

LITERATURE PACKETS
TO PROMOTE READING ALOUD
TO KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education,
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree,
Master of Science in Education

by

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DEDICATION

You may have tangible wealth untold:
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be -
I had a Mother who read to me.

- "The Reading Mother"
by Strickland Gillilan

This project is dedicated to my mother

Gertrude Preperato

in grateful acknowledgement that she has
made me rich indeed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the foremost goals of our schools today is to produce literate individuals who learn not just the answers for tomorrow's test but who have learned how to learn and continue educating themselves throughout their lives. Many critics of education today state that this is not what is happening. One of the many reasons for the failure to produce such lifelong learners is the failure of schools to produce lifelong readers.

Unfortunately, although research has shown that we are not a nation of illiterates - the average American can read - we are producing children and young adults who do minimal reading. The statistics are unsettling:

forty-four percent of U.S. adults do not read a book in the course of a year - with young adults showing the largest decline, leaving 10 percent of the population to read 80 percent of the books and become powerful through that information (Trelease, 1989, p. 7).

It would appear that Trelease makes a valid point when he states that "in concentrating almost exclusively on teaching the child how to read, we have forgotten to teach him to want to read." (1989, p.8) He goes on to state that desire is the key that is missing and that this desire is not something innate but rather something that must be planted by parents

and teachers. It is important to note that both parents and teachers must be held responsible for planting the desire to read in children. It has long been acknowledged that parents are their children's first and most important teachers and that the environment parents provide at home can have a profound effect on the attitude and achievement of a child when he reaches the public school system. It is equally recognized that reading is the most beneficial activity for parents and children to be involved in. The superintendent of Chicago Public Schools stated in 1981 that "If we would get our parents to read to their preschool children fifteen minutes a day, we could revolutionize the schools" (Trelease, 1989). A report issued in 1985, Becoming a Nation of Readers, was put together by experts in the fields of reading, learning, and child development who stated conclusively, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23). Parents reading aloud to their children at home are not only building the knowledge base for eventual reading success, they are also instilling the desire that is necessary for this success. Children who are not read stories and shown the importance and the value of reading will have few reasons for wanting to learn to do it themselves. On the other hand, children who have been enticed into the world of books by tales of adventure and wonder, lovingly read by one of the most important people in their lives, will have

abundant motivation to tackle the task of learning to read. In a home environment that supports and encourages literacy, a child will naturally and joyfully progress toward meaningful reading and writing.

Given the tremendous impact of such a relatively simple activity, why isn't it being done universally? First, teachers cannot assume that all parents realize how important it is that the home environment supports and encourages literacy. And unfortunately, the young, poor, undereducated parents who produce the greatest number of at-risk children and are most in need of this information, are also those least likely to receive it. Although most parents may be aware of the benefits to be realized from storybook reading with their children, Handel (1992) reminds one that "some parents might assume that book reading was solely a school function and of benefit only to school-age children" (p. 116.) Rasinski and Fredericks (1988) assert that "it is part of the schools' responsibility to help inform parents about desirable literacy activities for their children" (p. 512). Teachers must do everything in their power to provide clear information to parents about the value of their involvement and what kind of involvement is desirable.

Although parents who are informed about literacy may cite lack of time as a problem, Trelease maintains that this simply isn't so. Despite the fact that the American worker has never spent less time on the job, a 1986 study found that working

mothers spent an average of 11 minutes daily in quality time with a child and working fathers only eight minutes. Male and female adults do manage, however, to watch an average of 30 hours of television each week. And parents spending time in front of the television is only one facet of the problem. Statistics on the television viewing habits of children are disturbing: the set in the average American home is on a mean of seven hours a day and the nation's children are watching an average of 30 hours of television each week (Trelease, 1989). Obviously the problem is not so much one of time as of priorities. Parents must be convinced that reading aloud is a priority and to find the time and energy to read to their children.

The availability of appropriate reading material may also influence whether or not parents get hooked into a program of reading aloud. Therefore teachers may find it desirable to help provide quality children's literature to parents. Obviously, encouraging the use of the public library would provide families with good books but sending reading materials home from school with the children may stimulate more parents to participate. Teachers are in the position to select quality books so that both parents and children find reading them enjoyable and are therefore more likely to continue. This may be significant for parents who think reading children's stories still entails being bored by the adventures of Dick and Jane and aren't aware of the variety and caliber

of recent children's literature.

The series of literature packets, titled Book Buddies, developed in this project are designed to address the task of encouraging parents to become involved in reading aloud with their children. Each Book Buddy includes several appropriate children's stories, suggestions and materials for extension activities, and information for parents about various aspects of their child's development and education. By providing both the information and the materials it is hoped that a significant number of parents would participate in this reading aloud program.

Purpose for the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a series of parent/child literature packets, known as Book Buddies, to promote reading aloud to kindergarten children. Each Book Buddy packet includes a Book Buddy character, several children's stories, suggestions and materials for extension activities, and information for parents about various aspects of their child's development.

Definition of Terms

Extension Activities: activities to be performed after reading a story that will extend or expand understanding of the story, such as cooking a food mentioned in the story, retelling or dramatizing some aspect of the story, and/or engaging in some

other project connected to the theme or characters of the story.

Literacy: "a complex set of attitudes, expectations, feelings, behaviors and skills related to written language" (McLane & McNamee, 1990, p.4)

Limitations of the Project

This project assumes that teachers will have access to many of the books and other materials mentioned for use in the literature packets. Whenever possible sources of materials have been given and substitutions may easily be made.

The success of this project also depends on the ability of the teacher to get reluctant parents involved in participating. Both children and parents must be responsible about the use and maintenance of the materials.

The Book Buddy packets in this project were designed for use in a kindergarten classroom and many of the stories and activities might also be appropriate for use in preschool or first grade classrooms. The idea of using literature packets with stories, characters and extension activities to foster a reading connection between home and school could work in other early primary grades by adjusting the literature, characters and activities used.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To provide the research background for this project the writer conducted a review of journal articles and books discussing the topics of parent involvement in education and early literacy. More specifically, information relating to guidelines for designing successful projects for parent home involvement, suggestions for reading aloud, and the use of literature as a basis for integrating other content areas and activities was sought. Books of particular assistance in this study were The Read-Aloud Handbook and Read to Me: Raising Kids Who Love to Read. Most articles and books cited were published from 1985 to present in order to use the most current information. The writer organized research findings into four sections: parent involvement in schools, training parents for home involvement, benefits of reading aloud and advantages to integrating learning activities.

Parent Involvement in Schools

One reason to involve parents in schools is that parents are already their child's first and most influential teachers. Parents are teachers every time they interact with a child whether or not they perceive themselves as such. Schaefer (1972) tells us that studies show significant relations

between parent behavior and attitudes and the children's reading achievement. He goes on to state that the mother's example and the experiences she provides are important influences. Rasinski and Fredericks (1988) agree when they state "Without question, parents play a critical role in the literacy development of their children" (p. 508). Teachers themselves recognize the vital role parents play in their children's early education. When teachers were asked whether homelife or schools were more important in determining whether or not a child achieves academically, homelife was chosen by 87.6 percent of teachers (Rich, 1987).

Because a parent's impact upon their child's achievement is so significant, they have a responsibility to participate actively in their child's education. According to Rich, "The family is in the ideal position to prepare for, expand and extend the work of the school" (1987, p. 13). The National Commission on Excellence (1983) states:

Your right to a proper education for your children carries a double responsibility. As surely as you are your child's first and most influential teacher, your child's education and its significance begin with you.
(p. 35)

Former Secretary of Education, Lauro F. Cavaros (1989) in a report to the President called for parents to meet their obligations to the school, in part, by learning about opportunities for parent involvement and by cultivating in their children values and habits that will enable them to do

well in school. Parents' responsibilities include encouraging good study habits, monitoring homework, and nurturing creativity, curiosity and confidence. Anderson, Heibert, Scott and Wilkinson (1985) state more specifically:

Parents have an obligation to support their children's continued growth as readers. In addition to laying a foundation, parents need to facilitate the growth of their children's reading by taking them to libraries, encouraging reading as a free time activity, and supporting homework (p.57).

Schools, in turn, have a responsibility to promote parent involvement in their child's education. Rasinski and Fredericks (1988) more specifically state that "it is part of the schools responsibility to help inform parents about desirable literacy activities for their children" (p. 512). In fact, legislation in Colorado concerning state supported preschool programs mandates that schools provide parents with activities to do at home to help their children learn (Burns, 1993). Researchers consider teacher involvement a key element in effective parent/school collaboration and call for teachers to be more directly involved (Hollifield, 1993). Mavrogenes (1990) maintains that although most parents are willing to become involved in their child's education, they are unsure as to how to go about it and would appreciate guidance from their child's teacher. Teachers must communicate to parents that their involvement and support make a great deal of difference, and that they need not be highly educated or have large amounts of free time for their involvement to be beneficial.

There are also emotional and behavioral benefits to parent involvement in schools. Positive parent participation in school matters seems to send an urgently needed message of endorsement to children. Children themselves are then more likely to respect the school world (Greenberg, 1989). Sustained parent involvement appears to lead to a decline in classroom behavior problems (Cavazos, 1989). Involved parents seem to enjoy improved relationships with their children and experience far greater satisfaction with schools and school personnel. Spewock (1988) listed among the benefits of a parent involvement program: parents learned more about their children's development, fathers took a more active part in reading to their children, and parents were more willing to meet with teachers to discuss children's progress once they entered schools. Participation seemed to change negative attitudes and make parents more confident.

Training Parents for Home Involvement

Although there are many ways to promote parent involvement, training parents to teach their children at home can be a very effective approach in early childhood education. Rich (1987) explains that:

parent education and training involves teaching how to improve their family life and/or how to work with their children. Of all the models identified, this is the one that offers the most substantive research to date with findings most directly linked to children's achievement. It is the most appropriate model for the widespread involvement of families and the effective use of teacher

time and energy (p. 17).

Other types of involvement seem to have limited impact when compared to the role of the family in educating their child. The advisory role in which parents serve on an advisory council of some type and the classroom volunteer are two types of traditional family involvement that may no longer be the most appropriate methods. They are of limited impact when compared with the role of the family in educating their child. Good involvement gives educational responsibilities to the family and supplements and reinforces the work of the school. Rich (1987) reiterates that the research supports the role of "parent-as-tutor" as that most directly contributing to improved academic achievement and suggests that this role should be given priority attention. This is backed up with research done by Becker and Epstein (1982) who surveyed teacher practices. Teacher responses indicate that they feel reading aloud with their children is a parent involvement activity that parents can conduct successfully. In fact, over 80% of the teachers listed it as their most successful parent involvement technique.

Some educators believe that widespread parent interest in the academic progress of their children constitutes an immensely underutilized teaching resource requiring only general guidance and modest effort to bring about results in many cases (Becker & Epstein, 1982, p. 92).

Training parents to teach their children at home is a way to overcome some of the barriers to parent involvement.

Attracting and keeping parents involved is a challenge when working with any group of parents, and programs at school often lack attendance due to the inability to coordinate with parents' schedules, family stresses, social conditions and poor attitudes toward school from parents with prior negative school experiences (Handel, 1992). Even with the pressures of limited time in homes with two working parents, or in single parent homes, parents still care about and value their children's education. While these parents may not come to the traditional meetings, they are often seeking ways to become involved in their child's school achievement. Schurr (1993) recommends the implementation of monthly learning packets that can be used to train parents to help their children. She feels they are especially helpful with parents who are reluctant to attend workshops or meetings because of a limited educational background or a primary language other than English. Burns (1993) agrees that providing orientation and training for parents enhances the effectiveness of involvement and can take many forms including providing written directions with a send-home instructional packet. She recommends the use of newsletters and other printed materials to reinforce school learning by suggesting parent/child activities and to provide information to enrich family life and learning.

Programs that teach parents how to read aloud with their children are among the most successful. Rasinski and Fredericks (1988) maintain that "unless parents perceive a

recommended activity as profitable for themselves and their children, the activity will likely be dropped after the first attempt" (p. 511). Furthermore, parents are more likely to respond positively when asked to work with their children if the activity is fun, comprehensible and likely to be successful (Burns, 1993). Using children's literature is appropriate because it is motivating and interesting to both parents and children and provides an effective way to teach literacy skills. Both the quantity and quality of reading at home are improved when families participate in literacy activities. Literacy activities have the added benefit of being able to be shaped to any family's circumstances and desires.

Using children's literature and teaching parents strategies for reading aloud correlate with the suggestions Olmstead (1991) gives for developing home learning activities. She suggests that activities should complement but not be identical to classroom activities and that they be as much a natural part of family life as possible so as not to be overly contrived. She recommends that activities be open-ended and interesting for both parent and child and that parents should be given one teaching strategy to concentrate on while participating in an activity. Current thinking stresses that specific suggestions about what parents can do at home with their children are most effective. When using literature, parents can be given concrete instructions about actively

engaging their children in discussing stories and illustrations, identifying letters and words, comparing stories to their own experiences, etc.

~~△~~ Benefits of Reading Aloud

One benefit of reading aloud to children is that it is the best way to build a desire to read and a lifelong love of reading. Most students will learn how to read but whether or not they will want to read will depend in part upon parental encouragement. Studies have shown that those students who do read a lot come from homes in which there are plenty of books, and parents and siblings who also read (Anderson, Heibert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985). Trelease (1989) states that we are not born with the desire to read but that it is planted by parents and teachers who work at it. He maintains that "reading aloud is the best advertisement because it works. It allows a child to sample the delights of reading and conditions him to believe that reading is a pleasurable experience" (p. 9).

→ Good stories whet the appetite of children for learning how to read. "When an adult reads aloud, children quickly learn that a book is a wonderful thing" (Binkley, 1988, p. 6). Reading aloud with enthusiasm teaches that books are to be enjoyed, not endured. Cullinan (1992) agrees that reading aloud builds the desire to read. She asserts that "children learn exciting stories come from books and that reading is worth the effort" (p. 25). Rasinski and Fredericks (1988)

concur that "a lifelong reading habit is developed by regular daily read-aloud time" but caution that "the effectiveness of read-aloud diminishes when parents read to their children sporadically or infrequently" (p. 509).

← Another benefit of reading aloud with ones child is that it gives him an educational advantage. In addition to hearing a story, children automatically learn about written language as well. They learn that words in a particular story are always in the same order and on the same page. They may also learn many of the conventions of print that are necessary for learning to read. These understandings, that print goes from left to right, from top to bottom, and that there are spaces between words, develop naturally as the child observes the adult reader (Binkley, 1988). Cullinan (1992) agrees that children automatically pick up information about written language as they listen, especially if they sit beside the reader and see the page as it is read. What they see and hear makes written language easier to understand as they read alone.

→ France and Hagar (1993) cite that "emphasis on story reading is supported by a considerable body of research that indicates reading aloud to young children promotes listening comprehension" and knowledge of story structure which is in turn "a good predictor of success in reading" (p. 569). Developing greater verbal skills and better listening skills are also benefits to children who are read to according to

Trelease (1989). He sums it up by stating

When children have been read to, they enter school with larger vocabularies, longer attention spans, greater understanding of books and print, and consequently have the fewest difficulties in learning to read (p. 4).

Simply stated "children who are read to do far better in school than those who are not read to" (Cullinan, 1992, p. 25).

Another benefit is that reading aloud with ones child can be fun and provide quality family time. Reading aloud is more than just saying words. It is a social event in which the child enjoys the warmth and intimacy of adult attention. When an adult reads eagerly to a child, stories that delight both listener and reader, the experience is emotionally satisfying to both. Adults often relive the joys of special stories that were read to them as children. Cullinan (1992) likens this process to a torch being passed from one generation to the next. The sharing of books can create special bonds of love that stay with us forever. The feelings remain long after the words have been forgotten.

Literature Extension Activities

In order for the reader to benefit the most from a selection of literature, it is desirable for him to personalize the information and make a connection between what is new and what is known - to make connections between his world and the world of print (Hoyt, 1992). Literature extension activities, that is activities based upon a

selection of literature that incorporate or integrate other curriculum areas or develop other skills, help to examine the content of the story and make it more personal and meaningful. Literature extension activities help to generate further interest and excitement for the literature read and develop skills in a useful, purposeful context instead of in an isolated manner. Children's literature provides endless opportunities for this integration and can be a means for pursuing activities of personal interest which enhance the learning value of the literature.

Hoyt (1992) maintains that children have a deeper appreciation and understanding of what they read when they have opportunities to integrate reading with drama, oral language and art. With literature as a stimulus, Hoyt describes young learners as deepening and expanding their understanding of the theme information by translating it into oral language, clay and paint. These expressive arts are a natural part of the culture of childhood and are powerful motivators for children. "We need to help learners activate their senses, their imaginations, their emotions, and all their life experiences while interacting with the text" (Hoyt, 1992, p. 584).

In addition to the springboard that children's literature provides for experiences in the expressive arts, it also offers a meaningful context for mathematics and science. Griffith and Clyne (1991) believe that the context of stories

and of problems arising from literature provides a meaning and purpose for children's exploration of mathematical and scientific language. The familiarity of the book gives structure which provides children with a defined context within which they can manipulate and develop mathematical concepts. Both text and illustrations offer opportunities to involve children in problem solving, pattern and order activities, and classification as well as other mathematical skills. They further state:

Using books, stories and rhymes to stimulate thinking about mathematics and to develop and re-inforce mathematical concepts enhances children's understanding of mathematics, promotes their enjoyment of the subject and develops their conception of mathematics as an integral part of human knowledge (Hoyt, 1991, p. 9).

In summary, involving children in activities based upon selections of literature not only reinforces and expands comprehension of the selections read but also provides a meaningful context for exploration and discovery in the content areas and the arts. The integration of learning through the use of literature allows for learning activities that are useful and purposeful and therefore more personal and valuable for the student.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Having been read to frequently as a child and much encouraged to read later on, I have developed into an avid adult reader and have seen first hand the tremendous positive impact this avocation has had upon my schooling and education. In wishing to give my own children and those in my classrooms the same opportunity to fall in love with books and reading, reading aloud has always been a part of both homelife and school curriculum. After experiencing firsthand the benefits to both child and adult from reading aloud sessions, it is saddening and worrisome that so many of the children coming into the schools have not had someone share books with them at home. Having worked for many years with the children who often came from less than ideal home situations, I have often felt the need for improved home/school partnerships. I truly believe that this partnership of working together for the good of the child benefits all involved. For this reason, I have always been interested to hear at workshops and to read in professional resources, of ways that preschool and primary teachers have developed to tie home and school together. A recurrent activity has been to have a class mascot, very often a teddy bear, who along with a journal travels back and forth

from school to home, visiting with each child in the class. The building where I currently teach is a kindergarten center for the school system and each of the five other teachers there uses some type of a traveling mascot. When I joined this staff, I liked the idea of using a traveling character and decided to use Eric Hill's "Spot" character since I had just won a free one in a book club promotion. Spot traveled in a backpack with a journal in which the children were to draw a picture of something they did with Spot while he was visiting them. Parents were encouraged to take dictation if the child desired. Included in the backpack were several Spot books and copies of a coloring page depicting Spot reading a book. Each child was allowed to take the pack home for several days. The children were all very eager to have their chance to borrow Spot and it was very hard for the children who did not have turns right away to understand what was taking so long. Although waiting for a turn is something that needs to be patiently taught at this age, waiting for a few months for something that they were eagerly anticipating seemed almost to be cruel and unusual punishment. I began to wonder if I needed to change the activity so that children were able to participate more frequently.

Another recurring theme to life in our building has always been that of encouraging parents to read to their children at home. Over the years various methods such as recording minutes spent reading, or recording the titles of

books read at home have been employed, but most have not proven satisfactory for one reason or another. It occurred to me that by expanding the idea of using a mascot or character along with a few books and activities, I could accomplish both of these goals: to connect parents with what we were doing at school and to encourage them to read and work with their child at home. "Book Buddies" were born!

In order to receive some constructive criticism on my project, I explained my ideas to a friend who teaches kindergarten in another school district. She was excited by the idea of Book Buddy packets and decided to use them with her class. It proved very helpful to have someone with whom to brainstorm ideas and fine tune details. Our Book Buddy packets did not turn out to be exactly the same due to different class circumstances, and the materials and books that each of us had available but we did each follow the same basic formula for assembling them.

In some cases we started with the character because after raiding our children's toy boxes or our puppet collections from school, we found one that was particularly appealing. Although it would be possible to put together reading packets without using stuffed characters we felt that the character really added to the appeal of the packet for the children and that they might be useful in stimulating oral language as the children used the characters to talk and perhaps to reenact parts of the stories. When possible, the characters or

puppets are those actually read about in the stories, i.e. Clifford, Spot, or Curious George. In other packets, however, a generic animal or puppet may have been used and then we selected a name for it.

Stuffed story characters and puppets such as these can be found in the children's section of many bookstores but are quite expensive when obtained this way. Many of the book clubs such as Scholastic, Trumpet, and Troll that are used in schools to offer inexpensive paperback books to students also offer characters such as these for a reduced price or for free with bonus points. Garage sales are also wonderful places to find inexpensive animals and puppets for this purpose.

After finding an appropriate character, it was usually easy to generate a list of books in which the character appears. Having amassed quite a collection of children's literature over the years, it wasn't hard to go through the books I already had in my personal or classroom collections and find suitable titles. Again, book clubs are good sources for inexpensive but worthwhile children's books. If I did have trouble finding just the right book, browsing in a bookstore, consulting with a children's librarian at the public library or just chatting with a colleague soon gave me new ideas.

In other cases, the idea for a Book Buddy packet came from knowing a particular children's book that I had always liked but never found the time or reason to use in the

classroom. Again, it was usually easy to find a central theme and correlating books and to come up with a character to represent them.

In choosing the books to be included in each packet, I tried to keep variety and enjoyment in mind. In some of the packets, all of the books are by the same author and about the same characters such as the Berenstain Bear books by Stan and Jan Berenstain. Children often enjoy reading a series of stories about the same characters. The same familiarity that may be boring and repetitious to adults is comfortable and predictable to children. In other packets I tried to encourage reading different types of stories and for different purposes. There are concept stories for learning about letters of the alphabet, counting, or shapes. There are nonfiction stories for reading about animals and their habits and habitats. I also tried to provide for the different reading and listening levels of the children by using books with short repetitive sentences for emergent readers and longer, more detailed stories for listening. This also allows parents to pick among several choices to match the amount of time they have to spend on the packet, and best to match their child's interests and attention span. After the Book Buddy character and literature were chosen, I began to assemble the activities and materials to use with them. After ten years of early childhood teaching, attendance at countless workshops, and much professional reading, it was not usually too

difficult to think of appropriate activities. Variety and enjoyment were key ingredients here also. I felt that continued parent participation necessitated that the activities be easy to understand, be fun for both parent and child, and be things that other family members could be involved in. The review of the literature that was done in preparation for this project also stated that parents were more likely to participate in this type of home involvement if they could see a purpose to it and

Current teaching practice tells us that more learning takes place when language activities are kept "whole" or integrated and when projects are done for real purposes and are connected with daily life. In order to ensure the activities were developmentally appropriate I tried to choose materials and projects that were open-ended, could be used at a variety of levels, and encouraged parents to adapt them to their child and home situation. Using recipes to prepare food for the family, writing letters to grandma or other relatives, and playing family games were a few of the activities that connected with the themes of the books and that I felt would be both enjoyable and educational.

Planning for variety meant choosing activities from assorted areas of development such as math skills, health and science, reading and writing skills, social and emotional issues, and motor skills. If thinking of suitable activities for a packet proves difficult, there are countless theme or

early childhood curriculum guides that can be consulted. Often a colleague will be able to suggest ideas or sometimes just looking around at available household or classroom materials will spark ideas.

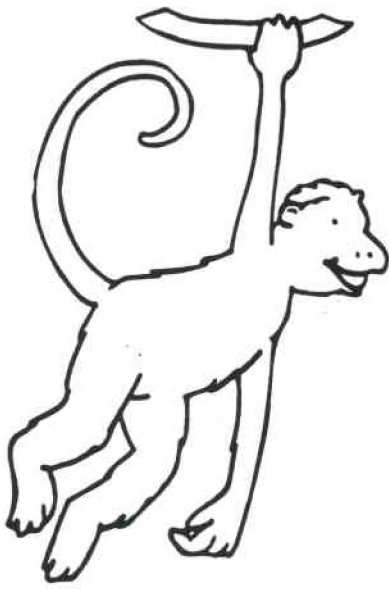
Often a packet would seem to lend itself to a particular area of development, such as the Simon Book Buddy packet which deals with the theme of buttons. Buttons are ideal for developing the math concepts of sorting, matching and counting. Tapping into this underlying area of development seemed to present the perfect opportunity to advise parents about why this learning might be desirable for their child and what else they might do at home to promote it. I decided to include in each packet, parent pointers that coordinated with the area of educational growth central to that packet. In the case of the Simon packet, parent information pertaining to the growth of math concepts and skills would be particularly pertinent. In looking for parent tips to include I tried to ensure that the material was instructive, that it was easy to understand, and that it was brief. Most parent information sheets are a single page and never more than two pages in length. Because some parents may wish to know more about a particular topic than was contained on the single page handout, a reference is included to a source of more information, usually a book. Parents are encouraged to borrow these items.

There are many sources for parent information available

these days that would be appropriate to include in the Book Buddy packets. Speech therapists, school guidance counselors and parent education coordinators are good sources for parent pointers. The parent coordinator at our county Head Start program provided many resources that I was able to use. Contacting a librarian at our local public library was also beneficial. She was able to direct me to some government publications that they had just received and I was able to obtain copies of a series of booklets for parents working with their child at home on topics such as learning math skills, learning responsible behavior, learning to be fit and healthy, and others.

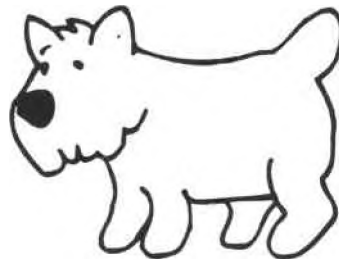
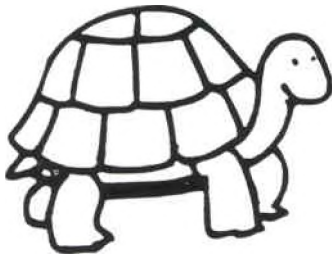
My colleagues and building administration have been very positive and supportive about the development of the Book Buddy packets. They have offered practical suggestions, ideas for activities, and materials. My principal provided canvas tote bags to house and transport the materials and offered book club bonus points to be used to help supply the literature for them. With this help and those items I already had, I was able to supply 15 Book Buddy packets for use in my classroom this year. If providing the materials for the packets had been more difficult, an alternative method of financing might have been to approach the PTA about providing the funds. What better use of PTA money than to help finance a project designed to help teachers and parents become partners in the education of children.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS OF THE PROJECT



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D A

BOOK BUDDIES



Introduction to Book Buddies

The most effective education for children occurs when teachers and parents work together for the benefit of all. Research indicates that the most successful method of parent involvement trains parents to work with their own child at home. There is overwhelming evidence supporting the tremendous academic and motivational gains for children whose parents regularly spend time sharing good books with them. Unfortunately, there are many parents who are unaware of how influential they are as a literacy model for their child, and/or who don't follow through with reading aloud due to the lack of appropriate, readily available children's books. Teachers must endeavor to see that parents are first of all, informed about the benefits of reading with their children and secondly, prodded to follow through with the task. Take home packets of children's literature and extension activities designed to put both information about working with their child and the materials to do so, in the hands of parents, may encourage them to participate.

It was with these two ideas in mind, educating parents about reading to and teaching their child and then getting them to actually do so, that the Book Buddy program was

conceived. Many early childhood classrooms have an animal, often a teddy bear, who travels with a journal, a book or two, and a suitcase to the children's homes and encourages family reading and writing projects. The author of this project previously used the Spot character created by Eric Hill for this purpose in her classroom but felt that although it was a worthwhile activity, it wasn't enough since each child only got to take Spot home once or twice each year. The Book Buddy program provides many opportunities for the children and their families to share books and activities with special stuffed characters and puppets.

Each Book Buddy packet is centered around a theme (such as buttons or frogs), an author (such as Frank Asch), or a character (such as Spot). Several books of quality children's literature related to the theme are included. It is recommended to choose a variety of genres when selecting books: fiction, nonfiction, alphabet and counting books, easily memorized and "easy reader" books for emergent readers and more detailed stories for listening. The author reads aloud several stories daily in her classroom and tried to select books that would complement but not duplicate those she already uses.

A Book Buddy, or stuffed character or puppet, has been included in each packet to add to the appeal for the children. Hopefully, the Book Buddy character will also stimulate oral language and story retelling and extension as the child plays

and pretends with the character.

Parents will find a instructions folder in each bag. Each folder has attached to the front of it an introduction sheet. This sheet introduces the Book Buddy and restates the basic instructions such as returning the bag on time and taking care of the materials. Inside the folder is a laminated cardboard activity sheet that contains suggestions for extension activities that relate to the theme. Activities were also chosen to represent numerous areas of development including art, motor skills, math and science, health and nutrition, reading and writing, and social and emotional development. So that parents are more likely to follow through with some of the activities, there are several choices listed and whenever possible all materials are included.

Include in the instructions folder of each Book Buddy there are one page reproducible sheets designed to give parents easily understood information about a particular area of their child's development. The topic of the parent sheet for each packet is designed to coordinate with the theme or skill area developed by the literature or activities. For example, in the "Simon" packet, the stories each deal with some aspect of buttons, and counting and sorting real buttons are among the suggested activities. The information provided to parents deals with why counting and sorting activities are appropriate and desirable for their child and suggests other ways to provide these experiences. There are many sources for

this type of information which may be copied and distributed to parents.

Sometimes a parent may wish to have more information about a particular topic that was discussed briefly in the single sheet handout. For this reason, there is also a reference to a book that the teacher may want to have available for parents to borrow. Such books may be from a parent lending library at the school or from the teacher's personal library. The following booklets (46 - 65 pages each) are available from the US Government printing office for a fee of \$.50 each:

Helping Your Child Be Fit and Healthy

Helping Your Child Get Ready For School

Helping Your Child Learn Math

Helping Your Child Learn to Read

Helping Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior

Helping Your Child Succeed in School

These booklets make an inexpensive way to start building resources to lend to parents. They have been compiled by the US Department of Education and are public domain which means that they may be photocopied and distributed without copyright permission. A catalog and order form may be obtained by writing to:

Consumer Information Center
P.O. Box 100
Pueblo, Colorado 81002

In the front pocket of the folder, paper, recipes or

other such materials needed for the activities may be kept. A list of all materials included in the bag is attached to the back of the folder to aid in making sure that everything is returned.

In order that the folder and other materials be durable and attractive, if appropriate they should be laminated or covered with clear adhesive plastic and decorated with stickers, stamps or pictures.

Many schools offer a beginning of the year parent meeting, i.e. Back-to-School Night, designed to inform parents about their child's school program. This would be a good time to introduce the Book Buddy program, show parents what can be found in each bag and how to go about using them. It might also be an appropriate time for the teacher to model good reading aloud techniques. Parents who enjoy reading as adults and who have been read to as children may possess the ability to read aloud well but there are other parents who don't seem to possess this talent naturally. For this reason the teacher would do well to provide modeling and suggestions for reading such as using an animated voice, stopping occasionally to predict what will happen next, encouraging the child to chant along with a repetitious phrase, "reading" the pictures for information, etc. A parent checklist such as the following, designed to encourage parents to think about their role in providing literacy learning and motivation for their child may be reviewed at this time.

Parent Self-Help Checklist

1. I read aloud to my child every day.
2. If my child asks for it, I'll read the same book aloud repeatedly.
3. When I read aloud, my child sits on my lap or very close beside me and is in a position to follow along in the book.
4. My child has seen me read frequently.
5. My child has seen a man and a woman reading.
6. There are books, magazines, and newspapers in our home.
7. My child has books of his/her own and a place to keep them.
8. Books and magazines are an important part of my gift-giving for each child.
9. Our conversations go beyond daily functions like eating, dressing, bathing. For example, we talk about what happens in our family and neighborhood and why things are done the way they are.
10. I give my child opportunities to express himself/herself through art, play, and talking.
11. I am a concerned and interested listener, showing my child that his/her feelings and interests are important to me.
12. My child knows I value reading as much as I do watching television.
13. I control the amount of time my child spends watching TV, and the types of programs.
14. I provide many interesting and varied experiences for my child, such as visits to parades and fairs, restaurants, cities, and towns of different sizes, concerts, church, beach, mountains, lakes, rivers, nature walks.
15. I provide plenty of paper, pencils, and crayons or a chalkboard for play activities.
16. We play games that help my child see differences and likenesses in objects in our home.
17. My child has a library card and has a chance to use it regularly.
18. I transmit a positive attitude towards schools and teachers.
19. My child's hearing and vision are checked regularly.
20. I am sure my child receives a balanced diet.

(Smith, 1984, p.670.)

Once the Book Buddy program has been explained to parents, the children should be introduced to it and taught to be responsible for the materials. Each set of Book Buddy materials has been placed in a canvas tote bag. The bags are

sent home on Monday and are due to be returned on Friday, giving the families several days to work with the materials. This would give the teacher time over the weekend to check and replenish materials in the bags.

Due to the many demands upon a teacher's time, it is imperative that a simple method of rotating bags among the students be devised. A management system that is too complicated or requires too much teacher time may result in the teacher discontinuing use of the program. One simple management system would be as follows: In the writer's classroom, there are currently 15 students who have been broken down into 5 groups of three students. A 5 column chart is prepared with the names of three students entered in each column. Each column is assigned a color by attaching a square of colored paper to the chart at the top of the column. The first week the first student in each column would take home the bag corresponding to the color at the top of the column. The second week, the second student in each column takes home the bag. After the bag has rotated among all of the students in the column, then the colored squares of paper are each moved one column to the right and the procedure is started over again until all of the children have used all five of the original Book Buddy bags. At this point, these five Book Buddies are taken out of circulation and five new bags of materials begin to circulate. This arrangement, once put into place, requires very little management time on the part of the

teacher, which is essential for continued use. In the writer's classroom each child receives a bag every third week. In classrooms with more students, however, students would receive one less frequently.

The following Book Buddy packets have been designed by the writer of this project based upon materials and books that were readily available to her and are by no means the only materials that can be used. Substitutions of literature selections, activities and sources of parent information may easily be made.

BERENSTAIN BEARS

Literature Theme: Berenstain Bears First Time Books

Suggested Titles:

*Too Much TV. Berenstain, S. & J. (1984). New York: Random House. Concerned that the family is spending too much time in front of the television and neglecting other activities, Mama Bear decides that there will be no television watching for one week.

*Week at Grandma's. Berenstain, S. & J. (1986). When Brother and Sister Bear get left with their grandparents for a whole week, they have a better time than they expected.

*Get the Gimmies. Berenstain, S. & J. (1988). Gran and Gramps come up with a plan to help selfish Brother and Sister Bear get rid of a bad case of the galloping greedy gimmies.

Parent Information Theme: TV watching - limiting the amount of time children spend watching TV; alternatives to TV.

Recommended Parent Handout: TV and Your Child, Quick Communications

Recommended Book: 365 Outdoor Activities You Can Do With Your Child. Bennett, S. & R. (1993). Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams Publishers. This book encourages parents to turn off the TV and turn on creative outdoor play using common household objects.

Hi! I'm Brother and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please



have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.

Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Brother Bear

BERENSTAIN BEARS Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Too Much TV

Week At Grandma's

Get the Gimmies

Brother Bear character

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

TV and Your Child

Berenstain Bears note paper

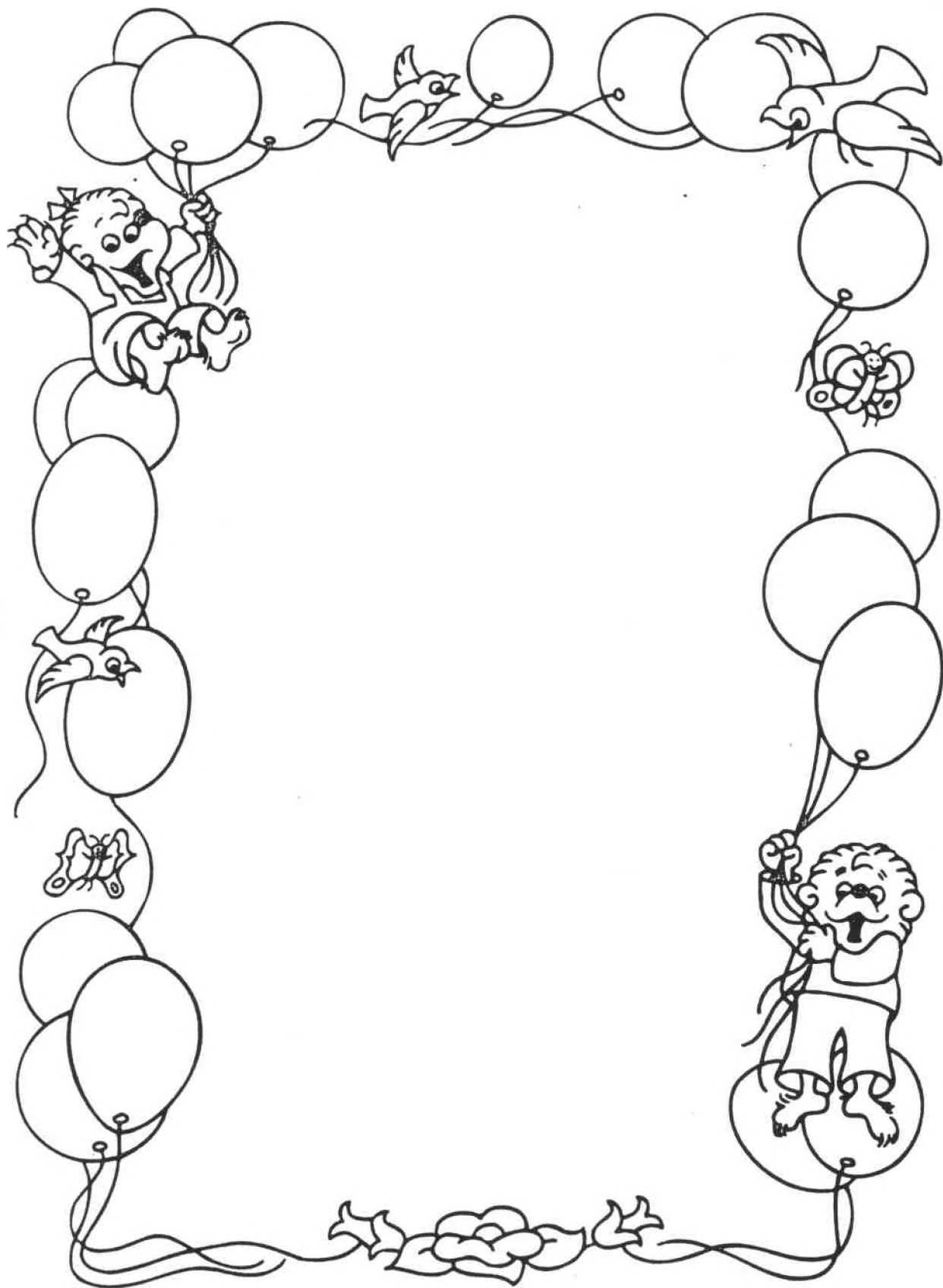
Berenstain Bears jigsaw puzzle

Turn off your tv and take a family walk. Don't forget to take along your Brother Bear. Look for unusual objects. Draw a picture of or bring in to school the most unusual thing you found.

Use the enclosed Bears' note paper to write a letter to your grandma or grandpa.

Go to the library and check out another book about the Berenstain Bears.

Put together the enclosed Berenstain Bears jigsaw puzzle.



Have a wonderful day.

TV AND YOUR CHILD



TV can be a good educational tool if not abused. On average one hour a day should be enough. However, research shows that children spend 15,000 hours watching TV compared with 12,000 hours spent in all their schooling 1st grade through 12th grade. It also shows that children who watch a lot of TV tend to be poor students. So try to:

1. Limit the number of hours spent in TV viewing each week. Make a TV schedule jointly with your children, post it, and keep it. Time must be left for less structured, more creative activities.
2. Keep the TV in a traditional area, not where you eat, otherwise children won't converse during meals. Never place a TV in your child's room where homework and reading are usually done.
3. View and discuss as many programs as you can with your children to judge the material for your child's age and your family values. This also helps to reduce the "hypnotic effect" of which many children are victims. Generally, watch for over-excitement, prejudice, glamorized crime, violence, and vulgarity. Openly comment on kind words and good deeds in order to stress consideration of others.
4. Food ads placed in conjunction with popular children's programs many times promote high-salt, high-sugar and high-fat foods. This kind of diet can lead to tooth decay and obesity immediately, and heart disease in adulthood. Discuss a *balanced* diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads, and low fat milk and good snack foods (oranges, stuffed celery, etc.) with your child to counteract this problem.
5. Find interesting substitutes for TV time such as reading aloud on favorite subjects, playing board games, designing a family project and playing outdoor games that *encourage exercise*. These activities involve listening, following rules and concentrating, which are all essential to success in school.



P.O. BOX 27891 · St. Louis, MO 63146

If you are interested in learning more about
alternatives to TV watching

I can lend you the book:

365 Outdoor Activities You Can Do
With Your Child

Please Ask For It!

CATRINA

Literature Theme: cats

Suggested Titles:

*Millions of Cats. Gag, Wanda. (1956). New York: Scholastic.

An old man goes in search of a cat for his wife and finds them all so adorable that he brings back "millions of cats."

*Where Is My Cat? Carle, Eric. (1987). New York:

Scholastic. A boy searching for his pet cat encounters many types of wild cats. The short, repetitive text will have children reading along in no time.

*The Kitten Book. Jessel, C. (1991). Cambridge, MA:

Candlewick Press. Nice photographs and a text which tells about kittens growing up and how to take care of them.

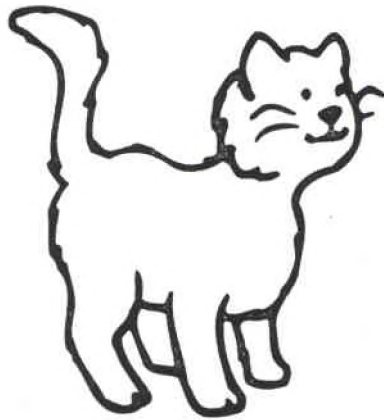
Parent Information Theme: math activities

Recommended Parent Handout: Learning About Numbers

Recommended Book: Helping Your Child Learn Math. Government

Printing Office. 26 meaningful and fun activities to help your children (5-13) see math as a positive and interesting part of life.

Hi! I'm Catrina and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Catrina

Catrina Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Millions of Cats

Have You Seen My Cat?

The Kitten Book

Catrina stuffed animal

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Learning About Numbers

Cat Face stamp

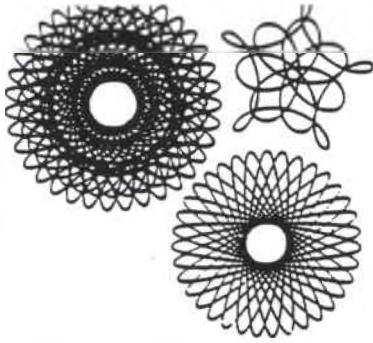
ink pad

Kitty Cat Counters

Use the cat face stamp on a sheet of paper and draw the rest of the cat around it.

Cut pictures of cats and other animals from magazines. Glue them to a sheet of paper to make a pet collage.

Use the kitty cat counters to make a pattern. Sort them by color. Use them to make up number stories. For example: Once there were 3 red cats playing jump rope. A blue cat from down the street wanted to play, too. Now how many cats are playing jump rope?



HOME ACTIVITY GUIDE

1. LEARNING ABOUT NUMBERS

An introduction to numbers, no matter how basic, is needed before children can begin to compute. Before adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing can be learned, certain readiness concepts must be in place. The following activities are to be done together by the parent and the child. If parents know the types of skills children need, the possibilities for reinforcing them will seem endless. Repeated activities in number recognition, counting, pairing, matching and fractions will all build readiness skills in preschoolers.

Have your child count out a collection of small objects from a large box. Say, "Can you find two pennies? Two paper clips? Three rubber bands? Good. Now can you make a pile of four pennies? Three rubber bands?" Increase the number of objects only when the child has learned the ones before.

Have the child count blocks in a stack one by one as it is being built, and then again as the blocks are being put away.

Mark a set of large pieces of cardboard, tagboard or paper with the numbers from 1 to 10 and an equal number of dots. Ask your child to place the number cards in order against a long wall.

Ask your child to count all the cats or dogs you see while the two of you take a walk.

Match equal numbers of dots by playing dominos.

When other children come over, have your child set out the right number of plastic glasses and napkins when it's time for a treat.

Encourage the counting of body parts. Ask your child to tell how many eyes, noses, fingers, toes, freckles, etc.

Put a deck of playing cards face up on the table and ask your child to make a pile of each different number.

Introduce fractional parts. Talk about half a sandwich, some or most of the apple, one third of the pie, and one fourth of a circle.

Have your child string macaroni on a shoelace knotted at one end, counting each piece as it is added.

Teach your child to use the fingers and toes as counting tools. The child's age can be shown by holding up the right number of fingers.

If you are interested in learning more about
beginning math concepts

I can lend you the book:

Helping Your Child Learn Math

Please Ask For It!

COOKIE MONSTER

Literature Theme: cookies

Suggested Titles:

*Book of Cookie Shapes. Brown, R. (1979). Western Publishing Company. While walking to the cookie contest Cookie Monster spies objects that remind him of the shapes of his cookies.

*Don't Forget the Oatmeal. Ford, B. G. (1980). Western Publishing Company. Bert, Ernie and Cookie Monster take a trip to the grocery store remembering to buy everything on their list except for Bert's oatmeal.

*Circles, Triangles, and Squares. Hoban, T. (1974). MacMillan. Excellent photographs of familiar objects are shown to illustrate the concept of shape in this wordless picture book.

Parent Information Theme: teaching children about shapes

Recommended Parent Handout: Learning About Shapes

Recommended Book: Helping Your Child Get Ready For School.

Activities to help your child develop socially, mentally, and physically.

Hi! I'm Cookie and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Cookie Monster

COOKIE MONSTER Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Book of Cookie Shapes

Don't Forget the Oatmeal

Circles, Triangles, and Squares

Cookie Monster stuffed character

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Learning About Shapes

Shapes in my House recording sheet

shape stencils

can of plastic shapes

Feel & Find Mat

Make colorful designs on paper using the plastic shape stencils. Lay a shape stencil on the table. Cover with a sheet of paper. Rub over with the long side of a crayon to make the shape appear on the paper. Or, lay the stencil on the paper and trace around it. Do again, overlapping shapes until the paper is full.

Play “Feel & Find” with the shapes in the can. Reach into the can and without using your eyes, pick out and identify a shape just by feeling it with your fingers. Sort the shapes onto the Feel & Find Mat.

Go on a search for shapes at your house and fill in the recording sheet in the other pocket of this folder.

Shapes In My House

I can find these shapes in my kitchen:









I can find these shapes in my bedroom:









I can find these shapes in my living room:

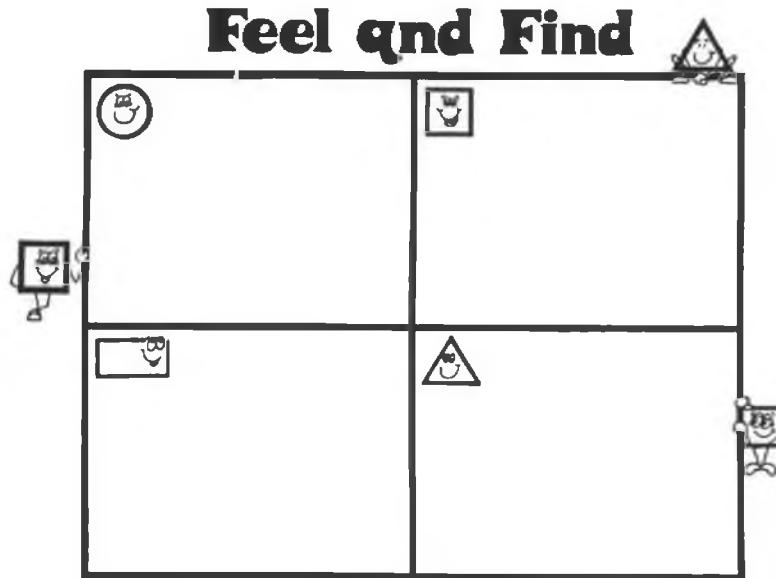






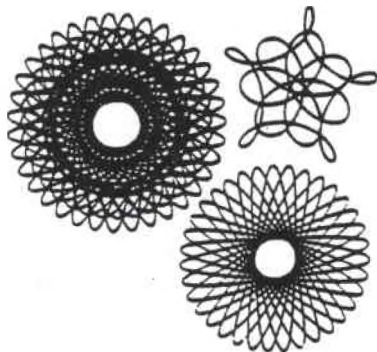
Directions for making the "Feel and Find" game

Make a surprise can by putting a container such as a white plastic icing tub inside of a stretchy sock. You should be able to reach your hand in to feel the contents without being able to see them. Put a selection of about 20 plastic shapes (circles, triangles, squares, rectangles) in the surprise can. Make a "Feel and Find" workmat by dividing a sheet of paper into four spaces. Label each space with one of the four shapes. Attach this paper and the playing directions to cardboard and laminate.



FEEL AND FIND

Reach your hand into the can of plastic shapes. Pick one shape and hold it in your hand. Without using your eyes, see if you can tell which shape you chose just by feeling it. Continue picking out shapes and sorting them onto the workmat. Trick question: Can you tell what color the shape is just by touching it or do you need your eyes?



HOME ACTIVITY GUIDE

6. LEARNING ABOUT SHAPES

Shapes are everywhere. Learning to recognize, talk about, and use shapes is an important language and pre-reading skill. Picturing the world as an endless combination of shapes is one way to view things and talk about them. The following are some activities you can do with your children to help them learn to understand shapes.

In simple, everyday conversation, start talking about objects important to your child. Talk about them in terms of their shapes. Soon your child will follow your lead and begin to think about the shape of things too. You might discuss the square block, the round jar top, the triangular boat sail, the rectangular envelope and the oval egg.

Make basic shapes on a piece of cardboard and let your child cut them out. Refer to these shape cards as often as you can, and your child will begin to notice these same shapes are all around.

Cut out a variety of felt shapes in different colors and sizes. Then ask your child to make pictures with them on a large piece of felt glued onto cardboard. Your child can be learning colors at the same time, and the combinations of shapes will be endless. Your child will be pleased to see a car formed from a rectangle and four wheels, or a kite from a square on end, with a string attached.

Ask your child to build familiar objects using differently shaped blocks. While the project is under construction or when it is finished, invite the child to tell you all the different shapes that were used.

Have your child make an interesting colored chalk or fingerpaint drawing. Provide the child with a selection of pre-cut cardboard shapes to place under the drawing paper. When chalk or paint is rubbed across the art paper's surface, the shapes will be outlined.

Your child will enjoy creating shapes with cookie cutters used on soft bread, playdough, clay, or cookie dough. As a group activity, several children might cut out "shapely sandwiches" and spread them with soft cheese, jelly, butter or peanut butter for a snack.

Mix up a variety of shape pairs in different sizes, textures, materials and colors, by shaking them together in a box. Then ask your child to sort the like pairs.

If you are interested in learning more about
**activities to promote your child's
development**

I can lend you the book:

Helping Your Child Get Ready For School

Please Ask For It!

CURIOUS GEORGE

Literature Theme: monkeys

Suggested Titles:

*Curious George. Rey, H. A. (1941). Boston: Houghton Mifflin. One of the classic figures in children's books, George is the funny little monkey whose curiosity gets the best of him and wins the hearts of his millions of fans.

*Curious George Flies a Kite. Rey, M. (1958). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

*Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed. Christelow, Eileen. (1989). New York: The Trumpet Club. This counting rhyme, based on an old nursery rhyme, is a predictable book that children will enjoy hearing over and over.

*Monkeys and Apes. Kaufman, E. (1992). Baltimore, MD: Ottenheimer Publishers. Nonfiction book with simple text and good photographs.

Parent Information Theme: creativity in children

Recommended Parent Handout: Learning to be Creative

Recommended Book: Helping Your Child Succeed in School. 15 fun activities to do with your children (ages 5-11) to help expand their imagination, obey, organize, help others, and much more.

Hi! I'm George and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

George

Curious George Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Curious George

Curious George Flies a Kite

Five Little Monkeys

Monkeys and Apes

Curious George stuffed character

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Learning to be Creative

Frozen Bananas Recipe Chart

Five Little Monkeys rhyme wheel

Barrel of Monkeys game

George's Journal

Brown paint cake / paintbrush

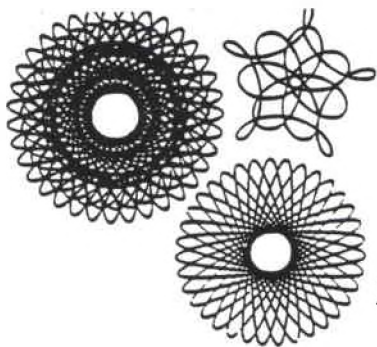
Have your child draw a picture of something Curious George did while staying at your house. An adult may write words to tell about the picture but please let the child do the drawing.

Use the rhyme wheel to retell “The Five Little Monkeys.”

Use the recipe chart to make a monkey’s favorite treat:
Frozen Bananas!

Use the brown paint cake to paint your own picture of a monkey.

Play the game
Barrel of Monkeys.



HOME ACTIVITY GUIDE

7. LEARNING TO BE CREATIVE

Children need to express themselves in many different ways. They need to experiment with different materials, words, sounds and instruments in order to interpret their world and their feelings.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS

Playacting is a basic form of self-expression which involves a combination of ideas, actions, and often some concrete props. If a playhouse or puppet theater is available, your child will enjoy endless hours both alone and with friends, acting out life situations. Two cardtables, draped with a sheet, a number of boxes attached together, or a blanket stretched across two low-strung clotheslines will work as well. And it won't take children long to transform the center into a movie theater, a grocery store or a fire station. Supplies for dramatic play might include play housekeeping equipment, toy phones, an old radio or camera, empty food boxes, small, clean plastic containers, dolls, stuffed animals and mirrors.

FREE ART EXPRESSION

Most children like to experiment with art materials. They feel a certain sense of power over the environment when they can put paint or crayon marks on a piece of blank paper, or cut into tissue paper with a scissors. Encourage your child to

draw, color, paste, cut, pound, squeeze and putter. Art expression is a natural outlet for a child's thoughts and creative energy. Remember, though, that the process, not the product, is what's important. Materials you'll want to provide are crayons, paper, finger-paint, school paste, watercolors, scissors, and play dough or clay. Display the child's creations where they can be seen, and be sure the child knows they are appreciated.

MUSIC

Children should be encouraged to listen for different musical ranges, speeds, and moods. They will want to sing along, clap their hands, tap their feet and move to the music as well. Children love to dance to a rhythm and to use gestures to let you know how the music makes them feel. You can provide simple instruments for your child to "play." Make a stringed instrument with rubber bands stretched over a small open box. Create an oatmeal box drum, or a set of cymbals from two metal pie pans. Ask your child to invite friends over to play in a backyard or basement band.

If you are interested in learning more about
**expanding your child's imagination
and organization skills**

I can lend you the book:
Helping Your Child Succeed in School

Please Ask For It!

DAN THE LETTER MAN

Literature Theme: alphabet books

Suggested Titles:

*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. Martin Jr., B. & Archambault, J. (1991). New York: Scholastic. The predictable phrase, meet you at the top of the coconut tree, underscores the rap beat of A told B and B told C.

*Dr. Seuss's ABC. Seuss, Dr. (1963). New York: Random House. Colorful pages filled with zany Seuss characters bouncing about on the alphabet.

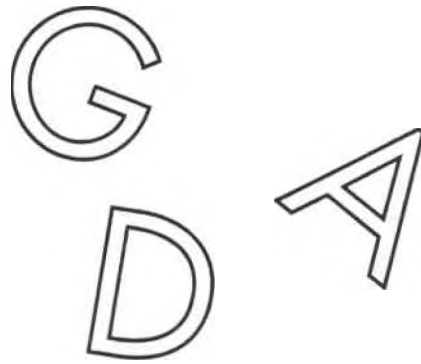
*Q is for Duck. Elting, M. & Folsom, M. (1980). New York: Clarion Books. An alphabet guessing game.

Parent Information Theme: teaching your child the alphabet

Recommended Parent Handout: Recognizing the Alphabet

Recommended Book: More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing. Schickedanz, J. (1986). Washington: National Association for the Education of Young Children. This book is intended to help parents and teachers give literacy learning a playful, interesting, and useful place in children's lives.

Hi! I'm Dan and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Dan the Letter Man

DAN THE LETTER MAN Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

Q is for Duck

Dr Seuss ABC

Dan stuffed character

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Recognizing the Alphabet

Alphabet letter stamps

ink pad

Letter stencils

Write down the names of your family members. Count the letters in each name to see who has the most, who has the fewest and if there are any with the same number.

Find words around your house and stamp them out on paper.

Lay a letter stencil on the table. Cover with a sheet of paper. Rub over with the side of a crayon to make the letter appear on the paper.

Put the letter stencils in ABC order and then trace over each with your finger.

Recognizing the Alphabet

Learning the letters of the alphabet is actually only one small part of learning to read. The key to teaching letters to young children is to be sure they are actively involved, and that activities are offered as a choice, not a requirement. Here are a few appropriate ways to present the alphabet:



Read ABC books to the child.

As you read an ABC book, encourage the child to name the letters. ("What letter will come after the A page?")

Read story books and picture books of all kinds to the child.

Point to letters and name them. Later, if the child is interested, point to letters and have the child name them.

Name the letters on your child's clothes as he gets dressed in the morning or as you fold clothes.

Choose a letter and find all of them that you can on the cereal box as you eat breakfast.

Offer a variety of materials such as clay, yarn and pipe cleaners for children to create shapes and letters.

Offer magnetic numbers and letters for use on the refrigerator or on a cookie sheet.

Play "find the letter" as you are in the grocery store or on a walk.

Play "same or different" with colors, shapes, and sizes.

Encourage the child to recognize the letters in his name (T-o-m).

When the child is ready, encourage her to attempt to copy her name (Katy).

When the child recognizes words, play "find the word." ("While we are walking, find the word 'stop'.")

If you are interested in learning more about
the alphabet and beginning literacy

I can lend you the book:

More Than the ABC'S

Please Ask For It!

FRANKLIN

Literature Theme: turtles

Suggested Titles:

*Franklin Fibs. Bourgeois, P. (1991). New York: Scholastic.

Bear can climb the highest tree, and beaver can chop down a tree with his teeth! So Franklin the turtle makes up something he can do. But now his friends want him to prove it.

*Franklin in the Dark. (1993). Franklin the turtle is afraid of the dark... and that makes it impossible for him to stay inside his own shell.

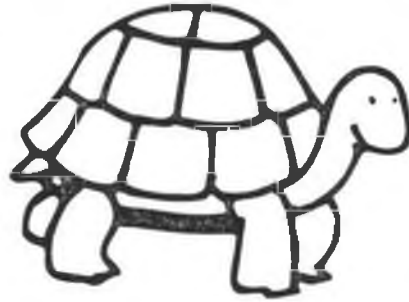
*Hurry Up, Franklin. (1989). Franklin is slow... even for a turtle. The endearing hero struggles to arrive at Bear's birthday party on time, despite numerous distractions.

Parent Information Theme: children's behavior

Recommended Parent Handout: The ABCs of Self-Esteem

Recommended Book: Helping Your Child Learn Responsible Behavior. Government Printing Office. Designed for children up to 9 years old to help develop fairness, respect, courage, honesty, compassion, and more.

Hi! I'm Franklin and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Franklin

FRANKLIN Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Hurry Up, Franklin

Franklin Fibs

Franklin Is Bossy

Franklin puppet

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

playdoh recipe

parent information:

The ABC's of Self-Esteem

Little Turtle rhyme

Turtle concentration cards

Use the turtle number cards to play a Memory or Concentration game. Or simply match the numeral cards to the correct set of turtles.

Talk about things people worry about.

Decorate the border of the turtle rhyme.

Together with your family, make a list of other slow-moving animals and a list of very fast animals. Choose an animal on the list and act it out. See if others can guess which animal you are.

There was a little turtle
Who lived in a box.
She swam in the puddles .
She climbed on the rocks.

She snapped at a mosquito.
She snapped at a flea.
She snapped at a minnow.
And she snapped at me.

She caught the mosquito.
She caught the flea.
She caught the minnow,
But she didn't catch me!

Cooked Playdoh

1 cup flour

1/2 cup salt

1 cup water

1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

2 tsp. cream of tartar

few drops green food coloring

Mix all ingredients in a medium sized saucepan, tinting to desired color. Heat over medium heat, stirring until ingredients form a ball. Turn out onto dry surface and knead when cool enough to touch. Store in a plastic bag. Keeps for about four weeks.

THE ABC'S OF SELF-ESTEEM

Avoid criticism, emphasize the positive things your children do rather than call attention to mistakes or failings. Believe in your children. Set reachable goals and reasonable expectations so that they can believe in themselves. Choose to keep a sense of humor. It helps everyone keep perspective on what is important and what is not. Do permit children to make decisions. It helps them feel good about themselves. Enjoy your children and make sure they know it. Forgive your children when they make mistakes. They're in the process of learning. Give your children responsibility and praise them for a task well done. Help your children only when they really need assistance. Allow them to feel capable by accomplishing things on their own. Use phrases such as "I like you. I'm glad you're my child, and I think you're a terrific kid!" Joke around, laugh together and share happy times. Kind words do much to bolster a child's self-esteem. Listen to your children. Be interested in what they have to say. Make time for your children. Get the whole family involved in activities which are enjoyed by all. Nurturing environments are ones which provide warmth, acceptance and limits. Occasional wrongs provide children with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. Provide fair, consistent discipline which teaches children to make wise decisions rather than punishing them for misconduct. Question what effects your comments or behavior may have on your child's self-esteem. Recognize accomplishments, however small they may be. Show your children how to communicate their feelings openly and honestly. Teach your children to do things on their own. Success leads to success. Unrealistic expectations lead to frustration, anger and disappointment. Visualize how you would like your children to be and teach them accordingly. Words which encourage your child build self-esteem. Remember...you as a parent provide eXamples for your child in everything you do. Your child will learn from you as they observe your actions and draw conclusions. Thses suggestions are only a few of the Zillion things you can do to contribute to your child's self-esteem.

Begin today!

If you are interested in learning more about
developing values in your child

I can lend you the book:
Helping Your Child Learn
Responsible Behavior

Please Ask For It!

FREDDIE

Literature Theme: frogs

Suggested Titles:

*Jump, Frog, Jump. Kalin, R. (1981). New York: Scholastic.

This is the turtle...that ate the snake...who swallowed the fish...and so on! Children will want to join in with "jump, frog, jump" after every verse of this cumulative tale.

*In the Small, Small Pond. Fleming, D. (1993). New York:

Scholastic. This book contains short, rhyming phrases about the various inhabitants of the pond. Children will enjoy looking for the frog on each page.

*It's Mine! Lionni, L. (1985). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Three selfish frogs quarrel over who owns their pond and island, until a storm makes them value the benefits of sharing.

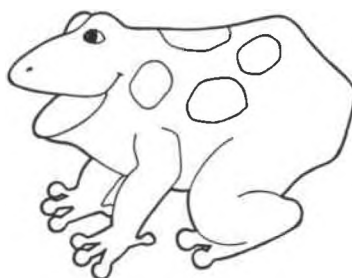
Parent Information Theme: reading with your child

Recommended Parent Handout: Reading With Your Child

Recommended Book: Read to Me: Raising Kids Who Love to Read.

Cullinan, B. (1992). New York: Scholastic. This is a book that is easily read and understood even by parents who are not good readers themselves. It addresses the reasons for reading to your children, how to get started and different characteristics of various age groups.

Hi! I'm Freddie and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Freddie

FREDDIE Book Buddy

List of materials

BOOKS

Jump, Frog, Jump!

I Took My Frog To the Library

The Small, Small Pond

Freddie the Frog puppet

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Reading With Your Child

"Five Green Frogs" Rhyme

Leap Frog Game

Count how many hops it takes to get from your kitchen to your bathroom. Can Mom or Dad do it in fewer hops? Why? Try hopping from different rooms in your house. Which rooms are farthest apart? Which rooms are closest?

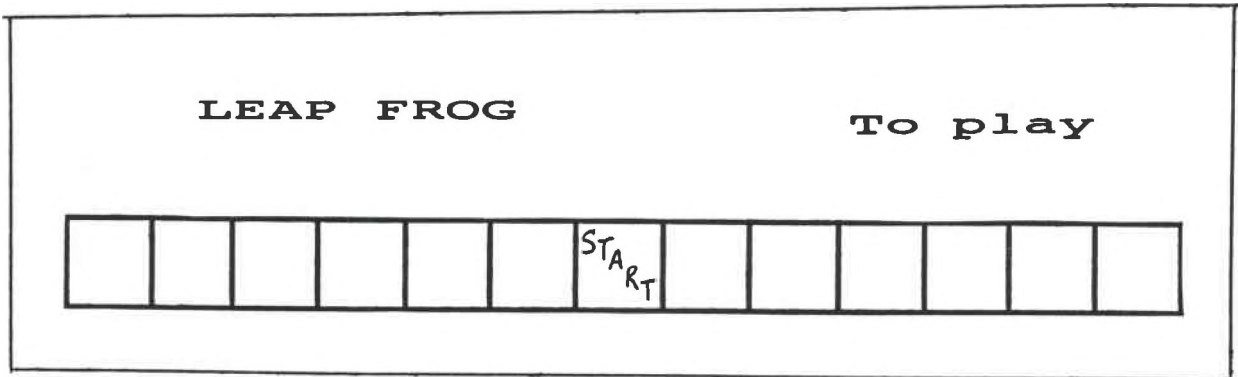
Use the frog counters to act out the rhyme “Five Green Frogs” on the storyboard.

Make a list of all the green foods you can think of.

Play the game Leap Frog.

Directions for making the Leap Frog Game

Prepare a gameboard that is 13 squares long in a straight line. The squares need to be large enough to hold a frog counter of some sort. In the center space write the word "Start". Copy and attach the playing directions to the gameboard and laminate. Include a frog counter and a die in a ziploc bag.



LEAP FROG

To play - Place the Frog marker on middle square (Start) of gameboard. Decide who goes first. One person rolls the die and moves the marker toward his end of gameboard that number of squares. The other player does the same (moving the frog in the opposite direction). Keep playing until someone gets the frog off the board on an exact count.

*Remember that you can always change the rules to suit your child or make up your own game.

Contents: gameboard, die, frog marker

Reading With Your Child

by Linda M. Levine, M.Ed.

Introduction

Learning how to read is one of the most important areas of language development. Parents often ask teachers, "How can I help my child with reading?" The answer might surprise you. You can help at home even before your child is ready for school.

Experts studied a group of school-age children who were good readers. The good readers had had several things in common when they were of preschool age. They had family members who:

- Read books, magazines, and newspapers
- Looked at books and magazines with them, and who READ TO THEM
- Talked to them about what was happening around them
- Pointed out words in books and other media
- Took the time to teach them new words

Pre-reading Activities

One of the most important things you can do to help with reading is something that does not involve books. It is teaching new vocabulary words and language skills during everyday activities. Even a trip to the market can be important for teaching pre-reading skills. Take time to help your child name the different kinds of fruit and vegetables. Help your child "read" the words on the boxes and cans. (This word is "soup.") Thinking skills can be developed while sorting the laundry. (My shirt is bigger than your shirt.) All this new information will help your child improve language skills and help get ready for reading in school.

Why read together?

Reading books or magazines together can be an enjoyable experience for parents and children. Reading to children will encourage good language development. Listening to stories is the basis for good reading. Children learn how a book works, where the beginning is, and how the story goes from page to page until the end. They learn that the pictures can be clues about the story. When they hear new ideas and new words, children expand their world and develop their thinking skills.

Tips On Reading With Your Child

Reading to your baby

You can start reading to your child when the child is very young. Eight to ten months old is not too early. Babies can enjoy looking at pictures in cloth books, in magazines, and even in toy catalogs. It is not necessary to read a story to a baby who has not yet learned how to speak. Just looking at the pictures is fine.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair with the baby on your lap.
2. Hold the book so that the pictures can be seen. Point to the pictures on the page. Raise and lower your voice, with lots of OOOHs and AHHHHs.
3. If the baby points to something or imitates the sounds you are making, give hugs and praise.
4. Lift the page a little, and encourage your baby to help turn it.
5. As the child learns to speak, start reading the stories. Take time to look at the pictures together. Stop reading the story if your child wants to talk about a picture. You may be surprised at the creativity and intelligence of some of your child's ideas.
6. When your child is able to take care of a book, get some books the child will enjoy. Owning books is as important as owning toys. Some good books can be bought inexpensively at supermarkets, bookstores, or rummage sales.
7. Take your child to the library as soon as the child can sit still for the toddler story time.

Reading to the preschool child

1. Set aside some time each day to enjoy reading together. Choose a quiet, special time when the child is not doing something else.
2. Allow your child to choose a book for you to read.
3. Take time to look at the pictures. Help the child name things and tell what is happening. Use books with large and colorful pictures.
4. Raise and lower your voice as you are telling the story. If you are paying attention to what is happening, so will your child.

Reading with the school-age child

When your child starts school and starts learning how to read, it becomes a good opportunity for the child to read to you! Continue reading together daily.

1. You and your child can take turns reading to each other. Praise what your child does well. Avoid criticism.
2. Remember that reading together should be fun. Don't use story time to teach reading. Remember to stop before either one of you becomes restless, tired, or bored.
3. Take advantage of your child's interests. Choose dinosaur books for dinosaur fans, etc.
4. Don't make your child choose between reading and watching television or playing outside. Let these activities all have their own place in your child's daily life.
5. If your child misses or stumbles on a word while reading out loud, just say the word. Don't make your child feel like a serious error has been made.
6. Ask your child's teacher for suggestions for reading to your child. If your child is reading a book at the proper ability level, the child will have good feelings about reading.
7. Remember that children learn by imitation. The BEST way to encourage reading is by reading yourself.

For more information:

Beck, Joan. *How to raise a brighter child*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.

Cullinan, B.E., and C. Carmichael, eds. 1977. *Literature and young children*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Dodson, F. *Give your child a head start in reading*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Dodson, F., and A. Alexander. 1986. *Your child: Pregnancy through preschool*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Hendrick, J. 1980. *The whole child*. St. Louis, MO: C.V. Mosby Company.

Larrick, N. 1969. *A parent's guide to children's reading*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster (also Pocket Books, paperback).

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
(800) 424-2460

Send for their list of publications, including their guide for selecting, purchasing, and using children's books.

Refer to:

- 2.1 Language Development
- 3.1 Infant Stimulation
- 4.1 Learning New Words
- 5.0 Home Activities for Speech and Language Development
- 8.2 Suggested Reading for Children
- 8.3 Pre-Reading Skills



If you are interested in learning more about
reading aloud to your child

I can lend you the book:

Read to Me:

Raising Kids Who Love to Read.

Please Ask For It!

SPOT

Literature Theme: Spot the puppy

Suggested Titles:

- *Where's Spot. Hill, E. (1980). New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. In looking for her missing puppy. Spot's mother searches every corner and niche of the house. As she peeks into closets and pianos, under beds and rugs, the reader and listeners can imitate her search by lifting page flaps to find an assortment of animals in hiding.
- *Spot's First Walk. Hill, E. (1981). Another Spot book that promotes active involvement between reader and book.
- *Spot Goes to School. Hill, E. (1984). More flaps to lift and peek under as Spot encounters activities and friends at school.

Parent Information Theme: helping children learn to write

Recommended Parent Handout: Helping Your Child Develop Writing Skills

Recommended Book: Kids Have All the Write Stuff. Edwards, S. & Maloy, R. (1992). New York: Penguin Books.

Hi! I'm Spot and I want to be your Book Buddy. I've packed a few of my favorite books and activities into this bag for us to use together. Please have someone read a story or two to us. Look inside the folder for other activities you might enjoy doing. Help me take good care of the items in my bag and please make sure you return all of them with me. Remember to return the bag on time so that I can visit other kids in the class.

Spot loves
to Read



Thanks for being my Book Buddy!

Spot

SPOT Book Buddy

List of materials

Books

Spot's First Walk

Where's Spot

Spot stuffed character

Instructions Folder

suggested activities sheet

parent information:

Developing Writing Skills

Spot Loves to Read coloring sheet

Spot's Journal

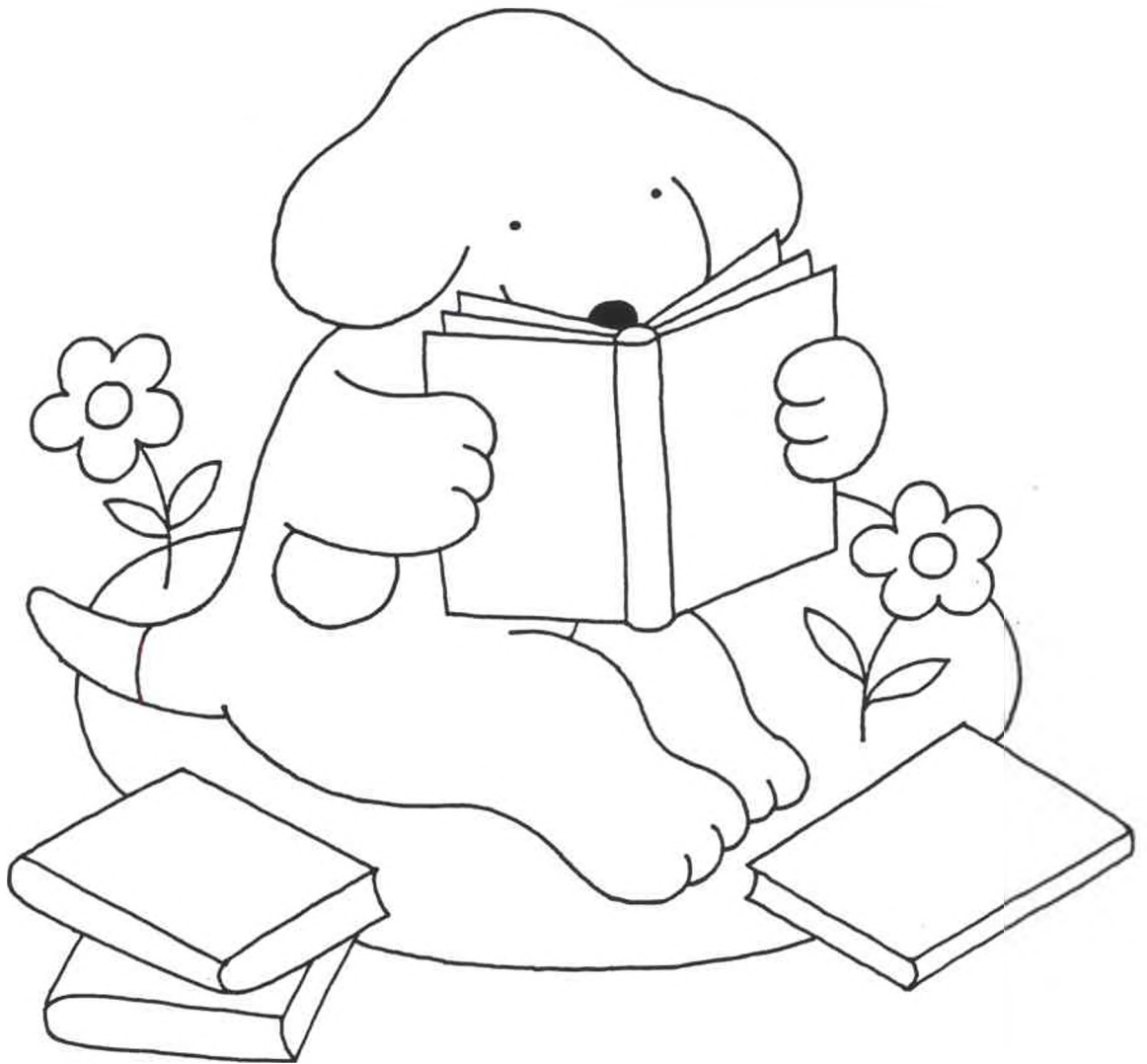
Colored Spot dominoes

Draw a picture of something Spot did while staying at your house. Have Mom or Dad write something about the picture you drew. Add it to Spot's journal.

Decorate the "Spot Loves to Read" coloring picture.

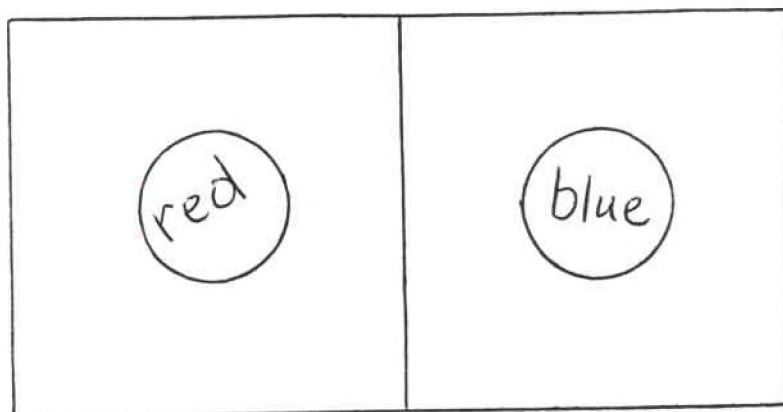
Play a game of Colored Spot Dominoes.

Spot loves to Read



Directions for making the Colored Spot Dominoes

Use tagboard to make 21 cards approximately 2" by 4". Draw a line across the center of each card so that there are two 2" squares on each domino card. In each square place a colored "sticky dot" sticker in the following combinations: red-red, red-orange, red-yellow, red-green, red-blue, red-purple, orange-orange, orange-yellow, orange-green, orange-blue, orange-purple, yellow-yellow, yellow-green, yellow-blue, yellow-purple, green-green, green-blue, green-purple, blue-blue, blue-purple, purple-purple. Laminate the cards and the playing directions and store in a ziploc bag.



Colored Spot Dominoes

Give each player 5 cards and place the remaining cards face down in a pile. Let one player begin by placing a card in the middle of the playing area. If the next player has a card with a half that matches on one of the halves of the first card, have the player place the card next to the first card so that the matching halves are touching. If the 2nd player does not have a matching card, let him draw cards from the pile until a match is found. Continue the game until all the cards have been played.

Contents: 21 cards

FOR PARENTS

Help Your Child Develop Writing Skills

By Lisa Feeney

For many of us, the idea of learning to write may bring back memories of worksheets, dotted lines, chubby pencils, and ABC cards. However, since our childhoods, researchers have discovered a great deal about how children learn to write. They now know that young children don't learn to write when we purposefully teach them writing skills. Instead, each child actually reinvents the writing process by seeing others write, by experimenting with writing materials, and by pretending to write during uninhibited play. This is part of a process known as emergent literacy. It's usually at around first grade that teaching conventional writing and spelling begins to make sense to children. So there's no need to rush it!

Here are several enjoyable ways you can encourage your son or daughter at this stage of development.

Set a good example.

Children want to be like the adults they admire. When your son or daughter sees that you enjoy reading and writing, he or she will naturally want to imitate that behavior.

Answer questions about letters and words.

Try to wait for your child to ask questions and then give simple, direct answers about the names of letters or what things say. This way, the information is in direct response to your

child's interests rather than information you feel he or she needs to learn.

Pay attention to signs.

Road signs are a great way for children to experience the usefulness of print. Try to read signs aloud: "Stop, S-T-O-P. That red sign tells me to stop the car." Also, encourage your child to make pretend signs during play and tell you what they say.

Take dictation.

Taking dictation is writing down your child's words exactly as he or she says them. You can create books together, write letters, make signs, or just have fun as your child sees what his or her words look like in print.

Provide lots of writing materials.

Encourage your child to write on his or her own by providing a variety of materials including pencils, crayons, markers, and paper. Don't interrupt your child to correct letter formation or spelling. Your child should feel free to experiment, imitate, invent, and make believe.

Create note cards.

Help your child make greeting cards, thank-you notes, or get-well cards. He or she will see that you can express feelings through writing.

Make and mail picture letters.

Encourage your child to draw a special picture for a faraway relative or friend. Then help your child add a few descrip-

tive words, put it in an envelope, address it, affix the stamp, and put it in the mailbox. Don't forget to check the mail each day for a response. Your child will discover the joy of communicating with written words.

Make lists together.

Another way for your child to see a direct benefit of print is to make and use shopping and things-to-do lists. Let your child hold the list and use a pencil to mark off items as you shop or work.

Set up a play office.

Preschoolers love to collect and use old office supplies. Help your child set up a place where he or she can "work" at pretend writing.

Encourage writing in pretend play.

Offer your child such items as old receipts and checkbooks. Then play along when your child pretends to write a bill for the groceries you purchased or a check for a toy he or she bought.

Be ready to help.

When your child asks you how to print a letter or word or to write a story he or she wants to dictate, be patient. Your willingness to help will encourage your child to write every day.

Lisa Feeney has a master's degree in early childhood education, is a former associate editor at Pre-K Today, and is currently an early childhood educator and free-lance writer.

If you are interested in learning more about
encouraging beginning writing

I can lend you the book:

Kids Have All the Write Stuff

Please Ask For It!

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This guide was developed by the writer to get parents involved in the education of their kindergarten child. It includes suggestions for compiling literature based learning packets that children may check out for use at home with their families.

In Chapter I, which outlines the purpose for the study, the writer discusses the need to involve parents in the reading process to help ensure that students are being taught not only how to read but to instill in them the desire to read. Because reading aloud, though simple to do, is such a powerful influence, this chapter details the need for teachers to encourage parents to participate at home by making available appropriate reading materials and activities.

In Chapter II, the writer reviewed the literature related to the study. Research into various methods of involving parents in their child's education are discussed and the most effective method, training parents to work with their own child at home, is identified. Included are sections addressing the benefits of reading aloud to children and the benefits of using children's literature as the basis for other learning activities.

In Chapter III, Methodology, the writer explains arriving at the idea of the Book Buddy literature packets as a means to help parents become involved in reading and working with their child. How the components of the packets were developed and why the specific materials were chosen is discussed. Recommendations for acquiring the necessary materials or appropriate substitutions are also included.

Chapter IV, the Results of the Project, outlines the specific contents of each literature packet. Included are annotated lists of suggested children's literature and recommended parent information resources, literature based activities for extending learning, and lists of any other materials included in the packets.

Implications for Practice

Having the appropriate parental involvement and support of education is of benefit to all involved: parent, student, and teacher. Teachers, therefore, must reach out to inform and involve parents in suitable ways. The Book Buddy literature packets are one method of doing this. The initial time and resources invested in assembling this type of a school/home reading connection will pay off in increased enthusiasm among children for reading and by guiding parents into beneficial involvement activities with their children.

Beginning teachers or those teachers not familiar with the extensive variety of children's literature currently available may wish to follow closely the outlines for

suggested books, activities and materials. Teachers who are very familiar with children's literature and using extension activities may wish to use the ideas as a basis from which to create their own literature packets. The literature packets may be duplicated as exactly or as loosely as a teacher desires depending upon the needs of a particular class or the availability of materials. By adapting the difficulty and interest level of the reading material and suggested activities, this type of take home reading packet could be successfully employed in classrooms ranging from PreK to third grade.

It is the writer's sincere hope that other teachers will find the suggestions in the project useful in creating a similar involvement program for parents. Many teachers are hesitant or unsure about how to tap into the tremendous educational resource that parent home involvement offers and it is the writer's desire to see more teachers and parents become active partners in the education of children. For my students, parents and myself, this has been a fun and motivating way for us to work together toward the goal of creating those lifelong readers. As a parent, working on this project has helped to reaffirm my commitment to reading aloud in our home, and instilling that reading desire in my own children.

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