

Intergenerational Literacy Activities

Dear Teachers and Directors;

Thank you for taking the important step to help your adult learners begin to connect their learning with that of their children or those young people whom they influence. As an adult educator, you are adept at taking students' needs and connecting them to prescribed curricula. Connecting adult learning with early childhood education will strengthen the parent's role as an educator and encourage the transfer of learned skills to the home environment. This notebook was created to serve as a catalyst for your creativity. The plans in this notebook can enhance a life-skills based curriculum with activities designed to be completed as either take-home or center-based. As you use the materials, your own skills as a teacher will shine through and adaptations will present themselves. Please be generous and share your ideas with others in the field. Great ideas can be passed along on the CLICK listserv or through conference and workshop presentations. Thank you again for your commitment to your families and their education.

Colorado Department of Education
Center for At-Risk Education

http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_adult.htm

Adult Education and Family Literacy
Even Start
Migrant Education Even Start

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeadult/adultstaff.htm>

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecare/evenstart.htm>

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/mees/index.htm>

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How to Use the Notebook

The IGL (Intergenerational Literacy) Notebook is divided into 17 sections. The first two consist of introduction, guidelines, and sample assessments. Section three is a cross reference table for the activities as they pertain to early childhood education, CASAS competencies, and adult basic education skills. The next 12 sections are the thematic activities. Each thematic unit has two sections, group and take home. Group activities are those that are recommended to be used in a classroom setting where the teacher may serve as a facilitator. The second set is designed to require minimal teacher support and would work well as take home activities. With sufficient support and instruction, both sets could be used interchangeably. The final two sections are activities specifically designed for science and social studies for ABE/GED learners and their children. These activities can also be used with ESL learners as well with additional support.

When preparing to use the activities, please take the time to read over the supplies needed, vocabulary and general directions. It is frustrating during limited class time to delay a project until adequate supplies of scissors are found.

Each activity has the following information at the top of the page for easy viewing:

- ◇ CASAS competencies for ESL learners if appropriate **OR**
- ◇ ABE skills which would be needed for the GED exam
- ◇ Early childhood developmental skills
- ◇ Preparation time needed
- ◇ Estimated time to complete the activities
- ◇ Colorado Model Content Standards in Reading/Writing and Math for children in grades K-4 when appropriate. These standards can be referenced at http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stdn.htm
- ◇ Supplies needed for the activity
- ◇ Vocabulary for pre-teaching

Take home activities should be somewhat self-explanatory. It is a good idea to review with learners the vocabulary necessary for the activity prior to sending it home. Let the adult know in advance what type of response you would like to document activity completion. The notebook contains many sample evaluation forms that you can use, or you may create your own. A response journal is ideal but may be a challenge in large classes. Another popular evaluation activity involves adults interviewing each other about the take-home activities they completed with their children. Each take home activity sheet has a section designed to be cut off and given to the parent to help them make the connection to their child's learning. If there is time within your class, a discussion regarding the children's learning can be beneficial. Some of the information presented may be new or at odds with the adult's background knowledge.

Getting Ready for a Family Night!

Family nights or other opportunities when parents can bring their children to see their own classroom and then learn together are an excellent way to provide Intergenerational Literacy Activities.

The benefits include:

1. Parents modeling the importance of education to their children.
2. Instructors having the opportunity to see family dynamics in action.
3. The entire family having the chance to practice learned skills in a supportive environment.
4. Parents being affirmed as their child's first and most important teacher.

There are numerous other benefits that you will discover as you work with your families to help them discover the joy and importance of learning with their children.

Family nights are hard work! **Every** staff member should be available during family nights. Planning should take place a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. If possible, a different staff member or reliable volunteer should be in charge of each aspect. Establishing a three-ring binder which has sections for each family night and includes attendance rosters, activities, evaluations, and planning details may make the task progressively easier. As each program is different, you will soon discover what is needed for your family nights, however, here are some basic things to consider. Each will be discussed in detail on the identified pages.

- ✓ Invitations, advertisements, community connections (page 4)
- ✓ Food (pages 4-5)
- ✓ Set-up and table arrangements (page 5)
- ✓ Clean-up (page 5)
- ✓ Transportation (page 6)
- ✓ Materials (page 6)
- ✓ Copies (page 6)
- ✓ Children who may not be interested / able to participate (teens and infants) (pages 6-7)
- ✓ Debriefing (page 7)

Often there is much discussion among the staff as to the correct number of activities to offer during a family night. There are many factors that will influence this number. Keep in mind the space limitations, number of families attending, number of staff available, how frequently you offer family nights, and your budget. A recommended minimum number of activities would be three. Offer one creative, building type, one artistic activity, and one quieter activity such as book creation. On the upper end, more than six activities can be chaotic and stressful for staff and families to accomplish in one night.

Every family night should include a small library of books at various levels which relate to the theme being studied. Families can read between activities, read after the meal, or use the books as reference for some of the projects.

Invitations, Advertisements, and Community Connections:

Families need to be personally invited. A posted flier on a bulletin board has much less effect than the instructor explaining the fun activities and the importance of attendance. A sign-up sheet may be helpful in advance but families may not adhere to following it.

Local media should be contacted to attend and participate in the festivities. We've all enjoyed seeing pictures of holiday parties. This is an opportunity to really showcase the educational opportunities provided by your program.

Local schools should be given the information about your family nights. Many will provide short notices in weekly newsletters which will serve as free advertising for you. If you are fortunate enough to obtain sponsors for your family nights, they should be invited to witness the excitement and should be acknowledged in your advertisements.

Service organizations (Zontas, Kiwanis, Elks, RSVP, etc.) may serve as financial or personnel supporters. Reliable volunteers are great for sharing the wealth of work involved in a family night.

Food:

We all know that nothing brings a group together like food. Many family nights are scheduled around the dinner hour for that reason. Food is expensive and the costs for a large group can eat away a budget quickly. Here are some recommendations.

1. Avoid potlucks unless your families have proven to be reliable about attendance and food participation. Some alternatives which require everyone to bring a dish are: potato bar where everyone brings a topping and the program supplies the potatoes, stone soup (read the book) where the program has a base stock and limited vegetables, salad bar, and spaghetti bar where the pasta and tomato sauce are provided by the program.
2. Wholesale clubs such as Sam's and Costco can provide large serving trays of hearty eats such as lasagna, macaroni and cheese, and deli meats. These can serve many and are generally palatable.
3. Obtain a meal sponsor. Provided your family night is not on a Friday or Saturday, many restaurants will donate food to a good cause. Great donations include trays of rice, beans, shredded meats, cheese, casseroles, and soups. These are generally low cost to the restaurant and provide good public relations as long as you display a banner and send a thank-you card from the participants.
4. Local schools may provide cafeteria style meals at a slight charge if your family night is held in their building. Costs for the school may be offset as parent involvement if the agenda is sound and you can provide a list of parents attending.
5. Take-out items from local grocery stores or restaurants. Fried chicken, pizza, deli meats, and salads are relatively inexpensive if assembled into a meal by the program.
6. Ask families to provide a limited donation (less than \$5 per family) to offset costs. This option is possible, but can be awkward as well as a logistical challenge to track down payments.

Alternatives to providing a meal include scheduling the family nights after or before the dinner hour to avoid the meal, encouraging families to bring a picnic dinner to eat before the activities, or posing the problem to the adults and having them problem solve solutions.

Set-up and Table Arrangements

Having someone assigned to arrive early, set-up and greet families is crucial. Frequently this detail is left to the director or lead teacher who must balance it in addition to other tasks. A delay in set-up can throw the entire evening's schedule off. Advanced students with older children or reliable volunteers can be assigned this task. It is a good idea to draw a map or layout of where the tables should be placed.

Special consideration should be given to the type of activity and the table placement. Noisy group activities should not be placed adjacent to the portable library. Any activity that involves food should **NEVER** be next to an activity with play-dough, glue, or paint. Young children often have a difficult time differentiating between edible and non-edible items. Items that require immediate clean-up such as painting or sticky play-dough should be as close to a source of running water as possible. If running water is distant, a small wash basin with soapy water and paper towels nearby works well too.

Ideally, many of these activities should be conducted on non-carpeted surfaces. If that cannot be avoided, clean shower curtains work well as drop cloths. To protect tabletops and make clean-up easier, cover the tables with newspapers or disposable plastic table cloths. Do not dispose of them unless ripped; they can be wiped off. These can be purchased rather inexpensively after a holiday and follow thematic colors.

Station a greeter at the main entrance door to welcome families, answer any questions, and have them sign in. There should be a location for diaper bags, backpacks, and coats which will be protected from food and activity. Name tags may need to be available depending upon your program and its size.

Clean-Up

After a long, fun-filled event, clean-up is not always relished. Having someone pre-assigned to the task and rotating the nights can help. Ideally, this is not the same person who conducted the set-up or is responsible for transporting families. In many programs, families will take responsibility to clean-up tables and put items away. That's wonderful. However, the ultimate responsibility lies with the staff. Find out in advance what the requirements are for the room. Make certain there are appropriate cleaning supplies such as broom, dustpan, mop, sponge, soap, buckets, etc. Covering the tables in advance will make this job easier, but accidents happen. Be prepared and know that someone else may get the job next time.

Transportation

Always a challenge for families yet critical for their participation. If your program is in a position to offer it, then do so. If not, be creative. Before the event, solicit families who may be able to carpool. Plan the family night around the bus schedule. Recruit partner organizations to assist with transportation. Head Start or your local public school may have parents attending and may be persuaded to share their buses. As an “in kind” donation, a local assisted living or long term care facility may be able to drive participants within a limited area. You will know your area best and can find the most available resources.

Materials

This can be a substantial part of any budget. The key to keeping it reasonable is planning. Consumable supplies such as crayons, markers, and glue should be purchased at back-to-school sales or through school district purchasing warehouses if possible. Local newspapers are a great source for plain, off-white newsprint from the ends of rolls. Often they will be donated to worthy causes. Building materials can be found in a variety of environments including construction sites, teacher’s lounges, fast food restaurants, and such. After holiday sales are great for basic items such as table cloths in various colors, napkins, and construction paper. Be resourceful. Once families begin to see what items are used, they will help you collect.

To help reduce costs on materials, buy in bulk when available and re-package into smaller sizes. Plastic ice cube trays make great paint trays. Not too much paint is wasted and there are extra spaces for mixing colors. Squeeze type condiment bottles work well for glue and thicker paint. Empty spice bottles and glitter are a good combination. Old cookie sheets can be used to contain projects that tend to overflow. Scavenging is often the name of the game for slightly under-funded projects.

Copies

Sufficient numbers of handouts and activity sheets are a must for full participation. Anticipate the number of attendees and add a percentage. Extra handouts can be given away the next day in class and many families ask to take them home for family members unable to attend. Have someone double check to ensure that activity stations have an adequate amount of materials at all times.

Children who may not be interested / able to participate (teens and infants)

This is not to say that all teens or infants do not want to participate. Many do. Many were not given a choice. Adolescence in this country is about asserting independence and many teens while being proud of their parents for attending classes, may have other focuses in their life. They may still be learning while not actively participating. Provide a graceful way for them to stay close to the action without having to fully interact. Their natural curiosity may take over and engage them better than any parent encouragement. If not, have a relatively quiet area for homework completion and make sure that they are visited on a regular basis.

Infants, however, frequently do want to participate. Make sure that most of your activity materials are non-toxic. Have the poison control number ready just in case. Do not

allow babies to crawl unguarded on the floor. They will find every paper scrap, bead, and puddle of glue. If possible, provide a corralled area for infants to play in. Encourage parents to take turns interacting with all the infants enclosed. If parents carry their babies with them, help them to be mindful of little hands and small, chokable objects. You may want to become a surrogate child carrier for those who are fussy.

Debriefing

Frequently this is the most overlooked aspect of intergenerational literacy activities. The evening is winding down, children are getting tired, staff are fussy, but it's not quite time to go. Debriefing is the part that ties the whole evening together. Questions to ask include:

- What did they learn?
- What was the favorite activity? Why?
- What skills did it teach?
- What activity did not work well?
- What could be done to make it better?
- What was their child's favorite activity? Why?
- What did their child learn?
- What activity will they try to do at home?

You will create many more questions to be discussed. Try not to ask more than about five. The survey can be conducted in small groups, entire group, adults in one and children in another, or in writing. An alternative would be to have the questions posted on chart paper in advance and participants complete with comments as they go. A large graph where families cast their vote also works well. The next day in class, questions can be asked regarding information from the graph. While predictability of asking is important, the method of encouraging families to process their thoughts regarding the night should vary to avoid rote responses.

Important Last Note:

Many parents have had limited opportunities to play and interact with such fun objects and materials as you are sharing. They may find it difficult to focus on their young children while creating masterpieces themselves. Be aware of this and gently support them in making the transition to their child. You may want to have an activity day just for adults when they can experiment without being responsible for their children.

Alternatively, some adults may expect such perfection from their child's project that they feel compelled to complete it for them. Again, encourage the parent to let the child create and emphasize the process of learning rather than the finished product. A pictorial handout showing developmental stages of young children is enclosed for your assistance. Point out how the differences can show the child's growth throughout the year. Take plenty of pictures to demonstrate that growth.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) Dictionary

Classifying – being able to identify which items belong together (all animals). This is both a pre-reading and math skill. In reading, language needs to be sorted as to type (adjective, verb, etc.) for most effective use.

Eye-hand Coordination – making a purposeful connection between planned and actual actions

Fine Motor – involving small muscles generally in the hand and forearms. Examples include cutting, coloring, manipulating play dough. Critical for later writing development.

Following Directions – young children often can only focus on one direction at a time, through practice they may move to following 3-step directions by age 3.

Following a Pattern – making observations about a pattern and continuing it. Important pre-reading and pre-math skill. Useful and time-saving life skill.

Gross Motor – involving large muscles such as running, jumping, climbing, walking, arm circles, etc.

Observing – starting to notice difference and changes

One-to-one Correspondence – first steps in counting is rote counting (“I can count to 5, watch me.”). The second step of one-to-one correspondence indicates the connection between the actual number of objects.

Oral Language Development – practicing give-and-take interactions with others; conversational type of speaking; adding language in a natural fashion

Predicting – anticipating a result based on previous experience. Important element in story telling, reading, and science.

Problem Solving – using resources to devise a working solution to a problem

Repetitive Language – to cement neural connections, young children need to hear and/or experience over twenty times

Rhyme and Rhythm of Language – the flow of conversation, frequently in their native language; helps develop fluency

Sorting – separating items into different categories based on attributes; helps to develop internal categorizing of language and experiences

Spatial Relations – location of an object in relation to other objects; important early math concept as well as to assist in child-parent identity separation

Taking turns – skill that must be developed through repetition; not generally mastered until school age

Using Tools – young children entering school are often confounded with unknown tools such as pencil sharpeners, rulers, tape dispenser, and even scissors; early exposure while aid in their pre-school knowledge

Visual Discrimination – being able to identify differences between objects; critical skill for pre-reading development (B vs. D)

Vocabulary Development – adding new language with an emphasis on natural utilization and not drilling

Written Language Skills – pre-writing skills in this area include scribbling, drawing of pictures with adult written captions, pretend letter formation, and repetitive letter writing