



The Very Hungry Caterpillar/Shape Scavenger Hunt/Sensory Play by Jessica Meisel

We have been reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* during circle time. This book is great for learning and practicing counting and colors. The book itself is a bit visually cluttered, so I created my own on the classroom iPad using real pictures of the fruit from the book presented on a black background. I also included pictures of a real caterpillar and real butterfly. You can Google images of "fruit on black background" to look at with your child at home. You can still read the book if you have access to it and practice counting and talking about colors. The Caterpillar eats many different fruits in the book and the kids have really enjoyed exploring real fruit. If you have fruit at home, cut it up and explore and talk about its texture, the difference between the whole fruit and the sliced fruit, temperature, smell, and taste.

Here's an idea for learning about shapes and practice counting that you can do at home:

Shape scavenger hunt

- Draw a large circle on a piece of paper (You can say: I drew a circle)
- Cut out the circle (You can say: I made a circle. Let's see what other circles we can find around our house!)
- Look for familiar items in your home that are circular
- Talk about similar features (ex. both are circles and both are blue!)
- And different features (ex. this circle is smooth and this one is fuzzy)
- Take a picture of each found shape
- Find a cozy seat and look at pictures of the shapes you found. Count how many of each shape you found.
- Repeat activity using a square or triangle

Here is an example of pictures we have been using on the iPad:



Children learn about the world around them through sensory input; touching, tasting, smelling, hearing. Sighted children have the ability to experience sensory experiences independently and will learn to categorize different objects and sensory experiences based on those independent experiences and scaffolding from adults. Children with visual impairments as well as children with cognitive and sensory disabilities need to be explicitly taught about sensory experiences; to give language to different sensory experiences and to learn about the properties of different sensory experiences.

Dr. Jan van Dijk was a pioneer in the field of educating children with deaf-blindness, visual impairments and multiple disabilities, enabling them to acquire communication skills. He maintained that responsiveness by adults is *by far* the most important aspect in gaining a child's trust and motivating that child to learn and build an understanding of symbolism. He said that a child must feel an attachment to his communication partners and feel that he is contributing to his environment and that co-active movement plays an important role in garnering the trust of a child. What does co-active movement look like? Responsiveness from caregivers to their child's vocalizations, movements, and breathing. This could mean that an adult assigns meaning to the child's vocalizations, movements and breathing as communication attempts (ie. Oh! That was a deep breath. You feel content!). Finding an activity that is important and

meaningful to your child will elicit emotion linked to the memory of that activity and will likely be remembered.

Here are some great ways to practice co-active movement with your child:

1. Always use hand under hand guidance with your child. By allowing your child the choice to move his or her hand away during an activity rather than holding their hand to something they may not want to touch, you decrease the chances that your child will become tactile defensive or not wanting to touch anything.
2. Create a tactile book. You can adapt any book that you have at home with materials that you can find around the house. <https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/tactile-books-students-visual-impairments>
3. Extensive and repetitive joint exploration of objects provides experiences which support a child's ability to connect meaning to words. Hold your child in your lap, explore object. Notice your child's movements and verbalize what you noticed, imitate their sound or movement. Be responsive!
4. Intentional labeling of objects supports language development and symbolism.
5. Support object permanence through a tactile mode: feeling an object that is partially concealed, then fully concealed. Play and have fun!