



Elephants Don't Wear Tennis Shoes

By Jacquelyn Fizet, 2018 CTI Fellow
Renaissance West Steam Academy

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Kindergarten

Keywords: Emergent Literacy Skills, Literacy, Science, and Math

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: For this unit students will learn that print carries a message, and can be either a fiction or a nonfiction text. This unit will focus on the nonfiction aspect of animal life, more specifically, the life of an elephant. We will be working with fiction and nonfiction texts, comparing, and contrasting what is real and what is not in the area of animal facts. I will be bringing an engaging literacy and age appropriate research component to all areas, math, science, writing, dramatic play, sand and water, small and large group activities. The unit will contain fun and inviting activities that the children will flock to during their center time. By repeated readings of the books through interactive large group activities, and readings, the children will be able to retell a true-to-life version of the elephant.

One result of this unit will be that the children will have a better understanding of the difference between fiction and nonfiction text. Let the fun begin.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 23 students in all learning domains in Kindergarten.

I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

Introduction

Today, notwithstanding endless digital technologies, children are born into a world full of print. The degree to which literacy is evident in home varies, but almost all children see adults being literate every day, reading books, making lists, writing notes, reading newspapers and magazines, reading directions or recipes, filling out forms and text messaging, reading labels on food packaging, and doing countless other tasks that require literacy. In a way, children start becoming literate almost from the day they were born, as they notice elements of the world, which are bound to include literacy. But in the midst of all of these texts, most children do not understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction in the books they may be looking at or the ones being read to.

The ability to read and process information is a necessary part of our educational experience. The teaching of reading and writing to the young child is key for the formation of literacy skills as preschool children get ready for kindergarten and beyond. Literacy is now, more than ever, essential for the basic survival on a day-to-day basis. It has been proven that children who struggle to read will struggle in all subject areas. This can cause children to have a negative attitude towards reading and toward school in general.

What is the importance of a “read aloud?” Since most kindergartners can only read at a beginning level, reading aloud exposes the children to a variety of slightly more complex fiction and nonfiction books. Hearing the different types of texts allows the young children to understand the specific features of each type. To emphasize the difference, choose a fiction and nonfiction book about the same subject. For example, read *Elmer the Patchwork Elephant* (by David McKee) and a nonfiction book about elephants. Discuss the difference in the type of information in the book. You might say the elephant in *Elmer* has a hide made out of patchwork colors. Do real elephant’s skin look like that? How do the elephants look in the nonfiction book?” Before you read any book to the class, ask the children to predict if it is fiction or nonfiction to reinforce the idea.

I will help them explore the specific features of the text and images to help kindergartners learn the differences between fiction and nonfiction books. Nonfiction books in particular have different features not often found in fiction books, including picture captions, tables of contents, glossaries, indexes and headings. Both genres typically include pictures, but a nonfiction book is more likely to use real photographs instead of illustration; yet both are critical for kindergartners since most of them are not yet reading. I will be pointing out those features as the children look through books on their own, and ask them to look for the print features.

Why chart differences? Charts and diagrams provide a visual reminder for the kindergarten students to help distinguish between fiction and nonfiction. One simple option is a Venn diagram that shows the similar and different text features. I will use it in this animal unit to get them used to charting similarities and differences. I will have my students brainstorm common details of both types to put in the overlapping portion of the circles, such as pictures, titles and words. This will be a great activity to use in think, pair, and share after I have introduced the animal facts to the children. Together we will list details about nonfiction books in one of the single circle areas, such as labels, diagrams, and facts. We will then list fiction-

specific details in the other single circle area, such as make-believe, conflict, characters, and illustrations instead of photos.

Sorting books, by title and content, is a wonderful way to show children how a fiction and nonfiction book may look different. A simple sorting activity will give my kindergarten students a chance to practice identifying fiction and nonfiction work. I will give my students a stack of books with both fiction and nonfiction selections. My students will look through the books to determine which they are, and put the books in separate piles. Another option is to use old book orders for the sorting game. Divide a piece of paper in half, one side for fiction and one side for nonfiction. Have the kids cut out the covers of the books from the book order and glue them onto the paper. This activity is more challenging than work with full texts, since the kids cannot open the books to see the interior features. Have them focus on the cover and title for clues.

Rationale

To promote early literacy, teachers and parents need to provide multiple opportunities for their children/students. It is important to permit and encourage children to build on their existing knowledge or oral and written language, as well as provide a supportive instructional environment where children can build a positive attitude toward themselves using literacy development as a tool. As teachers, we need to remember to prepare ourselves to instruct very young children so that they are prepared to deal with and respect the differences in languages and cultural backgrounds. At my school, in my current classroom, I have at least four different cultures represented and that is not taking into consideration religious beliefs. Teachers also need to ensure that children have access to quality and age appropriate books, both fiction and nonfiction. Some children may have never seen a real elephant, only the ones they have seen in picture books, which may not be a true picture of a real elephant. There are many books that are written for young children, but this does not mean all books for your readers are suitable for young “readers.” We need to be sure to look through, read and analyze the contents to be sure the book is age appropriate. Lastly, we need to design a classroom setting for young children that is rich with literacy materials for reading as well as writing, and exploring with science, social science and even math. Young children will begin to write and tell you what they have written even at the very young age with scribbles. As the children begin to research and learn about elephants, allow them the opportunity to experiment with all kinds of informational text, magazines, iPad, even articles found on the internet, to help them see all the different media outlets for exploring elephants. As I begin to teach the unit, I am sure I will see all the developing stages of writing from exploration to developing as they begin their early stages of learning to do research, in this case an elephant.

I believe that at a very young age children learn best through play. Since I am an at-risk program, I decided to research how play intervention affects the learning of at risk kindergarteners. In searching for research studies to support my theory that children learn best through play, I found the research conducted by Han, Moore, Vukelich, and Bell (1994), along with the research from the *Foundation for Child Development* (Lesux, 2013) to be the most informative and best support my ideas of learning through play. I am creating this unit because I feel play is the basis for so much of the learning that kindergartners do. There are three essential contexts for play: 1.) cognitive-exploring; 2.) asking questions and 3.) thinking. Through play,

children can be responsible for their own learning and they can use language not just to acquire knowledge, but also to demonstrate their knowledge.

School and Student Demographics

Renaissance West Steam Academy is a Pre-Kindergarten through 6th grade school serving 563 students. RWSA, is part of the Renaissance initiative to help impoverished families to better housing, food, jobs, medical, and education.

At RWSA, students engage in Literacy, Math, Social Studies, and Science instruction daily. Literacy at RWSA follows the balanced literacy model. Teachers engage their students in multiple components of the balanced literacy model. This year, staff members will continue to engage in professional development in literacy.

This year, teachers continue to be fully engaged in the Data Driven Instruction (DDI) process. Kindergarten teacher's use Mastery Connect to track data, and use this data to drive instruction and differentiate lesson plans to meet the needs of all children.

Unit Goals

A major goal of our society's educational system is for children to become literate. Although agreements exist regarding the importance of literacy, controversy surrounds the timing of literacy instruction and methods used to teach literacy skills. While most reading curricula involve formal instruction, I feel that informal instruction is more developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds. The early childhood literacy curriculum for a four-year-old should use a collaborative learning process that actively involves children to demonstrate their understanding of how words and images communicate meaning.

The following goals will serve as the basis of my developmentally appropriate animal curricular unit (CU). I will encourage an awareness of how reading and writing are useful, attempt to develop listening comprehension skills, develop my student's concept knowledge, develop their oral language skills, and explore the process of communicating through written language as well as drawing.

In the Area of Science

Students will observe and describe the structures of a variety of common animals – our focus will be on the elephant. They will then research structures and behaviors of the elephant along with other jungle animals, to better observe interactions of elephants with their surroundings. This will allow them to communicate observations and comparisons orally and through words and drawings, since my students are not yet proficient at writing. If the student is already writing, encourage the student to add writing to their drawings. Ultimately, this is to achieve the ultimate goal of comparing and contrasting fiction and nonfiction text. Students will also demonstrate the ability to use writing implements to for the symbols needed for pre-writing, in order to make clear their understanding of the animal unit.

In the Areas of Reading and Writing

Students will recognize when there is print in the environment, by knowing that print is read in stories. This will allow them to be aware of the sequence of events in stories that they can connect to life experiences. Connections between stories and life experiences leads to the students' ability to demonstrate understanding of the literal meaning of stories through questions and comments. Again, this leads to the ultimate goal of differentiating between fiction and nonfiction texts.

In the Areas of Speech and Language

Students will be expected to name various animals, often indulge in make-believe, use extensive language while carrying out activities; they ought to be able to readily follow simple commands even when the object is out of sight, carry on long conversations, and converse moderately with their peers.

These are some hefty goals but I believe all are attainable. I am going to need to be well equipped with a variety of different research interventions to have the most beneficial learning experiences for all my students. Being innovated and flexible to new ideas can bring new attitudes and a new interest to even the most reluctant students.

Content Research

Research dating back to 2003 explains and proves the reason “play based teaching” is an essential component of early literacy achievement (Roskos et al., 2003).

Prekindergarten plays a very important role in supporting language growth and development. Talking is the way kindergartners process all the new information they are gathering as they use their senses (look, hear, feel, touch and taste). Language is the most important tool for interrupting and explaining the information they pick up as they explore and learn. Quality talking and listening help support memory and enhance listening. The kinds of talk children engage in as they play foster risk taking, support and demonstrate comprehension and strengthen community. Resnick and Snow (2008) describe four kinds of talk: 1.) narrative; 2.) explaining and seeking information; 3.) oral performance; and 4.) giving and understanding directions. These are all essential elements in the stages toward knowing how to read and write.

Per the National Association for the education of Young Children (NAEYC), of which I am a proud member, *any* instruction of young children ought to consider the child's age and their developmental progress. NAEYC & NAECS/SDE (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education). 2002. NAEYC recognizes that play is a central component of developmentally appropriate practice and a vehicle for developing language, cognition, and social competence. Therefore, all the research on play has the potential to provide guidance for early. Sadly, there is strong evidence that time for play has been dramatically reduced in present day early childhood classrooms (Zigler and Bishop-Josef), which contradicts much of what research has told us about what is beneficial

to children. Howes and Wishard report that pretend play among 5-year-olds has dropped dramatically in recent years. However, in early childhood classrooms, academic learning and play are not mutually exclusive. NAEYC's recent statement cautions educators, "Rather than diminishing children's learning by reducing the time devoted to academic activities, play promotes key abilities that enable to learn successfully," (NAEYC 2010). I am personally such a strong believer in this idea of play-based learning. I have been teaching 31 years, I have taught both sides of the spectrum, and my students and I learn more and at a faster rate through play because it is so much more engaging.

Research shows that an overwhelming number of children in the United States are not academically ready to begin kindergarten, which is very true with my current class of at-risk children. Education reform during the past two decades, advocates that a crucial step in preparing all children to be "school ready" is to create programs to ensure it. Dogget and Wat reported on data presented by different states in the U.S. that began kindergarten state mandated programs and their effectiveness. The result of this research drives my passion to develop effect play based teaching methods to improve this deficit with young children. The classroom has the greatest capacity, second only to the home and family of a child, to provide quality educational experiences and interactions to support and strengthen cognitive development. Since I am a child's first experience with formal education, I need to have methods in place that will be engaging and inviting to my 5-year-olds. If not, I will miss the opportunity to make a difference in their school lives. All the research I have presented so far points to the importance of early intervention and the success of play-based curriculum.

Play Based Research in Kindergarten

Play based learning is a term that embraces two approaches simultaneously. One is that children are given ample time to carry their own ideas into play, with assistance from teachers as needed. The other is that their knowledge of the world has been enriched through appropriate content offered in interesting and experiential ways by the teacher. This can include reading books, storytelling, puppetry, music and the arts, as well as encouraging hands on activities and exploration of nature. The children's own play and content offered by myself one another. Play is the basis for so much of the learning that kindergarteners acquire. There are three essential contexts for play: 1.) cognitive-exploring and asking questions and thinking; 2.) emotional-expressing feelings within the social context; and 3.) creative- putting together new learning. Through play, children will be motivated to learn.

Lev S. Vygotsky presented insights as early as 1978 on play that suggested a new role for adults in child's play. Vygotsky believed that children develop an understanding of the world through play and that adults could encourage this development by appropriate intervention. He viewed play as a means for socially assisted learning and scaffolding. In scaffolding, the adult assists the child to perform at a higher level than would be possible without adult support. When the child can perform alone, the adult gradually withdraws and lets the child act independently. This kind of adult intervention helps children expand their learning and knowledge during play. Adult scaffolding during play encourages children to learn self-regulation, cooperation, and memory.

Play-based learning, has been linked to the inquiry-based approach of a scientist because both engage in “what if” thinking. The child is continually trying out new possibilities and learns as much from failure and mistakes as from positive outcomes. The process is of great importance to the child rather than the outcome. Creativity, curiosity, play, and problem-solving are all intertwined in early childhood. Social negotiation is also frequently part of the mix. This holds true for children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The way we present and teach these skills to young children can be life changing and so, we need to make the experience exciting, engaging and most of all fun for five-year-olds.

Elephants, Play, and Learning

Elephants seem to be everywhere in modern culture; these animals have known to signify so much. In Asia, for example elephants are a symbol of strength, wisdom and intelligence. In India, they are used in place of heavy machinery to move heavy items like logs from the forest. For many other cultures, the elephant is an exotic animal. An article that I really enjoyed in “Elephant World,” stated that the ‘the calmness and sheer strength of the elephant are virtues that many cultures would love to see become a part of their own selves.’ “Like people the wisdom of the elephant as they get older is something we see reflective in people.” When we get older, we seem to have the life lesson to reflect back on.

Everything about elephants is big, which is part of their appeal for children. Their intelligence is big, as is their social communities. They are able to speak to family members and friends as far as five miles away, and are very loyal. They deeply grieve losses and suffer stress when imprisoned in zoos and carnivals. They travel hundreds of miles and know every spot along the way, including of course watering holes which are essential to their survival.. Elephants live in large extended families and help, console each other, and work together. Their communication is elaborate and involves many different sounds and gestures. A recent study showed that elephants are extremely aware and compassionate, often consoling each other. When upset, elephants will flare their ears, erect their tails, squeak, roar and trumpet. Consoling involves chirping; placing a trunk in the upset elephant’s mouth shows that this friend is not in danger. Elephants are very intelligent and learn very fast. They live in large open spaces with large extended families and friends. Elephants live in complex societies. Like humans, apes, and dolphins, elephants can recognize themselves in mirrors and thus have an awareness of themselves as autonomous beings. How can anyone not appreciate the advance social life, intelligence, learning, compassion and skills of the elephant?

Instructional Implementation

Teaching Strategies

So how do I use my play-based instruction with a nonfiction unit on elephants? I start the process by deciding how much information about an elephant I feel a five-year-old child will be able to absorb. To bring a little geography into the lesson I will be discussing two kinds of elephants as well as their characteristics and places of origin. The second thing I want to do is supply the students with elephant fun facts that my young scholars will get excited about. I will start with the history of the elephant. "Elephants are among the most intelligent of the creatures with whom we share the planet, with complex consciousness that are capable of strong emotions."

Elephants are also the largest land animals on Earth.

Among the characteristic that all elephants share are their long noses, or trunks; large, floppy ears; and wide, thick legs. There are more than two species of elephant, and there are many subspecies. The Asian elephant and the African elephant live on separate continents and have many unique features. There are several subspecies that belong to one or the other of these two main species, though there is disagreement over just how many subspecies there are. The African elephant is the larger of the two species left in the world. They have extremely large ears and both the males and the females grow tusks. The Asian elephant has a huge body but with ears that are smaller than their African counterparts. The males develop tusks but the females do not.

Elephants live in tropical and subtropical regions of Africa and Asia. They are found most often in savannas, grasslands, and forests, but they also live in deserts, swamps, and mountains. Asian elephants have adapted many structural adaptations to help it survive in its natural habitat. Since they primarily inhabit tropical habitats and do not have any sweat glands, they have to find other ways to cool themselves off. They can flap their ears to create a cooling effect and stay comfortable in the heat.

Children will want to know just how big they are, and elephants are truly gigantic animals. They can grow to 11 feet tall and can weigh up to 13,000 pounds. The largest elephant ever was 13 feet tall and weighed 24,000 pounds! Elephants' appetites are as big as their size. They can eat up to 400 pounds and drink up to 30 gallons of water each day. They will also want to know if all elephants look alike so I can tell them, not all, some can look different from others, by size, color, ears and other features. Elephants have many interesting features including giant ears, long tusks, and a huge trunk.

Elephants flap their giant ears to cool off. According to National Geographic, flapping on the ear can express excitement and joy. The beating of the ears on the skin can be heard, and the sound causes other elephants to prick up their ears and get in contact with another elephant.

Their tusks can be up to 10 feet long. Elephants use their tusks to dig or to scrape the bark off trees. Sometimes they use them to fight. Their tusks continue to grow for their entire life. Elephants can live without their tusks, but sadly poachers hunt elephants to take their tusks from living, but more often dead, elephants. They use the ivory from the tusks to make for billiard

balls, piano keys and other items and trinkets of enjoyment for humans. When teaching about elephants losing their tusks I need to be careful of how far I want to take the subject as it can be difficult for young children to hear.

One of the things I know they will ask about is the elephant's trunk. An Elephant's trunk is their most versatile appendage, and it is unique among all animals. Elephants use their long trunks to pick up food as small as a blade of grass, but also to pull down tree branches to get to food. Elephants also use their trunk to drink, smell, and suck up water to spray themselves for a bath. I do not think I ever realized that the elephant smelled with their trunks, despite the seemingly obvious fact that the trunk is "just" an elongated nose.

I am also sure the subject of elephant poop will come up, because children--especially the boys--love poop. So according to the San Francisco Zoo, elephants eat tough, fibrous food and most of it passes through their bodies undigested. According to the zoo and African elephant can pass 300 pounds of dung a day. Some fun facts about elephant poop include it can be made into paper, it is a natural nonpolluting insect repellent, a herd of elephants in Thailand is being used to produce some of the most expensive coffee in the country, and it may sound disgusting, but elephant dung could save your life. If you are lost in the bush, squeezing fresh elephant dung could provide you with enough moisture to keep you hydrated.

Elephants are considered very intelligent. They have very sophisticated social structures and methods of communication. They also are very skilled with tools and can be trained for all sorts of tasks. Maybe there is some truth to the saying that "an elephant never forgets".

Elephants eat between 330-375 lb. of vegetation daily. Sixteen to eighteen hours, or nearly 80% of an elephant's day is spent eating, elephants consume grasses, small plants, bushes, fruit, twigs, tree bark, and roots. Tree bark is a favorite food source for elephants. It contains calcium and roughage, which aids digestion. Tusks are used to carve into the trunk and tear off strips of bark. Elephants require about 18 to 26 gallons of water every day, an adult male elephant can drink up 55 gallons of water in less than five minute

Unit Lessons- Real or Make Believe?

Day I

Large Group Literacy

This lesson will address language, cognitive and socialization domains of learning and will be the beginning of your elephant fiction day.

Introduce David McKee's book *Elmer, the Patchwork Elephant* to the students and point out the front of the book showing the front of the elephant and the back of the book showing the back of the elephant, pointing out that like the elephant, a book has front and back. Introduce the cards to the children before

reading the story. Give each child a card, you may need multiples depending on class size, tell the children they will be helping you read the story with their card. Show the children the first page of the story and ask, "What do you think will happen first?" Encourage the child/children with the first picture to match his/her picture to the picture in the book by coming to the front and putting on the flannel board. Ask the child to say the name of the picture. If the child is unable to name the picture, offer them a choice such as "Is it a cat or a dog?," and have him/her repeat the correct answer. Continue to the next page of the story, repeating the process for each picture in the sequence of the story, continuing to build the story with the pictures on the flannel board.

A suggestion to expand learning for children who are having difficulty identifying objects, is to send a set of cards home for the parents to use with their child. Children can use the cards to retell the story to classmates, or have the cards out for the children to put in sequence on the flannel board independently. These cards can also be used for transition activities.

Small Group Activities

These work best with four to six students and the domains explored will be language, cognitive and socialization.

Animal Match

Elmer book and sequencing cards reproduce two sets of each sequencing cards. Choose the most familiar cards to use as a set, use five or less cards for children who have a limited vocabulary. After the children have been consistently, successful sequencing the cards add another card to the set. Display one set of cards on the table. Have a child pick a card from the second set and match it to the correct card on the table. As the child sequences the cards, encourage him/her to tell the story in the sequence order.

Suggestions

As the children get better with the sequencing card game, I will play the memory game as a next step, laying two sets of sequencing cards face down on the table and have the children turn the card face up one at a time to see if they get a match. If they get a match, they keep the cards. If the cards do not match, they are returned to the table.

Colors of Elmer

You will need a copy of the elephant *Elmer*, colored tissue paper in many colors, glue and a large piece of bulletin paper for construction Elmer's forest and adding his friends. I have added an example of *Elmer* which we will follow as we cut the tissue paper into small squares for making Elmer's colorful hide. I will allow the children to use the glue and Elmer's outline to make their own version of the Elmer they read about in the book.

Center Activities

To continue the theme of the book, we will make center activities to match. Some possible centers may be art, dramatic play, math, sand and water table.

Art Center

At the Art Center, each child will draw his/her favorite elephant from the story reminding them they all looked a little different. Have them use invented spelling to name their elephant.

Dramatic Play

We will transform the dramatic play area into a Savannah. Add a sand color sheet to the floor, while adding brown and green paper for children to make shade trees for the elephants. Have the children collect paper towel tubes from home, give them brown paper for them to construct logs for building small huts. Add paper or plain journals, for creating logs to write on as they learn more elephant facts. Elephant masks for pretend play will be fun and finally some stuffed elephants for children to play and snuggle with.

Sand and Water Table

Fun times in the water table making Elmer's jungle with grass and leaves for the bottom. Add toilet paper or paper towel tubes for making Elmer's berry trees, and gray pom-poms for the berries he rolled in. To make things even better, I will add a small open container of water and eyedroppers to simulate the raindrops that took the berry color off of Elmer's hide.

Music and Rhymes

These are always a fun activity; here is a rhyme I will use with my students,

"Elephant" by Iram Khan (to the tune of "Here we go 'round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the elephant's tail so thin

Tail so thin, tail so thin.

This is the elephant's tail so thin

Swish, swish, swish.

These are the elephant's feet so huge

Feet so huge, feet so huge.

These are the elephant's feet so huge

Stomp, stomp, stomp.

This is the elephant's nose so long
Nose so long, nose so long.
This is the elephant's nose so long
Blow, blow, blow.

These are the animals all around
All around, all around.
These are the animals all around
Run, run, run!

Day II

Large Group Literacy

Today introduce a nonfiction elephant book; two that I will be using are *Once Upon An Elephant* and *Elephant Rescue*, both fun nonfiction books about elephants for children.

Small Groups

Sorting Animals

First start out by choosing one animal from the story, I start with the elephant. When the children have identified the animal as an elephant, present another elephant of a different type, color or size; age works well since it's hard to find elephants that look different. I use my jungle counting manipulatives from Lakeshore for sorting; you could also use Google images if you do not have manipulatives. Discuss that the new elephant(s) may not look exactly like the first elephant, they may look different but they are all elephants. When you have compared all the different elephants, introduce a different animal (e.g. jungle cats). Repeat the same procedure for the cats. Afterward, place two baskets side by side on the table, with a picture label of a elephant on one basket and a picture label of a jungle cats on the other basket. When the children are familiar with both the cats and the elephants, mix them together. Have the children take turns picking one animal and deciding if it's a cat or an elephant, and instruct them to place it in the correct basket. Add another animal and another basket after the children have mastered the previous ones.

Searching for Treasures

This is a fun idea that helps children understand the purpose of elephant tusks and well as develop fine motor skills. You will need playdough and small objects such as marbles, beads, or any small objects you may have that can be put into play dough. You will also need chop sticks. Bury small objects in the play dough, have the children hold the chopsticks next to their cheeks or in between their fingers, pointer and second finger, ring finger and pinky, and then have them try an get the objects out of the playdough using only the chopsticks simulating the way that elephants use their tusks.

Center Ideas

Art Center

You can have the child make the elephants from the stories *Elmer* and *Elephant Facts*, provide easel paper, paint brushes, the colors used in *Elmer* and black and white paint so they can make their own gray paint. Demonstrate how to use the paint to paint their elephant and then how to clean their brushes for the next student. When they are finished, encourage the children to name their elephant and write the name beneath the picture. Be ready to accept early-invented writing and assisting those who are at the letter making level if they ask how to spell a word.

Dramatic Play

Add elephant puppets or use the drawings the children did and add sticks for puppets. Encourage the children to reenact the story using the elephant puppets puppets. Add paper and pencils to make theatre tickets to sell as well as a cash register for collecting money.

Math Center

Make a file folder game; I was able to find a number elephant matching file folder game on "Confessions of a Home-Schooler." I made five of the same games because I usually have five children per center. I use file folders, printed the game, glued it down and then laminated it for durability. Use clothes pins for the numbers that will match the number of peanuts on the elephant cards.

Sand and Water Table

Turn the sand and water table into the savannah, replacing the leaves for sand. Continue to add the supplies from day one but add plastic elephants and rocks for uncovering. I was able to find small elephants at Michaels for little cost. Be prepared for some mess as the children will mix the sand and water.

Day III

Large Group Literacy

Companion Story

“Stand Back,” Said the Elephant I’m Going to Sneeze by Patrica Thomas -this lesson will address language, cognitive and socialization domains of learning.

Introduce this week's companion story, *‘Stand Back,’ Said the Elephant I’m Going to Sneeze*. Take a picture walk, asking students to state all the animals. Call on students to orally share, in a complete sentence, an animal that they see. For example, “I see a zebra.” For students who are unsure what to say and how to say it, I will begin by modelling the action and following sentence, or by having them point to the object they see, say the words for them and have them repeat what was said. After, we will return to the front cover and read the story all the way through with the students. Brainstorm additional things that are happening in the book such as the elephant blowing the stripes off the zebra, or the feathers off the bird with his sneeze. This is a great time to talk about fiction/nonfiction asking if these things could really happen. Adding pictures for hints are fun and helpful when they are just beginning; once they get going the lists can become longer. As they are naming the items once back in the classroom, write their objects on the board so that they begin to associate the spoken word with the letters needed for the word. After the story and during center time leave the word lists on the white board along with magnet letters for them to match and make words. Then in the writing center, they can use the picture labels on the board to add to their drawings.

Small Group

Elephant Positional Words

This lesson will focus on language, fine motor, cognitive, and socialization skills. I will demonstrate positional words by placing the animals in the front, behind, beside and over the elephant. I would suggest using the animals the elephant encountered in the fiction and nonfiction stories. You need to make sure to say the positional word as the object is placed. I will bring in a stuffed elephant and plastic animals from the story, I used the same animals I used with the sorting activity. Use positional words to instruct the child where animals should be placed (put the zebra beside the elephant). Have the children take turns placing the animals in the appropriate position. Encourage the children to use position words expressively to tell where his/her animal is by asking, “Where is the elephant?” Start out with using one positional word and a few animals; add additional positional concepts and animals when children have mastered the first positional concept. As a lesson extended use positional words to place children around the teacher.

Story Sticks

Language, cognitive, and fine motor skills are explored within this exercise. You will need to gather one flat stick for each child in your class, I went to Home Depot and got paint stirrers, they work well. Next gather small dishes of paint I used the colors of the animals and paintbrushes. You will want to cover the table as students get messy using the colors to paint their story sticks any way they want to. Remind the children that the elephant is the main character in both stories so they will be sure to paint him. As they are painting, have them tell you the colors they are using and why they chose those colors. This is a messy project and will need to dry overnight to be used in a small group activity on day four. Have the companion book close by so they are able to see which animal was sneezed on first, second, etc. by the elephants sneeze. You may want to provide them with animal patterns if they say they cannot draw the animals. Be sure to have them draw their own special elephant from the story.

Center Activities

Today add in a science center. Have dishpans filled with water, add basters, (found at Walmart), and model how an elephant has to suck the water up into his trunk before he is able to spray it into his mouth or over his back. This is a great fine motor activity as well and will need modeling before the children will be successful. Remind them that the “baster” or trunk is actually the elephant’s nose, so that when it takes up water, it cannot breathe.

Day IV

Large Group Literacy Lesson

In advance, print out the book covers of *Elmer* and *Elephant Rescue*, along with a large Venn-diagram that the children will use for sorting pictures from the two books. Tell the children you will first be reading the book *Elmer* and instruct them to listen for things that are not true about elephants. Then do the same with *Elephant Rescue*, instructing them to listen for things that are true about elephants. After the readings display the Venn-diagram, explaining that one circle will be nonfiction facts about elephants from the story, one circle will be about fiction facts from the story and that where the two circles meet in the middle will be those facts that appeared in both stories. I will be using pictures from both books but you can have the children use their words and write what they say. This activity is a wonderful way to check for understanding of the concept of fiction and nonfiction.

Small Group Activities

Gross Motor

Supplies needed will be bubble wrap, elephant cutouts, and tape. Larger bubbles are better for the experiment and the elephant cutouts can be found at stores such as the Dollar Tree or cut from paper. Tape elephants all over the bubble wrap, then tape the bubble wrap down to the floor. Tell the children to stomp like an elephant and let them go! Children love to jump, stomp, skip, hop, so an excuse to do that will be a hit with them. This is also a way to get them to work on their large muscle groups or gross motor skills. Allow the children to continue experimenting with the bubble wrap after stomping on it. . You can also add in fun elephant facts while they play. Such as elephants can swim, the leader of the herd is usually the oldest female, elephants love bananas, elephants can peel their own bananas, the elephant trunk is one of nature's most amazing creations and they cannot live long without it. Elephants, which live to be about 70 years old, are afraid of dogs, yet they are so clever they can even play jokes on humans.

For even more fun take the children outside (this needs to be done on a warm day), you need tube socks and a garden hose. Put the sock on the students' arms, you will need to cut the toe off, then thread the hose through the sock and have the nozzle come out by the child's hand. Turn on the water and watch the fun as they now have a trunk of their own complete with water. This activity will get children up and moving, while supplying them with even more fun facts about elephants.

Center Activities

Continue with the elephant habitats in the sand and water table, be brave and add the basters.

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play will be transformed into an African safari hut. Have kid-sized clothes in colors like greens, browns, olives, and khakis, explaining to the children that they will want to blend in. Supply long sleeve shirts explaining to the children the importance of keeping skin covered. If you can find hiking boots those will be fun I added snow boots in place of hiking boots because I could not find those. Hats to keep the heat off their heads and scarfs added to keep their faces safe from dust and debris. I also added binoculars and cameras to our safari huts, along with pictures on the walls of elephants we may see. Most of what I purchased from the hut I was able to find at Goodwill.

Writing Center

Today provide the children with the book *Elephants Facts* for them to color and label. A wonderful example of an age appropriate version of a book can be found on the website "Making Learning Fun," I will also give an example at the end of the unit.

Science Center

This will be the best science day ever because it is about elephant dung (poop). You will need a softer homemade play dough, receipt at the end of unit, pencil shavings from an electric pencil sharpener and shavings from a hand-held manual twist sharpener. Allow children to have two small balls of play dough, give some of each kind of pencil shavings. Model how you will mix one kind of shavings in one ball and the other in the other ball. Have then observe the two after mixing, explaining how an elephant does not fully digest its food and as which ball of dung best represents an elephant's dung. The electric pencil shavings should completely disappear, while the manual pencil curl shavings should be sill present in smaller portions.

Music

“The Elephant Went out to Play” (to the tune “Five Little Ducks Went Out One Day”)

This is a great finger play, if you want to extend the activity; *the measured mom* has a cute pattern for the students to make finger puppets.

Day V: End of Unit Celebration

Large Group Literacy

At the end of a fun unit, I like to involve either the parents or our 3rd grade buddy class. This will work better if I can get mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle or a special adult to come into the classroom to spend time with their child. This celebration can take up to 1 and ½ hours to complete if you do the large group activity and the 5 centers that will be run by adults. You will need white bulletin board paper, markers, pencils and tempera paint in the colors represented in *Elmer*. The adults, or buddy class student, will have their child/student lie down on the white paper and they will trace their body. After the tracing is done have the student draw facial features like his/her own on the head of the tracing. Next have the buddy student or family member will add a drawing of a large elephant next to the child. Provide shallow bowls of the paint and ask the child what color he/she would like to paint their body and their elephant body. Prompt them to paint either Elmer or a real elephant and tell which one they choose. The two work together to paint the child's body and elephant on the white paper. Hang the student's body pictures in the hallway to dry. Now you will split the class into five equal groups to go to the parent/buddy directed centers. You will be coming back to these after groups to tell an elephant story of your choice.

All the following centers should be parent/buddy lead, you will need to explain the centers to the parents beforehand. Remind the leaders of the activity to encourage good conversations between them and between the children as well.

Parent/Buddy Run Centers

Elephant Toothpaste

Students will need an empty soda bottle, a tray or cookie sheet, two tablespoons of warm water, one teaspoon of yeast, ½ cup of 6% hydrogen peroxide, four to five drops of food coloring, and liquid dish soap. Add the hydrogen peroxide to an empty bottle and squirt some dish soap in. Swirl it around to mix. Add in the four to five drops of food coloring. In a small dish, mix the warm water and yeast. Stir until well dissolved then pour the yeast mixture. Watch it grow! Since I will have so much parent help, I will give each child their own turn with the experiment.

Paper Plate Elephant Kid Craft

This is a fun gluing project for children. A large paper plate, gray tissue paper, cardstock in gray, white, and black; a stapler, scissors, and school glue will be needed. First cut your gray tissue paper into small squares, letting the kids practice their cutting skills. Set aside. Next, take your paper plate and put a good amount of glue all over it. Have children place the tissue paper on top of the glue, until the paper plate is completely covered. While they are working on that, cut out the other elephant features from the cardstock. Think large ears, a tail, legs, eyes and of course – a large trunk. To finish off the paper plate elephant, glue on the cardstock pieces in their designated spots, as well as other embellishments you see fit. Then display proudly.

Elephant Vegetable Salad

Many different vegetables for the students will be needed. Examples could be carrots, peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, beans, snap peas, the skies the limit. Children will taste the vegetables because that is what elephants eat. For desert, bananas will be served because elephants love bananas. Wash vegetables, and cut into safe bite size pieces before serving. Each child will get individual bowl with its own serving utensil. Allow the children to choose which vegetables they would like. Dip or dressing will be added to encourage tasting. Be aware of any allergies in your class. Children could make a chart of what their favorite and least favorite vegetables were.

Elephant Dung Race

Since elephant dung is made mostly of water, the children will learn that if they were lost in elephant land with no water; they could squeeze enough water out of elephant dung to stay hydrated. Supplies needed will be buckets, sponges, and large plastic cups. Children line up in two lines; place a bucket of water in front of the line. Add water and sponges to the buckets. Place the large plastic cup about 20 feet away from them, instruct them to one at a time fill the sponges with water, race down to the cup, squeeze the water from the sponges into the cup and run back to the next person in line. The team that fills their cup first without knocking it over wins.

As a final wrap up to this wonderful celebration, have the children do a reader's theatre of the book. Select a child to read the book as the rest of the class acts out the story. I send home notes before the celebration and ask parents if possible to have the children wear the color of their animal (i.e. red, blue, green etc.), and then the day of their play we provide headbands for them to wear made from sentence and color copies of each animal. This would be especially fun with the book *Elmer* or "*Stand Back,*" *Said the Elephant I'm Going to Sneeze!*. Depending on class size, you may need multiples of each animal from the books.. The children love doing this and are very proud to share it with family and friends.

Assessments

In my kindergarten classroom, I am required to do ongoing assessments with the students. For this unit, I can complete a simple assessment chart with the targeted skills across the top and children's names down the side. My target goals will align with my teaching standards and unit goals. I have enclosed an example in the teacher's aide appendix.

The objectives are aligned with the Common Core Standards, and state early learning guidelines. These objectives are at the heart of the system; teachers use them to focus their observations as they gather information to make classroom decisions. An ongoing assessment is happening during regular, everyday activities. Assessments are implemented on a continuous basis throughout the year, helps teachers meet children where they are, helps children meet challenging and achievable learning goals and give a broader more meaningful picture of development.

Appendix I: Teaching Standards

Our teaching standards come from North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development. All the standards I have chosen will directly relate to my unit content, as well as being measurable and will be ongoing. Besides language and literacy goals, I have chosen, math, science, arts, social/emotional and fine motor goals. I have incorporated language into all my activities to demonstrate the children can use language every day, every way.

APL-1 Children show curiosity and express interest in the world around them.

APL-5 Children are willing to try new and challenging experiences.

APL-8 Children maintain attentiveness and focus.

ESD-4 Children form relationships and interact positively with other children.

LDC-1 TO 5 Children understand conversations with others. Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one on one, small group, and larger group interactions. Children ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. Children speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly. Children describe familiar people, places, things and events. Children use most grammatical constructions of their home language well. Children respond to and use a growing vocabulary.

LDC-8 Children develop interest in books and motivation to read.

DC-13 Children use writing and other symbols to record information and communicate for a variety of purposes.

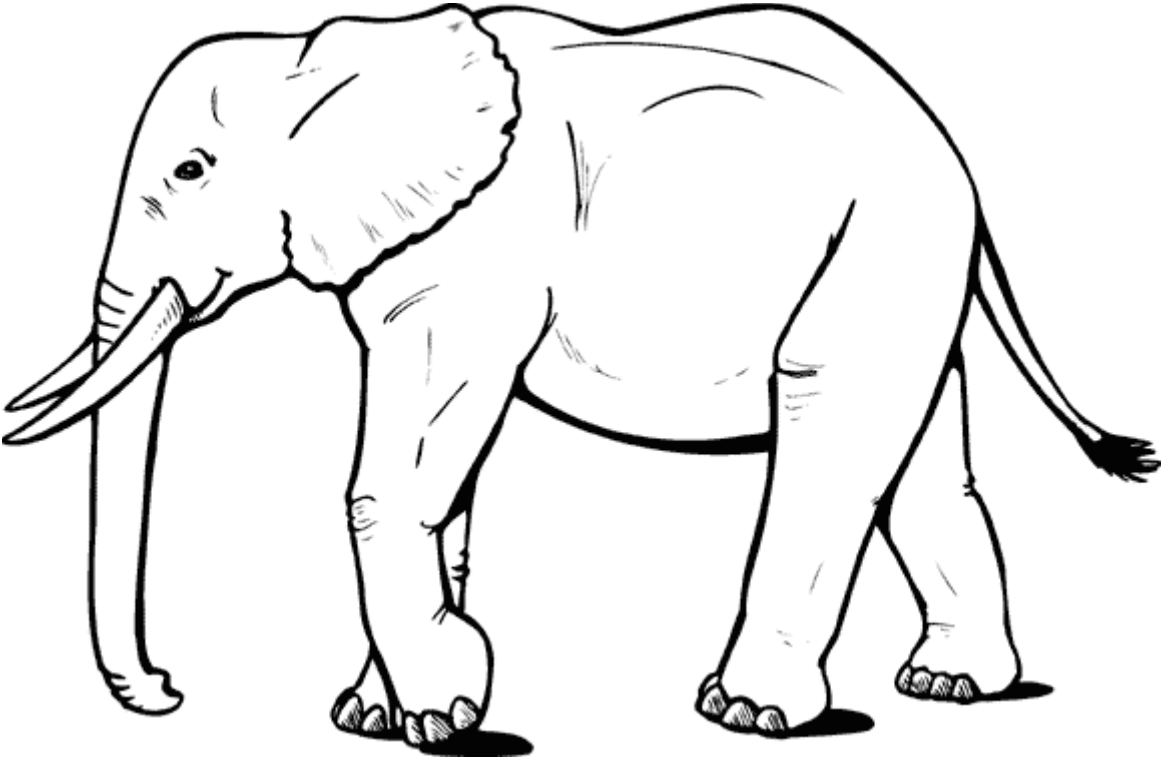
CD-2 Children recall information and use it for new situations and problems.

CD-5 Children demonstrate self-expression and creativity in a variety of forms and contexts, including play, visual arts,

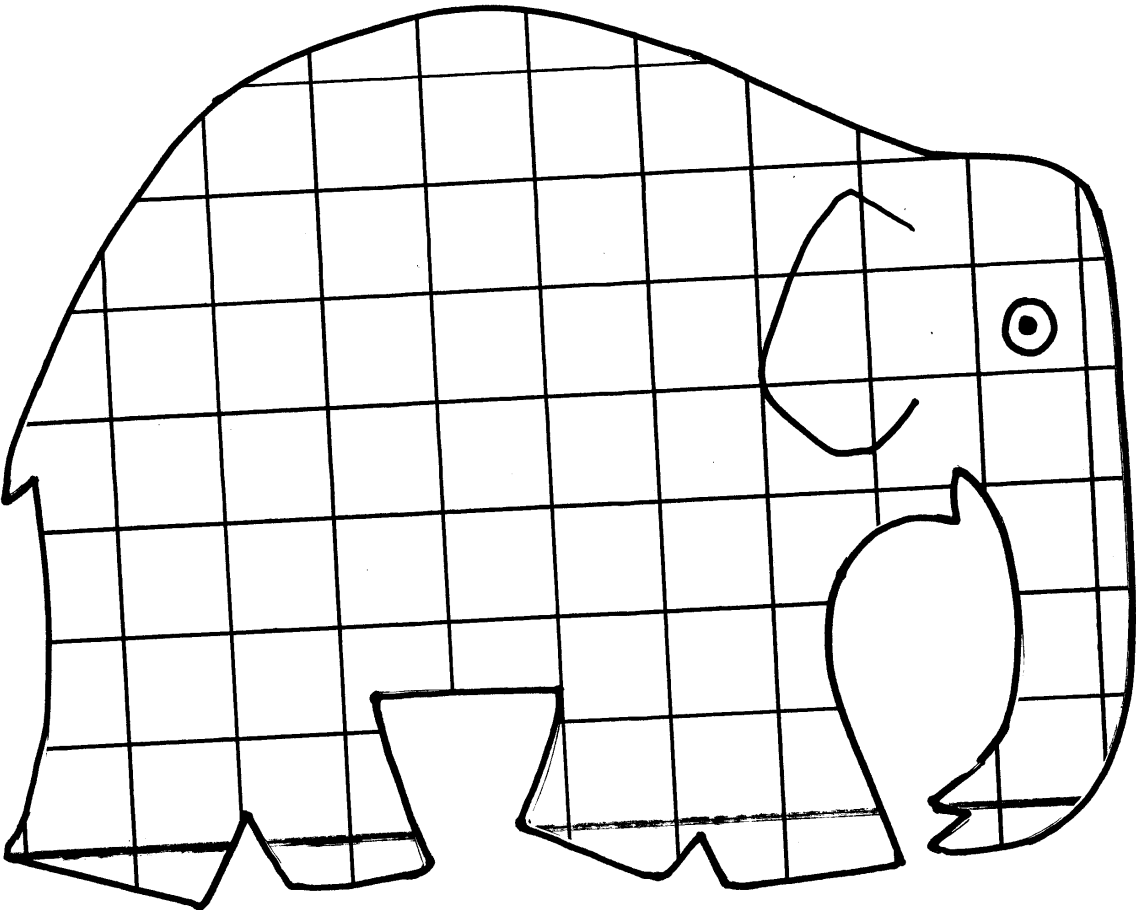
CD-11 Children compare, sort, group, organize and measure objects and create patterns in their everyday environment.

CD-15 Children explore the natural world by observing, manipulating objects, asking questions, making predictions, and developing generalizations.

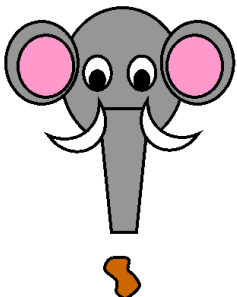
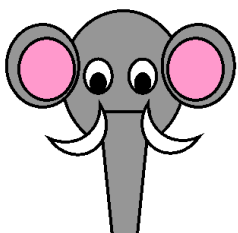
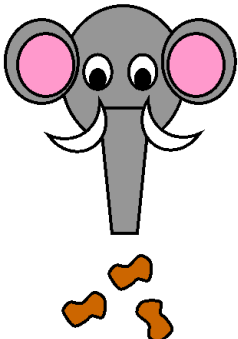
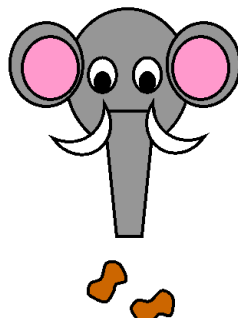
Appendix II: Nonfiction elephant for coloring



Appendix III: Fiction Elephant for Coloring



Appendix IV: Elephant Peanut Count To Be Used With Clothespins

			
0 1 2	0 1 2	4 3 2	2 3 4

Materials for Classroom Use

Books needed will be *Elmer* and *'Stand Back,' said the Elephant, "I'm Going to Sneeze!"*, along with paint in the colors mentioned in the books. You will also need the following: markers, crayons, paper and pencil, sentence strips, finger puppets (store bought or handmade), construction paper, large bulletin board paper, flannel board, Velcro, buddy class (optional), parents, family members, special adults; donated vegetables, buckets, and sponges. Check the weekly activities for other possible materials.

Student Resources

Books needed will be *Elmer* and *Elephant Facts*, which is what most the lessons are based on, and the companion book *'Stand Back,' said the Elephant, "I'm Going to Sneeze!"*.

[ABC Mouse](#) is a beneficial website because it takes children through the natural progression in all learning domains. Once a level is accomplished by the student it automatically takes them to the next level.

[National Geographic Kids](#) where students can find out all kinds of elephant facts.

[Starfall](#) is a wonderful website that promotes early learning in letters, letter sounds and early reading.

Teacher Resources

[Confessions of a Homeschooler](#) is a great resource for additional activities to complement the unit.

iPads let the children do a reader's workshop of the story and then allow them to play it back, you'll be surprised not only of the enjoyment it brings but how they want to do it differently next time.

[Making Learning Fun](#) has many teaching ideas in all domains and links them to favorite and popular children's books. They also provide master copies of images that you may want to complete a unit.

[Measured Mom](#) is a great website developed by a stay at home mom who also has many teaching ideas in all learning domains and most of the things she uses you will have in your home. She also has many teaching game and project master free of charge.

[National Geographic Kids](#) is a great way to make fiction characters come to life, like in "Elephants Can't Jump"

School or neighborhood library instead of buying books and companion books for the units. When I get a book from the library I make sure to let my students know that they too can go the library to borrow books.

Notes

- ¹ Cheung and Anderson, *Time to READ: Family Recourses and Educational Outcomes in Britain*, 5, 13.
- ² Roskos, Christie, and Richgels, *The Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction*, 1-3.
- ³ Hirsch, E. D., Jr., *Reading comprehension requires knowledge—of words and the way*, 10-29.
- ⁴ NAEYC & NAECS/SDE (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education), *Early learning standards: Creating the conditions for success*, 1, 83, 84
- ⁵ Zigler, *Under Siege: A Historical Overview*, 1-13
- ⁶ "Elephants in Captivity." Elephant Facts and Information. Accessed October 30, 2018. <https://www.elephant-world.com/elephants-in-captivity/>.

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- Cheung, and Andersen. "Time to Read: Family Resources and Educational Outcomes in Britain." ResearchGate. June 2003. Accessed September 2018.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285874262_Time_to_Read_Family-Resources_and_Educational_Outcomes_in_Britain.
In this paper, the authors explore the impact of social structure at home on children's responses in the classroom.
- Dickinson, David K., and Joy Moreton. "Predicting Specific Kindergarten Literacy Skills from Three-Year Olds' Preschool Experiences." ResearchGate. August 1992. Accessed September 2018.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234714370_Predicting_Specific_Kindergarten_Literacy_Skills_from_Three-Year_Olds%27_Preschool_Experiences.
This study looking into the link between the context of language in the classroom and the students' literacy skills. Teachers were interviewed and observed. When literacy was nurtured, children had more advanced skills.
- Fun Elephant facts for Kids. (n.d.). Retrieved September, 2018, from
<http://www.eleaid.com/eleaiders/elefacts/>
Short fun facts about elephants are presented. The information given is intended to be appealing to children.
- Han, Myae, Noreen Moore, Carol Vukelich, and Martha Buell. "Does Play Make a Difference? How Play Intervention Affects the Vocabulary Learning of At-Risk Preschoolers." *American Journal of Play*, 2010, 83-105.
NAEYC recognizes that play is a central component of developmentally appropriate practice and a vehicle for developing language, cognition, and social confidence. Play is critical for developing the oral language skills that children need to read. Research discovered that children at play often use higher forms of language than normal.
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. "Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge— of Words and the World." *American Federation of Teachers*, Spring 2003, 10-29. Accessed September 2018.
http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/AE_SPRNG.pdf.
This article focuses on how children are able to retain basics, but when the time comes they cannot retain more advanced literacy. In order to help these children overcome this hurdle, we must first understand where the roadblock is coming from and how to address it.
- Howes, Carollee, and Allison Gallwey Wishard. "Revisiting Shared Meaning: Looking Through the Lens of Culture and Linking Shared Pretend Play Through Proto-Narrative Development to Emergent Literacy." Academia.edu. Accessed September 2018.
http://www.academia.edu/436026/Revisiting_Shared_Meaning_Looking_Through_the_Lens_of_Culture_and_Linking_Shared_Pretend_Play_Through_Proto-Narrative_Development_to_Emergent_Literacy.

Social play and proto-narratives allow children to interact and cooperate with other children. Forms of narrative development directly impact literacy development. Play and narrative development should be visited both at home and in the classroom.

Lieff, J. (2014, March 11). Elephant Culture. Retrieved September, 2018, from

<http://jonlieffmd.com/blog/elephant-culture>

Lieff explores the culture of elephants around the world and just how similar they are to humans. They are intelligent animals that possess emotions and vast capabilities. Throughout the article the author explores these attributes amongst elephants.

Lexus, Nonie K. "PreK-3rd: Getting Literacy Instruction Right". *Foundation for Child Development*, no. 9 (May 2013): 1-18.

This article focuses on how effective instruction is a combination of direct instruction and inquiry based learning. Children need clear steps and quality materials to create a literacy rich environment. Young children need to engage in structured learning tasks, and routines that promote interactive play and inquiry.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, and The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. "Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success." *Early Learning Standards Position*, November 19, 2002. Accessed September 2018.

http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/executive_summary.pdf.

This article addresses the educational, ethical, developmental, programmatic, assessment, and policy issues that arise in Head Start programs.

Roberts, Joanne, Julia Jergens, and Margaret Burchinal. "The Role of Home Literacy Practices in Preschool Children's Language and Emergent Literacy Skills." *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*. April 01, 2005. Accessed September 2016. <http://jslhr.pubs.asha.org/article.aspx?articleid=1783817>.

This study analyzed shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child's enjoyment of reading, and maternal sensitivity, and their effects on a child's language and literacy skills.

Roskos, Kathleen A., James F. Christie, and Donald J. Richgels. "The Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction." *YC Young Children* 58, no. 2 (March 01, 2003): 52-60. Accessed September 2018. <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200303/Essentials.pdf>.

Children of a young age need both reading and writing to help learn about one another, as well as oral language to help understand both.

S. (2017, June 17). Conserve elephants. They hold a scientific mirror up to humans. Retrieved September, 2018, from <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2017/06/17/conserv-elephants-they-hold-a-scientific-mirror-up-to-humans>
The article explores the decline of elephant populations due to poaching and urges for a decrease in the murder of these creatures. This claim of saving elephant lives leads to the author's stance that these mammals are ones similar to humans and able to coexist with us.

Vukelich, Carol. "Effects of Play Interventions on Young Children's Reading of Environmental Print." *Early Childhood Research* 9, no. 2 (June 1994). Accessed September 2018. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223538487_Effects_of_play_interventions_on_young_children%27s_reading_of_environmental_print.
This article explores how children exposed to print during play, both enriched and non-enriched, impacts the child's ability to read environmental print.

Zigler, Edward F. "Play Under Siege." *21 Community News*, Winter 2004, 1-11. Accessed September 2018.
http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/pdf/21community_win2004.pdf.
This article reflects upon how many schools are reducing or even getting rid of children's play, mainly with those of preschool and kindergarten age. This interactive play, Zigler argues, is crucial to the children to help their cognitive, language, problem solving, memory, and creativity skills.