

# Family Literacy

## Toolkit

- Resources
- Planning Guide
- Best Practices

[www.literacyquebec.org](http://www.literacyquebec.org)

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# ≡ About Literacy Quebec ≡

Literacy Quebec is a network that connects and represents community-based literacy organizations to empower people, impact lives and build a stronger society. We envision a Quebec where everyone has the literacy skills they need to live a fully engaged life.

In pursuit of our mission, Literacy Quebec engages in a wide range of activities:

- Providing professional development opportunities for literacy practitioners
- Advocating for literacy
- Working in partnership with government agencies
- Networking with literacy-related groups
- Raising awareness of the importance of literacy in Quebec



Literacy Quebec currently represents 13 community-based literacy organizations, which serve Quebec English-speaking families and individuals. These organizations are located across the province and offer various literacy services such as one-on-one tutoring and small group instruction.

Find us on:



Literacy Quebec is a founding member of the Network for Literacy, a coalition of 20 organizations from diverse backgrounds of civil society. Their mission is to



increase social awareness with regards to low literacy, its causes and its consequences. We stand together and collectively advocate for a national literacy strategy. Visit [lutteanalphabetisme.ca](http://lutteanalphabetisme.ca) for more information.

# What is literacy?

“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.” -PIAAC 2013. Visit [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) for more information.

When it comes to low literacy, the image that usually comes to mind is an individual who cannot read or write at all. The reality is that there are levels of literacy. These levels affect many aspects of life and society. There are correlations between levels of literacy and a person’s health, their likelihood of civic participation, their chances of employment, their levels of self-confidence, etc.



Do not drink the  
water  
Non-potable



Do not drink the  
water  
Non-potable



Do not drink the  
water  
Non-potable

The Government of Canada has identified literacy and the nine essential skills needed for work, learning and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills.

Document Use	Computer Use	Continuous Learning
Reading	Critical Thinking	Oral Communication
Writing	Numeracy	Working with Others



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# What is Family Literacy?

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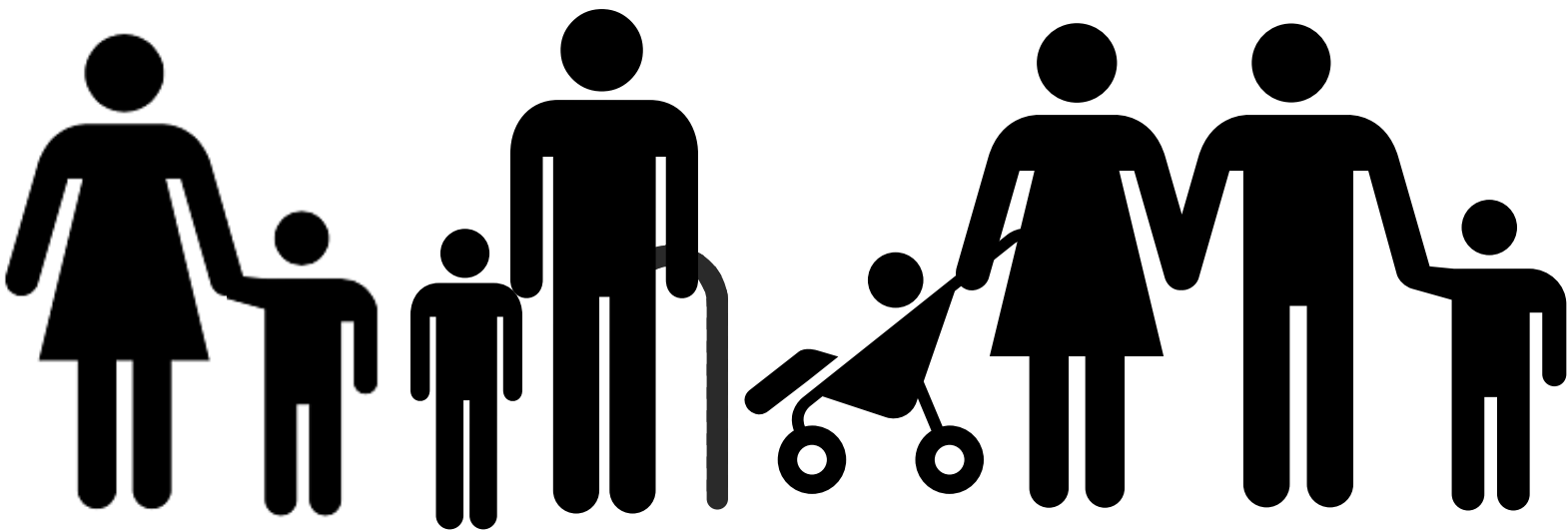
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"Family literacy...

- is the intergenerational sharing of experiences and meanings, which enhance the development of language and numeracy skills
- regards family as a “learning unit” and provides integrated support and learning opportunities for all family members
- is an innovative educational approach based upon a powerful premise: parents are their children’s first and most important teachers
- is a shared responsibility that builds on existing community resources and combines the strengths of many partners
- is culturally responsive and as diverse as the communities in which it develops
- Addresses the intergenerational correlation between education-level, income-level and health status”

- *Helping communities bloom, a family literacy resource guide for British Columbia*

• families come in all shapes and sizes! •



The word “Family” has different meanings for different people. Family Literacy activities and events are not limited to child/parent participants. There are many possibilities of participants: aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandchild, grandparent, cousin, sibling, caregiver, step-parent, etc.

# Why host a Family Literacy event?

In this digital age, increased screen time has led to a decrease in human connections and social interactions. The culture of books and reading are being lost. The sense of neighbourhood and community are being forgotten.

A Family Literacy event will bring families together, reinforce the importance of learning as a family and will encourage and inspire your community.



Many adults with low literacy develop coping mechanisms to hide their situation and are reluctant to seek assistance for fear of being stigmatized.

The adult learners who do seek help are often referred to a centre by word of mouth. When you host a Family Literacy event you spread the word that help is available.

## Family Literacy

*Who benefits?*

### Children experience improved:

- achievements in school
- cognitive abilities
- motivation to read and learn
- positive self esteem

### Adults experience increased:

- involvement in the learning of their child
- participation in child's success
- literacy skills

### Families experience increased:

- positive bonds between family members
- positive attitudes towards education and literacy

### Society experiences increased:

- literacy levels at all ages and levels of society
- community bonds
- graduation rates
- social inclusion

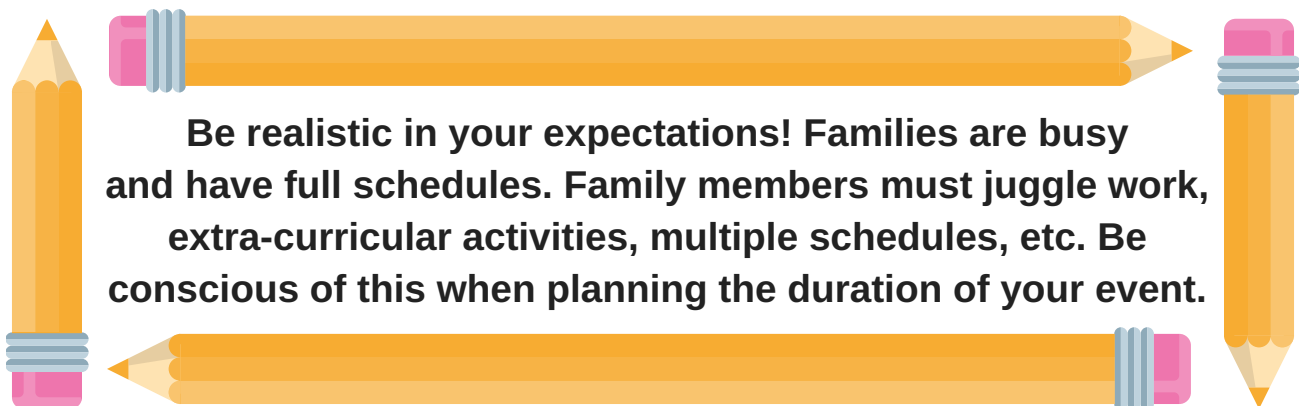
## ★ **When should you host your event?** ★

Although ABC Life Literacy has declared January 27th Family Literacy Day in Canada, you can host an event at any time and even host multiple events throughout the year. Here is a list of some of the important dates in Literacy which may help you determine the date or the time of year of your event(s).

<b>Jan 27</b>	<b>Family Literacy Day</b>
<b>Feb 14</b>	<b>International Book Giving Day</b>
<b>Feb 24</b>	<b>World Read Aloud Day</b>
<b>Mar 11</b>	<b>World Storytelling Day</b>
<b>Mar 21</b>	<b>World Poetry Day</b>
<b>Apr 2</b>	<b>International Children's Book Day</b>
<b>Apr 23</b>	<b>World Book &amp; Copyright Day</b>
<b>Sept 8</b>	<b>International Literacy Day</b>
<b>Sept 23</b>	<b>Essential Skills Day</b>
<b>Dec 10</b>	<b>Human Rights Day</b>



Any occasion can be an opportunity to promote Family Literacy. Having a look at your community calendar and partnering with others can ease the strain of promoting your event. For example, outdoor festivals and fairs are a great venue for story time tents.



**Be realistic in your expectations! Families are busy and have full schedules. Family members must juggle work, extra-curricular activities, multiple schedules, etc. Be conscious of this when planning the duration of your event.**



# Where to host an event?



When choosing a location for your event, there are many things to consider:

- **The size of the event:** How much space do I need? How many people are we expecting? Can I adapt the space to look bigger or smaller if there are more or less people that show up? Determining your target audience will help decide the size of the event.
- **Your budget:** How much is the rental fee and what does it include? Are there any organizations I can cost-share with? Do I have access to free space? Would a partner organization have space I could borrow? Can I have space donated?
- **Your technical needs:** Do I need power outlets? Wireless internet? Microphones? Speakers? Projector? etc.
- **Snacks and beverages:** Do I need a refrigerator, sink, kettle, coffee maker, etc.?
- **Furniture:** Does the location have enough tables and chairs?
- **Accessibility:** Is there parking near by? Easy to get to by public transportation? Wheelchair accessible (ramp, elevator, etc.)?
- **Temperature control:** Is there heating in winter/air conditioning in summer?
- **Washroom facilities:** Does your event require washroom facilities? If arts and crafts are part of the activity you may need a space to clean paintbrushes, wash hands, etc.

## Location is key!

The location should be inviting and visible. Lighting can play a big part in setting the mood of an event! You want participants to feel welcome and comfortable entering the space. Using a location that is accessible to the community is ideal.

# Promoting your event

The first step is to identify your target audience. Once you have done that determine the most efficient ways to reach them. For example, reaching newly arrived refugee families can be done through the settlement organization in your area. Young mothers may be more active on social media.

Word of mouth is the oldest form of advertising and it is still around because it works. Tell everyone you know about your event! Local bulletin boards in businesses, libraries and community groups are all great places to put up posters. Don't forget to put a blurb in the community bulletin, city newsletter and local newspaper.

Cross promotion is an effective way to ensure that you reach your audience. Partnering with an organization can help boost attendance. It will also allow you to present your organization to a new group of people.



*Don't forget Social Media!*

We often forget that social media is an effective way to reach people. There are so many great platforms out there, but we recommend Facebook since it has the capacity to reach your target audience with minimal effort. Twitter can be a good option too, but your posts are limited to 140 characters and can require more resources to manage.

**TIP: Posts that include images are seen more than posts without.**

*Your website is also important!*

Promoting your event can draw more traffic to your website. It is important to have information about the event on your website to avoid confusion. It can also be an opportunity for people to get to know your organization. If you have the time and resources, it is a good idea to make sure that your website has current content.

# • Sample Social Media Posts •

Keep posts short and to the point. A post that is too long will not be read. Use emojis and photos in your post to keep it light and fun. **TIP: use hashtags!**

On social media a hashtag is a word or phrase that is preceded by the pound (#) symbol. It indicates a key word or topic. If you click on a hashtag it will show you other posts that used the same hashtag. For example, if you did a search of #LiteracyMatters, you will be able to find almost every social media post made by Literacy Quebec and even a few posts by other people. Keep in mind that you cannot add spaces or punctuation in a hashtag or it will not work properly.

Here is a list of some hashtags that are relevant to Family Literacy. Using them will hopefully draw more attention to Family Literacy and will help raise awareness about literacy issues.

#LiteracyMatters	#FLD2017
#familyliteracyday	#family
#familyactivities	#fun
#familyliteracy	#learning
#learningtogether	#reading

**TIP: don't use too many hashtags!**  
**Although they are essential for spreading the word about your event, using too many hashtags can be distracting.**  
**We recommend using no more than three hashtags per post.**



A sample Twitter post from Literacy Quebec. The post features the Twitter logo and the text: "Come to our Family Literacy event at the LQ office this Thursday @ 6pm! See you there! #LiteracyMatters". It includes a "Follow" button and interaction options like Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More. The post is timestamped "8:08 AM - 9 Aug 16" and includes an "Embed this Tweet" link.



A sample Facebook post from Literacy Quebec. The post features the Facebook logo and the text: "Happy Family Literacy Day! Come to the LQ office tonight for Hot Chocolate and Story Time 🍫 See you at 7pm! #LiteracyMatters". It includes a "Like" button and interaction options like Comment and More. The post shows 56 likes and two comments from Margo L and Lauren G. The post is timestamped "9 minutes ago" and includes a "Write a comment ..." input field.

# Volunteers

It can be a good idea to enlist the help of volunteers both for the planning and running of the event. It is possible that you may need to recruit some new volunteers outside of your usual cohort. Before you start seeking help you should determine what you need help with and approximately how many volunteers you will need.

**It is always important to screen your volunteers, particularly when hosting an event where there will be children. Volunteer Canada has a great handbook on screening your volunteers.**

## Recruiting Volunteers

- 1. Advertise within your organization and network. Some of your existing volunteers might be able to help.**
- 2. Contact the volunteer bureau in your area. They can help you find great volunteers.**
- 3. Put up a poster on a community bulletin board or at a community centre.**
- 4. Promote your volunteer opportunity on social media!**

### *Volunteers Wanted!*

Volunteer for  
Literacy Quebec at our  
Family Literacy Event  
on January 27th!

For details call us at  
514-508-6805

Communication is key to running a successful event. Being organized and sharing the game plan with all involved will help things run smoothly. There should be a designated go-to person for any issues or questions that may arise as the event progresses. Delegate tasks so that everyone is involved. This will help free up the go-to person. During your event, it is a good idea to make sure your volunteers are easily identifiable. This can be done with special name tags, t-shirts, lanyards, aprons, funny hats, etc.



# Tips

## Make sure your event is a success!

Try seeking community partnerships, sponsorships and product donations for as many things as possible! This will help you cut costs while also raising awareness about your event. Cost sharing is also a good option. When different organizations work together, they can offer a diverse range of in-kind contributions. Keep in mind that literacy is more than reading and writing. It is in music, theatre, and arts and crafts. Be creative with your potential partnerships!

### Potential Partners:

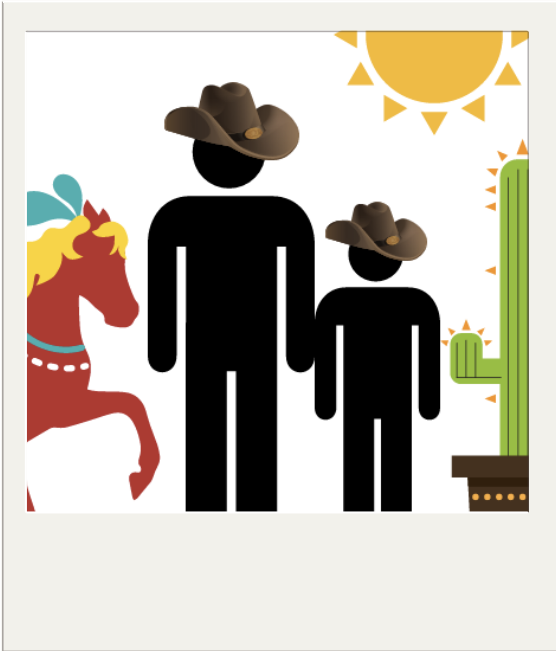
- Schools
- Community Centres
- Libraries
- Book stores
- Family organizations
- Community Groups
- Town fairs and festivals
- CLSC or community clinics
- Cafés and local businesses
- Collective kitchens
- Community gardens
- Museums, art galleries, cultural centres
- Local theatres
- Youth groups (Girl Guides, Scouts, 4-H)

### Who wants free stuff?

Send families home with something! No need to break the bank, get a sponsor or try to get product donations. Pencils, temporary tattoos, and other small items can be inexpensive giveaways. Try seeking donations of books too!

**Depending on the time and place of your event, serving snacks, refreshments or even a meal can be a great incentive for people to attend.**

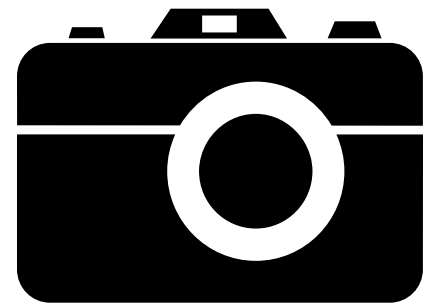




**Book themed costumes are a big hit with children! Have a volunteer dress up as a popular book character.**

Book themed photo-booths with props are also a hit! Families can dress up and take photos together. Try to have a photographer (a volunteer with a camera will do) at the photo booth. Families who may have forgotten their camera at home will appreciate it! Make the photos available to them by email or through your website if possible.

**When working with little or no budget, prioritize what is essential.**



Don't forget to take pictures of your event! Pictures can be used on your website, social media accounts, and in your activity report. They are also helpful for promoting future events.

**TIP: Be sure to have a Photo Release Waiver and have everyone attending your event sign one.**

Capitalize on the visibility that your event will bring your organization. Keep in touch with the families who attend. Have participants register and invite them to subscribe to your newsletter. This is a great way to build-up your mailing list.

**TIP: Be careful not to spam.**

Besides this, registrations are a simple way to track how many families were reached through your event. This information can be used when seeking sponsorships, product donations and funding for future events.

# Activities

The activities you organize at your event need to be suited to your theme and timeframe. Determine the format of your event. Will you just have one big activity? Or stations with many smaller activities?

There are many aspects that should be considered when planning your activity:

- Can people just pop in?
- Is there a reading at a certain time?
- If families arrive late can they still participate?
- Are activities accessible or adaptable for people with different levels of literacy?



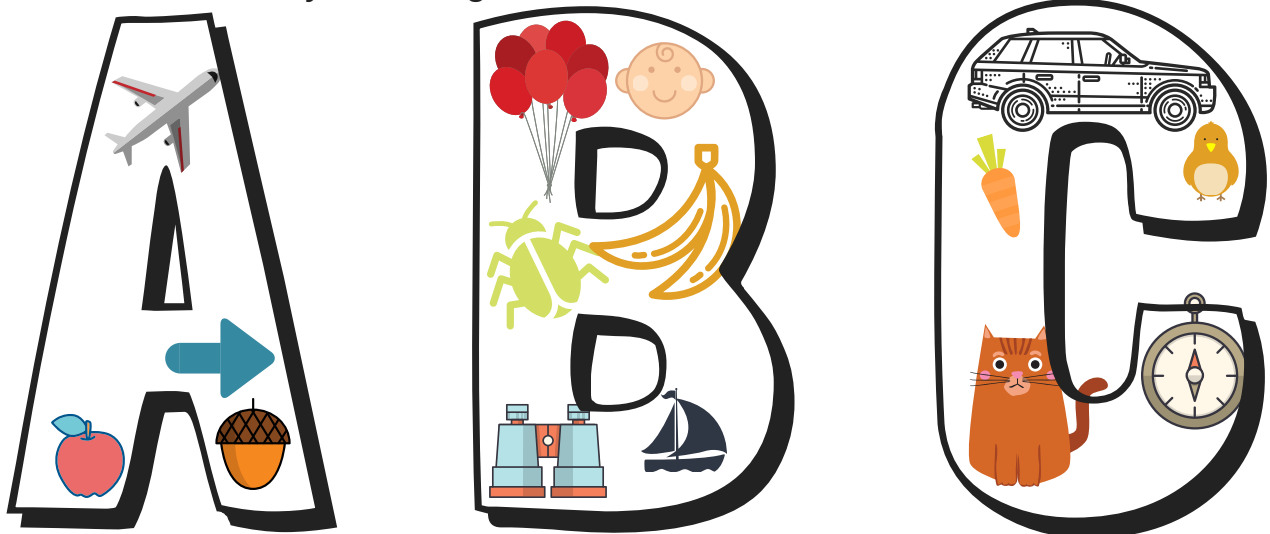
## Host a Book Swap!

Book Swaps are awesome. Most people will read a book once and then never read it again. We tend to hold on to these books "just in case." They end up taking up space on our shelves (and in our lives), when really we will never enjoy them again. Book swaps allow for participants to declutter their shelves and also gives them the opportunity to go home with a book that's new to them.



## Alphabet Banner

Make a huge banner of the whole alphabet in bubble letters. Participants can work together to colour in the letters. Whatever they draw inside the letter should start with the letter that they are filling in.





## Bookmark Making

Let kids create or decorate a bookmark. This is a nice way to add some fun to the reading experience. You can provide pre-cut rigid paper with a hole punched in the top and some wool or ribbon to tie through. Paint chips are also the perfect size. Other unconventional options could be popsicle sticks or bead bookmarks. An assortment of crafting supplies can be left on the table with a few samples for inspiration.



## Bingo for Books

Bingo for Books is a great way to distribute new and lightly used books! You may have these books already lying around or you can ask for donations. At the event set up a large table (or line of tables) with all of the books out on display. You can arrange the books on the table by reading level. Each time someone gets a BINGO they can pick up a book from the prize table!



## Pyjama Party

Are you hosting your event in the evening? Make it a pyjama party! Children (and their parents) will enjoy wearing their pyjamas and it will get them in the mood for bed-time reading.

Idea courtesy of The Learning Exchange.



## Reading Tents

Have reading tents at your event! Families can sit in a tent and take turns reading a new story together.

Idea courtesy of The Learning Exchange.



### **Guest Author**

Do you have a children's author in your community? Reach out to them and ask them to do a book reading and signing at your event!



### **Library Scavenger Hunt**

This is a great activity if you are hosting your event at the community library, or in the library of a local school. Distribute the Scavenger Hunt lists to the families. Encourage adults to assist the children and not just do it for them. Families can work together to find all of the items on the list. When they are done they can trade in their list for a new book! Here are some ideas for your list, but feel free to customize your list to suit your library!

#### **Scavenger Hunt**

- A new arrival (book)
- A picture book
- A chapter book
- A holiday book
- A kids' magazine
- A book in another language
- A book about science
- An audiobook
- A comic book



### **Host a Book Walk!**

A book walk is a great way to encourage families to learn together and adopt healthy lifestyle choices! An ideal location for this type of activity would be in the park, but it could definitely be adapted to other outdoor locations. Pick a children's book (any book will do). Mount each page of the book onto a board, and number each board to correspond with the page number. Attach the board to a stake and set them up across the whole park. Families can then walk through the park from page to page stopping to read each board.



### **Create a Comic**

Write a comic book as a family! Use drawing and words to tell a story in the form of a comic. Work together to develop the story line and characters.

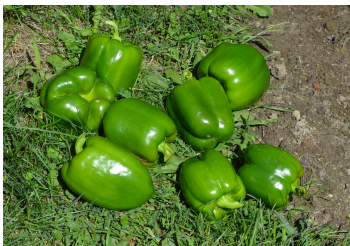






## Growing Together!

Gardening can be a fun family literacy activity. Depending of the size of your event and the number of volunteers, this could be a workshop or something larger with themed stations. Gardening tools, photos of various vegetable fields and the vegetables themselves can all be used as educational displays.



You can start by learning about the optimal environment needed to grow seedlings and plants. How much light and water do they need? Have families discuss where they would set up their own garden.

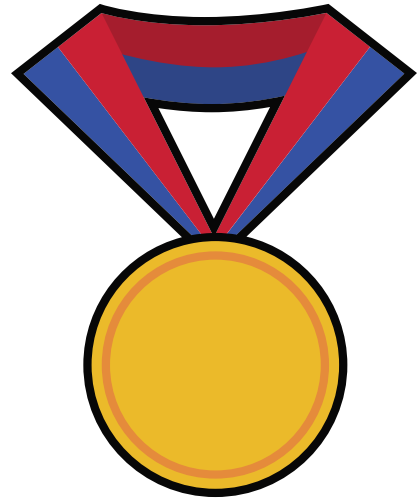
Seeds can be compared to the vegetables they will become and to other seeds. Let families choose which seeds they would like to plant and have the necessary supplies available for them to take them home. For seeds to germinate they need warmth, water and oxygen. Seeds can be wrapped in moistened cotton balls and put into almost any type of container. Glass jars, paper cups, milk cartons, yogurt cups are all inexpensive or free options.

Components of numeracy can be added by counting the seeds, comparing the cost of seeds versus the cost of the vegetables, discussing and keeping a daily log of their observations.



## Literacy Olympics

Set up a series of challenges that need to be completed. This does not have to be a race, but families may receive prizes for completing the entire route. Putting a puzzle together, filling in the blanks of a story that is already written, following instructions to a crafting project, these are all tasks that incorporate literacy fun.



## Collaborative Story Writing

Write a collaborative story! Have one person start writing a story on a piece of lined paper. They cannot tell anyone the details of their story! Once the first person has about a paragraph written, fold the paper down so that only the last line can be seen. Pass the paper to the next person. The second person can read the visible line of the story, and then continue the story. Once the second person has completed a paragraph, fold the paper so only the last line is showing and pass it on. Continue until everyone has had the chance to contribute to the story. Once the story is done, have someone read it aloud!



## Mystery Night

A mystery to solve can peak interest while igniting critical thinking. A “crime scene” can be set up where families must try to interpret the evidence and speak with people on the scene to solve the mystery. Who ate all of the Halloween candy? Who let the lizard out of its cage? There are so many possible scenarios. Candy wrappers, receipts, lipstick, every piece of evidence can be a clue. Volunteers become real-life characters who only know certain information and may only give certain clues. Another format which would require less space and less volunteers would be to distribute evidence bags that provide families with the clues necessary to solve the case. You can even get your local police involved and have them explain fingerprinting techniques and patterns.












## Writing Kit

Literacy Quebec developed these index cards on how to create your own writing kit, and a quick list of ways that family literacy can be continued at home. You can distribute these cards to families at the end of the event. A good idea would be to make your own writing kit and raffle it off throughout the event! It could be given away as a door-prize or as a prize for a specific activity. Inspired by The Learning Exchange



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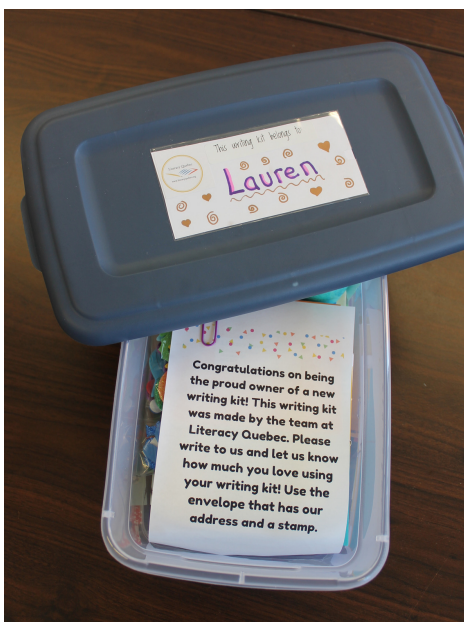
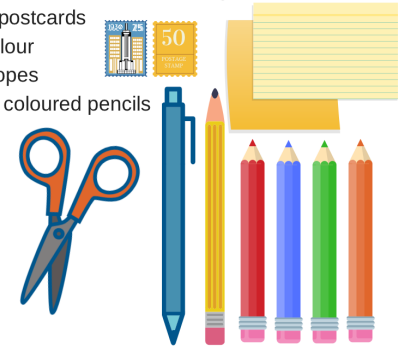
    #LiteracyMatters

## Family Literacy Fun!

- Become a pen pal
- Write a story
- Try a new recipe
- Write a song
- Scrapbooking
- Make a grocery list
- Make a family tree
- Create a family calendar
- Design a birthday card
- Address an envelope
- Organize a scavenger hunt
- Design a board game

## Make a great writing kit!

- Stationery, note cards and postcards
- Paper: Lined, patterned, colour
- Postage stamps and envelopes
- Markers, pens, pencils and coloured pencils
- Erasers and scissors
- Stickers and labels
- Tape and glue sticks
- Embellishments
- Sparkles and sparkle glue
- Ink stampers and ink pads
- Word puzzles and games
- Something to keep it all together! (Basket, tote bag, crafting box)



# Family Literacy at Home

Encourage families to continue the Family Literacy Fun at home! Here are some ways of incorporating Family Literacy into their daily routine.

## Family Board Game Night

Play a board game such as Scrabble, Boggle, Scattegories, or Pictionary. These games are a great way to get everyone involved while exercising your literacy skills. Even better, invent your own board game! Work together as a family to develop the board and the rules. Don't forget to test it out when you are done!

## Alphabet Food

Who says you can't play with your food? Letter shaped food can add some literacy fun to your meal time. Look for alphabet shaped pasta next time you're at the grocery store. Cut cheese and other foods into letters or make alphabet pancakes.



Idea and photo courtesy of RECLAIM Literacy

## Family Story Time

Set aside one night a week for Family Story Time. Take turns each week and have one family member read a story to the rest of the family. You can even write your own story and read it aloud! Reinvent a classic story and pretend that each family member is a character in the story.

## Story in a Bag

Have a magical bag, preferably with a drawstring to avoid losing pieces, filled with characters and objects. The first person picks an item out of the bag and uses it as inspiration for their part of the story. The person must make something up on the spot. Once completed, they must pass the bag onto the next person who will continue the tale with the item they selected.





## Storyline

Have three containers marked: location, character name and genre. Fill each one with pieces of paper that have suggestions for each. For example, the genres could be fiction, comedy, tragedy, etc. Pick one location, one character name and one genre, then have all participants take ten minutes to write a story that incorporates these elements. Share your creations with one another. An alternative would be to have each participant chose from each container and create their own story.

Learn the alphabet or how to communicate in sign language!

## Draw Me A Word

Divide players into teams of at least two people. The first team will have one sketcher and the other players are the guessers. One team choses the word that must be drawn, writes it on a piece of paper and passes it to the sketcher. The sketching team has a limited amount of time to guess what the word is. Once they have guessed correctly or run out of the time, the teams switch. Alternate sketchers within each team every turn.

## Incorporate Literacy Into Your Day!

As a family you can play word games, sing together, write a letter to a relative or friend who lives far away, make a shopping list, or try out a new recipe together!

Need to look something up online? Use your literacy skills as a family to navigate the web.

Consider keeping a family journal. Everyone can write about the best part of their day. This is a great way to communicate with each other while also practicing literacy skills!



Planning an event of any kind can be a stressful experience. Although this toolkit is specific to hosting a Family Literacy event, many of the tips provided can and should be used for any event that you host.

We hope that this Family Literacy Toolkit has been of use to you and your organization. Please feel free to let us know how your event went! We would love the feedback.

**TIP: Let us know about your event before it happens! We can share the info on our website and social media platforms!**

The Family Literacy Toolkit was conceptualized and developed by Lauren Gruer and Margo Legault on behalf of Literacy Quebec. Funding for this project was made possible by the Silver Dollar Foundation. Without them this toolkit would not have been possible.

"The Silver Dollar Foundation is a private philanthropic foundation established to invest in the strength and resilience of community organizations in Montreal. The Foundation has two priorities for giving: capital projects, and academic perseverance. [...]"

The Silver Dollar Foundation has been named in honour of Nathan Steinberg, who had a love of gardening, and whose favourite flower was the silver dollar. He felt strongly about giving back to his community, and we hope to maintain his generous spirit through the work of this foundation."

[www.silverdollarfoundation.ca](http://www.silverdollarfoundation.ca)



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## Chateauguay



Chateauguay Valley  
Literacy Council

## Eastern Townships / Estrie



Yamaska  
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## Gaspésie



## Laval / Laurentians



## Outaouais



Western Quebec  
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## Montreal



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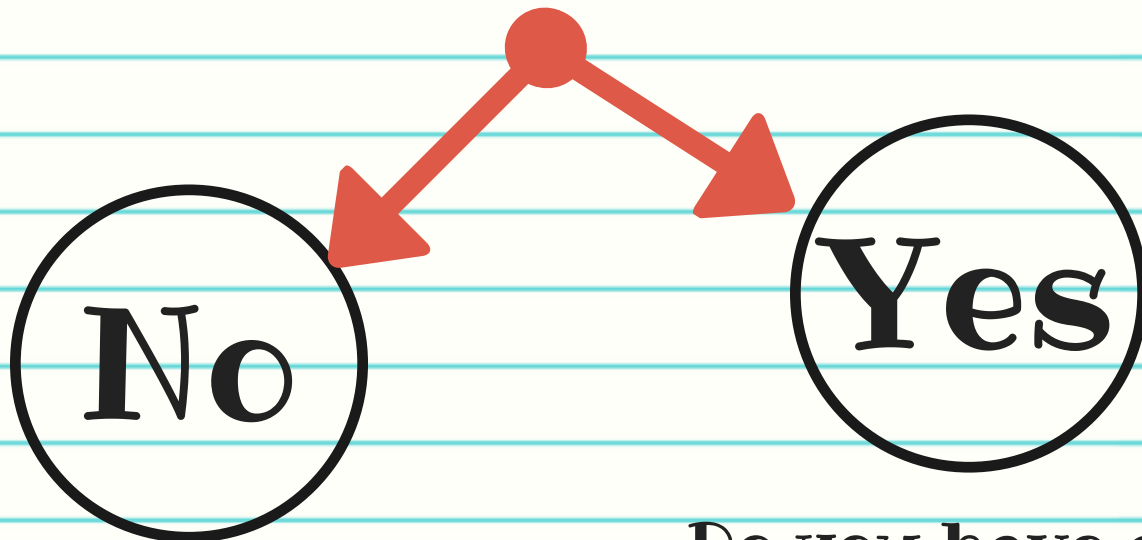
## South Shore



## Associate Members of Literacy Quebec



# Thinking of hosting a Family Literacy Event?

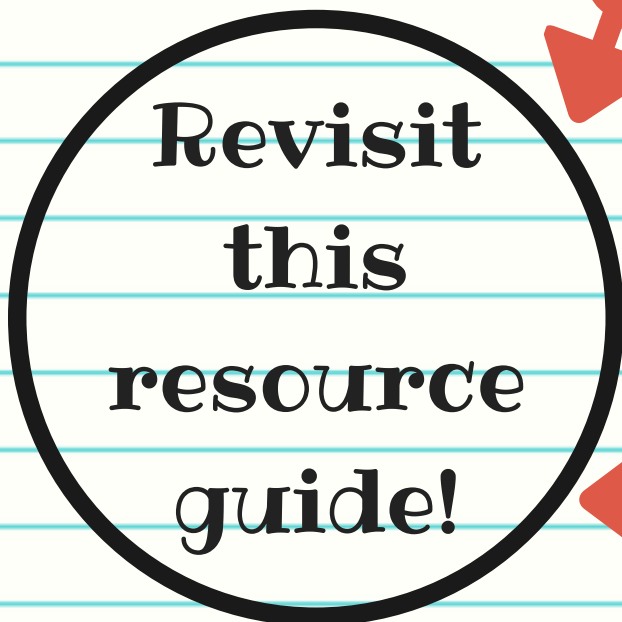


Do you have any partners in mind?



Awesome!  
Contact them.

Then what?



Revisit  
this  
resource  
guide!