BLOSSOM & ROOT

A COMPLETE, YEAR-LONG, EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

Early Years Second Edition

VOL. 2



RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 4 - 5

Weekly Nature Study, Music Study, Picture Study, Arts, Early Math Foundations, S.T.E.M. Activities, Reading and Writing Readiness, Literature, Kitchen Classroom Activities, and more!



www.blossomandroot.com

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Blossom & Root

Give Your Child a Beautiful Beginning

Early Years Vol. 2

A Complete, Year-Long, Early Learning Program

Recommended for Ages 4 - 5

Blossom & Root Early Years, Vol. 2

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Welcome to a Beautiful Beginning

Welcome to the second edition of Blossom and Root Early Years Vol. 2! You are about to embark on a joy-filled and wondrous year of learning and exploring with your child. Your days together will be filled with fine art, music, activities to nurture artistic expression, nature study, beautiful children's literature, discovery, hands-on learning, and so much more.

In this volume, you'll find 36 weeks of curriculum. This parent guide contains all of the activity prompts for the full year, book lists, supply lists, information about our philosophy and approach, tips for implementing each piece of the curriculum, and a clickable links list for any recommended videos, listening selections for music, and the featured artworks. The clickable links are at the end of this PDF.

Most lessons and activities are very short--ten minutes on average--and many can be integrated seamlessly into your normal day. We do recommend adding in park days, outside play, library visits, and any other activities your child enjoys, whenever possible. Free, unstructured, unscripted play should make up the bulk of the young child's day.

I wish you a wonderful year and a beautiful beginning with your child! Please feel free to reach out if you have questions. I am always happy to help!

- Kristina Garner kristinaeblossomandroot.com

Please note: In this second edition, we've separated the planning pages from the parent guide, and they are a completely optional resource. Please see the separate planning PDF for more details.

Tips for Getting Started

- Go at your child's pace and listen to their cues.

 If a certain activity captivates them, add it into your regular rotation. If another activity fails to engage them, feel free to skip it. Learning does not happen subject-by-subject here. It happens everywhere, all the time.
- Do not feel pressured to complete every single activity, every week. Do what you can, when you can.
- Take some time to set up a learning
 environment before beginning. A cozy reading
 nook, a dramatic play corner, a box of scarves for
 dancing to music, and a writing corner (with paper
 and crayons at the ready) can provide a welcoming
 environment for learning and discovery. These don't
 have to be fancy or take up a lot of space.
- Take some time to read through this parent guide carefully before beginning, and set aside time every few weeks to look ahead and see what you will need for upcoming lessons. Most weeks will require very little prep work.
- If you wish to print out this parent guide and / or the optional planning PDF, the best settings are black / white and double-sided, though this is completely up to you.

Make It yours

How to Teach This Curriculum

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood." – Fred Rogers

Focused Flexibility

Our Early Years curriculum is designed to be flexible yet focused. Please do not feel pressured to complete every single activity, every week. Fit in what you can, when you can, and learning will happen. If a certain activity really clicks with your child, feel free to add it to your regular schedule. If they are lackluster about another activity, skip it! Listen to their cues, and remember that every child has a unique learning style and pace.

What Does an Average Week Look Like?

Every family and every child is unique. Our curriculum is designed to be adaptable and flexible, so that it can fit into a multitude of schedules. For a low-pressure, relaxed approach, simply plan activities into your week however you like. If you need more structure, at least to get you started, please see the suggested schedule below.

Here is an example of a template for an average week of Blossom and Root Early Years Vol. 2:

Monday: Reading / writing lesson 1, picture study session 1, read the week's literature selection together, music study during free play

Tuesday: Reading / writing lesson 2, math lesson 1, picture study session 2, art project, option to read the literature selection again if you like

Wednesday: Reading / writing lesson 3, math lesson 2, picture study session 3, do the literature activity for the week

Thursday: Reading / writing lesson 4, math lesson 3, S.T.E.M. prompt, music study again during free play

Friday: Reading / writing lesson 5, kitchen classroom time, nature study (lesson 1) followed by nature notebook (lesson 2)

Feel free to add in whatever you like: weekly visit to the library, park day, play dates, kids yoga, etc.

Blossom and Root Early Years Vol. 2 can easily be adapted to fit any schedule. Most activities will require around 10 - 15 minutes to complete, with the exception of some of the art projects and kitchen classroom (depending on what you choose to make together.) Most activities require minimal prep, which can be done in around half an hour per week.

Reading, Writing, & Math Foundations

Our Philosophy and Approach

Our Reading and Writing Readiness Approach: Developing Familiar Sequence For Learning With A Hands-On Approach

Each week, your child will be introduced to a new letter through a familiar sequence of activities. You will choose an activity for each lesson from a list of options in this parent guide. This allows you to tailor the lesson to the materials you have on hand, as well as your child's learning preferences.

We begin by finding and forming the uppercase letter of the week. The next day's lesson teases the letter sound with a short reading, followed by an activity where your child finds the letter of the week amongst other letters, and an optional second activity where they trace the letter using their fingertip or a paintbrush. The next lesson introduces the lowercase letter, and an activity where your child matches the uppercase and lowercase versions of the letter together.

They practice finding and tracing the lowercase letter in the next lesson. In the final lesson of the week, they do an activity to explore the letter sound, and have the option to practice printing the letter with a variety of materials. Every few weeks, you will play special games to review several letters at once.

Your child will quickly learn the sequence of letter activities, and feel confident going into each day's lesson. The activity lists provide enough variety to keep things fresh, while still building a solid foundation for recognition and beginning letter sound familiarity. See the next page for examples of each kind of activity in our sequence! The activity lists can be found on the following pages, in the Parent Guide section titled "Reading / Writing Readiness Activities."

We rely on hands-on activities to help your child develop familiarity with letters and their sounds, rather than endless printing worksheets. They will love learning their letters in this playful, varied approach.

Building a Strong Foundation for Math in Context

In the early years, we believe that the mathematic focus should be on numeral recognition, quantity comprehension, shape recognition, and beginning to understand and recognize patterns.

Most children develop their first relationship with numbers and shapes through play, and through interactions they have with materials "out in the world." Our math program gently reflects this understanding with short, hands-on learning opportunities and prompts. Some can be done at the table, but most can be easily slipped into play, walks outside, and trips to the grocery store.

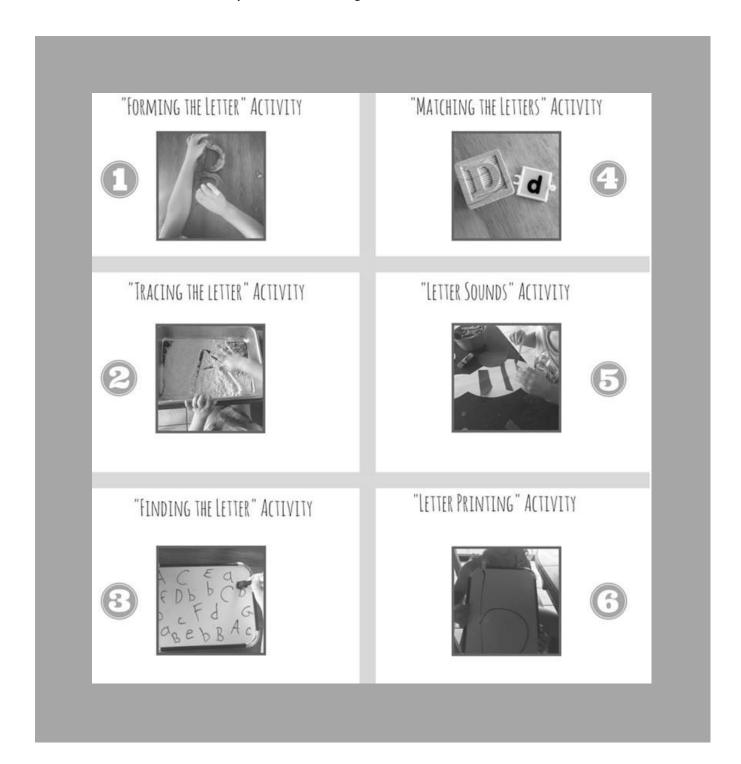
We use a cyclical approach in our Early Math Foundations lessons, building slowly upon a child's current comprehension. You will progress at their pace, using whichever activities click best for them. Like our Reading / Writing Readiness curriculum, our Early Math Foundations lessons feature lists of activities that allow for you to use materials you have on hand, and to choose the activities that best fit into your schedule and your child's learning style. For children who need variety, there are many options to choose from. For those that like a predictable sequence, you are free to use only their favorite iterations.

It is important to note that halfway through the year, you will be making a decision. The second half of the year begins to playfully (and gently) introduce the concepts of addition and subtraction to children who are ready to move on from numeral recognition and quantity comprehension. If you reach this point and your child has not mastered numeral / quantities 1 - 10, please cycle back to the first week and beginning the same sequence, starting with the level your child is currently at. Do not push them to go into addition and subtraction until they have a very solid understanding of the first 10 numerals and their corresponding quantities. If this is the only thing you accomplish in the year, it will still be a successful year!

Listen to your child, go at their pace, and integrate their math lessons into their natural play and learning as much as possible, and they will finish their year strong and ready to progress to the next level!

A Week of Reading / Writing Readiness

A Glance at Our Weekly "Letter Recognition" Activities Routine



Week	Book	Own	Borrow	Replace with
1	Roxaboxen by Alice McLerran			
2	Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey			
3	The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein and / or I am Love: A Book of Compassion by Susan Verde			
4	<i>The Proudest Blue</i> by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S. K. Ali			
5	The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle			
6	Birdsong by Julie Flett			
7	The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf			
8	My Papi Has a Motorcycle by Isabel Quintero			
9	Corduroy by Don Freeman			

Week	Book	Own	Borrow	Replace with
10	Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel by Virginia Lee Burton			
11	Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion			
12	Saturday by Oge Mora and / or Last Stop on Market Street by Matt De La Peña			
13	The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter			
14	The Grouchy Ladybug by Eric Carle			
15	Stellaluna by Janell Cannon			
16	<i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> by Laura Numeroff			
17	Ruby's Sword by Jacqueline Véissid and / or Julián is a Mermaid by Jessica Love			
18	<i>Beyond the Pond</i> by Joseph Kuefler and / or <i>Lift</i> by Minh Lê			

Week	Book	Own	Borrow	Replace with
19	The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats			
20	SkySisters by Jan Bourdeau Waboose and / or Owl Moon by Jane Yolen			
21	The Tale of Jeremy Fisher by Beatrix Potter			
22	Dear Juno by Soyung Pak and / or Where's Halmoni? by Julie Kim			
23	A Beetle is Shy by Diana Hutts Aston and Sylvia Long			
24	The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson			
25	Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin by Chieri Uegaki			
26	Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola			
27	My Rows and Piles of Coins by Tololwa M. Mollel			

Week	Book	Own	Borrow	Replace with
28	We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen			
29	The King of Bees by Lester L. Laminack and / or The Honeybee by Kirsten Hall and / or The Thing About Bees: A Love Letter by Shabazz Larkin			
30	My Dadima Wears a Sari by Kashmira Sheth			
31	The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle			
32	Thunder Cake by Patricia Polacco			
33	Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia by Jeanette Winter			
34	<i>Tar Beach</i> by Faith Ringgold			
35	Too Many Mangos: A Story About Sharing by Tammy Paikai			
36	Over and Under the Pond by Kate Messner			

Getting Ready to Start: Supplies

Supply List for Early Years Vol. 2

- large plastic tablecloth or tarp to protect work surface during art (can be used all year long)
- an old work shirt or apron to protect clothing (can be used all year long)
- large notebook or sketchbook to use as nature notebook
- card stock paper
- scissors
- crayons and washable markers
- oil pastels
- chalk in a few different colors (optional)
- glue (white school glue and / or glue sticks)
- clear tape
- stapler and staples
- items from around your home to use as counters: Cheerios, dried beans, pebbles, etc.
- compass (many phones have one)
- basic kitchen items: bowls, cookie sheets, etc.
- painting paper (larger is generally better for this age)
- tissue paper or kite paper in a variety of colors
- construction paper / craft paper in a variety of colors
- copy paper / printer paper
- watercolor paper, cold-press 140 lb. recommended
- uncooked penne pasta
- nontoxic, washable tempera paints (sometimes called poster paints) in variety of colors
- watercolor paint in a variety of colors
- paintbrushes, various sizes
- storage tub for sensory bins / invitations
- sand, dirt, or kinetic sand for sensory bins / invitations
- yarn (1 or 2 colors)
- needle and thread
- optional: hot glue gun and glue (adults only)
- play-dough (homemade or store bought), Model Magic, or air dry clay
- bean seeds (or another easy-to-grow seed), potting soil, and cup or pot with drainage holes
- cotton swabs
- optional: a small, clean spray bottle for wetting watercolor paints
- optional: a whiteboard and dry erase markers OR a chalkboard and chalk
- optional: a notebook or loose paper designed for young writers, with a center dotted line and a pencil
- a name tag for your child (simple, handmade)
- alphabet chart (to hang on wall), ideally with uppercase and lowercase letters (homemade or store-bought)
- several letter manipulatives representing uppercase and lowercase letters (wooden alphabet blocks, letter magnets, letter tiles, etc.)
- a deck of cheap ABC flashcards

- a flyswatter
- rhyming word picture cards (bought or made at home)
- · inexpensive notebook for alphabet book project
- math manipulatives for numeral recognition (wooden number blocks, foam numbers, number magnets or tiles, etc.
- a basic number line up to 20 (homemade or store-bought)
- a cheap deck of number flashcards
- manipulatives for pattern-making: beads and string, legos, colorful blocks, etc.
- corn starch
- sidewalk chalk
- ribbons or scarves for weaving (week 14)
- cheap gym locks with keys (week 15)
- marshmallows
- toothpicks
- a small balloon (week 21)
- flashlight with batteries (week 24)
- eye hooks (not too small), a wooden board, pipe cleaners (week 25)
- frosting and graham crackers (week 29)
- empty jug (like a milk jug)
- aluminum foil
- paper plates
- socks for sock puppets
- up-cycled boxes, shoe boxes, etc. (save a few or ask a neighbor to save some)
- camera or camera phone and a way to print out photos occasionally (at home or from a shop)
- optional: solar paper for making sun prints
- several prompts call for various toys and items from around your home or yard--use what you already have onhand for these prompts
- several prompts call for images of people, animals, etc.-you can use magazines, junk mailers / catalogs, print
 images off the internet using an image search, photocopy
 images from a book (libraries often have photocopy
 machines on-hand), or draw your own images
- several prompts will call for food items (goldfish crackers, pumpkins or substitute, etc.) and you will also need to source ingredients for the recipes you choose to make in the kitchen classroom—look ahead every few weeks to see what you'll need and when
- optional: cookie cutters in a variety of shapes for use with play-dough or in the kitchen classroom
- optional: tangrams or shape attribute blocks (you can also just cut shapes out of sturdy paper)
- optional: magnifying glass for nature study

Always look a few weeks ahead to assess what you need.



This Week in Nature Study.

Lesson 1 (Nature Study): Where I Live

This week, take time to walk around the area outside of your house. Notice, together, all of the important perimeters, borders, fences, features, landmarks, bodies of water, signs, outbuildings, neighboring buildings, streets, etc. Are there fields or lawns? Parking lots or parks? Flowers, vegetable gardens, trees, or vines? Rocks, beaches, or banks? Make a list of things you notice together as you walk. Look at your home from different points in the outside area around it. Notice how it looks different from each perspective. Each week, Lessons 1 and 2 may be done back-to-back on the same day, or split into two sessions on different days.

Lesson 2 (Nature Notebook): Map of Where I Live

Choose a notebook or a sketchbook that is to become your child's nature notebook for the year. This can be any kind of notebook, but plain, unlined pages would be best. Mixed media sketchbooks are optimal, as you can draw, paint, or glue upon the pages. Tell your child that this will be their special nature notebook for the year. Allow them to decorate the front, if they like.

Together, make a map of the area around your home, using your observations from lesson 1. Explain that a map is a drawing of a place from above, the way a bird would see it if it were flying overhead. This does not need to be to scale, and it doesn't need to be artistic. Help your child as much as needed. Allow them to color it, if they like.

Don't Forget: Daily Outside Play

Provide open time to explore and play at their own pace, following their own agenda, and prompted by their own curiosity.



This Week in Math and S.T.E.M.:

Early Math Foundations

Lessons should only last 5 to 15 minutes most days. <u>Please read the</u> <u>guide to Early Math Foundations at the beginning of this parent guide before beginning.</u>

Lesson 1: Counting Out Quantities to Given Numerals

Choose any of the activities from List 1 in the Early Math Foundations Guide. Select numerals / quantities appropriate to your child's current comprehension. (For example: 1 - 5, 1 - 10, 1 - 15, 1 - 20, etc.)

Lesson 2: Assigning Numerals to Quantities

Choose any of the activities from List 2 in the Early Math Foundations Guide. Select numerals / quantities appropriate to your child's current comprehension. (For example: 1 - 5, 1 - 10, 1 - 15, 1 - 20, etc.)

Lesson 3: Sing a Counting Song

Choose any song from List 3 in the Early Math Foundations Guide to sing together for today's lesson.

S.T.E.M. Activity

"Sink or Float" with Household Items

Gather several items together (blocks, coins, toys, etc.) Fill a large basin with water and place the items outside of it. Ask your child to predict if each item will sink or float when placed in the water. Allow them to drop each item in, one at a time, to test their predictions. Take it further by making a simple chart to organize which items sink or float.

"How Tall Am I?" (Part One)

Have your child stand up straight against a wall or door in your house. Use a pencil to mark how tall they are and write the date next to the line.



This Week in the Arts: Visual Arts & Drama

Picture Study: *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa* by Hokusai (clickable link in back of guide)

- Session 1: Tell your child that you are going to share a work of art with them every week. For the next few weeks, they will all be paintings by an artist named Katsushika Hokusai. Don't tell them the name of the painting just yet. Show them the artwork and allow them to look at it for a few minutes.
- Session 2: Show your child the painting again, and remind them of the artist's name. After they've looked at it for a few moments, hide it from view and ask them to tell you everything they can remember about it: colors, images, shapes, animals or people, etc.
- Session 3: Tell the child the title of the painting and show it to them again. Talk about the painting for a minute or two. Do they like it? Does it remind them of books they've read, movies they've seen, or places they've been? What do they feel like when they look at it?

Exploring Artistic Expression: Marble-in-a-Tray Painting

Protect work surface and clothing. Tape a piece of paper to the bottom of a cookie sheet (with a lip) or a baking tray. On one end, squirt a little dab of paint in yellow, blue, and red. Place 1 - 3 marbles or round pebbles into the tray and show your child how to tilt the tray back and forth (like a wave) to make the marbles roll through the paint and across the paper. Allow them to create freely, and repeat with fresh paper as many times as they like. They may wish to listen to music while they work. Display their artwork in your home.



This Week in the Arts: Music

Exploring Music: Introducing Fanny Mendelssohn

Decide when you will do music study during your week. Tell your child you will be sharing music with them each week. Tell them that, for the next few weeks, you will be sharing music written by a composer named Fanny Mendelssohn. Play a selection from the links provided in the back of this guide for them. They may wish to dance with scarves or fabrics while they listen. See the beginning of this guide for more information and tips for Exploring Music.



This Week in the Kitchen Classroom

Each week, choose a recipe or a cooking project to complete together. Allow your child to help with developmentally-appropriate tasks: stirring, measuring and pouring, cutting soft items with a child-safe knife, helping with set-up and clean-up, gathering and washing ingredients, etc. You may also use your kitchen classroom time to make snacks and treats that start with the letter of the week. We will offer suggestions each week, but you are welcome to make anything you like!

In the Kitchen with Letter Aa:

- Apple slices, baked apples, apple muffins
- Ants on a log (spread nut butter on celery sticks and place raisins along it)
- Apricots
- Avocado slices



This Week in Read-Together Time

Read Together: Roxaboxen Written by Alice McLerran Illustrated by Barbara Cooney

During the course of the year, we will be working on developing the habits that will lead to successful narration later on. However, the main goal of Read-Together Time is to enjoy reading literature together. Before beginning, be sure to read the guide on Read-Together Time at the beginning of this parent guide.

This book truly captures the joy and adventure of imaginative play. The children in the story work together to build a simple town, complete with homes, streets, and a marketplace, using whatever they can find outdoors.

Exploring Literature Through Engagement: Prompts

After you read the story together, here are some questions you could ask your child:

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- Which part of the children's town did you like the best?
- What is your favorite game to play, using your imagination?

Poetry

 Read "Little Bo-Peep" and "Little Boy Blue" from your Mother Goose book together.

Please feel free to substitute Mother Goose selections with any poetry book you like! Poetry can be a short stand-alone lesson, or it can be read at the same time as this week's main literature selection.

Exploring Literature Through Environment and Experiences: Build Your Own Roxaboxen

Spend some time outdoors together, building your own version of Roxaboxen. Responsibly collect stones, pinecones, or fallen branches to mark roadways and walls. Decorate with pebbles, petals, and leaves. Decide where the various buildings of your town will be located: the library, the grocery store or market, the park, the theatre, various homes, etc. Alternatively, build a "Roxaboxen" in your home, using toys, pillows, scarves, up-cycled boxes, etc. to mark the streets and buildings of the town. Be sure to give your town a name, and invite more friends and family members to join you, if you like.

Be sure not to disturb any protected areas.

Please note: You may bring the story to life with any activity you like. The activity above is just one suggestion. Please see the guide to Read-Together Time at the beginning of this parent guide for a list of activities to consider each week.

Don't Forget: Provide a Literacy-Rich Environment

- Cozy reading nook readily available
- Books where your child can access them on their own
- Regular visits to the library
- Print-rich environment
- Writing center available (this can be as simple as a jar of crayons and a drawing pad, some envelopes, etc.)
- Read for pleasure, yourself, and let your child see you doing it



This Week in Reading/Writing Readiness:

Lessons should only take 5 to 15 minutes most days. Lessons 1 and 2 can be combined to accommodate a "4-day per week" schedule.

Please read the Reading / Writing Readiness Guide at the beginning of this parent guide before starting.

Lesson 1: Introducing Capital A

- Sing the alphabet song together, pointing to each letter on your chart as you sing.
- Tell your child that you are learning about letter A this week. Ask them to find letter A on your alphabet chart, with your help if needed.
- Spread out uppercase letter manipulatives and ask your child to find capital A.
- Do a FORMING activity for capital A. (See Reading / Writing Readiness Guide at the beginning of this parent guide for a list of activities.)

Lesson 2: Finding and Tracing Capital A

- Look at the A page in your alphabet book together. (See beginning of this guide for a list of alphabet books to consider.)
- Ask your child to find capital A on your alphabet chart again.
- Do a FINDING activity for capital A and / or a TRACING activity for capital A. (See Reading / Writing Readiness Guide at the beginning of this parent guide for a list of activities.)

Lesson 3: Introducing Lowercase a

 Introduce lowercase a to your child. Find it on your alphabet chart together. Point out lowercase a in a variety of books, and explain that it often looks different in print than it does written by hand.

Lesson 3: Introducing Lowercase a, cont.

- Spread out lowercase letter manipulatives and ask your child to find the lowercase a.
- Do a MATCH-UP activity. (See guide for a list of activities.)
- Do a FORMING activity for lowercase a. (See guide for a list of activities.)

Lesson 4: Finding and Tracing Lowercase a

- Ask your child to find lowercase a on the alphabet chart again.
- Do a FINDING activity and / or a TRACING activity for lowercase a. (See guide for a list of activities.)

Lesson 5: Letter Aa Sound

- Look at the A page in your alphabet book together.
- Talk about the sound of letter A. Explain that letter A makes several sounds, but the one you will focus on for now is the sound we hear at the beginning of the word "apple." Try to think of several words together that begin with the short-vowel sound of A, as in "apple."
- Do a LETTER SOUNDS activity. See guide for a list of activity options, or choose from the suggestions below.

Suggestions for LETTER SOUNDS Activities for Letter Aa:

- Pretend to be an astronaut or an acrobat.
- Make apple play dough to play with (see play dough recipes in the back of this guide.)
- Make an ant or an alligator painting.

Practice Name Recognition and Printing Each Week in Addition to Scheduled Lessons

- Spend about five minutes, once or twice per week, on name recognition and printing.
- Begin by having your child assemble their name out of letter manipulatives, using a name tag to help them if needed.
- Work up to having them spell their name with letter manipulatives without the name tag.
- The next stage is to have them trace their name in a flour or salt tray with their finger. Work toward having them write their name on a whiteboard or chalkboard.
- Finally, once they are ready, have them practice printing their name on a piece of paper with a pencil or a crayon. Continue practicing once per week. Many children will not reach this stage until the very end of the year, and that is completely fine.

Featured Artists and Composers / Musicians in Early Years Vol. 2 (Second Edition)

Artists

Katsushika Hokusai

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Rosa Bonheur

Frida Kahlo

Tyree Guyton

Jacob Lawrence

Alma Thomas

Oscar Howe

Amrita Sher-Gill

Composers / Musicians

Fanny Mendelssohn

Ludwig van Beethoven

Ali Farka Touré

Joseph Boulogne (also spelled Bologne), Chevalier de Saint-Georges

Gabriela Lena Frank

Erik Satie

Miles Davis

Camille Saint-Saëns

Cécile Chaminade