

Case Study

Ovitt Family Community Library, City of Ontario



Center for
Childhood Creativity
at the Bay Area Discovery Museum



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Case Study | Ovitt Family Community Library

What follows is a case study showcasing how various aspects of the *Reimagining School Readiness Toolkit* were tested and implemented during the pilot phase in Spring/Summer of 2017. The case study outlines what type of programming existed before the pilot, how things were modified during the implementation phase, and any post-pilot reflections. The Appendices that follow include example signs, templates, and activities created and utilized by library staff. At the top of each, we highlight the relevant skills associated with the key findings (i.e., Talk & Play, Science & Math, or Body & Brain).

Before the Pilot

In Ontario, the school readiness programming was not formally called out, but there were many initiatives that fell under that umbrella already taking place at the library. Between storytimes (Brilliant Babies, Preschool Prep, Toddler Tales, evening and Bilingual storytimes, a new program called “Discovery Days” (a deep dive into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math concepts for 2 to 5 year olds), and a program in its second year called “Mad Lab” (a STEAM program for 5 to 8 year olds), the library was engaging children 0 to 8 and their families.

During Implementation

Since the staff at Ovitt already had a robust series of programming in place, they chose instead to enhance their current offerings. Using *Reimagining School Readiness: A Position Paper with Key Findings* as a guide, they pulled out key findings and incorporated them into their programs in a more direct and deliberate fashion. A few examples of how the individual programs benefited follow below:

Discovery Days

Discovery Days is a STEAM program geared toward children ages 2 to 5 that occurs quarterly on Saturdays. The overarching goal is to set up moments in the library that cause children to wonder, and features a deep dive into a certain topic like butterflies or the life cycle of a plant. The first day focused on metamorphosis and featured a time lapse video of the life cycle of a butterfly, an interactive app, and an activity where children ordered the phases. The staff even brought in caterpillars that children could come back and watch evolve, before releasing them. Another day revolved around the life cycle of the plant. Groups of children were taken outside to a nearby conservation park where they could investigate seeds and plants with magnifying lenses, and even plant some themselves!



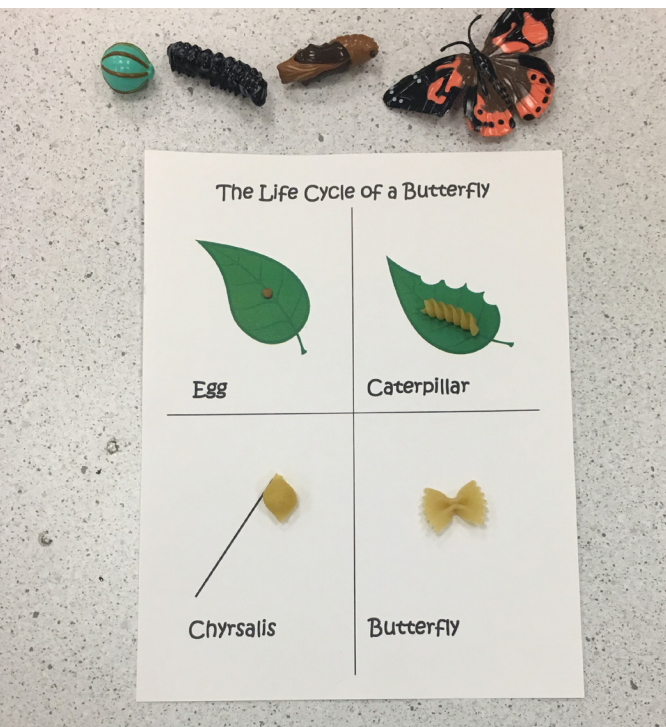
“It is lending that extra degree of support to something that you’re already doing, and it’s giving you the language to talk about it more intelligently so you can advocate for it more effectively and get better funding for it in the future. ... We did not create any new program to do this in. What we did was we strengthened the ones that we had.”

- A staff member



Embracing language and not shying away from complex terms and concepts was a key tip from Finding #1 on adult-child interactions that was infused throughout these events. In planning, the staff would pick out two or three words they wanted to focus on that day and have a simple explanation or definition of the word ready to go.

A staff member explained, “We got our caterpillars, and they (children ages 2-3) would come in...They’d stand on the little stool and they’d look at the caterpillars, how they’ve changed. When some started to make their cocoon, they were fascinated. To hear them talk to their grown-ups... ‘Oh this is such and such stage.’ It was really cool to have them scream metamorphosis! So it was really great to see how they retained that information so young.” See example activity stations on Caterpillar Patterns and Static Electricity in Appendix A and B, respectively.



Storytime - Preschool Prep

Preschool Prep is a specific type of storytime that aligns with the goals of local school districts to get children ready for school since many children in the community do not have access to preschool. The program runs year-round, with each session focusing on a particular skill (e.g., social emotional) for a 6 week period before taking a 2-3 week break and then starting again with a new area of focus.

Preschool Prep was re-engineered by keeping the Key Findings in mind. The first area focused on executive function skills (from Key Finding # 4 on planning, self-awareness and self-control) to teach children to form a line. At first, when the staff would hand out manipulatives, children would just run up to get everything. “...it was a disaster. Kids were getting trampled, and they were still playing with everything, and not walking away when they needed to.” Later, the staff started asking children to form a line to get their manipulatives.

“When I first asked them to get in the line, I had no idea that it was going to be that difficult. It’s so second nature to us, you know we stand in line at the grocery store, we stand in line for everything...But they never had to do that before...I wanted to give up, to be honest, because it extended my storytime by 20 minutes the first session...but I’m amazed that they can get in line now!”

- A staff member



After storytime, Preschool Prep offers station-based activities for families to explore and engage. By focusing on quality adult-child interactions (Key Finding #1), scientific wonder through open exploration (Key Finding #2), and mathematical concepts like comparing and contrasting (Key Finding #3), the staff set up their activities in a way that invited caregivers to ask open-ended questions and sprinkle unfamiliar words into the conversation. See prompts in photos to the left and Preschool Prep Outline in appendix C for more information.

Math Cards

The CCC Reimagining School Readiness pilot project provided math-focused signs in an 8.5" x 11" format that could be posted throughout the library. The staff at Ovitt realized these signs would not work for them, so they modified the content to fit on index cards that were secured with a metal ring. These cards were placed on top of one of the short book shelves in the Family Place area. They had 8 sets available, four sets in English and four in Spanish. They also developed an 8.5" x 11" sign to place next to the cards explaining what they were. What they found is that many of these cards walked away (in a good way!) and parents and caregivers were asking for more. This format has been adopted for the final toolkit you have access to today.



Post Pilot Reflections

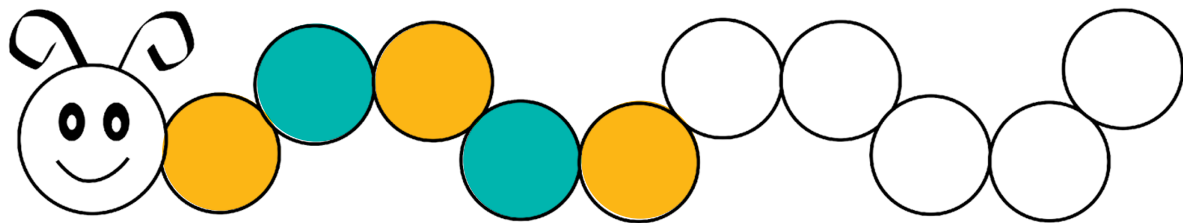
The staff at Ovitt utilized the position paper, *Reimagining School Readiness*, as the backbone of their work to revamp their existing programming. They already had pieces in place that reflected what research showed is effective, but could now be more focused and deliberate with their efforts. A staff member enthused, "I'll be honest with you, I've been in the library world for 12 years. I know that all these things are important. I also know I don't have the time to go back and find all the research that tells me all these things are important. But we say it all the time. Research shows, and I'm just waiting for someone to go, what research? This provides the research. It gives us that backbone that we can refer to and we didn't have to find it."

The Ovitt staff also recognized that the popularity and family engagement in their special Saturday programs like Discovery Days, or specialized storytimes like Preschool Prep, supported the growth of their larger programming base. They took advantage of the new audiences these programs brought to expose families to additional offerings at the library. Another staff member exclaimed, "I'm super excited to have learned so much, because it just helps me be better at my job, which helps the profession, which helps our community. I think the ripple effect long term, it's going to be great."

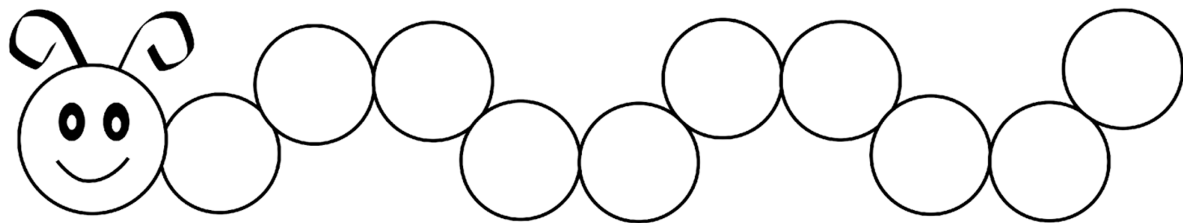


Caterpillar Patterns

Try following the pattern:

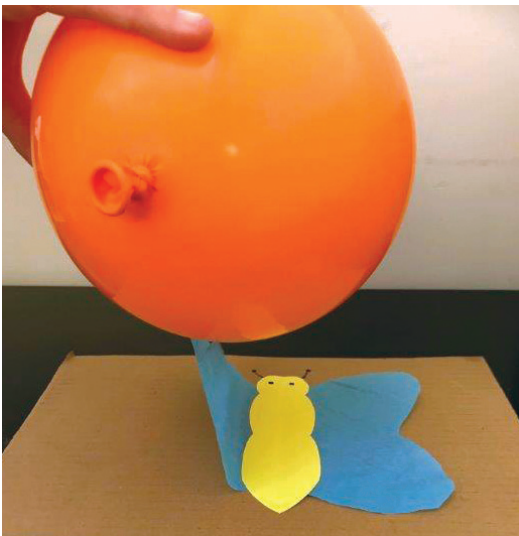


Now, create your own pattern!





Static Electricity



Little Ones:

1. Rub the balloon on your hair.

Hair gives some of its negative charge (electrons) to the balloon.

2. Hold the balloon near the butterfly wings.

When the negative charge in the balloon gets close to the tissue paper, they're attracted to each other, creating a flying effect!

Adults:

Atoms make up the objects all around us. Usually atoms have an equal number of protons and electrons. Protons have a positive charge and electrons have a negative charge. When 2 objects are rubbed together, electrons move from one to the other. Now one object has more negative charge and can attract things that are neutral or positively charged.



Preschool Prep Outline

Welcome & Introductions | 1 min.

Introduce yourself to children and adults

Warm up Songs | 4 min.

- Sing 3-4 songs and incorporate at least one song with finger play.
- Use songs that most children know already and keep them consistent throughout the 6 weeks.

Regular Songs: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star; I'm a Little Teapot
Finger play Songs: Baby Shark; Bumble Bee; Itsy bitsy spider
Movement Songs: If you're Happy and You Know It; Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes

Books | 10 min.

- Read ~ 2 books.
- Include a non-fiction book for 3 of the 6 weeks.
- At least 1 week should focus on traditional story telling and recapping with an active retelling of the story.

Songs | 15 min.

- Sing the Phonics Song each time.
- Sing ~ 4-5 other songs, making sure at least 2 of them involve props.

Phonics Song

Alphafriends (hold up letter cards while we sing)

Songs with props - Ask children to stand in line to get and return the props

Rhythm Sticks:

Tap Our Sticks Together by Rahel (Ann Rachel)

Tap Your Sticks by Hap Palmer

Scarves:

Shake Your Scarves by Johnette Downing

Scarves by Betsy Diamant-Cohen (Mother Goose on the Loose)

Bean Bags:

Teddy Bear Playtime by Hap Palmer

Beanie Bag Dance by Greg & Steve – Kids in Action

No Prop:

The Freeze Dance by For Little People Choir

Activity | 15 min

- Rotate activities based on the theme.
- Play music while children and adults are creating.

Slowly start cleaning up after 15 min and turn off the music to signal the end of storytime.