



MLM

make literacy meaningful

Partnership with Families: Zoom Ahead with Books

Brigina O’Riordain

Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland Dublin, Ireland, 2019

Introduction

This learning activity examines how teachers can work in partnership with families and engage them in supporting their children’s learning and development, both at home and in the service. It is part of the Making Literacy Meaningful project, funded by the European Union under the ERASMUS+ Programme, which is developing practically-oriented knowledge in the area of language and literacy development, with a specific focus on addressing the needs, challenges and opportunities resulting from multilingual and multicultural classrooms. More information is provided in our MOOCs <http://literacymooc.eu/courses/teaching-in-multilingualclassrooms/>; <http://literacymooc.eu/courses/mooc-2/> and website <http://euliteracy.eu/>.

By using and creating dual language (home language and L2) texts, children can develop literacy skills in both their home language and the language of instruction. These ‘plurilingual’ approaches increase children’s language awareness, so using many languages can be a positive learning experience for all (Catibusic-Finnegan, Bronagh, 2017)

Recognizing children’s home languages is an important aspect of intercultural education. Educators should encourage migrant parents to maintain their home languages and enable families to support their children’s vocabulary development through meaningful conversations, story-telling, reading, and play. Children’s linguistic and cultural identities should be affirmed by creating inclusive environments, where words in all languages become foundations for learning. (Catibusic-Finnegan, Bronagh, 2017)

The *Zoom Ahead with Books* programme is designed to encourage parental involvement and promote children’s enjoyment and motivation to read for pleasure. The programme is for children aged approximately 4 – 8 years and is rolled out mainly through the junior classes in primary school, but can also be used in preschool and afterschool settings.

Each night over a three-week period, the children take home a book from the class library, sit, read and discuss the book with their ‘book buddy’ and then both draw a picture representing the book. The project finishes with a series of exhibitions of the artwork from the children and book buddies in the local schools to celebrate the commitment and effort of all the children and their families.

Zoom Ahead with Books is an ideal way to encourage parental involvement, develop the home learning environment and promote literacy. It is an inclusive activity that can be done with all parents, especially if schools and other education settings can choose a mix of books, including books in the home language and in the instructional languages. Also, the artistic element of the project means that parents can engage with the activity even if they don't have good literacy skills.

Delivering the Programme

Below is a summary of how the programme works:

- Each child has a
 - 'book buddy' at home – a parent/guardian, grandparent or older sibling
 - resource pack containing a blank copybook, colouring pencils, letter to the parents/guardians to tell them about the project and a series of A5 prompt cards with suggested literacy, numeracy and emotional language questions for the 'book buddy' to use during the sessions (Figures 1,2,3).
- Each night the child takes home a class library book in their resource pack which they are asked to read and discuss with their book buddy. Both child and book buddy then draw a picture representing their discussion, whether it is their favourite part of the book, their interpretation, or any creative expression based on the book.
- Children with writing skills can also add a comment underneath
- Teacher appraises copies every day, or whenever possible, and adds stickers and comments to encourage
- Teacher can make a wall chart representing the number of books being read by each child/group in the class every day/week of the project (teacher decides on this themselves) and illustrates *Zoom Ahead with Books*. This visual display of progress helps to keep the children and book buddies motivated
- Towards the end of the project each child and book buddy draw a special picture on a template provided and ELI will have it framed for an exhibition in the NCI (or your own school) (further guidelines on the template for pictures for framing will be sent separately)
- Exhibition will celebrate the achievements of the children and book buddies and promote books and reading in the school and the community
- Framed picture is given as gift to the family following the exhibition.

Try asking these questions each time you read a story.

Choosing a book:
Beginning

After picking a storybook to read, ask:

- Did you like the picture on the front?
- What does it show?
- What do you think this story will be about?
- What might happen in the story?

Reading a book:
Middle

Pause at points during the story and ask:

- Tell me what is happening in the pictures?
- What has happened in the book so far?
- What might happen next?
- How do you think the story might end?

After reading:
End

At the end of the book, ask:

- Did you like this book?
- What was your favourite part? Why?
- What was the most interesting/exciting part of the book? Can you find it?



Original Concept by St. Laurence O'Toole Junior Boys School

The Area Based Childhood Programme 2013-2018



Early Learning Initiative
National College of Ireland

**Zoom ahead
with books**

Figure 1: Literacy Card – Talking about the book

There are many ways to show emotions, can you see any feelings words in the story?

Who is your favourite character in the story?



What are they like?

**Is he/she friendly?
Are they caring?
Are they unkind?**

**How do characters feel when things happen during the story?
Can you name some feelings?**

Does this story remind you of anything that has happened to you?



The Area Based Childhood Programme 2013-2018



Early Learning Initiative
National College of Ireland

**Zoom ahead
with books**

Figure 2: Emotion Card – talking about feelings and emotions

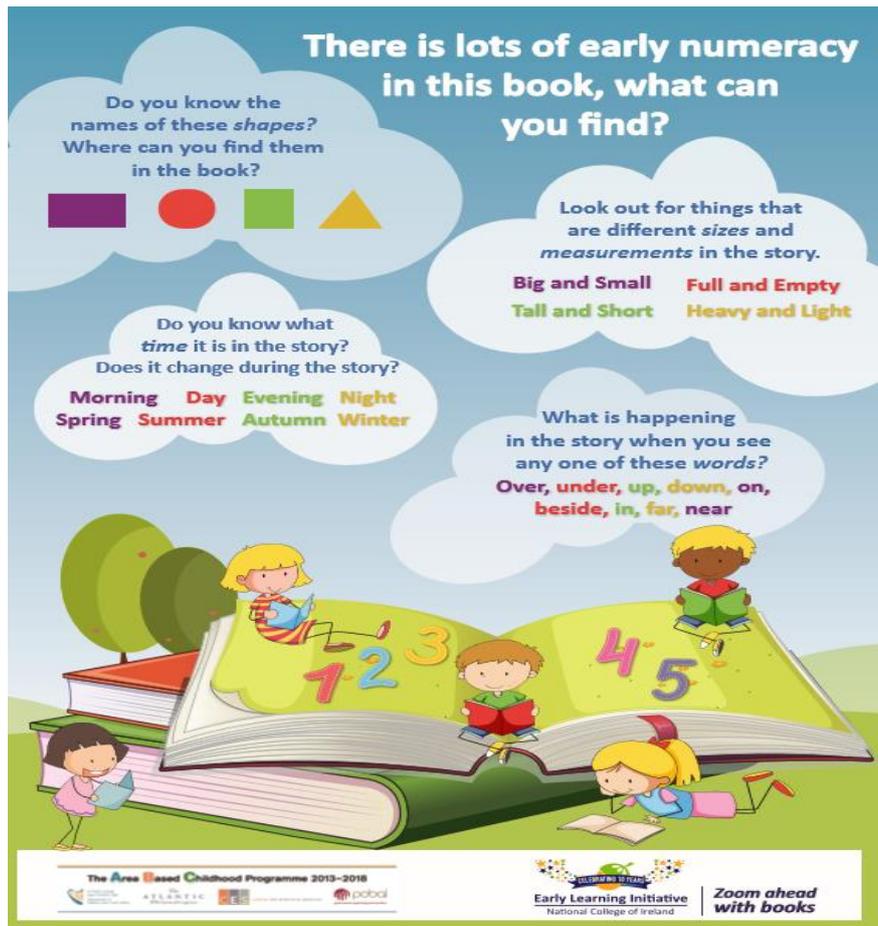


Figure 3: Numeracy Card – talking about mathematical concepts

Planning the Programme

1. Make a list of outcomes you hope to achieve by doing this activity.
2. Organise parents to take part in activity- decide on whether this will be a school based or home-based activity.
3. Book choice- decide on whether to use one book for the whole class or let children/parents choose the book (can be multilingual, home language or instructional language). You can always do both. E.g. have a school-based activity where all parents use the same book as a demonstration and then children can choose their own books to use at home.
4. Create a simple set of directions for parents/children, if you have parents/staff who can translate into different languages, you can have dual/multilingual instructions. Include images of each step (this will also help parents with literacy issues and language barriers.)
5. Model the use of the Zoom Ahead with Books pack. If you decide to have a school-based activity, this can be done during circle time, you can build this modelling into your activity plan. If you choose to do a home-based activity, you could create a video of a parent using the pack or take a series of photographs to create a visual aid.

6. Plan your evaluation/ review- how do I know the activity was successful/enjoyable/supported parents/have I fulfilled the desired outcomes/what have the children learned.



Do

10. Once you have planned your activity, put it into practice (school based or home based)



Review

11. Use your planned evaluation process to review the desired outcomes.

Reference

Catibusic-Finnegan, Bronagh (2017): Supporting multilingual children's literacy development. MLM-make literacy meaningful: <http://euliteracy.eu/supporting-language-acquisition-multilingual-environments/>