

# Ready to Succeed

An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

## Early Literacy Development in Family Child Care Settings

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With growing numbers of mothers entering the work force, the need for out-of-home child care has increased dramatically in the last two decades (O'Neill & O'Connell, 2001).

A survey by Capizzano, Adams, & Sonenstein (2000) reveals that approximately 3/4 of American children under age 5 with employed mothers are cared for by someone other than their parents during the day; and among these children, 1/5 were enrolled in family child care.

Although family child care is one of the most commonly used out-of-home child care arrangements, little research is available regarding children's early literacy learning and development in such settings (Cress, 2000).

As the acquisition of written language skills is critical to children's later academic success, it is important to explore how family child

care providers can develop sound literacy programs as well as create literacy-rich environments that support children's early literacy development.

Because of its unique characteristics, an early literacy program in a day care home may appear strikingly different than a center-based child care facility. However, the same fundamental principles should be observed in both settings.

The following recommendations for developing a quality early literacy program are made based on the principles of social-constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, 1990) and scholarship from the field of early literacy (Clay, 1991; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000; Wells, 1986; Strickland & Morrow,

1989; Taylor, 1993), with special attention paid to the distinctive features of the day care home.

◆ Children acquire the forms and function of literacy through interacting with more capable peers and adults. The multiple age and developmental levels of children enrolled in a day care home pose a challenge as well as provide an opportunity for the child care provider to design activities to promote the literacy learning and development of both younger and older children.

Trawick-Smith and Lambert (1995) suggest that both older and younger children benefit from shared book reading experience. The shared book experience can take two forms: older children reading aloud to the younger



*Ready to Succeed aims to assist everyone involved with the development of young children to value and embrace their role in fostering early literacy and school readiness.*

# Sunshine Clay!

Young children need many opportunities to develop the strength and coordination in their fingers and hands. This is especially helpful as children are learning to write because it will aid in their ability to grip the pencil properly. Play dough and clay are excellent choices in promoting this development.



## WHAT YOU NEED:

2 cups salt  
1 cup cornstarch  
water  
small rocks or pebbles  
leaves  
sticks

materials for making home made invitations (optional)

## WHAT YOU DO:

1. Mix the salt and 2/3 cup water in a saucepan.
2. Cook over medium heat for 4 - 5 minutes, stirring until the salt is dissolved.
3. Remove from heat.
4. In a separate bowl, slowly add 1/2 cup water to the cornstarch.
5. Stir until smooth, then add to the salt mixture.
6. Return to low heat and cook until smooth, stirring frequently.
7. Place the clay on a tray or paper plate and let the children work outdoors or in a sunny area indoors.
8. Give each child a lump of

clay to model into shapes or designs of their choosing.

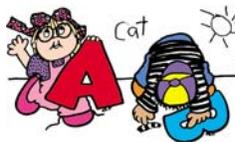
9. Next, have the children decorate their sculptures with small pebbles, leaves etc. to complete their design.
10. Place the finished items in the sun to dry.
11. Challenge the children to predict how long it will take the sculptures to dry.
12. While the projects are drying, have the children make invitations for the parents to a "sculptors' showing" of the children's work!
13. Display the finished clay sculptures around the classroom for parents to admire and enjoy!

# Bread Dough Letter Fun

Try this recipe for a yummy way to reinforce letter recognition. Remember to have everyone wash their hands prior to any cooking project ~ safety first.

## WHAT YOU NEED:

1 pkg. frozen bread dough rolls (thawed)  
2 tsp flour  
2 tsp water  
2 tsp cinnamon  
nonstick cooking spray  
1 egg  
1/4 cup granulated sugar  
baking sheet  
pastry brush  
2 mixing bowls  
whisk  
spatula



## WHAT YOU DO:

1. Preheat oven to 400.
2. Spray a light coating of cooking spray on the baking sheet. Set aside.
3. Sprinkle 2 tsp of flour on work surface. Roll each dough ball into a long ropes and then cut into shorter lengths.
4. Form letters with the shorter ropes of dough and place on baking sheet.
5. Place the baking sheet in a warm place for 30 minutes to let the dough rise.
6. While waiting, separate the egg white from the yolk. Add water to the egg white and whisk until fully mixed.
7. When the dough has risen for

30 minutes, brush the egg white mixture in each letter for a shiny glaze.

8. In a second bowl, combine sugar and cinnamon. Lightly sprinkle mixture on the letters.
9. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool in a safe place when done.
10. When cool, remove the letters using a spatula.
11. Arrange the letters on a serving tray to spell names, words, or the children's initials.
12. Enjoy with a glass of milk, water, or 100% fruit juice.



# Spring into a Super Story!

## IMAGINATION

### **Bethany for Real**

by Anna Grossnickel Hines  
Lovely story about a little girl named Bethany who makes a new friend while trading pretend lemonade for a pretend kitten.

---

*My Imagination*  
Katrina Estes-Hill

*Doggie Dreams*  
Nancy Kapp Chapman

*Gramps and the Fire Dragon*  
Bethany Roberts

*I'll Build My Friend a Mountain*  
Bobbi Katz

*Not a Box*  
Antoinette Portis

*The Three Funny Friends*  
Charlotte Zolotow

*The Tin Forest*  
Helen Ward

*When I Have a Little Girl*  
Charlotte Zolotow

*Where Do Balloons Go?*  
*An Uplifting Mystery*  
Jamie Lee Curtis

*Where the Wild Things Are*  
Maurice Sendak

*Henry's Amazing Imagination*  
Nancy Carlson

*Not a Stick*  
Antoinette Portis



## FATHER'S DAY (June 21)

### **A Wild Father's Day**

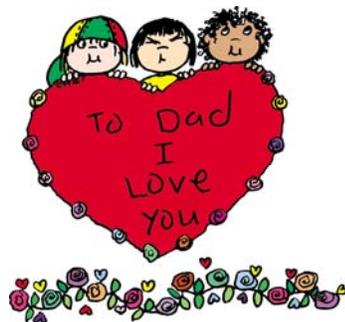
by Sean Callahan  
The kids give Dad a card that says, "Have a wild Father's Day," and Dad knows just what to do. He says, "Let's act like animals all day long!" They all hop on the bed like kangaroos, run like cheetahs at the park, and swing like monkeys at the playground. Their fun takes them through the day, until a cozy bedtime book tames down two tired kids (and their dad!).

---

*A Perfect Father's Day*  
Eve Bunting

*Daddies Are for Catching Fireflies*  
Harriet Ziefert

*Daddy and Me*  
Neil Ricklen



*Happy Father's Day*  
Mercer Mayer

*Daddy is a Doodlebug*  
Bruce Degen

*Fishing With Dad: My Father's Fishing Secret*  
Michael J. Rosen

*Father's Day*  
Laura Alden

*Father's Love*  
David C. Young

## GARDENING

### **Flower Garden**

Eve Bunting  
Delightful and beautifully illustrated story about a girl and her father who buy plants, potting soil, and a window box at the supermarket, ride the bus to their apartment, and put together a colorful gift for mother.

---

*The Tiny Seed*  
Eric Carle

*Flora's Surprise!*  
Debi Gliori

*Planting a Rainbow*  
Lois Ehlert

*Mrs. Spitzer's Garden*  
Edith Pattou

*Tiny Green Thumbs*  
C.Z. Guest

*Jack's Garden*  
Henry Cole

*Molly & Emmett's Surprise Garden*  
Marilyn Hafner

*A Gardener's Alphabet*  
Mary Azarian

*Zinnia's Flower Garden*  
Monica Wellington

*Growing Vegetable Soup*  
Lois Ehlert

*Grandpa's Garden Lunch*  
Judith Caseley



# Early Literacy Development *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

ones, or the child care provider reading a book to a group of older and younger children.



Older children are able to practice their reading skills and acquire new knowledge, while younger children have opportunities to learn from the adults and older children the conventions of reading, such as book handling and the directionality of written text.

Crawford and Hade (2000) also suggest that wordless picture books can be valuable reading materials, for younger and older children are both able to respond as well as interpret such books in their own ways.

◆ Children learn best from meaningful and functional activities. One strength of a day care home lies in the caregiver's ability to provide activities that children normally see and/or do around their house, which are less common in a typical child care center (Trawick-Smith & Lambert, 1995).

Simple cooking activities such as making salad or baking cookies, involve reading, writing, math, and eye-hand coordination skills, are enjoyed by younger and older children alike.

In addition, field trips such as visiting zoos, parks, and public libraries also provide children of different ages with opportunities

to be engaged in literacy activities that meet their interests and needs. While planning for trips, the children and child care provider can read books about the place they will be visiting (e.g., the zoo).

While on the road, the child care provider and/or volunteering parents can point out interesting signs, objects, and sights for children to watch and discuss. If the field trip involves visiting a public services facility, such as a post office, then the children can write/draw thank-you cards for the person(s) providing assistance. Through such functional and meaningful activities, children understand that the purpose of literacy is to communicate with others and achieve various goals in their life (Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

◆ Children learn to be literate in a literacy-rich environment, where diverse, real-life materials and activities meet children's different needs and interests. Children learn to be literate by observing activities in their environment, interacting with the people around them, and using literacy tools for functional and meaningful activities (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000).

Because of the different ages and developmental levels of the children in a day care home, the literacy materials should meet diverse needs of children. Literacy tools, such as writing materials of various kinds (crayons, pencils, pens, markers, paper of different colors, sizes, and textures) as well as toys, tapes, CDs, literacy props (phone books, play money, and restaurant menus) and books

should be carefully selected to reflect individual children's learning and developmental needs.

Even very young children enjoy holding crayons and making marks on writing surfaces. Materials for toddlers and young preschoolers (e.g., chubby crayons and paper) should be available to these children and used with adult supervision. Materials for the older children to use, such as scissors and staplers, need to be provided and carefully stored when not in use.

◆ Providers should use public facilities and collaborate with local higher education institutes. Although family child care providers share their home with the children they care for, they are not limited by the resources of their own household.

Public resources and facilities, such as the public library, also provide opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills (Bates & Bates, 1999). Children can attend storytelling sessions, check out books, and attend various literacy events at the libraries.

In addition, child care providers in most areas can acquire inexpensive literacy materials from such sources as library book fairs, yard and garage sales, bookstores' discount sections, used or second-hand bookstores, recycling centers, and charity sales [e.g., Salvation Army and Goodwill] (Stroup, 2001).

*ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading English and Communication, Bloomington IN. ED477606. Author: Lu, Mei-Yu <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-1/early.htm>*

# Supporting Early Writing Development

Western Illinois University's Center for Best Practices in Early Childhood Project ELIPSS suggests the following activity to support children's early writing.

When young children are in the scribbling and mock-handwriting stages of writing development, they need daily opportunities to see "real" letters and words in printed form.



*This activity helps children to:*

- discover the relationship between spoken and written language
- know that their thoughts and words are valued
- view writing as a meaning-making process

- see conventional models of letters and words
- realize that we can write what we say, and we can read what we write

**Directions:**

Ask children to focus on a specific object or event, such as a classroom pet, field trip, book, photograph, toy, or a piece of their art. Encourage individual children to talk about the selected item, as you proceed through the following steps of this Language Experience Activity.

**Step One:** Encourage the child to dictate statements about the selected item.

**Step Two:** As the child watches, write down the child's words - exactly as they are said.

**Step Three:** After each sentence,

read back what was recorded, pointing to each word in a word-by-word fashion, moving from left-to-right and top-to-bottom of the page.

**Step Four:** Invite the child to read along with you on a second reading of the words dictated by the child. When the child is reading confidently, lower your voice to almost a whisper while reading along. If the child hesitates on words and sentences, read along in a stronger voice.

**Step Five:** Invite the child to illustrate the page where the dictation was recorded.

**Step Six:** Encourage the child to share his or her dictation by reading it to others.

[http://www.wiu.edu/itlc/ws/ws1/docs/Writing\\_Activities\\_Level\\_2.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/itlc/ws/ws1/docs/Writing_Activities_Level_2.pdf)

## Sing a Song

### THE GARDEN SONG

Sung to: *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*

By: Kathleen M. Todd

Dig, dig, dig your garden  
Make it smooth and neat  
Push, push, push that shovel,  
Push it with your feet.

Plant, plant, plant your seeds  
Push them down an inch  
Cover your seeds with some soil  
Cover with a pinch.

Water, water, water your seeds  
This will help them sprout,  
Sprinkle lightly, let's not pour

And don't let them dry out.

Sun, sun, sunshine  
It will turn them green  
Carrots, radishes, peppers, too  
Tomatoes and some beans

Watch, watch, watch them grown  
See them grow so tall  
Put a scarecrow in the ground  
To protect them all.

Pull, pull, pull the weeds  
Keep your garden clear  
To make them grow up and out  
And stretch out here and there.

Pick, pick, pick your feast

Cook some veggie soup  
You'll have lots and lots to eat,  
Enough to feed the group.

### THE SEED

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*

By: Adele Engelbracht

I'm a little planted  
seed.

See the rain falling on  
me.

Sun shines down  
through the trees

These are the things I need indeed.  
Oh, how happy they make me.  
I'm a little growing seed.





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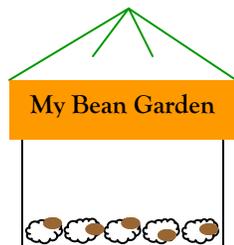


## Little Bean Garden

Children learn by doing things. They learn through experimentation and using all their senses. This greenhouse is a great way to introduce children to the concept of growing a vegetable garden.

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- zip seal sandwich bags
- cotton balls
- green bean seeds
- water
- construction paper
- yarn
- marker or crayon



### WHAT YOU DO:

1. Place 5 cotton balls and 5 bean seeds in the bag.
2. Sprinkle in enough water to slightly moisten the cotton balls. Seal the bag.
3. Cut a piece of construction paper to about 3"x7" and fold in half.
4. On one half write "My Bean Garden" or something similar.
5. Lay a piece of yarn about 15" long along the fold of the paper.
6. Staple the folded paper on the top of the bag, being careful to stay above the zipper.
7. Tie the ends of the yarn together to make a hanger.
8. Hang the garden in a sunny place and watch as it becomes a terrarium and the seeds germinate!
9. Once seeds are about 1 1/2 to 2" tall, open the bag and transplant them into soil.

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**Paula R. Westeren**

Program Representative II

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