Baby Storytime Training Manual

prepared for the Youth Services Group

January 2001
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Introduction

Baby storytime is a program designed to introduce babies and their caregivers to book-related activities that they are encouraged to continue at home. In the Mississauga Library System, baby storytime is for children 12 to 24 months old. The program is held on a weekly basis for four weeks and is intended to be a one-time experience. The shorter length of the program is just one way in which babytime differs from the toddler and preschool programs.

As babies differ from both toddlers and preschoolers, expectations for their behaviour must differ - not be lowered but changed, in view of the age difference. Babytime can be noisy and hectic, or calm and quiet, and it is never possible to predict. Thus, it can be more demanding of staff than preschool programs. Flexibility is the name of the game due to the short attention spans of these younger participants. Programmers will be surprised at what these “babies” are capable of. They will never cease to amaze with their responses, often non-verbal but rewarding all the same. As stated in Books, Babies & Libraries (Greene, 1991), “the primary purpose of library service to early children is to introduce parents to the library as a parenting information centre and to demonstrate ways of sharing books and non-book materials with very young children.”

Purpose of Baby Storytime

From the Library viewpoint:

- Demonstrate to parents and caregivers appropriate ways of sharing library materials with children.
- Provide parents and caregivers with songs, stories, fingerplays and rhymes which they can share with their child on a one-to-one basis.
- Attract non-users.
- Stimulate the use of the library collection.
- Promote a positive library image within the community.
- Fill a community need for programs for this age group.
- Prepare children for Toddler Storytime.
- Provide a first step in encouraging children on the path of life-time literacy.

From the parents’ viewpoint

- Develop the child’s socialization skills through contact with other children.
- Develop the child’s self-expression through movement and verbalization.
- Provide a positive learning experience.
- Provide an opportunity to talk to other parents or caregivers.
- Lay the groundwork for the child to become a reader.

It is important to note that expectations should be realistic. Parents should not feel they or their child are inadequate if their experience differs from others in the group. One of the principle intentions of the program is that the participants feel comfortable and have something beneficial they can take away with them (songs, rhymes, stories) to share on a one-to-one basis at home.
Organization of the Program

Registration
In the Mississauga Library System, baby storytime is always a registered program, since a stable and regular group is vital to its success. Registration and session dates are chosen system-wide in advance for three seasons: fall, winter and spring, with two 4-week baby storytime sessions per season. Baby storytime is usually scheduled in the morning, when children are at their peak of alertness, or in the evening for working parents; afternoon programs may conflict with nap time for this age group. Registration is by telephone to the location holding the program and begins strictly at the time specified. An information sheet for staff taking registration is included in the Preschool Storytime Training Manual. Priority is given to those who have not attended the same program before; those who have attended previously may be put on a waiting list until at least the next day, or referred to a family storytime session. Children must have reached the age of 12 months as of the first day of the program.

The number of children registered should be between 12 and 15 - it is normal to have an absentee rate of up to 25%, so a guideline is to add 25% to an ideal attendance number of 10 to 12. When registering, it is important to get the caregiver’s name as well, and to make sure that each registrant is accompanied by a caregiver, except in the case of twins. It is a good idea to telephone the caregivers a day or two prior to the first program as a reminder. It is important as well to take attendance each week, and call caregivers of babies who miss the first week or any two successive weeks.

Caregiver Participation
Parent or caregiver participation is more crucial to this program than any other library program. The intention is for the parent and child to experience the songs and stories together, with the child in the caregiver’s lap or sitting directly in front of him/her for most of the program. For the program to succeed, caregivers must actively direct the child’s accompanying movements (e.g., taking his/her hands and clapping them when appropriate), sing the songs, join in on rhymes, and repeat lines from stories when appropriate. For that reason, no siblings are allowed into the program, and the ratio is always one parent, one child except in rare circumstances such as twins.

Name Tags
Preparing name tags is always a good idea, especially if they are on appealing felt animal figures. It is best to keep the name tags at the library, encouraging parents to pick out their child’s name tag with the child’s “help” each week and making a ritual of handing it back at the end, especially to a puppet or stuffed animal. Options include letting the child keep the name tag at the end of the session and making name tags for parents to wear with both theirs and their child’s name.

Program Content

Elements
Baby storytime lasts 30 minutes, but usually 20 minutes of structured program is as much as this age
A good program should include the following:

**Stories.** Simple and repetitive stories from picture books are listed in Appendix B.

**Beginning and ending ritual.** A song each week should be used to signal the start and end of the program, such as “The More We Get Together” or “Hello to You” (see Appendix A). A “magic” box or other container may be brought out and each book or prop taken from it.

**A Puppet.** The rituals should also include a puppet or stuffed animal, which can be used to greet and say goodbye to each child, as well as to lead and demonstrate parent-child interaction during songs and rhymes.

**Book display.** A special story box or display should be set up so that babies and caregivers can make a selection and share the book with each other as part of the program.

**Rhymes and songs.** Simple songs or rhymes with actions, especially those that can be done as an interaction between a parent and a child in their lap, are a core part of this program. A variety of movements helps keep the group’s attention - hand-clapping, bouncing, tapping, hugging and tickling.

**Musical Break.** As an essential outlet for babies’ impulses to wander around, simple instruments can be distributed and the group allowed to make noise and move around, possibly in a line led by the programmer.

**Sequence of Events**
The format should not change greatly from week to week, as repetition and routines are crucial to this group. A typical sequence might be the following:

- As each child arrives, they are greeted by the programmer and encouraged to pick out their name tag with the parent or caregiver.
- Everyone is encouraged to choose books to share individually from a display.
- The actual program begins with the puppet greeting the whole group with a ritual song such as “Hello to you”.
- The programmer announces “bouncing time” and does bouncing rhymes using the puppet in his/her lap to demonstrate.
- A book is read, usually the week’s longest.
- “Tickling time” is announced and tickling rhymes are done.
- A second book is read, preferably one with a rhyme or song.
- The group takes a musical break.
- Another book may be read, depending on time and attention; a moveable book is a good idea.
- “Singing time” is announced and a few familiar songs sung, using props as necessary.
- The puppet sings “Goodbye to you” to each child as they hand their name tag to the puppet.
- Children choose books from the display to borrow.
**Physical Arrangements**
Baby storytime is best held in a carpeted area, with caregivers sitting in a circle or semi-circle with children in their laps. Distractions should be minimized and the room child-proofed, with no tables leaning against the walls or easels that can be pulled down, no sharp objects, and covers on all electrical outlets. Program materials should be set up well in advance and kept hidden or out of reach of curious hands, but books, etc. for browsing should be within easy reach.

**Maintaining Attention and Dealing with Interruptions**
Parents and caregivers are expected to actively participate, and chatting amongst themselves should be discouraged. They need to understand their crucial role in directing the child’s attention at all times. But still it is important to expect the unexpected. Children will want to move around and handle the books and other objects. If the parent’s gentle prodding to return to them or offer of a toy or snack does not work, children can be allowed to walk about as long as they are not disturbing others; often they will return to their parents on their own when a new story or song starts. But if a child is disruptive, it is best to recommend that they be taken out of the room until they can be settled. If the entire group’s attention wanders, it is best to quickly wrap up the current activity and start another that will grab their attention, such as a familiar rousing song. Sometimes it may be necessary to end the program sooner than planned and explain that everyone did their best and will try again next week; an easy-going, gentle attitude is best.

**Training & Preparation**
It is always recommended that an employee master both preschool and toddler storytime before being trained on baby storytime. Training should take four weeks at least - i.e. the length of a storytime session. When training is complete, it is suggested that the programmer be evaluated using the form in Appendix H of the Preschool Storytime Training Manual.

**Training Checklist**
A staff member being trained for preschool storytime should:

- Become familiar with a selection of at least 25 picture books suitable for babies, using the lists in Appendix B as a starting point.
- Attend any relevant children’s workshops.
- Learn the criteria used in evaluating picture books for babies.
- Read at least 2 books or articles on conducting baby storytime programs and one book on child development to 2 years of age. See Appendix C.
- Develop a personal collection of at least 20 songs, rhymes and action activities specifically for babies. See Appendix A.
- Participate in a full session (4 weeks) conducted by an experienced programmer, beginning by observing then gradually taking an active role.
- Be observed by the experienced programmer for at least the first two weeks of his/her solo session.
**Preparation for Each Program**

For the first program of a session, it is important to be prepared to share some information with parents/caregivers as an introduction, such as the object and length of the program and what is expected of them. For all programs, material should be selected in advance, making sure to have more than needed in case something does not work with the group. Rhymes and songs can be printed on index cards as a back-up. A fresh display of books for the children as well as some parenting material should also be prepared. Any musical instruments to be used should also be cleaned and set aside.

**Criteria for Selecting Books for Babytime**

Care needs to be taken in selecting books to use in the program. All programmers should preview new picture books as they arrive to increase their repertoire. The following criteria should be kept in mind:

! The theme should be something that a very young child would be able to relate to in terms of experience, imagination and emotions, e.g. playing hide-and-seek with a parent (“Where’s Nicky?”), getting dressed (“How do I put it on?”), meeting animals (“I went walking”).

! Length should be appropriate to their very short attention span; some stories can be shortened, especially by skipping some repetitions of a pattern.

! Stories must be extremely simple, without any real plot but with a satisfying ending, and with no more than one or two characters and one theme.

! Pictures should be large, graphically simple, and the focal point of the story. Many board books are appropriate to this age but generally too small for a group, but make ideal display books; some are also available in picture book format more suitable to the program.

! The programmer must enjoy the book and be familiar with it, as his or her enthusiasm and ease will make the story come alive.

! Elements that babies will particularly respond to include:
  " repetition, and lots of it;
  " gentle surprises on each page;
  " a simple rhythm or tune;
  " a picture book version of a well-known song.
Appendix A: Action Rhymes and Songs

Nursery Rhymes - Collections
Cousins, Lucy. *Lucy Cousins’ Big Book of Nursery Rhymes.*
Oxenbury, Helen. *The Helen Oxenbury Nursery Rhyme Book.*

Action Rhymes - Collections
Brown, Marc. *Finger Rhymes.*
Brown, Marc. *Hand Rhymes.*
Brown, Marc. *Play Rhymes.*
Games For The Very Young.
Hammond, Linda. *One Blue Boat: Finger Fun and Action Rhymes for Every Day of the Year*
Lap-Time Song and Play Book
Williams, Sarah. *Round and Round the Garden*
*Trot Trot to Boston.*
Williams, Felicity. *Pocketful of Stars.*

Bouncing Rhymes
Pat-a-cake
Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker’s man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can
Clap baby’s hands
Pat it and prick it
Poke baby’s palm with finger
And mark it with “B”
Make B on baby’s palm
Then put it in the oven
For baby and me
Push baby’s hands forward

One little baby
One little baby rocking in a tree
Two little babies splashing in the sea
Three little babies crawling on the floor
Four little babies banging on the door

Five little babies playing hide and seek
Keep your eyes closed tightly now
Until I say - PEEK!

Jack-in-the-box
I’m a jack-in-the-box all curled up
Just tap on my head and up I’ll pop!
Tap on baby’s head and lift into air

Pop goes the weasel
All around the cobbler’s bench the monkey chased the weasel
The monkey thought it was all in fun
POP! Goes the weasel

A penny for a spool of thread. A penny for a needle
That’s the way the money goes

Humpty Dumpty
Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the king’s horses
And all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again

Mother and Father and Uncle John
Mother and Father and Uncle John
Went to market one by one
But Mother fell off
And Father fell off
But Uncle John went on and on and on...

Leg over leg
Leg over leg
As the dog went to Dover
When he came to a stile
JUMP! He went over
To market
To market to market
To buy a fat pig
Home again home again
Jiggedy jig

To market to market
To buy a fat hog
Home again home again
Jiggedy jog

Ride ride
Ride, ride, ride to Boston
Ride, ride ride to Lynn
Careful little baby
Don’t fall in

Trot trot
Trot, trot, trot to London
Trot, trot, trot to Dover
Careful little baby
Don’t fall over

A smooth road
A smooth road (4x)
A rough road (4x)
A bumpy road (4x)
A hole!

Tickling rhymes
Criss cross
Criss cross applesauce
Spiders crawling up my back
Cool breeze
Tight squeeze
And now you’ve got the shivers

Pizza pickle pumpernickel
Pizza, pickle, pumpernickel
My little one should have a tickle
One for your nose, and one for your toes
And one for the tummy, where the hotdog
goes

Little mouse
See the little mouse
Creeping up the stair  Move fingers up baby’s arm
Looking for a warm place
There oh there  Give baby a tickle under the arm

Round and round the garden
Round and round the garden
Circling motion on baby’s hand
Goes the teddy bear
One, step, two step  Walking motion with fingers
Tickle him under there  Tickle under arm

Doodle-y-doo
Doodle-y-doo, doodle-y-doo
Cover eyes with hand
I lost my baby What will I do?
Doodle-y-doo, Doodle-y-doo
Open my fingers And what do I see?
A baby! Uncover eyes and look at baby

This little piggy
This little piggy went to market
  Use baby’s fingers or each arm & leg as a different piggy
This little piggy stayed home
This little piggy had roast beef
This little piggy had none
And this little piggy went “Wee Wee Wee”
All the way home  Tickle baby all over

Grand old duke of York
The grand old duke of York
He had ten thousand men
He marched them up to the top of the hill
And then marched them down again
And when they were up they were up
And when they were down they were down
But when they were only half way up
They were neither up nor down.
March fingers up & down baby’s arm as indicated
**Songs**

**Hello to You**  
(tune: Happy Birthday)  
Hello to you  
Hello to you  
Hello to (child’s name; or “everyone”)  
And how do you do?  

Hello to you  
Goodbye to you  
Goodbye to _____  
And you’ll come back too.

_The following are familiar songs which are available from many sources:_  
The More We Get Together  
Row, Row, Row Your Boat  
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star  
The Wheels on the Bus  
Baa, Baa Black Sheep  
Eency Weency Spider  
I’m a Little Teapot  
Rock-A-Bye Baby  
Let’s Tap Our Legs Together  
Head and shoulders  
As I Was Going to Town One Day  
Ring Around a Rosy  
Hickory Dickory Dock  
Pop Goes the Weasel  
If You’re Happy and You Know It  
Six Little Ducks  
Old MacDonald Had a Farm  
Three Blind Mice  
Are You Sleeping Mr Moon (tune of Frere Jacques)  
Ten in a Bed / Roll Over
Appendix B: Books for Baby Storytime

**Picture books**

Brandenburg, Franz. *Cock-a-Doodle Doo*
Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon*
Burningham, John. *The Blanket*
Campbell, Rod. *This Baby*
Carle, Eric. *Very Hungry Caterpillar*
  1 2 3 to the Zoo
  *Do You Want To Be My Friend?*
Christelow, Eileen. *Five Little Monkeys Jumping On the Bed*
Ellwand, David. *Big Book of Beautiful Babies*
Falwell, Catherine. *Where’s Nicky?*
Fleming, Denise. *Barnyard banter.*
Fox, Mem. *Time for bed.*
Galdone, Paul. *Cat goes fiddle-I-fee.*
Ginsburg, Mirra. *Good morning, chick.*
  *Asleep, asleep.*
  *Four brave soldiers.*
Gundesheimer, Karen. *Splish, Splash, Bang Crash*
Gunson, Christopher. *Over On the Farm*
Hellen, Nancy. *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*
Hill, Eric. *Where’s Spot?*
Hutchins, Pat. *Rosie’s Walk*
  *Goodnight, Owl*
Inkpen, Mick. *Lullabyhullaballoo?*
Kraus, Ruth. *The Carrot Seed*
McDonnell, Flora. *I Love Boats*
  *I Love Animals*
Offen, Hilda. *A Fox Got My Socks*
Ormerod, Jan. *Sunshine*
Raffi. *Wheels On the Bus*
Shaw, Nancy. *Sheep On A Ship*
Tafuri, Nancy. *This Is The Farmer*
  *What the Sun Sees*
  *The Ball Bounced*
Takahatake, Jun. *Rub-A-Dub-Dub*

**Titherington, Jeanne. Baby’s Boat**
**Watanabe, Shigeo. How do I put it on?**
**Williams, Sue. I Went Walking**
  *Let’s go visiting*

**Big books**

These can be booked from Central Children’s Services Dept.

*Classic Nursery Rhymes*
*Goodnight Moon*
*Owl and the Pussycat*
*Old MacDonald Had a Farm*
*Rosie’s Walk*
*Sing a song of Mother Goose*

**Felt Board Stories**

Also to be booked as above.

*Owl and the Pussycat*
*Roll Over*
*Ten Green and Speckled Frogs*
Appendix C: Professional Literature

**Baby Storytime**


Butler, Dorothy (1980). *Babies need books.*


**Child Development**


White, B. (1980). *A parent’s guide to the first three years of life.*