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Briarwood Children's House

Montessori 3-6 Program

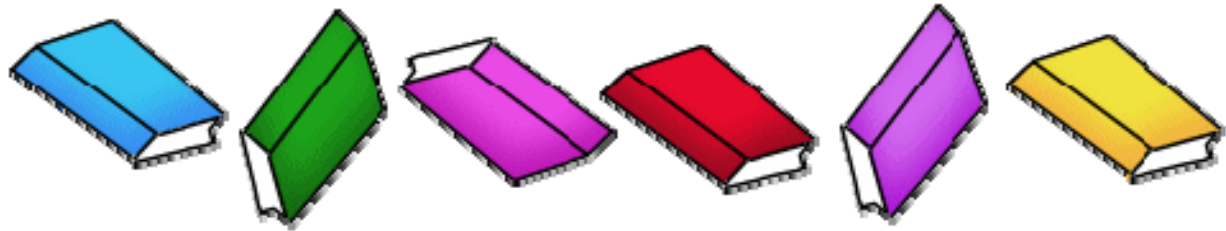
Literacy Parent Handbook

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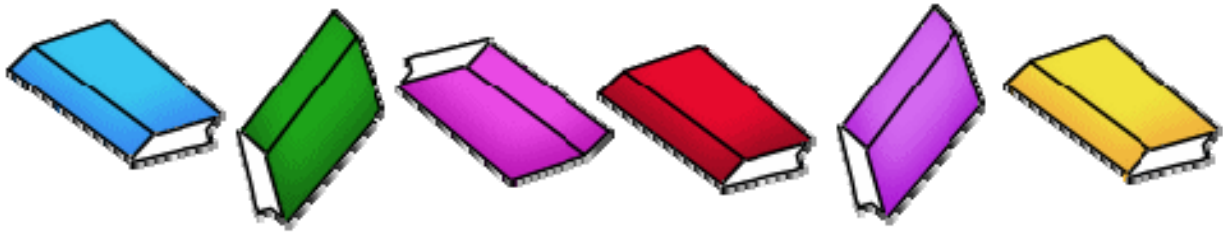
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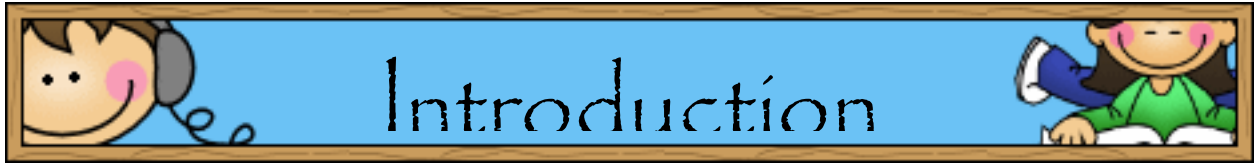
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Visitors came from all over the world to see Dr. Montessori's "Miracle Children," the



children in her first Casa dei Bambini in Rome, Italy.

The phenomenon attracting so much attention was the rumor of "miracle children" from poor illiterate families who began writing and reading spontaneously after working with Dr. Montessori's very simple materials.

Dr. Montessori did not set out to teach children to read and write. She attributed these "explosions" into reading and writing to the hidden spiritual and intuitive energies of the child. The world was looking for her "secret" method. The method wasn't some secret or a miracle

The key was and is the hidden potential of the child.

"We are here to offer to this life, which came into the world by itself, the means necessary for its development, and having done that we must await this development with respect."

- Maria Montessori

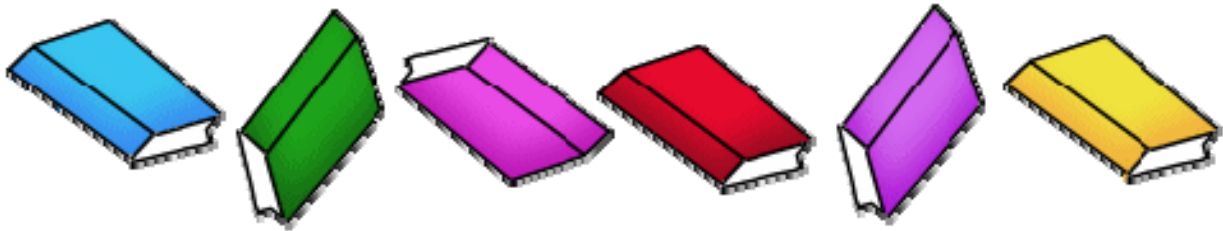
Montessori Keys

Respect for the Child

In understanding Montessori Education it is important to note that Dr. Montessori had an enormous respect for the mysterious thinking powers within the child and stayed from any direct interference with their natural unfolding.

Trust

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Montessori is about trust. Maria Montessori trusted the child to grow according to his own internal natural plan. Trust the Montessori environment and all of the rich experiences it has to offer. Trust the teacher to preserve and guide the process.

Auto-education

Her resolute trust in the powers of the child to auto-educate (teach themselves) led her to approach the subject of literacy indirectly. Typically Montessori children do not remember how they learned to read and write; When asked how, most montessori children say “I taught myself”.

Education through Movement

Dr. Montessori's believed the job of education was to ignite a sense of wonderment and call to the child's natural desire to learn. Children should be free to move and explore and should seek out knowledge. Children construct themselves through movement and Dr. Montessori said it is the movement of the hand which is the instrument of the mind.

The Absorbent Mind

Maria Montessori believed children birth to age six acquire knowledge simply by being in their environment. She called this form of absorption “the absorbent mind.” Children are like little sponges that soak up sounds, images, and language just by being present where these things are available. However, unlike a sponge that gets full and can take on no more, a child's mind is never full. They can continue to take in, organize and store as much knowledge is made available to them.

The Sensitive Periods for Language

Maria Montessori coined stages of development as Sensitive Periods. The Sensitive period for language begins at birth and is the longest of all of the sensitive periods.

[For more information on the Montessori Keys visit our Montessori web page](#)

“the acquisition of language has a national as well as an individual significance.”

- Maria Montessori

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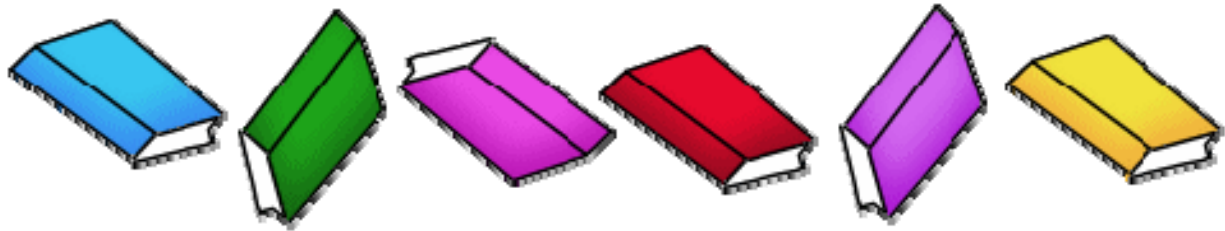
Global Peace

Language as a Vehicle to Peace

The power of the spoken word can start war, create peace, unite people or divide nations. Language unites or separates individuals within a group and unites or separates the larger global cultures of the human race. In this sense we must prepare the child to explore language & literacy as a tool for thinking and communicating with others. Language with this meaning honors Dr. Montessori's larger vision of world peace.



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Children are able to work at their own pace through the sequence of Montessori material. Montessori is



individualized education.

Guidance & Exploration

Teachers observe children and guide them to materials they are developmentally ready for. Teachers work with children, assess progress & guide them to the next material.

Self-correcting Activities

Within every Montessori work is built in a control of error that allows the child to self-correct mistakes.

Creating Thinkers & Building Self-esteem

Briarwood teachers ask questions in order to develop children's abilities to think and problem solve. We never give answers. We ask ourselves "what else can I help the child understand?" So we stretch their thinking by matching a challenge to a child.

Building Self-Esteem

Mistakes are golden opportunities for the child to build self-esteem and gain a deeper understanding of the work.

Children Teaching Children

A child's learning is more meaningful when knowledge is shared in an effort to help someone else. In a 3-6 classroom children help other children.

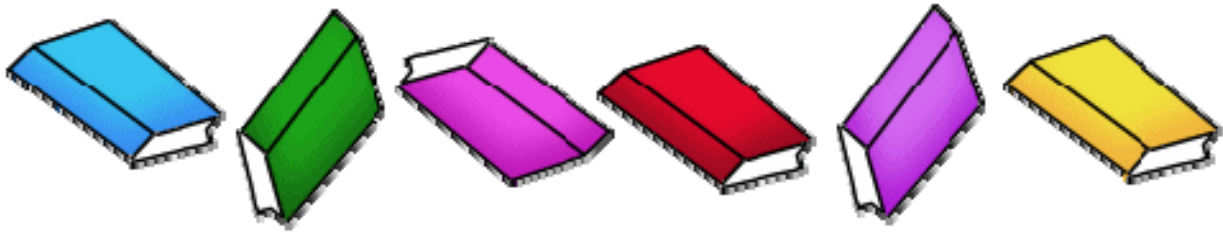
Repetition

A child may choose the same work as many times as they wish. Through repetition of the work skills are practiced and refined.



A Balanced Approach to Literacy

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The Montessori child benefits greatly from a balanced and complete approach to literacy development that integrates a strong foundation in Oral/Auditory Development, Visual Discrimination, Motor Preparation with purposeful Reading & Writing experiences.

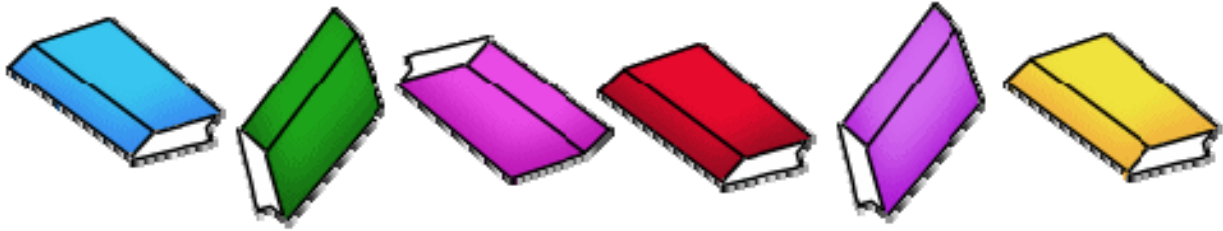
Our Montessori program immerses children in a language rich and sound saturated environment that naturally produces writers and readers. We incorporate listening and speaking, reading & writing experiences with focus on encouraging children to think about the decisions they need to make and the strategies they need to use to see their way through these complex multi-skilled processes.

A Balanced Approach to the Person

The Briarwood child is encouraged to follow their passions and interests, Montessori is an education for the individual. As teachers we “follow the child” while being mindful of the academic expectations awaiting children in today's schools. To ensure children are completely ready for Kindergarten or first grade we balance child choice with small group teacher prepared lessons. We make sure children are receiving time and the opportunity to practice readiness skills. Through our Teacher Choice Baskets children receive individual work just for for them and are asked to complete it at some point during the week. Teacher choice Baskets help to transition Montessori children who are used to choice & working at their own pace to a system of expectation of completion of work within a given time frame.

How Montessori Children Learn to Read & Write

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Briarwood Montessori children learn to read and write through a long process of indirect preparation.

Throughout the classroom children have the opportunity to work on and develop pre-reading & writing skills. Reading & Writing are complex processes that call on children to perform many different tasks simultaneously.

For children to write they need to organize their thoughts, put them into words, remember the formation of the letters and control a pencil. To read children need to visually identify the letters, know their sounds, understand the concepts of print and comprehend the meaning of the text.

Secret Messages

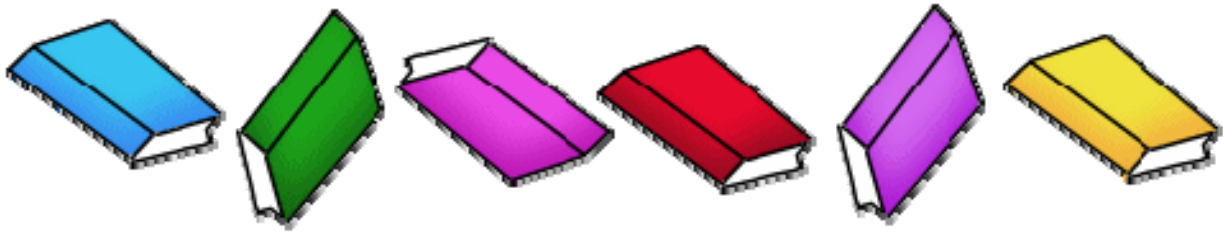
The long process of preparation begins almost secretly to the child through activities in practical life and sensorial. By manipulating and repeating the works in these areas the child begins to develop the muscle coordination, body strength and control, listening skills, visual skills & tactile skills necessary for success in later reading and writing. (see "Literacy Works" Parent Handbook for details)

"The classroom speaks and the systems whisper in the ear of the child whose eyes are wide open and whose hand is seeking to reveal that which only the mind can fully see."

There are lots of secret messages that the child receives from the classroom. The materials are arranged on the language shelves in an order that whispers to the child. The work on the shelves is sequential and as children work through the sequence the movement and direction whispers to the child "left to right", "top to bottom", "return sweep at the end of the row". These messages are keys to reading success with books and other texts.

There are secret whispered messages to the child embedded in every corner of our Montessori classrooms.

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Enjoyment

A central goal for our emergent readers is to introduce them to the power and pleasure of literacy. We strive to inspire a [lifelong love of reading](#) and to do our part to create a nation of readers.

Our goal is to [motivate children](#) to learn to read and later to read to learn by creating positive and enjoyable first literacy experiences. When a parent holds a child and reads aloud, when a teacher shares a story with the whole group, when two friends sit together in the library, reading becomes a pleasurable experience. We believe these memories will inspire and motivate children to persist through the complex and sometimes difficult stages of early literacy learning.

Literacy for Communication

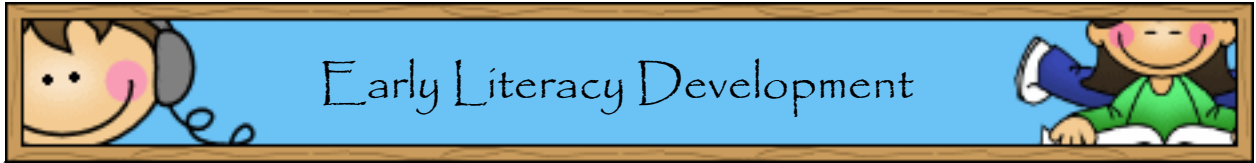
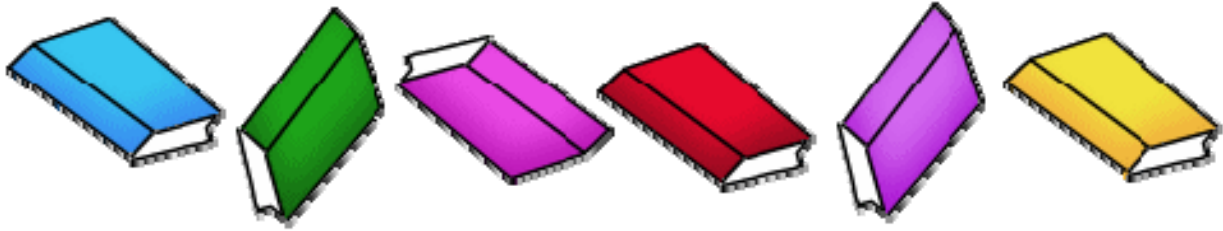
One of the many functions of language is to serve as a means of interpersonal communication between individuals. Language in this form is a process of exchange between listening and speaking and requires the development and refinement of listening and speaking skills.

Our goal for children is to develop the ability to [comprehend the language heard](#) and use spoken language [effectively to communicate](#) thoughts, feelings and ideas. We actively support children to become thinkers and communicators.

Literacy for Reading Success

Our goal is to support children on their journey to becoming [fluent & efficient readers & writers](#). We want children to feel successful as users of print and literacy and we encourage all of their reading & writing attempts. Successful readers read without stumbling over a word and comprehend the meaning of what is read. Our goal is to encourage children to persist through the challenging acquisition of these skills.





"Language

everywhere, all the time with everyone"

- Dr. Ann Epstein

Children's success in school and in life is dependent upon their ability to read and write. The importance of early literacy development cannot be overstated.

Language consists of four systems: Two spoken parts - Listening & Speaking

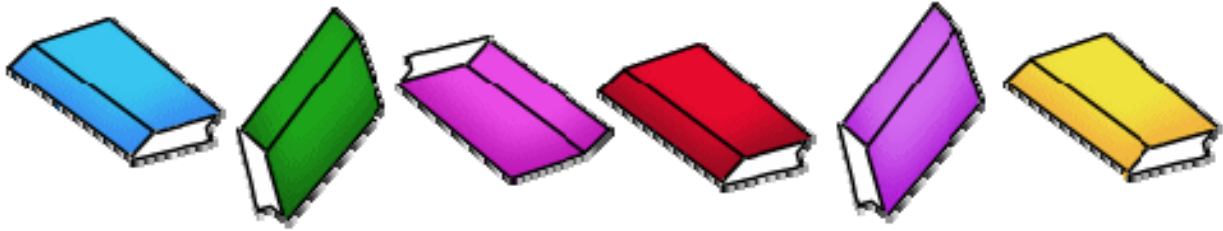
Two written
parts - Reading & Writing

100 years ago Maria Montessori said the skills in all four systems mutually support each other and cannot be separated from one another. As the debate on how to teach reading and writing to children rages on in today's schools, we in Montessori know that deep preparation and balance equal early success with very little frustration.

The National Early Literacy Panel has identified 10 essential skills in early literacy achievement that predict later literacy success for children:

1. Alphabet Knowledge
2. Phonological Awareness
3. Rapid Automatic Naming of letters or numbers
4. Rapid Automatic Naming of objects or colors
5. Writing or writing name
6. Phonological memory
7. Concepts of print
8. Print knowledge
9. Reading Readiness

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Discrimination

Our Briarwood Montessori language program covers every essential area of literacy skill development

The Stages of Reading

Emergent Readers - Pre-Kindergarten through First Grade

Early Readers - First through Second Grade

Early Fluent & Fluent Readers - Second through Third Grade

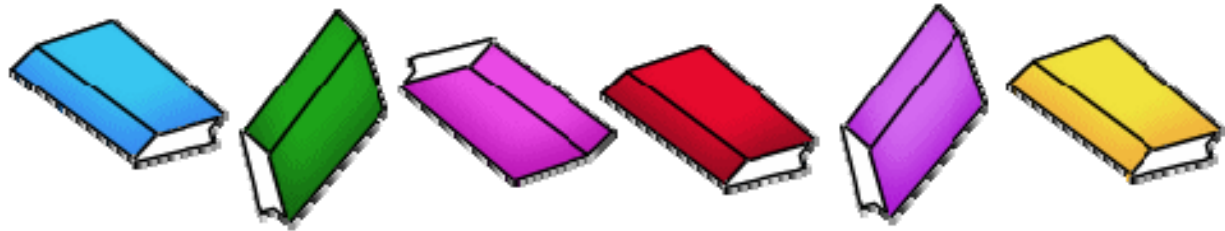
Children in this early stage of reading are just beginning to grasp the basic ideas of books and print. They are working on:

- Letter Knowledge** - visually identifying & naming upper & lower case letters
- Phonemic Awareness** - hearing the sounds in words, hearing syllables, rhyming,
- Phonics** - learning the sound/symbol relationships & committing them to memory
- Comprehension of Book Structure** - (cover, title, author)
- Print Concepts** - Directionality, Spacing, Print carries a message

Our Emergent readers will:

1. Seek out and enjoy experiences with books and print.
2. Become familiar with the patterns and phrases of story language "said the cat" "I exclaimed!"
3. Understand and follow the sequence of stories read to them.
4. Begin to acquire specific understanding about the nature, purpose & function of print.
5. Experiment with reading and writing independently through approximation.

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6. See themselves as developing readers and writers.

- MMINCME 2000, adapted by Sandy Becker 2009

The Montessori Language Curriculum Components

Oral/Auditory (Speaking & Listening) Development

(development of speech, training of the ear)

Importance: Oral Language is the basis for the development of writing and reading skills

Skills: Oral Expression, Oral Comprehension, Oral Storytelling,
Story Re-telling, Vocabulary Enrichment
Listening Skills, Phonemic Awareness

Visual Preparation

(training of the eye for reading)

Importance: Preparation for Reading

Skills: Sorting, Matching, Patterning, Classifying, Sequencing, Letter Identification

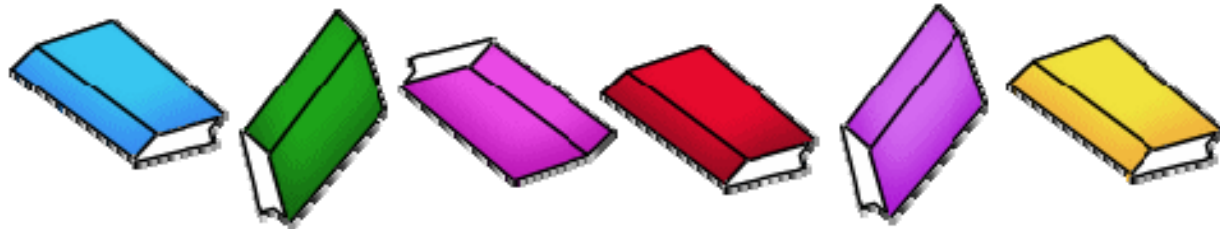
Motor Preparation

(training of the hand, training of the mind)

Importance: Preparation for Writing

Skills: Pincer Grip, Lightness of Touch, Control with a tool, Formation of letters

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Integration of Skills

(Combining Oral/Auditory, Visual, Motor)

Importance: Connecting the sound/symbol association in preparation for reading

Skills: Sound/Symbol Association (Phonics), Expression of thoughts with Symbols

Reading

Importance: Developing conventional skills to become fluent readers

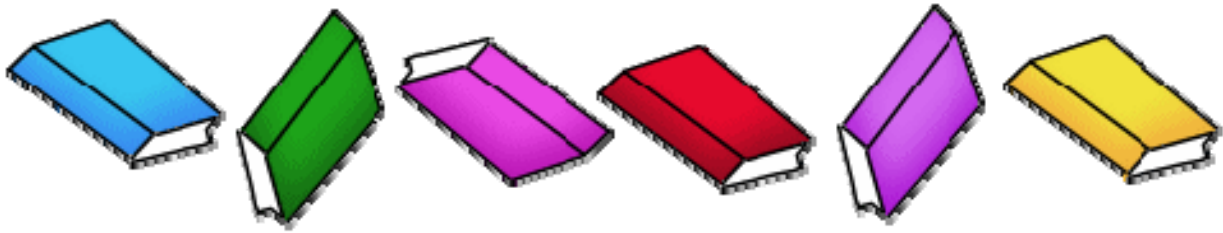
Skills: Print Knowledge, Fluency, Comprehension
Word Building & Phonograms, Sight Words, Grammar

Writing

Importance: Developing conventional skills to become fluent writers

Skills: Print Knowledge, Invented Spelling, Penmanship, Dictation, Journal Writing

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Parent Involvement at Home

How to Work with your Emergent Reader at Home:

Read Frequently to your child! This helps your child to:

1. Understand that reading is a social, pleasurable and worthwhile activity.
2. Become familiar with the “story language” that books are written in.
3. Become motivated to learn to read to self and to others.

Point to the Words as you read them! This helps your child to:

1. See that print moves across the page from left to right, and from top to bottom.
2. Notice what familiar words look like in print.

Encourage your child to read environmental print.

Be a role model - read & write in front of your children

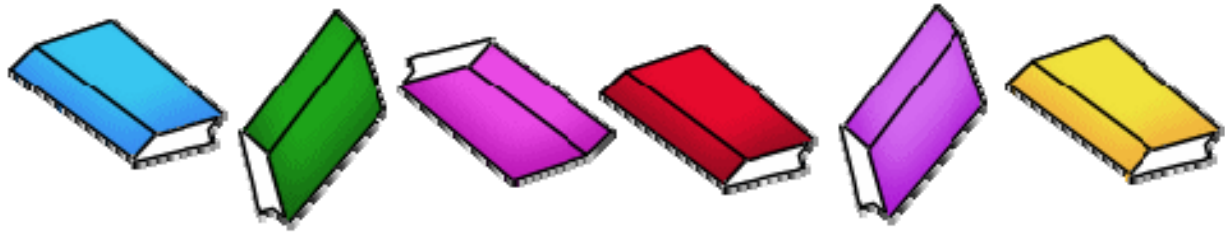
Encourage your child to read to you!

Recognize & celebrate your child's beginning reading skills!

Provide Essential Communication:

Essential communication occurs when a busy mom or dad acknowledges a crying child, a hurt child, or a frustrated child and validates their experience. You are laying the foundation for listening to requests and statements. In doing so you are providing a consistently effective communicative experience for your child. Your child learns that s/he can initiate communication and be heard. Your child will learn to reverse these roles to become an effective listener and responder in the classroom.

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Parent Involvement in the Classroom

Guest Readers

Volunteer to be a Guest Reader. Parent readers can come to the classroom to read aloud to the children. Guest Readers during story time can read our "Book of the Week" to the class.

Mystery Reader

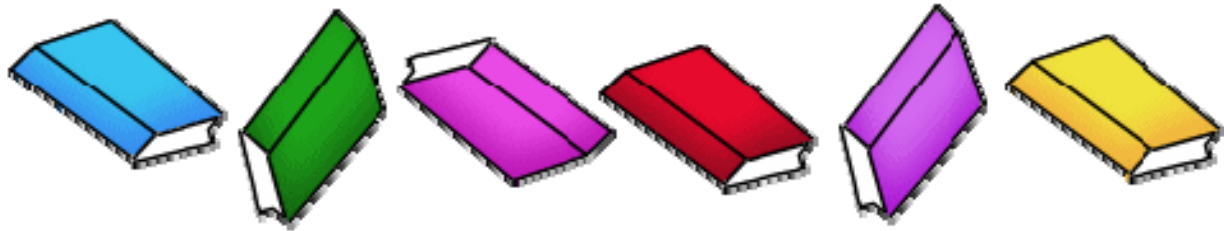
Volunteer to read a book on CD. Children develop listening skills and print concepts when they listen to a book on tape. Be a mystery reader for us and children will try and guess who's mom or dad is the mystery!

Donate to our Reading and Writing Cause

Wish List

paper	glue	wash cloths
pens	erasers	stamp pads
pencils	colored sand	alphabet stamps
colored pencils	markers	paper punches
envelopes	paper clips	hole punch
staples	post its	chalkboards
tape	stencils	
children's scissors	chalk	
glue sticks	sponges	
tracing paper	paint brushes	
scrapbook paper	sandpaper	

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stickers

large push pins

Home - School Literacy Connection

We offer opportunities for you to participate in your child's literacy development. The following are current activities available for home use.

Take Home Book Bags - take home a story bag and enjoy quality literacy time with your child. Take home bags are located in the dining room cupboard and may be signed out as often as you like.

Take Home Journal - at some point during the year your child will bring home the classroom stuffed animal along with a journal. Please write about your adventures with our classroom pal, we read the journal entries every week!

The School-Home Link Activities - a simple assignment for you to complete with your child that focuses on one specific literacy skill. Activities are sent home from the teachers on Mondays and may be returned by Fridays. These assignments become part of your child's developmental portfolio.

Oral/Auditory Kits - practice essential skills with your child

Story-retelling kits

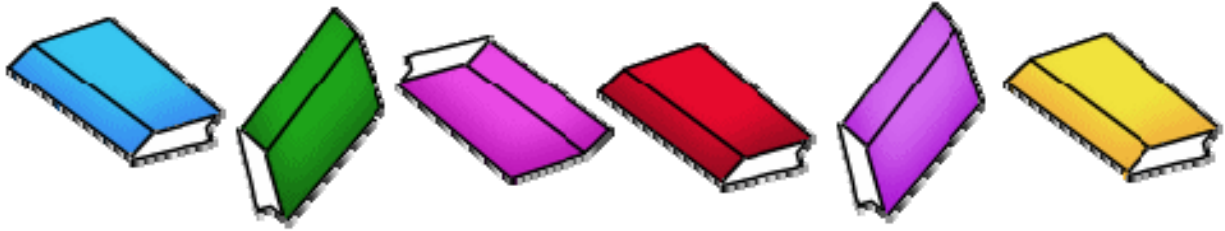
Vocabulary Enrichment Kits

Phonemic Awareness Kits

Visual Discrimination Kits

sorting, Matching, Patterning, Classifying, Sequencing, Letter Identification

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Resources

National Early Literacy Panel

NAEYC

American Montessori Society

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