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!”

**BUG BITES**
(Healthy Snacks Children Can Make)

**Ants on a Log:** Spread peanut butter in the groove of stalks of celery and line up black raisins on the peanut butter.*

**Ants on a Stump:** Cut circular shapes of apple. Children can spread peanut butter on the apple and place raisins on the peanut butter.*

**Round Bugs:** Spread a round cracker with plenty of peanut butter.* Press another cracker on top. Insert pretzel sticks between the crackers to make legs and antennae.

**Creative Bugs:** Give each child a few grapes (cut in half to prevent choking), apple halves or apple sections, raisins, and some toothpicks. Encourage the children to use their imaginations and create some edible bugs. Banana slices and pineapple wedges may also be used.

*For children with peanut allergies, use cream cheese, cottage cheese, soft cheese, or almond, soy, or cashew butter instead of peanut butter.
WING ART PROJECTS

Coffee Filter Wings

Materials:  
Round coffee filters  Spray bottles with water  
Washable markers  Clothespins (optional)

Children color the coffee filters with washable markers and then spray them with water. The ink of the marker bleeds into a beautiful blend of colors. Some children may want to clip the filter in the center with a clothespin to create an insect with wings.

Ink Blot Wings

Materials:  
Thick paint  Bowls or pie tins for paint  
Spoons  Construction paper

Children spoon paint on a piece of paper, fold the paper, and rub lightly. Unfold the paper and behold the symmetry of wings.

BUGGY “MUSICAL CHAIRS”

- Create “leaves” out of old carpet squares, mats, or large sheets of fun foam.
- Play a favorite CD or try Buzzers, Creepers and Crawlers and have the children “fly” around the leaves.
- When you stop the music everyone dashes for a leaf as in musical chairs, but don’t take any leaves away.
- The fun is in flying around and landing on the leaves, even sharing leaves. No winners or losers are necessary. This is a great activity to do either indoors or outdoors.

Variation: Children choose to be a particular type of insect. When the music starts they hop, fly, or crawl to the leaves as appropriate. After a few turns, children may choose to turn into different insects if they wish.
BUGS LIKE TO HIDE

Point out that one way insects survive is by hiding.

- **PLAY HIDE AND GO SEEK.**

- **GO ON A BUG HUNT.** The best place to find bugs is outside. Some good places to look are under rocks where it is wet (roly polys), on leaves (caterpillars), in cracks in the pavement (ants), in grass (grasshoppers, crickets) or in trees or flowers (ladybugs, butterflies). Many insects survive by hiding, so children will have to look carefully. And, since insects are small, it helps to take some time and slow down to notice them.

**Things you might want to take on your bug hunt:**
- Magnifiers
- Camera
- Bug hotels or other containers to hold the bugs you find
- Large spoons or trowels to lift bugs into the containers

**BUG HOTEL**

A bug hotel is a perfect way to observe insects without harming them. Keep them only long enough to observe, 24 hours at most, and then return them to their homes. The bug hotel can be saved for another guest. Be sure to put in plant material as food for the bugs. That will also give the bugs something to hang onto and a place to hide. Sprinkle a few drops of water on the leaves or add a bottle cap with water.

**Materials:**
- 1 qt. milk carton
- pantyhose
- rubber band
- heavy scissors or craft knife
- old magazines and glue (optional)

**Directions:**
- Cut 2 window openings on the sides of the carton.
- If desired, look through magazines for colorful pictures. Cut them out and glue them to cover the milk carton, making a collage.
- When the glue is dry, cut a leg off the pantyhose and pull it up over the box with the toe at the base of the carton.
- Add a bug, plants, and water, then pull the hose up tightly.
- Cut off the excess pantyhose, leaving about 3” to tie in a knot, or fasten with the rubber band.

**Variations:** Any clean, clear container will work fine to hold the guest bug. To cover, use netting, punch airholes in the jar lid, or use waxed paper pricked with pin holes and held in place with a rubber band.
OBSERVING BUGS

Stimulate observational skills and learning more about bugs by asking questions such as:

Where was your bug found?
What kind of legs does it have? Long? Short?
What kind of antennae does it have?
What shape is it? Thin? Round?
How long is your bug?
What color is it?
Does your bug have any special marks on it?
Can it fly?
Can you tell what it is?

BUG IN THE RUG GAME

Materials: A large sheet or light-weight blanket.

Directions:
1. Lay the sheet or blanket on the floor and ask the children to sit around it.
2. Ask one child to step away from the group and close his/her eyes.
3. Tap another child to ask him/her to get under the “rug”.
4. When that child is under the “rug”, the child that was away from the group with eyes closed comes back.
5. Now the rest of the children chant:
   Bug in the rug.
   Bug in the rug.
   Who’s that bug in the rug?

6. The child guesses who is under the “rug” by looking around to see who is missing.
7. The child may keep guessing until the “bug under the rug” is revealed.
8. When the next child steps away and closes his/her eyes, the child who was last under the “rug” gets to tap the next “bug.”
BEDTIME TICKLE BUG FINGERPLAY

Ticklebug, ticklebug
Hunting feet
Creeping, creeping
Over the seat.
(walk fingers along legs toward child’s feet)

One! Two!
Catch ‘em like this
(catch feet)

Tickle-y Tickle-y
(tickle toes)

Tummy kiss!
(kiss tummy)

IF YOU ARE A BEETLE, JUMP FOR JOY

To the tune of If You’re Happy and You Know It, sing:

If you’re a beetle and you know it, jump for joy.
If you’re a beetle and you know it jump for joy.
If you’re a beetle and you know it.
Then you really ought to show it,
If you’re a beetle and you know it, jump for joy!

Additional verses:
If you’re an ant and you know it, crawl around.
If you’re a moth and you know it, flap your wings.
Encourage the children to name other insects and make up movements.
Bring books to life with these simple ideas that highlight early literacy skills.

**Bugs! Bugs! Bugs! By Bob Barner**

**Presentation Notes:** Bright, bold illustrations and simple rhyming text celebrate bugs and the things they do. As you read aloud, have children find an action that reflects the text such as buzzing like a bee or hopping like a grasshopper. Share the “bug-o-meter” chart at the back of the book and use these questions and categories to create your own chart as you continue to study other bugs.

**Skills:** Phonological Awareness, Print Motivation

**Ants Go Marching edited by Ann Owen**

**Presentation Notes:** This campfire song makes a wonderful, interactive sing-along book when you invite the children to march along with the rhythm. For more fun, try the activity at the back of the book to make your own drums and then beat out the rhythm.

**Skills:** Phonological Awareness, Print Motivation

**Beetle Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta**

Unique facts about the wide variety of beetles are presented letter by letter in this bright and colorful alphabet book. Reading alphabet books is one way to expose children to letters. This book can be used as a resource for learning about different kinds of beetles.

**Skills:** Letter Knowledge, Vocabulary

**The Very Quiet Cricket by Eric Carle**

**Presentation Notes:** A small cricket proves that persistence pays off as he tries to greet other insects by rubbing his wings together but has trouble making a sound. Invite children to join in with the repetitive phrase “Nothing happened, not a sound”. Talk about the words that may be unfamiliar to the children such as locust, praying mantis and spittlebug.

**Skills:** Print Motivation, Vocabulary, Print Awareness
**I Love Bugs! By Philomen Sturges**

**Presentation Notes:** Bright illustrations and simple rhyming text introduce several types of bugs and the things they do. Read before going on a bug hunt to introduce action words such as “weaves” and “swoop” and encourage the children to use action words when describing what they see. Don’t miss the individual bug profiles at the front and back of the book. Point out the label on the “photo” then read the fun facts.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary; Print Awareness

**Beetle Bop by Denise Fleming**

**Presentation Notes:** Many types of beetles are included here with vividly descriptive vocabulary and fun fonts. Point out color and action words and even have children make sounds like the beetles.

**Skills:** Vocabulary, Letter Knowledge, Narrative

**MORE GREAT BOOKS!**

**Butterfly, Butterfly** by Petr Horacek

**Very Lazy Ladybug** by Isobel Finn

**I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track** by Joshua Prince

**I Like Bugs!** by Margaret Wise Brown