



READING THE World



Santa Fe Baby Fund



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During the 2017-2018 school year, the teachers in the Collaborative Teachers Institute (CTI) together with the children they work with set out to explore what literacy means. These studies, entitled **Reading the World**, are an expression of the many ways that young children engage with words through their play and exploration in the world, both inside and outside their classrooms. The photographs of children's work and words, coupled with explanatory descriptions by the teachers, demonstrate literacy as multi-dimensional.

Teachers identified how **speaking, listening, writing and, of course, reading** are the foundational elements of literacy for young children. By cultivating these skills, we are encouraging an interest in words, and in the world, and thereby deepening children's love of learning.

Paulo Freire, the Brazilian professor of education philosophy, coined the phrase "reading the world." The teachers in the CTI were inspired by Freire's idea that reading development occurs not in isolation, but when young children connect reading directly to their lives and experiences in the world.



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For young children, **speaking, listening, reading,** and **writing** develop in a dynamic exchange. Children create a relationship with literacy by exploring these skills as they engage in real life situations.

Speaking: Dialogue occurs between teachers and children, children and children, children and their families, and children and community members. Children develop verbal skills in order to seek new information, negotiate, cooperate and resolve conflict.

Listening: We listen in order to understand others and know how to respond. This is crucial as children develop meaningful relationships. Listening and speaking, of course, go hand in hand.

Reading: The world, both inside and outside the classroom, is filled with opportunities to read. Words are all around us. Children have opportunities to connect print to real world experiences such as reading street signs, labels of products in stores, newspapers and, of course, books. Children acquire reading skills by studying and connecting meaning to images and objects that are of interest to them and are reflective of one's culture and context.

Writing: Even before children learn to write letters, they are capable of connecting their written symbols with meaning. As children gain experience, fine motor skills and cognitive development, a bridge spans between their symbols, letters and the words they find in the world. Children develop a concept of writing as a form of action that connects their ideas to others.





Teachers and children together sound out words over lunch.

THE LETTER GAME

SCHOOL: Pando Little School
TEACHERS: Melissa Scott and Kristi Goldade

Adalia, Lazlo, Theo, and William are students at Pando Little School.

Collaboratively and spontaneously, the children generated a game, called **“The Letter Game,”** where they call out letters and a teacher writes them on a piece of paper. Once a string of letters has been written, the teacher will say each letter and then sound out the **“word”**.

Inevitably, each word is a string of mumbo-jumbo nonsense, which the kids find hilarious. Then one day, after the children keep asking to sound out **“Aaaaaaa,”** Melissa suggests they try to spell an actual silly word.

Adalia suggests BooBooButt, a character from the story, *The Book with No Pictures*. The children cheer her on and spend the next 15 minutes of lunch working together to figure out how to spell that funny word.

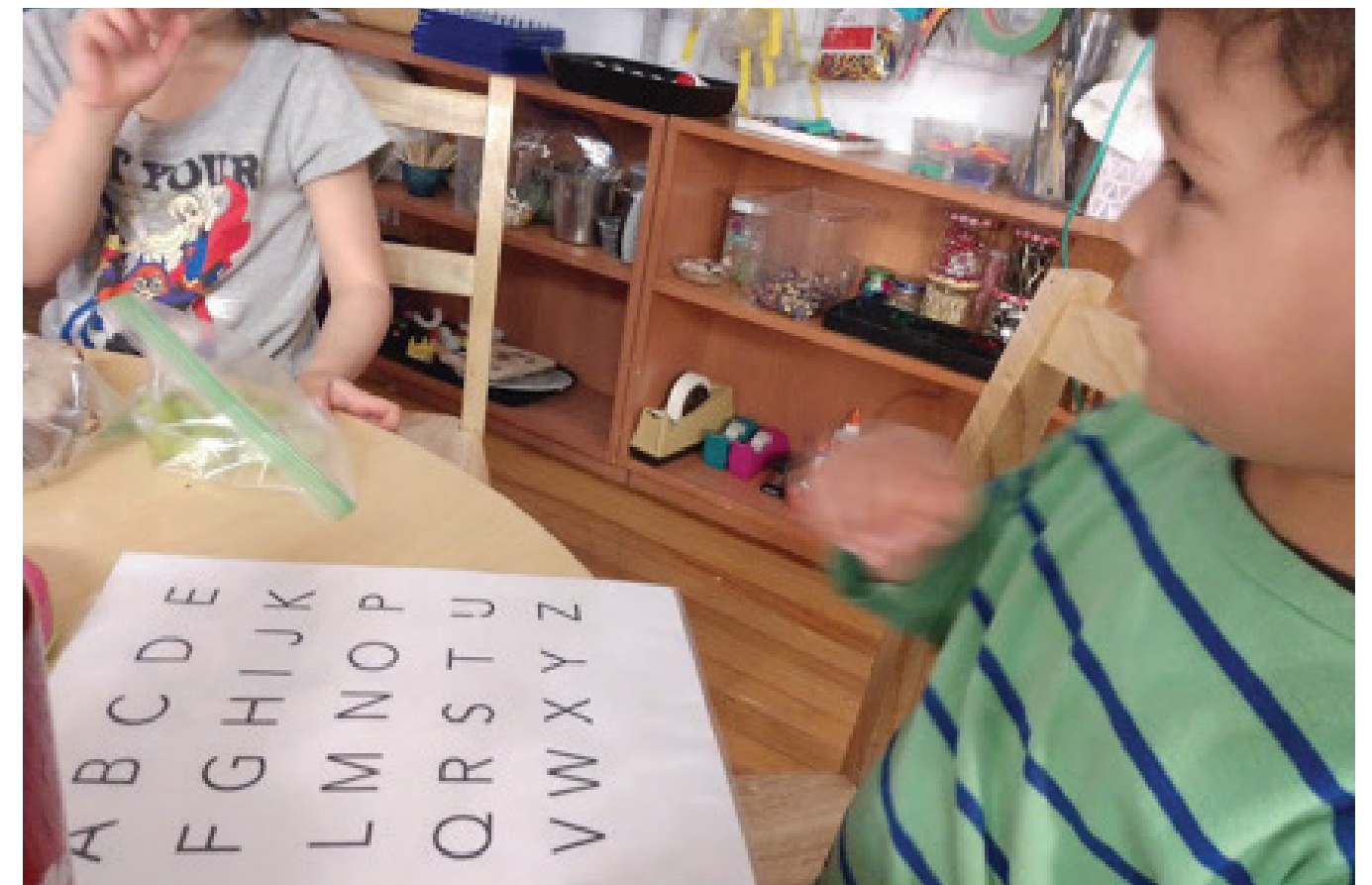
Much later, teachers Melissa and Kristi mused about this spontaneous spelling bee, wondering why children seldom were drawn to the **“Literacy Area,”** while they participated with glee in this game. We noticed their **collaboration**, their enthusiasm for the task, and most of all, their **joy**.

We asked ourselves how we can continue to foster such moments of **excitement in the early**

literacy acquisition process, a process too often marked by meaningless repetition, bored individualized task, unattached to the greater learning community or even a child’s personal interests.

As we worked together throughout the semester, the children did not revisit this game, but they did continue to attach symbols to meaning, through our Morning Meeting agenda board, by creating signs to sell various goods out of our front window, writing letters to friends, and so much more.

What unexpected times of the day can you bring letters into the conversation with children?

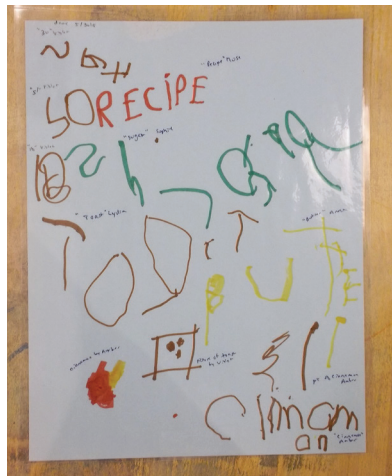


The Letter Game!

THE FIELD TRIP TO THE SANTA FE FARMERS' MARKET

SCHOOL: Temple Beth Shalom Preschool
TEACHERS: Theresa Stofocik

Field trips are opportunities for children to engage with literacy experiences outside of the classroom. An in-depth classroom study of food, recipes, and cooking led the Temple Beth Shalom children and teachers to a field trip to the Santa Fe Farmer's Market.



A recipe was written collaboratively with ingredients collected from the market.



As children strolled through the market, they noticed words that described objects and numbers connected to price and quantity.

The market was filled with rich colors, textures, and smells that inspired children to use descriptive words and phrases.

- Iris:** "It smells like lavender and it feels squishy."
- Andre:** "I want to take a sniff of onion."
- Scout:** "It smells like sunflowers!"
- Violet:** "The cucumbers look like babies!" and "the raspberry-lavender jam was tasty!"

Vegetables, fruits, and flowers were brought back to the classroom to study up close. Children were inspired by the colors and shapes of the objects and created drawings. They used the newly bought ingredients to explore, develop and write recipes.

Field trips are a connection to authentic literacy experiences when letters, words, and numbers exist in every day experiences and can be encountered during field trips within our communities.

Where can children engage with letters and words outside the classroom in your community?



Children drew zucchini flowers from the market.



EARLY LITERACY

SCHOOL: Santa Fe Public Schools PreK

Patricia Azura, Phd Santa Fe Public Schools
Early Childhood Coordinator and Juliet
Stavely, Santa Fe Public Schools PreK
FOCUS Consultant



It was choice time in Ms. Muller’s PreK class. The classroom was full of joy and activity. A group of boys carefully building a fort with blocks and cardboard boxes caught my attention. They all took turns negotiating and building together. A girl came by and observed. One of the boys immediately announced, “Just boys allowed.” He then looked for a piece of paper to make a sign and make his message clear. Ms. Muller overheard the conversation and calmly reminded them of their classroom’s inclusive policies. The boy then suggested that instead, they could use the paper and make a sign-in sheet to record who was in the fort. The first boy wrote his name. Then, his friend asked to include his name and started calling each letter. They came to “H,” and his friend seemed puzzled so he took the paper and wrote it for him. Another boy wanted to be included in the list. He called the letters of his name. The boy in charge decided it was easier to use the name cards. They left the shelter of their fort to look for the cards, came back and continued their task.



If the environment allows, children engage in literacy events in multiple ways and for real purposes. In this interaction, the boys were using phonological awareness skills, letter knowledge, and social skills. Moreover, they used print for meaningful purposes. When we are intune with our students, we can observe all their knowledge in authentic settings.

Boys made a sign-in sheet for their fort.

With this notion in mind, we invite you to:

1. Provide a rich literacy environment.

In your ECERS-3 manual (pgs. 37-45) you will find guidelines that focus on practices around oral and written language. The guidelines emphasize the importance of enriching vocabulary through meaningful conversations and reading experiences. Also, your role as a “model” is emphasized. Singing, reading, and engaging in meaningful conversations are ways to model. In your conversations, use statements, rephrase and expand children’s utterances.

2. Go beyond the writing center and reading corner.

The more children use written language for authentic, functional purposes, the more experience they gain with it. Place books, notepads, and pencils around your different centers. Also, expand your repertoire to include different media to communicate (chalk, paint, etc.).

3. Observe in authentic settings and inquire about their inventions.

Children pass through different stages during their literacy development (e.g., from scribbles, differentiated marks, strings of letters, etc.). Children begin to explore the systematic organization of written language and to construct hypotheses around different features of reading and writing. Children shape and reconstruct their hypotheses until they can use written language conventionally. Ask questions that will help them have a deeper understanding of what they know about print. This will help you be more intentional in your scaffolding.

4. Incorporate home literacy practices.

Kids come to school with concepts about print that they have gained at home. Learn about home literacy practices! For instance, for what purposes do they use reading and writing? A child’s home practices can be used as resources in our classroom (e.g., oral storytelling, writing and receiving letters, filling out a form to obtain a service, reading and writing for religious purposes).

5. Read aloud multiple times a day!

Through read alouds, children learn vocabulary and structure of language. Moreover, by engaging them in conversations about books, you help children build understandings about texts, process, and what it means to be a reader and writer (Fox 2008, Wood Ray & Glover, 2008).

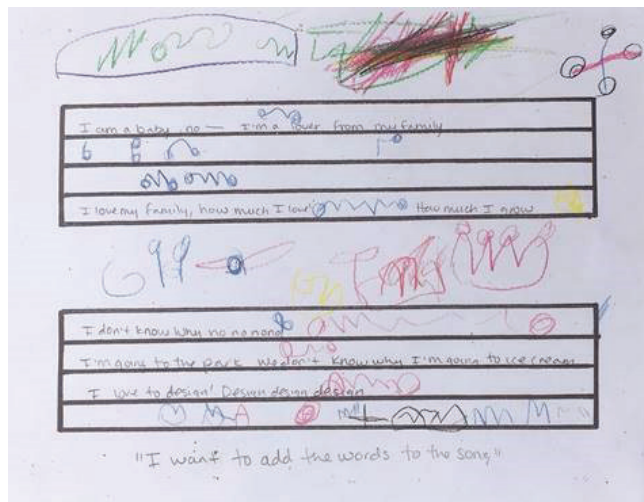


MUSIC

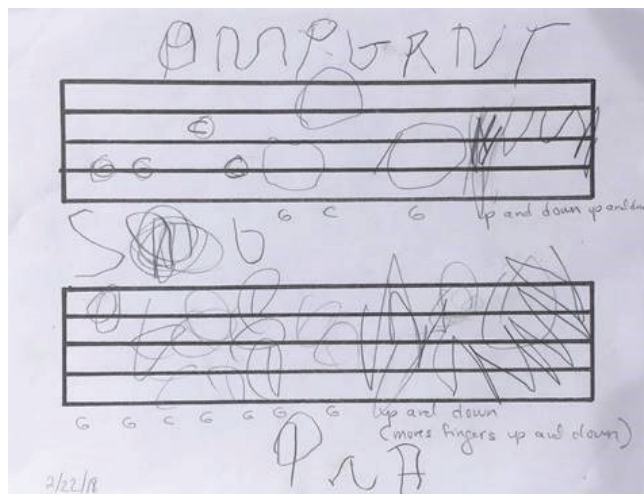
SCHOOL: Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences

TEACHERS: Aurora Wingard, Suzanne Maheshi Shakespeare Jones

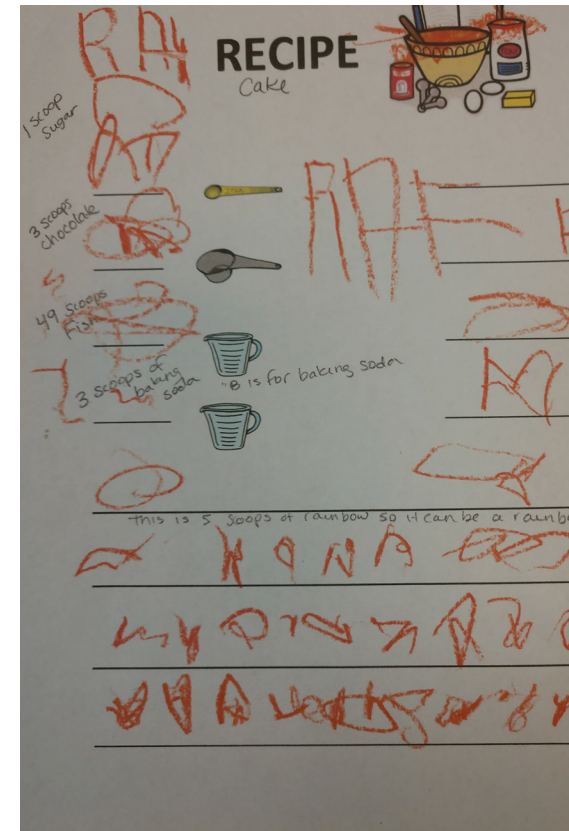
This school year the teachers noticed a student writing music notes on a page. We put a xylophone on the shelf, along with written sheet music and lyrics of a favorite song for them to look at. Blank music paper was added for them to write on. This became a favorite activity. Some would sing first, listening to their compositions, then write the music making round note like shapes, lines or pictures representing a note for each word or syllable. Others played on the xylophone first, listening to their compositions, then wrote. Lyrics to student' songs were sometimes scribed by a teacher, and others wrote titles to their work, sounding out the word and putting a letter down for each sound.



How can you use music to inspire a different use of language in children?



Children wrote music and lyrics to songs of their own invention.



COOKING

SCHOOL: Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences

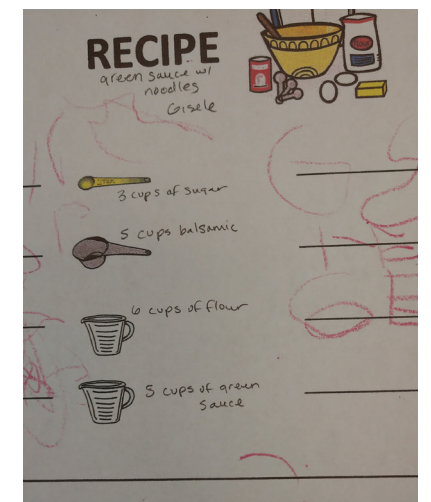
TEACHERS: Aurora Wingard, Suzanne Maheshi Shakespeare Jones

Teacher Amy cooks for the class every day. We are so lucky to enjoy warm delicious food each morning. Amy invites children to help her with cooking. Over the course of the fall, we learned about science by exploring wet and dry ingredients and how to mix ingredients to make a something new (dough, crust, soup, bread) and learned many new vocabulary words associated with food: chop, grind, mash, mix, stir, peel, batter, and dough. We learned about measurement by using cups, half cups, two cups, teaspoons and tablespoons. We helped with counting when stirring or creating portions and learned about measurement and shapes when making round biscuits big or small or cutting out triangular pieces of raisin bread. Teachers Suzanne and Aurora noticed that the children were also interested in Amy's recipe book. They loved to touch the pages and ask what the words and the steps mean. The teachers created recipe pages for children to fill out on their own during free-play and kept them in a recipe book. Some student-made recipes were even turned into real food in our classroom!



Fabric served as loose parts and inspiration for recipe writing.

How can loose parts extend verbal and written communication?





THE JABBERWOCKY: MAKING SENSE OF NONSENSE

SCHOOL: La Casita

TEACHERS: Lizzie Mann and
Helen McDonald

Teacher Lizzie volunteered to perform the “Jabberwocky” poem by Lewis Carroll in our classroom. As a large portion of the poem is composed of nonsense words, this would be the children’s first exposure to many of these words and could provide us with an opportunity to observe how the children interpret new vocabulary. Additionally, as the language would be delivered in an expressive, performative manner, we were interested to see how this would affect their understanding of the evocative language. As teachers, we were curious to learn *how children become comfortable understanding and using new words.*

After each reading and performance of the poem, we asked the children questions, including: What happened in the poem? What did the Jabberwocky look like? What was their favorite part? How did the poem make them feel? Some of the children’s responses include:

Malik – A giant.

Luna – Big and never washes his feet.

Malik – A giant that is so tall that he can see space.

**Kourtney – He walks like this...
(demonstrates stomping)**

Calvin: ‘One, two, one, two’ and ‘Callooh! Callay’

Lucas: The sword part.

Troy: Snicker-snack!

These interpretations of the Jabberwocky showed significant similarities to the figure of Abiyoyo, a favorite character from the South African children’s folktale that we had been reading. The children were freely drawing from the known context of Abiyoyo to inform their new ideas of the Jabberwocky.

The children engaged most with the parts of the poem that used gestures that they could copy and that helped them to understand the action taking place. Similarly, points of high emotional intensity were popular, even if previously unknown words were used to convey the intensity. The adult speaker’s physicality and emotional expression while speaking were the key to helping children assign meaning to, and **make sense of, new language.** This insight can help us as educators to appreciate the different ways that we can embody and convey the meaning of new words, whether they be to secondary language speakers, or native speakers.

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The Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.



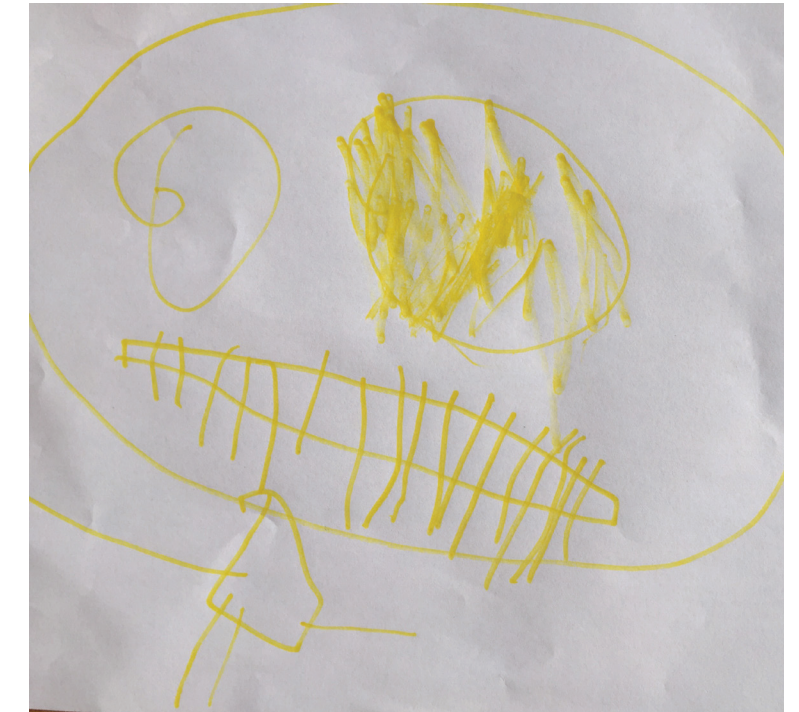
“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.
“And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.



A child's depiction of the Jabberwocky.

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The Collaborative Teachers Institute is a group of early childhood teachers in Santa Fe interested in pursuing advanced, collaborative professional development. Participating programs and teachers study children's interests through a reflective practice approach.

The Collaborative Teachers Institute helps teachers achieve their potential so that the youngest children in Santa Fe can achieve theirs.

The CTI is a project of the Santa Fe Baby Fund at the Santa Fe Community Foundation.

Gigi Yu, PhD
CTI Pedagogical Director
gigiyu.cti@gmail.com

Katie Dry
CTI Managing Director
kdry@santafecf.org

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