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!”

**HOW DO YOU FEEL?**

Read the following situations to the children or make up your own. To enhance the literacy experience, write down the children’s answers on large paper for display.

How would you feel if… or How do you feel when…

- You break your favorite toy?
- It is your birthday?
- You are going to a friend’s house for a visit?
- You give someone a present you made?
- You get a new kitten as a surprise present?
- You are sick and have to stay in bed?
- Someone knocks over your blocks?
- Someone doesn’t want to share the chalk with you?
- Someone lets you have a turn with the squirt bottle?
- You can’t reach the snack and someone passes it to you?
- You want to swing and someone won’t get off the swing?
- You see a big spider?
- You have oatmeal for breakfast?

*Variation:* For children just learning to identify their emotions and name their feelings, you might wish to try this alternative. Draw two circles on heavy paper for each child to cut out (or use paper plates). Ask the children to decorate the circles so that one is a sad face and one is a happy face. Help them glue the faces onto craft sticks, back-to-back so the faces can be seen. After discussing how they would feel in the situations above, ask the children to raise their craft sticks to show whether they would feel sad or happy. Call on children for more discussion or explanations as appropriate.
MAKE A FEELINGS BOOK

- Discuss happiness. Ask each child one thing that makes him or her feel happy. Write each child’s answer on a separate piece of paper. Encourage each child to illustrate his or her page.

- Repeat the activity on another day with a different emotion. What makes you sad? What makes you afraid?

- Assemble the pages into a book for each child.

I feel happy when I paint.

FLOWER SHOP

Talk about why people send or give flowers and the ways florists help others feel good.

Take a field trip to a florist, tour a greenhouse or invite a florist to visit and show how flowers are arranged.

Set up an area to play “Flower Shop” using plastic flowers, play money, calculator, non-glass vases and a watering can. Provide paper and markers to create signs for the shop including “open” and “closed.” Add wrapping paper or tissue paper and a wagon for deliveries. Include a telephone for taking orders, paper and pencils for writing receipts, notes, and enclosure cards. The children may want to arrange, sell, deliver, and receive flowers.

WHAT’S THE FEELING?

Guess the Feeling
Sit in a circle with the group while you make your face show different feelings and have the children guess the feeling that you are showing. After children get the idea, have them sit in pairs facing each other. One child in each pair starts by making a “feeling face” while the other child guesses the feeling being expressed. The children then switch roles so they will each get a turn making faces and guessing. If you notice a child having trouble, whisper a suggestion in his or her ear.

How Do My Feelings Look?
Distribute a mirror to each child. Name a feeling and have the children look in their mirrors while making a face that shows the feeling named. Encourage children to suggest their own ideas for feelings to express while looking in the mirrors.
SIMON SAYS

Play a non-competitive version* of Simon Says using emotions. Simon gives commands for the children to follow, such as “Simon says, ‘Make a happy face.’” or “Simon says, ‘Make a sad face.’” Keep on playing until as long as the fun continues.

Suggestions for emotions:
Simon says, “Make a sad face.”  
Simon says, “Make a surprised face.”  
Simon says, “Make an angry face.”  
Simon says, “Make a scared face.”  
Simon says, “Make a worried face.”  
Simon says, “Make an excited face.”  
Simon says, “Make a shy face.”  

*In this version, there is no instance where the leader “tricks” the children by not saying “Simon Says.”

FEEL THE MUSIC

Play various types of recorded music such as jazz, classical, rock, and country or invite someone to play an instrument for the group. Talk with the children about how the different kinds of music make them feel. Waltzes and marches make good contrasts. Provide materials for finger painting and encourage children to paint while listening to the music. Afterwards, children may wish to show their paintings and talk about the feelings expressed.

What you need:
- Finger paint (either purchased or home-made using one of the recipes below)
- Finger paint paper or other sturdy paper
- Bowls or other containers
- Spoons
- Sponge or brush

What you do:
Pour paint into the bowls. Dampen the paper with water using a brush or sponge. Help children spoon globs of paint onto their papers. Play your musical selection and encourage the children to finger paint along with the music.

Finger paint recipes:
- Start with 2 cups of liquid starch. Add 1-2 tablespoons of tempera paint to the starch to give it color. Add a squirt of liquid dish soap to the mixture to make clean up easier.
- Mix 1 cup flour with 1 cup water and 1 ½ teaspoon salt. Blend until smooth. Stir in food coloring to color the paint. Leftover paint may be stored in the refrigerator.

Variation: Use one large piece of paper and let everyone join in making a large group painting. The floor can be your table.
All cooking projects require adult supervision.

PLAYDOUGH* RECIPE
(makes enough for 3 children)

1 cup flour
1 Tbl. cooking oil
1 cup water
¼ cup salt
2 tsp. cream of tartar
food coloring

Put food coloring in water. Combine all ingredients and cook over medium heat. Stir constantly until ball forms. Remove from heat. Knead ball of dough until smooth. Store in airtight container. The recipe may be doubled or even quadrupled.

POUND, POUND, POUND!
Kneading bread is a wonderful way to work through emotions. The delicious aroma of bread rising, baking, and coming hot from the oven creates a happy, homey, contented feeling, and eating delicious warm bread that you have made yourself makes you feel good all over!

Ingredients:
- 1 package of fast-rising dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup cooking oil
- 3 cups flour
- dash of salt

Directions:
1. Pour the warm water into a bowl. Sprinkle the yeast on top of the water. Let the yeast settle into the water.
2. Mix all the other ingredients in a large bowl. Add the water and yeast to the ingredients in the large bowl and mix together.
3. Place the dough on a floured board. Demonstrate how to knead, letting each of the children take turns kneading the bread. After kneading the dough for about 10 minutes, put the ball of dough into a greased bowl.
4. If kneaded sufficiently, the top of the dough should have blisters on it. Cover the bowl with a dishtowel and put the bowl in the sun or near heat. Let the dough rise for about an hour or until doubled.
5. Take the dough out of the bowl. Punch it down, knead for several more minutes and then divide the dough into 12 to 15 pieces.
6. Roll each piece of dough into a ball. Place each ball on a greased cookie sheet. Let the dough rise again until doubled. Bake at 450 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes.
MAKE-A-FACE BAGELS

You will need:
- Dinner or butter knives for spreading
- Small bowls
- Plates
- Whipped or softened cream cheese
- 1 or 2 bagels per child, cut in half
- A selection of vegetables such as:
  - cherry tomatoes halves
  - cucumber slices
  - black olives, sliced
  - bell pepper, any color thinly sliced
  - carrots or beets, sliced and/or grated
  - alfalfa sprouts

How to make bagel faces:
1. Chop and slice the vegetables. Children can help by washing them or by using dinner knives to slice the vegetables that are less firm (such as bell peppers).
2. Set the vegetables out in separate small bowls.
3. Children spread cream cheese on the bagel halves. Encourage the children to cover the entire open side of the bagel so the vegetables will stick better.
4. If the children wish, they may use the vegetables to create faces on their bagel halves. Talk with children about the different feelings their bagel faces show. Some children may prefer to make designs instead of faces.

Variation: Instead of using cut up vegetables and bagels for faces, children may use slices of bread or rice cakes topped with nut butter, banana slices, raisins and other dried fruits.

IF YOU’RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT

Encourage the children to share their own ideas for additional verses and related actions.

If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.
If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.
If you’re happy and you know it,
Then your face will surely show it.
If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.

If you’re happy and you know it:
...nod your head
...jump up and down
...wiggle your tongue
...give a smile
...blow a kiss
Bring books to life with these simple ideas that highlight early literacy skills.

**Presentation Notes:** Taking turns with a favorite toy can be a hard thing to do. When Sophie is forced to share her stuffed gorilla, she feels angry, very angry. Talk with the children about what Sophie does to feel better. Encourage the children to tell about a time they felt angry and how they made themselves feel better.

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

**Duck & Goose: How are you Feeling?** by Tad Hills

**Presentation Notes:** Ten words to describe different emotions such as happy, proud and frustrated are introduced by the irresistible Duck and Goose. The illustrations depict each feeling clearly and give plenty of opportunity for discussion. Ask children if they have ever had similar feelings.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Narrative Skills

**If You’re Happy and You Know It: Jungle Edition** by James Warhola

**Presentation Notes:** When Mom brings her two children to the playground they are in for a big surprise! Set the stage for this story by showing the children the illustrations on the opening pages. Sing the full verse featuring the action on each page or sing the recap at the end of the book as written. Either way, you are sure to get the children up and moving! Help the children notice the print by pointing to the action words. After sharing this book, review the pictures and talk to the children about the difference between reality and fantasy.

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

**Go Away, Big Green Monster!** by Ed Emberley

**Presentation Notes:** Monsters can be scary, but children can learn to conquer their fears with this story time favorite. As each new facial feature is revealed, invite children to repeat the phrases after you read the text. Encourage a lot of expression in the second half of the book as you all tell the monster to “go away!” bit by bit.

**Skills Featured:** Print Motivation, Vocabulary
**The Feel Good Book** by Todd Parr

**Presentation Notes:** Lots of things make you feel good like giving hugs and laughing out loud. Smile as you read this colorful laundry list of wonderful moments. As you read, help children to notice the pattern of each sentence ending with the phrase “feels good.” Invite them to say it with you. The author’s note at the end of the book is a great opportunity to talk about what an author does. Use the author’s introduction to get children to share what makes them feel good. Don’t forget to tell them a few things that make you feel good too!

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

**Bear Feels Scared** by Karma Wilson

**Presentation Notes:** The tension mounts as Bear gets lost in the woods. His friends start to worry and go out to find him. This rhyming book features the repeating phrase of “bear feels scared.” Invite children to say that phrase with you. Pause during the story and ask the children to predict what will happen next. After reading, talk to the children about a time they felt scared. Ask the children what they did to feel better. Ask them what bear could have done differently.

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

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**MORE GREAT BOOKS!**

**I Like Me!** By Nancy Carlson

**Sometimes I’m Bombaloo** by Rachel Vail

**Llama Llama Mad at Mama** by Anna Dewdney

**Walter Was Worried** by Laura Vaccaro Seeger

**When I Miss You** by Cornelia Spelman

**How are you Peeling?** By Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers