

Trip to the Grocery Store— Writing (Environmental Print)

Advice to Parents

What is Environmental Print?

Environmental print is the print found in the everyday life of a child's natural environment. These may include: clothing brand names, t-shirt messages, personal name tags, food packaging, product labels, advertisements, mail, magazines, restaurants, websites, road signs, television advertisements, and billboards. At home this may include: calendars, grocery lists, or other personal writings of family members.

Why is Knowing About Environmental Print Important for Parents?

- Children who grow up in a print-rich environment seem to understand that print is different from other kinds of visual patterns in their environment. They notice that adults use print in different ways. They begin to understand that print symbolizes language and holds information. For example, the menu will tell them what they can order to eat. The advertising in a magazine will tell them what can be bought at the store.
- A very important first step in reading is understanding that print carries meaning. Environmental print provides many examples for the parent to show that the print in the child's world conveys meaning. That this print contains letters and each letter has a name and a sound associated with it.
- Through environmental print, children are able to learn that words represent objects or ideas. This is a great skill to have before entering kindergarten.
- When exposed to environmental print, children gain confidence in their beginning literacy experiences because they are entering school with a number of "words" that they already know.
- Environmental print is inexpensive, highly accessible, and available to parents from a wide-range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
- Environmental print is found everywhere, so it is a natural starting point to talk to children about reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Because environmental print is found in the everyday life of a child, it often connects to his/her own individual interests and backgrounds.

Learning TOGETHER

Making Sense of Early Childhood

- Environmental print is relatively stable. Stop signs don't move and product names and labels on cereal boxes, for example, usually stay the same.
- Letters that are accessible on environmental print tend to be large and upper case, which is easier for children to see and recognize.
- Because working with environmental print is a parent-child interaction, children display high levels of motivation to "read".