

Preparatory Reading Skills and Perceptual Development

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Introduction

In many African countries, there may be children who never attended pre-primary and who never were familiarised with books and print concepts. They may have heard traditional stories, but were not exposed to printed books. As these children may also be used to mostly short admonishments or instructions rather than explanations for why something has to be done in a certain way, their ability to focus on explanations or instruction used in a formal school setting will be difficult. For these children a special preparatory programme or structured exposure is needed to bring them on par with fellow classmates who have been exposed to books and print concepts and oral dialogues.

In addition, in many cases in Africa, parents cannot afford hearing aids or glasses for their children. The teachers have to do the best they can to support all children in learning.

The link between Perceptual Development and Literacy Development

If a child has visual or auditory problems, it will be a challenge to see the letters clearly or hear the sound the letter makes. Phonological and Phonemic awareness are dependent on these skills. The child does not realise that he/she cannot see well or hear well and will just fall behind regarding reading skill development.

There may also be a delay in communication skills. Unless a teacher does some generalised layman tests to determine whether children may have perceptual challenges, it may go

unnoticed, especially in rural African areas.

LAYMANS TEST for perceived visual problems. (Layman: non specialist)

- Can the child follow a small moving object with his/her eyes?
- Visually evoked potential/response testing, e.g. Can the child identify a specific described picture from among four similar types of pictures?
- Roll a paper into a roll and let the child look through the 'tunnel' one eye at a time. The child has to say what is seen when pictures or familiar symbols of different sizes are shown at varying distances, e.g. up to 4 m away.
- Does the child pull the eyelids closer together to try to see better?

LAYMANS TEST for perceived auditory problems.

- The child is not talking at an age appropriate expectation
- Unclear speech
- Not following directions
- Often saying, "Huh?"
- Turning volume up too high
- Learning problems
- Let the children stand at the back of the class facing the back wall. The teacher will whisper a child's name. When the child hears its name it will raise its hand and stay facing the wall.
- Looking at speaker's face and lips
- Turning head in the direction where the voice comes from

Visual Perception and eye muscle development

The visual perception of children who are unacquainted with print needs to be developed for them to **later** be able to realise how a **d 9 g b p** differ for instance. The child's small muscles, such as eye muscles need to be exercised as well to cope with the left to right eye movement when reading.

The information below is intended to support these early literacy skills for children who may need it for optimal potential development.

Activities to enhance and develop underdeveloped visual perceptual skills can include:

- Spot differences between nearly identical pictures
- Find the exact sample picture among similar looking pictures
- Find the image that will look like the sample image when rotated
- Copy draw a given image
- Complete a half drawn picture to look like the given example
- Find an object that is hidden within a drawing
- Count overlapping shapes or colour specific objects in overlapping objects
- Follow overlapping lines leading to a specific object

For fine eye muscle development:

Follow the movement of a swinging ball without moving the head

Jump up and down while keeping eyes fixed on an object

Run around while keeping the eyes fixed on an object

Move, e.g. a toy car left to right while keeping the eyes on the car without moving the head.

Name pictures positioned in rows from left to right, top to

bottom of page while keeping the head still

Write imaginary patterns with the eyes –eye movements

Draw imaginary pictures with the eyes- eye movements

Auditory Perception and oral language development

The phonemes need to be identified by hearing them. But first auditory perception needs to be developed as well.

Activities can include

- Identify sounds from the environment with eyes closed
- Learners sit with eyes closed and the teacher performs a sequence of actions, e.g., page through a book, open a cupboard, write on the board and push a chair. Learners have to tell what the teacher did in the correct sequence
- Repeat a rhythm the teacher clapped
- Identify who name a teacher whispered or what word the teacher whispered
- Listen to words and identify the beginning sound of all three words
- Listen to four object names said by the teacher and identify which does not fit in the group, e.g., moon, star, apple, sun.
- Identify a specific word when there are other noises or a variety of words said.
- Listen to poems and rhymes and identify words that rhyme
- Listen to a story and order the pictures related to the story in the correct sequence
- Listen to a description and identify the picture that was described
- Explain what is happening in a picture
- Use newly learnt words regularly in suitable ways.

Literacy related basic vocabulary

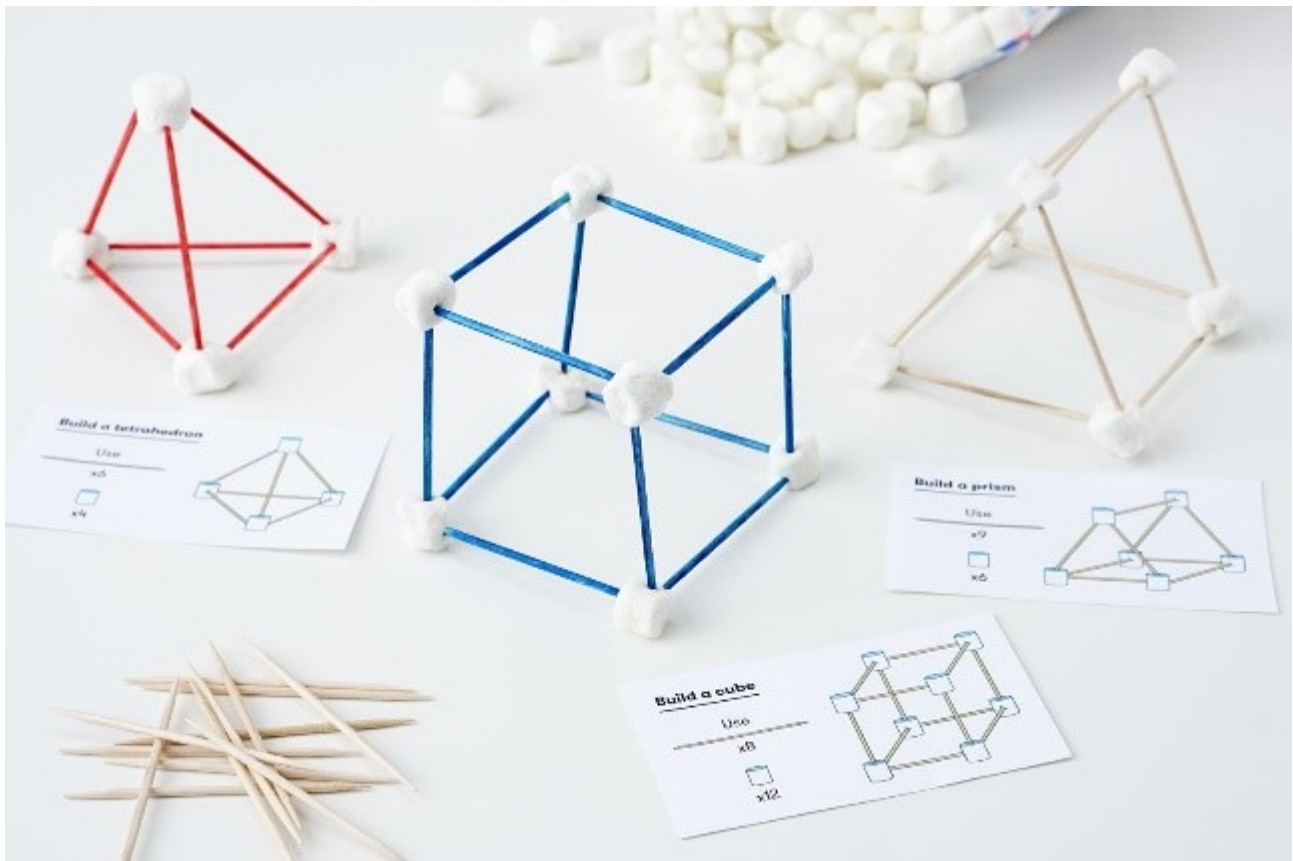
Spatial Orientation

Activities can include

- ## FOLLOW THE DOTS



- Building objects from pictures



<https://www.bigrentz.com/blog/construction-activities-for-kids>

- Have a series of **pictures** that tell a story in rows below each other. Learners follow the story by *reading* from left to right, top to bottom, e.g.,

The bird flies to the tree.

A frog jumps to the pond

A girl walks to her house

A dog chases a cat.

- Jump on your left leg.
- Touch your left ear with your right hand
- Climb on a climbing frame
- Hand upside down with legs hooked on a bar

- Climb over planted car tires
- Crawl under a table or chair and out again

Language and vocabulary development in the language of reading instruction

Reading takes place when the reader understands what he or she is reading.

For this to happen the learners needs to be familiarised with the language that is used as the medium of instruction, especially if it is not the home language of the child.

Activities can include

- Read stories to children from good literature; discuss the pictures, characters, storyline and “good” words that were used.
- Sing songs, say rhymes, dialogues.
- Create opportunities for talking, such as show and tell: Two/three learners at a time bring something from home on a Friday, show it to class, and tell them about it.
- Discuss stories or factual books after reading. Retell stories with and without pictures.
- Talk about the different words and word order in a sentence to see how the language is structured.

Concepts of print:

Activities can include

- The learner draws a picture and the teacher writes what the child says about the picture. Read it to the learner.
- Read a story in big bold prints and show the words as you read from left to right top to bottom
- Identify the first and last word on a page

- Discuss the pictures
- Say what they think a book will be about by looking at the cover picture.
- Show how to page through a book from front to back
- Identify the title of the story
- Let learners predict what they think will happen next.
- Have a print rich environment e.g., labels on objects in the class,
- Say an instruction and show the flash card, e.g. sit, girls walk, open your book.

Eye-hand co-ordination

Activities can include

Throw and catch a ball

Throw a ball or other object into a basket from different distances

Make objects from clay

Follow a curving line with the finger

Draw pictures or patterns in the sand

Cut out shapes with a pair of scissors

Draw pictures

Writing patterns and fine hand muscle development

Activities can include

Make clay figures

Fasten buttons

Lace shoes

Cut out shapes with a pair of scissors

Paste pictures

Build with Lego blocks

Learn to draw letter related writing patterns with thick crayons in wide folded lines

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW e.g. etc.

Copy their name from an example

Hold a pencil or crayon with the correct grip

Have a good sitting posture when writing or drawing

Page through a book without licking a finger tip

What to do with a child who has hearing or visual challenges and the parents cannot afford hearing aids or glasses.

Supporting a child with hearing problems in a classroom involves creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment, such as the following:

1. Use visual aid: Incorporate visual aids, such as charts, diagrams, and images, to reinforce verbal instructions. This helps children with hearing impairment by providing additional context.

2. Provide written instructions: Supplement oral instructions with written instructions, either on the board or handouts. This ensures that the child can refer to the information visually.

3. Face the class when speaking: When talking to the class, make sure you are facing the students. This allows the child with hearing problems to better lip-read and pick up visual cues.

4. Use assistive technology: Explore the use of assistive listening devices to enhance the child's ability to hear you clearly. These systems transmit sound directly to the child's hearing aids.

5. Seat the child appropriately: Place the child in a strategic location in the classroom where they can easily see and hear you. Avoid placing them near noisy distractions or in

areas with poor acoustics.

6. Foster a supportive and open communication environment: Encourage the child to let you know if they are having difficulty hearing or understanding, and be willing to adapt accordingly.

7. Caption/ subtitles for videos: If you use videos as part of your teaching materials, ensure that they are captioned. This benefits not only the child with hearing problems but also other students who may benefit from visual reinforcement.

8. Provide Peer Support: Assign a peer buddy to assist the child when needed, such as providing notes or clarifying information. This promotes inclusivity and helps the child feel more connected.

9. Implement a Signal System: Establish a non-disruptive signal system to get the child's attention or convey information without verbal communication. This could be a visual cue, a gentle tap, or a written note. Or a way for the child to let you know they are not following.

10. Be open to adjust your teaching strategies: Understand that each child with hearing problems may have different needs. Stay patient, be flexible base on the child's feedback and progress.

Supporting a child with visual challenges in the classroom involves creating a learning environment that accommodates their needs. See the following guidelines:

1. Give instructions verbally as well as in writing in a clear concise manner.

2. Help visually challenged learners by using descriptive language to help them from a mental image.

3. Include tactile materials and hands-on activities to engage the child by allowing them to explore and understand concepts.

4. Keep the classroom layout the same and avoid obstacles to help the child navigate independently.
5. All labels or word cards should be written in large bold clear letters in highly contrasting manner.
6. Use assistive technology e.g., print that can be enlarged on the screen.
7. Seat the child in an optimal place to see the teacher and visual aids best.
8. Provide peer support, e.g., reading aloud or providing additional descriptions.
9. Engage educational specialists for children with perceptual challenges.

Resources

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