

A Family Guide to Creating Stories

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This resource was created by the Coaching and Assessment Team at the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute for educators to share with families.



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What are Family Stories?

Families have special ways of recording their memories. Some do so through storytelling, others keep scrap books or journals. Stories that are written down become treasures that a family keeps forever. Written and illustrated family stories can also be a way of supporting your child's literacy development. As your child sees you write and draw, they learn about the purpose of writing. They can use their emergent literacy skills to read the stories you have written back to themselves.

Why Share Family Stories with your Child's Educator

Family stories can be a way to share meaningful moments you have noticed about your child with their educators. Stories are a helpful way to build and maintain a home-to-school connection. As an expert on your child, you can use your voice to share what children do at home but also who they are. Your child's educators have their own stories about your children's growth and learning in the classroom. By sharing your family story, you are providing a meaningful window into who your child is at home, their strengths, personality, and interests. This allows educators to put together a whole picture of your child both at school and at home which, in turn, can help them to create plans that better reflect all children's interests and strengths.

How to Create a Family Story

Family stories can capture your child's unique personality, character traits, interests, and strengths. As children build, play, go on daily walks and trips to the park, or help with household chores, you are constantly noticing how they are flourishing in their own way. Family stories do not have to be centered on an activity or task---as the author of these stories, you may choose to take a picture or video or simply write a quick story of a moment that shows the child you see through your eyes. We have shared some samples in the next section.

1. Create a picture and letter to your child

*Dear Eli,
I love to play with you. You are growing and changing every day. Yesterday we decided to play doctor with Teddy. We talked about what we would need during our game. You said we need a doctor's office, tools, and a mom for Teddy. Again, you told me I will be the mommy and you will be the doctor.
I pretended I was Teddy's mom and called the doctor over the phone saying that Teddy was not feeling well. You said that I can bring Teddy to the office. We walked to your bedroom which was now the doctor's office, and you took Teddy's temperature, asked him how he was feeling, and gave him some medicine.
We had fun playing with Teddy and then you asked me if we can do it again, but now you wanted to be the mommy and I can be the doctor.
We played again!!!*

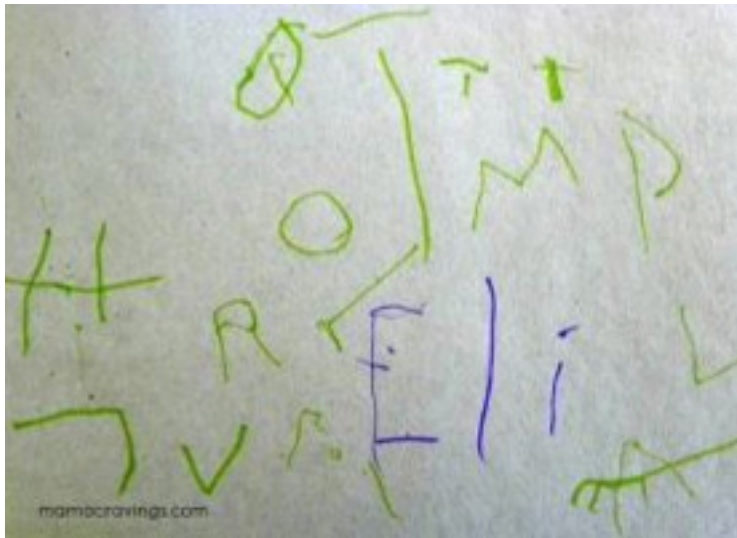


2. Create a picture with a voice memo

Oral records are also valuable. You can take a picture and record a short voice memo that describes the moment you want to remember. You can dictate letters to your child that they can listen to when they are older.

3. Create a scrapbook or portfolio of the child's work

You can keep pictures, drawings or something your child created along with a short message detailing what it is in a special place. Take time to revisit the portfolio with the child and notice how their skills and interests have changed.



*Dear Eli,
We played doctor with Teddy
yesterday. I took Teddy to your
office and this is the note you
wrote for me. You said, "To buy
medicine".*

How to Share Stories with Your Child's Educator

Your child's educator can learn a lot from you. Chat with your child's educator to figure out the best way to share these stories with them. You may already have a system in place, whether it's via email, text, or an app—if so, that is great!

Last Thoughts

In addition to sharing your family stories with your child's educators, it is equally important to share them with your children. Write your stories so that they can be read aloud to your child--keep them simple. As you share and read to your child, take an opportunity to reflect and ask your child questions to help strengthen their learning. Ask open-ended questions such as, "Do you remember what you liked best? Why did you do that this way? Why did you choose to draw this/use this color/use this tool, etc.?"