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READY FOR SCHOOL & BEYOND

A Guide to Hosting Family Workshops

Planting Seeds to Boost Learning in School and Beyond

- Strategies for involving volunteers
- Ideas for family workshops
- Tips for video screenings
- Invitations and name tags
- Kids' coloring page





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Families already have what it takes to help their kids get ready for school...and beyond.

And as someone who reaches families with young children, you're an important part of helping families discover the power they have to build their child's brain during everyday moments.

Sesame Street and PNC Grow Up Great have created this guide to support you in this all-important work. With these workshops and activity ideas, you can inspire families to create and deepen special relationships with their child that help form a strong foundation for learning in school and in life.

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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.

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.



Get the Word Out!

Consider these tips when publicizing your event:

- ✔ Post about your event on social media with a hashtag. Include photos and videos of past similar events to get your audience's attention.
- ✔ Put up flyers in popular family hangout spaces, such as the library or a movie theatre.
- ✔ Send an email to your listserv, making sure to include families who have attended previous events.

Kids' Corner

Some activities are for parents and caregivers only, so you might create a Kids' Corner in which volunteers or other adults can keep the little ones engaged.

- ✔ Telling stories is a great way to bond and build vocabulary. **Read a [Reading Adventures Storybook](#) aloud**, then create a story together. Ask, "Where should we go on our adventure?" Think of a beginning, a middle, and an end to kids' stories, then write them down and illustrate them together.
- ✔ **Create a play area** in which kids pretend they're in school. Set out chart paper, chairs, a table, and other classroom items. You might watch [Two Different Worlds](#), and then practice acting like you're in school—raising hands before speaking, lining up, and focusing when other people talk. Kids can take turns playing teacher and student.
- ✔ **Make family portraits.** Distribute Elmo's family portrait (page 9) for kids to color. Ask, "Who is in your family?" On blank paper, kids can create their own family portrait to take home.



Involving Volunteers

People volunteer for lots of reasons: to help others, to meet new people, to learn something new, or to make a difference in their community. When volunteers are prepared and feel valued, they can have more positive experiences...and the participants are more likely to find your event fun and worthwhile.

Make them feel welcome.

- ✔ Use name tags to encourage volunteers to call one another by name.
- ✔ Have an icebreaker activity to help them get to know one another.

Keep them "in the know"

- ✔ Knowing what to expect builds confidence. Send an email ahead of time with a schedule for the day and tasks they may help with.
- ✔ Train volunteers before the event, going through everything they'll need to know to make the most of participants' experience (and their own!). Review everything from the basics of greeting participants to the more detailed parts of each activity.
- ✔ Encourage volunteers to make the workshop materials work for them, depending on their needs and the size of the group.

Say, "Thank you!"

- ✔ Volunteers want to know that they've made a difference. You might share specific things that you observed them do well.

Keep them "in the know"

- ✔ Follow up with an email, note, photos, or newsletter about the event they helped with.
- ✔ Ask for feedback so you can make their next volunteer experience even better.



Hosting a Video Screening

These videos model nurturing interactions between a grown-up and child—a dynamic that naturally leads to learning. Use the videos and ideas that best fit your event (you might choose to show one video or all three).

Video: Let's Make Art

Materials: shapes cut from construction paper, glue sticks

Watch as Elmo and his Daddy make art together out of shapes. Ask, "What are did Elmo learn with his Daddy?" Encourage families to make shape pictures (animals, insects, buildings, vehicles, people, machines, or more).

Video: Observe With Me

Materials: paper, crayons/markers, stapler

- Say, "Little kids have big questions about the world—and it's okay if grown-ups don't always know the answers! Observing to find out answers together is a great opportunity to model lifelong learning (and science!)."
- Watch the video, then ask, "How did Abby, Rudy, and Abby's mommy Maggie observe using their senses?" Pass out paper, markers, and crayons, and encourage families to create their own Wonder Journals to observe interesting things at home, at school, and on the go. Pass around a stapler.

Video: This Is How I Grow

Materials: large rolls of paper (or chart paper), tape, crayons/markers, rulers

Watch the video. Point out that Abby used a ruler to measure a flower. Pass out the materials so families can make growth charts (using rulers to measure out inches). Depending on the size of the paper, you may need to tape several pieces together. Kids can then decorate the growth charts (at the event or at home).



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If you're working with grown-ups and children, you might do the activities as they're written. If you're working only with grown-ups, walk them through the activity (or they can pair up and role-play parent and child).

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Launching a Reading Adventure

Reading together opens doors to new and exciting worlds. Nurturing an early love of reading helps kids build vocabulary and comprehension skills, which prepare them to succeed in school...and in life!

MATERIALS:

Reading Adventures Digital Storybooks; tablets, smartphones, or computers.

First, ask, "When do you usually read together?" "What type of books does your child like?" "What do you talk about during or after reading?" Then launch the [Reading Adventures Storybooks](#). Ask families (or kids, if they are there) to choose a story. Encourage them to pick one of these "adventures" to follow as they read:

Adventure 1: Letters & Sounds

Focus on the letters and the sounds in each word ("What letter or sound does this word start with?"). You can also focus on the pictures ("Can you find the circles in this picture?" "What colors do you see here?").

Adventure 2: Story Detective

Focus on the basic storyline. Ask, "What is happening here?" You can also help kids predict ("What do you think Elmo might do next?" or "What do you want to happen next?").

Adventure 3: Story Builder

Ask children to add on to the story ("What if this weren't the end? What might happen next?"). You can also relate the story back to children's own stories, connecting the character's experiences and feelings to their lives.



Brain-Building 101: Family Workshop

Children do some of their best learning when they play. Celebrate the importance of play, and help families brainstorm ways to encourage play-based learning at home and on the go.

Enriching & Extending Play

1. Encourage families to introduce themselves. Start with a prompt: "Share one thing your child does that makes you smile or laugh" or "What is your favorite game to play or book to read with your child?"
2. Say, "You have the power to create learning experiences in everyday moments that prepare kids for school success. Today we're going to build on that power by sharing new activities and ideas."
3. Watch the [Enriching & Extending Play](#) video together, then discuss ways participants remember playing when they were kids. ("What's something you loved to play as a kid?" "Why do you think this play memory has stuck with you?")
4. Ask families to share ways their children play on their own, in pairs, and in groups. ("How does your child like to play?" "What are some things you think she's learning from playing?") Explain that as kids play, they're:
 - Developing social skills (sharing, cooperation)
 - Learning new vocabulary and concepts
 - Practicing problem-solving skills
 - Learning to wait and take turns (self-control)
 - Building memory
 - Developing gross and fine-motor (large and small) skills
 - Inspiring even more creativity
 -and more!
5. Brainstorm ways families might add to the play scenarios they've described. How might they join in? Could they add any props, music, stories? (Everyday materials like paper-towel tubes, boxes, oversized socks, and stuffed animals are great for inspiring play.)



You're Invited

Event:

Date:

Time:

Place:

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Name Tags

Help participants introduce themselves! Print these name tags on sticker paper and cut them apart.

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Elmo's Family

Color Elmo's family and think of the people in your family! You can draw them on the back of this page.



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