



# Letter Learning with Names

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## Research and Classroom Experiences

Children learn to read their names and the names of the other children early. The following activities demonstrate a variety of ways to utilize names throughout the classroom to assist in learning names.

### Cognitive Goals:

- Children will read their names, the names of other children, and teachers in a variety of places in the classroom.
- Children will learn to read their name by first letter alone, then gradually all letters, then names of classmates.
- Children will locate their personal spaces, such as cubbies, cots, and classroom helper jobs by recognizing their names.

## **RESEARCH ON LETTER LEARNING**

Letters are best learned in comparison and contrast to other letters. Letters are best used in a context that is meaningful to a child.

- Schickedanz & Dickenson

Using children's names to teach them about print is a sure way to get their attention and keep their interest. Most children learn their names before they learn any others.

Simply training children to memorize letters without providing learning in a larger literacy context has proven unsuccessful as a predictor of beginning reading success.

- Strickland, D. S., Schickedanz, J. A.

"Children's own names are highly motivating for learning."

- Sahare & Jaffe-Gur, Bloodgood

"Children's names and highly salient environmental print are often the source of initial letter learning."

- Carol Vkelich

# **MORNING ARRIVAL ROUTINES USING NAMES**

## **Welcome Signs**

Make:

Wall Pocket Chart or Poster Board with Velcro Labeled with sign: Who is Here Today? or Hello World . . .

Individual Cards - 4"x 4" with child's name, symbol and/or photo on one side. On reverse side, child's photo and "I am here" printed below photo.

How to Use:

As each child arrives, he/she finds own name and turns card over to indicate that s/he is present.

*Teacher Note: Use the chart by referring to it while modeling reading it to the children. Example: "Who is here today?"*



Extensions may include:

"How many children are here today? How can we find out? Let's find all the names that start with the letter 'J'."

"Jason's name begins with the 'juh' sound just like Jacqueline's name. Whose name begins with the same sound as Anna? Do they both begin with the same letter?"

"Shannon, you chose Shawn's name for the chart. His name has some of the same letters as yours, but Shannon has two 'n's' in the middle and Shawn doesn't."

## **Name with symbol or photo put on cubbies**

Allow children to choose their own symbol on the first day of class to go with their names.

## **For Classroom Helpers**

Post signs for classroom jobs in cubbies, by name/photo label.

For children without jobs, post an "I'm on vacation" card.

## **Daily Sign-in Boards**

At the beginning of the year –

Blank Piece of Paper with words: Who is Here Today? or Quien esta aqui hoy?

*Teacher Note: Vary the color, size, shape, surface of paper and also the angle of the sign-in board. Remember that vertical surfaces are a great way to develop fine motor skills and are easily attached to a classroom easel or wall especially if classroom space is limited.*

Then vary the methods of sign-in to keep children's interest such as:

Sign-in By the First Letter of Your Name:

Have a poster with lines for each of the 26 letters and enough space for children to sign in by their letter.

*Teacher Note: If you have limited space, just list the letters of the first names in your class. This can be extended with questions and discussion about how many, most, least, more and less which are natural topics to spring from this sign-in board.*

Sign-in Dry Erase Board or Laminated Poster Board:

Draw lines or use thin, colored tape to define a space at least 4" high by 8" wide with photo. Children sign in by their photo each day. Once they all become proficient, change to a smaller space (example: 3" then 2" then 1") as the year progresses. Then, change to a notebook and/or any of the following:

Unique Sign-in's:

Sign-in on SHINY paper. Use foil with transparency markers.

Sign-in on the OCEAN (blue paper with waves drawn in blue lines). Use fish shaped pens if possible.

Sign-in on paper using all types of SILLY pens.

Sign-in on DARK COLORED PAPERS with contrasting chalk, colored pencils and/or crayons (example: black paper with white chalk).

Sign-In UNDER THE TABLE (tape paper under the table and have markers available for children to write their name while lying on their back).

Sign-in on a math graph by asking a question such as "What was your favorite book?"

## **Morning Meetings**

Announce the VIP: Helper/Leader for the day.

At Morning Meeting salute this person and use it as an opportunity to look at the letters in this person's name. Use name card with corresponding letters and match each as you say the letters. You may wish to have a special VIP Cheer. (Example: Deb is the VIP. Give me a "D"; give me an "e"; give me a "b".

## **We Wish You Well**

Show a photo and name card of children not at school that day and as a group 'wish them well.' This provides the children comfort that they will be thought about when they miss school as well as an opportunity to focus on names.

## **CENTER SPECIFIC NAME ACTIVITIES**

### **Writing Center**

#### **Class Names on Cards:**

Put names and photos of children on index cards or place them in a Rolodex file or on a metal ring. (Names and photocopies of classroom storybook characters can be added. Example: If reading the book Corduroy, use a picture of Corduroy with his name).

#### **Letter Stamps for Stamping Names**

#### **Letter Stickers**

Make a classroom post office with divided storage container (cardboard shoe sorter boxes or paper sort boxes) labeled with student names and photos. Provide envelopes, paper and pens at the Writing Center.

### **Outdoor**

Take sidewalk chalk, classroom name book or names on a ring, and writing materials

### **Art Creativity Center**

Letter stamps for stamping names  
Letter sponges for sponge printing names  
Letter beads  
Letter collage materials (foam with sticky back)  
Letter wood tiles

## **Block Center**

Turn Taking List\*  
Block with each child's name and photo (1 per child in the classroom plus teachers)  
Letter Blocks

## **Dramatic Play Center**

Turn Taking List\*  
Classroom telephone book  
Classroom "My Family" book

## **Reading Center**

Response charts  
Classroom rules/promise board with signatures  
Sharing sign-In  
Tape recorder with tapes of children reading stories (label with book name and story title)  
Class response books with child's names and dictations  
*Brown Bear* adapted to class names  
"Our Class" ABC with photo of child/name and favorite things  
Magnetic letters on cookie sheet trays

## **Science Center**

Turn Taking List  
Charts and response charts related to activity  
Observation pads or journals labeled with each child's name  
Magnetic letters on magnetic cookie sheet

## **Discovery Table**

Letter molds  
Plastic and or foam letters in water or sand

## **Manipulative Areas**

Name puzzles for each child in class  
Name letter match (one-to-one correspondence of letters)  
Classroom "cookie jar" filled with cardboard cookies with students' names and photos  
Name sort based on letters or numbers of letters as graphing idea

Classroom name BINGO (sing Bingo song substituting names of children in the class and magnetic letters to spell out as you and the class sing the song)

## **GROUP TIME NAME ACTIVITIES**

### **Syllable/Alliteration Games Using Names:**

“If your name starts with ---.”

Teacher names a letter, holds up a card on which the letter is printed, and tells children that they are dismissed if their name starts with this sound/letter.

“If this is your name, you may leave the group.”

Teacher shows one nametag at a time. Teacher prompts, when necessary, by sounding out the first few sounds spoken in a name, to provide clues. When a child’s name is identified, the teacher responds with such a comment: “Yes, that is Yazzmine’s name. It starts with Y.”

“If your name starts with ---.”

Teacher says a sound. For example, “If your name starts with /d/, you may leave the circle.” In this task, children do not view the names. They concentrate on the sound only.

“Without the /?/ at the beginning of your name, what would we call you?”

Teacher isolates the first sound in a child’s name, says the child’s full first name, and asks the child to say his/her name without its first sound. Example: “Let’s take the ‘T’ off of Tosha. ‘Osha’ is how that would sound.”

“Think of a silly word that rhymes with the name ---.”

Teacher writes a student name on a dry erase board large enough for the children to see. When the children suggest a silly rhyming, the first letter is changed to show how it would look. As the letter is written the sound of that letter is said. Example: Mary-Tary.

“If your name has a --- in it, you may leave the group.”

Teacher holds up uppercase and lowercase cards of the letters named. Children who have the letter in their names are dismissed from the group. Variation: Replace the name of the letter with a letter sound: “If your name has a “dah” sound in it, you may leave the group.”

### **Silly Names Go Next**

Say each child’s name omitting the first letter. Have children guess who is being called. Then they say/chant the name. Example: “Laine Elaine go and play.”

### Name 'I SPY'

Give clues about whom you are thinking and have children guess.

Example: "I spy someone who is wearing a blue shirt and has on black and gray tennis shoes. His name begins with /m/." Give additional clues or ask, "Who has a name that starts with the /m/ sound?"

### Great Name Songs to Substitute with Children's Names

"Willoughby Wallaby Woo"

"The Name Game" (Example: If your name is Martin, you may go and play.)

"Bingo"

## **RESOURCES for Letter Learning with Names**

Literature and Language Play for Phonological Awareness  
Michael Opitz

More Than Letters: Literature Activities for Preschool, Kindergarten and First Grade  
Sally Moomaw and Brenda Hieronymus

Learning About Print in Preschool  
Dorothy Strickland and Judith A. Schickedanz, 2004.

Writing in Preschool  
Judith A. Schickedanz and Renee M. Casbergue, 2004.

Literacy: The Creative Curriculum Approach  
Cate Heroman and Candy Jones. 2004