

Talking is Teaching™

Family Moments: Talking, Reading, and Singing Together

 Community
Provider Guide



A creation of

sesameworkshop

The nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street and so much more.

Produced in collaboration with



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KAISER PERMANENTE 

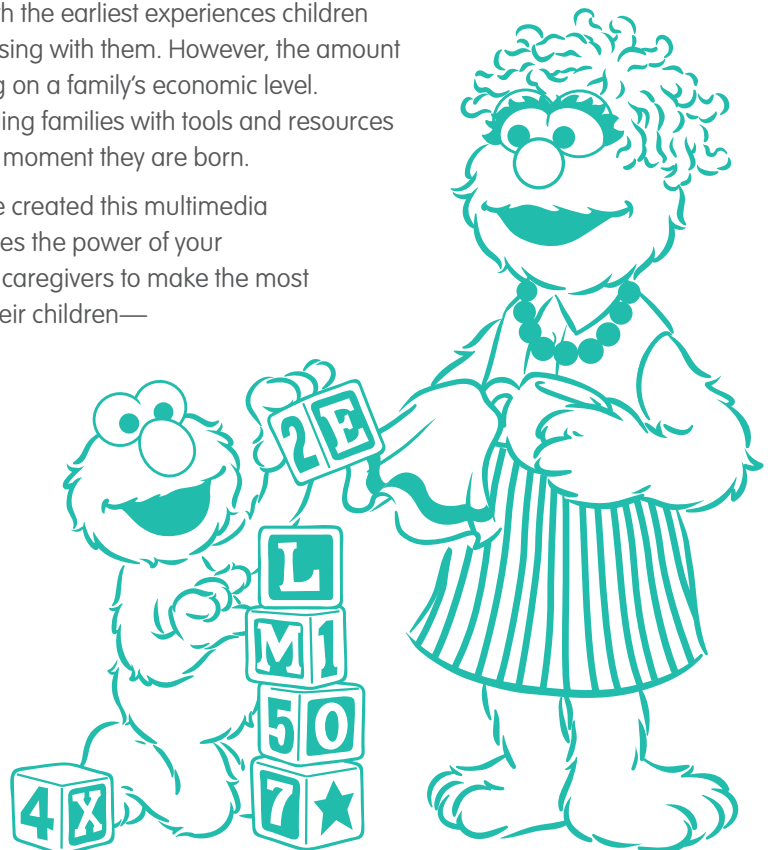
Dear Community Provider,

As someone who reaches families with young children, you are an important part of helping families discover their own power and critical role in building early language skills in their young children! You are the “messenger” who communicates key information around these fundamental ideas:

- **Talking, reading, and singing are crucial for boosting brain development during the early years.**
- **Opportunities to talk, read, and sing with kids arise constantly, during everyday moments and as families go through their daily routines.**

You already know that the foundation for literacy is laid years before children even enter school, long before they can actually read and talk. It begins with the earliest experiences children have when their parents and caregivers talk, read, and sing with them. However, the amount and quality of rich literacy experiences varies depending on a family's economic level. Therefore, now more than ever, you are crucial in providing families with tools and resources to support their children's literacy development from the moment they are born.

Your work with families and children is important; we've created this multimedia toolkit to support your work. Talking is Teaching leverages the power of your beloved Sesame Street friends to motivate parents and caregivers to make the most of everyday opportunities to talk, read, and sing with their children—and help them grow to become successful students.



In This Guide

This guide will help you inspire and empower parents and caregivers to promote their children’s language development while nurturing their overall growth—from day one. This material is designed to be flexible: to be used one on one, in small groups, or in large groups. Here’s what you’ll find in these pages:

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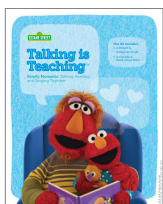
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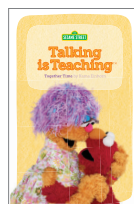
You might consider offering families copies of the guide or storybook—or both—as incentives to participate in workshops, or as a reward upon completion.

Families can download the materials at sesamestreet.org/talking or talkingisteaching.org. If families do not have printers at home, they might use them at their local library, family resource center, or child care provider’s home.

THE KIT: The ideas in this guide extend and enrich the information and activities found in these materials:



This guide highlights the importance of meaningful, joyful engagement with children and connects these interactions to brain development and literacy.



This read-aloud storybook features rhyming text, full-color photographs, and the Sesame Street friends as they talk, read, and sing their way through the day.

Walk & Talk

In this activity, families take a “walking tour” with their child, noticing different objects in the room and using them to spark conversations.

Materials: copies of page 5 (one per family)



FIRST, begin a discussion:

- Ask parents and caregivers, “What do you think your child means when he looks at or points to something? Why might she be pointing?” (It’s a way of showing interest and wanting to share the experience, or maybe the child wants more information about something.)
- Once participants have shared their ideas, note: “It’s great to follow your child’s lead as a starting place for teaching and learning. It’s wonderful when you’re in tune with their interests; it helps their overall development.”

NEXT, invite parents and caregivers to walk around the room examining their surroundings, allowing children to guide the walk. Tell them they are literally “following” children’s interests!

- Encourage adults to ask guiding questions, using the five senses as a framework: “What does that feel like? Is it soft or hard? What color is that? What noise does that animal make?”
- They can also “play narrator” and make comments on what the child is observing: “Oh, I think blue might be your favorite color”; “That is a very thick book!”
- If the child is a baby, suggest that parents hold the child at eye level to the things they are talking about, use pointing to gesture, and put their faces close to their babies’ faces, speaking slowly and softly and making eye contact.

LAST, regroup and ask families about other everyday moments:

- “What are some routines in which you might have conversations like this with your child?”
- Point out the importance of simply narrating everyday activities, responding to coos and babbling, and repeating what children have said.
- Say, “Let’s brainstorm other ways to use language to explore with your child at home.” Distribute the handout (page 5) and read through it together, asking for different volunteers to read each section out loud.
- Conclude by saying, “So having a language-rich conversation is like tossing a ball back and forth, responding to each other, and keeping the conversation going for as long as possible, while using many different kinds of words.”

Talking Sense

Children already have all the tools they need to learn about the world: their five senses! Just about anything they see, hear, feel, touch, or taste can be a springboard into conversation. Simply noticing your child as he looks around and explores can spark language-rich conversation. Follow her curiosity!

Looking and exploring—and paying attention to what your child’s senses are telling him—can spark interaction, teach new words, and so on. This can happen anywhere, anytime: on the bus, walking past a restaurant, while preparing dinner—just about every time and place holds an opportunity for developing language.

TOUCHING

- Let’s feel this.
- How does it feel on your skin?
- Does it feel warm or cool?
Smooth or rough?

TASTING

- Let’s taste this.
- What does it taste like?
- Is it Sweet? Sour? Bitter? Salty?
- Does it taste good to you?

SMELLING

- Let’s take two big sniffs.
- What can you smell?
- Let’s smell this flower.
- Let’s breathe deep.

BABY TALK

Even before babies begin talking, they’re processing language—so they benefit from you talking to them and asking questions. Just feel free to answer your own questions aloud!

HEARING

- Shhh! Let’s listen to the _____!
- The _____ sounds _____.
- What noise does the [animal’s name] make?
- Can you make a _____ sound?
- That music sounds _____ to me.

SEEING

- I see a _____.
- What do you see out the window?
- What else do you see?
- Where’s the _____?
- What color is it?
- Is it little or big?






Read It to Me

In this activity, you'll model read-aloud strategies and give tips on shared reading—and highlight the fun and joy that reading together can bring!



Materials: copies of mini-book (page 7), one per family







FIRST, distribute a copy of the mini-book to each family and show them how to assemble it by putting the pages in order (each family will need scissors; you can pass around a stapler). Say:

-  "We're going to join Elmo and his Mommy as they fill their day with talking, reading, and singing."
-  "Like Elmo's mother does in this story, you can talk back and forth together, delight in any sound or gesture your child makes (after all, sounds lead to first words), enjoy songs and music, and snuggle up with a story together."
-  "You can also have lots of fun while doing so!"

NEXT, invite parents to read the story aloud with their children.

-  Say: "Ask your child to help you turn the pages...use different voices...try reading in a sing-song voice...have fun with the words...comment on the pictures."
-  Remind them that, as a matter of fact, they don't have to read the words at all! They can narrate the story themselves or allow the children to make words up to go with the pictures. (If parents have infants, remind them it's normal for babies to grab and put books in their mouths—that's how they explore their world!)

THEN, say, "Children often want to hear the same story again and again, and that's good!"

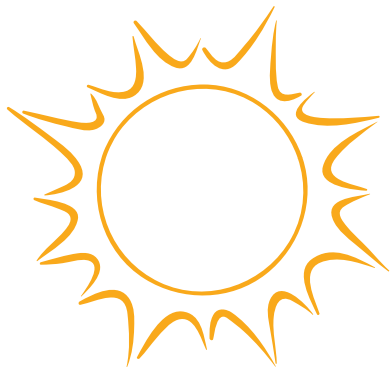
-  Invite parents to read the story again several times.
-  They can also practice other strategies, such as acting out the story, using different silly voices and gestures, pointing to objects they see in the pictures and saying their names, and so on.
-  Finally, answer questions parents have about reading with their children.
-  Encourage parents to also read words in their everyday environment, such as on a cereal boxes or store signs.

Elmo & Mommy's Day



This book belongs to

_____ (Child's Name)



Elmo's UP!
Rise and shine.
It's super-early
morning time.



There's my Elmo,
hugga-boo!
There's no one else
just like you.
My furry son's
got things to say.
All day long and
every day.

Playtime, yay!
You wave, wave, wave.
Big Bird, Cookie, Grover too,
say hi, hi, hi—
and play with you!



Mommy washes Elmo's back.
Rubber Duckie gives a quack.
The water's warm—
go splishy-splash. Scrub-a-dub.
You love your bath!



Night-night, Elmo, with a book.
Snuggle close and have a look.
Help me turn the pages, please.
Let's read together, you and me.



_____ (Child's Name)

helped turn the pages of this book!

Choosing a Book

Besides choosing books that you loved yourself as a child, look for different kinds of books as your child grows.

📖 0-12 MONTHS

Look for sturdy, bright board books filled with images of babies and other everyday things, such as teddy bears or bottles.

📖 12-24 MONTHS

Continue to seek out board books, and expand to books that show children doing everyday routines. Children at this age may also like books about saying hello and goodbye, and books with simple rhymes and/or predictable text. 12–24-month-olds may also have a favorite bedtime story!

📖 24 MONTHS

Children at this age will enjoy silly books with rhyme, rhythm, and repeated text they can learn by heart. They can also turn paper pages (not just board book pages) and may enjoy subjects like animals, cars, and other favorite things. To help expand vocabulary, look for books with pictures and names of many different things.

📖 AGE 3 AND UP

Children at this age can begin to appreciate story-lines. They'll also respond to books with simple, memorable text: counting books, alphabet books, search-and-find books, and books about school or daycare.



Making Music

In this activity, families will explore the importance of rhythm and song for language development, and identify everyday moments in which they can sing with their children.

Materials: copies of page 10 (one per family)



FIRST, remind parents that their bodies can act as instruments by clapping, snapping, patting their legs, stomping, or clicking their tongues. Say:

- 🎵 “Making sounds helps babies and toddlers learn how sounds are put together.”
- 🎵 “These are the building blocks of language and literacy. So let’s play with sound together.”

NEXT, have parents sit in a big group with their children in their laps.

- 🎵 Say, “Clap your hands. Can your baby clap with you?”
- 🎵 Pause, then say, “Snap: How does your child respond? Does she seem to like the sound?”
- 🎵 Parents can take turns playing leader and follower with rhythms and movements (stomps, pats, tongue clicks, and so on). “Can your child copy the sound?”
- 🎵 Depending on their age, children can also take turns as “leader.”

LAST, extend the concept of sound as a building block for language into the idea that songs are a powerful tool for language development.

- 🎵 Say, “Any song you sing doesn’t have to rhyme or be in tune; simply adding words in a sing-song or chanting voice works, too!”
- 🎵 Ask, “What are some times and places you might sing with your child?” (Emphasize that singing can happen anywhere, any time: when changing a diaper, when in the car, bath time, bedtime, when transitioning from one activity to another, and so on.)

Distribute the handout (page 10) and invite families to sing the songs at home. Remind them that even the tiniest babies can benefit from being sung to!

All About Me

Babies and toddlers will love hearing their name sung as you personalize these familiar songs.

🎵 TO THE TUNE OF "YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE"

You are my sunshine,
my only sunshine.

You make me happy
when skies are grey.

You'll never know, [child's name],
how much I love you.

I could hug my
[child's name] all day.

🎵 TO THE TUNE OF "WHERE IS THUMBKIN?"

Where is [child's name],
where is [child's name]?

Here s/he is!

Here s/he is! (touch child's
nose, put hand on her head,
hold his hand, or tickle his belly)

S/he is mommy's (or daddy's,
grandma's, and so on) baby,

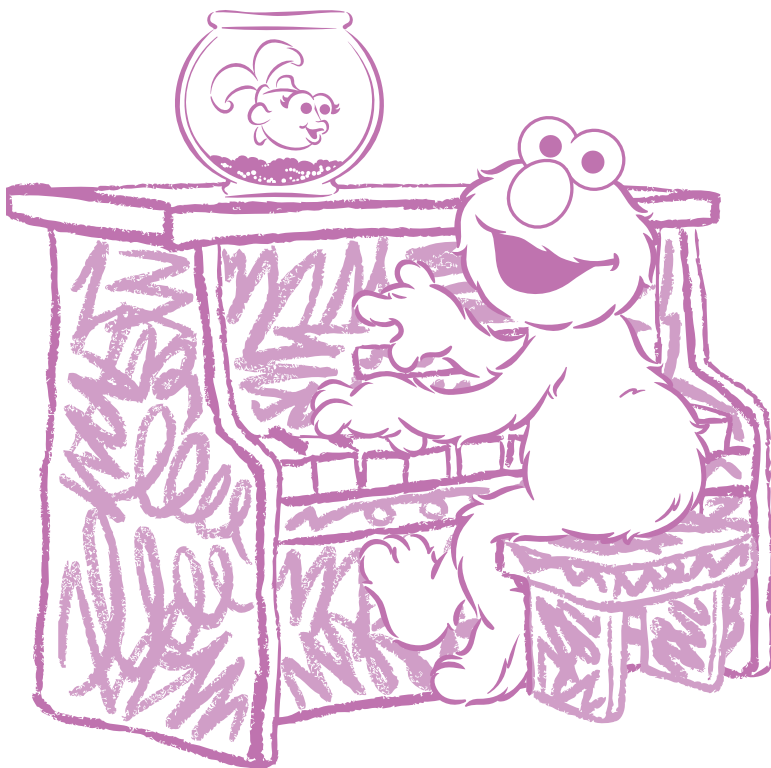
Such a sweet good baby,
Yes s/he is, yes s/he is.

🎵 TO THE TUNE OF "OH MY DARLIN' CLEMENTINE"

Oh my darlin', oh my darlin',
oh my darlin' [use child's
first name, or first and middle,
or first and last],

Let me hug you,
let me kiss you,
Oh my darlin' [child's name].

(then finish with a hug and kiss!)



One-Minute One-on-One Tips

Even a super-short conversation with a family can go a long way. Share these memorable ideas about early literacy—anywhere, anytime.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Your child's language development is like a garden. Just as you'd prepare soil, plant seeds, water sprouts, and watch flowers bloom in a garden, you can work to develop early language skills and watch them grow. There's so much happening in a tiny seed underground—things we don't even see. It's the same with your child. Talking, listening, reading, and singing are as important for his language development as sun and water are to a garden. And 80% of a child's not-so-tiny brain is formed by age three. When you talk, read, and sing with children, you fill their brains with words and thoughts that make all the difference in their happiness in the future. So...tend that garden!

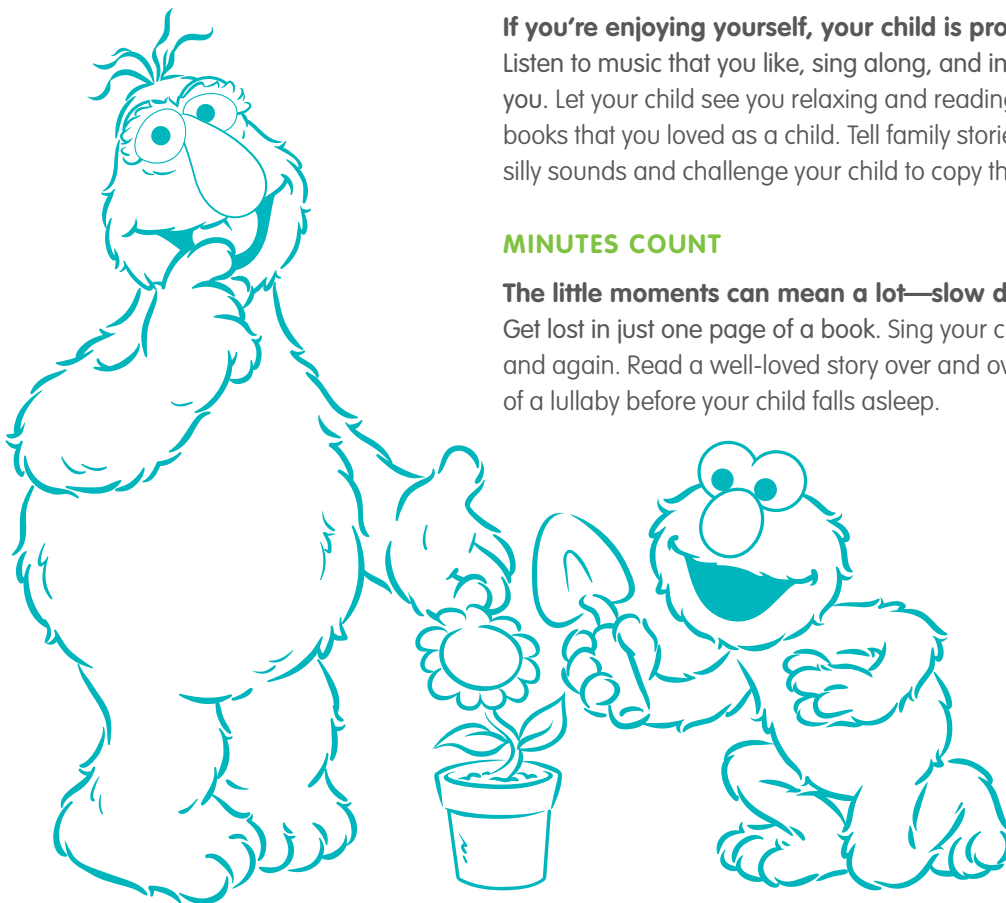
HAVE FUN...LEARN SOME!

If you're enjoying yourself, your child is probably having a good time, too. Listen to music that you like, sing along, and invite your child to move with you. Let your child see you relaxing and reading for pleasure. Read your child books that you loved as a child. Tell family stories that make you laugh. Make up silly sounds and challenge your child to copy them.

MINUTES COUNT

The little moments can mean a lot—slow down and notice them!

Get lost in just one page of a book. Sing your child's favorite song together again and again. Read a well-loved story over and over—and over! Savor the ritual of a lullaby before your child falls asleep.



Saying Hello to Books

Building a lifelong love of reading starts right now. As you choose a book for your little one or settle in with a story together, consider these tips:

SMALL, STURDY LITTLE CARDBOARD BOOKS (and washable cloth books) are perfect for tiny hands—and mouths.

It's totally normal for babies to put books in their mouth. It's how they explore, and it makes them feel that the book is their own special object. And plastic bath-time books are perfect for babies and toddlers who fuss in the tub!

INVOLVE YOUR CHILD BY INVITING HER TO TURN THE PAGES or “help” you turn the pages. Babies can't turn pages on their own, but 18-month-olds will begin to try. (It's fine to skip pages or not finish a book!)

BRING THE STORY TO LIFE.

Use different voices for each character and act out scenes with gestures or body movements. Repeat key phrases and invite your child to join in.

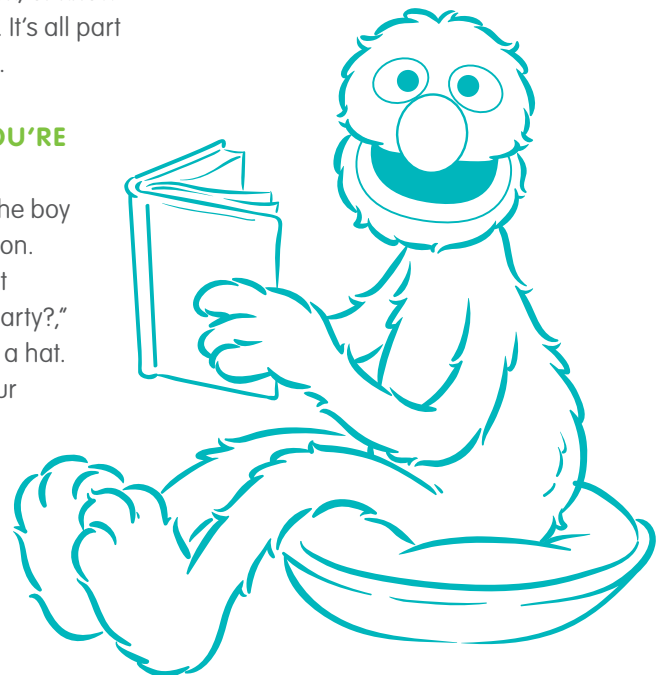
RUN YOUR FINGER UNDER THE WORDS AS YOU READ to build the awareness that there's a difference between words and pictures. You'll also be

showing your child that in English, print goes from left to right. And even very young children may be able to tell the difference between the front and back covers of a book, or know if a book is upside down. It's all part of getting to know books.

TIE WHATEVER YOU'RE READING to your own experience. “Oh, look, the boy in the picture has a balloon. Remember when you got that red balloon at that party?,” or, “Here's a cat wearing a hat. Do you have a hat on your head right now?”

TRY “READING” A BOOK WITHOUT READING THE WORDS AT ALL, just talk about the pictures! What's happening on each page? What do you see?

SOMETIMES IT'S OKAY to “judge a book by its cover”! Put two books in front of your child and say, for instance, “Let's choose a book. Would you like to read the book about the bears or the book about the cats?” Then your child can point to or reach for her choice.



Please Join Us!

You're Invited to a Family Workshop

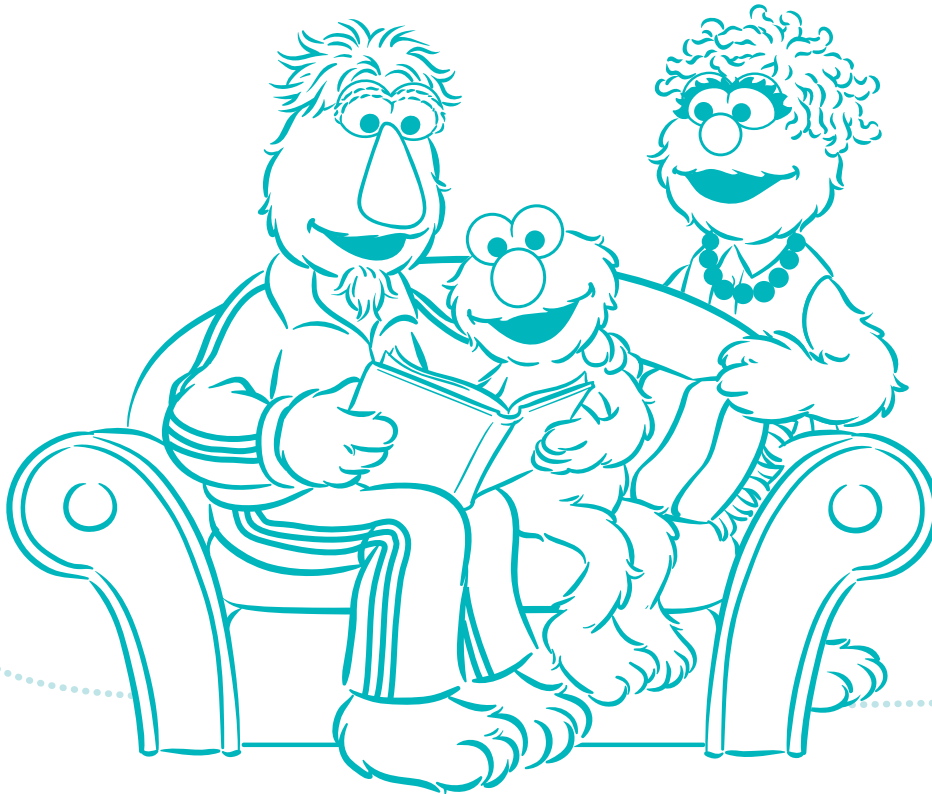
- Build your child's love of language.
- Set the stage for his success in school.
- Boost her brain development.

Join us and find out how!

DATE _____

TIME _____

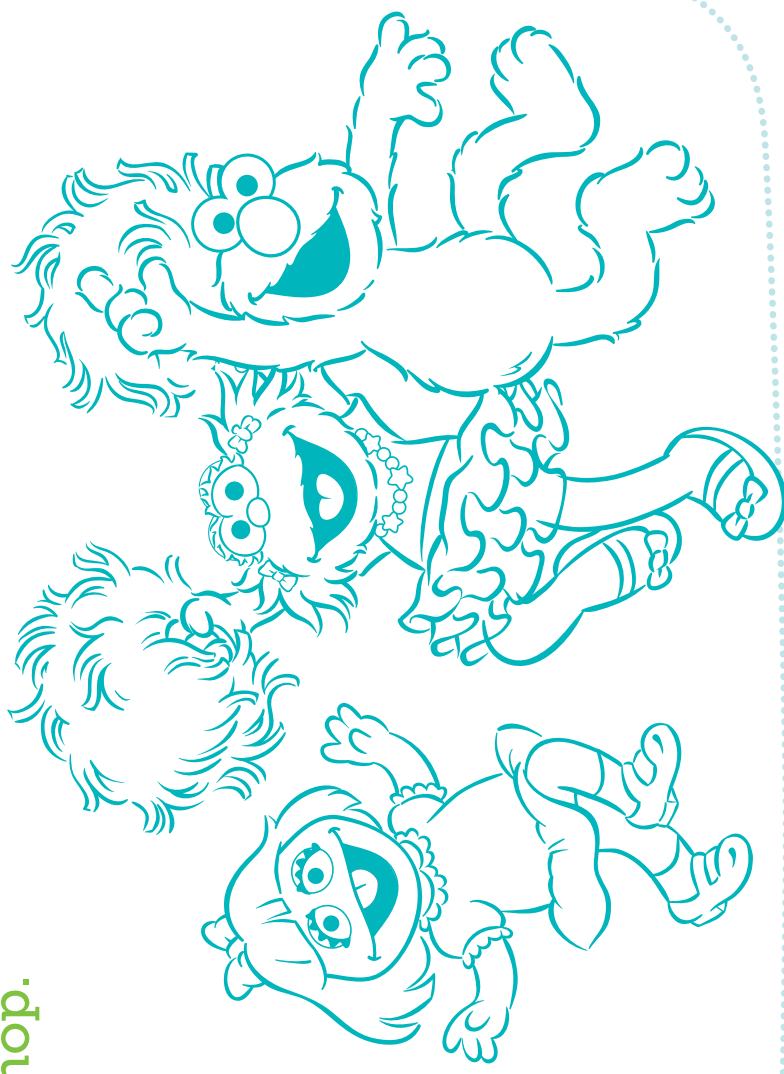
LOCATION _____



Congratulations!

The _____ family has completed the
Talking is Teaching Workshop.

DATE _____



Social Media Tips

Send out these bite-sized tips to post and promote messages, strategies, ideas, and materials on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

🗨️ TALKING MESSAGES

- Talking is teaching. So chat away! Visit talkingisteaching.org.
- So much brain growth happens through talking and listening. Take time to listen! And visit talkingisteaching.org.
- Start conversations about the happiest part of the day. Visit talkingisteaching.org.

📖 READING MESSAGES

- The more your child is read to from the very start, the more his brain will grow and language will develop. Visit talkingisteaching.org.
- Cuddle up with your child and enter the world of a story. Visit talkingisteaching.org.
- Books are brain boosters. Open one with your child today! Visit talkingisteaching.org.
- Books are like vitamins for the brain. Here's to your child's health! Visit talkingisteaching.org.

🎵 SINGING MESSAGES

- Music affects your mood. A fast beat might make it more fun to exercise. Quiet music relaxes you after a long day. It's the same for your child! Check out talkingisteaching.org.
- Sing together! Songs are a great way for your child to learn language and build vocabulary. Check out talkingisteaching.org.
- If your baby squeals, babbles, or screams as you sing... consider it a loving duet! Check out talkingisteaching.org.

📎 MATERIALS

- It's together time! Visit talkingisteaching.org for a downloadable read-aloud storybook for babies and toddlers featuring real parents and children—as they talk, read, and sing.
- Make the most of family moments. Visit talkingisteaching.org for a downloadable parent and caregiver guide on sparking conversation, enjoying books, and making music with your little one.



More Talking, Reading, and Singing

When it comes to language development, there's always more fun to be had! Try these tips in the areas of talking, reading, and singing.

CONVERSATION BAG

- Families can take turns pulling a variety of objects out of a bag or hat (or simply lay them out on a table) to explore with their senses (what do the objects look like, feel like, smell like, sound like, taste like?). They can use them to start conversations following children's lead and level ("That's a crayon you pulled from the bag! What color is that crayon? Right, it's blue."). Items can be different fabrics (lace, cotton, velvet), foods (banana, apple, orange), and so on. (If items are not readily available, pictures can also be used to spark conversations.)



READ, READ, READ

Along with the handout on page 8, you might share these points with parents:

- Point out and read words in your everyday environment—on cereal boxes, store signs, and so on. Print is everywhere, not just in books!
- Read anywhere, anytime. It's fine to pull out a book and read to your kids if mealtime is getting a little too chaotic. You can even read as you nurse your baby! Carry books in your diaper bag to keep your baby engaged wherever you are. Give your baby a small book to play with as you change his diaper.
- Read favorite, well-loved books and stories from your childhood. Most of all, have fun and enjoy the experience of settling into a book together. The more your child sees that you love reading, the more she will want to do so herself.

ROCK WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Playing with instruments helps kids learn about rhythm and sounds. Families can make instruments using everyday objects to accompany songs. Depending on children's ages, they can take turns giving directions: "make a loud/quiet sound," "shake it fast/slow," to go along with different kinds of music.

- An empty oatmeal or plastic container makes a great drum.
- A paper-towel roll can become a horn.
- Chopsticks can be used as rhythm sticks.
- Keys on a keychain can be used as jingle bells.
- A plastic spoon and a table can become a miniature drum set.