



# Book Cubbies: Family Engagement Workshop

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## One to Know: The Power of a Home Library

Book Cubbies house a child's home library, inspiring pride of book ownership and helping to establish the child's identity as a reader. The workshop supports parents by providing ideas to find time to read aloud and strategies to develop language and preliteracy skills essential for success in kindergarten and beyond. Regardless of nationality, level of education, or their parents' economic status, children who grow up with books in their homes reach a higher level of education than those who do not.

The Book Cubby Family Workshop engages families with the joy and transformational power of books and reading. The workshop is framed around three parts; families are invited

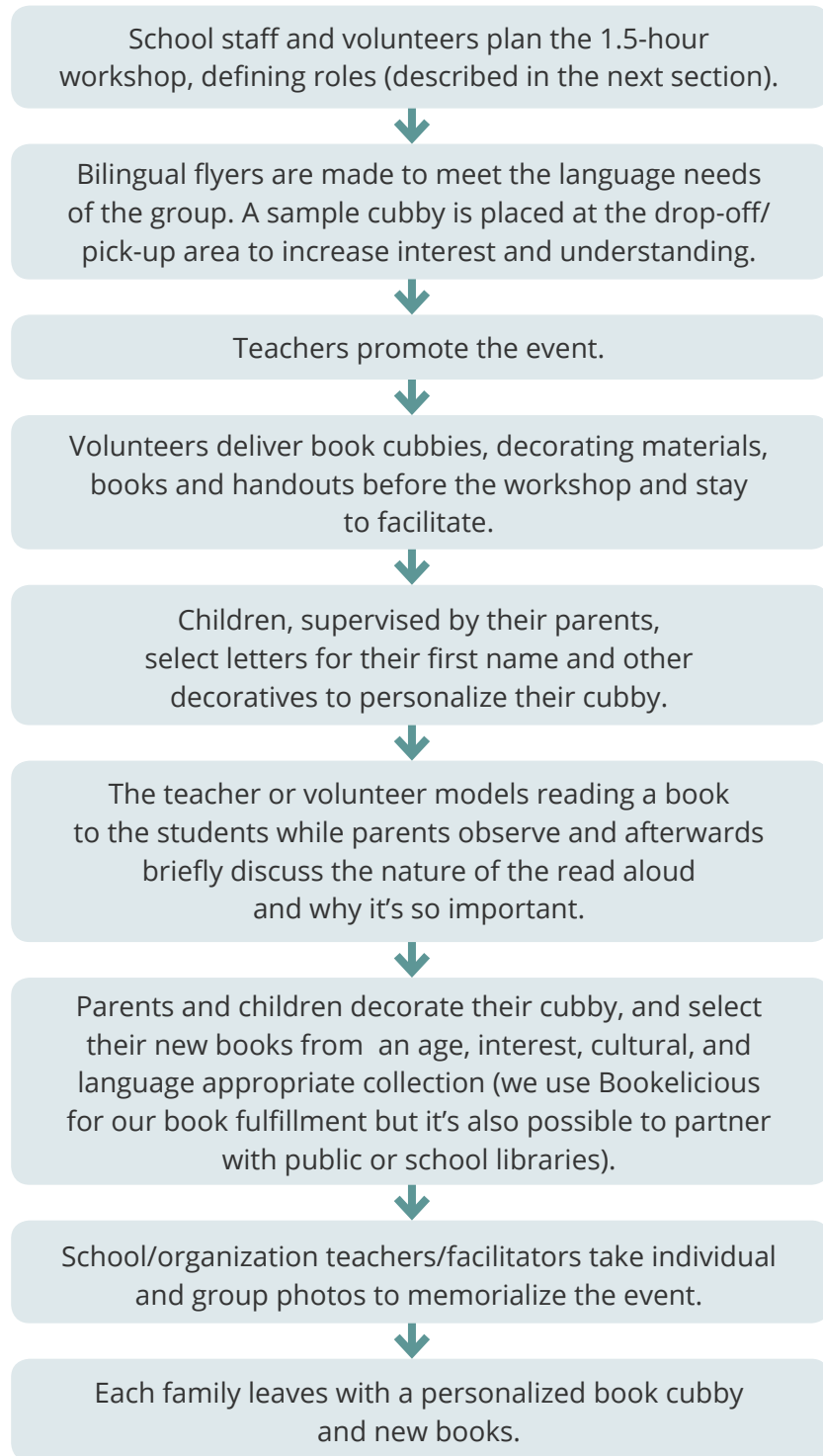
1. To help their children select books that they will love best to read.
2. To help their children paint, decorate, and personalize a small, apartment-sized book cubby for safe-keeping of and convenient access to their books and a writing journal.
3. To participate in an interactive family engagement session about the importance of reading aloud to children and talking with them about books and reading.

The interactive discussion centers on the developmental nature of reading and literacy, the importance of background knowledge, and the emergence of literacy understandings, behaviors, and attitudes—and how best to support them. And, most importantly, we discuss with families how best to foster a love of books and reading with their own preschoolers and primary students.



## Book Cubby Family Engagement Workshop Flow

The family engagement workshop follow this approximate rollout of events:



## The Read-Aloud and Family Discussion

The read-aloud and discussion takes about 20 minutes. It occurs after the cubby drawers are painted and the paint is drying.

### Family Discussion Purpose

- Engage families in understanding how the read-aloud is one of the most effective ways to support language and early literacy development at home.
- Select a book that will engage a large group of preschool age children and their families and model reading it aloud while the parents or caregivers observe. We often select books such as Mo Willems' *Elephant and Piggie* or Eric Litwin's *Pete the Cat* for their simplicity, brevity, and appeal.



### Essential Understandings

- Reading aloud develops vocabulary, background knowledge, and helps children learn what reading is and how it works.
- Loving books and becoming a lifelong reader starts now and is one of the best ways to bond with your child.

### Key Read-Aloud Pointers

- Be enthusiastic when reading.
- Develop vocabulary by asking one or two questions while reading. These depend on the age: identifying objects, colors, counting items for younger children. Predicting “What do you think will happen next...” for older children.
- Connect the story to the child’s life, if possible. There are many ways relate to something in the story: “Do you remember when...” “You have a baby sister too!” etc.
- Do let the story flow without too many interruptions.
- It’s natural that your child wants to read the same book over and over—each time they hear the story they are noticing and learning something new, which is immensely exciting for your child.
- When children ask you lots of questions, it’s a sign that they are thinking and trying to make sense of the world. You may not know the answers, but you can acknowledge that the question is really interesting and it shows that they’re thinking—and the two of you can work together to find answers.

# What to Do: Step-by-Step Instructions

## Before the Workshop

- Label bowls one letter per bowl.
- Set out bowls so that there is sufficient space for parents and children to select letters. Place letters and decorative stickers in bowls.
- Set out books in a separate area, if available, organized by language and age (e.g., board books separate from hardcover picture or chapter books for older students).
- Lay drop cloths so that families have space to paint.
- Place cubbies on drop cloths. Take out the drawer and place in front of cubby with brush on top of drawer.
- Organize paint/paint cups for each family (children pre-choose their favorite paint color).

## As Families Arrive

- Greet families, have them sign in and sign photo release forms, and gather other data you need.
- Depending on the site and arrival times, encourage children to select a book from the classroom library while waiting.
- When most of the families have arrived, explain the workshop steps.
- Fill the various paint cups with about one tablespoon of paint; use as many different colors as you like.
- Have students choose one color (so they don't mix colors and end up with a muddy brown) and give each student a brush.
- Remind parents to paint only the front of the drawer. Parents will provide assistance to children.
- Remind parents to guide their children, not paint for them. If the children are under three, parents should do much of the painting.
- Families may toss the used paint cups, but collect the brushes to save, soak, and clean so they can be used again.
- Invite adults and children into the classroom for a read-aloud while the paint dries.



## After Painting

Have parents and children enter the classroom and sit down on or around the reading area.

### Read-aloud with Families

- When ready, have children sit on the floor to listen to a read-aloud. Parents can sit on chairs.
- Remind parents to put their phones on vibrate.
- Have teachers and volunteers model how to read aloud to children while parents observe.

### Read-aloud Discussion

- After the read-aloud, have children go outside and play while parents and teachers discuss the strategies for reading aloud.

### Decorating

- Reunite parents with their child. Have them return to the classroom and find their drawer and a cubby.
- Ask students to get a bowl and choose four to six decoratives (no more will fit!).
- Encourage them to have fun decorating! They can paint their child's name on the cubby and decorate with stickers.
- When they are finished, families can take photos with their completed cubbies!





## Book Selection

- Each family can select their books (or pre-order through Bookelicious). The child should be encouraged to select the books he or she loves best.
- Take a large group photo of families with their books and cubbies (with their permission).

## Site Cleanup and Debrief

- Place remaining stickers in plastic bags. Avoid mixing stickers.
- If the workshop takes place in a classroom, make sure it's clean and restored to its "normal" state.
- Discuss with staff and volunteers what went well and what to revise for next time.

## More to Know and Do

After the workshop, follow-up with families, if possible, and ask about the cubby, books, and family read-aloud time. Gently engage families in discussion about how it's going; how their children are responding to their new home library, and what additional support they might need. If the Book Cubby Family Engagement Workshop takes place through a school, teachers can also engage their students in a conversation about the books and whether they are having a chance to read them at home.

# Adaptations for Online Family Book Cubby Workshops

(A supplement to the Step-by-Step Directions)

## Ideas for Preparing Materials for Distribution


1. Families order their preferred paint color and their books online.
2. Families provide the first name of the child for cubby letters.
3. Place letters of the child's name, paint and other supplies in the cubby drawer (examples below).
4. Sort books according to the child's order.
5. Books can be placed in the cubby (example below) or distributed separately in a bag.
6. Cubby, supplies and books placed in the black plastic bag for pickup. Bag should be used to protect the floor during painting.
7. Write the child's name on the label and place it on the bag so that there is no confusion during pickup.
8. Ask parents not to open the bag until the workshop. A big surprise!



Use the cubby drawer for the paint, paint cup and brush. Place letters for first name and foam stickers in small plastic bag.



Families pick up their cubby and supplies and open their package during the workshop.



If you are distributing board books for infants/toddlers, they will also fit in the drawer.

*With deepest appreciation to our Bring Me A Book Champion Dr. Judy Crates who piloted the Book Cubby Workshop and authored this Toolkit.*