Reading aloud, singing, doing fingerplays and engaging young children in conversation are all ways that parents and caregivers lay the foundation for young children to become successful readers and writers. The following activities were created to promote literacy with young children through hands-on, real-life experiences that will stimulate learning.

Have fun and “Grow a Reader!”

**Catching Air**

Wave a large plastic bag until it is filled with air, then close up the top. Can the children guess what is in the bag? Talk with the children about air.

Can we see air?
How do we know it is there?

Give each of the children a plastic bag* and let them run outside to catch air.

* adult supervision required

**Fan Dancing**

A simple prop to make for the children is an accordion pleated fan.

(See photo below)

The children can wave their fans while dancing to a favorite CD. You might want to feature the music of wind instruments - clarinets, oboes, flutes, bassoons and French horn.

*Variation:* Use scarves to wave around while dancing to music.
Wind Gauge

What is wind? How do we know it is windy?
Can you feel wind? Can you see wind?
A wind gauge can help the children “see” the wind.

To make a gauge with the children, you will need:
Scissors
String
Tape
A low tree branch (A yard stick, broom handle or the bar of a jungle gym will also work)
Heavy and light things: paper, foil, plastic lid, washer, marker, paper clip, shell, CD, etc.

1. Display objects and discuss which ones are heavy and which ones are light.
2. Help children cut off a section of string about a foot long.
3. Each child may choose an object and use the tape to attach the yarn to the object.
4. Help children tie the other end of the string to the tree branch or jungle gym so that the objects hang down. (If using a broom handle or stick, find a place outside to balance the stick horizontally).
5. Ask children to observe the wind gauge. Is the wind blowing? How can they tell? Which items move and which are stationary? Which items move the farthest?

Wind Watching Window

Designate one of your windows as a “Wind Watching Window”. Make sure it is a window from which the children can easily see outside. You might want to create a label for this special window. Children can look out to see if they notice anything moving: leaves, paper, trees, flags, etc. Provide paper for the children and help them record what they see. The children can also draw pictures of their observations. Children can look out the window at different times of day and on different days of the week. Is there anything different moving? You may want to add a wind sock, pin wheel, or wind chime for the children to watch.

Wind Races

Materials needed: Turkey basters
Hand-held fans
Feathers
Ping pong balls
Masking tape
Straws

- On the floor, use the masking tape to mark off a starting line and a finishing line about five feet apart.
- Give each child a feather and a turkey baster. Using the turkey baster to make wind to blow the feather, each child can move his/her feather from the start line to the finish line. Race again using ping pong balls.
- Repeat moving objects with the straws and then hand-held fans to move the objects.
- Children who get to the finish line quickly can then help their friends make even more wind to blow their object.
Fingerplay Fun

You’ll be “blown away” by these fun activities!
Use props such as scarves, streamers, fans, and leaves when doing these fingerplays.
Try them outside as well as inside.

Wind Tricks

The wind is full of tricks today.
Make a sweeping motion in the air with your hands for the wind.
He blew my daddy’s hat away.
Pretend to sweep hat off your head.
He chased our paper down the street
Roll hands.
He almost blew us off our feet.
Pretend to almost fall.
He makes the trees and bushes dance.
Raise arms and make dancing motions.
Just listen to him howl and prance.
Cup hand to ear.

The Wind

The wind came out to play one day.
She swept the clouds out of her way.
Make sweeping motion in the air with arms.
She blew the leaves and away they flew.
Make fluttering motions with fingers.
The trees bent low and their branches did too.
Lift arms and lower them.
The wind blew the great ships at sea.
Repeat sweeping motion.
The wind blew my kite away from me.
Let imaginary string go up, raise hand to brow and look up.

The Wind Blows

The wind blows high.
Wave arms high over your head.
The wind blows low.
Wave arms low to the ground.
The wind blows around and around you know.
Wave arms in circles.
The wind blows east.
Wave arms to your side.
The wind blows west.
Wave arms to your other side.
The wind blows and blows and then takes a rest.
Wave arms gently, then sit down and place hands in lap.
You will need air to do these two art activities!

**Straw Blowing**

**Materials Needed:** Plastic straws
Tempera paint, thinned with water (experiment with consistency)
Containers to hold tempera
Spoons
Paper

- Let children practice blowing air out of the straws before beginning. Let them feel the air that comes out of the straw as they blow.
- Children can spoon a puddle of tempera onto their paper. Place one end of the straw close to the puddle and then blow through the straw to move the paint.

*Helpful hints:*
If the children sit down so that the straw is level with the paint, the paint moves easier. Cutting the straws in half helps younger children blow the air through the straw more forcefully.

**Balloon Painting**

**Materials Needed:** Balloons
Tempera paint
Shallow containers
Paper

1. Set out shallow containers of tempera paint (use as many colors as you would like).
2. Blow up the balloons until they are about the size of an orange (at least one for each container of paint.)
3. Children can dip the balloon in tempera paint and then use the balloon to bounce or slide on their paper.

**Bubbles in the Air**

**Materials:**
Table
Towel
Fan (or hair dryer)
Bubble solution and shallow pan
Bubble wand

- Cover the table with a towel, then place the fan on top of the towel.
- Place the bubble solution in a pan next to the fan.
- Turn on the fan. Dip the bubble wand into the solution and hold in front of the fan.
- Children can catch & pop the bubbles!
Movin' It!

Materials:  
Table  
Table top fan with speed settings* or hair dryer  
Chair or stool to set fan on  
Three trays or boxes labeled “Moved easily”, “Moved at higher speed”, and “Didn’t move”  
Objects to test (e.g. tennis ball, plastic baseball, coin, empty plastic bottle, bottle full of water, paper clip, stapler, scissors, apple, can, feather, wad of paper, piece of yarn, shoe box, Styrofoam meat tray, unit block, etc.)  
Container to hold all of the objects.

- Set fan on the stool so that the breeze will be level with the table top. Show the children the fan. Explain that the children will test objects to see which ones the “wind” from the fan will blow.
- Hold up each item so that the children can identify it. Give children two items and ask them to tell you which is heavier. Ask them to predict what will happen when the fan blows the object. Will the fan be able to move it?
- Have the children put the objects back into the container.
- One child will select an object to test and predict. He/she places the object on the table in front of the fan. Turn the fan on low and then the higher speed if necessary. Discuss the results with the children. Have the child place the object in the appropriate labeled box.
- Repeat so that each child has a chance to select an object. Discuss with the children what the objects in each box have in common.

*Safety alert! Remind children to keep hands away from fan. Adult supervision required.

Wind Socks

Materials:  
Lunch size paper bags  
Ribbon, crepe paper streamers, yarn  
Hole punch  
Markers  
Stapler or tape

- Cut off the bottom end of the lunch bags. At the top of each bag, punch out 2 holes across from each other. (You can put reinforcements around the holes to keep them from tearing.) Cut a length of yarn to use as a handle and string it through the two holes and tie the ends together.
- Children can decorate the lunch bags with markers, stickers, etc.
- Children cut streamers from lengths of crepe paper, ribbon or yarn. Staple or tape the streamers around the bottom of the lunch bag.
- Children can run outside with their windsocks and experience the wind. They may also hang the windsocks outside to watch the wind. (See “Wind Watching Window” activity.)
Bring books to life with these simple ideas that highlight early literacy skills.

**Who Likes the Wind?** by Etta Kaner

**Presentation Notes:** Pique children’s interest in the wind with this two part book. First, read the book without opening the flaps. Ask children what they wonder about the wind. Next, reread the book and open the flaps to learn more about wind.

**Skills Featured:** Print Motivation, Narrative Skills, Print Awareness

**The Wind Blew** by Pat Hutchins

**Presentation Notes:** Hold on to your hat, the wind is wild and it’s taking everything with it! Take your time reading this story so that the children can enjoy the marvelous illustrations and make predictions about what item might be blown away next. After reading, ask the children to talk about a time they’ve had something blow away. Use a fan to simulate wind and see what flies the furthest.

**Skills Featured:** Narrative Skills, Print Motivation

**Like a Windy Day** by Frank and Devin Asch

**Presentation Notes:** Why should the wind have all the fun? A young girl imagines what she could do if she were like the wind. Talk about the difference between imagination and reality. Have children look at the pictures and talk about the things the girl can do with the wind’s help. Challenge children to use their imaginations and share not only what they can do with the wind, but also what they would do if they were the wind.

**Skills Featured:** Narrative Skills, Print Motivation

**The Windy Day** by Anna Milbourne

**Presentation Notes:** From generating electricity to ruffling your hair, the wind has lots to do. After reading the story, discuss the concept of the wind being invisible. The wind itself cannot be seen, only its effects. (For example, a kite flying or a branch moving). How do the children know that the wind is there? Do they use other senses? Ask children to share examples of a time that they felt or heard the wind and relate those experiences back to the story. Don’t miss the opportunity to talk about the poetic language of wind, pointing out words like rustle and billow.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Narrative
**One Windy Wednesday** by Phyllis Root

**Presentation Notes:** When the wind blows and mixes up the animals’ voices, a young girl must find a way to fix the problem. While reading, invite children to join in making the animal sounds even when they don’t correspond to the right animal. Discuss with the children how the animals get their voices back.

**Skills Featured:** Print Awareness, Phonological Awareness

**Gilberto and the Wind** by Maria Hall Ets

**Presentation Notes:** A young boy plays with the wind like a playmate. Sometimes they get along and sometimes they don’t. Emphasize all the action words in this story. The wind doesn’t just blow; it floats and grabs and whispers. Ask the children for their interpretations of these action words. Have children use their breath to create a gentle breeze or a sharp gust. Go outside on a windy day and observe the speed and sound of the wind.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Print Motivation

**More Great Books!**

- I Face the Wind by Vicki Cobb
- While You Were Chasing a Hat by Lilian Moore
- Comes a Wind by Linda Arms White
- Windy Day by Brian Karas
- Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert