Family Literacy Lesson Plans
Zack's Alligator

**Adult Education Lesson Plan**

**Early Childhood Education Lesson Plan**

Five Finger Rule Bookmark
"My Just Right Book!" Bookmark

Alligator Template Page
Fish Cards
Blank Fish Cards
Alligator Song

Parenting Education Lesson Plan

Interactive Literacy Lesson Plan
Alligator Fact Coloring Book
Cover Example of Alligator Fact Book

Comprehension Activity Sheet of Zack's House
Comprehensive Character Sheets of
Story Retell Puppets
Alligator Storybook Packet
Adult Education Lesson Plan
for
Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle

Name of Activities: Five-Finger Rule
   Book Discussion

Students Participating; size of group: Adults- individuals or small groups

Lesson Goal: Learners will learn the Five-Finger Rule and how to apply it. They will understand characteristics of different leveled texts.

Learning Objectives/Skills: The learners will be able to:
a) Learn the steps of the Five-Finger Rule for selecting books
b) Discuss how to implement the Five-Finger Rule with their child
c) Identify characteristics of leveled books

Environmental Adaptations, Time and Materials Needed: These activities can be adapted to almost any environment; however a library or classroom with different leveled texts would be ideal. The activities will take approximately 20-25 minutes, depending on students. The following materials will be needed:
   • A variety of different leveled texts
   • Five Finger Rule Bookmarks
   • “My Just Right Book!” Bookmarks
   • Pencils and paper

Procedure/Description of the Activity

1. Instructor begins by explaining the importance of choosing appropriate level books for children to read. In order for a child to practice reading skills they need a book that will support their development. Difficult texts for beginning readers can cause frustration and have too many advanced words.

2. Explain that many publishers have created “Leveled Text” series where they rank each title according to its reading level. However, learners should understand that these levels are not always appropriate ways to judge a book’s difficulty. There can be many differences between the amount of text, vocabulary difficulty and length of books within a single level.

3. In small groups or pairs, have learners look at different books within the same level of a series (ex. Level 1 of the I Can Read series). Prompt them to pay attention to the text size, amount of text on each page, differences in the amount of illustrations and the length of the books. After discussion, have groups share some examples of variations they found.

4. Introduce learners to the Five-Finger Rule for choosing appropriate books to read independently. Explain to learners that this strategy helps determine if a book is at an individual’s reading level. Pass out the Five Finger Rule Bookmarks for each person to refer to and take home. The Five Finger Rule begins with the reader choosing a book. The reader opens the book to any page and begins reading to the bottom of the page. The reader puts up one finger
for each word they encounter that they don’t know. At the end of the page, if the reader has no fingers or one finger up, the book is too easy for the reader. If the reader has four or five fingers up, the book is too difficult and should be saved for later reading. If the reader has two or three fingers up, the book is just right and is a great choice to keep reading. The goal is to find a book where the reader will encounter some new words, but are familiar with most of them.

5. Have learners practice role-playing in pairs how to apply the Five Finger Rule with different books. Have them also practice how they might explain it to their own children. Explain to parents that they should teach this rule to their children and practice it together in libraries and bookstores with books of varying difficulty. Pass out extra Five-Finger Rule Bookmarks and Just Right Bookmarks to parents to give to their children. After some practice, children will be able to complete this rule independently when choosing books for themselves.

**Assessment:**

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**Reflect on the Activity:**

1. What worked well?

2. What didn’t work?

3. What might have made the activity more successful?

4. Did you notice any potential for follow-up activities based on what the students said or did?

**Transfer Home/Extension Ideas:** a) Have parents use the Five-Finger Rule bookmarks to teach and demonstrate the rule to children. Then practice by selecting appropriate books. b.) Parents
can give their children the “Just Right Bookmarks” to record the books they find and draw an illustration after they read the story.

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* from National Center for Family Literacy’s *Building Strong Readers* and *Learning to Read and Write*
Five Finger Rule

1. Choose a book!

2. Open the book to any page and begin reading.

3. Put one finger up for each word you don’t know.

   - 0-1 Fingers: Too Easy
   - 2-3 Fingers: Just Right!
   - 4-5 Fingers: Too Hard

   ![Finger Hands]
My Just Right Book!

Your Name

Title of Book

Draw a picture!
Early Childhood Lesson Plan
for
Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle

Name of Activities: Vowel “CHOMP” Game  Students Participating: size of group:
Alligator Song  Children, any size group; partners

Lesson Goal: Learners will practice the short “a” vowel sound by playing the Vowel “CHOMP” Game and learn basic alligator facts through a song with motions.

Learning Objectives/Skills: The learners will be able to:
a) Actively listen to a story and participate in a group discussion before and after
b) Recognize the short “a” vowel sound in words
c) Identify alligator facts in the “Alligator Song” by singing with class

Environmental Adaptations, Time and Materials Needed: These activities can be adapted to almost any environment. Children will need a flat surface (table, tray, floor) on which to play the vowel game with a partner. The activities will take approximately 25-30 minutes, depending on students. The following materials will be needed:
- A copy of Zack’s Alligator, by Shirely Mozelle
- Alligator Template Page (one for each student)
- Sets of fish cards cut apart (one set for every two students)
- Sets of fish cards for each student to take home (which they can color and cut apart on their own)
- “Alligator Song” (copies for each student to take home)
- Brown paper bags (one for each student)
- Gluesticks / Elmer’s Glue
- Safety scissors
- Optional: coloring supplies (crayons, markers, colored pencils)
- Optional: Blank fish cards for students to write their own words

Procedure/Description of the Activity:

1. Gather children and seat them for story time. Introduce the book, Zack’s Alligator, by Shirley Mozelle to students. Before reading the book, ask students what vowel sound they hear in the word, “Zack.” Students should recognize the short “a” sound. Have students identify the short “a” vowel sound at the beginning of “alligator” and distinguish between the short and long “a” sound they hear in the word. While reading the book, have students look for words where they hear the short “a” vowel sound, as it will be an important part of a game they will play!

2. Read Zack’s Alligator to the group. Ask students questions throughout the story to encourage them to make predictions and be active listeners. For example: What do you think Zack will find in the box? Do you think Zack is afraid of Bridget? Why or why not? Do you think Zack will bring Bridget to school the next day? Also, highlight some of the words that have the short “a” sound and have students repeat them with you.
3. After reading the book, ask students some follow-up questions about the story. For example, “Do you think Zack will take Bridget to school the next day?” or “Do you think Zack’s parents know that Bridget can grow? Why do you think so?”

4. Next, explain to students that they are going to play a game that will help them practice finding the short “a” sounds in words. Each student will color an Alligator Page, cut it out, and glue it on a brown paper bag. Students will then play the game in pairs, each with their own alligator bag. To play the game, each pair will receive a set of fish cards with words; cut apart (These cards have words from the book, some of which are high frequency words).

Have students lay all the cards face down on a flat surface (floor, desk, or table) so they cannot see the words. Explain to students that the alligators on their bags will only eat fish that have words with a short “a” vowel sound. Each student will take a turn picking a fish card out of the pond and reading the word aloud. If the student picks a word with a short “a” vowel sound, they say, “CHOMP!” and put the card in their alligator bag. If they don’t hear the short “a” sound in the word, they leave the fish in the pond with the word facing up. The game is over when the students’ alligators have eaten all the short “a” words (Note: Students can continue playing the game looking for other vowel sounds they have learned, such as long “a” or short “i” sounds). Praise children for their cooperation and efforts while playing the game.

5. When students have finished playing the Vowel “CHOMP” Game, have them gather as a group on the floor. Go through the fish cards with students and have them say the words together aloud. If the students hear the short “a” sound, then they will make an alligator mouth with their arms and say “CHOMP!” as they clap their arms and hands closed. Praise students for their correct answers and following directions so well. If there is confusion about a word, repeat the word and highlight the vowel sound for them so they can identify it correctly.

6. Give each student a packet of fish cards to take home and cut apart. Students can then color them and practice playing the game with their family.

7. Conclude the lesson by teaching students the “Alligator Song” and the accompanying hand motions. Ask students to share some facts they know about alligators. Explain to students that alligators live in swamps and hatch from eggs. Ask students, “In the book, Zack’s Alligator, do you remember where Bridget said she lived?” Talk about the Everglades being a place where alligators live. This will be a fun way for students to learn some simple facts about alligators after reading the fictional story about Bridget the alligator.

8. Students can take a copy of the “Alligator Song” home with them to sing and share with their family.
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<td>c) Identify alligator facts in “Alligator Song” by singing with class</td>
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Reflect on the Activity:

1. What worked well?

2. What didn’t work?

3. What might have made the activity more successful?

4. Did you notice any potential for follow-up activities based on what the students said or did?

Transfer Home/Extension Ideas: a) Write additional words on the blank fish cards provided to practice other vowel sounds and play the game. Students can think of their own words to include in the game, as well. b) Students can identify different vowel sounds they hear in the “Alligator Song” in addition to the short “a” sound. c) Read non-fiction books about alligators and have students investigate how real alligators behave and eat compared to Bridget in the book. d) Read *Zack’s Alligator Goes to School*.

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* from National Center for Family Literacy’s *Building Strong Readers* and *Learning to Read and Write*
bad
glad
ran
flat
pat
that
Zack
grass
Alligator Song
To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle"

Alligators live in swamps,
Eating fish- CHOMP, CHOMP!
When they're young they hatch from eggs.
One long snout and four short legs.
Alligators live in swamps,
Eating fish- CHOMP, CHOMP!

(Note: As students sing "CHOMP, CHOMP" they can imitate the long snout of an alligator by extending their arms in front of them and clapping them shut twice.)
Parent Education Lesson Plan
for
Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle

Name of Activities: Using Nonfiction Texts with fictional picture books

Students Participating: size of group:
Individual parents or parents in a large group

Lesson Goal: Parents will learn how to pair a picture book with a non-fiction text and encourage their child to identify facts in a story.

Learning Objectives/Skills: The learners will be able to:
a) Understand the importance of exposing their children to multiple genres of texts
b) Acquire facts about alligators in order to extend their child’s knowledge
c) Apply techniques that incorporate nonfiction texts with fiction texts

Environmental Adaptations, Time and Materials Needed: These activities can be adapted to many different situations but chairs/desks in a circle would be ideal. The activities will take approximately 20-25 minutes, depending on students. The following materials will be needed:
- Copies of Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle (one for each family)
- Copies of Waiting Alligators by William Munoz (one for each family if possible) or have a variety of elementary nonfiction books on alligators (see “Suggested Titles”)
- “Alligator Fact Coloring Book” (one copy for each family)
- Pencils and paper
- Stapler/staples
- Scissors

Procedure/Description of the Activity

1. Instructors should begin the lesson with a brief discussion about genres of texts. Explain to parents that it is important to expose children to multiple types of books, including fictional and nonfictional texts. Make sure parents understand the difference between the terms “fiction” and “nonfiction” (fictional books are imaginative stories that are not true or did not occur in real life, whereas nonfictional books represent accurate facts or events).

2. Explain to parents that children’s fiction provides excellent opportunities to introduce children to nonfiction books that include real facts. By using their child’s favorite story books with other nonfiction texts, parents can increase their child’s motivation to learn.

3. Introduce the book Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle. This is an example of a fictional storybook that makes some connections to real alligator facts. Ask parents to listen to you as you read the story. They should think about how the story incorporates a few alligator facts and areas in the text where these facts could be elaborated on. Instructors should model interactive reading techniques by asking questions, prompting listeners for predictions and making connections between the illustrations and text. This will provide parents with an example of how to read interactively with their own children.
4. After reading the story, discuss parents’ responses. Possible answers may be that the book touches on facts about alligator’s diets, habitats or behavior. Also, ask parents for some examples of Bridget’s behavior that young children may recognize as different from real alligators (i.e. riding merry-go-rounds, watching TV, etc.).

5. Next, distribute copies of the book, *Waiting Alligators* by William Munoz to parents (if not enough copies are available, use a variety of nonfiction books on alligators from the “Suggested Titles” list). Have parents read and discuss the book in small groups or pairs. Have parents identify strengths of this nonfiction text for young readers (i.e. large real-life photos, larger print, limited amount of text on each page).

6. After reading and discussing nonfiction texts, have parents read *Zack’s Alligator* in pairs. Have parents role-play how to read the story and point out alligator facts in the text. Also, have parents practice extending some of the facts in the story with information they have learned from the *Waiting Alligators* book.

7. Encourage parents to read both *Zack’s Alligator* and *Waiting Alligators* with their children at home. After reading both books, parents can discuss with their child differences and similarities between real alligators and the character, Bridget, in the story.

8. Distribute copies of the Alligator Fact Coloring Book to each family. Model how to easily assemble the book by cutting each page in half and stapling them together on the side. Parents should encourage their child to color and draw on the pages. Families can also read the short book of facts together at home.

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Reflect on the Activity:
1. What worked well?

2. What didn’t work?

3. What might have made the activity more successful?

4. Did you notice any potential for follow-up activities based on what the students said or did?

Transfer Home/Extension Ideas: Encourage parents to try out the techniques at home with their children as they read Zack’s Alligator and to report back on their success. Also, encourage parents to incorporate nonfiction books with other storybooks that their children enjoy listening to.

Suggested Nonfiction Titles on Alligators
- Waiting Alligators by William Munoz
- Snap! A Book About Alligators and Crocodiles by Melvin and Gilda Berger
- All About Alligators by Jim Arnosky
- Alligators by Frank Staub

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* from National Center for Family Literacy’s Building Strong Readers and Learning to Read and Write
Alligators are reptiles. Their bodies are covered with thick scales that are as hard as your fingernail!
Alligators have big tails. Alligators use their tails to swim in the water.

Some alligators look like logs floating in the water. They wait quietly for their prey. Alligators eat turtles, fish, birds and other small animals.
Female alligators lay eggs. Alligators bury their eggs in a nest of mud and leaves to keep them warm.

Draw your own picture of an alligator! Don’t forget their strong jaws and sharp teeth!
Here are some other facts I have learned about alligators....
My Alligator Fact Book!

Name: ________________________
Interactive Literacy Lesson Plan
for
Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle

Name of Activities: Comprehension Activity Sheet
Alligator Storybook

Students Participating; size of group: Children and parents; partners

Lesson Goal: Children and families will retell the story of Zack’s Alligator and create an Alligator Storybook by illustrating events from the beginning, middle, and end of the book.

Learning Objectives/Skills: The learners will be able to:

a) Actively listen to a story and participate in a group discussion (children and parents)
b) Demonstrate comprehension by recalling events in story (children)
c) Listen attentively and support their child by participating in the puppet retell (parents)
d) Illustrate events from the beginning, middle, and end of the book (children and parents)
e) Provide effective prompts for their child when necessary (parents)

Environmental Adaptations, Time and Materials Needed: These activities can be adapted to almost any environment. Children will need a flat surface (table, tray, floor) that they can draw and color on. The activities will take approximately 25-30 minutes, depending on students. The following materials will be needed:

- A copy of Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle (one for each family)
- Zack’s Alligator Comprehension Activity Sheet (individual copies for students)
- Comprehension Character Sheet (individual copies for students)
- Popsicle sticks/straws
- Alligator Storybook Packet (one packet for each student)
- Gluesticks / Elmer’s Glue/Tape
- Safety scissors
- Coloring supplies (crayons, markers, colored pencils)
- Optional: Green construction paper

Procedure/Description of the Activity:

1. Begin the lesson by inviting children and families to join you for story time. Introduce the book, Zack’s Alligator by Shirley Mozelle. Have children look at the cover and make predictions about what the story will be about. Invite parents to read the story to their child in pairs or small groups. Parents should prompt their child to pay attention to what happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story, as they will be using these events to make their very own Alligator Storybook. Also, ask the child to look at how the alligator changes throughout the story.

2. After reading the book talk with children and families about the story. Ask the children how the alligator changed in the beginning, middle and end of the book. Discuss other questions such as “What made Bridget grow bigger?” “Why do you think Bridget wrestled with the hose?”

3. Explain to children and families that being able to remember details about a story is an important skill that we have to practice to get better at it. To practice this skill, parents and
children will recall different events of the story using puppets and an activity page. Distribute copies of the Comprehension Activity Sheet and Comprehension Puppet Sheet to each family. From the Puppet Sheet, have the student select a picture of a child that they want to retell the story with (the puppets represent various genders and ethnicities, so children can pick one similar to themselves, or completely different). First, have children color and cut out the character puppets (using at least one child puppet, Key Chain Bridget, and Big Bridget) and tape or glue each on a straw or Popsicle stick. Have parents assist the child with cutting and taping on sticks.

4. When groups are finished creating their materials, have them use the Comprehension Activity Sheet and puppets to retell the events using their puppet to imagine themselves in the story and what Zack may have felt. Parents may prompt their children by asking, “What was something that happened in the living room at Zack’s house?” Answer—“Bridget watched TV on the couch and ate the Meat Loaf Special.” Ask children and families to act out any events that happened after Zack and Bridget left the house, too. Parents should praise their children for remembering the story well. After the retells are finished, children can take their Comprehension Story Sets home to use again and create new stories with the stick puppets.

5. Next, have children and families return to tables or an area where they will have a flat surface to work. Explain that they will make an Alligator Story Book that opens and closes like a real alligator’s mouth! Give each group an Alligator Story Book Packet. Provide various coloring materials to create their books. Tell children and families to think about the book, Zack’s Alligator, and try to remember something that happened in the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the story. Have them illustrate one or two events on the appropriate pages. Students can also color the alligator face for the cover of their book.

6. If children are struggling to remember events from the book, parents can offer prompts to help their child recall the information. For example, “Where did Zack and Bridget go when they left the house?” or “How did Zack get Bridget?” Children and parents can work on drawing and coloring the illustrations together.

7. When groups have illustrated all the pages of their storybook, parents can help cut out each page and staple them together at the top (See photo of finished book). Children can share their books with each other in small groups and explain what parts of the story they chose to illustrate.

Optional: Children can glue the Alligator Face and the “End” Page on green construction paper and cut them out to make a more sturdy cover and back for their book.
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<td>c) Listen and support child by participating in puppet retell (parents)</td>
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**Reflect on the Activity:**

1. What worked well?
2. What didn’t work?
3. What might have made the activity more successful?
4. Did you notice any potential for follow-up activities based on what the students said or did?

**Transfer Home/Extension Ideas:**

a) Children can take home their Comprehension Activity Sheet and puppets to create their own stories and use when rereading the book.
b) Families can read nonfiction books about alligators together
c) Have children make a “Prediction Page” for their Alligator Story by illustrating what they think will happen if Zack takes Bridget to school.
d) Have children and families draw additional characters from the story (mother, father, mailman, etc.) to make into puppets and use for a more specific retell of the story.
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* from National Center for Family Literacy’s *Building Strong Readers* and *Learning to Read and Write*
Zack's Alligator
by Shirley Mozelle

Here is a picture of Zack's house!
See if you can remember the parts of the story that happened in each room and outside!
Story Retell Puppets
Story Retell Puppets
Beginning
Middle