Early Literacy Programme

Learning to read and write is not just a matter of identifying letter shapes and being able to draw or copy those shapes. Research has indicated that reading and writing are meaningful and constructive processes and not simply a matter of mechanical drills. Children benefit from varied and meaningful opportunities to use language and literacy, both inside and outside the school. An understanding of how children develop as readers and writers is needed in order to provide a suitable environment and support to their developing literacy. As children enter the early years of formal schooling, they need to be given a classroom which offers a variety of opportunities to read, talk and write for various purposes. After a year of schooling, every child should have received adequate guidance in the direction of an interesting world of print.

In this direction, the NCERT had set up the Reading Development Cell in 2007, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with the support of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The creation of the Cell, now the Early Literacy Programme, marked the beginning of a significant attempt to bring the attention of teachers, teacher educators, school administrators, policy makers and curriculum developers all over the country on the pedagogy of reading and writing in the early years. The Early Literacy Programme not only questioned the prevalent notions of reading and writing but also offered a perspective that emphasized using children's literature and not just textbooks in the classroom to provide children with an environment conducive to reading and writing. The various activities of the Programme have had the following objectives:

Objectives of the Early Literacy Programme

- To acknowledge early literacy as an area requiring particular attention at the national level.
- To promote dialogue on the pedagogy of reading and writing in the early years.
- To create awareness about the unique needs of children of classes I and II with reference to early literacy.
- To inform and educate teachers about the pedagogy of reading and writing in the early years.

A number of activities have been planned and implemented to fulfill the above-mentioned objectives. One of the first and primary activities of the Early Literacy Programme was the Mathura Pilot Project. The Project in Mathura lasted for five years and served as a model for the entire country. The insights gained from the Project also gave direction to various activities of the Early Literacy Programme.

The Mathura Pilot Project

The Early Literacy Programme chose more than five hundred schools of Uttar Pradesh spread across five blocks of Mathura district as its field for piloting a theoretically informed pedagogy of early reading and writing. The teachers and children of classes I and II of the five hundred plus schools of Mathura were the participants. Beginning with intensive workshops for teachers, the classrooms were transformed with opportunities for sharing, talking about pictures and books, drawing, scribbling, reading and writing. Class I and II rooms were equipped with reading corners. The Project was monitored to understand the challenges occurring in the implementation and plan further activities. The Project lasted from 2007 to 2012. An end-term survey and a review of the Project were carried out.

Material for teachers

- Manual on reading, *Padhne ki Samajh*
- Manual on writing, *Likhne ki Shuruvat : Ek Samvad*

The manuals focus on the understanding of pedagogical aspects of reading and writing and provide guidelines for conducting training programmes for teachers on early literacy.

- Dossiers on reading and writing
  - *Reading for Meaning*
  - *Padhne ki Dehleez par*
  - *Padhna Sikhane ki Shuruvat*

Collections of articles highlighting the issues in reading and writing in the Indian context and compilation of articles and papers considered to be classics in the field of reading.

- Posters on concepts and assumptions of early reading and writing: The posters can be used during workshops with teachers to generate discussion.

- Select children's literature in Hindi and English for classes I and II: Children's literature was reviewed and a list of selected titles created in the years 2008, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

- Video programmes on classroom processes: Audio spots and video programmes have been developed that draw attention to various aspects of early

literacy. The titles of the video programmes are Aaj ki Baat, Kahani aur Padhen Likhne ke Avsar, Kavita aur Padhen Likhen ke Avsar. The audio-video programmes capture real classroom situations and presents interesting points for generating discussion.

Material for children

- Graded reading series Barkha: The series has been developed on themes related to the children's everyday experiences and give children plentiful opportunities of prediction while reading the stories.

- Children's magazine- Firkee Bachchon ki: The magazine provides children with reading opportunities

in Hindi and English through relevant, age-appropriate and culturally familiar material.

- Posters of stories and poems for children: The posters can be used in classrooms and libraries or homes.

Support to states and union territories

One of the primary objectives and the one with the most enduring impact and reach is to provide support to the states and union territories in their efforts to promote awareness about early literacy. This is a step towards engaging the entire country in an informed dialogue on reading and writing in the early years. The Early Literacy Programme has provided academic support to several states and union territories in training programmes for teachers, administrators and teacher educators. It has also helped them in developing and adapting material for teachers and children.

- comprehension
- emergent literacy
- prediction in reading
- print-rich environment
- authentic children's literature
- developmental view
- invented spellings
- instruction and assessment as simultaneous processes
- prior knowledge
- reading aloud

An early literacy classroom

- meaningful engagements with print
- story-telling
- child's home language
- planning for instruction
- writing with a voice
- personal experiences
- bridges across reading and writing

The above mentioned material is avalable on the following link :
http://www.ncert.nic.in/department/nie/dee/publication/print_metarial.html

For more details, visit our website www.ncert.nic.in

Early Literacy Programme
Department of Elementary Education
G.B. Pant Block, N.C.E.R.T
Shri Aurbindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016
Phone/Fax : 91-11-26863735, 26863104
e-mail : readingcell.ncert@gmail.com

सर्व शिक्षा अभियान
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Early Literacy Programme

राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING