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## A Poetry Curriculum for Primary Teachers

Janice M. Matheny  
*Central Washington University*

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ABSTRACT

A POETRY CURRICULUM  
FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS

by

Janice M. Matheny

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This project examined the role of poetry in language development and literacy acquisition in children. The review of current literature strongly supported the rationale for providing poetry experiences beginning at an early age and continuing on through the first few years of school. All stages of language development benefit from exposure to rhythm and rhyme. Poetry can be there to bridge the gap as young children speak their first words, read their first book and write their first sentence. Included is a poetry curriculum centering on the theme of Playground Rhymes. It was specifically written for primary teachers. The research based activities provide children with experience at all levels of language development including oral, phonological awareness, reading, writing, and spelling.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Background of Project	1
	Introduction	1
	Purpose of the Project	4
	Scope of the Project	4
	Definition of Terms	5
Chapter 2	Review of Related Literature	6
	Introduction	6
	Oral Language - The Foundation	7
	Phonemic Awareness Through Rhyme	13
	Poetry's Part in Reading Acquisition	17
	Children as Writers	25
	Spelling and Word Awareness	28
	Summary	31
Chapter 3	Purpose and Structure of the Project	31
Chapter 4	The Project	34
	Introduction	P-2
	Activity Management Checklist	P-5
	Poetry Journal	P-7
	Rhyme and Spell BINGO	P-8

Jump Rope Your Spelling Words	P-11
Write Your Own Counting Rhyme	P-12
Memorize Your Parts for the Jamboree	P-15
Read Two Poem Books	P-16
Math: Ball Bounce and Count	P-17
Guess Which Rhyme	P-17
Project Choice	P-18
Practice the Poetry Jamboree	P-20
Poetry Sun Visor	P-21
Make a Poster of a Playground Rhyme	P-23
Poetry Jamboree	P-24
Bibliography	P-25
Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations	35
Summary	35
Conclusions	35
Recommendations	36
References	38

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

#### Introduction

If young children are indeed natural versifiers, and if poetry lies at the heart of our cultural and individual linguistic development, then it should be no surprise to find an almost universal love in children for nursery rhymes, chants, jingles, riddles, lullabies, tongue twisters, and old rhymes (Obbink, 1990, p. 229).

Poetry is an untapped resource for educators. Andrews (1988) suggests, "the educational benefits of including poetry in the early childhood curriculum are many" (p. 17). It is a highly loved language form that is clearly more valuable to the development of children than we have given it credit. Do we understand its role in the evolution of language and literacy in a child? Have we used it to its greatest potential? I say we have not. Surrounded by rhythm and rhyme since infancy, poetry is simply an echo of their world. As Lenz (1992) points out, "the feeling of being rocked, hearing lullabies sung, hiccuping, playing jump-rope games, and rattling off lists of the things they wanted for Christmas or the names of their ten best friends, rhythm was built into their actions and conversations; it was there in the context of their everyday lives" (p.600).

Children seldom tire of hearing their favorite stories and rhymes repeated over and over again. It's through this repetition they begin to hear and

internalize their language. As a part of this exposure, a child's awareness of individual sounds within words is heightened. In his following statement, Geller (1983) summarizes the attraction children have for poetry and recommends its use for drawing their attention to the structure in language.

Human creatures -- especially children -- are particularly responsive to the musicality of language sounds. The meanings of words when captured in the expressive rhymes and rhythms of verse delight the ear at the same time that they alert young language learners to the phonological design of their native tongue (p. 192).

Paige (1969) argues that for years poetry has been used to fill incidental moments in the school lives of young children and has not been fully recognized for what it can offer. Most educators have not yet acknowledged the rich resource available to them. Poetry can be woven into the curriculum at any point to add a link to literacy. Danielson (1990) reported, "Poetry enhances reading, writing, listening, and speaking" (p. 146). In addition, Buchoff (1994) stated, "Poetry can be chosen for any age level, varied to meet children's needs and interests, and selected to complement or extend the classroom curriculum" (p.26).

Finally, poetry taps into the natural desire in children to play with language and provides a medium to help them connect with print. Andrews (1988) enthusiastically points out, "poetry is part of the magic that motivates children to

love reading” (p. 17). McCracken and McCracken (1993) explained how all children can achieve literacy by stating:

An educator can guide a child to literacy by combining this oral work with writing, teaching children to write, and as part of the writing, teaching phonics and spelling. This integrated approach to reading and writing makes print understandable and renders true literacy accessible to all children (p. 9).

There is a powerful and lasting connection between a child's early knowledge of nursery rhymes and aspects of their linguistic development later on. The rhymes are connected to the development of phonological sensitivity and through that sensitivity are linked to the child's success in learning to read and spell (Bryant, 1989).

Educators are always in search of what will excite their students to read and write. Poetry, through its rhythm and rhyme, has a way of captivating and drawing children into language. “Within a few seconds every child in the classroom was sitting quietly, listening intently to the poem, under the spell of the rhythms and rhymes, timbres and tones. It was like magic!” (Andrews, 1988, p. 17).

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a poetry curriculum for primary teachers to use in the classroom with students in kindergarten through third grade. To accomplish this purpose, a review of current research and literature regarding the use of poetry with young children was conducted.

### Scope of the Project

For purposes of this project it was necessary to set the following limitations:

1. Research: The preponderance of research and literature reviewed for the purpose of designing this project was limited to the past twenty-five (25) years.
2. Scope: The primary poetry curriculum has been designed for use by teachers in the early grades, particularly kindergarten through third grade.
3. Target Population: The activities in the curriculum were specifically designed for use with primary students, kindergarten through third grade. The activities are also appropriate for second language learners in all elementary grades.



### Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of this project are defined as

follows:

1. Alliteration: The repetition of the same initial consonant sound in two or more words.
2. Chant: "Any group of words that is recited with a lively beat" (Buchoff, 1994, p. 26).
3. Literacy: The ability to read and write.
4. Onset: The initial consonant or consonant cluster (Gunning, 1995).
5. Phonemic Awareness: "The ability to examine language independently of meaning and to manipulate its component sounds" (Griffith and Olson, 1992, p. 516).
6. Poetry: A composition in verse, one characterized by a highly developed form and the use of heightened language and rhythm to express an imaginative interpretation of the subject.
7. Rime: Vowel or vowel plus consonant element (Gunning, 1995).
8. Rhyme: Correspondence in like terminal sounds.
9. Rhythm: The regular rise and fall in intensity of sounds that is associated chiefly with poetry and music.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The review of research and literature summarized in Chapter 2 has been organized to address poetry as it relates to the following areas of a child's language development:

1. Oral Language - The Foundation
2. Phonemic Awareness Through Rhyme
3. Poetry's Part in Reading Acquisition
4. Children as Writers
5. Spelling and Word Awareness
6. Summary

Data within the past twenty-five (25) years was identified through an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) computer search. A hand search of various other sources was conducted which involved the use of the Internet, reviewing journal articles and educational digests, reading professional texts, and the researcher's own personal experience.

## Oral Language - The Foundation

At an early age, children's exposure to rhythm and rhyme can influence later reading ability. In studies done by Bryant (1989), nursery rhyme knowledge at 3 years was related to reading ability at 6 years even after differences in social background and IQ were taken in to account. To understand the importance that poetry plays in the evolution of literacy in a child, we must start from the beginning of learning. We must understand what takes place in the development of oral language.

From birth an infant is observing and "trying on language". No one formally teaches him or gives lessons from a text. It is done solely by listening and experimenting on the part of the child. John Holt (1983) states:

The baby does not learn to speak by learning the skills of speech and then using them to speak with. . . He learns to speak by speaking. . .

The baby who begins to talk, long before he makes any sounds that we hear as words, has learned from sharp observation that the sounds that bigger people make with their mouths affect the other things they do. . . (p. 81).

As adults we can consistently provide young children with good modeling and plenty of opportunities to hear and experience rich vocabulary. It is during these first few years that they are most receptive to learning language. Holt (1983) suggests that "if we want to help little children as they learn to talk,

one way to do it is by talking to them, provided we do it naturally and unaffectedly, and by letting them be around when we talk to other people” (p. 86).

After much observation, children begin to mimic what they've seen and heard and begin to experiment on their own, making their share of mistakes along the way. At this point, according to Holt (1983), they must be encouraged to play with the sounds of the language and continually compare their sounds to the sounds made by people around them, gradually bringing their sounds closer to others. Most importantly, a child must be “willing to do things wrong even while trying his best to do them right” (p. 84).

Oral language is not mastered overnight. It comes with a great deal of patience and persistence on the part of a child. “To learn with ease a particular language in a particular form, children must experience the language as completely and richly as possible; and they must practice with the form intensely over a long period of time” (McCracken and McCracken, 1993, p. 3). This is where we begin to see the value of introducing young children to poetry.

Poetry can be a part of the modeling that allows children the repetition needed for mastery. From an early age, they can be read to and given the full offerings of a language through rhythm and rhyme. Buchoff (1995) points out that “many children are first exposed to the world of literature through Mother Goose rhymes. . . . Jump rope rhymes and street chants are in some ways similar to Mother Goose rhymes, and serve to maintain children’s interest in

poetry. At the same time they offer opportunities for active involvement through language and movement" (p. 149). McCracken and McCracken (1993) stated further, "nursery rhymes are a natural vehicle for bringing children to language. They contain all the cadences of spoken English in short stanzas, enticing children to chant them over and over" (p. 102).

Through many forms, language can and must be shared with the young. It is our responsibility to enable each child with a strong foundation in their oral culture. McCracken and McCracken (1996) go on to remind us that "through listening to stories, poems and rhymes children are filled with the rhythms of the language as well as the many forms of written English" (p. 14). It is apparent right from the start that poetry plays a vital role in oral language learning of our young. It shouldn't stop at the home, but should continue on through the child's early school years as well. Here the "classrooms should be liberally laced with oral language experiences" (Obbink, 1990, p. 32) of all kinds and students should be surrounded with opportunities to try on their language.

As children begin to use the language in the form of rhythm and rhyme they are free to hear it and experience it as pleasurable and fun. It's inviting and pleasing to the ear as they practice uninhibitedly to perfect their own command of it. In addition, they begin to attach a deeper meaning to their words and that helps them in discovering themselves and their world. As Obbinik (1990) observed, ". . . the very foolishness of nonsense rhymes helps the young child to gain confidence about his or her understanding of reality, to feel superior to

the foolishness of the characters who populate the rhymes, and to begin to develop a sense of humor” (p. 231).

Later, when children begin to grow up and enter elementary school, we continue to see how important poetry and chants are to their socialization and continued language growth. “Children enjoy and appear to have a deep-seated interest in the rhymes. . . . They are considered to play an important part in social growth, physical development, and in indoctrinating children in suitable behavior patterns” (Emans, 1978, p. 938). They are continually gaining more control over their speech and enter into another phase of development. They begin to take ownership of their language. Geller (1983) comments, “though adults are the purveyors of nursery rhymes to the preschool generation, children from six to eleven are the protectors and transmitters of their own expansive tradition of verbal art” (p. 185). As children grow up, we often overlook the need they still have to engage in oral word play. Today, students spend countless hours on playgrounds manipulating their language through rhythm and rhyme. Educators, unaware of the valuable asset they have before them, often dismiss it as just child’s play, when before them lies a tool that is a link to literacy.

What attracts children as well as adults to poetry is often its rhythm. Rhythm is what grabs a listener and invites him to be a part. Jim Trelease (1982) contends that “the first sound a child hears is a poem of the rhythmic beating of its mother’s heart” (p. 61). Is it any wonder there is such an attraction to poetry? Rhythm is a basic of life. Denman (1988) reminds us that from the

very youngest of children, they derive joy from the rhythmic pulse of a Mother Goose nursery rhyme. It becomes contagious in both verbal chant and physical movement. He goes on to say that any "good primary teacher can eventually have their class singing, clapping, chanting and gesturing with any rhythmic poem" (p. 20).

Chanting is another method to assist children in acquiring the language. It is done as a group, large or small and all students speak together in unison. Through chanting, children learn about speaking clearly and using expression to get across a unified message. Buchoff (1994) explained:

Chanting promotes successful language experiences for all children regardless of background or talent. . . . Even the shy child, poor speaker, or emergent or reluctant reader can develop self-confidence and the satisfaction of self-expression as a cooperative and contributing member of the classroom chanting choir. Poetry provides a natural vehicle for chanting because the rhythm and rhymes make them perfect for reciting over and over again (p. 26).

Chanting allows children the freedom to try on language. Again poetry plays an important role in supporting oral language growth.

As Andrews (1988) pointed out, "exposure to a variety of literature, including poetry, raises children's level of general language development and vocabulary development, and whets their appetite for reading" (p. 17). Based on research, Hennings (1990) reported that "children's success in reading and

writing depends upon a solid background in the development of oral language skills” (p. 26). Sound development in oral language is important to a child’s acquisition of literacy later on. Many building blocks are laid in advance. Geller (1983) stressed that while rhymes can not begin to make up a total language program, “it appears to hold possibilities for integrating the art of verbal expression with the science of literacy learning” (p. 192).

Obbink (1990) suggests that “we must continue to recognize that the progression to text begins with the utterance, and the evolution to literacy has its roots deep in orality” (p. 232). The oral expression component of our early elementary school curriculum is weak. Educators must acknowledge its importance so students are given every advantage to tie to literacy. Next, Obbink also reminds us that “in our eagerness to educate young children, to progress from the world of utterance into the world of text, it is easy to rush through a child’s passion for Mother Goose in an attempt to provide more substantive literature and prose” (p. 232). The author concludes:

As we pass from traditional nursery verse to other forms of poetry and prose, we must never abandon the rhythm, the balance, and the pleasurable taste of language as we first knew it through the oral chants, jingles, and rhymes of early childhood. For before the text there is the utterance. In the beginning is the word, and that word is the spoken word (p. 233).



## Phonemic Awareness Through Rhyme

Morrow (1997) defined phonemic awareness as “knowing that words are composed of a sequence of spoken sounds that have no isolated meaning and being able to hear those sounds” (p. 399). Educators have acknowledged the importance of phonemic awareness and recognize its tie to literacy. As Honig (1997) stated, phonemic awareness is “one critical breakthrough in the reading field in the past decades” (p. 19). The author went on to conclude “how important being able to hear and manipulate the discrete sound parts of words is to learning to read” (p. 19). At this point, a child’s world continues to rely heavily on oral communication. A rich language background in order to support this phonemic stage of development is crucial.

Exercising a child’s oral vocabulary through the use of rhythm and rhyme establishes their ear for manipulating component sounds. Fowler (1998) points out that “new research shows how important it is for children to understand that words are made up of individual sounds” (p. 4). She goes on to explain how rhyme is used in her classroom to help drive this point home. Without this basic building block in place, many children would flounder. According to McCracken and McCracken (1996), “the alliterative quality of poetry, rhyme, and song has a great deal to do with children becoming aware of phonemes” (p.4). We discover again, how children’s poetry and rhyme are key pieces for children when learning about their language.

Geller (1983) supported this need to include poetry in the curriculum when he stated:

Because of the repetitious use of rhyme and rhythm in their construction and the gleeful exploitation of these characteristics typical of young children's oral performance, it would seem that the learning of this verse repertoire contributes to processes of discrimination and categorization of key sound structures of language (p.186).

By exposing children to various forms of rhymes, jingles, and other literature that feature language play, we help to make them more conscious of individual sounds in words. Geller (1983) found that "the form quite naturally segments speech sounds, exposing and highlighting phonetic similarities and differences in a way which normal speech does not" (p. 186). Clearly, poetry is instrumental in supporting phonemic awareness.

Chall (1983), in her book, Stages of Reading Development, outlines the different phases a child moves through to acquire literacy. She titles "Stage 0 as the prereading stage" (p. 13). It is the time in a child's life from birth to about age six, when oral language and awareness of words and sounds are developed. She goes on to emphasize that research has shown "that the various skills, knowledge, etc. acquired during the prereading stage are substantially related to success with reading at Grade 1" (p. 13). Building blocks are already being put in place for reading and all along poetry and rhyme play an important part in the final transition from oral language to written text.

Phonemic awareness education is a vital key to success in reading for any child. Research conducted by Yopp (1992) found that “those children who had received phonemic awareness training in kindergarten significantly outperformed those who had not participated in training” (p. 698). She went on to say that, “in order to benefit from formal reading instruction, youngsters must have a certain level of phonemic awareness. Reading instruction, in turn, heightens their awareness of language. Thus, phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite to and a consequence of learning to read” (p. 697). In studies done by Bryant, MacLean, Bradley, and Crossland (1990), they report, “sensitivity to rhyme and alliteration are developmental precursors of phoneme detection, which, in turn, plays a considerable role in learning to read” (p. 437). Offering young children the basis of a rich language environment gives them every opportunity to be future readers. Without this strong background, they will lag behind in their grasp of language in print.

Teachers and parents of young children must realize the importance of providing opportunities for their students to grow in their acquisition of words and sounds. Mattingly (as cited in Yopp, 1992) expresses that a growing number of reading experts are urging classroom teachers to provide their students with “linguistic stimulation above and beyond speaking and listening during the preschool [and early school] years: storytelling, word games, rhymes, and riddles, and the like” (p. 698). Children should be surrounded with oral language play from an early age. Entertainers like Charlotte Diamond, Raffi, and others

"who have made children's songs so popular, are helping children to attain phonemic awareness" (McCracken and McCracken, 1996, p. 4). Griffith and Olson (1992) also remind us that as children begin writing with invented spellings, they continue to enhance their word/sound awareness.

According to Griffith and Olson (1992), "the phonemic awareness tasks easiest for children are those requiring them to rhyme words or to recognize rhymes" (p. 516). In their opinion, these types of activities "will not be helpful to a child unless they can be placed in a context of real reading and writing" (p. 522). Here enters poetry, for it is already a natural part of a child's repertoire and a real example of their own language. Routman (1996) supports this point by encouraging us to "reread favorite poems, songs, and stories with children and discuss alliteration and rhyme within them" (p. 196).

Research has proven the significance of phonemic awareness instruction in the classroom. Have poetry and rhyme been given enough emphasis by early childhood educators? Fowler (1998), a veteran teacher of first grade students, sums it up, "I've started out this year teaching nursery rhymes. It makes it easier for children to hear sounds. I'd never done that before, but I can see how it helps" (p. 4). As educators we have too often ignored a form of literature that plays a crucial part in a child's first steps to unlocking print. Can we continue to overlook its obvious role?

## Poetry's Part in Reading Acquisition

The basis of literary education is poetry. Poetry is rhythm, movement.

The entering of poetic rhythm into the body of the reader is very important.

It is something very close to the development of an athletic skill and, as such, it can't be rushed (Frye, as cited in Hopkins, 1987, p. 216).

Frye's statement above reflects the importance of including poetry in opening up the world of literacy to a child. Poetry is a rich source of language waiting to be experienced and internalized by children of all ages. To fully consider how poetry can fit into a child's literacy development, we must first take time to look at current research and discover what educators are saying about reading.

Chall (1983), in her research on reading development, describes Stage 1, as the stage where children begin reading from print. This occurs around Grades 1-2 or ages 6-7. While at this stage, one of the discoveries made by children is "that the spoken word is made up of sounds" (p. 16). In addition, a common trait of oral reading, reflects "some substitutions of words with the same meaning" (p. 16) because not enough is known at this point about how to get the author's words from the printed page. "Letting go of what appears to be a more mature reading behavior" (p. 16) eventually leads to practice in decoding. "Decoding," reports Chall (1983), "is the main development of Stage 1, and

remains with the reader throughout each of the successive stages" (p. 16). The author goes on to remind us that:

In a sense, none of the stages is ever fully mastered. One continues to grow and become more proficient in the skills of a stage even as a new stage is entered. It may be useful to view the transition to the next higher stage as resting on competency in the earlier one. Thus Stage 1 (decoding) can move into Stage 2 (fluency) before all of the relations between letters and sounds are learned" (p. 17).

Chall (1983) summarizes Stage 2 as the stage of "confirmation, fluency, and the ungluing from print" (p. 18). It most often takes place around Grades 2-3, or ages 7-8. The focus now changes as a child is encouraged to move away from relying on decoding and is encouraged to begin focusing more on the context of print in order to develop meaning and fluency. The content of material is "basically familiar" (p. 19) and repetition of familiar material is frequent. Chall emphasizes the fact that fluency at this level is developed with much reading on one's own. "More complex phonics elements and generalizations are learned" (p. 18) as well as "automatic recognition of words" (p. 36).

The ebb and flow from stage to stage also moves from openness to greater structure, then back again to openness. . . . In Stage 1, when the reader learns the basic elements and rules of recognizing words, a structured approach usually works better. At Stage 2 the reader returns

to the daring of Stage 0 and applies more gracefully the elements and decoding rules learned in Stage 1 with an emphasis also on the message (Chall, 1983, p. 53).

Routman (1996) reported that the "research on how children learn to read and write . . . indicates that {they} become literate in much the same way as they learn their first oral language" (p. 194). McCracken and McCracken (1993) argued that if "universally, 100 percent of children learn to speak then the potential for literacy is equally universal" (p. 1). They continued by saying, "This acquisition will take years, with the learning as fraught with error as was the learning of speech. Error seems to be a symptom of language learning, not a symptom of disability" (p. 6). If the possibility for all children to learn to read is so great, and it can be paralleled with that of oral language, then it is logical to conclude that literacy is a natural development for all children.

As we begin to understand the direction children are going in relation to literacy development, we can only imagine the enormous task ahead of them. They must be given every opportunity to succeed. "If all children are to learn to read and write, they must be immersed in a print environment equivalent in intensity to the oral language environment from which speech emerged" (McCracken and McCracken, 1993, p. 1). Emans (1978) suggested, "children may be able to read naturally when enough repeated examples of written language are presented so children are able to extract necessary

generalizations for themselves” (p. 938). As with oral stimulation, we must surround young children with an abundance of quality print. However we choose to look at it, there seems to be a strong “bridge between orality and literacy” (Lenz, 1992, p. 603). The link cannot be ignored.

A child’s awareness of rhyme and alliteration are strong indicators of later reading progress. Research done by Goswami (1992), suggests that “the linguistic units onset and rime may be crucial in explaining this robust link between rhyming and reading. Specifically, a child’s ability to categorize words by onset - rime units may be related to their child’s awareness of spelling sequences in words, and this may facilitate the development of reading” (p. 153). By raising a child’s awareness of rime in words, the child is able to make the analogy to other spelling patterns in print and use the skill to read new words.

So what do we use to bridge orality and literacy for children? McCracken and McCracken (1993) recommend using “print that was written to say something or to preserve ideas, not print that was devised to teach reading skills” (p. 6). They also suggested using “the familiar rhymes at the beginning of grade one to teach children concepts about print” (p. 102). In other words, educators must select material that is familiar and meaningful to their students. Andrews reiterates this fact by stating, “children need a chance to be turned on to literature. . . . Poetry is part of the magic that motivates children to love reading” (p. 17).



The initial years of reading instruction are between five and seven. They coincide, as noted, with the child's induction into ritual games and chants of school-age culture. Verse rhymes and rhythms guide children's activities. Game rhymes are, as a result an important part of these youngster's experience with language (Geller, 1983, p. 188).

It's obvious that young children are drawn to this kind of language, so why not capitalize on it and use what is familiar in their world to open up the door of literacy? Research offers additional justification for employing rhyme:

1. Repetition of the same words (a hallmark of most basal readers) is quite naturally represented in many of children's favorite verses (Geller, 1983, p. 188).
2. Because the reading/repeating of familiar verses relieves the beginner of some of the task of discovering what is being said, it can leave him or her freer to consider how it is being said--how, that is, spoken language is presented by print systems (p. 190).
3. Rhyme also aids the reader by limiting the choice of words. Young readers can make use of the predictability of verse language (p. 188).
4. The reading of memorized verse can contribute to a child's developing grasp of the concept of "word" (Morris, 1981, p. 189).

"Reading begins with whole meaningful texts which are easily predictable for the learner" (Goodman, as cited in Geller, 1983, p. 188). Geller goes on to point out that although "Goodman probably didn't have traditional rhymes in

mind, it is intriguing to note how close a match there is between his description of beginning reading material and children's verse" (p. 188). Repeatedly it is evident how much we have to consider poetry an essential part in the whole puzzle. It continues to reflect the needs of children in their language development at all phases.

How can poetry be used to advance literacy development in children?

McCracken and McCracken (1993) listed six steps to beginning reading. Each of these six steps can easily be reinforced using poetry and rhyme.

1. Children Memorize the Story
2. Introduce Print
3. Children Match Word to Word
4. Children Match Word to Phrases
5. Children Match Pictures to Words
6. Children Rebuild the Entire Story (p. 35-44).

They also stated, "if we want to achieve universal literacy, our school goal should be to create an environment cluttered with print while demanding that children work with the written form" (p. 6). McCracken and McCracken (1996) described their use of poetry in the classroom:

Children need to see the language they are using. We put up poetry posters, and track the words as children chant along from memory. We create poems on word cards in the pocket chart, and track, as children chant. . . . In this informal way, children learn to put what they say

together with what they see. Putting speech together with print, and with literally thousands of practices, they begin to realize how print works (p. 15).

Buchoff (1994) draws our attention to the value of chanting poetry and its connection to reading. She states, "chanting can be used to develop reading skills with first, second, and third graders, as well as to foster an appreciation of poetry" (p. 26). It is also an occasion for children to "practice fluent oral reading in a supportive setting while being involved in the exploration of words" (p. 26). She goes on to say that teachers can utilize chanted poetry on a chart to instruct students on concepts about print, vocabulary, and the conventions of language. In addition, Buchoff suggests to teachers that when chanting "with emergent readers, it is often helpful . . . to track the words with a pointer while modeling the verse" (p. 28). Finally, the author reminds educators that "when children read the verse while reciting it, they have opportunities to learn about print in genuine language experiences" (p. 28).

Chanting is a vehicle to practice reading in a group setting. It allows children to take part in good oral interpretation practiced in an environment that is reassuring and risk free. Those that are shy or timid can be swept along with the group and achieve success. As Lenz (1992) shared, "Reading aloud with the group allowed my youngest readers to opt out and listen whenever they came to words they didn't know" (p. 598). Strickland (1990) encourages educators to use chanting to further language development in children, especially the emergent

reader. With these benefits in mind, educators of young children must make the time to involve their students in chanting, regardless of their stage of literacy development. Each child will take what they need from the experience and at the same time feel part of a collective group, learning together. "All children can learn whatever is developmentally appropriate about the written language of the chant as they develop their oral language skills" (Buchoff, 1994, p. 28).

McCracken and McCracken (1993) remind us that "we can never expect to discover what bit of language each child needs to begin or to progress; we merely must make certain that all the bits are available so that each child may individualize his or her own learning and acquire literacy" (p. 10). The authors concluded, "there are a great number of activities, that, when orchestrated by a teacher, produce literate children" (p. 11). Poetry and rhyme are some of the "bits" and "activities" used by parents and teachers to open the door to literacy for their children.

If teachers take the time to involve their students in poetry, they can experience the excitement of children learning to read! Sepura (1994) enthusiastically shared the positive response she witnessed in her second grade classroom after many months of working with poetry:

By watching the children I could observe self-selection of poetry at reading time. I could witness friends together rereading chart poems, poetry books, or class written poems. I could watch children sign out poetry books in the library, or conversely, bring in poems they had found

at home. . . . I could note rhythmic clapping and spontaneous body movements (p. 130).

“Through poetry, promote love of reading!” (Andrews, 1988, p. 24).

### Children as Writers

Using poetry as an example, Lukasevich (1984) summarizes the transition that takes place when a child moves from oral to written language:

Given ample opportunity to listen to good poems read well, children begin to read poems on their own. Their natural love for poetry, developed during the early childhood years through listening, reciting and reading, can be extended even further by encouraging them to compose their own original poems (p. 41).

He reminds us of the generous amount of quality literature children must be exposed to in order to eventually become successful writers. Poetry and rhyme are again introduced because it's loved by children and part of their everyday world. There is a natural progression that takes place as a child moves from the world of oral language to participating in the world of print.

“If children are to mature into writers and wordsmiths, they must be saturated early in life with examples of printed language worthy of their attention and satisfying to their imaginations” (Denman, 1988, p. 111). In this respect, learning how to write is no different from learning how to speak or read. Children

must be surrounded by examples of well-written literature. Buchoff (1994) encourages educators to provide children of all ages the “opportunities to hear, read, and perform many rhythmic selections” (p. 27). She goes on to explain how it “will help them develop strategies for creating their own compositions” (p. 27).

Griffith and Olson (1992) describe how to lead children to the point of writing their own creations. “Read rhyming texts to children each day. From repeated readings of rhyming and playful texts, children will develop a repertoire of old favorites, which can serve as springboards for children to create their own rhymes” (p. 520).

Modeling is a natural part of learning language and should be encouraged in writing development as well. As Denman (1988) explains, “. . . most accomplished writers first modeled their writing after someone else. By modeling their writing of poems after a poem they have read, children role play as writers. . . . It relieves them of the anxiety of having to conceptualize the entire idea” (p. 93). He goes on to suggest using rhyming pattern books to give children a framework to start from. This is the “apprentice stage” as Denman (1988) describes it, where “students take those first tentative steps into writing” (p. 103). Poetry is an effective model for beginning writers. It is manageable, a part of their own language, and naturally stimulates them to write (Denman, 1988). McCracken and McCracken (1993) echo the advantages to using quality literature as a model. “Imitation of well - written

portions of stories and poems leads to quality writing, and the practice frees children to be creative" (p. 10). Because poetry is already so much a part of a child's world, using it as a model comes naturally. The topics can be easily chosen from everyday experiences and molded into verse that is familiar.

In order for early childhood educators to understand the richness poetry can offer their students in writing, they need to know what the advantages are. Buchoff (1994) points out that students have the opportunity to use the stages of drafting, revising, and editing when composing their own verse. The techniques of good writing are included right from the start, even with poetry. Tucker (1997) identified eight elements that benefit children when writing their own poetry:

1. Writing can become as easy and important as talking.
2. Children discover connections between thinking, speaking, writing, and reading.
3. Interest in reading often increases. Children want to read their poems to themselves and others.
4. It improves their listening and thinking skills.
5. Words become paints without the mess. Children draw pictures with language and turn the classroom into a word gallery.
6. Builds self esteem.
7. Spelling improves.
8. It can be easily combined with other subject areas (p. 1).

Using poetry in the classroom can provide students with all the opportunities to meet with success in writing. Sepura (1994) describes the ownership that took place in her second grade classroom: "As the year progressed spontaneous writing of poetry appeared at varied times. . . . Students wrote poems to me and slipped them on my desk when I wasn't looking. . . . During Writing Workshop some children chose to write poems" (p. 128). Clearly this is success when students are so excited about what they are writing that their need to write and express themselves spills over and is shared with others!

#### Spelling and Word Awareness

Routman (1996) contends that "extensive exposure to print and reading helps children internalize not only the spellings of particular words, but spelling patterns. . . . Children learn patterns of the written language from reading and rereading favorite texts" (p. 200). Simply put, children need to be immersed in print and, I think more than ever, need to be doing most of the reading themselves in order to become better spellers.

Direct instruction becomes significant to improving spelling performance in students. Snowball (1990) concluded that it is "definitely worthwhile to help children hear the sounds in words by developing phonemic awareness, and then exploring sound/symbol relationships and spelling patterns" (p. 34). Routman



(1996) concurs when she states, "Discussing spelling patterns and drawing spelling generalizations as a class will also help children develop an ever growing repertoire of words they can spell correctly in first drafts" (p. 201).

Guiding students into discovering patterns and generalizations in spelling will give them the tools to be independent spellers.

Eventually, children tend to group or cluster letters into spelling patterns, developmentally first in their reading and then in their writing (Gunning, 1995). At this point teachers can take advantage of this natural progression to heighten their students' awareness of words by having them build words with rimes and onsets. Through the use of direct teaching and guided practice, students will become more aware of words in clustered parts and begin to develop their own strategies for spelling.

One way to reinforce these spelling strategies is through poetry. Geller (1983) turns us to "Verse language, because it is built upon patterns in sound and can focus children's attention on multiple relations which govern sound-to-spelling correspondences" (p. 190). He goes on to suggest that we look in "anthologies of verse where the use of rhyme quite naturally exposes different ways to spell particular sound units" (p. 191). Here, because of the frequency of rhyme, can be found an endless source of spelling lessons. If teachers take advantage of the abundance of poetry resources available to them, they can provide a wealth of spelling examples for their students from real literature they enjoy.

## Summary

The research and literature summarized in Chapter 2 supported the following themes:

1. Poetry included in the early years of oral language development can be a rich source of vocabulary, offer enjoyable examples of how language sounds in short bites, and provide the repeated practice children need for mastery.
2. Phonemic Awareness is essential to a child's success in reading. Poetry can contribute to a child's further awareness of language by highlighting sounds in ways that are not usually heard in normal speech.
3. Beginning reading requires that children are given familiar material that can be memorized, is meaningful and is easily predictable. Poetry is familiar, short enough to memorize, meaningful to children, and is very predictable.
4. Children can use poetry as a model for good writing.
5. Teachers can use poetry to improve their students' spelling by:
  - a. strengthening phonemic awareness
  - b. exploring sounds and their symbols
  - c. discovering spelling patterns through rimes and onsets

## CHAPTER THREE

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Poetry, rhythm, and rhyme are such a large part of a child's life. Observe children playing on the playground at recess and see the stimulating socialization and language play that goes on using the simple medium of poetry. Through poetry, children learn proficiently how to manipulate different sounds in words and speak with the rhythm of language. They are able to hear words broken up into sounds, emphasized in rhyme, that are normally hidden in everyday speech. When they go to read, the words are so a part of their vocabulary, that recognizing and reading words becomes effortless. As children begin to write their own creations, poems give them a friendly and familiar model to go by. Finally, their endless exposure to print and reading through poetry helps them to internalize many of the spelling patterns found in our language. With the above thoughts in mind, I have compiled a curriculum for early childhood educators so they can grasp this excitement of poetry and bring it into the classroom to guide their students into a world of literacy.

To accomplish this, current research and literature on poetry as it relates to oral language development, phonemic awareness, reading acquisition, writing development, spelling and word awareness was reviewed. An ERIC and microfiche search were conducted at the University of Washington Suzzalo Library. Relevant articles and books were then located. Book stores in

the area were visited and books on the subject were skimmed for relevancy to the topic. Some were then purchased and read, others were checked out from the local King County Library System. After months of research, a list of books the researcher was unable to locate was taken to the University Book Store in Bellevue, Washington. They did an extensive search on their computer through Books in Print. Many of the books were out of print and not available. A search was also done on the Internet and articles on the topic were copied. The researcher discussed the project with colleagues, and personal books and articles were collected. An article was found in the NEA Today newspaper relating to poetry and its use in the classroom. All information gathered throughout the year was thoroughly read and reread to fully comprehend the subject. The information was organized and written for a formal review of literature (Chapter Two of this project).

Next, the "Playground Rhymes Poetry Curriculum for Primary Teachers" was written. The following criteria were used:

1. It must be easy to use and comprehend.
2. The format must be written so it could be used with any poetry theme.
3. It must be a flexible program to meet the needs of diverse students.
4. The topic must be enjoyable for both students and teacher.

5. Activities must be research based and reinforce language development in one or more of the five areas (oral, writing, reading, spelling, phonemic awareness).
6. Activities must be child centered and appropriate for early childhood students.
7. Worksheets must be ready made to Xerox.
8. Resources for further information must be included.
9. Information on the benefits of using poetry with children must be included.
10. Graphics must be used to add interest and appeal.
11. Suggestions for a final poetry celebration must be included.

To field test the curriculum, the playground rhymes poetry unit was taught to twenty-five second graders in the spring of 1998. A final Poetry Jamboree was held and year long pen pals were invited as guests to the performance. After two weeks of activities involving more than 25 rhymes and fingerplays, the students planned and prepared for a final celebration with friends. Everyone participated and it was a success. Adjustments were made to the curriculum as needed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PROJECT

A playground rhymes poetry curriculum follows. It was developed for primary teachers to use in their classrooms. The chapter is a collection of child centered activities written to reinforce the many ways poetry can support language development.

After an introductory letter to the teacher, the unit is organized around an activity management checklist. Each student receives a checklist included in their poetry packet to wind their way through the wonderful world of playground rhymes and chants.

Finally, suggestions are given for organizing a Poetry Jamboree to celebrate and share all the poems that have been learned.

A Playground Rhymes  
Poetry Curriculum for  
Primary Teachers

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Playground Rhymes Jamboree! Poetry in all its forms, opens up the exciting world of language for students in ways no other form of literature can. There will be a sense of magic that captivates your classroom as you invite them to take part and experience the rhythms and rhymes found in the following pages.

Poetry is something we've all used in our classrooms at one time or another. It's a form of literature that is found sprinkled throughout the curriculum we teach. Do we really understand the role it plays in our students' language development? At the local library it has a shelf all its own, and at any neighborhood school playground, one can quickly observe the joy and excitement of children engaged in all forms of play with rhythm and rhyme. Is it just there because it's short and cute and can fill the extra minute we have at the end of our day, or does it offer us more? It offers us more, much much more!

This curriculum is designed to help promote growth in your students' language development at all stages. The child centered activities are intended to reinforce one or more of the following areas of development: oral language, phonemic awareness, reading acquisition, writing, and/or spelling. Allow yourself two to three weeks to complete all the suggested activities. After doing this unit once with your class, I encourage you to use it as a template, add your own ideas, and try again with a different poetry theme. There are so many



possibilities! You might decide to focus on one author, like Shel Silverstein or build around a specific theme like Fall. Involve your students in the planning and off you go!

Playground rhymes were selected as the theme for this unit, because they reflect the language of young school children. It's what they choose to do at recess and after school with their friends. It's a part of their world. "Verse rhymes and rhythms guide children's activities. Game rhymes are, as a result an important part of these youngster's experience with language (Geller, 1983, p. 188). Students will draw from their own repertoire of rhyme as well as learn new games and chants. You'll be bringing the outdoors in with jump ropes and bouncing balls, so be prepared for lots of enthusiasm from your class! You are recognizing and highlighting a very important part of who they are!

Poetry is an untapped resource for educators. It is a highly loved language form that is clearly more valuable to the development of our students than we have given it credit. Rhythm and rhyme play a vital part in every child's grasp of language. As educators, we are always in search of what will excite our students to read and write. I say, "Let's celebrate poetry!"

In this unit you will find the following:

- \* an activity management sheet (to be reproduced for each student).
- \* clear explanations for the teacher for each activity listed on the activity management sheet followed by a ready-made worksheet if needed.
- \* suggested resources of poems to reproduce for student poetry journals.

- \* a wide variety of activities to develop skills in the areas of spelling, oral language, writing, reading, and phonemic awareness.
  - \* a bibliography of related literature.
  - \* tips and suggestions for a final poetry celebration.
-

### Activity Management Sheet

Use the activity management checklist for lesson planning, keeping track of student progress, and end of the unit assessment. Each student is responsible for keeping track of their own "poetry packet" and its progress throughout the study. As activities are completed, each child marks off the number with an 'X'. Those activities with a box next to them also require your visual inspection and initials to "sign them off".

The numbered exercises are done in the order introduced by the teacher, not necessarily in the order on the management sheet. Students can work alone or with a partner or small group at the discretion of the classroom teacher.

After introducing the unit, give each student a poetry packet that includes the following:

- \* Activity Management Checklist (cover sheet)
- \* Rhyme and Spell BINGO (2 worksheets)
- \* Spelling Word List (Use the week's list)
- \* Five Little Monkeys Poem Template
- \* Sun Visor (Xeroxed on tag board)

After the students receive their packet they will no doubt read ahead and get excited about what is to come!

Playground Rhymes

1. Poetry Journal
2. Rhyme and Spell BINGO

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3. Jump Rope Your Spelling Words
4. Write Your Own Counting Rhyme
5. Memorize Your Parts for the Jamboree
6. Read 2 Poem Books (Your Choice)  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Math: Ball Bounce and Count by 5's  10's
8. Guess Which Rhyme
9. Project Choice: (Check One)
  - Write your own playground rhyme. Share it with us!
  - Learn about a game of long ago. Teach it to us!
  - Read poems to a Kindergartener
10. Practice the Poetry Jamboree
11. Poetry Sun Visor
12. Make a Poster of a Playground Rhyme

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Poetry Journal

## Materials:

Copies of poems for each student (refer to the bibliography, P-25)

A notebook or folder for each student

Markers or crayons

## Directions:

Each student will make and decorate a book of their own collection of playground rhymes. Provide copies of poems and chants selected from the suggested list of books referenced in the bibliography. In addition, give each student a couple of blank pages to record their own favorites they play with their friends. During the unit, encourage them to read their journals independently, with their friends, and for their parents. Chant the poems together as a class different times throughout the day.

Rhyme and Spell BINGO

## Materials:

Rhyme and Spell worksheet (P-9)

BINGO board worksheet (P-10)

game chips

Scholastic Rhyming Dictionary  
(Young, 1994)

## Directions:

Direct students to the Rhyme and Spell worksheet in their poetry packet.

Have them read the rimes listed at the top of the page: /ang/, /ong/, /ing/, /ung/.

The students are to write five words that rhyme under each word part. After they have finished, they can randomly fill in their BINGO board with words chosen from their rhyming worksheet.

## Playing the Game:

1. The caller selects a student to read out loud a word from their BINGO board.
2. Each player with the same word places a chip over the word on their BINGO board.
3. The caller then selects a different student and steps 1-2 are repeated.
4. The game continues until one person gets BINGO, which is four chips in a row--horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

The Rhyme and Spell activities are intended to draw your students' attention to how various sounds are spelled in words. The more they work with rimes and onsets, they will begin to observe similarities and differences in spellings and will draw their own conclusions about how sound units are represented in our language.

## RHYME AND SPELL

Directions: Write rhyming words to match each word part below.

ang

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ong

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ing

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ung

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**BINGO**



Jump Rope Your Spelling Words

Materials:

individual jump ropes

\*spelling list

Directions:

1. Choose a spelling word. Say the word.
2. Look at the word and decide which letters are consonants.

Jump on two feet for all consonants.

3. Decide which letters are vowels.

Jump on one foot for all vowels.

4. Say each letter of the word while jumping.
5. Repeat three times for each word.
6. Choose another spelling word and begin again.

\*The list of spelling words can come from the poems in the poetry journal.

Write Your Own Counting Rhyme

## Materials:

*\*The 5 Little Monkeys* poem (P-13)

poem template (P-14)

overhead of the poem template

pencil

overhead pen

## Directions:

Recite the counting rhyme, *\*The 5 Little Monkeys* as a whole class.

Repeat it a second time asking the children to emphasize the rhyming words.

Model for them. Altogether, write a class poem. Make an overhead of the template and fill in the students' ideas as they share them. Draw their attention to the shape boxes at the end of each line. Get them to tell you why they are there (every two words in the shapes should rhyme). Have them read the class poem when it is done. In small groups of 2-3 have them write their own version of the poem. Allow time for sharing later. There will be lots of giggling!

\* (Cole, J., & Calmenson, S., 1991, p. 38-39)

**FIVE LITTLE MONKEYS**

P-13

(Calmenson & Cole, 1991, p. 38-39)

# Five Little \_\_\_\_\_

Five little \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  .

The first one said, \_\_\_\_\_  .

The second one said, \_\_\_\_\_  .

The third one said, \_\_\_\_\_  .

The fourth one said, \_\_\_\_\_  .

The fifth one said, \_\_\_\_\_  .

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  .

and the five little \_\_\_\_\_  .

Memorize Your Parts for the Jamboree**Materials:**

Poetry Journal

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**Directions:**

This is the point in the unit when each student is given two to three specific poems from the journal to memorize for the final celebration. Assign the parts at the end of the first week or the beginning of the second. This allows time for everyone to have experienced all the poems for at least a week prior to their assignment. You will be amazed at how many of your students will already know their rhymes just from the whole class reciting that has been done. Give a date when their parts must be memorized by. Remind them they can take home their poetry journals to practice.

When assigning poems, group students to add variety for the final program. Make the groups different sizes and be sure to include some solo parts too. Consider putting quiet and shy students with those more confident. Allow 5-10 minutes each day for the different groups to get together and practice. Monitor to add suggestions and encouragement when needed.

Read Two Poem Books

## Materials:

15-20 children's poetry books

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## Directions:

Check-out 15-20 children's poetry books from the library. Have them available in the classroom for the length of the unit. Draw your students' attention to where 'Read Two Poem Books' is on their poetry packet. Point out the two lines underneath. Inform them they can read any two poem books they choose independently or with a partner. Each book must be read from cover to cover and the title of the book recorded on their poetry packet. They can read them during sustained silent reading, independent reading work time, or any other time that is decided upon. A time during the day might be set aside for students to read favorite poems they have discovered.

Math: Ball Bounce and Count by . . .

## Materials:

bouncing balls

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## Directions:

1. Take a ball.
2. Select a number to 'count by' (i.e.: 5's, 10's, or any other choice)
3. On each bounce say a number in the sequence.
4. Keep on bouncing until you have reached 100!
5. Start over if you miss.

Guess Which Rhyme

## Materials:

Poetry Journal

## Directions:

Start off by giving the class a short phrase from one of the poems they are learning. Ask them, "Can you guess which rhyme this is?". The one who guesses right is 'IT' and gets to repeat the activity but with another poem. The game continues until everyone has had a turn. This is an excellent listening activity. It is best played the second week of the unit after students have had a chance to work with the poems awhile.

## Project Choice

### Materials:

paper

books of games from long ago

poetry books

### Directions:

Project Choice allows each student to select a project from a list of activities. Whatever is chosen by the student must be eventually shared with an audience. The students are given the choice to work independently or in a small group. The criteria for each project is determined by the teacher and explained to the class before their selections are made. The project choices offered to students can be as challenging or as simple as decided by the teacher. The three choices presented in this unit can be adapted to meet the needs of your classroom. Whatever choices are offered to your students, make sure they are different and special, hands on and child centered, not just paper and pencil.

Project Choices: (From the Poetry Packet Checklist)

1. Write a playground rhyme of your own and share it with us!

This gives students an opportunity to write a version of a favorite rhyme.

They must write it out in some form and share it with the class.



2. Learn a game from long ago and teach it to us!

This option offers students the chance to learn about games from long ago and how they may be different or even the same as the ones they play on the playground today. They choose a game to teach the class.

3. Read poems to a Kindergartner!

This is an excellent choice for those students who need to practice reading or for any student for that matter! Coordinate with a Kindergarten teacher in your building to make the necessary arrangements. Each student that selects this option must practice reading the poems many times before sharing them with their young friend.

Practice the Poetry Jamboree

## Directions:

As your students become more familiar with their playground rhymes and have had some time to work on memorizing them, set aside a time each day to begin practicing the Poetry Jamboree as a whole class. This experience ultimately gives the children enough rehearsal time to feel comfortable performing in front of a group and also allows them the opportunity to make any needed changes to their performance.

Make a list of poems in the order you want the program to go. Write it on the chalkboard where students can refer to it when practicing. To begin with, practices are totally orchestrated by the teacher. Eventually, after the program order of poems has been set, and the students have practiced its order over and over again, they go up and back without any adult direction. In time, there is ownership on their part and you can sit back and enjoy watching them perform. The amount of practice needed depends on the students.

Poetry Sun Visor

Materials:

sun visor pattern (P-22)

crayons and markers

poetry journal

Directions:

Visors allow students to display their work by wearing it. Have them make a poetry sun visor to wear for the Poetry Jamboree by following these steps:

1. Cut out the visor.
2. Write a playground rhyme on it
3. Decorate it
4. Have your teacher help staple on a paper strip band
5. Wear it for the Poetry Jamboree

Cut out and decorate.  
Staple on a paper strip.

Make a Poster of a Playground Rhyme**Materials:**

poster paper

markers

crayons

**Directions:**

Divide students into groups of 2-3. Provide poster size butcher paper and large markers for them to write out and illustrate a playground rhyme. You may want to group students according to the poems they have in the program. Roll up the finished posters and store until the Poetry Jamboree. Later, staple them up around the room to decorate for the final program.

### Poetry Jamboree

The Poetry Jamboree is just what it sounds like -- a time to come together to celebrate and share the many poems, rhymes, and chants your students have come to love! Remember, poetry was meant to be shared out loud.

You can do this within your own class, invite groups in, or go on the road and visit other classrooms. It is also a wonderful opportunity to invite parents into your classroom. They have probably been hearing the rhymes around home so much they will want to come and see what all the excitement is about!

Select a date and begin to get ready! Involve all your students in the planning and setting up. Give them the responsibility and they will surprise you with their creative ideas! You will see a sense of ownership and pride in your students as they work together to prepare. The following list of jobs is a start and can be altered to meet your needs and the celebration you are putting on.

\*Decorations Committee (setting up the room)

\*Invitations Committee (making and delivering  
to selected guests)

\*Cookies (bring one dozen)

\*Juice (bring a half gallon)

\*Napkins and Cups

Be creative and most of all have fun!!

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this project was to develop a poetry curriculum for primary teachers to use in the classroom with students in kindergarten through third grade. To accomplish this purpose, a review of current research and literature regarding the use of poetry with young children was conducted.

#### Conclusions

“Poetry provides opportunities for enjoyment, cooperation, friendship, beauty, and learning in every “subject” area that should not be missed at any age--particularly the early childhood years” (Andrews, 1988, p.24). Poetry is a magical tool that opens up the world of language and learning for children.

Conclusions reached as a result of this project were:

1. Poetry included in the early years of oral language development can be a rich source of vocabulary, offer enjoyable examples of how language sounds in short bites, and provide the repeated practice children need for mastery.
2. Phonemic Awareness is essential to a child’s success in reading.  
Poetry can contribute to a child’s further awareness of language by

highlighting sounds in ways that are not usually heard in normal speech.

3. Beginning reading requires that children are given familiar material that can be memorized, is meaningful, and is easily predictable.

Poetry is familiar, short enough to memorize, meaningful to children, and is very predictable.

4. Children can use poetry as a model for good writing.
5. Teachers can use poetry to improve their students' spelling by:
  - a. strengthening phonemic awareness
  - b. exploring sounds and their symbols
  - c. discovering spelling patterns through rimes and onsets

### Recommendations

As a result of developing this project, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Teachers of young children should make chanting poetry a part of each school day to strengthen their students' vocabulary, offer them practice in their oral language, and give them a model of how language sounds.
2. A strong focus should be placed on phonemic awareness beginning in Kindergarten. Daily, teachers should direct their students to the rhyme

in words and provide exercises to heighten their awareness that words are made up of individual sounds and sound parts.

3. Poetry should be used with children in the early stages of reading print. It is familiar, short enough for them to memorize, meaningful text, and because of the rhythm and rhyme, very predictable.
4. Teachers should include the use of poetry as a good model for teaching writing to their students. It comes in a variety of forms, is familiar, and offers students an opportunity to be successful writers.
5. Early childhood educators seeking to improve their students' spelling skills should include the use of rhyming activities in the spelling curriculum. As they work with rhymes in the written form, exploring rimes and onsets, children will strengthen their phonemic awareness and begin to discover spelling patterns in words.
6. Teachers of young children should provide their students with many opportunities to experience poetry in the classroom.

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