

TEACHING THE ALPHABET IN PRESCHOOL

Anne writes:

I just retired as a K teacher and will be working with a recreation center writing a curriculum guide for pre-k and k. In talking with the teachers the pre-k teachers teach the alphabet in order, but they tie them to their weekly theme. When I taught K, we tied the letter we were working on to a big book, rhyme, etc.

I am wondering for pre-k, what is the best way to teach the alphabet.

Jean replies:

Teaching the alphabet in preschool has often been the subject of debate between early childhood educators.

- Some schools say to begin by teaching children letters they are familiar with, such as the letters in their names, or the “M” in MacDonald. This requires individualized teaching.
- Other schools and teachers with many children, find it easier and more fun to introduce all their children to the same letter at the same time.
- Some schools, teach letters through themes and others teach through books.

I feel that there is not right or wrong way to teach the letters as long as the children are eager to join in the learning process. When you teach through themes, you have the opportunity to introduce letters through all the areas of the curriculum.

Teaching through literature is great, if you treat the book as a theme and expand your teaching of the letter into areas such as cooking, art, song, and games, not just through story time. Preschoolers need lots of opportunity to learn through sensory, auditory as well as visual stimulation.

The other aspect, of teaching the alphabet, that Early Childhood Educators seem to disagree on, is whether or not to teach letter sounds. For years, I was told that in preschool, we only teach letter recognition, not letter sounds. Now, however, I hear more and more that teachers are teaching letter sounds in preschool and some are actually teaching preschoolers to read. I probably am old fashioned, but I still stick to the practice of teaching only letter recognition, with a little letter sound thrown in but placing too much emphasis on it for preschoolers.

In writing your guide, I would do it through themes but then expand the themes for the kindergarteners by doing more language activities through the use of big books and rhymes.

Whatever you do, be sure to keep the preschool curriculum “hands-on” and open-ended.

I hope this helps, Jean Warren, Preschool Express