

Launching Literacy Toolkit



Product code: P1458

Boost young children's language and literacy learning with engaging activities you can use throughout the preschool day. The Launching Literacy Toolkit gives teachers the tools they need to support children's emergent literacy skills — from alphabetic knowledge and letter-recognition to reading and writing. With this easy-to-use classroom toolbox, even transition times and mealtime table talk become playful language- and literacy-rich learning opportunities.

This toolkit includes:

- Large Alphabet Chart (22" x 34")
- Small Alphabet Chart (8 ½" x 11" reproducible sheet)
- Alphabet Cards (1 set)
- 20 Mealtime Conversation Cards
- 40 Small Moments Cards
- 20 Message Board Activities

USING A MESSAGE BOARD



Ready for School Since 1970

Using the Message Board

Reading a daily message board at greeting time (or circle time) is an interactive way to share information with preschool children about the upcoming day, while introducing them to the function of pictures, symbols, and words. Messages help children begin to acquire concepts about print while simultaneously developing their reading, writing, and communication skills.

Early childhood educators can use these cards to communicate with children about a range of topics — from changes in the day’s usual routine to the addition of new materials to the classroom. Teachers can also use the message board to initiate discussions or problem solving related to classroom situations (e.g., a new classroom pet, missing toys).

The 20 message board activities in this booklet offer specific examples of messages teachers might replicate in their classrooms.

Each message board activity includes the following elements:

- **A Message** — a hand-drawn example for teachers to replicate or adapt for their children’s needs
- **Purpose** — a brief explanation of how the message is used
- **Literacy Focus** — the relevant content areas addressed in the message
- **Preparation** — suggestions for how to set up the message clearly
- **Reading the message board with children** — strategies for conversing with children about the message





PURPOSE

Every classroom has typical activities and consistent expectations that children learn and anticipate each day. Sometimes there are special events, new toys, and changes in the routine that affect what children typically anticipate and do. When children know about these changes, they can respond to and act on that new information. Reading a daily message board with children at greeting time (circle time) is an interactive way to share this information with them. The message board also gives children an opportunity to practice reading and writing drawings, symbols, and words with a teacher's guidance.

COMMON MESSAGES

- **Who's not here?** When children know a classmate or teacher is absent, they talk about that person's well-being and learn that others will miss them when they're absent. This information also helps children plan whom they will play with and think about who will care for them when a familiar adult is absent.
- **New materials.** Messages that let children know there are new materials available help them make informed plans. Teachers can share information about the materials or ask children for ideas about how to use them.



MESSAGE BOARD

Who's Not Here Today? Introducing the "No" Symbol

PURPOSE

Use this message to inform children that someone will be absent.

LITERACY FOCUS

Reading symbols and words

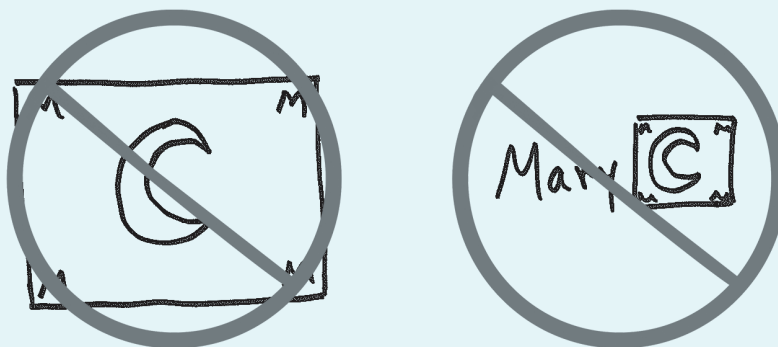
PREPARATION

1. Write the name and draw the personal symbol of the child or adult who will be absent. (Use photos if you do not use symbols.)
2. Number the message and cover it with a piece of paper. Reveal the message in the appropriate sequence at message board time.
3. Have a marker available. [Note: Later in the year, include the symbol on the prepared message or invite a child to add the "no" symbol when you read the message.]

READING THE MESSAGE BOARD WITH CHILDREN

- Point to the picture. Say something like *I see somebody's symbol on the message board. I'm thinking this message is about somebody in our classroom. Do you know?* Acknowledge children's responses and confirm their answer.
- Draw the "no" symbol over the symbol of the person who is absent. Say *I drew another symbol over Mary's symbol. What do you think the message means now?*
- Introduce the "no" symbol. You might say, *A circle with a diagonal line through it is called the "no" symbol. What do you think it means when the "no" symbol is over Mary's symbol?*
- Acknowledge children's responses and restate what the "no" symbol means.

MESSAGE BOARD EXAMPLE





MESSAGE BOARD

Introducing New Materials: Fill in the Area Name

PURPOSE

Use this message to introduce a new material to the classroom so children know where to find it.

LITERACY FOCUS

Alphabetic knowledge;
Reading symbols and words

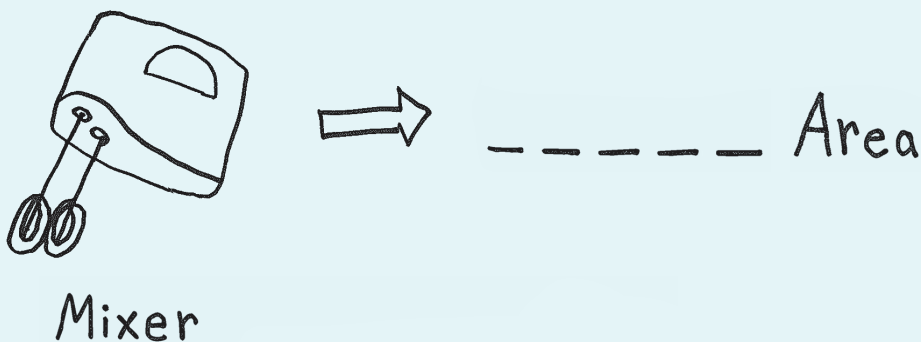
PREPARATION

1. Put a representation of the new material on the message board (a drawing, picture, or actual item taped to the board) and write its name under the image/item.
2. Draw an arrow pointing to the blank lines that represent the missing letters of the interest area name.
3. Number the message and cover it with a sheet of paper so you are ready to reveal it at the appropriate time.

READING THE MESSAGE BOARD WITH CHILDREN

- Draw children's attention to the message. Ask what they think it might be about.
- Call attention to the word(s) that describes the new material (e.g., *This word starts with the /m/ sound. What might it say?*).
- Call attention to the blank lines that represent the missing letters of the interest area name.
- Help children figure out the letters that complete the name. If they don't guess correctly, provide clues (e.g., write or make the sound of the initial letter).
- Ask a child to write in the letters and/or add the area symbol.
- Remind children that they can make a plan to use the new material at work/choice time.

MESSAGE BOARD EXAMPLE





SMALL
MOMENTS

Small Moments Cards

Small moments are exactly that — brief periods between activities (e.g., moving from snack-time to large-group time) or short waiting times between parts of the day (e.g., lining up to go outside).

These 40 Small Moments cards provide teachers with short activities to build children's language and literacy skills during those in-between times as they transition from one part of the day to the next.

For these times of day, here are some ideas to make those minutes translate into literacy learning opportunities!

The cards are divided into two categories:



Transitions



Wait Times



Move Like a Storybook Character

Give clues to the identity of a familiar storybook character (e.g., the colorful fish in *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister) to help children move to the next activity. For example:

Teacher: *I'm thinking about a character in a book we've read who has shiny scales. Who is it?*

Children: *It's Rainbow Fish!*

Teacher: *Yes! Let's move to small-group time like Rainbow Fish.*



What Rhymes With...?

Give a common word ending, such as *-ock*.

Ask children to think of as many words as they can that have that ending (e.g., *clock, block, sock, dock, trock*); accept made-up words.

Other common word endings for this rhyming game include *-ick, -at, -ide, -ake, and -ill*.



MEALTIME
CONVERSATIONS

Mealtime Conversation Cards

Mealtimes are an important part of the daily routine in early childhood programs. In full-time programs, children and adults share several mealtimes, including breakfast, lunch, and snacktimes; most part-time programs have one 15- to 20-minute snacktime.

The emphasis during mealtimes is on social interaction. It is important for adults to sit down and eat family style, creating a familiar situation as well as an opportunity to share relaxed conversation with children and support their ideas.

Using the Mealtime Conversation Cards

Each of the 20 Mealtime Conversation cards provides you with a different idea for conversing with children during mealtimes.

Many of the cards also list vocabulary words related to the conversation idea; you might want to incorporate these words and their child-friendly definitions* into your conversations.

Once you've tried out these mealtime conversation starters, you may want to create your own variations.

*Sources consulted for these definitions include *Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary* (learnersdictionary.com) and *Wordsmyth* (kids.wordsmyth.net/we).

My Family

During mealtime, converse with the children about who is in their family. Start with a photo or a statement about your own family or offer an open-ended prompt as illustrated in the following examples:

- *Tell me about the people in your family.*
- *Here is my family (show photo). I have two siblings; siblings is another word for brothers and sisters. I have a sister and a brother who are older than me.*
- *I have lots of relatives — aunts and cousins and grandparents. I call my grandmother Oma.*

Vocabulary Words

adult: a grown-up

relative: a family member

sibling: a brother or a sister

ALPHABET CARDS

HighScope Alphabet Cards

Young children develop alphabetic knowledge by building two important skills: letter recognition and an awareness of letter-sound connections. In preschool classrooms, this is best accomplished in the context of children's play and meaningful and authentic reading and writing activities.

The 26 images of the HighScope Alphabet Cards are designed to spark children's imagination and sense of play as children engage in learning letters and letter sounds — skills that lay the foundation for later literacy and speaking skills.

Suggestions on How to Use the Alphabet Cards

- Hang a set of Alphabet Cards near each small-group table so children can refer to them during writing activities.
- Model how to use the Alphabet Cards as a reference (e.g., look for a specific letter during a shared reading or writing activity).
- Place a couple sets of the Alphabet Cards in the toy or writing area for children to manipulate and match.
- Use two sets of the Alphabet Cards to play “concentration” or another memory/matching game.

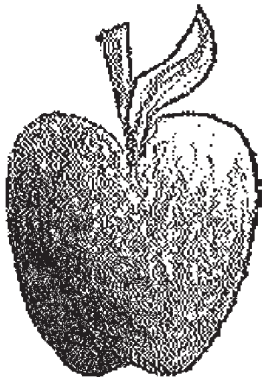
Adult-Initiated Activities Using the Alphabet Cards

- Ask children to transition when you hold up the first letter of their name.
- Play guessing games. You might say, for example, *This letter makes the /b/ sound* or *This is the first letter in Melodie's name*.
- Give each child several Alphabet Cards and go on a letter hunt around the classroom or neighborhood.

A

d

A a





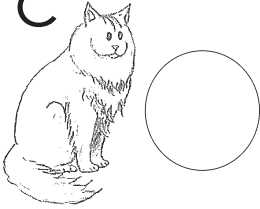

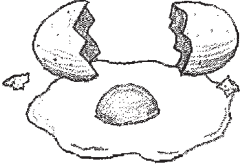
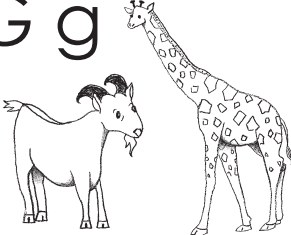
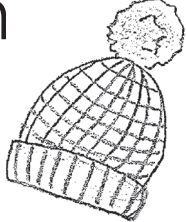
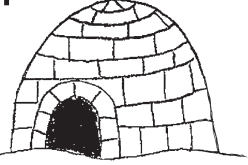
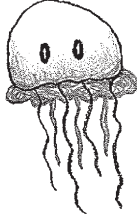
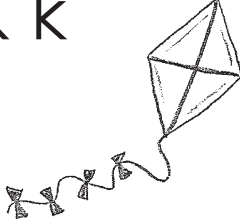
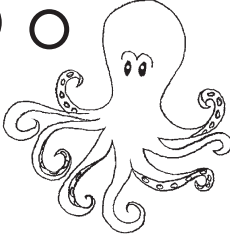
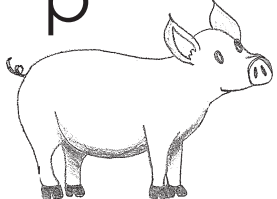
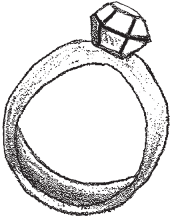
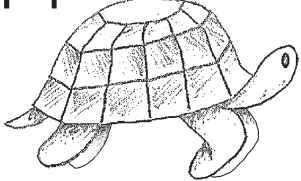
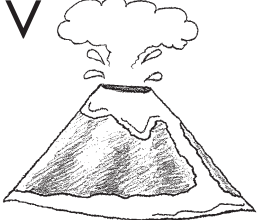
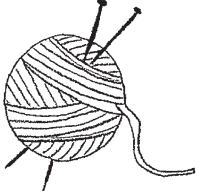
Using the HighScope Alphabet Chart

Young children develop alphabetic knowledge by building two important skills: letter recognition and an awareness of letter-sound connections. In preschool classrooms, this is best accomplished in the context of children’s play and meaningful and authentic reading and writing activities. The 26 images of the new HighScope Alphabet Chart evoke a sense of imagination and play as they engage children in learning letters and letter sounds, laying the foundation for later literacy and speaking skills.

How to support children’s alphabet learning:

- Place the 24" × 32" high-quality HighScope Alphabet Chart at children’s eye level as a useful visual tool they can reference as they expand their alphabetic knowledge. The black-and-white print helps to focus children’s attention on the chart as a tool rather than as a decorative poster.
- Post the HighScope Alphabet Chart in an area where conversations and literacy activities often occur. Refer to the chart yourself to model how to use it as a tool to aid reading and writing. For example, you may refer to the alphabet chart as you and the children read or compose messages at greeting time.
- Photocopy the smaller alphabet charts (8 ½" × 11" version), and make them available to children for literacy-related activities. For example, you might provide children with copies of the chart to use at their tables during a literacy-focused small-group time or to carry on a neighborhood letter hunt.
- Give children a copy of the 8 ½" × 11" HighScope Alphabet Chart so they can bring one home to share with their families.
- Use opportunities to explicitly name letters and connect letters to their sounds within the context of children’s play and through adult-initiated activities.
- Since it is typically easier for children to recognize the beginning sounds in words, make connections between the illustrations and the initial sounds of the words they represent.



A a 	B b 	C c 	D d 
E e 	F f 	G g 	H h 
I i 	J j 	K k 	L l 
M m 	N n 	O o 	P p 
Q q 	R r 	S s 	T t 
U u 	V v 	W w 	X x 
	Y y 	Z z 	