Parents Reading Children SUCCEEDING

A Family Literacy Program

The British Columbia
Literacy Project

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This work was made possible by
The Province of British Columbia
and
Human Resources Development Canada
National Literacy Secretariat

Invermere, B.C.
December 2005

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This work was made possible by:
A grant from the National Literacy Secretariat (Human Resources Development Canada) through the Adult Literacy Cost-Shared Program in partnership with the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank:

The National Literacy Secretariat and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education Cost-Shared Program for making this project possible and for their patience while waiting for the final product.

The College of the Rockies for agreeing to partner in the funding application.

Leona Gadsby for her constant support and encouragement.

The Windermere Valley Literacy Advisory Committee members for their thoughtful support for literacy development in the community.

The Invermere Family Resource Centre for agreeing to be the administrative agent for this project.

The staff and volunteers through the years who have contributed to the development of this program.

The parents who have participated in this program over the years and helped to make it grow.

Betsy Brierley for her attention to detail as the editor.

Warren Clark for rescuing me in the layout department.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The History of Parents Reading, Children Succeeding

The seeds for Parents Reading, Children Succeeding (PRCS) were planted as part of a pilot project funded by the National Literacy Secretariat in 1997. In that year, five small rural communities in the East Kootenay region of British Columbia joined together to apply for family literacy funding. The first Family Literacy Advisory Committees and Family Literacy Coordinators learned about family literacy, their community and its people, researched options and possibilities for family literacy programming, and planned a program for each community. In the second year, each of the five communities piloted the program decided upon by their local Family Literacy Advisory Committee.

The only literacy programs available at the time in the Windermere Valley were Adult Fundamental and Adult Basic Education, which were available at the satellite campus of the College of the Rockies in Invermere. Although the Advisory Committees identified a wide range of literacy needs of adults and children of all ages during the planning year, they decided to begin with a program for parents and preschool children. Given the limited resources available for family literacy, they believed that trying to meet the needs of young parents with preschool children might make the most impact over time.

The Advisory Committee knew that parents are interested and concerned about their children's development and would likely be most interested in a program that focused on the literacy and learning of their child. The committee believed that adult learning would happen within the context of assisting parents with skills that would support their children's learning.

At that time no agency was offering group programs for parents in the several smaller towns of the Windermere Valley. The Windermere Valley Family Literacy Advisory Committee chose to design and deliver a series of five workshops for parents and children three to five years of age to be delivered in three locations during the pilot project year. This program became Parents Reading, Children Succeeding.

Over a period of several years, the series of workshops expanded to ten; topics were added and deleted, and program activities changed and evolved. Facilitators varied the topics and related activities as participants changed and as their own understanding grew and deepened. This manual is an attempt to present a snapshot of one version of the program.

Facilitators who deliver PRCS will bring their own experience and background knowledge to the program. The manual is not meant to be prescriptive but rather a jumping-off point. Facilitators should adapt the content to meet the needs of parents attending their program and incorporate their own knowledge and interests.

Program Overview

The Parents Reading, Children Succeeding program is designed primarily for parents of children three to five years old. However, we have had parents of younger children in the program. Usually, these are younger siblings of children in the target age range. The only issue this raises is one of additional staffing needs. Babies can easily stay with their parent. Children who are walking but not yet comfortable being away from their parents for a length of time can also stay with the parent group, although some parents find this distracting. Making sure to provide simple, appropriate toys in the parent group room for these children or encouraging parents to bring a toy they know their child particularly likes will help parents to focus on the discussions and activities.

What is the focus of the program?

The main purpose of the parent portion of the program is to share with parents ideas and activities that will help them support the learning and emergent literacy skill development of their preschool children. Indirectly, parents will also gain knowledge about learning in general while they engage in discussions and activities that offer them opportunities to practise their own literacy skills.

The children's portion of the program has two purposes: to provide a safe, fun program of activities so that parents can attend the program, and to engage children in activities that will support and encourage their learning.

What is the core philosophy of the program?

The PRCS program is based on two simple but powerful ideas:

1) Parents are their children's first, best, and most consistent teachers. Parents have the experience, one-to-one time, love, and motivation to help their children learn that no one else in the world has.

2) Parents are usually already doing many things that help their children learn. However, parents may not understand the value of what they already know and do with their children.

PRCS Program Schedule and Requirements

The program is designed to be delivered over ten weeks. The ideal length of each session is two and one half hours.

Each session is organized as follows:

Welcome Circle	15 minutes
Children's and Parents' Programs	75 minutes
Snack Time	15 minutes
Parent and Child Time (PACT)	30 minutes
Circle Time	15 minutes

Try to encourage parents to arrive a few minutes before your scheduled start time so that they can take off coats and mittens and have a little socializing time with their children before you begin.

What is the optimal size of the group?

A group of no more than twelve parents is most manageable. If your program is full, you can expect at least fifteen children.

Space Requirement

PRCS requires separate spaces for the parents' group and the children's group. The rooms should be in the same facility and not too far apart, particularly if you will have children younger than three in your program.

There should be space in the children's room for a circle of parents and children together, child-sized tables and chairs, at least two easels, a sink, a counter or table for supplies and, if possible, a large enough open space for some active games and free play. A bathroom should be easily accessible.

The room for the parents' group needs chairs and tables for parents to sit comfortably with enough table space for each parent to work on projects. Set up the tables in a square so that everyone is facing each other. It is helpful to have an easel or a place to hang a flip chart or whiteboard.

PACT and Circle Time will be shared in the children's room. Snack time can take place in either room. A kitchen or coffee space is helpful but not necessary.

Staff and Volunteers Required

Coordinator/Parent Facilitator (this can be two separate positions)

Children's Facilitator

Children's Facilitator Assistant(s): The number of assistants needed will depend on the number of children registered in your program and their ages. One assistant is necessary and another will be needed if there are more than fifteen children, particularly if some are younger than three years old. Often,

parents who have attended the program once have volunteered to assist in the children's program.

Basic Supplies Needed

1. Parents' Program
   - A flip chart or whiteboard with markers
   - Pens and pencils, one or two sets of coloured markers
   - Hole-punched lined paper, glue sticks and scissors for parents
   - A Duo-Tang for each parent to hold handouts (couples can share one)
   - A stapler

Additional supplies for parent activities for each session. Lists are provided below.

In addition to the basic supplies, photocopies of the session handouts, and examples of projects you will complete with parents, you will need the following supplies each week.

Session One
- Name tags
- A large fabric or felt shape such as a simple tree or house to act as a "home" for name tags
- Small felt or poster board shapes for name tags
- Small safety pins
- A few tubes of fabric paint (if you use felt) or markers (if you use poster board)
- A calendar for each parent
- Stickers to mark program dates on their calendars
- Half sheets of poster board for each parent
- A selection of magazines for parents to cut out images
- Puzzle-making images (cereal boxes, greeting cards, magazines, or photos)
- Cardboard or poster board to reinforce magazine images
- Zipper-top plastic bags
- Clear contact paper (optional)
- Craft sticks (10 for each parent)

Session Two
- Enough sets of ten or twelve small plastic objects such as wild animals, farm animals, trucks, or other items for half the parents in your group
- Fun foam sheets in six colours
- Self-sticking magnetic tape

Session Three
- White typing paper
- Coloured construction paper
- A selection of magazines
- Medium-tipped markers
- Sample "I Like You Because…" card
- Card stock
- A4 Envelopes
- Glitter, sequins, stickers

Session Four
- A sample Art Box that you have filled and decorated
- A face-painting book borrowed from your local library
- Enough small jars or paper cups to provide each parent with one container
- Measuring spoons and a measuring cup
- 1 box of cornstarch
- 1 large jar of cold cream (or shortening)
- Food colouring

Session Five
- A book to read aloud. Some suggestions are: *The Day You Were Born* by Jamie Lee Curtis, *When You Were a Baby* by Anne Jonas, *Once I Was Very Small* by Elizabeth Ferber, or *My Grandfather Loved the Stars* by Julie Lawson
- An object or photograph that means something to you (and that you are willing to share with the group) to act as a story starter for you
- A set of three to five nesting objects for each parent
- Felt, construction paper, or contact paper to cover the nesting objects
- Images from colouring books, magazines, or printed clip art to represent characters in a story, rhyme, or song
- Hot-glue gun or carpenter's glue

Session Six
- One piece of Masonite for each parent or a large pizza box
- One piece of flannel to cover the board for each parent
- Hot glue, carpenter's glue, or fabric glue
- Dowelling for each pizza box if you use them
- Felt pieces in a variety of colours
- Small zipper-topped plastic bags
- Several tubes of fabric paint
- Photocopies of felt board story patterns
- Examples of stick puppets, fingertip puppets, and paper bag puppets
- Enough materials for parents to make at least one puppet at home

- Paper lunch bag for each parent
- Yellow, black, and white construction paper
- White index card, cardboard, or poster board
- Rubber bands
- A wordless picture book to read aloud

Session Seven
- White poster board alphabet sign (to be made ahead)
- One book to read aloud

Session Eight
- Inexpensive watercolour paints
- Small-handled watercolour brushes
- Rough-textured, inexpensive paper
- Coloured construction paper
- White typing paper
- Medium-tipped markers
- Photographs (6-8 each, supplied by parents)
- Several copies of the book layout page
- Brass fasteners for each book
- Blank assembled books for parents to take home

Session Nine
- A few small objects such as toy trucks, coloured links, or blocks
- Number magnets
- Packages of mixed pasta shapes
- Packages of small plastic animals
- Dominoes
- Blocks of different sizes and colours
- Puzzles
- A box of mixed crayons, pencils, and markers
- A bag of mixed buttons
- Counting books
- Felt board stories
- Graduated measuring cups
- Copies of the Pick Sticks game board and directions
- Markers in six colours
- Six craft sticks for each parent
- Small zipper-topped plastic bags

Session Ten
- One book to give as a gift to each child
- One copy of the graduation certificate for each family
- Card stock for photocopying the certificates

Books

You will also need a selection of children's books each week. If your organization does not own a library of appropriate books, borrow them from your public library. There are lists of suggested books in the notes for each session.

If you own your own books, it is wonderful to be able to lend them to parents each week. Make up a sign-out sheet and identify your books with a distinctive sticker. You might lose some books this way, but it is very much worth the risk.

In a small community, the selection at the local library might be limited but inter-library loan is available almost everywhere, and if you plan ahead, your librarian will be happy to request books for you. If you borrow books from the local library or through inter-library loan for use at the program, make sure to let parents know that they can borrow these books from the library.

Encourage parents to use their local library and to go there often with their children.

2. Children's Program

A selection of toys such as building blocks, a farm set, a kitchen set, cars and trucks, shape sorters, manipulatives such as puzzles and lacing cards, and dolls for free play will be required. It is best not to have too many toys available, and to take them out only for free play and then put them away. Otherwise, it can be difficult to engage children in planned group activities.

You will also need a supply of art materials such as:

- Construction, finger-paint, and plain paper
- Tempera paints, paint cups with lids, and large-handled brushes
- Painting aprons or shirts
- Large-sized markers and crayons
- Small bottles of white glue and glue sticks
- Child-safe scissors
- Stickers
- A supply of chenille sticks, pompoms, popsicle sticks, stickers, and other interesting art materials
- Playdough with tools and plastic cookie cutters
- Plastic placemats for the playdough table
- A felt board with a variety of stories

Specific additional supplies will also be needed for the activities planned by the Children's Facilitator.

On the first day of your program—

Welcome parents and children to Parents Reading, Children Succeeding

All the staff should be ready to greet and welcome parents and children as they arrive to each session.

Show the parents and children around the facility. Show them where the bathrooms are, where the parents will be meeting, the kitchen (if there is one), and where the children's group will be. Point out where to put coats and boots.

Name tags

On the first day, have parents and children make felt or poster board name tags together as soon as they arrive. Keep the name tags between sessions even if the children resist leaving them behind. To help them feel more willing to leave their name tags behind, make a "home" where they can leave them each week. Use felt or other fabric wrapped around heavy cardboard in the form of a tree, a house, or other shape.

Materials:

- Fabric or felt shape such as a simple tree or house
- Felt or poster board shapes in a variety of colours
- Small safety pins
- A few tubes of fabric paint (if you use felt) or markers (if you use poster board)

Invite each parent and child to choose a shape in a colour they like to make their name tags.

Encourage parents to involve their child in making their name tags. A parent can ask her child to spell his own name aloud if the child can do this, or the parent can say each letter as he or she paints it on the shape. Or, if the child cannot yet print, the parent can print the child's name. (Encourage parents to use upper and lower case letters appropriately).

If you used fabric paint, ask parents to leave the name tags on the table until snack time to allow enough time for them to dry.

Use small safety pins to pin the name tags on clothing.

Program Components

Welcome Circle

Beginning each session with a short Welcome Circle will help both parents and children become comfortable and focus for the day. The Welcome Circle should last no more than fifteen minutes.

Families may not know each other and will need some time to become comfortable in the group and with the staff. The children are young and some will not have experienced being separated from their parents for any length of time. They likely will not know the staff and will need some help and reassurance from Mom or Dad to feel comfortable with the Children's Facilitator and her assistant.

Sing this quick little song to get everyone (parents and children) sitting on the floor for the Welcome Circle. You may have to sing it two or three times before you have everyone's attention.

Roly Poly

Roly poly, roly poly
(Roll your hands around each other like a wheel)
Up, up, up
Up, up, up
(Raise your arms further in the air with each "up")
Roly poly, roly poly
Roly, roly, poly
Down, down, down
(Bring your hands closer to the floor with each "down")
Down, down, down

Establish a routine by starting every Welcome Circle with "Roly Poly" and the welcome song "Here We Are Together" and "Name Song" on the next page.

Invite all the parents and children to sit in a circle on the floor. Hopefully you are using a space with a welcoming carpeted area where you can all sit comfortably together.

The Children's Facilitator leads the Circle Time so that the parents, and especially the children, can start to feel comfortable with her. She begins by asking the name of the parent sitting beside her. Encourage the children to say their own names. However, if a child is too shy this first week, ask the parent the name of the child.

Continue around the circle in this way until everyone has been introduced.

Sing the following welcome song.

Here We Are Together

(Sing to the tune of "The More We Get Together")

Here we are together, together, together
Here we are together all sitting on the floor
We're happy to be here; We're so glad to see you
Here we are together all sitting on the floor

Then sing the following name song.

Name Song

Higgeldy, piggledy, bumblebee
Who can say their name for me?
(Children and parents take turns around the circle saying their name one at a time beginning with the facilitator; e.g., Peggy!)

Let's all shout *(e.g., PEGGY!)*
(Clap once for each syllable as you all shout out the name)

Let's all whisper *(e.g., Peggy)*
(Clap once softly for each syllable as you whisper the name)

After a few weeks when everyone is familiar with each other, you can change the name song to:

Rickasauraus, rockaraurus, kangaroo
We will shout your name for you!
(The facilitator points to each parent and child in turn)

Let's all shout *(NAME!)*
(Clap once for each syllable as you all shout out the name)

Let's all whisper *(name)*
(Clap once for each syllable as you all whisper the name)

Introduce Rhymes

Teach the group the following rhymes the first week. Always teach a new rhyme in the same manner.

Recite the rhyme once first, including all the motions.

Then say the rhyme a line at a time, encouraging everyone to repeat the line

together after you, and continue until you have completed it again. Then say it all together as a group at least once.

Here Is a House

Here is a nest for a bluebird
(Make a nest with your hands)
Here is a hive for a bee
(Make a hive shape by cupping your hands together)
Here is a hole for a rabbit
(Make a circle with your hands)
And here is a house for me!
(Tent your hands together over your head)

Elephant Rhyme

An Elephant goes like this, like that
(Pat knees)
He's terribly big
(Reach up)
He's terribly fat
(Reach to your sides)
He has no fingers
(Fold fingers over and show hands)
He has no toes
(Curl toes and hold out feet)
But goodness, gracious what a nose!
(Reach arm out in front of your face and swing it back and forth)

Repeat familiar rhymes and add one or two new ones each week.

Discuss what the children will be doing today

Prepare the children for their special time with the Children's Facilitator in their own group.

The Children's Facilitator should spend a couple of minutes talking about the fun and exciting things the children will be doing while parents and children are in their separate groups. Many children of this age love to feel that they are at "school" with a teacher, and they often respond enthusiastically to the idea that their parent is also going to "school" with their own teacher.

Ending the Welcome Circle

Finish the Welcome Circle with a physically active rhyme such as:

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom!

Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
(Swing your arms back and forth in
rhythm to the words and march in time)
If you want to take a trip
Climb aboard my rocket ship
(Hold one arm up from the elbow
and "walk" your other hand up)
Zoom, zoom, zoom
We're going to the moon
(Swing and march again)
Five, four, three, two, one
(Count down with your fingers)
Blastoff!
(Jump up as high as you can!)

Allow parents a few minutes to settle their children in the group with the Children's Facilitator before joining the Parent Facilitator in their meeting space.

Children's Program

The Children's Facilitator should have Early Childhood Development training and experience.

The children's program should be planned on a quality group day care model to develop children's learning through a variety of experiences and active play. Stations and whole-group activities should be offered each week including dramatic play, games, manipulatives, building with various kinds of blocks and materials, creative art activities, science and math, and literacy activities.

The children's personal and social development should be supported by encouraging them to take turns, share, and focus on one activity at a time.

Snack

Providing a simple, healthy snack is important. Remember good nutrition in what you offer for snack and include fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, crackers, muffins, plain cookies such as arrowroot or digestive, and juice. Remember to include coffee, tea, and water for parents. Encourage parents to sit down with their children to enjoy the snack together. This is a good opportunity to build the group and provide parents with some social networking time.

Parent and Child Together (PACT)

PACT time is at least as important as the parent and child components of the program.

PACT:
Allows parents and children time to engage in a child-led activity. PACT encourages parents to spend unstructured time with their children playing and engaging in activities the child chooses to do with the parent.

Provides time for parents to practise strategies with their children that have been introduced during the parents' component of the program while staff is present to support them.

Provides parents and children with an opportunity to share games, art, stories, and other activities.

Allows facilitators to encourage parents and children to explore the activity stations with each other, and to encourage parents to ask their children to share what they have been doing while the parents have been busy in their own program.

Provides time for parents to help their children complete a project they have not finished, read a book together, or try something new you have discussed in the parents' session that day.

Allows facilitators to plan an occasional game for everyone to play or a special art activity.

Story Circle

Close the program each week with a Story Circle. Include a mix of read stories, told stories, rhymes, and songs. For some sessions, one or more parents will have prepared a story to tell, a book to read, or a rhyme to share with the group.

The facilitator will model ways to read to children, tell stories, and sing and share rhymes. She will also encourage children to take part in the storytelling by inviting them to place felt pieces on the felt board, contribute the repetitive refrains of a story, and point out or count objects on a page.

Make sure that parents participate with their children during the Story Circle. This may be the first time a child has been part of a Story Circle. Helping children to sit in the circle, listen with attention, and be part of the action and discussion is the responsibility of both the facilitator and the parent.

Occasionally, during the children's program the following week, the Children's Facilitator can re-read a book that was shared at the last Story Circle and plan extension activities based on the story.

A Guide to the Parent Facilitator Notes

Icons have been used down the left side of pages in the Parent Facilitator Notes to identify the content. The meaning of each icon is noted below.

This icon indicates background information. The information is not meant to be exhaustive. It represents some basic information about each topic. If the facilitator is unfamiliar with the subject, she should consider reading additional information.

The facilitator should not read this information aloud to parents or summarize it directly. The information provided should be understood as background information that the facilitator will keep in mind and add to from his or her own knowledge and experience in order to guide and contribute as the group engages in discussion and activities related to a topic. Emphasize discussion and active learning. Try to strike a balance between providing information and encouraging the sharing of ideas and hands-on activities.

This is the discussion icon. There are suggestions in the notes to help facilitators initiate a discussion on the topic.

This icon indicates a parent activity. Facilitators should consider leading some of the session discussions while parents are engaged in activities which do not require concentration, such as when parents are making felt board stories.

This icon indicates parent handouts, which are identified by session and number. Occasionally, the handout itself will not be labelled with a heading or handout number when it would interfere with its purpose, such as on the Pick Sticks game board.

This icon indicates a suggestion for home activities parents and children might try.

Each parent session begins with at least one quote related to the topic. Make a poster with a quote for the day to put up on the wall, or write the quote on your flip chart or whiteboard before the session begins.

Session One:
Introduction to Learning

Welcome and Program Orientation

Welcome parents to your program and invite them to help themselves to coffee or tea before you begin each session together.

Introduce yourself and your organization to the parents. Remember to recognize your funders.

Start time: Ask parents to arrive a few minutes ahead of time for each session. Review with them where coats and boots should be stored.

Name tags: Remind parents that all the name tags should be returned at the end of each session. They can pick up their own and their child's name tag when they arrive next week.

Restroom: Let parents know that the staff will ask them to take their children to the restroom.

Guidelines for your time together: Write these on your flip chart and discuss with parents.

Start and end on time.

Honour all opinions.

Give equal opportunity for everyone to participate.

Uphold the right to pass in discussions.

Maintain confidentiality.

Dates: Give parents a calendar that includes the date of each session. Make sure you take into account statutory holidays and school holidays (some parents may not be able to attend your program when their school-age children are not in school). You can find free calendars at many businesses. Give parents stickers to mark the dates of your program.

Planned program schedule for each PRCS session; for example:

Welcome Circle	9:00	–	9:15
Children's/Parents' Programs	9:15	–	10:30
Snack Time	10:30	–	10:45
Story Circle	10:45	–	11:00
PACT	11:00	–	11:30

This is a good time to check that the day of the week and time of day you have chosen are best for parents if you have any flexibility in scheduling. It is possible that you might be able to reschedule to make it easier for parents to attend regularly. Make sure they understand that this is not a drop-in program. The program topics build on each other from session to session. It is important that parents attend as regularly as possible.

Components of each session

Welcome Circle: Everyone will share Circle Time for about fifteen minutes at the beginning of each session. The Children's Facilitator will lead parents and children in a welcome activity and talk about the activities she has planned for the children that day.

Children's Program: Review the kinds of activities the children will be engaged in with the Children's Facilitator and her assistant while the parents are in session with you. Suggest that parents encourage their children to stay with their own group. However, let them know that you do understand the children may need some reassurance in the beginning and may come to the parents' group to "check up" on mom or dad occasionally.

Parents' Program: Advise parents that their program is intended to be a discussion group. Each week you will be talking about a different topic related to their children's learning and development. You hope everyone will share his or her own ideas and opinions. You will bring information on the topic to each session but emphasize that you are not "the expert" about their children, and their contribution is crucial to the success of the program—just as it is crucial to the learning and development of their children.

Snack Time: There will be fifteen minutes to share a healthy snack with the children. Tell the parents the location for snack time. Ask if there are any food allergies or preferences.

Story Circle: Facilitators and parents will share rhymes, songs, storytelling, and story reading with children.

Parents and Children Together (PACT) Time: Each session will include half an hour for parents and children to play and learn together. Explain what PACT time is. Write the letters on your flip chart or whiteboard:

P
A
C
T

Tell parents each letter stands for a word and complete each word as you say it. Parent…And…Child…Together.

"Ask parents: What is a pact? Parents may say a contract, agreement, or promise. Yes, a pact is a promise. Each week we promise to give you the gift of time with your child. It will be a time without interruptions and distractions so that you can enjoy playing with your child. And each week you can promise to give a gift to your child. You can give her the gift of **your time** and **your full attention**. This is a gift your child wants more than any other gift."

("The PACT Time Gift," *NCFL, Parent and Child Time Together, Training and Staff Development for Family Literacy Practitioners*, page 39.)

During PACT time:

- Parents have uninterrupted time to play with and enjoy their children.
- You encourage parents to allow their child to choose the activity; parents can make suggestions if necessary.
- Staff will be present to support parents and children.
- Parents can observe how their child learns through play and what the child already knows while helping her add to her learning.
- You provide examples of the activities that will be available for parents to share with their child such as toys, colouring and painting materials, puzzles, building materials, and reading and writing materials.
- You encourage parents to ask their child to show mom or dad what he has been doing that day.
- Parents can help their child complete a project she has not finished.
- Parents can practise a new skill you have discussed in the parent group while the staff is there to help if necessary.

The only way to do all the things you'd like to do is to read.
–Tom Clancy

Introduce the Philosophy of Parents Reading, Children Succeeding (PRCS)

Briefly review the topics you plan to cover over the next ten sessions so that parents will know what to expect from the program.

Session one:	Introduction to Learning
Session two:	Language Development
Session three:	Social and Emotional Development
Session four:	The Power of Play
Session five:	Storytelling Part One
Session six:	Storytelling Part Two
Session seven:	Reading with Children
Session eight:	Writing with Children
Session nine:	Emerging Math Skills
Session ten:	Ready for School

The PRCS program is based on two simple but powerful ideas:

1) **Parents are their children's first, best, and most consistent teachers**.
Parents have the experience, one-to-one time, and motivation (that no one else in the world has) to help their children learn.

2) **Parents are usually already doing many things at home that help their children learn**.
Parents may not understand the value of what they already know and do with their children.

Common everyday activities help children develop pre-reading and writing skills (emergent literacy), build their vocabulary and understanding of language, and stimulate their desire to learn.

During your time together you will talk about many of the things parents are already doing to assist their child's learning, as well as some ideas that may be new to them.

Emphasize that you will not be showing parents how to formally teach their child to read and write. What you *will* be doing is discussing how they can support their child's development, learning, and emerging literacy skills.

This Is My Family

Goals:

- To help you and parents get to know each other
- To help you and parents discover what qualities they value in themselves, both as parents and as individuals
- To help parents discover what qualities they value in their children
- To help parents discover what qualities they hope their children will have as adults

Materials:

- Half sheets of poster board, one for each parent
- Pens, markers, or crayons
- Scissors
- A selection of magazines (parenting or family-oriented magazines will provide the best selection of images)

Method:

- Explain the entire activity to the parents. (Make sure you participate in this activity, too.)
- Distribute materials to each parent.
- Ask parents to draw their family on the centre of their sheet of paper. They can include whoever fits in their definition of family. (Tell them stick figures are fine.)
- Ask parents to clip images from the magazines that illustrate or describe qualities they value in themselves and in family members including their children, and images that represent things the members of their family like to do.
- They then glue the pictures on their sheet of paper around the drawing they have made of their family.
- They might also find words to clip from the magazines, or they can use the markers and crayons to write words if they choose.
- When everyone is finished, ask parents to share a little about their family with the group. Ask them to share the qualities they value in themselves, their children, and other adults in their lives, as well as the activities they all enjoy.
- Make a list of these qualities and activities on your flip chart or whiteboard.
- Tell parents they may choose to add more activities or qualities to their collage during the discussion.
- Many parents will say they hope their children will be happy, healthy, creative, caring, respectful of others, honest, and confident.
- Did anyone include being a good reader, writer, or learner as a quality they value? (Very few, if any, will mention these points.)
- Discuss the connections between developing positive personal qualities and being a successful learner.
- Being a successful learner means we have the tools to develop our talents and abilities. We gain these tools through life experience. Literacy skills are some of our most important tools.

Early Brain Development

Children learn a tremendous amount in the first five years. Their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development during these years will lay the foundations for all later learning in life.

During the last decade, breakthroughs in technology, particularly in brain "scanning" technology, have shown that environment plays a much bigger role in children's intellectual capacity than we once thought.

When babies are born, they have all the neurons or brain cells they will ever have but lack the connections or "wiring" between the neurons. A child's experiences during the first few years of life have a substantial impact on how his or her brain is wired. With every recitation of a nursery rhyme or game of peekaboo, thousands of connections are formed or strengthened in the brain. These are not connections that can be easily made later on. Although we continue to learn new things throughout our lifetimes, after age 10 our brains begin wiping out the connections that haven't been used, making it harder to develop social, emotional, and intellectual skills.

It is never too late to overcome learning barriers, because brain development is cumulative, and emerging capacities build on earlier activities. However, it is much more effective to practise early intervention and prevention.

Implications for parents

Scientists are finding that the kind of caregiving that parents provide for their children has an even greater effect than most people previously suspected. We now know that a complicated mix of heredity and experience shapes brain development. Good prenatal care, warm and loving attachments between young children and adults, and positive stimulation from birth make a difference in a child's ability to learn. Because most of a child's brain development takes place after birth, parents have many opportunities every day to contribute to their child's healthy development.

Review **handout 1.1** with parents and discuss the basic concepts of early brain development.

Mention that a child's health and safety are basic essentials for healthy development. Children need to be well nourished and have regular checkups.

Introduction to Literacy and Family Literacy

This is a family literacy program. So...what is literacy?

- On the flip chart, draw the outline of a simple house similar to the illustration on the cover page for this session.
- Ask parents for a definition of literacy. They will likely stop at reading and writing.
- Write **Reading** under one window of the house and **Writing** under another window.
- Discuss with parents the idea that talking (and, by extension, listening) and thinking skills are also part of literacy. Write **Talking** and **Thinking** under the other two windows of the house.
- Literacy is the power to gain understanding and express ourselves through language. **Reading, writing, thinking** and **talking** are the language skills which together contribute to being literate.
- Can parents suggest any other common uses of the word "literacy"?
- This question might lead to a discussion of numeracy and the fact that we often use the word literacy to mean "knowing" or "understanding" as in computer literacy, media literacy, and cultural literacy.

How do we use our literacy skills every day?

- Literacy skills give us the power to gain understanding and express ourselves through language. Literacy skills help us to understand and make sense of the world. We use our literacy skills to communicate with others in many different ways, understand printed information, learn new things, reach our goals, create, dream, imagine, and get things done in our lives at home, at work, and in the community.
- Ask parents how they use their literacy skills in their everyday lives.

- Distribute **handout 1.2** and ask parents to spend five minutes writing down some ways we use literacy skills at home, at work, and in the community.
- Turn your flip chart horizontally and draw four columns. Label the columns Reading, Writing, Talking, and Thinking.
- Divide each column into three sections labelled Home, Work, and Community.
- Ask parents to share the ideas they have written on their own chart. Suggest that they may want to write down some of the ideas generated by the group. (See a chart with some ideas for each section below.)

Reading	Writing	Talking	Thinking
Home	**Home**	**Home**	**Home**
recipes food labels sales flyers TV program guide directions for the VCR newspapers magazines books	grocery lists cheques birthday cards appointments on a calendar telephone messages letters notes to teachers recipes	giving instructions sharing your day with family telephone discussing events telling jokes comforting a child remembering good times disciplining a child talking about books	budgeting time management learning solving problems planning menus planning a garden
Work	**Work**	**Work**	**Work**
staff notices pay stub memos letters technical information safety information	order forms letters receipts inventory reports	customers co-workers supervisors suppliers	making decisions planning tasks scheduling your time
Community	**Community**	**Community**	**Community**
posters sale signs in stores menus bus or train schedules maps street signs	community newsletters letters to editor lost kitten posters for sale advertisements	community meetings parent advisory council neighbours and friends service providers	voting understanding the news fundraising for groups

Why family literacy?

Families are the single most important influence on a child's health, development, and learning.

Families provide the main social and learning environment for children.

Parents spend more time with their children than anyone else ever will (including teachers).

Learning can happen anytime and anywhere. Parents have many opportunities to support their child's learning as the family goes about the business of living.

When families experience new things and learn together, everyone benefits.

In family literacy, we recognize the importance of lifelong learning. Leaving or completing formal education does not signal the end of learning. We learn new things every day as we go about our lives.

Literacy is a "use it or lose it" set of skills. The more we use and challenge our ability to read and write, understand new ideas, and converse with others, the better we will maintain and develop our skills. The modern world is a challenging place, and good literacy skills are important if we want to be an involved citizen, learn about our world, find a satisfying job, and help our children as they prepare for their adult lives.

Most adults will find they need to upgrade their skills or retrain for an entirely new job or career several times throughout their lives.

Let parents know what opportunities are available in your community for adults to upgrade their own skills. Have business cards or brochures available that outline local adult upgrading courses. Keep them readily available throughout the program for parents to pick up.

Ask parents for some examples of occasions when they and their children have learned something new together. Examples might be: taking a family vacation to a new place; going on an outing to the beach, a zoo, or a museum; purchasing a new game and figuring out how to play it; or trying a new cookie recipe.

How We Learn

- Ask parents how they learn new things. They might say that they like to watch how others do something and imitate their actions, or that they prefer to figure the problem out themselves, listen to others who have experience, ask someone for information or directions, or read about the topic or task. Ask for examples of times parents have used these different ways to learn.
- Write the suggestions on your flip chart.

- Point out that there are several paths to learning illustrated on **handout 1.3**. The more paths to learning we use, the more we learn.
- Ask parents to suggest examples of incidental learning, imitative learning, trial and error learning, and directed learning from their own experience with their children.
- Point out that children experience all of these pathways to learning during play.
- Ask parents what method of learning is missing from this handout. In your previous discussion, someone will have mentioned reading for information and ideas as a way to learn. When we read we have the opportunity to learn in ways that are not always possible with direct experience. Children also learn many things from printed information, but it is parents who help young children learn those things by reading to them and helping them recognize the uses of print.
- Initiate a discussion of the sorts of things you have all learned through your understanding of print that you might not have learned another way.

Reading also allows us to experience places, situations, emotions, and characters we might never experience in our everyday lives. (Refer parents to the quote of the day.)

Children Learn When They Play

Refer parents to **handout 1.4**.

Play is the business of childhood. It is while children are playing that they learn how the world works, how to get along with others, how to manage their bodies, learn new words, and begin understanding stories and numbers. Allowing children many opportunities to experiment with the world around them and the emotional world inside them is crucial to healthy development. While it may look like mere child's play to us, there is a lot of work involved— problem solving, skill building, and overcoming physical, emotional, and social challenges.

Pretending or imaginative play is one of the cornerstones of a young child's world. Toddlers begin demonstrating this behaviour around the age of two. Almost anything can spur a child's imagination, including everyday objects—because he uses them as symbols. He is learning that one thing can stand for something else. Using his new ability to pretend, he can transform a block of wood into a boat, or a few pots and pans into a drum set.

Everyday objects are not the only things that transform in a child's make-believe world. So do the roles he assumes in his play. A child will move from superhero to cook to ballerina to firefighter with great fluidity. Through role play, he is able to explore a variety of scenarios and outcomes.

Sometimes the stories a child acts out reflect issues he's struggling to understand. If he's coming to terms with a new sibling, for example, he may incorporate a lot of nurturing behaviour into his play, mimicking a parent's interaction with his new brother or sister. Imaginative play gives children a sense of control as they interpret the dramas of everyday life and practise the rules of social behaviour.

Briefly discuss **handout 1.5**. Ask parents what they have noticed their children learning as they played during the last week or two.

Playing with puzzles is a great early literacy activity. Children develop problem-solving skills, pattern recognition, and fine motor skills when playing with puzzles.

Puzzles can be created with any image. Children particularly like puzzles that relate to what they know, so parents can make puzzles from photos of friends and family or places they are familiar with. Suggest keeping the pieces large and few in number in the beginning until children are more experienced with recognizing patterns and shapes.

Laminating a puzzle will make it last longer, and it also makes it easier to handle, but it isn't necessary. When children are bored and looking for something different to do, a parent can easily make a puzzle with any number of images they are likely to have in the house.

Make a Puzzle

Materials:

- Cereal boxes, greeting cards, magazine pictures, or photos
- Cardboard or poster board to reinforce magazine pictures
- Glue
- Zipper-top plastic bags
- Scissors
- Clear contact paper or laminator (optional)

Method:

- Ask parents to choose one of the materials you have provided to make a puzzle for their child.
- If parents choose a magazine picture, they can glue it to a piece of poster-board backing for strength.
- Laminate the image or cover it with clear contact paper if you have the materials.
- Cut the image into four to eight pieces.
- Store the pieces in the zipper-top plastic bags.

Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner developed his theory of many kinds of intelligence in 1983. He contended that intelligence includes more than logic and reasoning power. Gardner included knowledge of music, spatial relations, and emotional intelligence with math and language abilities. Many other thinkers and researchers have adapted and elaborated on his theory since he first developed it.

It is important to remember that although adults and children may be stronger in one area than another, everyone possesses all the different kinds of intelligence in a unique mix of their own. It is also possible to further develop our different kinds of intelligence. All types of intelligence are useful and should be valued.

Introduce **handout 1.6**. Discuss the multiple-intelligences concept with the parents. Emphasize that we all learn in many ways, but each of us has strengths in different areas. When parents recognize their own and their child's style of learning, it will be easier to understand and help the child's development.

Parents can both support their child's preferred path to learning and offer opportunities for the child to practise and develop his or her less preferred paths to learning.

- Ask parents to take five minutes to fill in the Multiple Intelligences Questionnaire (**handout 1.7**) while thinking of their own learning strengths.
- Next, ask parents to take another five minutes and fill in the questionnaire while thinking of their child.
- Ask parents if they could identify their own and their child's learning strengths.

Home Activity

Suggest that completing the questionnaire with their partner and with other children in their family might be a fun activity at home this week.

Stick Puppets

Materials:

- Photocopies of patterns for a felt board story for each parent. (You can find felt board story patterns at the library.)
- Craft sticks (10 for each parent)

Method:

- Distribute the story patterns and a craft stick for each shape.
- Suggest that parents and children colour the shapes together. (Don't worry about neatness).
- Parents can help their children cut out the shapes and glue them to the craft sticks to make stick puppets.
- Parents and children can then retell the story at home together .

Suggest that parents help their child write her name in the book she has made in the Children's Program today.

Parents can trace around their child's hand on one page in the child's book and then glue the poem in **handout 1.8** below it.

Now is the time for parents to have fun and play with their children!

Book List

Crash! Bang! Boom! by Peter Spier

Gobble Growl Grunt, Peter Spier

Richard Scarry's Cars and Trucks From A to Z, Richard Scarry

Color Zoo, Lois Ehlert

Dear Zoo, Rod Campbell

Pigs in Hiding, Arlene Dubanevich

Rough Road, Kate Davis, illustrated by Bob Filipowich

Where's Spot? Eric Hill

Arthur's Tooth, Marc Brown

Clifford the Big Red Dog, Norman Bridwell

Maisy Takes a Bath, Lucy Cousins

The Three Little Pigs, Paul Galdone

Goodnight Moon, Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd

Ten in the Bed, Penny Dale

We Sing Silly Songs, Pamela C. Beal & Susan H. Nepp, illustrated by Nancy S. Klein

Wheels on the Bus, retold by Raffi, illustrated by Sylvie Wickstrom

My First Action Word Book, Jane Bunting

Planting a Rainbow, Lois Ehlert

How You Can Support Your Child's Early Brain Development

Research in brain development suggests that the following ten guidelines can help parents and caregivers raise healthy, happy children and confident, competent learners.

- Be warm, loving, and responsive.
- Respond to the child's cues and clues.
- Talk, read, and sing to your child.
- Establish routines and rituals.
- Encourage safe exploration and play.
- Make TV-watching selective.
- Use discipline as an opportunity to teach.
- Recognize that each child is unique.
- Choose quality child care and stay involved.
- Take care of yourself.

(Adapted from the "I Am Your Child" campaign)

Reading	Writing	Talking	Thinking
Home	**Home**	**Home**	**Home**
Work	**Work**	**Work**	**Work**
Community	**Community**	**Community**	**Community**

Pathways to Learning

Life Experiences (Incidental)

Children learn about the world as they experience many different things. They observe their own sensations and how the world works. They begin to understand the results of their actions.

Imitation and Dramatic Play (Imitative)

Children learn by watching others and imitating the things they do.

Try, Try Again! (Trial and Error)

Children learn by trying many different ways of doing things before they find one that works.

Direct Instruction

(Directed Learning)
Children learn when they are directly taught skills and behaviour.
(Person to person)

Play Is the Business of Childhood

It is while children are playing that they learn how the world works, how to get along with others, how to manage their bodies, learn new words, and begin understanding stories and numbers. Allowing children many opportunities to experiment with the world around them and the emotional world inside them is crucial to healthy development. While it may look like mere child's play to us, there is a lot of work involved—problem solving, skill building, overcoming physical, emotional and social challenges.

Play and Social Development

As toddlers, children play side by side without obvious communication (this is called parallel play). During the preschool years, they start to interact with each other by creating complex story lines together. As they do this, they learn to negotiate, cooperate, and share (though some children do not master the art of sharing until they are between four and six years old).

Play and Physical Development

Different types of physical play help develop different skills. For example, skipping takes balance, climbing builds strength, and ball-throwing involves coordination. Large motor skills such as running, throwing, and pedalling improve first, but fine motor skills are not far behind: A three-year-old carefully stacking blocks into towers is not only learning about gravity and balance but also developing hand-eye coordination. Hand-eye coordination and control of the small muscles of the hand are also developed through creative activities such as painting, colouring, and using scissors. These activities help prepare a child to hold and control a pencil to begin writing.

Play and Emotional Development

There is a non-physical benefit of physical play, too, which helps kids work through stress and crankiness. In fact, without adequate time for active play, a child may become grumpy or tense. Long before children can express their feelings in words, they express them through physical play, and through their reactions to stories, art, and other activities. When children have experiences that are hurtful or hard to understand, they review those experiences again and again through play.

It is helpful to allow a child to lead during play. This allows her to try out her judgment and to show you what delights her. As she lets you into her world of make-believe, give her complete control. In real life, the parent may be in charge, but this is ***her*** world. Parents can still offer specific activities that they know will help their child develop particular skills and abilities. If she shows no interest in a puzzle, letter play, or a matching and sorting activity today, just try again tomorrow and again the next day. Always stop any play activity right away when the child loses interest. Play is the work of a child, but a child's work should always be fun!

Ways to Support Your Child's Learning

A healthy child learns more easily. Good nutrition, enough rest, and appropriate health care will help prepare a child for learning.

You can be a role model. Show your child that you value and enjoy reading and learning new things, and that reading and writing helps us get things done.

You can be involved, encouraging, and supportive of your child's learning process and respond positively to his learning efforts.

You can make sure your child feels good about herself and has a healthy self-esteem. You can believe in her and her ability to learn.

You can be consistent in the way you treat your child so that he has a sense of security and stability in his life.

You can provide lots of opportunities for your child to hear stories, look at books, practise writing skills, and experience new things.

You can make sure she has lots of time to play with other children.

And most important! You can enjoy him and make sure that the adults in his life spend time with him talking, laughing, playing, singing, reading books, and sharing other daily activities.

Multiple Intelligences

Visual/Spatial Intelligence includes being able to visualize an object and to create mental images. It relates to the visual arts, navigation, architecture, and some games such as chess.

Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence relates to words and language. We use this intelligence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence applies to the ability to recognize the patterns, rhythm, and beat in sounds. It includes sensitivity to environmental sounds, the human voice, and musical instruments.

Logical/Mathematical Intelligence deals with reasoning, numbers, and relationships. It involves the ability to recognize patterns, to work with geometric shapes, and to make connections between pieces of information.

Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence is related to physical movement and an innate knowledge of the body and how it functions. It includes the ability to use the body to express emotions, to play games, and to interpret and convey effective body language.

Interpersonal Intelligence is used in person-to-person relationships. It includes the ability to communicate effectively with others and to have empathy for their feelings and beliefs.

Intrapersonal Intelligence is based on knowledge of the self. It involves self-reflection and a deep understanding of how we think and feel.

It is important to remember that although adults and children may be stronger in one area than another, everyone possesses all the different kinds of intelligence in a unique mix all their own. It is also possible to further develop our different kinds of intelligence. All types of intelligence are useful and should be valued.

Multiple Intelligences Questionnaire

People are unique. They work and learn best in an individual mix of different ways. Complete the questionnaire below, first with yourself in mind and again with your child in mind.

- Write a number between 0 and 4 to show how closely each statement describes you. If you agree that the statement strongly describes you, write 4 beside the statement. If the statement does not describe you at all, write 0 beside the statement. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside statements that you do not feel so strongly about.
- Add the scores in each section.
- The sections in which you score the highest are your preferred learning styles.
- The sections in which you score the lowest are not your preferred learning styles.

People Person (Interpersonal)

___ I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of those around me.
___ In teams, I cooperate and build on the ideas of others.
___ I enjoy games involving other people.
___ I have a natural ability to sort out arguments between friends.
___ I have many friends.

Thinker (Intrapersonal)

___ I enjoy working or learning independently of others.
___ I know myself well and understand why I behave as I do.
___ I am an independent thinker and know my own mind.
___ I like privacy and quiet for working and thinking.
___ I have a strong personality.
___ I have a deep awareness of inner feelings.
___ I am reflective and analytical.

Word Player (Verbal and Linguistic)

___ I am able to explain difficult topics so they are clear to others.
___ I like to play with sounds in language.
___ I like to think out loud, talk through problems, and ask questions.
___ I enjoy and see the value of taking written notes.
___ I learn well from talks and listening to others.
___ I love seeing, saying, and hearing words.

Problem Solver (Mathematical and Logical)

___ I always do things one step at a time.
___ I can see or pick out patterns and relationships.
___ I have ability with numbers and mathematical problems.
___ I order, choose priorities, and tend to work from a to-do list.
___ I enjoy puzzles, crosswords, and logical problems.
___ I wonder about and question natural events.

Artistic (Visual and Spatial)

___ Charts, diagrams, and visual displays are important for my learning.
___ I can imagine memories of scenes or places easily.
___ I can take things apart and put them back together easily.
___ I have a good sense of direction.
___ I am observant and will often notice settings which others miss.
___ I know the location of everything.

Physical Mover (Bodily and Kinesthetic)

___ I have a good sense of balance and enjoy physical movement.
___ I like to think through problems while doing something such as walking or running.
___ I am skillful in working with objects.
___ I learn best when I have to get up and do something for myself.
___ I get restless easily.
___ I am very good at imitating the actions of others.

Musical (Musical and Rhythmic)

___ I can remember the words to music easily.
___ I enjoy making music.
___ When I listen to music, I feel changes in mood.
___ I can pick out individual instruments in complex musical pieces.
___ I can remember things such as telephone numbers by repeating them in a rhythm.
___ I am sensitive to environmental sounds (bells, crickets, background music).

My preferred learning style(s)

My least preferred learning style(s)

(Adapted from: http://www.salt.cheshire.gov.uk)

A Poem for Mom

Sometimes you get discouraged
because I am so small
and always leave my fingerprints
on furniture and walls.
But everyday I'm growing up
and soon I'll be so tall
that all those little handprints
will be hard to recall.
So here's a special handprint
just so that you can say...
this is how my fingers looked
when I placed them here today.

-Unknown

Session Two: Language Development

There is no greater gift that you can give your child at the beginning of life than the ability to communicate.
–Dr. Sally Ward (2000) Babytalk, Century, London

A child doesn't learn to communicate by himself. He learns through involvement with his world. We, his parents, are the largest part of that world, and it's what we do and how we do it that affects our child's opportunities to learn. It takes two to talk.
–Ayala Manolson, It Takes Two to Talk

Ask parents for feedback about the Multiple Intelligences Questionnaire.

- Did they complete the questionnaire at home with other members of their family?
- What did they find out about themselves, their partners, or their children?

We all begin communicating with others from a very young age. We have many ways to communicate. Body language, oral language, sign language, pictures, symbols, and writing are all methods of communication.

Language is a wonderful part of being human. With language we can express our wants, our needs, and our feelings. We can exchange thoughts, ideas, and information with others, and we learn to connect in a meaningful way with our world.

Oral language is a literacy skill. Developing an ability to use oral language well is important to learning to read and write.

When we talk about language, we are talking about both **receptive language** (understanding what we hear) and **expressive language** (speaking).

Although all children typically go through the same stages of language development, they learn language at different rates, so it is best not to compare one child's language development with another's. The important thing to notice is that your child is developing language steadily.

Ages and Stages of Language Development

From the day they are born, children are exposed to words and the basics of communication and language interaction. Children are naturally curious. From infancy, children want to know how to interact with others.

Young children understand many more words than they can say. Talking to a baby about what both of you are doing and what she sees and hears will help her learn about language and will continue to help her learn as she grows.

Learning to use language happens naturally and gradually through the child's interaction with the people around him. But there are many ways parents can help their child to become a confident and fluent speaker and a good listener. The best way parents can help their child develop good language skills is to listen and talk with him often.

- Ask parents if they can remember their child's first words. Initiate a discussion about the language development of their children while referring to **handout 2.1**.

- Do they have any concerns about their child's language development? Remind parents that children learn to use language at different rates, but be prepared to suggest that they consider meeting with a speech and language therapist for an assessment if they believe there may be a problem with their child's hearing or ability to reproduce speech.

What parents can do to help

- Review **handout 2.2** with parents.
- Point out that they have probably been interacting with their children in most of these ways since they were born.

Role playing language-rich play

Goal:

- To demonstrate to parents that using the handout suggestions for helping their children develop language skills is not difficult and can be incorporated into everyday activities and play.

Materials:

- Sets of 10 or 12 small plastic objects such as wild animals, farm animals, trucks, or other items for half the number of parents in your group.

Method:

- Ask parents to choose a partner.
- Distribute a set of the small objects to each pair of parents.
- Ask parents to role play the child's part and the parent's part in turn and play with the toys together. Remind them to use descriptive language in the ways you discussed. Suggest that the partners change roles in five minutes.
- Call the group back together and ask them how they were able to use the strategies you discussed.
- Make sure you tell parents that they don't need to buy anything special to do this activity at home. They might use pasta shapes or toys their child already owns.
- Remind parents that language-rich ways of interacting with their children are ongoing techniques that they can practise as they go about their daily lives. It should not be a task that they set aside only for a particular time.

Rhymes, Songs, and Fingerplays

Because children love the predictability, absurdity, and pace of rhymes, they are an excellent tool for encouraging language development.

Rhymes are great for building a sense of the sounds and rhythm of oral language.

Chanting rhymes and pausing to invite children to complete a line, supply a repeating phrase, or say every other line can help the child develop memory and prediction strategies.

Including gestures or fingerplays with rhymes not only makes them easier to remember and more fun, but also improves coordination.

Why share nursery rhymes with children?

Chanting rhymes and singing songs help children become familiar with hearing and saying the sounds and rhythms of language (phonemic awareness). The ability to distinguish different sounds is a valuable pre-reading skill. It is important to be able to hear the individual sounds within words before learning how those sounds relate to letters.

Rhymes and songs can help children develop their ability to rhyme, break words into syllables and syllables into phonemes (sounds), blend syllables and phonemes, and manipulate phonemes within words. These are basic skills that children need to develop to be successful readers and spellers.

Children develop these skills while adults are talking with them, reading stories to them, and sharing rhymes and songs. Children who grow up in homes where there is a lot of conversation, music, and rhymes will be much better prepared to begin reading when they start school.

Begin by saying the following rhyme:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and...

Ask parents if they can complete the rhyme. The chances are they can because it is very familiar, rhythmic, and fun!

If there is a Parent-Child Mother Goose Program in your community, you could tell parents about it now. This family literacy program focuses specifically on learning and sharing rhymes, songs, and stories with young children. Both parents and children enjoy the time together.

Teach parents the following rhyme. Tell them that you will share the rhyme with the children at Circle Time.

Method: Say the rhyme once all the way through with the actions.
Say the rhyme line by line and ask parents to repeat each line after you.
Repeat the entire rhyme slowly together as a group.
Repeat two or three more times, a little faster each time.

There Was a Little Turtle

There was a little turtle who lived in a box
Make a box shape with the forefinger and thumb of both hands

He swam in the puddles, he climbed on the rocks
"Swim" your hands, then "climb" the fingers of one hand on the back of your other hand

He snapped at a mosquito, he snapped at a flea
Clap your hands together at each loud "snap" in the rhyme

He snapped at a minnow and he snapped at me
When you say "snapped at me" snap your hands on your nose

He caught the mosquito, he caught the flea
Clap your hands each time you say "caught"

He caught the minnow, but he didn't catch me!
Shake your head that he didn't catch you!

Point out that like many rhymes, this rhyme tells a story.

Learning and sharing rhymes with children is also the beginning of storytelling.

Ask parents if they remember rhymes from their childhood and if they share them with their children. How do they share the rhymes?

Ask parents if anyone would like to teach the group a rhyme or fingerplay.

Briefly review **handout 2.3**.

Introducing songs

Teach parents the song "I'm a Little Piece of Tin" to share with the children at Circle Time. Remind parents that their children don't care whether they are good singers or not, and neither will anyone else in the group!

I'm a Little Piece of Tin

Sway or bounce in time with the rhythm

I'm a little piece of tin
Point to yourself

Nobody knows where I have been
Shake finger back and forth

Got four wheels
Hold up four fingers

And running boards
Make a swooping motion with your hands

Not a Chevy not a Ford
Shake finger back and forth

Knock, Knock
Pretend to knock twice

Rattle, Rattle, Rattle
Shake both hands

Crash
Clap

Beep, Beep!
"Beep" nose twice
and...repeat

Knock, Knock
Rattle, Rattle, Rattle
Crash
Beep, Beep!

Tell parents you are giving them the words to the rhyme and the song you have learned together (**handout 2.4**) so they can share them with their partner and child at home.

Shapes and Colours

Learning to recognize simple shapes is an early step to learning to recognize the shapes of letters.

Recognizing and naming colours is also one of the first skills children learn to help them talk about the differences between objects.

Explain to parents that each week you will provide materials for them to make things to share with their children. Sometimes there will be time to complete the projects at the program and sometimes they can take the materials with them to complete at home.

Fun Foam Fridge Magnets

Materials:

- Fun foam sheets in six colours
- One copy of the shape template (**handout 2.5**) for each parent
- Self-sticking magnetic tape
- Scissors
- Pens for tracing the shapes
- Glue sticks

Method:

- Cut the shapes from the template.
- Use a dab of glue to attach the paper template to the fun foam temporarily so it doesn't slip while being traced.
- Trace each shape onto a different colour of fun foam.
- Cut out the shapes and attach a piece of magnetic tape to the back of each.

Home Activity

Encourage parents to talk with their children about the shapes and colours. They can use the magnets to attach children's artwork or reminders to their refrigerator.

Have a variety of books on hand that focus on colours and shapes for parents to look through. Choose one to read aloud to the parents while they are making the magnets and discuss how they can share the books with their children. Two good books about colours and shapes are *Bear in A Square* by Stella Blackstone and *Colour Zoo* by Lois Ehlert. As well, Tana Hoban has published several books about shapes, which include: *Look Again*; *Take Another Look*; *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes, Circles, Triangles and Squares; Is It Red? Is It Yellow? Is It Blue?*

Book List

Take some books to share with parents each week. If you can, allow parents to sign out one or two until next week.

Following is a list of some excellent patterned or "predictable" books. Predictable books have a repetitive pattern. Children can easily follow and "read" along with you after the first few pages.

Predictable books help children to anticipate what comes next, participate as you read the story, and practise saying new words. Pause before each repetition of a phrase to allow children to say the words.

Predictable books include ideas that are very familiar to young children. The children can easily identify with the story and the characters.

The illustrations match the words closely. The pictures tell the story and help the child remember the main parts of the story for re-telling.

Many predictable books use rhyme and rhythm. Once the child catches the rhythm or the rhyming pattern, he can easily predict what comes next.

Predictable books have repeating and often familiar sequences of events. Eric Carle's book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, includes two sequences that are familiar to most young children—numbers and the days of the week.

Parents can look for any book of rhymes for young children. Here are some suggestions for books with a strong repetitive pattern.

My Five Senses, Aliki

Thump, Thump, Rat-a-tat-tat, Gene Baer

Goodnight Moon, Margaret Wise Brown

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle

Klippity Klop, Ed Emberly

Color Dance, Ann Jonas

Whose Mouse Are You? Robert Kraus

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, Bill Martin

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, Bill Martin

Mary Wore Her Red Dress, Merle Peek

I Went Walking, Sue Williams

Biscuits in the Cupboard, Barbara Nichol

Home Activity

Suggest that parents try playing some of the games and activities listed on **handout 2.6** with their child at home this week. These are examples of activities that help children understand and use language.

Ages and Stages of Language Development

Listening	Speaking
Birth: Language learning starts at birth. New babies are aware of sounds and listen to the speech of those close to them.	**Birth:** Newborn babies communicate their emotions and needs by crying and making other sounds.
0-3 Months: Your baby will start to turn her head to look at you and will recognize your voice.	**0-3 Months:** Your baby will smile at you when he sees you. He repeats the same sounds often and makes distinctive cries for different wants and needs.
4-6 Months: Your baby notices new sounds around her, such as the telephone or a dog barking. She begins to be attracted to toys that make sounds and to enjoy music and rhythm. She will respond to "no" and to the changes of tone in your voice.	**4-6 Months:** Your baby's babbling increases and he sometimes makes sounds that resemble speech.
7-12 Months: Your baby starts to recognize her name and listens when you speak to her. She enjoys interactive games like peekaboo, hiding toys under a blanket, and handing objects back and forth. She is learning to recognize some words and know what they mean and is learning a basic skill of conversation by taking turns with you.	**7-12** Months: Your baby's babbling begins to include speech sounds and he uses these to get your attention. He will say one or two words such as "Mama" or "bye-bye" although not very clearly.

Listening	Speaking
1-2 Years: Your child will point to pictures in a book and can point to a few body parts when you name them. She can follow simple commands ("Blow a kiss!") and understand simple questions ("Where's the doggie?").	**1-2 Years:** Your child knows more words as each month passes and will even ask one- or two-word questions ("Where ball?" "What that?"). He is starting to put two words together to let you know his wants and needs ("More juice").
2-3 Years: Your toddler begins to understand two-part directions ("Get your cup and give it to me"). She starts to enjoy simple stories, rhymes, and songs. At this stage, she will want you to repeat them many times.	**2-3 Years:** Your toddler's vocabulary is growing rapidly. Sentences become longer and family members can usually understand them. He may draw your attention to something by using words to name it, describe it ("big!"), or make a comment ("good doggie").
3-4 Years: Your child understands simple who, what, and where questions and can hear sounds clearly from a distance.	**3-4 Years:** Your child's sentences are longer and more complicated. He is interested in talking about his activities. His speech is fluent and clear, and people other than family can understand him.
4-5 Years: Your child enjoys longer stories and can answer simple questions about them. She can understand nearly everything that is said to her.	**4-5 Years:** Your child communicates easily with other children and adults. His sentences give details and are closer to adult grammar. He can stick to a topic and string ideas together in a sequence. There may still be errors in pronunciation and grammar, but he is well on his way to being a fluent speaker!

What You Can Do To Help Your Child's Language Development

Listen, observe, and respond: Listen to your child actively, observe his expressions, body language, and the pitch of his voice. Respond to his attempts to communicate. Giving him your undivided attention helps him to develop confidence in his ability to communicate and encourages him to express himself.

Make eye contact: You might need to sit or bend down to your child's level to make eye contact. Face-to-face communication allows both you and your child to see facial expressions and helps to focus attention on the conversation.

Take turns: Model good conversational skills by encouraging your child to take turns speaking and listening.

Use parallel talk: Comment on what the child is doing. Use lots of descriptive words. Parallel talk helps a child connect language to her world.

Use self-talk: Talk about what you are doing. Self-talk helps your child understand you and your actions. It is a great way to help him develop new language and understanding.

Be a reflective listener: Listen to what your child says and repeat to her what she has tried to say, pronouncing the words correctly. This shows your child that you have understood and helps her to correct her speech in a natural way.

Ask questions: Questions are a great way to help your child develop language and thinking skills. Try to ask questions that have both a single answer ("What colour is the ball?") and that are open-ended and can have many answers ("What do you think about...?" or "What would happen if...?"). Allow enough time for him to respond to your question. Children often take longer to answer a question than an adult might. A good rule of thumb is to count to five before you assume your child cannot or will not answer.

Express emotions: Talk about your feelings and those of others. Provide your child with words to express her feelings.

Read to your child often: Reading together provides an opportunity to be close to each other, introduces your child to the excitement of books, and prepares him for learning to read as it builds vocabulary and knowledge of the world.

Why Share Rhymes with Your Children

- They are FUN!
- They are a cost-free entertainment and learning package all in one.
- They strengthen the bond between parent and child.
- They de-stress the teller and the listener.
- They gently introduce babies to language and memory development.
- It's impossible to share rhymes and songs in anything but a loving or happy voice.
- Rhymes are useful when your child is testy and your arms and hands are not available to hold, play with, or comfort her.
- Rhymes allow you to use beautiful, rhythmic, and complex language with your young child.
- Babies identify with the rhythm rather than the rhyme, and the gentle singsong sound helps them feel secure.
- Listening to rhymes gets the imagination working. Repetition allows the baby or child to become used to the sounds and actions and to take ownership of the rhymes.
- Using actions with the rhymes makes them easier to remember and also helps develop the child's large and small motor skills.
- Action rhymes are great sanity-savers when babies or toddlers are getting frustrated or don't want to do something. They distract the baby and the parent, too! Try repeating familiar rhymes when feeding, changing, or bathing children.
- Rhymes help develop awareness of language, the basic tool of learning.
- Oral language is the centre of all communication and storytelling is the original "information superhighway."

There Was a Little Turtle

There was a little turtle who lived in a box
Make a box shape with the forefinger and thumb of both hands

He swam in the puddles, he climbed on the rocks
"Swim" your hands, then "climb" the fingers of one hand on the back of your other hand

He snapped at a mosquito, he snapped at a flea
Clap your hands together at each loud "snap" in the rhyme

He snapped at a minnow and he snapped at me
When you say "snapped at me" snap your hands on your nose

He caught the mosquito, he caught the flea
Clap your hands each time you say "caught"

He caught the minnow, but he didn't catch me!
Shake your head that he didn't catch you!

I'm a Little Piece of Tin

Sway or bounce in time with the rhythm

I'm a little piece of tin
Point to yourself

Nobody knows where I have been
Shake finger back and forth

Got four wheels
Hold up four fingers

And running boards
Make a swooping motion with your hands

Not a Chevy, not a Ford
Shake finger back and forth

Knock, Knock
Pretend to knock twice

Rattle, Rattle, Rattle
Shake both hands

Crash
Clap

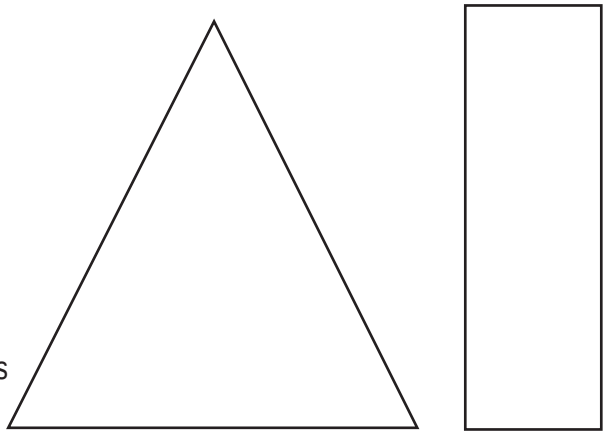
Beep, Beep!
"Beep" nose twice
and...repeat

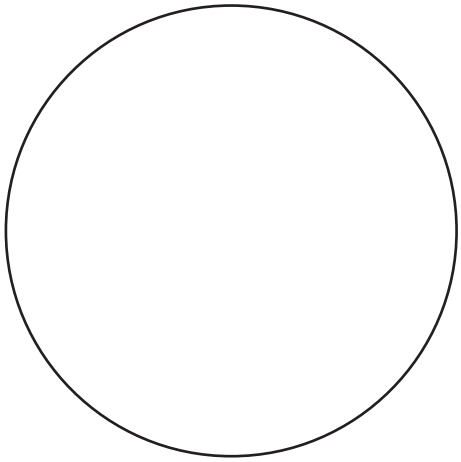
Knock, Knock
Rattle, Rattle, Rattle
Crash
Beep, Beep!

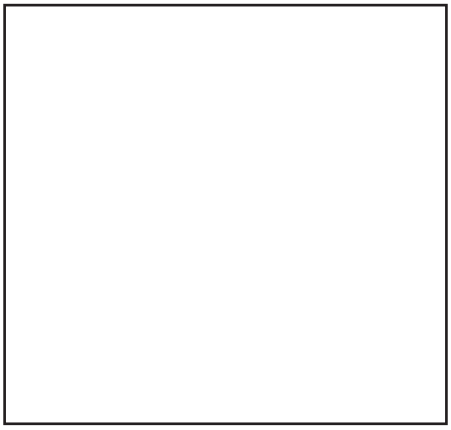
Colour and Shape Magnets

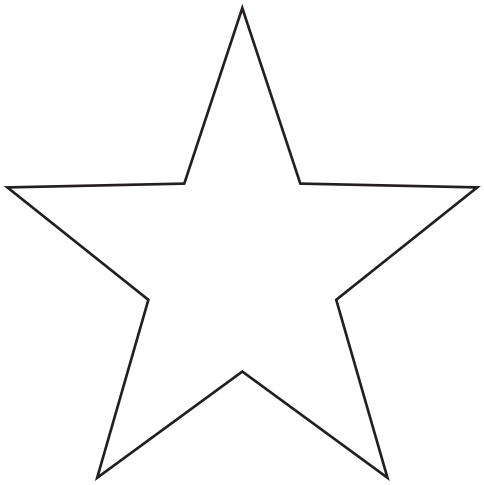
Directions:

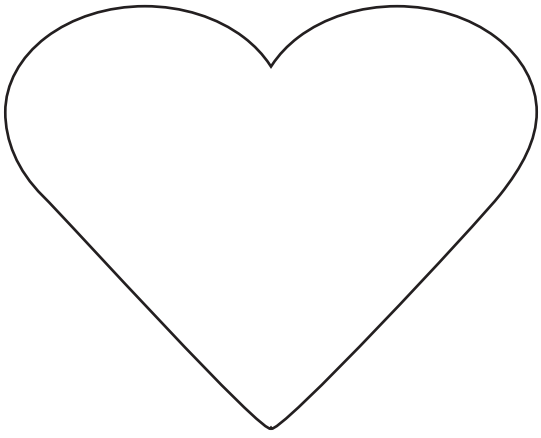
- Cut out the paper shapes.
- Trace each shape onto a different colour of fun foam.
- Cut out the foam shapes.
- Put a piece of self-stick magnetic tape on each shape.
- Put them on your fridge and share the names of the shapes and colours with your child.











Language Development Games and Activities

Start a conversation with your child by asking an "open-ended" question. Open-ended questions have no right or wrong answer. They help your child learn to express his ideas, opinions, and feelings. They also help him express his individuality and become a creative thinker and, eventually, a storyteller!

- What do you think about…?
- How did you feel when…?
- What should we do after…?

When you are out together visiting or doing errands, talk with her about what you are doing and seeing. This helps her to understand what is happening, encourages her to think about her experiences, and to develop the language to talk about them. Later, at the dinner table or at bedtime, start a conversation with someone else about what you did that day and ask your child to help you remember the things you did together.

Encourage your child's imagination. Begin by using your own imagination! You could start the game by saying something like: "Let's imagine that we can fly. We can…". Encourage your child to talk about the exciting things you could do and the places you could go if you had wings.

Play "remember when." Talk about something special you did together in the past. You might deliberately make a mistake and say: "We walked to Grandma's house…" and pause for your child, who will stop you and insist "No! We went on the bus!" The two of you will have fun and lots of giggles trying to get the story straight.

Have a scavenger hunt on a rainy afternoon. Hide a special book, a toy, or a treat, and give your child clues to find it. Then share the book, play together, or have a tea party.

Look at some photographs or magazine illustrations and begin a story about what is happening in the picture. Encourage your child to add his own ideas.

Go to the library and choose some books together. Talk about the different books you look at and pick some that interest your child. Does she love bugs? Eric Carle has written several books about bugs that your child will love: *The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Very Quiet Cricket,* and *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle*. Look for non-fiction books, too, such as Pascale de Bourgoing's *The Ladybug and Other Insects*. Or try a bug alphabet book like The Icky Bug Counting Book by Jerry Pallota.

Tell a story to your child with a simple sock puppet. Find a stray sock that lost its mate in the dryer, add a couple of buttons for eyes and a nose, and maybe some wool for hair. Encourage your child to help you tell the story by asking often: "What do you think should happen next?"

Session Three:
Social and Emotional Development

All learning has an emotional base.
–Plato

Healthy social and emotional development form the foundation for learning.

Social development is the ability to get along with others in a group.

Emotional development is the process of learning to understand and control your emotions and to have empathy and respect for others.

Healthy emotional development is sometimes called "emotional intelligence" and it represents two of the multiple intelligences we already discussed in session one (interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence).

"In the last decade or so, science has discovered a tremendous amount about the role emotions play in our lives. Researchers have found that even more than IQ, our emotional awareness and the abilities to handle feelings will determine your success and happiness in all walks of life, including family relationships."
(John Gottman, Ph.D., *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child*)

Children who learn how to listen to others, how to recognize and understand other people's feelings (empathy), and how to recognize their own emotions possess the basic building blocks of emotional literacy.

Emotions are a basic part of human nature. Through them we respond to life with feelings such as anger, happiness, fear, love, and loneliness. Emotions influence our thoughts and actions; they inspire our needs; they affect our bodies and impact on our relationships. Emotions are not enemies to be ignored, repressed, or rejected but rather friends to be honoured, understood, and directed. If we do not acknowledge and learn to handle our emotions, our physical health and well-being, our relationships with others, and our confidence in ourselves will be undermined. When we can identify, accept, and respond appropriately to our feelings, they become a strength we can count on to live full, responsible, and healthy lives.

Stages of Emotional and Social Development

Parents are their child's first teacher and role model. Parents teach their child all sorts of things every day, both intentionally and unintentionally. From birth, children are learning from their parents and caregivers how to identify and handle their emotions and how to interact with others. Young children can start learning from their earliest experiences how to recognize, understand, and express their emotions in a healthy way. As early as two years of age, children are ready to learn names for their feelings.

Young children need to feel secure and live in an emotionally safe atmosphere. Children should always get the message that they are allowed to feel and that feelings are normal. There are no "wrong" feelings. Feelings just exist. It is learning how to identify and properly handle their feelings that children learn as they grow.

"Becoming emotionally literate is learning the alphabet, grammar and vocabulary of our emotional life." (From http://www.feel.org/literacy.html)

Review and discuss **handout 3.1** with parents.

Recognizing Emotions

To identify our feelings, we have to know the words for those feelings. Parents can help by making a conscious effort to teach their children "feeling" words and what those words mean.

During the first five years, children experience the most rapid emotional growth of their lives. They grow from not being able to identify or understand their feelings to being able to recognize and name them.

They are also learning to recognize the feelings of other people and to be aware of how those people look and act when they are experiencing different emotions.

Through trial and error, children begin to discover what causes certain feelings and what makes feelings change.

Children look to adults to become part of their learning process. They may test adults by trying to make them laugh or trying to make them sad, angry, or frustrated. At times, parents may feel that their children want to drive them crazy, but in reality children are just trying to "figure it all out."

Parents can teach their children that feelings are worth "listening to," that everyone has feelings, and that emotions are an important part of being human.

Coming to terms with our own emotions will help when we are teaching children how to recognize and deal with their feelings. By accepting, understanding, and honestly acknowledging their own feelings, parents can show that all feelings are valuable. Children will also see that they don't have to bear feelings of anger, sadness, or pain by themselves.

Initiate a conversation about emotions and ask parents how they learned (or didn't learn) to express them. For example, you might ask:

- What feelings were expressed in your family?
- Were there any feelings that were not okay to express?
- Were different feelings okay for girls but not boys or okay for boys but not girls?
- Were there feelings only adults could express or feelings only children could express?
- Do you remember how your parents taught you about feelings?

"We all have a dream, we all have a hope, we all have an expectation that one day our child will learn to talk, naturally and effectively. But learning to talk means much more than learning the right words. It means learning to recognize feelings. It means learning to understand thoughts. It means learning to be a person, and how to connect with another person." (Ayala Manolsen, *It Takes Two to Talk*)

Emotions help connect inner feelings to external movements, especially facial expressions. When we are happy, we smile. Some aspects of emotional expression appear to be pre-wired and show up before a baby fully understands the meaning of the emotion. For example, a very young baby will smile readily and automatically before she is able to identify why.

How well we signal what we are feeling, and how well we "read" and respond to the cues of others are central to both emotional and social development. Based on what we see, we adjust our behaviour to acknowledge what is occurring and to establish and maintain good relationships. People who pick up cues quickly and respond appropriately are more likely to develop healthy relationships.

Emotions draw us toward certain people and situations and steer us away from others. Along with memories of our past experiences, emotions lead us to want to extend or end activities or to try or avoid something new. Emotional connections to people and events also help us to better remember what we have learned. (Adapted from Craig T. Ramey, Ph.D., and Sharon L. Ramey, Ph.D. *Right from Birth: Building Your Child's Foundation for Life*)

One of the most important skills we learn is the ability to recognize our own feelings and those of others. Being able to tell the difference between frustration and anger, for example, will help us react to those emotions in ways that are appropriate and helpful to a situation. If we misunderstand our own feelings or those of others, we can also find ourselves reacting to our mistaken perceptions rather than to the true feelings involved.

Review and discuss **handout 3.2** with parents.

While parents begin the following activity, read a book aloud that deals with children's emotions, such as *Today I Feel Silly* by Jamie Lee Curtis. There are many excellent children's books with themes based on emotions a child might experience in different situations. Choose a selection from the book list and initiate a discussion with parents about these books and others they might know about that are fun, interesting, and helpful for opening up a conversation about feelings with their children.

Make a "Feelings" Book

Have parents begin to make a book about feelings for their child. This is a project that parents can begin here at the program and work on with their child at home.

Materials:

- White paper
- Construction paper
- Magazines
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Medium-tipped markers

Method:

- Fold several sheets of white paper and a piece of construction paper in half.
- Staple the cover and pages together.
- Title the book How am I Feeling? and leave a space for the child to print his or her name as the author.
- Title the pages with words to describe feelings; e.g., Happy, Sad, Sleepy, Scared, Excited, Mad, and so on.
- Parents start the book with an illustration of one "sample" feeling. They can write a short descriptive sentence for their child as they work on the book together; e.g., "I feel happy when…"
- Together, parents and children look in magazines for faces that express selected emotions and then glue them onto the appropriate pages.
- They could also add pictures of things that cause different emotions in their child. Perhaps pizza makes him happy or a rainy day makes him sad.
- Suggest that parents may want to choose photos of their family to illustrate some emotions.
- This is a great project for parents and children to share, as it offers an opportunity for parents to talk with their children about feelings.

Extension Activity

- Suggest to parents that the feelings book can be extended to include real or imaginary situations in which people express emotions. Children can help suggest how to encourage positive emotions and how to comfort someone who is feeling sad, frustrated, or angry.

Recognizing Non-Verbal Feeling Cues

Recognizing the facial expressions and body language of other people is a skill that helps us understand others and learn how to react to them appropriately.

Review **handout 3.3** with parents and talk about the facial expressions and body language depicted in the illustrations.

Suggest that parents look at this handout with their child at home and talk about the emotions illustrated in the images.

They might turn it into a game by asking their child: "What do you think happened to make this man look sad?" or "Why do you think the little boy is blushing?" or "Find the person who is scared." Parents might discover that their child can imagine a whole story based on just one picture!

Empathy and Social Development

Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and identify with the feelings and experiences of other people. Helping children develop empathy is one of the greatest gifts we can give them. It will reduce aggression and support both their emotional and social development.

As children develop empathy they may:

- Ask more questions about how certain events or experiences make others feel.
- Ask a parent how certain things make them feel.
- Begin to understand how others might feel in certain situations.
- Begin to show behaviours that express empathy during play with a doll or playmate; e.g., "Don't cry, baby. Mommy will make it better."
- Begin to comfort and express concern for another individual.

The ability to feel empathy for another person will affect a child's social interactions and reactions and her belief in her ability to care for, understand, and comfort another person.

Temperament and Learning

Everyone experiences many different kinds of emotions, but the way we experience feelings and the intensity of them depends largely on our temperament. Temperament refers to the consistent reactions of individuals to similar situations. We are all born with a tendency toward a certain temperament or way of responding. For example, some of us feel our emotions intensely and with passion, while others responding to the same situation may be mildly pleased or a bit irritated.

As parents begin to understand their own temperament and that of their child, they can learn how to anticipate and respond to the child's way of interacting with the world. They will be better able to understand their child and their relationship with him. They will be better able to anticipate his reactions to situations and respond with approaches that encourage, support, and lead him to expand his natural tendencies to include a more balanced approach to life and learning. Being aware of their own temperament helps parents to understand their instinctive reactions to situations and modify those reactions to better meet the needs of their child.

"Understanding a child's temperament doesn't necessarily mean excusing it or adopting an accommodating parenting style. In many instances, parents who gain more understanding of their child's temperament also understand why they need to take a firmer stance in a particular area." (From The Preventive Ounce, a non-profit organization: http://preventiveoz.org)

There are many different theories of temperament and how it interacts with learning and parenting styles. However, outside a clinical setting it is preferable to look at individual traits rather than trying to determine a label for individuals.

One way parents can consider the influence of temperament on their relationship with their child is to look at how they commonly react to situations and compare their reactions to those of their child. Rather than classifying individual temperaments, we can then focus on the particular traits of each person and think of how to influence a child's way of interacting with his world and help him to better manage his own temperament.

Ask parents to take five minutes to respond to the statements on **handout 3.4**.

Initiate a discussion about whether or not the parent's temperament matches their child's and in what ways.

How might parents adjust their way of interacting with their children in light of what they have learned in this exercise?

Reflective Listening

Listening and responding effectively with our hearts and our minds is an important human skill.

Reflective listening is an excellent technique for making sure we have correctly interpreted what others are telling us, both verbally and non-verbally. It is also a very effective way to help children learn to identify their feelings, talk about them, and express them in a way that helps them maintain and build relationships.

Review **handout 3.5** and initiate a discussion about reflective listening.

Self-Esteem

What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the name for the feeling we have about ourselves. We feel good when we have high self-esteem.

How much self-esteem we have depends on how closely the way we see ourselves matches what we think of as our "ideal self." If there is a close match, our self-esteem will be high; if there is a large gap, our self-esteem will be low. Our ideal self is formed by parental and cultural expectations (school, media, peers, and community). Our perception of ourselves can be close to reality or it can be distorted.

Children who feel good about themselves take part in building healthy relationships. They are often open to new ideas, have the self-confidence to take appropriate risks, and are eager to share their own ideas. They are confident and curious, cope well with disappointments, and enjoy their successes. These are children who face challenges with a sense of wonder and discovery.

Children with low self-esteem often have difficulty learning and relating to others. In some children, feelings of inadequacy are reflected in bossy and aggressive behaviour, which can influence how other children and adults relate to them. A negative self-image affects everyone.

Creating a nurturing environment that is supportive and caring provides a strong foundation for building healthy self-esteem.

Realistic self-esteem is formed when we feel competent (in what is important to us), in control of our lives, and valued by other people.

Parents can contribute to a healthy self-esteem by:

- Helping the child become competent in areas that are important to him. Is he interested in music or sports? These can be important avenues of self-esteem, and are especially valuable for the child who has problems with schoolwork.
- Allowing the child to make age-appropriate choices and decisions and to take responsibility for those choices. For example, a parent can ask: "Do you want to wear your hat or your earmuffs today?" Parents who "do everything" for their child deprive him of opportunities to become capable, to learn from his mistakes, and to be responsible.
- Showing appreciation for who a child is as a person. In addition to knowing she is loved, it is important for a child to know that she is liked for the particular person she is. When parents acknowledge and show appreciation for character traits they admire in their child, that child's positive sense of herself will grow and those traits will become stronger.

Initiate a discussion about the things parents appreciate about their child's personality while they make him or her a card.

Some character traits parents might recognize and encourage in their child include: good nature, sense of humour, honesty, friendliness, care for others, courtesy, bravery, fairness, cooperative and sharing attitude, or persistence.

Make an "I Like You Because…" Card

Materials:

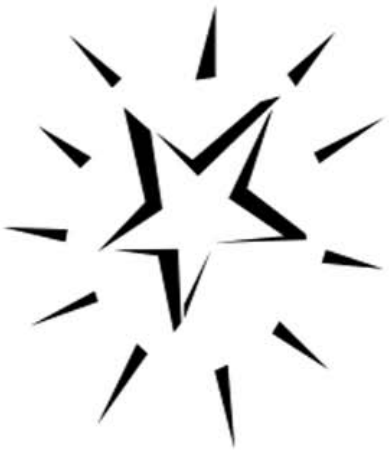
- Card stock for each parent
- Envelopes
- Markers and pens
- Glitter, sequins, stickers, or other items to decorate the cards

Method:

- Make a card yourself to show parents to get them thinking about what they can create. (A printed sample is included here, but you should show parents one you make yourself by hand.)
- Fold the card in half or quarters.
- Parents decorate the card, address it, and sign it.
- Suggest to parents that they could give the card to their child on a day he needs a little extra encouragement.
- Parents might choose to start a tradition of making cards or writing small notes to their child that express their appreciation and love for who she is as a person.

This card is designed to be folded in half across the width and the length of the sheet

You are my special shooting star



I like you

Sooooooooo

much

Because

You make me smile

everyday!

I love you

Sooooooooo

much!

Suggest that parents think back to the Multiple Intelligences Questionnaire they completed in session one. Perhaps their child is interested in music or sports, which can help with self-esteem. Keeping in mind and encouraging a child's learning strengths, while helping her develop areas in which she is not as strong, will help her to build a healthy self-esteem based on what she loves and will encourage her to take some risks as she works on skills that do not come as naturally to her.

Ask parents to suggest ways they might help a child build self-esteem, taking into account the child's strengths in the various kinds of intelligence.

Visual/Spatial

Verbal/Linguistic

Musical/Rhythmic

Logical/Mathematical

Bodily/Kinesthetic

Interpersonal Intelligence

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Review **handout 3.6**.

Pick one or two points for discussion.

A socially and emotionally healthy child:

- Is confident.
- Is friendly.
- Relates well with other children.
- Can readily use words to state her needs, opinions, ideas, and emotions.
- Will try challenging new tasks.
- Will not give up easily when frustrated.
- Is not emotionally threatened by making mistakes.
- Listens to others and responds appropriately.
- Has empathy for the feelings of others.
- Uses words to solve conflicts and problems.

Home Activity

Children learn about social interaction through pretend or dramatic play. Dramatic play helps children explore their imaginations, learn to cooperate and share with others, and create their own stories as they work out the details of their play. Pretend play can also help children work through their own ideas, problems, and fears about certain situations.

Encourage parents to provide blankets, tables, or large boxes so that their child can build a tent or a house. Parents can pack an old suitcase with unwanted clothing, unused purses, briefcases, hats, and costume jewellery to support their child's play.

Children love pretend play with their friends, but it is also lots of fun and very exciting to play like this with a parent, especially when it is the child who is the director. Perhaps the child will choose to be the firefighter and the parent will be the one who is rescued!

Book List

Each One Special, Frieda Wishinsky

Emma's Eggs, Margriet Ruurs

Little Toby and the Big Hair, Eugenie Fernandes

There's a Mouse in My House! Sheree Fitch

Love You Forever, Robert Munsch

I Was So Mad! Norma Simon

Bad Mood Bear, J. Richardson

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak

Are We There Yet? V. Wilkins

Rainbow Fish to the Rescue, M. Pfister

Oscar Needs a Friend, J. Stimson

Owl Babies, M. Waddell

Little Red Hen, M. Foreman

Red is Best, K. Stinson

If You're Happy and You Know It, Jane Carbrera

The Kissing Hand, Audrey Penn

The Runaway Bunny, Margaret Wise Brown

Do You Want To Be My Friend? Eric Carle

Little Teddy Bear's Happy Face, Sad Face, Lynn Offerman

Copycat Faces, Dorling Kindersley

Stages of Emotional and Social Development

Infants and toddlers are developing a sense of self and of belonging to a family.

- Use your child's name often when speaking to him.
- Be supportive of your child and give her lots of love and affection.
- Do things together as a family.
- Ask your child about his likes and dislikes and allow him to make choices.

Children learn to develop trust in others.

- From the very beginning, your responsiveness to your child's needs provides the nurturing he needs to develop trust.
- Follow through on promises.
- Be consistent. Have a schedule and family rules and stick to them.
- Talk about yourself and listen to your child talk about herself.

Children learn to separate from their parents.

- Encourage your child as she starts to learn to play independently and with other children.
- If your child cries when you leave her with another caregiver, try to be cheerful and confident so your behaviour does not make her worried or afraid.
- Infants and toddlers show great interest in other children and like to watch them play from a distance.

At about two years of age children like to play near other children and may briefly join their play and then withdraw to watch again.

- Provide your child with opportunities to be around other children.
- Draw her attention to other babies or toddlers and talk about what they are doing.

Children are learning about the world around them and beginning to absorb the social skills they will need to be a part of it.

- Take your child to places where other children are playing such as playgrounds, the homes of friends, or organized groups like Moms and Tots.
- Support his early attempts to play with others but avoid pressuring him to participate.

By three years of age most children are enthusiastic about playing with other children.

- Invite other children to your home to play with your child.
- You might consider taking her to a preschool or childcare program.

Three-year-olds are learning to share and take turns.

- Talk with your child about sharing and taking turns.
- Take turns with your child when you are playing or talking together.

By four years of age children will have very strong opinions and desires. They know what they like and dislike and are beginning to clearly state their wants and needs.

- Ask your child's opinions often and respect her answers.
- Encourage your child to tell you his needs verbally.
- While reading a story to your child, ask her opinion of the characters or events in the story.
- Talk about real life situations and ask your child what he suggests you do in those situations.

Children learn to use words to solve conflicts, and they begin to develop control of their emotions.

- Encourage your child to talk about his feelings.
- Help your child remember to use the "feeling" words you have been teaching her in situations with other playmates or family members.
- Try to be close by when children are playing but do not try to solve your child's problems with other children.
- Have a quiet place where children can choose to go to regain control of their emotions.
- Provide materials like playdough that children can play with to relieve their frustrations when they are upset.

At age three or four children learn that it is okay to make mistakes.

- When your child makes a mistake, acknowledge the mistake and encourage her to try again.
- Notice when your child is trying hard and give him lots of hugs and encouragement.
- Provide activities and opportunities for your child to succeed.
- Be willing to listen and give comfort when your child needs it but focus on letting her know everyone makes mistakes and that making a mistake does not mean she is a bad person.
- Let your child know when you make a mistake.

Children learn to develop confidence and self-respect.

- Accept your child for who he is and where he is in his development.
- Offer your child some tasks that are slightly more difficult for her and challenge her to extend her abilities.
- Ask questions and show interest in your child's artwork and other activities to help him build pride in his accomplishments.
- Make sure your child knows you believe in her and her abilities.
- Provide new and interesting experiences and encourage your child's curiosity and eagerness to try new things.

By four years of age children are learning to feel true empathy for others.

- Talk to your child about respecting the feelings of other people. Show respect for other people and their belongings and let your child know you expect him to respect the property of other people, too.

(Adapted from: http://www.meddybemps.com)

Teaching Your Child about Feelings

Recognize and accept your child's feelings.
Feelings are not right or wrong. Stay close and touch or hold your child when she is talking about her feelings.

Remember you are your child's role model.
Express your own feelings appropriately. Talk about your feelings and use the correct words to describe them. "I am feeling impatient because the phone keeps ringing and I'm trying to finish writing this letter." "I am surprised because I did not expect to see the seeds we planted sprout so soon!"

Use "feeling" words often in conversation when you talk with your child.

When your child displays or expresses feelings, use the appropriate words to help her identify and describe them.
Start with talking about the five basic feelings (mad, glad, sad, afraid, and hurt). Gradually add more words to describe feelings. "It sounds like you are really frustrated." "You seem interested in dinosaurs; let's find a book about them in the library."

Help your child recognize and deal with his feelings in an appropriate way.
Make sure your child is safe. When a child is angry or overly excited, firmly but gently holding him and moving him to another place is the safest response, but remember that children need the time and opportunity to express their feelings. We would never tell a child not to laugh when he is happy. Allow a child to express pain or sadness in the way he needs to. Crying is often the most honest response to emotion.

Set limits about what your child can and cannot do.
Talk about ways your child can deal with a difficult situation.

Respect and acknowledge the non-verbal ways people express feelings.
Body language (crying, hiding one's face, slumped shoulders) are all clues to the feelings of others. Sometimes it is not easy or even possible to express in words immediately how we are feeling, especially when we are in the grip of strong emotion. Comfort and support your child and help him learn how to talk about how he is feeling.

Talk about the feelings of other people.
"Your brother is sad because his friend said he didn't want to play." Talk about how your child's actions make other people feel. Draw the connection between her actions and the feelings of others and discuss how she would feel if someone said or did the same thing to her.

Take every opportunity to let children know they have the power to make other individuals happy by showing them an act of kindness.

Read books that help you and your child explore and talk about different feelings and situations that invoke emotion.

How Do You Feel Today?

What Is Your Temperament?

- Read through the statements below and mark **a number between 1 and 4** beside each for both yourself and your child. (1 = Almost always; 4 = Almost never.)
- Compare your responses and think about how you might best respond to your child to take into account both your temperament and his.
- Remember that your child is still young, and although temperament is often considered to be a genetic or biologically determined characteristic, our perceptions of a child's temperament may be based on his stage of development or the life experiences he has had up to now.
- Exercises like this one give clues about how to understand children, but the ideas you have now about your child may change over time.

Parent	**Child**	
____	____	Activity level: I am constantly moving and doing.
____	____	Bio-Rhythm: I am regular in my eating and sleeping habits.
____	____	Approach/Withdrawal: I consider everyone I meet to be a new friend, not a stranger.
____	____	Mood: I am a positive person.
____	____	Intensity: I am very vocal about my positive or negative reactions to situations.
____	____	Sensitivity: I am bothered by loud noises or bright lights.
____	____	Adaptability: I need a consistent routine and have problems adapting to changes in plans.
____	____	Distractibility: I get distracted from a train of thought or from what I am doing.
____	____	Persistence: I persist with a task until I figure it out or get it done.

Reflective Listening

Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak.

Epictetus

Listening is the most basic way we show respect, and one of the most important aspects of human relationships. When we listen well, we not only have a better chance of understanding our children, but they will absorb the effective listening skills you model for them.

Listening is active; it is more than just hearing. Listening engages the mind, understands the intent and content, and includes making use of cues like posture, gestures, and vocal qualities. Listening takes concentration and practice. Listen with empathy. Listen with your heart as well as your ears. Get down and look at your child on her level and maintain eye and physical contact.

Reflective listening involves becoming both a mirror and a lamp for children. We listen carefully to what children are saying, both verbally and non-verbally, and we reflect what we hear or perceive. We also help illuminate the child's understanding of her emotions by offering a word to describe what she is feeling and by connecting her emotions to the situation that led to them.

Non-verbal expression of feelings:

- Your child's much-loved grandmother is leaving to return to her home in another city after a long, fun-filled visit with your family. Your young child might cry as she sees Grandma take her suitcase to the car.

  You could say: "You're feeling sad because Grandma is leaving."

- Another time your child might express her feelings by throwing her toy across the room.

  You could say: "Are you feeling angry because Grandma is leaving?" or "Do you think you are feeling sad because she is leaving?"

Use reflective listening and provide appropriate feeling words to help your child verbally express himself when you believe he is struggling to tell you how he is feeling.

- A toddler might say with tears in his eyes: "Grandma leaving!"

Observation and listening with your eyes and heart as well as your ears tell you that he is stating more than the obvious fact that Grandma is leaving. You might say: "Yes, Grandma is leaving. That makes me sad. You seem sad that she is leaving, too."

Ways to Build Self-Esteem in Children

Give your child the gift of your time and attention.
Listen to your child with your full attention.
Practise reflective listening.

Listen actively and engage your child in conversation.
Ask questions, especially open-ended questions that cannot be answered with yes or no or a short factual answer. For example, the question "What colour is the duck?" has one factual answer, but the question "Where do you think the duck is going?" engages the child in a conversation that draws on her knowledge of the world (and ducks!) and her imagination.

Encourage your child and allow him to try to solve his own problems.
Don't jump in too quickly with a solution. A child learns through experience and needs the opportunity to try and succeed…and try and fail so that he can try again.

Accept your child for who he is.
Recognize, reinforce, and nurture his uniqueness and talents.

Use the language of self-esteem.
Describe her behaviour without judging the child as a person. For example, say "You were not acting like a good friend when you ignored Mary today" rather than "You are rude."

Praise your child for a job well done and for effort.
Make sure you praise honestly. Praise that is overdone becomes undervalued.

Tell your child and show by your actions that you enjoy his company and want to be with him.
A child feels more confident when he knows he is loved. He also needs to know that you like him for the person he is.

Set reasonable limits and expectations and be consistent.
A child needs to feel secure and know that your rules and expectations are predictable.

Session Four:
The Power of Play

The child's work is play.
–Maria Montessori

Perhaps the most important thing parents can do to support their children's development is to encourage them to be enthusiastic learners.

Children are born with a natural curiosity and a desire to learn.

Children are born with a natural interest in the world around them. They are learning in thousands of ways every day of their young lives.

The goal for parents is to maintain and encourage that interest. Parents want their children to be active, creative explorers who are not afraid to try out new ideas. They want their children to become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners.

What Children Learn When They Play

Play is not a break from learning—it is learning.

When children play they are learning:

How to get along with others
They develop friendships, begin to feel comfortable as part of a group, cooperate with others, and learn to negotiate and compromise.

How to take turns
Communication involves two people taking turns. Taking turns with words and with actions is an essential element of shared play. Children quickly learn to say "First, I'll take a turn and then you take one" as they play with other children and with parents.

To concentrate
Who hasn't observed a young child totally engrossed in play? A child constructing a tower of blocks, drawing a picture, or having a tea party is showing a sophisticated level of concentration on the task at hand. Children learn to tune out what is irrelevant and concentrate on what is important.

To problem solve
For example, when a child is presented with containers of varying sizes, he will persist until he figures out which is larger and which ones will fit into the others.

To use their imagination and creativity
Children are born with rich imaginations, and it's a good thing. If we had to invent imagination or teach it to our kids, we couldn't do it. Encouraging a child's imagination is important. Fantasy and imagination allow us to explore possibilities, develop the use of language, and understand social roles.

To deal with their emotions and feelings
Children experience a broad range of emotion during play. They are learning to feel pride, self-confidence, independence, and self-control, as well as creating opportunities to express both positive and negative emotions.

To act out adult behaviour
Children copy others to learn new ways to do things. Through role playing and dramatic play, children imitate and try to understand and participate in adult behaviours.

To develop large and small motor skills
As they play, children develop their ability to control their bodies. As they jump and run, balance on objects, and move to music, they develop their large muscles and increase their physical strength and coordination.

Playing with small objects (e.g., building blocks), drawing, modelling playdough, and trying to write help children develop hand-eye coordination and strengthen the small muscles in their fingers and hands. Before children can successfully learn to write, they will need to develop fine-motor control. Play involves repetition, which is necessary to master physical and other skills. Repeating the same game over and over can be boring for parents as they interact with their children during normal routines, but turning everyday activities into a game can make it fun for both parents and children.

To explore their senses
Children are more likely to learn and remember when they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste things. Their learning about their world is strengthened when they have opportunities to experience many different materials and situations through play.

To build self-confidence and independence
As children move from parallel play behaviour to interactive play with other children, they develop a stronger sense of themselves as independent beings with unique identities. They begin to feel confident in their ability to operate in the world separate from Mom and Dad.

Review **handouts 4.1** and **4.2** with parents.

Initiate a discussion about the ways parents play with their children. Ask parents if they tried the at-home activity last week and engaged in some dramatic play with their child.

Homemade toys

The stores are full of a huge variety of toys for children's play, and every parent knows that the cost of toys keeps rising. A trip down any aisle of toys at a department store is all that's needed to see how expensive they can be. The worst part of paying a lot of money for toys is that often children play with them once or twice, and then forget them in the heap with all the other toys.

Parents on a budget can't keep up with the demand or the prices of today's toys. So, what can they do to provide their child with a variety of toys and opportunities for stimulating play without breaking the budget? There are ways to keep children entertained and challenged and still not drain the cheque book. Play props can be free. Many everyday items can be used to make homemade toys for young children. The only thing needed is imagination—both the parent's and the child's!

Initiate a discussion with parents about things they can find around their home that their children love to play with.

For example: Have parents ever seen their child play with boxes? What could their child do with one or more boxes? Children will often move things in and out of boxes, stack or nest them, decorate them for keeping things in, make a house, turn it into a tunnel, or tape some boxes together and make a maze.

Ask parents what else is around the house that children like to play with. Distribute **handout 4.3**.

If there is a toy lending library in your community, have some information about it available to parents at your program. Using a toy library is a great way to try out some new toys to gauge a child's interest or find out if they are developmentally appropriate for the child before you consider a purchase. It is also a wonderful way to offer a child new toys and experiences at little or no cost.

Most parents will purchase toys for their children. Yard sales and second-hand stores often have inexpensive good quality toys available. At gift-giving times relatives and friends will ask which toys their children might enjoy.

Discuss **handout 4.4** and the tips for purchasing appropriate quality toys for children.

Initiate a discussion among parents about purchased toys. You might ask a few questions to get things going, such as:

"In your experience, which toys have been a good buy and which ones haven't?"
"Where have you found a good selection of toys at a good price?"
"What do you do with toys that your child is tired of?"

Parents might be interested in a toy exchange at one of your sessions if they have toys at home their child no longer plays with.

Creative Play

Children are creative people and they love to make art. Nature seems to have given them the ability to transform even the most commonplace thing into something whimsical, full of joy and discovery. It is important to nurture that creativity.

When parents keep their own creativity alive and enthusiastically join their children to explore creative materials and play, children understand that creativity and exploration are valued.

It's important to provide children with a variety of materials and to encourage free exploration of those materials. Rather than expect the faithful reproduction of a particular craft or image, adults can help children notice the way paint drips down the page or how the colours mix to make new colours.

Above all, adults should never judge a child's creative efforts. A child's picture may look like scribbles to an adult, but to the child it may represent much creative effort. Asking him to talk about his creation is a more supportive response than making a comment such as "That flower is really beautiful" (especially when it is not a flower!), or worse, "I can't tell what it is." When adults show interest in a child's creative labours, they reinforce his desire to want to continue discovering new things in his own way.

Creative art play is an excellent way to provide children with opportunities for exploration, creativity, and expression of emotion. Activities such as painting, drawing, or working with clay introduce children to basic art concepts. They learn about colour, line, shape, form, and texture when they paint and draw, make collages, and form three-dimensional objects out of clay. They learn to recognize patterns, learn about primary colours, and discover how to mix two colours to make a third, which is a science idea. Because art activities do not require the creation of a specific product, children of all ages enjoy and benefit from them.

Children develop symbolic understanding by representing their experiences in paintings, drawings, collages, and models. This familiarity with symbols is key to beginning to read. When they talk about their artwork, children practise their language skills and expand their vocabulary, which are also critical for reading.

Learning to manipulate crayons and markers and to use scissors help children develop the coordination they need to write with pencils.

Craft activities usually require children to make something according to a model. Crafts help children develop specific abilities including eye-hand coordination and small-motor skills, but the success of a craft project is often evaluated (even by the child!) against a model or standard. Because children do not fully develop the mental or physical abilities to succeed in imitating a model until the elementary years, it is better to offer only occasional, very simple craft activities to young children.

Providing opportunities for children to develop the small muscles in their hands and their hand-eye coordination is important. Making things, drawing, modelling with playdough, and using scissors, glue, stamps, tape, and paper punches are all activities children love and are beneficial to developing their fine-motor control.

Read the poem in **handout 4.5** to parents.

Initiate a discussion of free art activities and crafts with parents. Explore the kinds of art activities their children enjoy.

Making an art box

Suggest that parents find a cardboard box or other container to store a selection of art supplies for their child. The box should be kept in an easily accessible place once the child is old enough to work without supervision—usually around three years of age. Parents can encourage their child to decorate the box with a drawing or a collage of interesting objects.

Some ideas for purchased items to include in the craft box are crayons, washable markers, coloured paper, watercolour or tempera paints, tape, child-safe scissors, and a glue stick. Parents might also consider including a chalkboard or whiteboard, and an easel.

Suggest that parents gather things around the house for their child's art box. There is probably a wealth of interesting material going into the garbage or recycle box every week that their children would enjoy experimenting with. Children love to explore different textures and consistencies of art materials such as playdough and finger paint.

Show parents a box that you have decorated containing all the basic supplies listed above and a selection of other items such as those listed on **handout 4.6**. Ask parents what their child might do with these things.

Displaying a child's art

Remind parents to display the things their child makes and show appreciation for their work. They might post artwork on their refrigerator with the shape magnets they made in the first session, or (to save their walls) they could install a clothesline with pegs in their child's room to hang artwork.

Suggest that they encourage their child to write his name on his creation (with help until he can do it on his own), or parents can write a caption or short story about a picture together with their child. The parent will act as the scribe and write down the child's words.

Craft Recipes

Let parents know that the recipes in **handout 4.7** are just a sample of the many that can be found in books at the library. If parents have Internet access, there are many sites on-line with recipes and creative ideas for children of all ages. Suggest that they use a search engine such as Google and search with words like "children" or "toddler" with "craft," "game," "fun," "activity," "song," "rhymes," "preschool," or "kindergarten." There is an amazing amount of information out there.

Make some face paint with parents. They can use it to paint their children's faces at PACT time.

Materials:

- A face-painting book from your local library
- Enough small jars (such as baby food jars) or paper cups so each parent has at least one
- Set of measuring spoons and a measuring cup
- 1 box of cornstarch
- 1 large jar of cold cream or some shortening
- Food colouring
- Jar of water

Method:

For each colour mix:

- 1 tablespoon of cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon of cold cream or shortening
- A few drops of food colouring

If the mixture is too thick to paint with, thin with a few drops of water. This paint can be applied with a paintbrush for small areas or spread all over a child's face with the fingers. While the paint is still wet, parents can add some glitter to their design!

If parents choose to make different colours, they can share them when they paint their children's faces.

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play:

- Is a way for children to express themselves and develop their imaginations.
- Helps children release emotions and relate events or stories to themselves.
- Encourages children to use their entire bodies to explore feelings and emotions.
- Helps them understand who they are in relation to others through role playing.
- Allows children to develop language skills through practising language that fits into different social roles as they play.

What parents can do

Parents can provide old clothes and hats, purses, costume jewellery, empty food containers, and boxes for dramatic play. They can build a kitchen or workshop set out of boxes or mix up some face paint to bring a character to life. (They should help their child with the paint.) Stuffed animals and puppets are great props that children enjoy in dramatic play.

Suggest that parents and children act out a story they have read, pretend to go shopping, or make some buildings, roads, or tunnels for cars or a train set. Joining in a child's play occasionally is a wonderful way for parents to enjoy their child! It is a perfect opportunity to get to know her better.

Ask parents if they have ever joined in a game of "let's pretend" with their child. Perhaps they held a tea party for dolls, or directed traffic with their little police officer, or set off on a safari together. Engaging in dramatic play with a child is a good way to relieve stress and recapture (or experience for the first time) the joyful, imaginative world of make-believe.

Music and Movement

Music is an art form that addresses all areas of child development—physical, intellectual, social, and emotional.

A research team exploring the link between music and intelligence reported that music training—specifically piano instruction—is far superior to computer instruction in dramatically enhancing children's abstract reasoning skills necessary for learning math and science. The findings, published in the February 1997 issue of *Neurological Research,* are the result of a two-year research project with preschoolers.

"A surprising proportion of mathematicians are accomplished musicians. Is it because music and mathematics share patterns that are beautiful?" –Martin Gardner

Children of all ages express themselves through music. They love to play their own music on homemade musical instruments or on instruments parents purchase. They love to move and dance to the music alone, with parents, or with friends. Even at an early age, children sway, bounce, or move their hands in response to music. Many preschoolers make up songs and, with no self-consciousness, sing to themselves as they play.

When children experience music, they develop listening skills, react emotionally to music, and improve their language skills. Music contains patterns both in the words and in the melody, which help children develop memory, anticipation, prediction, and sequencing skills.

Music is like magic to children. A father's lullaby can soothe a baby to sleep, and a mother's enthusiastic chant can inspire a whole family to hike the steepest mountain trail. Music and rhythm in their many forms are part of all children's lives. The tick-tock of clocks, the purring of cats, rhymes, and songs accompany them as they grow up. Music is portable. You can take it—or make it—anywhere. Part of growing up is learning to make and listen to music.

Review **handouts 4.8** and **4.9** with parents.

Initiate a discussion about the music their children like to listen, sing, and dance to. Suggest that parents try to expose their child to many kinds of music, including country, classical, and other forms instead of playing only children's music for them.

Book List

From Head to Toe, Eric Carle

Jiggle, Wiggle, Prance, Sally Noll

Shake My Sillies Out, Raffi

Happy Hedgehog Band, Martin Waddell

Giraffes Can't Dance, Giles Andreae

The Little Band, James Sage

I Can Draw Animals, R. Gibson

Alexander's Pretending Day, Bunny Crumpacker

Red is a Dragon: A Book of Colours, Roseanne Thong

White is For Blueberry, George Shannon

Colours, A First Art Book, Lucy Micklethwait

Little Blue and Little Yellow, Leo Lionni

Red is Best, Kathy Stinson

My Crayons Talk, G. Brian Karas

My Friend and I, Lisa Jahn-Clough

Eloise Dresses Up, Marc Cheshire

Snow Music, Lynne Rae Perkins

Kids Make Music!: Clapping & Tapping from Bach to Rock! Avery Hart, Paul Mantell, *Loretta*, Trezzo Braren

Music Is, Lloyd Moss, Philip Petit-Roulet

Our Marching Band, Lloyd Moss

Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin, Lloyd Moss

Max Found Two Sticks, Brian Pinkney

My Family Plays Music, Judy Cox

The Abaleda Voluntary Firehouse Band, Dianne Young

The Boogie-Woogie Bear, Arlene Hamilton

There Is Music in a Pussycat, Richard Thompson

Simon Makes Music, Gilles Tibo

Home Activity

Refer parents to **handout 4.9**. Suggest that they try making some musical instruments with their child this week and play along as they sing songs together or listen to music.

What Children Learn As They Play

During play children learn:

To get along with others
They develop friendships, begin to feel comfortable as part of a group, cooperate with others, and learn to negotiate and compromise.

To take turns
Communication involves two people taking turns. Taking turns with words and with actions is an essential element of shared play.

To concentrate
A child constructing a tower of blocks, drawing a picture, or having a tea party is showing a sophisticated level of concentration on the task at hand. Children learn to tune out what is irrelevant and concentrate on what is important.

To problem solve
When a child is presented with containers of varying sizes, he will persist until he figures out which is larger and which containers will fit into the others.

To use their imagination and creativity
Fantasy and imagination allow us to explore possibilities, develop the use of language, and help us to understand social roles.

To deal with their emotions and feeling
Children experience a broad range of emotion during play. They learn to feel pride, self-confidence, independence, self-control.

To act out adult behaviour
Through role playing and dramatic play, children imitate and try to understand and participate in adult behaviours.

To develop large and small motor skills
As they play, children develop their ability to control their bodies.

To explore their senses
Children are more likely to learn and remember when they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste things.

To build self-confidence and independence
As children move from parallel play behaviour to interactive play with other children, they develop a stronger sense of themselves as independent beings with unique identities.

Encouraging Your Child's Play

Use what's around you. On the drive to school or daycare, take the time to imagine. Point out a bear-shaped cloud. Ask your child what she thinks the clouds look like. Try to imagine what the people in the car ahead of you are talking so passionately about.

Keep it simple. It's easier to exercise the imagination with a big cardboard box and a stick than with a Play Station or video. Try to set up times when children can get back to basics.

Cultivate the what-ifs. What if Rover could talk? What do you think he'd say? What if you were Dad today? What if we didn't have cars? What if you could be anything you wanted to be? Imagination can lead us to our dreams.

Encourage your child's strengths. Observe what your child likes to do and provide opportunities for her to do it often. Does she like to colour? Does she like to move to music? Maybe creating things with playdough or playing in the sandbox is your child's favourite activity.

Include both old favourites and new, slightly more challenging activities. Children gain confidence from repeating the same song, game, or activity often. But occasionally offering a new activity that provides a bit of a challenge will help your child become comfortable with new things and develop confidence in his ability to be successful in many situations.

Read! When you read to your child, encourage him to form pictures in his mind. This is an important skill in learning to read well and connect with the written word. Reading fuels the imagination.

Above all, have fun! Play should be fun. It's important to allow children to make their own choices about how they play. As parents, you can provide opportunities for play, simple props and materials that are easily available to your child, and an interest in and appreciation of her play activities. Entering occasionally into your child's play is fun for both of you and gives you the opportunity to better understand her personality and learning, have conversations that are meaningful to her, and pass along some new ideas, too.

Homemade Toys

When you are stuck trying to find something for your children to play with on vacation, or if they just need something different that will interest them for a morning, try putting together some simple materials for a homemade toy.

Here are a few ideas for toys your child will love!

Building blocks

Children love to create castles, forts, bridges, and other creations with building blocks. Purchasing enough blocks commercially to allow your child to build a fort would be very expensive. As an alternative, use boxes and other containers to make building blocks for your child. Packing boxes, shoeboxes, cereal and other dry food boxes, gift boxes, milk cartons—they are all wonderful for construction. You can stuff light cardboard boxes with newspaper and tape them shut to make them sturdier. The best thing about boxes is that children can decorate them in a hundred different ways. They can draw on them, glue on pictures from magazines or photos, put stickers or glitter on them, or paint them. The options are endless. If you know someone who has been working on a building project, small waste pieces of wood with the edges and surfaces sanded smooth also make great blocks.

Plastic nesting containers

We all have a tendency to save the plastic containers that yogurt, sour cream, and cottage cheese come packaged in. Instead of cluttering up your cupboard, put them in the toy box and see what your child will do with them! If you punch holes in a few, they will be great fun as sieves in sand or water.

Puzzles

Puzzles are a lot of fun and a great way for children to learn. Small puzzles are easily made with photographs, the lids of the boxes toys were packed in, plastic placemats, cereal boxes, and pictures from magazines. Store the puzzle pieces in zipper-top bags. Posters make great floor puzzles. Paper images can be mounted on cardboard. If you want the puzzles to last longer you can get them laminated, but they are so easy to make it is simple, quick, and inexpensive to provide your child with new ones when the old puzzles wear out.

Sorting activity

Take a look in your kitchen cabinet and find a pair of salad tongs, cooking tongs, or even a strawberry huller, and a muffin tin. Purchase a small bag of pompoms of mixed sizes and colours or some ping-pong balls and place them in a plastic container. Children can pick up the pompoms with cooking tongs or strawberry huller and sort them by colour into the muffin tin. The ping-pong balls can be put in a large plastic container of water and picked up with the salad tongs. These activities are super fun for little ones and great for their small-motor development, too!

Easy fishing game

Make a fishing game with fun foam, string, a small branch or stick, paper clips, and a small magnet. Just cut fish shapes from the fun foam, attach a string and a paper clip. The paper clip will go through the fun foam easily. Tie the string to one end of the stick and the magnet to the other end. You could easily make a few of them for a party game.

Sand or water table

Children love playing in sand and water tables. Make your own with a large plastic storage container. You can fill it with water or sand, or you can also try beans, rice, packing "noodles," snow in the winter, birdseed (use it to feed the birds at your own feeder when you're done with it). Add cups, scoops, pitchers, trucks, dinosaurs, or anything else your child would like. This makes for hours of fun!

Fantasy dress-up box

Collect old clothes and accessories from friends, relatives, garage sales, or your own closets, and put them in a large storage box. Include everything from clothes and shoes to purses, hats, and jewellery. You can add any number of things that your child can use to play storekeeper, pilot, firefighter, or fairy princess. Look for inexpensive dress-up items at dollar stores or right after Halloween when they will be on sale.

Junior explorer

Gather together some old maps, a small dollar-store compass, a hat, and a pair of old binoculars. Make a butterfly net with an old tennis racket and netting, and add a plastic magnifying glass for looking at bugs. Provide your child with a small travel bag to put all her supplies in and set her loose in the backyard. She will have hours of fun exploring and learning about every corner of her own private world.

Toy Buying Guide

Parents have a wide variety of choices available when it comes to purchasing toys for children. It can often be confusing to know which toys to buy. Toys should be age appropriate, conform to safety standards, and stimulate creativity and problem solving. Look to provide quality toys rather than quantity. Children can become overwhelmed with too many toys. They find it difficult to concentrate on one toy long enough to really explore it and let their imaginations bloom. Choose a few really interesting toys that can be played with in many different ways, rather than several toys that do just one thing.

Children learn so much while they are playing. Look for toys that support:

Social and language development

Preschoolers love pretend play and especially playing with someone else. Toys such as medical kits, kitchen sets, cash registers, play money, empty food containers, dollhouses with furniture, dolls, stuffed animals, wooden trains, cars, and puppets are ideal.

Large-motor development

Children have lots of energy and love to jump, run, and hop, so introduce soft balls, climbing toys, pull and push toys, riding toys, crawling tunnels, slides, and swings. Taking your child to a local park regularly is a great way for the two of you to meet other children and their parents.

Small-motor development

Construction toys, building blocks, sand play, and simple sport toys such as a bowling set (make your own with an inexpensive plastic ball and some clean plastic pop bottles) help your child grow and learn. Art activities with materials like playdough, markers, crayons, child-safe scissors, scrap paper, and paint are also great for developing small-muscle control and hand-eye coordination.

Cognitive (thinking) development

Puzzles, building blocks, simple board games, and card games are all great learning activities that children love.

Don't forget books! They are fun, interactive, and endlessly entertaining. Books help your child learn about the world of ideas and stories.

No matter how wonderful a toy is, if there are several parts that can easily be lost, much of the play and learning value will also be lost. Keep your child's toys sorted in boxes or containers that will keep all the parts together. If you put the toys in plastic baskets or tubs, cut a photo of the toy from the original box and tape it on the container. This will allow your child to find the toy he wants to play with and begin learning how to put his toys away. Consider rotating toys if your child has several, so they remain interesting longer.

Creative Art Play

Children are creative people and they love to make art. Nature seems to have given them the ability to transform even the most commonplace thing into something whimsical full of joy and discovery. It is important to nurture that creativity.

When you keep your own creativity alive and allow yourself to enthusiastically join your child as he explores creative materials and play, he will understand that you value creative exploration and expression.

I Am a Preschool Painting

I am not a picture. I am the creation of a child
absorbed in a new adventure, a brush,
a collection of nice swishy paint in inviting colours.
A blank piece of paper and
time to investigate the feel and rhythm,
the appearance of colours as they are applied
without a thought of a finished masterpiece.
The child who created me has long since
forgotten me but I was the multitude of
experiences that helped the child to grow.
I am not a picture…I am a child's painting.
–Author Unknown

Provide your child with a variety of materials and encourage free exploration. Watching the way paint drips down the page and how the brush can be used to redirect it, how a straw can be used to blow paint across a piece of paper, or the way the colours mix to make new colours are valuable learning experiences. Activities like painting, drawing, or working with clay introduce children to basic art concepts. Because art activities do not require the creation of a specific product, children of all ages enjoy and benefit from them.

Craft activities usually require children to make something according to a model. Crafts help children develop specific abilities including eye-hand coordination and small-motor skills, but the success of a craft project is often evaluated (even by the child) against a model or standard. Because children do not fully develop the mental or physical abilities to succeed in imitating a model until the elementary years, it is better to offer only occasional, very simple craft activities to young children.

Be careful not to judge your child's creative efforts in your comments. Your child's picture may look like scribbles to you, but to him it may represent much creative effort. Asking him to tell you all about it is a more supportive response than making a comment that implies evaluation, such as "That flower is really beautiful" (especially when it is not a flower!), or worse, "I can't tell what it is." When you show interest in your child's creative labours, you reinforce his desire to want to continue making art, exploring ideas, and taking creative risks.

Recycled Art Materials

Here are some everyday items to save for children's art activities. Art materials for children do not have to be expensive. Involve your child in saving these items and discuss how it helps the environment to recycle. You can find many art ideas in books at the library and on the Internet, but also be sure to encourage your child to use her imagination to make a creation of her own.

Bubble wrap
Packing "noodles"
Shipping boxes
Mesh food bags
Cereal boxes
Empty tissue boxes
Strawberry baskets
Toilet and paper towel tubes
Pringles cans
Frozen orange juice cans and lids
Plastic bottles
All kinds of plastic containers
Frozen-food trays
Egg cartons
Milk cartons
Paper grocery bags
Squeezable bottles (like ketchup and mustard containers)
Camera film containers and lids
Seed packets
Soda-bottle lids
Bottle caps
Plastic cups
Baby formula containers and lids
Baby food jars
Baby-wipe containers
Matchboxes
Old books
Newspapers
Old magazines
Straws
Plastic cutlery
Used copy paper
Aluminum foil
Clay pots
Popsicle sticks
Tissue
Used gift wrap and bows
Used greeting cards and gift tags
Ribbon scraps
Fabric remnants, yarn scraps
Buttons
Wallpaper remnants
Carpet remnants
Felt scraps
Broken crayons
Beads from broken jewellery
Rubber bands
Paper dots from a hole punch
Old mouse pads
Old CDs
Wood scraps

Craft Recipes to Share with Your Child

Playdough

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup salt
1 tablespoon cream of tartar
1 small package powdered drink mix (optional but makes a great colour and smell, or you can add food colouring to the water mixture)
Mix together:
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
2 cups of boiling water

Pour the water and oil mixture into the dry ingredients, stir, and knead until smooth. Store in an airtight container.

Homemade face paint

1 tablespoon of cornstarch
1 tablespoon of cold cream or shortening
A few drops of food colouring

Mix all of the ingredients in a small paper cup. If the mixture is too thick to paint with, thin with a few drops of water. This paint can be applied with a paintbrush for small areas, or you can spread it all over your child's face with your fingers. While the paint is still wet, you can add some glitter to your design!
Note: The cold cream or shortening is important. It helps the paint to spread and makes it easy to remove. Don't use a light face moisturizer; instead, use a heavy, oily cream.

Finger paint

3 teaspoons of sugar
1/2 cup of cornstarch
2 cups of cold water

Mix all ingredients in a pot and bring to a boil stirring constantly. Cool. Pour into jars (baby food jars are great sizes) and add food colouring.

Modelling clay

1 cup of cornstarch
2 cups of salt
1 1/3 cups of cold water

Put all of the salt and 2/3 cup of water in a pot and bring to a boil. Mix the cornstarch with the remaining water and then add it to the boiling mixture. Stir the combination until thick. Cool. Knead. After your child is finished modelling, bake in the oven at 225° F for approximately 2 hours, turning every 1/2 hour. The clay creation can be decorated or painted once cool.

Bubbles

2 to 6 tablespoons of dishwashing soap
1 cup of water
For stronger bubbles, add 1 tablespoon of gelatin or 1 tablespoon of glycerin to the mixture.

For bubble wands try pipe cleaners bent into interesting shapes, cookie cutters, straws alone or taped together to make a bundle, or plastic container lids with the centres cut out. For giant bubbles, bend a coat hanger into a circle and straighten the hanging loop for a short handle. Wrap pipe cleaners around the loop to give the solution something to cling to.

Puffy paint

Salt
Water
Tempera paint

Mix equal amounts of flour, salt, and water. Add liquid tempera paint for colour. Pour mixture into squeeze bottles and paint. Mixture will harden in a puffy shape.

Powdered milk paint

1/2 cup powdered nonfat milk
1/2 cup water

Mix milk and water. Stir until milk is dissolved. Makes about 3/4 cup.

Powdered tempera paint

Mix a small amount of the milk solution with powdered tempera pigment in a pan. Work smooth with a brush. Combine only as much solution with powdered pigments as you intend to use in one sitting. Use water to thin paint and to clean your brushes. This paint dries quickly to a glossy, opaque finish. It won't dust, chip, or come off on your hands.

Flubber

Solution A:	Solution B:
1 1/2 cups warm water	4 teaspoons borax
2 cups white glue	1 1/3 cups warm water
Food colouring	

Mix solution A in one bowl. Mix solution B in another bowl. Dissolve both well. Then just pour solution A into solution B. DO NOT MIX OR STIR! Just lift out the Flubber. This is a safe chemical reaction. If you use a glass bowl for solution B, your child can see the Flubber form in the bowl. It becomes a big "cloud" of rubbery stuff. Store in Baggies.

Goop

1 cup of liquid starch
1 cup of white glue
A few drops of food colouring

Mix together until it forms a ball. If it is sticky, add a few drops of liquid starch. It will first become very stringy until you have mixed it well. Children love the texture of this!

Music and Movement

Listening to music, making music with instruments, singing songs, and moving to a rhythm can help children:

- Express their emotions. Children will sing a joyful song or hum a catchy tune when they're happy. In contrast, their dance movements might be jerky and aggressive when they are angry or frustrated.
- Release energy and channel it in creative, productive directions.
- Gain confidence as they realize they can use their minds and bodies together.
- Learn new words and ideas. Children often love to create their own songs, melodies, and movements and learn songs about spaceships, kangaroos, or friendships.
- Learn about themselves and the relationships they have with others. Improve listening, awareness, and attention span.
- Develop fine-motor skills as they shake a tambourine or make different sounds
  with a drum.
- Develop social interaction skills.
- Improve their sense of rhythm, an important part of speech.
- Absorb an awareness of pattern through repetition.

Sing songs and rhymes with your child, play tapes or CDs of all kinds of music, encourage children to move to the music, ask them to draw a picture of how a piece of music makes them feel or what is happening in a song. Singing a song is a fun and natural way to help children become sensitive to the different qualities and sounds of words. During daily activities, sing favourite songs with your child, especially songs with words that rhyme. Once your child becomes familiar with the words, you can take turns singing the verses. Eventually, you can invent your own songs together and even play with nonsense words and silly verses.

Let's Dance!

Dancing helps children develop large-muscle motor skills. Children learn about rhythm by moving their bodies to music. Exploring the rhythm helps children become sensitive to the time quality of sounds. Sing a song or listen to music that has different rhythms and dance to the different beats, clap hands, or use a drum. Begin with slow, regular, even beats, and later introduce uneven beats with variations in tempo. Relate movements to personal experiences: "Let's move slowly and pretend we are heavy elephants!" "Let's move fast and pretend we are flying on a plane!" Listen to a variety of music. Talk about how the music makes you feel. What does it make you think of? Ask your child to draw a picture that goes with the music after you are too tired to dance anymore.

Make a Homemade Band!

Making your own music with your child is easy and doesn't have to cost anything.

Try using these materials as instruments:

- Two metal spoons
- Two wooden spoons
- Two dowel rods
- Two pan lids
- A pan lid and a spoon
- A pot and a wooden spoon
- Milk jugs to blow in
- Christmas bells

Or, make some of the following instruments and have a party! Make them with your children. Have them decorate, pour in the beans, string the bells—whatever they are capable of doing.

Kazoo: Take one toilet paper tube. Using a paper punch, punch a hole about 1 inch (2.5 cm) from the bottom. Place a 4-inch (10-cm) square of wax paper over the end of the tube closest to your punched hole and gather closed with a rubber band. Blow in the other end.

Bongos: Cover a round box (a potato chip or oatmeal box) or a plastic ice cream container with contact paper or decorated construction paper. Beat on the lid with your hand or a wooden spoon.

Shakers: Fill yogurt cups or small margarine tubs with beans, rice, or pebbles and put the lid on. Tape it down. Decorate the container. Experiment with different items to get varying sounds.

Tambourines: Place two paper plates together facing each other and staple their edges together leaving a small opening. Fill them with beans, rice, or pebbles and staple the hole shut. Children can decorate them with markers, glitter, and colourful crepe paper streamers.

Bell Bracelets: Have children string jingle bells on a piece of yarn or cotton string. Tie the ends together to make a bracelet. Shake your wrists to the music!

Maracas: Use toilet paper rolls and fill with rice or beans. Glue a circle of construction paper over each end. Decorate the outside by wrapping with paper and colouring with crayons, or try adding sequins, stickers, or feathers.

Guitar: Take a shoebox and cut a hole in the lid or use a facial tissue box. Tape the lid down. Place several rubber bands of different widths around the box to make a guitar.

Session Five:
Storytelling Part One

First the child must learn language. Stories follow. The child learns to query: "Who am I in relation to all this? How can I think about it? How can I talk about it? What do the rules mean? What about my emotions—fear, anger, excitement, curiosity—are they okay?" Stories have authority. Stories normalize. Stories model behaviour and feeling. Stories model the power to make stories—a power that children must develop in order to manage their own particular worlds, the ones seen with their own eyes.

–Joseph Gold, Read For Your Life:
Literature as a Life Support System

Why Tell Stories to Your Children?

Review **handout 5.1** with parents.

Visualization

Without the ability to form our own visual images of the characters, setting, and action when we listen to a story, full comprehension of what we hear becomes difficult. The same skills are needed to fully understand what we read.

We are increasingly dependent upon visual forms of entertainment. We are in danger of losing the ability to just listen to a story and form our own mental images based on the author's words. In times past, the storyteller in the tribe or the village was the keeper of our history and our stories. People listened and used their imaginations to create vivid pictures in their minds. As more stories were written down and more people learned to read, family or group reading became a common form of entertainment, and our listening and imaginative skills were maintained.

In more recent times, radio dramas were as engaging as and even more exciting to the imagination than films and television today. Radio dramas fire the imagination of the listeners and demand close attention to the words in order to understand, just as listening to the village storyteller around the fire or taking turns reading a novel in front of the parlour fireplace used to do.

Of course, once we have seen a representation of a story in a child's picture book, on television, film, or on the stage, our visual images will be influenced by what we have seen. Still, even well-known and loved picture books or movies are great for storytelling. Learning to enjoy both telling stories to children and listening to stories will offer many rewards for children and parents.

Give parents **handout 5.2** and discuss the following two topics—where and when to tell stories, and the parts of a story.

Where and when should we tell stories?

Telling a story is like having a chat; it can happen anywhere and anytime. Telling stories at bedtime is a wonderful routine to establish, but it is also fun to tell stories on a car trip, while waiting for the doctor, at mealtimes, or anytime we want to distract a bored child.

Ask parents if anyone told them stories when they were children or if they tell their child stories now.

The basic parts of a story

There are a few very simple parts to any story.

- Stories include events that happen over time; that is, they are sequential and have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Stories focus on particular events and people. They have characters and action.
- Stories include (either directly or indirectly) the intentions, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of the characters. They convey and elicit emotion.

Stories can be as simple as a rhyme, as familiar as the story of "The Three Little Pigs," as personal as the story of a child's birth, as informal as "the funny thing that happened on the way to the grocery store today" or as elaborate as a folktale.

Personal Stories

Children are usually interested in stories about themselves.

These can be stories of the day a child was born, stories of when she was a baby, or stories about funny or interesting incidents in her life.

Distribute a few books such as the following for parents to look through. Choose one book to read aloud.

The Day You Were Born, by Jamie Lee Curtis
When You Were a Baby, Anne Jonas
Once I Was Very Small, Elizabeth Ferber
My Grandfather Loved the Stars, Julie Lawson
Owen, Kevin Henkes

Suggest to parents that they could read a book like one of these and use the experience to introduce a storytelling session about the day their child was born or the things he did when he was a baby.

Parents can also invent or adapt stories with their child as the main character. They can be based on real events and can also include elements of fantasy. A child will love stories about her neighbourhood and the people who live there, or stories about a little girl just like her who loves to play in the park.

Personal stories can be a marvellous way to teach indirectly and to explore things that are upsetting to a child. Reading a book such as *A Lot of Otters* by Barbara Helen Berger and then telling a story about the little boy who did not like baths until the day a playful otter joined him in the bathtub can turn a stressful bath time routine into a time of fun and laughter.

Name Stories

One example of a personal story is a name story.

Tell a story about how your parents chose your own name or how you chose your child's name.

The following are elements you can include in your story:

- Who chose the name and why?
- Did you or your parents have other names chosen for the new baby? What if the child was a boy and not a girl (or vice versa)? Was there much discussion and controversy about the choice of name?
- If you are named after someone, what do you know about that person?
- What is the traditional meaning of your name?
- Do you like your name? If not, what would you like to be named and why? Do you think your name or your child's name suits you or him?
- Was your name shortened or changed in some way, or do you now use a completely different name?

Ask if anyone would like to tell the group how their parents chose their name or how they chose their child's name. This is a non-threatening way to encourage parents to begin storytelling.

Point out to parents that they have in fact told a story. Their narrative will naturally have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Something happens in their story, there are characters in their story, and the characters express emotion.

Family History Stories

"There are two lasting gifts we give our children.
One is roots and the other is wings."
–Author unknown

Another kind of personal story is the family history story.

Telling family history stories is an excellent way to pass on these two gifts. The history gives children deep roots, and the ideas, values, and imagination embodied in the stories give them wings.

Stories that parents tell about themselves or other family members help children to learn about the people who make up their family. Over time this storytelling will give them a solid sense of where they fit in the life of their family. Family stories give children a sense of continuity; present an opportunity for children to recognize qualities in themselves that are similar to other family members, and help parents pass along the values of their family.

A good starting point for a personal story is a photograph or an object that has been passed down from other family members or that parents have collected themselves. The item could be as simple as a unique seashell picked up on summer vacation or a special memento inherited from a grandparent.

Show parents an object or photograph that means something to you (and that you are willing to share with the group) and tell a story about it

Suggest that parents use the back of a handout to write a quick list of some highlights or funny incidents in their lives. They might also think of an object or photograph they have at home that would make a good jumping-off point for a family story they would like to share with their child.

Home Activity

Suggest that parents try this kind of storytelling at home this week.

Traditional Children's Stories

Young children also enjoy traditional children's stories, which are usually strongly patterned and often incorporate frequent, rhythmic repetition of words and phrases.

The classic stories of "three" such as "The Three Little Pigs," "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," and "Three Billy Goats Gruff" are easy to remember because of the strong pattern, and they are as much fun to tell as to listen to. The repeated phrases such as the Big Bad Wolf's threat "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!" are a perfect invitation for children to jump in and help tell the story as parents progress through it, and as they tell it over and over again.

Pausing before the refrain of a song or the repeated phrase in a story and inviting children to participate will encourage their learning.

Many traditional stories are cumulative; that is, each event in the story builds and adds to what went before.

Ask parents if they remember this traditional cumulative story.

The House That Jack Built

This is the house that Jack built
This is the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built
This is the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built
This is the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built
This is the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built

And so on…

Give parents **handout 5.3** (learning to tell stories) and discuss.

Telling a Traditional Story

Many adults will be familiar with the traditional story *The Pied Piper of Hamelin,* either from Robert Browning's poem or one of the several animated film versions. If parents introduce a child to this story by first reading the book or watching a film, the images in the child's mind and his ideas about the story will be based on the imagination of the illustrator, director, or animator. However, introducing the story first through oral storytelling will allow the child to bring his own imagination to it and create his own personal images of the characters, setting, and action.

An oral storytelling session is like a conversation—it is truly interactive. The listener brings at least as much to the story as the teller. A story heard can become real, immediate, and personal in a way it rarely will if first encountered in an illustrated book or film.

Suggest a few traditional fairy or folk tales to parents and ask if they know of others.

Here is a list to get you started:

- *Little Red Riding Hood*
- *Cinderella*
- *Sleeping Beauty*
- *The Emperor's New Clothes*
- *Jack and the Beanstalk*
- *Thumbelina*

You can find versions of these traditional stories and many others on the Internet at the following site, http://www.surlalunefairytales.com, or do an Internet search using the title of the story you have chosen.

Write the titles parents suggest on your flipchart. Ask parents to choose one story, and you can make a list of the main ideas in the story together; that is, the important parts of the story that are necessary to telling it.

Tell the story together in a round. Make sure parents know it is okay to pass if they aren't sure how to continue the story.

Encourage parents to add plenty of detail as they tell the story. The details can change each time. Suggest that as they tell stories to their child, they can encourage her to add her own details.

The more descriptive the story becomes, the more easily the listener can imagine. The details are our own and the pictures we visualize are drawn with our own imaginations.

Where to Find Great Stories

Material for great storytelling is everywhere.

Ask parents to suggest where they could find stories to tell their children.

Here are a few ideas.

- Favourite picture-book stories.
- Traditional legends, fairytales, or stories remembered from childhood.
- Aesop's fables. They are simple and children always love stories with animals as characters. Be careful not to over-emphasize the moral. The beauty of these little stories is that the moral is always made clear through the action, and it is not necessary to state it explicitly.
- Made-up stories. Suggest parents exercise their imagination. They can tell a story about a cloud shape, a dog they saw running down the street dragging a leash, or a little girl just like theirs who blew such a big bubble in her bubble gum that she floated away and had the most exciting adventures!

Encouraging Children to Tell Stories

When parents encourage children to tell their own stories by really listening, responding actively, gently guiding them with questions, and asking for explanations—remember the five W's: Who, What, When, Where, and Why—children will learn that they can tell a story, too.

Telling personal stories of their day, about their play, from their imagination, and about the delicious treat Johnny's mom gave them for a snack that day helps children develop an understanding of the events in their lives. Nothing helps us to make emotional or logical sense of our experience like telling someone else about it!

Discuss how to encourage children to communicate and tell stories.

Many parents have had the experience of asking a child: "What did you do today?" and getting little or no response. When a child is very young, this question can be too broad. Instead, parents can ask a more specific question: "Tell me a story about what you had for snack at Jimmy's house today" or "Tell me a story about the animals you saw at the farm." If parents prompt with questions and show that they are interested, the child will usually begin to look forward to being asked for a story. Often, young children will have difficulty remembering the sequence of events. Helping children remember the order of events helps them organize their thoughts and become interesting storytellers.

Children will often begin to weave fantasy and imaginative embellishments into their stories. This is the beginning of creative storytelling and indicates the child is moving past a simple recitation of events.

Eventually, children will expand their repertoire from telling stories about themselves and their day to participating in their favourite stories as parents tell them, repeating a story from a familiar book while turning the pages, and telling stories with props.

If parents make storytelling as well as story reading a regular part of their routine—at dinnertime, bath time, bedtime, or on car trips—children will soon learn to see themselves as storytellers, and eventually when they start to write, as authors.

Tell a brief story a four- or five-year-old child told to you.

Ask parents if their children like to tell stories and ask how they might encourage their child's storytelling

Making a Nesting Story Sequencing Game

It's easy to make a set of nesting objects for children to learn to retell stories, songs, or rhymes. This game is also a great way for them to learn how to tell stories in sequence. (If you don't have the time for parents to make a nesting story at the program, take a sample you have made and enough materials for parents to take home and make them with their child.)

Materials:

- Sets of 3-5 nesting objects such as empty tin cans (with sharp edges sanded off or covered with felt or paper), nesting boxes without tops, or inexpensive nesting cups for each parent. Here is one example of a set of empty tin cans that will nest inside each other:
  - Large juice can
  - 796-ml tomato can
  - 398-ml tomato sauce can
  - 284-ml soup can
  - 196-ml tomato paste can
- Felt, construction paper, or contact paper to cover tin cans, or images from colouring books, magazines, or printed clip art to represent the characters in the story, rhyme, or song
- Hot glue or carpenter's glue
- Scissors, markers, crayons

Method:

- Choose a simple story, song, or rhyme such as "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." (For this song you can also print the animal sound and attach it to the can; for example, "moo" and "neigh" for the can with the cow and horse images.)
- Cover the can or box with felt, contact paper, or construction paper (if you are using these).
- Glue an image representing each animal in your song to the nesting object. (Use hot glue on plastic nesting cups). Attach the images to the objects in order from smallest to largest.
- Nest the objects inside each other.

How to use the activity:

- Parents can tell the story themselves once or twice, removing each object at the appropriate time as they sing the song or tell the story with their children.
- Then, they pass the set of nesting objects to their child and encourage him to lead the song or tell the story himself.

Learning a Story to Share with the Children

Choose either "Going on a Bear Hunt" (**handout 5.4**) or "The Great Big Enormous Turnip" story (**handout 5.5**) and practise it as a group.

For the bear hunt story, ask parents to each take the lead as you encounter one of the obstacles along the way to the bear's cave.

Tell the enormous turnip story as a round. Have each parent learn one of the sections and the group will tell it in turns.

Ask parents to practise their parts for a few minutes and then repeat it as a group.

Share the story you have chosen with the children at the Story Circle.

Book List

Any book of nursery rhymes, tales, or traditional or modern fairy tales is great. Here are a few, but there are many excellent editions to choose from.

The Golden Book of Fairy Tales (Golden Classics), illustrated by Adrienne Segur

The Real Mother Goose, illustrated by Blanche Fisher Wright

Old Mother Hubbard and Her Wonderful Dog, illustrated by James Marshall

The Gingerbread Man, by Jim Aylesworth

Favorite Folktales from Around the World (Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library), by Jane Yolen

Nursery Tales Around the World, by Judy Sierra

Home Activity

Suggest that parents tell a family story at home this week. Next week, parents can share their stories with each other while they work on the felt board patterns they will be making at the program.

Why Tell Stories to Your Children?

- Storytelling is fun!
- Storytime is top-notch quality time. Parents and children enjoy an active, creative time together.
- A story is always in your head. You need no props.
- Storytelling promotes emerging literacy by shaping a child's sense of what makes a good story and helps children develop vocabulary. Studies of early readers show they tend to come from homes where oral language is used in a variety of ways.
- Children learn to concentrate and develop good listening skills, which prepare them well for school.
- Stories can bring relief—calming upset tempers, acknowledging and relieving a child's fear, and even distracting him from physical pain.
- Stories can be a useful alternative to a lecture or reprimand. Solving a problem through a story involving another person—perhaps one just like your child—can help her consider and face consequences. If the story leads to a question such as: "What do you think should happen now?" you are asking your child to seek solutions. It's a way of telling without telling directly, of teaching without lecturing.
- Stories are a great way to pass on family history, cultural history, and values. They are a perfect way to give children their roots as well as their wings!
- Stories help us think about our experiences.

The word pictures in a story develop imagination and are an important step to reading. Picture books are a wonderful way to experience a story, but if children are not accustomed to visualizing or imagining their own pictures for a story, it will be more difficult for them to truly connect with written stories that have no pictures—the ones they will read as they get older.

Storytelling

Telling a story is like having a chat. It can happen anywhere—at bedtime, on a trip, waiting for the doctor, at mealtime—or anytime to distract a tired or bored child.

The parts of a story

- Stories include events that happen over time. The events happen in order or sequence.
- Stories have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- Stories have particular people and events. They have characters and action.
- Good stories include the intentions, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of the characters.

Personal stories

Telling a personal or family story involves choosing a memory and giving it some life.

Children are usually interested in stories about themselves. These can be true stories about the day they were born or about how their names were chosen or about the funny things they did when they were younger. Personal stories can also be stories about your child that you make up from your own imagination, or familiar stories that you adapt with your child as a character in the story.

Family history stories about you and your life or that of other members of your family are also interesting to children.

Old favourites

Traditional children's stories, familiar and favourite picture-book stories, fairy tales, legends, and Aesop's fables are also excellent resources for storytelling.

Learning to Tell Stories

- Have fun when you tell a story.
- Tell stories when it feels right—at family gatherings, meal time, bedtime, on trips, and at the doctor's office.
- You can start telling stories to children when they are babies. Looking through photo albums together is a great way to remember stories to share with your children.
- Encourage your children to tell stories by listening to their tales, even if they ramble. Gently encourage them to fill in the details and stay with an idea by asking questions.
- Collect stories from family members and friends.
- Storytelling happens best face to face. With storytelling, there is a two-way communication going on. The expressions on the faces of your audience will let you know how your story is being received, and the expression on your face will give your listener clues about what to expect.
- Tell your story with enthusiasm. Vary your tone, pitch, and pace. Gestures also help. Play to your audience. Young children like stories with a beat and lots of sound effects.
- Tell stories you like.
- Be familiar with your story but don't try to memorize every detail. If you have forgotten something important, you can say "Did I mention…" or "What she'd forgotten until now was…" You don't need to memorize all the words, details, and descriptions of a story. As long as you remember the basic events, you can fill in the details as you go along.
- Visualize the story as you tell it. It will help you to remember the story sequence and to add interesting details.
- It is okay to simplify a story for young children if you feel it is too long or complicated to hold their interest.
- The "moral" or instructional content, if any, will come through to your children automatically. You don't need to point it out.
- Believe that you are a good storyteller. The more you practise, the better you'll get.

Relax and have fun!

Encouraging your child to tell you stories

Telling their personal stories allows children to bring some order and understanding to the jumble of people and events that fill their days. Stories help children to think about their experiences.

Storytelling helps children to organize their thoughts and to practise expressing them in a way that is understandable to others.

Storytelling helps children understand that they have a story to tell. It demystifies stories and books. Telling their own stories helps children understand them in a deep and personal way.

Going on a Bear Hunt

Chant the rhyme with a strong rhythm and tell it actively by doing all the motions!

Going on a bear hunt.
Going to catch a big one.
I'm not afraid!
Look! What's up ahead?

Mud!

Make slow-motion movements like walking through mud.

Can't go over it.
Can't go under it.
Can't go around it.
Got to go through it.

Repeat all the words replacing "mud" with each of the following in turn.

A field of tall grass. (*Brush hands together, swish.)*
A forest of trees. (*Make gestures climbing up and down.*)
A gate. (*Make gate-opening motions.*)
A river. (*Make swimming motions.*)
A cave. (*Clap hands together to make a hollow sound.*)

Gosh it's dark in here.
Better use my flashlight.
Oops! It doesn't work.
I think…I see something…
It's big! It's furry!
I think…it's a bear. *(Say this with suspense in voice.)*
EEK! It IS a bear!
LET'S GO!

Reverse all motions quickly to get home.

We've got to:
Swim through the river.
Run through the gate.
Climb through the trees.
Swish through the tall grass.

Whew! We made it!
I'm NEVER going on a bear hunt again!

The Great Big ENORMOUS Turnip

Part 1 Once upon a time a grandfather planted a turnip seed in his garden.
He watered and weeded and talked to his turnip for months so that it would grow big and delicious.

Narrator The turnip grew. And it grew. And it grew. Until it was the biggest, most ENORMOUS turnip the man had ever seen!
Then one day, the grandfather decided to pull up his ENORMOUS turnip.

Chorus

All He pulled and he pulled and he PULLED.
But…
Fee, fie, foe, fout,
That turnip just wouldn't come out!

Part 2 So the grandfather called to his wife:
"Come and help me pull out my great big ENORMOUS turnip!"
His wife came to help. The grandmother pulled on the grandfather's coat.
And the grandfather pulled on the turnip.

All *Chorus*

Part 3 So the grandmother called to their granddaughter:
"Come and help us pull out this great big ENORMOUS turnip!"
Their granddaughter came to help.
The granddaughter pulled on the grandmother's coat.
And the grandmother pulled on the grandfather's coat.
And the grandfather pulled on the turnip.

All *Chorus*

Part 4 So the granddaughter called to their little black dog:
"Come and help us pull out this great big ENORMOUS turnip!"
The little black dog came to help.
And the little black dog pulled on the granddaughter's dress.
And the granddaughter pulled on the grandmother's coat.
And the grandmother pulled on the grandfather's coat.
And the grandfather pulled on the turnip.

All *Chorus*

Part 5 So the dog called to the fluffy white cat:
"Come and help us pull out this great big ENORMOUS turnip!"
The fluffy white cat came to help.
And the cat pulled on the little black dog's tail.
And the little black dog pulled on the granddaughter's dress.
And the granddaughter pulled on the grandmother's coat.
And the grandmother pulled on the grandfather's coat.
And the grandfather pulled on the turnip.

All *Chorus*

Part 6 Just when they didn't think they could ever pull out that turnip, along came a tiny brown mouse. No one thought that tiny brown mouse could be any help. But mouse said: "I'll help you pull out that turnip."
So the mouse pulled on the cat's tail.
And the cat pulled on the dog's tail.
And the dog pulled on the granddaughter's dress.
And the granddaughter pulled on the grandmother's coat.
And the grandmother pulled on the grandfather's coat.
And the grandfather pulled on the turnip.

All And they pulled and they pulled and they PULLED.

Part 7 And do you know what happened to that great big ENORMOUS turnip?

All It came out!

Narrator And they all took the turnip to the house and made turnip soup.
And turnip sandwiches.
And turnip cake.
And turnip pie.
And turnip candy…Mmmmmmmmm!

Session Six:
Storytelling Part Two

There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.
–Ursula K. Le Guin

Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.
–G.K. Chesterton

Telling stories with props such as felt boards and puppets is an enjoyable way for parents to tell stories with children.

Felt Board Stories

Young children love felt board stories. Felt board stories encourage children to participate in the storytelling, and they love to place the pieces on the board. The pieces help everyone remember the characters and sequence of events because they guide the teller and the listener through the story.

The felt pieces are tactile, brightly coloured, and intriguing. Children quickly learn to participate in the storytelling by placing new characters on the board as they appear and helping the teller with the repeated phrases in the story; e.g., "No more monkeys jumping on the bed!" The more they participate in the storytelling, the more children begin to develop a sense of themselves as storytellers. If parents have some felt board stories at home, they will notice that eventually children make up their own stories with the pieces.

Children love to:
- See the bright colours
- Touch the soft felt
- Listen to the stories and songs
- Move and rearrange the pieces

Children develop creativity, memory and thinking skills when they:
- Repeat sounds
- Tell familiar stories
- Place the pieces on the board in sequence
- Use the felt pieces in new ways by inventing their own stories

Making a Felt Board

Have parents make a felt board and at least one story to take home and share with their children.

Here are directions for two felt board options—a flannel board and a pizza-box board. The smooth back of the first board can be used as a drawing board by simply taping the paper to the board.

Flannel/drawing Board

Materials:

For each parent

- 1 piece of Masonite, 18 x 24 inches (45 cm x 60 cm) for each parent (your lumber store will cut these to size for you)
- 1 piece of flannel to cover the board (light blue is a good colour for this)
- Scissors
- Hot glue, carpenter's glue, or fabric glue

Method:

- Lay the flannel on the rough side of the Masonite board.
- Turn the board over and fold the fabric edges under to make a neat seam that overlaps the back about 1/2 inch (1.25 cm). Mitre the corners by folding in and cutting out the excess fabric.
- Apply glue to the edges of the board and press the fabric into the glue.
- Make sure the fabric is taut and wrinkle-free as you work around the edges of the board.

Pizza-box Felt Boards

Materials:

- For each parent
- Pizza box—large 16-inch (40-cm) boxes work well
- Flannel to cover the top of the box
- 1/2-inch (1.25-cm) dowelling, 12 inches (30 cm) long, to prop open the lid
- Hot glue, carpenter's glue, or fabric glue
- Scissors

Method:

- Fold and assemble the pizza box.
- Cut fabric large enough to cover the top and side flaps of the box lid with a 1-inch (2.5-cm) overlap.
- Turn pizza box upside down on the piece of fabric.
- Pull the fabric taut as you glue it down over the edges of the lid. (Turn under the fabric edges to make a neat seam that won't fray).
- Open the box and gently push the ends of the dowel into the centre front of the lid and the base of the box to make small holes that do not go all the way through the cardboard. These holes will anchor the dowel top and bottom to prop the box open.
- Store felt board story pieces inside the box.

Making a Felt Board Story

Have parents make at least one felt board story at your program. You could also give parents copies of patterns with pieces of felt to make additional stories at home.

Check to see if your local public library has felt board pattern books. If not, you can access them through inter-library loans.

Here are some engaging felt board pattern books.

Felt Board Fun, Liz and Dick Wilmes; *The Flannel Board Storytelling Book*, Judy Sierra; *Felt Board Fingerplays*, Liz & Dick Wilmes

You can also trace shapes from colouring books or draw your own shapes based on favourite storybooks. There are also lots of ideas and some patterns available for free on the Internet. Enter a search in your search engine for felt board or flannel board patterns and see what you find!

Materials:

- Felt pieces in a variety of colours
- Small zipper-topped plastic bags
- Photocopies of felt board story patterns and typed versions of each story
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Several tubes of fabric paint with a fine tip (optional)
  Outlining the features of the felt pieces with fabric paint makes them more easily recognizable and they stand out well on the board. You only need black and white fabric paint which will show up on any colour of felt, but if you like, you can purchase a wide variety of colours, including paint in neon colours and paint with small sparkles in it.

Method:

- Ask parents to choose a story to make.
- Roughly cut around each shape from the photocopied sheets (leaving excess paper on the border of each shape).
- Lightly tack down the shapes on pieces of felt with the glue stick. This will hold them in place while cutting the felt.
- Peel the paper from the back of each felt piece.
- Use the fabric paint to outline key features on each shape, referring to the original paper pattern. (The fabric paint will take a couple of hours to dry thoroughly).
- Small zipper-top bags will keep the story pieces and the written story together.
- Remind parents that you are giving them the written story just to help them learn it, but they don't have to tell the story exactly the way it is written.

Another way to make story pieces is to laminate paper shapes you have coloured with markers or crayons. Attach a piece of sticky-backed Velcro to the back of each piece to use them on a felt board—or parents can attach small pieces of sticky-backed magnetic tape, and children can retell the story at home by arranging the pieces on the refrigerator.

While parents are working on their story, you can either help them or use this time to talk about puppets and wordless picture books.

Distribute **handout 6.1**.

Practising a Flannel Board Story

Take your own selection of flannel board stories to your program and encourage parents to practise telling a story. If you use stories that parents are familiar with, such as "The Three Little Pigs," they will find it easy to learn to tell the story.

Method:
Ask parents to choose a partner and a story to learn, and practise telling a felt board story.

Suggest that parents:

- Familiarize themselves with the story and make a point-form list of the main events if the story is new to them.
- Stack the felt pieces they will add to the board in the order of their appearance.
- Plan how they will place the pieces on the board so there is enough room for each piece as they add it during the storytelling.
- Place some objects on the board first if it will make the story easier to tell; for example, the bears' porridge bowls, chairs, and beds from "Goldilocks and the Three Bears."
- Tell the story with expression and add details as they tell it.
- Emphasize any repeated phrases and pause before saying them to encourage the listeners to join in.

Allow parents about fifteen minutes to practise storytelling to each other.

Ask if anyone would like to tell their story to the other parents.

Ask if anyone would like to tell a story to the children during Circle Time that day. Encourage parents to volunteer to tell their own felt board story at Circle Time during the sessions.

Puppets

Puppets are an enjoyable, warm way to share language, thoughts, and feelings with children. When children are given opportunities to respond to their world with language during puppet play, they are developing their creativity and exploring their experiences through a form of dramatic play.

Just as when parents and children share fingerplays, playing together with puppet figures helps children build meaning for the words of rhymes, stories, and songs. Puppets make the language and the action come alive.

Puppets that represent characters or experiences children are familiar with are meaningful to a young child. The characters could be from books, television programs, or films they enjoy; they could be firefighters, clowns, or puppy dogs. The language that parents use when they manipulate the puppet serves as a model of how to talk about characters and events. When children join in or tell their own story with puppets, they are practising and developing language skills.

Puppets for dealing with difficult issues

Parents may also find that using a special puppet is a helpful tool to talk with their child about difficult issues. It is sometimes easier for a parent and a child to explore emotionally loaded topics through the voice of a puppet, and the child may "hear" the message more readily when the puppet "says" it. A child may also be more comfortable allowing a puppet to express strong feelings by acting out or verbalizing feelings that he or she cannot express directly.

It is probably best for parents to reserve one puppet to use for these situations or to get in the habit of creating a quick and simple thumb or hand puppet. The materials are always right there when an issue arises. Take a minute or two to demonstrate how to make these easy puppets.

Thumb puppet: Draw a face on your thumb or index finger with a marker or a pen. You can wrap a facial tissue or a cloth item (e.g., a scarf or a necktie) or any other small piece of fabric around the base of your thumb and hand to give the puppet a clearer identity.

Hand puppet: Draw a face with pen, marker, or lipstick on your palm or make a fist and draw on the side of your hand. The thumb and index finger can be moved like a mouth as your puppet speaks. Draw the eyes and nose on the knuckle of the index finger.

Distribute **handout 6.2**.

Making Puppets

Of course, it is possible to purchase commercially made puppets but it is much more fun, less expensive, and more personal to make your own.

The following are some simple puppets parents can create. Provide extra materials so parents can take enough to make several puppets at home.

Make examples of the various types of puppets for parents to look at. Use one or two of these to tell stories at Circle Time today.

How to use stick puppets

As they tell a familiar story or rhyme, parents can ask their child to choose a character puppet and play that character's part. For example, the child could choose to play the Big Bad Wolf ("I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll *blow* your house down!") or Baby Bear ("Somebody has been eating *my* porridge!").

Fingertip puppets

Fingertip puppets are also simple to make and fun to share. There are several sites on the Internet with patterns for finger puppets.

Fingertip puppets can be made with construction paper or with felt. The felt puppets will last longer.

Paper-bag puppets

There are many free patterns for paper-bag puppets available on the Internet. Do a search for some patterns and bring copies to give to parents to take home. Parents can also use their imagination and creativity to make a wide variety of these puppets as they are very simple.

Have materials available and allow parents to choose which of the following paper-bag puppets they would like to make today at the program. Distribute **handouts 6.3** and **6.4**.

The Lion and the Mouse

Lion materials:

- Paper lunch bags for each parent
- Yellow, white, and black construction paper
- Glue, scissors

Lion method:

- Use yellow paper to cut the lion's mane five inches (12.5 cm) wide and long enough to glue it across the top edge and two short sides of the folded bottom of the lunch bag, which will form the face.
- Cut the mane into a fringe of 1/2-inch (1.25-cm) strips, stopping the cut 1/2 inch from the long edge of the paper. For a curly mane, curl the strips around a pencil and attach to the bag with glue.
- Cut two eyes and teeth from the white paper. Cut a nose from black paper and glue all the pieces to the lion's face.

Mouse materials:

- White index card, cardboard or poster board
- Rubber bands
- Markers or crayons
- Stapler, scissors

Mouse method:

- Note that the mouse is just a round head on two legs, which are real fingers.
- Cut a 2 1/2-inch (6.25-cm) circle for the head of the mouse and two round ears from the cardboard. Glue the ears onto the head.
- Draw eyes, nose, mouth, and whiskers with crayons or markers.
- Select a rubber band slightly smaller than the diameter of the circle and staple across the back, edge to edge horizontally. Put two fingers through the rubber band to form the mouse's legs.

Frog puppet

Materials:

- Paper lunch bags
- Construction paper
- Scissors and markers
- White glue

Method:

- Cut shapes out of construction paper for the frog's eyes and long tongue, two short arms, two longer legs, and round pieces for its spots.
- Glue the pieces onto the paper bag as described in handout 6.4.

Making a puppet stage

Suggest to parents that if their child loves puppets and telling stories with puppets, they can make the whole experience more exciting with a puppet stage.

This can be as simple as a cloth or towel draped over three sides of a table with a box set in front of the fourth side to create the "stage" area.

A large box can have a "window" cut high in one side so that a child can crouch or stand behind. Small curtains can be made with scrap fabric or towels. Parents and children can decorate the box with paint, stickers, markers, or anything else that takes their imagination. Making a sign for the top of the stage opening makes it even more special—"Jeannie's Puppet Theatre."

Wordless Picture Books

Wordless picture books tell a story without words or with very few words. All or most of the story is conveyed by the illustrations.

Sharing wordless books with children is an excellent way to encourage children to participate in creating and telling a story. They help children learn to notice details in the pictures, to see how illustrations support and help tell a story, and to develop the building blocks of language. Children learn to use connecting ideas and language as the story sequence progresses, such as "and then…" or "before she knew it…" and to describe what they see. Wordless books encourage children to use their imaginations, explore their own ideas of a story, and practise and expand their vocabulary.

Choose a wordless book and tell the story to the parents. Encourage parents to choose a wordless picture book to share with their child during PACT today.

Wordless-Book List

Rosie's Walk, Pat Hutchins

Deep in the Forest, Brinton Turkle

A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog, Mercer Mayer (there are five other books in this series as well)

The Snowman, Raymond Briggs

Do You Want to Be My Friend? Eric Carle

No, David, David Shannon

Peter Spier's Rain, Peter Spier

Tuesday, David Wiesner

Home Activity

Suggest that parents practise telling their felt board story to their child this week.

If you have been able to provide extra patterns and felt for parents to take home, they can also make another story or two.

Making a Felt Board

Young children love felt board stories. Telling stories with a felt board is another way you can enjoy telling stories to your children. Felt board stories also encourage children to participate in the storytelling. Young children love to place the pieces on the felt board, and the pieces will help both you and your children remember the parts of the story.

Tips:

- Choose stories that you like.
- Keep the story simple and the felt shapes simple.
- Organize your felt pieces in the order they appear in the story before you begin, and practise placing them on the board so everything will fit.
- Choose stories with repeating phrases or sound effects so your children can join in.
- Don't worry about remembering exactly all the words in a story. The felt pieces will remind you of what comes next. If you like, you can add details as you become more familiar with the story.
- After a few repetitions, encourage your child to place the pieces and tell the story himself.
- Children will often begin making up their own stories with the felt board pieces. This is great! Don't insist children tell only the story for which the pieces were intended.
- The easiest stories to make for your felt board are traditional children's stories.
- Look for books of felt board story patterns at your local public library. If your library does not have any on their shelves, they can be ordered through inter-library loan. You can also find some story patterns and lots of colouring pages to use for patterns on the Internet. Look for these on the computer at your library if you do not have Internet access at home.
- If you feel adventurous, you can make your own patterns based on the illustrations in your child's favourite storybooks.

Puppets

Telling stories with puppets is a fun, warm way to share language, thoughts, and feelings with your child.

Using puppets helps your child build meanings for the words and events in stories, rhymes, and songs. Puppets help the language come alive.

Puppets that relate to familiar experiences, are meaningful to a young child. The words you use to describe what is happening in your story serve as a model of language use. Your child will practise his own language skills and explore his imagination and creativity when he joins in or tells his own story with a puppet.

Stick puppets

Making stick puppets to retell a story is an interesting way to involve your child in storytelling. Make the characters using simple outlines such as those for a felt board story with heavy paper or poster board, and colour them. Cover them with clear contact paper if you want to make them last. It can also be fun to leave the faces blank and glue in a photo cutout of your child's face. Glue them to a Popsicle stick or tongue depressor. Keep the figures together in a zipper-top bag. As you tell a familiar story or rhyme, ask your child to help you by choosing a stick puppet and joining in the storytelling.

Stuffed-animal puppets

You can make a puppet from a stuffed animal very easily. Cut the seam open on the back, remove some of the stuffing, and sew in a small piece of fabric to make a pocket for your hand. You can look for inexpensive, potential puppets at yard sales, but make sure you can wash them before using them.

Paper-bag puppets

Paper-bag puppets can be very simple. Your child can draw a face on the bottom of the bag, then add some sparkles or "hair" or draw some clothes on the puppet.

Fingertip puppets

Fingertip puppets are also simple to make and fun to share. There are several sites on the Internet with patterns for finger puppets. Fingertip puppets can be made with construction paper or with felt. The felt puppets will last a bit longer. Simply make a little pocket with two pieces of paper or felt that will fit on one of your fingers or several of your child's fingers. Add a face and other details with markers, fabric paint, or glue on small pieces of felt.

Making a puppet stage

Having a simple puppet stage makes puppet play even more fun. You can make one very simply with a blanket or a towel draped over a table. Or use a large box with a "window" cut in it high enough in the side that a child can hide by crouching or standing below the opening. You can add small curtains with scrap material and paint or otherwise decorate the box.

The Lion and the Mouse Puppets

Lion materials:

- Paper lunch bags for each parent
- Yellow, white, and black construction paper
- Glue, scissors

Lion method:

- Use yellow paper to cut the lion's mane five inches (12.5 cm) wide and long enough to glue it across the top edge and two short sides of the folded bottom of the lunch bag, which will form the face.
- Cut the mane into a fringe of 1/2-inch (1.25-cm) strips, stopping the cut 1/2 inch from the long edge of the paper. For a curly mane, curl the strips around a pencil and attach to the bag with glue.
- Cut two eyes and teeth from the white paper. Cut a nose and small circles for the centre of the eyes from black paper and glue all the pieces to the lion's face.

Mouse materials:

- White index card, cardboard or poster board
- Rubber bands
- Markers or crayons
- Stapler, scissors

Mouse method:

- Note that the mouse is just a round head on two legs, which are real fingers.
- Cut a 2 1/2-inch (6.25-cm) circle for the head of the mouse and two round ears from the cardboard. Glue the ears onto the head.
- Draw eyes, nose, mouth, and whiskers with crayons or markers.
- Select a rubber band slightly smaller than the diameter of the circle and staple across the back, edge to edge horizontally. Put two fingers through the rubber band to form the mouse's legs.

The Lion and the Mouse

Once a Lion was sleeping in a shady spot in the jungle. A little Mouse was running around in the long grass and did not notice that he was running over the Lion's back, around his head, and down his nose! This soon tickled the Lion, who woke up with a loud roar. The Lion placed his huge paw on the Mouse and opened his big jaws to swallow him. "Pardon, O King of the Jungle," cried the frightened little Mouse. "If you will forgive me this time, I will never forget it. Maybe someday I can do you a good turn too."

The Lion was so amused that he laughed and laughed and laughed at the idea of the Mouse being able to help him. He lifted up his huge paw and let the Mouse go. Some time later the Lion was caught in a trap, and the hunters, who wanted to take him to their King, tied him to a tree while they went in search of a wagon to carry him. The Lion roared so loudly the sound echoed through the jungle. Just then the little Mouse happened to pass by, and seeing the sad situation of the Lion, went up to him and soon gnawed away the ropes that bound the King of the Beasts. "Was I not right?" said the little Mouse. "Little friends may prove to be great friends."

Frog Paper-Bag Puppet

Materials:

- Paper lunch bags
- Construction paper (green for eyes and spots and red for the long tongue)
- Scissors and markers
- White glue

Method:

Cut shapes out of construction paper for the frog's eyes and long tongue, two short arms, two longer legs, and round pieces for its spots.

Glue the eyes to the folded bottom of the bag, the long tongue under the flap, and the arms and legs to the sides of the bag. Glue the round spots all over the body of your frog.

Once you have made one or two paper-bag puppets, you will find it easy to make many others with your child. Use them to make up your own stories or retell favourite ones.

You could look in your library for Mercer Mayer's series of wordless picture books about frogs, such as A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog; Frog, Where are You? and One Frog Too Many and retell the story with your frog puppet after sharing the book together.

After you tell your story, try singing this song with the puppet.

Little Green Frog

Bloop, bloop went the little green frog one day
Bloop, bloop went the little green frog
Bloop, bloop went the little green frog one day
And they all went bloop, bloop, ahhh!

But…
We all know frogs go
Lah dee dah dee dah!
Lah dee dah dee dah!
We all know frogs go
Lah dee dah dee dah!
They don't go bloop, bloop, ahhh!

Session Seven:
Reading with Children

Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.
–Emilie Buchwald (1994)

Breaking the Alphabet Code

Materials:

- 1 piece of white poster board
- Paper and pens for parents

Method:

- On the poster board, make a sign written in the alphabet code that is illustrated in **handout 7.1**.
- On the back of the sign, reproduce the coded message with the translation into familiar letters written below each symbol.
  Suggested message:

  Welcome to
  Parents Reading, Children Succeeding
  Week Seven
  Find the books I have hidden in this room

- Hide the books you will be reading together today.
- Display the sign.
- Give parents **handout 7.1**.
- Ask parents to work together in pairs to translate the sign.
- Explain that this is an exercise to help them remember what it was like to learn to read.
- Allow 10 minutes for parents to work on this activity, then turn over your sign.
- Encourage the parents to look for the books you have hidden as soon as they have decoded the sign.

Ask parents to reflect on and share their code-breaking experience. You might ask some of the following questions:

What did you think or feel when you first looked at the sign?
Did some letters give you clues about what the other letters in a word might be?
Did you figure out some of the words before you had translated all the letters in the word?
Once you knew some of the words, did you try to guess some other words?
How is breaking the message code like learning to read?

The Skills We Need to Read

Reading involves more than just figuring out the words, which is called decoding. Decoding is learning the way individual letters look and the sounds they make alone and in combination with each other.

There are two kinds of tasks a reader must accomplish when reading. The reader must be able to 1) figure out the words and 2) take meaning from the words and sentences she reads. When we can figure out the words and the meaning of the text, we are truly reading because then we can understand.

We use many complex skills to figure out words, including:

- Context—The phrase, sentence, or paragraph that surrounds a word and gives clues to what the word is.
- Patterns of language—The order of words in a sentence that helps us to figure out the word.
- Sounds of language—The letter/sound system of our written language that helps us to pronounce the word.
- Knowledge of sight words—Many words in English do not follow the rules; these must be learned by sight.

We use many other skills to figure out the meaning of what we read, including:

- Thinking strategies—We observe closely, compare and contrast, group things in categories, recognize sequences, predict what might happen next, recognize cause and effect, use our imagination, and question ourselves about what we are reading.
- Attitudes about the topic—We learn much better when we have a positive opinion or curiosity about a topic.
- Knowledge of language—We need an understanding of words and their definitions.
- Prior knowledge of a topic—We make connections between new ideas and what we already know.

Adult readers do most of these things unconsciously most of the time. We have a kind of internal dialogue that helps us to comprehend, or understand, what we are reading.

Most three- and four-year-old children are not ready to learn to read. Many of the skills required for reading, such as matching sounds with corresponding letters, are still too complex for them. However, three- and four-year-old children who are read to often will develop many *reading-related* skills that will prepare them for learning to read. Adults help children begin to learn these skills when they read to them and talk with them about what they are reading.

Reading with Young Children

In this program, you and your group have talked about:

- What literacy is—reading, writing, talking, and thinking.
- The importance of understanding how children learn and the specific learning characteristics of individual children.
- The value of play and what children learn through play.
- Oral language development through conversation and sharing rhymes and stories, and how good language development lays a foundation for reading.
- Storytelling and how this helps children develop language and memory skills, imagination, and an understanding of how stories work.

Today you will introduce discussion and activities related to reading with young children. You will share some tips and strategies for reading to children and how they develop pre-reading skills.

As discussed earlier in this program, parents do not need to teach their preschool child to read. A child will start reading soon enough when he starts school. The parents' goal with their preschool children is to develop a love of reading, an understanding that the words on a page convey meaning, and knowledge of what makes a story.

Children begin to learn about reading and writing when they are babies. They begin to become literate as they see, hear, feel, and share in the reading and writing that happens in the home and the community. Children will copy what they see around them. Every time parents read a book, write a shopping list, check the TV guide, pay bills, send greeting cards, or buy a newspaper they are showing their child that reading and writing are important to them. When adults show that reading and writing are important, children also believe they are important.

The best thing parents can do to prepare their children for reading and writing at school is to read to them. Story reading encourages children to want to read. Most of the ideas children have about reading are learned from the time they spend reading and writing with a caring adult. Children need lots of opportunities to interact with all kinds of printed materials, to attempt writing, and to have meaningful conversations with adults as a preparation to learning to read and write.

Discuss **handouts 7.2** and **7.3** with parents.

Reading with children is fun and a warm one-to-one time for parent and child.

Reading builds a child's imagination, desire, curiosity, self-esteem, vocabulary, and prepares young children to learn to read. It helps them make sense of the world around them and much, much more!

Children develop gradually and at their own pace toward successful reading. The support of a loving parent will help to foster positive attitudes toward books and reading, happy experiences of stories and rhymes, an understanding of how books work, and some specific pre-reading skills.

Choose a book you enjoy and read it aloud to parents. Model reading techniques you would use as you read to children.

Following is an example based on the book *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell.

- Because you are reading to a group, hold the book open in front of you and slightly to the side of your face so that the group can see the pages and your expressions. (Remind parents that when they are reading to their own children, they will be cuddled up together on the sofa so they can look at the book side by side.)
- Begin by looking at the cover. Point at the title and the names of the author and the illustrator as you say them. Parents can explain what an illustrator is by saying the illustrator "drew the pictures."
- Talk about the cover art. Point at the three owls and count them—one, two, three—as you point to them. "Is it day or night?" "How do we know that?" "Do the owls look happy?" "How do you think they might be feeling?"
- Point to one or two of the repeated words in the text each time you read it, perhaps the names of the owl babies.
- Take your time as you read each page. Look at the pictures and talk about them; draw the connection between the text and illustrations. Talk about how the owl babies look. "Do you think they would be soft to touch?" "What are the owl babies doing?" "How do you think Bill is feeling?" "Where do you think the owl mother might be?"
- Use expression as you read. You can try using different voices for each owl baby.
- Emphasize the "s" sound when you read: "Soft and silent, she swooped through the trees to Sarah and Percy and Bill."

After you finish reading the book, talk with parents about it. What did they like and what didn't they like about this book? What did they feel as you were reading the story?

Talk about the way you read the book to parents and point out the connections to the early literacy skills listed on **handout 7.4**. Discuss the things young children are learning as they read with parents.

Remind parents that when they read with interest, enthusiasm, imagination, and love, their children will learn these skills automatically. It isn't necessary to turn enjoyable reading sessions into teaching sessions. Reading together should always be fun and never a lesson.

The general recommendation is that parents try to read with their young children for 15 or 20 minutes a day. This is a goal to aim for, but we all know that other commitments can sometimes get in the way. Several short reading sessions each day are more suited to young children than one longer session that risks losing their attention.

Review **handout 7.4** with parents. Initiate a discussion about what their children know about books and reading. How might parents help children learn some other early literacy skills as they read together? Talk about what happens when the parents read to their children. What kind of books do their children enjoy? Do they have favourite books they would like to recommend to other parents?

Encourage parents to browse through the children's books you brought to the program today.

Ask parents to break into pairs and choose one book to practise reading using the strategies you have demonstrated and discussed.

Encourage a parent to read their chosen book at Circle Time today.

Choosing Books for Children

There are many wonderful children's books available. There are also many lists of recommended books and award winners in the library and on the Internet. These offer excellent ideas for books to share with children, but it is best if we use our own judgment when we are choosing books for particular children.

Above all, children's books should be well-written stories with engaging and beautiful illustrations on topics that interest the child for whom they are intended.

Review **handout 7.5** with parents.

Discuss where they have found good, inexpensive children's books.

Would they like to have a book exchange at the program next week?

Extending or "Stretching" Stories

"Success in reading is directly related to the quality of dialogue engaged in by the reader and the learner. Effective readers spend time mentally making connections and predicting both words and events. Beginners make these connections through conversation. Stop and talk about what you are reading." –Vera Goodman, Reading is More Than Phonics

Talking about stories with children is important. Quality talk will relate the story to the child's own personal experience.

When parents talk about how a book affects them, children are more able to understand and connect to the story. Good books stimulate amazing conversations!

All good stories convey and elicit emotions. Parents can help identify the emotions of the characters and how the child feels about the events of a story.

Parents can add information and explore new ideas with their child as they talk about the story.

Parents can also help children explore their imaginative side when they talk about a book. For example, after reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, they could ask the child what he would do in the same situation. "If you were a caterpillar, what would you eat on Monday?"

Asking questions of children around books should never be a test. Answering the questions your children have about the books you read together and asking questions yourself is to children's learning if you look at asking and answering as part of a conversation.

When parents share a new book with their child, they could ask her to use her thinking skills and imagination to predict what might happen next.

It is a good practice to ask open-ended questions (questions without right or wrong answers) and listen carefully to the child's answer. Encouraging children to explain their answer gets them thinking and learning how to talk about their thoughts.

Parents can also help a child connect the story to their own life. For example, they can ask their child where they might have actually seen the animals in "Brown Bear, Brown Bear." Was it at the zoo or when the family went camping? Did she see some of them at a farm?

Other ways to extend or "stretch" stories involve engaging in another activity with a child that relates to the story.

If parents and children read a book about farm animals together, they might make a special visit to a farm, draw a picture of a farmyard, look in the cupboard and the refrigerator for food that comes from a farm, cook eggs for dinner, or sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" together.

Review **handout 7.6** with parents.

Ask parents to break into pairs, choose a book, and brainstorm some story-stretching activities they might do with their children. Come back together and share your books and ideas with the group.

Environmental Print

Environmental print is the print we see around us every day at home and in the community. We see symbols and letters on street and traffic signs, store signs, and labels of all kinds in the home. Children notice the print around them when they are as young as three. Some researchers think this is the root of literacy.

Helping children to recognize and understand the symbols and print they see around them starts their learning about the connection between symbols and the ideas they stand for. The label on their favourite cereal box, traffic signs, and store signs help them start to learn the alphabet and give them confidence as they begin to see themselves as readers.

Home Activity 1

Suggest that parents share **handout 7.7** with their child. They can identify together the symbols and signs that are illustrated on it to prepare for this activity.

Suggest that parents go for a walk with their child this week and look for as many signs as they can find.

They might ask their child if he knows what the signs mean. Being able to understand the signs around them helps young children feel like readers.

They can count the signs. How many signs have print and how many have only symbols?

If they have a camera, parents and children can take photographs of the signs in their neighbourhood and put them in a small photo album.

Parents can make a practice of pointing out and talking about the signs and print around them when they are out with their child. There are also numerous printed items around the house, such as the labels on packaged food. Every child learns very early which cereal box has his favourite cereal in it!

Home Activity 2

Ask parents to bring six to eight photographs next week—of their family or their children or some special event. Each parent will be making a book for their child. Caution them to bring photos they don't mind gluing into a book for their child.

Book List

Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, Laura Numeroff

The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats

Click, Clack, Mood: Cows that Type, Doreen Cronin

Julius the Baby of the World, Kevin Henkes

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, Very Bad, No Good Day! Judith Viorst

Roadsigns, Margery Cuyler

Signs Around Us, Jan Wells

The Napping House, Don and Audrey Wood

No, David! David Shannon

Cock-A-Doodle-Moo, Bernard Most

Who Took the Cookies from the Cookie Jar? Bonnie Lass and Philemon Sturges

Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak

Owl Babies, Martin Waddell

Reading Makes You Feel Good, Todd Parr

Alphabet Code

A	↓
B	↔
C	↕
D	Δ
E	∏
F	∞
G	∩
H	≈
I	√
J	≠
K	≡
L	⌂
M	■
N	□
O	⁄
P	◊
Q	Ω
R	╬
S	∑
T	☺
U	¥
V	¡
W	»
X	Ψ
Y	π
Z	Э

Reading with Young Children

You do not need to teach your preschool child to read. It is soon enough for him to start reading on his own when he starts school.

Most three- and four-year-old children are not ready to learn to read because the skills required for reading, such as matching letters with sounds and blending them to make words, are still too complex for them. However, three- and four-year-old children are ready for many reading-related skills.

The most important thing you can do for your child to prepare her for reading is to read to her. Story reading encourages your child to want to read.

Children develop gradually and at their own pace toward successful reading. Your support in the early years will help to foster:

- Positive attitudes toward reading
- Happy experiences of rhymes and stories
- An understanding of how books work
- Some specific pre-reading skills

Children need to have fun with stories and be challenged. You can help your child be ready to learn to read by:

- Reading books to her. Most of the ideas your child will have about reading are formed when you read to her when she is young.
- Giving him opportunities to help you read a familiar book. Encourage your child to "read" a story by following the pictures. Pause when repeated phrases come up to encourage your child to fill in the words. Encourage him to make appropriate animal or other sounds in the story.
- Discussing the book you have read and making connections to her life. Young children need to talk and think about stories if they are to become good readers. They need to connect stories with their own lives.

- Writing for him. Ask your child to tell you what he would like to say in a letter to Grandma, or put a title on a picture for him, or write a book together about something that interests him. Your child can then "read" the title or the book back to you.
- Modelling reading and writing for him to see. When you show that reading and writing are important to you, your child will also believe they are important. Children will copy what happens around them. Show your child how you use reading and writing to get things done in your daily life. Children become literate as they see, hear, and share in the reading and writing that take place in your home.

Tips for Developing a Child's Love of Reading

Read to your children often and for gradually longer periods of time. Some families like to have regular times to read together, but you can read anytime and anyplace. Try to stop and read whenever your child asks you to. If you can't stop what you are doing, suggest that he look at a book on his own until you can join him, or ask another adult or older sibling to read to him. Several short reading sessions each day are more suited to young children than a very long one that risks losing his attention.

Make book reading an active experience by:

- Encouraging your child to name objects in the illustrations
- Relating the book to your child's life and experience
- Pausing at repetitive lines to allow her to join in
- Talk about what you are reading together
- Explain print in the world around your child—such as signs, advertisements, and the print on food packaging.
- Discuss your day-to-day use of reading and writing skills such as paying bills, writing reminder notes, making shopping lists, reading recipes, looking up a favourite program in a TV guide, reading a magazine or the manual for the VCR.
- Read slowly so your child can participate and absorb the story.
- Reread favourite stories often. Children learn about the world through repetition and will ask you to read favourite books over and over again.
- Provide a supply of good quality, interesting books in many places in your home.
- Go to the library often and allow your child to choose books that interest her.
- Show your enjoyment of books, reading, and writing.
- Make sure that your reading time is FUN!

Ways to Share Books with Children

Sharing storybooks with young children is a celebration of family and a warm way to spend time together. When parents and children read together, they learn about themselves, one another, and the world in which they live.

Try to choose books for your child that you both will enjoy. But also allow your child to choose his own books at the library. Read the story yourself first to make sure it is suitable and to become familiar with it.

One really good children's book can stand alone. When your child brings you a pile of books and says "Read me a story" help your child select one to read together. Read through it slowly but dramatically and spend time looking at the pictures and talking about the story.

When you first start looking at a new book together, tell your child the name of the book and the author. Look at the author's picture if there is one. Perhaps mention if you have read another favourite book by that author.

Briefly tell your child what the story is about, or ask what she thinks the story will be about based on the illustrations on the cover. "This is a story about a little boy named Max who goes to the place where the wild things are. Instead of being scared of the wild things, he becomes their king."

Keep your child close to you during story sharing. Encourage your child to handle the book.

As you read, occasionally move your finger from left to right, following the words in order to give your child a sense of how words are placed on a page. From time to time, point to a character who is speaking. Children will often enjoy and understand a whole story but not be clear about the details. Help them by pointing out who is speaking or what is happening.

Use your voice to hold your child's attention. Change your voice to suit a character. Growl like a bear or squeak like a mouse. Doing this may feel silly at first, but most children will love it.

Read slowly enough to allow your child to join in with you, but try to keep a good pace without rushing through the story. If you read too fast, your child may feel you are bored or don't find the story interesting.

Sometimes, stop and ask her to repeat familiar words and phrases. Encourage her by saying, "Can you read this part with me?" This includes the child as a reader. Often children will recall a story better if they have key phrases in mind. "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!"

Encourage physical dramatization of the story. For example, if a character is flying, your child can flap his arms. Children enjoy acting out the words, and you may find it surprising how much you enjoy joining in.

When you have finished reading the story, briefly review it and talk about what happened. This helps the child to remember, understand, and draw connections to his own life. "Remember how you felt when your baby sister was born? How does the boy in this book feel about a new baby sister?"

Try to help your child draw connections with other stories you have read together or told to her. "This fox in The Gingerbread Boy reminds me of the fox in the Henny Penny story we read last week."

Ask your child questions about the story to find out his ideas. Ask why he thinks the characters acted the way they did, or what might happen to the characters next now that the story is over. Did he like the story?

Celebrate your child's accomplishments around reading! Make him feel proud that he is on his way to becoming a reader.

Early Literacy Skills Children Learn As You Read Together

How books and print work. (Books in English are read front to back and right side up; print is read left to right.)

The letters on the page correspond to sounds that make words.

Pictures help to tell the story and help us to understand it.

Stories are interesting and fun and make it easier to understand ourselves and the world we live in.

Books are written by a person and the pictures are made by a person. This helps children understand that they can write and make pictures.

Retelling the story together helps with remembering and understanding what happens in a story.

Sequencing: Pictures and events in the right order tell a story that is understandable.

Predicting: Thinking and saying what will or might happen next.

Picture reading: Children can tell or retell a story by following the pictures in a book.

Matching: Spotting what is the same and what is different.

Focusing on detail: Noticing what is in the illustrations.

Sound awareness: Hearing and recognizing sounds. Poetry and rhymes are particularly good for this.

Rhyme awareness: Hearing that different words rhyme.

Word recognition: Children will often begin to recognize a few words they see frequently in favourite books.

Helping Beginning Readers Choose Books

Everyone loves stories. Stories help us make sense of our world. Books offer parents and children a way to share their ideas, imagination, problems, and emotions. Cuddling up to share a book with Mom or Dad is a warm, reassuring, and special way to spend time together. Children who have this experience often when they are young are most likely to love books and reading as they grow.

- Let children choose their own books. Encourage your child to choose books about his interests. Any book your child enjoys is a good book for him.
- You choose some books, too, to broaden her horizons. Ask yourself if you will enjoy reading this book. If you enjoy reading it, your child will also enjoy it.
- Look for books that avoid biases.
- If the book has a message or moral, does it come naturally out of the story and is it indirect?
- Choose books with clear, exciting pictures that are full of information and relate to the story. It is never too early to learn to appreciate beautiful books.
- Illustrations should support and expand on the words.
- Books with repetitive phrases are great for encouraging your child to participate.
- Books with lots of animal or other sounds to imitate are fun for young children.
- Include books of nursery rhymes or books with rhyming text and books that can be sung.
- Look for books with rich, descriptive language. Explain words your child does not understand.
- Choose books with humour.
- Choose books that explain ideas.
- Look for books that relate to your child's life.

- Look for books with simple text and not too many words to begin with. Young children generally like a book that can be finished in one reading. However, as they become accustomed to listening to you read and tell stories, you can try reading books that might take several sittings. It's best to read this kind of book at a regular time and read it every day until it's finished.
- Look for other books by a familiar author, but look through them before buying or borrowing, as not all books by the same author will be suitable for your child.

Where to Find Children's Books

It is wonderful to have a home library of quality books for your child, but buying children's books can become expensive so don't forget other options.

- Go to the library. There's a lot of variety and it's a good place to check out authors and types of books before investing in books of your own. Ask for suggestions.
- When relatives ask what your child would like for birthdays or other special days, suggest books.
- Check out garage sales.
- Exchange books with friends.

Some Story-Stretching Ideas

Use your imagination to stimulate your child's imagination around stories and books.

- If there are animals in the book, act out the way they move or sound. Or read a book like Shake My Sillies Out by Raffi and then sing the song together and act it out.
- Draw a picture together or make a puppet and use it to act out the story.
- Sing a rhyme or song you already know that relates to something in the story—or learn a new one. For example, if you read The Very Busy Spider with your child, you could do the fingerplay "Eensy Weensy Spider" together.
- If the book is about food, try a cooking or tasting activity (all the while talking with your child about the experience). Children love to help with cooking. You can read the recipe aloud and ask your child to help gather, measure, and add the ingredients or help with stirring or pouring.
- Ask your child to retell the story in drawings (you can write captions for the drawings). You can make a card for relatives that illustrates the story. Photocopy the card and send it to several people. Children love to share their stories with people they care about.
- Tell The Gingerbread Man story with your felt board. Then, trace the outline of the gingerbread man on a folded piece of paper and have your child decorate it—maybe by applying glue and shaking on cinnamon sugar. Have your child tell you the story and write what she says on the card. Include the repeated line "Run, run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man."
- Make an alphabet book together after you have read one. Use animals, clothing, or food to illustrate each letter. You can go on an alphabet hunt; that is, look for objects in your house or outdoors that begin with the different letters of the alphabet.
- Play games like I Spy and describe things around you that appeared in the story.
- Paint pictures together of what the story was about, the characters in it, or how it made you or your child feel.

- Go on a nature walk if your book was about the outdoors and compare what you see to what was in the book. For example, you could read Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey and then look for some ducks at the lake or by the river. You could talk about how much easier it is for ducks to find a good home in the country than in a city.
- Visit the library to find another book related to the book you have just shared. For example, if you have just read "Goldilocks and The Three Bears," you can look for a book with pictures of real bears, another storybook about bears, or another book by the same author. It is important for children to understand that some books tell about real things and others about pretend things. Or, you could repeat "Going on a Bear Hunt" together.


SALE


STOP


EXIT


NO
SMOKING

Session Eight:
Writing with Children

The first and most important thing we can do to support children's beginning writing is to provide materials…Our role is to provide a print-rich environment, to answer children's questions and to respond with interest and enthusiasm to children's writing creations.

–Dr. Judith Schickedanz

Learning to Print

Materials:

- Watercolour paints
- Small-handled watercolour brushes
- Rough-textured, inexpensive paper

Method:

- Ask parents to write their names with watercolour paint in the symbol code on **handout 7.1** using their less preferred hand.
- Keep this activity short to reduce frustration—no more than five minutes.

The purpose of this activity is to remind parents how difficult it was as children to learn to handle a pencil and to write.

- Discuss the activity with parents. You might try asking the following questions to get the conversation started.
- How was this experience similar to children learning to print the alphabet?
- How did it feel to use your opposite, or less preferred, hand? How is using that hand similar to the experience of beginning writers?
- Even though writing your name this way was awkward, how do you feel about what you were able to accomplish?
- Do you think you would get better at doing this if you practised every day?
- Based on this experience, what skills would you say children need to develop in order to write letters and words?

Learning to Recognize and Reproduce Print

Reading and writing are two halves of the same process. Parents will want to encourage both activities with their child.

Just as there are stages in learning to read, there are stages in learning to write. At first children experiment with writing by making random scribbles, then they start to control the scribbles and begin to cover a page left to right—although they will be all over the page and not in a neat line. Later they start to make shapes such as circles and squares.

Most three- and four-year-old children are interested in words and letters. The ability of young children to form letters well does not develop fully until the elementary school years, and many children will still reverse letters in second and third grade. Some people have difficulty ever developing clear handwriting.

Young children need practice using the small muscles in their hands in order to learn to control a pencil for writing.

Everyday activities—brushing teeth, buttoning and zipping clothes, using forks and spoons—help develop this fine-motor control. Art activities such as rolling and shaping playdough, threading beads on laces, drawing, and painting also help children learn to control their hand movements.

Once a parent observes that a child has some control over her hand and the scissors, marker, or crayon during art activities, they can show her how to print her name. Being able to write her own name on a painting she has made is a great incentive to learning to write. Everyone likes recognition for their creations!

At first, the child may manage only one backward shape that is almost a letter. We may not be able to "read" what she has written, but she can certainly read it back to you! With practice over time she will learn to print all the letters in her name so that others can understand.

As parents help their child form the letters of her name, it is a good idea to name each letter and emphasize the connection between the letter and the sound it represents. Parents can exaggerate the sounds of the letters as they are written, particularly the first letter. For example, if the child's name is Mary, a parent might say: "Your name begins with the letter M. M says mmmmm."

Children value what the adults around them value. A parent is their child's first teacher in everything they do. It is important for children to see their parents writing, otherwise they won't understand the purpose of writing and may have little or no interest in writing themselves. A child who sees her parent write grocery lists or telephone messages will often start to imitate that behaviour by "writing" a list or note and "reading" it back in her pretend play. This is a clear sign that she understands what writing is for.

Children typically go through several stages in understanding print. At first, they appear to think that a story comes from the pictures. In books for very young children, this is actually often the case—there are very few words but a lot going on in the story. When children "re-read" a favourite storybook based on the illustrations, as far as they are concerned they are actually reading!

Next, children start to notice the printed words, especially if adults point to words occasionally as they read them. Once children start to print their own name, parents can make a habit of pointing out the particular letters in books and other print. "See, Mary, there is Little Miss Muffet. Her name starts with an M just like yours."

Children will often learn to tell their favourite story by heart with almost every word, just as it is written on the page. At this point, they are likely to correct you if you skip a part!

Eventually, children will try to match the story they memorized with the words on the page. Parents can help by pointing out simple repeated pages or names. The child is still not actually reading, but she has come to understand that a particular shape or arrangement of marks on the book's page always has the same meaning.

Review and discuss **handouts 8.1** and **8.2**.

Sharing Alphabet Books

Reading alphabet books together is a good way for children to start to learn the shapes of letters. Many alphabet books will also help them learn to connect the sounds of some letters to the shape. Initial letter sounds (the first in a word) are a good place to start.

Magnetic letters for the fridge are also fun. Parents can spell out the child's name or another word occasionally. They can use the letters to make note of items for their shopping list—"milk," "cereal."

Take a selection of alphabet books for parents to look through. There is a wide variety of entertaining and beautiful books to choose from.

Talk about what parents think makes a good alphabet book. Here are some ideas that parents might identify.

- A good alphabet book, like any other good book, attracts and keeps the readers' attention.
- Alphabet books that rhyme immediately have a rhythm that is attractive and interesting.
- The illustrations for each letter must make sense and be interesting and recognizable to the child.
- Humorous books with funny sounds like *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin or funny situations like the *Absolutely Awful Alphabet Book* by Mordecai Gerstein are always hits.

Alphabet book list

Eating the Alphabet, Lois Ehlert
The Circus Alphabet, Linda Bronson
Miss Spider's ABC Book, David Kirk
A Big and Little Alphabet, Liz Rosenberg
The Absolutely Awful Alphabet Book, Mordecai Gerstein
The Alphabet Tree, Leo Lionni
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Bill Martin Jr.
A Prairie Alphabet, Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet
Wildlife ABC & 123, Jan Thornhill
C Is for Curious: An ABC of Feelings, Woodleigh Hubbard
Canada from A to Z, Bobbie Kalman
The Dinosaur Alphabet Book, Jerry Pallotta
Animals A to Z, David McPhail
ABC of Canada, P. Gurth and K. Bellefontaine

Making an Alphabet Book

During program time, parents will only make the book and print in the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet.

Materials:

- Coloured construction paper for covers
- White paper for the pages
- Stapler
- Sharpie or other medium-tipped black markers

Method:

- Fold the white paper in half across the width.
- Fold the construction paper in half to make the cover.
- Staple the cover and the pages together.
- Parents print the lower case and upper case forms of each letter beside each other—one letter to a separate page, leaving about half the page for a photograph or other image that begins with the specific letter.

a A

Parents can complete the book at home with their child. The child can cut images from magazines, or parents and children can take photos together of objects around the house and neighbourhood.

Review **handout 8.3** with parents. Talk with parents about the fact that some letters of the alphabet—vowels and some consonants such as "c" and "g"—are pronounced in more than one way. This idea is too complicated for preschoolers, so when parents are talking about these letters and words to represent them, they should choose word options with just one consistent sound. Children will do this automatically, of course, because they aren't yet confused by written English!

Writing to Communicate

Writing is not only about the physical ability to reproduce letter shapes or knowing the sounds that letters make. Writing also communicates our thoughts, feelings, stories, and messages in many different ways.

Young children can also have the experience of expressing their own thoughts and stories in books. They won't be able to write the words, but an adult can do that for them or they can express their ideas with images alone.

Being a Scribe: Writing a "story" based on a child's own experiences

Refer parents to **handout 8.4**, which describes how they can write down a simple story for their child in his own words. This kind of story should be written about things the child knows and has experienced.

Home Activity

After a trip to the playground, a visit with a friend, or a special holiday, parents can ask their child if he would like to write a story about it. With young children it is best to do this soon after the event or with a photograph to look at while they tell their story.

The parent's role is to write down what the child wants to say, encourage the child's ideas, and give lots of praise once the story is written.

One or two sentences is enough for each event or image.

The letters should be printed clearly and large.

The child could draw pictures to illustrate his story or glue the photograph to the same sheet of paper.

When the writing is finished, the parent can read it back to the child and then encourage the child to read it. He will likely be able to do this very well because the words and ideas are his. Even though this is remembering or memorizing rather than true reading behaviour, it gives the young child a sense of mastery and accomplishment because he did, in fact, create his own story. Displaying the story for family and friends to see will make your child feel proud of his accomplishment.

Writing a Children's Book

Have parents write a book for their child with the photographs they brought with them today.

Writing a book is a wonderful way for a parent to do something very special for their child and to create something that will be enjoyed over and over and treasured for years.

The possible topics are endless. Some suggestions include the story of their child's birth, a funny incident that happened when he was a baby, what happened the day they found the baby bird in the backyard, or a story about the different members of the family or a beloved pet. A favourite storybook can be rewritten with their child as the main character.

Materials:

- 6 – 8 photographs (brought by parents)
- A corresponding number of copies of the book layout page (in the handout section) for each parent
- 1 blank front cover page for each parent
- 1 blank back cover page for each parent
- Glue sticks (if laminating) or white glue
- Sharpies or other medium-tipped black markers
- Scrap paper and pens for parents to write a draft of their book

It makes the books particularly special if you can laminate them and have them coil-bound at a copy store to bring back to parents at the next session. If you can't laminate the books, provide the book layout pages copied on card stock (heavy paper that can be purchased at any office supply store).

If you can't have the binding done:

- Use three brass fasteners for each book.
- Use a hole punch to make holes for the fasteners.
- Use a ruler or other straight edge to make a fold in the pages where they will need to bend to open.

Method:

- Parents place their photographs in a narrative order.
- They choose one photograph for the cover and write the title of their book. Ask parents to add their own names as author.
- Glue the photos to the pages and write two or three lines to tell the story.
- Either take the books with you to laminate and bind or use the brass fasteners to finish the books.

Review **handout 8.6** with parents.

Have a few samples of homemade books on hand to look at and discuss. Can parents suggest other ideas for books their children would enjoy making?

Home Activity

Have one or two blank assembled books ready for each parent to take home and make books with their child.

Suggest that they bring their homemade books with them to the next session to share their ideas with other parents.

Book List

20 Years of Caldecot Award Winners

2005 *Kitten's Full Moon*, Kevin Henkes

2004 *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*, Mordicai Gerstein

2003 *My Friend Rabbit*, Eric Rohmann

2002 *The Three Pigs*, David Wiesner

2001 *So You Want to Be President?* illustrated by David Small; text by Judith St. George

2000 *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, Simms Taback

1999 *Snowflake Bentley*, illustrated by Mary Azarian; text by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

1998 *Rapunzel*, Paul O. Zelinsky

1997 *Golem*, David Wisniewski

1996 *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, Peggy Rathmann

1995 *Smoky Night*, illustrated by David Diaz; text by Eve Bunting

1994 *Grandfather's Journey*, Allen Say

1993 *Mirette on the High Wire*, Emily Arnold McCully

1992 *Tuesday*, David Wiesner

1991 *Black and White*, David Macaulay

1990 *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China*, Ed Young

1989 *Song and Dance Man*, illustrated by Stephen Gammell; text by Karen Ackerman

1988 *Owl Moon*, illustrated by John Schoenherr; text by Jane Yolen

1987 *Hey, Al*, illustrated by Richard Egielski; text by Arthur Yorinks

1986 *The Polar Express*, Chris Van Allsburg

Writing and Young Children

"The first and most important thing we can do to support children's beginning writing is to provide materials…Our role is to provide a print-rich environment, to answer children's questions and to respond with interest and enthusiasm to children's writing creations."

–Dr. Judith Schickedanz

Just as there are steps to learning to read, there are steps to learning to write.

Reading and writing are two halves of the same process. As parents, you will want to encourage both activities with your child. It is important for him to see you writing. You are his first teacher and if he does not see you write and understand the purpose of your writing, he may have little or no interest in writing himself.

Most three- and four-year-old children are interested in words and letters. Usually at this age they begin to experiment with writing their own names. Their ability to form letters well does not develop fully until the elementary school years, and many children will still reverse letters in second and third grade. Some people have difficulty ever developing clear handwriting.

Reading alphabet books together can be a fun way for children to begin to learn the shapes of letters. Many alphabet books will also help children learn to connect the sounds of at least some letters to the written symbol or shape. Initial letter sounds (the first letters in words) are a good place to start. Look for some alphabet books at the library and share them regularly with your child. Some great examples are: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr., *A Prairie Alphabet* by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet, and *Wildlife ABC & 123* by Jan Thornhill.

Magnetic letters for your fridge are also fun. Spell out your child's name or another word occasionally. For example, you can use the letters to note items for your shopping list such as "milk" or "cereal."

Practise forming some letters together occasionally. Make sure you use upper and lower case letters correctly. Kindergarten teachers will tell you that if your child is able to write her own name by the time she starts kindergarten, she is well on her way!

Never turn writing into a chore. All reading and writing activity should be fun.

Encouraging Young Writers

- Be a role model. Make sure your child sees you writing—letters, lists, diaries, and phone messages. Talk about writing as you are doing it. Explain what you are doing.
- Create a place for writing with your child, or pick a consistent place such as the kitchen table. A box of her own with her own writing materials gives your child a sense of herself as a writer.
- Drawing, painting, crayoning, cutting, and sticking all encourage hand-eye coordination and strength, which are important to being able to physically control a pencil and learn to print.
- Let your child experiment with different sizes and types of markers, crayons, and chalk, and on different writing surfaces. Provide large-sized markers, crayons, and pencils; they are much easier for small hands to manage.
- Write any words your child requests in lower case (small) letters. Use capitals only for the first letter of a name.
- As she writes her name, she may like you to put your hand gently over hers at first, so that you can help her with the writing movements.
- Exaggerate the sound of the letters, especially the first letter in his name as he writes it.
- Trace the formation of individual letters in the air and encourage your child to do this with you.
- If he shows a preference for using his left hand, don't discourage him. Children need encouragement for whichever hand they use more naturally.
- Beginner writers need lots of praise for their efforts and to be made to feel their writing is important. Display the results!
- Keep it fun! Children will learn to read and to write when they start school. At this stage, it is only important that children begin to understand that those shapes on the page of their favourite book convey meaning, and that it is possible for them to also become writers and put their ideas on paper.

Making an Alphabet Book

Materials:

- 1 or 2 favourite alphabet books
- 1 piece of coloured paper
- 9 pieces of white paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Magazines or photographs

Method:

- Read an alphabet book together.
- Look through magazines with your child to find images to glue into his book. There will be a picture to represent each letter of the alphabet.
- Help your child select one picture that has meaning for him for each letter.
- Make sure to involve your child in choosing the images and adding them to his book. Try to find several images that would work for a letter and ask your child which picture he wants to use.
- Guide your child toward discovery of which image or object he wants to use to represent each letter. For example, you might be working on the letter "b." You might ask if he remembers the alphabet book you read earlier. Ask what was on the page for the letter "b" and what other word starts with the sound. You can make a game of coming up with lots of words like "ball," "bear," "brown," "bell," and "bee" or even your dog "Buster." Then look through your magazines to see if you can find a picture of one of those things—or take a photograph of the dog!
- Be sure your child understands which part of the word you mean when you talk about the beginning sound of a word.

- Choose only one picture for each sound in the book. Every now and then, remind your child of his alphabet book and ask what picture he chose for the letter "b." Explore again other words that start with "b."
- Write "My Alphabet Book" on the cover for your child. Help him write his name as the author.
- Share this special alphabet book together often. Your child will be able to "read" to you because he "wrote" it!

Being Your Child's Scribe

You can write down a simple story for your child in her own words.

This kind of story should be written about things the child knows and has experienced.

After a trip to the playground, a visit with a friend, or a special holiday, ask your child if she would like to write a story about it. With young children, it is best to do this soon after the event or with a photograph to look at while they tell their story.

Your role is to write down what your child wants to say, encourage her ideas, and give lots of praise once the story is written.

One or two sentences is enough for each event or image.

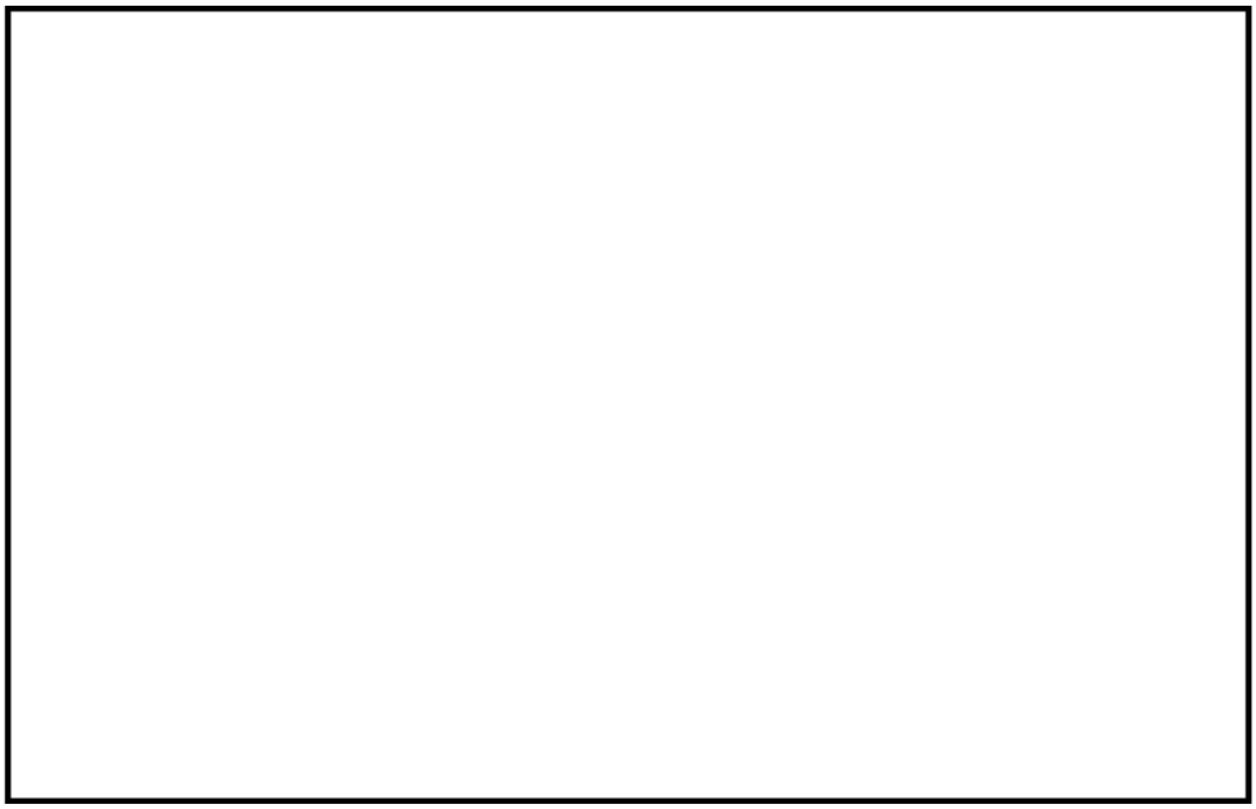
The letters should be printed clearly and large.

Your child could draw pictures to illustrate her story or glue the photograph to the same sheet of paper.

When the writing is finished, read it to the child and then encourage her to read it. She will likely be able to do this very well because the words and ideas are hers. Even though this is remembering or memorizing rather than true reading behaviour, it gives your young child a sense of mastery and accomplishment because she did, in fact, create her own story.

Displaying the story for family and friends to see will make your child feel proud of her accomplishment.

Putting these stories in a scrapbook or making individual books with three- or four-page stories is very exciting and satisfying to a young child. Soon, she will have a library of books that she wrote herself!



Your Child Is an Author!

Making all kinds of books with young children is easy to do.

Make the book itself the same way we made the alphabet book with plain sheets of paper folded in half and stapled together. You can add a cover made of cardboard from cereal or dress-shirt boxes or pieces of heavier cardboard boxes.

Print the title of the book on the front cover for your child. Don't forget to use upper and lower case letters appropriately.

Have your child print his name as the author and illustrator on the front of the book.

The topic of the book can be anything that interests your child. Have fun and be imaginative together!

Things I Like

Encourage your child to find images of things he likes in lots of different places such as pictures in catalogues, flyers, and magazines, labels from cans and packaged food or toy boxes, photographs, or he can draw his own pictures. Have him put a different object or activity on each page.

Touch and Feel

Look around the house for things that are smooth and shiny (tinfoil), rough (sandpaper), soft (velvet), furry (fake fur), sticky (Velcro), stretchy (socks), or any other texture you can think of together. Take advantage of the opportunity to introduce your child to new and different words. Glue small pieces of the materials on individual pages of a small homemade book and also print the words you used to describe them.

Colours or Shapes

Find images, use markers to make shapes, or cut shapes from coloured paper so that you have a different shape or colour on each page. Write the word to describe it under the image. Look at some of Tana Hoban's shape books to get some ideas of how to look at objects in a new way in order to find the circles and squares and triangles.

My Favourite Animals

Write down the names of the animals and the sounds they make.
Number Book
Use the appropriate number of images to illustrate the number on each page. The images should be in the same category (cars or balls, for example) but they don't need to be identical.

Transportation

Find pictures of trucks, cars, trains, airplanes, tricycles, blimps, skateboards, or any other object that catches your child's imagination and can move people and things around.

I Can…Book

Include the things your child can do or likes to do.

Session Nine:
Emerging Math Skills

Go down deep enough into anything and you will find mathematics.
–Dean Schlicter

Think! Think and wonder. Wonder and think. How much water can 55 elephants drink?
–Dr. Seuss

About Math Readiness

Math is all around us. How much and how many are questions we ask ourselves every day. We use math when we shop for groceries, cook dinner, share a pizza, or watch a hockey game. Without even knowing it, children are also using math when they play. They pour things in and out of cups, they stack pots and pans or blocks, they sort things, and they count their toys and lots of other objects around them.

Thinking logically and solving problems is what math is all about. When we ask children how to do an everyday task or why they choose to do something, we are asking them to solve a simple problem or explain their choices. Challenging children's thinking skills prepares them to do math.

Children learn the foundation skills for math as they play and explore and try to make sense of the world around them. One way children learn to understand their world is in terms of numbers and shapes. They learn to reason, to connect ideas, and to think logically. Math is more than the rules of number manipulations we learned in school. It is about connections and seeing the relationships in everything we do.

Parents can help children enjoy numbers and the ideas that lead to comfort and competence with math. If parents did not like math at school or are still uncomfortable with numbers, it is best to avoid passing that along to children. Expressing a dislike of math can lead to a defeated attitude in children before they even start learning to work with numbers.

What is math readiness?

You have talked about reading and writing readiness in children. It doesn't mean being able to read or write; it means having the basic knowledge and skills to make learning to read and write possible and enjoyable. It is the same with math readiness. The foundations for numeracy are built in early childhood, just as the foundations for reading and writing are built in early childhood.

Research has shown that children who have a good base of intuitive knowledge about numbers and logical thinking before they start school achieve more success with math in school, see math as an activity with meaning, have a sense of confidence in their ability to do math, and develop good numeracy skills.

Parents do not have to teach young children math rules.

Instead, encourage them to ask questions. In turn, ask them questions about problem solving, such as "What would happen if…?" or "What do you think we should do?" Count and sort things important in their world, measure and estimate and look for patterns.

Children intuitively know math ideas, although they won't have the words for them unless parents help. Children are born with an ability to recognize quantity. Although they can't explain it, they know when something is bigger or smaller, more or less. A toddler knows that she is small and her parents are big. She knows that if she has one cookie and her older sister has two cookies, she has less, and that doesn't make her happy! Young children know the order of their day if they have a routine. They know that a snack will come after their nap and bedtime means a story.

Children learn many concepts of size, shape, weight, and numbers as they stack block towers, try to fit square shapes into circles, and pour sand and water from large containers into small ones.

Using the language of math

Parents can use math language during daily activities with their children.

Conversation that uses numbers and math ideas in a variety of different situations is important to helping children understand the ideas.

Parents can use math words like these often: “same,” “different,” “all,” “some,” “none,” “after,” “before,” “later,” “bigger,” “smaller,” “the same,” “size,” “position,” “under,” “beside”—and measurement words such as two “kilometres,” six “centimetres,” and one “metre.”

Review and discuss **handout 9.1** with parents.

- Ask if they've noticed that their children are learning math readiness skills.
- Brainstorm some things they could do during daily activities that will help their children learn early math skills.

Understanding emerging math skill development

Parents can play an important role in preparing their children to be successful in math.

Children learn naturally through play and life experiences. Building on this awareness and the words they are learning for math ideas, children begin to learn the names of numbers in counting activities by age two or three. By three or four years, most children can compare two small sets or groups of things for size and can use words to describe which is larger and which is smaller.

Naming Numbers and Rote Counting

Naming the numbers and rote counting are some of the first steps to math that young children will take. Parents should not worry at first that their child won't have the numbers in order. That will come later.

Parents can share number songs and fingerplays to familiarize their children with the order of numbers. At first this will be rote counting, or counting without understanding the value of numbers.

Learn the following rhyme for Circle Time. Rhymes like this help children to learn to count backwards, too!

Five Little Children

Five little children playing on the shore
One went away and then there were four

Four little children sailing on the sea
One went away and then there were three

Three little children mixing up a stew
One stopped stirring and then there were two

Two little children playing in the sun
One went home and then there was one

One little child playing all alone
Went to talk to friends on the telephone.

Sorting and Classifying Objects

Sorting helps children understand that we group things together in different categories to help us order our world. When children sort things, they are putting like object with like object in sets or groups.

Parents can provide lots of opportunities for sorting. They can encourage children to sort a box of buttons into piles of big and small or two-holed and four-holed. They can help children sort markers or crayons by colour. They can provide a tub of mixed pasta shapes. On a walk, children can pick up small stones and sort them by colour or shape or size. Putting the grocery shopping away can be a wonderful sorting activity. Put all the cans together and all the boxes. Experiment with sorting big boxes and small boxes and learning which shapes take up more room in the cupboard.

Comparing Objects

When children begin to combine their counting and comparing skills, they have achieved one of the most important milestones for math readiness.

Comparing begins with looking at two objects to determine what is different and what is the same. At first, this usually means tactile and visual comparisons. Is one soft and one hard? Is one brown and one red? Later children learn to count objects correctly and compare two groups of objects they have counted to know which has more and which has less.

Parents can ask children to look and feel objects. They can ask which is smaller, bigger, darker, brighter, heavier, lighter, rougher, or smoother. Is one stack of blocks higher than the other?

After a child has sorted a group of things, parents can ask her to compare which group is bigger or smaller, which has more or less.

Talking about which building is higher, whose ball went farther, and who has more peas on their plate can be done anytime.

Sequencing

Sequencing helps children understand there is a natural order for many things in our world. Children learn sequencing when they have the opportunity to arrange things in order of size—smaller to bigger cups, for example. And the bigger ones hold more sand!

The next step, number sequence, is the knowledge of counting and the position of each number in the 1 – 10 counting sequence; that is, knowing that 2 follows 1 and 3 follows 2, and so on.

There is no intrinsic reason for the order of letters in the alphabet; that is, “b” follows “a” and “c” follows “b,” and so on. The order of letters is only important when we are making words. Numbers do have a reason for their order—1-2-3-4, and so on. The best way to help your child understand this is to count things. We can count things in the world around us and we can use books to count.

Counting steps while climbing a set of stairs will help children understand how numbers can represent a sequence of steps. They will develop an active understanding of the relationship between numbers and forward movement, which will help them appreciate that moving up or down the counting sequence is the same as adding or subtracting units from a set, or group, of objects

Once children can reliably compare two objects and say which is bigger or smaller, parents can add another similar object to make a sequence of three. Then they can start using words such as “smallest,” “bigger,” and “biggest” or “light,” “heavier,” and “heaviest.”

Parents can do this with any number of objects—three crayons of different lengths or three blocks or three books of different sizes.

One-to-One Correspondence

Numbers are symbols which represent, or stand for, *quantities* of something. Making the connection between numbers and how much or how many is a major step toward understanding numbers.

Sequencing leads to the understanding that a higher number means there is more of something, a lower number means there is less of something, and the last number you count indicates the total number of the set.

Before people had a formal number system, they used marks on a surface such as a clay tablet, or collections of small objects like pebbles to count important things or events. Parents can count to 10 on their fingers, touching each finger as they count in sequence. They can encourage their child to do the same. Fingers are always with you!

This is the beginning of counting with understanding. Children begin to understand that the number 2 represents two things and 3 represents three things.

Parents can set out a small number of objects in a line (e.g., three blocks or five trucks) and encourage children to touch each one as they count it. Setting the objects in a row will help children count without skipping numbers or counting something twice. Parents can then ask “How many are there?” Eventually, children will understand that once they have counted the last object, that final number represents the total number in the set, or group.

Gradually, as children become more confident, parents can increase the number of things to be counted. Count everything!

Once children become confident with counting increasing numbers of objects, parents can try taking one away from a group and asking their child to count them again.

Parents can help children to connect number with quantity in everyday life. They have many opportunities to count with their child in real and imaginary situations. How many cookies are on the plate? How many coloured socks and how many white ones? How many forks will they need for dinner? How many teacups for their tea party with the dolls?

Patterns and Relationships

Patterns are things that repeat. Relationships are things that are connected by logic or reason. They help us understand the underlying structure of our world; they help us feel confident and capable of knowing what will come next, even when we can't see it yet.

Patterns and relationships can be found in music, art, and rhymes, as well as in math (for example, counting and geometry). Predictable books with repeating phrases are great for understanding patterns. Understanding patterns and relationships means understanding rhythm and repetition as well as sorting, categorizing, and ordering from shortest to longest, smallest to largest.

Parents can help their child find patterns in designs and pictures, as well as in movement and in recurring events such as the day of the week, season of the year, or the time of day that something they enjoy always happens.

They can string pasta necklaces or other small objects into a simple pattern. As children get older they can produce more and more complex patterns.

Estimating

Estimating is a thinking skill that draws on our experience of the world. It allows us to make an educated guess about the amount or size of something. To estimate accurately, numbers and size have to have meaning. Young children will not be able to estimate accurately, because they are still learning these ideas. They first need to understand ideas like "more," "less," "bigger," and "smaller."

When children make guesses, they are learning to make appropriate predictions to reach reasonable results. As well, they learn math vocabulary such as "about," "more than," and "less than."

Parents can help children begin to learn how to use their experience to guess or estimate by regularly using words such as "about," "near," "approximately," "in between," "around," "more than," and "less than."

To practise estimating, parents can use any daily activity such as mealtimes or going to the store. Asking a child to make a guess of how much or how long or how many will help her to start making reasonable estimations.

Telling Time

Young children don't understand the concept of time. But they are capable of learning that some activities take longer than others.

Parents can help children begin to understand time by comparing one activity with another to figure out which takes longer.

One way to help children learn about time measurement is to set time limits. "You can only play for five more minutes and then we have to leave." At first the child won't understand what "minutes" means, but gradually he will internalize the idea of passing time.

Start time talk with ideas like "after lunch" or "before bedtime," which provide real-life examples children can understand. When children are older they will start to understand standard time ideas such as "two hours from now," "tomorrow," or "next week."

Measuring

Measuring is finding out about and describing the physical, measurable properties of an object.

Adults use standard measuring units like centimetres or grams. Measurement is an important way for children to look for relationships in the real world.

Using standard measurements such as centimetres is only one way to measure. Let children pick their own way. Use everyday objects like cereal boxes, blocks, or coloured links. You can use any object to measure things with children; for example, ask "How many wooden-blocks long is the house you built?" or "How many soup-cans tall is the cupboard?"

Materials:

- A few objects such as toy trucks, markers, coloured links, and blocks
- Paper and pens

Method:

- Ask parents to use the objects to measure the width of the table or the distance between the table and the wall. For example, the table might be eight trucks wide, and the wall might be 20 links from the table.
- Ask parents to record the measurements they make.

Fractions for Preschoolers?

Parents can encourage an early understanding of fractions and division in children. Many sharing activities that involve dividing food, chores, or treats into equal portions help children understand fractions. Every time we cut up a pizza or a pan of brownies we are dividing something into parts. Cutting pieces equally will help children begin to understand the idea of fractions. Parents can cut an apple in half and show their child how the two pieces fit together to make a whole; then they can show each half using the words "half" and "whole" as they talk about what they are doing.

Children learn by touching, tasting, feeling, smelling, and listening. They love to help prepare food and cook because they can use all their senses. Cooking with children is not only fun, but it will also help them learn how to measure. Children can help measure the chocolate chips for the cookies, get eight apples for the apple pie, or fill a half-cup measure with flour. They can also stir the batter, drop cookie dough onto the baking sheet, and put the toppings on the pizza!

Read parents a storybook that involves numbers, such as *How Many Ways Can You Cut A Pie?* by Jane Moncure or *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins.

Brainstorm some story-stretching activities parents could do with their child after reading a book about numbers.

Number Shape Recognition

Being able to distinguish between shapes is an important skill for recognizing written numbers, just as it is important for recognizing circles, squares, and letters.

Parents can help their child learn to recognize the shapes of numbers by pointing out numbers in the world around them—page numbers, calendar numbers, house numbers. A number puzzle is also fun for children who are learning the different shapes. Number puzzles are more directly related to number knowledge than simple shape puzzles.

Review **handout 9.2** with parents.

Brainstorm some other things parents could do with their children to help early math development.

If children are learning to make shapes such as circles and triangles, or letters and numbers, tracing the shapes is good for practice before they attempt to reproduce their own. They may like someone to help at first by guiding their hands. Parents and children can also practise making large shapes in the air.

Number magnets for the fridge can help children become familiar with the shapes of numbers. They can also be used to help a child make the connection between things in the real world and how we use numbers. One idea is to display a row of numbers corresponding to the number of days until an event the child is looking forward to—for example, a visit to Grandma. Each day the child will remove the last number in the row.

Everyday Math

Materials:

- Packages of mixed pasta shapes
- Coloured plastic links
- Packages of small plastic animals
- Dominoes
- Blocks of different sizes and colours
- Puzzles
- A large box of mixed crayons, pencils, and markers
- A bag of buttons
- Counting books
- Felt board stories
- Paper and pens
- Graduated measuring cups

Method:

- Ask parents to choose a partner and pick one or two of the materials you have provided. Partners will make a list together of the math activities they can share with their children using these things. Ask them to also note the math concepts their children will be learning and practising through these activities.

- Give parents five minutes for this activity and then ask pairs to share their ideas with the group.

Distribute **handout 9.3**.

Distribute **handout 9.4** and learn the following rhyme to share with the children at Circle Time.

Up to the Ceiling

Up to the ceiling (*raise hands up*)
Down to the floor (*put hands down*)
Left to the window (*point left with the left hand*)
Right to the door (*point right with the right hand*)
This is my right hand
Raise it up high (*raise right hand*)
This is my left hand
Reach for the sky (*raise left hand, too*)
Right hand, left hand (*twirl hands over one another*)
Twirl them around
Left hand, right hand
Pound, pound, pound (*hit fists on top of each other*)

Board Games

Board games along with conversations using numbers are two activities that have proven most useful in providing children with good math readiness skills.

Games with numbers, such as Snakes and Ladders or dominoes, help children learn counting skills. They count the dots on the dice and move that many spaces along the board, or match the dots on the domino pieces.

Board games help children learn the value of numbers; for example, if they roll a big number, they can move farther along on the board than with a small number.

Board games help young children learn problem solving and social skills.

Playing board games helps children:
- Learn the importance of taking turns.
- Begin to understand the concepts of winning and losing.
- Learn number recognition.
- Make the connection between numbers and concrete things as they play with dice or count spaces along a path.

Children between two and three years old just like to move the game pieces around the board. Children between four and five like to play the game, but they may or may not follow the rules. After age six children like to follow the rules, but at first they may not be happy when a rule puts them at a disadvantage. Around ages seven and eight, kids have problems playing with "little" kids who don't follow rules!

Make a Pick Sticks Board Game

Distribute **handout 9.5**.

Materials:

- Pick sticks game boards from handout section photocopied onto card stock (or use a glue stick to glue a paper photocopy onto a piece of poster board)
- Enough copies of the directions to glue one onto the back of each game board
- Markers in six colours
- Six craft sticks for each parent
- Small zipper-topped bags
- Glue sticks

Method:

- Have parents glue the directions onto the back of the game boards.
- Parents will colour the squares with the six colours in a random pattern.
- Parents will use the markers to colour one end of each craft stick with a different colour.

Pass around a few books that explore math concepts and numbers. Parents can look through them and choose one to read with their child during PACT. The book list contains some suggestions for fun and interesting books about numbers.

Home Activity

Suggest that parents try one or more of the activities listed on **handout 9.3** with their child this week. Ask them to think about the math skills their child is learning through this activity and how they can support that learning.

Book List

Richard Scarry's Little Counting Book, Richard Scarry

Ten in a Bed, Mary Rees

Ten Terrible Dinosaurs, Paul Stickland

Anno's Counting Book, Mitsumasa Anno

How Many Bugs in a Box? David A. Carter

The Right Number of Elephants, Jeff Sheppard

How Many Ways Can You Cut a Pie? Jane Moncure

The Doorbell Rang, Pat Hutchins

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle

Today is Monday, Eric Carle

One Duck Stuck, Phyllis Root

Pretend Soup, Mollie Katzen and Ann Henderson (great rebus recipes for cooking with children)

Math Readiness

Math is all around us. How much and how many are questions you ask yourself every day. You use math when you shop for groceries, cook dinner, share a pizza, or watch a hockey game. Without even knowing it, your children are also using math when they play. They pour things in and out of cups, they stack pots and pans or blocks, they sort things, and they count their toys and lots of other objects around them.

Thinking logically and solving problems is what math is all about. Ask your children how they could do something or why they would choose to do something. Challenging your children's thinking skills is a good way to prepare them for math.

Math helps children make sense of the world around them. Through math, children learn to understand their world in terms of numbers and shapes. They learn to reason, to connect ideas, and to think logically. Math is more than the rules and number manipulations we learned in school; it's about connections and seeing relationships in everything we do.

Help children enjoy numbers and mathematics. If you didn't like math at school or are still uncomfortable with numbers, try very hard not to pass that discomfort along to your children. Don't confess your dislike of numbers. Try not to say "I hate numbers" or "Math is hard" when you are trying to balance your cheque book!

What is math readiness? Reading and writing readiness in children doesn't mean being able to read or write; it means having the basic knowledge and skills to make learning to read and write possible and enjoyable. It is the same with math readiness. The foundation for numeracy is built in early childhood, just as the foundations for language literacy are built in early childhood.

Research has shown that children who have a good base of intuitive knowledge about numbers before they start school are more successful with math in school, see math as an activity with meaning, have a sense of confidence in their ability to do math, and develop good numeracy skills.

You don't have to teach your child math rules. Instead, encourage him to ask questions, and in turn, ask him questions about problem solving, such as "What would happen if...?" or "What do you think we should do?" Help your child to count and sort things in his world, measure and estimate and look for patterns.

Use the language of math during daily activities with your child. Conversation that uses numbers and math ideas in a variety of different situations is important to helping children understand the ideas. Try using words like these often: "same," "different," "all," "some," "none," "after," "before," "later," "bigger," "smaller," "the same," "size," "position," "under," "beside." Use measurement words such as two "kilometres," six "centimetres," and one "metre."

Understanding Emerging Math Skill Development

You can play an important role in preparing your child to be successful in math.

Number names

How to name the numbers is the first step to math that young children will learn. Don't worry at first if they don't have the numbers in order. That skill will develop over time.

Sorting and classifying

Sorting helps children understand that we group things together in different categories to help us order our world. When children sort things, they are putting like with like in sets or groups.

You can provide lots of opportunities for sorting. You can have a box of buttons and encourage your child to sort them into piles of big and small, or two-holed and four-holed. You can help children sort markers or crayons by colour, or provide a tub of mixed pasta shapes. On a walk, you can pick up small stones and sort them by colour or shape or size. Putting the grocery shopping away can be a wonderful sorting activity. Put all the cans together and all the boxes. Experiment with sorting big boxes and small boxes and discovering which shapes take up more room in the cupboard.

Comparing objects

When children begin to combine their counting and comparing skills, they have reached an important milestone for math readiness. Comparing begins with looking at what is different and what is the same between two objects. At first, this usually means tactile and visual comparisons. Is one soft and one hard? Is one brown and one red?

You can ask your child to look at and feel objects. Ask which is smaller, bigger, darker, brighter, heavier, lighter, rougher, or smoother. Is one stack of blocks higher than the other? After your child has sorted a group of things, ask him to compare which group is bigger or smaller, more or less. Talking about which building is higher, whose ball went farther, and who has more peas on their plate can be done anytime. Later, children learn to count objects correctly and compare two groups of objects they have counted to know which has more and which has less.

Sequencing and number order

Sequencing involves understanding there is a natural order for many things in our world. Children learn to understand sequence when they have the opportunity to arrange things in order of size—smaller to bigger cups, for example. And the bigger ones hold more sand! The next step, number sequence, or order, is the knowledge of counting and the position of each number in the 1 – 10 counting sequence; that is, knowing that 2 follows 1 and 3 follows 2, and so on.

You can help by providing lots of things that are graduated in size for children to put in sequence. There are many books written specifically for sharing counting activities. Of course, you can also count a wide variety of things in books and in the world around you that are not specifically about numbers. Sequencing leads to the understanding that a higher number means there is more of something, a lower number means there is less of something, and the last number you count indicates the total number of the set.

Patterns and relationships

Patterns are things that repeat and relationships are things that are connected by logic or reason. They help us understand the underlying structure of things; they help us feel confident and capable of knowing what will come next, even when we can't see it yet. Patterns and relationships can be found in music, art, and rhymes, as well as in math processes such as counting and geometry.

Predictable books with repeating phrases are great for understanding patterns. Understanding patterns and relationships means understanding rhythm and repetition, as well as sorting, categorizing, and ordering from shortest to longest, smallest to largest. You can help your child find patterns in designs and pictures, as well as in movement and in recurring events such as the day of the week, season of the year, or the time of day something they enjoy always happens. Try stringing pasta necklaces or other small objects into a simple pattern. As children get older they will be able to make more and more complex patterns.

Estimating

Estimating is a thinking skill that draws on our experience of the world. It allows us to make an educated guess about the amount or size of something. To estimate accurately, numbers and size have to have meaning. Young children will not be able to estimate accurately, because they are still learning about ideas like "more," "less," "bigger," and "smaller." When children make guesses, they are learning to make appropriate predictions to reach reasonable results and they are learning math vocabulary such as "about," "more than," and "less than."

You can help your child begin to learn how to use their experience to guess or estimate by regularly using words such as "about," "near," "approximately," "in between," "around," "more than," and "less than." To practise estimating, use any daily activity such as mealtime or going to the store. Asking your child to make a guess of how much or how long or how many will help her to start making reasonable estimations. Make a game of it by making your own guess. Once you know the actual answer, you can compare it with the estimations you each made.

Telling time

Young children don't understand the concept of time. But they can learn that some activities take longer than others. You can help your child begin to understand time by comparing one activity with another to figure out which takes more time.

One way to help children learn about time measurement is to set time limits. "You can only play for five more minutes and then we have to leave." At first, the child won't understand what "minutes" means, but gradually he will internalize the ideas of passing time. Start time talk with ideas like "after lunch" or "before bedtime" that provide real-life examples children can understand. When children are older, they will start to understand standard time ideas like "two hours from now," "tomorrow," or "next week."

Measuring

Measuring is finding out about and describing the physical, measurable properties of an object. Adults use standard measuring units like centimetres or grams. Measurement is an important way for children to look for relationships in the real world.

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Cut an apple in half and show your child how the pieces fit together to make a whole. Then show each half using the words "half" and "whole" as you talk about what you are doing. Children learn by touching, tasting, feeling, smelling, and listening. They love to help prepare food and cook because they can use all their senses. Cooking with children is not only fun, but it will also help them begin to learn how to measure. Your child can help measure the chocolate chips for the cookies, get eight apples for the apple pie, or fill a half-cup measure with flour. She can also stir the batter, drop cookie dough onto the baking sheet, and put the toppings on the pizza!

Number shape recognition

Being able to distinguish between shapes is an important skill for recognizing written numbers, just as it is important for recognizing circles, squares, and letters. Parents can help their child learn the shapes of numbers by pointing out numbers in the world around them—page numbers, calendar numbers, and house numbers. A number puzzle is also fun for children who are learning the different shapes. Number puzzles are more directly related to number knowledge than simple shape puzzles. If your child is learning to make shapes—circles and triangles, or letters and numbers—having him first trace the shapes is good for practice before he attempts to reproduce his own. At first, he may like you to help by guiding his hand.

Number magnets for your fridge can help children become familiar with the shapes of numbers. You can also use them to help your child make the connection between things in the real world and how we use numbers. One idea would be to put up a row of numbers corresponding to the number of days until an exciting event for your child; for example a visit to Grandma. Each day have your child remove the last number.

Some Math Activities to Try with Your Child

Block play

- Find the taller, longer, wider block.
- Find the right size block to fit in the gap.
- Can you make your tower bigger than the table?
- How many blocks make up your tower?
- Are there more blue blocks than red blocks?
- Count the blocks in a row. If we add two more, how many will there be?

Water/sand play

- Use containers of different height and width and pour sand from one to another. Which holds more?
- Compare two objects. Is the bucket heavier than the spade? What happens when you fill the bucket with sand?

Art and craft

- Trace around shapes and cut them out.
- Make pictures using short and long pieces of string.
- Talk about drawing a bird in a tree, under the tree, and next to the tree.
- Thread two green beads, then three yellow beads in a pattern on a long piece of string.

Music and movement

- Move slowly to slow music and quickly to fast music.
- Clap in time to the music.
- Play Pass the Parcel in different directions.
- Sing songs such as “Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed” and “Five Little Ducks.”

Logical thinking activities

- Sort blocks by size.
- Sort crayons, markers, and pencils into containers.

- Compare groups of things using the words "more" and "less."
- Sort buttons, keys, coins, pasta, cereal, fabric or paper scraps, marbles, balls, stamps, postcards, jar lids, leaves, shells, or playing cards, and talk about why you are sorting them in the categories you have chosen.
- Sort zoo and farm animals as you put them away.
- Go on a shape or colour hunt.

Measurement activities

- Measure shoes, height, length of table, etc., with yarn or hands.
- Use different-sized containers and pour things from one to another.
- Build towers of blocks to a height equal to other objects.
- Count the number of steps it takes to get somewhere.
- Measure ingredients for cooking.

Shape activities

- Hunt for shapes throughout the room.
- Pass around a shape for children to look at and feel with eyes open and closed.
- Have children hunt for shapes in a magazine and paste them on a page.
- Have children make objects using a variety of shapes.
- Trace shapes, then colour them in.

Pattern activities

- Look for patterns on leaves.
- Work with simple patterns in children's bead and block construction.
- Build patterns with two colours of blocks.
- Construct a pattern with two colours of napkins at snack time.
- Explore patterns in wallpaper or clothing.
- Create patterns using sponge printing, collage materials, geometric shapes.

Five Little Children

Five little children playing on the shore
One went away and then there were four

Four little children sailing on the sea
One went away and then there were three

Three little children mixing up a stew
One stopped stirring and then there were two

Two little children playing in the sun
One went home and then there was one

One little child playing all alone
Went to talk to friends on the telephone.

Up to the Ceiling

Up to the ceiling (raise hands up)

Down to the floor (put hands down)

Left to the window (point left with the left hand)

Right to the door (point right with the right hand)

This is my right hand

Raise it up high (raise right hand)

This is my left hand

Reach for the sky (raise left hand, too)

Right hand, left hand (twirl hands over one another)

Twirl them around

Left hand, right hand

Pound, pound, pound (hit fists on top of each other)

Pick Sticks Board Game

Materials:

- Cardboard
- Photocopy of game board (optional)
- Craft sticks
- Container to hold the pick sticks so that the colours can't be seen
- Markers
- Glue

Method:

- Colour the game board and glue it to a piece of cardboard to stiffen it.
- Use six craft sticks and colour one end of each stick with a different colour: red, blue, green, yellow, purple, and orange.
- Put the sticks in a cup or small container where you will not be able to see the coloured ends.
- Choose a couple of small objects to use as markers, such as buttons or small crackers.
- Take turns. Each player picks a stick and moves to the next square of that colour.
- The first one to reach Dino wins the game!
- Think about winning and losing. Are there ways to let everybody win? Everyone wins when you use crackers or candy pieces as markers; you get to eat your marker when you reach Dino.
- What other ways could this game be changed? Perhaps you could make a rule that if you land on a square with a picture on it (draw or glue on pictures), you must go back to the beginning. Or use dice instead of the pick sticks.

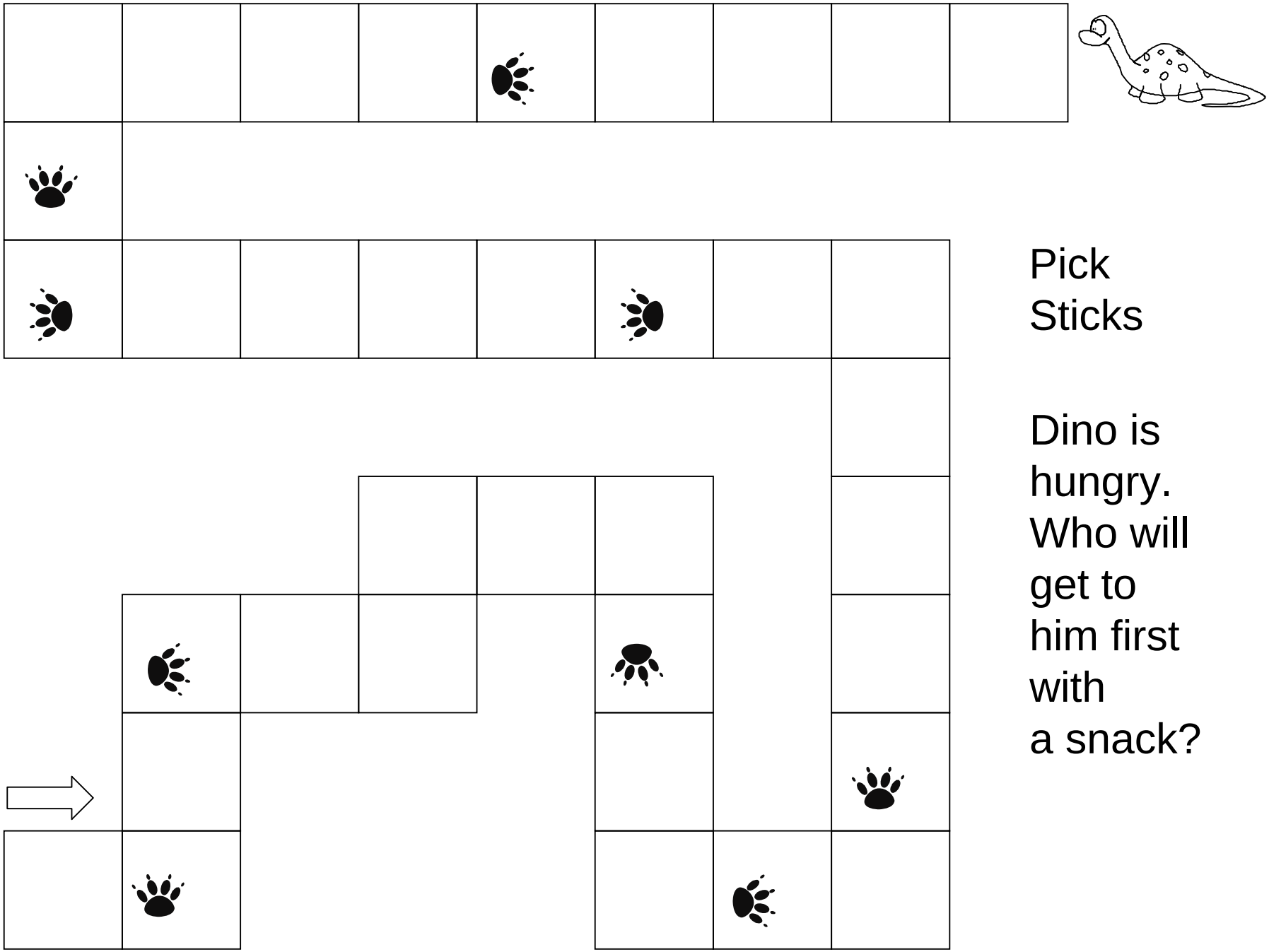
About Playing Games with Children

Children between two and four years old just like to move the pieces around the board.

Children between four and five like to play the game, but they may or may not follow the rules. This is a natural stage.

After age six or so, they like to follow rules. At first they are not happy when the rule puts them at a disadvantage.

Around ages seven and eight, kids have problems playing with "little" kids who don't follow rules.



Pick Sticks

Dino is hungry. Who will get to him first with a snack?

Session Ten:
Ready for School

The family is the strongest element in shaping lives. It's the most powerful support network there is. It's where the cycle of learning begins, where the attitudes of parents about learning become the educational values of their children.
–National Center for Family Literacy, Kentucky

The value of an education…is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.
–Albert Einstein

What Does It Mean to Be Ready for School?

All the things you and your group have talked about in this program help prepare a child for success in school and, ultimately, in later life.

- You discussed a definition of literacy and family literacy; that is, that literacy includes not only reading and writing skills but also talking and thinking. Literacy skills help us to communicate and to make sense of our experiences and the world around us.
- You emphasized the important role of parents in helping their children learn about themselves and their world. Parents are their children's first and best teachers. Children will spend more time with their parents than with any particular teacher in school, or in school itself. Parents' involvement and support is crucial to their success in life. Parents can encourage their children's curiosity, give them emotional support to help them develop healthy self-esteem and confidence, and help them with specific tasks as they learn and develop. When children enter the school system, parents can continue to provide needed support and become their advocate.

- You explored the different ways children learn and the different learning strengths everyone has in varying amounts. You talked about the importance of play and all the things a child learns through play. You discussed the importance of providing children opportunities to play in many different ways, with peers and with parents, to support their social and emotional development.
- Language development was the focus in another session. You discussed how holding meaningful conversations with children, chanting rhymes together, and telling stories will help them with their speaking and listening skills and prepare them to read and write.
- You explored early reading and writing skills and what parents can do to help their children be prepared to be enthusiastic and accomplished readers and writers. You talked about various ways of sharing books with children and providing opportunities for them to practise early reading and writing skills. You brainstormed story-stretching ideas to help children get more out of a book by connecting it to their lives, talking about the story, stimulating their imagination, providing more information, and discussing how the story affected them.
- Finally, you talked about math readiness, the different skills this involves, and how these skills relate to thinking and problem solving.

Briefly review all the topics you have explored during the past nine weeks, reminding parents that it is what they do with their children each and every day that prepares them for school.

Emphasize that if parents are regularly doing even a fraction of the activities you discussed, their children will be ready for school.

Schools and teachers are hoping that children entering kindergarten are appropriately mature socially and emotionally, have basic control of their large and small muscles, are familiar with books, stories and rhymes, and have some simple early literacy and numeracy skills.

Discuss the skills that educators hope children will have when they enter kindergarten, as listed on **handout 10.1**, and ask parents how their children are learning these skills.

Remind parents that every child develops differently. If parents do have concerns, suggest that they talk with their family doctor or a public health nurse. The sooner any issue is identified, the sooner it can be addressed.

Supporting children when they start school

If a child has some difficulty in school, how can parents help?

To make change parents have to be involved. One way for them to be involved is to ask questions and show interest in their child's learning.

What parents want to accomplish is to help their child be happy in school so he is able to learn. Parents can: seek to form a partnership with their child's teachers and the school to help him succeed and be happy; join the parent advisory council and go to parent/teacher meetings; show their interest consistently; ask the child's teacher how they can support at home what the child is learning at school.

Parents have a right to be informed and involved in their child's education. Parents should approach the school with that knowledge. Once children start school, parents have gained some extremely valuable partners in their child's education. However, individual teachers and schools come and go in a child's life. It is still the parent who will be there for their child year after year throughout life.

Review **handout 10.2**.

Open a discussion with parents about school. Emphasize that parents should continue to read to children after they start school and even after they are practised readers.

Ask some questions about the parents' own experiences with school. Be aware that this might be a difficult subject for some parents.

- What are their memories of school? Did they enjoy it? Were they good students? Did they have lots of friends? Did they love sports?
- What do they think makes a good school experience for children?
- Did they have support from their parents when they had problems in school?
- Do they have concerns about their child starting school?
- What can they do to help make school a good experience for their child?

Setting Limits

All children need to have limits set for them. When parents are firm but loving, children tend to have better social skills and make friends easier than children whose parents set too few or too many limits.

Children's activities need to be supervised, but parents should take care not to be overly restrictive, in order that children can develop confidence and independence.

Children should be offered a reason when they are asked to do something. This helps them to understand that rules are not arbitrary.

Adults need to listen to children as well as talk to them. It is sometimes surprising to find out what children are feeling and thinking. Listening also gives parents the opportunity to provide support when they know it is needed.

We may need to criticize a child's behaviour, but never the child. Adults must always demonstrate love and respect for the child as a person, even when they are angry.

Children sometimes need help to identify their options, make choices, and work out problems in difficult situations.

Adults should always be positive and encouraging, praising children for a job well done. They should offer children choices as often as possible, but only when there really is a choice.

Limiting Screen Time

Screen time is the amount of time spent in front of a TV, video, electronic game, or computer.

People who are concerned with the effects of too much screen time recommend that it be limited to one hour for preschool children and no more than two hours per day for older children and adults.

Too much time spent with electronic equipment takes away from time to talk, play, sing, explore, and read. Technology cannot replace human interaction.

Children, Television, and Computers

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no television for children under age two. Talking, playing, singing, and reading will promote healthy development in children under two.
- Between the ages of two and six, children should spend most of their day playing and socializing, not watching TV. The Canadian Pediatric Society suggests no more than one hour of television per day for preschoolers.
- There are good quality television programs available for young children. Some studies have shown that programming developed to help children learn can be beneficial. Parents could consider building a video collection of their child's favourite programs. Kids love watching the same program over and over. But too much television limits the time available for other activities that better support a child's development.
- Because preschoolers are more likely to show aggressive behaviour after watching shows involving violence, parents should restrict violent programming, especially cartoons.
- Young children need a variety of experiences that support their learning and literacy development. Most of this healthy learning will occur during human interaction with parents, other adults, and children as they enjoy conversation, playtime, storytelling, drawing and painting, and pretend play. Joyful, fun experiences help children learn.
- There is a place for computer software in the learning experiences of young children. Like TV, though, it should be limited. Some educators have observed that computer play can encourage longer, more complex speech and the development of fluency. Others have found that children tend to talk about or narrate what they are doing as they draw pictures or move objects and characters around on the screen. –Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001, www.nwrel.org

Distribute **handout 10.3**. Initiate a conversation with parents about limit-setting in general and limiting TV and computer use in particular. Ask their opinions on the issues.

Ask parents to take turns reading aloud the information on **handout 10.4**. What is their reaction to these statistics? Do they affect their vision of their children's future?

This is a good time to again offer parents brochures and business cards for local colleges or other services that offer upgrading, employment training, and post-secondary education.

You will need to use your judgment about the makeup of your group, but it may be a good time to ask parents if they are "ready for school" and to have a conversation about their own hopes and dreams.

Home Activity

Suggest that parents use **handout 10.5** as a guide to think about the television viewing habits of their family this week.

Book List

100 Storybooks Everyone Should Know (**handout 10.6**)

Distribute **handout 10.7**. Read it aloud to parents.

Graduation

Have a graduation ceremony and a special snack time or lunch today to mark the end of the program—if your budget can handle it.

You might invite some special guests such as the principal of the elementary school, a board or advisory committee member, or someone from a partner organization.

There is a certificate in the parent handout section that you can fill out and present to parents and children to mark the end of the program. Also, if you can, give each child a book today. You can either purchase a few different books and let children choose, or you can purchase multiple copies of one book.

Ready for School

This list of skills may look long, but when you look closely you will see that all the things educators hope that kindergartners are able to do are things that your children are already learning with your help. Most importantly, your children believe that, no matter what, you will look out for them. You show that you care about your children. Children learn and thrive when they have parents who are loving and dependable. Small children need attention, encouragement, hugs, and plenty of lap time. A child who feels loved is more likely to be confident.

Large-muscle control

- Runs and walks a straight line
- Jumps and hops on one foot
- Alternates feet when walking downstairs
- Bounces, throws a ball, and kicks a ball

Small-muscle control

- Pastes pictures on paper
- Claps hands
- Buttons clothes
- Builds with blocks
- Completes simple puzzles
- Draws and colours
- Zips clothes
- Controls a pencil and crayon
- Handles scissors
- Cuts and draws simple shapes

Social and emotional development

- Is confident to explore and try new things
- Is learning to work well alone and to do tasks for himself
- Is learning to share
- Is curious and motivated to learn
- Is learning to finish tasks
- Is learning self-control
- Can follow simple instructions
- Helps with chores

Language and general knowledge

- Knows about books and stories
- Asks questions
- Tries to solve problems
- Notices similarities and differences
- Sorts and classifies things
- Is learning to write his name and address
- Is learning to count and plays counting games
- Is learning to identify shapes and colours
- Likes to draw, listen to and make music, and to dance
- Has had a range of first-hand experiences in the world

Reading and writing readiness

- Remembers pictures from a printed page
- Repeats a six- to eight-word sentence
- Pretends to read
- Has been read to frequently
- Identifies own first name in writing
- Prints own first name, with appropriate use of upper and lower case letters
- Answers questions about a short story
- Looks at pictures and tells a story
- Understands that one reads from left to right
- Knows the letters of the alphabet
- Knows some nursery rhymes
- Knows the meaning of simple words

Listening and sequencing

- Follows simple directions
- Pays attention
- Recognizes common sounds
- Retells a simple story in sequence
- Repeats a sequence of sounds
- Repeats a sequence of oral numbers

Colours and shapes

Recognizes primary colours: red, blue, yellow

Recognizes secondary colours: purple, green, orange

Recognizes black, brown, white, and pink

Recognizes circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles

Numbers

Counts to 10

Can count objects

Recognizes the written symbols 1 – 10

Size, position, and direction

Understands opposites such as big/little, hot/cold, long/short, over/under, up/down

Time

Understands day and night

Knows age and birthday

Supporting Children After They Start School

Studies show beyond dispute that children's achievements in school improve with increased parent involvement in education.

–Henderson, 1998

Continually reinforce your child's self-esteem. A child needs confidence to ask a question in class or contribute to a discussion.

Help your child develop good work habits. You can help her develop a willingness to stay with a task and keep trying. Remember to praise effort as well as results. You can help by encouraging your child to take on responsibilities at home.

Support your child's learning at home. Provide opportunities for practice; it takes practice to learn how to do things well. Children don't get bored when they repeat things. Repeating things until they are mastered helps children develop the persistence and the confidence they need to try new things.

Share activities that give children opportunities to learn. Go for walks and talk about what you see, play board games with them, take them to places like museums, the library, the zoo, and the park whenever you can.

Don't stop reading to your children once they can read to themselves. Sharing books will always be an opportunity to have some close time with them, to talk about ideas and issues, and to keep up their interest by reading material to them that they are not yet able to handle on their own.

Emphasize language and communication. Talk with children as you go about your daily lives, have lots of books and magazines available, go to the library, continue to sing songs, say rhymes, and tell jokes.

Before your child starts kindergarten, talk to him about school often and the exciting things he will be doing there. Make sure you visit the school before he starts attending. Many schools have events for new kindergartners a few months before they will begin.

Get to know your child's teacher. Know what your child is learning and ask how you can help, volunteer at the school, join the parent advisory council. If there is a problem, talk it over with the teacher and try to find a solution that will work for your child.

Have a positive attitude toward learning and school and let your child know how important you think education is. Ask often about what happens at school.

Managing TV

Canadian children between 2 and 11 watched 15.5 hours of television per week in fall 2001.

–Statistics Canada, October 2001

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under two should not watch TV.
- The Canadian Pediatric Society suggests that children between two and six should be limited to no more than one hour of TV each day, and that everyone else should watch no more than two hours of TV each day. Be prepared to adjust your own TV-watching habits if you want to limit your children's hours in front of the TV set.
- Control what your children watch. Turn on the TV when a program is scheduled that you have chosen to watch. Turn it off when it's over. Reading the TV guide and marking the programs you choose together is a great reading and writing activity to share with preschoolers.
- Avoid programs that might frighten young children. News programs are not a good idea.
- Decide on a maximum number of hours that you will allow your child to watch TV and play with other video technology you may have in your home. Then stick to it.
- Decide that TV time cannot be "banked" or saved up.
- Talk about what your children are watching. Help them understand what they are seeing. Point out what is real and what is not real.
- Start early to educate children about advertising and teach them to question what they see.
- Watch TV with your children; don't use it just to keep them occupied.

- Plan lots of other family activities
- Some critics say that too much TV can influence poor physical development, obesity, violent behaviour, poor self-image, and poor nutrition in children. Like anything else, TV has the potential for good or bad. Some educators say that talking with your children about what they see, being aware and in control of what they watch, and offering many alternative activities is the most effective way to handle the potentially destructive effects of TV. What do you think?

Literacy in Canada

"Connections between parents' levels of educational attainment and children's academic scores have been established in a number of studies." –"Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society," IALS, 1997, pp. 30-31.

"Seventy-four per cent of young Canadians who graduate from high school have strong literacy skills. The remaining percentage can handle simple reading and writing tasks. Those who leave school before graduation generally have lower literacy skills." –ABC CANADA

"There is a correlation between literacy and wage levels in Canada. A recent study indicates that each additional year of education a person receives is worth 8.3 per cent on their pay cheque. Using an annual base salary of $30,000, this amounts to an additional $2,490 per year." –"Literacy, Numeracy and Labour Market Outcomes in Canada," Statistics Canada, 2001

Statistics Canada released the report, "Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society," in 1997. This report confirms that we have a serious literacy problem in Canada. Here are some of the facts:

- Literacy skills are like muscles—they are maintained and strengthened through regular use.
- The higher an individual's literacy level, the more likely he/she will be employed and have a higher income.
- Canadians use their literacy skills more in the workplace than at home.
- The report writers suggest that "good" jobs are those that provide opportunities to maintain and enhance literacy skills.
- About 45% of new jobs created in this decade will require 16 years of education."–ABC CANADA
- Close to 33% of employers reported training problems because some of their staff were functionally illiterate." –ABC CANADA
- Women make up 45% of the paid labour force. This will go over 50% by the year 2000. Women hold 72% of the lowest paying occupations and the majority of part-time and casual work." –ABC CANADA

Family Television Viewing

Try this activity at home with your family.

For one week, keep a log of the number of hours your family watches television each day.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Child 1							
Child 2							
Child 3							
Adult 1							
Adult 2							
Total							

How many of those hours did an adult watch television with your children? _____

What kinds of programs did your family watch? Place a check mark beside the program type for each program watched in your home this week.

____ Comedy

____ Cartoons

____ Drama

____ Adventure

____ Movie

____ Documentary

____ Lifestyle

____ Sports

____ News

____ Game

____ Children's program

____ Talk show

____ Other

Consider whether all the programs your family watched when children were present were suitable for them.

Next week:

Look through the program guide together and choose the programs your family members will watch. Circle or check them in the guide. Turn your television on only when programs you have chosen are scheduled.

Each day, during one of the hours you spent watching television the previous week, try playing a game together, going for a walk, reading together, listening to music while you prepare dinner, or any other enjoyable family activity.

During increasing amounts of your time together, make a conscious effort to choose more interactive family activities rather than television viewing.

Just for Fun

100 storybooks everyone should know from the New York Public Library

Abuela, Arthur Dorros. While riding on a bus with her grandmother, a little girl imagines that they are carried up into the sky and fly over the sights of New York City.

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, Judith Viorst. Recounts the events of a day when everything goes wrong for Alexander.

Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock, Eric A. Kimmel. Anansi the Spider uses a strange moss-covered rock in the forest to trick all the other animals, until Little Bush Deer decides he needs to learn a lesson.

Andy and the Lion, James Daugherty. The lion remembers Andy's kindness to him.

Bark, George, Jules Feiffer. A mother dog worries about the strange noises her puppy is making.

The Bossy Gallito: A Traditional Cuban Folk Tale, retold by Lucia M. Gonzalez; illustrated by Lulu Delacre. In this cumulative Cuban folktale, a bossy rooster dirties his beak when he eats a kernel of corn and must find a way to clean it before his parrot uncle's wedding.

Bread and Jam for Frances, Russell Hoban; illustrated by Lillian Hoban. Frances decides she likes to eat only bread and jam at every meal—until to her surprise—her parents grant her wish.

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Bill Martin Jr.; illustrated by Eric Carle. Children see a variety of animals, each one a different color, and a teacher looking at them.

Bruno Munari's ABC, Bruno Munari. Beginning with an "Ant on an Apple," illustrations, simple text, and a pesky fly who will not stay on his page introduce the letters of the alphabet.

Buz, Richard Egielski. When a little boy swallows a bug along with his cereal, pandemonium breaks out as the bug searches for an escape, the boy searches for an antidote, and Keystone Cops–like pills search for the bug.

Caps for Sale: A Tale of a Peddler, Some Monkeys and Their Monkey Business, Esphyr Slobodkina. A band of mischievous monkeys steals every one of a peddler's caps while he takes a nap under a tree.

The Carrot Seed, Ruth Krauss; illustrated by Crockett Johnson. A young boy plants a carrot seed and, although the adults tell him that nothing will happen, he just knows it will come up.

A Chair for My Mother, Vera B. Williams. A child, her waitress mother, and her grandmother save dimes to buy a comfortable armchair after all their furniture is lost in a fire.

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault; illustrated by Lois Ehlert. An alphabet rhyme/chant that relates what happens when the whole alphabet tries to climb a coconut tree.

Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type, Doreen Cronin. When Farmer Brown's cows find a typewriter in the barn they start making demands, and go on strike when the farmer refuses to give them what they want.

Come Along, Daisy! Jane Simmons. Daisy the duckling becomes so engrossed in playing with dragonflies and lily pads that she temporarily loses her mother.

Corduroy, Don Freeman. A teddy bear in a department store wants a number of things, but, when a little girl finally buys him, he finds what he has always wanted most of all.

Curious George, H.A. Rey. The adventures of a curious monkey.

Dinosaur Roar! Paul and Henrietta Stickland. Illustrations and rhyming text present all kinds of dinosaurs, including ones that are sweet, grumpy, spiky, or lumpy.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! Mo Willems. When the bus driver leaves the bus for a while, the pigeon wants to drive the bus so badly that he starts to dream himself behind the steering wheel vroom-vroom-vroom.

Duck on a Bike, David Shannon. A duck decides to ride a bike and soon influences all the other animals on the farm to ride bikes too.

Fire Truck, Peter Sís. Matt, who loves fire trucks, wakes up one morning to find that he has become a fire truck, with one driver, two ladders, three hoses, and ten boots. Features a gate-fold illustration that opens into a three-page spread.

Freight Train, Donald Crews. Brief text and illustrations trace the journey of a colorful train as it goes through tunnels, by cities, and over trestles.

Froggy Gets Dressed, Jonathan London. Froggy hops out into the snow for a winter frolic but is called back by his mother to put on some necessary articles of clothing.

The Gardener, Sarah Stewart. A series of letters relating what happens when, after her father loses his job, Lydia Grace goes to live with her Uncle Jim in the city but takes her love for gardening with her.

George and Martha, James Marshall. Relates several episodes in the friendship of two hippopotamuses.

Go Away, Big Green Monster! Ed Emberley. Die-cut pages through which bits of a monster are revealed are designed to help a child control nighttime fears of monsters.

Goin' Someplace Special, Patricia McKissack. In segregated 1950s' Nashville, a young African American girl braves a series of indignities and obstacles to get to one of the few integrated places in town: the public library.

Good Night, Gorilla, Peggy Rathmann. An unobservant zookeeper is followed home by all the animals he thinks he has left behind in the zoo.

Goodnight Moon, Margaret W. Brown; illustrated by Clement Hurd. A little bunny says goodnight to all the familiar things in his little room.

Gossie, Dunrea Olivier. Gossie is a gosling who likes to wear bright red boots every day, no matter what she is doing, and so she is heartbroken the day the boots are missing and she can't find them anywhere.

Grandfather's Journey, Allen Say. A Japanese American man recounts his grandfather's journey to America which he later also undertakes, and the feelings of being torn by a love for two different countries.

Harold and the Purple Crayon, Crockett Johnson. Harold goes for a walk in the moonlight with his purple crayon and creates many fantastic adventures.

Harry the Dirty Dog, Gene Zion; illustrated by Margaret Graham. A little dog who hates baths hides his scrubbing brush then becomes so dirty that his family does not recognize him.

Henry Hikes to Fitchburg, D.B. Johnson. While his friend works hard to earn the train fare to Fitchburg, young Henry Thoreau walks the thirty miles through woods and fields, enjoying nature and the time to think great thoughts. Includes biographical information about Thoreau.

Horton Hatches the Egg, Dr. Seuss. When a lazy bird hatching an egg wants a vacation, she asks Horton, the elephant, to sit on her egg—which he does through all sorts of hazards and waits until he is rewarded for doing what he said he would.

How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night? Jane Yolen. Mother and child ponder the different ways a dinosaur can say good night, from slamming his tail and pouting to giving a big hug and kiss.

I Kissed the Baby! Mary Murphy. Various animals tell how they saw, fed, sang to, tickled, and kissed the new duckling.

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, Laura J. Numeroff. Relating the cycle of requests a mouse is likely to make after you give him a cookie takes the reader through a young child's day.

It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folktale, retold and illustrated by Margot Zemach. Unable to stand his overcrowded and noisy home any longer, a poor man goes to the Rabbi for advice.

John Henry, Julius Lester; illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Retells the life of the legendary African American hero who raced against a steam drill to cut through a mountain.

Julius, Angela Johnson; illustrated by Dav Pilkey. Maya's grandfather brings her a pig from Alaska and the two of them learn about fun and sharing together.

Kitten's First Full Moon, Kevin Henkes. When Kitten mistakes the full moon for a bowl of milk, she ends up tired, wet, and hungry trying to reach it.

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, Kevin Henkes. Lilly loves everything about school, especially her teacher, but when he asks her not to disturb the class with her new musical purse, she does something she is very sorry about later.

The Line Up Book, Marisabina Russo. Sam lines up blocks, books, boots, cars, and other objects, all the way from his room to his mother in the kitchen.

The Little Red Hen: An Old Story, Margot Zemach. A retelling of the traditional tale about the little red hen whose lazy friends are unwilling to help her plant, harvest, or grind the wheat into flour, but all are willing to help her eat the bread that she makes from it.

Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China, Ed Young. Three sisters staying home alone are endangered by a hungry wolf who is disguised as their grandmother.

Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile, Bernard Waber. The helpful, happy crocodile living on East 88th St. causes a neighborhood feud.

Mabela the Clever, Margaret Read MacDonald. An African folktale about a mouse who pays close attention to her surroundings and avoids being tricked by the cat.

Machines at Work, Byron Barton. During a busy day at the construction site, the workers use a variety of machines to knock down a building and begin constructing a new one.

Madeline, Ludwig Bemelmans. The story of a schoolgirl in Paris.

Maisy Goes Swimming, Lucy Cousins. The reader helps Maisy the mouse undress and put on her bathing suit for a dip in the pool.

Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey. Mr. and Mrs. Mallard found a quiet place to raise their babies then took them to the pond in the Boston Public Garden where there were peanuts to eat.

Mama Cat Has Three Kittens, Denise Fleming. While two kittens copy everything their mother does, their brother naps.

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers, Mordicai Gerstein. A lyrical evocation of Philippe Petit's 1974 tightrope walk between the World Trade Center towers.

Martha Speaks, Susan Meddaugh. Problems arise when Martha, the family dog, learns to speak after eating alphabet soup.

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel, Virginia L. Burton. The story of an Irish steam-shovel artist and his old-fashioned steam shovel, Mary Anne.

Millions of Cats, Wanda Gág. The story of a peasant who goes off in search of one kitten and returns with trillions of cats.

Miss Nelson Is Missing! Harry Allard and James Marshall. The kids in Room 207 take advantage of their teacher's good nature until she disappears and they are faced with a vile substitute.

Mr. Gumpy's Outing, John Birmingham. Mr. Gumpy accepts more and more animals on his boat until the inevitable occurs.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale, retold and illustrated by John Steptoe. Mufaro's two beautiful daughters, one bad-tempered, one kind and sweet, go before the king, who is choosing a wife.

Muncha! Muncha! Muncha! Candace Fleming. After planting the garden he has dreamed of for years, Mr. McGreely tries to find a way to keep some persistent bunnies from eating all his vegetables.

My Friend Rabbit, Eric Rohmann. Something always seems to go wrong when Rabbit is around, but Mouse lets him play with his toy plane anyway because he is his good friend.

The Napping House, Audrey Wood; illustrated by Don Wood. In this cumulative tale, a wakeful flea atop a number of sleeping creatures causes a commotion, with just one bite.

No, David! David Shannon. A young boy is depicted doing a variety of naughty things for which he is repeatedly admonished, but finally he gets a hug.

Off to School, Baby Duck! Amy Hest. Baby Duck experiences the fear of the first day of school, but with a little help from Grampa, everything turns out okay in the end.

Old Black Fly, Jim Aylesworth; illustrated by Stephen Gammell. Rhyming text and illustrations follow a mischievous old black fly through the alphabet as he has a very busy bad day landing where he should not be.

Olivia, Ian Falconer. Whether at home getting ready for the day, enjoying the beach, or at bedtime, Olivia is a feisty pig who has too much energy for her own good.

Owen, Kevin Henkes. Owen's parents try to get him to give up his favorite blanket before he starts school, but when their efforts fail, they come up with a solution that makes everyone happy.

Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me, Eric Carle. Monica's father fulfills her request for the moon by taking it down after it is small enough to carry, but it continues to change in size. Some pages fold out to display particularly large pictures.

Pierre: A Cautionary Tale, Maurice Sendak. The story of a boy who learned to care.

The Polar Express, Chris Van Allsburg. A magical train ride on Christmas Eve takes a boy to the North Pole to receive a special gift from Santa Claus.

Puss in Boots, Charles Perrault; illustrated by Fred Marcellino. Translation of *Chat Botté*.

The Random House Book of Mother Goose: A Treasury of 386 Timeless Nursery Rhymes, selected and illustrated by Arnold Lobel. An illustrated collection of Mother Goose nursery rhymes, including well-known ones such as "Bah, Bah, Black Sheep" and "Little Boy Blue" and less familiar ones such as "Doctor Foster went to Gloucester" and "When clouds appear like rocks and towers."

Round Trip, Ann Jonas. Black and white illustrations and text record the sights on a day trip to the city and back home again to the country.

Rumpelstiltskin, retold and illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. A strange little man helps the miller's daughter spin straw into gold for the king on the condition that she will give him her first-born child.

The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats. A story of a young boy explores the magic world of snow—snowball fight, snowman making, sliding down the snow way, etc. He loves the snow fall.

Spots, Feathers and Curly Tails, Nancy Tafuri. Questions and answers highlight some outstanding characteristics of farm animals, such as a chicken's feathers and a horse's mane.

The Story of Ferdinand, Munro Leaf; illustrated by Robert Lawson. The story of a bull that would rather sit quietly under a tree than fight.

The Stray Dog, Marc Simont. A family befriends a stray dog, names him Willy, and decides to keep him. From a true story by Reiko Sassa.

Strega Nona, Tomie De Paola. A retelling of an old Italian tale about what happens when Strega Nona leaves her apprentice alone with her magic pasta pot, and he is determined to show the townspeople how it works.

Swimmy, Leo Lionni. Swimmy, the only black fish of the entire school, devises for himself and his adopted brothers and sisters a safer way to live in the sea.

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, William Steig. In a moment of fright Sylvester the donkey asks his magic pebble to turn him into a rock but then cannot hold the pebble to wish himself back to normal again.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter. Peter disobeys his mother by going into Mr. McGregor's garden and almost gets caught.

Tar Beach, Faith Ringgold. A young girl dreams of flying above her Harlem home, claiming all she sees for herself and her family. Based on the author's quilt painting of the same name.

Ten, Nine, Eight, Molly Bang. A father and daughter prepare for her bedtime with a countdown game.

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, Simms Taback. Presents the traditional version of a famous American folk poem first heard in the U.S. in the 1940s with illustrations on die-cut pages that reveal all that the old lady swallows.

The Three Bears, Paul Galdone. Three bears return from a walk and find a little girl asleep in baby bear's bed.

Trashy Town, Andrea Griffing Zimmerman. Little by little, can by can, Mr. Gillie, the trash man, cleans up his town.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf, John Scieszka; illustrated by Lane Smith. The wolf gives his own outlandish version of what really happened when he tangled with the three little pigs.

Tuesday, David Wiesner. Frogs rise on their lily pads, float through the air, and explore the nearby houses while their inhabitants sleep.

Uptown, Bryan Collier. A tour of the sights of Harlem, including the Metro-North Train, brownstones, shopping on 125th Street, a barber shop, summer basketball, the Boys' Choir, and sunset over the Harlem River.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle. Follows the progress of a little caterpillar as he eats his way through a varied quantity of food until, full at last, he forms a cocoon around himself and goes to sleep.

The Wheels on the Bus, adapted and illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. Through the use of movable illustrations, the wheels on the bus go round, the wipers swish, the doors open and close and the people go in and out in this adaptation of the traditional song.

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak. After Max was sent to bed for misbehaving, he escapes by imagining that he sails away to a wild land full of monsters.

Where's Spot? Eric Hill. It's time for supper, so Spot's mother searches for him.

Whistle for Willie, Ezra Jack Keats. A little Black boy tries very hard to learn how to whistle for his dog.

The Wolf's Chicken Stew, Keiko Kasza. A hungry wolf's attempts to fatten a chicken for his stewpot have unexpected results.

Yoko, Rosemary Wells. When Yoko brings sushi to school for lunch, her classmates make fun of what she eats—until one of them tries it for himself.

Zomo the Rabbit: A Trickster Tale from West Africa, retold and illustrated by Gerald McDermott. Zomo the Rabbit, an African trickster, sets out to gain wisdom.

http://kids.nypl.org/reading/

Don't Forget to Keep Reading to Your Child

Ted Arnold is the author of *Green Wilma,* the Huggly series (*Huggly Gets Dressed, Huggly Takes a Bath)*, *No Jumping on the Bed,* and other popular children's books. This story can be found on Mr. Arnold's web site "http://www.geocities.com/~teddarnold/" and is used here with his kind permission.

The Cat That Loves Reading

"We still read aloud at our house, even though Walter is 16 and William 12. Not as often as we once did, but we still read regularly. We have a cat at home, a big white cat named Cody, that appears in some of my books. Cody loves reading! Whenever we sit down or stretch out on the big bed to read aloud together, Cody appears from wherever he was in the house and gets right in the middle—right onto the book if we let him. One night, many years ago, when Cody joined us, I asked the boys how the cat knew we were reading, and what it was that he liked about it.

"They had some answers like this: 'He knows we aren't acting rough when we're reading.' And 'He knows there are laps to sleep on when we're reading.'

"I asked, 'But how does he know *when* we're reading?'

"They said, 'He hears the sound of our voices and comes running.'

"I persisted. 'But he hears our voices all the time.'

"'Oh,' they said, 'our reading voices are quiet and peaceful. When he hears that, he knows we're all together and cozy.'

"Then William said something I'll never forget. He said, 'It's like people purring to each other.'

"Yeah. Reading aloud together is like people purring to each other! I wouldn't dare try to improve on that thought."

Parents Reading

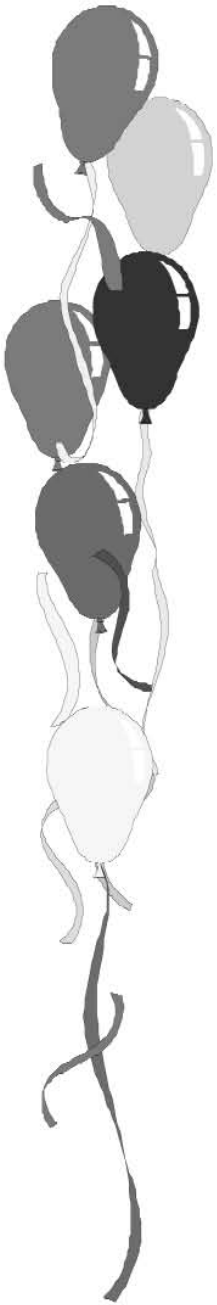
Children Succeeding

This diploma is presented to:

_____

Proudly presented this __ Day of ___ 2___

_____



Appendix A:
Program Registration Form

PROGRAM LOCATION:

PROGRAM DATES:

from to

ADULT'S NAME:

First Name Middle Initial

Last Name

MAILING ADDRESS:

PO Box or Street # City

Province Postal Code

TELEPHONE:

EMAIL:

CHILDREN ATTENDING THE PROGRAM:

Child's name

Boy/Girl Age

Allergies or health issues?

Occasionally staff or visiting members of the media may take photographs at the program. Your permission is required for these photographs to be used in publications. Please sign this form **if you agree** to allow us to take pictures of you and/or your child and if you agree that these photos may be used in publications.

Signature Date

Appendix B:
Staff Responsibilities

Project Coordinator:

- Prepare evaluation plans for the program.
- Advertise the program.
- Arrange space and acquire resources and supplies.
- Ensure accurate registration and attendance statistics are kept, and evaluations are completed for each program.
- Prepare financial, statistical, and evaluation reports.
- Recruit and train program staff and volunteers.
- Provide team leadership to staff and volunteers.
- Work with other team members to recruit participants.

Parent Facilitator:

- Keep records of program plans.
- Lead the parent group in discussions and activities designed to support literacy and parenting skill development.
- Encourage parents to transfer the skills they learn and practise in the group to their family life.
- Assist the Children's Facilitator to guide and supervise volunteers at the program.
- Purchase needed supplies and resources.
- Work with other staff to plan and prepare the snack.
- Work with the Children's Facilitator to plan and implement the PACT component.
- Register participants and keep accurate attendance statistics.
- With the Children's Facilitator, write a weekly evaluation of the program.
- Along with participants, the Children's Facilitator, and volunteers, evaluate and report on the program.

Children's Facilitator:

- In collaboration with the Parent Facilitator, plan a program of activities for parents and for children that recognizes the interests and needs of participants.
- Keep records of children's program activities.
- Prepare program materials for each session.
- Lead the children in learning enrichment activities that support their development.
- Plan and lead the Welcome Circle and the Story Circle.
- Work with the Parent Facilitator to plan and implement the PACT component.
- Work with the Parent Facilitator to guide and supervise volunteers at the program.
- Purchase needed supplies and resources.
- With the Parent Facilitator, write a weekly evaluation of the program.
- Along with participants, the Parent Facilitator, and volunteers, evaluate and report on the program.

Appendix C:
Evaluation

Evaluation provides staff with the opportunity to reflect on what you are doing and to make observations and judgments about how effective the program is, how closely you are meeting your goals, and how well you are meeting the needs of the parents and children who are participating.

The weekly evaluations help to capture the observations you make at each workshop, so that ideas you have for changing and improving them are not lost or forgotten before the workshop is presented again. Decisions you make about workshop changes can be tracked by using the weekly evaluation and noting what worked well, what you changed, and why.

When it comes time to write your final report or plan the next workshop series, the staff weekly evaluation along with the parent evaluation will provide a great deal of useful information.

Appendix D:
Parent Feedback Form

Thank you for being part of this program. It will help us to plan future programs if you will answer these questions. Your thoughts are very important to us. (It is not necessary to tell us your name on this form.)

Name _____

Has this program been enjoyable and interesting for you?

1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___

(low) (high)

What would have made it better? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you learn specific ideas, strategies, and activities that you can use at home with your child to encourage his/her literacy development and learning?

Yes _____ No _____ Not sure _____

Can you tell us one or two examples of things we discussed that you have found helpful? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Were there plenty of opportunities to ask questions, get involved, and discuss how to apply ideas and strategies in your own family situation?

Yes ____ No _____ Not sure ____

Are there topics you would have liked to discuss in more depth? What are they?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there topics of interest to you that were not covered?

Yes ____ No ____

If you answered yes, what are they? _____

_____

_____

_____

Have you found yourself talking, sharing activities, or reading more to your child at home?

Yes ____ No _____ Not sure ____

Did your child enjoy the program?

1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___

(low) (high)

What would have made it better for your child? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you noticed that your child's interests have changed or developed at home (e.g., drawing, enjoying books, counting)? Please tell us about that.

If you have noticed that your child has changed in the way he/she relates to or plays with other children, please tell us about it.

Has your child changed in some of the ways he/she relates to you?

Would you recommend this program to others?

Appendix E:
Staff Weekly Evaluation

Date _____

What observations did you make about participants' interests, literacy skills, or involvement in discussions? _____

Did participants respond positively to the workshop? _____

Are there any changes you would like to make to this session? _____

What did parents and children do during PACT time?

Were the activities appropriate for the children attending the program? How might you change them next time?

What child development and early literacy goals were addressed by the planned activities today?

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