

## Science of Reading Small-Group Activities: Preschool & Pre-K

### Phonemic Awareness Fun With Sounds

**Objective:** Teachers will explore simple phonemic awareness activities that are appropriate for preschoolers and discuss how to integrate them into daily routines.

**Materials:**

- **Phonemic Awareness Activity Cards:**
  - **Rhyming:** "Find the picture that rhymes with *cat* (e.g., *hat*)."
  - **Sound Matching:** "Match the picture with the same beginning sound (e.g., sun and sock)."
  - **Clapping Syllables:** "Clap the syllables in the word *apple*."
  - **Initial Sound Identification:** "What is the first sound in *dog*?"
  - **Sound Blending:** "What word do these sounds make? /b/ /a/ /t/."
- **Sorting Mats:**
  - **Simple Tasks:** Basic rhyming and sound-matching activities
  - **Intermediate Tasks:** Activities like clapping syllables or blending simple sounds
  - **Challenging Tasks:** Activities like identifying initial sounds or blending more complex sounds

**Activity:**

1. In small groups, teachers sort the phonemic awareness activity cards into "simple," "intermediate," and "challenging" categories on the sorting mats based on their appropriateness for preschoolers.
2. Groups share their sorting choices and discuss how these activities can be integrated into circle time, transitions, or small-group work.
3. Discuss strategies for making phonemic awareness activities a playful and engaging part of the preschool day.

## Rhythms and Rhymes for Fluency

**Objective:** Teachers will explore rhythmic and rhyming activities that build early fluency skills in preschoolers.

**Materials:**

- **Nursery Rhymes:** Printed copies of simple rhymes like "Humpty Dumpty," "Jack and Jill," or "The Itsy Bitsy Spider"
- **Instruments:** Simple rhythm instruments, like tambourines, maracas, or rhythm sticks

**Activity:**

1. In small groups, teachers choose a nursery rhyme and practice saying it in different rhythmic patterns (e.g., clapping along or using rhythm sticks).
2. After practicing, groups try performing the rhyme together, focusing on maintaining rhythm and expression.
3. Discuss how these rhymes and rhythms can be used to build fluency, promote language play, and engage preschoolers in the sounds of language.
4. Brainstorm additional ways to incorporate rhythmic and rhyming activities throughout the day, such as during transitions or outdoor play.

## Vocabulary Building With Picture Walks

**Objective:** Teachers will explore how to use picture walks to build preschoolers' vocabulary and comprehension.

**Materials:**

- **Picture Books:** Age-appropriate books with rich illustrations, such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr., or *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown
- **Vocabulary Word Cards:** Cards with key vocabulary words from the book and corresponding pictures (e.g., *moon* with a picture of the moon, *bear* with a picture of a bear, etc.)

**Activity:**

1. In small groups, teachers do a picture walk through the book, discussing the illustrations and predicting what the story might be about, using the vocabulary word cards as prompts.
2. Each group selects a few key vocabulary words and creates simple activities for introducing these words to children (e.g., using the word in a sentence, acting it out, or drawing a picture of it).
3. Groups share their vocabulary activities and discuss how picture walks can enhance preschoolers' vocabulary learning and story comprehension.
4. Discuss how to make picture walks a regular part of story time and how to extend vocabulary learning into other areas of the classroom.

## Phonics Play With Letter Sounds

**Objective:** Teachers will explore simple phonics activities that introduce letter sounds to preschoolers in an engaging way.

**Materials:**

- **Letter Sound Cards:** Set of cards with letters and corresponding images (e.g., a card with the letter "A" and a corresponding picture card with an apple)
- **Matching Mats:** Mats with letters and spaces to place corresponding picture cards

**Activity:**

1. Each group receives a set of letter sound cards and matching mats.
2. Teachers work together to match the letter cards with the correct picture card, discussing the sound that each letter makes.
3. After completing the matches, groups discuss how to introduce these letter sounds to preschoolers, focusing on playful, hands-on methods, like singing, movement games, or sensory play (e.g., tracing letters in sand or using Play-Doh).
4. Share strategies for incorporating phonics play into daily routines and center activities.

## Comprehension Through Story Retelling

**Objective:** Teachers will practice using simple props and visuals to help preschoolers retell stories, building comprehension and sequencing skills.

### Materials:

- **Storybook:** A simple story with a clear sequence, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle or *The Three Little Pigs*
- **Story-Retelling Props:** Small felt pieces, puppets, or picture cards that represent key elements of the story (e.g., a caterpillar, a leaf, a butterfly, or the three pigs and their houses)

### Activity:

1. In small groups, teachers read the story aloud and then use the props to retell the story, taking turns to add to the narrative.
2. Groups discuss how these props can help preschoolers remember the sequence of events and understand the story better.
3. Share ideas for creating simple story-retelling kits for other popular preschool books, and discuss how retelling supports comprehension and language development.
4. Discuss ways to encourage children to engage in story retelling during free play or as part of a small-group activity.

## Oral Language With Story Starters

**Objective:** Teachers will explore ways to encourage oral language development through imaginative play and story creation.

### Materials:

- **Story-Starter Card Sets:** Cards with simple prompts and pictures to inspire stories (e.g., "Once upon a time, there was a magical tree . . ." with a picture of a tree, "A little bear went on an adventure to . . ." with a picture of a bear, etc.)
- **Puppets or Stuffed Animals:** Puppets or stuffed animals that align with the prompts for acting out the stories.

### Activity:

1. Each group receives a set of story-starter cards and chooses one card to create a short story together, using puppets or stuffed animals to act it out.
2. After creating their stories, groups discuss how to use story starters in the classroom to encourage children to use their imagination and develop their oral language skills.
3. Share ideas for incorporating story starters into daily routines, such as during circle time or as a choice during free play.
4. Discuss how to support children in expanding their vocabulary and sentence structure as they create and tell their stories.

## Integrating Literacy With Play

**Objective:** Teachers will brainstorm ways to integrate literacy skills into play-based learning experiences.

**Materials:**

- **Play-Center Planning Sheets:** Templates for planning how to incorporate literacy into different play centers (e.g., dramatic play, blocks, art, etc.)
- **Markers**
- **Chart Paper**

**Activity:**

1. In small groups, teachers are assigned a different play center (e.g., dramatic play, blocks, art).
2. Groups brainstorm and plan how to integrate literacy into their assigned play center using the chart paper and markers. Here are some examples:
  - **Dramatic Play:** Create a pretend grocery store with labeled items, shopping lists, and receipts to practice writing and recognizing letters and words.
  - **Blocks:** Include word cards that children can use to label their structures (e.g., "tower," "bridge," etc.), or encourage storytelling about what they've built.
  - **Art:** Provide materials for children to create their own storybooks or label their drawings with words.

3. Each group shares their literacy-integrated play-center ideas with the larger group.
4. Facilitate a discussion on the importance of play in early literacy development and how to create a literacy-rich environment in preschool classrooms.