

Pre-K

Community
Studies

The Post Office

Learning about Mail



STORYPATH®

The Post Office

Learning about Mail

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ABOUT PRE-K STORYPATH

THE PRE-K STORYPATH STRATEGY

The *Pre-K Storypath* structure is a familiar one: the story. The *Pre-K Storypath* strategy is grounded in the belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning. Through dramatic play, children connect what they already know to new learning. They rehearse real-life events as they tackle the problems presented through the plot of the story. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that children feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, *Pre-K Storypath* draws support from decades of experience with teachers and children. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about learning:

- **Constructing Meaning:** When children build on their prior knowledge during dramatic play, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their play is more meaningful and memorable.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Through dramatic play, children develop important social skills. They learn to conduct themselves in appropriate and positive ways as they negotiate the problems presented through the story line.
- **Problem Solving:** When children are engaged in problem solving that is developmentally appropriate, they take ownership for their learning and develop self-confidence.
- **Integrated Learning:** The story structure integrates ideas about the social world with skills for literacy, mathematics, and other subjects.
- **Universal Appeal:** The story structure is universal, and children, whatever their background and prior experience, find a place in the unit to build and deepen their prior knowledge and understanding.
- **Literacy Development:** When children engage in rich dramatic play, they rehearse the oral language skills necessary for developing strong reading and writing skills.

An Inquiry Approach

Questioning, by both the teacher and children, is a key aspect of *Pre-K Storypath*. Through the story structure and the conversation it creates, the teacher guides children in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Asking open-ended questions results in more complex responses and further develops children's oral communication skills.

Pre-K Storypath Engages the Imagination

Each *Pre-K Storypath* unit challenges children to imagine themselves in new roles and in new places. *Pre-K Storypath* stimulates children's imaginations through dramatic play as well as a variety of other activities such as listening to stories, engaging in story dictation and dramatization, and creating art projects.

THE UNIT COMPONENTS

Teacher's Guide

Each *Pre-K Storypath* unit includes a teacher's guide. You can follow the graphic story to see how one teacher uses the *Pre-K Storypath* unit in her classroom.

Assessments

You can use the *Child Observation Form* to document children's behaviors and progress in each episode, as well as to maintain anecdotal records. A summary of key information from the *Child Observation Forms* can be recorded on the *Group Assessment Summary*. The *Family Poster* can be displayed in the classroom at the start of the unit to inform parents about children's learning.

Discussion Posters

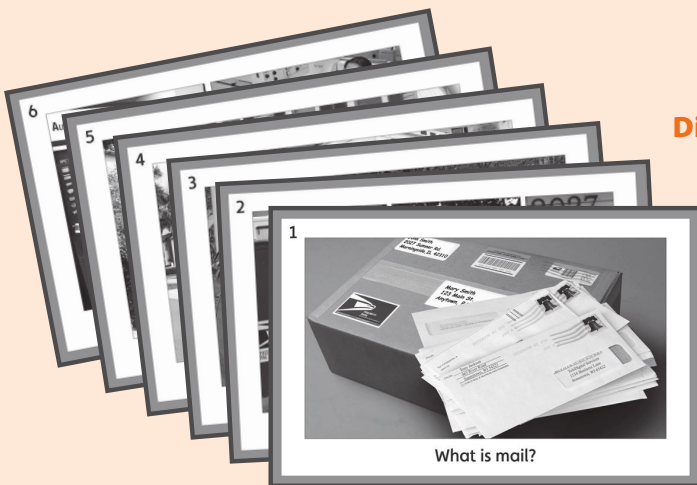
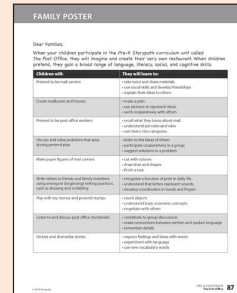
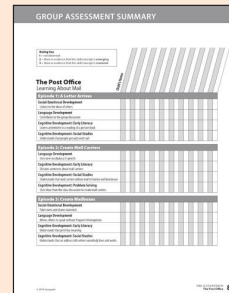
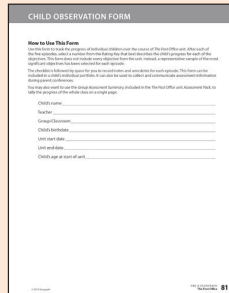
Each unit includes a packet of six *Discussion Posters*. These posters provide visuals and a guiding question to stimulate discussion with children. The posters can be used to introduce and reinforce new concepts and vocabulary.

The back of each poster provides open-ended discussion questions and vocabulary words that may arise naturally from conversations with children. This information is provided in both English and Spanish.

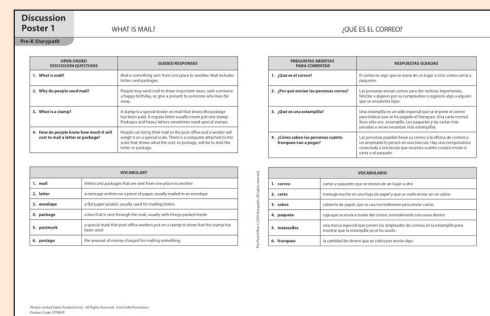
Teacher's Guide



Assessments



Discussion Posters



A LETTER ARRIVES

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF MAIL

page 14

Children are introduced to the topic with the arrival of a letter, and children prepare a letter for their families.

- Materials**
- A letter written to the children and sent to the school through the U.S. Postal Service
 - Copies of Teaching Master 1, *Family Letter*, pp. 52 and 53
 - Writing materials, envelopes, pretend stamps
 - Optional: stickers

Schedule Spend approximately 15 minutes introducing topic; decorate letters during free play or center time.

READ AND PLAY

page 17

Children discuss mail, look at *Discussion Posters* and examples of mail, and listen to a story. Children explore mail concepts during dramatic play.

- Materials**
- *Discussion Posters 1, 2, and 3*
 - Examples of letters, postcards, and junk mail
 - Picture book about mail carriers (see p. 77 for list)

Schedule Allow approximately 20 minutes for story and discussion. Encourage dramatic play to develop by allowing 45 minutes of uninterrupted free play each day.

ASSESS AND REFLECT

page 19

Children create a word chart and reflect on their experiences. Teachers begin portfolios for individual children.

- Materials**
- File folders for individual portfolios
 - *Child Observation Forms*

Schedule Allow approximately 20 minutes for group discussion; teacher planning time for reflection and assessment will vary.

EPISODE OBJECTIVES

Social-Emotional Development

- Use language to communicate needs.
- Take turns and share materials.
- Listen to the ideas of others.

Language Development

- Listen for information.
- Allow others to speak without frequent interruptions.
- Contribute to group discussions.
- Use new vocabulary in conversation.
- Understand and follow oral directions.

Cognitive Development: Early Literacy

- Listen attentively to the reading of a picture book.
- Focus on illustrations for details.
- Recognize print in the local environment.
- Understand that different text forms are used for different purposes.

Cognitive Development: Social Studies

- Understand that the mail carrier delivers the mail to homes and businesses.
- Understand that people get and send mail.
- Understand that an address tells where somebody lives or works.

Cognitive Development: Problem Solving

- Use ideas from the class discussion to understand mail and mail delivery.

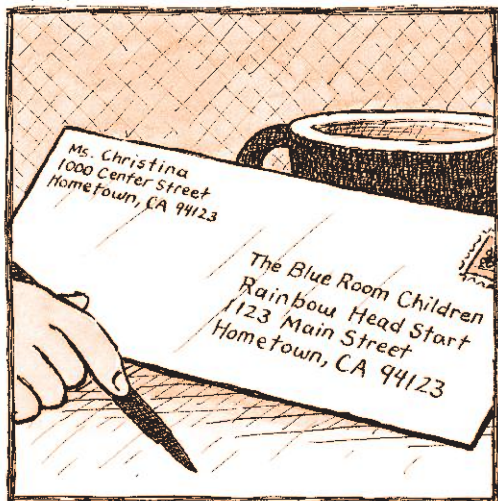
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EPISODE

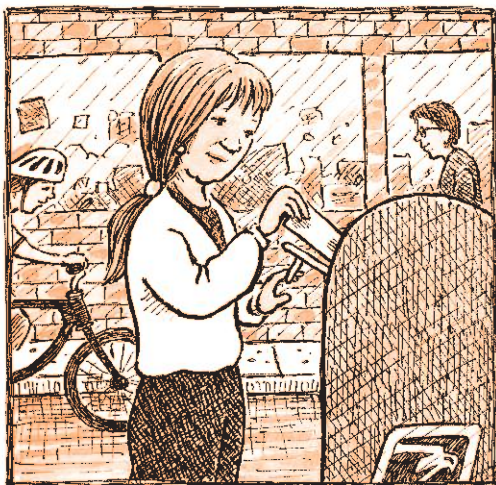
EPISODE 1

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF MAIL

The week before we started the unit, I prepared a letter for the class.



I sent the letter through the U.S. Postal Service.



Dear Blue Room Children,

I have some important news. Our class is going to be learning about mail. "Mail" means letters and packages that are sent from place to place. Together we will learn about mail, mail carriers, and post offices.

To learn about mail, we will do many fun things together. We will write letters to our friends and families. We will work on art projects, too. And, of course, there will be lots of pretending!

We will spend many school days learning about mail. Then we are going to have a party. Are you ready to get started?

Sincerely,
Your teachers,
Ms. Christina and Mr. Jonathan



I didn't know exactly which day it would arrive, so I allowed plenty of time. The letter came three days before our unit was scheduled to start. So I held on to it, unopened, until the big day.



INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF MAIL

Prepare a letter to the class

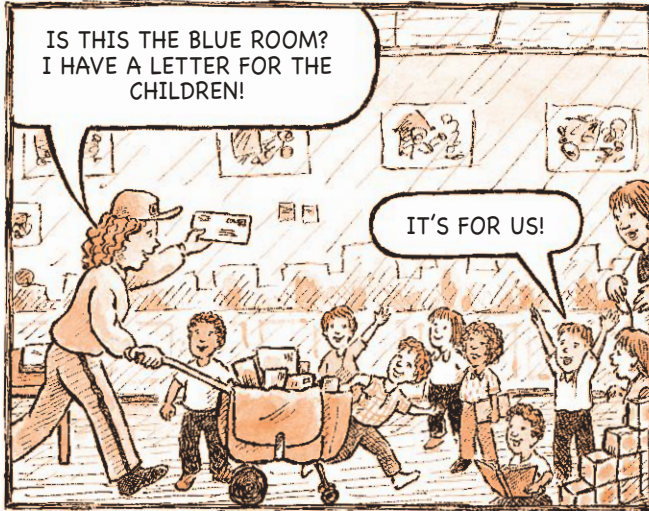
In this episode, children will be introduced to the unit with the arrival of an important letter. Before the unit begins, write a letter to the children, announcing that they will be learning about mail at school. In the envelope with the letter you may want to include a set of stickers that the children will use as pretend stamps when they create their first letters.

If time permits, send the letter to the school through the U.S. Postal Service. Then the letter will have a postmark. If time is short, simply seal the letter and save it for the day when you will launch the unit.

EL If possible, prepare a translation of your letter in the home language of children who are English learners. For more information about teaching children who are English learners, read the article on page 72.

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF MAIL *continued*

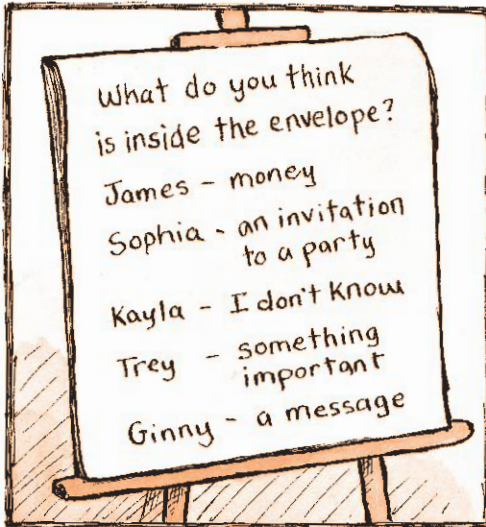
I asked our mail carrier, Mrs. Romero, to visit our classroom and deliver the special letter to the class.



After Mrs. Romero left, we gathered on the rug.



I wrote down the children's predictions.



Then I opened the letter. I was amazed by how carefully the children listened as I read.



Announce the arrival of a letter

Announce to the class that they have received a letter. If possible, have your neighborhood mail carrier visit the classroom and deliver the letter to the children. Then gather the children for group time and show children the envelope. With a sense of drama ask the children questions such as

- What is this?
- How did it get here?
- What do you think might be inside the envelope?

Read and discuss the letter

After building suspense, open the letter and read it aloud to the class. Allow children to ask questions and comment on the letter. Compare children's earlier predictions with what was actually inside the envelope.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

When teachers write down children's predictions, children

- learn new uses of print
- see that their ideas are valued
- have an opportunity to test a hypothesis

EPISODE 1

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC OF MAIL *continued*

During center time, we invited children to visit the writing table to prepare letters for their families.



We gave each child a copy of the *Family Letter* and invited the children to decorate the letters and "sign" their names.



The children were very excited about giving the letters to their families, especially Trey.



Prepare letters to families

Make copies of the *Family Letter*, page 52. Be sure to include in the letter the date and time of your letter-writing party so parents can plan ahead for this event. Invite children to decorate these letters with stickers or drawings and "sign" their names at the bottom of the letter. This activity can be completed as a large group at tables or as a choice during free play.

EL For families who speak Spanish, a translation of the letter has been provided on page 53. For more information about how children develop emergent writing skills, read the Teacher Workshop on page 61.

Make family connections

The purpose of this letter is to generate excitement about the topic and to involve parents and families. Have the children hand-deliver these letters to their parents instead of sending them through the U.S. Postal Service. This will give children an immediate sense of satisfaction that will help build momentum for the new unit.

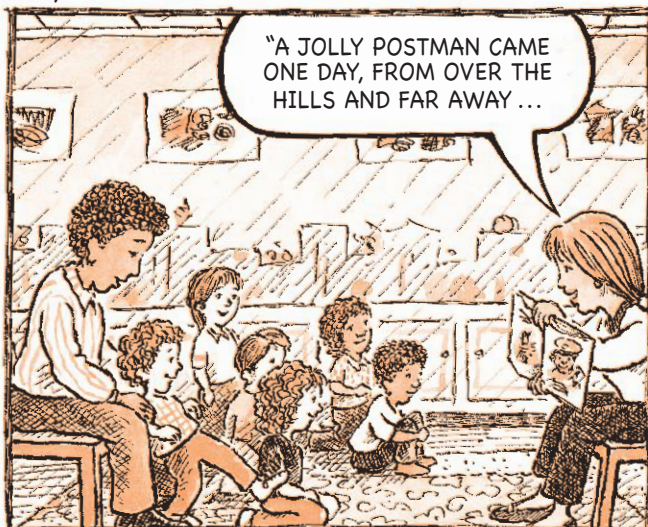
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

As children develop emergent writing skills, allow them to experiment in a variety of ways, including

- controlled scribbling
- tracing letters
- drawing shapes
- copying letters

READ AND PLAY

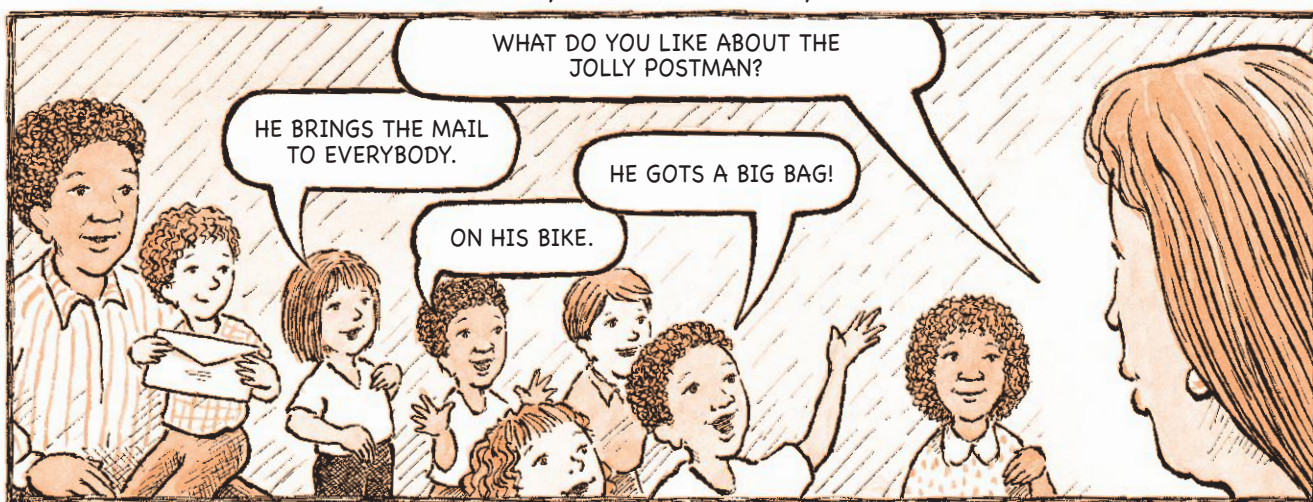
The next day, I read *The Jolly Postman* during story time.



Trey had a hard time sitting still. He wanted to touch the book.



Jonathan gave Trey an envelope to hold. That helped Trey calm down. Then the group had a great discussion. The children were able to recall many details from the story.



READ AND PLAY

Read a story

Respond to children's curiosity by reading a story that explains some basic concepts about mail, mail carriers, and mail delivery. Suggested picture book titles are listed on page 77.

As you read, discuss the mail carrier's job. Point out the mail carrier's uniform and talk about why postal carriers wear uniforms.

The topic of addresses will be covered in depth later in the unit. For now, you may want to simply tell children what an address is ("written directions that tell where a house or building is located").

Use anti-bias and culturally relevant practices

As children talk about people who deliver the mail, watch for opportunities to discuss gender roles so that stereotypes are not reinforced. You may want to introduce gender-neutral language by using the words "mail carrier" instead of "mailman" or "postman."

EPISODE 1

READ AND PLAY *continued*

In response to the *Family Letter*, many parents brought in junk mail, stickers, and envelopes. We added these materials to our dramatic play area. Soon the children were pretending to be mail carriers.



During play, I observed the children. I wanted to know what they already understood about mail and what they were ready to learn.

Meanwhile, Jonathan created an activity that was great for active children like Trey because it involved stacking, pulling, and lifting.



Encourage dramatic play

Make sure your writing area is well-stocked with paper, envelopes, pens, pencils, and stickers. You may also want to put out a box or bin of junk mail and other materials children can use to create mail. Allow children to use these materials in both the writing area and in the dramatic play area.

EL Group children to ensure that non-native English speakers interact with native English speakers.

PROFESSIONAL VOCABULARY

open-ended question *noun* a question that inspires creative thinking and cognitive growth because it has more than one correct answer

ASSESS Pre-assess individual children

During play, observe what children already know about mail and how mail is delivered. Write down your observations and, as the opportunity arises, ask each child **open-ended questions** and write down the answers. Keep these notes in the child's individual portfolio for future reference.

Suggested open-ended questions:

- What do you know about mail?
- How do you think mail gets from place to place?

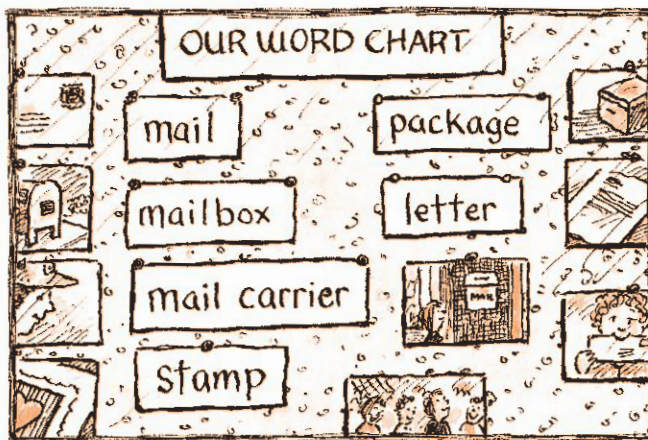
ASSESS AND REFLECT

One day, we went on a mini field trip. We walked around the block and looked for mailboxes on stores and houses.



Back at school, we gathered on the rug and reviewed what we had learned about mail. We looked at examples of mail and talked about the characteristics of each item.

We also started a word chart, a list of important words related to mail. I posted the photos from our walk and the word chart cards on the classroom wall. We used this display throughout the unit to talk about what we had learned.



ASSESS AND REFLECT

Look at mailboxes

Take a walk through the neighborhood and have children look for mailboxes. Point out the differences between the large blue mailboxes used for sending mail and the smaller mailboxes on homes and buildings used for receiving mail. If possible, take photos to use later for documentation.

Discuss mail

Gather the children together to discuss what they have learned so far about mail. Use *Discussion Posters 1, 2 and 3* to review and reinforce concepts about mail.

During the discussion, help children learn new vocabulary words by creating a word chart. Write down each new word on a card and discuss each word. If possible, add a small sketch next to each word, to help children visualize the new concepts. Display the words on a bulletin board. There is no expectation that children will read these words independently; the goal is to expose them to print concepts.

EL For children who are not native English speakers, add words in the children's home language.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Creating a word chart

- increases print awareness
- documents children's ideas and interests
- reinforces new vocabulary learning

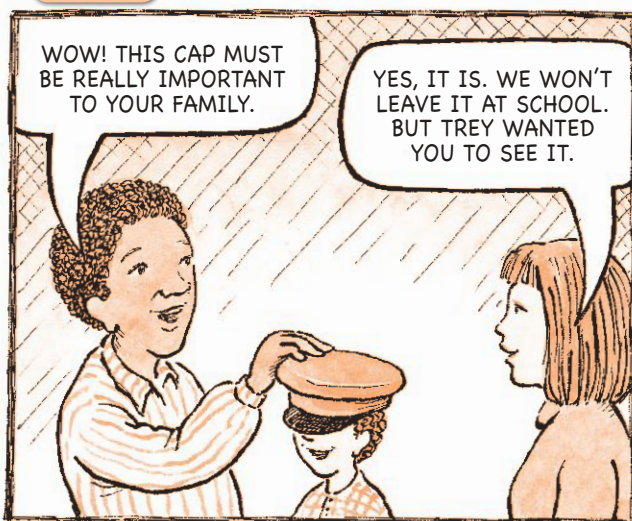
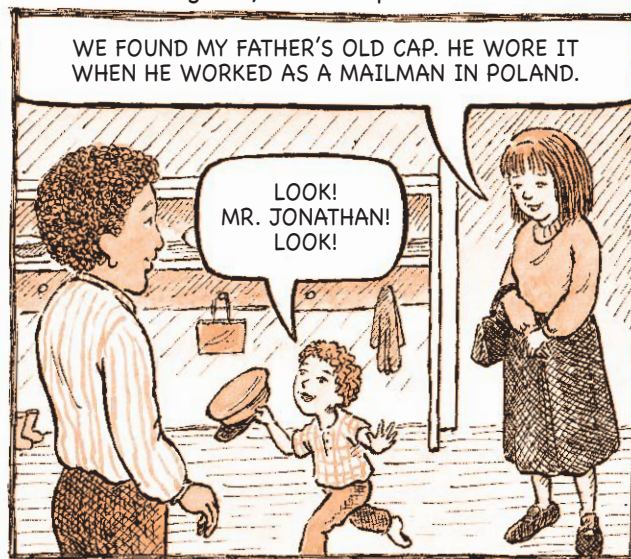
EPISODE 1

ASSESS AND REFLECT *continued*

During our planning meeting, Jonathan and I worked on the children's individual portfolios.



The next morning, Trey had a surprise for us.



ASSESS Assess the group

Did children

- demonstrate an understanding of mail in their dramatic play?
- use new vocabulary words during discussion and play?
- show curiosity for learning more about mail?

Use your observations of the group to help shape your plans for next steps.

For more information about using observation and portfolios for assessment, read the article on page 74.

ASSESS Assess individual children

Use the *Child Observation Form* to assess each child's learning in Episode 1. Collect items for children's portfolios, such as

- dictated words and sentences
- photos of children writing their letters
- notes summarizing comments made by parents

Make family connections

Invite families to contribute items for the unit such as pretend stamps, postcards, greeting cards, envelopes, catalogs, junk mail, scales, or old mailboxes. Find out if any of the parents or family members are postal service employees and might be willing to visit your class.

1



What is mail?

Discussion Poster 1

Pre-K Storypath

WHAT IS MAIL?

OPEN-ENDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	GUIDED RESPONSES
1. What is mail?	Mail is something sent from one place to another. Mail includes letters and packages.
2. Why do people send mail?	People may send mail to share important news, wish someone a happy birthday, or give a present to someone who lives far away.
3. What is a stamp?	A stamp is a special sticker on mail that shows the postage has been paid. A regular letter usually needs just one stamp. Packages and heavy letters sometimes need special stamps.
4. How do people know how much it will cost to mail a letter or package?	People can bring their mail to the post office and a worker will weigh it on a special scale. There is a computer attached to the scale that shows what the cost, or postage, will be to mail the letter or package.

VOCABULARY	
1. mail	letters and packages that are sent from one place to another
2. letter	a message written on a sheet of paper, usually mailed in an envelope
3. envelope	a flat paper pocket, usually used for mailing letters
4. package	a box that is sent through the mail, usually with things packed inside
5. postmark	a special mark that post office workers put on a stamp to show that the stamp has been used
6. postage	the amount of money charged for mailing something

¿QUÉ ES EL CORREO?

PREGUNTAS ABIERTAS PARA COMENTAR	RESPUESTAS GUIADAS
1. ¿Qué es el correo?	El correo es algo que se envía de un lugar a otro, como cartas y paquetes.
2. ¿Por qué envían las personas correo?	Las personas envían correo para dar noticias importantes, felicitar a alguien por su cumpleaños o regalarle algo a alguien que se encuentra lejos.
3. ¿Qué es una estampilla?	Una estampilla es un sello especial que se le pone al correo para indicar que se ha pagado el franqueo. Una carta normal lleva sólo una estampilla. Los paquetes y las cartas más pesadas a veces necesitan más estampillas.
4. ¿Cómo saben las personas cuánto franqueo van a pagar?	Las personas pueden llevar su correo a la oficina de correos y un empleado lo pesará en una báscula. Hay una computadora conectada a la báscula que muestra cuánto costará enviar la carta o el paquete.

VOCABULARIO	
1. correo	cartas y paquetes que se envían de un lugar a otro
2. carta	mensaje escrito en una hoja de papel y que se suele enviar en un sobre
3. sobre	cubierta de papel, que se usa normalmente para enviar cartas
4. paquete	caja que se envía a través del correo, normalmente con cosas dentro
5. matasellos	una marca especial que ponen los empleados de correos en la estampilla para mostrar que la estampilla ya se ha usado
6. franqueo	la cantidad de dinero que se cobra por enviar algo

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