Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children SIA Whampoa Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Sze Wu Shu Min Nursery School
Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Thomas Tam Nursery School
Kornhill Christian Anglo-Chinese Kindergarten
Lei Yue Mun Methodist Kindergarten
N.M.S. Lutheran Kindergarten
NTW & JWA Ltd Pok Hong Nursery School
Peace Evangelical Centre Kindergarten
Raimondi College Kindergarten Section
S.K.H. Holy Spirit Church Kindergarten
S.K.H. St. Barnabas' Church Kindergarten
S.K.H. St. Joseph's Church Kindergarten
St. Philip Lutheran Church Kindergarten
The Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong Cheerland Nursery School cum Kindergarten (Wanchai)
Tivoli Anglo-Chinese Kindergarten
Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong On Keung Nursery School
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