



Literacy Lesson ideas

Describing Journeys

In small groups, let the children brainstorm all the useful information that would be needed, to give an accurate factual description of their journey to school. (You could start by describing your own journey) e.g. time you leave home, mode of transport, things you see and hear, places where you turn left or right, landmarks and street furniture passed, street names crossed, hazards encountered etc.

Let the children recount their own journeys in small groups. How well can they describe someone else's journey as a chronological sequence of events? Whose journeys were alike? Who had the shortest, longest, most interesting, most unusual or least healthy journey?

Make concertina folded books showing the journey to school as a sequence on one side and the journey home on the reverse. How are the journeys different?

Comparing Journeys

Let the children compare their journey to school with that of older siblings, other teachers or ancillary staff. In what ways are they similar/different?

If possible, arrange for the children to compare their journey to school with that of a child in another class and perhaps another school (writing for a real purpose). How are the environments different? Compare rural with urban journeys. The form of writing could be the writer's own decision - e-mail, letter, booklet etc.

Imaginative Journeys

Ask the children to describe the best or worst journey to school they could ever imagine.

Can they describe an unusual or amusing journey to school.

Can they describe a journey to school in an unusual place - desert, jungle, mountains, island, another planet?

Use storyboards to help plan the sequence.

Describing Objects

Let the children work in pairs - each child has a picture or photograph (preferably, local) of a piece of street furniture (post box, lamp column etc.). Without letting their partner see it, they either write or give a detailed verbal description of their object, without saying its name. Partners use the information given to draw a picture of the object.

Compare drawings with the original picture or photo -how accurate was the description given? What information was missing?

Develop this idea using photos of busy or quiet local road scenes. (Your local road safety office

may be able to supply these). What elements of danger are given in the descriptions? Talk about safer places to cross a road.

Looking and Listening

An idea for developing attentive listening skills is the sequential memory game, 'On the way to school I heard...' or 'I saw...'

Sit the group in a circle; choose one child to start. They must say the name of one thing they saw on the way to school. The next child repeats what they said and adds one more thing and so on. Try an alternative using things they heard.

You can use the same idea for an alphabet sequence of objects they might see or hear e.g. 'I saw an Aeroplane, a Bulldozer, a Car' etc.

Perhaps you could arrange a listening walk locally. Take a tape recorder to record any sounds heard. Play it back in the classroom. Which sounds can they identify?

Eyes and Ears

Provide an outline shape of a very large pair of glasses or elephant sized ears - write or draw inside, all the things they remember seeing on their way to school. Whose eyes and ears are filled with the most information?

Walk to School Diary

Keep a walk to school travel diary or log for a week, which includes various observational activities for each morning or afternoon journey.

This will encourage looking and listening skills and is an opportunity to encourage parental involvement.

Begin by looking at a few examples of diaries or logs, which show how entries are written in chronological order.

Use a checklist to tick off things they have seen or heard on the way e.g. street furniture, road signs, types of vehicles, birds singing etc. Include a note of any people they see who are "people who help us" e.g. police officer, traffic warden, school crossing patrol etc.

Record how many different road names they pass/cross which have the following words in them; "hill, church, station, north, south, east, west, people's names, tree names and colours."

Can they note something in their diary/log that has changed from the previous day? It could be something simple like the weather, or changes in flora and fauna, or material development as on a building site.

With prompting, even a very short walk can provide a rich source of changes to observe.

Language Trail

Arrange a local language walk which encourages the children to note all the examples of literacy on the route e.g. road names, directional information, advertising etc.

Consider taking a camera or video to record what they find. Use the examples of literacy discovered, to create a language trail display.

Points of View

Improvise a two-way scene, role playing a parent driving to school and another parent with children, walking to school. Each blames the other for the congestion problems outside school. Give differing points of view in debate and rehearse the arguments prior to any written work. This could be in any form, perhaps a letter to the local newspaper or council, or as a viewpoint poem or piece of prose.

Try hot-seating, with the teacher in the hot seat role first.

In small groups, ask the children to give their opinions verbally or in writing, on what they find attractive and unattractive about their journey to school. List all the opinions; are there any that are frequently mentioned? How would they go about improving the quality of their environment or journey?

Pros and Cons

These are some real comments made by parents about the pros and cons of walking to school. Ask the children to sort them into positive and negative comments. Study the negatives; how would the children persuade each of these parents to walk occasionally, rather than drive? (Are the children's own opinions the same as their parents'?)

"It's too far to walk to school."

"It's the best way to teach road safety."

"My children go to different schools - there isn't time to walk to both."

"It's less hassle to walk."

"There's always dog mess on the pavements."

"It keeps you fit and healthy."

"I have to be at work by nine o'clock, so I can't walk."

"Pushchairs are easier to park than cars!"

"It helps to cut down on pollution."

"It's too dangerous to walk - there are too many cars outside school!"

Words and Phrases

How much traffic vocabulary do the children have?

Do they know the meanings of words like kerb, pavement, pelican crossing etc.? Use dictionaries to find the meanings and write sentences.

Use walking related words as a stimulus for phonically based word collections.

e.g. Foot/Feet - oo and ee words

Shoe - sh words

Make a shoe template and fill it with as many 'sh' words as the children can find.

How many two syllable movement words can they find?

e.g. running, jumping, walking, skipping etc.

How many phrases/metaphorical expressions can they find which contain foot/feet words?

e.g. "best foot forward", "you've put your foot in it now!"

"stand on your own two feet", "he was swept off his feet".

How many phrases can they find with "path" or "road" in them?

e.g. "to cross someone's path", "take to the road".

Create lists of compound words with path, road, walk, step, foot or feet in them.

Create an acrostic poem or piece of prose with 'Walking' as the theme.

Journey to School Game

Ask the children to design a journey to school game. Relate it to their own real life journey, with places of interest, street furniture etc.

Let them look at models of instructions from a selection of board games. Look at the interesting language used, labels, layout and design.

Decide on appropriate penalties and rewards.

There will be much trial and error, so allow them to try out their ideas in draft form first. Too many penalties make it difficult or frustrating - too few make it too easy.

e.g.

Overslept - miss a go

Dog mess - miss a turn cleaning shoes

Leaking shoe - go back 2 steps

Gust of wind - move on 3 steps

Pelican crossing - move on 2 steps

Lollipop person - move on 3 steps etc.