

Family Card Making

A Kindergarten Readiness Outreach Workshop



Early Literacy Focus

Writing can be anything from scribbling to writing letters and words. Early writing activities include those that help children develop their hand muscles, eye-hand coordination, and learning the letters of the alphabet. During this workshop, we'll be talking about ways to support your child's writing and pre-reading skills.

The Program

This is a workshop for the whole family to engage in a fun activity that also helps young children develop their pre-writing skills.

Overview

Activity	Focus	Time
Introduction	Share early literacy focus and set expectations for the program	5 min
Book	Select a book that contains examples of environmental print.	10 min
Family Activity: Make a List	Making a list to encourage Print Awareness.	10 min
Individual Activity: Practice using tools	Use scrap paper to practice cutting with safety scissors, drawing, gluing, etc.	10 min
Family Activity: Card Making	Plan to create and decorate a card.	20 min
Wrap Up	Reflect and Goal Set	5 min

The Details

Introduction

Welcome participants and deliver the following messages:

- This is a program for the entire family.
- We will do card-making activities that can help your child get ready for kindergarten:
 - We will demonstrate that print has meaning, which is an important early literacy skill called Print Awareness.
 - We will work with crayons, markers, glue and safety scissors to help children develop fine motor skills that will later help them learn to hold and write with a pencil.
 - We will make a plan for how our cards will look – making a plan helps children develop a sense of self-regulation, which is important in a school setting.
- Everything we do today is something you can continue to do at home.
- YOU are a child's best teacher, and doing things together helps your child learn.

Book:

Sharing a book is a great way to introduce a concept to the group and model reading aloud to adults. Select a book that features environmental print. One that shows handwriting or scribbles, or a card, would be particularly appropriate. As you read the book, point out examples of print during the story. Check out the book list later in this document for ideas and recommendations.

Share Research

At the end of this program plan are several different research-based comments to share during this program. Choose one or two that you would like to focus on, and practice saying them out loud in your own words before the workshop. As you move through the different activities in the workshop, find ways to share the comments. All of these comments are based on Every Child Ready to Read (ECRTR) research and were written by early childhood expert Saroj Ghoting for the Idaho Commission for Libraries' long-running ECRTR workshops.

Family Activity: Make a List

Supplies needed:

- Blank paper (1-2 sheets/family)
- Pens
- Clipboards or another hard surface to write on (optional)

Lists are a great way for kids to understand the importance of print, and they can help all of us organize and prioritize. For this activity, hand out blank paper and pens to each of the families, and have them make two lists: the first is a list of different types of cards they might want to make (birthday cards, thank you cards, holiday cards, etc.) and the second is a list of people that they might want to make a card for (grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, teachers, etc.).

As they are wrapping up creating their lists, deliver these messages:

- Making lists shows children that print has meaning. This is an important early literacy skill.
- Being able to organize your thoughts and prioritize your actions are important executive function skills, and can help children do better in school. Making lists helps children develop these skills.

Individual Activity: Practice Using Tools

Note: For this workshop, you should hand out the school supply kits for each family now. They will need to use materials from the kits throughout this program.

Supplies needed:

- Safety scissors (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Glue bottles (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Copy paper or construction paper (Library)
- Other scrap paper (newspaper, magazines, junk mail; Library)
- Crayons (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Markers (Library)
- Tape (ICfL – washi tape in school supply kits, or painter's tape)

Before we actually make a card, have participants practice with some of the tools that they might use. Have children use the safety scissors to cut up scraps of paper, use glue to practice gluing things together (use actual glue, not glue sticks, so that they can practice squeezing the right amount out of the bottle), and use crayons and markers to practice drawing pictures for the card or signing their names. Try to use this time to also incorporate counting into the activity. Count how many cuts were made, how many pieces of paper there are, etc.

During this activity, deliver this message:

- Hands-on experiences in art, science, and creating – such as scribbling with crayons, using safety scissors, ripping tape, and playing with blocks – are developmentally appropriate ways to help children develop their fine motor skills which are needed for writing.

Family Activity: Card Making

Supplies needed:

- Cardstock or blank cards with envelopes (ICfL)
- Scissors (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Markers (Library)
- Glue (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Crayons (ICfL – in school supply kits)
- Construction Paper (Library)
- Pens (Library)
- Other card-decorating craft items (optional)
- Washi Tape (ICfL – in school supply kits)

Now it's time to make a card. Have families decide how many cards they are going to make – will they all contribute to one card, team up on a few cards, or will everyone make their own? Then have them spend time talking about what they want their cards to look like and their plan to create them. Let the families spend 15-20 minutes creating their cards. It's okay if they don't finish and, if possible, let them take home supplies to continue their cards at home. If there is time, have parents explain how to address an envelope and how addresses work.

Wrap Up

As the program is wrapping up, deliver the following messages:

- Today your family came together to make a card to help your children develop important early learning skills.
- When we made lists, you demonstrated the importance of print. When you leave today, continue to make lists together and share your grocery list or other lists with your children.
- Your children had the chance to practice cutting with scissors, squeezing out glue, writing and drawing. All of these are important for kids to know before they begin kindergarten, and they also help develop the fine motor skills that children need when they learn how to write.
- Card making also involved making a plan and coming to an agreement on how the card should look. These are important social-emotional skills that will help your child become ready for school.
- Check out the Vroom tip cards in your child's school supply kit for more ways to write together.

As a final activity, give adult participants the parent survey to fill out and return to you. Give children the Family Card Making Kids Reflection Activity to work on while their grown-ups are filling out the survey.

Return completed adult surveys to Jennifer Redford at ICfL:

- Scan and email them to: jennifer.redford@libraries.idaho.gov
- Mail them to Jennifer’s Attention at ICfL: 325 W. State St., Boise, ID, 83702
- **Remember to count** the number of kids and adults who attend your program – you will need those numbers for your Summary Report

Supplies

Pens (Library)

Clipboards or another hard surface to write on (optional)

Safety scissors (ICfL)

Glue bottles (ICfL)

Copy paper or construction paper (Library)

Other scrap paper (Library)

Crayons (ICfL)

Markers (Library)

Tape (ICfL– washi tape or painter’s tape)

Cardstock or blank cards with envelopes (ICfL)

Other card-decorating craft items (optional; Library)

Books:

“A Splendid Friend, Indeed” by Suzanne Bloom

“Draw Me a Star” by Eric Carle

“Harold and the Purple Crayon” by Crockett Johnson

“Rocket Writes a Story” by Tad Hills

“Ten Things I Love About You” by Daniel Kirk

“We Are in a Book!” by Mo Willems

“More Bears!” by Kenn Nesbitt

“Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School” by Mark Teague

Research-Based Comments to Adults*

***Select a few of these comments to share with the group as they are doing the activities in the workshop.**

The Practice of Writing

Writing can be anything from scribbling to writing letters and words. Early writing activities include those that help children develop their muscles as well as their eye-hand coordination as well as learning the letters of the alphabet. We’ll be talking about ways to support your child’s writing and pre-reading skills.

Writing and reading go hand-in-hand. They are both expressions of the spoken word. Just as there are pre-reading skills, there are also skills that will help your child learn to write. For example, your child’s grasping objects and learning how to manipulate them is the beginning of learning how to hold a pencil.

Among the first words children want to write are their names. This usually begins as scribbling. As children learn letter names and improve their motor skills, they begin to form the letters of their name. As children scribble and draw, they practice eye-hand coordination and exercise the muscles in their fingers and hands. This helps develop the fine motor control they need to write letters and words.

Here are some tips as your child try writing his or her name:

- Use unlined paper. In the beginning, children will not be able to stay within the lines.
- Use only your child's first name to start.
- Start by printing your child's name in large letters. Have your child trace over your letters to get a better feel for them, then practice copying the whole word.

Print Awareness Connection to Writing and Reading

Writing, which includes scribbling and drawing, helps children understand that print has meaning. When children have this skill, print awareness, it helps them make connections for learning to read.

Having children draw and write notes or letters is one way children learn that print has meaning, even if we don't know what their scribbles mean. They will read their notes to us. Print awareness is a key concept in getting ready to read!

When your child draws a picture and tells you what it is, ask if you can write down his or her words on the front, on the back, or on a separate piece of paper. This is a powerful way for children to understand that the written word reflects the spoken word. You can do the same! Make a picture and write down your words as you say them to your children.

When your children draw pictures, ask if you can write down for them what it is or what they are saying about the picture; they may want you to write on the back or on a separate piece of paper. When you write down what they say, they can begin to see the connections between the spoken and written word.

Pointing out the text in books, such as the title or the caption next to a picture, and running your finger under the words helps them understand the connection between the text and the words you are saying.

Letter Knowledge

There are several parts to learning about letters. One is learning the names of the letters, as we do with the alphabet song; then being able to put the letter names to the written letter itself, both upper and lower case. Children can begin to learn what sound a letter represents. This can be confusing in English because one letter can represent several sounds (the letter C for example may have a "K" or an "S" sound) or one sound can be represented by different letters (the "K" sound could be a K or a C). At this point it is fine for your child not to know all the details.

The most important word to a child is his or her name, so start with the letters in your child's name.

When you write words with your children, in addition to their names, you can ask them what words they would like to know how to spell. What words would they like to see? They may choose "trucks," or "dinosaur" or "princess." Start with words your child is interested in.

Between two and four years old, most children are ready to learn about the letters of the alphabet, an essential pre-reading skill. Learning the alphabet consists of several distinct tasks:

- Learning the names of all 26 letters.
- Learning which names go with which letter shape, both uppercase and lowercase.
- Learning what sounds each letter represents.

When you play “find the letter” games, your child may know what some letters look like just by hearing the name of the letter. If they don’t know what a letter looks like, show them what it looks like and let them find more letters that look like it.

One way to learn about letters is to draw them in the air. Using large movements first will make it easier to write the letter on paper. Make sure to describe the movements.

Songs often help us remember things. Singing the letters of your child’s name to the tune of Bingo might help your child remember how to spell his or her name. We start with your child’s name because our names are so much a part of us.

Making an alphabet book helps your children recognize the letters and letter sounds as you talk about letters with them. When you let them try to cut out some of the letters, you are helping them build those muscles they will need for writing too!

Motor Skills Support Writing

Doing fingerplays and movements to songs help children learn where their body is in space. Children need good eye-hand coordination to later write letters.

It is important for writing for children to have a good sense of their own bodies in space so that they know how to tell their bodies how to move and in what direction. This can be developed through large motor activities such as jumping, hopping, dancing and doing movements in space. Talking about the movements as children do them helps them connect the movement to words, like up and down or to the right or left.

Helping children learn direction (above, below, between, left, right) will help them when they learn to write. When they form letters, they have to know which direction to go in order to form the letter correctly. So, while they are enjoying action songs, we are also supporting early writing skills.

When children scribble and draw, they are practicing eye-hand coordination and they are exercising the muscles in their fingers and hands to develop fine motor control they need for writing.

Some parents find it a little scary to have children play with scissors. If your child uses safety scissors (like the ones we have here) and you are playing together, there should not be any problem. Cutting is an excellent way to build muscles that are also used for writing. Many kindergarten teachers say that children are coming to school not knowing how to cut with a scissors. Even if your child does not cut well, do give them opportunities to try.

Doing crafts and activities with these items help to develop children’s small motor skills, working those small muscles and helping with coordination. Those are the same muscles that are used for writing!

Relationship of Shapes to Letter Knowledge

The beginning of letter knowledge is shapes. Children recognize letters by their shapes. For example, an upper-case “A” has a triangle in it, or a “P” is a circle with a line down the side.

When children are learning letters, they observe what is similar and what is different between two letters. This helps them figure out which letter is which. So, when you do match games with your children, you are preparing them for letter knowledge.

Point out the shapes of toys and other objects, and talk about how they are alike and how they are different. Comparing and contrasting shapes helps children notice the differences between letter shapes.

When you do sort or matching activities with children, you are helping them develop letter knowledge. In order to match and sort, children have to notice things that are alike and different. They need this same skill when they are trying to distinguish one letter from another. (Point out the differences in two similar letters).

You can look at two pictures and compare them, how are they similar? How are they different? When you have children notice similarities and differences by talking about how items are alike and different, you help them develop the skills they will need to notice the differences in similar letters (i.e. the difference between “h” and “n” or “p” and “q”).

[Support at Home for Writing, Print Awareness and Letter Knowledge](#)

Help your child notice environmental print such as names on food cartons or words on road signs. Point out letters as you go through daily routines.

Play games like, “We are going to go to a place to eat that begins with the letter M. Where do you think we are going?”

Children like to imitate what you do, so whenever you are writing something, a list or a note, for example, encourage them to write also. You might not understand what they have written, but they will gladly tell you about what they have written or drawn.

Print is all around us—on food containers, like cereal boxes or canned goods, on road signs, in stores. Play an I Spy game as you go through the day.

You can write little notes to your children, on the front door, on their pillow, in a bag they carry. Encourage family and friends to write them letters in the mail or on email. Even though your child doesn’t read yet, when you read what is written they learn a lot about the written word. Have them write notes to you. If you can’t read what they wrote, don’t worry. They will tell you what it says. They are learning how writing and reading works.

When you play with your children there are many ways to incorporate writing. For example, if they are playing restaurant, you can encourage them to make a sign for the restaurant, a menu, perhaps a sign-in sheet for people as they arrive, signs for the specials. When you offer them encouragement by providing some writing materials to ask what they might want to write, you support their play and support writing as well!

There are many ways your children can learn about shapes and letters using simple materials. You enrich their play experience by talking about what they are making, using the words for shapes or adding a sign to their story.

Children learn best when they use more than one sense. Having them feel letters, not just see them, can help them picture the letter and recognize it.

Cookie sheets are a good match for magnet letters. They make talking about words portable.

Encourage your child to experiment with different letter combinations, whether or not the letters make a real word. Magnet letters allow children to turn letters around. A lower-case n when turned upside down is a u! Please show children both upper- and lower-case letters.

Remember, your home is a learning zone. You don't need expensive toys. What your child needs is YOU! You to guide them as they learn about their world, as they learn about writing, and print and letters, as well as stories you tell and read.

There are many ways you can support letter knowledge as you play with your children. Block play, whether you use store-bought blocks or blocks made from containers at home, offer the opportunity to talk about shapes that are alike and different. Some blocks may have letters on them. Children may write a sign to describe a structure they have built, and you can spell out the word as you write it for them. Children, really all of us, learn best when we are enjoying what we are learning and when we build that learning from something we already know. So, follow your child's lead as you explore ways to support their pre-reading skills.

We are always here to help you find ways so that you and your children can enjoy reading together. We can help you find books that you and your children will enjoy. We can also talk about ways to keep their attention, and ways to keep them involved. We love to hear what you do with your children as you help them learn!