

CREATING ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING READING TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to exploring effective activities for teaching reading to young learners, focusing on methods that are both engaging and developmentally appropriate. It examines how interactive, playful, and context-rich tasks can support the development of key reading skills such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. The article also discusses the importance of motivation and learner-centered approaches, offering practical examples that can be adapted to various classroom settings. By combining theory with hands-on activities, it aims to equip educators with tools to foster early literacy and a lifelong interest in reading.

Keywords: activities comprehension early literacy engagement motivation phonemic awareness reading development reading strategies storytelling vocabulary word recognition young learners.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a foundational skill that plays a critical role in a child's educational journey, particularly in the early years. For young learners, acquiring reading skills is not just about decoding letters and words; it involves developing a range of sub-skills such as phonemic awareness, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, and print awareness. These skills evolve through carefully structured experiences that match children's cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development. Unlike older students, young learners are still developing their attention spans, fine motor skills, and language abilities, which means traditional methods may not always be effective or engaging.

Teaching reading at this stage requires creativity, patience, and a deep understanding of how children learn best - through play, interaction, and exploration. Effective reading instruction for young learners integrates storytelling, songs, games, visuals, and hands-on activities to make the learning process enjoyable and meaningful. Moreover, creating a positive and supportive reading environment is key to fostering motivation and confidence in early readers. This article explores a variety of engaging

and age-appropriate reading activities that help young learners build essential literacy skills. It also discusses the principles behind these activities, offering practical suggestions for teachers who aim to cultivate both competence and a lifelong love of reading in their students.

MAIN BODY

To teach reading effectively to young learners, it is important to first understand who they are as learners. Children in the early years are curious, energetic, and developing rapidly in many areas at once - cognitively, socially, and linguistically. Because of this, reading instruction at this stage needs to go far beyond textbooks and worksheets. It should be hands-on, interactive, and enjoyable.

One of the first steps in building reading skills is developing phonemic awareness. Young children need time and activities that help them hear, identify, and play with the individual sounds in words. Simple games like clapping syllables, finding rhyming pairs, or matching sounds to pictures can be both fun and educational. These activities strengthen their ears for language and prepare them for decoding words later on.

As they begin to recognize letters and sounds, children also need opportunities to connect those sounds to print. This can be done through letter-matching games, word hunts around the classroom, or using magnetic letters to build simple words. Sight word games can help learners become familiar with common words they will see again and again in texts.

Reading to and with children is another essential part of the process. Shared reading sessions using big books, picture books, or projected texts allow teachers to model fluent reading, intonation, and expression. During these sessions, asking questions before, during, and after reading helps children develop comprehension skills and encourages them to think critically about what they hear.

Stories are especially powerful tools in teaching reading. Not only do they build vocabulary and understanding, but they also spark imagination and emotional connection. Activities like retelling stories using puppets, drawing story sequences, or acting out scenes can make reading feel meaningful and memorable. Incorporating movement and sensory experiences into reading lessons can also make a big difference. Young learners often learn best when they can move, touch, and see. Using sand trays to trace letters, acting out action words, or matching textures to descriptive words adds a playful, hands-on element that supports various learning styles.

In today's classrooms, technology can also play a helpful role when used thoughtfully. Interactive story apps, educational phonics games, or digital books can offer extra practice and keep learners engaged. However, screen time should always be balanced with face-to-face interaction and physical books. Creating a print-rich classroom environment is another effective way to support reading development.

Labels on classroom objects, word walls, charts, and posters all help reinforce the connection between spoken and written language. Even making simple class books with student drawings and dictated stories can give children a sense of ownership and pride in their reading journey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When thoughtfully designed and implemented, reading activities tailored to young learners yield encouraging and observable results in the classroom. One of the most noticeable outcomes is an increase in student engagement. Children who are exposed to interactive and playful reading tasks often show greater enthusiasm for books and stories. They begin to associate reading with enjoyment rather than pressure, which is a key shift in early literacy development.

Teachers frequently report improvements in classroom participation during reading sessions. Even shy or reluctant readers tend to open up when activities involve movement, creativity, or collaboration. For example, students who may hesitate to read aloud from a book often feel more confident participating in group storytelling or acting out a scene. These alternative forms of expression allow children to develop literacy skills indirectly, in ways that feel safe and supportive.

Another positive result is the noticeable progress in foundational reading abilities. Over time, learners start to demonstrate a stronger grasp of phonics, a growing vocabulary, and better listening comprehension. In classrooms where print is visibly present and consistently used, children begin to recognize familiar words and symbols around them, even outside formal reading time. This natural exposure contributes to their sense of independence and curiosity as early readers.

An important observation from practical classroom experience is that variety matters. No single activity fits all learners or all days. What works well one week might need to be adapted the next. Therefore, flexibility and responsiveness are essential qualities in any reading program for young learners. Teachers who regularly reflect on students' responses and adjust their methods accordingly tend to see more sustained progress.

It is also worth noting that the emotional impact of reading activities can be just as significant as the academic one. Children who feel proud of their reading efforts, even small ones, begin to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This confidence often spills over into other areas of learning. When young learners feel that their voices are heard and their ideas matter, they are more willing to take risks, ask questions, and try new things - not just in reading, but in their overall learning journey.

CONCLUSION

Teaching reading to young learners is a complex but deeply rewarding task. As this article has shown, effective reading instruction goes beyond introducing letters and sounds - it involves creating experiences that are engaging, meaningful, and suited to

the developmental needs of children. When reading activities are designed with care and creativity, they not only build essential skills like phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension, but also nurture curiosity, confidence, and a genuine love for reading.

The key to success lies in variety, flexibility, and a deep understanding of how young children learn best - through play, exploration, and connection. Teachers who use stories, games, songs, movement, and hands-on materials create an environment where reading becomes a natural and joyful part of everyday life. The positive impact of these efforts is visible not only in learners' academic growth, but also in their enthusiasm, independence, and willingness to express themselves.

In the end, fostering strong reading habits in the early years sets the stage for lifelong learning. With the right tools, approaches, and support, educators can inspire a generation of confident, capable readers - one story at a time.

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