Feed Hungry Young Minds through Storybook Adventures

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Links to all the resources cited in this guide are available at our Family and Consumer Sciences “Feed Hungry Young Minds” Web site: www.ca.uky.edu/hes/fcs/Hungry_Minds/index.htm
Feed Hungry Young Minds through Storybook Adventures

Program Introduction

This program provides resources and activities designed to assist community leaders in promoting parent-child storybook reading. Recent research shows that shared reading of storybooks, singing, and conversation from birth onward are highly effective ways to ensure optimal brain development and readiness for school. Wonderful by-products of shared storybook reading are in-depth conversations and affectionate relationships. Besides, such literacy-building activities are great fun for parents and children alike.

The versatile program materials are written to be used with diverse community groups. Such groups include, but are not limited to, Extension Homemaker clubs, 4-H clubs and their adult volunteers, community service clubs, public school parent-teacher organizations, family life study-action groups in faith communities, childcare center staff, social service agency volunteers, paraprofessional home visitors, and public health professionals or volunteers.

Program description

The program includes three variations on a basic lesson plan, so that the leader can easily decide which components make the best fit for a specific teaching-learning situation. After a common introductory section utilizing audiovisual aids and discussion, Lessons 1, 2, and 3 differ on their enjoyable application activities according to the interests and energy levels of group participants. There is also a composite lesson plan, Lesson 4, which includes all three choices of activities for longer workshop settings. Leaders may decide to develop their own hands-on activities if they prefer. A Call to Action, an accompanying fact sheet, may stand alone as a mini-lesson, or may serve as an additional resource to the lesson plans. The Literacy Action Plan chart, which helps participants plan, implement, and evaluate their literacy promotion activities, is attached to the fact sheet and is included as Appendix A. The group leader should end each lesson with the End-of-Session evaluation sheet, Appendix F. A Follow-Up Questionnaire, Appendix G, helps group leaders assess the longer-term effectiveness of the program in motivating participants to promote early literacy.

We suggest that leaders invite their county’s Extension agent for family and consumer sciences, a children’s librarian from the county public library, or an early childhood professional from Head Start, Even Start, a family resource center, or public school preschool classroom to partner with them in teaching some of the components of this program.

Other program resources

Appendix B, Make Your Own Story Mitt and Characters, and Appendix C, Make Your Felt Board and Make Your Felt Board Pieces, are materials listed as Recommended Supplies in Teaching Guides for Lessons 3 and 4.

Appendix H is a list of program links to Web pages where resources may be located and printed out. Be sure to check Appendix H online periodically for updates on literacy and child development.

Two audiovisual resources are included as information and discussion aids: a 24-minute video,
Ready to Learn (already available through all University of Kentucky county Extension offices), and a PowerPoint® presentation, Reading, Cuddling, and Talking: Food for Hungry Young Minds, which may be easily converted to overhead transparencies or paper posters.

The Resources section contains short readings and illustrative teaching materials that will enhance the leader’s understanding of early literacy’s relationship to brain development and readiness for school.
Feed Hungry Young Minds through Storybook Adventures

A Call to Action

Picture yourself cuddling an 8-month-old baby as you point to and name the little animals in the book you are holding in front of the baby’s eyes. The baby wriggles with glee, and her eyes light up as she touches your pointing finger with her chubby palm. Her babbles sound remarkably like the words you are speaking. You think, “This child is going to start talking before you know it!”

Now imagine yourself sitting on a sofa with your arm around a favorite 5-year-old. You are reading aloud an exciting book about his favorite subject. You say, “Bobby is really in a pickle! What do you think he is going to do next?” You listen intently for the youngster’s answer and respond before resuming your reading. You glow with the joy of the special time the two of you are sharing.

Reading to Children is Critical for Success in School

Research indicates that reading to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is the single most important activity for ensuring later academic success. The brain cells of even the youngest babies connect in complex webs of imaginative ideas when parents or other caring adults read aloud from colorful books of stories and poems. An older toddler or preschool child begins to understand the relationship of spoken and printed words when the reader points to the symbols (letters and words) and pictures on the page and encourages the child to repeat a word or chant a rhyme. Reading readiness includes comprehending the verbal-written relationship as well as grasping the meaning of words, learning the symbol system of the alphabet, and following lines of print from left to right.

According to the 2003 (most recent) Kentucky State Assessment of Adult Literacy (http://kyae.ky.gov), over 40 percent of working-age Kentuckians fall into the two lowest of four categories of literacy proficiency, ranging from very few to below average reading skills. The 2004 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census, cited on the home Web page of the Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy (http://www.famlit.org/kifl), states, “Kentucky ranked 50th out of 51 states and districts in the percentage of adults over 25 with a high school diploma or GED, and 48th in the percentage of adults with a baccalaureate (four-year) degree or higher.”

Although Kentucky adults over-all have made gains in literacy in the last few years, clearly there is still much work remaining to be done. All of us have roles to play in helping Kentuckians lead richer lives and compete effectively for meaningful work. Encouraging parents and caregivers to read colorful storybooks to babies and young children on a daily basis is an easy and enjoyable first step toward improving the Commonwealth’s literacy picture—helping those little ones to be fully prepared for formal learning in school with a rich supply of language.

The Central Goal of This Lesson
Through informal sharing and mentoring with parents, other loving family members, and caregivers, we seek to encourage literacy among citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky through developmentally appropriate reading with babies and young children.

Suggested Activities
Members of the group may select one or more activities from the list on the next page for their personal literacy projects. You may come up with other ways to promote reading enjoyment by collaborating with members of your group.

1. Set aside for yourself a daily time to enjoy reading.
2. Purchase developmentally appropriate books for young children and distribute them to selected parents and caregivers. Refer to supplementary handout Project StoryTime [Appendix H, Link 6, page 49] and its companion piece Tips for Reading and Recommended Books—Children Birth to Five Years [Appendix H, Link 7, page 49].
3. Collect developmentally appropriate books for babies and toddlers. Loan them to parents and caregivers.
4. Cuddle and read with young children in your extended family and social network.
5. Offer to read books to young children at your local public library.
6. Volunteer at your local public library. You might help repair books or create puppets, flannel-board figures, and other visual materials used in storytelling.
7. Read to children identified by faith-based organizations or social service agencies.
8. Working through your local public health department or pediatrician’s office, read stories to young children in waiting rooms and offer to give or loan children’s books to interested parents.
9. Create a display on developmentally appropriate books and reading techniques for babies and young children, emphasizing the lifelong benefits of reading with young children.
10. Develop a local media campaign on the importance of reading with children, including contact information for groups that educate and assist parents.
11. Volunteer to read or work with Head Start, the Family Resource Center, or other school groups to promote pre-reading and reading activities.

Literacy Action Plan Chart
The Literacy Action Plan Chart will help you plan, implement, and evaluate your literacy promotion activities.

The chart is available on the following page as well as on page 33 (Appendix A). You may use this chart as is or create a larger poster size version adapted to your needs.

Here are some examples of what you might list on your chart:

Action plan:
1. I will help out at the public library.
2. I will supply picture books for my physician’s office.

Date/Time/Location:
• 6/12 & 19/08 – (1 and 2) County public library children’s room, four hours.
• 7/1/08 – Library and my home, ordering books, two hours.

Activity:
1. Librarian helped me order six new toddler books for Dr. Larson’s office.
2. Mended books at the library.

Participants:
3. Chatted with two moms about reading to their 2-year-olds while mending books.
4. Read to the toddlers while their moms browsed.

Results:
Feed Hungry Young Minds through Storybook Adventures

Literacy Action Plan Chart

The Literacy Action Plan Chart below will help you record your literacy promotion activities. After a period of time, such as a month or a year, you may be surprised at how much you or your group have accomplished in promoting literacy. You’ll have stories of your own to tell about your heartwarming adventures while feeding hungry young minds. Share your stories and influence others to break the cycle of illiteracy.

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<th>My Literacy Action Plan</th>
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<th>Results</th>
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Example: (1) I will help out at the public library. (2) I will supply picture books for my physician’s office.

Example: (Month/day/year; location of activity; amount of time) Ex: 6/12/08 – County public library children’s room. Miss Sharon, librarian. Two hours

Example: (Number from Activity list above; activity description) Ex: Public librarian helped me order six new toddler books for Dr. Larson’s office. Mended children’s books at the library.

Example: (Example: Ages of participants; happenings) Example: Chatted with two moms about reading to their 2-year-olds while mending books. Read to the toddlers while their moms browsed

Example: (Examples: Books read, children’s & adult’s responses) Example: Four books ordered for M.D.’s office. 10 library books repaired. Moms glad to talk; find it hard to get toddlers to sit still, but they listened.

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