Ways of Interacting with Language

Reading and writing are complex processes with which children engage actively to construct meaning or to communicate. Because of this, children learn to read and write in different ways. In school, learning these skills is likely to be most effective when the environment is non-threatening and the daily life experiences that children bring with them are addressed. In an effort to do this, these design ideas explore ways of creating a stimulating and meaningful literacy environment within the built spaces of a school, while keeping the curriculum in mind.

10 Pre-writing Aids
11 Ruled Line Boards for Languages
12 Pin Up Boards and Display System
13 Book Corner
14 Play With Words
15 Visuals Around Us
Introduction

Children, if left to grow naturally, develop the physical ability to grasp pencil in hand and write letters and words in notebooks at the age of six and seven. Writing words or alphabets is a very complicated process. Where does one start when one writes an “a”? Where should the child end the letter or how should it be joined to the next letter? These are important questions. Teachers need to be very alert when children start to write the letters of the alphabet because it is easy to develop bad habits, especially if writing starts at the age of four and five, before the child has physical control of her small muscles. BaLA has aids to help a child strengthen and exercise small muscles and also to practice proper letter formation. The aids are in window security grills for Class I and II or along the walls.

Suggested Activities

1. Large Muscle Movements
2. Small Muscle Movements

Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Large Muscle Movements

Classes I, II

Physical control of the muscles must be practiced in many ways. Give opportunity for large muscle movements such as:

a) Drawing in sand with fingers
b) Moving the beads in the window grills
c) Following patterns in window grills and on motifs with the finger
d) Allow children to draw large shapes on the writable surfaces, and slates with chalk.
e) Giving paper and crayons and allow child to scribble or draw
f) Giving newspaper and scissors and allow the child to cut paper
g) Giving newspaper and crayons and ask the child to circle all the “b”s or “m”s
h) Giving bottles and allow child to develop muscle control by pouring water from one bottle to the other

Smooth grooves in wall plaster, especially near soft mud and sand area will help children understand various shapes.
Teacher’s Role

Teachers and parents often look at the neatness of a child’s writing rather than looking to see what the child has expressed. It is common to see children filling up slates or copies without knowing what they have copied. We need children who have true skills in reading and writing. Neat writing is a desired goal but first give positive feedback to children about what they have written. Is it their own expression or have they copied a poem that is enjoyable for them?

When you know that the child understands what has been written, then you can pay attention to the letter formation. Have they written properly so that there is neatness and flow? Is it easy for others to read? If a child has gotten into bad writing habits, you need to give that child extra practice on the lines on the wall or lines on the board.

Objectives

1. To develop skills of fingers and wrist movement within lines.
2. To develop hand and eye co-ordination.
3. To “feel” and “see” the shape of alphabets at the same time.
4. To understand the directions of alphabets.
5. To practice the proper tripod grip on a chalk or pencil.
6. To enjoy the skills of letter formation and appreciate beautiful writing.
7. To enjoy cultural motifs and designs that have been put in the built environment to practice handwriting.

Activity 2: Small Muscle Movements

Classes I, II, III

Control of small muscles will happen when practice is given such as:

a) Give chalk and ask children to draw straight lines between the lines on the writing surfaces
b) Give lined paper and pencil and ask children to draw straight lines
c) Use the lines on the writing surfaces to practice circles, straight lines, wavy lines
d) Practice simple alphabets first
e) Children love to write their names. Start with words that are meaningful to them

Prewriting security grills along parapets and windows can have beads for children to move their fingers

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11 Ruled Line Boards for Languages

Introduction
In order for children to write properly, it is necessary for them to see the process of writing. The right hand side of the main chalkboard is provided with proper lines facilitate writing of mother tongue and English.

Objectives
1. To train students in proper handwriting in the mother tongue and English.

Suggested Activities
1. Practice Neat Handwriting
2. Relevant Reading and Writing
3. Dictionary on the Ruled Chalk Board
4. Writing Classroom News and / or Local News

Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Practice Neat Handwriting

Classes I, II, III, IV, V

a) The lines on the board can be used by the children to practice their own handwriting.

b) Notices can be neatly written on the lines.

c) In English, sometimes only the lower case letters of the alphabet can be practiced. The teacher will point out how many letters stay in the center row, a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z, while b, d, f, h, k, l, t move to the top row and g, j, p, q, y move to the bottom line.

Activity 2: Relevant Reading and Writing

Classes I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII

At first, the teacher must encourage literary activities in the school. The teacher can ask riddles and
**Teacher’s Role**

Children do not need to be taught cursive writing in English. Printing is easier to read. As children grow, they will start joining the words. In fact, children start to write too soon. It is easier to read small poems or songs, or riddles or notices. The teachers’ writing must always be an example for the children. When children make mistakes in their copy, the teacher must point out the use of lines by showing the words written on the chalkboard lines.

When you look at the written work of a child, first read the contents, then discuss the poem or story or answer. When you are satisfied that children can understand the content, then you can pay attention to the neat presentation of the work. *Neat work is important but always secondary to comprehension.*

You can write notices very neatly on the lines. Be a role model.

tell jokes. These can be written on the lined boards. Children must be encouraged to copy these riddles and ask them at home.

Then each day a child can be assigned to bring a riddle from home. The riddle can be asked in class and then copied neatly on the lines for other children to copy. In this way, the family is involved in helping the child with schoolwork and the children learn to keep diaries of riddles and jokes. Indirectly reading and writing is encouraged.

These jokes and riddles can be in childrens’ mother tongue as well as in English.

**Riddles for you:**

a) What gets bigger the more you take from it? (answer: a hole)
b) What goes up when the rain comes down? (answer: an umbrella)
c) What goes up and down but never moves? (answer: a ladder, stairs)

*Ruled lined boards can be in classroom, corridor as well as in the outdoors*

Effectively using BaLA in Elementary Schools - A Teacher’s Manual
Activity 3: Dictionary on the Ruled Chalkboard

All Classes

a) Young children need to have a dictionary of words on the wall. Everyday the teacher in classes I to IV can teach phonics by writing down a list of words that the children tell him. These words can be from the text or from children’s conversation. Children will give the words when asked.

b) The ruled lines get filled up very quickly. Transfer this classroom dictionary to another writing surface at the children’s eye level where it can be read by the children in small groups.

c) Every letter of the alphabet in English must be illustrated by phonics words. Words that are in process of being taught can be on the writing surfaces. The words that are a constant reference will need to be put on the pin-up boards.

For example:

- button
- toy
- bat
- shoe
- sing
- pain
- table
- teeth
- top
- shake
- ring
- main
- sing
- rain
- ain
- ring
- main
- pain

Activity 4: Writing Classroom news and / or Local News

All Classes

a. For classes I and II

The teacher can ask for local news, children will tell her orally and she can write the news on the ruled lines. Then she will re-read the sentences and discuss the news in greater detail, if desired.

b. For classes III to VIII

Every day children can be asked to write the class news, school news or local news on the ruled lines. These children can read their own sentences to the class. If the news is very emotional then teacher must take the time to discuss it in class. E.g. She can ask ‘how it happened?’, ‘why it happened?’, ‘what did other people do?’, etc.

There must be a response to the news, otherwise children will not take interest.

For example:

- He fed the dog.
- You can run.
- Student.
- Boy.
- Button.
- Table.
- Shoe.
- Sing.
- Rain.
- Ring.
- Main.
12 Pin Up Boards and Display System

Introduction
It is important to have a literacy environment in the school which is non-threatening and allows children to enjoy and see the work of other children.

The pin up boards will display children's drawing, children's written compositions, craft work and some construction work.

Besides this, notices, charts or maps can be hung here.

The ceiling can also have hooks for display. Children will want to make mobiles or the solar system and hang it in the "sky" above.

Suggested activities
1. Displaying Collection of Visual Material
2. Displaying Collection of Reading Material
3. Displaying Collection of Objects

Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Displaying Collection of Visual Material
All classes
Ask the children to bring visual illusions, their own drawings or paintings, photographs from newspaper / magazine of common interest. These may be put on the pin-up board by the children themselves, with little supervision by the teacher. They can be changed periodically.

Activity 2: Displaying Collection of Reading Material
All classes
Ask children to bring riddles and stories, folk tales from home. They can also bring their own writings.
**Teacher’s Role**

Appreciate the work of the children and encourage them to display their work.

Show children how they can pinup their work. Leave boxes of pins in the almirah which is easily and freely available to the children. Display system should be easily accessible to children.

Sometimes you may need to stand by and help children realize that the display on the pin-up board can be done in a pleasing and aesthetic manner. If the boards look sloppy ask the children what should be done to make the displays pleasant and enjoyable to look at.

**Objectives**

1. Children develop a sense of self-worth as well as motivation to achieve better standards of work through comparison with some of the displayed work, which does not happen if the work is just confined to note books.
2. These boards help children to develop a sense of autonomy as they learn to manage themselves.
3. Children feel confident and respected when they know that their creations are respected and admired.
4. Children learn to treat public property that is openly displayed, with respect. Many things in the room should not be under lock and key. If children grow up in a free and trusting environment, inner self discipline is sure to develop.
5. Children learn that there are many ways to communicate feelings and ideas.
6. A good book to use as an aid for display of children’s projects is *Apne Haath Vigyan* from Eklavya (see annexure – I).

Activity 3: Displaying Collection of Objects

**All classes**

For EVS classes, children may be asked to go out and gather collections of stones, soils, grains, flowers, leaves, pods, insects, stamps, etc. These may be put on the panel of niches by the children themselves. Some of these articles can be put on the sill of the niche. Others could be hanged in the niche. Still others could be pinned up on the soft board given in the back surface of the niche.

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*Hanging pin-up board from hatten patti*  *Outdoor pin-up board*  *Multiple use pin-up, hang-up and keep-up display system*

Effectively using BaLA in Elementary Schools - A Teacher’s Manual
Introduction

Reading can introduce one to a wide and imaginative world beyond the home and school. Teachers need to help children take pleasure in reading. All children have their own interesting stories and reading can start from here. As a teacher you will understand that the objective of education is to understand and be able to use this understanding throughout one's life. This means an ability to read and analyze or understand what is being read. A child who reads also achieves academically since all subjects involve language. A child's first experiences with books must be pleasurable.

Children are not fond of moralistic stories. Read stories that are entertaining, suspenseful or humorous. There are many books from the National Book Trust, Eklavya, Tulika, Pratham and Navneet. Some stories from NCERT textbooks are excellent.

Objectives

1. To learn to enjoy books and understand reading as a source of pleasure.
2. To understand that anyone can be an author.
3. To develop true skills in reading and become a self-learner.
4. To be able to read text books and newspapers, magazines without the teachers guidance.
5. To be able to understand different genres-fiction, poetry, humour, instructions, letter-writing, travel-writing and so on.
6. To be exposed to a wider variety of expression than is possible in home and school.

Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Reading Stories

All Classes

The teacher must read the stories to the children everyday otherwise children will not voluntarily pick up the books. Children must see that these books give enjoyment. Telling stories adds variety to storytelling. Use the setting for book reading also as spaces for story telling make children comfortable. For younger children you can make puppets. Older children will make their own puppets.
Teacher’s Role

The teacher must keep putting interesting books in the Book Corner. If children tell you an exciting story, you can write it on a piece of paper or cardboard and read it to the children. In this way you will soon have many books for your corner. The teacher must read and tell stories every day. Have a special time for this. After the story has been read, put the book in the Book Corner where children can pick it up and again page through it. You will notice that some children learn to read just by being read to. They look at the pictures, read the story that you have read to them and even tell the story to their friends. Stories can be oral stories, stories from books and homemade books. You need to decide where you will keep the classroom library. In a closet, that is open during the day or on an open shelf? The books can also be kept in the outdoor library during school hours. Will children be allowed to pick up the books as soon as they have finished their classwork?

The teacher also needs to discuss up-keep and management of the books. Torn books must be immediately removed or repaired when you have time. Older classes can repair their own books.

Often there is not enough budget for books. You may need to ask for cash donations. Do not ask people to donate books. Donated books are usually not suitable for young children as they contain verbose moralistic stories that are not enjoyable. Books that tell stories from the Panchtantra, Akbar and Birbal stories are enjoyed by older children. You can collect jokes and riddles and write them on the writing surfaces in the hallway. Children can copy them and ask the riddles to family and friends.

Suggested Activities

1. Reading Stories
2. Central Library
3. Class-room Library
4. Reading Records
5. Making Homemade Books

Activity 2: Central Library

All Classes

The teacher and principal may need to develop an extensive central library that serves all the class rooms. The library must have science activity books, nature books, books for teachers, supplementary reading for all subjects and magazines for children and teachers.
Activity 3: Class-Room Library

All Classes

Keep the library, in the classroom on the inside door of the almirah. It can be shut safely when school is over. Children should be able to freely take the books and then return them.

Children can take the storybooks from the closet and sit and read books in a cozy corner that has a soft mat and cushions. A low height wide window sill can also be a good reading corner.

Activity 4: Reading Records

All classes

The teacher should keep a record of children who visit the book corner. If some children do not go there, ask them to sit there and read with the child who has reading skills.

From Class II onwards, there must be a programme of supplementary reading. Children will be required to read a book a week and enter the name of the book in the reading record. The teacher then must have a discussion with the child about the book.

Space for Notes
Activity 5: Making Homemade Books

All classes

a) Every week, put one more homemade book into the library corner. This can be a story that one child has told about an accident, or about the cat that came into her house and drank the milk or about a new cycle that she has received. Or it can be a newspaper of events that have happened in the community.

b) You must write the story very neatly and let the child make the drawings.

c) Then you can have it laminated.

d) After reading to the children put it in the Book Corner.

e) Classes II to VIII must be writing their own stories. When a child has written five stories, the teacher should share with the student to discover which story is the most emotional or enjoyable. After that edit it for style, grammar, spelling mistakes and presentation. It should then be neatly recopied and pictures can be drawn. Give it for lamination and read the story to the class and then put it in the library for all to enjoy. At the end of the school term the book can be given back to the child.

f) Homemade books can be made from the oral stories which you have told. If you give children pieces of paper 10cm x 10 cm or 15cm x 6cm children will draw the pictures of your oral story.

g) Ask elders from the community to narrate stories / history and put them in book.
Introduction

The school environment must be a learning environment. It is true that the teacher is the most important person in the school along with the students. Nevertheless, the environment is also a teacher. A stimulating teacher can help children to be creative by providing many supplies, provoking literary, science and math activities where children learn with others or by themselves. The teacher will be the guide who asks probing questions and supports and praises experimentation and learning. Nothing is more important than learning to read and write. BaLA gives you a Word Wall with an Alphabet Border and a Word Organizer as well as Labelling Around us.

When words are on the wall and poems and riddles are on the writing surfaces, you will find that children learn a lot by themselves in non-threatening ways. When children want to write a new words, these words are available for them just like a dictionary.

Words need to be classified according to their phonetic sounds, prefixes, suffixes, and usages. The Word Wall and Word Organizer provide space to do this. Children easily learn this poem: all you need is a ball to demonstrate “bounce”.

Bounce the ball, Bounce the ball, Bounce the ball, high, Bounce the ball, Bounce the ball, Up to the sky.

As children begin to learn words, these new words such as “bounce”, “high”, “sky” must be put up on the Word Wall and learned. When you need space for new words, put these words on word cards and enter a new set of words. Always remember that the words must be usable for the children or else they will forget.

Suggested Activities

1. Names of Children
2. Word Wall
3. Learning Alphabets, Words and Phonetic Sounds
4. Relevant Reading
5. Grammar and Language Patterns
6. Advanced Phonetics
7. Language Games
Teacher’s Role

As you enter words on the Word Wall and Word organizer, remember to point out the words regularly and use them in sentences and poems. The Word Wall always fills up very quickly. Where will you put the old words, which must be a ready reference for children? Maybe you can put them on a sheet and pin them to a pin-up board or make word cards and keep them in a basket. Think about it.

It is wrong to think that children must learn alphabets before words and sentences. Children learn to read words and alphabets together. So you must use words which children know, write them on the Word Wall and then point out the alphabets in the words. Always let children know there are important uses for the alphabet that are very enjoyable.

There are many objects in the classroom. If they are labelled it can assist reading. Children can learn to read “table” which is written or painted on the table. “Wall” can be painted on the wall. “Switches” need to be labelled beside the switchboard. Other important labels are: door, ceiling, floor, chair, fan, shelve, almirah, window, door handle, pin-board, chalkboard, grill and so on.

Objectives

1. To learn words and alphabets in a non-threatening and pleasurable manner.
2. To promote reading and writing culture.
3. To let children learn that reading gives pleasure.
4. To appreciate patterns in language.
5. To use language as something to play with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>DID WHAT</th>
<th>WHERE</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>jumped</td>
<td>into my room</td>
<td>today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>borrowed a book</td>
<td>from library</td>
<td>two days ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effectively using BaLA in Elementary Schools - A Teacher’s Manual
Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Names of Children

Class I (for Mother Tongue Language), Class III (for English Language)

Children can be helped to learn the alphabet by writing their names. We all love our names and easily learn to recognize the special shapes on the alphabet border.

As an example if a child’s name is “Sachin” you can teach alphabets by writing his name then asking him to search for ‘S’ on the border, then search for “a”, then “c” and so on. Then ask children if anyone else has a name that starts with the sound of ‘s’. Do not spend time teaching alphabets in isolation.

Activity 2: Word Wall

Classes I, II, III, IV, V

The Word Wall should try and keep words beginning with the same alphabet together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>button, bath</td>
<td>cloth, catch</td>
<td>dimple, did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animal</td>
<td>both, bridge</td>
<td>cotton, could</td>
<td>dip, daytime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amit</td>
<td>busy</td>
<td>cone</td>
<td>didn’t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 3: Learning Alphabets, Words and Phonetic Sounds

Classes III, IV, V

Make cards and ask children to point out parts of the room and objects in the room. As children point out ‘chair’ write “chair” in front of them on the card and glue it to a chair. Do the same for wall, door etc. Your children, who have just started to come to school, have now learned to read without knowing the alphabets. Of course it is an educated guess, and they will not recognize “wall, switch, window”, etc. in another context but this is an excellent way to start reading by helping children feel that reading is possible and they are capable. Every week learn just one alphabet and find this alphabet in many words which they already know. Perhaps your alphabet of the week is ‘f’ you will want them to find words that start with the sound of ‘f”. But you can also say, ‘before’, ‘buffalo’, ‘saffola’, ‘five’, ‘fire’ etc. Write it on the board and ask children to find the “f”. In a few months children will learn to read many words since they have had a positive start.

Activity 4: Relevant Reading

Classes II, III, IV, V

Give the children a head start in reading by finding small poems or stories that they can relate to and enjoy. Teaching alphabets, rhyming words, phonetic sounds are important only in small doses. You need to tell stories, sing songs, have many discussions and then ‘teach’ for
a few minutes. The poem on cat and mice is fun and at the same time children can be introduced to word endings.

Now use the Word Wall to list words that have ‘ing’ endings such as creeping, peeping, sleeping, wing, sing, running, jumping and so on.

**Activity 5: Grammar and Language Patterns**

**Classes V, VI, VII**

All languages have patterns that children need to learn. These patterns do not need to be taught as grammar lessons. Find the patterns in the stories and poems that are read to children. For example, if homonyms are to be taught, they can be found in this poem.

Also notice rhyming words, which you can ask the children to identify and then enter on the Word Organizer.

**Activity 6: Advanced Phonetics**

**Classes IV, V, VI, VII**

On the Word Wall have children find words that have the sound “ow” as in “owl” and “ow” as in “show”. It can be displayed as shown here.

Similarly help children understand phonetics and other word families such as shown.

**Activity 7: Language Games**

**Classes IV, V, VI, VII**

There are many language games to play such as Boggle, Scrabble. In school ask children to find as many small words as possible in one large word. In “February” you will find rub, ray, bear, are, year, bar and many, many more.

**Space for Notes**
Introduction

India has a rich tradition of visual motifs in the form of folk or traditional art and mythological art. Schools can be a place where this art is presented to the children. Pride in one’s cultural heritage can also be a stepping stone to understanding the heritage of the many regions of India.

The visuals must:

- Capture the child’s interest
- Provide a resource for language, mathematics and art
- Be selected from various cultural traditions to help children develop a cultural identity
- Provide variety and expose children to different art forms
- Enhance the children’s artistic appreciation

Objectives

1. Children will experience rich visual stimulation.
2. Children can use the patterns for tracing, to copy or for finger movements.
3. Children develop the power of observation.
4. Visuals stimulate the imagination and appreciation of many art forms.
5. Children will develop an appreciation of their own history and culture.
6. Children will develop sensitivity towards the art of other cultures and regions.

Suggested Activities

1. Relate Patterns in the Environment to the Text
2. Draw Local Patterns
3. Field Trips
Teacher’s Role

Teachers need to look for and display many kinds of stimulating visuals. This may start with local folk art and motifs in the form of Tribal art, Alpana, Rangoli, Kolam designs and traditional patterns drawn and constructed at the time of festivals.

Why have decorations of cheap plastic flowers, when richer art and patterns are all around us? In fact, if your school has glass-enclosed shelves, a collection of local craft can be displayed. Your interest in indigenous toy making, local embroidery, local pottery, cave art, tessellations in the local Imambara, patterns in temple art, can be sensed by the children when you give a place to these creative endeavours in your school.

If your village has old architecture, you may want to put up a sketches or photo exhibition of the unique patterns that were built by skilled artists who have passed these treasures on to us.

A committee of teachers can get together to decide what you want children to see, where you will put these motifs, and which are to be permanently displayed. Other art or craft can be displayed in showcases or frames and changed from time to time. Craft melas are good places to buy inexpensive Madhubani art, tribal art, baskets, pottery, sculpture, local handmade toys, handmade fans, local weaving and other art that children will grow to appreciate since it is in their own environment and valued by teachers.

The art and motifs in your school can become a rich resource for conversation, for creative expression, aesthetic appreciation, written activities and number work. Some may be painted with traditionally used colours while others may be created with different materials, textures and colours. There are now many ceramic tiles available in tile shops that show fascinating designs and tessellations. These can be used as borders, around boards, around doors or windows, along the veranda walls and floors. These patterns are very useful for reinforcing number patterns, pre-writing patterns, lateral inversion, multiples, fractions, division, addition, subtraction as well as drawing skills.

Motifs of everyday objects, natural elements, birds, animals, insects. Let children observe the different ways in which the same object, animal or bird is depicted.
Teaching-Learning Activities

Activity 1: Relate Patterns in the Environment to the Text
Classes III, IV, V, VI, VII
The teacher needs to check through her math text to see how she can relate math to the patterns which have been displayed throughout the school.

Activity 2: Draw Local Patterns
Classes II, III, IV, V
At festival times, children may be asked to decorate the school entrance and veranda with traditional Rangoli.

Tessellations

Rangoli and Kolam patterns
Activity 3: Field Trips

Classes VI, VII

A good history and geography project would be to visit the old architecture in the area around you. Notice the materials used. Where did it come from? What designs are seen? What patterns are made? Do you see symmetry? Tessellations? Repeated patterns, Fractions?

This is the history of Aaligaon in Koraput, Orissa as told by village elders in the school. First the village was in the foothills. Then it moved out. Villagers use to collect the sap from a tree to make wine. One evening some villagers thought why not cut the tree and get the entire sap in one go. When they cut the tree the sap was still very limited. Near by villagers, when they saw this they called these village people - Aali' - meaning stupid. This is how the village got the name Aaligaon or the village of Aalis'. This oral history was painted in the school by school teachers and local painters for the children in the local style of painting.

These visuals are painted in a school wall that depict local festivals, livelihood, crafts, ornaments, folk arts, music, dance, etc.

Kolam patterns

These panels can be made on a prominent wall where teachers and children can sit, talk and discuss amongst themselves and with the community.