

Introducing Books and Language

# Bookstart

Selected Activities for Babies, Toddlers,  
and Young Children

by Jennifer Birckmayer and Bonnie Jo Westendorf



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# Introduction:

## Notes for Workshop Leaders

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In a world that often seems full of unhappy events and people, children's books, stories, conversations, and play can provide oases of pleasure and comfort. Unfortunately, many highly stressed adults are unaware of the riches to be found in sharing books with children; some highly educated adults have yet to discover children's literature that is currently available. Although books are an expensive luxury, they are freely circulated by public libraries, most of which welcome babies, toddlers, young children, and adults. In addition to providing books, many libraries offer a host of other services and special events. The Bookstart program is intended to inform those who parent or care for children about the delights of using books and doing language-related activities with their small charges. The program is also intended to create an awareness of the ways books and language-related activities contribute to children's literacy skills and in turn foster the literacy skills of adults.

The goals of the program are as follows:

1. To introduce developmentally appropriate books and language-related activities for children 0 to 5 years of age to adults who care for or about children.
2. To encourage adults to increase their own literacy skills by using books and expanding communication with children. Simultaneously, adults will increase their understanding of child development and their parenting or child care skills.
3. To increase awareness among adults who care for young children of the importance and pleasure of sharing books with them and to help adults understand that activities such as reading books and telling stories can provide
  - pleasant ways to develop and strengthen relationships with children.
  - vehicles for communicating personal values, interests, and concerns.
  - sources of information about the world and the people who live in it.
  - a foundation for children to develop a love for books that can help them toward later success in school.
  - connections between workshop participants and public libraries that will enable participants to view libraries as a source of support and pleasure for people of all ages, including the very young.

The program consists of information for workshop leaders or facilitators, suggested outlines for six workshops, and handouts for workshop participants.

Information for workshop leaders or facilitators is given in this Introduction, in the sections “How the Bookstart Program Addresses Readiness for School” and “How to Be a Workshop Leader or Facilitator,” and in the background sheets following each workshop outline.

In the six workshops participants will select and use developmentally appropriate books with 0- to 5-year-olds, make a book for a child, practice using books to begin conversations with children, and visit a public library and learn about its services for children and adults. They will also explore a variety of activities that foster language and literacy in young children in a visit to an early childhood education program or by doing a hands-on workshop.

Handouts follow each workshop outline. They can be duplicated for distribution to participants. The workshop leader may decide that some background sheets are appropriate to use as handouts.

### A collection of children’s books is essential for the workshops.

Suggested titles are listed on pages 39 and 40. Workshop leaders should feel free to substitute some of their own favorites, but they should be sure that the books that are used reflect the principles for selection advocated in the Bookstart program.

We suggest that the collection of books used in this program reflect cultural diversity. If participants in a particular workshop series are from a particular culture, every effort should be made to include many books with pictures and stories reflecting that culture. Children’s books from many cultures can provide rich fodder for discussion and reflection.

We have included a few sturdy cardboard books on the list, but more will be needed if participants are to examine a variety. The market for these board books is expanding so rapidly that we hesitate to make recommendations because more and better ones appear each day. The workshop leader will find many to choose from on a trip to a children’s section of a good library or bookstore. A few of our favorite authors of board books are Sara Lynn, Harold Roth, Eloise Wilkin, Martha Alexander, and Tana Hoban. Books by Helen Oxenbury and Eric Hill seem to be top favorites with the diaper crowd. We particularly appreciate Helen Oxenbury’s multicultural illustrations.

### How do you acquire this collection of books?

Before you begin the workshop series, visit your library and talk with the children’s librarian about the Bookstart program. Most libraries will make a special arrangement for you to borrow a large number of books for an

extended period of time. The librarian can also be of invaluable help in substituting books for ones that are not in the library. Finally, the librarian can be invited to cofacilitate Workshop 5, and you might make arrangements for that workshop during your initial visit.

Some bookstores will lend books for public relations reasons or as a community service. Elementary schools often have large collections and will lend books for adult education. Because one of the goals of the Bookstart program is to help families and child-caring adults discover their public library, we suggest going there first.

### Why aren't the books categorized by the age of the children for whom they are intended?

In our experience, chronological age is rarely a good predictor of maturity; neither is it a good predictor of books children will enjoy. We have known five-year-olds whose favorite is a wordless board book and babies who disdain literature intended for them but are passionate about an encyclopedia. One of us recalls baby-sitting for a seven-year-old whose choices for a bedtime story were *The Little Fur Family* and a fat volume titled *The History of the Spanish Civil War*. If you feel the need to categorize books by chronological age, a children's librarian will be able to provide you with many lists that do just that.

Literacy skills emerge in many ways—through listening and speaking, through immersion in a print-filled environment that includes books, and through early writing. The Bookstart program activities can only provide a hint of the complexity that is involved in helping people become literate. We emphasize that the early stages of literacy seem to lie in comfortable conversations about pictures and books, storytelling, and using language in playful ways. Encouraging adults to introduce the rhythms, humor, warmth, and richness of language by talking and listening, dramatizing and playing, and referring to the books and stories children have enjoyed establishes an attitude toward language as a powerful, happy vehicle for communication. And as they offer these gifts to children, adults find they have also received the gifts themselves.

Workshop leaders can provide the following letter to prospective participants in the Bookstart series as motivation for attending the workshops.

**Dear Parents:**

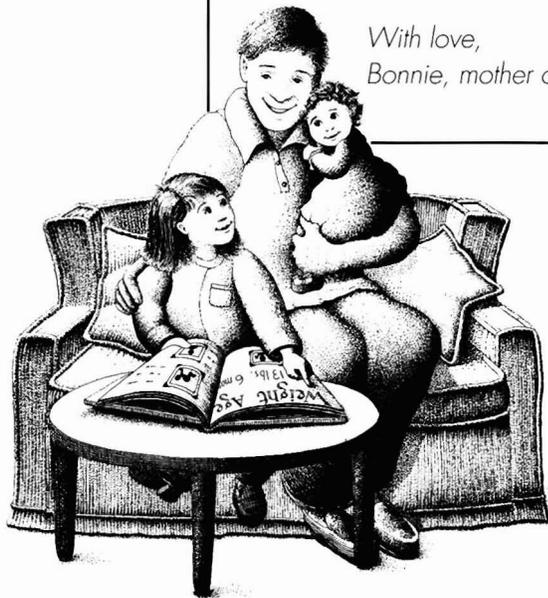
It wasn't until I was "thirty something" and had my second child that I truly began to appreciate and enjoy the world of children's literature. As I reflect back to when my first baby was born, it seemed I was too busy as a new mom trying to get all the "important things" right (feeding, bathing, and washing clothes). I didn't take the time or even really know about the things that truly mattered—like sharing a book together.

Since then, however, I have come to enjoy and love everything the world of children's literature has to offer to both me and my child. Children's stories make it okay to make-believe, to travel to far-off places, to be silly, to be sad, to have a "terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad day." But the love of language which child and parent share does not stop and start with children's books. Singing favorite songs, putting on a play with finger puppets, or reading the back of the cereal box all contribute to building language skills your child will carry throughout life.

For me, the best part has been sharing children's stories with my own child. I will always treasure the feeling of my daughter's soft hair rubbing against my cheek as we snuggled to read *Goodnight Moon*, I will never forget the times when my teenage son would appear in the doorway while I was reading to my daughter and the next thing I knew, he'd be snuggled up on the other side of me enjoying the story with us. Words cannot describe the intimacy and closeness felt while sharing books with children—it has to be experienced.

I encourage all parents to take the time to become a part of this world with their children—these moments will create memories for both you and your child. Happy reading!

With love,  
Bonnie, mother of Caitlyn and Aaron



## How the Bookstart Program Addresses Readiness for School

**S**ix educational goals for children were established by the president and governors of the United States in 1989. The first of those goals, to be achieved by the year 2000, calls for all children to be ready to learn when they start school. This goal recognizes the importance of the early years of life in determining later success in school. It also implies that children who are confident, healthy, secure, and have had appropriate social and educational experiences will be off to a good start when entering kindergarten. We believe that the approach and activities suggested in the Bookstart program can help children get a good start.

Being ready to learn involves a complicated set of factors. A comprehensive community-based approach is necessary to achieve the optimal development of every child. Susan Walker, a consultant on communities and school readiness, is the author of a paper "Background Report: Factors Associated with Children's School Readiness," which summarizes risk factors she has compiled with Dave Riley at the University of Wisconsin. Walker and Riley suggest four categories of risks that may prevent children from being ready for school:

1. Maternal and child health, including low birth weight, poor prenatal health, lead poisoning, child abuse, childhood illness, poor nutritional status
2. Parenting and the family environment—unresponsive parenting, inadequate literacy experiences, hostile or inconsistent discipline style, physical characteristics of the home environment, stressful conditions for parents
3. Early childhood education factors—developmentally inappropriate learning environments, lack of good-quality early out-of-home learning, lack of supports for transition to kindergarten, lack of parent involvement in early education, age and quality of early learning, and inadequate learning opportunities
4. Family demographics—poverty, limited maternal education, socioeconomic status, and family structure



We believe that each category of risk must be carefully addressed and that social, economic, and educational supports must be firmly in place if children are to thrive. Obviously children who are hungry, frightened, ill, abused, or neglected cannot learn. Books, stories, and language activities alone cannot alleviate or counteract this need. Surprisingly, however, even when children and adults are under severe stress, a poem, song, or story can grant moments of comfort, even serenity. Countless anecdotal accounts of people who have been captive, isolated, or in situations that seemed hopeless document the comfort they derived from recalling books, stories, poems, and songs stored in their memories. During one dramatic example in 1987, many anxious people were moved to tears when they heard that, after falling into a pipe and remaining there for two days, eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure comforted herself by singing nursery rhymes, and when rescuers inquired through a microphone, "How does a kitty go?" the tiny child reassured them by saying "Meow" from her place underground, reflecting her previous experience with responsive adults. People who keep journals, write poetry, or put their thoughts into other written forms also derive comfort from the process.

Increasing the health status of mothers and children is certainly a formidable task, but it could be infinitely more bearable when accomplished by sensitive adults who maintain their sense of play and the love of language required for effective communication. So we believe that emphasizing the importance and delights of language is not a frivolous use of time and energy, even for the many young children whose lives are filled with harsh realities.

We believe this program has the most to offer in responding to Walker and Riley's categories 2 and 3. We have, with their kind permission, added on the following pages some strategies that we believe may address risks in these categories. The Risk Factors and Description columns are from Walker and Riley's paper, adapted with permission from Susan Walker.

## Parenting and the Family Environment

Listed by Walker and Riley

<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How Bookstart Addresses This Risk</i>
<b>Unresponsive parenting</b>	Parenting that is warm, attentive, responsive, verbally interactive, and nurturing toward infants and young children is most stimulating to the development of cognitive, language, and social skills.	<p>The Bookstart program increases adult understanding of child development and fosters the ability of adults to talk, read, and respond to children in developmentally appropriate ways.</p> <p>Adults who have little or no experience with the demands of parenting or child care are often inattentive, respond inappropriately, or are hostile because they lack parenting skills.</p> <p>Many parents want to be warm and nurturing but aren't sure how to go about it. They expect too much or too little of their children, and they believe that children will not be ready for books until they enter school or at least until after they have developed language. Important and richly rewarding experiences with language, books, and songs are missed because, as one parent said sadly, "No one told me about them or that they could be important to very young children."</p>
<b>Inadequate literacy experiences</b>	Language use and acquisition are facilitated by a nondirective, accepting, and elaborate speaking mode. Interest in reading is stimulated most by regular and interactive reading between parent and young child.	Talking, listening, playing, telling stories, singing songs, and sharing books with young children are skills that can be learned. Choosing developmentally appropriate books and activities will help one live comfortably with young children. Helping adults develop these skills is one goal of the Bookstart program.
<b>Parental discipline style</b>	Hostile, inconsistent parenting is associated with aggressive behavior in children. Discipline that asserts control firmly and consistently within a positive emotional context is related to children's positive social development.	<p>When adults discover activities and experiences that they enjoy sharing with young children, they can establish a positive emotional context that fosters a caring relationship.</p> <p>Engaging in mutually satisfying activities in an atmosphere of loving support may also establish a foundation for a consistent and positive discipline style.</p>

## Parenting and the Family Environment *(continued)*

Listed by Walker and Riley

<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How Bookstart Addresses This Risk</i>
<b>Physical characteristics of the home environment</b>	Cognitive development in infancy and early childhood is correlated with aspects of the home environment such as crowding of furniture, safety, noise, and the selection of toys and play-things. Depending on its use, television can have a positive or negative impact on reading and academic achievement.	Books and other language-related activities should be developmentally appropriate and will be most effective if there is a quiet environment in which adults and children can talk with and listen to each other. Introducing alternatives to TV, such as looking at books or telling stories, can, if wisely used, reduce the amount of inappropriate TV watching and alert adults to programs that are educationally beneficial. The Bookstart program acquaints adults with two community resources that can benefit families: early childhood education programs and public libraries.
<b>Stressful conditions for parents</b>	Having a limited income or little education and being young or single are stressful conditions that limit parents' abilities to stimulate young children to develop early learning skills. Parents who have weak community or family support are even more affected by these problems.	Language is a free resource, available to all who choose to use it. Turning parents and child-caring adults on to the joys to be found in language-related activities is, in a sense, reminding them of "freebies" available even in times of stress. A child who goes to bed to the sound of his father singing a lullaby, a toddler who is hospitalized in an emergency but whose mom is by her bedside with favorite stories and songs, or a preschooler whose understanding teacher shares a book about someone whose parents are also going through a divorce has sturdy emotional resources to call upon. And when adults say they "don't know stories," discovering the public library can be a life-enriching event.
		We don't claim that language-related experiences can alleviate the sufferings of poverty, chronic disease, or other difficult human conditions. But we <i>do</i> know that the patterns and rhythms of words found in stories, books, and songs can often provide comfort and pleasure. The ability to seek and find this comfort and pleasure can begin in the earliest years of life.

## Parenting and the Family Environment *(continued)*

Listed by Walker and Riley

<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How Bookstart Addresses This Risk</i>
<b>Low-quality early education</b>	Early learning environments that are not developmentally appropriate, have too few staff numbers, have inadequately trained staff, and do not involve parents are believed to provide poor quality learning experiences for young children.	The quality of early learning can be improved by making parents and staff aware of the need for positive, playful one-on-one adult-child interactions; exposing staff and parents to the wonderful riches of children's books and language-related activities; helping adults use carefully chosen books and language-related activities in developmentally appropriate ways; and emphasizing the importance of creating a shared history of books, stories, poems, and songs that make up a family culture or a shared background of experience in out-of-home programs. The Bookstart program provides many opportunities for participants to review and discuss a variety of books. The program encourages participants to choose children's books that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.
<b>Low-quality early out-of-home learning for disadvantaged children</b>	High-quality care for infants and preschool attendance have been shown to be of great benefit to disadvantaged children. Gains in IQ, self-esteem, health, motor coordination, and development have been observed in programs designed to assist these children.	The presence of culturally and developmentally appropriate books, the quality of interactions between children and adults, and low adult-child ratios that make individual attention possible are indicators of a high-quality program. Mutual pleasure in language and language-related experiences can contribute to more loving adult-child relationships in an appropriately stimulating environment.

## Parenting and the Family Environment *(continued)*

Listed by Walker and Riley

<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How Bookstart Addresses This Risk</i>
<b>Lack of support for the transition to kindergarten</b>	Unless children making the transition to kindergarten continue to get support in their learning, especially those in programs like Head Start that are designed to help disadvantaged children, the benefits of those early efforts are likely to fade.	Parents who have acquired skill in using books and language with young children will feel more confident about their role as their child's primary teacher, more competent in developing their child's language skills, and more familiar with the world of books, including reading and writing in school. Thus parents may become empowered to support their children's transition to kindergarten and to remain involved in their school and educational lives.
<b>Lack of parental involvement in early education</b>	Parents' involvement in early learning that includes reinforcing concepts at home, participating in the classroom, and helping to set policies helps their children develop learning and social skills and may influence their later academic achievement.	Parents who develop feelings of confidence and competence through successful early language experiences and positive interactions with their children are more likely to take an active role in their children's education than are parents who have developed negative or hostile relationships with their children.
<b>Age and quality of early learning</b>	The quality of the early learning environment is more critical the earlier the child begins the out-of-home experience. Children who are exposed to a poor-quality environment in the first year have the most problems, as shown by their adjustment (or failure to adjust) in kindergarten. Conversely, children who attend a high-quality preschool program at young ages have greater success in first grade than do those who begin school at age five.	This program presents books as sources of pleasure, information, and reassurance for children and adults. Although activities to foster language and develop a love for reading are only part of a high-quality early learning environment, they are of utmost importance. Becoming "hooked on books" at an early age instills in young children a delight in learning that is both easy and pleasurable for adults—parents, teachers, and caregivers—to share.

## Parenting and the Family Environment *(continued)*

Listed by Walker and Riley

<i>Risk Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>How Bookstart Addresses This Risk</i>
<b>Inadequate community learning opportunities</b>	Libraries, museums, parks, and even shopping malls are places in the community where young children can develop their cognitive and social skills. Safe, high-quality experiences that are planned with children's learning needs in mind can help to reinforce concepts taught at home and elsewhere and provide opportunities for children and their families to interact with others.	The program encourages adults to use public libraries as an important family resource. Families, caregivers, and teachers who are excited about books for young children can find treasures of them in local public libraries across the country. Although this program specifically encourages adults to use one community resource—libraries—we hope that as they become comfortable in the library they will become aware of a wealth of other welcoming community agencies and cultural resources.

### **We emphasize again that this program**

- does not stand alone; it must be embedded in a caring community.
- is not magic.
- is not a panacea.

It does, however, offer a simple, pleasant, and effective strategy for strengthening the quality of adult-child relationships, promoting language development, and increasing literacy skills.

## Family Literacy Programs

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**F**amily literacy programs attempt to break the cycle of inter-generational illiteracy by working with both parent and child. Parents and their children are taught academic skills and are brought together for learning activities. Parents are offered instruction in skills such as nurturing, educating, disciplining, and communication. Family literacy programs vary from one community to another because each program attempts to meet the needs of its community and participants.

Family literacy programs require cooperation between adult educators and early childhood educators. Parents may attend during the school day or in the evening if they are employed. Children receive instruction in academic and social skills but also spend time with their parents and the program staff so parents and children can work together to enhance communication skills and interactions.

Participants in family literacy programs are parents who lack the basic literacy skills and often the positive self-concepts needed to encourage their children to do well in school or to help their preschool children develop the necessary skills to help them do better later in life. Participants include single parents, low-income parents, and parents of children in Head Start, Title XX, and Chapter 1 programs.

Parents' involvement in their children's schooling can influence students' achievement, attendance, motivation, self-concept, and behavior. Children of parents who read to them, have books in the home, have a positive attitude toward school, and have high expectations for achievement tend to become higher achievers than those of parents who do not. Adults who have not mastered the basic skills cannot model appropriate literacy behavior and often pass on to their children the attitudes and abilities that keep them from breaking the cycle of illiteracy.

The notion that the educationally disadvantaged parent and child are a learning unit and could benefit from shared learning experiences has led to the formation of family literacy programs to improve the literacy skills of both parents and children. In many family literacy programs parents are taught basic literacy skills and, at the same time, are given direct instruction in how to share those skills with their children. Components of family literacy programs usually include school-based skills, planned conversation periods, handling everyday tasks and duties, and parent-child interaction, including playing with children and language enrichment.

# How to Be a Workshop Leader or Facilitator

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**T**he Bookstart program was developed to help you organize your efforts to use children's books as vehicles for educating parents and promoting family literacy.

Workshop outlines are designed to serve as a guide. The workshops and strategies are based on a few simple benefits:

- People learn more when they are actively involved in their own learning.
- People often have the intuitive wisdom they need. A good facilitator helps participants discover and share their intuition. Facilitators are not required to be experts on every topic. Adult learners bring many life experiences to workshop sessions. A positive evaluation is "I learned from other people in the workshop."
- Each person has a "living laboratory" of life experiences. Many workshop outlines ask participants to remember back to their own childhoods as a way to connect the information presented with their version of reality.
- Presenting a new or different framework for thinking about a topic helps participants see and think about that topic in a new way.
- Each experience needs to be tailored to the needs of the program participants. Do this by using examples from their situations, timing that fits, and emphasis on areas they tell you they need.

Each trainer has his or her own style of presentation. Feel free to make these workshops your own, letting your own style shine. Use your own words. Add examples from your own living laboratory of life experiences. Add activities that have "spoken to you" about a topic and that you feel sure will "speak to" your participants. Omit activities that seem awkward or contrived for your style.

As a workshop leader, you are trying to influence your audience. When your actions, your manner, and your words express conviction, your ability to influence is strong. Study the concepts presented in the outlines and weave the richness of your own experiences into the workshops. Pay attention to how you state concepts. "I believe . . ." expresses more conviction than "I think. . ." Make these workshops your own; your conviction will shine through, and your ability to influence will soar.

Resist the temptation to cover too much material in too little time. Especially resist the temptation to “save time” by cutting out small group discussions or activities that involve participants in their own learning. Active involvement is the life of any training. Saving time by lecturing rather than encouraging participants to experience a topic will drain the life out of your training. Often participants create a large group discussion from their need to question or digest information. That large group discussion may take more time than the originally planned activity.

## Planning the Workshops

As you plan the workshops you want to do, you will need to address the following questions.

- Which topics are most appropriate for participants at this time?
- Which workshops will I deliver at this time? (The workshops can be used in ways other than the suggested sequence.)
- What steps do I need to take to set time aside for the workshop, encourage participants to look forward to our sessions, and prepare myself to deliver high-quality workshops?
- What resources, including guest speakers, will I choose to use? How will I prepare guests to deliver what I want them to?
- How will I know whether the program is effective?

## Steps to Take

- **Planning:** everything you do before you schedule, announce, and conduct a workshop. Solid planning results in a solid program.
- **Marketing:** helping participants look forward to your workshops will help you deliver better programs.
- **Practice, practice, practice:** get yourself ready. Know your stuff. Get your act together.
- **Presentation:** the reward for all your planning and practice.
- **Successful outcomes:** how to tell if your program was effective.

Think about the last movie or play you saw. How much time do you think it took to produce that two hours of entertainment? How much planning, marketing, and rehearsal did it take to make a presentation you could enjoy? We do not intend to turn you into entertainers, but we do believe it is useful to think about producing our programs in the same way we might approach producing a Broadway play. We therefore invite



### Rehearsal

How long do I need to prepare for each session? \_\_\_\_\_

When will I schedule preparation and rehearsal time for myself?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do I need to read so I understand more about before the workshops?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Applause: Successful Outcomes

When will I evaluate the program? \_\_\_\_\_

What will I be looking for as a successful outcome? \_\_\_\_\_

### Rehearsal

Learn your part.

Learn what else you need to know to feel comfortable teaching a topic.

Read the resources listed for the workshop.

Seek out other resources on the topic.

Add your own real-life examples to the workshop content.

Interview experts on the topic.

Invite experts to present a training session. (Be sure to communicate your purpose and expectations clearly to them.)

Search out and use resources. See the section "Getting What I Want from a Guest Speaker."

Gather your props and learn how to use them.

Prepare your notes and know what you'll say or do and when you'll say or do it.

Prepare your audiovisual equipment, charts written on newsprint, or VCR, and know how to use them.

Practice until you know your stuff and feel comfortable and confident.

### Applause: Successful Outcomes

Think about the results you want after you have done a great session. At the end of a play, the cast usually gets applause, and that's how they know they were successful. Workshop leaders love applause too! But applause doesn't mean much unless your audience changes their behavior with children. Workshop leaders want to know that they have made an impact on participants and the people they serve.

Applause often comes in the form of observing new behavior among those who have been in a workshop session. Use this sheet to plan the

outcomes you want to see as a result of your workshop. Ask yourself the following questions and record your responses.

- What will help me feel the workshop has been effective and therefore successful?
- When I have done a workshop on a given topic, how will I know that it has been effective?
- What will participants be doing differently than they do now?
- Will I be able to measure what they are doing differently?
- What would it take to make my indicators measurable?
- When can I expect to see these success indicators?

### **Getting What I Want from a Guest Speaker**

A guest speaker who has expertise in a topic can be a blessing or a bomb. Use the following checklist as a guide for preparing a guest speaker to be a blessing for you and your staff.

- Have I found an expert who understands the topic as it applies to my program? Have I checked references? (In this program, for instance, a children's librarian may be a great expert.)
- Have I clearly communicated my expectations: what I want my audience to learn, skills I want them to practice, outcomes that will make me feel the program was successful?
- Have I clearly communicated any morale or teamwork issues that might affect a workshop session?
- Have I clearly communicated my perception of the needs of the audience?
- Does the presenter know the date, time, and place of the workshop?
- Do I know the presenter's needs for equipment, space, setup, time, and so on, and can I have everything ready when she or he arrives?

Have we agreed on a fee or a voluntary presentation? Have we agreed who will duplicate handouts for our audience?

- Have we paid or thanked the presenter for his or her time and talent?
- Have I seen the results I wanted?

## **Great Workshops**

Think about programs you have attended. What elements were present in a good workshop? What was missing in a less successful one?

## **Purposeful Workshops**

Share the goals of each workshop with participants as you begin. Tie all activities in the workshop back to the goals. Participants will learn more and participate more willingly when they know why you are doing what you do.

## **Modeling**

Act toward your audience as you would like them to act toward children. Use active listening, “I” messages, encouragement, and positive conflict resolution skills in daily interaction with others as well as during the workshops. Use workshop sessions to model energizers, transitions, and other activities that participants can use with children.

## **Find Another Prophet to Carry Your Message**

Just as children seem to listen better to adults other than their parents, your audience may learn better if you can arrange for someone else to conduct some of the sessions. Seek out networks that will allow you to share responsibilities with educators from other programs. Set clear expectations of a guest speaker as shown in the section “Getting What I Want from a Guest Speaker.” A respected teacher of young children or a children’s librarian may be a wonderful guest workshop leader.

## **Pay Attention to Needs of Participants**

### **Psychological Safety**

- Establish noncritical ground rules.
- Plan something to do for people who arrive early. Refreshments or a few children’s books on a table help create a comfortable atmosphere.
- Use care to avoid putting anyone down, even inadvertently.

### **Learning Styles**

Remember that people learn in different ways:

- Visually: print key ideas on newsprint. Use handouts.
- Orally: introduce the content and allow participants to talk about their ideas.
- Kinesthetically: use movement and physical demonstration to reach people who need to feel learning in their bodies.

**Physical Comfort**

- Be attentive to physical needs such as stretch breaks, room temperature, and lighting.
- Use a room setup that allows participants to sit comfortably and see you and each other easily.

**Attention Spans: Pace and Flow**

- Watch the clock so your participants don't have to.
- Be prepared to vary an activity that the group is losing interest in or that the group wants to continue.
- Bring a discussion to closure when there are still a few thoughts left to be shared. Encourage further conversation at breaks, future meetings, and other times.
- Vary the energy level by how you structure the workshop. Vary large group activities with small groups; vary sit-and-listen time with active-doing time.

**Use Your Workshop Sessions as a Guide to Further Learning**

In the time you have, you'll never be able to teach as much as you'd like your participants to know. Use workshops to whet people's appetites to keep learning. Provide resources such as books and videos and tell them about other organizations that can help them continue learning. Make use of resources in your community. Be sure participants know how to become members of a library and where to find literacy volunteers, parent educators, and early childhood services. Workshop outlines provided in this program are meant to be foundations on which you can build.

**Prepare Well, Work Hard, and Relax and Have Fun!**

Most of us learn better when we enjoy what we are doing. Workshops offer a break in the routine of working or living with children and should be used to refresh, refuel, and recreate your audience. Show that you care for your participants and build fun into your workshops by

- encouraging participants.
- providing special refreshments.
- making your training site visually attractive. Flowers are a lovely touch.
- playing fun music.
- using humorous anecdotes or cartoons that also fulfill the purpose of your workshop.
- having fun yourself.

## **Strategies, Techniques, and Bags of Tricks**

The workshop outlines in this manual use a variety of strategies to involve the learners and pull discoveries out of people. We have grouped the strategies into the following categories but have not used all of them in the Bookstart program. You may find ways to improve on activities we have suggested by substituting a strategy from this list.

- Warm-Ups and Starters
- Groupings
- Role Playing
- Brainstorming
- Modeling and Demonstration
- Leading Discussions

Closure

Use the material presented under each strategy

- as a review before conducting a workshop that uses a particular strategy.
- for ideas to create variations on strategies when you want to tailor your presentation.
- for ideas to breathe life into any meeting, training session, or workshop.
- for new ways to do something.
- for new ways to approach a topic.
- for ways to put your own stamp on a workshop.

Each section gives reasons for using the particular strategy and times when it might be especially helpful. It provides a few tried and tested techniques to start you thinking.

Every good teacher draws on his or her own bag of tricks to make learning come alive and become more meaningful for participants. Use the following pages as the beginning for your Training Bag of Tricks.

### **Warm-Ups and Starters**

#### **Why Use Warm-Ups and Starters?**

- Get people involved and on task right away.
- Help participants get ready to focus their attention on the topic.
- Help people feel comfortable in the group and increase their sense of belonging.

## Warm-Up Ideas

- For people who arrive early: Put early arrivers at ease by offering them something to do such as putting out refreshments, handing out materials, or chatting with you (which requires that you are ready to go when the earliest person arrives). Put a few children's books on the tables and encourage people to browse.
- For people who arrive late: Accept and acknowledge that you are glad they are here. Help them find a seat. Write the purpose or goals of the workshop on chalkboard or newsprint so people can see it as well as hear you say it.

Clear the decks: Ask each person to share warm-up responsibility by talking about the books he or she shared with children during the time since the last workshop.

- Music: Playing or singing music can set the tone and help build a sense of community. Many children's books can be sung as well as read.
- Small group activity: Plan a starter activity that people can begin as soon as they arrive. Many workshop warm-up activities can be started as soon as people arrive.

## Groupings

### Why Use Small Groups in Workshops?

- People may feel more comfortable and participate more freely in smaller groups.
- Encourage people to talk so they can learn from one another.  
Vary group size to change the energy level, involve participants, and keep the workshop interesting.
- Accomplish different goals depending on how you form your groups:
  - Encourage getting to know new people by mixing.
  - Encourage team building by preassigning people to groups.
  - Encourage enjoying each others' company by being in a group with friends.

### When to Use Small Groups in Training

- When the content of what you are discussing is personal in nature
- When moving around would help increase attention and involvement
- When practicing a new skill or engaging in a learning activity
- When your content sequence goes from general (large group) to specific (small group) and back to general (large group)

## How to Get People into Small Groups

If your whole group is small, form smaller groups of two or three. Form groups of nearly equal size by

- grouping birth months. “If you were born in January, February, or March, gather in this corner; April, May, June, gather in this corner; and October, November, and December in this corner.”
- recognizing habits. “Fold your hands in your lap. If your right thumb is on top, move to this side of the room. If your left thumb is on top, go to the other side of the room.”

asking people to form groups of a specific number. Count ahead of time to be sure everyone can feel part of an appropriate sized group.

## Role Playing

### Why Use Role Playing?

- To relate to real-life situations
- To illustrate, demonstrate, or practice new skills and principles
- To generate discussion of human behavior
- To create a base from which to select other possible responses

### Basic Role Playing

- Clearly state your purpose in role playing. It is a way to teach something, not a talent showcase.
- Acknowledge that role playing may feel silly and awkward. Get agreement that no one will criticize.
- Give time to prepare.
- Provide brief, clearly written situations.
- Ask adults to act the part of children, especially in the beginning. Playing children lowers risk and allows adults to be less self-conscious.
- Encourage laughter by using a light touch.
- Have participants use other names while playing roles. Refer to characters by name. Help them come out of the roles by using their own names during discussion.
- Keep it moving. Limit role plays to a few minutes and then have a group discussion of the situation.

## Variations on Role Playing

- Ask players to maintain roles during discussion and respond to questions as the characters they played.
- Play video or audiotaped vignettes by professional actors who demonstrate what you are trying to teach.

## Brainstorming

### Why Use Brainstorming?

- To generate possible solutions to a problem
- To encourage imagination and creativity free from evaluation
- To build on others' ideas
- To uncover solutions we might not see unless we looked at a problem in a new way
- To model part of a good decision-making and problem-solving process

### When Could I Use Brainstorming?

- When there is a problem to solve
- When I want to practice creative thinking
- When I want people to have ownership of ideas that are generated

### Basic Brainstorming Rules

- Allow no evaluation or discussion of ideas; evaluating can inhibit the free flow of ideas.
- Support risk-taking by accepting all ideas.
- Give nonverbal recognition to wild and zany ideas for they encourage creativity.
- Encourage quantity, knowing that quantity will eventually breed quality.
- Encourage building on and combining ideas.

### Variation: Carousel Brainstorming

In small groups, have people brainstorm solutions to a problem and record their responses on newsprint. After a brief period of time, pass one's group newsprint to another until all groups have someone else's ideas. Encourage the groups to brainstorm again, adding to and building on the ideas already listed.

Carousel brainstorming is particularly useful when you are trying to solve a complex problem that has different components. Each small group can concentrate on one component at a time, passing them around until each group has seen all of them.

Carousel brainstorming is also useful when your total group is large. Participants may feel more comfortable sharing ideas in a group of five than in a group of fifty and therefore will risk more creative thinking.

## **Modeling and Demonstration**

### Why Use Modeling and Demonstration?

- The most powerful influence you can have on another person is your own example. When you model a concept in and outside of workshops you increase your impact.
- Modeling doesn't mean you have to do it perfectly all the time; being a good model is demonstrating that you are trying to internalize your message.
- If you doubt the power of modeling, try the following exercise with a group. Put your thumb and forefinger together and place them on your cheek. Ask the participants to put their thumbs and forefingers together and place them on their chins. More people will follow your example and put their fingers on their cheeks.

Nearly 70 percent of what we learn is from nonverbal messages. Use these messages to show participants how you would like them to interact with children. And remember that they are watching you all the time, which means you have a constant training opportunity.

### Basic Modeling and Demonstration Tips

- Prepare, prepare, prepare—know training materials upside down.
- Practice, practice, practice, especially when you are learning a new or difficult concept. Look for opportunities to apply concepts so you can train with confidence.
- Watch details. Be sure everyone can hear and see you during workshops. Let participants know you are attentive to their needs, as you would like them to be with children.

Review and practice good communication and listening skills.

## Leading Discussions

### Why Use Discussions?

- People often need to hear themselves think out loud about a situation before they know what they really think about it.
- In a free discussion, people can learn from one another.

### Basic Discussion Tips

#### Leading the Discussion

- The discussion leader is not the expert. Your role is to ask questions, not to answer them.
- Avoid closed questions (beginning with the words *do*, *would*, *could*, *have*) that result in yes or no answers.
- Ask open questions (beginning with the words *what* and *how*) to encourage people to talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- Plan more questions than you'll have time to ask.
- Ask one question at a time. Avoid following an open question with a closed question: "How would you feel if. . . . Do you remember feeling like that?"
- Feel comfortable with controversy. When more than one view is held, people benefit from talking about it in an environment that you keep safe for all to express their beliefs.
- Learn to accept and use silence. Participants will become uncomfortable with silence and start to talk just to fill it.
- Listen actively. This is a great way to model listening that helps people want to talk more. After a discussion, you can draw attention to listening skills you modeled and reinforce how they work.
- Allow everyone to have an opportunity to talk.
- Be sure everyone can hear. Restrict side conversations that distract the group.
- Honor the risk people take in speaking before a group. Thank them for sharing their thoughts.
- Stop at a peak. A good discussion continues in the hall and on the way home.

## Closure

### Why Bring a Training to Closure?

- To reinforce the teaching
- To read the group's understanding of the topic
- To help participants make connections between the training and real life
- To set up and preview your next session

### Basic Tips for Closure

- Involve everyone.
- Allow time.

Keep it brief and focused on the teaching. A great teacher stays focused on the learning of the group rather than on his or her personal feelings. Bask in your feelings after the workshop is over.

- Listen actively and be prepared to reinforce what was learned nonverbally.
- Ask people to make a connection with their real lives.
- Model whatever you ask people to do.

### Variations

Verbal wrap-ups. Ask participants to complete a statement such as "The most valuable thing I learned was . . ."; "I'm walking away feeling or thinking . . ."; "One way I'm going to use what I learned is. . . ."

- If the group is large, ask people to give one-word responses to complete the statement "I'm feeling or thinking. . . ."
- Refer back to an opening activity and ask participants to reflect on how what they learned in the workshop is different from what they learned as children, will change how they think about something or what they will do, or will make a difference in what they do.

## **Growing a Better Workshop Leader—You!**

We learn good judgment from experience. We gain experience from bad judgment.

To increase our training skills, we need to reflect on our training experiences to detect incidents of good and bad judgment so that we can grow from our experience.

As a self-evaluation tool, use the following three questions that were developed by Mayme Porter as evaluation questions used with student teachers.<sup>1</sup>

What did I like about my workshop presentation?

If I had it to do over again, what would I do differently?

What help or support do I need to do it better next time?

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1. Sidney Simon, *Negative Criticism* (Hadley, Mass.: Values Press, 1991), pp. 74–80.

# Why Books?

## Workshop 1

Estimated time: 90 minutes

### Goals

To review briefly the purpose of the Bookstart program

To help participants become acquainted

To discuss reasons for introducing books, stories, and language-related activities to children at a very early age

To provide a taste of future workshop activities

### Resources

"How to Be a Workshop Leader or Facilitator," introductory material to this book, pages 13-27

List "What Books Can Do" (page 32) written on newsprint in front of the room

### Materials needed

A collection of children's books including *Caps for Sale* (see Handout 1-2). You will need two or three times the number of books as you have participants in the group.

Newsprint, markers, and tape

### Background sheet

1-1 "How Can Adults Assess the Quality of a Book for Young Children?"

### Handouts

1-1 "We Use Print in Many Ways"

1-2 "Children's Books for the Bookstart Program"

1-3 "Why Do We Share Stories, Books, and Language-Related Activities with Babies and Young Children?"

## Workshop at a Glance

### 20 minutes Welcome and Introduction

Review the reasons for introducing books to young children.

### 15 minutes Warm-Up

Distribute Handout 1-1, "We Use Print in Many Ways." Also post this list on newsprint in the front of the room.

Emphasize that most of us use print in some form every day.

### 40 minutes Introduction to Children's Books

Write the list "What Books Can Do" (page 32) on newsprint in the front of the room.

Ask participants to think about responses to the four discussion questions listed on page 32.

Share five or six books from the collection you brought to the workshop.

Discuss participants' responses to the four discussion questions and identify ways in which each book meets one or more of the criteria on the "What Books Can Do" list.

Invite participants to browse through the book collection and to sign out one book to introduce to their child before the next meeting.

### 15 minutes Wrap-Up

Summarize the workshop by reading and dramatizing *Caps for Sale* with the group. Emphasize the importance of adults as role models, just as the peddler was a role model for the monkeys.



### Tips for Trainers

Be familiar with the introductory material for trainers in the beginning of the section "How to Be a Workshop Leader or Facilitator" (page 13). Read all the children's books you have selected for this workshop so that you can choose the ones that will be of greatest interest to the participants. Post on newsprint the lists "What Books Can Do" (page 32) and "We Use Print in Many Ways" (Handout 1-1). Read Background Sheet 1-1, "How Can Adults Assess the Quality of a Book for Young Children?"

## Welcome and Introduction

20 minutes

**I**ntroduce yourself using the name you wish to be called and tell the group something about yourself (“My name is Mary Smith—I hope you’ll call me Mary—and I’ve been an extension educator for the past five years. I’ve discovered the fun of using books with children I have worked and lived with and I hope to share some of the things I’ve learned with you and to learn from you about some of the ways you can enjoy books, stories, songs, or language games with the children in your lives.”)

Ask participants to introduce themselves by telling the group their names and something about themselves. When everyone has been introduced, say (in your own words), “In this program we’re going to talk a lot about how children develop language and reading skills. But we think sharing books, stories, and conversation does much more for children than simply introduce them to reading and other skills they will need in school. It may sound farfetched, but we believe the activities we will discuss and practice in this program will help you develop ways to communicate with your children that will be fun for both of you. By developing good communication (which begins before babies can talk), we hope you will strengthen the love and affection between you and your children. By developing habits of talking, storytelling, and sharing books while your children are young, you may be able to establish a family tradition of talking about ideas, searching together for information, and developing reading habits that will last a lifetime. Finally, several studies confirm that when families talk, play, and share books on a regular basis with young children, those children move easily into learning to read in school. We hope you’ll think these are good reasons to attend our Bookstart program. But I have to tell you that our primary reason for wanting to get you and your families hooked on books, stories, and related activities is that it’s fun—and we all need a little more old-fashioned relaxation and fun in our lives!”

## Warm-Up

15 minutes

Give each participant a copy of Handout 1-1, “We Use Print in Many Ways.” Explain that this exercise is to remind everyone of the many ways print is used in everyday life.

As the facilitator reads aloud each item from the handout, participants who have used print in the way described introduce themselves again and tell the group specifically what they did. For example:

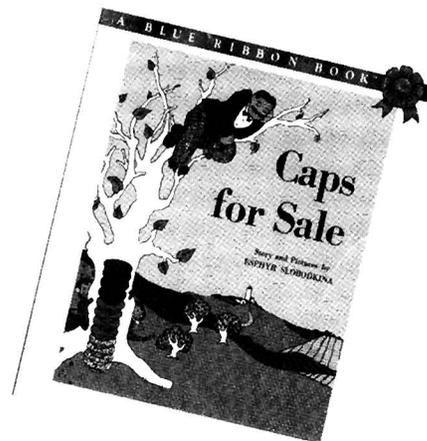
“My name is Rhonda Coons, and I used print to find the street where my child’s school is located.”

“My name is Ben Irish. I used print to find the telephone number of an auto parts store.”

“My name is Anna Clark, and I used print to find the video I wanted at the video store.”

Suggest that as they use print in the future they tell children what they are doing by saying, for example: “I have to look up a number in the telephone book” or “Remind me to write ‘milk’ on the grocery list.” These simple comments will help children learn why people read and write.

Summarize by saying: “We use print in many different ways—often without thinking about what we are doing. Children learn from us that reading and writing are useful, easy, everyday skills.”



## Introduction to Children’s Books

40 minutes

1. Make the following points in your own words.

Books can be useful to children in many ways, but above all books should be beautiful, well-written, and carefully chosen to match the developmental level and interests of each child. As we look at some of these books, ask yourself:

Is the book clearly written and well illustrated?

Is the story easy and fun to follow?

Would this book appeal to my child?

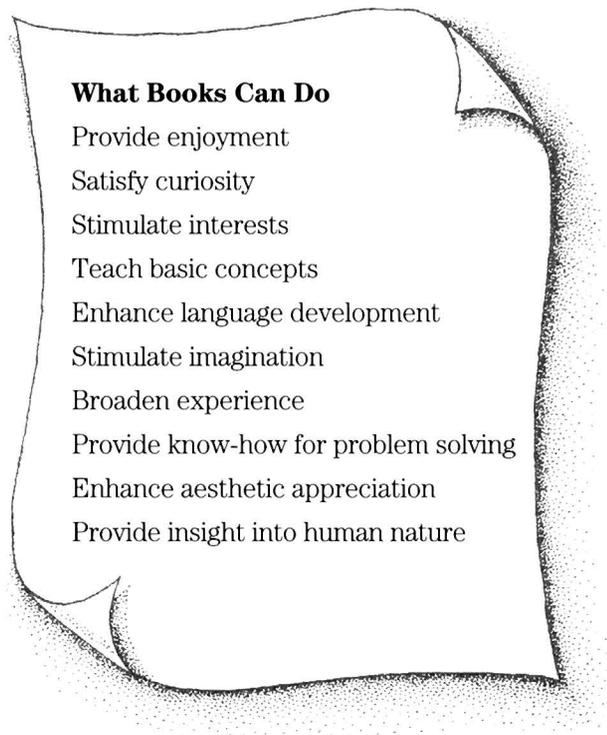
Does it appeal to me?

Ask each participant to try to discover at least one book from the collection you brought to share with his or her child. As the group reviews the books, they will identify some of the ways these books may satisfy children and enrich their imaginations.

2. Share the five or six books you selected from the suggested list by reading or showing them to the group. (If you select *Caps for Sale*, read through the workshop instructions and plan to use it at the end.) You may not be able to read each page of every book you have chosen. Show sample illustrations to the group and tell the story in your own words. Explain that this technique can be used if they want to share a book that has too many words with a toddler or very young child. Talking about pictures is a fine way to share a story or book. Encourage children to tell you about the pictures too.

As you finish each book, refer to the list you posted on newsprint in the front of the room. Ask participants to identify the contribution or

contributions each book might make to the development of happy, well-adjusted children.



### Discussion Questions

Lead a discussion after you have presented five or six books.

Ask participants:

- Was each book clearly written and well illustrated?
- Was each story easy and fun to follow?
- Would any of the books appeal to one of their children?  
Why or why not?
- Which book did each of them like best?

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The list "What Books Can Do" is from *Family Relationships*, NCR Publications 58 (Ames: Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, n.d.), p. 3.

## Wrap-Up

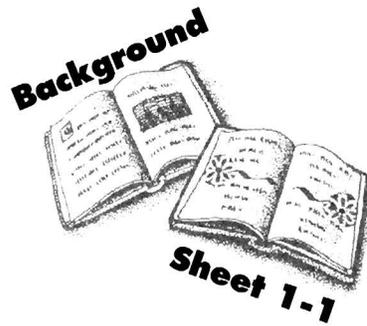
15 minutes

Summarize by stating that children imitate the adults they love. One of the best ways to interest children in books is to show that you are interested and enthusiastic. Ask participants to assume the role of monkeys in *Caps for Sale*. Assume the part of the peddler and dramatize the story with the group. When you reach the part about the monkeys, stop reading and explain that you want participants to do exactly what the book is saying. For example, after pretending to steal your caps, they will simply look at you when you look at them. Next, they will shake their fingers at you and say, “Tsz, tsz, tsz!” Encourage them to be dramatic.

After you have finished the story, point out that we can tell children to read books, but the most effective teaching we can do is to show them that we love books—just as the peddler inadvertently discovered that the way to retrieve his caps was to show the monkeys what he wanted them to do.

Pass out Handout 1-2, “Children’s Books for the Bookstart Program,” and Handout 1-3, “Why Do We Share Stories, Books, and Language-Related Activities with Babies and Young Children?”

Invite each participant to sign out one book to try at home before the next meeting. Explain that during the next meeting they will discuss their experiences at home with their children. Remind them that they can choose to talk about pictures in the book they select instead of reading it to their child.



## How Can Adults Assess the Quality of a Book for Young Children?

Let's begin by asking some general questions: Does the book provide information that is interesting, accurate, and appropriate for the child's age and attention span? Does the book provide gentle stimulation for a child's imagination? Folk and fairy tales may be appreciated by children old enough to know the difference between reality and fantasy but may be too rich a literary diet for preschoolers. Finally, and perhaps most important, does the book convey unbiased, accurate information about other cultures and lifestyles, as well as portraying males and females in interesting and challenging activities? Is the book developmentally appropriate for a young child? The following list of characteristics of preschoolers can be helpful to adults trying to choose a book for a young child.

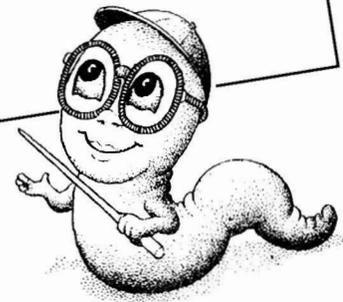
1. Young children are appropriately self-centered. They are intensely concerned with questions about their own identities, such as "Who am I? What am I? Who is like me—eats or dresses like me? Who plays like me?" Very simple stories about everyday events, objects, and people with an occasional twist or joke such as one about a boy who put his pants on his head instead of his legs seem to be absorbing and satisfying to toddlers. It can be reassuring to hear a simple story about someone "just like me" because it reinforces feelings of trust and belonging in a world that often seems to be unpredictable and bewildering.
2. Young children have a keen sense of possession. "Me, mine, and my" are important words in their vocabularies. Stories that give children a sense of direct, personal involvement may encourage them to feel that books have a personal relevance to their lives.
3. Young children are curious and rely on their senses to find out about the world. They enjoy holding and owning books and turning the pages themselves, and they often learn to "read" to themselves by talking about the pictures or remembering the story as the adult has read it to them. Children often want to be close to the book and the reader—sitting on a lap, cuddling close, or perhaps lying down together for a bedtime story.
4. Young children are just learning to ask questions and assimilate knowledge. Each child may have a unique pattern for digesting information. Some need to hear the same story over and over again; for others, a single reading is enough. Some need to ask questions and talk about each page; others are annoyed by this and want to hear the story straight through with no interruptions.
5. As children grow to love books and to discriminate between what is real and what is make-believe they will be ready for an increasing proportion of fantasy in their books. During the preschool years children use books to identify, clarify, and connect with aspects of their daily lives and experiences.
6. Young children have a primitive sense of humor. They enjoy stories that make them laugh but find most appealing books in which the funny side is simple and obvious—and the joke may be repeated many times.

7. As children become better acquainted with language, they begin to enjoy repetitions of sounds, rhymes, and rhythms. They become better equipped to play with words and to enjoy poetry.
8. Most young children who are learning about books have short attention spans. They need stories with interesting pictures, few words, plenty of action, and a satisfying conclusion.
9. In the years before age five, one of the central tasks in personality development is the establishment of a strongly positive self-image. Books that enable a child to achieve vicarious success through identification with a central character have great appeal. It is never enough, however, for the book to contain an important message, fact, moral, or lesson. The primary purpose of books is to delight and entertain children through pictures and texts that are aesthetically pleasing. Parents and teachers should look for books that can provide delight and at the same time further the child's emotional, social, or intellectual development.

The same standards of excellence pertain to the selection of all children's books, regardless of price, whether they are bought in supermarkets or bookstores or borrowed from libraries. Many inexpensive books are available; good ones may be found by a shopper who measures each purchase against the criteria suggested.

"The real value of a satisfactory reading life is that it gives you the key to other minds in all ages. You find a keener pleasure in all that lies about you because of knowing how other human creatures have felt about it, and the unfamiliar becomes close and real because you see it through eyes as eager and curious as your own. Real books grow out of active desire to give permanence to some experience, spiritual or imaginative or intellectual or social."

—Annis Duff, *Bequest of Wings*



## Handout 1-1

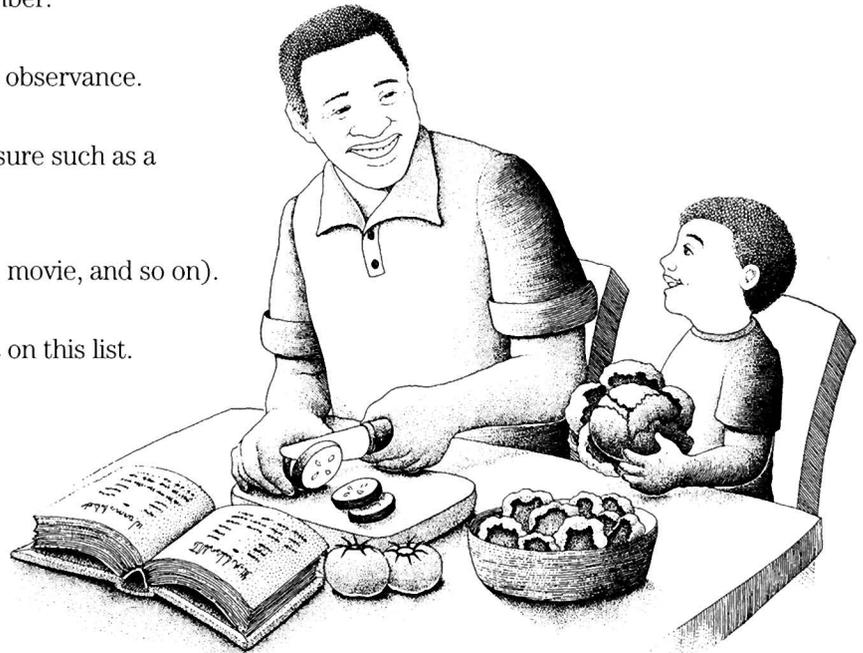


# We Use Print in Many Ways

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**Find a person who during the past week has**

- used print to make a dish from a recipe.
- used print to find a place (street sign, store, house).
- used print to make a grocery list.
- used print to follow instructions from a doctor or to take medication.
- used print to read a bill or letter.
- used print to look up a telephone number.
- used print to participate in a religious observance.
- used print to read something for pleasure such as a newspaper, book, or magazine.
- used print to find something (a video, movie, and so on).
- used print to do something that is not on this list.



Before they can become readers, young children must learn why people read and what people do when they read. This knowledge is called “print awareness.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Susan Kontos, “What Pre-School Children Know about Reading and How They Learn It,” *Young Children*, November 1986, p. 58.

## Handout 1-2



## Children's Books for the Bookstart Program

*All Fall Down* by Helen Oxenbury. New York: Aladdin Books, 1987.

*Anybody at Home?* by H. A. Rey. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, n.d.

*Bread Bread Bread* by Ann Morris. New York: William Morrow, 1989.

*Beatrix Potter's Nursery Rhyme Book* by Beatrix Potter. New York: Penguin, 1995.

*Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina. New York: William Scott, 1968.

*The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus. New York: Scholastic, 1971.

*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin and John Archambault. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

*Clap Hands* by Helen Oxenbury. New York: Macmillan, 1987.

*Each Peach Pear Plum* by J. Ahlberg and A. Ahlberg. New York: Puffin Books, 1978.



*Eat Up, Gemma* by Sarah Hayes. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1988.

*Feast for 10* by Cathryn Falwell. New York: Clarion Books, 1993.

*The First Hundred Words in Spanish* by Heather Amery and Stephen Cartwright. Tulsa, Okla.: Usborne, 1988.

*Five Minutes' Peace* by Jill Murphy. New York: Putnam's Sons, 1986.

*Fruit* by Gallimard Jeunesse and Pascale de Bourgoing. New York: Scholastic, 1989.

*Gilberto and the Wind* by Marie Hall Ets. New York: Viking, 1963.

*Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown. New York: Harper & Row, 1947.

*If You Give a Moose a Muffin* by Laura Joffe Numerott. New York: Scholastic, 1991.

*Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

*Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino. New York: Scholastic, 1989.

*Just for You* by Mercer Mayer. New York: Golden Press, 1975.

*Let's Play* by Amy MacDonal and Maureen Roffey. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1991.

*The Little Red Hen* illustrated by Karen Schmidt. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1984. (Many versions of this folk tale can be found.)



*Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney. New York: Puffin Books, 1982.

*No Milk!* by Jennifer A. Ericsson. New York: Tambourine Books, 1993.

*Nursery Rhymes* illustrated by Douglas Gorsline. New York: Random House, 1977.

*Pancakes, Pancakes* by Eric Carle. New York: Scholastic, 1990.

*Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake* illustrated by Moira Kemp. New York: Lodestar Books, 1992.

*The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats. New York: Penguin, 1962.

*Spot Goes Splash!* by Eric Hill. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984.

*The Tenth Good Thing about Barney* by Judith Viorst. Hartford, Conn.: Atheneum, 1971.

*Tickle, Tickle* by Helen Oxenbury. New York: Aladdin/Macmillan, 1987.

*Tucking Mommy In* by Morag Loh. New York: Orchard Books, 1987.

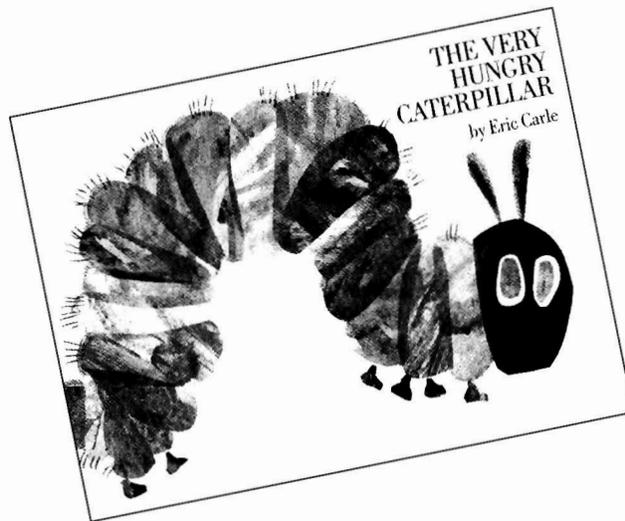
*Umbrella* by Taro Yashima. New York: Viking, 1958.

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. New York: Putnam, 1969.

*What Color?* with photographs by Anthea Sieveking. New York: Penguin, 1990.

*Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill. New York: Puffin, 1994.

*Working* by Helen Oxenbury. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981.



## Handout 1-3



# Why Do We Share Stories, Books, and Language-Related Activities with Babies and Young Children?

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1. The love and respect you and your child feel for each other can grow stronger when you
  - tell stories.
  - recite nursery rhymes and poetry.
  - sing songs together.
  - look at pictures and talk together about them.
  - share picture books.
  - play together.
2. People of all ages can find out about things they want to know by looking at pictures and reading books. Using books to find information is a habit children can learn long before they start school—but they need grown-ups to help them.
3. Talking about books and stories helps children learn values. If you don't like something that happens in a book or if you don't like the way people in the book behave, tell children your opinion. Ask them what they think.
4. Children who are used to hearing stories, sharing books, and talking with adults are learning skills that will help them in school.
5. Having fun with books, stories, conversations, and play can make life with children interesting and pleasant.

# Choosing Books

## for Babies, Toddlers, and Young Children

### Workshop 2



Estimated time: 90 minutes

#### Goals

To provide background information about child development

To establish criteria for choosing appropriate books for children

#### Resources

A collection of children's books (see lists on pages 39-40 and 48 for suggestions). Workshop leaders should add their own favorites.

#### Background Sheets

2-1 "Choosing Books for Babies and Toddlers"

2-2 "Choosing Books for Young Children"

2-3 "Individual Differences Make Choosing Books a Challenge"

#### Handouts

2-1 "Choosing Books for Young Children: It's Not Enough for a Book to be 'Cute'"

2-2 "Choosing a Book Is Similar to Choosing New Clothes"

#### Tips for Trainers

You will need 20 to 30 books for this workshop divided into collections appropriate for your group size. The focus of the discussion, however, will be on participants' experiences sharing the books they borrowed at the previous meeting with babies, toddlers, or young children.

### Workshop at a Glance

#### 10 minutes Welcome and Warm-Up

If participants do not know each other, they should introduce themselves, tell the group the ages of the children they parent or care for, and give the title of the book they signed out at the last meeting.

#### 30 minutes Guided Discussion

Based on reading Background Sheets 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3, the facilitator will lead a discussion about matching the characteristics of babies, toddlers, and young children with the books we choose to share with them.

#### 10 minutes

#### Review of Handout 2-1, "Choosing Books for Young Children: It's Not Enough for a Book to be 'Cute'"

Read a book to the group and evaluate it based on the criteria listed on the handouts.

#### 20 minutes Small Group Activity

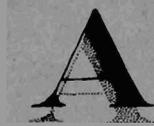
Each group will review several children's books using Handout 2-1 as a guide.

#### 20 minutes Summary

Representatives from the small groups describe the books they reviewed. Conclude by distributing and discussing Handout 2-2, "Choosing a Book Is Similar to Choosing New Clothes."

## Welcome and Warm-Up

10 minutes



fter the facilitator has welcomed the group, participants can be asked to introduce themselves by telling the group their names, the names and ages of the children they parent or care for, and the title of the book they signed out at the last meeting. If there are newcomers at this meeting, the facilitator can ask participants who attended the first workshop to tell the newcomers about it and to explain how they used the book they borrowed with their child. Participants who left the book at home or did not use it with a child should be reassured that they can return the book and try others with children in the future. Facilitators should be prepared to expect that some books may never be returned.

## Guided Discussion

30 minutes

Based on reading Background Sheets 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3, the facilitator should present, as informally as possible, a list of points that seem particularly appropriate for participants. For example, if most of the participants are directly involved with children under age three, Background Sheet 2-1 will be the most relevant. If most participants are parents or caregivers of three- to five-year-olds, Background Sheet 2-2 may be most helpful. Facilitators should, however, be familiar with all the background sheets so they can prepare the most effective presentation. As each point is presented, the facilitator can ask participants to provide illustrations from their own experiences. For example, if the facilitator is talking about choosing books that are about familiar objects, animals, or themes, he or she can ask, "Has anyone shared a book with a child who says, 'Just like me!' when he sees something he knows?" If the facilitator chooses the point from Background Sheet 2-2, "Young children have a strong sense of possession. 'Me, my, mine' are very important words in every young child's vocabulary," ask participants if they have found that statement to be true in their experience. Talk about the fact that children like to see and hear in books things that remind them of "me, my, and mine." Perhaps participants will make a connection to their adult experiences of liking stories, books, TV shows, or movies that reflect their own experiences and feelings. If participants are reluctant to provide illustrations, the facilitator must be prepared to do so. The facilitator might choose one children's book to illustrate each point of the presentation and be sure always to ask participants if they agree with the chosen illustration or could suggest a better one.

## Review of Handout 2-1

### “Choosing Books for Young Children: It’s Not Enough for a Book to Be ‘Cute’”

10 minutes

Give each participant a copy of the handout. Read one book to the group (perhaps one of the following: *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus, *Clap Hands* by Helen Oxenbury, or *Feast for 10* by Cathryn Falwell) and evaluate the book with the group based on the nine points listed on the handout. Discuss each point to be sure every participant understands how to use it in evaluating a book.



## Small Group Activity

20 minutes

Divide participants into groups of three to four people. It will be helpful to ask parents and caregivers of babies to form one group, parents and caregivers of toddlers to form a second group, and parents and caregivers of three- to five-year-olds to work together. Give each small group four to six children’s books you have selected. Ask each group to assign one person to summarize that group’s discussion when the total group reconvenes. Small groups can report back in a variety of ways, including talking about why they did or did not like the books they reviewed or predicting which books would work best with the children they care for. Either approach is acceptable because the goal of the activity is to establish criteria for choosing appropriate books for children. Ask participants to share the books within their small groups by having one person read each book aloud, by talking about the pictures, or by looking at the books individually and then discussing them as a group. To ensure that participants who have low literacy skills can participate comfortably in this activity, ask a person who reads well to read each book to the small group. Suggest that the groups use Handout 2-1, “Choosing Books for Young Children: It’s Not Enough for a Book to Be ‘Cute,’” to evaluate the books but assure them that they are free to examine and evaluate the books as they wish.

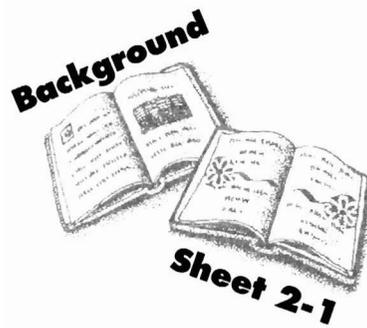
## Summary

20 minutes

Participants selected by their small groups describe the books they reviewed and summarize their discussion.

The facilitator can conclude the workshop by pointing out that choosing a good book for a child is similar to choosing clothes for a child. Handout 2-2, “Choosing a Book Is Similar to Choosing New Clothes,” can be distributed, reviewed, and discussed as a final activity or, if time does not permit, participants can take the handout home.

Once again participants are invited to sign out one book to share with a child before the next meeting.



## Choosing Books for Babies and Toddlers

Introducing babies and toddlers to books can be a delightful experience for parents and caregivers. Infants often watch with interest while an adult turns the pages of a book or magazine, and many babies have a favorite picture or picture book by their first birthday. Looking at books also offers a weary adult the opportunity to sit quietly, with a child nestled on his or her lap, while the two enjoy happy, quiet moments together.

New books for children are among the few products in the world that get better and more beautiful each year. Children under age three are now recognized as an audience with interests and needs of their own. Adults who remember favorite books from their own childhoods sometimes introduce those books to children at an inappropriately early age, which may prevent toddlers from discovering a body of literature created especially for them.

An hour spent in the infant/toddler section of a good bookstore or library can be an eye-opening experience for adults, who even a generation ago did not have such literary treasures available. Below are suggestions for choosing appropriate books

for children under the age of three.

- Choose books that are about familiar objects, animals, or themes in the child's everyday life. The thrill of recognition adults often experience when they read something that has personal relevance or particular significance may come first to a toddler who shouts, "Just like me!" when looking at a picture of a child putting on socks, feeding a cat, or taking a bath.
- Begin with books that have simple, clear illustrations of one or two objects on a page. Some children quickly grow to love complicated pictures in which they can find something new each time they look, but in the beginning, pictures surrounded by blank space may be most appropriate. If the book has no printed words, the adult can talk about the pictures: "There's a teddy bear!" or "Look at the frog jumping!"
- Remember that the world is a new and unfamiliar place to very young children. A picture of an everyday object like a spoon or shoe may not be very exciting to an adult, but many babies will study it with rapt attention.
- Making a connection between a picture in a book and an object in real life may be an important first step on which to build later experiences with reading.
- Avoid books about cartoon or TV characters. Children may like them because they recognize them, but books of this kind are often poorly written and artistically inferior. Just as we choose food that is nourishing for children's bodies, we can choose books that are nourishing for their minds.
- Children begin to form ideas about gender roles at an early age. Many old picture books were surprisingly sexist. Examine books carefully to be sure the ideas about what males and females do are the ones you want your children to believe. Some old books can surprise us, however. For example, many adults have never realized that *The Little Engine That Could* was female!
- Include picture books about people from other cultures in your book collection. These books can introduce children to our increasingly diverse populations and communities.

- Save folk and fairy tales until children are old enough to enjoy them because they understand how reality differs from fantasy. That doesn't mean we should never use fantasy with toddlers, but a little goes a long way in stimulating their imaginations.
- Very young children can be hard on books! Babies may crumple, tear, or try to eat printed materials. Sturdy cloth or board books may be necessary until children can enjoy books without destroying them. Some teachers and parents recommend that toddlers who have discovered the joy of tearing can be told, "I've finished with these newspapers so you can tear them up for recycling. But our books are for reading—not tearing." Adults can protect books from destruction by putting them out of reach except when children look at them with a supervising adult.

Books can be an expensive luxury for people of any age. Public libraries are a great family resource, providing books to every member of the family. Librarians will help parents and teachers introduce toddlers to books because they know that children who are "hooked on books" have a lifetime of pleasure ahead of them. When adults who enjoy reading carefully choose and lovingly share books with babies and toddlers, they are creating a precious gift that will bring

countless benefits to its tiny recipients.

The following list includes some recent as well as some old books suggested for toddlers from Handout 1-2, "Children's Books for the Bookstart Program."

*All Fall Down* by Helen Oxenbury. New York: Aladdin Books, Macmillan, 1987.

*Anybody at Home?* by H. A. Rey. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, n.d.

*Each Peach Pear Plum* by Janet Ahlbert and A. Ahlbert. New York: Puffin Books, 1978.

*Eat up, Gemma* by Sarah Hayes. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1988.

*Feast for 10* by Cathryn Falwell. New York: Clarion Books, 1993.

*Fruit.* by Gallimard Jeunesse and Pascale de Bourgoing. New York: Scholastic, 1989.

*Let's Play* by Amy MacDonald and Maureen Roffey. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1991.

*The Little Red Hen* illustrated by Karen Schmidt. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1984.

*No Milk!* by Jennifer A. Ericsson. New York: Tambourine Books, 1993.

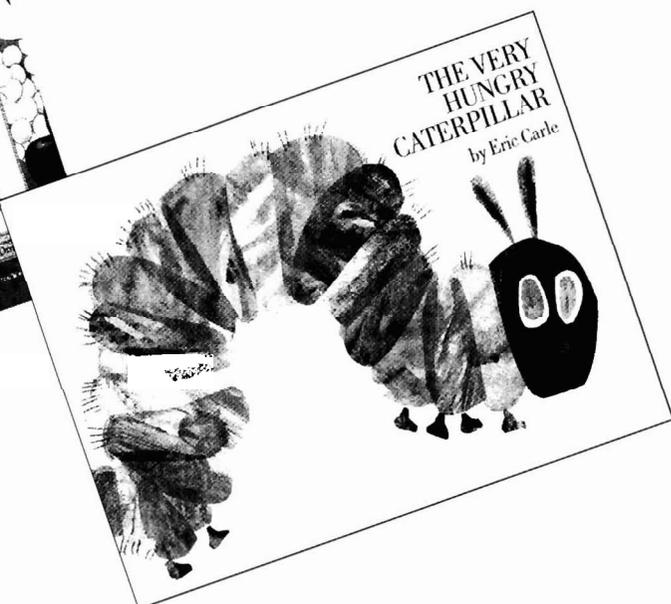
*Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake* illustrated by Moira Kemp. New York: Lodestar Books, 1992.

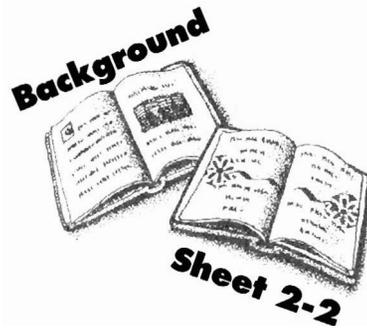
*The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats. New York: Penguin, 1962.

*Spot Goes Splash* by Eric Hill. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984.

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. New York: Putnam, 1969.

*What Color?* Photographs by Anthea Sieveking. New York: Penguin, 1990.





## Choosing Books for Young Children

Certain characteristics of young children can serve as guidelines when selecting books for them.

1. Young children are appropriately self-centered. They see both the world and the objects and other people in it as revolving around themselves and their needs. They are intensely concerned with questions about their own identities—"Who am I? What am I? What can I do? Who, in this world, is like me? Who is different?" Very simple stories about people and human characteristics, animals and animal characteristics, and factual accounts of homes, foods, habits, and daily activities of other living creatures can help children figure out answers to their own identity questions. Children appear to find satisfaction and pleasure in the kind of story that begins "Susie is four years old and lives with her mother" even though adults may find such stories boring.
2. Young children have a strong sense of possession. "Me, my, mine" are very important words in every young child's vocabulary. Stories that give children a sense of direct involvement may encourage feelings that books can have direct personal relevance to their everyday lives.
3. Young children are curious and rely on their senses to find out about the world. They enjoy holding and owning books, turning the pages themselves, and often learn to "read" to themselves by talking about the pictures or remembering the story as the adult read it to them. Children often want to be close to the book and to the reader—sitting on a lap, cuddling close, or lying down together for a bedtime story. For this reason, adults who work with groups of children usually find it works better to have two or three story groups each with five or six children than to have one story group for an entire class or group of young children.
4. Young children are just learning to ask questions and assimilate knowledge. Each child may have a unique pattern for digesting information. Some need to hear the same story over and over again, whereas others are content with a single reading. Some need to ask questions and talk about each page; others are annoyed by going so slowly and want to hear the story straight through with no interruptions. It is important to be aware that right from the start children have individual responses to books.
5. As young children grow to love books and become able to discriminate between what is real and what is make-believe they will be ready for an increasing proportion of fantasy in the stories they hear. Fantasy can stimulate a child's imagination and be a source of great joy as long as the child has a firm understanding of the difference between what is real and what is pretend. Fairy tales and highly imaginative stories can provide a rich experience for children, but they may be even more fun if children read or hear them after long experience in determining what is real and what is pretend.
6. Young children have a primitive sense of humor. They enjoy stories that make them laugh but find most appealing books in which the funny side is simple and obvious—often books in which the joke is repeated many times.
7. As children become better acquainted with language

through books, they begin to enjoy repetitions of words and word patterns and pleasant and interesting combinations of sounds, rhymes, and rhythms. They become better equipped to play with words and to enjoy poetry.

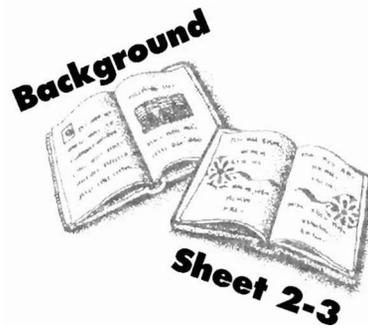
8. Many young children have short attention spans. They need stories with interesting pictures, few words, plenty of action, and a satisfying conclusion.
9. One of the central tasks in personality development for children under age six is to establish a positive self-image. Books that enable a child to achieve vicarious success by identifying with a central character have great appeal. It is never enough, however, for the book to contain an important message, fact, moral, or lesson. The primary purpose of books is to delight and entertain children through pictures and text that are aesthetically pleasing. We are always looking for books that can provide delight and at the same time further the child's emotional, social, or intellectual development. Some inexpensive books perform this dual function as do many of the beautiful (and expensive) picture books of more substantial physical quality available in most bookstores. The same standards of excellence pertain to the selection of all children's books, regardless of price.

In setting up a library for a young child, whether it is in a home or in a preschool group situation, it may be helpful to select some books in each of the following categories:

1. Clearly illustrated (with very few words) books about familiar objects, animals, people, and experiences are best for young children who are looking at books for the first time.
2. Books should provide accurate and interesting information in a lively fashion.
3. For a child with limited experience with books, many of our traditional stories are too rich a diet to begin with. Save "Snow White," "Sleeping Beauty," "Little Red Riding Hood," and the like until you are sure the child understands enough about what is real and possible to enjoy what is pure fantasy.
4. Mother Goose rhymes, folk songs, lullabies, old favorites like "Row row row your boat," and finger plays like "Where Is Thumbkin?" will be sources of pleasure for very young children.
5. Stories that expand a child's understanding of everyday experiences and relationships such as those based on simple themes like "everybody eats" help young children begin to understand the universality of

human needs. A story about a boy who is finding it difficult to dress himself can be reassuring to a child who is having the same problem.

6. Stories can foster personal growth when the child identifies with a central person or animal who achieves success or mastery under difficult circumstances. For example, Ruth Kraus's book *The Carrot Seed* shows children that hard work and persistent efforts can have dramatic results.
7. Stories can also foster personal growth (particularly the development of a positive self-image) when they allow children to identify with characters who are involved in satisfying relationships and experiences with other people. For example, generations of children have responded to the comfortable feelings of routine, warmth, and security in *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown.
8. Books can delight and stimulate the imagination through fantasy and fun. For example, *The Backward Day* by Ruth Kraus, with its comical description of a boy who does everything backward for an entire day, has elicited chuckles from many children as they imagine what that day would be like.



## Individual Differences Make Choosing Books a Challenge

Choosing the right book at the right time for a particular child can be a challenge. Children, like adults, respond to books in widely different and individual ways. The following examples will illustrate the difficulty of choosing books based on the chronological age of the child.

1. Eleven-month-old Tashika is devoted to a picture of a red telephone in a picture book she has been given. She often crawls over to the low shelf where it is kept, pulls it out, and flips carefully through the pages until she finds the telephone, which she appears to study intently for a minute or two, murmuring softly to herself. She is not interested in any other page of that book or in any other book.
2. Tamas, also aged eleven months, loves books as objects to crumple, tear, and wave about. His family keeps all reading materials out of reach but allows him to play with a sturdy plastic edition of *Spot Goes Splash*.
3. Zack, who has just had his first birthday, grins and listens when

his grandfather recites nursery rhymes to him. He claps his hands when grandfather says dramatically “and NOW—Pat-a-Cake!”

These babies are becoming acquainted with books and are fortunate to live in families that allow them to pursue interests in their own ways.

Toddlers, too, have individual responses to books.

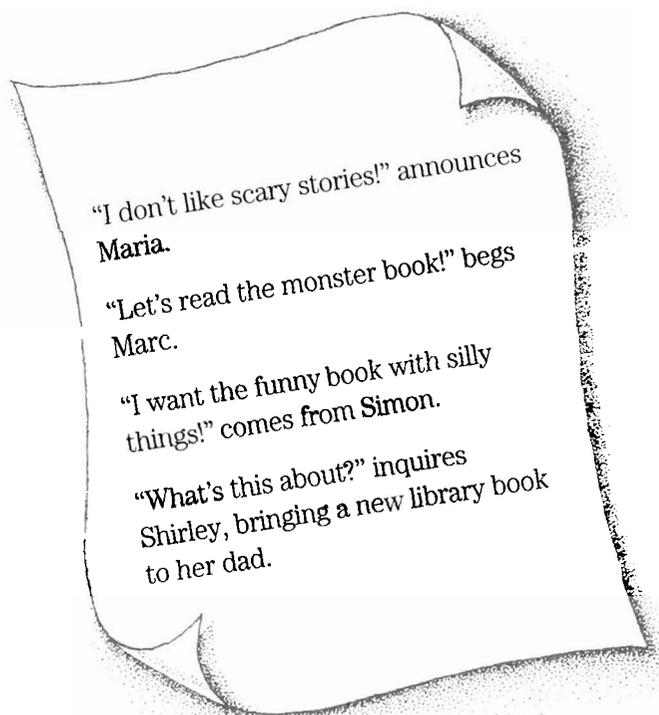
1. Two-year-old Ben loves pictures of things with wheels and will sit quietly turning the pages of his truck and car books for fifteen-minute periods during the day. He has little patience for the kind of “reading” his two-and-a-half-year-old cousin Emma enjoys. Emma likes variety, but her favorite of the moment is *Goodnight Moon*. She begs her parents to read it several times each day.
2. Niki will soon have her third birthday. She does not appear to want anything to do with books, but her family has continued to sing, recite nursery rhymes, and try to interest her in picture books. One day as her uncle looked out the window and

remarked that it looked “misty” outside, Niki rushed to the window to see the mist and, to her uncle’s astonishment, recited

“One misty moisty morning  
When cloudy was the weather  
I chanced to meet an old man  
All dressed in leather!”

3. Leon was three before he showed any interest in books. His older brother loved stories and had established an evening ritual of stuffing a bed pillow behind his mother’s back and another behind his own back so that they could rest comfortably while they read bedtime stories each night. One evening, when his mother went to kiss Leon goodnight, expecting to find him playing with his toy people, she discovered that he was waiting for her, pillow behind his back and another ready for her, with *The Little Fur Family* in his hand. But instead of allowing his mother to read, Leon “read” the book to her, repeating the words he had learned by eavesdropping on his brother’s storvtime.

Many young children develop preferences for books by particular authors or with particular themes:



Some children love short, simple picture books but are not ready for more complicated stories like the “Frances” books by Russell Hoban. Other children may listen happily to stories and books that seem long and complicated to an adult. The problem of matching books with children is best solved when adults have observed children carefully, noting their interests, having a fairly accurate idea of their attention spans, and usually trying a variety of books and other approaches such as singing, storytelling, nursery rhymes, and poetry to see which kindles a spark of excitement or pleasure.

Sometimes, children who do not appear to be interested or attentive suddenly reveal that they have been paying attention all along. A few children do not become “hooked on books” until the early years of elementary school or even later. In general, however, gentle, persistent, creative efforts on the part of loving adults will create a climate that encourages children to become interested in books and language-related activities during the early years of life, thus introducing them to what is called the “culture of literacy.”

It’s important to emphasize that children are extremely sensitive to adult moods, likes, and dislikes. If adults dislike books and think those designed for babies and young children are “dumb” or “silly,” their attitudes may communicate to children that language-related activities such as stories, picture books, and reading are not important. If adults are unaware of the vast numbers of children’s books available through libraries, schools, and bookshops, they may be pleasantly surprised to discover books not only for their children but ones they can enjoy themselves. A first step in instilling a love of literature in youngsters is to love it yourself, and the most sophisticated adults can develop a love for children’s books.

Handout 2-1



# Choosing Books for Young Children: It's Not Enough for a Book to be "Cute"

1. Is the book safe for a child to handle with no small parts or sharp corners, and is it made of material that is free of toxic substances? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
2. Is the book about objects, animals, events, or people that the child will recognize or can connect with his or her life and experiences? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
3. Are the illustrations clear, beautiful, and appealing to a young child? Books need not necessarily be illustrated in bright colors. (One or two objects on a page with surrounding white space are most appropriate for beginning book lovers.) \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
4. Can the child say or think, "Just like me—or mine—or my family—or my world," when looking at the book? Is the story based on reality or does it lead the child gently into fantasy with nonfrightening pictures and text? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
5. If the book has words, are they short and simple? Are the sentences easy to understand? Can a young child follow the story, if there is one? Do the pictures and text fit well together? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
6. Does the book help a young child learn that the world contains people from many cultures and of all ages? Does it avoid stereotypical portrayals of people? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
7. Does the book reflect the values you want your child to develop about gender roles, relationships, and violence? (This does not mean that books showing people who are frightened or mad or misbehaving are inappropriate.) \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
8. Does the book catch your child's attention? \_\_\_\_\_ **yes or no**
9. What is it about the book that makes it a particularly good one for your child?  
\_\_\_\_\_

The striking characteristic of the pictures in the really good books that are used first of all is that they show with intensified clarity, and with beauty, vitality, humor and charm, the things a child is likely to see in everyday experience. They invest these ordinary things with the brightness of an artist's vision.

—Anis Duff, *Bequest of Wings*

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**Handout 2-2**

## Choosing a Book Is Similar to Choosing New Clothes

Choosing a book for a young child is a little bit like choosing a new piece of clothing. Many of the questions we ask when shopping for clothes can be reworded to help us choose books.

### When shopping for clothes we ask:

1. What does my child need? Has she grown out of boots or a coat or jeans?
2. Where will I find clothes? In a store? A used clothing store? A garage sale? Hand-me-downs from relatives and friends?
3. How will I know if clothes fit? Knowing your child's size will help. Some four-year-olds wear size 6 and others wear size 2T. Age is a rough guide but not always the correct one. Trying clothes on is the best way to see if they fit and whether the child likes them.
4. How will I know if my child will like the clothes I buy? Take the child shopping with you. You may get to know his likes and dislikes well enough to buy occasional garments on your own.
5. How will I know if the clothes I choose are appropriate for my child?
  - \*You know the climate in which your child lives. Buy clothes for changing seasons so as to meet his needs throughout the year.
  - \*You know the way your child plays. If she is very active, you look for well-made, sturdy play clothes. If she takes ballet lessons, she probably needs a leotard. In addition to clothes chosen to meet their individual needs, most children need a variety of other garments.

### When looking for a book we ask:

1. What does my child need? Has she grown out of counting books? Does she need more complicated stories?
2. Where will I find books? In all the kinds of places in which clothes are to be found, but public libraries are an additional source of beautiful books.
3. How will I know if a book is right? Knowing your child's interests and the length of her attention span will help. Some four-year-olds like books designed for two-year-olds and others prefer those meant for six- to eight-year-olds. Age is a rough guide but not always a correct one. Trying out a book by looking at or reading it with your child is the best way to see if your child likes it.
4. How will I know if my child will like the books I find? Take the child to the bookstore or library. After a while you'll know his likes and dislikes well enough to choose occasional books on your own.
5. How will I know if the books I choose are appropriate for my child?
  - \*You know the people and culture in which your child lives. Choose books that will help your child understand his own and other cultures and increase her understanding of herself and other people.
  - \*You have observed your child's interests. Perhaps she is interested in trains, or zoo animals, or jokes. Choose some books to meet your child's individual needs, but expose her to variety as well.

- \*The clothes you choose for your child reflect your values and tastes. You probably do not choose clothes that seem too young, too old, too flashy or unsuitable. You choose clothes that you and your child like to look at—ones that are comfortable to wear and appropriate for the lives you live.
- \*Children have strong likes and dislikes. Wise adults take their preferences into account when shopping for clothes.
- \*Some families allow their children to wear T-shirts or clothes that are patterned with movie or TV cartoon characters. But children usually have other unpatterned clothes as well.
- \*You check the seams, buttons, and construction of garments you buy and do not purchase items that are poorly made. Children can be hard on their clothes just by being kids.

### Appropriate Clothes

- \* fit the child
- \* are well-made
- \* are right for the occasion
- \* are varied (a child doesn't need a wardrobe consisting only of hats)
- \* are comfortable enough to wear again and again
- \* are affordable
- \* impart satisfaction and pleasure to the wearer.

- \*The books you choose for your child can reflect your family values. Books can communicate acceptance of feelings and ways of relating to others and standards of behavior. Books don't have to preach to teach lessons about human experience.
- \*Children have strong likes and dislikes. Take their preferences into account when choosing books.
- \*Your child may enjoy a few books based on movie or TV shows. But be sure children are also exposed to books that are not based on movies or TV shows.
- \*Check the binding, quality of paper, and durability of books. Do not purchase books that are poorly made. Children can be hard on books just by being kids.

### Appropriate Books

- \* fit the child
- \* are well-made
- \* are right for the occasion
- \* are varied (a child doesn't need a library consisting only of nursery rhymes)
- \* are interesting enough to read again and again
- \* are affordable or can be found at the library
- \* impart satisfaction and pleasure to the reader.

# Using Books

## to Begin Conversations with Children

### Workshop 3

Estimated time: 90 minutes

#### Goals

To reinforce the concepts that children's books should be chosen to match the needs and interests of the child for whom they are intended and that adults should select books of high literary quality

To introduce the concept that children's books can provide useful and important starting points for conversations between adults and children

To suggest that books can be used to clarify children's ideas about the world, to help them express feelings through identification with fictitious characters, and to see alternative solutions to problems they experience in their personal lives. (Using books in these ways is called bibliotherapy.)

#### Resources

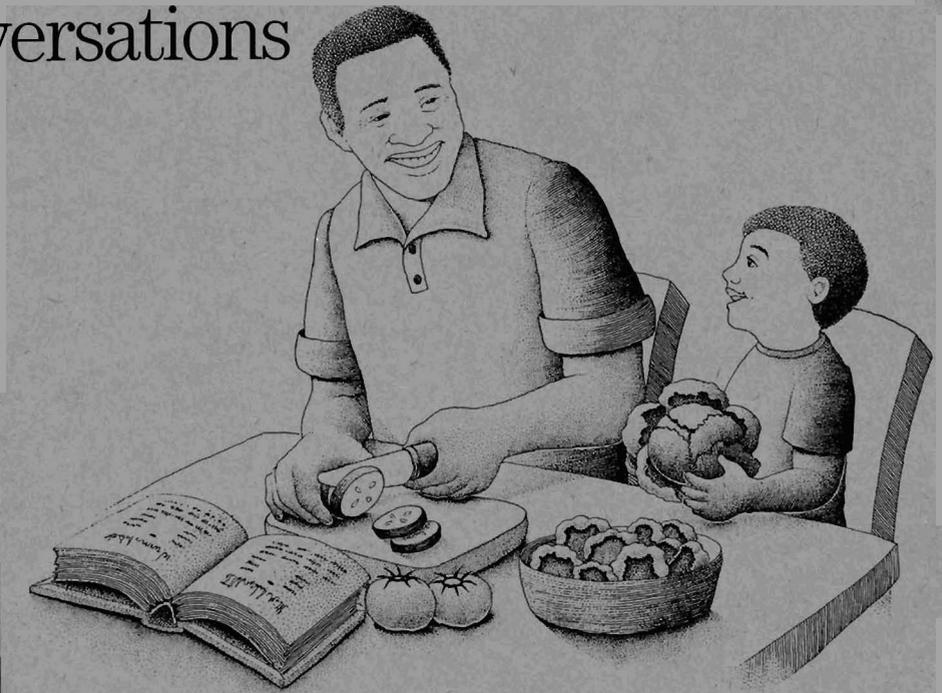
A collection of children's books chosen by the facilitator to illustrate the ideas participants will explore during this workshop. (Books used as examples throughout the workshop are listed on pages 39–40 and 48.)

#### Background Sheet

3-1 "What Books Can Do for Children"

#### Handout

3-1 "What Books Can Do for Children"



### Workshop at a Glance

#### 10 minutes Welcome and Warm-Up

Participants are asked to tell the group about their experiences using books with the children they care for or parent since the last workshop.

#### 25 minutes Mini-Lecture and Guided Discussion

Base lecture on Background Sheet 3-1, "What Books Can Do for Children."

#### 20 minutes First Small Group Activity

Participants practice using books to begin conversations with children about simple objects, people, or events that are familiar to them.

#### 20 minutes Second Small Group Activity

Participants practice using books to begin conversations with children about concerns, issues, or worries the child may have.

#### 10 minutes Total Group Feedback

The small groups report back about the books they discussed.

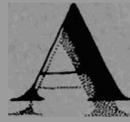
#### 5 minutes Summary

Children's books should

- be well written and beautifully illustrated.
- contain interesting information.
- be acceptable for use as a "talk about the pictures" story if there are too many words or words are too complicated.
- provide a starting point for conversation between children and adults.

## Welcome and Warm-Up

10 minutes



Ask participants to tell the group about their experiences using books with the children they care for or parent since the last workshop.

## Mini-Lecture and Guided Discussion

25 minutes

Say, "So far in this program we've talked about choosing books to match the interests of our children. We've discussed some of the ways to evaluate whether a book is good for a particular group or individual child. And we've stressed the importance of finding books that are safe for children to handle as well as being the best, most beautiful available. Finally, we've talked about ways to share books with children by talking about the pictures or making up your own stories, as well as reading the words printed on the page. At this meeting we're going to explore another use for books, that is, using them as jumping-off points for starting conversations with babies, toddlers, and young children, first about everyday experiences and second as a way to begin discussions with children about issues that may be difficult to talk about.

Read Background Sheet 3-1, "What Books Can Do for Children," to get ideas for leading a discussion. Give each participant a copy of Handout 3-1, "What Books Can Do for Children." Show and talk about or read the books chosen to illustrate each point on the handout. Ask participants to tell the group about other books they have found to be useful in each category. As you describe what books can do for children, offer short, simple examples of conversation starters that might be used with each book. Here are some examples:

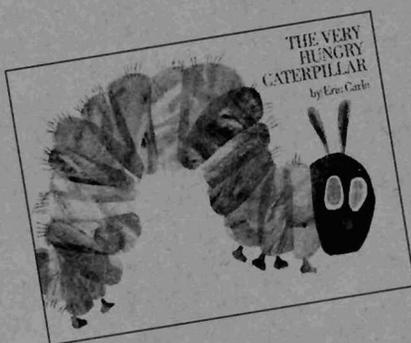
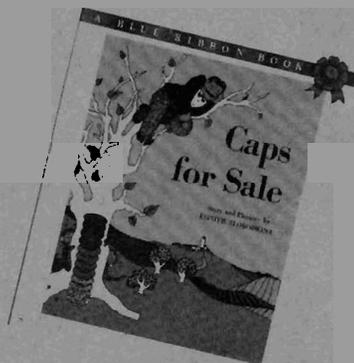
*Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown: "The little bunny has lots of things to look at from her or his bed. What are some of the things you can see when you are warm and cozy in your bed?"

*Feast for 10* by Cathryn Falwell: "The children help their mother find many things in the grocery store. What do you find when you go to the store with Mommy or Daddy?"

*Eat Up, Gemma* by Sarah Hayes: "Are there things you don't like to eat? What are they? What are some of the foods you like best?"

*The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus: "The little boy worked so hard to help his carrot grow. What hard work do you like to do?" (block building, digging, riding a tricycle)

*The Little Red Hen* (folktale; many versions are available): "The little red hen had to go to a lot of trouble to make bread. Where does our bread come from?"



*Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina: “The peddler got so mad, didn’t he? He shook his hands and he stamped his feet and he yelled at those monkeys—but what did he do in the end?”

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle: “This is my favorite page in this book. Which page do you like best?”

Questions are not the only (and sometimes not the best) way to start conversations with children, but they are often easier than statements for adults to use as openers. Beware of questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Open-ended questions that encourage children to offer information or opinions that adults can respond to are almost always more useful.

## First Small Group Activity

20 minutes

Ask participants to form small groups of three to five people. Suggest that they group themselves by the ages of the children they care for or parent (babies, toddlers, preschoolers). Give each group one children’s book about simple objects or experiences that would be familiar to a child. Select the books carefully based on your knowledge of the participants. Ask one person in each small group to show or read the book to the group. Then ask participants to brainstorm ways to begin a conversation with a child based on the book. Here are some examples:

*Clap Hands* by Helen Oxenbury, a book for babies: “Let’s clap our hands, like the babies in the book!” “The babies are waving bye bye—just like you! I can wave too!”

*Where’s Spot* by Eric Hill, a book for toddlers: “Spot hides in many places. Can you find him?” “We can hide like Spot does. Can you hide behind the couch?”

*The Little Red Hen*, a book for preschoolers: “Poor little red hen. No one would help her. What did the cat say when she asked for help?” “I like bread. Maybe we could eat some, just like the little red hen.”

This activity may feel artificial to participants. Explain that it is to provide practice for the next, more difficult exercise—using children’s books as starting points for talking about issues that children may have concerns or worries about.

## Second Small Group Activity

20 minutes

Give each small group a book you have carefully selected based on your knowledge of the participants. Choose books that suggest or describe developmental issues. Once again, ask one person in each small group to show or read the book to the rest of the group. Then ask the group to

identify the concern, issue, or worry the book is about and to brainstorm ideas for discussing the issue with a child. By this point a participant will undoubtedly have stated disbelief that it is possible to discuss “issues” with babies. The facilitator can emphasize that discussions with babies often mean describing, naming, or showing an object, person, behavior, or experience and giving the baby a message about it. For example:

“The dog is eating—he’s hungry.”

“The baby is sleeping—she’s so tired.”

“The boy has spinach on his bib—it spilled from his plate.”

Remind participants that children understand more than they can express.

Some examples of books and the discussion starters adults can use about them are as follows:

#### **For babies**

*Tickle Tickle* by Helen Oxenbury

“The babies are playing in the mud. They’re all dirty! Sometimes it’s okay to be dirty!”

“The babies are playing in the bathtub—just like you!”

“Mommy is brushing the baby’s hair. Sometimes you cry when Mommy brushes your hair, don’t you?”

#### **For toddlers**

*All Fall Down* by Helen Oxenbury

“The babies ran around and jumped and fell down! Sometimes you fall down! Sometimes you hurt yourself when you fall down! Then you cry.”

#### **For preschoolers**

*Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber

“Ira and Reggie felt snug and safe with their teddy bears. What do you sleep with that helps you feel snug and safe in bed?”

*The Tenth Good Thing about Barney* by Judith Viorst

“The boy was very sad when his cat died. Do you ever feel sad? What can we do to help when you feel sad?”

*Five Minutes’ Peace* by Jill Murphy

“The poor mommy just wanted a little peace and quiet. Sometimes I feel like that. Do you?”

*Just for You* by Mercer Mayes

“The little person in that book tried very very hard, didn’t he (she)? It’s sad when things go wrong when you’re trying so hard. Has there been a time when that happened to you? Can you tell me about it?”

## Total Group Feedback

10 minutes

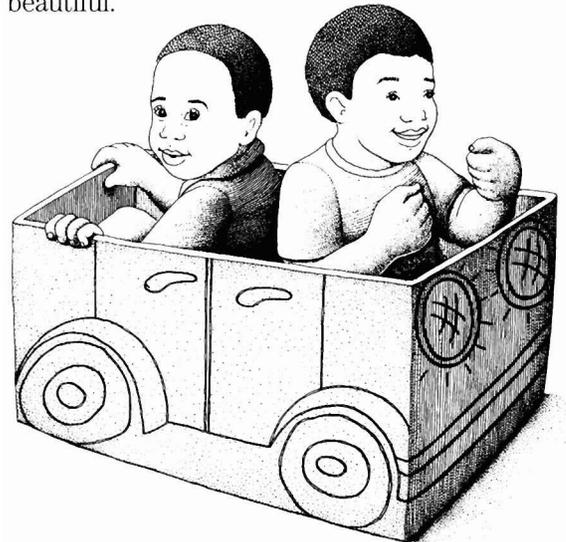
Ask each small group to report back briefly about the two books they discussed in the activities.

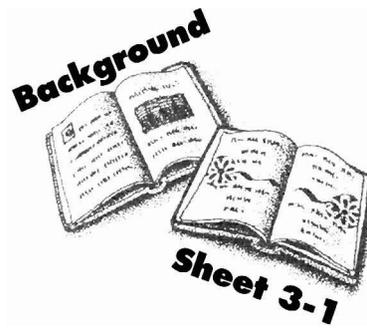
## Summary

5 minutes

The facilitator might choose to read *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney to participants as a summary of the workshop, pointing out that

- it has a central character with whom children can identify.
- it contains interesting information.
- it is well written and beautifully illustrated.
- it can be used to talk about the pictures if there seem to be too many words for a child to comprehend.
- it provides an opportunity for children and adults to discuss an important topic: what they can do to make the world more beautiful.





## What Books Can Do for Children

Books are no substitute for living, but they can add immeasurably to its richness. When life is absorbing, books can enhance our sense of its significance. When life is difficult, they can give us momentary release from trouble or a new insight into our problems, or provide the rest and refreshment we need. Books have always been a source of information, comfort and pleasure for the people who know how to use them. This is just as true for children as for adults. Indeed it is particularly true for children.

—May Hill Arbuthnot, *Children and Books*



Books are usually viewed as sources of information or pleasure. Arbuthnot's suggestion that they can also be a source of comfort may surprise some readers. In her classic text Arbuthnot suggests that the broad definition of comfort implies that books can meet some of children's psychological needs.

### 1. The need for security

A basic human drive urges each of us to make ourselves safe—to be as snug and comfortable as possible. This basic sense of security begins in the arms of

those who first care for us and extends gradually to include daily routines, family members, pets, and everything in our personal surroundings that gives us a sense of security and well-being.

Selecting books to reinforce feelings of safety and comfort undergirds our recommendation that many books for babies and young children reflect the realities of their daily lives. Toddlers derive comfort and satisfaction from stories about people (or animals) “just like me.” Although three- to five-year-olds may enjoy stories about pretend, magic, or make-

believe, their feelings of security are reinforced by variations of familiar themes and experiences.

### 2. The need to belong, to be part of a group

“Growing out of the need for security is the need to belong” (Arbuthnot, p. 4). As children become slightly less egocentric, they begin to identify with family, home, school, peer group, neighborhood, and so on. Hearing stories and reading books about others who also seek to belong can reassure a child about the universality of her need and let

May Hill Arbuthnot's classic text *Children and Books* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1947) is based on the seven concepts summarized here. Although Arbuthnot's theoretical construct would be difficult to substantiate from the perspective of hard research, many clinicians, teachers, librarians, and other adults who have worked extensively with children and books see her ideas reflected in their professional and personal experiences.

her know she is in good company with other people who also want to belong.

### **3. The need to love and to be loved**

Books are not a substitute for people or relationships. But children fortunate enough to belong to loving families can see the significance of their own experiences reflected in stories about other families. Children may gain a sense of what it is like to love and be loved from reading, talking, and hearing about families in which love exists and is shared.

### **4. The need to achieve, to do something worthy**

Children's first heroes and heroines are often their primary caregivers—the people they observe doing housework, shopping, driving, gardening, and fixing things. Watching people deal with difficulties as they struggle to accomplish tasks can help children understand that though life may be challenging, with persistent effort it can be managed. As children grow older, the heroes and heroines they find in books may be far removed from their own personal experiences but continue to illustrate the possibilities (or impossibilities) of human efforts.

### **5. The need to know, intellectual security**

Long ago many people believed that the only legitimate purpose of books for children was to provide information or instruction. Books

continue to provide a wide variety of information about many topics, beginning with a toddler's curiosity about animals, household objects, and food and expanding into astronomy, physics, philosophy, and other fields as people grow older.

### **6. The need for change**

Books can lift us out of the tedium of daily routines, provide escape when reality is harsh, tickle our imaginations, and make us laugh and cry. Reading books to escape responsibility is, of course, unwise. But reading to obtain needed moments of peace, tranquillity, and rest can recharge our emotional batteries and help us find strength to meet the challenges that confront us.

### **7. The need for aesthetic satisfaction**

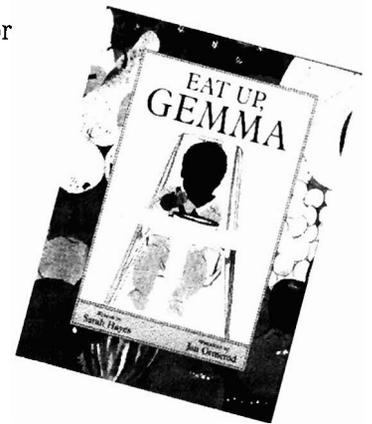
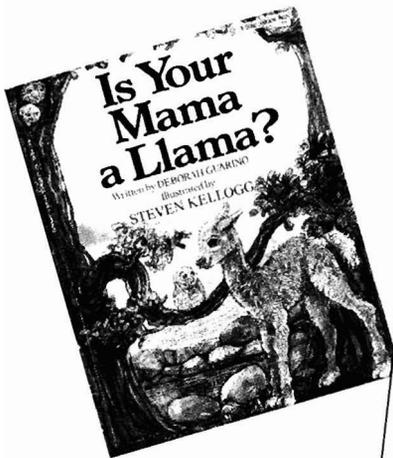
"Aesthetic satisfaction comes to the small child as well as to the adult, but the development of his taste depends not only upon his initial capabilities but also upon what material he encounters, and upon how that material is presented. When a child has chuckled over Miss Muffet and the spider, he is getting ready to enjoy Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses* and when he has been charmed with *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* he is on his way to appreciating the humor and beauty of *Wind in the Willow*" (Arbuthnot, p. 10).

**Handout 3-1**

## What Books Can Do for Children

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1. Books can help children feel safe and secure, for example, *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown.
2. Books can help children feel they belong to a family or group, for example, *Feast for 10* by Cathryn Fallwell.
3. Books can help children learn about love and may even help them feel loved themselves, for example, *Eat Up, Gemma* by Sarah Hayes.
4. Books can help children understand what it's like to do something important, for example, *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Kraus.
5. Books can help children find out about things that interest them, for example, *The Little Red Hen* illustrated by Karen Schmidt.
6. Books can be fun for children, for example, *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina.
7. Books can show children beautiful pictures and good writing, for example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.



# Making Children's Books

## Workshop 4

Estimated time: 90 minutes

### Goals

To increase participants' understanding of the way a book is constructed

To give participants an opportunity to make a book for a child they know

To increase participants' awareness of their own skills in writing and telling stories

### Materials needed

See supplies for making books listed on Background Sheet 4-1

### Background Sheet

4-1 "Supplies for Making Books"

### Handouts

4-1 "Write a Story with a Child"

4-2 "Writing Longer Stories with Children"

4-3 "Telling Stories"

4-4 "More Ways to Create Books and Stories"

4-5 "Making a Book"

4-6 "More about Making a Book"

4-7 "The Public Library"



## Workshop at a Glance

### 10–15 minutes Warm-Up

Participants describe their experiences with children and books since the last workshop.

### 30–50 minutes Making Books

Each participant will make a book for a child he or she knows, parents, or cares for.

### 15–30 minutes Wrap-Up

Participants show and share the books they made.

### Tips for Trainers

This is a hands-on workshop. The secret to success lies in preparation. Read all the handouts and select the ones most appropriate for your participants. Assemble all the supplies. Have work tables available.

Many programs support the use of computers in making books so we have focused on more old-fashioned methods in this workshop. Of course, computers can add a special excitement and polish to the process.

### Warm-Up

10–15 minutes

**G**reet the participants and invite them to describe briefly the experiences they have had with children and books since the last meeting of the group.

### Making Books

30–50 minutes

Explain that this workshop will give everyone the opportunity to make a book for a child. Give each person a copy of Handout 4-1, "Write a Story with a Child," and review the activity with the group.

In your own words, present the information on the other handouts. As you do so, give participants the handouts so they have both heard and can read what you are saying. (There are several handouts for this workshop. You may choose to review and distribute only the two or three that you feel are most appropriate for your group. You may find it helpful to duplicate each handout on a different color paper so that you can refer to the "red," or "blue" or "yellow" sheet.) If you choose not to distribute every handout, review each of them carefully before the workshop so that you can give the information verbally to participants. Ask if they have any questions before starting the book-making activity.

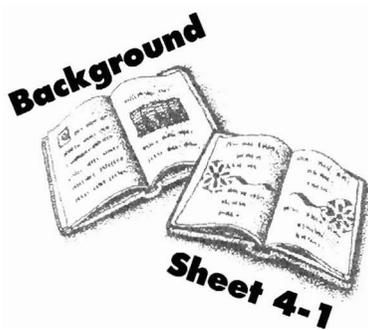
Give each participant Handout 4-6, "More about Making a Book." Invite participants to plunge in and make books for children they know. Explain that you will be available to give advice and want to be called on to help in any way possible. It may be helpful to give a quick tour of the supplies and tools you have assembled so that participants know what they have to work with.

### Wrap-Up

15–30 minutes

Sometimes it's hard to know when the hands-on part of a workshop has gone on long enough for participants to feel satisfied. Each group—and person—will proceed at an individual pace. You will have to judge when it is time to ask them to share and show the books they have made. Be sure to plan this so that every participant (even those who seem reluctant) has an opportunity to let the group admire what he or she has done. Conclude the share and show time with a round of applause and suggest that participants show their books to the children for whom they were made.

Tell participants that the next workshop will be held at the public library. Distribute Handout 4-7, "The Public Library," and review the information on it before adjourning the workshop.



## Supplies for Making Books

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blank paper

index cards

luggage tags

interesting fabric scraps

poster board

scissors

hole punch

staples

glue

pinking shears

large needles and thread

stickers

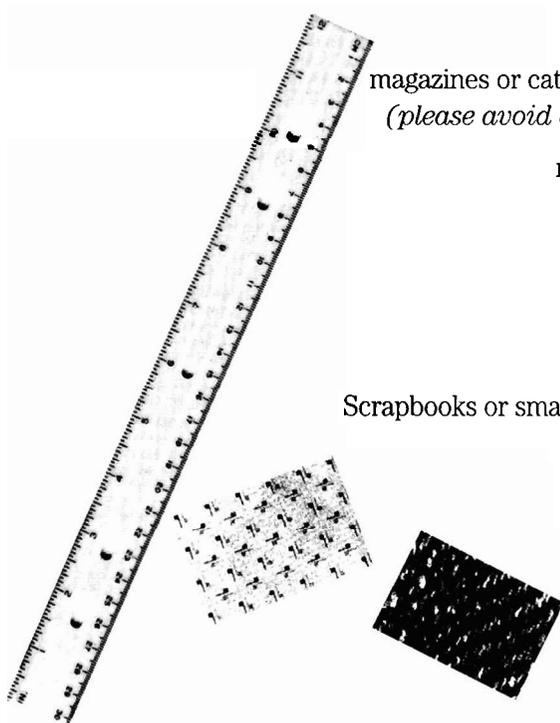
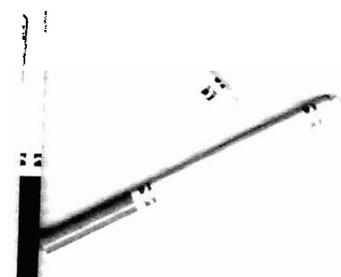
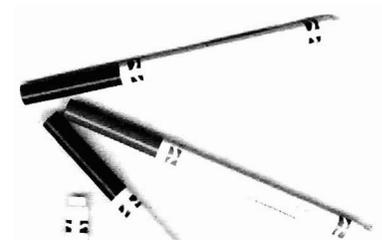
magazines or catalogs with interesting picture  
*(please avoid cartoons or TV characters)*

marking pens

rulers

pens

pencils



Scrapbooks or small photo albums if budget allows

**Handout 4-1**

## Write a Story with a Child

---

Children like books about

- themselves and other children.
- objects they can recognize such as clothes, toys, food, animals, and machines.
- holidays or special times like birthdays or trips.

Here is a very simple story you can write with a child.

Here is \_\_\_\_\_  
*(child's name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ has two eyes, a nose, and  
*(child's name)*  
 a mouth—like this *(draw a picture of the child's face here)*

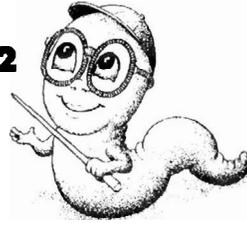
What else shall we put on \_\_\_\_\_  
*(child's name)*

face? (The child can suggest hair, eyebrows, ears, or teeth—or may be satisfied with the simple face you have drawn.)

When \_\_\_\_\_ sees his (her) friend  
 he (she) says *(child's name)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(ask child what to write here to end the story)*

## Handout 4-2



# Writing Longer Stories with Children

---

As children have more experience with books and stories they can help you write longer stories. For instance:

This is a story about \_\_\_\_\_ and  
*(child's name)*

his(her) friend \_\_\_\_\_  
*(child's name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ and  
*(child's name)*

\_\_\_\_\_ *(friend's name)*

like to play.

Sometimes they play with a ball.

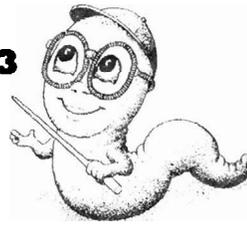
Sometimes they march.

Sometimes they play train with boxes.

Sometimes they jump up and down and laugh.

That is the end of this story.

You can write stories with children about what they wear and eat, what they like to do at a playground, how they celebrate birthdays or holidays, or about the people in their families. Keep stories short and sweet! Don't force children to make up stories with you.

**Handout 4-3**

## Telling Stories

---

Some people prefer to tell stories instead of writing them down. Listening to a story someone is telling helps children learn to concentrate. Listening to and writing stories are good ways to spend time when you are waiting in a clinic, traveling, or calming children down so they will be ready for bed or to pass the time pleasantly when children are sick or otherwise in need of special time with an adult. You can use the same ideas as in Handout 4-1 to tell a story.

You will soon find that children enjoy stories with a longer, more complicated plot. For instance

\_\_\_\_\_ and  
(child's name)

\_\_\_\_\_ like to play  
(friend's name)

together. They like to go to the park with their mothers.

\_\_\_\_\_

(child's name)

likes to \_\_\_\_\_ best and

\_\_\_\_\_ likes the  
(friend's name)

\_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes they feed bread to the ducks. One day a big mother duck swam over to eat some bread. And swimming right along behind her were six baby ducks! That is the end of that story!

**Handout 4-4**

## More Ways to Create Books and Stories

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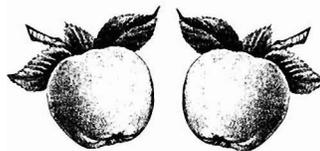
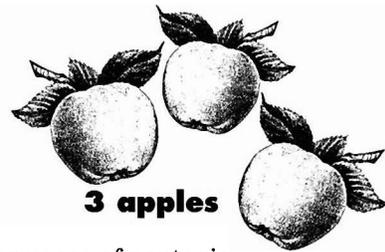
1. Make a small book of snapshots "All About You" for your child. Describe each picture as you look at the book together:
 

"Here you are when you were a tiny baby!"

"This was the first time you ate spaghetti!"

"That's you with Grandma and Grandpa."

"There you are at your three-year-old birthday."
2. Staple or sew blank pages together to make a small book. Write one of the stories you and your child have made up together in the book. Put one short sentence on each page. Draw stick figure pictures to go with the story.
3. Buy some extra large notebook rings, some index cards, and some notebook page reinforcements. Punch holes in the index cards, put reinforcements on the holes, and put several cards on the notebook rings. Write a story or put stickers on the book you have made. Stickers are good for making counting books. For example, if you have a book of apple stickers you could make a book called "Let's Count Apples."

**1 apple****2 apples****3 apples**

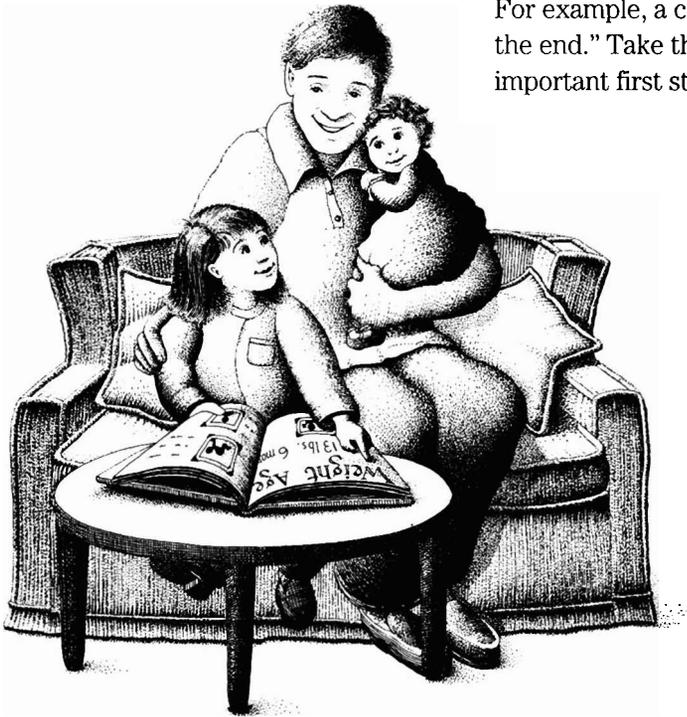
4. Make a book for a baby or young toddler by sewing pages of nontoxic fabric together. Choose fabric scraps with interesting designs. "Read" the book by talking about the patterns or color of fabric:
 

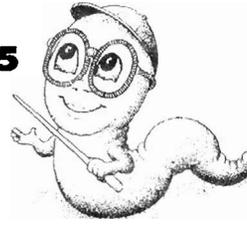
"These are red and white stripes."

"This page is all blue."

"Look at the ducks on this page."
5. Another durable book can be made by stringing clear plastic lids on a notebook ring. Draw, put a sticker, or paste a picture on each "page." If you use colored magazine pictures cover them with clear contact paper. (Some dyes in magazine pictures may be toxic.)

6. Write a "silly" book with your child. For example, "Bobby's mother called him to lunch. Bobby washed his KNEES. Then he sat on HIS SANDWICH and ate his CHAIR! The end!" (If children don't appreciate this humor, don't insist on writing this kind of book.)
7. Gradually you and your child may decide to write stories about family celebrations, trips, "the olden days when you were young," and many other topics. Save these books as reminders of some of your good times with children.
8. The books described up to this point have been "here and now" books. They are meant to show children that books are closely connected to their lives. You can also write imaginative, make-believe stories. One of our own children told her younger cousins lots of stories about "Yodels," imaginary creatures based on cupcake wrappers.
9. Try to remember stories, poems, and songs from your childhood. Write them down for your child. Ask your family and friends to share their childhood memories. Write them in a book. Write down old favorites that you remember like "Three Billy Goats Gruff" or the "Gingerbread Man."
10. Your child may want to tell you stories. Write them down and read them together often. It doesn't matter if they don't make much sense. For example, a child may ask you to write "The boy runned. That is the end." Take the child's effort seriously. She has taken a very important first step toward becoming a writer!



**Handout 4-5**

## Making Books

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Many of us take books for granted. Making a book ourselves can remind us that there is much to be learned about books and that children are not born knowing these things. Children can learn that

- books have front and back covers. They also have spines.
- books have titles (names) and authors(writers). Some books have illustrators (who draw pictures).
- in our part of the world we read the print in books from top to bottom and from left to right.
- the print in books is arranged in letters, words, and sentences.
- special marks, called punctuation, tell us when to pause or stop while we are reading.
- in many books we can tell ourselves the story by looking at the pictures.
- the print we find in books can be found in many other places. It helps us find things and places, get directions for doing things, and learn useful information.

## Handout 4-6



# More about Making a Book

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1. Write the story or theme before you start.
2. Collect the materials you will need.
3. Make a cover for the book. On the cover write the title and the names of the author and illustrator.
4. Write your story from left to right. Do not put more than one sentence on a page.
5. Choose pictures that illustrate what the words are saying.
6. Put one picture on a page (children need white space around pictures when they are first learning about books).
7. Plan each page before you start your book.
8. Think about the child for whom you are making the book. Be sure you know his or her interests and attention span.
9. Make your book.
10. Practice reading or showing your book to another adult and then share it with your child.

**Handout 4-7**



# The Public Library

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Public libraries are usually wonderful places to visit with children. At the library you can expect to find

- friendly people ready to help you find what you need.
- books for people of all ages.
- videotapes and other material you can borrow.
- bulletin boards and information about jobs.
- newspapers and magazines.
- special events for children that are fun and free.

We will meet at the \_\_\_\_\_ library for our next  
*(name of library)*

workshop. \_\_\_\_\_ will meet with us and has  
*(name of librarian)*

agreed to give us our own tour. If you are not a member of the library

\_\_\_\_\_ will tell us how to join. You will need  
*(librarian's name)*

to bring a photo ID like a driver's license and an envelope or bill addressed to you that you recently got in the mail. If you don't have these things, don't worry.

Directions to the library are as follows:

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See you on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
*(date)* *(time)*

# The Public Library

## Workshop 5



Estimated time: 90 minutes

### Goals

To increase participants' awareness of an important community resource

To acquaint participants with the library and show them how to use it for themselves, their families, and children they care for or about

### Resources

This workshop requires a field trip to a local public library. Choose one that is accessible for workshop participants and arrange to meet at the library at an agreed-upon time.

### Handout

5-1 "Points to Remember When Reading to Young Children"

## Workshop at a Glance

### 15 minutes Warm-Up and Introductions

Participants become acquainted with the librarian.

### 30 minutes Tour of the Library

The librarian conducts a tour of the library.

### 25 minutes Discussion

Discussion of the library as a resource, perhaps including a description of adult services in addition to those offered for children.

### 20 minutes Participants Explore the Library

Participants are on their own to look around the library. If possible, they apply for library membership and check out books or materials.

Tell the librarian what has been done in the workshops up to this point. Explain that your goals are to emphasize that the library is an important community resource that is hospitable and user friendly and to

encourage participants to feel at home in the library so that they will use it and take children to it. The success of this workshop depends very much on the friendliness of the librarian and your ability to work with her or him.

### Tips for Trainers

Be sure to make a trip to the library before the workshop. Talk with the children's librarian so you can lead the workshop together. Be prepared to share your copy of *Bookstart* with the librarian.

## Warm-Up and Introductions

15 minutes

**I**ntroduce the librarian to the group. Ask her to talk about herself for a minute or two. Why did she decide to be a librarian? Which part of her job does she enjoy most? Ask participants to introduce themselves to the librarian and to tell about some of the ways they are reading or telling stories to children.

## Tour of the Library

30 minutes

A library can be overwhelming if you have not spent much time in it. You, the workshop leader, can model for the participants that librarians are used to dealing with many questions and that they will repeat information if asked to do so. You may have to ask the first few questions. Be prepared to do so. Ask the librarian to cover the following points on the tour:

- When the library is open
- Who can use it
- Where to find children's books and materials
- How to check them out
- Information about special events such as story hours and parent-toddler programs
- Location of restrooms
- Rules about behavior (food and drink in the library, noise, children's questions)

## Discussion

25 minutes

Arrange ahead of time with the librarian for a place to sit down comfortably for discussion. The librarian may be willing to read or tell a children's story to demonstrate what happens in a story hour program. Include in discussions with the group and the librarian the behavior expected of children at story hour or other programs, whether adults are expected to remain with children during the story or event and if so what they are expected to do, and what happens if a child is disruptive. Encourage participants to tell the librarian how they are using books, stories, and activities with their children.

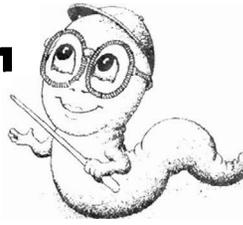
If time permits, distribute copies of Handout 5-1, "Points to Remember When Reading to Young Children."

Review the handout with the group. Ask the librarian to react to the suggested points on the handout; participants may be relieved (even surprised) to find that librarians agree with you.

### **Participants Explore the Library**

20 minutes

Give participants time to look around the library. Let them know that you are available to help them apply for library cards, find books or materials of interest to them, and be generally helpful. If refreshments can be served in the library you may choose to have coffee and cookies available.

**Handout 5-1**

## Points to Remember When Reading to Young Children

### SHARE the book!

There are many ways to share a book with a young child. You don't have to read the entire book.

Some children like to look at one picture and talk about it.

- Some children want to skip pages.
- Some children want to hear the same story over and over again.
- Some children want to chat with you about the story while you read or tell it.
- Some children want to tell you a story or "read" the book to you.

These are all good ways for children to learn about books and stories.

When you were a child you may have been told, "Be quiet and listen until I finish the book or story." We know now that children learn more when they are actively involved in an activity or experience.

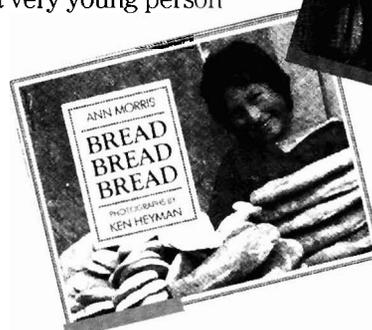
**S**uggle with a child when you are reading or telling a story.

**H**old the book so the child can see and touch it.

**A**nswer questions when the child asks them.

**R**espond to the child's way of enjoying the story.

**E**njoy the experience of introducing a very young person to the joy of books.



# Beyond Books:

## Other Activities to Increase Literacy Skills and Provide Pleasure

### Workshop 6

#### Tips for Trainers

Plan this workshop in advance. You may want to arrange for participants to meet you at a school that has a good pre-K, Head Start, or nursery school classroom during a time when children are not present. This session will be particularly effective if you can find an early childhood educator (perhaps the classroom teacher) to help you tour the classroom and discuss with participants how each learning center contributes to children's emerging literacy skills.

In this workshop we are attempting to broaden the scope of activities designed to increase children's literacy skills. As Bonnie Lash Freeman wrote: "Family literacy programs typically seek to do one or more of the following":<sup>1</sup>

- Increase literacy skills of adults and children
- Influence parent-child relationships
- Help family members develop positive attitudes about reading and writing
- Influence how families view literacy as part of daily activities

By now you will know the participants and have a sense of the amount of time they need to complete activities. Adjust the suggested times in this workshop to meet the needs of your group. Don't worry if you have extra time at the end of the session. Informal conversation would be a fine way to conclude the Bookstart program.

1. Bonnie Nash Freeman, "Family Literacy: Serving Undereducated Families," *Zero to Three* 12 (September 1991): 27.

Estimated time: 90 minutes

#### Goals

To extend participants' awareness of the importance of reading and storytelling to other activities that enhance literacy skills

To explore selected activities designed to enhance the literacy skills of children

#### Resources

Background Sheets

6-1 "Suggested Guide for a Tour of an Early Childhood Classroom"

6-2 "Activities to Build on Books"

#### Handouts

6-1 "Activity Areas in an Early Childhood Classroom"

6-2 "Activities That Build on Books"

#### Workshop at a Glance

##### 15-20 minutes Warm-Up

Participants describe the experiences they have had sharing books with children and, if they are visiting an early childhood program, meet the classroom teacher.

##### 30-45 minutes Tour of Early Childhood Classroom

Visit the classroom, using Background Sheet 6-1 as a guide or, if the group does not visit a classroom, divide into small groups and do the activities on Background Sheet 6-2.

##### 15-30 minutes Discussion

Discuss observations of the classroom with the teacher or, if you have not visited a classroom, show and share the activities participants did in small groups.

##### 15-30 minutes Wrap-Up

Because this is the final workshop in the series, serve simple refreshments and encourage participants to discuss plans for their future adventures with children and books.

**Warm-Up**

10–15 minutes



ask participants to describe their experiences sharing the books they made with children. Some important questions may arise which the group should discuss. For example:

1. What do you do if the child is not interested in the book you made? The child's response does not necessarily mean the book is a failure. Put the book away for a while and then try again.
2. What do you do if the child destroys the book? This sometimes happens in spite of our best efforts to supervise and to protect books. Say to the child, "That's too bad. Now we don't have the book to enjoy. Books are for looking at—not for destroying." Ask participants to respond to questions. Don't attempt to be the expert who knows all.

**Tour of Early Childhood Classroom**

30–45 minutes

Visit a classroom and follow Background Sheet 6-1 to learn about the facilities available there, especially those related to a library.

If you cannot visit an early childhood classroom, the following activities can be done in your usual meeting room. Select four or five activities from Background Sheet 6-2 that you think participants might particularly enjoy. Collect the materials they will need in large grocery bags, one bag for each activity. For example, for the sock puppets put some socks, scraps of yarn and fabric, scissors and three or four books with animal characters in the bag. For the flannel board stories collect books with photocopies of illustrations you have made ahead of time, scissors, glue, felt, or velcro, and a large piece of fabric. For acting out a story put three or four books in a bag and ask participants to choose one to dramatize for the total group. Making bookmarks brings up the topic of caring well for books by marking your place in them appropriately. Adults may enjoy making more elaborate bookmarks than we expect children to produce.

## Discussion

15–30 minutes

Ask each small group to show the activity it has done.

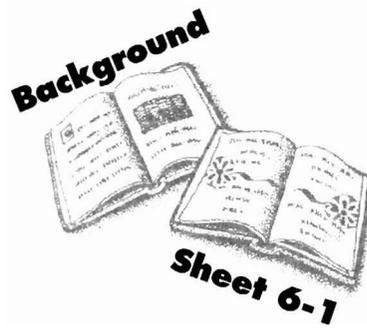
If participants visit an early childhood education program, arrange for the group to sit informally with the teacher. Encourage participants to ask questions or make comments to initiate discussion.

## Wrap-Up

15–30 minutes

This is the final meeting of the Bookstart program. Simple refreshments and a few minutes of informal conversation provide a small celebration. Be sure to say good-bye to each participant. Wish them luck as they continue to share books with their children.



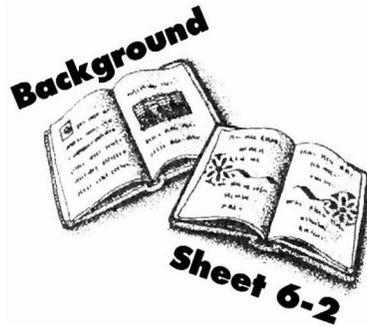


## Suggested Guide for a Tour of an Early Childhood Classroom

1. Visit the classroom before you convene the workshop there.
2. Ask the teacher to show you the ways she or he facilitates emergent literacy for children in the room. For example, there will probably be
  - a cozy book corner, with books attractively arranged and soft pillows and rugs available for children's comfort.
  - a dramatic play area where children can play house, post office, library, grocery store, or many other situations in which they practice the give and take of oral language and use their imagination in many "let's pretend" ways.
  - a writing center with paper, pencils, pens, and perhaps other tools children can use to scribble, "write" in their individual ways, and perhaps begin to form recognizable letters.
  - a music area where children can listen to tapes (including story tapes) dance, experiment with instruments, and sing.
  - a block area where children learn about size, shape, classification, and construction—and much more.
3. With the teacher, plan for small groups of participants to have
  - an expressive art area in which children paint, draw, model with clay, glue collages, and do other creative (and probably messy) projects.
  - an area for small manipulatives equipped with puzzles and materials that allow children to coordinate the use of their fingers, hands, and eyes and to solve problems as well.

Additionally, a good early childhood classroom will provide many opportunities for children to engage in vigorous activity—perhaps outside—to ask questions, engage in scientific experiments, play, and find out for themselves about many of the wonders in the classroom.

Each teacher facilitates learning differently. Some teachers find it difficult to explain exactly how they teach. Talk with the teacher until, together, you have developed an exciting and revealing explanation for workshop participants.
4. Explain to the teacher that you plan to discuss with participants ways to adapt or replicate some activities they like for use at home with their children as a summary of the visit.
5. A good classroom for young children provides an environment that is rich in language and bursting with opportunities for play, stories, music, self-expression, and self-selected challenges. It is often difficult for adults who have a traditional image of school as a place in which children sit quietly for the teacher to instruct them to appreciate the learning that occurs when children play. Visiting a classroom and being encouraged to explore materials and activities alone will not help adults who have a different perception of how learning happens. Therefore, the roles of the teacher and the program facilitator (who is by now well acquainted with the participants) are critically important if this visit is to be an effective learning experience.



## Activities to Build on Books

Here are a few ways to plan experiences for young children that build on their experiences with books and stories. There are many more. Use your imagination! Brainstorm!

### 1. Flannel boards

Photocopy illustrations of characters from a favorite book. Back them with sandpaper, scraps of flannel, or velcro. Let the children put them up on a large poster board covered with flannel (a summer blanket over the back of a sofa can be used at home). The children can help you read or tell the story, acting it out on the flannel board as you do.

### 2. Puppets

Instant puppets can be improvised with old socks. They make lively animal puppets. Use different puppets as the characters in a story you are reading or telling. Drape scraps of yarn (for hair) or fabric (for clothes) as you go along. When children are first exposed to puppets they sometimes want them to be very aggressive and may tickle, hit, or tease adults with them. Adults can say, "I don't let people or puppets touch me in ways I don't like—I will talk to the puppet."

### 3. Act out a story

*Caps for Sale* (see Workshop 1)

is a favorite for four- and five-year-olds to act out. *The Little Red Hen* is fun for three- and four-year-olds. Two-year-olds with lots of experience with books will enjoy acting out the characters in their favorite books or repeating some of the refrains such as "Not I" (*The Little Red Hen*).

### 4. Clothes and furniture in story dramatizations

Children enjoy dressing up, arranging a play story, restaurant, doctor's office, library, and so on. Themes from favorite books frequently appear in their play. Children who know and love the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* may act out the story if the adult can find three teddy bears (small, medium, and large) and improvise bowls, chairs, and bed for each bear.

### 5. Creating a story character

For example, the adult might cut strips of egg carton for children to paint with many colors to simulate *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.



### 6. Videotapes and Audiotapes

There are many fine videotapes of favorite children's books and stories. Ask for them at the public library and at your video store. Although we believe videotapes are valuable and enjoyable, they do not substitute for the warm, living presence of an adult reading a book or telling a story.

Parents and teachers can record their book or storytelling sessions with children so that children can listen again and again. Parents who travel can leave a special surprise story or audiotape for children to listen to while they are away. Some day care programs encourage parents to tape record stories and songs for children to hear at nap time.

### 7. Literacy packets

A literacy packet does not have to be fancy or expensive. It simply contains a prop to make the story

come alive for children. For example, a packet might include a snack of fresh blueberries and the book *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey. Or an adult might round up several small cars and trucks to play with after reading a book about cars and trucks.

#### **8. Referring to book characters as role models**

A two-year-old struggling to take off his coat may be encouraged by a dad who says, "You're just like *The Little Engine That Could* 'cause you keep on trying!"

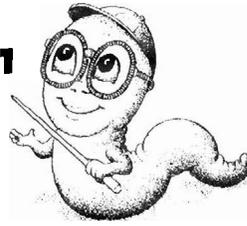
A five-year-old on a food jag can be reassured, "You're just like Frances in the book *Bread and Jam for Frances*."

#### **9. Television**

We thought hard about whether to include TV. Of course, there are good programs and good stories on TV for young children. Wise adults use television selectively for themselves and their children. And children gain more from any experience if adults share it with them. So select the programs that are appropriate for your children and watch with them.

#### **10. Bookmarks**

Children can make bookmarks by decorating strips of poster board or paper. They can write or draw on them or use stickers or stamps.

**Handout 6-1**

## Activity Areas in an Early Childhood Classroom

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1. In the dramatic play area children can make believe and pretend to be mom, dad, fireman, storekeeper, and others.
2. The book corner and writing center have lots of books for children to enjoy. In a writing center there are paper, pencils, and markers for children to use in scribbling.
3. In the music area children can sing, dance, listen, and play instruments.
4. Blocks are for children to build towers, roads, or just arrange.
5. Materials in expressive art allow children to paint, color, and use clay and glue.
6. The small muscle area has puzzles and other things for children to practice using their fingers and eyes together.
7. Big muscle equipment allows children to climb, hop, jump, and run.
8. In a science area children can experiment with how things work.



**Handout 6-2**



## Activities That Build on Books

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Flannel boards

Puppets

Acting out stories

Using dress-up clothes and furniture to act out stories

Making a story character

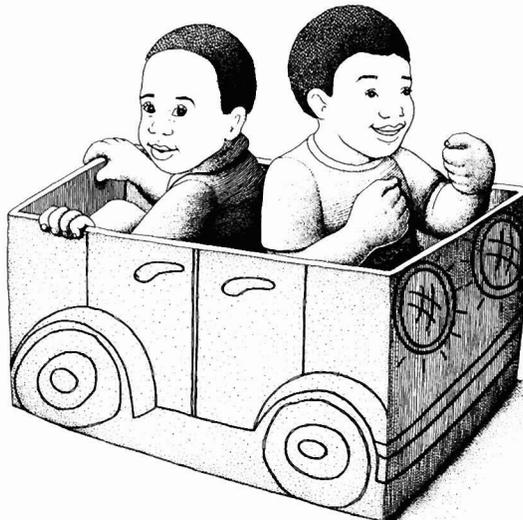
Tapes (video and audio)

Literacy packets

Using book characters as role models

Television—watch it with children

Bookmarks



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# Sources of Information on Adult Family Literacy

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## Journals

*Adult Basic Education: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Adult Literacy Educators.* Published by the Commission on Adult Basic Education of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. (For information contact AAACE, 2101 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Va. 22201. Phone 703-522-2234.

*Adult Learning and Literacy. A.L.L. Points Bulletin.* Published bi-monthly by the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., Washington, D.C. 20202-7240.

## State and Private Literacy Providers

*Connections: A Journal of Adult Literacy.* Published by Adult Literacy Resource Institute, 989 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02215. 617-782-8956.

*Journal of Reading.* A journal of adolescent and adult literacy from the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, Del. 19714-8139.

*MOSAIC: Research Notes on Literacy.* Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, College of Education, Pennsylvania State University, 204 Caldera St., University Park, Pa. 16801-4756.

*Report on Literacy Programs.* The biweekly newsletter on basic skills training and workplace literacy. Business Publishers, Inc., Silver Springs, Md. It gives an excellent biweekly report on regulations and movements related to literacy programs and general "happenings" regarding adult literacy.

## Organizations

Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 1002 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

Clearinghouse on Adult Education and Literacy, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, Washington, D.C. 202-205-9233.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Center for Education and Training for Employment, Ohio State University, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

## Newsletters and Bibliography Notices

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, Indiana University, Smith Research Center, Bloomington, Ind. 47408. 812-855-5847.

ERIC National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. An Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse, Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037. 202-429-9292.

Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. 16801. 814-863-3777.

National Center for Family Literacy, Waterfront Plaza Suite 200, 325 West Main Street, Louisville, Ky. 40202-4251. 502-584-1133.

National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6216. 215-898-2100.

National Institute for Literacy, 800 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20202-7560. 202-632-1500.

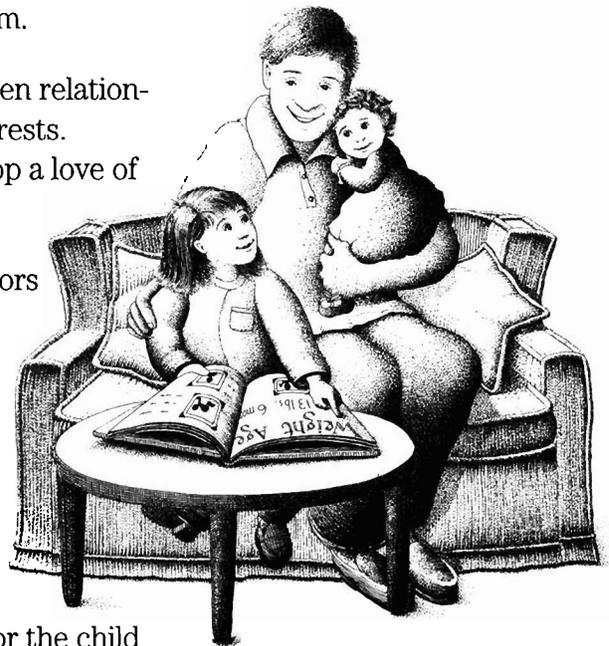
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), 11325 Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. 202-638-3143.

Very young children vary so widely in their response to reading that adults and caregivers appreciate help to find the best ways to share books and reading-related activities with them.

Certain activities using books allow adults to strengthen relationships with children and communicate values and interests. Adults can also lay a foundation for children to develop a love of books that can help them later in school.

The Bookstart program is useful to workshop facilitators because the manual provides clear recommendations for adult participants:

- Specific benefits of sharing books with children
- How to assess the quality of books
- Choosing developmentally appropriate books
- Using books to begin conversations with children
- Making or helping a child compose a simple book for the child
- Visiting a public library and learning about its services
- Ways to foster literacy among children



Written by nationally recognized child development specialists for Cornell Cooperative Extension Jennifer Birckmayer and Bonnie Jo Westendorf, the 104-page manual includes ideas for field study and hands-on projects.



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