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# Incorporating Literacy Props in Preschool Play

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Incorporating Literacy Props in Preschool Play

by

Andrea Guck

May 2012

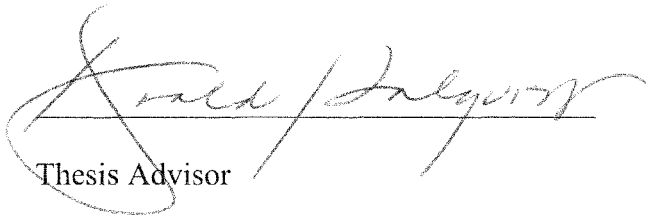
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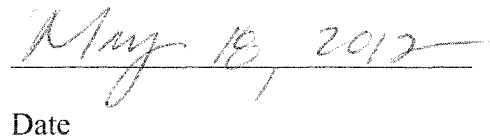
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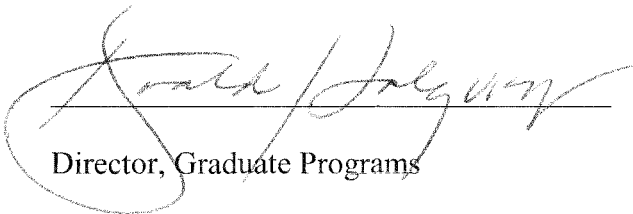
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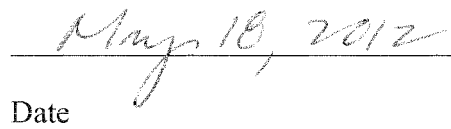
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## Chapter One: Introduction

“It’s time for centers everyone!” the teacher exclaims as the preschoolers quickly jump up from their spots on the carpet and race toward the different play stations in the classroom. Joey and Dominic immediately start pulling wooden blocks off the shelf in the block center and together begin stacking the rectangular blocks one on top of the other. Dominic happily exclaims “Come on, Joey! Let’s build the tallest tower ever!” Tommy plays next to Joey and Dominic, building his own tower out of the wooden blocks. He frequently looks over at his two classmates, comparing his building to theirs.

Once in the dramatic play center, Aiden immediately puts on a mail carrier’s costume, complete with a coat, cap, and bag marked “Post Office.” Emma, Nicole, and Leah are playing in the opposite side of the dramatic play center. Emma quickly takes charge and designates their roles by explaining who is going to be “the mommy,” “the big sister,” and “the baby.” The other girls seem excited to take on the assigned roles.

Cameron and Jack begin using the bucket of stamps to make designs in large chunks of play dough at one of the tables.

The lead teacher places herself at the art center with Amelia. The teacher has set up markers, crayons, and blank pieces of paper. The teacher explains to Amelia that she would like her to create a picture of herself for the class’s “All About Me” book. Amelia picks up a brown crayon and starts sketching the shape of her hair.

Jesse and Nathan are playing in the sensory table where they are excitedly pushing toy trucks around in the dirt and running around the table. While doing this, they are accidentally spilling dirt on to the floor. The teacher notices this, and tells them to stop and go to the reading center. Once in the reading center, they start laughing and throwing pillows at one another. The teacher looks up from the art center and states “Boys, you need to find a book to look at and sit quietly in the reading center!” The boys unwillingly select a book, glance at the cover and then begin talking about their favorite video game.

### **Significance of Problem**

For individuals who have ever spent time in a preschool classroom, this description above may seem very ordinary; children interacting with their classmates, building with blocks, playing with toys, and creating art projects. However, as I observe the behaviors of the children, I can't help but think about all of the great literacy opportunities that could be infused into the centers to support and enhance the children's literacy development. In the vignette above the children are engaged in oral language, which is crucial for social and emotional development. Yet there is much potential for other things that could be done to support the children's literacy development. There are a wide variety of literacy-related activities that the children can participate in as they play at the different centers. For instance, writing utensils, paper, and envelopes could be placed in the dramatic play center so that children can begin to experiment with writing. The children at the play dough station might be

encouraged to form letters or write their names on their self portrait. Instead of using the reading center as a form of punishment for undesired behaviors, books could be introduced to the children in an intriguing way so that they become excited about this center as well. One way of doing would be to have the lead teacher or assistant teacher welcome the children into the reading center to take part in exciting book readings.

Morrow and Rand (1991) define “play” as the “ideal setting, which allows the young child to practice, elaborate and extend emergent literacy abilities” (p. 397). Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) define emergent literacy as “the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading and writing” (p. 849). Whitehurst and Lonigan explain that emergent literacy skills developed during the preschool years include language, which includes vocabulary and phonological knowledge; conventions of print, where children demonstrate knowledge of the ways books are arranged; knowledge of letters, which involves children identifying specific letters; and linguistic awareness which enables children to distinguish between letters, phonemes, and words. Morrow and Rand (1991) state that the specific literacy skills children acquire through play include sharing stories aloud, locating words on paper, experimenting with writing, and book handling.

I have observed in several preschool classrooms and I have had a career as a preschool teacher for the past two years. Based on my observations and teaching practices, I recognize that the majority of learning that takes place among

preschoolers occurs through active participation in organized center-based activities. The typical center-based activities that I have observed are blocks, reading, art, sensory, and dramatic play. I have witnessed that preschoolers spend the majority of instructional time involved in “center-based play”. I define “center-based play” as the activities that children engage in as they move from one learning center to another. I propose to find out how literacy can be incorporated into environment where center-based play is encouraged in order to maximize young children’s emergent literacy skills.

I believe that it is crucial for young children to have opportunities to engage in more literacy-enhanced play. Neuman and Roskos (1992) examined two different groups of preschoolers. In the first group, or “intervention group,” the researchers placed a variety of familiar literacy objects in the play environment, while the second group served as the control group who were exposed to no changes to the classroom environment. For six months, a video camera, placed in each of the classrooms, documented the behaviors of the children in the two settings. Neuman and Roskos concluded that “children in the intervention group engaged in over 10 times the amount of literacy-related play” (p. 216). This literacy-related play included more experimenting with reading and writing, book handling, and meaning negotiation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Through this study, I will examine the importance of incorporating age-appropriate literacy activities into center-based play activities. I believe that play in

the preschool setting involves children interacting with one another in a variety of settings in order to make sense of the world around them. I have chosen to conduct this study in order to understand the effects of incorporating literacy activities into center-based play activities. Christie and Roskos (2009) found that “play in the preschool years has the potential to provide young children with a highly engaging and meaningful context for learning essential early literacy concepts and skills” (p. 1). Therefore, I purpose to study how integrating literacy opportunities into play-based centers affects the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of preschoolers.

As an individual who is a preschool teacher, I also purpose to conduct this study to help improve my practice as an early childhood educator. I feel that conducting this study will help me continue to develop and demonstrate my thorough knowledge of developmentally appropriate instruction of preschoolers.

Another purpose of this study is to help me refine my skills as a researcher. I have spent 20 years of my life as a student and I know that I have acquired a wide variety of skills that will assist me in obtaining new knowledge. These skills include sorting through published resources to support my own research; collaborating with peers and professors on ways to improve my writing; and revising drafts before submitting a finished piece. However, I also recognize the fact that I still have much to learn as a researcher. For instance, I want to learn how to conduct high-quality interviews of teachers; how to analyze data to look for patters; and how to examine my own research to determine limitations and plans for future research.

Through this study, I intend to answer the question: How does incorporating literacy props into center-based play support the literacy development of preschoolers?

### **Study Approach**

For this study, I will spend an hour each day observing in my preschool classroom. I intend to observe the children as they engage in play-based centers. The preschool is located in an urban setting and serves many local families. The participants will be a group of eighteen preschool children (9 females and 9 males) ages four to five years old. The student population within the classroom is 90 percent African American (8 females and 8 males) and 20 percent Hispanic (1 female and 1 male).

I will observe the group of eighteen preschoolers as they participate in center-based play activities for approximately six weeks. For the first two weeks of the study, my role will be to observe the preschoolers as they play in the center-based activities. Throughout the remaining four weeks of the study, I plan to incorporate a variety of literacy related activities into one of the centers each week. For instance, I would like to place myself in the reading center to conduct interactive read-alouds with the students where I can demonstrate my thinking as I read a story; I will place various writing utensils such as paper, pencils and crayons in the dramatic play center to allow the children to experiment with writing; I will place foam letters in the

sensory table and create letters out of play dough or shaving cream with the students while discussing the sounds associated with each letter.

While observing, I will record field notes in order to keep track of the events and conversations that occur among the children (See Appendix A). Throughout the first two weeks, I anticipate that the notes will help me document what is occurring in the classroom prior to introducing the students to literacy props within the centers. During the remaining four weeks, I hope to record how the students interact with the different literacy props within the different centers.

Since I am a teacher in this classroom, I plan to conduct an interview with my co-teacher in our classroom along with teachers from other classrooms within the preschool (See Appendix B). Through the interviews, I hope to gain insights into the value that preschool teachers place on literacy in an environment where children are encouraged to learn through play.

### **Rationale**

I have chosen to conduct this study in a preschool classroom because I am currently working as a preschool teacher in my own classroom. I enjoy this career choice and I want to continue to work within preschool settings. I decided to specifically focus on the topic of play because play is the essential means through which preschoolers learn because, as Fallah, Janani, Mohammadian, Mallahi, and Jamali (2011) point out, “playing makes learning joyful for children” (p. 337). In addition, Christie and Roskos (2001) found that play can ultimately aide in the



development of children's emergent literacy skills, which are essential in the cognitive development of preschoolers. The researchers state that "children's early 'hands-on' experiences with language and literacy in everyday social activities give rise to the internal mental processes that are needed to do the intellectual work of reading and writing activity" (p. 60).

My goal for this study is to incorporate developmentally appropriate literacy activities into center-based play. Not only do I want to see how this study impacts the development of preschoolers, but I also want to help my preschoolers in their acquisition of emergent literacy skills.

### **Summary**

During my initial observations of my classroom where I will be conducting my six-week study, I noticed that my preschoolers could be participating in more literacy-related activities as they play in the different centers. It is clear that the preschoolers are engaging in oral language, yet there are many other opportunities for literacy-based play that could be occurring. My goal for this study is to incorporate developmentally appropriate literacy activities into center-based play. I plan to spend six weeks observing in my preschool classroom where I will gather data in the form of observations, field notes, and interviews of preschool teachers. Not only do I want to see how this study effects the development of preschoolers, but I also want to help my preschoolers in their acquisition of emergent literacy skills.

Through their study in a preschool classroom, Morrow and Rand (1991) discovered that by incorporating literacy objects into play settings with adult guidance, students were more likely to demonstrate “literacy behaviors” (p. 400). Therefore through my study, I propose to introduce new literacy materials into the play-based centers of the preschool classroom. I will then observe how the children interact with these materials by recording their behaviors. By gaining more insight into the incorporation of literacy props into play settings, I believe that this study will help me to improve my practice as an educator. In addition, I will also refine my skills as a researcher by learning how to thoroughly analyze data and identify limitations within my study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Through this study, I intend to answer the question: How does incorporating literacy props into center-based play support the literacy development of preschoolers? In order to answer this question, I must consider the ways in which preschoolers develop emergent literacy skills; the importance of play in the preschool environment; and how to incorporate literacy props into play activities.

### **Emergent Literacy**

Saracho and Spodek (2006) believe that children's cognitive development of literacy skills starts to take shape before obtaining organized reading and writing instruction because children are constantly being exposed to print in their everyday lives. Williams and Rask (2003) explain that children start to develop emergent literacy behaviors in a variety of ways. For instance, when adults help draw attention to print within the environment, children begin to understand "the important message that print conveys meaning" (Williams & Rask, 2003, p. 528). Williams and Rask also state that when a book is read several times to children, they begin to understand certain concepts about print, and hearing poems and nursery rhymes will help children to develop phonemic awareness. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) report that these types of emergent literacy behaviors are crucial for a child's development during the preschool years.

Fallah, Janani, Mohammadian, Mallahi, and Jamali (2011) divided the preschool years into three different time periods: infancy, which occurs from three to

eighteen months of age; toddler, which occurs from eighteen months to three years of age; and early childhood, which occurs from three-to-six years of age.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) state that emergent literacy skills occur during the early childhood period and define “emergent literacy” as “the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to the conventional forms of reading and writing” (p. 849). There are specific emergent literacy behaviors that children who range in age from three-to-six years old should be demonstrating.

Whitehurst and Lonigan report that during this time, children are typically demonstrating skills in language, conventions of print, knowledge of letters, linguistic awareness, phoneme-grapheme correspondence, and emergent reading. The authors state that as children are developing language skills, they are realizing that letters have different sounds and are then associating those sounds to different words. In conventions of print, children are beginning to comprehend the fact that specific rules apply when reading books, such as reading left-to-right, that pictures are different from words, and the concept of punctuation. With knowledge of letters, children are beginning to recognize and identify the names of the different letters. Whitehurst and Lonigan describe linguistic awareness as the ability to identify different aspects of language such as words and phonemes, while phoneme-grapheme correspondence requires children to understand that letters are linked to specific phonemes. With emergent reading, Whitehurst and Lonigan report that children may be pretending to read books or are reading print that exists within their environment, which strengthens the concept that meaning exists within a text.

Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) recognize that during the preschool years, it is appropriate for children to demonstrate emergent writing behaviors, which may include using pictures to convey meaning. In addition, the researchers state “invented spelling” is often used where children attempt to spell words using unconventional forms of spelling.

Saracho and Spodek (2006) observe that “in emergent literacy, a play and literacy relationship becomes more striking as play helps young children explore and comprehend the interactions between these two realms of activity” (p. 708).

### **Importance of Play in Preschool**

In order to successfully discuss the role of play in the preschool classroom, one must first provide a definition of the term “play”. Saracho (2001) states that “through play, young children engage in a diverse set of play experiences such as imitative experiences, communication of ideas, concrete objects and several socialization levels. When children play, they acquire information about their intellectual and social world” (p. 402). This definition is supported by the work of constructivist theorists Jean Piaget (1962) and Lev S. Vygotsky (1976), who have conducted numerous studies in the area of play among young children as it pertains to literacy. Saracho and Spodek (2006) report that Jean Piaget argued that play allowed children to learn about the world around them while Lev Vygotsky theorized that children learn through their interactions with peers. When interacting with peers,

children are given the opportunity to express their thoughts, solve problems, and obtain new knowledge (Saracho & Spodek, 2006).

Bodrova and Leong (2003) also studied Vygotsky's beliefs about play in the preschool years. According to Bodrova and Leong (2003) and Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010), Vygotsky believed that through a child's use of symbolic play in dramatic play, he/she is not only developing oral language skills, but also the skill of deriving meaning from symbols. For instance, Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) use specific examples of children deriving meaning from symbols including pretending that a block is a car or assigning family roles during dramatic play.

Wolfgang and Sanders (2001) report that this skill of deriving meaning from symbols is essential in learning to read because "reading, in its most fundamental definition, is a process of deriving meaning from the printed page or written words. Understanding of meaning is related to cognitive development and the ability to understand representation" (Wolfgang and Sanders, 2001, p. 116).

Mielonen and Paterson (2009) theorized that "play offers a natural way for children to express ideas. Children learn by watching and imitating situations around them" (p. 17). From this notion, Mielonen and Paterson (2009) conducted a study in which they observed, interviewed, videotaped and collected drawings and journal entries from two five-year-old female students while the students were engaged in play. The goal of the study was to focus on specific examples of literacy skills that the students were exhibiting through the engagement of play. Based on the findings from the study, Mielonen and Paterson (2009) were able to conclude that "the

benefits of play for language development include the use of oral language, complex cognitive abilities, reading and writing skills, challenges, experimentation, approximations, and negotiations” (p. 30).

Vukelich (1994) provides another definition of play: “a social context embedded in the classroom play centers” (p. 155). Neuman and Roskos (1992) discuss that common play centers in the preschool classroom include dramatic play, a classroom library, and a writing center.

### *Dramatic Play*

Saracho and Spodek (2006) reflect on the work of Piaget (1962) who believed that through dramatic play, children can develop the skill of recall because dramatic play encourages children to reenact what they have experienced. Saracho and Spodek (2006) go on to state that the skill of recall becomes useful to students once they are expected to remember facts and draw meaning from a specific context in formal literacy instruction. When Mielonen and Paterson (2009) conducted their study on how children develop literacy skills through play, they observed two students as they participated in dramatic play. Based on their observations, Mielonen and Paterson (2009) were able to conclude that as children engage in dramatic play, they are not only developing language skills, but they are engaging in role playing and utilizing problem solving strategies. This will eventually help the children as they begin to comprehend new texts. For instance, Mielonen and Paterson (2009) specifically point

out that when children engage in dramatic play, they are assigning roles and developing character personas and plot, which is similar to what they will face when reading through texts.

### *Classroom Library*

Teacher-researcher, Rowe (2007) conducted a study in which she examined the role of book-related dramatic play among preschoolers. Rowe observed and interviewed a group of 16 preschoolers twice a week while also observing the actions of her own son in her home. During this time, Rowe (2007) gathered props related to the books that she read to students in the classroom library. The students were encouraged to play with the toys, express ideas, and participate in conversations regarding the stories. Incorporating toys into the classroom library had several affects on the students' literacy behaviors. For instance, Rowe (2007) reported that by allowing children to interact with the props while reading books, the children reacted with strong emotions to the stories, participated in conversations with teachers and peers, sought out the author's meaning, discussed the roles of the different characters, and began reading for enjoyment.

### *Writing*

Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) have found that play has been proven to have a positive impact on young children's writing skills as well. Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) examined the role of play during Writer's Workshop by observing



a group of four students in a multiage kindergarten/first grade classroom. The researchers observed the children during their writing time, where they were able to interact with their peers. During this time, Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson observed the group of children engaging in “play” behaviors including singing songs, displaying strong emotions, and engaging in pretend play. Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson argue that each of these demonstrated behaviors positively affected the writing of the students in the study. For instance, when the students were able to sing with their peers while writing, they established a classroom community where everyone felt comfortable enough to express their ideas. As students displayed their feelings, Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) reported that “the expression of emotion served the purpose of bringing a kind of authenticity to the Writer’s Workshop environment” (p. 222). In addition, engaging in pretend play with peers allowed the children to use the fantasies that they created as inspiration toward their written work.

Saracho and Spodek (2006) indicate that play settings can ultimately lead to literacy learning because children have the opportunity to practice literacy skills, such as the exploration of print, in an environment that encourages social interaction. Furthermore, Christie and Roskos (2009) argue that play can ultimately help preschoolers to develop literacy skills including print awareness, purposes for writing, and comprehension techniques such as self-correction. Christie and Roskos (2009) argue that this type of cognitive development can be fostered through “literacy-enriched play settings” (p. 2).

## Literacy Props

Saracho and Spodek (2004) state that play offers children the chance to experience reading and writing in a unique way which will allow them to develop literacy skills. The term “literacy” is defined by Saracho and Spodek (2004) as “behaviors that focus on receptive (listening, reading) and expressive (speaking, writing) language” (p. 715). Vukelich (1994) formulated a literacy definition by stating that it is “the ability to read environmental print” (p. 157). Tsao (2008) explained that literacy is the skill of deciphering messages from others as a way of communicating oral language. Tsao (2008) explains that young children are able to develop literacy skills through interacting with others. Christie & Roskos (2001) believed that:

Children’s early ‘hands-on’ experiences with language and literacy in everyday social activities give rise to the internal mental processes that are needed to do the intellectual work of reading and writing activity. Play activity in particular affords these experiences, creating bold and subtle opportunities for children to use language in literate ways and to use literacy as they see it practiced (p. 60).

Christie & Roskos (2001) state that children’s play environments need to be enriched in ways that support literacy development.

One way to encourage literacy development within the preschool setting is to incorporate literacy props within play centers. Saracho and Spodek (2004) claim that:

Literacy skills for children in preschool, kindergarten and multi-age programs have been found to be developed through play by embedding literacy materials within play settings. The results of these studies indicated an increase in children's use of literacy materials and engagement in literacy acts (p. 718).

Lysaker, Wheat, and Benson (2010) state that "the addition of literate tools, pads of paper, pencils, markers, etc., to play centers has been shown to increase children's engagement in literacy for real life purposes and encouraged approximations of adult literacy use necessary for literate growth" (p. 212).

Morrow and Rand (1991) conducted a study in which they explored how the classroom environment affects a child's development of literacy skills. The researchers observed one hundred seventy students, who ranged in ages from four-to-six- years old, in thirteen different preschool or kindergarten classes. The students were divided into four different groups. Morrow and Rand report that the teachers in the first group were required to incorporate books, pencils and paper into the dramatic play and block centers and to explain how to use the different materials. The teachers of the second group incorporated themed literacy materials into the dramatic play area and to explain their use. The themed materials were materials that were typically found in a veterinarian's office including magazines, signs, books, calendars, a telephone book, writing materials, and doctors' kits. Teachers of the third group also incorporated themed materials into the dramatic play center but did not explain the purpose of the materials. There were no changes made to the fourth group and the

teachers continued to implement traditional curriculum without making changes to the classroom environment.

Morrow and Rand (1991) observed the different groups for approximately six weeks. During the first three weeks, the children in all of the groups were observed without any changes being made to their classroom environment. The children were then observed during the remaining three weeks once the changes were implemented. Based on their observations, Morrow and Rand concluded that the children in the first and second group displayed a much greater amount of literacy-related behaviors than the children in the third and fourth group. The literacy-related behaviors include book-handling, story-telling, pretend reading, drawing, using invented spelling, typing on the computer, and paper handling. Therefore Morrow and Rand “concluded that preschool and kindergarten children are likely to engage in more voluntary literacy behaviors during free-play periods when literacy materials are introduced and teachers guide children to use those materials” (p. 399).

Neuman and Roskos (1992) conducted a similar study where they rationalized that teachers can ultimately increase the amount of literacy experiences that children have by simply altering the physical environment of the classroom. In their study, Neuman and Roskos observed ninety-one preschoolers who ranged in age from three-to-five-years old from two different day care centers. The first day care center was chosen as the non-intervention classroom while the second center was chosen as the intervention classroom and both centers were observed from approximately seven months through the use of a video camera.

In the intervention classroom, Neuman and Roskos (1992) placed literacy objects into familiar play settings, including the dramatic play area, classroom library, arts and crafts table, and “office” area while no changes to the classroom were made in the nonintervention classroom. After carefully reviewing the play frames from the video camera, Neuman and Roskos concluded that “the infusion of literacy objects along with physical design changes in play settings significantly influenced the nature of children’s literacy behaviors” (p. 216). The literacy behaviors that were observed included reading and writing activities along with handling of books. Neuman and Roskos reported that children within the intervention group “more often negotiated meaning through language” (p. 217); “used writing instruments in more functional ways” (p. 218); “incorporated the literacy objects into their play themes” (p. 219); and “engaged in more object transformations with the literacy props than those in the nonintervention group” (p. 219). Therefore from the findings of this study, Neuman and Roskos (1992) concluded that by incorporating literacy props into familiar areas of the classroom, children demonstrated more literacy-related behaviors through play.

Christie and Roskos (2009) agree that incorporating themed literacy materials into play settings can be beneficial to the development of preschoolers. However, they point out that when incorporating literacy props into centers, teachers should “make direct connections between literacy-enriched play centers and the academic parts of the curriculum, rather than having play experiences as a ‘stand alone’ activity” (p. 3). By explicitly explaining literacy props, Christie and Roskos (2009) believe that children will be more likely to use play as a means to develop literacy

skills. For instance, Christie and Roskos (2009) point out that teachers can point out signs that are placed in the dramatic play center or explain the purposes of different writing materials. Explicitly explaining literacy props will also help to ensure that children use these materials through their independent play.

### **Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures**

One of the purposes of this study is to examine the use of literacy props in center-based play and to examine what if any effect the preschoolers' use of the props has on their cognitive development. Another purpose of this study is to help improve my practice as an early childhood educator.

#### **Research Question**

Through conducting this study over a six-week period of time, I propose to answer the research question: How does incorporating literacy props into center-based play support the literacy development of preschoolers?

#### **Participants**

The proposed participants are eighteen preschool children (10 females and 8 males). The children range in age from four year old to five years old. The demographics of the children are 90 percent African American (9 females and 7 males) and 10 percent Hispanic (1 female and 1 male).

Since this is such a small number of participants, I do not plan on selecting specific preschoolers to observe. I would like to observe the actions of all eighteen preschoolers and, more specifically, their actions in center-based play activities.

I will also seek the opinions through an interview with my co-teacher. My co-teacher is a Caucasian female who has worked at the preschool for five years. I also

intend to interview at least two other teachers who teach in preschool different classrooms within the same school.

### **Context of the Study**

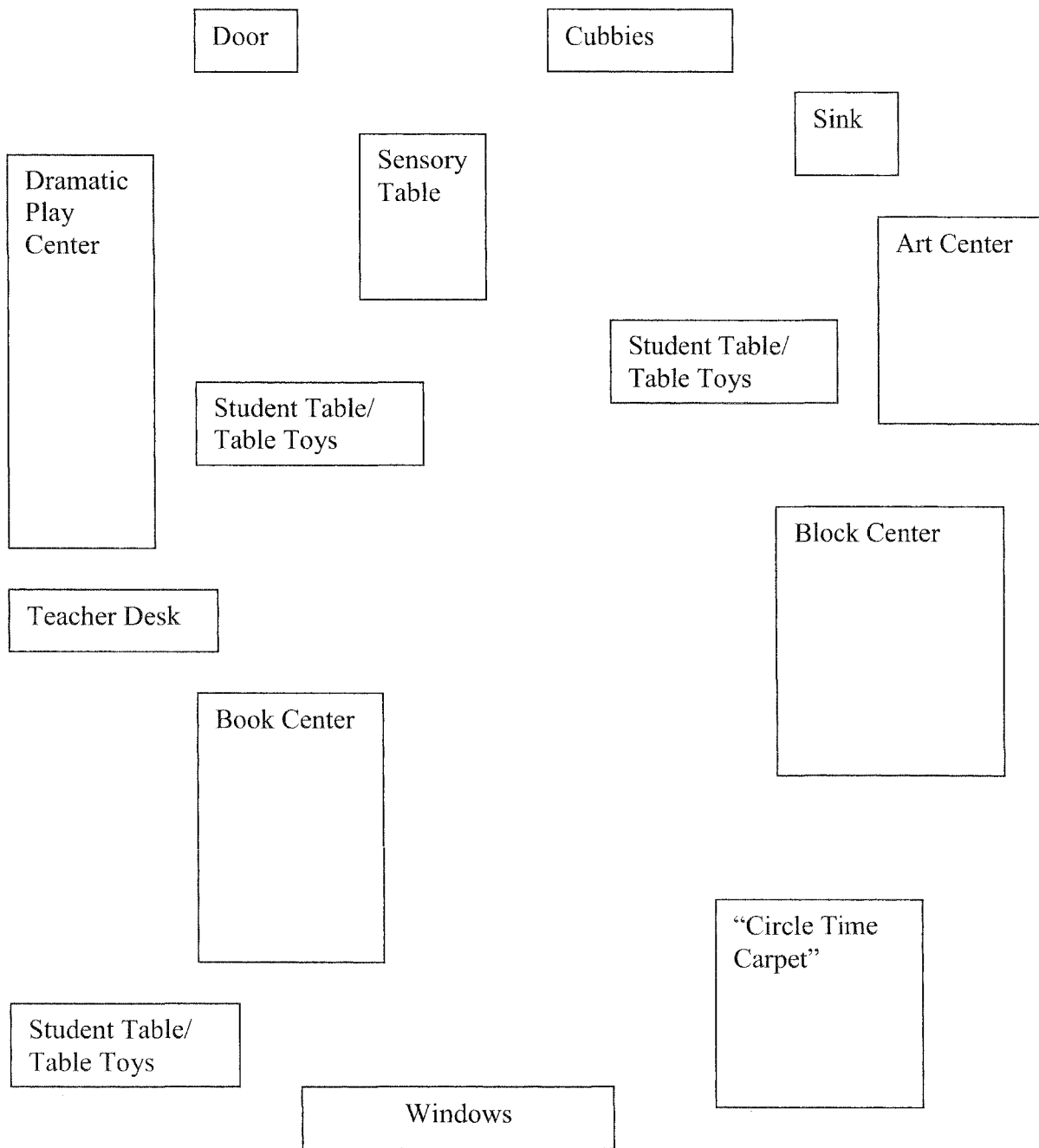
The study will take place in my preschool classroom that is located in an urban setting. All of the children who attend the preschool are residents of the community and are present in the classroom for a full day.

Upon entering the classroom, there is a set of cubbies to the left where the preschoolers store their personal belongings. In front of the cubbies is a “Sensory Table”, which contains a variety of different materials including water, sand, dirt, rice, shovels, and buckets. Across from the “Sensory Table” is a sink which is accessible to the preschoolers. Next to the sink is an “Art Center” where the preschoolers have access to paint, paper, easels, paint brushes, markers, crayons, glue, scissors, tape, glitter, and stamps. On the opposite side of the “Sensory Table” is the “Dramatic Play Center”, which contains costumes, hats, child-sized furniture, plastic dishes and food, and cash registers. In the center of the classroom are child-size tables and chairs where the preschoolers play with table toys and eat meals. Next to the “Dramatic Play Center” is the teacher’s desk and the “Book Center” which contains a variety of children’s books, pillows and stuffed animals. Next to the “Book Center” is another child-sized table where students can play games, puzzles and other table toys. On the far side of the classroom is the “Circle Time Carpet” where the preschoolers gather to play games, sing songs, and read stories. Next to the “Circle Time Carpet” is



the “Block Center” where the preschoolers play with magnetic tiles, animals, and a variety of building blocks.

**Figure 3.1: Map of Classroom**



### **My Positionality as the Researcher**

I am a 24 year old Caucasian female living in a suburb in the western New York area. I received my bachelor's degree in early childhood and childhood education from Niagara University in May 2009. Then in August 2009, I began the journey towards my master's degree in childhood literacy at The College at Brockport, SUNY, which I intend to complete in May 2012.

I am currently working as an assistant teacher in the preschool classroom in which I will be conducting this study. Due to this opportunity, I have a great desire to continue working with preschoolers in the future and I believe that conducting this study will help me expand my knowledge of the development of preschoolers as it pertains to literacy.

As an educator, I believe that the preschool years provide teachers with the unique opportunity to prepare children for educational success that they will carry with them throughout the rest of their lives. I believe that preschoolers not only learn from teachers but they also learn through social interactions with their peers. I think that "centers" provide young children with a great opportunity to develop social and emotional skills while engaging in meaningful activities that will assist in cognitive development. I believe that providing literacy props within play-based centers will have a positive effect on young children's literacy development. By incorporating literacy props into centers, children will be able to experiment with reading, writing, and oral language. Young children can choose whether to engage with the props

independently or with peers, which may ultimately help them share their ideas and learn from one another.

### **Data Collection**

I plan to collect data through the use of observations and interviews.

#### **Observations**

I intend to observe the eighteen preschoolers for six weeks. Although I am in teaching in the classroom for the entire day, I plan to specifically observe the children for one hour each day for the purpose of this study. During this time, I will observe the children as they engage in “centers.” For the first two weeks, I will strictly observe the children as they interact with their peers. In the remaining four weeks, I will incorporate literacy props such as foam letters and writing utensils into the different centers and observe how the children interact with these props. I also want to observe the actions and verbal cues given by the “lead” teacher in the preschool classroom. During my observations, I plan to record field notes on the actions and dialogue of children (See Appendix A).

#### **Interviews**

I will conduct an interview with my co-teacher (see Appendix B). I plan to conduct the interview during the first week of my observations. I will administer the interview by reading the questions aloud and then record the teacher’s responses.

During the remaining four weeks of the study, I will interview at least two other individuals who are teachers within the preschool.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Observations**

I will exam the field notes that I record during my observations, by reading and rereading and noting the ways in which the children engage with the literacy props in the center-based play activities. I anticipate that the process of reading and rereading will reveal patterns in the behaviors of the children as well as the teachers.

### **Interviews**

I will examine the responses of all three preschool teachers by reading and rereading the interview data to understand how they are incorporating literacy into the classroom setting. I also want to learn the value they place on literacy. I will engage in a process of triangulation with the interview responses as I try to determine patterns in the beliefs of the educators while also drawing on the observation data that I obtain from the children.

## **Procedures**

### **Week One**

- I will strictly observe in my classroom. During “centers,” I will note how the children interact with one another and also how they play with the different materials in the various play centers.
- I will conduct an interview with my co-teacher.

### **Week Two**

- I will continue my role as an observer and my actions will mirror Week One. I will also continue to brainstorm literacy props that I can incorporate into the different play centers.

### **Week Three**

- I will continue to make observations and field notes. However, I will shift to play a more active role during “centers”. I anticipate that I will conduct read alouds in the reading center. I will demonstrate my thinking aloud as I read to the children and will also point out important details. I think I will include stuffed animals that represent the characters in the story, which will hopefully grab the children’s’ interests.

#### **Week Four**

- I will incorporate a series of literacy props of writing utensils into the dramatic play center, which may include paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and envelopes. I will observe how the children experiment with writing utensils.
- I will conduct an interview with another preschool teacher in a different preschool classroom.

#### **Week Five**

- I will incorporate literacy props into the sensory center. For instance, I will add foam letters and rice into the sensory center and participate with the children as they hunt for the letters in the rice. I will also have discussions with the children about the different letters and their sounds.
- I will conduct an interview with another preschool teacher in a different preschool classroom.

#### **Week Six**

- At one of the table centers, I will use play dough or shaving cream to help the children create letters. Similar to Week Five, I will participate with the children by discussing the letters, their sounds, or where they have seen the letters before (signs, classroom walls.)

### **Criteria for Trustworthiness**

I will conduct this study for an hour each day for a period of six weeks, a process that will ensure prolonged engagement. To maintain trustworthiness, I will collect data through a variety of sources. I will conduct observations and record field notes each time that I observe the children as they play and I will obtain the opinions of three different preschool teachers through individual interviews. I will engage in triangulation as I analyze the field notes taken from the observations and the interviews. I will guarantee dependability by describing in great detail each of the steps in the research process.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of this study is that I will only be observing the children during the same time each day for the purpose of the study. This will help my study because I do want to focus on “centers” time but it is also a limitation because I will not discuss other incidents that may happen throughout the day as they pertain to literacy.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

During the first two weeks of this study, I strictly observed in the classroom without incorporating any additional literacy props into the various centers. During the remaining four weeks of the study, I added literacy props into one center each week and then observed how the students used the props.

In addition to observing the students and recording field notes, I also interviewed three preschool teachers. The first interview was with my co-teacher who is present in the classroom on a daily basis. I then conducted interviews with my two colleagues who teach at the preschool level in different classrooms within the same school.

### **Research Question**

Through this study, I sought to answer the research question: How does incorporating literacy props into center-based play support the literacy development of preschoolers?

### **Weeks One and Two**

During the first two weeks of this study, I observed my 18 students as they participated in the various center-based activities, watching as the students interacted with the classroom materials and recording their dialogue with one another. I did not add any additional literacy props to the classroom environment. I observed student participation in six main areas: the Block Center, Dramatic Play, the Sensory Table,



the Table Centers, the Reading Center, and the Art Center. I spent approximately 10 minutes in each center during the first two weeks.



**Figure 4.1: Block Center**

### **Block Center**

In the Block Center, the students had access to a wide range of materials, including wooden blocks, which they would often stack to create towers, buildings, and rocket ships. Many of the students enjoyed interacting with the magnetic tiles to create cages for zoo animals, castles, and garages for cars. The students linked train tracks together and pushed around plow trucks and dump trucks while making motor noises. The students seemed to enjoy working together to accomplish tasks. For instance, on one occasion, the students brought over all of the chairs from one of the tables, set them in straight lines, and pretended to be riding in a train. On a different day, several students worked together to connect large squares together in order to build a bridge. When the bridge was complete, the students took turns crossing it.

Joey was so excited during that he exclaimed “Be careful guys so you don’t fall into the hot lava!”

### **Dramatic Play Center**

In the Dramatic Play center, students had the opportunity to dress up in a variety of clothes, shoes, and hats. Jesse dressed up in a Halloween costume and said “Look! I’m Iron Man!” Many students assumed different roles during their play such as the mommy, the sister, the babysitter and the aunt. The students often used the plastic food to pretend that they were cooking a meal or going grocery shopping. One day, Kari pretended to play house with Kylie, Mackenzie and Nicole. As the girls assumed different roles, Kari stated, “Let’s make dinner for the kids!” Several other students used the different puppets in the center to engage in conversation with one another. For instance, on one occasion, Tierra picked up one of the girl puppets and said to Amelia “Are you coming to my birthday party?” Amelia, who was also holding a girl puppet, replied “Yes, what do you want for your birthday?” Tierra then answered “I want a new backpack like Nicole has.”

### **Sensory Table**

In the Sensory Table, the students had the opportunity to explore different materials. For instance, they used soapy water and plastic fish to pretend that they were fishing. Nathan connected to the experience intrapersonally by saying, “I go fishing with my dad and brothers sometimes.” The students had the opportunity to

pour water with buckets and examine seashells. When I replaced the water with dirt, the students used shovels and trucks to dig holes and uncover buried worms.

### **Table Centers**

My co-teacher and I provided the students with a variety of activities at the Table Centers on a daily basis. The students often put puzzles together or play games such as “Memory” with one another. Aiden helped explain how to play the game to Tommy by stating, “No Tommy you have to flip them over like this and guess where the matches are.” I set out Play Dough with tools such as cookie cutters, which allowed the students to practice making shapes such as circles, stars and squares. My co-teacher provided small motor activities as well including linking chains and cardboard lacing. On one occasion, Cameron and Leah started building their own chains with the plastic links. Cameron said “Leah lets put them together to make one big chain to go around the whole classroom!” Leah responded “No, I want to make a necklace for my mommy.” Science and math concepts were also introduced through the table activities when students used magnifying glasses to examine different insects and plants and numbered pads that required students to match a certain amount of pegs. When examining the insects with a magnifying glass, Tommy exclaimed “This one looks like a scorpion!”

## **Reading Center**

The Reading Center is stocked with many children's books, including fairy tales, picture books, and informational texts that are easily accessible to the students. In addition, the center also contains pillows and stuffed animals to provide a comfortable place to read stories. However, during these first two weeks, I noticed that this center was not used by the students. One day, Mackenzie, Kari, Kylie, and Kendyl brought a board game and played on the pillows, but they did not use the books.

## **Art Center**

The Art Center provided students with the chance, through the use of construction paper, paint, dabbers, stamps, scissors and stickers, to express their creativity. The students appeared to enjoy activities in which they could use outside objects to create paintings. For instance, the students used paint trays, paper, and marbles and trays to roll the marbles around to paint their papers. The students also used cotton swabs and cookie cutters to create shapes with paint. On one occasion, Tierra and Amelia used sponges to create pictures. While mixing the colors on her paper, Tierra exclaimed, "Did you know that blue and yellow make green? Look!"

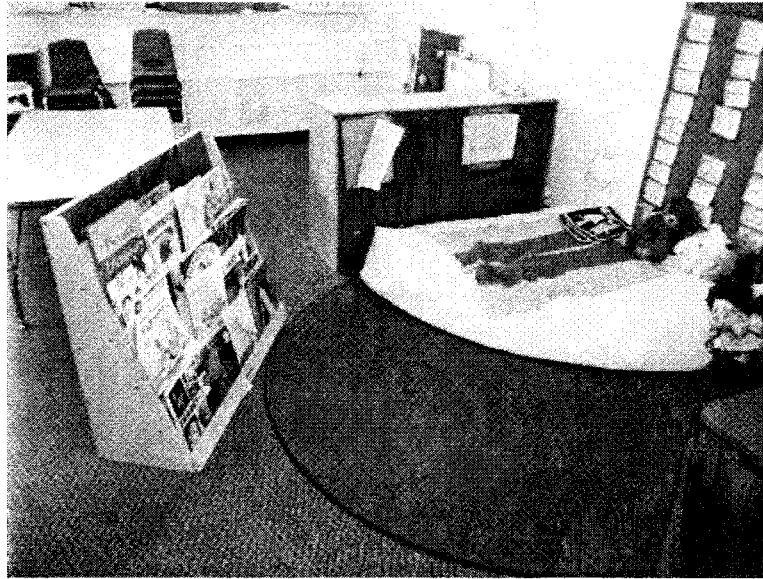
## **Summary**

During the first two weeks of my study, there were several patterns that I noticed in regards to my students' interests and how they interacted with the materials

in the various centers. Overall, the students expressed oral language abilities with their peers through talking with one another while engaged in the different center activities. Building with blocks was a common interest in the Block Center and many students enjoyed playing with another peer. Many students enjoyed dressing up in different clothes and costumes in the Dramatic Play Center and a few students assumed roles and reenacted experiences that they have had outside of the classroom. The Sensory Table provide a space where the students to experiment with various materials and the Table Centers provided opportunities to develop small motor skills through games and Play Dough. The Art Center was stocked with a wide array of materials that encouraged student creativity. For the most part, all of the students seemed to participate in each center at different times. Yet the one center that was overlooked by most of the students was the Reading Center.

### **Week Three**

Based on my observations during the first two weeks of this study, I noticed that the students were not engaging with the books in the Reading Center. Therefore, I decided to take this opportunity to conduct read alouds with the students to encourage them to interact with the books in the center. I invited a different group of students to the Reading Center each day to ensure that they all had the chance to listen to a read aloud. In addition, a different story was selected each day by one of the students within the group.



**Figure 4.2: Reading Center**

### **Tuesday**

At the beginning of the students' work time in the play-based centers, I invited Melissa, Dominic, Amelia, and Cameron to the Reading Center. I asked the students to select a story to read together. Melissa picked the book *Lola at the Library* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (2006). I decided to introduce the book by saying "In this story, Lola visits the library with her mommy. What do you know about the library?" Melissa replied, "There are lots of books there and you can take them home." Cameron added, "There are computers, too, and you can play games." The statements indicate to me that both Melissa and Cameron had visited the library or at least have prior knowledge about libraries.

While observing the students during Week One and Week Two, I noticed that

some students were engaged with the puppets in the classroom. I decided to use one of the puppets to express Lola's dialogue in the story. In the middle of the story, Lola must give her library card to the librarian. I wanted to see if the students knew why this was occurring so I asked "What is a library card?" The students were unsure so I explained "A library card lets you bring books from the library home to read but you have to make sure that you return the books on time."

As I continued reading the story, I demonstrated how I was thinking about the story by pointing out details that I was using to figure out what was happening. For example, on one page I said aloud "Wow, Lola has a lot of books in her hands. I wonder if she will read some of the books at the library or take them home."

I then asked the students to identify what they thought might be happening based on the pictures. Dominic commented, "They are reading together because they are friends!" This shows that Dominic was able to use his observations of the pictures to make inferences about what was occurring in the story. I responded to Dominic's comment by stating "I think you are right Dominic. It looks like Lola made a new friend at the library."

When I finished reading the story, I asked the students "What did you think of this story?" Cameron replied "I liked it!" Melissa replied, "I liked it because I like going to the library." Next, I wanted to gain an idea of what exposure to books the students were having outside of school so I asked them if they read any books at home. Amelia replied, "Mommy reads me the 'princess book' when I go to sleep."

At this point, Dominic, Cameron and Amelia left the Reading Center to

participate in other centers. However, Melissa stayed and looked through *Lola at the Library* (McQuinn & Beardshaw, 2006). She began using the puppet that I had used during the read aloud to recreate some of the dialogue.

Tierra and Nicole entered the Reading Center and Tierra asked Melissa what she was doing. Melissa responded, “Do you want to hear the story?” Melissa then proceeded to use the pictures and puppet to retell the story to Tierra, while Nicole played with a different puppet. This exchange showed me that using the puppet was an effective literacy tool for Melissa as she used it to retell the story to her classmate.

### **Wednesday**

I invited Tommy, Kari, Kylie and Joey to the Reading Center and asked them to select a story that they were interested in reading. Joey selected the story *Night Noises* by Mem Fox (1992). I wanted to encourage the students to make predictions so I asked the group “What do you think this story will be about?” Joey replied, “I think it will be about night time.” I decided to further encourage my students’ predictions by conducting a picture walk prior to reading the story. While looking at one of the pictures, Kari predicted, “I think the bus driver is making the noises outside.” Kylie observed, “The lady looks old because her hair is grey.”

As I began reading the story, I came across the word “cottage” and asked the students if they knew what the word meant in order to make sure that they were familiar with the word. Tommy replied, “It’s a place where you live.” I responded “You’re right Tommy! A cottage is a small house that people can live in.” While I



was reading, the students began reciting the reoccurring noises in the story. For example, on one page I read “creak, creak, creak” and the students repeated “creak, creak, creak.”

Once I had finished the story, I asked the student to explain what happened in the story as a way for them to practice the skill of recalling information. Kylie said, “The lady’s family threw a party for her!” I responded “That’s right Kylie! The lady’s family threw a surprise party for her.” Joey added, “Yeah and she thought the noises were bad guys but it wasn’t right?” I responded to Joey by stating “I think the lady might have thought that the noises were ‘bad guys’ because she was scared and didn’t know what the noises were.”

After the students explained the events of the story, Melissa entered the Reading Center and asked, “I made a book; can I read it to you?” Kari and Kylie wanted to hear the story while Tommy and Joey decided to leave the Reading Center. I noticed that Melissa had created a book using construction paper and markers. She began reading her book, “A bunny got lost and then a rainbow came out and a girl came and found the bunny with her doggy and the doggy was nice to the bunny. The end.” It appeared to me that Melissa really enjoyed reading the story aloud yesterday, and that positive experience seemed to motivate her to create her own story that she could then share with her friends. Kari and Kylie clapped for Melissa when she finished reading her story and the three students began playing with the puppets.

I noticed that Kylie selected a different book and began looking at the pages. I sat with her as she did this and she began pointing out details that she noticed on the

pages. For instance, on one page she pointed to the picture and said, “The birdies are all different colors.” When she turned the page, Kylie stated “It is raining! The birds are hiding in the tree!” Toward the end of the book, Kylie said “It’s sunny again so the birdies can fly!” The way she pointed out the details reflected how I encouraged the students to search for details during the picture walk.

### **Thursday**

I invited Nicole, Jack, Aiden, Kendyl, and Leah to the Reading Center and I asked them to select a story that I could read aloud. Leah picked the book *Lemon the Duck* by Laura Backman (2009). Yesterday when conducting the picture walk with the students, I noticed that they were able to use the details in the pictures to help them make predictions about the story. Therefore I decided to conduct a picture walk with the students today. On the first page of the book, Nicole pointed to a cracked egg and said, “I think the eggs will hatch and the ducks will come out!” I responded to Nicole’s observation stating, “I think you’re right Nicole! It looks like the eggs are hatching!” In the middle of the picture walk, Aiden said, “The duck looks sick.” I replied “Yes Aiden, I think the duck might be sick or even sad.” Then at the end of the picture walk, Kendyl examined the picture and said “The duck looks happy now with her friends.” I stated “Yes, Lemon looks much happier now that she is with her friends. I wonder why she wasn’t with them before.”

As I began reading the story, I asked the students “Does anyone know who a ‘vet’ is?” The students were not sure about the meaning of the word so I decided to

demonstrate my thinking allowed by saying “Since I don’t know who a ‘vet’ is, I wonder if I can use the clues in the pictures to figure it out.” Jack looked at the picture and said, “It’s a doctor.” I confirmed his response by saying “Yes, a ‘vet’ or veterinarian is a doctor for animals.” Kendyl responded “We took our kitty to the doctor to get a shot.”

Since the students had a positive reaction to my use of puppets during Monday’s read aloud, I decided to use a duck puppet while reading this story. I offered quacking sounds during different parts of the story.

In the middle of the story, I stopped to summarize what was happening stating, “Lemon cannot walk.” And then I asked, “What should the students do to help her walk?” I asked this question in the hopes that the students would practice brainstorming solutions to a problem. Nicole answered, “Maybe the teacher can hold the duck like this,” and she demonstrated by holding the duck puppet with both hands around the duck’s stomach. I responded by stating “That’s a good idea Nicole!”

When I finished the story, Jack, Leah and Nicole continued using the duck puppet along with other classroom puppets. Jack put a boy puppet on his hand; Nicole put a girl puppet on her hand; and Leah assumed the role of Lemon from the story and said, “I can’t walk, can you help me?” Jack and Nicole used their puppets to pretend to pick up the duck puppet the help her walk, similar to what the students did for Lemon in the story. This interaction showed me that the students were able to process what occurred in the story and recall the events including the main conflict.

## Friday

I invited Jesse, Nathan, Emma, Mackenzie and Tierra to the Reading Center to participate in a read aloud. I decided to choose the book *Good Night Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann (1996) because I noticed that during my observations of Week One and Week Two, many of the students enjoyed playing with the zoo animals and using magnetic tiles to create cages. For instance, I saw Jesse, Nathan and Mackenzie interacting with the zoo animals during the first two weeks of this study. I saw the read aloud as an opportunity to incorporate the students' interest while making a connection between their play and literacy.

I read the title of the story to the students and in order to capture their interest in the story, I asked them to make predictions about the events in the book. Emma stated, "The story is about animals who are sleeping at the zoo." I responded with "You're right Emma; the book does take place at the zoo with many different animals. Since it's night time, the animals probably should be sleeping but they do not. Let's read to find out what the animals do."

As I began reading the story, Jesse looked at the picture and said, "The monkey is going to steal the keys from the man!" I explained that the man is a zookeeper who watches over the animals at the zoo. Mackenzie said, "It looks like the gorilla wants to let the other animals out, too!" Jesse then replied, "No, he can't let the lion out because the lion will eat him!" Tierra added, "No the lion is friendly because he is smiling." Jesse's, Tierra's and Mackenzie's responses indicated to me that they were using the pictures to make predictions about the story.

As I continued to read the story I got to the point where the animals follow the zookeeper home and I ask, “What do you think will happen?” Nathan answered, “I think the animals will eat all the food in the house.” This response is another indication that Nathan was making predictions about the story. On the next page, I asked, “Why is this picture all black?” Mackenzie responded, “Because the zookeeper turned out all the lights!”

When I finished reading the book, I asked the students “What do you think will happen when the zookeeper and his wife wake up?” Nathan replied “I think the lady is going to scream and make the gorilla go back to the zoo!” I responded “That is a good prediction Nathan since that is what happened earlier in the story right?”

Next, Jesse, Nathan and Mackenzie went to the Block Center. I went to the Block Center with Jesse, Nathan and Mackenzie, and Cameron joined the group. I gave the students magnetic tiles, zoo animals, and keys. I did this because these are all materials that the students have played with before and I want to demonstrate how we can use the toys in relation to the book that they just read. I asked, “What if we build our own zoo?” Mackenzie replied, “Yeah, like in the story!”

The students began building cages for the animals using the magnetic tiles. Jesse took the plastic keys and said, “I want to be the zookeeper!” Nathan took the lion and said, “I’m going to steal your keys!” As he said this, he pretended to free the animals from the cages. Cameron flattened the magnetic tiles and said; “Now all the animals are free!” The book itself was about a gorilla who freed the other animals from their cages by stealing the zookeeper’s keys. By using the keys to free the

animals from their cages, the students were showing that they could recalled what had happened in the story and demonstrated a reenactment through their play.

### **Summary**

After examining my field notes from Week Three, it appeared that the students enjoyed engaging in small group read alouds. During the sessions, I introduced the book and attempted to capture the students' interests by engaging in picture walks. I also demonstrated how to use the details in the pictures to figure out the story and to make predictions. The students began using the pictures to make predictions and inferences as well. I introduced puppets while reading to the students in order to portray character dialogue. Some students then used the puppets to reenact parts of the stories or to engage in conversation with one another. Through conversations and related activities, the students also had the chance to practice the skill of recall by talking about and demonstrating what happened in the stories. The books and puppets will be kept in the Reading Center for the students to use in their future play.

### **Week Four**

My observations from the first two weeks of this study indicated that at least 14 of my 18 students enjoyed participating in the Dramatic Play Center. I took this as an opportunity to add a variety of writing materials into the center in the hopes that the students would use these materials during their play. The different writing

materials I incorporated were construction papers, envelopes, pencils, markers and crayons.



**Figure 4.3: Dramatic Play Center**

### **Monday**

When Nicole, Kari, Kylie, Cameron and Jack entered the center, I encouraged them to use the materials, explaining, “I have a lot of writing materials for you to use while you are playing in this center.”

While Cameron and Nicole began playing with the cash register and plastic money, Kari, Kylie, and Jack sat down at the table. Kari took a couple pieces of paper and began folding them in half. I was curious about what Kari was creating so I asked what she was making. To this Kari replied, “I’m going to make a book for my mommy.” Kari began writing a line of letters on the “cover” of the book. I asked Kari

what the writing said and she responded “Mommy’s Book. To Mommy, Love Kari”. Kari opened to the different pages and began drawing pictures while adding some letters. Kari’s response and her actions indicated that she was not only making use of the materials that were given to her, but she was also practicing her writing skills as well.

I noticed that Kylie began drawing a picture. Kylie is an African American student and this is her first year attending the preschool. When I asked her to describe her picture, she said, “This is me and this is my kitty and we are playing in my room.” I wanted Kylie to also practice her writing skills as well and I proceeded to encourage Kylie to write her first name on her picture. She wrote a “K” and a “y” (two letters of her name) but was unable to write her entire name. I decided to work with Kylie to complete her entire name so that she could practice writing her name in the future.

I noticed that Jack folded a piece of construction paper in half and began drawing a picture and writing a few letters. When Jack was finished, he handed me the paper and said “I made you a card. It says ‘from Jack’.” Jack had also only written a few letters from his first name and I worked with him to figure out the remaining letters.

Based on my interactions with Kari, Kylie and Jack, I realized that all three students would strongly benefit from continuing to use writing materials in the “Dramatic Play Center.” Kari took this as an opportunity to practice invented spelling while Kylie and Jack practiced writing their names. Incorporating the writing materials could further encourage the development of writing skills in these students.



## **Tuesday**

I kept the writing materials on the table in the Dramatic Play Center in the hopes that more students would be encouraged to write while playing in this center. Tierra entered the center and I drew her attention to the writing materials. Tierra stated "I am going to make my mommy a card for her birthday!" She began to write several different letters in a line on a piece of construction paper. I asked Tierra what she wrote and she responded by pointing to the letters and saying "It says 'I love you mommy. Happy Birthday, I love you very very much.'" I looked at Tierra's paper and she had written several different letters in five separate lines. This interaction shows me that not only was Tierra able to use invented spelling, but she also understood the concept that words represent meaning and that writing is read left to right. Tierra then folded the piece of construction paper and placed it into an envelope.

Kari entered the Dramatic Play Center and said, "I am going to finish the book for mommy." Kari left the center to retrieve the book from her cubby that she had started yesterday. She returned to the Dramatic Play Center and began writing several lines of different letters. I asked Kari if she could read her writing to me and she stated, "Mommy and I went to Chuck-E-Cheese and played with my cousin." Kari is aware that words carry meaning, and by giving her materials she can practice writing skills.

## Wednesday

I continued to leave the writing materials in the Dramatic Play Center since several of the students seemed to demonstrate an interest in using the materials during the past two days. On Wednesday, Dominic, Jesse, Nicole and Kendyl entered the Dramatic Play Center and I pointed out the writing materials to them. Jesse began playing with the food and explained that he is making lunch. Dominic, Nicole and Kendyl took pieces of construction paper and markers and started writing letters and drawing pictures. I was curious about what the students were creating so I asked, "What is everyone making?" Dominic replied, "I am making a sign for the door" as he wrote on the paper. Dominic wrote an "S", an "O", a "D" and a "P". I responded, "What does your sign say?" Dominic pointed to the letters and said "Stop here!"

Nicole, who was seated nearby overheard our discussion and shared, "I am making a sign for my room!" Kendyl, also nearby, added, "Me, too!" I noticed that Nicole's sign contained her entire name while Kendyl's sign had a "K", an "e" and a "d". I decided to work with Kendyl to spell the rest of her name in order to help her practice writing the different letters. I decided that this would be a great time for the students to practice problem solving so I asked "How will you hang your signs?" The students thought about my question for a moment and Nicole exclaimed, "I know!" Nicole left the center and went to the Art Center where she grabbed a handful of pipe cleaners. When she returned, she began tearing holes in the top of her sign and then looped the pipe cleaners through the holes. Dominic and Kendyl followed her demonstration and attached pipe cleaners to their signs as well. When they were

finished, Dominic hung his sign on the classroom door knob while Nicole and Kendyl placed their signs in their cubbies.

The students demonstrated many different skills during this observation. They demonstrated how they knew that print contains meaning, and more specifically, that signs are meant to convey a message. All three students used invented spelling and Nicole proved that she could write her entire name.

### **Thursday**

I decided to leave the construction paper, envelopes, pencils, markers, and crayons were on the table in the Dramatic Play Center for the students to utilize as they visited the center. When Aiden, Melissa, and Kari entered the center, I pointed out that “There are a lot of envelopes on the table; I wonder what we could do with these?” Melissa responded, “Mommy puts envelopes in the mail box.” Aiden then exclaimed, “I could be the mailman and bring mail to people!” Aiden put on the mail carrier’s costume that is in the Dramatic Play Center.

Kari looked at the materials on the table and said, “I want to write a letter to my grandma in Florida!” She took a piece of construction paper and began writing lines of letters. Melissa exclaimed, “I want to write a letter, too!” as she began writing letters on a piece of construction paper. She wrote several different letters in four separate lines. Aiden took an envelope and began drawing straight, horizontal lines on the front of the envelope.

I saw this as a good opportunity to assess the students’ knowledge of the

process of sending mail so I asked, "Does anyone know what we need on our envelopes to put them in the mail?" The students are unsure so I went on to say "When we mail things, we need to put a stamp on the outside of the envelope." I also took this chance to promote problem solving by asking the students, "What could we use instead of a stamp?" Melissa excitedly exclaimed "Stickers!" I then went to retrieve stickers for the students to use. All three students put several stickers on the outside of different envelopes.

When Melissa and Kari were finished, they folded their letters and placed them into envelopes. Aiden explained to Melissa and Kari, "You guys gotta put the envelopes in the mailbox and I'll take them because I'm the mailman!" The girls gave their envelopes to Aiden and he placed the envelopes on the tables and shelves around the room.

I noticed several different important aspects of literacy development during today's observations. For instance, Melissa, like Kari, used invented spelling by writing lines of various letters that is meant to convey a message and understands the concept that meaning is derived from print. When Melissa and Kari expressed how they wanted to write letters, the students were applying literacy to real-life situations by using emergent literacy skills to practice writing. Not only did the students problem solve when they decided to use stickers in place of stamps, they were also demonstrating the use of symbols, which is an important literacy skill because letters themselves serve as symbols of sounds that make up words, which readers use to obtain meaning.

## Friday

I continued to use the various writing materials in the Dramatic Play Center for the final observation of the students in this center. Melissa and Mackenzie entered the Dramatic Play Center and began putting the center's stuffed animals and dolls in the chairs at the table. Melissa said, "Okay we are the teachers and it's time for a story!" Mackenzie went to the Reading Center and retrieved *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* by Eric Carle (1992). Melissa looked at the book and said, "Hey, that's like the polar bear book!" Melissa then chose *Polar Bear, Polar Bear What Do You Hear* by Eric Carle (1996) from the reading shelf. Melissa's recognition shows that she was able to make a text-to-text connection independently.

Mackenzie began reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?* aloud to the dolls and stuffed animals. It appeared that she was reciting the book completely from memory. As she read the book, she did not point to the words but she did show the pictures to the "audience" as I did during Week Three in the Reading Center. I asked, "Mackenzie, have you read this story before?" Mackenzie replied "Yeah, I have it at my house." This indicates that Mackenzie is having literacy experiences at home.

Melissa started reading *Polar Bear, Polar Bear What Do You Hear?* but she used the pictures to tell the story. This is the same strategy that I encouraged the students to use during the time I spent with them in the Reading Center. This shows that Melissa is able to use the pictures to gather information or to remember the story's sequence. When Melissa finished the book, she announced, "Okay class, it's

time for writing!” Melissa and Mackenzie then began to pass out paper and markers to the dolls and stuffed animals.

### **Summary**

After providing my students with writing materials in the Dramatic Play Center and observing their interactions with the materials, there were several patterns that I noted regarding their behavior. Several of the students who entered the center were very interested in using the materials to practice writing. The students created letters, signs, cards, and books. Through the use of invented spelling, the students exhibited their understanding that writing is used to represent meaning. In addition to making use of the writing materials, Melissa and Mackenzie also read aloud to an audience of dolls and stuffed animals. During these readings, Melissa demonstrated how she used the pictures in the book to tell the story, which is similar to what I had encouraged her to do during Week Three of this study. I plan to keep the writing materials available for students to use during their play in the centers.

### **Week Five**

Based on my observations during the first two weeks of this study, I noticed that the students enjoyed playing at the Sensory Table. This center offers a great deal of sensory materials for the students to engage with, including water, sand, dirt and tools. However, the Sensory Table was lacking literacy materials. I used this week to

incorporate different literacy tools into the Sensory Table to help students with letter recognition and identification of the sounds associated with letters because many of my students have not exhibited these skills.



**Figure 4.4: Sensory Table**

### **Monday**

To begin the fifth week of my study, I added soapy water and plastic seashells containing letters to the Sensory Table. The first two students to enter the center were Tommy and Leah. Tommy is an African American student who has attended the school for the past three years. Leah, who is also African American, has only attended this school for one year. Both students noticed the seashells and Leah said, “I’m cleaning off the seashells. There are numbers on them!” Tommy responded, “No, they are letters! See that’s an H.” This shows that Tommy is able to distinguish letters from numbers. I saw this as an opportunity to begin identifying letters sounds with the students so I asked “Do either of you know what sound an ‘H’ makes?” Tommy

made the sound of an “H” showing that he is familiar with that sound.

I wanted to expand the students’ knowledge of letter sounds so I asked “Where do we hear that sound?” Tommy thought about the question for a moment and then replied with “H-h-horse and h-h-home.” He carefully sounded out the “H” sound as he said the different words. After hearing Tommy’s response, Leah said, “And h-h-house!” This shows that Leah is also able to recognize the “H” sound after becoming familiar with some examples.

Tommy then began taking the seashells out of the water and lining them up on the side of the Sensory Table. I wanted to see if Tommy could identify other letters, so I asked, “Tommy, do you know any of these other letters?” Tommy pointed to each letter on the side of the table, identifying each one. He then flicked each seashell back into the water after he identified the letter. I wanted to extend Tommy’s knowledge of the letters and I asked him “Are any of these letters in your name?” Tommy examined all of the letters and picked up two of the seashells, one contained the letter “T” and the other contained the letter “M”, and said “Just these two.” Tommy was able to correctly identify two letters in his name amongst approximately 20 different letters.

## **Tuesday**

Since the students seemed to enjoy playing with the soapy water and the seashells with letters, I decided to keep these materials for the students to use during the second day of my observation in the Sensory Table. I also added fishing nets to



the center for the students to use because the students enjoyed using the nets during the first two weeks of this study.

Cameron and Nathan came to the Sensory Table and began moving the water around with the fishing nets. Cameron and Nathan are both African American students and are each in their second year at this preschool. Cameron caught a seashell containing the letter “S” with his fishing net. I asked both students if they knew the letter and Cameron replied, “It’s an S.” I wanted to assess the students’ knowledge of sounds that are associated with letters and I asked “Do you know what sound an ‘S’ makes?” Nathan responded by making the /s/ sound. Next, I wanted to see if the students could identify sounds in words so I asked, “Do you know any words that have that sound?” Nathan responded with “S-S Snake.”

Cameron and Nathan continued to catch more seashells and I noticed that they were able to identify many of the letters and their sounds. For instance, Cameron identified the letters “A”, “C”, “R”, and “T” while Nathan identified the letters “N”, “S” and “O”. Since the students were able to do this, I further encouraged Nathan and Cameron to identify words containing the letters that they caught. Nathan caught an “M” with his fishing net and said “M- M- Monkey.” Cameron caught a “C” and said “C-C-Cat.” After Nathan caught a seashell with the letter “R” and identified the sound. However, both Cameron and Nathan were unable to identify a word that contained that started with the r sound. I then suggested, “What about R-R-Rainbow?” Nathan then replied, “And ‘R-R-Rain!’” Cameron and Nathan began

dropping the letters into a large pitcher and started pouring the letters back in to the water.

### **Wednesday**

To continue to keep the students interested in the Sensory Table, I decided to replace the soapy water, seashells, and fishing nets with sand, shovels and plastic animals that contain letters. The plastic animals with letters were similar to the seashells and I decided to use them in hopes that they would also encourage discussion about letters, sounds and words.

Jesse and Mackenzie came to the Sensory Table first and Mackenzie started digging in the sand. Mackenzie is an African American student whose primary language is English; while Jesse is a Hispanic student whose primary language is Spanish. The first animal she found was a monkey with the letter “M.” I wanted to encourage discussion about the letter by asking “Why do you think there is an ‘M’ on the monkey?” Mackenzie and Jesse thought about the question for a moment, but appeared to be unsure how to respond. I saw this as a good opportunity to point out sounds that are associated with different letters and how those sounds can be found in words. I explained “Monkey starts with an ‘M’ and it makes the m-m-m sound. What other animals can you find?” Mackenzie mimicked the /m/ sound.

Jesse and Mackenzie continued to dig in the sand and Jesse uncovered a bear. In order to check the students’ understanding associating letters with beginning sounds of words, I asked “What can you tell me about that animal?” Mackenzie

exclaimed, "It's a bear!" Jesse went on to add, "Yeah, b-b-bear!" showing that he was making the connection between letters, sounds, and words. I confirmed Jesse's response, "That's right! What else can you find?" Mackenzie uncovered a pig and said, "I found a pig!" I responded, "Yes, and do you know the letter that pig starts with?" Jesse answered "It's a 'P' for pig!" I then practiced making the "P" sound with the students in order for them to understand why it was associated with "pig."

Then Kendyl joined the Sensory Table and asked, "What's in here?" Jesse responded, "Animals and letters." I offered Kendyl encouragement, asking, "Would you like to dig to find the animals?" Kendyl began digging and said, "I got a turtle!" Jesse pointed to the animal and said, "Yeah 'T' for turtle!"

Based on my observations in this center today, I realized that this activity helped several students, especially Jesse, to not only identify sounds associated with different letters, but also to identify sounds that exist in specific words. Several of the students were able to recognize the letter on the animal and the animal itself and could therefore derive the sound from the letter.

### **Thursday**

For the fourth day of my observation in the Sensory Table, I decided to leave the sand and shovels but chose to replace the plastic animals with foam letters in order to maintain student interest by exposing students to a variety of materials. When Dominic, Tierra, and Amelia entered the center, I explained, "There are a lot of letters buried in the sand. I want to see if you can tell me the letters and what sound they

make.” I provided the students with these directions to encourage them to identify the letters and their associated sounds.

First, Tierra found a “J” and said, “I found a J. I think it sounds like /j/. Amelia then uncovered an “M” and said, “I have an ‘M’.” Tierra examined Amelia’s letter and said, “If you turn it this way, it looks like a W.” I confirmed Tierra’s response, “That’s right Tierra. Do you know what sound the letter M makes?” Dominic, Tierra, and Amelia all begin to make a /m/ sound.

I then acknowledged how Tierra pointed out that by turning the M, a W is made and I said, “How about the sound the letter W makes?” The students were unsure and I went on to demonstrate the /w/ sound. I wanted to assess whether the students could identify the sound in words and I asked “What words make this sound?” Tierra responded with “W-w-witch!”

Dominic then began trying to locate letters in his name in the sand. Amelia began placing the letters in different lines on the side of the Sensory Table. Amelia explained her actions stating, “I’m making words!”

Based on my observations of the guided practice that I engaged in with my students as they played, it is clear that the students are receiving practice in identifying certain letters and their sounds, and connecting the sounds to words. Dominic tried to locate letters that exist in his name while Amelia demonstrated her awareness that letters help to form words by places letters into different lines and stating “I’m making words!”

## Friday

For the last day of my observations in the Sensory Table, I decided to replace the sand, letters, and shovels with shaving cream because I thought that shaving cream would be appealing to the students since they have never used this in the classroom before. I planned to continue to have discussions with the students about the letters, sounds, and words. When Aiden, Kylie, and Jack came to the Sensory Table, they spent a few minutes squishing the shaving cream in their hands and smearing the cream on the bottom of the table.

In order to encourage the students to practice making letters, I began quietly making letters in the shaving cream. Kylie watched what I was doing and asked, “What are you drawing?” I explained, “I am making letters. Do you want to make letters?” Jack started drawing the letter “C” in the shaving cream and said “C” aloud. Aiden then explained, “I can make letters in my name. Want to see?” He then proceeded to make a few letters in his name including an “A” and a “D”. I pointed out “Aiden made the letter ‘A’. Can anyone else make an ‘A’?” The students began drawing the letter “A” in the shaving cream.

To help the students associate the letter with its sound I asked “Does anyone know what sound an ‘A’ makes?” Kylie began making the short “A” sound and Jack and Aiden joined her in making the sound, too. I then asked, “What words do we hear that sound in?” Jack replied, “A-A-Ant!” This exchange shows that Jack was able to associate the sound that he was hearing to a familiar word containing the short “A” sound.

When Jack left the Sensory Table, Melissa joined the group and began drawing shapes circles in the shaving cream. After a few moments, I asked, “Melissa, can you think of any letters to write in the shaving cream?” Melissa replied, “I know how to make my name.” She then proceeded to write her entire name in capital letters by looking at her name located on her cubby, which is next to the Sensory Table. I then said to Melissa “Wow Melissa! You used your cubby tag to help you write your whole name!”

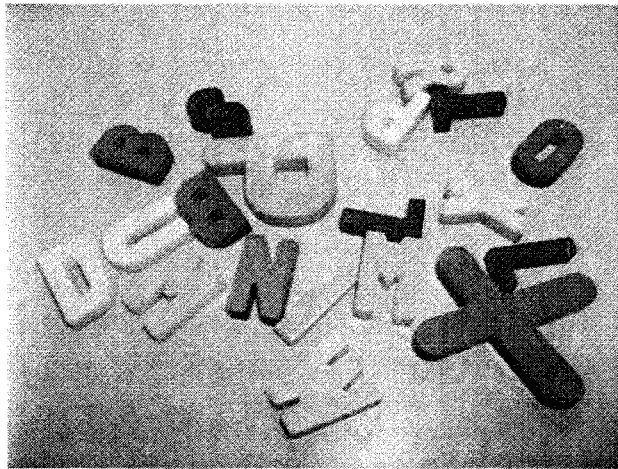
By playing with the shaving cream in the Sensory Table the students were able to practice drawing letters, identifying sounds and words, and writing their names.

### **Summary**

During the fifth week of this study, I observed my students’ interactions with various literacy-based materials in the Sensory Table. The students who participated in this center recognized different letters, some associated with their names. With my guidance, some students identified sounds associated with different letters. Furthermore, some students like Tommy, identified words containing specific sounds. Melissa also used environment print to write her entire name in shaving cream. The lettered materials that I incorporated into the Sensory Table will be available for the students to use in the future.

## Week Six

During the first two weeks of my six-week study, I noticed that the students were engaged with different activities at the Table Centers. Some of these activities include linking chains, magnets, and play dough. Therefore, for the final week of this study, I decided to incorporate various literacy activities into the Table Centers. Each day I chose a different literacy activity to place at the tables for the students to interact with and I noted their reactions.



**Figure 4.5: Magnetic Letters**

### **Monday**

I wanted to give the students more practice working with letters and I decided to place cookie sheets and magnetic letters at one of the two Table Centers. When Kari came to the table, she began playing with the different letters. She picked up a K and said, “This is my name!” I wanted to encourage her observations and replied, “You’re right! That is the first letter in your name.” Kari is a Hispanic student whose primary language is Spanish and she is becoming familiar with letters that make up

her name. Tommy came to the table and said, "I want to make my name." He took several letters, including a T, an M, and an O and correctly made his name. I wanted to see if Tommy could identify the names of the letters and I asked "Can you tell me what these letters are?" He then pointed to each letter and correctly identified it. Kari said, "I can make my name, too!" Kari then put some of the letters from her name, including a K, an A, and an I into a line on the cookie sheet.

Joey approached the table and asked, "Can I play, too, guys?" I responded, "You sure can. Do you know any of these letters?" Joey identified many of the letters in front of him, including an "O", a "J" and an "S". While identifying the letters, Joey exclaimed "Hey, wait! This isn't a letter; it's a number!" I said "You're right that is a number. Do you know what number that is?" Joey then responded "It's a three!" Joey's recognition of the number three in the context of the letter indicates to me that he has the ability to distinguish between numbers and letters.

When Leah came to the table, she began to sort the letter magnets by color. I then asked, "Leah, would you like to make any words with your letters?" Leah responded, "Okay." She then lined up all of the green letters and said, "This says green!" Leah's arrangement of the green letters indicates that she understands the concepts that letters can form words and that the words carry meaning.

## **Tuesday**

I decided to keep the magnetic letters and cookie sheets at the Table Center for the second day of observations in this center in order to allow more students to

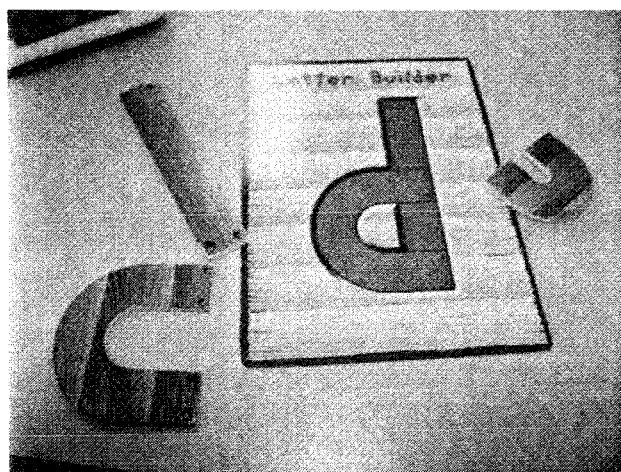


interact with the materials. When Emma and Nicole came to the Table Center, Nicole emptied the large bucket of magnetic letters on to the table. Both Nicole and Emma began playing with the letters and started identifying some of them including an “N”, an “E”, an “O”, an “S” and an “X”. I noticed Emma searching for different letters of her name. Once she obtained all of the letters, she pointed to each letter and identified its name. Emma’s use of the magnetic letters allowed her to create her name independently.

Nicole organized some of the letters into different lines including an “M”, an “E”, an “R”, an “A” and an “O” in one line and an “O”, a “T” and an “X” in another line. I commented on what Nicole was doing by saying, “It looks like you are making words.” Nicole replied, “Yes, this says ‘Good morning boys and girls. We will play outside today!’” (This was the same message that was written on the easel during the “Morning Meeting.”) I responded by saying, “Nicole, let’s go to the easel and look at the different words.”

Once at the easel, I read the “Morning Message” to Nicole and pointed to each word as I read it aloud. Next, I pointed to the word “Good” and said, “This is the word ‘Good’, what letters can you see?” Nicole pointed to each letter in the word as she said “G-O-O-D.” I replied, “That’s right! Let’s see if we can make that word together.” When we returned to the Table Center, Nicole started looking for the different letters to spell “good.” Once Nicole collected all of the letters, I helped her stretch out the sounds of the word. With assistance, Nicole correctly made the word “Good” and exclaimed, “Look! I did it!”

This interaction with Nicole helped me to realize that Nicole is not only aware that words are composed of letters but that words carry meaning. Through the use of the magnetic letters, Nicole was able to represent the “Morning Message.” Through scaffolding, Nicole was also able to use environmental print to create the word “good.” also indicating that she is recognizing environmental print. The magnetic letters also allowed Nicole used the magnetic letters to practice creating a word that she recognized in the classroom and she identified the sounds that exist in that word.



**Figure 4.6: Letter Builder**

### **Wednesday**

During the third day of observations at the Table Center, I set up the Letter Builder activity, which contained different cards with letter shapes and wooden sticks. With this activity, students can match the sticks to the cards to form letters. When Mackenzie, Tierra and Dominic approached the table, they began playing with

the sticks. I told them, "We can match the sticks to the cards to make different letters." Dominic then took the lower case "t" card and crossed two wooden sticks. He then exclaimed, "Look, I made a 't'!" I wanted to encourage the students to think about the letters' sounds and I asked, "Does anyone know what sound the letter t makes?" All three students joined in to make the t sound /t/.

After working with Nicole yesterday, I thought it would be a good idea to encourage the students to recognize the environmental print in our classroom. I then said, "Let's look around our classroom. Can we spy a 't'?" Mackenzie, Dominic and Tierra began looking around the classroom for the letter. Mackenzie went to the sign "Art Area" and pointed to the t. She then exclaimed, "Look! I found one!" I then confirmed her discovery by saying, "That's right! What other letters can we make?"

When the students returned to the Table Center Tierra took a 'd' card and made the letter with one straight and one curved wooden stick. Tierra then said, "I made a 'd' but if you turn it this way, it can be a 'P' too!" I exclaimed, "Wow, Tierra! You're right!" Tierra use of the "Letter Builder" activity enabled her to practice manipulating letters. When Melissa entered the center, she began forming letters without using the cards. She picked up a curved stick and asked, "Why is this stick broken?" I responded, "The stick isn't broken, but we do need the curved sticks to make some letters. Can you think of any letters we can make that need a curved stick?" Melissa picked up two curved sticks and put them together and said, "An 'O'!" I replied, "Yes! That's right!" The Letter Builder activity helped Melissa to

notice the specific features of different letters and then create different letters based on those features.

### **Thursday**

On the last day of my study, I decided to continue to provide activities that enabled the students to work with letters. At one of the two Table Centers, I placed a wooden house containing foam letters and letter cut-outs on all sides of the house. When Jesse, Amelia, and Kylie approached the table, I instructed them to match the foam letters to the correct shape cut-out. First, Kylie picked up the letter “D” and immediately recognized the letter and said “I found a ‘D’!” To assess Kylie’s knowledge of letter sounds, I asked, “Do you know what sound a ‘D’ makes?” Kylie responded by making a /t/ sound. I wanted to be careful not to discourage Kylie from taking risks in identifying sounds. Therefore I responded, “You’re very close but this letter actually makes the /d/ sound. Can you think of any words that make that sound?” Kylie thought for a moment and said. “D-D-Doggy!” I responded, “You’re right Kylie!”

When Amelia picked up the letter “C”, she said, “Hey, this is Cameron’s name!” I responded, “You’re right, Amelia! That is the first letter in Cameron’s name!” Amelia’s recognition of the letter C demonstrates her ability to associate letters to names of her peers. As the students continue matching the foam letters to the cut-outs on the sides of the house, Jesse found a “B” and said, /b/ I responded, “I’m glad you know the ‘B’ sound! Do you see the letter ‘B’ anywhere in our classroom?”

I asked this in order to encourage the students to recognize the print that exists in their environment. Jesse and Amelia began looking around the classroom. Amelia ran to the Block Center and pointed to the sign on the wall. She exclaimed, “There’s one right here!” I stated, “That’s right Amelia!”

### **Summary**

During the sixth week of my study, I provided my students with different literacy-based materials and games at one of the two Table Centers. My students used the magnetic letters and foam letters to identify the different letters and some sounds. I assisted Nicole in recognizing environmental print to create a word. I also encouraged Amelia, Jesse, and Kylie to identify specific letters within the classroom. Some students also used the Letter Builder game to kinesthetically form letters using wooden sticks and cards with letter shapes. The materials used during the sixth week of this study will be available for students to play with in the future.

### **Teacher Interviews**

During this six-week study, I interviewed (see Appendix B) three preschool teachers at the school where I teach to understand how they are incorporating literacy activities into their work with their students. One of the teachers, Mrs. R., is my co-teacher in my classroom while Mrs. D. and Mrs. H. teach in different preschool classrooms. I also wanted to learn about the value that they place on literacy. Table 4.1 represents the teachers’ demographics.

**Table 4.1: Teacher Demographics**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	<b>Master's Degree</b>	<b>Certification</b>
Mrs. R.	31	Caucasian	9	Elementary Education	Literacy	Childhood Education
Ms. D.	35	Caucasian	10	Psychology	Literacy	Childhood Education and Literacy
Mrs. H.	30	Caucasian	7	Sociology	Literacy	Early Childhood Education

All three teachers are at least 30 years of age, Caucasian, and have at least seven years of experience teaching preschool. Each teacher has a master's degree in literacy and has certification in childhood education.

Mrs. R., Ms. D., and Mrs. H. have similar views in the theories that guide their choices related to teaching and learning experiences in their preschool classrooms. Each teacher believes that children learn best through play, meaning that children have a variety of choices and that they are able to interact with adults and their peers. Mrs. R. provided a unique response when she stated:

I think our students also learn a great deal from small-group work, which allows me to plan activities that specifically target skills for students to develop based on their interests. For instance, last week I noticed that the students were interested in finding rocks on the playground. Then during our small group activity, I encouraged students to examine rocks with magnifying glasses and together, we

formed a class list of description words about our rocks. The students came up with words such as 'hard' and 'pointy.'

When I asked the teachers about their daily routine, each of the teachers indicated that she includes similar blocks of time, though not necessarily in the same order. For instance, all three classrooms have a time for breakfast, a large group activity, work time within the centers, a small group activity, large motor activities, lunch, rest time, snack, and an end of the day large group activity. Each teacher stated that work time within the centers was one of the largest blocks of time when students were free to choose where they want to work. For instance, Mrs. H. explained "The students can play at any center for as long as they want." During this time, all three teachers interact with the students and record observation notes based on the students' actions and dialogue. Mrs. R. explained "I use this time to record notes based on what the students are doing but I also take part in the students' play as well." The school also mandates a two-hour rest period that occurs after lunch in each classroom.

After discussing their daily routines, I asked the teachers about ways in which they incorporate literacy. All three teachers explained that they keep a variety of books in their classroom Reading Center. Ms. D. explained, "I try to incorporate a variety of literacy materials in to each of the classroom centers, including books, paper, and various writing materials. I notice that these materials are used on a daily basis by my students."

Mrs. H. explained:

When I went to graduate school, I majored in literacy and my topic for

my thesis was similar to yours where I wanted to infuse as many literacy tools as possible into the centers in my classroom. Now I make sure that dry-erase boards are available for the students to use in order to practice their writing skills. I encourage my students to practice writing their first names on the dry-erase boards because I think this is an important skill for them to have in kindergarten. Another thing I did with my thesis was putting maps in the Block Center and the Dramatic Play Center for the students to use. It was really cool because one time, my students used the maps and pretended like they were pirates searching for treasure.

Since each teacher explained that literacy materials are available in her classroom, I thought it would be important to ask the teachers what they consider when incorporating these materials. Mrs. R., Ms. D., and Mrs. H. all explained how they consider the students' interests as well as their students' developmental levels. For instance, Mrs. R. stated,

In the beginning of the year, most of our students did not recognize their name and could not identify any of the letters in their names. So I decided to print their names on to labels with a picture that contained the same first letter as the first letter in their name. For example, Amelia's label had an apple next to her name. I then put the labels on their cubbies and continuously pointed out their names for the students to reference when I was working with them on writing their names.



During the interviews, I also asked each teacher to describe how her students responded to the literacy-based activities that are offered in the centers. Mrs. R. answered, “The students really seem to enjoy the activities. During large-group time, they like creating oral stories together. They also seem to like talking about letters and seeing if they can spot letters within the classroom.”

Ms. D. commented on her students’ response to the activities by stating,

My kids love exploring with the materials and I think that it helps to expand their knowledge. I also think that they learn from each other. Some of my kids will play in the Reading Center and will pretend to read books to each other. Then after, they will pick specific books for me to read aloud to the rest of the class.

When noting her students’ responses to the literacy-based activities, Mrs. H. stated,

Overall, I think my students really enjoy the materials that are infused in their play as opposed to it being forced upon them. That’s why the maps work so well because the students can use them however they want. I also think my students respond best to materials that are fun and interactive. With the dry-erase boards, the students can practice their writing and I’ve also noticed that some of the girls pretend to play ‘school’ with the boards and mimic my dialogue.

The school where the three preschool teachers and I teach requires specific assessments to be completed to monitor the students’ progress. An example of these

assessments include the Child Observation Record or COR (High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2012). This assessment requires teachers to observe students as they play while recording anecdotal notes. The notes are recorded in specific categories including initiative, social, emotional, language/literacy, math/science, and music/movement. The students are then given scores in each of the categories. In addition to the COR, the teachers also keep portfolios for each student which contains writing samples. The writing samples are collected from the beginning and at the end of the year. These are all of the assessments that are administered by the preschool teachers throughout the school year.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

Through this study, I sought to answer the question: How does incorporating literacy props into center-based play support the literacy development of preschoolers? In order to answer this question, I spent six weeks observing the preschoolers in my classroom. Christie and Roskos (2009) found that “research on literacy-enriched play centers indicate play environments can be engineered and enriched to enhance the literacy experiences of young children” (p.3). Therefore during these six weeks, I incorporated a wide variety of literacy props into the different center-based activities in my classroom while noting my preschoolers’ reactions to the materials. In addition, I also interviewed three different preschool teachers who work within the same school where I teach. One of these teachers is currently my co-teacher in my classroom. My purpose for conducting these interviews was to obtain an understanding of the teachers’ perspectives on literacy within their classrooms.

In this chapter, I discuss specific conclusions that I came across by incorporating various literacy props into the different centers in my classroom. I explain implications for student learning and discuss how the props that were used were important and how they benefit my preschoolers. I also discuss how this study will impact my future practices as an educator. I discuss my recommendations for future research, explaining changes that I would make if I were to conduct this study a second time. I conclude the chapter by providing my final thoughts on my study as a whole.

## Conclusions

By conducting this study, I was able to come to several conclusions about the use of literacy props.

### **Teacher's Read Alouds in the Reading Center Offered Students Opportunities to Make Predictions and Inferences**

On the first day of Week Three, I read aloud the book *Lola at the Library* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (2006). As I read the book, I encouraged the students to make inferences by pointing out the details in the pictures. When I pointed to the page where Lola was reading a book with another girl, Dominic made the inference, "They are reading together because they are friends!"

On the second day of Week Three, I read aloud the book *Night Noised* by Mem Fox (1992). In order to encourage the students to make predictions, I asked "What do you think this story will be about?" Joey replied, "I think it will be about night time." In order to encourage the rest of the students to make predictions, I conducted a picture walk prior to reading the book and Kari predicted, "I think the bus driver is making the noises outside."

On the third day of Week Three, I read aloud *Lemon the Duck* by Laura Backman (2009). During a picture walk, Nicole made the prediction, "I think the eggs will hatch and the ducks will come out!" Nicole was able to use the details in the pictures to make a prediction about why the egg was cracked.

During the fourth day of Week Three, I read aloud the book *Good Night Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann (1996) and the students made several predictions during the reading of this story. Once I read the title of the book, I asked the students to make predictions about what they think the story will be about. Emma predicted, “The story is about animals who are sleeping at the zoo.” In the middle of the story, I asked the students, “What do you think will happen?” Nathan predicted, “I think the animals will eat all the food in the house.” Nathan made another prediction when I asked “What do you think will happen when the zookeeper and his wife wake up?” Nathan answered “I think the lady is going to scream and make the gorilla go back to the zoo!”

These situations illustrate how conducting a read aloud encouraged students to make inferences and predictions by using details in the pictures. Had it not been for these read alouds during Week Three, along with prompts and questioning from me, the students in my classroom would have missed out on the opportunity to practice using pictures to make inferences and predictions.

### **Students Use Puppets to Engage in Conversations and Retell Stories**

I decided to use the puppets because during the first two weeks of my observations, I noticed how Amelia and Tierra used the puppets to engage in conversations with one another. On one occasion, Tierra, using a girl puppet asked “Are you coming to my birthday party.” Amelia, who was also using a girl puppet,

responded “Yes, what do you want for your birthday?” Tierra then responded “I want a new backpack like Nicole has.”

On the first day of Week Three, I used puppets while reading the book *Lola at the Library* by Anna McQuinn and Rosalind Beardshaw (2006) to bring Lola’s dialogue to life. Once I had finished, Melissa looked through the book again and independently used the puppet to recall the dialogue that she remembered hearing when I read the book aloud. In addition, Melissa then used the puppet and the book to retell the story to her peers, Tierra and Nicole.

On the third day of Week Three, I read aloud *Lemon the Duck* by Laura Backman (2009). While reading the book, I used a duck puppet to portray the quacking sounds made by Lemon. Once I finished the story, Jack, Leah and Nicole used the duck puppet along with other puppets that were in the Reading Center. Leah placed the duck puppet on her hand and, assuming the role of Lemon from the story, said, “I can’t walk, can you help me?” Jack, using a boy puppet, and Nicole, using a girl puppet, pretended to pick up the duck puppet. This shows that they were recalling what the students did for Lemon in the story. The students used the puppets to engage in casual conversation with one another. In addition, I also demonstrated how to use the puppets to show character dialogue when conducting a read aloud. Several of the students then used the puppets independently to recall information that they heard in the story.

## **Students' Use of Writing Materials in the Dramatic Play Center Created Authentic Opportunities for Students' to Practice Letter Writing and Invented Spelling**

Saracho and Spodek (2005) found that “During play, children participate in reading and writing experiences that develop the literacy skills they need for formal reading instruction” (p. 716). Therefore in Week Four of my study, I placed writing materials, such as construction paper, envelopes, pencils, markers and crayons, in the Dramatic Play Center for the students to utilize. The students used these materials throughout the week to practice their writing skills by creating letters, books, signs and cards. By using invented spelling, the students also demonstrated that they understand the concept that print conveys meaning.

For instance, on the first day of the study, Kari used the writing materials and invented spelling to create a book which she later read aloud to her classmates. A few students, including Jack and Kylie, took this opportunity to practice writing the letters in their names. On the third day in the Dramatic Play Center, Dominic, Nicole, and Kylie used the writing materials and invented spelling to create signs. On one occasion, Aiden, Melissa, and Kari used the writing materials to send mail to family members.

After placing writing materials in the Dramatic Play Center, several students utilized the materials to practice writing skills, including writing their names and using invented spelling. I realized that my students understood the concept that

meaning is derived from print when my students acknowledged that they had created words. This is a crucial point for emergent readers to understand.

### **Students' Use of Letter-Based Props and Games Promoted Letter and Sound Recognition**

Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) argued that “Knowledge of the alphabet at entry into school is one of the strongest single predictors of short- and long-term literacy success” (p. 851). Therefore in the last two weeks of my study, I incorporated a wide variety of letter-based props and games into the Sensory Table and at one of the Table Centers. Through guided practice, the students were able to identify different letters and their corresponding sounds, identify words containing specific sounds, and locate some letters in environmental print.

Several students identified letters on seashells and animals in the sensory bin. On one occasion, Tommy used the seashells to recognize letters and identify sounds in words like /h/ in “H-h-horse and h-h-home.” When I added shaving cream to the Sensory Table and encouraged the students to draw letters, Aiden took this as an opportunity to practice drawing the letters in his name.

When I added magnetic letters to one of the Table Centers, Emma identified letters and used some of the letters in an attempt to make her name. Nicole used the letters to mimic the “Morning Message.” While assisting Nicole, I pointed out the word “good” in the “Morning Message” to help Nicole recognize environmental print. I then helped Nicole as she formed the word “good” with the magnetic letters.



The students used the letter-based props and activities to identify letters and sounds and to recognize environmental print. I encouraged my students to use oral language to discuss letters and the activities, such as the Letter Builder game, helped students to notice distinctive features of letters.

### **Preschool Teachers Infuse Literacy Props into Center-Based Play Based on Their Students' Interest and Developmental Needs**

By conducting interviews with three classroom teachers, I learned that each teacher believes that children learn through play. In addition, each teacher incorporates different literacy props in her classroom centers based on the students' interests and developmental levels. The teachers believe that the students enjoy interacting with the different materials and learn literacy concepts through their play.

### **Implications for Student Learning**

#### **Students' Practice Emergent Reading Skills through Participation in Read Alouds**

Neuman and Roskos (1992) explain that "changes in the structural features of the play environment that are literacy based may have important consequences for children's emerging conceptions of literacy" (p.204). Therefore, having the chance to incorporate various literacy props into the different centers benefited my students as emergent readers and writers. For instance, by conducting the read alouds with the students, the students were able to practice different skills that are crucial skills as

emergent readers. My students used pictures to make predictions and inferences, they used puppets to recall information and engage in conversations, and they recalled information through their play.

### **Students Practice Writing Skills Through Use of Writing Materials**

By placing writing materials in the Dramatic Play Center, my students had the opportunity to practice their writing skills, where they formed letters and used invented spelling. In addition, the letter-based props and activities infused into the Sensory Table and the Table Center allowed students to practice letter and sound identification and recognize environmental print.

I believe that the use of literacy props helped to support student learning and, after consulting with my co-teacher, I will continue to allow students to have access to these props in the future.

### **Implications for My Future Teaching**

#### **A Chance to Learn About My Students**

This study was very beneficial to me because I started this study as a new teacher in this preschool classroom. Therefore, this study gave me the opportunity to learn about my students and their interests and to focus on their development levels in terms of literacy. Becoming aware of my students developmental levels will help me to support them in their cognitive development.

## **Students Developed Literacy Skills through the Use of Literacy Props in their Play**

As discussed in the section on Implications for Student Learning, I believe that this study benefited my students in terms of their literacy development. Neuman and Roskos (1992) stated, “With physical design changes in play environments, we may be able to extend the range of literacy opportunities for young children and thereby encourage developmentally appropriate literacy activities” (p. 203). As their teacher, I plan to continue to incorporate the literacy props that were used in their play. By providing additional guided practice to my students, it is my goal for them to eventually be able to use the props independently.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

#### **Incorporate Literacy Props in All Centers**

If this study were to be conducted in the future, there are a few recommendations that I would consider. For instance, I would suggest incorporating literacy props into more classroom centers. Due to time constraints, I was unable to incorporate literacy props in the Block Center and the Art Center. However, I do believe that literacy props and activities could be infused into these centers as well to support cognitive development among my preschoolers.

### **Observe All Centers**

For this study, I spent one week focusing on the actions of my students in one specific center. I would record their behaviors and dialogue in the form of field notes without visiting the other centers. If this study were to be conducted for a second time, I would visit each center throughout the entire six week time frame in order to record observations in each of the centers. This would ensure that I captured as many literacy-related behaviors as possible among my students.

### **Observe Throughout the School Day**

Another recommendation that I would make is to not limit observations to centers time, but instead, to record students' behaviors and dialogue throughout the entire school day. Many of my students made literacy connections during large group and small group activities that would have been important to make note of in regards to this study.

### **Final Thoughts**

In the opening vignette of chapter one, I illustrated a typical day in my preschool classroom. Although the students were engaged in oral language, I felt that the classroom centers lacked materials to support the students' literacy development. Roskos and Christie (2001) state that "If one wants children to engage in literacy activity during play, then play settings should contain materials that create an environmental 'press' for play-related reading and writing activities" (p. 60).

Therefore, I saw this study as an opportunity to infuse literacy-related activities and props into the centers as a way to increase the students' literacy development. The literacy props that I added to the various centers had an impact on my students' literacy development because I encouraged them to make predictions and inferences, recall information, engage in conversation, identify letters and sounds, and recognize environmental print.

## Appendix A: Field Notes

Date:

Time start:

Time Stop:

<b>Block Center:</b>
<b>Dramatic Play:</b>
<b>Sensory Center:</b>
<b>Table Activities:</b>
<b>Reading Center:</b>

## Appendix B: Teacher Interview

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) How long have you worked as a preschool teacher?
  
- 2) What are some of the overall theories or concepts that guide your choices related to teaching and learning experiences in a preschool classroom?
  
- 3) Describe your daily routine in your classroom?
  
- 4) In what ways do you incorporate literacy into your work with the children?
  
- 5) What do you consider when integrating literacy-based activities?
  
- 6) Based on your observations, how do the children respond to literacy-based activities?
  
- 7) How do you assess your students' progress?
  
- 8) What else would you like me to know about your work with your students?

## **Appendix C: Consent for Interview and Observation**

The purpose of this research study is to explore what happens when I incorporate literacy props (books, writing materials) into play-based center activities in a preschool classroom. The researcher, Andrea Guck, is a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY in the Education and Human Development Department. This study is a requirement for completing a graduate thesis. The researcher will conduct interviews with teachers gain insights into the value that preschool teachers place on literacy in an environment where children are encouraged to learn through play.

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will take part in an interview and be asked about perspectives and experiences of incorporating literacy into play activities.

Also, you may be randomly selected to be observed during a period of play instruction. This will allow the researcher to see how you use literacy through play activities in your classroom. You have the option of participating in the interview and not an observation.

In order to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to participate in the study. If you are willing to participate in the study, and agree with the statements below, please check your consent option and sign your name in the space provided at the end.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My name will not be recorded. If any publication results from this research, I would not be identified by name.
3. My participation involves completing a personal information sheet regarding my education, experience, and certification. The information sheet will only be read by the researcher and only used for contextual information.
4. My participation involves answering 8 open-ended interview questions about how I incorporate literacy-based activities into my classroom. The questions will be provided to me prior to my scheduled interview, so that I have an opportunity to gather any resources I would like to share with the researcher.
5. Time is a minor risk. My participation will be no more than 45 minutes.
6. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher and will be destroyed by shredding after the research has been accepted.
7. My name may be randomly selected for an observation. I understand that I may refuse to be observed without penalty. Observations will not be recorded. The researcher will use field notes to record observations. All field notes will be shredded after the thesis research has been accepted.



8. I understand that administration may request a summary of results. I understand that my name and information will be kept confidential. Administration will not know which teachers participated in the study.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study, with the understanding that I may withdraw, without penalty, at any time during the interview process.

I agree to participate in the interview and understand that I will be audio taped.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to participate in the interview, but do not agree to be audio taped.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to participate in an observation if I am randomly selected.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not grant consent for an observation.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher or thesis advisor using the contact information below.

Andrea Guck  
Education and Human Development  
Childhood Literacy  
Graduate Student and Researcher  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
(585) 451-2146  
aguck1@brockport.edu

Dr. Don Halquist  
Education and Human Development  
Department Chair  
Thesis Advisor  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
(585) 395-5550  
dhalquis@brockport.edu

**Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet**

CONFIDENTIAL

**Purpose:**

Completing the information below will give me pertinent information about your education and professional experiences. I will use this information to build the contextual information regarding the teacher participants in my thesis paper. If you do not wish to answer these questions, or a particular question, please leave it blank. Your identity will not be affiliated with this information. I will use an identification number on all data sheets. I will be the only person to know the identification numbers. Please return this sheet to me with your consent form in the provided envelope by February 6, 2012

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Current grade level: \_\_\_\_\_

Other grade levels you have taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree of education: \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor's Degree in: \_\_\_\_\_

Master's Degree in: \_\_\_\_\_

Certification(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Letter to Parent

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education and Human Development at The College at Brockport, SUNY. I am conducting a research study to explore what happens when I incorporate literacy props (books, writing materials) into play-based center activities in a preschool classroom. As part of my study I would like to observe your child to understand how he/she interacts with the literacy props and his/her peers while at the center.

If you grant consent for your child to participate in this study, I will observe him/her during “center” time. My observations will focus on your child’s use of the literacy props and his/her interactions with peers while at the centers. I will observe your child and record notes based on his/her behaviors and dialogue, in addition to his/her interactions with his/her peers. I will collect data through the use of note taking. I will take notes twice a week for during “center” time for approximately six weeks.

The enclosed form includes information about your child’s rights as a study participant, including how I will protect his/her privacy. Please read the form carefully. If you are willing to allow your child’s participation, please indicate your consent by signing the form and returning it to me.

If you have any questions regarding my study, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may also contact my thesis advisor if need be. I appreciate your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Andrea Guck  
Graduate Student  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
[aguck1@brockport.edu](mailto:aguck1@brockport.edu)  
585-451-2146

Dr. Don Halquist  
Thesis Advisor  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
[dhalquist@brockport.edu](mailto:dhalquist@brockport.edu)  
585-395-5550

## Appendix F: Consent for Observation and Interview of Student

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the effects of incorporating literacy props into play-based center activities. The person conducting this research is a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY. If you agree to have your child participate in this research study, your child will be observed during his/her "centers" time.

In order for your child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in the study. If you would like for your child to participate, and agree with the statements below, please sign your name in the space provided at the end. You may change your mind at any time and your child may leave the study without penalty, even after the study has begun. Your child can decline participation in the study even with your consent to participate.

I understand that:

- a. My child's participation is voluntary and s/he has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
- b. My child's confidentiality is guaranteed. Her/his name will not be recorded in observation notes. There will be no way to connect my child to the observation. If any publication results from this research, s/he would not be identified by name. Results will be given through the use of pseudonyms, so neither the participants nor the school can be identified.
- c. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of participation in this project.
- d. My child's participation involves participating in regularly scheduled classroom activities in her/his preschool classroom.
- e. The researcher will observe my child during "centers" time twice a week for approximately six weeks.
- f. The results will be used for the completion of a thesis paper by the primary researcher.
- e. Data and anecdotal notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the investigator. Only the primary investigator will have access to the notes and corresponding materials. Data and anecdotal notes and consent forms will be destroyed by shredding when the research has been accepted and approved.

I understand the information provided in this form and agree to allow my child to participate as a participant in this study.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. If you have any questions, you may contact:

Andrea Guck  
Primary Researcher, Graduate Student  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
[aguck1@brockport.edu](mailto:aguck1@brockport.edu)  
585-451-2146

Dr. Don Halquist  
Thesis Advisor  
The College at Brockport, SUNY  
[dhalquis@brockport.edu](mailto:dhalquis@brockport.edu)  
585-395-5550

Consent to Observe:

Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: Statement of Assent for Observation

To Be Read to Preschool Students

I am a student at The College at Brockport, SUNY. I want to learn more about how you play and learn during “center” time. To learn about your play and how you learn, I would like to observe you during center time.

If you decide to let me learn more about your play and learning during center time, I won't write down your name or let anyone else know who you are. When I write about you in my study, I will only say what you did. Your parent or guardian has given permission for you to take part in this study, but it's up to you to decide if you would like to. If you would like to take part in my study, but change your mind later on, you can tell me that you have changed your mind. It is okay to change your mind at any time.

If it is okay with you for me to learn more about your play and how you learn, you can write your name on the first line below. Under your name you can write today's date, which is \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you very much,  
Miss Andrea Guck

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (over the age of 18): \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Letter to Preschool Director

February 1, 2012  
Mr. Mustafa Berhan, Director  
Action for a Better Community  
30 Hart Street  
Rochester, NY 14605

Dear Mr. Mustafa Berhan,

I am currently a graduate student at The College at Brockport, State University of New York completing a master's thesis for the Department of Education and Human Development. As part of the requirements for the thesis, I am conducting a research study in which I will examine elementary teachers' perceptions of student engagement. Specifically, I am interested in investigating how preschoolers interact with literacy props in play-based centers.

There will be two parts of my study. First, I would like to observe the students in the classroom and record anecdotal notes on the students' behaviors and dialogue as they are engaged in "centers". Second, I would like to conduct interviews with the two classroom teachers as a way to learn more details about their perspectives on incorporating literacy into play-based centers. I have included a copy of the observation form and interview questions and interview consent letters for your review.

During the first two weeks of the study, I will be taking a non-participant role in this research study and will not disrupt the students or teachers as they engage in play-based centers. During the remaining four weeks, I will take a more active role in this research study by incorporating various literacy props into the different centers with your approval. I will conduct the teacher interviews outside of the teachers' duty day. I will ensure confidentiality by not disclosing the names of teachers or the school.

In order to comply with The College at Brockport's Institutional Review Board, I must submit copies of the teacher informed consent letters and a letter from you on school letterhead, stating you approve of this study entitled, The Effects of Incorporating Literacy Props into Play-Based Centers. I have included an example.

Please contact me at 585-451-2146 or my thesis advisor if you have any questions regarding my method of data collection or any aspect of my study. If you approve of my study, please mail a letter to me at the address below. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Rochester, NY 14616  
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585.451.2146

Dr. Don Halquist  
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