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Real-World Literacy Activity in Pre-school

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In this article, we share real-world literacy activities that we designed and implemented in two early literacy classes for preschoolers from two inner-city neighborhoods that were part of an intergenerational family literacy program, Literacy for Life (LFL). The program was informed by research that shows that young children in high literate homes develop important emergent literacy knowledge by engaging in meaningful and functional activities in their homes and communities that are mediated by print. We defined real-world literacy activity as reading, writing, or listening to real-life texts for real-life purposes. The children made significant gains in literacy knowledge when compared to the norm group. We share examples of how we integrated real-world literacy activities into daily classroom management/organizational routines, whole class and small group instruction, celebrations and special events and how we took advantage of teachable moments to make explicit the purposes and functions of print and texts in developmentally appropriate ways.

On a gray, rainy October day, Kim and eight four- and five-year olds enter their classroom. The caretaker has again forgotten to turn up the heat and everyone shivers. The children are excited as they sign in and sit at the group table. Next week is Xiao Ping's birthday and they know that today they will be planning for her birthday party. Kim points to a large sheet of paper, taped to the wall. She prints "Things we will need for our party" at the top of the page. "Boys and girls, we're going to make a list," she announces. "Lists help us remember what to bring or what to buy. This list will tell us"—pointing to each word as she reads it—"things - we - will - need - for - our - party" and pointing again to each word, says, "Boys and girls, this says, 'Things we will need for our party.'" Four year old Ling (children's names are pseudonyms) excitedly calls out "a cake" and Kim neatly prints "cake" on the chart. She points to the print as she reads the word. "Food!" Xin says hurriedly

and as Kim prints F-o-o-d, she asks, “What kind of food?” Kim and the children continue composing the list until they have identified all of the things they will need for the birthday party.

The vignette above captures a typical real-world literacy event from Kim’s and Marianne’s early literacy classes for preschoolers that were part of an intergenerational family literacy program, Literacy for Life (LFL). Twenty-one children from two inner-city neighbourhoods in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia participated in the program, which ran from October to May for two hours a day, twice weekly. Nine children and their mothers who were recent immigrants from China and who spoke limited English attended the program at Site One, located in a community center in their neighborhood. At Site Two, 12 children and their mothers participated; they were all members of immigrant or refugee families, principally from the Middle East. The parents varied both in terms of literacy ability in their first language, Arabic, and in proficiency in English. Here, the program was located in portable classrooms provided by the community school.

Each year, about a quarter of a million people arrive in Canada as immigrants and refugees. Nearly half of these new Canadians are children and many of them speak a language other than English or French, Canada’s other official language (British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 4). Although many of these families want to retain their own language and culture, they also want to make sure that their children acquire the skills and develop the knowledge to be successful in school and to become successful and productive citizens of their new country (Anderson, et al. 69). We recognize that the children and families came to the program with significant funds of knowledge (Moll, et al. 139), and we were committed to building our program around their out-of-school literacy lives. We also were committed to honoring the parents’ wishes to prepare their children for Canadian, English-speaking classrooms, concurring with Delpit that children and families from outside the “mainstream” also need to learn the “codes needed to participate fully” in society and they need to do so “in the context of meaningful communicative endeavors” (45). We believe the Literacy for Life project is a model of how to achieve this with young children, including new citizens from immigrant and refugee families. In this article, we present the theoretical background to the program and the associated pedagogy to showcase the application of real world literacy activities in community-based pre-school programs.

Background

Our work in Literacy for Life was informed by several perspectives. First, we drew on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of human development wherein children’s learning and development are thought to occur within three overlapping spheres of influence—home, school, and community (21). That is, children’s homes and communities are important contexts where learning and development are supported, in addition to more formal educational institutions such as day cares, pre-schools, and schools.

We also drew on language as social practice theory and the research base in authentic literacy. Authentic literacy reflects a socio-cognitive view of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 31): students learn best if they are given opportunities to learn and apply new skills within genuine contexts of use. Authentic literacy is also consistent with the concept of guided participation (Rogoff 282): children learn knowledge and skills by participating in the ongoing activities in their families and communities. For example, a young child helping a parent with a shopping list learns “about using lists as planning tools, counting and calculating to make sure they weren’t planning too many items for the available cash, and reading the items on the list” (283). In addition, children learn what is valued and important in their community through “peripheral” participation in an activity, by watching and participating.

The LFL early literacy program was also based on research in emergent literacy that demonstrates that children who live in homes and communities where people engage in reading and writing on a regular basis for a variety of purposes and functions enter school with considerable literacy knowledge (Clark 7; Harste, Burke and Woodward 70). From a young age, children “write” grocery lists with their parents before they head to the grocery store, they check the television guide with their older siblings to see when their favourite show is on, and with parents or significant others, they share books (Taylor 11). These young children are engaged in activities that are mediated by print in their daily lives. That is, they see demonstrations that reading and writing are meaningful and purposeful and that they serve a range of purposes: to find out information, as a way of remembering things, for fun or entertainment, and so forth (Purcell Gates, B 426). Of course, parents and significant others play an important mediating role in that they help children understand how print works (Sénéchal, et al. 109). That is, they: draw children’s attention to print in their homes and communities (i.e., “That word is Stop, S-T-O-P, stop, and it means we must stop the car and look to see if any other cars are coming”); support children in learning the alphabet by constructing names with magnet letters of the alphabet on the refrigerator; help children learn letter sound associations (“That sign says Subway; it starts with the letter s and

the same sound as your name does, Sidhu, /s/-/s/"); and help them develop phonemic awareness as they sing songs or raps together, recite rhymes, read to them, or play word games or share riddles. Although much of the research in emergent literacy has focused on middle class, English speaking Caucasian families, researchers have also demonstrated that this early literacy development occurs across social and economic classes (McTavish 483, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines 13) and linguistic and cultural groups (Ferreiro and Teberosky 24). What seems to be central, however, is that children observe reading and writing being used in purposeful ways in the daily lives of their family and community and that a significant other, such as a parent, grandparent, older sibling, or peer, support and help mediate the literacy learning.

Literacy for Life

The LFL program built on this documented process of early literacy learning. The teachers designed a program in which the young children engaged in early childhood activities such as painting, playing games, making art projects, and listening to stories. We then worked to build into these activities a meta-focus on print and texts. This meant that for each activity, the teachers would either introduce real-world texts that would mediate the activities or would create activities that would require the reading and/or writing of different types of real-world texts. The meta-focus on these texts came from the teachers explicitly naming the different real-world texts, explaining their purposes in the contexts of the activity, and pointing out aspects of the print such as letter names, letter sounds, capital letters, what is a word, and other important early concepts of print (Clay 141). We ensured that the activities were developmentally appropriate (International Reading Association/National Association for the Education of Young Children), and we ensured that the play centers that we created were also infused with real-world literacy props and materials to which we drew children's attention (Neuman and Roskos 220).

Our goal for the children was significant growth in English emergent literacy knowledge. To reiterate, the immigrant parents of the children all stressed that they wanted their children to learn English and to enter kindergarten in Canadian Schools on par with Canadian children. The children did gain significantly in their literacy knowledge compared with the norm as measured by the Test of Early Reading Ability -3 (Reid, Hresko, and Hammill), designed for ages three to eight to measure children's emerging knowledge of the conventions of print, such as book orientation, print orientation and directionality, knowledge of the alphabet, and ability to comprehend written material.

This outcome added to previous research on real-world literacy activity in classrooms that has shown that the more students read and write real-life texts for real-life purposes, the higher their scores are on an array of measures of reading and writing (Purcell-Gates, et al. 90, Purcell-Gates, et al. 41). This was the first time, though, that positive results were found among pre-school-aged children and for children from immigrant and ESL backgrounds.

How Did We Define Real-World Literacy Activity?

Researchers and teachers have used the term authentic literacy for quite some time. However, the ways they have defined authentic literacy vary. By real-world literacy activity, we are following the lead of Duke (personal communication, September 25, 2010), who has dropped the term authentic literacy to avoid confusion between the way she and her colleagues have operationalized it and the ways others have applied it. A review of the literature and of teacher methods and handbook materials (Purcell-Gates, et al. 14) revealed that all of the definitions have included pieces of our definition. They most often cite authentic materials, such as real children's literature or party invitations. Some include real-world literacy activities such as participating in book discussion groups or sending letters. None of the teacher materials, though, have completely conceptualized the concept of real-world—or authentic—literacy activity for the classroom in the same way as we, utilizing a sociolinguistic theory of language in use, dialogic, and purposeful (Bakhtin 60; Halliday and Hasan 17).

For the LFL study, we used a very specific definition that was the same as that used in the Purcell-Gates, et al. ("Impact" 74) and the Purcell-Gates, et al. ("Learning" 14) studies. We defined real-world literacy activity as the reading, writing of, or listening to (a) real-world texts for (b) real-world purposes within (c) real-world social activity contexts. Real-world texts were defined as text types that people read and write in any aspect of their lives—e.g., novels, poetry, menus, postcards, email messages, newspapers, recipes, and ingredient lists—with the exception of texts that are read and written solely for the purpose of learning to read and write.

In order for us to consider an activity with real-world texts as authentic, the children needed to be reading, writing, or listening to those texts for the same purposes that people do in the real world. Reading a menu to choose what to eat, signing in to document that you are present, listening to a story for enjoyment, and composing or dictating a birthday card to give to a friend on her birthday are examples of real world literacy activities.

Essential to our definition of real-world literacy is the need to create in the classroom the real-world social activity contexts that call for reading and writing. Literacy in the real world never exists in a vacuum. At home and in the community, people read newspapers as part of their daily routines

so they can be informed about the world. People read map directions or a GPS as part of activities that involve driving or walking somewhere; people read or listen to stories as part of their enjoyment activities. People compose banners as part of celebrations. The tables summarizing real-world literacy activities that were part of the LFL program, following, will further demonstrate how we embedded real-world texts and real-world purposes for reading, writing, or listening to them, within activity contexts in the classroom that reflect real-world activity contexts outside of a learning to read and write activity. Neuman and Roskos applied this understanding of literacy as it mediates social activity to the world of play for young children (220). We have further extended this to other activity contexts that young children are engaged in outside and inside of classrooms.

Real-World Early Literacy Activities

Following are examples of how we created real-world literacy activities within the LFL early literacy program. The activities are offered as models and not as lesson plans. To satisfy requirements of our definition of real-world literacy activity, we believe that teachers can use these models to develop activities and engage children in real-life literacy within their own contexts and classroom events.

Real-World Literacy Activities for Classroom Routines

Managing early childhood classrooms requires establishing routines. These routines are often organized by the teacher to foster and encourage the child's sense of personal security in the classroom and to support their independence. The teachers in this program capitalized on the potential richness for real-world literacy activities these kinds of routines provide. An example of instruction that enables a meta-focus on print in daily routines involved the use of name labels for coat hooks. Other examples follow in Table 1.

In many early childhood classrooms, teachers prepare for children's entry by labeling storage spaces, equipment, and supplies with the child's name. Kim and Marianne felt that involving the children in this activity would help them to become aware of the print purpose associated with labeling.

The teachers greeted the children as they arrived for the first time, leading them individually to a table with blank sticky labels and a felt pen. After welcoming each child, the teachers explained that because the classroom was a shared space where everyone was working and learning, it would be helpful if each child had a place to put personal things so belongings wouldn't get mixed up. The teachers also explained that in order for everyone to remember the places where their belongings went each day,

it was necessary to make a name label to mark the place. Taking a sticky label, the teachers asked the children individually to state their names and printed each name on a label while the child watched and repeated each letter as the teacher printed it. The teacher pointed to and read the name, telling the child that this was his name and this is how it was printed. The teachers explicitly told the child this label would help the two of them to remember where the child's belongings should go.

When it was time to leave, rather than having the child recognize her jacket or backpack by sight, the teachers assisted the children in finding their hooks by pointing to the letters of their names on the labels and then reading them. The next day, the teacher accompanied the children individually to their hooks, pointed to the names on the labels as she read them aloud, and told them that this word was his or her name. Then she pointed to the letters as she read them and the children watched, confirming that they had the right hook on which to hang their belongings. Over the next weeks, the teachers continually pointed to and read the children's name labels when the opportunity arose, stating that this was the child's name, and how this label would help both the child and the teacher to remember that this is where the child's jacket should be hung. This activity and other name writing events became sites for scaffolding print awareness. For example, one day while watching her friend, Dianne, sign-in, Bonnie noticed for the first time that Dianne's name contained some of the same letters as her own. "Hey! She stole my n!" she exclaimed.

Table 1: Real-World literacy activities for classroom routines

Social Context	Text	Reading/Writing/ Listening/ Viewing/ Representing	Purpose
Taking attendance	Sign-in sheet	Writing	To keep a record of who attended each day
Organizing personal belongings	Name label	Reading	To know where to store their belongings

Helping visitors to participate	Name tag	Writing	To allow visitors to identify the children by name
Keeping track of personal belongings	Signature on artwork	Writing/Reading	To identify our own artwork
Setting the scene for positive social interactions	Name cards	Reading	To ensure everyone has a place to sit
Locating the right bathroom to use when needed	Labels on key fobs and bathroom signs	Reading/Viewing	To ensure boys and girls find the correct bathroom
Creating classroom rules as a group	Rules written on chart paper	Writing/Reading	To keep a record of co-constructed rules To remind class of social contract

Real-World Literacy Activities for Whole Group Time

Early childhood teachers participate in many different developmentally appropriate activities. In the LFL program, the teachers included the children in these activities, providing important opportunities for purposeful and real-world literacy.

Snack time.

Daily snack times not only provided occasions to write shopping lists with the children but also provided numerous authentic opportunities to draw the children's attention to other sources of print (see Table 2). Typically, the children stated their choices, either in reference to a menu or to seeing the items on the table in front of them. The teacher then used a think aloud procedure as she selected the item to hand to the child. For example, "Oh, we have two kinds of juice boxes today. Here it says it's apple and this one

says it's berry," pointing to the words on the label that distinguished the flavor. "Which one would you like?"

We soon began to notice that the children themselves appropriated this label-checking. On one occasion, young Anna asked the teacher if she could read a label to see if there was any gelatin in the yogurt because her cultural dietary restrictions prevented her from consuming gelatin. In another instance, young Amy handed back to the teacher a granola bar she had just been given. Pointing to the ingredient list, Amy asked the teacher to check for peanuts because she was allergic to them.

Outdoor play time.

The outdoor environment offered numerous opportunities for the teachers and the children to engage in real-world literacy activity. Both sites provided limited access to an outdoor playground so the teachers often took the children out for short neighborhood walks to shop for snacks, to go on "print walks," or to use community playgrounds (see Table 5). While escorting the children on these walks, the teachers pointed out relevant print in the environment and explained its purpose. For example, the teachers pointed out the OPEN signs as they walked into local businesses, they pointed out and read the street signs on maps and on roads to find their way, they read warning signs and rules posted on playgrounds meant to protect the children from danger (see Figure 1).

Reading this environmental print to the children often had interesting consequences. In one particular example, Marianne read aloud a sign posted outside a private school playground, pointing to the words as she read: "Private Property. Play at your own risk." Marianne interpreted the ambiguous meaning of the sign as an invitation for the children to play. Unfortunately, after playing on the playground equipment for some time, the teacher and the children were asked by the school personnel to leave the premises. The children, frustrated by the situation, looked to Marianne for help; she told the children that while the situation seemed very unfair, they



Figure 1. The sign posted at the playground

could go back to the classroom and write a letter to the school principal asking permission to play. The children dictated what they wanted to say as Marianne recorded their words (see Figure 2). After reading the letter back to the children, Marianne then assisted the children in signing their names (see Figure 3). While the children watched, Marianne explained how to look up the school's address in the telephone book, address an envelope, seal it and stamp it. The children and Marianne then went back outside to mail the letter. In Table 2, we provide other examples of real-world literacy activities for whole group time.

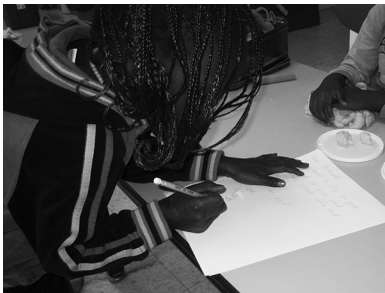


Figure 2. The dictated letter

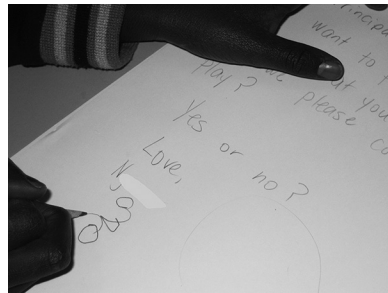


Figure 3. Signing our names to the letter

Table 2: Real-world literacy activities for whole group time

Social Context	Text	Reading/Writing/ Listening/Viewing/ Representing	Purpose
Planning the day's activities	To-do list	Writing/Reading	To remember what we wanted to get done
Planning for grocery shopping	Grocery list	Writing/Reading	To remember what to buy at the supermarket

Planning for snack time	Shopping list, Food labels	Writing/Reading	To check that everything on list was purchased
Preparing food	Recipe in a cookbook	Reading	To know how to cook something
Choosing snack	Menu, Food package labels	Reading	To make food choices
Serving snack	List of helpers' names	Writing/Reading	To give everyone a turn with serving snack
Eating snack	Alphabet cereal, Alphabet pretzels	Reading	To play
Saving leftover snack	Name on Ziplock bag	Writing/Reading	To enable each child to take their own leftovers home
Sharing songs	Song lyrics	Reading	To help children teach songs to their caregivers
Singing songs	Jacket insert on a CD	Reading	To get the words right or find name of a song
Reading books	Children's books	Listening/Reading/ Viewing	To be entertained

Going for a walk	Signs, Site maps	Reading/Viewing	To know where to go; To know what to do
Checking items for recyclability	Recycling symbols	Viewing	To find out what can be recycled

Real-World Literacy Activities for Small Group Time

Small group time in LFL provided opportunities for focused attention and individualized instruction. This enabled Marianne and Kim to support the children’s literacy learning in authentic and meaningful ways. Through small group activities, teachers of young children commonly engage them in completing small projects. Because children at the emergent reading level are not independently reading, teachers usually show them an example of a completed project and explain orally how to do it. However, in LFL, the teachers used written instructions to orient the children to print associated with these projects. For example, when demonstrating a craft, the teacher referenced the instructions for the project found in a book or downloaded from the Internet.

In one of the LFL classrooms there was little space for storing the kinds of toys typically found in early childhood classrooms. One of the few toys Kim was able to store was a box of Duplo blocks. As the children exhausted the play possibilities of this toy, Kim suggested making a large play mat to provide a more contextualized play space to use the building toys (see Figure 4). Kim found the idea for the play mat in a children’s craft book. As she showed the children how to begin the project, she consulted the text, saying, “Let me just check what the



Figure 4. A play mat

instructions say to do here.” When the play mat was completed, she noticed the children wanted to “visit” each other’s houses with their Duplo cars but had to ask each other to identify their houses. Building on this teachable moment, Kim made a name sign outside each child’s house as they looked on, reinforcing the notion that the sign would help them find each other.

The group frequently went on print walks and enjoyed locating stop signs in the urban neighborhood. Following one walk, Kim introduced the idea of placing stop signs at the intersections on the play mat, so the children could safely drive their cars. Two of the children made stop signs with help and glued them onto the play mat. In subsequent play sessions, she modeled using the various signs, as part of the activity of driving cars and visiting each other’s houses, to reinforce the meaningful nature of the signs’ print. Additional real-world literacy activities associated with small-group activities are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Real-world literacy activities for small group time

Social Context	Text	Reading/Writing/Listening/Viewing/Representing	Purpose
Making crafts, art projects, science projects, gifts, playthings	Instructions from a book or the Internet	Reading/Viewing	To know how to make something
Making play dough	Recipe	Reading	To replenish play dough supply
Playing games	Rules and instructions	Reading	To know how to play the game
Doing puzzles	Picture on the box	Viewing	To know how to put the puzzle together

Making photo albums	Captions for the photos	Writing	To tell others about an event or to remember it
Preparing a puppet show	Script	Writing/Reading	To remember what to say

Real-World Literacy Activities for Celebrations

Celebrations are a natural part of early childhood programs. Kim and Marianne took advantage of future special events, such as birthdays, commemorative holidays, or the imminent arrival of new babies, as moments to involve children in real-world literacy activities. This planning generally included the children in generating lists and making party decorations, such as banners, but also frequently involved sending out invitations.

Kim and Marianne used commercially prepared invitations to introduce this genre of text to the entire family, cognizant that the families might not be familiar with items such as invitations to birthday parties. Each teacher worked with the children one-on-one to fill out the invitations. They reminded them of the purpose of invitations, and then pointed to the print while reading each fill-in-the-blank portion of text aloud to the child and writing in the required information. They then re-read the pre-printed text and the entered information aloud and invited the children to sign the card, with the reminder that doing so would help the parent reading it know whom the invitation was coming from. Kim and Marianne also invited the children to write the recipient's name on the envelope, either copying it directly or writing each letter as dictated, depending on their level of ability and interest in doing so. In time, some of the children began to express interest in filling out more than the names on the invitations—e.g., the address—a task the teacher readily turned over to them, providing guidance where necessary. Additional real-world literacy activities associated with celebrations are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Real-world literacy activities for celebrations

Social Context	Text	Reading/Writing/ Listening/Viewing/ Representing	Purpose
Noting special events/dates	Calendar	Reading/Writing/ Viewing	To plan for and remember special events
Planning a party	To-do, Grocery and Supply lists	Writing/Reading	To remember what to buy or complete prior to the party
Filling out invitations	Party invitations	Reading/Writing	To invite guests to the party
Having a party	Slogans on cups, napkins, cake, and candy	Reading	To acknowledge a particular person/event
Making banners	Print on the banner	Writing/Representing	To acknowledge a particular person/event
Making cards	Greeting cards	Writing/Representing	To wish someone well

Real-World Literacy Activities for Written Communications

Notes.

Using literacy for communications was a common way for LFL teachers to involve the children in real-world literacy activity. In addition to the letters requesting permission to play on the playground, Marianne and Kim engaged the children in the literacy practice of leaving notes. They frequently took the children out of the classrooms to experience learning in other venues. Marianne and Kim regularly drew on these opportunities

and wrote simple notes to the children's caregivers and posted them on the doors (see Figure 5) of the classrooms. This practice was always preceded by the teachers saying, as the children were preparing to leave the room, "What if your parents get here before we get back? They might worry if they can't find us." At first it was the teacher who suggested leaving the note; later in the program, the children, themselves, proposed the note solution. The early notes contained the teachers' ideas but as the children began to appropriate the practice themselves, they began to dictate what the teachers should include in the notes. When writing the notes, the teacher read aloud the words she wrote and re-read the completed note to the children under the pretext of making sure all the necessary information was there. At first the teacher wrote the children's names but later when they were able to independently write their names, the children signed themselves.



Figure 5. Note to caregivers explaining children's whereabouts

Letters.

In everyday life, letters are written to communicate with others for a variety of reasons. They may be written to request something, as in the example regarding the children's desire to play on the playground at another school, or as a means to correspond with individuals to maintain relationships. The LFL teachers used letters: to respond to circumstances that arose during the program. For example, at one site, the heat was regularly turned off in the classroom, which overlooked an indoor skating rink. The teacher used this problem as a real-world reason to write to the site manager to let him know the room was too cold for comfort. At the other site, a company supplier dispute necessitated the return of a large number of items from the classroom. The site manager informed the teacher of the situation and subsequently left a note and a list of the equipment needing to be returned. The teacher decided that she would use this real-world text as an opportunity for teaching.

The teacher showed the children the note and the list of things that needed to be returned. As she read off each highlighted item, she pointed to the words. She thought aloud, wondering where each item could be. The children assisted her in finding the items. As they did so, she placed a check mark on the list. The children couldn't find all 12 pairs of scissors, so the teacher made a note on the list to say that they were missing one. When all the items had been checked off, the teacher suggested that they write a note to the site manager to say that everything had been found. Taking a piece of paper and a pencil, she started with, "Dear Mike," and read what she had written out loud. The teacher and the children co-constructed the letter; the teacher wrote the words that the children dictated to her. At the end of the letter, the teacher helped the children sign their names. The teacher found an envelope and addressed it to Mike. With letter in hand, they walked to the site manager's office to deliver it. Additional real-world literacy events involving written communication are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Real-world literacy activities for written communications

Social Context	Text	Reading/Writing/Listening/Viewing/Representing	Purpose
Posting notices	Notes	Writing	To let others know where we are; To remind caregivers of things the children need to bring to school
Writing letters	Letters	Writing	To express thanks for something someone has done; To request things; To acknowledge receipt of something
Sending e-mail	E-mail	Writing	To thank people or make requests
Receiving e-mail	E-mail	Reading	

Concluding Thoughts

The literacy activities that we shared are examples of ways to engage young children in learning that are meaningful, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate. Others (Richgels 243, Turner 44) have documented how real world—or authentic—literacy activities can be used in kindergarten and primary grade classrooms to support young children's early literacy learning. However, we have extended this work by bringing theory and research on real world literacy experiences into the realm of emergent literacy in early childhood classrooms. Furthermore, the real world activities in previous studies have generally been restricted to working with children's names, such as when children sign-in to indicate they are present for class (Richgels 243), or focus on using authentic children's literature (Turner, "Classroom Context" 437) instead of basal readers and other commercially produced materials designed specifically for teaching reading and writing in school.

Our meta focus on print and texts is also consistent with previous work with older children in primary and elementary grades (Edwards, et al. 149). Consistent with Delpit's perspective (15) and with the expressed wishes of the families, we were helping children acquire the knowledge that children from "mainstream" homes have when they enter kindergarten. As evidenced in the examples we provided, children were quick to appropriate the knowledge about print and texts that we had made "transparent" (Turner, "Orchestrating Success" 41, Delpit 15) in age appropriate ways. To reiterate, it was not our intention to teach the children how to read before they entered school. Rather, our goal was to support children in developing the crucial conceptual knowledge about the meaningful nature of print that young children from literacy rich homes develop and that advantage them when they enter school.

The children and their families found these activities highly engaging and the results of the TERA-3 suggest that the LFL activities supported the children's emerging literacy development. It is important to note that literacy activities and events were embedded in ongoing, day to day social activities, just as research in family literacy suggests occurs in literacy rich homes and communities.

Of course, we were able to share only some of the real-world literacy activities from the two classrooms. Teachers can build upon these but also take advantage of other opportunities that occur in their classrooms daily. Likewise, many of the activities we shared are easily transferable to homes and communities, and families and caregivers can avail of opportunities there. Although we worked with preschoolers, most of the activities we shared are suitable for kindergarten and other primary grade children. The key elements of all real-world literacy activities in the classroom include: (a) Children read, write, or listen to real-world text types for (b) real-world

purposes. Further, for writing (or dictating) activities, the real-world text types must be written to a real person (or reader) who will read the text for real-world purposes.

To conclude, there is a body of evidence that young children can develop considerable knowledge about literacy prior to school in age appropriate ways and they are advantaged when they do so. Real world literacy activities such as those we shared in this article are a promising context for supporting young children in contexts of schooling as they develop that knowledge in engaging and developmentally appropriate ways.

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