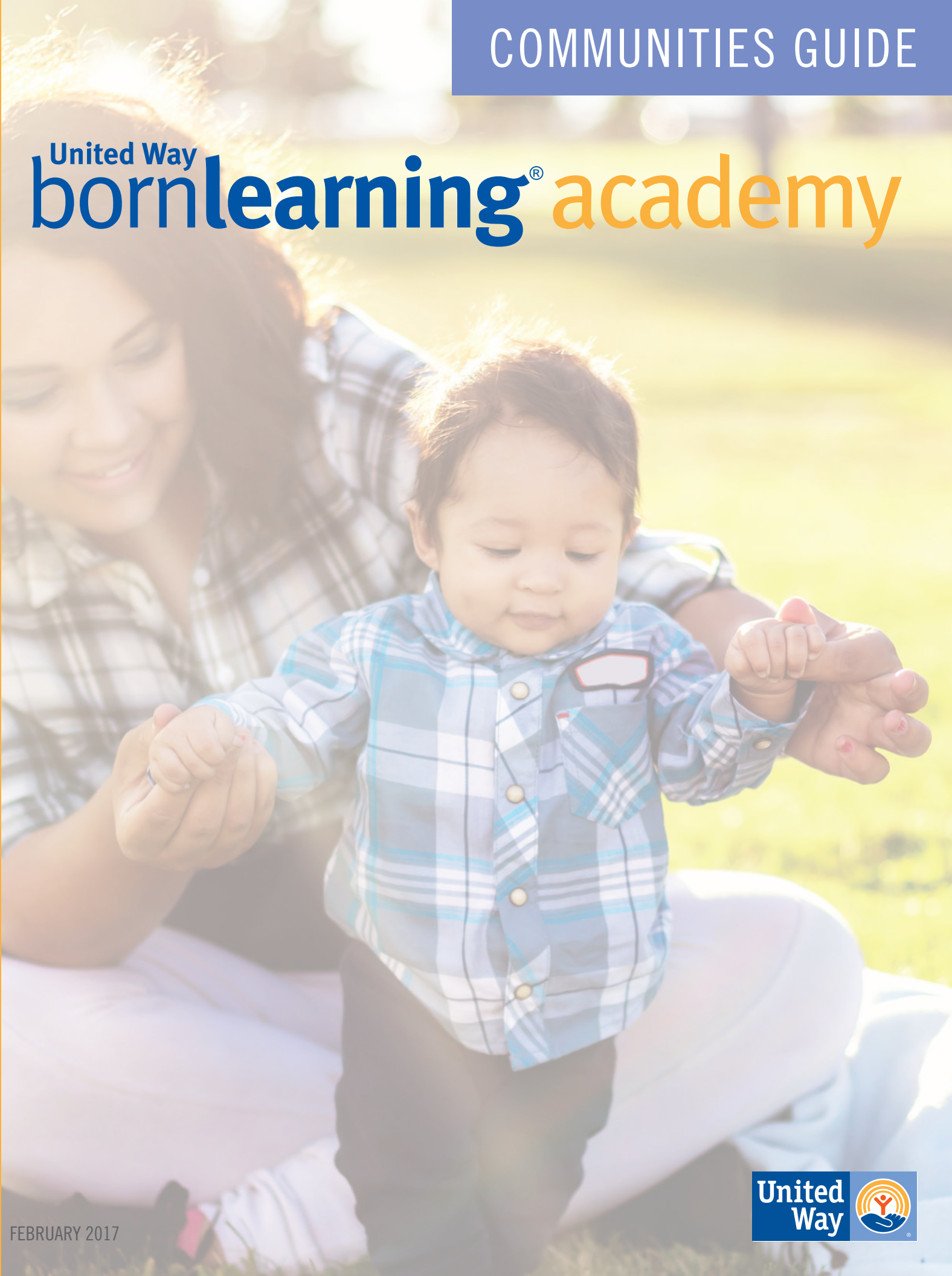


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INTRODUCTION

A companion to United Way Born Learning Academies, Born Learning Communities were designed to meet families where they are, physically, in their communities, in a safe space. The program also aims to meet families where they are, developmentally, building on strengths and what they already know to help them to be successful in meeting the needs of their children.

Born Learning Communities provides families with a toolbox to build skills as responsive caregivers, connect to early childhood programs and other community resources, and to prepare children for school success. The goals of Born Learning Communities are to:

1. Inspire families to recognize their role in preparing children for kindergarten entry.
2. Teach caregivers what it means to be ready for kindergarten by offering strategies that can be used at home to maximize their child's early learning and development.
3. Establish trust, build relationships, and increase enrollment in local early childhood programs.
4. Create a pathway to the traditional school based Born Learning Academy.
5. Prove a community based model will lead to increase engagement in surrounding community early childhood opportunities and school-based programs.
6. Build capacity in our communities by creating a program that can be replicated over time and facilitated by "non-professionals."

Born Learning Communities provide the content and structure for four workshops. The specific learning objectives for each are:

Workshop 1: Early Childhood, Why is Early Learning important?

- 1) State one connection between the early childhood years and kindergarten readiness.
- 2) Demonstrate one thing that will help children focus on learning at home.

Workshop 2: Everyday Moments, Parents are Early Teachers

- 1) Describe one reason why parents are referred to as children's first teachers.
- 2) Name one thing adult family members can do to foster responsive relationships with children.

Workshop 3: Early Literacy

- 1) Describe one way verbal language encourages literacy.
- 2) Demonstrate one way to engage children in language and literacy.

Workshop 4: Invitation to Change, Overview of Community Resources

- 1) State one reason for connecting with community resources.
- 2) Name the local school district as a helpful/useful community resource.

The overall results indicate awareness of kindergarten readiness and early learning, which is tied to both program objectives and session objectives. Additionally, a community-based model like the Born Learning Communities is a great avenue to increased family engagement.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the United Way of Greater Cincinnati and their partners for the design and pilot of this program. Additional thanks to Dr. Jaesook Gilbert and Dr. Helene Harte, the primary authors of this content, as well as the community partners who made this work a success:

- Covington Independent Schools
- Housing Authority of Covington
- Northern Kentucky Community Action Council Head Start
- Covington Partners



**FACTORS TO CONSIDER
BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION**

PARTNERS

- From recruiting families to providing space to running workshops, community partners are critical to the success of the program.
- To start, make a list of the service providers, faith leaders, schools, and other stakeholders in the community where you want to hold workshops. Partners to consider include:
 - Nearby early learning service providers, including Head Start/Early Head Start
 - Local health partners
 - Local elementary schools
 - Early intervention service providers
 - Public library, museums, music and arts, out-of-school time and other enrichment programs
 - WIC, housing and other public benefits services
 - Financial literacy, job training, transportation or others services identified by families
- Make a strong connection with the local elementary school, especially if you plan to recruit participants to attend Born Learning Academies during the school year. Make sure school representatives are at each session to mingle and build rapport with families.
- Make a list of potential partners and the assets (expertise, staff, volunteers, space, participants, etc.) they bring to the program.
- Contact partners to discuss the program and how they might be involved.
- Provide clear expectations for partner participation. Partners should be aware of the timeline and the clientele, and should be committed to ensuring that the most relevant staff have time to be fully engaged.
- A positive trusting relationship among partners is essential. Work on building and establishing relationships by including partners in planning, communicating frequently and seeking input.
- Always pull the partners together after each session and review/reflect on what went well, what did not, etc. Focus on continuous improvement, the families, and the program outcomes. This process requires honesty with partners.

RECRUITING FAMILIES

It's never too early to start thinking about recruiting families and keeping them engaged. Ideally, workshops will include 15-20 adults. For bigger workshops, consider having a co-facilitator to ensure everyone gets individual support. Assuming some families will register but not attend, plan to recruit additional families beyond your target number.

Consider the following recruitment options:

- Talk with area service providers, schools, faith leaders and others to determine which current families have young children at home and would benefit from the workshops. Can you post an announcement in a church bulletin? Is there a neighborhood newsletter? Let families know about this great opportunity. What about the PTO? There's no one better than another parent to recruit families to attend.
- Nearby childcare centers are another vehicle for recruitment. Contact the center director to tell them about the workshop. What about apartment complexes and housing developments? Head Start?
- Do door to door outreach. If possible, have the recruiter be an active participant in the sessions, so that families can become familiar and build relationships with session staff.
- Work on creating ambassadors for the next session. Families who live in the community and are excited about these sessions are the best champions for the programs and salespeople to the rest of the community members.

Where else in the school neighborhood do families live, work, play and pray? All are great opportunities to engage families.

WORKSHOP LOGISTICS

- The pilot program estimates a total of 40 hours for preparation work. Below are estimates for the planning process:
 - Neighborhood Outreach= 10 hours
 - Purchasing supplies and prizes = 5 hours
 - Early Arrival= 5 hours
 - Pre-meetings and Planning Calls = 10 hours
 - Food coordination= 1 hour
 - Childcare Coordination= 3 hours
 - Facilitator Prep = 5 hours
- **Sign in rosters:** It is important to know who attends each workshop. Attendance should be simple and efficient for families arriving after a busy day with hungry children. At the same time, you'll want to ensure you will be able to read names later.
 - Have a roster prepared with all of the family members' names already printed.
 - Have a separate roster or include enough blank space for unanticipated families to sign in. Ask people to print or have someone take down the information to ensure legibility later.
 - Have pages for children to sign in if they want.
 - Have people sign in electronically, if possible.
- Learn about the community in advance. Select a location where community members feel comfortable going. Make sure it is accessible. The facility space is important.
 - Check out the space in advance.
 - Evaluate the space for size, layout and flow of different rooms, and think about where people are going to be, as well as what they will be doing in that space. For example, is the space big enough for all of the families to enjoy a meal? Is this the same space where the adult session will occur or will it be used for older children (school age)?
 - The space should be welcoming, comfortable and relaxed.
 - There should be enough space to keep children safely engaged.
 - The childcare should be in a contained area that the families can feel good about. Determine where the childcare and programs for older children will take place, then think about the noise factor and proximity to the adult session. If the space is unfamiliar, plan how it will be organized in advance.
 - Be sure to do a walk thru of the space a few hours before the program begins to ensure you have the tables, chairs and general set-up that you were anticipating.

- Consider the **timing** of the sessions.
 - Consider family work schedules and commute times.
 - End early enough for families to do bedtime or other routines when they get home.
 - Check with local partners to determine times of past community events that had good attendance.
- **Communication** is key to ensuring a good turnout and a successful event.
 - When you invite families, provide concise written information that includes location, date and time.
 - Have fliers, reminders and other communications translated into Spanish and other languages as needed.
 - Be intentional about tailoring the message and resources for the audience—fathers, mothers, grandparents, teen parents, foster parents, etc.
 - Be sure to let families know there will be childcare for older and young children, as well as a meal for all participants.
 - Call, email or mail reminders several days before each workshop.
 - End each session with an invitation to the next session as well as an explanation of the next session topic, time, location, children’s programming and meal menu.
- The knowledge and expertise of the session **facilitator** matters. They should have expertise and experience in early childhood education. They should be comfortable and familiar with the content. They also should be comfortable working with adults.

CREATE A WELCOMING CLIMATE

In addition to equipping families as first teachers, the workshops are an opportunity for families to build a network of supports.

Here are some things to consider to foster a community in the workshops:

- Be mindful of culture and language. Be sure examples are relevant, that handouts are translated, and that the facilitator is bilingual, if needed.
- Provide food and childcare.
- Hold workshops at a time that works for the majority of families.
- In addition to good facilitation skills and knowledge about early childhood development, ensure that the facilitator is well-suited to the participants. Ideally, the facilitator is someone known and trusted in the community.
- Be flexible. Allow families to come as they are able.
- Think about when the doors will be open to the families, and build in time for preparation so that everything is ready for the families.
- Affirm families often.
- Create a sense of ownership among the attendees and partners. Have a potluck one session; give families lots of opportunity to contribute their ideas and ask questions; ask families to volunteer to help break-down or set-up at the next session.
- Push the tables together so there is more interaction among families.
- Provide incentives and resources for families to take home.

CURRICULUM

- The session format was designed to allow time for modeling, guided practice and practice with the children. This format is important to helping families learn and retain new knowledge and skills and therefore, should not be modified.
- The PowerPoint slides provide a framework. Use them as a guide, adding relevant examples from your experiences. Avoid reading the slides. Take cues from your audience. Do people seem overwhelmed or intimidated? Allow time for questions and invite people to make comments. Feel free to change the order of content to better accommodate your audience.
- Allow enough time for families to practice new skills with children.
- Model language, questions and interactions for families during the activity. Show them what they can do and why it is important. Make connections back to the slides.
- Plan for transitions. Explain to families what will happen next, where adults and children are going, and what adults and children will be doing at the next session component.

CHILDCARE

Space

- Use an RSVP to get an estimate of the number of children you are likely to have, by age range.
- Try to have separate space for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and school age children.
- Be sure to have diaper changing and toileting, seating, etc. to accommodate young children.
- If possible, have multiple stations to allow children choices. Suggested areas included:
 - Comfortable and cozy library or reading area.
 - An art area that has a variety of papers, writing utensils (markers, stampers, and glue sticks) and collage materials (colored shredded paper strips or shapes, pictures, etc.).
 - A cozy, quiet space for some down-time.

Supervision

Whether volunteers or paid staff, here are some things to consider about the adults supervising children during the workshops:

- If possible, designate one consistent person overseeing childcare for the young children and one for the older age group. Consistency of a coordinator or supervisor helps ease families' concerns about leaving their children because of the familiarity and potential relation-building.
- Think about the ages of children and adult-child ratios to ensure that children are sufficiently supervised. Use this [link](#) to see the National Association for the Education of Young Children's recommendations for teacher to child ratios and group sizes.
- Have many childcare helpers available. It is a difficult situation when you realize you need more helpers and do not have them. At a minimum, pair adults up to ensure that children are always in the care of at least two helpers.
- Ideally, all people supervising children will have completed background checks. This may be a requirement of the hosting facility, so be sure to check into their policy.
- Will you be enlisting early childhood or school district teachers? Other paid staff? Be sure to account for stipends and hourly pay as you budget for each workshop.

Activities

Provide age-appropriate planned activities for children that are connected to the workshop their families are attending.

- See Suggested Activities for Children at the end of each workshop for ideas. Additional activities can be found in the Born Learning [Literacy Kits](#) (must be a registered Born Learning user to access).
- Partner with community programs for activities for older children. For example, Tae Kwon Do or dance studios may have a lesson they can lead.

- Make a list of all needed materials. Be sure to purchase some extra for unanticipated headcount.
- Provide directions to each planned activity for childcare supervisors to review in advance of the session. Be sure to include how the activity is connected to the family session.

Materials

- Be sure materials are age appropriate.
 - Avoid chokables for young children.
 - Infants and toddlers will need chunky materials that are easy to grasp.
 - Avoid wet materials like paint, unless you have a water source for cleaning up nearby.
- Keep materials simple and low or no-cost.
- Keep plenty of wipes on hand for cleaning up children’s hands and tables.
- Remind families to leave anything the child may need while in care (bottles, diapers, pull-up, etc.) with the childcare provider.
- Supply lists for activities can be found under Suggested Activities for Children and Born Learning [Literacy Kits](#).

MEALS

- This is an area where costs can be minimized through in-kind donations from restaurants, catering companies and/or grocery stores. Another option is for families to bring potluck items.
- When estimating costs, check a few menus to determine the average per person cost. Check for delivery, set up and other costs.
- Be sure to include staff and volunteers in addition to participants and children.
- Model healthy eating. Be creative. For example, the pilot program had a theme for each session which included Sunday Supper, Italian Night, Fiesta and Cook Out.
- Take into consideration possible food allergies and dietary restrictions. Be sure to keep in mind cultural, ethnic, and religious dietary restrictions as well, not just health-related dietary restrictions.
- Try to have food setup in an area separate from the workshop to ensure participants aren’t distracted.
- Allow families to eat immediately upon arrival, even if they come early. It will feel less rushed and allow more time for socialization and community building.
- Give families plenty of time to transition from the meal to childcare and workshop content.
- Provide “to-go” containers for families to bring food home (include the flyer for the next session on the box).

BUDGET

Born Learning Communities was designed as a low cost, high-impact strategy. Depending on volunteer involvement, donated items and in-kind donations, costs will vary. Here are some budget considerations to consider. Budget worksheets are provided on page 40.

Childcare Stipends

A worksheet is included on page 40 to help determine childcare expenses. Things to consider here include:

- Will you be utilizing teachers or paid staff from partner organizations? What overtime or other HR policies do you need to consider?
- Will you use volunteers? Do you need to budget for background checks? Have you discussed any requirements that your partners and facility may impose?
- Will you provide training for those providing childcare coverage? If so, be sure to include those hours and costs in your calculations.
- What are the ages of the children in care? How does that impact adult to child ratios?

Food

- This is an area where costs can be minimized through discounts or donations from restaurants, catering companies and/or grocery stores. Another option is for families to bring potluck items.
- Use your organization's tax exempt status when possible.
- When estimating costs, check a few menus to determine the average per person cost.
- Check for delivery, set up and other costs.
- Be sure to include staff and volunteers in addition to participants and children.
- A worksheet is included on page 41 to help determine food expenses.

Materials

In order to determine this cost, it is best for the coordinator or facilitator to read through each workshop/session and determine what supplies will be needed. Costs should factor in the number of anticipated participants at each workshop, what items are already available, and should include anything needed for activities for children in childcare (see Suggested Activities for Children at the end of each workshop section). Costs can be minimized by soliciting local businesses for in-kind donations.

Incentives

Although not required, these costs are recommended to boost attendance and enhance the program.

- You might do a drawing for one bigger item or have smaller incentives for everyone.
- Options could include access to local attractions, gift cards, bags of groceries, children's books, etc.
- Costs will vary depending on sponsorships and donations.



WORKSHOP 1
**WHY IS EARLY
LEARNING MPORTANT?**

WHY IS EARLY LEARNING IMPORTANT?

**Foundation to Future ■ Resiliency ■ Early Intervention
■ Kindergarten Readiness and Approaches to Learning**

Objectives

At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- State one connection between the early childhood years and kindergarten readiness.
- Demonstrate one thing that will help children focus on learning at home.
- Identify one reason you might contact the state early intervention service.

Materials Needed

Use your RSVP list to generate a headcount of adults and children to compile needed materials. Be sure to have a few extra items in the event of unanticipated participants.

- Sign in roster
- PowerPoint slides (equipment to present or a hardcopy for each family)
- Plates, napkins, utensils, cups, ice, etc. for meal
- Materials for planned children's activities
- Empty cereal boxes, tissue boxes and other lightweight cardboard food boxes
- Contact paper or construction paper
- Packing tape
- Optional:* Incentives/prizes
- Optional:* take-home literacy kits (see Practice at Home section below)
- Optional:* Age-correct copies of ASQ (see Note below)

Agenda

5:30-6:00	Dinner
6:00-6:10	Opening Activity
6:10-6:25	Presentation and Discussion
6:25-6:40	Closing Activity
6:40-7:00	Practice with Children

Note: If the facilitator or a partner is skilled in it and there is committed capacity to conduct any subsequent referral and follow-up, an additional or alternative activity may be to talk about the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)¹ and give families time to complete it.

¹ <http://agesandstages.com/products-services/asq3/>

OPENING ACTIVITY: THINK, PAIR, SHARE

Try this activity to get everyone thinking about and talking about why they are here today.

1. Share the following quote:

“It’s easier to build strong children than repair broken men.”
–Frederick Douglas

2. Have families talk about what this quote means to them.

- Have them think about it and jot down some notes
- Pair participants up to discuss
- Share with the group

3. Facilitator can transition with the following thoughts:

Early learning builds strong children. Over the next few sessions we will discuss simple ways to promote early learning and give children the tools they need to be strong adults.

Approaches to Learning

A child’s earliest experiences lay the groundwork for kindergarten and lifelong learning. Beginning at birth, children start to develop approaches to learning.²

Approaches to learning include the attitudes and behaviors children develop about learning new things, including:

- Showing curiosity about the world around them
- Trying new things (initiative)
- Paying attention
- Persistence, or continuing to try despite challenges or obstacles
- Resilience, or the ability to bounce back from adversity

Adults can support positive approaches to learning by:

- Providing safe opportunities for children to explore and be actively engaged with the world around them.
- Talking with children about what they are doing, seeing, experiencing. Ask open-ended questions (questions that require more than a simple yes or no response), providing plenty of time for children to form their thoughts and respond, and actively listening.
- Building curiosity by using phrases like “I wonder.” For example, “I wonder how many shoes we would have to line up to be as long as you are.”

²Epstein, A. S. (2014). The intentional teacher: Choosing the best strategies for young children’s learning. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

- Instilling creativity by giving them open-ended materials to create what they want and encouraging problem solving.
- Promoting independence by letting them make choices. Let them pick between two shirts to wear, for instance.

These things will need to be adjusted based on the age of the child, but can be done with children of every age and ability.

Social Emotional Competence

Kindergarten readiness and future learning success are dependent on how well a child can regulate his or her emotions and reactions. Also known as social-emotional competence, these skills are needed for children to form positive and nurturing relationships with others, including playmates and classmates as well as caregivers, teachers and other adults. When children have social emotional competence, they are able to master their own body better, have better self-control and self-regulation, can communicate their ideas and feelings, empathize and establish successful relationships. For children to gain social-emotional competence, prosocial skills and early learning, they need to form positive attachments to caring adults in their lives—their adult family members.

Self-regulation is the ability to stop and think before you act.³ Infants and very young children depend on adults to meet their needs and soothe them when they are upset. As children learn about themselves and begin to meet some of their own needs, they also begin to learn how to calm themselves down. To master this, children need adults to model calming techniques as well as provide language and other tools to manage their emotions. Help children learn to take a deep breath or count to three. Model how you have self-control by using “self-talk.” For example, while in line at the store you might say, “Waiting is hard. I don’t like it. It helps me when I find something to do while I wait.” No response is needed or expected for self-talk. You could extend this into an interaction by suggesting an activity. “Let’s play I –Spy.” You can do this with children of any age. With infants, you will be doing all of the talking and modeling language. Interaction will be non-verbal. With older children, they will be able to respond verbally.

In summary, children need to know what to do when they experience different feelings (e.g., being angry, sad, happy) and where to go for help when they have those feelings. If children feel good about themselves and feel like they know what to do to when there is a problem or challenge, they will want to try new experiences and activities. As children try new things, they can make more friends and learn new skills.

Early Intervention

Sometimes children need additional supports. Just as early learning is important, so is early intervention. All children need to develop positive attachments and opportunities to develop approaches to learning. All children need responsive adults to meet their needs, read to them, talk to them and play with them. In addition to these interactions, some children and families will benefit from professional guidance. Not all skills are developed at the same time because children develop at their own pace. There are, however, some general guidelines for doing things for the first time like responding to loud sounds (2 months) or smiling at people (3 months), reaching for things (6 months), saying words (1 year). Children

³ McClelland, M.M. & Tominey, S.L. (2016). Stop, Think, Act: Integrating Self-Regulation in the Early Childhood Classroom

are sometimes delayed in meeting these milestones. Sometimes children lose skills they once had or stop doing things they previously did. Primary caregivers know their child best. If there are signs that a child is not responding, interacting or making eye contact, caregivers should contact their state or local *Early Intervention Service*. (Provide URL, phone and email contact information to workshop participants).

Whether children are typically developing or have developmental delays, there are everyday things caregivers can do at home to help them to be prepared for kindergarten.

Learning at Home

Spending time together doing simple activities with materials you already have at home can help children learn.

- Build with blocks or boxes to learn math skills such as counting and sorting.
- Use snack time, bedtime and other daily activities to name and compare similarities and differences with various objects.
- Pretend and role play with children helps them develop plots and characters as well as practice problem solving.
- Label feelings and describe what you see and what you feel to build vocabulary.

As you provide support, coaching and modeling, children learn important skills. Children learn *how to learn* from their caregivers as their first teachers.

CLOSING ACTIVITY AND PRACTICE: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

Use empty cereal boxes, tissue boxes etc. as blocks. They can be covered with contact paper or construction paper for decoration.

- Families can build giant towers that do not hurt when they fall on you.
- Notice if the bigger boxes are on the bottom the tower is sturdier. A strong foundation is important.
- As you build, talk about the size and shapes of the blocks. Count them. How many can you add before it falls over?

When children have early learning supports from families, communities and schools they have a strong foundation. When they do not, they are at a disadvantage. Children need tools to be successful in kindergarten. Those tools are provided by schools, families and communities. Some children start kindergarten with more tools than others. Some children do not even have a tool box. Luckily these tools do not cost money.

Practice At Home

Help parents use what they've learned when they get home while also building early literacy skills with a take home literacy kit. Check out the [Literacy Kits](#) for *Baby Feels* or *The Kissing Hand*.

Additional Resources

- [School readiness/Head Start](#)
- [Social Emotional Competence](#)
- [Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning](#)

WORKSHOP 1

WHY IS EARLY LEARNING IMPORTANT?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

1. Include activities and books related to a “Building” theme as a prelude to the parent child activity.

Suggested Materials

Materials can be set up in stations so children can rotate from one to another.

- Buckets and small blocks (one inch cubes) for filling and dumping
- Duplos or Mega Blocks for building
- Play dough with trays and construction vehicles or plastic construction tools (Paint or washable stamp pads are another option, but it may be best to avoid activities that involve a great deal of clean up.)
- Ramps for racing cars and construction vehicles

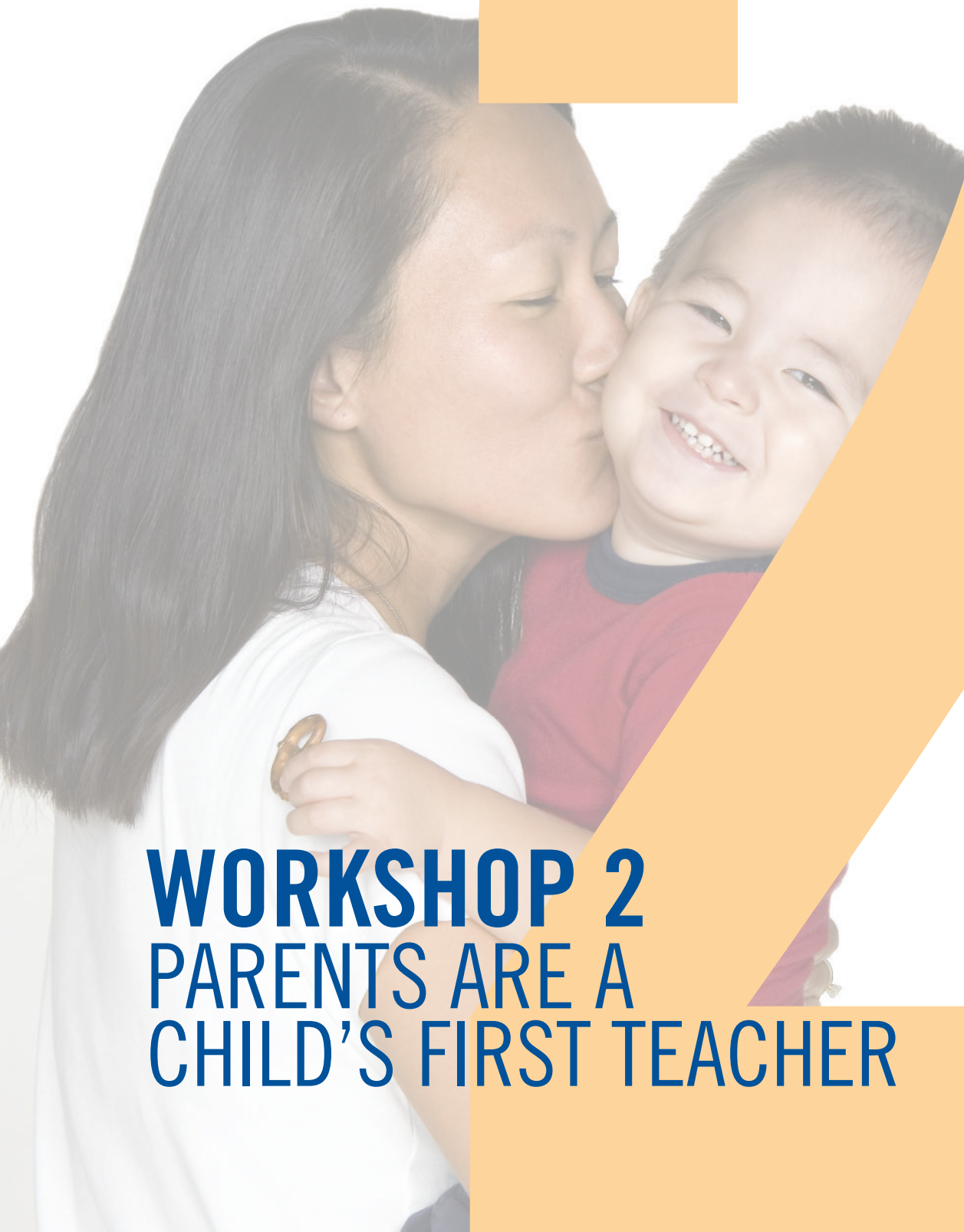
Suggested Books

The local library might be able to pull a collection of children’s books related to construction. United Way can also purchase books at a deeply discounted rate through Scholastic’s Literacy Partners program. Information is available at the bottom of [this web page](#).

- *Building A House* by Byron Barton
- *Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins
- *Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building* by Christy Hale
- *Alphabet Under Construction* by Denise Fleming

-
2. Need some ideas to connect to social emotional competence? Check out the [Literacy Kit](#) Prop/Puzzle/Game Activities for *Baby Feels* or *The Kissing Hand*.

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WORKSHOP 2

PARENTS ARE A CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

PARENTS ARE A CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

**Serve and Return ■ Relationships ■ Why Early Learning is Important
■ Families Are the Critical Tool in the Toolkit**

Objectives

At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Describe one reason why parents are considered children's first teachers.
- Name one thing adult family members can do to foster responsive relationships with children.

Materials Needed

Use your RSVP list to generate a headcount of adults and children to compile needed materials. Be sure to have a few extra items in the event of unanticipated participants.

- Sign in roster
- PowerPoint slides (equipment to present or a hardcopy for each family)
- Plates, napkins, utensils, cups, ice, etc. for meal
- Materials for planned children's activities
- Optional:* Incentives/prizes
- Optional:* take-home literacy kits (see Practice at Home section below)

Agenda

5:30-6:00	Dinner
6:00-6:10	Opening Activity
6:10-6:25	Presentation and discussion
6:25-6:40	Closing Activity
6:40-7:00	Practice with children

OPENING ACTIVITY: PARENTS ARE EARLY TEACHERS

1. Share the following quote:

“Family is the first school for young children and parents are powerful models.”

– Alice Sterling Honig (child development specialist and professor)

2. Have families talk about what this quote means to them.

- Have them think about it and jot down some notes
- Pair participants up to discuss
- Share with the group

Serve and Return

Last session we talked about why early learning is important. Today we'll discuss what has to happen to build that foundation. It's the first tool in the toolbox to help children be ready for kindergarten. It's all about responsive relationships. It's a give and take. It's called **serve and return**.⁴ The serve and return interaction is when babies and children do something and adults respond. We have to pay attention and respond. It's a give and take that helps the brain develop, and helps families/caregivers be closer to children. This is how we put tools in the toolbox.

Active Listening

One way you can become responsive to your children is through active listening:

1. Pay attention to what children say.
2. Let children know you understand different feelings they are having.
3. Ask questions.
4. Highlight positive statements children make.

Children learn by watching you and playing with you. When they feel they matter to you and that they are loved by you, they will want to do more with you and imitate what you do and say.

Learning at Home

What to do:

- Be an empathic partner by showing children you care about them. Spend time with children, talk to children, show interest in the things they find interesting.
- Be an interactive partner by responding, taking turns, and engaging in the experiences/ play with children.

⁴ Center on the Developing Child (2010). The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

- Be alert to children’s nonverbal attempts during the activity/interaction/play and suggest a strategy children can try.

Young children do not yet have the tools for success in kindergarten and in life, but you as parents and caregivers already do. Your strengths, skills and time help children to develop their skills in these important early childhood years.

CLOSING ACTIVITY AND PRACTICE: WHAT AM I DOING? GAME

Someone in the family act out/pretend to do something and the rest of the family tries to guess the activity by asking questions. *Suggestion: Include simple picture word cards with prompts such as animals. This limits choices, keeps it simple, and builds early literacy skills.*

Mirror Game

In the mirror game, two people face one another and pretend to be looking in a mirror.

- The leader moves his or her body.
- The partner follows the movements of the leader, acting as a mirror, trying to do the same thing at the same time.
- After a minute or two the leader and follower should change roles.

Follow the Leader

- The leader makes a movement or sound.
- The partner must imitate the action of the leader.
- As children get a bit older, help develop listening skills with Simon Says:
 - The leader tells the partner what action to take.
 - The partner completes that action only if the leader said, “Simon says . . .”

If you have an infant follow their lead by imitating and responding to their faces, noises and actions. Games like this help with communication. You are listening to one another, responding to one another and following the lead of the other person.

Practice At Home

Help parents use what they’ve learned when they get home while also building early literacy skills with a take home literacy kit. Check out the [Literacy Kits](#) for *How Do I Love You* or *Is Your Mama a Llama?*

WORKSHOP 2

PARENTS ARE A CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

1. The theme is communication. The children will engage in an activity mirroring their parents.

Suggested Materials

- Break resistant mirrors
- Cards with emotion images and words
- Markers, crayons, paper, etc.

Suggested Activities

- Have children name and then imitate the image they see on the card in the mirror
 - Have children look in the mirror and draw their self-portrait
-

2. Another connection is animals. One variation of the family child activity is animal charades.

Suggested Materials

- Plastic animal families and plastic baskets
- Two identical images of different kinds of animals
- Play dough

Suggested Activities

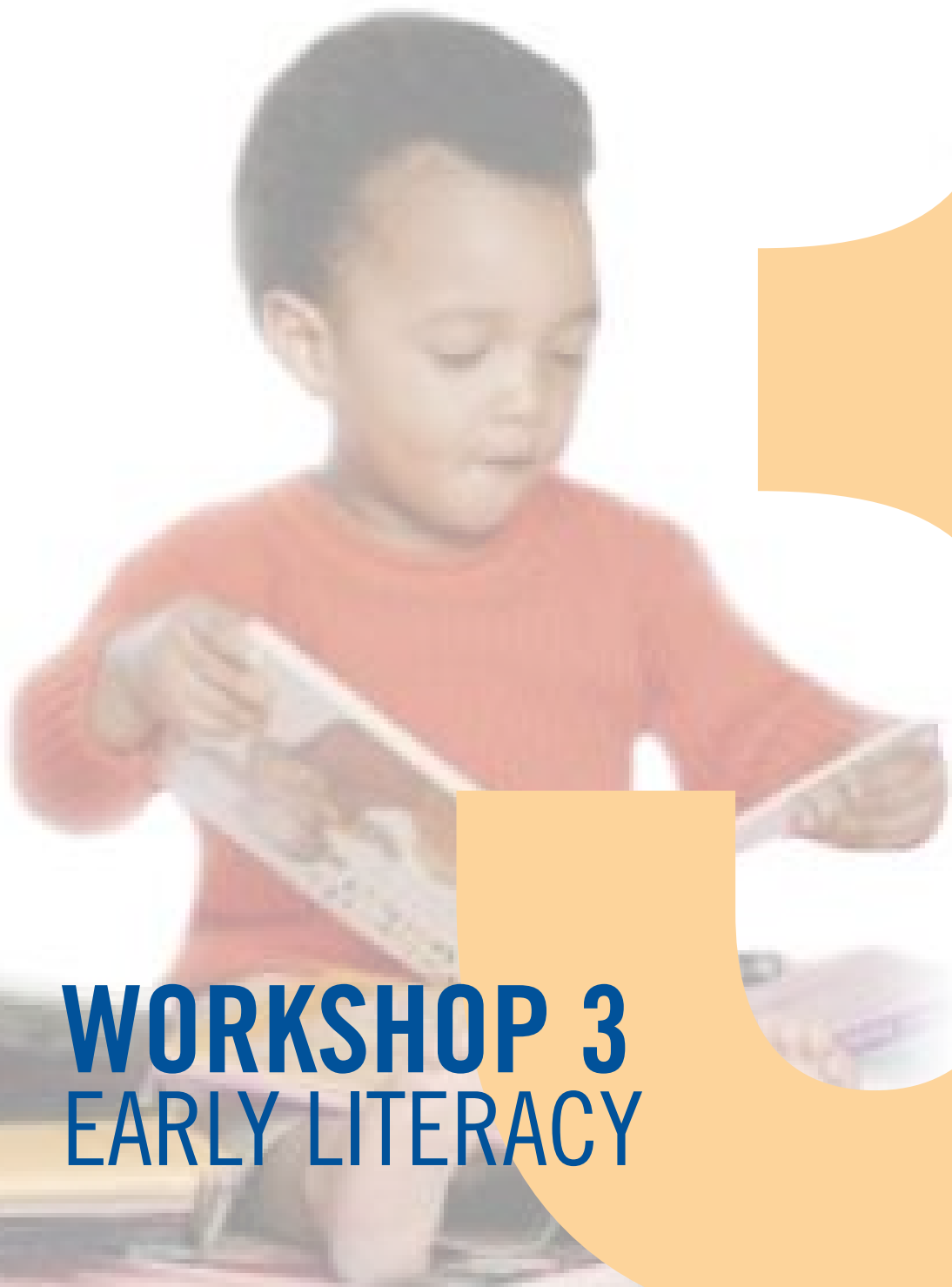
- Children can group animal families and make their own zoos
- Children can make animals using play dough
- Animal memory game (*templates and instructions can be found in the [Literacy Kit](#) for *Brown Bear, Brown Bear**)
- Contact the local zoo or nature center about their programming

Suggested Books

- *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell
 - *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle
 - *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle (group and take-home activities available in the [Literacy Kit](#))
 - *Animals* by Ingela P. Arrhenius
 - *Dear Zoo Animal Shapes* (Dear Zoo & Friends) by Rod Campbell
-

3. Want some additional ideas that focus on the bond between parent and child? Check out the [Literacy Kit Prop/Puzzle/Game Activities](#) in *How Do I Love You or Is Your Mama a Llama?*

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WORKSHOP 3
EARLY LITERACY

EARLY LITERACY

Storytelling ■ Conversations ■ Oral Language

Objectives

At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Describe one way verbal language encourages literacy.
- Demonstrate one way to engage children in language and literacy.

Materials Needed

Use your RSVP list to generate a headcount of adults and children to compile needed materials. Be sure to have a few extra items in the event of unanticipated participants.

- Sign in roster
- PowerPoint slides (equipment to present or a hardcopy for each family)
- Plates, napkins, utensils, cups, ice, etc. for meal
- Materials for planned children's activities
- Paper or construction paper
- Yarn
- Tape
- Hole puncher
- Optional:* Incentives/prizes
- Optional:* take-home literacy kits (see Practice at Home section below)

Agenda

5:30-6:00	Dinner
6:00-6:10	Opening Activity
6:10-6:25	Presentation and discussion
6:25-6:40	Closing Activity
6:40-7:00	Practice with children

OPENING ACTIVITY: THINK, PAIR, AND SHARE

1. Share the following quote:

“Language is the main tool that promotes thinking, develops reasoning, and supports cultural activities like reading and writing.”

– Lev Vygotsky (Russian psychologist and teacher)⁵

2. Have families about what this quote means to them.

- Have them think about it and jot down some notes
- Pair participants up to discuss
- Share with the group

This should help get everyone thinking about and talking about why language is so important not only for children’s ability to talk but for lifelong learning.

- The amount of and type of words children hear when adults talk to them during the first three years have a huge impact on how many words children will know later and how they can learn more new words in their future school work.⁶
- You make a big difference in how many words your children will know and use when they talk, read and write. Talk to your children. Share stories with your children.
- Have conversations with your children.
- Use different words as you talk with your children.
- Encourage your children to play with words.

Children learn to communicate by watching your facial expression and gestures and listening to your voice change when you talk. When we talk to babies, we speak in higher pitch, slow down, stretch out sounds and clearly pronounce words. This changing of voice tone is called “infant-directed speech” formally, but it is also known as “motherese,” “parentese,” or “caregiverese.”⁷

“Think of yourself as [your] child’s greatest plaything. Your voice, your face, the things you do, your actions are what intrigue them most. They have a natural curiosity for the things that humans do.”⁸ says Patricia Kuhl, Co-Director of the University of Washington Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences, Director of the NSF-funded Science of Learning Center, and Professor of Speech and Hearing Sciences at University of Washington.

Another way you can help with language development is by telling stories. Storytelling helps us to connect with each other, pass down our history and family culture, develop language skills and thinking as well as build our imaginations. To be successful readers and writers, children need to hear, read and tell stories.

⁵ Vygotsky, L. S. ([1930-1935] 1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes* eds. & trans. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁶ Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

⁷ Galinsky, E. (2010). *Mind in the Making*, New York: Harper Collins.

⁸ Kuhl, Patricia. http://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies

More ideas on what to do:

- Have fun by positively responding to what babies do and say. Point, name, and describe what they are doing.
- Play simple fun language games every day. Have fun making up silly words that begin with the same beginning letter sound or end letter sound.
 - When young children create or mispronounce a word because they can't say that word or that letter sound (e.g., baby talk), respond back with the appropriate word correctly without making a big deal out of it. No need to force young children to practice the sound or word correctly. You, as the adult, just state the word in the proper way.
- Create a simple poem with words that rhyme at the end of each sentence. Include finger play any time.
- Share family stories and talk about special events or family traditions. When talking about a special event or family tradition (e.g., Sunday dinner at Grandmother's), it would help if you have a picture of everyone around the dinner table for children to recollect and to add to the story.
- Create a story with your child as the main character or star.
- Encourage children to make up stories and affirm their attempts.
- Spend time with each child and make this time special by being positive, asking questions, giving time for a child to discuss what is interesting to him/her and listening.
- Engage in deep conversations.

CLOSING ACTIVITY AND PRACTICE: CREATING A FAMILY STORY

Have each family member draw or write about a favorite activity, person, etc. on a piece of paper then tell each other the story. Tape or tie each paper to make one quilt. Hang up the family quilt and talk about these stories again.

OR

You can use photographs (e.g., photo of each family member or a favorite object, etc.) and then create a story for each photo.

Practice At Home

Help parents use what they've learned when they get home while also building early literacy skills with a take home literacy kit. Check out the [Literacy Kits](#) for *Eating the Alphabet* or *I Spy Animals*.

PARENT RESOURCES

Fun and Games with Songs

Singing together is learning together. Songs help your child connect words with their meanings. So, fill your house with songs and music. Here are some of the rhymes and songs that children love best. Learn the words, learn the motions, and sing along with your child.

This Little Piggy

(can be done on fingers or toes)

This little piggy went to market.
 This little piggy stayed home.
 This little piggy had roast beef.
 This little piggy had none.
 And this little piggy cried,
 “Wee, wee, wee!”
 All the way home.

touch and wiggle thumb
touch and wiggle index finger
touch and wiggle middle finger
touch and wiggle ring finger

touch and wiggle pinky

The Itsy, Bitsy Spider

The itsy, bitsy spider
 Went up the water spout.
 Down came the rain
 And washed the spider out.

 Out came the sun
 And dried up all the rain.
 And the itsy, bitsy spider
 Went up the spout again.

put finger to opposite thumb and pretend to crawl up
wiggle fingers from top of “spout” down to lap
move hands/arms across lap;
ie, motion of safe in a baseball game
move hands in large circles to show sun coming out

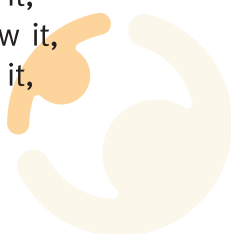
show spider again going up

If You’re Happy and You Know It

If you’re happy and you know it,
 Clap your hands.
 If you’re happy and you know it,
 Clap your hands.
 If you’re happy and you know it,
 Then your face will surely show it,
 If you’re happy and you know it,
 Clap your hands.

Suggestions for other verses:

- stamp your feet***
- pat your legs***
- wiggle your ears***



Fun and Games with Songs, page 2

Teapot

I'm a little teapot, short and stout.
Here is my handle, here is my spout.

bend knees
put hand on hip with elbow out;
the other hand should go out to be a spout

When I get all steamed up,
Hear me shout,
“Tip me over and pour me out.”

pretend to tip over

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
Round and round, round and round.
The wheels on the bus go round and round,
All through the town.

bend your arms and make them go around like wheels

The people on the bus go up and down,
Up and down, up and down.
The people on the bus go up and down,
All through the town.

sit up and down

Other verses:

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish.

use your hands as wipers back and forth

The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep.

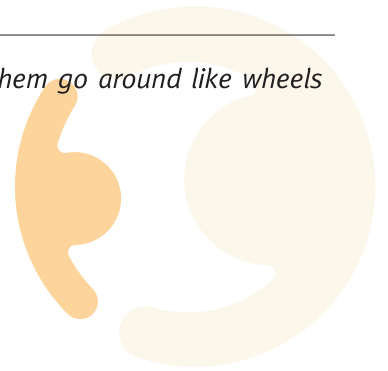
pretend to beep a horn

The money on the bus goes clink, clink, clink.

pretend to put money in

The driver on the bus says, “Move on back.”

hand-motion your thumb over your shoulder
to move on back



PARENT RESOURCES

? How does play encourage literacy?

Opinion vs. research

Child development research shows that play is important to all aspects of a child's development, including the development of language and literacy. However, many adults do not recognize just how important it is.

In a recent survey about the importance of play in children's development, 80% of parents of children birth to six felt play was important to the development of language skills.

Of all future parents, grandparents and non-parents surveyed, only 70% thought play was important to the development of literacy.

Of parents of children ages zero to six whose income was under \$30K, 70% thought it important, while 81% of parents with incomes over \$50K recognized the value of play in contributing to a child's literacy.

Early vocabulary is the biggest determinant of later literacy.

Sources: Civitas, Zero to Three, BRIO.



The beginnings of literacy appear in activities such as conversations about the words on street signs or labels on favorite foods.



? How does my child develop literacy through play?

It is through play that your child discovers language and learns to communicate through reading and writing. **When your child sings a song, looks at pictures in a book or turns the pages in a book, she is both playing and taking important steps to literacy.** Reading, writing, talking and listening can all be encouraged through play.

Reading enhances pretend play...

Young children who are read to often introduce reading into their fantasy play. They may pretend to read books to dolls or stuffed animals, or they may incorporate written materials into their play. **Playing with story ideas can begin very early.** A two-and-a-half-year-old may act out a scene from a book or repeat a sentence.

...so does writing

From age three, children often imitate writing in their pretend play: police officers write traffic tickets, waitresses write orders. When children bring writing into their play it indicates that they recognize writing as an activity worth imitating and that **they are seeking ways to make it serve their own purposes.**

ACTION ITEMS

Avenues for enhancing literacy

1 Reading

Babies: Books are great first toys for babies. Begin with books that:

- can be propped up for a baby to look at.
- have pictures in bright contrasting colors.
- are made of cardboard or cloth to withstand a little chewing and make page turning easier.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers: Toddlers are just able to sit and listen to a complete story. Try books that:

- have repetitious text about familiar objects.
- involve activities such as counting, identifying colors, objects or letters.
- are about subjects that interest the child.
- deal with topics that relate to the child's life, such as toilet training or new siblings.
- are interactive, such as having lifting flaps.

2 Writing

Babies: Even a baby can prepare for writing. Let her:

- hold a rattle to develop grasping skills.
- play with magnetic letters.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers: To get her interested:

- give her safe writing props to incorporate into her play, like crayons, blank paper, newspaper and construction paper, thick sticks of chalk and thick magic markers.
- promote the development of her fine motor skills by letting him cut paper or trace letters.
- allow her to draw freely and creatively.

? How can play help my child develop literacy from the beginning?

Literacy begins with play.

It starts long before your child goes to school and masters the technical skills involved in reading and writing.

Through playful activities, such as pretend play, drawing, hearing a story and talking about its plot and characters, your child first experiments with language. **He learns what reading and writing are, and what he can do with them.** He also acquires attitudes about literacy.

Symbols used in play are bridges to literacy.

Through gestures or marks on paper, your child uses symbols to create and communicate meaning. Whether in pretend play or other activities like drawing, symbols allow her to leave her immediate environment and explore imaginary worlds.

When first experimenting with words and letters, your child may use them in the same way as symbols. Eventually she will make the connection between these play experiences and the activities of reading and writing.

Children play by pretending to read to themselves.

Play is a safe environment for your child to explore literacy. Because **play allows her to feel and act as if she is in control of her activity**, she can play with books and paper and pretend that she can actually read books or write stories. Therefore, through play, your child can feel like a reader or a writer before she knows how to read and write.

Such feelings can install confidence, create positive expectations about learning to read and write and motivate a child to learn.

Give-and-take conversation and storytelling help develop literacy skills. When your child begins to learn the art of conversation and storytelling, **encourage her by asking questions, sharing stories and creating plots and characters together.**

How does play encourage literacy?

For your child, every word he hears and repeats, every storybook, song and nursery rhyme become the building blocks of literacy.

When he draws, pretends to read or write or invents stories, play allows your child to build his literacy skills by experimenting with pictures and symbols he has seen.

3 Talking

Babies:

- Talk and read with him at every opportunity.
- Sing nursery rhymes and read books that play with word sounds.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers:

- Whether at the grocery store, the park or the zoo, point out objects, signs and people.
- Engage your child in conversation and ask a lot of questions.
- Play with words by making up funny names for people and objects. Making nonsense out of language helps children appreciate the rhythm and musicality of language.
- Play rhyming games with words.

4 Listening

Activities you can try with your child:

- A narrated version of hide-and-seek. When the child hides, the caregiver thinks aloud about where she could be. Where is Laura? a parent might say. Maybe shes in the refrigerator did I put her next to the milk? Such silly discussion within earshot of the hiding child will encourage her to listen as she waits to be found.
- Singing songs. Children love to listen to songs. Try adding new words to her favorite songs to pique her interest.

WORKSHOP 3

EARLY LITERACY

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

1. The theme is oral language. The children will engage in conversations and telling stories about what they are doing.

- Have the materials and books listed below at different stations and have children rotate through them.
- Ask children what they are making with the materials at different stations and respond to what they say by re-iterating or elaborating or asking further questions
- Read any of the books together. Then, have the children re-tell the story by asking prompting questions. Ask about the characters in the story, what happened in the story, and have children come up with what they would do if they were one of the characters.

Suggested Materials

- Magnetic letters and cookie sheets
- Alphabet cookie cutters, play dough and trays
- Toy animals, cars, people, food, etc.

Suggested Books

- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff (group and take-home activities available in the [Literacy Kit](#)).
- *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh
- *All Kinds of Families* by Mary Ann Hoberman
- *A Day with Dad* by Bo R. Holmberg
- *Black Is Brown Is Tan* by Arnold Adoff
- *Everywhere Babies* by Susan Meyers

-
- 2. Want some more fun activities that promote additional early literacy skills? Check out the [Literacy Kit](#) Prop/Puzzle/Game Activities for *Eating the Alphabet* or *I Spy Animals*.**

WORKSHOP 4

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Overview of Resources ■ You Are Not Alone ■ Accessing Community Resources

Objectives

At the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. State one reason for connecting with community resources.
2. Name the local school district as a helpful/useful community resource.

Materials Needed

Use your RSVP list to generate a headcount of adults and children to compile needed materials. Be sure to have a few extra items in the event of unanticipated participants.

- Sign in roster
- Plates, napkins, utensils, cups, ice, etc. for meal
- Tables and chairs for each community partner
- Ask partners to bring brochures, program descriptions, enrollment forms and other written information for families
- Pens for participants to take notes or complete forms
- Materials for any planned children's activities, or request that community partners have child-friendly activities for children to complete at their tables
- *Optional:* Incentives/prizes
- *Optional:* take-home literacy kits (see Practice at Home section below)

Community Partners Needed

- Nearby early learning service providers, including Head Start/Early Head Start
- Local health partners
- Local elementary schools
- Early intervention service providers
- Public library, museums, music and arts, out-of-school time and other enrichment programs
- WIC, housing and other public benefits services
- Financial literacy, job training, transportation or other services identified by families

Agenda

5:30-6:00	Dinner
6:00-6:10	Opening Activity and Transition to the Resource Fair
6:10-6:45	Community Resource Fair
6:45-7:00	Closing Activity

OPENING ACTIVITY: TRANSITION FROM DINNER TO RESOURCE FAIR

“It takes a whole village to raise a child.”
- African Proverb

In Workshop 1, we talked about what resilience is and how to help your children become resilient. In the same way, resiliency is important for you too.

- Just because you are an adult and you can do so much well, you don’t have to have answers to everything. Remember you are not alone, and you don’t have to figure out what to do when you or your family experiences a challenge or stressful event all by yourself.
- It’s okay, even good for you, to reach out to your friends, your neighbors, your extended family members, and community resources.
- There are many different types of support available in your community that can strengthen what you are already doing as a parent and make your life a bit easier.
- You are not alone. How can different community resources build on your strengths?

Resource Fair

Consider what the purpose of the resource fair is, so that the way community partners share information aligns with your purpose and relevance for families. Allow enough time for families to ask questions at the resource fair. Consider whether having different agencies/community resources simultaneously at different tables makes sense or having them share what they offer to families in a group presentation format is more helpful for families.

Consider the best format for your space, group size, and family needs. Does it work best to have:

- A separate booth/table for each provider/resource for families to discuss services individually?
- Each provider discuss their services/resources in a group presentation format?
- Short presentations followed by time for individual follow-up?

CLOSING ACTIVITY

1. Be sure to connect families to any upcoming Born Learning Academies in the area.
2. If you have time and have the desire, end the Fair by playing the Guessing Game about community resources.

- You could have bells to ring, or people could stand up if they know the answer.
- Questions would include things such as – Where do you go for information on kindergarten readiness? Where do you go to sign your child up for preschool?

OR

Sing and make up motions for one of these songs (this could also be done as a children’s activity while parents are at the resource booths):

- “Once we help each other” song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GArRCWgVDM8>
- Shakira’s children’s song about helping people: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_KGQCWgJX8
- Raffi’s “It takes a village” song from Let’s Play CD:
 What does it take, for a baby girl to grow up good and strong?
 What does it take for a baby girl?
 What does it take for a baby boy to grow up full of love?
 What does it take for a baby boy?
 (Chorus) It takes a village,
 It takes a village to raise a child.
 It takes a village,
 No one can do it alone.
 It takes a village to raise a child.
 And in the early years of live
 What does a newborn need to be whole, to thrive in every way?
 In these crucial early years, when the brain is growing,
 And the love for a lifetime takes hold.
 Not just parents’ love, not just love of the family
 It takes all of this and more
 Not just teachers who care, not just the care of doctors
 It takes all of this and more.
 How about the love of farmers?
 How about the business people?

Practice At Home

Help parents use what they’ve learned when they get home while also building early literacy skills with a take home literacy kit. Check out the [Literacy Kit](#) for *The Little Engine That Could* or *Cookie’s Week*.

WORKSHOP 4

CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

1. Each community agency should have family friendly activities. It might be helpful to bring back all of the materials from the previous weeks and have them available for children.
-
2. Need some activities for children? Check out the [Literacy Kit Prop/Puzzle/Game Activities for The *Little Engine That Could* or *Cookie's Week*](#).

BUDGET WORKSHEETS

Personnel

Use this table to determine annual staffing expenses, including childcare.

	# Hours Per Workshop (include prep time)	Hourly Rate	Cost Per Workshop	Total Cost (*4 workshops)
Coordination				
Facilitation				
Childcare (add line for each paid provider)				
TOTAL				

Meals

Use this table to estimate food expenses.

	#	Cost/Person	Total Cost (*4 workshops)
Children (excluding infants)			
Adults			
Beverages			
Utensils (plates, silverware, to-go containers, etc.)			
Delivery, Setup, etc.			
TOTAL			

Materials: Adult Activities

Workshop	Materials	Cost
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cereal, tissue, shoe and other cardboard boxes (several for each family) 2. Markers, crayons, or colored pencils 3. Tissue, construction or contact paper 4. Scissors 5. Tape or glue sticks 	
2		
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paper or construction paper 2. Yarn 3. Tape 4. Hole punch 	
4		
TOTAL		

Materials: Children’s Activities

See Suggested Children’s Activities to determine activities and prepare a budget.

Workshop	Materials	Cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
TOTAL		

Take Home Literacy Kits (Optional)

See Practice at Home section of each workshop for suggested titles and links to develop the kits. Be sure to include a copy of the book.

Workshop	# Families/Children	Materials	Cost
1			
2			
3			
4			
TOTAL			

Incentives (Optional)

Workshop	Materials	Cost
1		
2		
3		
4		
TOTAL		

Final Budget

Use totals from the worksheets above to finalize your budget.

BLC Workshop Series	Projected for 20__-20__
Personnel	
Recruitment/Outreach	
Printing	
Supplies	
Meals	
Materials: Adult Activities	
Materials: Children's Activities	
Take Home Literacy Kits*	
Incentives*	
Other: _____	
TOTAL	

*optional

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