



Family Involvement

APRIL 2004

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IN THIS ISSUE

Research shows that family involvement is crucial to children's literacy development. This issue of *Literacy Link* provides practical advice for engaging families in your literacy program, as well as at-home activities for parents and caregivers to share with their children. See pages 2-3 for reproducible take-home pages designed to make literacy a family affair!

While you are probably well familiar with the wide selection of discounted books offered through Scholastic Literacy Partners, you might not be aware of the diverse range of online resources that Scholastic also provides. The following pages give an overview of three sections of the Scholastic website designed especially for parents and caregivers: *Family Matters*, *Your Early Learner*, and *Your School-Age Child*. Whether you are an experienced Scholastic.com user or a new visitor to the site, we encourage you to explore these areas fully—and to encourage the families in your program to do so, too.

Please let us know how we can be of continued assistance to you and the families you serve.

ADVICE FROM THE FIELD

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a parent education and family support program designed to enhance child development and school achievement. The Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc. (PATNC) develops curricula, trains early childhood professionals, and certifies parent educators to work with parents to provide them with parenting support and information on their developing child. We spoke with Susan S. Stepleton, President and CEO of Parents as Teachers, and Diane Givens, Early Literacy Coordinator at the National Center.



Parents as Teachers supports family literacy by engaging parents in language-rich parent-child interactions

In what settings does your program operate?

Our parent educators generally visit families' homes, where they model for parents the types of interactions that will foster their children's growth and learning. If home visits aren't possible, we meet in libraries, schools, churches, or other community organizations. Our work with each family is private and individualized, regardless of the setting. In addition, we hold group meetings for parents, where we explore a range of topics—from early literacy to toilet training—that are chosen by the parents themselves.

How do you encourage ongoing family involvement?

Our aim is to empower parents to be their children's most important teachers. After each visit, the parent educator leaves books, materials, and activities for the families to

use on their own, and then follows up during the next visit to see what they've done. We also encourage parents to observe their children at play and to write observation notes about them. This process gives parents a powerful sense of their own capabilities as parents and as teachers.

How do you involve parents who lack strong literacy skills?

We help parents communicate positive feelings about reading, even if they're not strong readers themselves. We look to see what types of literacy activities are already going on in the home—making shopping lists or reading the backs of cereal boxes. We stress the importance of talking and sharing stories orally, which are essential parts of early literacy development. In addition,

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Family Literacy Activities

Make literacy a family affair with these engaging activities from the Scholastic website. Visit <http://www.scholastic.com/families/index.asp> for other ideas to make learning fun for the entire family.

Babies and Toddlers: Picture This!

What You Need

- sturdy plastic photo album with plastic photo protectors
- photos, greeting cards, and pictures cut out of magazines
- heavy card stock
- nontoxic glue

What to Do

1. Gather materials to get started; then let your baby's or toddler's interest dictate the content.
2. Feature family photos. Glue photos to card stock and fill album pages with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins—and you!
3. Build on your child's interests. Dogs, babies, the color purple—virtually any theme she likes will make a book she'll treasure.
4. Talk about the book. You don't always need words to "read." Name and point, and soon she will, too!

Learning Benefits

- enhances language development
- builds early book awareness
- develops recognition skills

Preschoolers: Guess the Letter

What You Need

- 26 (or 52) index cards
- marker

What to Do

1. Invite your child to write the letters of the alphabet on index cards, one letter per card. (You may need to help younger children write the letters.) For an extra challenge, write the uppercase letter on one card and the lowercase letter on another.
2. Have your child draw a card, think of a word that begins with that letter, and act out the word.
3. Once you have guessed the word, it's your turn to draw a card.
4. Continue taking turns until you have acted out at least 10 letters.
5. For older children, try acting out words that end with the letter on the card.

Learning Benefits

- supports letter recognition skills
- provides practice with beginning and ending letters

From *Your Early Learner: Time Together Activities* (<http://www.scholastic.com/earlylearner/timetgether/>)

Choosing Books for Your Preschool Child

Sharing great books with your child will build pre-reading skills, spark curiosity about the world, and create wonderful memories. When selecting a book for your child, use the checklist below to see if it meets your family's needs.

Is this book age-appropriate for my child?

For your baby or toddler, board books constructed of sturdy cardboard or wipeable plastic make good choices. Choose books that are small enough

for little hands to manipulate. Older toddlers and preschoolers can handle paper pages and will delight in larger picture and lift-the-flap books.

What will my child learn from this book?

Books for babies and preschoolers tend to focus on basic concepts, such as ABCs, feelings, or friendship. These books often use repetition, phonics, and other literacy tools to prepare children for reading.

Are the illustrations and characters appealing?

Look for illustrations that catch your eye and familiar characters that will engage your child's attention. Your choices should invite your child to point, touch, and talk about the pictures. Also check for books that sound like they'd be fun to read aloud, such as nursery rhymes.

Adapted from Family Matters: The Right Stuff (<http://www.scholastic.com/familymatters/rightstuff/youngbooks.htm>)

Family Literacy Activities

Set children on the road to successful reading with these entertaining at-home activities. Visit <http://www.scholastic.com/families/index.asp> for more great family literacy ideas

Grades K to 2: Word Hunt

What You Need

- list of words
- magazines, newspapers (optional)

What to Do

1. Make a list of words you are likely to see on signs as you drive (*gas, stop, exit*, etc.). Review the list with your child.
2. Challenge your child to cross all the words off the list by the time you reach your destination.
3. Try creating similar lists for words your child is likely to encounter in the market, the garage, her bedroom, etc.
4. For more advanced readers, create a list of more difficult words, including spelling or vocabulary words.
5. For these words (or even simpler words), provide your child with a newspaper or magazine to use in her search. For an extra challenge, set a time limit on her search.

Learning Benefits

- increases word recognition
- strengthens ability to focus on a challenge
- develops recognition skills

Grade 3 & Up: Family Riddles

What You Need

- paper
- pen/pencil
- felt tip pens (optional)

What to Do

1. Invite your child to ask you five questions about yourself.
2. Challenge her to turn the answers into a short riddle or poem about you. She might even want to see if she can make her verses rhyme.
3. If interested, your child can use felt tip pens to illustrate her written work.
4. Can she think of riddles for other family members, such as siblings, cousins, or grandparents? Encourage her to gather the riddles into a family anthology and to challenge relatives to solve them.

Learning Benefits

- promotes creativity
- develops writing skills
- encourages attention to detail

From *Your School-Age Child: At Home Activities* (<http://www.scholastic.com/schoolage/activities/>)

Family Resources from the Scholastic Website

The Scholastic website contains a wide range of information designed to support families as they help their children develop strong literacy skills. Visit the following areas for expert advice, easy-to-use checklists, reading lists, and more!

Family Matters: All About Reading <http://www.scholastic.com/familymatters/>

This section includes age-specific information and activities for children from birth to Grade 8. *All About Reading* provides tips for helping children learn to love reading at every age. Useful Parent Guides offer advice on everything from school involvement to homework help.

Your Early Learner

<http://www.scholastic.com/earlylearner/>

This section is organized by six different levels, from infancy to age 5. In *Ask the Experts*, leading literacy specialists provide advice on a wide range of issues, while *Time Together* describes engaging activities for caregivers and children to try at home. The site also includes highlights from *Scholastic Parent & Child*™ magazine.

Your School-Age Child

<http://www.scholastic.com/schoolage/>

This section is divided into seven grade levels—K to 5 and middle school. Each level includes three sections: *What's Up at School*, *Homework Help*, and *Growth & Development*. The site also features *Ask the Experts* and *At Home Activities* for various age groups.

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we're currently piloting our *Knowledge Path Early Literacy Kit*, which provides supplemental activities designed for families with low literacy skills.

How do you choose reading materials for your program?

We choose books that promote learning and discussion, using familiar themes such as daily activities, animals, colors, letters, or numbers. Young children should be able to play with the books by opening flaps, turning wheels, or pushing buttons.

We also show families how to create homemade books out of whatever materials are available—grocery bags, photo albums, or construction paper and string. Families can collect photos and write captions, or children can draw pictures while parents write words to go with them.

What advice would you give other literacy educators who wish to foster greater levels of family involvement?

Go where the families are. If your program isn't home-based, try to connect with one that is. Include parents in your program planning; find out what they perceive as obstacles and work together to overcome them. Make sure your materials are relevant, understandable, and useful, and that you're providing families with what they want and need.

Home-school connections are also key. Work with your local school district to make early contact with families, beginning with pregnancy. To ensure each child's school readiness, families need to be actively involved in their children's learning processes long before the children enter kindergarten.

For more information about Parents as Teachers, visit the PAT website at <http://www.patnc.org/>, or contact Julie Mainer, Marketing Communications Coordinator, at (314) 432-1732, ext. 287.

New Early Literacy Series: Just for You!

Fun for
the Whole
Family!

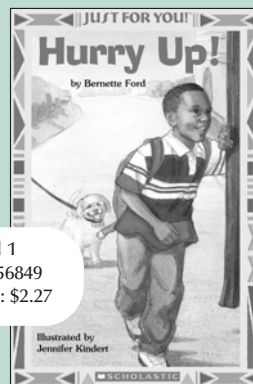
Scholastic is pleased to announce our new early literacy series, **JUST FOR YOU!** Parents, caregivers and children will love sharing the engaging stories in these 24 brightly illustrated books. **Just For You** books:

- Are created by authors and illustrators from diverse backgrounds
- Present child-centered stories that support literacy learning
- Include a note to the family, literacy activities, and a "Meet the Author/Illustrator" section

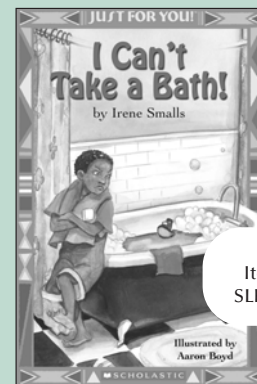
Just for You books come in three levels to help build reading confidence:

- **Level 1:** simple words and short sentences for the newest readers
- **Level 2:** increased vocabulary and sentence length for beginning readers
- **Level 3:** longer stories with more complex vocabulary and paragraphs

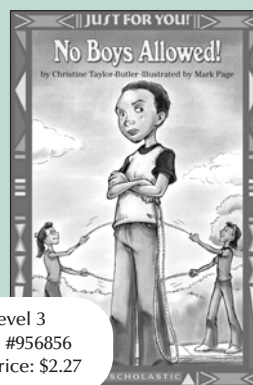
Just for You books make reading fun for everyone!



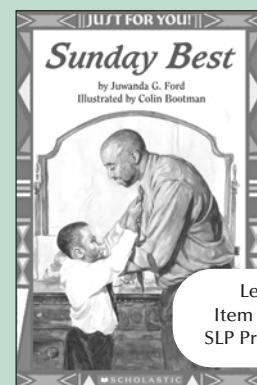
Level 1
Item #956849
SLP Price: \$2.27



Level 2
Item #956852
SLP Price: \$2.27



Level 3
Item #956856
SLP Price: \$2.27



Level 3
Item #956854
SLP Price: \$2.27

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS? Call us at (888) 531-2665, e-mail us at litpartners@scholastic.com, or visit us on the Web at www.scholastic.com/literacypartners. We'd love to hear from you!