



Tips & Messaging for Staff Program Delivery

SLQ Wiki Fabrication Lab 2025/07/08 05:28

Tips & Messaging for Staff Program Delivery

These tips have been developed by SLQ and can be used to help develop your F5F Programming session and provide guidance in your delivery.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS -

Children's library programming is a fantastic way to bring new families into local libraries and build a community. Although children are at the centre of early literacy programs, these sessions are also important opportunities to engage with parents and caregivers. This process may take some time as often adults don't appreciate how important their role is in the session, and it can take time for families to feel comfortable engaging and sharing. Here are some simple tips for involving adults in the program:

- Welcome the adults as well as the children
- Have a predictable routine, children and adults feel more comfortable when they know what to expect
- Let adults know that it's okay if their child can't sit still and needs to wander
- If you're using musical instruments or egg shakers make sure there are enough for caregivers and children
- Repeat songs and rhymes each week so that adults get to know the words and feel comfortable participating
- If adults aren't participating, invite them in "Adults, I need your help with this rhyme, can you help your little one with the words and actions?"
- Make sure you thank everyone for coming. Some families will have made a huge effort to get to the library

NEW TO STORYTIME -

If you are new to libraries, the idea of delivering a story time can seem a little daunting. Before you deliver a session consider sitting in on other story time sessions or talking to other staff members about the tips and tricks they use. Preparation is an important part of any successful program, so when possible, choose the books prior to the session. Practice reading the books aloud, as this will give you a sense of the rhyme and rhythm of the book and will help you anticipate what's coming next in the story. When delivering story time consider;

- Talking about the title, author and illustrator
- Slowing your pace
- Involving the children by asking questions
- Making sure everyone can see the pictures
- Using your voice to make sounds or voices for different characters as you become more confident

- Don't forget to have fun, It's infectious!

SPEND TIME TALKING AFTER THE SESSION -

Be available before and after the session and spend time mingling and chatting between the groups of parents and caregivers. Talking with the families is a great way of building relationships and helping individuals feel included in the program and connected with the library. Don't underestimate the positive impact that library programs can have on helping local families establish support networks.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF -

Don't forget to introduce yourself at the beginning of each session, even if you've been delivering for many years. You may think everyone knows you, but they may have forgotten your name or you might have new families joining for the first time. If someone knows your name it makes it easier for them to ask a question and helps to establish a connection with the families attending each session.

SLOW IT DOWN -

Remember to slow down songs, nursery rhymes and stories. Babies and toddlers need time to process information and sounds. The simple trick of slowing nursery rhymes down will give babies and toddlers more time to understand what you are saying. You could also remind parents and caregivers to give even young babies time to respond to their words and questions - they may be rewarded with the little noises that are their child's very first attempts at conversation.

STORYTIME IN ACTION -

Storytime doesn't just have to be about books! A great way of getting children involved in Storytime is by retelling a story that allows them to take on different roles. You might read the story first and then get the children to act it out. Book suggestions for oral storytelling include:

- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- The Three Billy Goats Gruff
- Wombat Stew - Marcia C Vaughn
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt - Michael Rosen

USING YOUR OWN WORDS -

Delivering First 5 Forever key messages to parents and caregivers can often feel awkward and clunky. The best way to make these messages feel authentic is to write them in your own words and practice them. For example, you might change: “Sharing stories and rhymes, singing, talking, and playing with your child is not just fun but good for little brains too” to “Reading, singing songs and talking with your child is how they learn”

CURATE A SELECTION OF BOOKS AT STORYTIME AND RHYMETIME -

A simple way to link families back to the collection and make it easier for them to borrow is to display books during library programs. You might even like to choose your favourite picture books, talk to the parents and caregivers about why they're your favourites. Parents will appreciate having easy access to quality books or recent releases without having to search through the collection.

STEAM AND FIRST 5 FOREVER -

Have you thought about incorporating STEAM in First 5 Forever programming? STEAM fosters a love of learning through science, technology, engineering, artisans maths. STEAM activities and experiences are a hands-on way of building language and literacy skills. Easy ways to incorporate STEAM into your First 5 Forever library program:

- Play 'I spy' and help children observe the world around them
- Incorporate toys with wheels or blocks into your program
- Talk about different colours
- Ask questions like “I wonder what would happen if...?”
- Read books or sing rhymes that incorporate counting

INCORPORATE OTHER LANGUAGES INTO PROGRAMS -

Most library programs have culturally diverse families and caregivers attending them. Invite parents and caregivers to share words from their language and incorporate it into the rhymes you sing. Use rhymes that you know well and start out simply. For example, try singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, starting in English and then changing the word “star” to another language, then doing the same for “diamond” and “sky”. This is a fun way of making culturally diverse families feel included.

TALKING TYPOGRAPHY -

Talk about all the ways typographic choices - including font size, colour and style - are used to tell us things such as how the author wants us to read a book, the meaning of words and the rhythm of the writing. This is a great way to increase print awareness, an important early literacy skill. Invite children to tell you how they think a word or phrase should be read to increase interactions. Some books with examples of different uses of typography to check it out include:

- Hark! It's Me Ruby Lee by Lisa Shanahan
- The Very Cranky Bear by Nick Bland

SING THE SYLLABLES -

Making sounds, hearing sounds and telling the difference between sounds is a key foundation that later supports learning to read. A great way to support children in hearing the different sounds that make up words is to clap the syllables. Talk about the many different sounds you can hear in stories and songs you share and encourage parents and caregivers to do this at home. Some fun ideas include:

- Clap or tap the syllables in names as you sing each child's name during a welcome song.
- Point out that long words have lots of sounds and short ones very few.

TALK ABOUT POSITIONING -

Encourage parents and caregivers to turn their baby's face towards theirs so their child can see them as they form sounds and words. Positioning is also important when sharing conversations as children will take cues on when it is their turn to talk by taking in the non-verbal cues given. A nod towards a little one can let them know that it's their turn.

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION! -

You don't need the lights and camera, but actions are really important for children to understand the meaning of lots of words used in songs and rhymes. It's important to demonstrate the actions as you say the words so that little ones can make the connection between the two. This is also a great way to support adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We sometimes forget that songs and rhymes that are familiar to us are not for others.

SET EXPECTATIONS FROM THE BEGINNING -

Often we assume that parents and caregivers know what is expected of them and their children. If you are finding certain behaviours or actions from families challenging during your sessions, setting clear expectations in your welcome and introduction can help to address these. By using strength-based language, you are not telling families off but setting clear expectations of how you would like them to engage. Examples of responses to common challenges include:

- Invite parents and caregivers to enjoy being in “a little bubble away from the rest of the world” for the duration of the session by turning their phones to silent. How lovely to be able to pretend that nothing else is going on in their busy lives for a little while!

- Let families know that Baby Time, Rhyme Time and Story Time session are “built” for little ones and that you expect noise, movement and lots of fun. To make sure everyone is safe ask parents and caregivers to maintain a line of sight with their child.
- To encourage parents and caregivers to sing and engage with their little one, remind them that they are their child's favourite person and that their little one would much rather listen to their voice and see their face than yours.

INCLUDE PROPS -

When we use props such as puppets, objects, felt stories, toys, maps, posters and dress-ups we invite interaction and engagement from children and their families. In addition, props can often enhance understanding of vocabulary, concepts and ideas. Some examples include:

- If you're reading Possum Magic by Mem Fox show the group a map of Australia and point out the states and capital cities as you go through the book.
- Props such as parachutes, lycra pieces or musical instruments are a great way to invite participation from adults. For example “the parachute will only work if all the grown ups help us out!”
- Write a letter/shopping list/recipe on a large piece of paper or whiteboard to enhance children's understanding of different types of print. For example, when sharing Dear Zoo, actually write a letter.
- Print out a stop sign and put it on a ruler or stick, or use a wooden toy version to hold up in The Magic Hat by Mem Fox when the wizard says “STOP!” Point out the shape and colour of the sign and the letters and tell children to keep an eye out when they are driving around town for signs that look like that one.
- When singing Old MacDonald use a range of toys or finger puppets to help children connect the animal name with an example. Assure parents and caregivers that they don't need to be a matching set: they might use a Duplo cow, wooden pig, rubber duck or plastic dinosaur.

POINT OUT THE ENDPAPERS -

Point out the endpapers during Story Time (these are the pages immediately inside the front and back covers). Most children's picture books have incredible endpapers that are an integral part of the story. Margrete Lamond refers to them as the “gateways into picture books”. Point the endpapers out to children and families and use them as an invitation to predict what might happen in the story. Encourage families to look at the endpapers in the books they borrow and share all the things they discover with you next time they are in the library.

DON'T SKIP THE BIG WORDS -

Explain complex or unusual words: don't leave them out or substitute smaller words. If three-year-olds

can pronounce and understand the meaning of tricky dinosaur names they can understand the rich vocabulary found in picture books! Young children build their vocabulary by hearing and using words. When we explain the meaning of words using other words, ideas and concepts children are already familiar with we scaffold their understanding. Some of the ways you can scaffold understanding is by using the illustrations or a real object, acting out or demonstrating, or providing a known synonym.

UPSIDE DOWN AND BACK TO FRONT! -

Start a story sharing session with the book upside down and back to front. This is a fun way to enhance children's awareness of how books work. Sit the book you are reading upside down and back to front in your lap.

- Start by asking the children if they are ready to hear the story.
- Then ask them if they think you are ready to go.
- Give them cues to look at the book.
- They will tell you that you can't start like that: this gives you the opportunity to talk about which is the right way up, where is the front and back of the book.
- Point out the blurb on the back and the title on the front. Talk about the author who writes all the words and the illustrator who creates all the pictures.

PREDICTABLE BOOKS -

Predictable or repetitive books are a good resource to use in sessions as they have structured patterns with rhyming and repetition of phrases and plot lines. They are easy to understand and give children the opportunity anticipate what is going to happen next in the story. Predictable books are important because they allow children to participate in the reading of the story and helps them to experience how the reading process works. For your next story time think about using predictable picture books to get children and families involved and participating in the program. Make sure you leave a long enough pause for very young children (or shy adults) to respond – this could feel like an awkwardly long period of silence but it isn't for children, they are processing language.

RHYMING BOOKS -

Because early literacy skills are about listening and speaking, rhyme and rhythm play an important role. Rhyme and rhythm help children discriminate sounds and patterns, and this helps them learn about phonics, an essential skill when learning to read. Using rhyme and rhythm isn't just for Rhyme Time sessions, you might like to consider choosing and reading books at Story Time that have rhyme and rhythm.

[Go back to Messaging and Tips](#)