

Functional literacy makes print come alive!

What is functional literacy?

Functional literacy is often defined as the ability to use literacy skills and tools in the natural context of daily life. It is an important compensatory skill area of the Expanded Core Curriculum for students who are visually impaired or blind.

How can functional literacy be achieved?

Environmental print is the print of everyday life. It is the name given to print that appears in signs, labels and logos. By bringing examples of environmental print into close view and discussing what it means, students develop print awareness, recognition and understanding.

How can functional literacy be applied?

There are many creative ways to work with students on functional literacy. This student is learning to identify environmental print in and around her school. This student helped collect items such as wrappers, drink box containers and even stickers from bananas around her school. To further enhance understanding of environmental print beyond the school, popular items with logos (packaging from McDonald's, Burger King, Subway etc) were also collected.



Items were displayed on a poster board for up-close examination and for later presentation to her class.

More functional literacy program activities:

1. Identifying and demonstrating an understanding of common signs such as: stop, exit, no parking, pedestrian crossing, red/yellow/green traffic lights, male/female washroom, and the poison sign.



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2. Using color-coding to identify and independently read a class schedule.
3. Reading a simple step-by-step recipe with visuals to make fresh fruit salad.
4. Creating a detailed, real-life social story about going to the doctor.



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