

*Especially for practitioners working with young children!* 

# Literacy-Rich Outings

*Literacy-Rich Experiences*

Infants often get to go along on activities with adults outside the home to do things like food shopping, visiting relatives, watching older siblings' ball games, eating out, and visiting the library or book store. Many of these activities provide infants opportunities to learn symbols, letters, and signs that help develop the earliest "reading" skills.

## What is the practice?

This practice involves an infant's exposure to symbols, signs, letters, words, books, and other familiar images that are part of what children typically experience out and about in their neighborhoods and communities.

## What does the practice look like?

An 8-month-old infant "goes along" to her older sibling's Saturday morning soccer game. Along the way, the family passes a familiar shopping center, a billboard with a picture of a dog, a fast food restaurant, and finally the sign with the name of the soccer field. Along the way, the parent says, "Look! That's where we go food shopping" or "See the doggy? You have a dog just like that." Labeling and pointing out familiar and regularly experienced objects provides infants the opportunity to make a connection between words and things that they see.



## How do you do the practice?

The many sights and sounds that young children experience on trips and visits in their neighborhoods and communities are opportunities to help little ones start to associate objects with words. Here are some things you might try when out and about with a child.

- Start with three or four things that the child gets to see on a regular basis. This can be anything that is easily recognizable and that is especially interesting to a child (e.g., playground, supermarket, a relative's home, McDonald's). Point out the most obvious features of the familiar object or place and describe it to the child ("There's grandma's house! Let's go see your grandma!").
- Anytime you and the child are in a familiar place (e.g., supermarket), pick three or four things that the child especially likes and which are easily recognizable to her (e.g., cereal boxes, fruits and vegetables, milk and bread). Let the child reach for and hold the familiar objects or foods. Describe and label each item for her.
- Find two or three places in the community or neighborhood that the child particularly enjoys. This can be a community pond or park, public library, a book store, or playground. Find activities that you can use to engage her in interactions and conversations.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child increasingly recognize objects?
- Does the child vocalize or get excited when she sees familiar people, places, and things?
- Does she seem to understand the words you use to describe people, events, and so forth?

# Take a look at more literacy-rich outings

## *See What I See!*

Five-month-old Caleb and his mother take the bus to go food shopping, run errands, and grab something for lunch. Caleb's home visitor explained to his mom the importance of talking to Caleb about all that is going on around him, so his mom makes it a point to describe the familiar sights on their route. These include his sister's school, the family's church, a playground, billboards, and so much more. Caleb's mother holds him on her lap so that he can see everything as they go by. As they approach any one sight, mom describes what he is about to see and asks him questions like "Do you see \_\_\_\_\_?" and "Where is the \_\_\_\_\_?" Caleb so much looks forward to his bus ride and playing the game with his mother.



## *More Than a Stroll*

Marc's caregiver, Gavin, pushes 6-month-old Marc down the street in his stroller to pick some things up at the supermarket. Along the way, there are many things to look at and talk about (trees, flowers, animals, people, cars, and so much more). Gavin names and talks about what he and Marc see between home and the store. Whenever Marc sees something that catches his attention, he reaches toward and points at whatever he sees. Gavin knows that if they stop and "talk about" what has excited Marc, the baby will listen to what he is saying to him. The more trips they have made to the store, the more Marc recognizes things that are familiar to him.

## *Super Marketing*

Food shopping is one of 16-month-old Luke's favorite things to do with his mother. He doesn't have much upper-body strength and cannot sit independently in the shopping cart seat, so his early interventionist showed his mom how to use her hand bag and her coat to prop him up so he can see what is going on. Mom has a routine for food shopping, and Luke has learned to recognize what they will be seeing and getting next. His mother announces what they are about to do: "Next we are going to get Luke's favorite food." She then asks him, "Do you want pretzels or cheese crackers?" Mom occasionally asks her son to point to things that he recognizes, and helps him hold items to get a better look before they go into the cart. By the time they are finished shopping, Luke has probably heard the names for 50 different things!

