

*Especially for practitioners working with young children!* 

# Literacy-Rich Word Activities

*Literacy-Rich Experiences*

Anyplace, anywhere, anytime, a child's neighborhood and community are rich in sights and sounds that are likely to catch his interest in listening and talking. Using language with young children in neighborhood and community activities exposes them to a world of words. Give the babies you work with plenty of opportunities to visit places that offer many early reading, talking, and drawing/writing opportunities for young children.

## What is the practice?

This practice uses formal and informal language and literacy learning activities to expose and introduce a child to listening to storytellers, reading books, playing word games, and so much more. The child's participation in these activities will give him opportunities to learn all kinds of pre- and early writing and reading skills.



## What does the practice look like?

A mother and her son have been attending a twice-a-week mother/infant play group for several months. This regular time with other babies and moms is filled with songs, games, and storytelling. Their favorite activity is a simple version of the song "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." The little boy especially likes this rhyme because he enjoys moving back and forth while his mother and the other mothers sing the song. He even gets into a sitting position and reaches his arms out to his mother to let her know he is ready to play!

## How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas about places to go and things to do to involve babies in literacy-rich neighborhood and community activities.

- Start by identifying things the child likes to do and enjoys doing. If an activity is interesting to him, chances are he will benefit from being involved in it.
- Look for places to go or things to do that involve activities that match the child's interests. Discover places that will provide him lots of literacy-learning experiences.
- Formal activities might include library story times, storytelling at parents'-morning-out programs, reciting nursery rhymes at parent/child play groups, and drawing and finger painting at a beginners' art workshop for wee ones. Don't overlook activities at book stores, community recreation centers, and similar places.
- Informal activities might include reciting nursery rhymes at a friend's house, listening to songs at a music store, looking at a menu at a restaurant, visiting a bookstore's children's section, and talking to the child on visits to a petting zoo. Almost any everyday activity can provide opportunities for talking, listening, and learning.

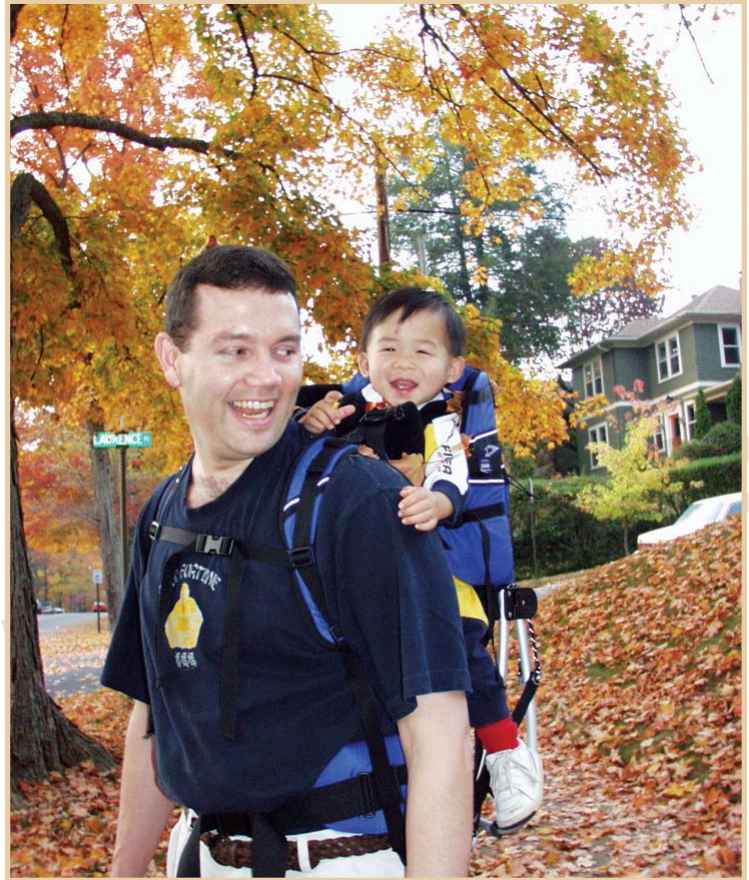
## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child get excited when involved in the activities?
- Does he try to do part of the activities?
- Does the child vocalize to get someone to continue an activity?

## Take a look at more fun with words

### *Walks and Words*

Thirteen-month-old Paige and her caregiver, Carter, enjoy neighborhood walks. Carter carries Paige in a baby backpack so she can see all that is going on. On their walks, Carter points out both familiar and novel things. He points to a neighbor's dog and crouches down so Paige can pet her. "There's Skipper!" Carter says. "Do you want to pet him?" Carter describes what Paige is doing and encourages her to "tell him" using gestures or sounds what she wants to do next. Paige sees a neighbor approaching. She starts to get excited and vocalizes as the person gets closer. Paige starts a "conversation" that includes many opportunities to listen and interact with her neighbor and Carter. These neighborhood walks are filled with lots of talking, listening, and communicating. Paige loves all the attention!



### *Five Times To "Talk"*

Two of 7-month-old Wyatt's favorite things to do when out with his caregiver, Lorena, are going to a baby exercise class and swimming at a recreation center. They are his favorite things because there is so much to see, do, and hear. He is "all ears and eyes." The baby exercise class includes lots of nursery rhymes, fingerplays, and singing that Wyatt so much enjoys. The infant swimming class includes music and lots of "dancing" while in the water! While involved in these activities, Lorena describes and explains what they are doing and encourages Wyatt to use gestures and vocalizations to tell her "what he thinks" about all of the activities. These adult-child play episodes have become a way for Lorena and Wyatt to "talk" to each other while having fun.