



Exposure to early literacy for deaf and blind children

Addressing inclusion in early literacy may prove to be a challenge for new early childhood educators. The task, however, with the right approaches and understanding of Universal Design for Learning early childhood educators can build the exposure of literacy for all children in the early care environment. Research shows that many aspects of reading and writing, regardless of vision, ability level or age, are the same for all children.



What is emergent literacy?

- Attending to objects or pictures during familiar activities
- Beginning to understand that people and objects have names
- Showing an interest in stories
- Handling, mouthing, or other types of non-traditional exploration of books

Early literacy is important in the early care environment because it allows children to connect with language, oral communication, pre-reading, and pre-writing skills. In early education one of the biggest challenges is finding opportunities to expose all children to high quality literacy experiences. If a child has a diagnosis of a specific disability such as hearing loss, or multiple disabilities such as deaf blindness, how can one find ways to increase access to literacy?

Literacy is more than just reading and writing.

Literacy and communication are interconnected.

For example, children with hearing loss or who are deaf may not have had exposure to books that are available in multiple formats or having access to American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters during read-aloud. For children with low vision or blindness, access to large print books, tactile or Braille may not have been presented to them. (<https://www.nationaldb.org/info-center/educational-practices/literacy/>)

“Literacy is more than knowing letters and words and reading. It is the main character in a lifelong story about learning, communication, self-awareness, and fulfillment.”



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Creating Literacy Environments

- ✓ **Modify** the environment (tactile books, Braille formats, books on tape, audio books with Closed Captioning).
- ✓ **Label** the classroom environment (Using tactile letters, figures, numbers), Braille, large print, Color contrast on desk, tables, chairs, cubbies etc.
- ✓ **Name** symbols-this may be a combination of a photo, print, Braille, and a Tactile symbol
- ✓ **Acknowledge** multiple ways of learning literacy.

RESOURCES

- Perkins School for the Blind: <https://www.perkins.org/resource-center/>
- National Federation for the Blind: <https://nfb.org/>
- Paths to Literacy: <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/>
- International Literacy Association: <http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/>
- Learning A-Z: <https://www.learninga-z.com/>
- LD Online: <http://www.ldonline.org/>
- National Center on Improving Literacy: <https://improvingliteracy.org/> Reading
- Rockets: <https://www.readingrockets.org/>
- !Colorin Colorado: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>

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