The Power of Print: Print Awareness and the Library

Today's Skills for Tomorrow's Libraries

Summer 2025

North Dakota State Library

Strengthen · Connect · Ignite

Definition of Print Awareness

- Also called Concept of Print.
- Print has meaning.
- Spoken words and written words are connected.
- Books contain letters and words.*
- The parts of books.
- Reading left to right, up to down.*
- Most often used in early childhood (approximately 2 – 8 years old).

Importance of Print Awareness as Children Grow

- Sets foundation for reading and writing proficiency.
- Helps interpret information – increases critical thinking skills.
- Enhances vocabulary.
- Improves communication.

Environmental Print

- Printed materials we encounter in everyday life.
- Help children connect letters and words with their meaning.
- Examples?

Street Signs

Food Packaging

Nutrition Facts
Serving Size 77

Amount Per Serving
Calories 130

	Calories from Fat 79
	% Daily Value *
Total Fat 8.8g	**13 %**
Saturated Fat 2.6g	**15 %**
Trans Fat 0.0g	
Cholesterol 5 mg	**1%**
Sodium 69mg	**3%**
Total Carbohydrate 9.9g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 1.8g	**7%**
Sugars 4.8g	
Protein 4.9%	
Vitamin A 7 mg	20%
Vitamin C 1 mg	100%
Vitamin D 5 mcg	50%
Vitamin E 2 mcg	100%
Riboflavin 5 mg	75%
Folic Acid 150 mg	60%
Vitamin B12 mg	45%
Thiamin 2 mg	45%
Calcium 50 mg	35%
Magnesium 300 mcg	100%
Chromium 65 mcg	80%
Phosphorus 80 mg	90%
Zinc 5 mg	50%
Calcium 7%	Iron 11%
Love	**100%**

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Nutrition Facts
6 Servings Per Container
Serving Size 1 cup (300g)
Calories Per Serving 358

Amount Per Serving

Calories 358	**Calories from Fat 90**
	% Daily Value
Total Fat 5%	15 %
Saturated Fat 1.7%	25 %
Trans Fat 1%	5 %
Cholesterol 50mg	29%
Sodium 300mg	17%

Vitamin D 2 mcg 20% / Calcium 50 mg 5 % / Zink 8 mg 58%
Biotin 400 mcg 80% / Folic Acid 100 mcg 70%

Amount Per Serving

Calories 328	**Calories from Fat 70**
	% Daily Value
Total Carbogidrate 50g	15 %
Saturated Fat 1.7%	45 %
Trans Fat 1%	8 %
Cholesterol 70mg	45%
Sodium 500mg	38%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,800 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Nutrition Facts

Amount Per Serving

Calories 130	**Calories from Fat 79**
	% Daily Value *
Total Fat 8.8g	**13 %**
Saturated Fat 2.6g	**15 %**
Trans Fat 0.0g	
Cholesterol 5 mg	**1%**
Sodium 69mg	**3%**
Total Carbohydrate 9.9g	**3%**
Dietary Fiber 1.8g	**7%**
Sugars 4.8g	
Protein 4.9%	
Vitamin A 2%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 7%	Iron 11%
Love	**100%**

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Logos and Signs

Flyers, Ads, and Lists

Activity:
Environmental Print Puzzles

- Can be made from food boxes, bookmarks, postcards, etc.
  - Try to use sturdier items.
  - Can be cut into as many pieces as you want; fewer pieces for younger, more pieces for older.
- Types:
  - Numbered on Back
  - Numbered on Front
  - Copy of Image

Read Alouds:
Prior to Reading

- Introduce book with title, author, and illustrator. Ask kids what author and illustrator do.
- Hold up the book and turn it, showing (and stating) the front, spine, back, and pages.
- Have children study the cover picture. Ask them what they think this book is about.

Read Alouds:
During Reading

- Define unknown words – vocabulary building – Ask children what they might think a new word means based on context clues.
- Briefly discuss pictures.
- Encourage predictions based off what has happened so far or context clues.
- Have your finger underline words as you read them (if this makes sense for your read aloud area).

Read Alouds: After Reading

- Ask children what they thought of the book.
- What did they like? What did they not like?
- Was there anything new they learned?

Reinforce Print Awareness During Read Alouds

- Best for 2 1/2 to 5-year-olds.
- After several read alouds “screw up” how to handle a book.
  - Example: Turn the book upside down, jump around in reading, or say that the author is the person who creates the pictures. Kids will giggle/attempt to correct you. Ask them what you are doing wrong.
  - Goofiness, as a teaching tool, is one of the biggest perks to working with early childhood!

The Power of Repetition

- Books with repetitive phrases – such as “There was an Old Lady” series - can be a great way to foster print awareness!
- Repetition gives children more exposure, which helps them build connections.
- Repetition also helps students make educated predictions.

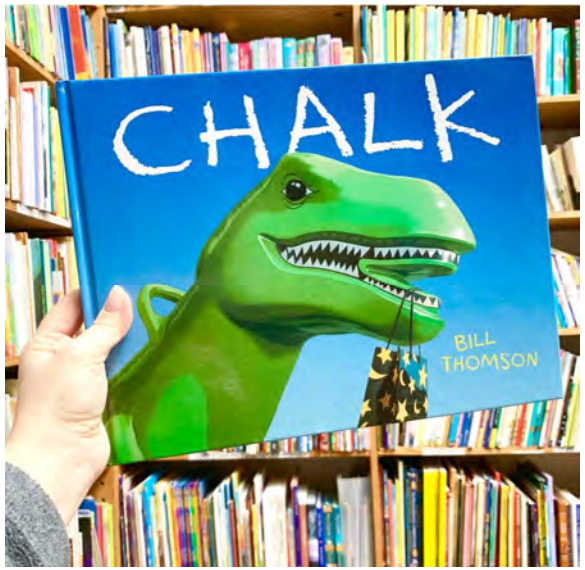
Music and Print Awareness

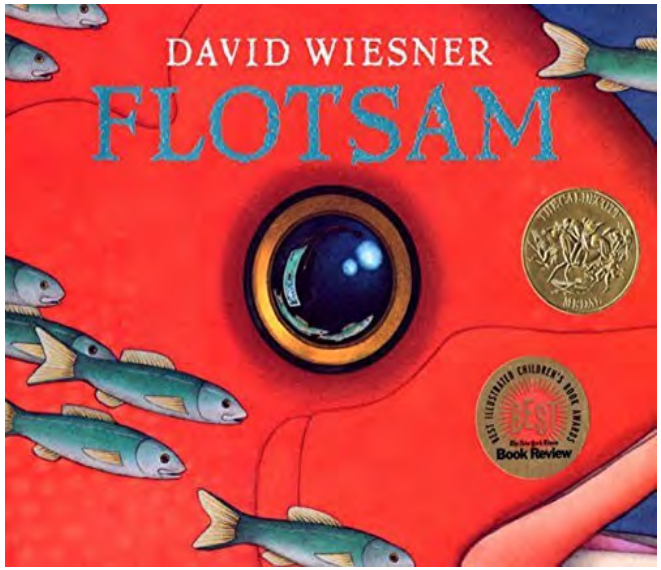
- Songs offer fantastic learning tools!
- Teach about the alphabet, the structure of words and sounds, and how print can be used to tell stories.
- Combining books with their songs helps show the connection further.
  - *Itsy Bitsy Spider*
  - *Wheels on the Bus*
  - *Hey Diddle Diddle*

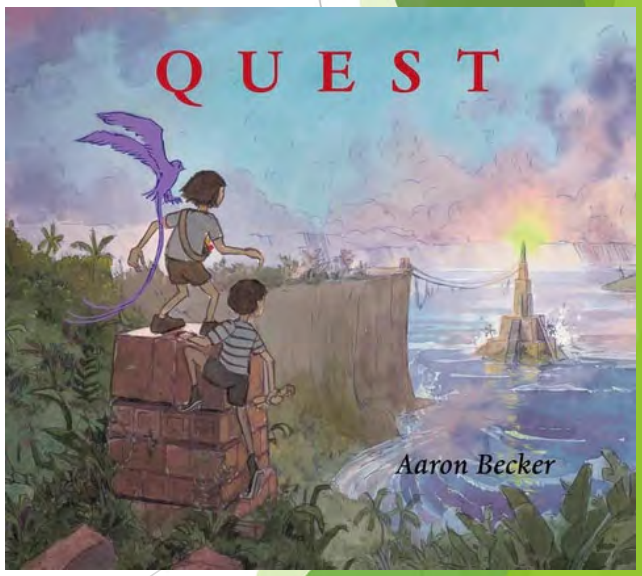
Activity:
DIY ABCs Books

- Best for age 4+.
- Children create they own ABC books using environmental print.
- Give each participant a booklet. Each page (or half page) should have a letter of the alphabet in order. Page 1 = A, Page 2 = B, Page 3 = C, etc.
- Materials needed:
  - Scissors, glue, environmental print items
- Items to use for environmental print:
  - Outdated posters and signs, weeded picture books, bookmarks, food boxes, ads from stores (makes sure alcohol and tobacco references have been removed)
- Tips:
  - Make sure to have a variety of environmental print with tough letters – Q, Z, W, Y.
  - For little kids, larger print is better than smaller because larger is easier to cut out and handle.

Do wordless books teach print awareness?







Yes!

Wordless Books Teach…

- Book Orientation – left to right, up to down.
- Visual Cues – interpretate visual cues and make predictions.
- Engagement and Comprehension – promote children creating their own narratives.

Activity:
Print Walk

- A type of group scavenger hunt.
- Walk children around the library.
- Ask them to find certain letters, symbols, or words.
- Return back to sitting and discuss what you saw. Did they notice other symbols, signs, or words that you (the librarian) did not ask for?
- Older children, about ages 6-8, can also be given a sheet with environmental print to find and check off.

Family Connections

- Encourage families to ask Who/What/When/Where/Why questions when they read to children at home.
- Print Awareness I Can Checklist https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U5wo2dcx8sG-PCyWrEnRTeX64GsdzQcYrF-sKt5gths/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0
- Videos
  - Read the Signs (https://prairiepublic.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/btl07.rla.early.print.signs/read-the-signs/?student=true)
  - Early Literacy: Learn How Books Work | Print Awareness | Learn To Read (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FomVrsf-PJ0)
  - Concepts for Print for Kindergarten (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-ybpyBWH2o)

Family Connections

- Draw and Tell
  - Children draw and tell story; guardians write story down and read it back.
- Letter and Number Sorts
  - Cut letters and numbers from print materials and have child sort them.
- Alphabet Games
  - Use alphabet puzzles, magnetic letters, or playdough to create letters.
- Model Reading
  - Show your child how to turn pages, how to find the top and bottom of a page, and how to identify the title and front and back covers.
- Explore Environmental Print at Home
  - Study, with child, food packages, mail, newsletters/magazines, street signs, etc. Talk about the print you see.

What do you do in your library to promote print awareness?

OR

What would you like to try to promote print awareness?

Activity:
ABC Bingo

- Best for ages 4+.
- Give participants a bingo card of letters.
- Say letter, ask what sound letter makes, ask for word that starts with that letter.
- You decide what constitutes as a winning bingo.

Questions or comments?

References

- *Basics: Print awareness*. (n.d.). Reading Rockets. https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-and-writing-basics/print-awareness.
- *Print awareness during read alouds*. (n.d.). Reading Rockets. https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/early-literacy-development/articles/print-awareness-during-read-alouds.
- Sherman LeVos, Jody. (2024, November 4). *What is print awareness and why is it important for young learners?*. Begin. https://www.beginlearning.com/parent-resources/print-awareness/.

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