

## Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively

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### EMERGENT LITERACY FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND

#### Definition

"Reading" and "creating" tactile representations of real life experiences that are permanent for the child to access

#### Purpose

To provide literacy experiences for children who are deaf-blind and do not have symbolic language skills to participate in literacy activities

#### Examples

- A child's trip to an amusement park is recreated tactilely using items from the trip (e.g., part of the popcorn box, the wristband to get him on rides, a straw for the drink that was purchased, a small souvenir). The child's grandparent discusses the event while encouraging the child to manipulate each object in the "story or memory" box. Each item is labeled in braille and print.
- A student's day is created tactilely in a book format. An item or part of an item is attached to each page of the book with a phrase or sentence written beneath the item (in both braille and print). With his mother and sister, the child reads about his day by touching each item and turning the page. His mother or sister read the phrase as he touches the item.
- A child reads an APH book about pockets and what are in them by turning each page of the book to feel the pocket and look inside each one. The child also feels the braille words while a peer reads the print.

#### Considerations

1. Provide language-rich activities, materials, and environments to support a child's experiences with literacy. These include playing together, describing objects, discussing events, supporting the child's access to language, conversations, stories, and books.
2. As appropriate, use varied intonation, gestures, signs, objects and tactile items to engage the child in a conversation or story.
3. Build on real experiences that children enjoy as a beginning point for

literacy experiences by referring to tactile items associated with these experiences. These tactile items should be organized in a "story or memory" box or book so that the child can refer to events and "reread" these stories.

4. Expose the child to braille in a similar manner that young sighted children are exposed to print, e.g., on labels. The child should feel the braille even though the child may not be able to read this abstract symbol system. Through repeated and consistent exposures, the child will assign meaning to the braille dots.

5. Read familiar, interesting, and relevant books repeatedly with the child.

6. Ask the child to "read" a favorite book to you by touching tactile items in sequence and using gestures or other means of communication.

7. Provide opportunities for interaction. Pause during the story and wait for the child to feel tactile items, the braille, and to comment or anticipate what happens next. Allow the child to hold the book, turn the pages, and manipulate tactile features. If needed, add tabs to the pages to make them easier for the child to turn.

8. Have the child participate in the development of tactile books and displays using items that represent favorite activities or experiences.

9. Whenever possible, help the child make connections between these experience stories and current or upcoming events.

10. Include individualized tactile books in a child's portfolio that will follow the child from grade to grade.

11. As the child gains greater understanding of different literacy experiences, more and more abstract methods of representation can be used.

12. The use of jumbo braille cells for reading may be helpful for some children.

13. Let children experiment and play with brailers as a form of written self-expression.

## Advantages

- Adapted literacy materials allow the child access to specific literacy skills.
- Shared literacy experiences contribute to effective communication and support the child's language development and social interaction.
- Children can participate with sighted children during literacy activities.

## Disadvantages

- All materials have to be adapted and individualized. This can be time consuming and difficult.
- Finding appropriate materials to develop tactile (non-braille) materials for literacy may be challenging.

## Source

***Emergent Literacy Skills*** represents a synthesis of information from Project SALUTE's National Advisory Committee, staff activities, and a review of relevant literature such as the following bibliography.

## Bibliography

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## Websites

**Read to me**

<http://www.readtomeprogram.org>

**Reach out and read**

<http://www.reachoutandread.org>

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