Early Literacy Checklist
January 2014

What is the Early Literacy Checklist?

The Early Literacy Checklist is a reflective self-assessment tool enabling programs and specialists working with young children:

- ✓ to better evaluate to what extent they support literacy in young children
- ✓ to better evaluate to what extent they support literacy within families
- ✓ to better evaluate to what extent they engage in community partnerships in supporting child and family literacy

The Early Literacy Checklist focuses on three major areas:

Environments   Interactions   Collaboration

Who Should Use the Early Literacy Checklist?

The checklist can be used by any early childhood program or services such as: Ontario Early Years Centers, licensed child care Centers, home child care agencies and associations, libraries, family resource programs, kindergarten programs, etc.

Keep in mind that not all components of the checklist will apply to each of these programs and series. Staff are encouraged to use the sections that pertain to their unique services but can also be adapted to specific programs.

It is suggested that the Early Literacy Checklist be implemented at least once annually. This will assist in identifying strengths and gaps in the early literacy component of programs and supports that serve children and families.

Other benefits include:

- ✓ Supports planning and evaluation
- ✓ Supports proposals for new or enhanced funding and/or partnerships
- ✓ Supports budgeting decisions.

Program _____

Date	Completed by:

Section I
Environments

Environments for Children: Staffs demonstrates a commitment to preparing the environment to support literacy acquisition in children

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT

The following items are available:

	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Children's books, including:					
Picture books, fiction and non fiction					
Fairy Tales					
Rhyme books					
Concept books ex. My feelings					
Information books (illustrated and non-illustrated on a range of issues children face)					
Books that reflect all aspects of diversity and are non-sexist, anti-racist, and non stereotypical					
Books that cater to a variety of ages and skills					
Board books with predictable stories					
Books related to current themes ex. Seasons					
Large books for shared reading					
Props essential for re-telling stories and simple rhymes and folk tales					
Felt board, magnetic board and materials to stick on					
Musical instruments (including home-made and reflective of diverse cultures)					
Puppets					
Costumes for dramatic play					
Masks					
Other					
Paper, including:					
Lined paper (regular and wide ruled)					
Construction paper					
Tissue paper and tracing paper					
Newspaper and newsprint					
Finger-paint paper					

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT

The following items are available					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Safe and non-toxic writing/drawing tools, including					
Pens					
Pencils (regular and thick)					
Pencil crayons					
Crayons (regular and thick)					
Markers (regular and thick)					
Paint (including finger-paint)					
Stencils					
Rulers					
Easels					
Paintbrushes and sponges					
Other					

Comments and next steps:

CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT

Physical set up

	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Writing/drawing tools and books are accessible in the:					
Dramatic centre					
Reading centre/corner					
Science centre					
Building centre					
Other					
Visuals posted at children's level – photographs, posters and images relevant to children's lives (reflecting family composition, holidays and other events:					
Illustrations from children's books					
Cards with familiar words					
Labels (of objects, days, months etc)					
Non-stereotyped representations of the above					
Alphabet, in capital and lower case. Letters of the alphabet are in :					
English and French					
The form of a puzzle					
Reading Corner					
Child-sized chairs and tables and proper lighting					
Sofas, cushions and other objects to sit or rest on while reading or listening to stories.					
Accessible bookshelves for children					
Dramatic centre/corner					
Reflects a variety of activities that support the development of literacy in young children					
Regular rotation of materials					
Other					
Accessories that support dramatic play relating to:					
Daily life (reflecting diversity)					
Specific stories					
Community events					
Various careers					

Environment for staff: supplemental materials may be available to support staff in promoting early literacy

STAFF ENVIRONMENT					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following objects are available:					
Picture and video cameras					
Themed books					
Reference books					
Books on planning related to development					
Reserved space for resources					
Areas to plan and prepare material					
Area for staff meetings					
Other					
Writing/drawing tools including:					
Photocopier					
Printer					
Computer					
Other					

Comments and next steps:

Environment for the family: Staff demonstrates a commitment to preparing the environment to support early literacy within the family context

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occur:					
Posted written communications with family members are presented in a format that will be understood by all families, including letters, notices and other signage.					
Families are provided with information – through direct face-to-face discussions, by telephone, and in writing through postings, notices and letters- about upcoming literacy workshops and events.					
Informal and formal opportunities and facilities are available to accommodate - Parent networking and mutual support - Parents and children together					
Physical set-up of the program, including bulletin boards, posters, decorations and other cultural items display evidence of the diversity of families in Ontario and are "print rich".					
Information bulletin boards and newsletters reflect diversity and respect literacy levels of readers					
Other					
Borrowing library					
Books are available for children and their families to borrow.					

Environment for the community: Staff demonstrates a commitment to strengthening partnerships that promote child and family literacy with the community

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occur:					
Brochures that promote literacy services offered by other agencies are available.					
Educational resources are made available to members of the community to enable them to gather for sessions that focus on emergent literacy in early childhood.					
Other					

Comments and next steps:

Section II
Interactions

Interaction with children: Staffs facilitates the emergence of knowledge and skills that support literacy acquisition in young children. Note that these strategies may not pertain to all children

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Staff interactions with children					
Actively plays with children					
Initiates and reacts to children's communication					
Models ways of playing					
Puts themselves at child's level					
Speaks face-to-face with child					
Initiates eye contact and waits for child to return eye contact					
Shares experiences that will favor language development and social development. Ex, art, music, puppets, books, re-telling, outdoor play and finger play.					
Facilitates interactions between children					
Encourages children, individually or in groups to express ideas and feelings during ac activity.					
Demonstrates positive interactions between staff and children					
Supports an inclusive program and adapts to meet the needs of each child.					
Staff members use strategies to promote talk and language that corresponds with the communication styles of each child					
Speech and listening					
Serves as an example of gestures, words, grammar and proper articulation - "I broke the tower. She fell. "					
Simplifies language and articulates while speaking, singing and explaining pictures while reading					
Repeats and expands on child's speech.					
Uses gestures and signs to add meaning to words					
Uses open questions and comments to facilitate conversation. Ex. "What is happening? "					
Uses the lame label consistently for an object, activity or description.					
Uses key words and expressions. Ex. "All done"					

Uses a variety of forms to communicate : • Gestures, signs, pictures, concrete objects, facial expressions, printed words.					
Serves as a model and encourages plau with words. • Rhymes : Changes words • Made up words • Invents rhymes • Play on words • Identifies expressions or lists words that have similar sounds					
Promotes awareness of the relationship between sounds and letters, letters and words.					
Use key words and phrases of the spoken language of children and families in the program.					
Uses a range of positive responses when children speak their native language, smiles and shows an interest in what they say.					
Writing					
Encourages and supports attempts at writing					
Promote awareness of the links between oral and written language. (eg. stories dictated by the child)					
Demonstrates that writing conveys a message					
Identifies written text in the immediate environment (ex. open, closed, exit)					
Discuss writing conventions such as direction of text, using capital and lower case letters, etc.					

INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF MEMEBERS

INTERACTION BETWEEN STAFF MEMEBERS					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occurs:					
Mutual support is given when learning new strategies that relate to literacy in early childhood.					
Acts as an example in the use of appropriate language to use with children and families.					
Other					

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Reading					
Reads stories, poems and posters with individuals and groups.					
Provides a variety of books and make sure they are within the reach					
Encourages children to flip through a book from left to right.					
Encourages children to look at the pictures in books.					
Draws pictures to create stories					
Encourages children to identify and write the letters in their name and of the things that surround them.					
Uses fingers to touch words being read including the title.					
Discusses letters and sounds relating them to forming words and the meaning of these words.					
Posts labels in the environment.					
Creates opportunities for shared reading and more in-depth activities					

Interaction with families: Staff demonstrates a commitment to interacting effectively with families to support early literacy development within the family context.

INTERACTION WITH FAMILIES

	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occurs:					
Provide opportunities for spontaneous interaction with family members					
Converse in a way that will be understood by all families, including those who do not speak English or French as their mother tongue.					
Welcome families and encourage them to attend regularly.					
Share information and resources relating to child's progress in literacy development at their convenience.					
Provide alternative methods of communication for families who speak neither French nor English.					
Organize literacy activities for families that reflect and supports cultural diversity					
Plan family activities on a regular basis, taking into account the schedules of parents to encourage their involvement.					

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occurs:					
The staff promotes early childhood literacy within the community. (eg. organizing literacy activities for families in the community, encouraging the formation of early literacy networks, providing workshops and resources to community members, discuss the importance of literacy in early childhood)					

Comments and next steps:

Section III
Collaboration

Collaboration with children: Staff demonstrates commitment to enhancing early literacy by supporting children's interests.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
The following occurs					
Provide regular opportunities for self-directed activities and independent exploration. (e.g., children choose books and literacy activities)					
The staff responds to children's interests and builds on it. (e.g. making cards for her friends at the Valentine's Day)					

Collaboration with families: Staff demonstrates a commitment to work with parents to promote early literacy development at home.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Promote literacy and provide support to families					
Plan, implement and facilitate family literacy activities.					
Display information about early literacy (brochures, posters)					
Include information regarding literacy in newsletters for families.					
Meet the families to inform them of strategies to promote literacy in early childhood.					

Collaboration with the community: Staff demonstrates a commitment to work with members of the community to enhance early literacy.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY					
	Yes	Sometimes	No	NA	Comments
Promote awareness in the community about early literacy					
Actively collaborate with community organizations that support literacy in early childhood: • Early Years Centres • Healthy Baby, Healthy Brain • Libraries • Early literacy specialists • Schools • First Words • Public Health • Other (specify)					
Facilitate workshops that focus on literacy in early childhood.					
Include articles on early literacy to newsletters					

Comments and next steps:

Early Literacy Checklist

Ottawa Region

Name of organization: _____

Date completed: _____

Name of person(s) completing the checklist:

_____

_____

_____

This document is an adaption of the 2006 Ottawa Emergent Literacy Checklist, the 2004 Hamilton Early Literacy Checklist and the 2005 Niagara Emergent Literacy Checklist.