

ENHANCING EMERGENT COMPREHENSION IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH LITERACY-BASED PLAY

by:

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Literacy development in kindergarten is crucial for laying the foundation for future academic success. One of the most effective ways to support this development is through literacy-based play. This approach integrates reading, writing, and language activities into playful experiences, helping children develop essential comprehension skills. By engaging in literacy-based play, kindergarten students improve their ability to understand and interact with text, setting the stage for lifelong learning.

Emergent Comprehension in Kindergarten

Emergent comprehension refers to the early stages of understanding written language. In kindergarten, children transition from recognizing letters and words to making meaning from stories and text. Comprehension is critical because it allows children to connect the text to their own experiences, make predictions, and understand key ideas. Building emergent comprehension is essential for future success in reading.

While phonics and decoding are often the focus in early literacy instruction, comprehension must be developed alongside these skills. Literacy-based play is a highly effective way to support both. By engaging with text in meaningful ways, children can improve their understanding of stories, characters, and concepts while also having fun.

What is Literacy-Based Play?

Literacy-based play refers to activities that combine play with literacy instruction. In these activities, children read, write, and engage in oral communication in ways that

feel natural and enjoyable. Examples include role-playing, storytelling, creating written materials like lists or signs, and reading books. The key is that these activities are integrated into play, making literacy learning interactive and engaging.

Through play, children can explore print and language in a relaxed and enjoyable setting, which makes learning feel purposeful rather than forced.

How Literacy-Based Play Enhances Emergent Comprehension

Literacy-based play supports emergent comprehension in several ways:

Storytelling and Retelling

When children retell stories or act them out, they understand story structure and sequence. This helps them grasp the narrative's meaning and reinforces comprehension by engaging them actively with the text. For example, after reading a story, children can use props or puppets to recreate scenes, reinforcing their understanding of key ideas.

Vocabulary Expansion

Through play, children encounter new words in context. For instance, in a pretend grocery store or restaurant, children learn terms like "menu" or "order," which improves their vocabulary and, in turn, their ability to comprehend text. Expanding vocabulary is key to better understanding stories and books.

Predicting and Making Connections

Play allows children to make predictions and connections to their own experiences. Predicting what will happen next in a story or in role-play helps develop critical thinking and comprehension. By connecting what they read to their own lives, children deepen their understanding of the material.

Writing and Mark-Making

Writing activities during play, such as creating signs or lists, help children understand that writing communicates meaning. When children “write” during play – whether it’s a letter, menu, or story – they practice both reading and writing in a meaningful way, reinforcing their comprehension of how text works.

Literacy-based play is a powerful way to enhance emergent comprehension in kindergarten students. By incorporating reading, writing, and verbal communication into play, children gain a deeper understanding of language and text. Activities like storytelling, role-play, vocabulary-building, and writing help children develop essential comprehension skills while making learning enjoyable. This approach not only improves children’s ability to understand text but also fosters a love for reading, ensuring a solid foundation for future academic success.

References:
National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction. Retrieved from <https://www.nichd.nih.gov>