



# Let's Get Ready for **Kindergarten!**



## Educators Guide



Funded by the Department of Early Education and Care,  
Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant

## DEAR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY EDUCATORS:

Massachusetts understands that families are the most influential individuals in a child's growth, learning and success, and considers them partners in improving how we support that development. An extensive body of research tells us that when families and communities are engaged in children's learning, and active partners in supporting students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being, the result is better educational and developmental outcomes for children.

Governor Deval Patrick has made closing the academic achievement gap in Massachusetts a priority of his administration. Families and neighborhoods are instrumental to achieving this goal. Parents are their children's first teacher, and children grow and develop in the context of communities, where positive and engaging adult interactions are necessary to build their brains and provide a solid foundation for learning and success. Learning begins at birth, is always happening, and continues for a lifetime.

The *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit is a resource that will increase the capacity of museums and libraries to support the optimal development of all children through intentional family engagement activities and early learning opportunities. This is an exciting time for museums and libraries to embrace the invitation to collaborate in communities, contributing to the effort that all children start school ready to succeed.

We are grateful for the chance to help create a statewide network of museums and libraries who are working locally with early childhood professionals on behalf of our youngest children in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We hope you find this kit helpful in launching meaningful programming for your community. Thank you for your enthusiastic participation.

Sincerely,

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Director Museums/Libraries Project

Boston Children's Museum  
Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant  
May 2013



## WELCOME!

The *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit is a product of the Department of Early Education and Care, and Boston Children's Museum and its Museums/Libraries Project. The goal of this curriculum is to support museum and library educators to create learning opportunities based on the Massachusetts Early Learning Standards, in their unique efforts to help families prepare their children to enter kindergarten.

## MEET THE PARTNERS

**The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)** was created within the context of childhood brain development research showing the long-term impact of high-quality early education and its potential return on investment. We know that *access* to formal and informal early education and care experiences is crucial. EEC has been seeking to create formal and informal opportunities for growth and learning since its inception.

**United Way of Massachusetts Bay and the Merrimack Valley** leads the Brain Building in Progress campaign through a public/private partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and a growing community of early education and child care providers, academic researchers, business leaders and individuals. Our mission is to raise awareness of the critical importance of fostering the cognitive, social and emotional development of young children by emphasizing its future impact on economic development and prosperity for everyone in Massachusetts. Visit [www.brainbuildinginprogress.org](http://www.brainbuildinginprogress.org) for more information.

**Boston Children's Museum (BCM)** is a welcoming, imaginative, child-centered learning environment that supports diverse families in nurturing their children's creativity and curiosity. BCM promotes the healthy development of all children so that they will fulfill their potential and contribute to our collective well-being and future prosperity. In 2012, BCM was awarded a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant by EEC. The grant enables BCM to convene museums and libraries statewide in order to align informal early learning and development opportunities in our cultural institutions with state standards. The goal is to create engaging programming for children and families around a few key topics: STEM, kindergarten readiness, literacy, and Brain Building in Progress. In BCM's *Countdown to Kindergarten* exhibit, parents and children practice going to kindergarten.

### NOTE:

This educators' guide was written for the *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit, which is intended for use between 2013 and 2015. Some activities and resources may have changed since the guide was published.



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## LET'S GET READY FOR KINDERGARTEN!

Kindergarten is a big step, even for children who have already spent time in preschool or in a group early education and care setting. It usually means learning new names and faces, a new building, a new classroom, and a new kind of schedule. Being ready for kindergarten can make all the difference in a child's introduction to formal education. When families and educators work together to prepare children for school, parents know more about what to expect and what they can do to support their children.

Preschool experiences for families and children are a key part of the school-readiness strategy. But busy schedules and limited resources make it difficult for many adults to find the time to spend in early childhood settings. What's needed is a community resource where parents can see what quality in early childhood education looks like, a place to participate in the process of getting young students ready for this critical transition.

In August 2010, Boston Children's Museum opened a new exhibit called *Countdown to Kindergarten*. This 1,500-square-foot model classroom serves the general public as a place to play and learn during regular museum hours. It provides an opportunity for children to become familiar with a classroom and its materials and for parents to learn how to support and advocate for young learners.

As a museum or library educator, you too can provide a kindergarten classroom experience by using the materials provided in the *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit and creating a "let's play school" setting in your space. You can invite your visitors to hear a Circle Time story with a puppet, play a new game, or practice their writing skills. The opportunity for children and families to experience a classroom setting, meet a "teacher," read a story about going to kindergarten, and ask questions is valuable for your visitors—and it's valuable for your community! Let your public school superintendent's office know that you provide this experience, publicize it widely, and embrace even the youngest of children who want to practice going to school.



# ARE YOU READY?

*This guide will help you make it happen.*

## WHAT IS A POPUP CLASSROOM ALL ABOUT?

The PopUp Classroom is based on the pop-up retail spaces that began to appear in 1999 in Los Angeles. A pop-up retail space is a venue that is temporary, lasting anywhere from one day to several weeks. The space might sell rare and limited-edition books one day and host a celebrity chef and private dinner party the next. The pop-up retail concept allows companies to create a unique environment that engages their customers and generates a feeling of relevance and interactivity. These spaces are often used by marketers for seasonal items such as Halloween costumes and holiday decorations.

Like a pop-up retail space, this PopUp Classroom will be temporary, but a unique and exciting environment that will engage children and their families about getting ready to go to kindergarten. Remember playing school as a kid? Usually someone's pushy big sister was the teacher and other siblings and friends were her students. All you needed was a small table and chairs, something for a chalkboard, and paper and pencils to do the work. A PopUp Classroom in your museum or library doesn't need much else!

## HOW DO I SET UP A POPUP CLASSROOM?

The setup for a PopUp Classroom is not complicated. It might include a few child-size tables and chairs for manipulatives and a whiteboard or flip chart that the "teacher" can use when talking about the day of the week, the month, and the year. You could arrange a Circle Time with a story and props about going to kindergarten. Perhaps some older children can comment about how they felt when they went to kindergarten for the first time.

Floor activities like puzzles, blocks, and dramatic play items can also help transform your space into a classroom. Use a small rug to define an area, or position a movable bookcase to delineate different areas.

Post signs announcing your event in the lobby of your museum or library, and use signs to decorate the "classroom." (You'll find signs you can use on a CD included with the kit.)



## WHAT'S IN THE KIT?

Take your time to check out the puppet, activities, CDs and more that are in the box and ready to make your PopUp Classroom come alive!

### Big-Mouth Duck Puppet

This plush puppet has a giant working mouth and movable arms so children can use it to perform and verbalize easily. It is machine-washable and dryer-safe. This puppet is perfect for Circle Time, story time, or anytime an adult or child wants to communicate, describe, or problem-solve using a dramatic element.

### Feed the Monkey Game

Children build fine motor control and develop eye-hand coordination as they help the hungry monkey gobble up his bananas. The game features large, fun-to-use tweezers designed just for little hands. Children use the tweezers to grab the bananas and drop them into the monkey's mouth, fine-tuning their motor skills with every bite.

### My First Sorting Bears

Give early learners an introduction to sorting with big, easy-grip bears designed just for them. The kit includes twenty-four bears in two different sizes and four primary colors, plus eight corresponding activity cards. Children can place the bears right on the cards to sort each one by size and color. This activity, which can be done on a tabletop or the floor, is all about counting and patterns.

### Magic Boards and Printing Cards for Writing Practice

Children use the magnetic pen to write on the Magic Board, and then slide the eraser bar to wipe it clean. Slip the stencil cards onto the Magic Board, and have children trace the preprinted letters. The Magic Board has baselines printed right on the screen so it's easy for children to practice printing on their own. There's even a simple word to reinforce letter sounds.

## MASSACHUSETTS GUIDELINES FOR PRESCHOOL LEARNING

- < Listen to storytellers and watch puppet shows. Encourage the children to talk about the puppet and what it said or did.
- < Use thumb/forefinger in pincer grasp. Let children experiment using the tweezers to pick up small objects. There's no wrong way; they will eventually figure out how to use their thumb and forefinger only.
- < Engage in play experiences that involve naming and sorting common words into various classifications using general and specific language. Encourage children to select a bear, identify its color, then use specific words to describe it in terms of color, shape, or size.
- < Develop familiarity with the forms of alphabet letters, awareness of print, and letter forms. Encourage children to practice the letters in their names and write their names.



## WHAT'S IN THE KIT? (continued)

### Books

***Is Everybody Ready for Kindergarten? A Toolkit for Preparing Children and Families*** by Angéle Sancho Passe provides early childhood professionals with information and practical advice to help children and their families prepare for and transition successfully into kindergarten. The book includes helpful activities and reproducible checklists and handouts.

***Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come! [Prepárate, Kindergarten! Allá Voy!]*** by Nancy Carlson is about getting ready for kindergarten. This Spanish-English edition reaches out to Spanish speaking families with simple, comforting text and big, bright illustrations to help ease first-day-of-school jitters.

***First Day Jitters*** by Julie Danneberg is a familiar story about that sinking feeling you get in the pit of your stomach just before diving into a new situation. Sarah Jane Hartwell is scared and doesn't want to start over at a new school. She doesn't know anybody, and nobody knows her. Children and adults will sympathize with Sarah's feelings and laugh when they read the surprise ending.

***Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*** by Joseph Slate describes the first day of kindergarten for a teacher and her class. Miss Bindergarten is hard at work getting the classroom ready for her new students. Meanwhile, Adam Krupp wakes up, Brenda Heath brushes her teeth, and Christopher Beaker finds his sneaker. Miss Bindergarten puts the finishing touches on the room just in time, and the students arrive. This rhyming, brightly illustrated book is the perfect way to practice the alphabet and to introduce young children to kindergarten.

◀ Recognize and describe or represent emotions such as happiness, surprise, anger, fear, sadness. As you read and discuss these books, talk about the emotions by asking questions like, "How do you think he is feeling?"



### CDs and DVDs

Five CDs and one DVD are included in the kit:

**Tip sheets for parents in English, Spanish, and Chinese (three CDs).** These tip sheets can be printed out on color paper; there are two tip sheets to an 8½ x 11-inch sheet of paper with content on the front and back. These tip sheets allow parents to take home simple and fun ideas they learned while participating in your activities.

**Signage for your classroom (CD).** This CD includes an assortment of professional graphics that you can use to advertise your kindergarten readiness activities and put up around the space to engage parents and caregivers. The graphics can be adjusted to fit sign holders of all sizes.

**Classroom activities (CD).** The twenty-five activities included on this CD give you a variety of simple, age-appropriate activities and programming ideas for your PopUp Classroom. You can view the activities on your computer and print them out when you need them.

***I'm Ready for Kindergarten (DVD).*** This video follows Olivia, a new kindergartner, through a typical day and lets children share her experience in this new year of learning. The second video, *Ask a Teacher*, answers parents' most commonly asked questions about kindergarten: Is there homework in kindergarten? How do we find out if our child can take the bus to school? What if my child has special needs?



## HOW DO I USE THE KIT?

You can use the *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit in a variety of ways to meet your community's needs. Here are two suggestions: (1) host a kindergarten-readiness event at your museum or library and (2) set up a PopUp Classroom in your facility so young visitors can "play kindergarten."

### Kindergarten-Readiness Family Event

At Boston Children's Museum, we host a kindergarten-readiness night the first Friday of every month, September through June. Museum admission is only \$1.00 per person on Friday nights after five o'clock, so we generally get a good crowd.

During each event, our *Countdown to Kindergarten* exhibit features a theme. For example, when the theme is "All About Me," our young visitors practice writing their letters or maybe their names, trace their bodies or hands on paper, draw pictures of their families (engaging parents and caregivers to help), and make hand-print collages. Circle Time revolves around the story *I Like Me* by Nancy Carlson and includes a conversation about how many siblings or pets the children have, what color their eyes are, and other features that make each individual special.

To complement the *Countdown to Kindergarten* exhibit activities, BCM offers a cutting activity in the Art Studio where children can practice their scissors skills, a sink/float activity in our Peep's World exhibit, and a special play *D.W. Counts Down to Kindergarten* in *KidStage*.

The goal of a kindergarten-readiness event is to raise the awareness of parents and caregivers to help their children develop the skills they need to begin kindergarten ready to learn. Your staff should be prepared to answer some simple questions:

- How old do children need to be to register for kindergarten in the local school district?
- Is there homework in kindergarten?
- What skills do children need to be successful in kindergarten?

Kindergarten-readiness events can take place anytime. Alternatives to a regular Family Night include an all-day program on a Saturday or Sunday, a weekday late afternoon or evening event, or an event held occasionally during the school year.



### Let's Play Kindergarten!

As a museum or library educator, you can use the *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten!* kit in your facility anytime. Here are some suggestions for using the kit:

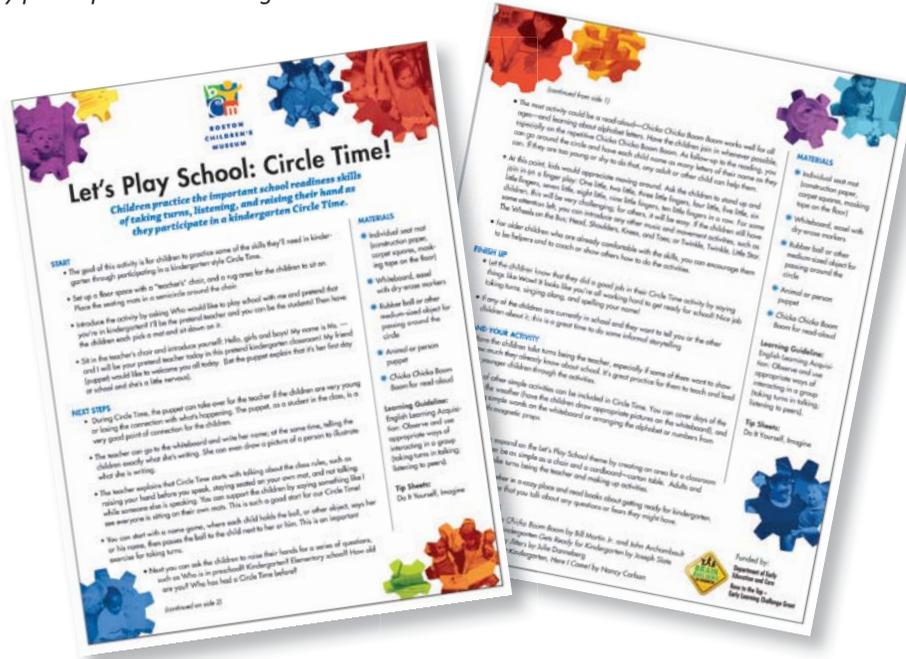
- At Circle Time/story time pretend you're a kindergarten teacher. Talk about what month it is, name the days of the week, and describe the current weather. Kindergarten teachers do this every day to help their students learn the calendar, the weather, and the other children's names as they take attendance.
- Read a story using the Big-Mouth Duck Puppet. Have the puppet read the story and ask the children questions.
- At a small table, set out one of the manipulatives from the kit. Let children play freely with the Sorting Bears or Feed the Monkey Game. Provide a tip sheet for parents to help them understand what their child is learning while playing. (Remember, the tip sheets are available on the CD in the kit.)
- Host a kindergarten program around the time your town registers incoming kindergartners. This often happens in January and February. Museums and libraries can host a few sessions or a series of *Countdown to Kindergarten* or *Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten* programs leading up to registration.
- Collaborate with others in your community to celebrate the incoming kindergartners for the following September. Depending on your space, you can host the gathering or bring kit activities or other programming to the celebration site. Help market and advertise this event!
- Plan a themed family program, such as *What's in a Backpack?* This program gives children an opportunity to get familiar with backpacks by packing them with small plastic storage containers, pretend lunch foods, and other items, helping them learn self-help skills.
- Create a kindergarten-readiness display in your space using some of the kit materials. (One of the CDs included with the kit has various signs you can use.)
- Catalog the kit's components separately, and lend them to library patrons. This might include the manipulative activities, the DVD, and the puppet.

## SAMPLE CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

There are twenty-five activities you can use in your PopUp Classroom (located on a CD in the kit). They represent a variety of learning experiences including language arts, STEM, social-emotional development, and creative arts. Here's one sample activity.

### Let's Play School: Circle Time!

Children practice the important school-readiness skills of taking turns, listening, and raising their hands as they participate in a kindergarten Circle Time.



### MATERIALS

- Individual seat mats (construction paper, carpet squares, masking tape on the floor)
- Whiteboard, easel, dry-erase markers
- Rubber ball or other medium-sized object for passing around the circle
- Animal or person puppet
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault to read aloud

### START

- The goal of this activity is for children to practice some of the skills they'll need in kindergarten by participating in a kindergarten-style Circle Time.
- Set up a floor space with a chair for the "teacher" and a rug area for the children to sit on. Place the seating mats in a semicircle around the chair.
- Introduce the activity by asking, "Who would like to play school with me and pretend that you're in kindergarten? I'll be the pretend teacher, and you can be the students!" Then have the children each pick a mat and sit down on it.
- Sit in the teacher's chair and introduce yourself: "Hello, girls and boys! My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I will be your pretend teacher today in this pretend kindergarten classroom! My friend [give puppet's name] would like to welcome you all today." Have the puppet explain that it's her first day at school and she's a little nervous.

### NEXT STEPS

- During Circle Time, the puppet can take over for you if the children are very young or are losing interest in what's happening. The puppet, as a student in the class, is a very good point of connection for the children.
- Go to the whiteboard and write your name; at the same time, tell the children exactly what you're writing. You can even draw a picture of a person to illustrate what you are writing.
- Explain that Circle Time starts with talking about the class rules, such as raising your hand before you speak, staying seated on your own mat, and not talking while someone else is speaking. Support the children by saying something like "I see everyone is sitting on their own mats. This is such a good start for our Circle Time!"
- Start with a name game, where each child holds the ball or other object, says her or his name, and then passes the ball to the next child. This is an important exercise for taking turns.
- Next, ask the children to raise their hands as they answer a series of questions, such as "Who is in preschool? Kindergarten? Elementary school? How old are you? Who has had a Circle Time before?"
- For the next activity, read a book aloud—*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* works well for all ages—and introduce the letters of the alphabet. Have the children join in whenever possible, especially on the repetitive "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom." As a follow-up to the reading, you can go around the circle and have each child name as many letters in her or his name as possible. If some children are too young or too shy to do this, any adult or other child can help them.
- At this point, kids would appreciate moving around. Ask the children to stand up and join in on a finger play: "One little, two little, three little fingers, four little, five little, six little fingers, seven little, eight little, nine little fingers, ten little fingers in a row." For some children, this will be very challenging; for others, it will be easy. If the children are still attentive, you can introduce any other music and movement activities, such as "The Wheels on the Bus," "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes," or "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."
- If any of the older children are already comfortable with the skills, encourage them to be helpers and to coach or show others how to do the activities.



### FINISH UP

- Let the children know that they did a good job in their Circle Time activity by saying things like “Wow! It looks as if you’re all working hard to get ready for school! Nice job taking turns, singing along, and spelling your name!”
- If any of the children are currently in school, allow them to talk about it. This is a great time to do some informal storytelling.

### EXPAND YOUR ACTIVITY

- Have the children take turns being the teacher, especially if some of them want to show how much they already know about school. It’s great practice for them to teach and lead the others through the activities.
- A lot of other simple activities can be included in Circle Time. For example, you can talk about the days of the week or the weather (have the children draw appropriate pictures on the whiteboard). You can also help the children spell simple words on the whiteboard or arrange the alphabet or numbers from 1 to 10 using magnetic props.

### TAKE IT HOME

- Families can expand on the Let’s Play School activity by creating an area for a classroom at home. It can be as simple as a chair and a cardboard-carton table. Adults and children can take turns being the teacher and making up activities.
- Encourage parents to sit down with their children in a cozy place and read books about getting ready for kindergarten. Give the children a chance to talk about any questions or fears they might have.

### BOOKS

- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

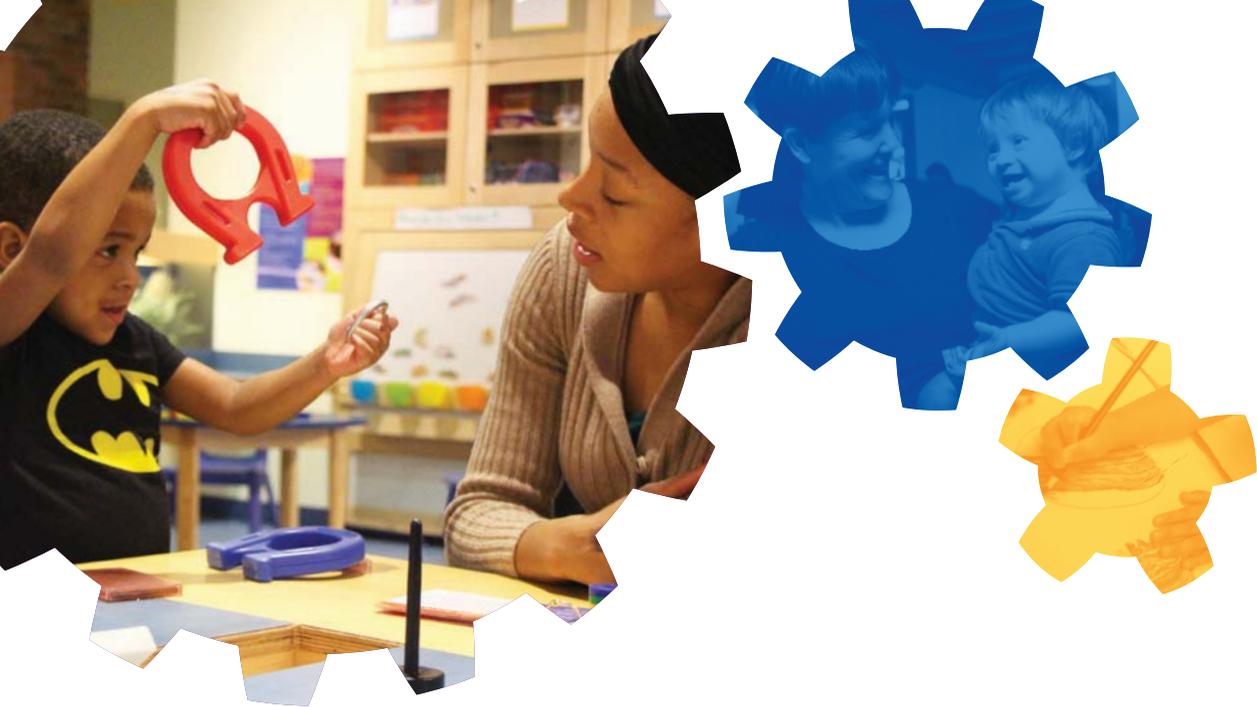
What is family engagement, and what does it look like in the PopUp Classroom? There are a number of organizations and academics trying to settle on a clear, research-based, commonly shared definition that can be applied to policy and practice in order to increase the likelihood that our investments in family engagement will contribute to kindergarten readiness, student success, and school improvement. For the purpose of BCM’s Museums/Libraries Project, and this educators’ guide in particular, we are concerned with children up to eight years of age and their families when they are visiting museums and libraries.

Karen Mapp, Ed.D, of Harvard Graduate School of Education defines family engagement as “any way that adult caregivers support their child’s learning.” This works in both museums and libraries and is supported by a statement from the Association of Children’s Museums.

**Children’s museums are unique places that bring children, families and communities together for quality interaction. Offering lifelong learning opportunities for audiences as tender as newborns, children’s museums are vital cultural institutions. Serving as beacons amid a frenzied environment, children’s museums celebrate play and creativity; provide activities that nurture family relationships; establish common ground in communities; collaborate with traditional educational and social service organizations and build creative communities that improve the quality of life. Grounded in well-established pedagogy, children’s museums are leading a movement that combines specific learning objectives with play in informal learning environments. As highly desirable meeting places and as proponents of play, children’s museums bring a world of possibilities to families who want the best for their children.**

Lynn D. Dierking of Oregon State University offers more about family learning in museums in her helpful resource *Family Learning Overview* ([www.familylearningforum.org./family-learning/familylearning-overview/index.htm](http://www.familylearningforum.org./family-learning/familylearning-overview/index.htm)) and the Family Learning Team of the USS Constitution Museum in Boston, MA contributes *Getting Started: Ten Steps to Encourage Family Learning at Your Institution* ([www.familylearningforum.org./images/ten\\_steps.pdf](http://www.familylearningforum.org./images/ten_steps.pdf)).





In libraries, an initiative known as *Family Place* introduced a new children’s programming model that encourages libraries to go beyond summer reading programs and story hours to reach their full potential as community hubs. The California State Library is working on an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant to build this model. (You can learn more at [www.imls.gov/your\\_friendly\\_neighborhood\\_library\\_an\\_inviting\\_space\\_a\\_family\\_place.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/your_friendly_neighborhood_library_an_inviting_space_a_family_place.aspx).)

The Museums/Libraries Project is working toward a simpler working definition of family engagement in museums and libraries in Massachusetts. Your ideas are welcome as we continue to refine this work.

### Engaging Families in the PopUp Classroom

With the activities in the PopUp Classroom, you can engage families by:

- Enabling parents to observe their children playing and reflect on what they know and what they love to do
- Encouraging parents to interact with their children while “playing school”: be the teacher, be the student, use the props, read stories
- Supporting the connections between parents, between parents and children, and between parents and educators by creating a relaxed and fun atmosphere in which everyone can freely explore the idea of starting school
- Promoting family fun and supporting the museum-library-home connection by offering parents meaningful content to take home to practice and continue the play and learning

## TIPS TO SHARE WITH PARENTS

Judging a child’s readiness for kindergarten is not an exact science. Children develop at different rates, especially between the ages of four and eight. Some children may learn to read at four but have trouble controlling a pencil until age seven. Some children may have no interest in reading until age seven but may be very advanced socially at a younger age. All of this is perfectly normal.

Experts on young children disagree on whether it’s more important for a child to be ready for kindergarten or for the kindergarten to be able to work with children at many different stages of development. No matter what point of view you take, help parents determine their child’s readiness for kindergarten by encouraging them to:

- Compare the school’s expectations with their child’s academic and social skills. If they are considering a kindergarten with a traditional academic program, does their child recognize letters? Can she use numbers? Some teachers approach this in different ways.
- Think about other aspects of their child’s learning so far. For example, does he enjoy telling stories? Does he ask questions about how things work? Ask if the school fits his learning style.
- Consider their child’s social, emotional, and physical development. These involve skills their child will need to use in the classroom. For example, if their child has trouble dealing with other children, she may not thrive in a large classroom. If she can’t yet control her hands well enough to draw pictures, she may not do well in a kindergarten that expects her to write.



## MASSACHUSETTS GUIDELINES FOR PRESCHOOL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The role of the early years in a child's development has received a great deal of attention in recent years. Research on brain development supports the value of high-quality early childhood education programs for young children, and studies of early childhood education also provide evidence of their benefits. The *Early Childhood Program Standards* and the *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences* reflect the Massachusetts Department of

Education's commitment to quality in order to ensure a solid foundation for learning and school success. As a museum or library educator, keep these guidelines in mind as you design and deliver programming for children from birth to five years of age. [http://www.highreach.com/highreach\\_cms/portals/0/pdf/StateAlignments/MAFinal.pdf](http://www.highreach.com/highreach_cms/portals/0/pdf/StateAlignments/MAFinal.pdf)

### Guiding Preschool Learning in English Language Arts

Children develop the basis for verbal communication in early childhood, beginning with nonverbal social exchanges. They begin to appreciate literature and the joy of reading by being read to in family and early care/education settings. A solid foundation in language development in the years before a child enters school promotes success in reading and writing in the future.

### Guiding Preschool Learning in Mathematics

Mathematics relates to ideas and concepts about quantity and addresses logical and spatial relationships. At the preschool level, the foundations of mathematical understanding are formed out of children's concrete experiences. Mathematical thinking can be incorporated into block play, dramatic play, sand and water play, and outdoor play.

### Guiding Preschool Learning in Science and Technology/Engineering

Young children are naturally curious. They wonder what things are called, how they work, and why things happen. The foundations of scientific learning lie in inquiry and exploration—these are the tools of active learning. Fostering young children's sense of curiosity about the natural world around them can promote a lifelong interest in it.

### Guiding Preschool Learning in History and Social Science

At the early childhood level, learning in history and social science is built on children's experiences in their families, school, community, state, and country. Preschoolers can explore beginning concepts of history and social sciences with questions that are important to their lives such as "Who are the members of my family?" "Where do we live? Who are our neighbors?"

### Guiding Preschool Learning in Health Education

In the preschool years, brain and body development are critically linked. It is through physical activity and body movement that the brain internalizes the foundations of laterality (left, right), directionality (up, down, in, out), and position in space (over, under, behind). These concepts are critical to mathematical thinking as well as to beginning reading and writing.

### Guiding Preschool Learning in the Arts

The goal of arts education for young children is to develop and sustain the natural curiosity, expressiveness, and creativity that very young children often display. Arts education begins with a foundation that emphasizes exploration, experimentation, and engagement of the senses, and discussion as paths to understanding.



## DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

Because each child develops differently, you should use the following development milestones as only a general guideline of what to expect from a young child. It is important to deliver consistent, developmentally appropriate messages to parents and developmentally appropriate activities to your youngest visitors. Training your staff so they feel comfortable and knowledgeable when answering parents' questions is key to delivering a developmentally appropriate program. To that end, the following table includes brief descriptions of developmentally appropriate practices in a PopUp Classroom.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

### Two-Year-Olds

Between two and three, children are beginning to realize they are independent from their caregivers. They want to exercise free will, largely by opposing much of what grownups want or expect from them. Their protests will probably include temper tantrums and heavy use of the word *no*.

Children are now learning to incorporate their real-life experiences into pretend play. This is their way of figuring out the world around them.

Grownups should be encouraged to expand their children's language by reading with them every day and by asking them questions about the book they are reading: "What do you think will happen next?"

### Three-Year-Olds

At three years old, children begin to make friends. For the first time, they face difficult new issues like sharing and taking turns.

Three-year-olds are learning to cooperate with other children and engage in fantasy play. They understand that there are ways to solve problems, and they identify "same" and "different" objects. Three-year-olds talk in short sentences so that others can understand, and they remember and retell parts of stories.

## DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

### In the PopUp Classroom

At BCM, young toddlers love the Countdown to Kindergarten exhibit. They love climbing up in the kid-size chairs and sitting at a table. They love activities and manipulatives they've never seen or played with before. They are curious and some of our best customers!

Instead of the smallest sorting bears, use the larger bears that present less of a choking hazard. With the larger bears, toddlers can compare size and color on their own or make up their own imaginative games with them.

Use the Big-Mouth Duck Puppet and other props you own for dramatic play. Board books and larger objects support the development of fine motor skills.

### In the PopUp Classroom

Encourage children to play together at the tables or during Circle Time. Use opportunities to reinforce sharing, raising your hand, sitting in the circle, and taking turns. These are all important skills in kindergarten.

Provide dramatic play activities and table activities for "same" and "different," counting, sorting, and patterns. Encourage lots of conversation while working at tables, read stories, and ask questions so children can practice talking in sentences and using their experience to describe the world.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

### Four-Year-Olds

This age group can use the future tense—for example, "Tomorrow I am going to school" or "On my next birthday I will be five." Many four-year-olds:

- Tell their full name and address
- Count ten or more objects
- Want to be like their friends
- Exhibit greater independence, such as a willingness to visit a friend's house alone
- Easily agree to rules
- Enjoy singing, dancing, and acting

### Five-Year-Olds

This age group can use past, present, and future tenses accurately. Many five-year-olds:

- Group similar objects together
- Understand the idea of today, tomorrow, and yesterday
- Identify most letters and numbers
- Retell a story from a picture book with reasonable accuracy
- Comfort friends who are sad or hurt
- Understand that there are rules when playing games
- Express feelings

## DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

### In the PopUp Classroom

During a Circle Time activity, encourage kids to say their full names and share other facts as they want to: where they live, when they're going to school, about their siblings, etc. Sing, dance, and playact in Circle Time too!

Make math activities available as well as science, writing, and reading.

Your visitors should understand the rules of the "classroom" and be encouraged to share them with their younger siblings and parents.

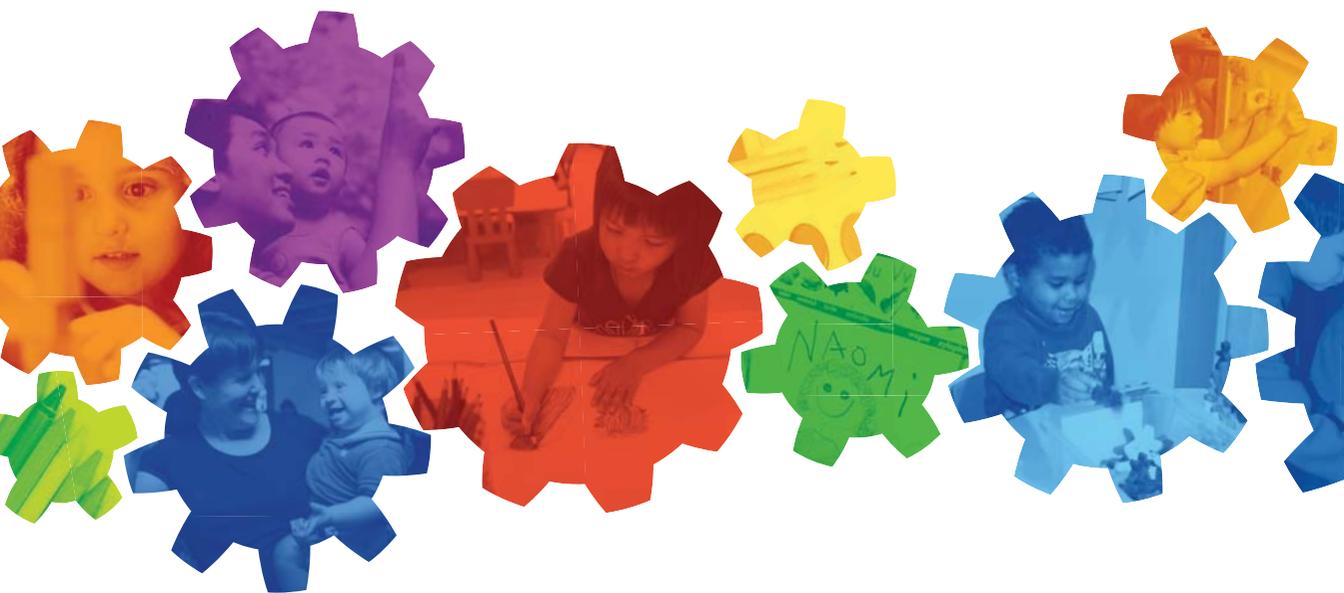
### In the PopUp Classroom

The five-year-olds are the easiest to keep busy in the Countdown to Kindergarten exhibit. They find multiple activities to do and play with in every exhibit area.

Talk with parents of children in this age group about how their kids are doing in preschool, when they are going to kindergarten, and whether they need information about the logistics or developmental skills of kindergarten.







Developed by:



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Funded by:

Department of Early  
Education and Care

Race to the Top –  
Early Learning Challenge Grant

Photography by:

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Clive Grainger, Karin Hansen,  
Tim Porter, Paul Specht, and  
iStockphoto.com.*

*Design by Karin Hansen*