

## Lesson plans: Literacy

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### *Describing Journeys*

In small groups, let the children list 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. 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.

### 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!"

### *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?

### *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.

### **X marks the spot**

Ask the children to draw a map of their walking route from home to school, marking with a "X" all the places where they have to cross the road. Younger children can draw simple pictorial maps with landmarks, whilst older children can use local street maps.

Discuss their routes - can they identify danger spots such as junctions, corners, bends and parked cars? Can they plan a safe walking route to school, using safer crossing places? If in a rural area, can they design an ideal safer route, with traffic calming features?

It would be a useful exercise to agree the safest walking route to school with parents. A copy of the agreed safest route can be signed and returned to the school for reference.

For those who come by bus or car, they could also draw their route, noting any important or interesting landmarks on the way.



It is interesting to compare the amount of detail in a walker's route to a passenger's route. How many child passengers only see their local environment as a passing 30mph blur?

This is a good opportunity to discuss safe walking behaviour and how to make themselves more visible as a pedestrian or cyclist.

### **Town or Country**

Ask the children to collect or draw pictures of things they might see on their way to school. Sort them into sets of things they might see mainly in the town or mainly in the country. How will they sort things they might see in both?

Introduce two large rings - label one "TOWN" and the other "COUNTRY". Let them put their pictures into the most appropriate ring. Can they create a third area for things seen in both, by overlapping the rings?

### **Hazards**

Ask the children if they know what a hazard is.

Can they give examples of any hazards they have seen on their way to school?

Ask them to consider what hazards there may be for particular groups of people walking the same route as them e.g. disabled, elderly, people with pushchairs or pets.

Do/would hazards change with the time of year? e.g. because of weather conditions or the amount of daylight.

Carry out a risk assessment of part of the journey to school - outside the school gates is a good starting point.

With younger children it is important to discuss what they think is meant by something being "risky". Can they give examples of risky behaviour?

Draw or write about the potential hazards they find e.g. cracked paving, potholes, worn road markings, bad parking, speeding etc. Write or draw how it could be improved. Act on the findings. Let the children write to the appropriate authorities.

### **Detectives**

If you are taking the children out as part of a local study, you can use the opportunity for them to act as detectives.

What lies under the pavements outside school? What clues are there to help them? What do all the manhole covers "cover"? Take rubbings - can they find out what the letters on the covers mean?

How can they tell whether a road or pavement has been dug up recently? How has it been repaired? Is it safe? Where will they find information about future local road closures? What effect could this have on their journey to school?

Compare recent local photographs of the area around the school, with those taken 50 or more years ago. Look at buildings, street furniture and road names. What clues do they give about the history of the local area?

## *Crossing Places*

*Ask the children to think of a safe crossing place - can they make a model of it and write an explanation of how they would use it?*

*Do the children actually know how to walk safely where there is a pavement?*

*Discuss safe behaviour, walking on the inside away from traffic and the kerb edge.*

*Discuss what to do if there is no pavement, particularly in a rural area.*

*Do they know how to make themselves more visible if they have to walk in poor daylight or darkness?*

## *Signs*

*What sort of road signs do the children see on their way to school?*

*Which give warnings (triangular), which are orders (circular) and which give information (rectangular)?*

*Find out where the busy junctions are in school.*

*Discuss and decide which would be the most suitable signs to use and where to position them e.g. slippery floor*

*Headteacher!*

*Think about signs for rules e.g. no running, keep left.*

*Where will they put information signs? E.g. visitors this way, please report to school office etc.*