C E L L

Center for Early Literacy Learning

Additional skill-building exercises to help teachers promote CHILDREN'S INTEREST-BASED LEARNING

There is much to be said for the old adage: *Practice makes perfect.* The following three exercises provide teachers and other early childhood professionals extra practice in following the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) learning model with the young children in their classes. These exercises are designed to help classroom teachers/ practitioners identify and use child interests to promote early literacy development.

The activities provide the teacher with more opportunities to practice, evaluate, and reflect about child interests. The intent is to take these practices into the classroom to provide the practitioner with an authentic, hands-on experience utilizing the CELL components.

Exercise 1

Activity:

> Informally observe one child over the course of a morning or afternoon for two or three hours. List what specific activities, materials, or people the child chooses when given the choice during play time.

Evaluate:

- What activities, materials, or people did you identify as being particularly interesting to the child?
- Which of these interests made the child laugh and smile?
- What activities did the child do repeatedly?
- List any new literacy learning opportunities that occurred for the child during these interest-based activities.

Reflect:

- List any literacy learning opportunities that *could* occur for the child during the interest-based activities. In what ways could you support literacy learning during one of these interest-based activities?
- How will you incorporate this child's interests into your lesson planning?
- How could you help this child's parent(s) understand the importance of his/her child's interests?

Exercise 2

Activity:

Choose one of the child interests you identified through observation in Exercise1.

Identify and write down three literacy-related activities you will provide based on one of these interests.

Over the course of a week, facilitate these activities with the child.

Evaluate:

- Were there any challenges in indentifying and facilitating these interest-based literacy learning activities with the child? If so, what were the challenges?

- How did the child respond to the activities? Did the child smile and laugh? Did the child actively participate in the activities? Did the child ask to repeat the activities?

- Did you notice a difference between the way the child was engaged in the interest-based literacy activities compared to other activities?

Reflect:

Using the checklist below, reflect on how you used child interests to promote literacy learning with the individual child from your class.

Child Interests Checklist

Use this checklist to identify the key features of using a child's interests as the basis for early literacy learning. Complete the checklist by indicating if you **did (Yes)** or **did not (No)** observe the child interest indicators listed below.

Did you identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that . . .	YES	NO
1. Capture and hold the child's attention?	☐	☐
2. Are the child's favorites?	☐	☐
3. Make the child smile and laugh?	☐	☐
4. Are especially exciting to the child?	☐	☐
5. The child choses most often?	☐	☐
6. The child works hard at doing?	☐	☐
7. Attract the child's attention?	☐	☐

Exercise 3

Activity:

Observe the children in your class during outdoor play. Write down some of the child interests that you observe. (What outdoor activities make the children smile and laugh? What outdoor activities do the children choose most often? What activities do the children work hard at doing? What activities excite the children? Etc.)

Think about literacy-learning opportunities that you could provide outdoors based on these interests.

Over the course of a week, provide these outdoor interest-based literacy opportunities for the children.

Evaluate:

- What interests did you identify? Were any of these different from what you've observed while indoors?

- What were the interest-based literacy learning activities that you provided during outdoor play?

- How did the children respond to these literacy activities? Did the children work hard at doing these activities? Did the children want to repeat these activities again and again? Were the children excited during the activities?

- What was your role during these activities? How did you support the children in actively participating in the activities?

Reflect:

Using the checklist below, reflect on how you used child interests to promote literacy learning with the children of your class.

Child Interests Checklist

Use this checklist to identify the key features of using a child's interests as the basis for early literacy learning. Complete the checklist by indicating if you **did (Yes)** or **did not (No)** observe the child interest indicators listed below.

Did you identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that . . .	YES	NO
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5. The child choses most often?	☐	☐
6. The child works hard at doing?	☐	☐
7. Attract the child's attention?	☐	☐