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This manual sets out to assist you in implementing this resource and making literacy come alive in your classroom.

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Introduction

Why Use Literacy Learning Centres?

When literacy learning centres were discussed in 1998, we, like many teachers, felt overwhelmed. It meant spending hours of each weekend preparing activities and resources to be used during our literacy blocks each day. As a staff, we received professional development that explained *why* we should establish literacy learning centres and touched on *how* through the presentation of timetables that told us how much time to devote to this and how much time to devote to that. We loved the concept – but there was nothing to *really* tell us how to establish learning centres that could stand the test of time. We wanted activities that were much more beneficial than teachers photocopying five different sheets that would be rotated over the week. As we searched through resources that dealt with learning centres, we failed to find anything that we were satisfied with. There was only one solution – create it ourselves!

Initially, we were just making it for use in our own school. Discussions with teachers from other schools made us realise that everybody was in the same boat as we were. We hope you find it as useful and practical as we do and that your children receive the same benefits as ours have – both academically and socially. Don't be afraid to build on our work to ensure it caters for the needs of your children, after all, that is our wish. Many of these activities can be completed or enhanced through the integration of classroom computers. Helpful programs are *PowerPoint*, *Hypercard*, *Hyperstudio*, *ClarisWorks*, *Micro Worlds* and *Logo Writer*. There are many commercial products just waiting to be integrated.

The importance of teaching to the individual needs of each child in the classroom has never been more evident. The introduction of learning centres allows you to set activities that are appropriate to the different learning styles and developmental stages of your children and allows you to provide individual instruction to a small group of children.

The most significant obstacle facing teachers when setting up learning centres in the classroom is creating the resources required. This was our motivation for creating Literacy Alive!

Literacy Learning Centres can be used for several years without children ever repeating the same combination of activities!

How to Start the Day

This is a suggested format.

Each school will have varying obligations to fulfil before classes can start.

✓ Remember to assess and record children's progress throughout the morning.

Time	What's Happening
8:50	Assembly and administration
9:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Shared reading – this may be where you focus on a specific grammatical skill, punctuation, fluency, expression etc.✓ Start circle reading with adult helpers – or your own method of reading✓ Start 'Literacy Alive!' learning centres.✓ I.S.P.'s✓ Guided reading✓ Whole class reading, spelling or writing task.✓ This may include extension-spelling activities, dictation, modelling of different genre, free creative writing etc.
10:50	Allow time for the children to verbalise what they have learnt during the activities.
11:00	Morning recess

A Weekly Model for Literacy Learning Centres

Rotational Activities for Monday to Thursday

Group 1.

Modelling instructional writing – teacher instructed

Group 2.

Tons of Tenses – Literacy Learning Centres #27
Focus on present tense.

Group 3.

Longer Shorter – Literacy Learning Centres #17
Focus on writing brief informative sentences.

Group 4.

Wonder Words – Literacy Learning Centres #8
Focus on verbs and linking words, e.g. first, then, after.

Group 5.

Sequence Scuttle – Literacy Learning Centres #25
Focus on sequencing instructional texts.

Friday

- Revise verbs such as *cut, put, place*, etc.
- Discuss the importance of short, concise instructions used in instructional texts.
- Reinforce that instructions are written in present tense.
- Children follow simple instructional text on how to make a salad sandwich.
- Children select from list of instructional text topics such as 'How to clean your teeth.'
- Use 'circle reading' groups for children to share instructional texts.
- Whilst child reads instructional texts, other children act out instructions to provide feedback on sequence and instructions.

Assessment

- Assess knowledge of present tense, verb usage, sequencing and instructional writing through individual written task. (see Friday)

Outcomes

- Maintains simple present tense throughout.
- Uses linking words to signal time
- Omits 'you' and starts sentences with a verb, e.g. stir, add, cut
- Uses action verbs.

At a Glance

1. Heads and Tails.

This task involves a series of sentence beginnings and endings to be matched together. Experimentation will uncover other combinations that make sense.

2. Lots of Letters.

For this task you will need two complete sets of letters – one in lower case, one in upper case. Tasks can be as simple as matching a lower case letter with its upper case partner or as complicated as making as many words as possible with five letters. Extend the activity further by including a capital letter or two.

3. Basic Blends.

A combination of single sounds and basic blends found at the start, middle and end of words. Involves the creation of known words and the development of new words. Other suggestions include memory and rhyming activities.

4. What's My Question?

Requires students to formulate appropriate and meaningful questions to supplied answers. Can be modified as an oral task or extended as a starting point for dialogue sequences.

5. Word Crazy.

Multiple copies of each letter of the alphabet so that students can formulate words they know or words belonging to new families, blends and sounds. This activity can be teacher instructed or experimental play by students.

6. Better Blends.

An extension of Basic Blends with more complex blends such as ch, ir, ur and er.

7. Questions Galore.

Question starters that develop students' question construction skills. Can be completed as an oral or written task. Easily modified or extended.

8. Wonder Words.

The 200 most frequently written words (Salisbury list).

A large selection of suggested uses makes this a very flexible resource.

9. Challenge Yourself.

Fifty-three questions covering the six comprehension levels – knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Questions have been written in a manner that allows them to be applied to any narrative text. Ensures that every level of comprehension is developed in students. Can be completed as an oral or written activity.

Heads and Tails

Focus

Identifies errors in text using proofreading strategies.

Comprehends sentences read.

Uses strategies to determine whether sentences make sense.

Can expand a theme.

Writes simple sentences.

What to do

1. Place sentence beginnings and endings together ensuring that no sentences make sense.
2. Prompt the children to read the sentences that have been made. None of them make sense. Ask the children to explain what is wrong with the sentences.
3. Allow each child to have a turn of matching a sentence beginning and a sentence ending. The first person picks one sentence beginning and one sentence ending and puts them together. Ask the child if it makes sense – ask other children in the group. Give each child a turn until all sentence beginnings and endings have been matched.
4. When all sentences make sense, read them aloud together.
5. Children copy one or more sentences in their book. Children draw a picture to show their understanding of the sentence.
6. Each child then chooses one sentence.
7. Into their book, the children write the next 5 sentences that could follow their sentence. For example:

I chose: Tom hit the ball over the fence.
 I write: He climbed the fence to get it.
 At first he couldn't find it.
 It was hiding under a tree.
 Tom quickly picked it up.
 He threw it over the fence to his friends.

