

Quick Summary of Learning about Letters, Sounds and Words:

Learning about letters, sounds and words is important to developing young readers and writers. Letter knowledge is necessary, but it alone is not enough to read and write. Children will be reading and writing stories long before they can identify all of the letters of the alphabet.

In the past, “letter of the week” was a common practice but teachers now realize the severe limitations of this practice. When you spend a great deal of time on “letter of the week”, many children work on letters they already know, while others see and study letters out of context. Sometimes children forget last week’s letter while working on this week’s because they are looking at one item at a time.

We remember things as a whole. Therefore, children need to be exposed to all the letters through songs, books and hands on opportunities. The more connections children make between the multiple understandings required to read, the faster they will learn.

YES! Then we do focus more intensely on specific letters using children’s names, common themes, and topics of interest.

YES! We still include instruction in letter learning with short lessons on how to look at letters- starting with those that have the most meaning. We focus on comparing letters and their sounds in short lessons while literacy centers provide experiences with multiple letters and/or an individual letter of a child’s choice (i.e. there may be multiple big cut out letters at the art center and children may choose one or many to add pictures from magazines of items that start with that letter).

Since, children tend to first learn the letters in their names and in the names of family members and their friends. Attached are multiple ideas for using names.

Resources in which information was gathered:

- Literacy Beginnings by Pinnell and Fountas
- Reading and Writing by Dr. Jean
- I Love Letters by Feldman and Karapetkova
- The Teacher’s Guide to Building Blocks by Hall and Williams
- http://www.pre-kpages.com/lotw/
- Literacy by Heroman and Jones-
- Ladders to Literacy
- The Kindergarten Connection by Tawnya Powers
- Creative Curriculum

Ideas for Letter Instruction through the Use of Names:

(Note: these are examples of how multiple name ideas- can mix and match to meet needs of your children)

Revolving through each child's name (one a day) until all names have been covered using I-2 strategies and then move to a new activity for the next round:

Each day choose a new name during morning meeting: (write each name on a piece of sentence strip paper)

1. Chant the Name

Have the student point to each letter he/she chants: (example with Becky)

<u>Student/teacher</u>	<u>Class</u>
Give me a B	B
Give me an e	e
Give me a c	c
Give me a k	k
Give me a y	y
What is the word?	Becky
One more time	Becky

(Can add movements for each response or a cheer such as fireworks at the end etc.)

2. Letter Dance

- Examine each letter: Up in the air/Tall letter, sitting on the dock, or dangling feet in the water: (or whatever terminology you use for height of letter)
- Everyone stands up and says the letters in the name again- with hands up in the air for tall letters, hands crossed on opposite hips for "on the line" letters and squat with hands crossed touching opposite feet for under the line letters (using motions that cross midline are important for reading development)

3. Comparing Names:

As more names are added, compare the words. (Ideas- pick one or two each day)

- Number of letters- whose has the most, whose has the fewest, whose have the same
- Letters in each name- are any of them the same
- Number of letters that are tall, sit on line or go below (can start a running tally for the week)
- Number of letters that have sticks only, curves or dots
- How do the names sound- is the first sound soft, hard, how does it feel in your mouth to make the sounds

- *Quote: "The fascinating thing about this activity is how the children compare their own names to the ones on the board even before their names are chosen. This is exactly the kind of word/letter awareness we are trying to develop."*

4. Predictable Chart at the End of the Day:

I.e. Becky likes to _____.

Ideas for Predictable Chart use:

- Have the children help you spell the words- first day start with the name but by the end of the chart on day 15 and so on- they can help spell many of the words
- Compare the answers/ the fill in portion- which word has the most letters, the fewest, which words have the same amount of letters
- What words start with a capital? What does the dot at the end mean? What is that called?
- "Becky" reads the sentence pointing to each word (use a fun pointer).
- Write the words from the sentence on index cards and have "Becky" or multiple students match the words
- Place the index cards from above in baggies, allow the children to match the words during center time or divide the children in groups based on number of words in the sentence, have them stand in the correct order and read their sentence to the class.
- Once children can easily put the sentence in the correct order, play with the words by asking them to hold up their card high in the air if they are holding
 - A certain word
 - A word that starts like ... (i.e. lollipop)
 - A word that rhymes with ... (i.e. new)
 - A word that begins with ... (i.e. B)
- Discuss: How many sentences have we written? How many words in each sentence?
- Discuss how to write the letters- the individual letter poems for formation or pointing out if the letter has sticks, curves or dots
- Pointing out how to find that word- where it is written on the predictable chart already or where it is written in the room (such as on a color poster)
- After all 22 are completed on the predicable chart- can cut off each sentence, glue on paper and have each child illustrate their page to make a big class book or continue to use in pocket charts as a choice during literacy center time.

Ideas for predictable chart sentences:

- My name is...
- Becky's favorite color is... (great way to teach colors as well- can have each student find a scrap of fabric, paper or cut out from a magazine that is their favorite color- can then compare the shades of each color)
- Becky's favorite animal is a _____ (color) _____ (animal). (student can add a picture from internet or magazine)

- Becky's favorite fruit is a _____ (color) _____ (fruit). (student can add a picture from internet or magazine)
- Becky can ...
- Becky is thankful for...
- Becky saw ... (on my way to school, on the playground- encourage students to be observant for something fun and interesting)
- Becky's friend is ... (can expand to include alliterations: lovely Lacey, beautiful Becky, cool Cade)
- Becky noticed/observed/discovered ... (while working on a long term science experiment such as growing crystals or a plant or to encourage students to explore in the discovery center)
- Becky's favorite food is ...
- Becky's favorite song or book is ...
- In the snow, Becky likes to ...
- Title: Good Food _____ is/are good to eat.
- Title: How We Use Water You need water to _____.
- In the ocean, there is ...
- On a farm, there are ...
- Becky likes to eat at ... or Becky's favorite cereal is ... or For breakfast, Becky eats ... or My favorite candy is ... (can add in environmental print as well- have students match the environmental print to the word on the chart)
- Today at school ...
- At school on Monday, Becky..., At school on Tuesday, Karen..., At school on Wednesday, Sam... etc.
- Becky is _____ inches tall.
- Becky has _____ brothers and sisters.
(can tie in lots of math concepts: counting, have cut outs of girls/boys- put those up and count for one to one correspondence, who has more, less, the same, place name on a graph each day, etc.)

5. Match the Letters or Mixed up Letter:

- a. Cut letters apart and have student put his/her name back together in correct order (can match to whole name if needed)

6. Missing Letters

- a. After the student has placed letters in order from above, have all students close their eyes, remove one letter and after opening eyes, have the students guess which letter is missing
- b. Can have them think first, hold it in their brain, then show someone's name from a stack of name cards and that is the student who answers

7. Syllables in a Name

- a. Chant:
Hickety pickety bumblebee,
Who can say their name for me?
(hold up the name card and that child says his/her name)
(Class repeats the name)
Clap it. (Clap syllables in name)
Snap it. (Snap syllables)
Whisper it. (Whisper name in syllables)
No Sound (mouth name)
Shout it. (optional)

8. Graph it

- a. Number of letters in each name OR
- b. The number of names per letter OR
- c. Cut up the student's name and have them place each individual letter on a letter graph- which letters are used most often within our names

9. ALL the Same

Choose all names that begin with the same letter and use them on sequential days:

- a. Have the students brainstorm other words that begin with the first letter of the name (s). Demonstrate how to make a small book of words and pictures that begin with that letter and invite students to make one at the writing center ("This is something you can do today at the writing center. You can make a book just like this.") If students choose to make a book, have them share.
- b. Student chooses one of his/her favorite things that start with the letter (i.e. Becky- bananas, bikes etc.) and compare the words (how they look and sound)
- c. Read a poem that has a lot of words that start with the same sound as the names being focused upon (such as letter B), every time the children hear that sound in the poem they give a thumbs up
- d. Use brainstormed words to write an alliteration sentence for each student (i.e. Brilliant Becky likes to bounce big blue balls.) The student can illustrate their sentence and then bind into a class book.
- e. Near end of year, return to use of names and concentrate on names that sound the same at the end of the word or in the middle of the word (i.e. Becky, Tommy, Jimmy, Gracie)

10. Secret Password:

Place the name of the day on the door frame. Students need to point to and say the name to leave the room or point to a certain letter in the name

11. Sing the Sound

Place a large cut out of the letter on the floor, walk around it singing (tune of Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush)

Here we go round the letter
The letter b, the letter b
Here we go round the letter b
So early in the morning
/b/ /b/ /b/ is what it will say
What it will say, what it will say?
/b/ /b/ /b/ is what it will say
It is letter B.

Use the large cut out to add a picture and the name of each student – can use the large cut outs to then replace the existing alphabet chart or place as an additional alphabet line in the room (hang down low so children can see). Each child can also find a picture of their favorite things that start with the letter to hang on a poster above or below the big letter.

12. Sort the Names

(can also use the names on the attendance chart- important for attendance chart to be visible all day long- so all names are seen together, students can pull a friend's name to use in their writing, students can use the chart for a choice center- sorting names or matching names with pictures)

- a. Sort by first letter
- b. Sort by number of letters
- c. Sort by ending sound
- d. Sort by first letter- does it have curves or only straight lines
- e. Boy/Girl
- f. Match name to picture

13. Lost Letters

- a. Give students the letters of the name on index cards, they stand behind the circle of the other children
Whole class sings: (tune of Five Little Ducks)
Five little letters went out one day (hold up five fingers)
Over the hills and far away (move hand up and down)
When the class called /b/ /b/ /b/ (hold up letter so class knows which to call)
Only the letter B came back.
(does not need to be in name order, when all letters are back have them arrange themselves in order to spell the name- person whose name it is can be the helper)

14. Rap the Letters

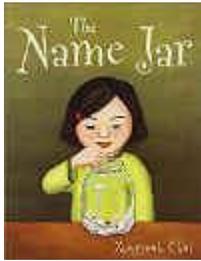
- a. Another way to sing/rap each letter in the name
Yo, B (move arms and dance around)
What do you say?
When we make your sound
It will go this way
/b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ /b/ (bring fists together and make a circular motion)

After you've exhausted names (3-5 rounds of using names- you may be tired of it but the kids will love to keep hearing their names) . Use the same activities with the student's last names, names of favorite foods or other items that match your theme and have meaning to the students.

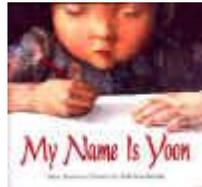
Another way a teacher put the ideas together- she gives specifics for 5 rounds of using names:

The Name Game

We begin to learn about letters and letter sounds right away in Kindergarten! We do this by beginning to learn about our classmates' names. Every day we play the Name Game. We start with "round one" of the Name Game and work our way through the class list. Once all students have had a chance to be the "name" of the day, we then move onto "round two" of the Name Game. This continues until we have finished all rounds. Scroll down for further information about each activity. Throughout the first months of school, we also read books about names.



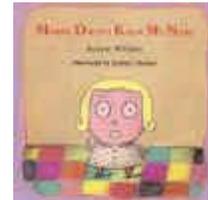
The Name Jar
by Yangsook Choi



My Name is Yoon
by Helen Recorvitz



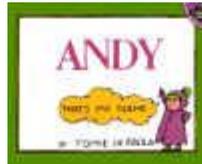
A My Name is Alice
by Jane E. Bayer



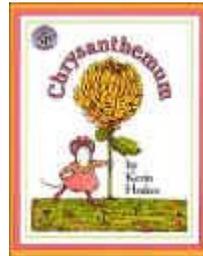
Mommy Doesn't Know My Name
by Suzanne Williams



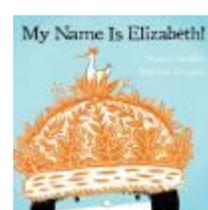
The Name Quilt
by Phyllis Root



Andy That's My Name
by Tomie de Paola



Chrysanthemum
by Kevin Henkes



My Name is Elizabeth!
by Annika Dunklee

For information on Rounds of Names- click the link:
<http://www.jmeacham.com/name.game.htm>