

## HOST OR SPONSOR A FAMILY LITERACY CELEBRATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

### Did you know?

Early language and literacy development is a critical school-readiness factor.

### What is a family literacy celebration?

Families play a critical role in promoting children's literacy development: Family literacy celebrations (literacy fairs, family literacy nights, etc.) are events for families and children to participate in fun early literacy activities together. Caregivers learn fun ways to promote literacy and learning and babies, toddlers and preschoolers get to learn through play. Family literacy events feature hands-on learning stations, information from early learning experts, make-and-take activities and access to books and other resources to support learning at home. They can be hosted at schools, libraries or other places where community members gather.



### How do literacy events support literacy?

Literacy events help caregivers build the knowledge, confidence and skills they need to promote literacy development in young children by modeling behaviors and sharing activities and ideas that they can replicate at home. By showing parents and caregivers how to model reading and early literacy-building skills and sharing activities they can replicate at home, these events help make reading enjoyable for the whole family and foster a passion and love for reading that can last a lifetime.

### Steps to planning your literacy event:

- ✓ Set the date, location and theme. Be creative and look for books that align with the chosen theme. Get suggestions or input from your local children's librarian. Partner with a local agency that serves young children and families. You may also want to consider inviting local kindergarten teachers who can share information about what students should know and be able to do once they start kindergarten.
- ✓ Identify relevant activities for children from birth to preschool aged. Select activities and length of time needed/ list out materials needed. Activities should include:
  - At least one read-aloud activity.
  - At least one make-and-take activity/craft.
  - At least one literacy game.
- ✓ Determine funding and other resources needed.
- ✓ Recruit volunteer/staffing support.
- ✓ Promote the event. [Visit Brand Center](#) and use People of Action campaign templates to develop signage promoting the activity and how your club is active in the community.

**Tips for a successful event:**

- Literacy events are festive events. So promote this as a party and have child and family-friendly snacks and drinks (and remember that there will be babies, toddlers and preschoolers on hand).
- Consider giveaways to boost attendance. You can provide books as door prizes for the first 10-20 families to arrive.
- Collaborate with local preschools – they will be a key partner and may already be doing something similar that you can support.
- When planning the event, family engagement is very important. Consider enlisting parents and family members to help prepare resources, such as the materials needed for making the games. Seek their input on which types of games and make-and-take activities would be most beneficial.
- Be creative and have experts on hand who can actively engage parents and caregivers. It's a great idea to host literacy events at various times to reach parents with various work schedules.
- Send reminders to families, use your club's Facebook page, or use stickers or flyers to remind families of your upcoming event.
- Plan to schedule the event for about an hour and a half. This will allow enough time for the activities (20 minutes in length) and transition times (two, five-minute breaks).
- Based on the number of participants expected, consider how you want to present the activities. If only a small group is expected (15 or fewer), hold all activities in one room, with one activity following another.
- If the crowd is larger than 30, consider using three rooms, one for each activity. With this model, parents rotate to each activity. If possible, group the families by the age of the children in case you want to differentiate the activities according to developmental level.
- Before the event, have all materials prepared and handy. This will minimize down time between activities.
- In addition, consider family participation on the night of the event. Parent volunteers can act as time keepers, guides for taking groups from one room to another if the rotation is used and helping with the make-and-take project.
- Have directions available for each activity in the form of a handout so parents can refer to them when working with their children at home. These might include tips for reading aloud to children, directions for playing the literacy game and/or how to use the literacy resource at home.

**Types of Literacy Events & Themes:**

Below are some literacy event activity and theme ideas. The sky is the limit for what you can do! The internet and social media sites like Pinterest are also great resources for ideas!

Family Reading Night

Plan to have three 20-minute activities in this 90-minute parent and child reading event: a read-aloud, playing a literacy game and making a reading resource for families to take home.

Book Swap

What better way to save families' money and promote the importance of reading? Plan a gently used book swap in conjunction with a school literacy program and provide materials for kids to make their own bookmarks.

### Reading with Dads

To encourage fathers to read to their kids every day, hold a Reading with Dads event. Fathers come with their kids and, in small groups, rotate through several short sessions where each group is read to by a familiar dad from the community: the fire chief, a local minister, a teacher, a barber, the school custodian. Kids can receive a free book for attending.

### Nighttime Story Book Fair

Family members come dressed in pajamas with their favorite blanket, pillow, and/or stuffed animals. Parents browse the books at the book fair while kids listen to staff members read bedtime stories. When parents come back from the book fair, they can choose to share their books with the group if they would like and if time permits. If possible, offer a free book choice as a door prize for the first 20 families who arrive.

### Read It and Eat It

Have a “Read It and Eat It” event where families eat snacks that are paired with books. For example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* can be paired with making fruit kebobs. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* can be paired with healthy cookies, made with whole grains and raisins. *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* can be paired with a spaghetti dinner. *Green Eggs and Ham* can be paired with breakfast foods. There are many preschool–aged books with food themes. Be sure to focus on healthy food options!

### **Sample activities for your literacy event:**

- Make-and-take projects should be pretty simple for this age group. Ideas can include:
  - Making a pretty bookmark
  - Decorating a pillow case for comfortable at-home reading experiences
  - Cutting out letters of the alphabet from magazines or pictures to make flash cards for letter recognition or vocabulary-building games.