Family Literacy Day
Event Coordinator's Guide

familyliteracyday.ca

ABC LifeLiteracyCanada

Attention All *Family Literacy Day*® Event Co-ordinators!

Thank you for your interest in organizing a *Family Literacy Day* event.

Family Literacy Day, **held annually on January 27**, was created in 1999 by ABC Life Literacy Canada to celebrate parents and children reading and learning together to become lifelong learners.

The resources and information in this guide will help you plan and host a fantastic *Family Literacy Day* event, and help continue spreading the word about the importance of family literacy.

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Section 1

The History of *Family Literacy Day®*

Family Literacy Day, held annually on January 27, was developed by ABC Life Literacy Canada in 1999 to celebrate adults and children reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family.

Q: What is family literacy?

Family literacy focusses on parents, grandparents, children, and other family members learning together to improve the literacy skills of the whole family. By reading to children and engaging in fun literacy activities regularly, adults actively keep their own skills sharp and also help children improve their skills. Family literacy activities strengthen the relationship between family members which, in turn, encourages lifelong learning. Without adult support and a strong foundation at home, a child is less likely to be successful and engaged in school.

Q: Why is family literacy important?

Family literacy helps reinforce the importance of learning with children as a means of building the knowledge necessary for future skills, and helps adults maintain their literacy skills. Many studies have shown that improving parents' skills directly and positively affects the language development of children.

Q: How is *Family Literacy Day* celebrated?

Every year, events and activities are coordinated by literacy providers, schools, libraries and community groups across the country (visit **FamilyLiteracyDay.ca** for a listing of events or to register your event). These activities range from fundraisers, book drives and children's reading circles, to literacy-themed games and contests. You don't have to participate in a formal event to be a part of this initiative. *Family Literacy Day* can be celebrated by simply setting aside regular family time to read, play a game, write a letter, or even follow a recipe together.

Q: How do local communities and organizations benefit from *Family Literacy Day*?

Literacy providers have the opportunity to showcase their hard work and achievements on *Family Literacy Day*. They benefit from increased public awareness and support, and have the opportunity to connect with key influencers in their community. *Family Literacy Day* is a great time to spread the word about the importance of reading and engaging in fun literacy activities regularly. This initiative also provides an opportunity for families to become aware of literacy programs available in their community. *Family Literacy Day* is also sometimes used as a fundraiser, where literacy groups and libraries can raise much-needed funds for literacy programming or new supplies.

Family literacy

Family literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills, from enjoying a storybook together, to playing word games, singing, writing to a relative or friend, sharing day-to-day tasks such as making a shopping list or using a recipe, and surfing the Internet.

Parents' literacy skills and their ability to engage with their children in ways that encourage literacy at an early age have a lasting and far-reaching impact on children's language development, future success in school and well being throughout their lives. Having a parent read aloud helps children learn listening, vocabulary and language skills, and develop imagination and creativity. Additionally, it's important for adults to continue exercising their reading abilities at all stages of their lives.

- 48 per cent of adult Canadians have literacy skills that fall below a high school level, which negatively affects their ability to function at work and in their personal lives. 17% function at the lowest level, where they may, for example, be unable to read the dosage instructions on a medicine bottle. (*OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the survey of Adult Skills* – OECD, 2013)
- One year of parental education has a bigger positive impact on whether a son or daughter will attend a postsecondary institution than an extra $50,000 in parental income. (*Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario*, 2011)
- Parents' reading habits play a large role in determining how often kids read: 57 per cent of kids who are frequent readers have parents who read books 5–7 days per week, compared to only 15 per cent of kids who are infrequent readers. (*Kids and Family Reading Report* – Scholastic, 2017)
- A mother's reading skill is the greatest factor to affect her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, like neighborhood and family income. (*National Institute of Health*, 2010)
- Children of low-literate parents are exposed to 30,000,000 fewer words and enter kindergarten with a much larger skills gap than their peers. (*The Case for Investment in Adult Basic Education* – Kevin Morgan, Dr. Peter Waite, Michele Diecuch, 2017)
- The positive impacts of family literacy programming are greater than interventions including giving homework to children or reducing class size. Moreover, children from disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit from family literacy programming at least to the same extent as children from other backgrounds. Further, family literacy programming enhances children's social and emotional development and parents' confidence as parents. (*Impact and Implementation of Family Literacy Programmes: Review and Recommendations* – National Adult Literacy Agency (Ireland), 2018)

Section 2

Family Literacy Day® Activity Ideas

Host a Watch Party
Choose a book that has been turned into a movie. Read the book first and then schedule a movie night to see the book come to life on the screen.

Sing Along
Invite some local musicians to lead a sing along of some classic songs.

Create Bookmarks
Have participants make their own bookmarks and ask them to include why they love to read.

Scavenger Hunt
Create a giant scavenger hunt where participants have to find items in a list.

Host a Spelling Bee
Put everyone's spelling to the test with a fun competition.

Card Games
Improve numeracy skills by learning fun new card games, like Uno.

Read S'more
Organize an outdoor storytime event and roast some marshmallows around the campfire.

Dress Up
Invite participants to arrive dressed up as their favourite story character or author.

Board Games
Invite participants to bring in their favourite board game. Make groups and take turns playing the different games.

Virtual Activity Ideas

Involve Distant Family and Friends

Books can be read aloud over FaceTime or Skype to friends and family members that live far away. Record children reading their favourite book and send the video to loved ones.

Photo Contest

Ask families to send in a photo of them doing a literacy activity together. Provide winners with a prize.

Parent Workshop

Host an online workshop for parents on effective ways to improve literacy at home as a family.

Book Experts

Invite a librarian, local publisher or author to share about their job, or the ins and outs of how books are written and published on a webinar.

Go for a Hike

Get outdoors and learn about nature on a hike.

Best Practices for Virtual Events

Determine which platform will work best for your event. Tools like Facebook Live and GoToWebinar can work well if you're looking for a one-way presentation with no interaction from the audience. If you want audience engagement, try something like Zoom, Skype or Google Meet. Check out our free resources and courses at **abcconnectforlearning.ca** on how to use some of these tools. Be sure to choose something that your participants will have easy access to.

Put together an event outline. Figure out who is going to say what before the event. Like any event, you need a plan, and with online events it's harder to just wing it.

Do a trial run. Technology can be complicated, so it's best to do a trial run before the event to make sure you know how everything is going to work. You don't want to have technical difficulties on the big day.

Try to make the event as interactive as possible by using things like Q&A chat or polling functions. This will ensure participants stay engaged.

Limit the event to no more than 45 minutes. It can be hard to keep concentration in real life, but online it can be even harder.

Section 3

How to Promote your *Family Literacy Day* Event

Use Promotional Materials

ABC Life Literacy Canada offers free downloadable promotional materials online at **FamilyLiteracyDay.ca**. Access posters, bookmarks, tipsheets and PSAs that will help promote your event. Contact your local print shop to see if they will donate the printing of materials in return for recognition on your event materials.

Create an Advertisement

Create your own ad or feel free to use one of the downloadable print ads or web banners in the promotional materials section of **FamilyLiteracyDay.ca**. Ask your local media if they will donate media space to your organization to help promote your event. Many media outlets have extra space they need to fill and would be happy to run your ad for free if there is room.

Put Up Posters

ABC Life Literacy Canada offers free downloadable posters at **FamilyLiteracyDay.ca**. These posters provide space at the bottom to write in the details of your event. Print a few posters, fill out your information and post them around your organization and your community.

Spread the Word Online

If you have a website, be sure to publish your event on the website at least a month or two in advance.

If your organization has a Facebook page, create a Facebook event! Let all your fans know about the event and ask them to spread the word to their friends and family.

If you're on Instagram, be sure to promote your event and use hashtags such as #FamilyLiteracyDay to increase your chances of being noticed.

Feel free to download our social media guide at **FamilyLiteracyDay.ca**, which has pre-written posts you can use to promote the day.

Contact the Media

Reach out to your local newspaper, TV or radio station and see if they would be interested in covering your event, either before or during. Offer to do an interview with them or invite them to attend! Most media contacts can be found on the contact page of an outlet's website.

Certificate of Participation

Congratulations to:

For participating in:

Signature

Date