

# growing together

READY FOR SCHOOL & BEYOND



## A Family Activity Book

Planting Seeds for School Success

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## The first few years of your little one's life are packed with new experiences.

Every word she hears, everything she observes, and every relationship she forms help her brain grow and develop. They all form a foundation for her experience in school, and you can make that foundation a strong one.

To help you build upon this growth—and become a brain-builder for your child—Sesame Workshop and PNC have created *Growing Together: Ready for School and Beyond*. All learning is about relationships and connections—with you; with other family members; and with friends, classmates, and teachers.

In this activity book, you'll find tips and ideas just for you, plus activities to help you engage with your child and support his learning adventures as he gets ready for school...and beyond.

Enjoy the journey!

A creation of:



Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We're present in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically-funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve. For more information, please visit [sesameworkshop.org](http://sesameworkshop.org).

Developed in partnership with:



Founded by The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., PNC Grow Up Great and PNC Crezca con Éxito form a multi-year, bilingual initiative that began in 2004 to help prepare children—particularly underserved children—from birth to age five for success in school and life. Through Grow Up Great, PNC emphasizes the importance of the first five years of life, which research has shown is critical to long-term achievement, by helping families, educators, and community partners provide innovative opportunities that enhance learning and development in a child's early years. PNC offers leadership, advocacy, funding, volunteers, and educational resources because we believe that an investment in our children now makes good economic sense and plants the seeds for the dynamic workforce of tomorrow. Learn more at [pncgrowupgreat.com](http://pncgrowupgreat.com).

# Planting Seeds for Learning

**By listening to your child's questions and talking about what interests him,** you're encouraging his natural curiosity and preparing him for school success.

Every moment you spend with your child—talking, telling stories, reading, listening to music, singing, moving, and playing—you're planting tiny seeds of knowledge.

You may not see the sprouts right away, but over the years, you'll notice how much her brain has grown. There's so much power in planting the seeds of learning *now*, to pave the way for the learning adventures that will blossom in school and beyond.

Use these pages as opportunities to talk and learn together. The close bond between the two of you will soon help your child become a caring member of a classroom community and will set the stage for a lifetime of learning.



# Everyday Word Play

**Words help kids make sense of the world,** and they open the door to learning new information—and the conversations you have with your child are powerful because they're her first experiences with communication!

Talking and reading together help kids build their vocabulary so they can express themselves more and more. Make everyday activities into language-building moments:

## READING TOGETHER

- Encourage your little one to **talk about** the story. ("What's happening in this picture? What do you think will happen when you turn the page?")
- Point out that most stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end.

## AT THE SUPERMARKET

- Play "I Spy" to introduce new food words such as *citrus fruit*. Use **describing words**, such as *above*, *below*, *sour*, *smooth*, and *maroon*.
- Being in a classroom often requires **patience**! Help your child learn to wait in a line and build language skills at the same time by searching for things around you ("Let's find all the red things.").

## GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

- Use words such as *left*, *straight*, and *behind* to help your child **remember and follow directions**.
- Look for the letters in your child's name on signs! It's great for kids to start school knowing **letters and their sounds**.

## Another Language, Another Opportunity

If you speak a language other than English at home, you're giving your child an important advantage that will last a lifetime. Share books and songs in your first language, too.

## Social-Emotional Learning

A big part of school success is being able to share, care, and get along—which can be hard when kids are angry or frustrated! Describing and labeling emotions can help kids begin to manage big feelings. Let your child know that all feelings are okay; it's how we handle them that matters.



# A-maze-ing Stories

Telling stories is a great way to bond and jump-start the imagination! Help Elmo find his way through the maze, collecting words to make the beginning of a story. Make up the middle and the end together.

- Have kids draw a line through the maze with their finger as you or an older sibling read the words aloud.
- Then take turns adding sentences, asking, "What happens next? Then what? How does the story end?"



MIDDLE OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

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END OF THE STORY \_\_\_\_\_

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# Math Time Is Anytime

**You use math every day**, and making the most of these moments prepares kids for school.



Your child builds math concepts when he helps you measure ingredients for a recipe or presses a numbered button on an elevator. Highlight these moments to remind your child that math is both fun and useful.

## MORNING

- Together, use your phone to check the temperature outside and identify the **numerals**.
- Help your little one **count** the steps it takes to go from the bedroom, to the bathroom, to the breakfast table.

## AFTERNOON

- Go on a **shape** hunt and find different shapes in signs, buildings, and clouds.
- Play with **patterns**! Try walking home in patterns: giant step, baby step, giant step, baby step. Kids will build **focus and listening skills** at the same time.

## EVENING

- **Count** bath toys, and use cups to **measure** different amounts of water.
- Mark your child's **height** against a wall every so often, pointing out the change each time.



## Social-Emotional Learning

Your child can even “do math” when she’s being a good friend! When taking turns, you can help her count to 30 slowly before switching turns. You can also help children make up a friendship handshake (three high fives, one spin, and two pats on the shoulder).

# You Can Count on Me

**Big transitions like going to school can be easier** when children know they always have a helping hand.

Trace your hand, then trace your child's hand within yours. Invite your little one to color in both.

Together, count the number of fingers on your hands as you write numerals on each. As you count each of your child's fingers, say something positive about your child, such as, "You are helpful to your brother" or "You are brave." Read this poem aloud:

**1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.**

**Count on me again and again.**

**My fingers are big, your fingers are small.**

**But together, we can do it all!**



# Exploring Together

**Little kids have big questions about the world**—and it's okay if you don't know the answers! Finding out answers together is a great opportunity to model lifelong learning (and science).

Every "I wonder" or "what if" is an opportunity to "do science." As kids ask questions, they're telling you what makes them **curious**. It's always more fun to learn about things we're interested in!

You can use this curiosity as an opportunity to practice the **scientific method** of observing, questioning, and investigating to find answers. Finding answers can encourage even more questions...and learning!

## Social-Emotional Learning

Slowing down and noticing small details are great ways to practice focus and help calm wiggly bodies—skills that come in handy in a classroom!

## The Science of Kindness

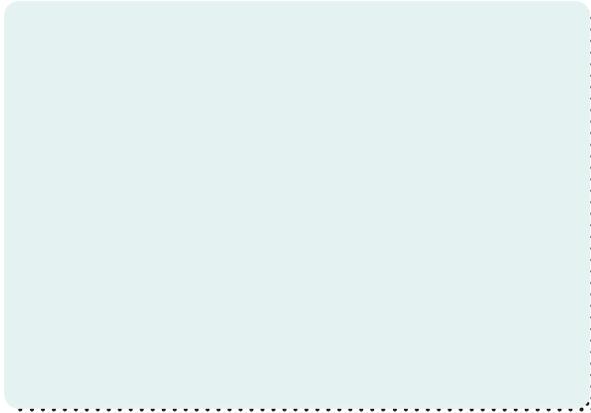
Science can help kids learn to be kind, be empathetic, and take care of our world. Talk about **recycling**, and ask your child how he thinks it **helps the planet**. Say, "Recycling turns the things we throw away into new things, since there is too much trash in the world."



# Sponges & Sprouts

**Create a simple shared learning adventure** that's new to both of you. Observe growth in your own kitchen by planting seeds and observing them change over time—modeling curiosity and wonder for your child.

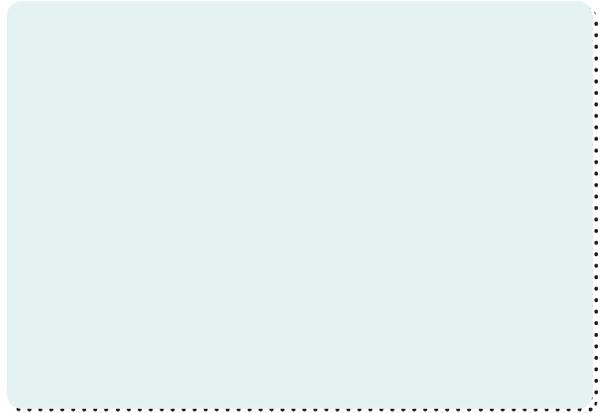
1. Place a damp sponge on a plate (cut it into a simple shape if you would like). Scatter broccoli, spinach, grass, or lettuce seeds (from a hardware or garden store) all over the sponge. Add water to the plate so there's a small puddle under the sponge.
2. Put it on a windowsill in the sun. Mist the seeds with water every day and keep the plate wet.
3. Together, observe sprouts as they grow. Every three or four days, invite your child to draw what she sees. You can write down everything you both notice (color, height, new sprouts).



**week 1**

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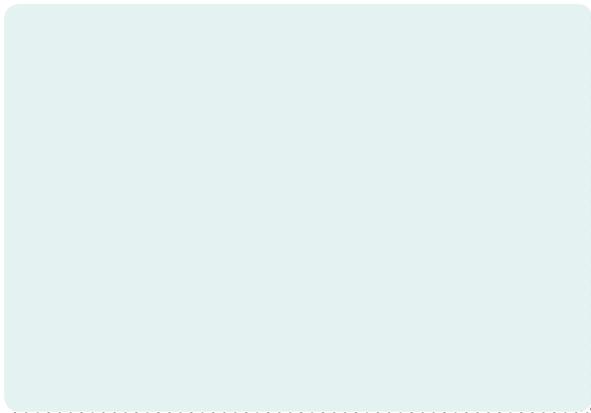
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**week 2**

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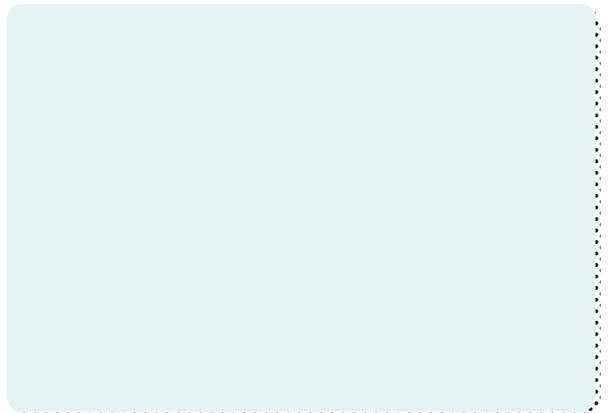
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**week 3**

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**week 4**

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# The Art of Learning

**Music and the arts are a creative way to have fun** with your child, and they're also brain-builders!

As your child dances or uses a paintbrush, she's developing muscle control; as she sings along to a song, she's developing focus and memory. It's easy to add the arts to your day:

**After waking up or at bedtime**, sing or play the same song; soon enough, she'll be singing along!

**At playtime**, introduce art materials like fingerpaints, colored pencils, markers, crayons, clay, child-safe scissors, glue, and different kinds of paper.

**Anytime**, such as when your child needs to let out extra energy, put on fun music and have a dance party! Or, with no music at all, play "feeling-movement charades" and take turns making up movements that show how you're feeling—this can help kids develop empathy and learn words for different emotions.



## Home-School Connections

Music and the arts are ways to connect home and school. Ask your child to teach you a song he sings in school, or have him draw his classroom and talk about how it is the same and different from home.

## Social-Emotional Learning

Kids don't have all the words they need to express important feelings. Drawing, moving, singing, and acting out stories give kids healthy ways to express themselves without words!

# My Family Portrait

**When your child begins school,** your whole family becomes part of a learning community. To help your child's teacher get to know your family, help your child draw a family portrait on this page and share the answers below with his teacher.

A large, empty rectangular area is provided for drawing a family portrait. The area is mostly white, with a decorative teal and dotted pattern at the bottom left corner that tapers into the drawing area.

NAMES OF PEOPLE IN MY FAMILY: \_\_\_\_\_

THINGS WE LIKE TO DO TOGETHER: \_\_\_\_\_

LANGUAGE(S) WE SPEAK AT HOME: \_\_\_\_\_

WORDS THAT DESCRIBE MY FAMILY: \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT MY FAMILY IS: \_\_\_\_\_

SOMETHING IMPORTANT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MY FAMILY IS: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Learning Team

**Your child isn't alone on her learning journey in school—** you and her teacher are on her team, and everyone benefits from communication and information sharing.

As you begin this partnership with your child's teacher, you might consider these points:

- You and your child's teacher have the same goal—to provide **safe spaces** with lots of love and care in which your child can **explore and learn**.
- Your approach to these goals may be different from his teacher's, since **school and home are naturally different**. Reassure your child that those differences are okay: "You do some things differently at school than you do at home, but you're going to learn a lot in both places."
- Talk with your child's teacher about your **home routines, language, and culture**. Ask about ways you can help him get used to the classroom.

## Staying Connected

Ask your child's teacher about ways to be part of his learning. If you can't make it to conferences or school events, ask how you can stay connected from home, such as checking the school Web site or taking your child to a library or a museum to keep the learning going.

## Social-Emotional Learning

When little ones feel unsure, they look to the adults around them. Seeing that you are excited about a new situation and that you trust the grown-ups there can help your little one feel excited and secure, too!

