



*Cultural Literacy and
Environmental Print
School-wide Initiative*

Home Connection

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The ***Cultural Literacy and Environmental Print Home Connection*** is designed based on the work of E.D. Hirsch, Jr. as well as studies of successful educational practices in Singapore. Cultural literacy and environmental print function together to create an environment focusing on gaining and using background knowledge.

According to Hirsch, it is critical to not only understand what somebody is saying, but also to understand the greater context. In order for students to be successful learners in our ever-changing, fast-paced society, they must possess a wide body of shared knowledge. For example, it is often assumed that educated readers/listeners will comprehend allusions to social, historical and literary topics. Individuals who lack the background knowledge to recognize these allusions are at a significant disadvantage. This body of knowledge, which Hirsch labels core knowledge, forms the strong, necessary foundation for higher-order reading, writing, and thinking skills that students need for academic and vocational success.

Included in this Home Connection guide are recommendations for expanding core knowledge and increasing cultural literacy through family activities.

In addition, this initiative emphasizes the importance of creating a “print-rich” learning environment. While school and classroom labels are part of this initiative within the schools, home labels are included here for those who choose to create a “print-rich” learning environment in the home. Please note that the home labels provide a sample of selected items that might appear in a home. It is not expected that a given home will use all of the provided labels. Customization will be necessary.

Reading, Writing, and the Student According to E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

Teaching students to read is at the forefront in education, especially in kindergarten through third grade. Reading is such an important skill as it is required for most other learning as well. Hirsch states that there needs to be a balanced approach to teaching reading. One approach emphasizes a systematic teaching approach of the written language: phonics and decoding skills, spelling, handwriting, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, paragraph form, and other rules and conventions. The second approach highlights the student’s need for a rich literacy base that includes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Students must be given the opportunity to use language in several ways.

Learning to read is a process as it does not naturally occur. Most students need organized, systematic, direct instruction in how to decode words, turning written

symbols into the sounds they represent. Part of learning to read is being able to understand the relationships between individual letters and combinations of letters and the sounds they make. Another component is learning the predictable letter-sound patterns in written words. These key components work together in teaching students how to both decode and encode. Students must be given ample opportunities to work with letters and sounds in order to develop a good initial understanding of the English language. Coupled with explicit and systematic instruction, students will learn how language works. All of this is covered through Woodbridge Township's systematic Word Study programs.

The ultimate goal for primary students is for them to become independent readers and writers. This can be achieved when teachers deliver a balanced instructional approach to language arts. Students must be surrounded by written language that is meaningful to them. Every student should receive appropriate instruction, materials, and support as he/she is guided and encouraged to become an independent reader and writer. Independence and student choice are certainly fostered by the Reading and Writing Workshop structures employed throughout the District's language arts curricula.

Hirsch's discussion of reading and writing is consistent with the intensive and balanced approach to literacy employed throughout Woodbridge Township's elementary schools including: Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, Word Study, Read-aloud, Guided Reading and Informational Text Study. Student choice and independent practice are valuable tools in creating an environment that surrounds students with written language that is valuable to them. Choice and independence then must also be balanced with a consistent presentation of basic skills and core knowledge concepts. The *Literacy First* programs in grades one and two specifically foster the core skills and deep reading instruction outlined by Hirsch.

Core Knowledge Sequence According to E.D. Hirsch, Jr.

Language and Literature

Hirsch provides a selection of poetry, stories, and myths as the basis for the language arts component in the *Core Knowledge* sequence. Students must be exposed to a rich and varied selection of literature.

The best way to introduce students to poetry is to read it to them and encourage them to read poetry aloud. In the younger years, students enjoy poetry for its rhymes and predictable patterns. Traditional nursery rhymes and other familiar poems build student confidence as they recognize the rhymes and participate in reciting the poems. As students progress through elementary school, they begin to learn other important poetic concepts such as metaphor and simile.

Hirsch states that reading aloud is one of the most effective reading strategies. Students are involved in listening activities that encourage comprehension and are introduced to concepts of print and features of text. The stories that Hirsch references in his work are often excerpts, abridgements, and adaptations of longer works. Students should be encouraged to read the complete text. Students should be introduced to literary elements and there should be a focus on reading strategies and comprehension skills. Grammar plays an important role as in an effective language arts program as well. Students should be given frequent opportunities to write and revise their writing which is consistent with the Writing Workshop curriculum. Sayings and phrases are included in the literature section as they are cultural references.

Hirsch's discussion of language and literature is once again consistent with Woodbridge Township's approach to literacy with a balance between choice/independence and exposure to core texts.

Family Activities:

- Read together daily, selecting age-appropriate books from district summer reading lists, public library recommendations, and other books that interest your child.
- Read across genres including poetry, fables, tall tales, myths, legends, stories, and nonfiction.
- Choose a favorite author and read all of his/her books.
- Remember and retell favorite stories.
- While reading, stop to talk about what happened, what was learned, or make predictions.
- www.starfall.com
- Discuss lessons learned from books – the moral/theme of the story.
- Explain the meaning of common sayings such as “Every cloud has a silver lining” as they come up in conversation.
- Notice and discuss interesting word choice in literature, especially figurative language and rhyme.
- Make up a story while driving together or waiting in a line.
- Keep a family journal of events, vacations, discoveries.
- Play games such as Scrabble, Boggle, hangman, or crossword puzzles.

History and Geography

In order to build students' curiosity about the world and their sense of the past and its significance, students must be introduced to history and geography concepts beginning in kindergarten. An introduction to these concepts can foster an understanding of the world beyond the student's local community. Hirsch states that special emphasis should be placed on geography beginning in second grade. Students should be familiar with the main features of the world: continents, countries, rivers, mountains, and major cities. Historical concepts are introduced in the early grades and then are further explained in the upper grades. There is a shift beginning in fourth grade. There is a

stronger emphasis on American and World history. Students learn the *story* of these histories.

Family Activities:

- Research and discuss major holidays when they come up throughout the year.
- Collect local, regional, national, and international maps, globes, atlases and travel guides/brochures.
- Plan a real or imaginary trip using collected references. Be sure to include stops along the way, points of interest, and mileage.
- Explain direction, distance, and scale.
- Locate continents, oceans, countries, states, capitals, landmarks, hemispheres, and coordinates.
- Assist child in navigating using a map.
- www.kids.gov
- www.timeforkids.com
- Choose nonfiction books and videos that teach about historical people and events.
- www.brainpopjr.com/socialstudies
- Discuss voting, elections and candidates, and bring your child to the polls on Election Day.
- Read newspaper and discuss current events.
- Research and discuss major American concepts such as independence, colonial life, westward expansion, Native American cultures and conflicts, slavery and emancipation, wars, and famous presidents.
- Visit a museum to learn about national and international history.
- Visit local, state or national seats of government.
- Visit local historical sites such as Monmouth Battlefield, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, The Historic Village at Allaire State Park, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.
- Watch the History Channel.

Visual Arts

According to Hirsch, art should take the form of doing: drawing, painting, cutting and pasting, working with clay and other materials. Students should be exposed to art and various artists from a young age. Art should be looked at, talked about, and practiced. Students need ample opportunities to create art as well as learn about it. As students get older, they need the experience of visiting museums and galleries. Classic masterpieces, fine art, and ethnic artwork are also key components when learning about art. By looking closely at art and talking about it, students will develop a love of art and will enjoy it in active ways.

Family Activities:

- Hunt and sort colors and shapes.
- Notice a variety of textures.
- Notice and discuss local architecture as well as famous architecture from around the world.
- Use tracing paper to copy artwork.
- Select How to Draw books from the library and encourage children to practice drawing subjects of interest.
- Create collages.
- Use clay or dough to create sculpture.
- Make a quilt using fabric or paper.
- Visit a museum to learn about different art movements and view famous artwork.

Music

Like visual art, students also need to be exposed to many musical experiences. Students develop a love and appreciation of music through singing, listening, dancing, attending musical performances, and learning about genres of music and composers. Musical terms and vocabulary are also key components to musical experiences. Sharing good music with students also enhances their love of music.

Family Activities:

- Listen to recordings of favorite children's songs and sing along.
- Make instruments out of everyday items.
- Discuss patterns, rhythm and beat.
- Play "Name That Tune" using familiar songs.
- Change the radio station – Listen to a variety of genres of music.
- www.bussongs.com
- Compare high/low, short/long, soft/loud, fast/slow.

Mathematics

Engaging students in mathematical activities that are fun and lively fosters a sense of importance and interest in math from an early age. Students need to feel comfortable with math and an easy way to achieve that comfort level is to provide them with a daily exposure to age-appropriate math concepts and operations. This strong foundation should include varied practice of basic ideas and operations which will lead students into effortless, automatic performance on which all problem solving and other sophisticated math applications depend.

A key component to mathematical success is practice. Effective programs integrate multiple opportunities to practice math skills. Once a concept or skill is introduced, it is repeatedly practiced through exercises of gradually increasing difficulty. Through this approach, arithmetic becomes automatic.

Family Activities:

- Encourage children to collect, sort, and create patterns with everyday objects.
- Involve children in measuring while cooking, sewing, building or crafting.
- Involve children in recognizing, counting and budgeting money.
- Recognize and point out shapes that appear in everyday life.
- Utilize an analog clock and engage children in telling time.
- Use flash cards to reinforce number facts.
- Discuss fractions in relation to food, crafts or other household activities.
- Keep a family calendar and engage children in updating it monthly.
- Encourage children to use age-appropriate mathematical skills when solving problems.
- Estimate weights, use scales, and determine greater than/less than at home or the grocery store.
- Play store using coins, bills, calculators or adding machines.
- Notice angles in building or crafting projects.

Science

Students gain knowledge about the world around them through observation and experience. A systematic approach to the exploration of science through hands-on experiences, along with a combination of book learning, provides essential building blocks for deeper understanding of science concepts. The study of famous scientists and their contributions is also important when learning about science. Students should be encouraged to view the world scientifically: to ask questions; seek answers through observation and study; to collect, count, measure, and make qualitative observations.

Family Activities:

- Take a nature walk.
- Create a back yard, countertop, or window garden and involve children in caring for plants.
- Plant and care for a tree.
- Recycle as a family and involve children in sorting recyclables.
- Conserve electricity, water, and other resources, and discuss different methods of doing so.
- Discuss the weather and seasons and how they affect daily life.
- Discuss and read about animals and their families.
- Care for animals in your home or other safe places.
- Discuss children's experiences in terms of the five senses.
- Talk about the human body and its many systems, and involve children in making healthy choices.
- Talk about the foods you choose as a family and where different types of food come from.
- Experiment with magnets to determine whether surfaces are magnetic, but DO NOT test magnets on a computer or television screen as it may cause damage.

- Visit the ocean or bay and notice sea life and tides.
- Visit a farm.
- Experiment with water to illustrate the changing states of matter: solid, liquid, gas.
- Choose nonfiction books and videos that teach about famous scientists and science concepts such as dinosaurs, electricity, astronomy, geology, habitats and other areas that interest children.
- Look up – notice the moon and its phases, stars and constellations, and the movement of the sun. Consult books or electronic resources to explain what you notice.

Note to Parents on Assessment

In order to ensure active participation in the ***Cultural Literacy and Environmental Print School-wide Initiative***, an assessment program is necessary. However, we do not believe that memorization of discrete facts or an additional high-stakes assessment is appropriate for this initiative. In order to generate enthusiasm for and draw attention to the initiative, success will be assessed in a competition format. Gameshow style questions have been created and will be made available for classroom, school and district-wide competitions. Student success and engagement in competitions will only be enhanced through the Home Connection component and enjoyment of the recommended Family Activities. Above all, we hope that you will enjoy learning together as a family.

Home Connection

Authors, Titles, Sayings and Songs by Grade

Kindergarten:

Authors

Eric Carle
Pat Hutchins
Ezra Jack Keats

Poems

Hickory, Dickory, Dock
Hey, Diddle, Diddle
Little Bo Peep
Little Boy Blue
Baa, Baa, Black Sheep
One, Two Buckle My Shoe
Rain, Rain Go Away
It's Raining, It's Pouring
Roses are Red
Jack and Jill
Little Miss Muffet
Humpty Dumpty
Mary Had a Little Lamb
Hot Cross Buns
Old King Cole
Three Blind Mice
There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe

Star Light, Star Bright

Fables

The Lion and the Mouse
The Hare and the Tortoise
The Grasshopper and the Ants

Stories

The Three Little Pigs
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
The Three Billy Goats Gruff
The Little Red Hen
Chicken Little

Little Red Riding Hood
The Ugly Duckling
Cinderella
King Midas and the Golden Touch
Snow White
Johnny Appleseed
Casey Jones

Sayings

April showers bring May flowers.
Better safe than sorry.
Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
A dog is a man's best friend.
The early bird gets the worm.
Great oaks from little acorns grow.
Look before you leap.
A place for everything, and everything in its place.
It's raining cats and dogs.
Practice makes perfect.

Songs

Bingo
Hush, Little Baby
Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush
Old MacDonald
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
Pop! Goes the Weasel
Jingle Bells
The Hokey Pokey
If You're Happy and You Know It
Kookaburra
Row, Row, Row Your Boat
The Wheels on the Bus

Grade One:

Authors

Marc Brown
Kevin Henkes
Leo Lionni
Maurice Sendak

Poems

Little Sally Walker
The Queen of Hearts
Thirty Days Hath September
Tongue Twisters
Riddle Rhymes
A Good Play by Robert Louis Stevenson
I Know All the Sounds that the Animals
Make by Jack Prelutsky
My Shadow by Robert Louis Stevenson
Rope Rhyme by Eloise Greenfield
Table Manners by Gelett Burgess
Sing a Song of People by Lois Lenski
Washington by Nancy Byrd Turner
Thanksgiving Day by Lydia Maria Child

Fables

The Boy Who Cried Wolf
The Fox and the Grapes
The Maid and the Milk Pail
The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs

Stories

The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix
Potter

Jack and the Beanstalk
The Pied Piper of Hamelin
Pinocchio
The Princess and the Pea
Puss-in-Boots
Rapunzel
Rumpelstiltskin
Sleeping Beauty
Sayings

An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
Do unto others as you would have them
do unto you.
Hit the nail on the head.
If at first you don't succeed, try, try
again.
Land of Nod
Let the cat out of the bag.
The more, the merrier.
Never leave until tomorrow what you
can do today.
Practice makes perfect.
There's no place like home.

Songs

For He's a Jolly Good Fellow
Frere Jacques/Brother John
She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain
Skip to My Lou
Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Grade Two:

Authors

Stan and Jan Berenstain

Paula Danziger

Barbara Park

Cynthia Rylant

William Steig

Poems

Bed in Summer

Caterpillars

Hurt No Living Thing

Discover

Harriet Tubman

Lincoln

The Night Before Christmas

Seashell

Something Told the Wild Geese

Smart

Who Has Seen the Wind

Stories

The Blind Men and the Elephant

The Emperor's New Clothes

A Christmas Carol

Before Breakfast

Beauty and the Beast

How Wendy Met Peter Pan

Tall Tales

Paul Bunyan

John Henry

Myths

Oedipus and the Sphinx

Sayings

Go back to the drawing board.

It's better late than never.

Don't cry over spilt milk.

Don't judge a book by its cover.

It's easier said than done.

Get a taste of your own medicine.

Two heads are better than one.

In hot water

Practice what you preach.

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Songs

Clementine

Home on the Range

Buffalo Gals

Casey Jones

Grade Three:

Authors

Beverly Cleary
Joanna Cole
Mary Pope Osborne
Jon Scieszka

Poems

By Myself by Eloise Greenfield
Catch a Little Rhyme by Eve Merriam
Dream Variations by Langston Hughes
The Crocodile by Lewis Carroll
Jimmy Jet and His TV Set by Shel
Silverstein
First Thanksgiving of All by Nancy Byrd
Turner
Eletelephony by Laura Richards

Stories

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves
The Hunting of the Great Bear
Three Words of Wisdom
William Tell

Myths

Jason and the Golden Fleece
Perseus and Medusa
Cupid and Psyche

Sayings

Actions speak louder than words.
Don't beat around the bush.
Beggars can't be choosers.
Give the cold shoulder.
It's the last straw.
Let bygones be bygones.
One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel.
Rule the roost.
The show must go on.
When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Songs

Polly Wolly Doodle
The Man on the Flying Trapeze
A Bicycle Built for Two
You're a Grand Old Flag
America

Grade Four:

Authors

Judy Blume
Eve Bunting
Roald Dahl
Tomie DePaola

Poems

Monday's Child is Fair of Face
Fog by Carl Sandburg
Dreams by Langston Hughes
Paul Revere's Ride by Henry
Wadsworth Longfellow
Concord Hymn
Clarence by Shel Silverstein
Things by Eloise Greenfield
George Washington by Rosemary Benet
and Stephen Vincent Venet

Stories

*King Arthur and the Knights of the
Round Table*
Robin Hood
Robinson Crusoe

Gulliver's Travels
Treasure Island
Rip Van Winkle
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Sayings

Beauty is only skin deep.
Birds of a feather flock together.
Don't count your chickens before they
hatch.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket.
Etc.
Once in a blue moon
RSVP
Through thick and thin
Two wrongs don't make a right.
When it rains, it pours.

Songs

Auld Lange Syne
Waltzing Matilda
The Yellow Rose of Texas
The Army Goes Rolling Along

Grade Five:

Authors

Virginia Hamilton

J.K. Rowling

Jerry Spinelli

E.B. White

Poems

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

O Captain! My Captain! by Walt

Whitman

Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence

Thayer

Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll

I, Too by Langston Hughes

The Eagle by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Stories

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Don Quixote

Little Women

Narrative of the Life of Frederick

Douglass

The Secret Garden

Sayings

Every cloud has a silver lining.

The grass is always greener on the other side.

Kill two birds with one stone.

Make a mountain out of a molehill.

A penny saved is a penny earned.

Read between the lines.

Take the bull by the horns.

Time heals all wounds.

Vice versa

What will be, will be.

Songs

We Shall Overcome

Shenandoah

God Bless America

Danny Boy

Home Connection Labels

bed

window

curtain

bookshelf

dresser

closet

basket

radio

alarm clock

wall

ceiling

door

door knob

shelf

drawer

moulding

floor

carpet

rug

toy box

door handle

clock

mirror

photograph

electrical outlet

responsibility chart

shade

lamp

night table

map

sink

faucet

toilet

mirror

toothbrush

toothpaste

dental floss

mouthwash

soap dispenser

medicine cabinet

bath tub

shower

faucet

shower head

soap dish

soap

shampoo

conditioner

hair dryer

hairbrush

comb

drawer

toilet tissue

window

wall

tissue box

ceiling

door

curtain

door knob

computer screen

keyboard

filing cabinet

mouse

telephone

modem

desk

office chair

bookshelf

books

certificate

Artwork

photograph

Stationery

printer

fax machine

copy machine

drawer

rolodex

speakers

electrical outlet

surge protector

tape

paper

manual

compact disc

speaker

computer

desk organizer

wastebasket

garbage can

sink

refrigerator

oven

stovetop

cooking range

range hood

ceiling fan

table

chair

shelf

cookbook

utensils

dishwasher

cabinet

knickknack

container

microwave oven

toaster oven

glass

cup

light switch

electrical outlet

bowl

telephone

calendar

window

door

curtain

drawer

sofa

couch

armchair

television

game system

basket

shelf

sculpture

painting

photograph

remote control

books

magazine

cabinet

table

picture frame

fireplace

thermostat

hearth

sconce

step

stairway

spindle

candle

basement

bowl

instrument

loveseat

recliner

mail

mailbox

doorbell

foyer

umbrella

welcome mat

front porch

back porch

laundry room

detergent

fabric softener

washing machine

dryer

clothesline

patio

hallway

stoop

deck

outdoor grill

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