

IMPROVING LITERACY SKILLS THROUGH MANIPULATIVE MATERIALS

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What is the best way to prepare emergent learners? How do we create an environment in which children can learn well? Some theories supporting developmentally appropriate learning have their origin in the work of Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner in the early 1960s. According to these child development specialists, using physical interaction with their environments is essential for early learning success. Also, Piaget on his theory of cognitive development in young children, Bruner's contribution was that individuals make sense of their early environment by enactive representations, such as manipulation, and then later develop full competence through images of words (Marley & Carbonneau, 2014).

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In the Omnibus Policy of Kindergarten, it is stated that learners shall be given equal opportunities to effectively promote their physical, social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual development including values formation to ascertain school readiness. Hence, early literacy instruction must be appealing, creative and follow developmentally appropriate practices which engage the young learners in meaningful experiences. Teachers must prepare learning materials that focus on activities that are hands-on discovery play. Using real and manipulative objects in teaching lets students relate with first hand information and build ideas or concretize things that they already know. Developing ideas through scaffolded lessons that move from concrete to semi-concrete, semi-abstract, and finally, abstract levels is a well-documented and known pedagogy for teaching elementary school children. (Moch 2012)

Studies show that the use of concrete materials among emergent learners can produce meaningful lessons and increase learner concept development. Thus, utilization of manipulative learning materials is essential in developing the learning activities because establishes engagement. Manipulative materials provide a strong foundation for learning abstract ideas. The use of manipulative in early childhood education like a game played is one of the best instructional materials that can develop and enhance early literacy skills.

In this digital era where the demand is giving quality learning among emergent learners during this challenging situation brought by the pandemic, teachers' role is so intense, that directly affects early literacy among young children. As early childhood educators, one of the educational goals is to innovate digital manipulative to make fresh concepts that will motivate children to learn. We must prepare and incorporate new ways of learning with those traditional manipulative materials to better engage young minds in new ways of thinking to develop literacy skills.

References:

Carbonneau, K. J., Marley, S. C., & Selig, J. P. (2014). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of teaching mathematics with concrete manipulatives. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2), 380-400. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031084>