

8-2018

Changing Seasons: A Language Arts Curriculum for Healthy Aging

Denise Calhoun

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/purduepress_previews

 Part of the [Alternative and Complementary Medicine Commons](#), [Health Communication Commons](#), and the [Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Calhoun, Denise, "Changing Seasons: A Language Arts Curriculum for Healthy Aging" (2018). *Purdue University Press Book Previews*.
11.
https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/purduepress_previews/11

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Changing Seasons

A Language Arts Curriculum for Healthy Aging



Changing Seasons

A Language Arts Curriculum for Healthy Aging

 Denise L. Calhoun

Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, Indiana

Copyright 2018 by Purdue University. All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America.

Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

Paper ISBN: 978-1-55753-818-5

ePDF ISBN: 978-1-61249-529-3

ePUB ISBN: 978-1-61249-530-9

✿ I strongly believe in the power of the human spirit. If you have the will and the desire, you can accomplish anything at any age. After observing the “changing of the seasons” of my parents, Radford and Earline Knuckles, and my mother-in-law, Jessie Mae Calhoun, I became aware of how important it is to maintain meaningful communication with our older generation. This book is thereby dedicated to them for giving me the inspiration to create a curriculum to help families, staff, and administrators understand the importance of communicating effectively and staying connected with our older family members. ✿



Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	<i>ix</i>
ABOUT THE PROGRAM	<i>1</i>
Curriculum Goals	<i>1</i>
Curriculum Content	<i>2</i>
Curriculum Implementation	<i>2</i>
Tips for Facilitators	<i>3</i>
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	<i>4</i>
ORAL LANGUAGE	<i>6</i>
Strategies for Activities and Lessons	<i>6</i>
Getting Started	<i>7</i>
Warm-Up Activities	<i>8</i>
Lessons	<i>13</i>
Listening	<i>14</i>
Speaking	<i>26</i>
Vocabulary Building	<i>34</i>
WRITTEN LANGUAGE	<i>44</i>
Activities	<i>44</i>
Lessons and Steps for Various Writing Styles	<i>50</i>
Expository Writing	<i>50</i>
Descriptive Writing	<i>51</i>
Persuasive Writing	<i>53</i>
Narrative Writing	<i>55</i>
Folklore	<i>59</i>
Poetry	<i>61</i>

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES	75
ABSTRACT ART ACTIVITIES	90
APPENDICES	99
Appendix A. Additional Idioms, Commonly Misspelled Words, Food Words, and Recipes	99
Appendix B. Questionnaires	106
Appendix C. Graphic Organizers	110
Appendix D. Sample Daily and Weekly Plans	114
GLOSSARY	129
RESOURCES	133
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	139

Acknowledgments

I extend my sincere appreciation to my loving husband, Marion, and wonderful children, Don, Stacy, and Gia, for their love, support, words of wisdom, and insightful comments in helping me create a project of this magnitude. I am also grateful to all of my family members, friends, and professors, Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch and Dr. Bruce Burnam, who have supported me throughout this amazing journey by attending book signings or giving me words of encouragement, guidance, and praise. Finally, I would like to show gratitude to all older adults—past and present—who have paved the way for whatever hopes, dreams, and opportunities we may have for our future.



About the Program

Both communicating and connecting with others are important for sustaining quality of life. Difficulties with communication can lead to social withdrawal and feelings of isolation, dependence, and depression. The purpose of this curriculum is to enrich the quality of life of older adults through participation in a language-based, interdisciplinary program that will help them to improve their communication skills.

According to the Alzheimer's Association in 2018, “a number of studies indicate that maintaining strong social connections and keeping mentally active as we age might lower the risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's” (“Prevention and Risk of Alzheimer's and Dementia,” https://www.alz.org/research/science/alzheimers_prevention_and_risk.asp). This curriculum provides participants with opportunities to share and connect with others and improve their language and thinking skills by participating in challenging, engaging activities and lessons that encourage active involvement. Its primary use is with non-dementia older adults in assisted-living, nursing home, and adult day services settings as well as senior centers and community groups. However, families can also adapt the curriculum for use with their older adult loved ones.

Curriculum Goals

- Get older adults actively involved in the learning process.
- Build strong communication skills.
- Strengthen cognitive skills through challenging activities that require higher-level (critical) thinking.

- Create an enriched environment to relieve loneliness, depression, and anxiety.
- Assist older adults in establishing and maintaining friendships.
- Increase family involvement.
- Enhance well-being through healthy practices.

Curriculum Content

This language arts curriculum content is divided into two main content areas—oral language and written language—with an emphasis on comprehension. Included are fun warm-up (icebreaker) activities as well as longer activities and lessons.

Some oral language activities involve physical movement or cooking; some writing activities will be ongoing, lasting for several days as participants polish and perfect their poems and essays. Included are fun seasonal and abstract art activities that contain a language arts component.

Curriculum Implementation

As with any educational program, success cannot be met without the support and assistance of family members and, depending on the setting in which it is used, staff and administration. Family members are the best observers of their loved ones' strengths and needs, and they have a sincere interest in their care and welfare. The alliance between families and older adult communities, therefore, not only facilitates effective communication but also promotes quality interaction among participants, staff, and administrators.

However, no matter how great a lesson or an activity might be, it has no value if there is no interest. For administrators, the first step in implementing a program like this one is to build enthusiasm. One way to accomplish this is to point out the benefits of incorporating a language arts curriculum that helps to improve thinking and communication skills. This message could be best communicated via mini-workshops during family night or throughout the day. Implementing the program should be a team effort in which family,

staff, and participants work together to make it happen. The main point to emphasize is that language and thinking work hand in hand: language affects thinking and thinking affects language.

After the advantages of the program are reinforced, offer incentives for participants—for example, lottery tickets, senior bucks to buy things in the community, or awards for exemplary work. To acknowledge the work completed, create events that allow participants to show off their accomplishments, such as poetry readings, mock trials to illustrate persuasive writing, gallery walks to view completed projects, and plays—especially whodunits that get the audience actively involved in solving the mystery.

Tips for Facilitators

- Plan ahead. Review the lessons and activities and be prepared. Expect the unexpected. Over time you will get a feel for how long an activity or lesson might take, depending on the makeup of the group.
- Check with participants to make sure they can hear you.
- Be courteous, respectful, patient, encouraging, and supportive.
- Take your time with the activities and lessons. Allow plenty of time for thoughtful responses.
- Practice and model active listening (pay attention, paraphrase what the speaker said, ask questions, and summarize the message) to build rapport, understanding, and trust.
- Keep a positive attitude and remember the saying “Different strokes for different folks.” What works for one person or group might not work for another. Find what works.

For best results, consider the population of the community as well as the time frame for other activities planned for the week. It might work best to break the curriculum into segments. Think creatively! You could start a writing club, a book club, a mystery club, or even a Toastmasters-type club. The goal is to encourage older adults to become active learners.

Okay, let's get started!

How to Use This Book

This book is organized into the following sections:

- Oral language activities and lessons: listening (including physical movement and cooking), speaking, and vocabulary building
- Written language activities and lessons: various activities, essays, and poetry
- Seasonal and abstract art activities with a language arts component
- Appendices A, B, and C: supplemental information and materials for activities and lessons
- Appendix D: sample lesson plans to help you get started
- Glossary of oral and written language terminology
- Resource list

Here is a good way to get started:

1. Read the glossary of oral and written language terminology, which will take just a few minutes. This will refresh your memory on terms you learned when you were in school and familiarize you with the glossary contents. You can then refer to it as necessary when preparing for activities and lessons.
2. Activities and lessons are identified with the icon  throughout the book. Read the introductory paragraphs that precede the activities and lessons in each section.
3. Go over the sample lesson plans in appendix D. (See the cross-referenced page numbers for full instructions where indicated.) This will give you a framework for choosing and pairing activities and lessons.

4. Consider the population you are working with and the time frame for other activities planned. Determine what structure would work best and which activities and lessons would appeal the most.
5. When planning lessons, review instructions carefully so you know what materials are required, can anticipate how long the activity/lesson might last, and are mentally prepared to present it. (Note: Some writing activities/lessons will likely last for several days.)
6. Think about ways to display, share, and celebrate work completed. See Curriculum Implementation on p. 2 for some ideas.
7. Set your intention to encourage older adults to become active learners, then enjoy the process!

Oral Language

Oral language involves speaking, listening, questioning, and interpreting tone. The oral language activities and lessons in this curriculum focus on building vocabulary and increasing comprehension. Participants are called upon to employ higher-level thinking skills such as summarizing, predicting, inferring, sequencing, comparing, and contrasting.

Here are three suggestions to help you maintain a relaxed, friendly, and productive atmosphere during oral language lessons and activities:

1. Provide a risk-free environment where participants feel comfortable speaking up.
2. Encourage participants to share their ideas, background knowledge, and experiences and to be responsive and receptive listeners.
3. Provide fair and equitable opportunities for all participants to further develop their speaking and listening skills.

Strategies for Activities and Lessons

- Present instructions one step at a time.
- Slow down. Allow time for participants to think and reflect. Ask them to share their thoughts.
- Reduce the amount of new information presented all at once. Break the information into small bites until you know what participants can handle.
- Use short, simple sentences. Gradually incorporate more complex sentences to stimulate higher-level thinking.
- Repeat and summarize important points.

- Ask participants to repeat what was said in their own words.
- Teach self-questioning strategies to aid memory storage. For example, participants can ask themselves these questions: Can I picture this in my mind? What pops into my head when I hear this? What does this remind me of?
- Stimulate critical (higher-level) thinking by asking who, what, where, when, why, and how questions.
- Encourage participants to share what they know about a topic.
- Encourage construction of full-sentence responses.
- Allow participants to talk about what they know rather than what they don't know. For example, ask:

What can you say about _____?

What do you know about _____?

Tell us about _____.

Some participants might struggle with oral language. The following areas could present difficulties.

- Has trouble pronouncing some words. Speech is difficult to understand. Speech pattern is hesitant and unsure.
- Vocabulary is limited to familiar words. Limits use of new words in spontaneous speech. Has trouble with word associations and categorizations.
- Describes familiar objects rather than calling them by name (e.g., calling a toothbrush a “teeth cleaner”). Buys time to try to retrieve a word by saying “Umm,” “Well,” or “You know.”

Getting Started

The purpose of the following activities is to generate “quality talk.” These activities reinforce critical-thinking skills such as predicting, inferring, sequencing, recalling, paraphrasing, analyzing, interpreting, describing, and explaining. They can be used in a variety of ways.