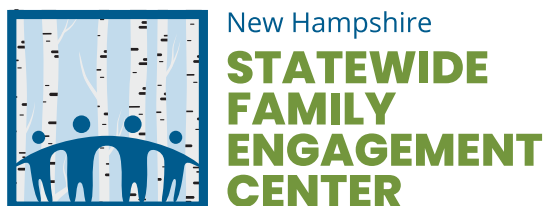


Families Build BRAINS

PROVIDER TOOLKIT



Families Build Brains

Introduction

We have only a few short years to build strong, trusting relationships, and nurture brain development. Why not have fun in an educational way right at home? We have read the research, and we know that our parents are their child's first teacher. We can provide our families with materials, ideas, and tips through a series of brain building kits at their fingertips. Families Build Brains are toolkits designed by early childhood educators and family engagement specialists to boost children's educational requirements for kindergarten readiness. These kits will strengthen and build self-confidence and promote creative thinking skills through play. More importantly, children will be exposed to everyday learning in their own living room or kitchen while engaging with their parents or other caring adults.

If families have already begun to teach some basic skills such as exploring colors, shapes, counting, and reading to their child, then these kits will enhance that learning with developmentally age-appropriate activities. These components are included in each kit:

Literacy & Writing: drawing, modeling, painting, scribbling, looking at books, reading books, and retelling stories.

Math: number recognition and counting, shapes, patterns, and spatial relationships.

Cognition: focusing, engaging, attention, curiosity, motivation, and making connections to real life experiences.

For more information about Kindergarten Readiness:

[Family Engagement to Support Kindergarten Readiness and Early School Success](#)



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For the Provider

This set of *Families Build Brains* kits has been developed to address Kindergarten Readiness in alignment with the skills measured by the Brigance. Kits assist parents in hands-on experiences that stimulate their child's early brain development.

These kits are also aligned with typical family engagement performance measures in community schools. Here is all you need to know to build a successful program. The pages that follow contain supply lists and printables.

Steps for Implementation

1. Determine your target budget and audience
2. Purchase materials for kits
3. Recruit family participants in your target audience
4. Assemble kits
5. Host a kickoff event to distribute the first bag, introduce the program, and collect pre-survey data
6. Distribute the kits monthly to families, with phone call check-ins by a coordinator
7. Collect post-survey data while connecting families to other kindergarten readiness events and programs in your community

Tips on Implementation from PRI Coordinators

- The books are frequently available for purchase on First Book Marketplace for a lower cost.
- A Parent Cafe meeting is a wonderful opportunity to kick off your program.
- We have found that recruiting younger siblings of school age children is effective. Some parents told us that the preschool age child likes to have "homework" to do while their big sister or brother is doing school homework.
- We recommend partnering with childcare centers, doctor's offices, local libraries, and health departments to recruit young families. Some of those agencies may also be able to take on the project for sustainability.
- Are there other materials you need to get to young families in your community? Flyers for events? Save the dates for kindergarten screening? Summer Programming calendars? Consider putting those copies with your kit each month.

We would love to connect with you as you implement *Families Build Brains*!

Email Vanda.Rhodes@partnersrural.org for technical assistance.

Families Build Brains

Supply List

Overall

- Tote bag for materials
- You may choose to provide general art supplies and ABC, 123, fridge magnets

1, 2, 3 To the Zoo by Eric Carle

Writing Journal (size 4.25x5.5)
Jungle Safari Animal Ink Stampers
Color Pencils
Counting Zoo Animal Activity Sheet (laminated)
Laminated Information Sheet

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Card Stock to make a Caterpillar Activity Sheet for each kit (laminated optional)
Blank Natural Pulp Egg Carton (purchase in Bulk)
Chenille Stems assorted colors
Watercolor Paint Set/Brush
5 Wooden Clothes Pins (3 or 4-inch clothes pins)
Laminated Information Sheet

Mouse Shapes by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Card Stock to make a Shape Activity Sheet (laminated)
Foam Pattern Shapes, Blocks, or Geometric Shapes
Writing Journal (size 4.25x5.5)
Crayola 8pk Large Crayons
Laminated Information Sheet

Ten Apples Up on Top by Dr. Seuss

Card Stock to make a Tree Shape Activity Sheet (laminated)
1cm (about 0.39 in) Red Pom Poms for crafting
Crayola Ultra Clean Washable Markers 8pk
White Paper 2 sheets
Laminated Information Sheet

Ten, Nine, Eight by Molly Bang

Coloration YARNTIP tipped Lacing Yarn for kids (less than 3mm (about 0.12 in) diameter)
70-120 PCS Large Lacing Buttons (assorted shapes and colors)
Laminated Information Sheet

Butterfly Colors and Counting by Jerry Pallotta

Plastic Ten Frames – Available on Amazon, Carson-Dellosa, Lakeshore, etc.
White Paper
Watercolor Paint Set/Brush
Colorful Butterfly Counters 100 PCS
Laminated Information Sheet

Ten Black Dots! by Donald Crews

3x5 Index Cards
White Paper
Crayola 8pk Large Crayons
1" Black Dot Stickers
Laminated Information Sheet



READING

Read **1, 2, 3 To The Zoo** by Eric Carle with your child.

Ways to interact with your child and the book:

- Have your child point to and count the animals as you talk about each page.
- Wait before turning the page. Ask "What animal or number comes next?" If your child doesn't know, just say, "Let's find out."

Picture books introduce children to reading, encourage conversations, and build vocabulary.



MATH

- Find the animal stamps and Counting Zoo Animals worksheet included in the kit.
- Use any animal stamp your child chooses. Ask your child to stamp out the number of animals that are on the train for each line on the page. Remember this is a FUN activity!

By matching the number of stamped animals to the written number, your child is learning that written numbers really have meaning.

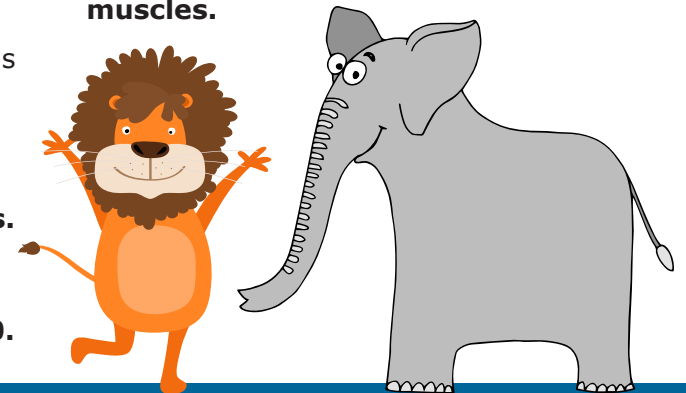
For extended learning, create flashcards. Write the word "One" on an index card and on the other side, write the number "1." Continue for numbers 2 through 10.



WRITING

- Have your child use crayons, markers or pencils to draw a picture of their favorite animal in their writing journal.

Marking a paper with a crayon teaches your child about cause and effect. It also helps them build muscles.



NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Children love small toys like cars, dolls or blocks. The next time your child is playing, ask them to make a pattern with their toys. It's fascinating to see what they do. You can help them make patterns, like "blue block, red block, blue block, red block."

INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

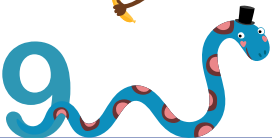
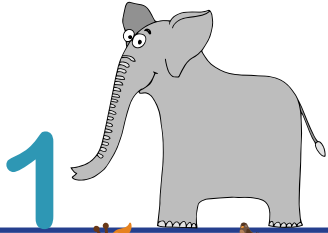
Crayons and paper don't make a mess, so drawing and coloring are easy activities for your child to do when you're busy with other things.

Your child may not be able to read the words in a book, but they can turn the pages, talk about what they see, and count the images on the pages. This is a part of reading a book "on their own" and it builds self-confidence!

Counting Zoo Animals

How many of each animal do you count in the story?

Using any stamp you like, stamp the number of times you find an animal in the story.
(For example, if you count two hippos, stamp 2 times next to it.)



The Very Hungry Caterpillar



READING

Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle with your child.

- After you've read the story a few times, pause before you turn each page. Ask your child, "What does the caterpillar do next?" This helps your child exercise their attention and memory muscles.
- Ask your child what food they want to try that the caterpillar eats.
Connections between stories and real life encourage reading.



MATH

- Tell the story of the very hungry caterpillar.
- Find your caterpillar picture and numbered clothespins.
- Ask your child to help you retell the story by matching the clothespin with the picture on the caterpillar's body segment.

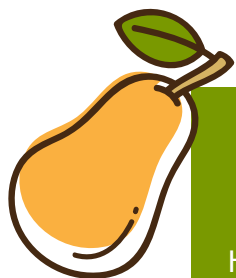
Your child is learning that numbers stand for real things in the world.
Opening and closing the clothespins also help them build hand-eye coordination.



WRITING

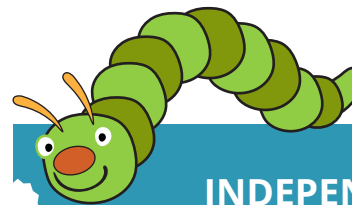
- Find your watercolor paints and egg carton.
- Your child can make their own caterpillar by decorating the egg carton with the paint.
- They can use the pipe cleaners to give the caterpillar antenna.

Any activity where children are using a tool to make marks on a paper helps them develop the strength and coordination to write their name.



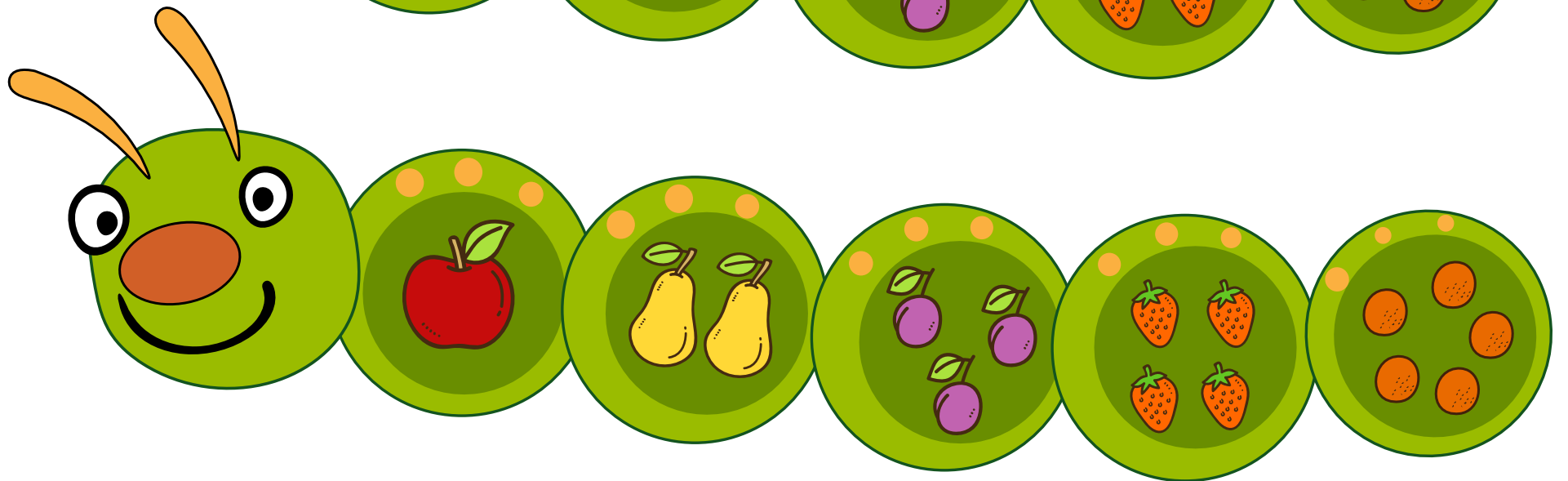
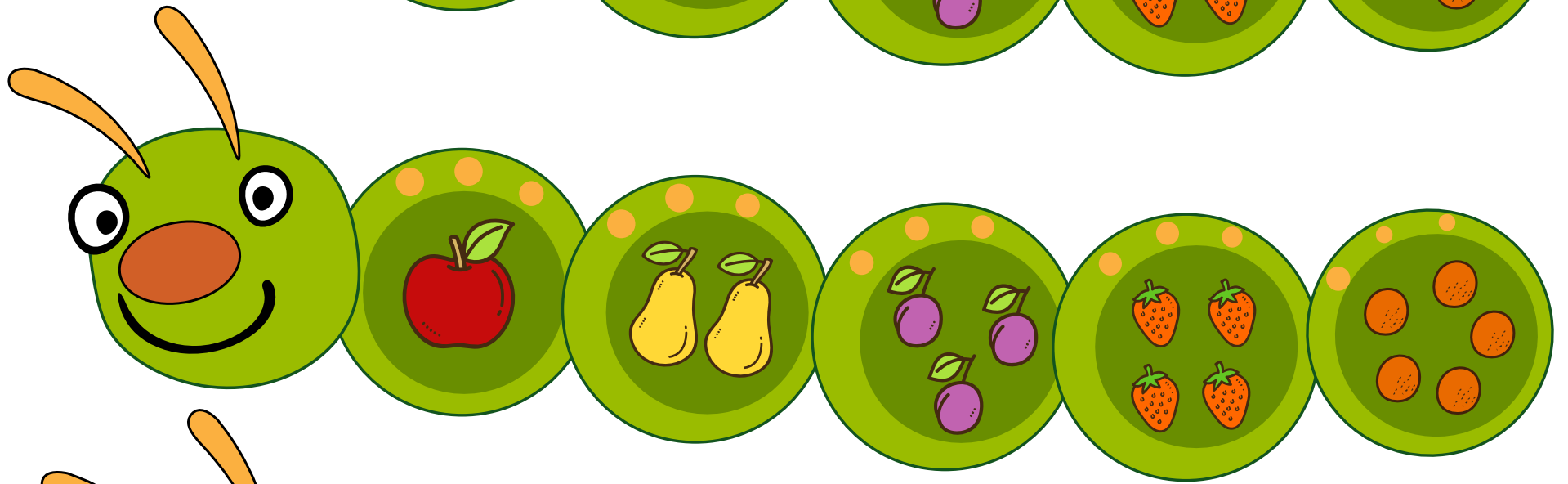
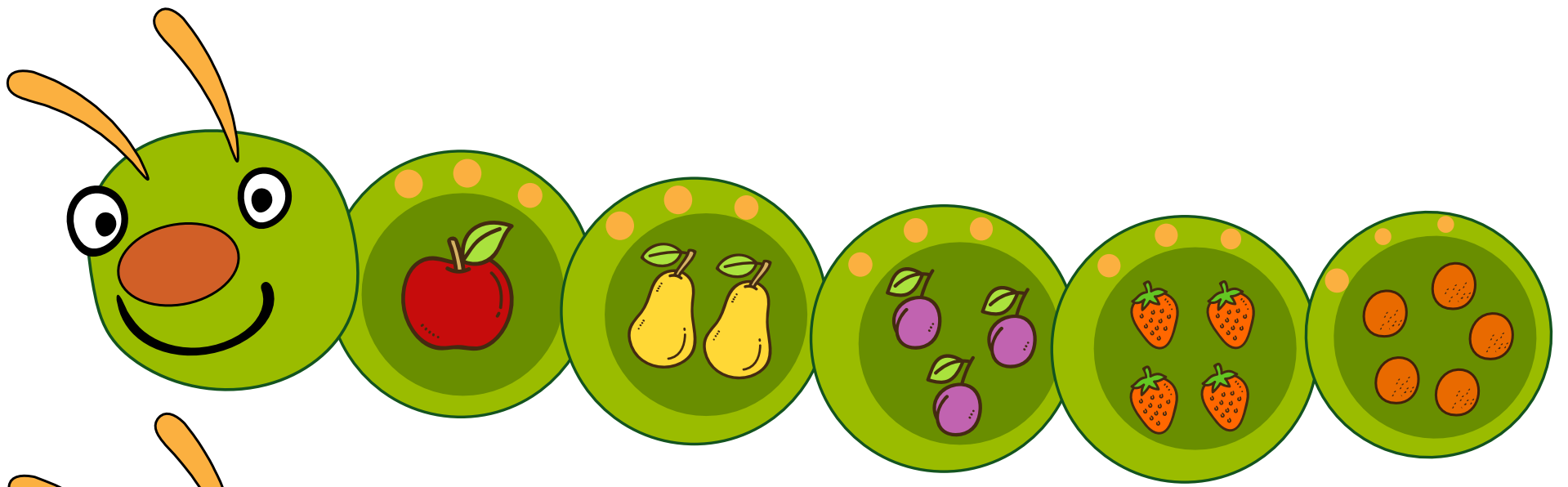
NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Have your child show their caterpillar to a friend or relative and retell the story. Grandparents love to hear what your child has to say. Retelling a story to a loving adult helps your child feel pride and accomplishment.



INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

The watercolor paints in this kit should last for many art projects. They're washable so your child can make art without damaging clothes or furniture. When you need to get something done around the house, set your child up with a stack of paper, paints and a cup of water. They'll be busy for a while.





READING

Read *Butterfly Colors and Counting* by Jerry Pallotta with your child.

Ways to interact with your child and the book:

- Point out the colors of the butterflies.
- Take your book outside. Look for butterflies like the ones in your book.
- Ask your child to tell you about a butterfly they have seen.

Talking about books is as much a part of reading as reading the words.



MATH

- Find your ten-frame activity sheet. It's the sheet with the 10 squares. Find the plastic butterflies in your kit.
- Ask your child to put one butterfly on each square. Take the butterflies off and repeat the process.
- This time, count the butterflies aloud from 1 to 10 as your child places them on the frame.

By touching the butterflies as they count, your child learns that numbers mean a specific amount. Your child will use ten frames like this in kindergarten.



WRITING

- Find your watercolor paint set and blank paper. Encourage your child to make butterfly art exactly how they want.
- Demonstrate how to dip the brush into water then into the color to make a paint. If you show your child how to clean the brush between colors, their final painting will make them happier than if the colors all mix together.

Painting and making art are activities for pre-writing because children need coordinated hand muscles for writing letters and numbers.



NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Go on a wonder walk with your child.

Look for butterflies and ask "I wonder" questions like "**I wonder where butterflies sleep**" or "**I wonder how flowers grow.**"

INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

Keep your child's ten-frame sheet and butterflies in a place where they can get them out to play any time, any way they like. Don't worry about right and wrong, even if the ten frame turns into a doll bed or Hot Wheels garage!

Setting up your watercolor paint on an old cookie sheet makes cleanup easy.

Ten, Nine, Eight



READING

Read *Ten, Nine, Eight* by Molly Bang with your child.

- On each page, ask your child to count the objects.
- As you read, talk about your nighttime routines. What does your child do to get ready for bed every night?



MATH

- Find your bag of buttons.
- It's time to sort shapes. Ask your child to sort the buttons into four piles: circles, triangles, rectangles and squares.
- Help your child identify the shapes if they don't know them.
- When you're finished, put the buttons into one pile and sort in another way. Ask your child to hand you all the green buttons or all the yellow buttons.



WRITING

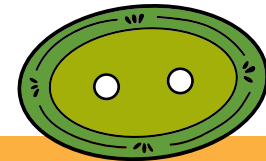
- Find your buttons and lace.
- Work with your child to put the lace through the button holes to make a bracelet.

This activity helps your child build more hand-eye coordination for writing. You can also encourage your child to make a pattern of colors or shapes.



NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Draw a picture of a shape on a piece of paper and have your child practice cutting it out with child-safe scissors.



INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

A simple bag of buttons can keep a preschooler occupied for a long time. They can keep sewing the buttons together with the shoelace. They can make more patterns. They can pretend the buttons are something else, like coins for playing store.

Ten Apples Up On Top



READING

Read *Ten Apples Up On Top* by Dr. Seuss with your child.

- Pause on some pages to ask your child “what” questions, like **“What is he doing?”** or **“What is he wearing?”**
- Ask your child to predict what number is going to be on the next page.



MATH

- Find your tree shape and red pompoms.
- Ask your child to place the apples (pompoms) on the tree.
- As they place each apple, help them count the apples on their tree.

Counting objects helps your child understand that numbers go up. Once they’ve mastered counting applies as they go on the tree, they can try counting the pompoms from 10 to 1 as they take them off the tree. **This is the beginning of adding and subtracting.**



WRITING

- Find your markers and paper.
- Draw a circle on a page and ask your child to draw some circles.
- As you have fun drawing together, you can ask your child to also draw round things, like apples or oranges.

This activity helps your child learn about the circle shape, which is part of lots of lowercase letters. **Practicing drawing circles helps your child get ready to write the letter “a” and “b” and “o.”**

NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Make cleaning up a shape-and-counting game. When it’s time to pick up toys, ask your child to pick up all the blue toys or all the square toys. Following your directions helps your child build attention and memory.

“Bigger” and “smaller” are important math ideas. When you’re cleaning up, pick up an object. Ask your child to find something bigger and put it away. Ask them to find something smaller and put it away.

INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

Give your child a notebook to go along with their markers and tell them to use it for their shape hunts. This is a great rainy day activity. Your child can hunt for shapes around the house, draw them and then report back to you. Children love keeping notebooks and reporting back. It makes them feel responsible and important.





READING

Read **Mouse Shapes** by Ellen Stoll Walsh with your child.

- Pause on some pages to ask your child what shapes they can see.
- Pause between pages to ask your child, **“What will the mice do next?”** This helps children with attention and memory.



MATH

- Find your tangram shapes and pictures. These are just like the shapes in the book.
- Have your child practice putting the shapes on the pictures.

This is the first step in understanding how shapes can fit together to make something bigger.



WRITING

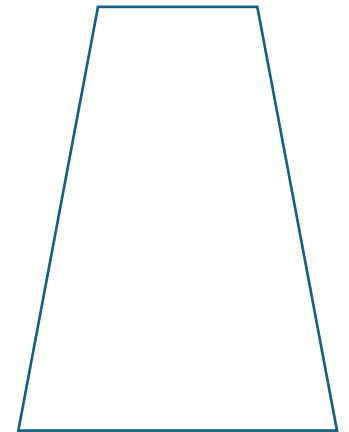
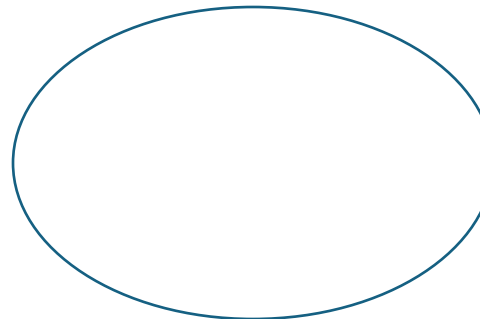
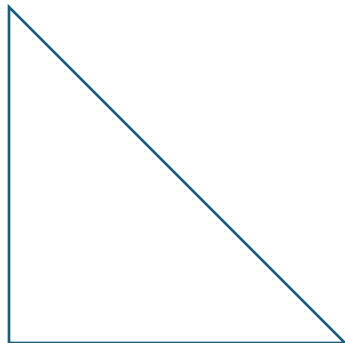
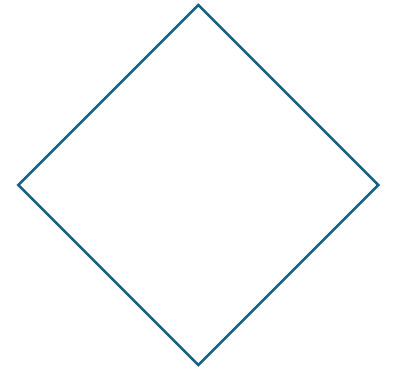
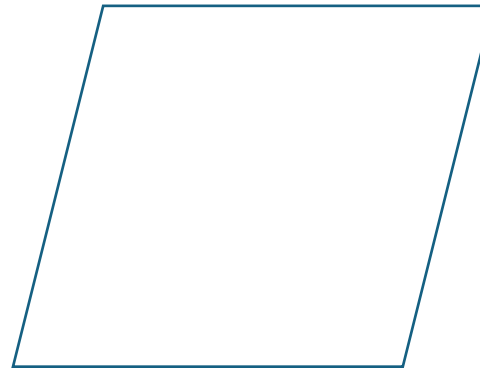
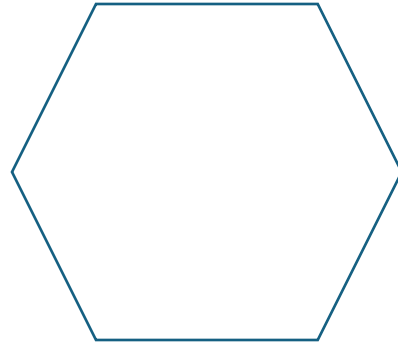
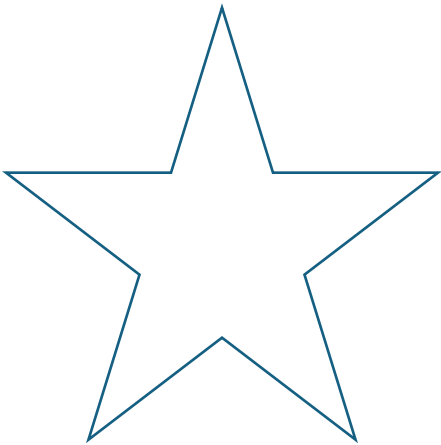
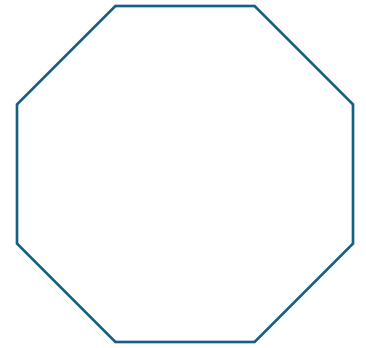
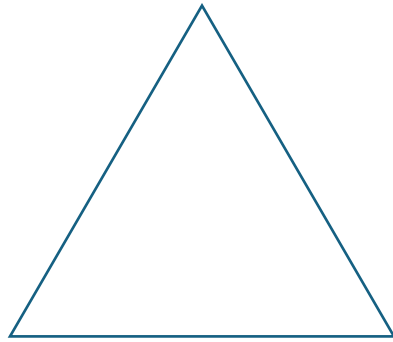
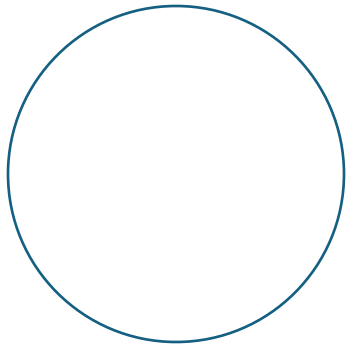
- Find your blank book, your crayons, and your bag of gadgets.
- Help your child make their own book. Write a number at the top of each page and ask your child to draw things that are important to them, like a pet or person.
- Help them write their name in the book.
- Think of different ways you and your child can use the gadgets for additional learning.

NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Children are proud of books they create. You can make blank books by folding paper in half and stapling it. Your child can use the materials from their Berea Builds Brains kits to make their books special. **Cutting up old magazines is also a good way to find pictures to put in the books and to practice scissor skills.**

INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

Playing with and using scissors are important for getting ready for school, but it can be easy for adults to worry about what kids are going to do with scissors. Help your child know what's safe to do with scissors, and set up rules for scissor time at your house. For example, **“no using scissors without an adult around”** or **“scissors don't cut hair.”**



Ten Black Dots!



READING

Read *Ten Black Dots* by Donald Crews with your child.

Ways to interact with your child and the book:

- Have your child point to and count the dots as you read each page.
- Wait before turning the page and ask "What happens next?" If your child doesn't know. Just say, "Let's find out."

Rhymes are fun and help your child listen closely and repeat exact sounds. Point out rhymes as you read.



MATH

- Find your numbered index cards and your black dot stickers.
- Ask your child to place one black dot on the card with the number 1.
- Ask them to put two black dots on the card with the number 2.
- Keep repeating until you get to 10!

By matching the number of dots to the written number, your child is learning that written numbers really mean something.

"1" isn't just a word. It means "1 thing."



WRITING

- Find your black dot stickers, your white paper, and your crayons.
- Ask your child to draw a picture and then place the dots on the picture, just like in the book.

Marking a paper with a crayon teaches your child about cause and effect. It also helps them build muscles.

Peeling and sticking the dots helps them practice hand-eye coordination.

10

NO COST WAYS TO KEEP LEARNING TOGETHER

Children love small toys like cars, dolls or blocks. The next time your child is playing, ask them to make a pattern with their toys. It's fascinating to see what they do. You can help them make patterns, like "blue block, red block, blue block, red block."

INDEPENDENT PLAY IDEAS

Crayons and paper don't make a mess, so drawing and coloring are easy activities for your child to do when you're busy with other things.

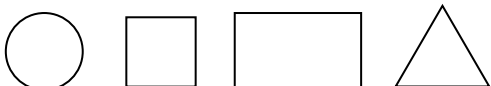
Your child may not be able to read the words in the book, but they can turn each page independently and count the dots. Reading a book "on their own" helps children gain self-confidence!

Families Build Brains

Parent Post-Survey

Child's Name: _____ Child's DOB: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Date of Completion: _____

1. My child can verbally count (1-10) Math	How many? _____
2. My child can count 1-5 objects accurately. Math	YES/NO (circle one)
3. My child can identify numbers 1-5 by name. (Example: My child can point to the number 1 and say its name, "one") Math	YES/NO (circle one)
4. My Child can identify these shapes by name: (Circle the shapes your child can identify) Math	
5. My child can sort by: (Circle all that apply) Math	Color Size Shape
6. My child can retell a story that has been read before just by looking at the pictures. (May leave out details) Literacy/Cognition	YES/NO (circle one)
7. My child can identify letters in their name. Literacy	YES/NO (circle one)
8. My child scribbles lines, circles, or zigzags in a row? Writing	YES/NO (circle one)
9. Based on your child's experience with the kits, do you think playing with these kits has increased your child's kindergarten readiness?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-Strongly Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Neither Agree nor Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Agree <input type="checkbox"/> 5-Strongly Agree
10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for us about Families Build Brains? 	

Thank You & Enjoy Your Kits