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## Literacy backpacks for emergent readers

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## Literacy backpacks for emergent readers

### **Abstract**

Schools and families are continually searching for ways to bridge learning between home and school. Partnerships that encourage literacy learning at home are especially important for young children. Literacy backpacks were designed to encourage parents and children to engage in meaningful literacy experiences in their homes. The literacy backpacks include a collection of literature, activities, and supplies that enable families to enjoy literacy learning in an informal setting. Literacy backpacks provide emergent readers and writers opportunities to see adults model literacy behaviors, to engage in meaningful interactions with adults and text at home, and to actively construct literacy knowledge independently.

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Literacy Backpacks for Emergent Readers

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Literacy Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

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Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
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## Introduction

### *Project Description*

Literacy backpacks were designed to encourage parents and children to engage in meaningful literacy experiences in their homes. The literacy backpacks include a collection of literature, activities, and supplies that enable families to enjoy literacy learning in an informal setting. Literacy backpacks provide emergent readers and writers opportunities to see adults model literacy behaviors, to engage in meaningful interactions with adults and text at home, and to actively construct literacy knowledge independently.

The literacy backpacks included in this project were designed to reinforce a variety of literacy skills and strategies for emergent readers and writers and to encourage emergent readers to respond to and interact with text in meaningful ways. A total of ten literacy backpacks were created for this project. Each literacy backpack includes:

- Selections of literature for parents and children to read together.
- A parent letter explaining the emergent literacy skill or strategy being reinforced along with instructions on how to complete the activity at home.
- A response journal for parents and children to record their literacy learning together.
- Materials necessary to complete the literacy activities at home.
- A literacy backpack inventory list.

Books and literacy activities included in the backpacks were chosen to meet the needs of a wide variety of learners with the understanding that children differ in their literacy backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and development. The literacy backpacks created for this project will be used to support emergent readers and writers at Crestview Elementary School in Clive, Iowa. Crestview is a part of the West Des Moines Community School District. Crestview's 522 students come from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Crestview's minority population in the 2003-2004 school

year was 16.7%. Twenty-two percent of Crestview students qualified for free or reduced lunch in the 2003-2004 school year. Crestview also provides support for English Language Learners who make up 11.3% of the student population. The number of students classified as minority, English Language Learners, and free/reduced lunch is expected to increase for the 2004-2005 school year.

### *Rationale*

Research has shown the importance of parents in children's literacy learning as well as how the home environment can help build a strong foundation for literacy learning (Auerbach, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Saracho, 1997; Saracho, 2000; Teale, 1999; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The literacy backpacks created for this project reinforce the importance of parents and families as children's literacy teachers. Parents of young readers often ask classroom teachers what they can do to support the literacy development of their children. Although some parents are able to be actively involved in their children's learning at school by volunteering their time during the school day, many others are unable to be involved in this way. The literacy backpacks created for this project allow families of emergent readers and writers to participate in children's literacy learning by encouraging social interactions with children at home in the context of oral language and print.

### *Purpose of the Project*

Literacy backpacks offer an opportunity to connect home and school literacy learning beyond simple storybook reading (Dever, 2001; Dever & Burts, 2002). The literacy backpacks created for the project encourage families to explore, discover, and build children's literacy knowledge through connections between oral language and print.

The purpose of the literacy backpack project is to engage children and families in authentic, meaningful literacy experiences that will enhance the literacy development of emergent readers and writers. Literacy backpacks can be the source of modeling, interacting, and independent exploration in the home to support children's literacy development (Dever, 2001; Dever & Burts, 2002).

### *Importance of the Project*

Early literacy experiences form the foundation for future literacy learning (Clay, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Characteristics of literacy learners change over time as children build on their literacy experiences and knowledge (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Literacy backpacks created for this project meet the developmental needs of emergent readers and writers and serve as a way to encourage families to engage in authentic literacy experiences at home. Literacy backpacks for emergent readers and writers help parents of school-age children learn about their children's literacy development by helping them understand appropriate activities that enhance children's literacy learning (Dever, 2001; Dever & Burts, 2002). The literacy backpacks are designed to provide parents with an understanding of the characteristics of emergent readers and writers and to provide opportunities to engage their children in literacy activities that support emergent reading and writing behaviors.

The optimal setting for children's literacy learning is within their "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). This enables children to engage in constructing literacy knowledge through meaningful social interactions with adults and text. Parents play an important role in children's active construction of literacy knowledge within the zone of proximal development as children engage in literacy

activities with adults that they would be unable to do independently. The literacy backpacks designed for this project provide home reading opportunities and text extensions within a child's zone of proximal development that connect to the developmental characteristics of emergent readers and writers. The literacy backpacks also offer emergent readers the opportunity to build important skills that will aid in their understanding of text. Adult interaction within the context of authentic literacy experiences is essential to the success of the project.

### Review of Literature

A casual observer in a kindergarten or first grade classroom may see young children engaged in reading simple, patterned books or writing short words under a picture and assume the children are just beginning their literacy learning. The casual observer may believe these children have finally reached the age when they are ready to begin reading and writing. However, the foundation for what appears to be the very beginning of literacy actually began for these children several years earlier in their homes. Children's first literacy teachers, their parents, help young readers build a foundation of literacy learning that a classroom teacher can build upon once they enter school (Clay, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

#### *Emergent Literacy*

At one time, the view of literacy learning suggested children reached an age when they were ready to begin reading (Clay, 1991). This age at which children were deemed ready to read signified the beginning of literacy learning. In contrast to the idea that literacy learning begins when children are ready to read is the "emergent literacy

perspective.” The emergent literacy perspective emphasizes that literacy learning begins at birth from the earliest interactions with others and continues throughout a lifetime (Clay, 1991; Stratton, 1996). The foundation of literacy learning is the exposure to and development of oral language from the beginning of life (Clay, 1991). Children construct early literacy knowledge before entering school through meaningful interactions with others, their environment, and print (Clay, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Children build upon oral language experiences to learn to utilize verbal communication and then proceed to understand the symbols of language through experimentation with books and attempts at writing (Clay, 1991; Stratton, 1996; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Young children’s literacy knowledge is often not represented in conventional ways through their attempts at oral language, reading, and writing. However, the unconventional behaviors demonstrated by children in the earliest stages of literacy development are critical to the later development of conventional reading and writing behaviors (Teale, 1999). The emergent literacy perspective emphasizes that (a) literacy learning begins at birth, (b) young children are critical in constructing their own understanding of literacy, and (c) adults play a significant role in children’s literacy development (Clay, 1991; Teale, 1999).

The emergent literacy perspective focuses on children’s active learning. Children actively construct their own literacy knowledge through exposure to and experimentation with oral language, books, and writing (Clay, 1991; Stratton, 1996; Teale, 1999). Children’s explorations of the world around them aid in their construction of literacy knowledge. Authentic reading and writing opportunities allow children to construct literacy knowledge through the routines of daily life experiences (Purcell-Gates, 1996; Stratton, 1996). The focus of literacy learning in the emergent literacy perspective is on

building literacy through meaningful interactions, rather than explicit teaching of conventional literacy behaviors or learning the correct answer (Clay, 1991; Teale, 1999).

### *Literacy Learning in the Home*

The years prior to the beginning of formal schooling are critical to children's literacy development (Auerbach, 1989; Clay, 1991; Teale, 1999; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Therefore, families and the home environment play a key role in building a solid foundation for children's literacy learning. The home environment can provide a variety of literacy experiences that enrich the development of children's oral and written language (Senechal et al., 1998). Children who are exposed to a wide variety of the uses of language in the home environment build a solid foundation for literacy learning (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Families support children's literacy learning through the creation of a rich literacy environment and opportunities for social interactions (Saracho, 1997). In literacy-rich homes, children are often read to, see adults model reading, have access to literacy materials, and are encouraged to develop questioning skills (Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The home environment can be a source of many literacy opportunities including: (a) opportunities to view adults model various aspects of literacy, (b) opportunities to interact with adults in literacy experiences, and (c) opportunities for independent literacy exploration (Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

Children in literacy-rich homes see other family members engage in literacy experiences through daily living routines. The literacy experiences children observe within daily living routines can be planned or occur spontaneously and have a positive influence on children's literacy development. (Auerbach, 1989; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

Children can see family members engage in literacy practices from various social domains including: daily living routines, entertainment, school-related activities, work, religion, interpersonal communication, and storybook time (Teale, 1986; Purcell-Gates, 1996). This modeling of literacy behaviors by adults has been shown to be an important part of nurturing children's literacy development. Family modeling of literacy behaviors for varying purposes provides children with opportunities for "incidental learning," which demonstrates to children how literacy works and how literacy can be used for communication with others (Stainthorp & Hughes, 2000). Children see literacy as an enjoyable part of daily living activities in the home and in the community in which they live (Dumas & Aldridge, 1995).

Family members can be positive role models for children's literacy development. However, children's literacy acquisition also depends on interactions with others, as literacy knowledge is passed on from adults to children (Teale, 1999). Social interactions with adults within the context of rich literacy experiences enable children to actively construct literacy knowledge and meaning (Richgels & Wold, 1998; Saracho, 1997). Children's construction of literacy knowledge is dependent upon adult assistance. The ideal setting for literacy learning is within Vygotsky's (1978) "zone of proximal development." The zone of proximal development is the area between what children can do independently and what they can do with assistance. Adult assistance through modeling, scaffolding, and encouragement in early literacy experiences enables children to construct their own literacy knowledge while engaging in literacy activities that they would be unable to do independently (Teale, 1999; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Teale (1982) and Dever (2001) found that literacy interactions with adults in homes help children

develop language skills and better prepare them for school based reading and writing experiences. Literacy-rich homes provide opportunities for children to explore their environment, converse with others, learn to express themselves, tell about events that occur, and interact with text. These opportunities for literacy development are important because they are the same opportunities presented to children in a school setting (Neuman & Roskos, 1989).

Along with viewing adults modeling literacy behaviors and engaging in social interactions that promote literacy development, the emergent literacy perspective focuses on children actively constructing their own literacy knowledge through exposure to and experimentation with oral language, books, and writing (Clay, 1991; Stratton, 1996; Teale, 1999). A rich literacy environment in the home encourages children to explore the world around them to help develop their literacy knowledge. Children can engage in authentic reading and writing experiences to construct new literacy learning. Literacy is a way of interacting with, thinking about, and responding to the environment (Neuman et al., 1998).

### *Parent Involvement in School and Home Literacy Learning*

Research has shown the important role parents play in the early literacy learning of children before they reach school (Auerbach, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Saracho, 1997; Saracho, 2000; Teale, 1999; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). The role of families as children's literacy teachers does not diminish once children enter school. As children construct new literacy learning in school the classroom teacher emerges as a new partner in children's literacy development. The role of families as children's first literacy teachers is still vital in their continuing literacy development. Families need to be seen as

partners in their children's education as continued parent involvement in literacy learning is essential for children's development and achievement of success in school (Becher, 1985; Cairney & Munsie, 1995).

Parent involvement often occurs in a variety of settings once children enter school. Some parents may be able to assist in the classroom, attend workshops, or support parent involvement groups such as parent-teacher organizations. However, some families may not be able to participate in school in the above ways due to a variety of circumstances. Barriers to parental involvement at school may include a lack of transportation, lack of childcare, or language differences. Because of this, Epstein (1995) advocates for opportunities for children to continue to learn at home as one of her six types of involvement for parents. Epstein encourages teachers to provide information and resources for how parents can help children at home in order to have a positive influence on their success and achievement in school.

### *Building Literacy With Emergent Readers and Writers*

Emergent readers are beginning to use visual discrimination to help them quickly identify the letters of the alphabet (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Emergent readers are also beginning to pay attention to consonant sounds at the beginning and end of words as they connect letters and sounds together. In addition to increasing knowledge of letters and sounds, emergent readers are beginning to develop an understanding of important concepts about print including directionality and one to one matching of spoken and written words in a text (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Emergent readers use their knowledge of oral language in the reading of simple texts. Texts with one to two lines of print can help emergent readers develop the understanding of how print works. Emergent readers

know a few high frequency words that they can read and write. The focus of literacy learning for emergent literacy learners is on building literacy through meaningful interactions with others (Clay, 1991; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Teale, 1999). Social interactions with adults within the context of rich literacy experiences enable children to actively construct literacy knowledge and meaning (Richgels & Wold, 1998; Saracho, 1997). Families encourage and support emergent literacy behaviors when they provide materials to support literacy development, establish a home environment that promotes literacy, and interact with children in literacy activities at home (Leichter, 1984). Emergent readers are also building knowledge about the importance of reading for meaning. The children's literature included in the literacy backpacks provides the means to develop comprehension strategies that help emergent readers construct meaning in text.

### *Home Literacy Backpacks*

As schools look for ways to actively involve families in children's literacy development, classroom teachers and literacy researchers have developed literacy backpack programs to bridge literacy learning between home and school. Literacy backpacks can reach all families and provide opportunities for children and families to interact in authentic literacy experiences (Barbour, 1998). Brock and Dodd (1994) found some families lack access to quality children's literature to share in the home. Through literacy backpack programs, children gain access to books (Ramos & Krashen, 1998) and have opportunities to interact with adults in reading and literacy activities that help build and support their literacy development (Bus et al., 1995). Literacy backpacks give children the opportunity to see adults model literacy behaviors, encourage meaningful

literacy interactions in the home environment between parents and children, and provide opportunities for children to actively construct literacy knowledge independently.

Literacy backpacks sent home from school provide the medium to engage parents and children in a wide variety of literacy activities to continue to build a solid literacy foundation that began in the home at birth.

Articles written about literacy backpack programs share the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program that seeks to engage children and parents in meaningful interactions around literacy at home (Barbour, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Dever, 2001; Dever & Burts, 2002; Richgels & Wold, 1998). Four literacy backpack programs were researched for this project. They were developed for kindergarten and first grade readers. These literacy backpacks include selections of quality children's literature along with suggestions for meaningful literacy activities to help parents understand appropriate activities that enhance children's literacy development at home (Barbour, 1998; Dever, 2001).

Children's literature formed the basis for literacy backpack programs. Each backpack contained several books based on a particular theme. Some themes were related to science or math (Barbour, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Richgels & Wold, 1998) while others related to social issues such as families or growing up (Dever, 2001). Although all programs were designed for use in kindergarten and first grade classrooms, the reading levels of books included in each backpack varied from program to program. The "Three for the Road" backpacks (Richgels & Wold, 1998) included three thematic books at varying reading levels. Children could choose what book to read at home with their families, but were encouraged to read the one closest to their level to their parent and

have the parent read aloud the other books. Other programs (Barbour, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Dever, 2001) encouraged parents to read the literature aloud to their children.

Some literacy backpack programs include response journals although the format for each varies from program to program. Barbour's (1998) "Be Excited About Reading" (BEAR) and Richgels and Wold's (1998) "Three for the Road" backpacks included both a child and parent response journal. Parents were encouraged to comment on what they learned from the activity while children were encouraged to draw a picture of a favorite character or favorite part of the book. Dever's (2001) "Family Literacy Bags" did not include any response journals. Instead, parents filled out an evaluation form rating the backpack and its contents. The response journals included in Cohen's (1997) kindergarten backpack program focused on children's responses to favorite characters or scenes from the books.

Book extensions are also features of literacy backpack programs. Dever's (2001) and Richgels and Wold's (1998) backpacks all included explicit questions parents could use to elicit responses from their child about the books. Some backpacks included art activities centered around the backpack theme (Dever, 2001) while others focused on dramatic play, puppets, board games, or puzzles (Barbour, 1998). Children in the "Three for the Road" program were encouraged to act out the story with sock puppets included in every backpack (Richgels & Wold, 1998).

In an evaluation of a literacy backpack program Dever (2001) and Dever & Burts (2002) found that literacy backpacks encouraged parents to make storybook reading more interactive as the parents engaged children in meaningful conversations and activities about literacy. Parents appreciated the fact that books were provided in Spanish so that

families of English language learners could also engage in authentic literacy experiences with their children. Koskinen et al. (2000) found that reading at home or listening to a book on tape had a positive influence on the literacy development of children learning to speak English. Reading books at home has also been found to increase children's motivation to read as well as parent involvement in children's literacy learning (Koskinen et al., 2000). Children who participated in a literacy backpack program were eager to take backpacks home to share with family members, were enthusiastic about the meaningful, authentic literacy activities provided in the backpacks that went beyond storybook reading, and often discussed books at school with their peers (Barbour, 1998; Dever, 2001). Family support of activities in the home that promote literacy learning helps to nurture children's literacy development (Saracho, 2000).

Literacy backpacks give children the opportunity to see adults model literacy behaviors, encourage meaningful literacy interactions in the home environment between parents and children, and provide opportunities for children to actively construct literacy knowledge independently. Literacy backpacks sent home from school could provide the medium to engage parents and children in a wide variety of literacy activities to continue to build a solid literacy foundation that began in the home at birth.

### The Project

Creating literacy backpacks for emergent readers and writers consisted of a series of steps: (1) selecting appropriate books to reinforce emergent literacy behaviors and encourage reading for meaning, (2) preparing support materials, (3) planning for the demonstration of the use of literacy backpacks to students and parents, and (4) planning

for scheduling and management of the literacy backpacks. The literacy backpacks created for this project were designed to build on children's literacy knowledge as emergent readers and writers and to help them construct new literacy knowledge through meaningful interactions with adults in their home.

### *Selecting Books*

The children's literature included in the backpacks must meet a wide variety of children's needs and encourage positive interaction between family members and children. Within a classroom, there are a wide variety of literacy backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge. Children's literacy knowledge will change and grow throughout the year as they construct new literacy knowledge with the help of a classroom teacher and parents.

Literature in the literacy backpacks includes familiar nursery rhymes that children have recited for a couple of years before entering school. The use of favorite nursery rhymes in the literacy backpacks will help children begin to understand the connection between spoken language and printed text along with the concept of rhyme. The backpacks also include family favorite books such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin & Archambault, 1989) and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* (Taback, 1997). These books allow children to listen to adults read aloud to them and to develop an understanding of the language used in books along with the different literacy skills reinforced in the activity of each backpack. It is also important the children using the literacy backpacks at home be encouraged to read patterned and predictable books such as *I Can Read* (Lanczak-Williams, 1994) and *My Accident* (Giles, 1996). These

books help readers develop concepts about print and work on reading strategies modeled after classroom reading in guided reading groups.

Books were read to children to gauge positive reactions to the literature and to ensure the literature included in the backpacks would be motivating to young readers. Books were chosen to go along with literacy activities that meet the expectations of literacy learning for emergent readers in the West Des Moines Community School District where the project will be implemented in the fall of 2004.

Because Crestview has a significant Hispanic student population, books written in Spanish were included in each literacy backpack when available. Those books that were not available in Spanish will be read in English and Spanish on a cassette tape that can be added to the backpack when needed.

### *Preparing Support Materials*

After selecting the literature to be included in the backpacks and choosing the literacy skill or strategy to enhance each book, materials were collected for each backpack. Each literacy backpack contains the selections of literature, a family letter, a response journal, writing and drawing materials, and an inventory list along with specific supplies for individual backpacks such as magnetic letters or sentence strips. For this project, a brief introduction to each backpack along with a materials list is included before the family letter. This will be useful to a classroom teacher looking to replicate or adapt the project for different classrooms.

The family letter in each backpack tells parents the literacy skill or strategy the backpack reinforces along with specific instructions for using the literature and materials to complete the activity in the backpack. Each family letter also includes a reminder of

when the child is to return the backpack to school so another child can take it home to share with his/her family. Family letters have been translated into Spanish to allow children whose parents do not speak proficient English to share literature and build emergent literacy with their children.

The response journal is a book that includes copies of the journal page for individual children and families to record their literacy learning. The response journals are made so that children can look at what other children in the hopes of building further literacy knowledge. Parents and children are encouraged to read other children's responses in the each journal. The pages are formatted to guide parents and children in their responses which will alleviate families' worries about how to respond to the literature included in the backpack. There is also a sample page completed in each backpack for those families who may be unsure how to complete the journal page.

All materials that families will need to complete the activity are included in each backpack. Each backpack includes an inventory list that is taped to the inside of the front pocket and is easily visible from the outside. This will help families ensure all non-consumable materials are returned to school with the backpack and books. Consumable materials will be replaced as needed by the classroom teacher or parent volunteer before the backpack is sent home with another child.

Each literacy backpack is also labeled with its name to help children choose backpacks efficiently. A small lost and found tag with the school's name and address is attached to the zipper of each backpack in hopes that if a backpack is lost, it can be returned to school as soon as possible. If non-consumable materials are lost, a letter to

parents will be sent home asking them to help their child look for the missing pieces (see Appendix A).

*D* Literacy backpacks will be introduced to parents at the first grade Meet the *demonstration of Literacy Backpacks*

Teacher night presentation in September. A letter will be included introducing the literacy backpacks that parents can keep as a reference at home (see Appendix B). At the bottom of the introductory letter is a backpack contract parents will sign agreeing to help their child with the backpack activities (see Appendix C). The parents also agree, by signing the contract, to return the backpack and materials to school in good condition and to replace any broken or lost manipulative in the backpack. Due to time constraints, each individual backpack will not be introduced separately, but backpacks will be available for parent viewing after the teacher presentation.

Literacy backpacks will be introduced individually in the classroom to the children. The demonstration will include an introduction of each backpack, an opportunity to explore the materials and books in the backpack, an introduction to the literacy activity and response journal, and a discussion about the responsibilities regarding the backpacks and individual materials. The teacher will introduce the books included in the literacy backpack. This will engage children's interest in taking the backpacks home to share with their families as they see favorite literature selections as well as new selections that pique their curiosity. Students are also introduced to the manipulatives included in the backpack and shown how they can use the manipulatives at home to complete the literacy activity. While engaging in the conversation about manipulatives, students will also discuss how to care for the materials and books included

in the backpack. Providing student ownership and responsibility is important in ensuring materials are well cared for and returned to school on time. Students will also be introduced to the response journal and the teacher will create a sample page. This will help students understand how the response journal is to be used at home. These important demonstrations with each backpack allow students to take the responsibility of introducing the backpack to their parents and provide an opportunity for children to become excited about the literacy backpack program and thus, engaging in literacy learning at home.

### *Scheduling and Management of Literacy Backpacks*

During the Meet the Teacher Night presentation in September, volunteers will be solicited to help with the management of the literacy backpacks. This should take approximately one hour each Wednesday. Parent volunteers will be responsible for checking the contents of the returned backpacks with the inventory list on the outside of the backpack. The parent volunteer will fill out any letters to parents noting a missing book or manipulative (see Appendix A) and will replace consumable materials if needed.

Literacy backpacks will be introduced to the students (as described in the demonstration section) in September after the parent introduction at the Meet the Teacher Night presentation. Literacy backpacks will go home on Thursday afternoons and be returned to school on the following Tuesday. This gives each family five nights to complete the activity in the literacy backpack and to enjoy the literature included in each backpack with their child. On Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, children who returned a literacy backpack will have the opportunity to share their journal page with the class. On Thursday afternoons, children will have the opportunity to select which

backpack they would like to take home. The teacher will keep track of students and literacy backpacks on the class checklist (see Appendix D).

### *Functions of the Ten Literacy Backpacks*

The literacy backpacks developed for this project provide opportunities for parents and children to engage in literacy learning together in an informal setting. Literacy backpacks help parents support children's literacy learning at home through the inclusion of children's literature and an activity specifically designed to enhance children's literacy learning based on the book or books included in the backpack. Emergent readers are building literacy knowledge based on their experiences with oral language and print. Six of the literacy backpacks created for this project emphasize opportunities for children to engage in behaviors characteristic of emergent readers and writers. Children can actively participate in tracking print, matching print to pictures, and writing high frequency words. In addition to behaviors that enable emergent readers and writers to become more independent, the literacy backpacks contain literature and activities that encourage emergent readers to develop comprehension skills. Parents are active contributors and provide scaffolding to help emergent readers build on prior knowledge to construct meaning while reading text. The literacy backpacks included in this project were designed to reinforce a variety of literacy skills and strategies for emergent readers and writers. A total of ten literacy backpacks were created for this project. Each literacy backpack includes:

- Selections of literature for parents and children to read together.
- A parent letter explaining the literacy skill or strategy being reinforced along with instructions on how to complete the activity at home.
- A response journal for parents and children to record their literacy learning together.
- Materials necessary to complete the literacy activities at home.

- A literacy backpack inventory list.

The following paragraphs present a brief description of how the literacy backpacks connect to the literacy characteristics of emergent readers and writers that help build a strong foundation for future literacy learning.

- “Environmental Print Backpack” (See Appendix E)  
Emergent readers are becoming aware of print and how print contains meaning (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). The Environmental Print Backpack encourages emergent readers to look in their surrounding environment for print they can recognize to help them understand that the print they see all around them contains meaning.
- “Label Your Home Backpack” (See Appendix F)  
Classroom teachers often assist children in making labels for important objects in the classroom. Children can then read the labels in the classroom. This builds on children’s experiences with environmental print that they bring to school as they build further understanding of the connection between spoken words, print, and meaning. The Label Your Home Backpack provides a direct connection between literacy practices in the classroom with literacy at home as children are encouraged to label objects in their bedroom or throughout their home.
- “Letter Sorting Backpack” (See Appendix G)  
Emergent readers are learning to recognize letters of the alphabet (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). Children must be able to quickly attend to the visual features of letters for easy identification (Clay, 1991). This will help them as they begin to read text. The Letter Sorting Backpack encourages children to analyze letters for common characteristics and classify the letters according to specific features (straight lines, curves, etc.). Practice sorting letters will help children learn to successfully identify all letters of the alphabet.
- “Nursery Rhyme Backpack” (See Appendix H)  
Nursery rhymes are favorite poems of young children. Because they contain small amounts of familiar text, nursery rhymes are useful in helping emergent readers develop important concepts about print. Children can use nursery rhymes to develop an understanding of directionality (reading left to right) and 1:1 matching (matching one spoken word to one written word), both important skills for emergent readers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000). In addition to helping emergent readers develop important concepts about print, the Nursery Rhyme Backpack helps children develop a sense of rhyme, which is an important skill in the development of phonemic awareness.

- “Words, Words, Words Backpack” (See Appendix I)  
It is important for emergent readers to develop a core of high frequency words (Fountas & Pinnell, 2000) that they can read and write automatically so they can direct their problem-solving strategies to more difficult words when reading and writing. The Words, Words, Words Backpack helps emergent readers and writers develop their high frequency reading and writing vocabularies.
- “Story Sequencing Backpack” (See Appendix J)  
Many children have been exposed to story sequence through the sharing of storybooks with parents from a young age. Knowledge of story sequence can help emergent readers establish a connection between print and meaning (pictures) which is extremely important in many patterned and predictable books children emergent readers use when first reading text. The Story Sequencing Backpack encourages readers to use information from pictures to help them match print as they read.
- “Storytelling Backpack” (See Appendix K)  
Children’s ability to retell stories is important in determining their understanding of text. Retelling also helps build oral language and story sequencing skills. The Storytelling Backpack includes props to help children retell a favorite story.
- “Wordless Picture Book Backpack” (See Appendix L)  
Opportunities to listen to stories demonstrates how authors use “book language” to tell a story. Children learn how “book language” works through repeated exposure to quality children’s literature. The Wordless Picture Book Backpack invites children to practice using “book language” to tell a story. Knowledge of how stories work helps children construct meaning when interacting with text.
- “Similar Story Backpack” (See Appendix M)  
Good readers make connections between texts that they read in order to aid in their comprehension of text. The Similar Story Backpack provides an opportunity for emergent readers to use their knowledge of stories to make connections between three texts in order to enhance their understanding.
- “Inference Backpack” (See Appendix N)  
Emergent readers need to understand that reading is about making meaning from text. Authors do not always explicitly tell readers what happens in the story. Good readers use prior knowledge and textual cues to predict what happened in the story. The Inference Backpack provides emergent readers with the opportunity to develop this important comprehension strategy with a simple book.

## *Conclusion*

Because children's literacy learning begins at birth, parents are children's first literacy teachers (Clay, 1991; Teale, 1999). Children's home environments can be sources of rich literacy experiences that enable them to see adults using literacy, to interact with adults in literacy settings, and to actively construct literacy knowledge independently (Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

Schools and families are continually searching for ways to bridge learning between home and school. Partnerships that encourage literacy learning at home are especially important for young children. In order to build literacy, parents of emergent readers and writers must have an understanding of the characteristics and literacy behaviors these children exhibit. The literacy backpacks help parents understand the characteristics of emergent readers and writers and help them provide opportunities to engage their children in appropriate activities that support literacy development (Dever, 2001; Dever & Burts, 2002). The creation of literacy backpacks for classroom use reinforces the importance of communication between teachers and parents in order to best support children's literacy learning.

Children come to school with a wide variety of literacy experiences, opportunities, and knowledge. Because of this, there is often a great range of literacy skills children demonstrate within a classroom. Children's literacy knowledge also changes throughout the year, as they connect new literacy learning to the literacy foundation they have built since birth. Because of the diversity in children's literacy development, teachers may want to create backpacks that address literacy learning beyond the emergent stage.

The literacy backpacks designed for this project strive to promote positive attitudes about literacy learning among emergent readers and writers while helping them build literacy skills through the context of authentic, meaningful literacy experiences with adults at home. Literacy backpacks provide opportunities for children to continue to build a solid foundation for a lifetime of literacy learning.

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## Appendix A: Missing Manipulative

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you enjoyed sharing the \_\_\_\_\_ backpack with your child. After looking through the backpack, I noticed \_\_\_\_\_ was missing. Please look for it at home and send it to school with your child as soon as possible so another family may enjoy the backpack.

Thank you,  
Mrs. Logan

## Appendix B: Introduction to Backpacks

Dear Families,

Your child's literacy learning began at birth. Families are very important in building a solid foundation for children's literacy development. Now that your child is in school, your role as a literacy teacher is still vital in your child's continuing literacy development. It is important for children to learn that literacy learning occurs all around them at home and at school. This year you will have an exciting opportunity to actively participate in your child's literacy learning through literacy backpacks.

Literacy backpacks provide opportunities for families to engage in authentic, meaningful literacy experiences at home that have a positive impact on children's literacy development. The literacy backpacks that will be sent home with your child are designed to promote positive attitudes toward literacy while supporting your child's literacy development.

Each literacy backpack contains books to share with your child, a literacy activity with manipulatives for you and your child to do together, and a journal where your family can record your child's literacy learning. Each backpack also contains a family letter that tells you the literacy skill or strategy your child will be working on along with an inventory list to ensure all materials are returned to school. The literacy backpacks will rotate between members of the classroom and will be sent home on **Thursdays**. You may enjoy the books and activity in the backpack until the following **Tuesday**. Please be sure to check the materials against the inventory card before returning the backpack to school so that other children may enjoy its contents.

Please take the time to enjoy the literacy backpacks with your child. The backpacks are designed so that parent participation is essential to your child's success. Please remember that the books in the backpacks vary in difficulty. Your child may find some books and activities more challenging than others. Do not worry if your child needs help reading a book. You may read the book aloud to your child, read the book together, or have your child read it to you. We do all of these types of reading each day in the classroom.

I hope you will join us for our Meet the Teacher night presentation on Tuesday, September 7 at 6:00 PM in our classroom. The literacy backpacks will be on display and we will discuss the benefits of using them at home and the more specific details about the backpack program.

I appreciate your willingness to help your child with reading throughout the school year. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at school at 633-5732. We can work together to develop successful, confident readers who love books. I hope you and your child have a wonderful time reading together!

## Appendix C: Backpack Contract

Dear Families,

During this school year, literacy backpacks will be sent home with your child in order to promote positive literacy experiences with families at home. The backpacks are designed to support your child's continued literacy development while promoting positive attitudes toward literacy. Each backpack will contain some books, an activity to support literacy learning, a response journal, and some additional manipulatives necessary to complete the activity. Activities are best completed when you interact with your child in order to support their literacy learning.

Backpacks will be sent home on Thursdays. Backpacks need to be returned the following Tuesday in the condition that they left the classroom so other families can enjoy them throughout the year. **The student and/or parents will be responsible for replacing damaged or lost items.** Please sign the contract below and return the bottom portion to school.

Have fun and enjoy the literacy backpacks!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Logan

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### Backpack Contract

I will support my child's literacy development by participating in the literacy backpack program. My child will return all backpacks to the classroom in the condition it was given to him/her. I understand that I am responsible for replacing all broken and/or lost manipulatives or books not returned.

---

Parent Signature

---

Date



## Appendix E: Environmental Print Backpack

### *Purpose*

The environmental print backpack helps emergent readers understand that print contains meaning. Children look for print they can read in their surrounding environment and practice reading print in their home and neighborhood around them.

### *Materials*

- *I Can Read* by Rozanne Lanczak-Williams
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Magazines
- Pencil
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Environmental Print journal

Dear Family,

Environmental print includes familiar signs and labels all around us. Young children can often read signs found in the physical environment around them. These signs can include: street signs, billboards, building signs and labels on common household products. Environmental print helps emergent readers begin to understand that print contains meaning. Please follow the steps below to help your child discover environmental print in his/her surroundings.

1. Read *I Can Read*.
2. Take a walk through your neighborhood or look around your home for environmental print your child can read.
3. Look through magazines, newspapers or cupboards and cut out examples of environmental print you can read.
4. Glue the examples on a new journal page.
5. Look through the journal and read other children's examples. How many can you read?
6. Be on the lookout in the places you go for new things you can read.

You are a great reader! Please return the Environmental Print backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another reader can enjoy it.

Estimada Familia,

La impresión ambiental incluye los signos familiares y marca por todas partes nosotros. Los niños jóvenes a menudo pueden leer los signos encontrados en el ambiente físico alrededor de ellos. Estos signos pueden incluir: los signos de la calle, las carteleras, construyendo los signos y las etiquetas en productos comunes de casa. La impresión ambiental ayuda a lectores emergentes comienzan a entender que esa impresión contiene el significado. Siga por favor los pasos debajo de ayudar a su niño descubre la impresión ambiental en sus alrededores.

1. Lea *Puedo Leer*.
2. Tome un camino a través su vecindario o la mirada alrededor de su hogar para la impresión ambiental que su niño puede leer.
3. La mirada por revistas, los periódicos o las alacenas y recortó los ejemplos de la impresión ambiental que usted puede leer.
4. Pegue los ejemplos en una página nueva de diario.
5. Examine el diario y leyó a otros niños' los ejemplos.  
¿Cuántos usted puede leer?
6. Esté en el mirador en los lugares que usted va para las cosas nuevas que usted puede leer.

¡Usted es un gran lector! Vuelva por favor la muchila Ambiental de la Impresión en \_\_\_\_\_ tan otro lector lo puede gozar.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Glue examples of environmental print in the space below. Have fun reading!

## Appendix F: Label Your Home Backpack

### *Purpose*

The Label Your Home backpack encourages readers to label common objects around their house. This labeling helps emergent readers connect print with meaning. After objects are labeled, children are encouraged to walk around their home and read the labels they created.

### *Materials*

- *My House Mi Casa: A Book in Two Languages* by Rebecca Emberley
- *My First Word Book* by Jeni Riley
- *Mi Primer Libro de Palabras* by Jeni Riley
- Sentence strips
- Marker
- Scissors
- Masking Tape
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Label Your Home journal

Dear Family,

We have labeled important objects in our classroom. We can read these labels as we look around our classroom. These labels help emergent readers connect print with meaning. At school, we have labeled objects such as the door, tables, and the computer. You can label important objects in your house too. Please complete the following activities at home.

1. Read *My House Mi Casa*.
2. Look around your bedroom or home for important objects to label.
3. Write the name of the object on a sentence strip.
4. Tape the label to the object. (Note: The masking tape will not leave a mark on walls or furniture and can be easily removed.)
5. Now walk around your house and read the labels.
6. On the journal page, draw a picture of three or more things you labeled in your house. Don't forget to label your picture.
7. Read *My First Word Book* for fun with your family.

Please return the backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so someone else can make labels for their home.

Estimada Familia,

Hemos marcado objetos importantes en nuestra aula. Podemos leer estas etiquetas como nosotros echamos una mirada alrededor nuestra aula. Estas etiquetas ayudarán a lectores conectan la impresión con el significado. En la escuela, nosotros hemos marcado objetos tales como la puerta, pospone, y la computadora. Usted puede marcar objetos importantes en su casa también. Complete por favor las actividades siguientes en casa.

1. Lea *My House Mi Casa*.
2. Eche una mirada alrededor su dormitorio o en casa para objetos importantes marcar.
3. Escriba el nombre del objeto en una tira de la oración.
4. Grabe la etiqueta al objeto. (Nota: La cinta que enmascara no saldrá una marca en paredes ni muebles y se puede quitar fácilmente.)
5. Ahora caminata alrededor de su casa y leyó las etiquetas.
6. En la página de diario, dibuje un retrato de tres o más cosas que usted marcó en su casa.
7. Lea *Mi Primer Libro de Palabras* con su familia.

Vuelva por favor la muchila en \_\_\_\_\_ tan otra persona puede hacer etiquetas para su hogar.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Draw and label pictures of some things you labeled in your house. Practice reading the labels around your house and on this page.

## Appendix G: Letter Sorting Backpack

### *Purpose*

The Letter Sorting backpack helps emergent readers identify letters of the alphabet. Children will analyze the letters for common characteristics. This will help emergent readers attend to the features of individual letters so they can identify all of the letters of the alphabet.

### *Materials*

- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault
- *26 Letters and 99 Cents* by Tana Hoban
- Magnetic letters
- Letter sorting cards in English
- Letter sorting cards in Spanish
- Pencil
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Letter Sorting journal

Dear Family,

We have been learning about letters. It is fun to work with letters of the alphabet. Did you know that some letters are similar? For example, some letters are made of straight lines, some are made of curved lines, and some are made of straight and curved lines. Today you are going to look at the letters of the alphabet and sort them into groups. Please complete the following activities at home.

1. Read *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*
2. Put the magnetic letters in ABC order.
3. Take out the letter sorting cards. Choose at least two cards and find letters that match that rule.
4. How many different ways can you sort the letters? Do some letters belong in more than one group?
5. In the journal write down two of the ways you sorted the letters. Don't forget to write what letters you included in that group!
6. Read *26 Letters and 99 Cents* for fun with your family.

Please return the Letter Sorting backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ . Enjoy sorting the letters!

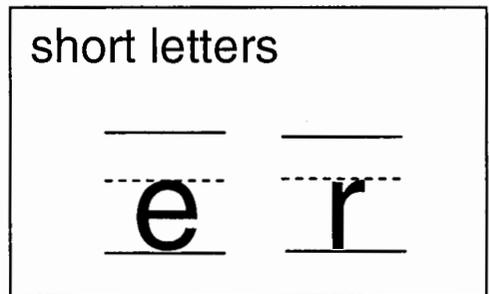
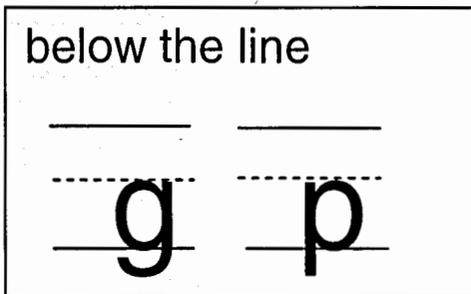
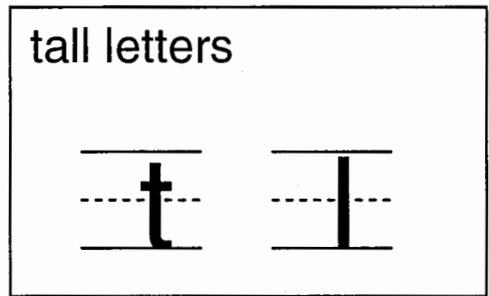
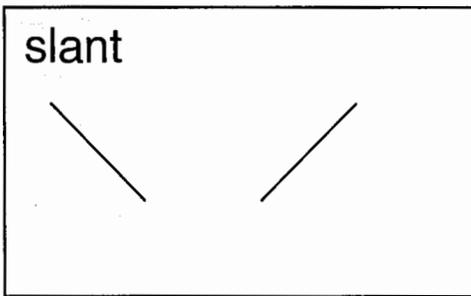
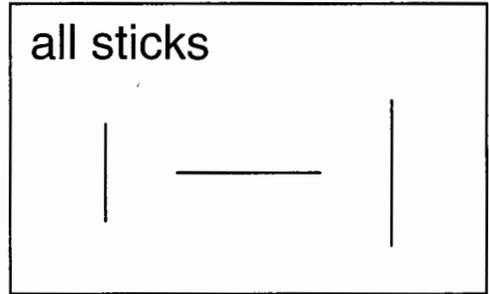
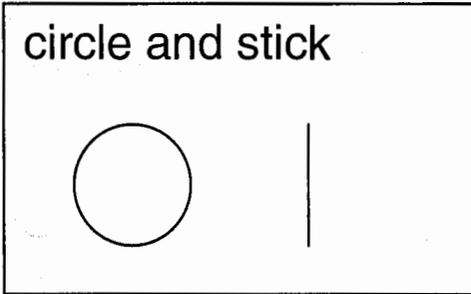
Estimada Familia,

Nosotros hemos estado aprendiendo acerca de letras. Es divertido trabajar con letras del alfabeto. ¿Supo usted que algunas cartas son semejantes? Por ejemplo, algunas cartas están hecho de líneas rectas, algunos están hecho de líneas curvas, y algunos están hecho de líneas rectas y curvas. Hoy usted mirará las letras del alfabeto y los clasifica en grupos. Complete por favor las actividades siguientes en casa.

1. Lea *el Estampido del Estampido de Chicka Chicka*.
2. Ponga las letras magnéticas en la orden de ABC.
3. Saque las tarjetas que clasifica tarjetas. Escoja por lo menos dos tarjetas y encuentre que letras que emparejan que gobiernan.
4. ¿Cuántas maneras diferentes puede clasificar usted las letras? ¿Pertenece algunas letras en más de un grupo?
5. En el diario anota dos de las maneras usted clasificó las letras. ¡Póngase'T se olvida de escribir qué letras que usted incluyó en ese grupo!
6. Lea *26 Letras y 99 Centavos* juntos con su familia.

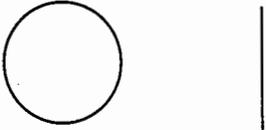
Vuelva por favor la muchila del Tipo de Letras en \_\_\_\_\_ . ¡Goce clasificar las Letras!

# Letter Sort Cards

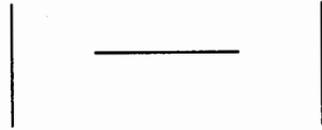


## Tarjetas de letras para clasificar

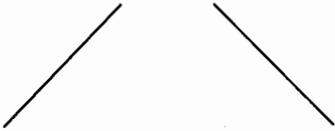
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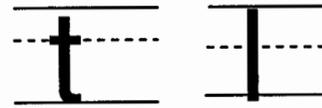
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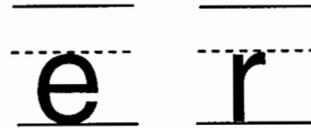
letras altas



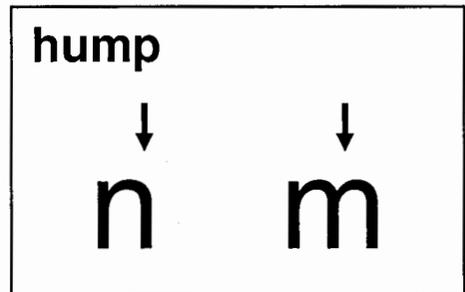
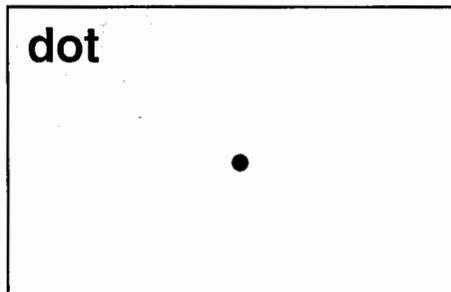
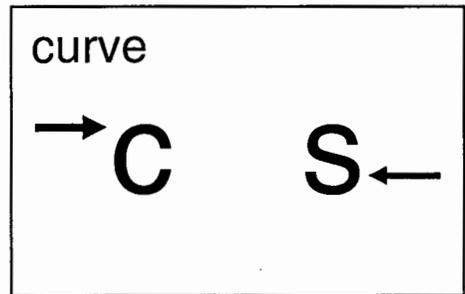
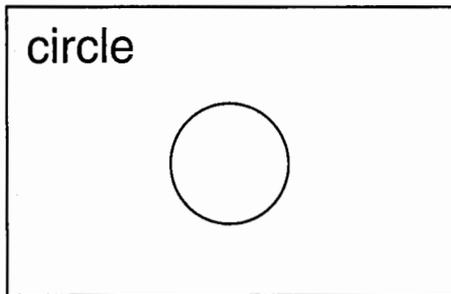
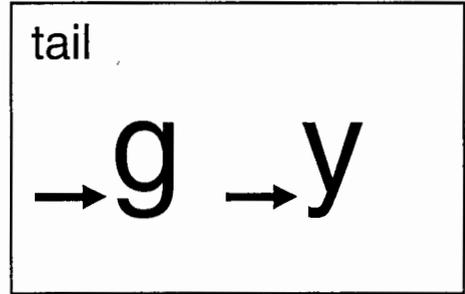
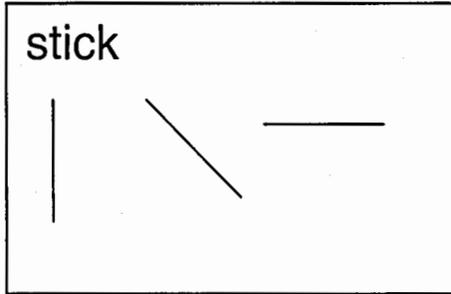
abajo de la linea



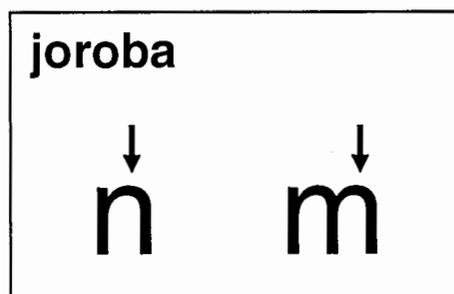
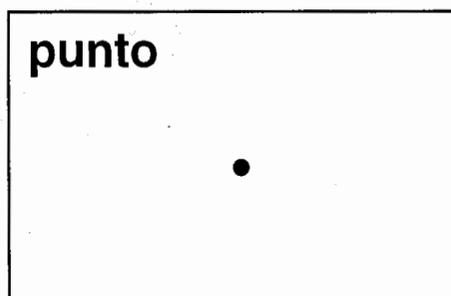
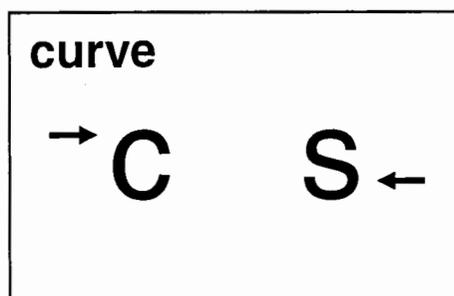
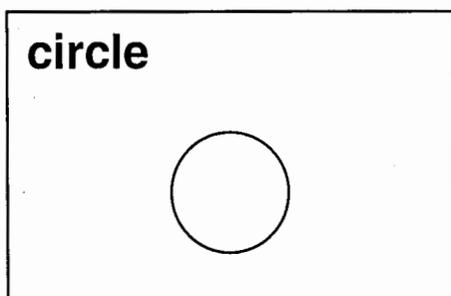
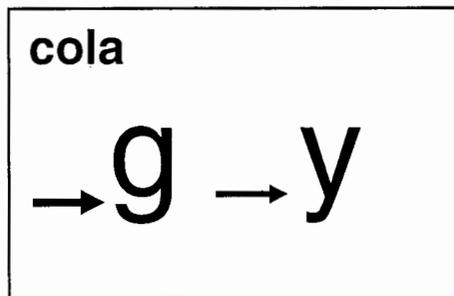
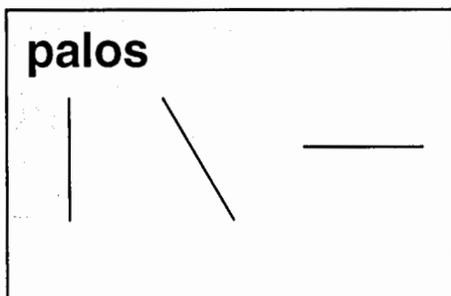
letras bajas



# Letter Sort Cards



# Tarjetas de letras para clasificar



Name \_\_\_\_\_

How did you sort the letters? Glue two small letter sort cards and write the letters that fit into each group below the card.

## Appendix H: Nursery Rhyme Backpack

### *Purpose*

Nursery rhymes are among the favorite poems of young children. Children can learn a lot about how print carries a message from reading nursery rhymes. They can also learn about rhyming words. The activities in this backpack help children track print using a familiar text. The activities also help children identify rhyming words and develop an understanding of the meaning of rhyme.

### *Materials*

- *The Lucy Cousins Book of Nursery Rhymes* by Lucy Cousins
- *Each Peach Pear Plum* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- Poems in bags
- Wikki sticks
- Crayons
- Pencil
- Glue
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Nursery Rhyme Journal

Dear Family,

Nursery rhymes are a great way for children to read and enjoy familiar text. Which nursery rhymes can your child recite? Which nursery rhymes are your child's favorites? Please complete the following nursery rhyme activities.

1. Read *The Lucy Cousins Book of Nursery Rhymes*.
2. Choose a nursery rhyme packet.
3. Read the rhyme in the packet.
4. Can you find words that rhyme in the poem? Use wikki sticks to make circles around the rhyming words in the poem.
5. Use the sentence strips to put the poem in order. Read and recite the poem again.
6. Do another nursery rhyme pack if you wish.
7. Glue your favorite poem (in small print) in the journal and create an illustration to go with it.
8. Read *Each Peach Pear Plum*. Have fun looking for the nursery rhyme characters.

Please return the backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another child can enjoy reading favorite nursery rhymes.

## **Humpty Dumpty**

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king's horses,  
And all the king's men,  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

## **Humpty Dumpty**

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the king's horses,  
And all the king's men,  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

## **Little Miss Muffet**

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey.  
There came a big spider,  
He sat down beside her.  
And frightened Miss Muffet away!

## **Little Miss Muffet**

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey.  
There came a big spider,  
He sat down beside her.  
And frightened Miss Muffet away!

## **Jack and Jill**

Jack and Jill went up a hill,  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.

## **Jack and Jill**

Jack and Jill went up a hill,  
To fetch a pail of water.  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.

## **Twinkle Twinkle**

Twinkle, Twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.

## **Twinkle Twinkle**

Twinkle, Twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Glue a small copy of your favorite poem below. Illustrate the poem. Practice reading the poem with your family.

## Appendix I: Words, Words, Words Backpack

### *Purpose*

It is important for emergent readers to develop a core of high frequency words they can spell conventionally. The Words, Words, Words Backpack encourages writers to make words using magnetic letters to help them develop a writing vocabulary.

### *Materials*

- *Alphabet Soup* by Kate Banks
- Magnetic letters
- Pencil
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Writing Words journal

Dear Family,

It is fun to write words! We know that words are made up of letters and that we can write many short words the way adults do. Please share the story in the backpack and complete the following activities.

1. Read the *Alphabet Soup* book.
2. Put the magnetic letters in ABC order.
3. Spell your name with the magnetic letters.
4. See if you can spell the names of the people in your family.
5. Use the letters from your name and/or your family's names to make other words you know how to write.
6. Write the words you made in the journal. Read the words you wrote.
7. Look through the journal and see if you can read some of the words the other boys and girls wrote.

Making words with letters is fun! Please return the Words, Words, Words backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another student can practice writing words!

Estimada Familia,

¡Es divertido escribir palabras! Sabemos que palabras son compuestas de cartas y que podemos escribir muchas palabras cortas los adultos de la manera hacen. Comparta por favor el cuento en la muchila y complete las actividades siguientes.

1. Leyó el libro de *Sopa de Alfabeto*.
2. Puso las cartas magnéticas en la orden de ABC.
3. Deletrea su nombre con las cartas magnéticas.
4. Ve si usted puede deletrear los nombres de las personas en su familia.
5. ¿Cuántas otras palabras que usted puede hacer con las cartas magnéticas?
6. Escribe las palabras que usted hizo en el diario.
7. Leyó las palabras que usted escribió.
8. la Mirada por el diario y ve si usted puede leer algunos de las palabras los otros chicos y las chicas escribieron.

¡Hacer palabras con cartas son divertidas! ¡Vuelva por favor las Palabras, Palabras, Palabras acen camping en \_\_\_\_\_ tan otro estudiante puede practicar palabras de escritura!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Write the words you made with the magnetic letters. How many words did you write?

I wrote \_\_\_\_\_ words.

## Appendix J: Story Sequencing Backpack

### *Purpose*

It is important for readers to be thinking about what will happen next in the story. Emergent readers need to predict the sequence of the story and check to see if the print matches the pictures as they read.

### *Materials*

- *My Accident* by Jenny Giles
- *Under the Sky* by Rozanne Lanczak-Williams
- Story cards (pictures and sentence strips)
- Family letter
- Sequencing Journal

Dear Family,

Good readers are always thinking about what will happen next in the story. Emergent readers need to predict the story sequence and then check to see if the print matches the pictures as they read. In your backpack tonight you will practice these important skills.

1. Get out the story cards from *My Accident*. Read the story cards with your family. Be sure to track the print with your finger.
2. Match the picture cards to the text.
3. Reread the story to see if it makes sense and if the picture and story cards match.
4. Look carefully at the last page of the book. In the sequencing journal, draw a picture of what you think will happen next. Write a sentence that would go along with the pattern of the text.
5. Read *Under the Sky* with your family for fun. Practice sequencing and matching the print to the pictures.

You are a great reader! Bring back the Sequencing Backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another reader can enjoy it.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think happens next in the story? Write a sentence and draw a picture showing what will happen.

## Appendix K: Storytelling Backpack

### *Purpose*

Retelling stories helps children improve their oral language and story sequencing skills. The activity in this backpack will help children practice retelling a familiar and much loved story.

### *Materials*

- *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly* by Simms Taback
- Cassette tape of the story
- Storytelling apron
- Felt animal pieces
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Storytelling journal

Dear Family,

When children retell stories, it helps improve their oral language and story sequencing skills. Tonight your child has brought home a book to practice these retelling skills. Please follow the steps below to help your child develop retelling skills.

1. Read *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*.
2. Put on the storytelling apron and arrange the felt pieces in order. See if you can do it without looking in the book!
3. Retell the story. Put the pieces on the apron as you are retelling. Use expression in your voice and act it out too!
4. What else could the old lady swallow? Write about it in the journal and illustrate your page.
5. Listen to the tape and enjoy hearing the story again!

Please return the storytelling backpack on \_\_\_\_\_.  
Please make sure all the pieces are in the bag. Thank you!

Estimada Familia,

Cuándo niños cuentan de nuevo los cuentos, ayudan a mejorar su idioma oral y las habilidades de secuencia de cuento. Esta noche su niño ha traído en casa un libro para practicar estas habilidades de nueva versión. Siga por favor los pasos debajo de ayudar a su niño desarrolla contando de nuevo las habilidades.

1. Lea *Allí Era una Vieja Dama Que Tragó una Mosca*.
2. Ponga el delantal de narrativa y arregle el sentía los pedazos en la orden. ¡Vea si usted lo puede hacer sin mirar en el libro!
3. Cuente de nuevo el cuento. Ponga los pedazos en el delantal como usted cuenta de nuevo. ¡Utilice la expresión en su voz y lo actúa fuera también!
4. ¿Qué puede más la dama vieja traga? Escriba acerca de lo en el diario e ilustre su página.
5. ¡Escuche la cinta y goce oyendo el cuento otra vez!

Vuelva por favor la muchila de narrativa en \_\_\_\_\_.  
Cerciórese por favor todos los pedazos están en la bolsa.  
¡Gracias!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What else could the old lady swallow?

Draw a picture and write a sentence about your picture.

## Appendix L: Wordless Picture Book Backpack

### *Purpose*

Wordless picture books improve children's oral language and storytelling skills. Children can begin to develop an understanding of story structure and begin to use the same language that authors use in books when they focus on making meaning out of illustrations. The purpose of the wordless picture book backpack is to help children make meaning out of narrative pictures and to develop a sense of "book talk."

### *Materials*

- *Good Dog, Carl* by Alexandra Day
- *Carl's Afternoon in the Park* by Alexandra Day
- *Carlito En El Parque Una Tarde* by Alexandra Day
- Crayons
- Pencil
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Wordless Picture Book journal

Dear Family,

Authors use special language when they write their books. Children learn how book language works through repeated exposure to quality children's literature. Wordless picture books help children develop this book language by inviting readers to tell the story like an author would. In this backpack, you and your child will "read" a wordless picture book. Please complete the following activities at home with your child.

1. Look at the book *Good Dog, Carl*.
2. When the author stops using words to tell the story, the reader can begin telling the story. Have mom or dad model telling the story for a few pages.
3. Invite your child to join in and tell the story using the pictures.
4. Choose a favorite picture from the story. Draw that picture in the journal and write the text that would accompany the picture if you were the author.
5. Practice telling a new story by "reading" the book *Carl's Afternoon in the Park*.

Telling stories is fun! Please return the Wordless Picture Book backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another child can become an author!

Estimada Familia,

Los autores utilizan el idioma especial cuando ellos escriben sus libros. Los niños aprenden cómo trabajo de idioma de libro por la exposición repetida a niños de calidad la literatura de s. Los libros ilustrados mudos ayudan a niños desarrollan este idioma del libro invitando a lectores para decir el cuento como un autor hace. En esta muchila, usted y su niño hacen “leyó” un libro ilustrado mudo. Complete por favor las actividades siguientes en casa con su niño.

1. Mira el libro *Perro Bueno, Carl*.
2. Cuando las paradas de autor que utilizan palabras para decir el cuento, el lector puede empezar decir el cuento. Tenga el modelo de mamá o a papá que dice el cuento para unas pocas páginas.
3. Invita a su niño a unir en y para decir el cuento que utiliza los retratos.
4. Escoge un retrato favorito del cuento. Dibuje ese retrato en el diario y escriba el texto que acompañaría el retrato si usted era el autor.
5. la Práctica que dice un cuento nuevo por mirar el libro *Carlito En El Parque Una Tarde*.

¡Decir los cuentos son divertidos! ¡Vuelva por favor la muchila Muda de Libro Ilustrado en \_\_\_\_\_ tan otro niño puede llegar a ser un autor!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Illustrate your favorite part of the book.  
Write what the text would say if you were  
the author.

## Appendix M: Similar Story Backpack

### *Purpose*

It is important for emergent readers to begin to make connections between texts they read. Making text-to-text connections helps readers make predictions and thus enhances their understanding of the stories they read.

### *Materials*

- *No, David* (English and Spanish versions) by David Shannon
- *David Gets in Trouble* by David Shannon
- *David se mete en lios* by David Shannon
- *David Goes To School* by David Shannon
- *David va al colegio* by David Shannon
- Venn Diagram loops
- Text description cards
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Similar Story journal

Dear Family,

Have you ever noticed some stories are similar? Some stories have the same characters and some stories have similar events. Tonight you will compare two stories about one of our favorite book characters, David. Think about how the stories are the same and how they are different. Please complete the following activities together:

1. Read *No, David* and *David Gets in Trouble*.
2. Set up the circles so they intersect in the middle.
3. Put the word cards in the place they belong in the loops. For example, put the “David” card in the middle of the loops since he is in both stories. Put the “David overflows the bathtub.” card in one of the outside circles since that only happens in one story.
4. Draw a picture of something similar that happened in both stories in the journal. Write a sentence telling what happened.
5. Read *David Goes to School* for fun with your family.

It’s fun to read similar but different books! Please return the Similar Story backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so someone else can enjoy reading about David too!

Estimada Familia,

Usted ha advertido jamás que algunos cuentos son semejantes? Algunos cuentos tienen los mismos caracteres y algunos cuentos tienen los acontecimientos semejantes. Esta noche usted comparará dos cuentos acerca de uno de nuestros caracteres favoritos del libro, David. Piense acerca de cómo los cuentos son el mismo y cómo ellos son diferentes. Complete por favor las actividades siguientes juntos:

1. Lea *No, David* y *David se mete en lios*.
2. Establezca los círculos tan ellos se cruzan en el centro.
3. Ponga las tarjetas de palabra en el lugar que ellos pertenecen en los lazos. Por ejemplo, puso el "David" tarjeta en medio de los lazos desde que él está en ambos cuentos. Ponga el "David se derrama la tarjeta de bañera." en uno de los círculos del exterior desde que eso sólo sucede en un cuento.
4. Dibuje un retrato de algo semejante que sucedió en ambos cuentos en el diario. Escriba una oración que dice lo que sucedió.
5. Lee *David va al colegio* con su familia.

¡'La diversión de s para leer los libros semejantes pero diferentes!  
 ¡Vuelva por favor la muchila Semejante del Cuento en  
 \_\_\_\_\_ tan otra persona puede gozar la lectura acerca de  
 David también!

*No, David!*

*David Gets in Trouble*

David overflows the bathtub.

David makes a funny face for the class

David picks his nose.

David says his dog ate his homework.

David gets sent to his room.

David eats dog food.

David jumps on his bed.

David spills juice on the carpet.

*Both David Stories*

David leaves the house without pants.

David breaks something while playing baseball.

"I love you!"

David has bad table manners.

*No, David!*

*David se mete en lios*

David se derrama la  
bañera.

David hace una cara  
chistosa para el retrato  
de la clase.

David escoge la nariz.

David dice que su perro  
comió sus deberes.

David obtiene mandado  
a su cuarto.

David come alimento de  
perro.

David salta en su cama.

David come alimento de  
perro.

*Ambos Cuentos de  
David*

David sale la casa sin  
sus pantalones.

David rompe algo al  
jugar el béisbol.

¡Te quiero!

David tiene las maneras  
malas de mesa.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

How are the stories about David similar?  
Draw a picture comparing two events from  
the stories.

## Appendix N: Inference Backpack

### *Purpose*

Emergent readers need to understand that reading is about creating meaning from text. Sometimes, the text does not explicitly state what happens in the story. The reader must use prior knowledge and textual cues in order to draw conclusions and form an interpretation of the text.

### *Materials*

- *The Cave* by Carol Krueger
- Crayons
- Pencil
- Family letter in English
- Family letter in Spanish
- Inference journal

Dear Family,

Good readers understand that making meaning out of text is a very important part of reading. Sometimes, the text does not explicitly state what happens in the story. The reader has to use story clues and prior knowledge to make meaning out of the text. This is called making an inference. In tonight's story, the author leaves it up to the reader to decide what happens inside the cave. Please complete the following activities with your child.

1. Read *The Cave*.
2. Why do you think the animals ran out of the cave?  
How do you know?
3. In the journal, draw a picture and write a sentence describing what you think happened in the cave when the skunk entered.
4. Read one of the other stories and see if you can figure out what happens when the author doesn't tell you in the words of the story.

It is interesting to think about what happens in a story when the author doesn't tell us. Please return the Inference Backpack on \_\_\_\_\_ so another child can practice making inferences!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What happened in the cave when the skunk went inside? Draw a picture and write a sentence describing what happened when the skunk entered the cave.