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The Early Literacy Checklist

The **Early Literacy Checklist** is a reflective self-assessment tool enabling programs and specialists working with young children to better evaluate to what extent they support literacy in young children and within families, and to what extent they engage in community partnerships in supporting child and family literacy. This checklist will help programs to determine both their **strengths** in promoting early literacy as well as their **gaps**.

The Checklist can be used by an "*early years program or service*" found in a community. *Early years programs and services* refers to the range of programs and supports that serve children and families. It includes, but is not limited to: Ontario Early Years Centres, child care centres, home child care agencies and associations, libraries, family resource programs and kindergartens.

Programs should use the checklist together with the Early Literacy Specialist when she/he visits your program. Working with the Early Literacy Specialist in applying the Checklist to your program will help the specialist determine how s/he can best support the work you are already doing and will be taken into consideration for literacy resources for which your program may be eligible.

PART 1: Supporting Literacy in Young Children

A - The Environment:
Demonstrating a commitment to preparing the environment to support literacy acquisition in young children.

L = Lots (more than 5)   **F** = Few (3 to 5)   **N** = None

L F N
- ☐☐☐ Books that rhyme (using rhyming or alliteration)
- ☐☐☐ Variety of pattern books
- ☐☐☐ Variety of read aloud books
- ☐☐☐ Variety of picture books
- ☐☐☐ Beginning-to-read books
- ☐☐☐ Baby board Books
- ☐☐☐ Books with "real" pictures
- ☐☐☐ Nursery rhyme books
- ☐☐☐ Fairy tale books
- ☐☐☐ Concept books (colours, shapes, numbers, counting, sorting, etc)
- ☐☐☐ Books that encourage art
- ☐☐☐ Books that encourage science
- ☐☐☐ Books that encourage music
- ☐☐☐ Information books (about nature, trucks, dinosaurs, animals, etc)

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L = Lots (more than 5)   **F** = Few (3 to 5)   **N** = None

L F N

☐☐☐ Special topics books (fears, toileting, divorce, illness, etc)
☐☐☐ Books that reflect diversity (relationships, same sex families, developmental, multicultural)
☐☐☐ Books that children created themselves
☐☐☐ Cookbooks
☐☐☐ Atlas
☐☐☐ Newspapers, flyers, magazines
☐☐☐ Games
☐☐☐ Puzzles
☐☐☐ Puppets
☐☐☐ Props (including dress-up, felt board, musical instruments, careers and occupations materials)
☐☐☐ Variety of teaching resources
☐☐☐ All kinds of paper (including paper with lines for printing, books for journaling, construction paper…)
☐☐☐ All kinds of writing tools (*working* markers, *useful* crayons, pencils *that work*, erasers, chalk, paint)
☐☐☐ Labels (that are created *with* the children and/or *by* the children) to identify objects
☐☐☐ Labels to sort and classify
☐☐☐ Labels to give information or direct
☐☐☐ Newsletters, calendars, and/or bulletins for Parents (*simple* and *easy-to-read*)
☐☐☐ Books, strategies, and other resources available to parents – ON SITE
☐☐☐ Books, strategies, and other resources available to parents – ON LOAN
☐Yes☐No Are parents reminded often that they are *very* welcome to sign out books/resources?
☐Yes☐No Is the sign out book/system easy to use?
☐Yes☐No Is help given for parents who need it?
Comments:

_____

Y = yes   **N** = no

Y N
☐☐ CD player and CDs
☐☐ Tape recorder
☐☐ Cassette tape player
☐☐ Books with tape cassettes or CDs
☐☐ Musical Instruments
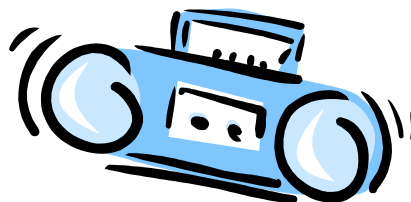
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B – Interactions:
Facilitating the growth of knowledge and skills that support literacy acquisition in young children

A = Always   **S** = Sometimes   **N** = Never   **N/A** = Not applicable

A S N N/A

☐☐☐☐ Is there enough time for staff to interact and support children, individually and in groups?

☐☐☐☐ **Is there enough staff to interact and support children, individually and in groups?**

During daily activities are the following communication approaches (aural, oral and visual) being used?

☐☐☐☐ signs

☐☐☐☐ gestures

☐☐☐☐ concrete objects

☐☐☐☐ pictures

☐☐☐☐ songs/chants

☐☐☐☐ symbol/written words

☐☐☐☐ expressive facial language

When adults (staff, volunteers) are speaking with children do they use the following skills?

☐☐☐☐ simplify/slow down

☐☐☐☐ repeat/expand on child's speech

☐☐☐☐ teach and use key words and phrases consistent with the child's first language

☐☐☐☐ model good grammar and repeat child's words in grammatically correct format

☐☐☐☐ use open ended questions

Do you use of a variety of strategies to help children try new items/materials related to literacy?

☐☐☐☐ Rotating of toys and equipment, materials and resources

☐☐☐☐ Role modeling pretend play

☐☐☐☐ Encouraging peer interaction

☐☐☐☐ Playing games with the children

☐☐☐☐ Singing songs with the children

☐☐☐☐ Playing with sounds (especially with rhyme)

☐☐☐☐ Printing with the children (e.g., asking children for a title for their pictures and demonstrating how oral and written language connect)

☐☐☐☐ Offering art, drawing, and painting experiences

☐☐☐☐ Offering music experiences

☐☐☐☐ Offering puppetry experiences

☐☐☐☐ Offering dramatic play experiences

☐☐☐☐ Offering felt board experiences

☐☐☐☐ Offering storytelling experiences

☐☐☐☐ Reading lots of stories and poetry aloud

☐☐☐☐ Asking good questions when reading aloud

☐☐☐☐ Showing how writing communicates a message (pointing out signs, words in books, making labels *with* the children)

☐☐☐☐ Pointing out conventions of print when reading (left to right text, upper/lower case letters, etc…)

☐☐☐☐ Exploring alphabet letters, demonstrating that letters represent sounds

☐☐☐☐ Encouraging children to recognize, print, and identify letters in their names

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PART 2: Supporting Literacy within the Family

A - The Environment: Demonstrating a commitment to preparing the environment to support literacy acquisition in young children.

A = Always   **S** = Sometimes   **N** = Never   **N/A** = Not applicable

A S N N/A

☐☐☐☐ Easy to understand written communications with family members (letters, notices, other signs)

☐☐☐☐ Opportunities for parents to network and gain mutual support

☐☐☐☐ Parents are encouraged to play with their children, and participate during circle time

☐☐☐☐ Bulletin boards, posters, signs, decorations, and cultural items that reflect a diversity of families

☐☐☐☐ Drop off & pick up times/locations designed to support informal discussions among parents & staff

☐☐☐☐ Families are provided with information about workshops(directly, face-to-face, via phone, in writing)

☐☐☐☐ Newsletters respect literacy levels of readers

☐☐☐☐ Parenting resources available for loan

B - Interactions: Facilitating the growth of knowledge and skills that support literacy acquisition in young children

A = Always   **S** = Sometimes   **N** = Never

A S N

☐☐☐ Are there opportunities for families and staff to interact on a spontaneous basis?

☐☐☐ Verbal communications between staff and families are conducted in a friendly manner that is respectful of the families' culture

☐☐☐ Staff greet families warmly, and encourage them to socialize and spend time together

☐☐☐ Staff encourages parents and other family members to fully participate with their children while attending activities and programs offered in the centre

☐☐☐ Literacy events for families are planned on a regular basis with parent involvement

☐☐☐ When requested by families, are opportunities provided to work with individuals to identify their strengths, goals, interests, & resources regarding literacy through either family focused interviews, informal discussions, or home visits?

☐☐☐ Do you document information regarding a child's progress in literacy skills development to share with families at times convenient to them?

☐☐☐ Are parents involved in the development of literacy materials, activities, and events?

☐☐☐ Do the family literacy activities reflect families' lives culturally, socially, economically, etc…?

PART 3: Community Partnerships in Supporting Child & Family Literacy

A – Collaboration: Demonstrating a commitment to forming and strengthening partnerships that promote child and family literacy within the community

A = Always   **S** = Sometimes   **N** = Never   **N/A** = Not applicable

A S N N/A

☐☐☐ ☐ Does regular communication & information sharing occur with other early years programs in the community?

☐☐☐☐ Do you plan, implement, and host community-based family literacy events open to those outside your program?

Do you share staff resources with other early years programs in the community via:

☐☐☐☐ staff shadowing opportunities?

☐☐☐☐ staff exchange programs?

☐☐☐☐ professional development opportunities?

☐☐☐☐ conference participation?

Do you share funding resources with early years programs in the community including proceeds from funding and/or fundraising, where possible? I.e.:

☐☐☐☐ In-kind resources (toys, clothing, formula etc) shared with early years programs in the community

☐☐☐ ☐ Volunteer resources shared with early years programs in the community

☐☐☐☐ Other – (list) _____

☐☐☐☐ Are formal protocols or agreements developed, maintained, and tracked for the above resource sharing?

☐☐☐☐ Do you participate in literacy events sponsored by other sectors?

☐☐☐☐ Do you participate in literacy organizations by serving on boards, committees, etc…?

☐☐☐☐ Do you **consult with** the Early Literacy Specialist in your programs?

☐☐☐☐ Do you **include** the Early Literacy Specialist in your programs?

Name of Centre: _____

Location of Centre: _____

Signature of Centre Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____   **Date Completed:** _____

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Early Literacy Action Plan for: _____ Date: _____

	Goal(s)	How to Achieve	Resources Required	Timeline	Comments
Supporting Literacy in Young Children: Our Environment					
Supporting Literacy in Young Children: Our Interactions					
Supporting Literacy within the Family: Our Environment					
Supporting Literacy within the Family: Our Interactions					
Community Partnerships: Collaborations					

Early Years Program Staff: _____ Date: _____

Early Literacy Specialist: _____ Date: _____

The Early Literacy Checklist

Program/Centre: _____

Date: _____

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