PLAY SPACES
Presented by Out of the Box Festival, Brisbane City Council Libraries and First 5 Forever

Play Spaces is about sharing great stories, exploring your imagination, and taking time to reflect with others and by yourself. This is a great place to relax and take a break from the Festival or find a comfortable spot to curl up with a great selection of books for children.

With a dedicated space for babies, as well as a space for the older kids, these spaces are great for a moment to think about what you have experienced in the day, to get ready for what is ahead, or just to chill out and recompose, before heading back into the festival.

Play Spaces encourages the development of literacy, communication and language skills in a gentle yet fun environment.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

DRAMA: F-2
Explore role and dramatic action in dramatic play, improvisation and process drama (ACADRM027).

Use voice, facial expression, movement and space to imagine and establish role and situation (ACADRM028).

MUSIC: F-2
Develop aural skills by exploring and imitating sounds, pitch and rhythm patterns using voice, movement and body percussion (ACAMUM080).

ENGLISH: F-2:
Understand that spoken, visual and written forms of language are different modes of communication with different features and their use varies according to the audience, purpose, context and cultural background (ACELA1460).

Innovate on familiar texts by experimenting with character, setting or plot (ACELT1833).

EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners
Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

NEED TO KNOW
AGE RANGE: All ages
VENUE: Playhouse Lounge and Lyric Lounge

This Creative Learning Guide was prepared by Brisbane City Council Library Services for First 5 Forever.
“I knew who I was this morning, but I’ve changed a few times since then.”
From Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Did you know that up to 90% of a child’s brain development happens in the first 5 years? (First 5 Forever). The ‘First 5 Forever’ principles are at the core of the approach to Play Spaces (find out more on their website, link provided in the resources listed below). These formative years are crucial times of flux and growth, when every moment of each day holds possibilities for new thoughts, ideas and questions to germinate and blossom. Change is the constant here, and it can be a tough ask for adults to maintain that pace. Play Spaces provides a loosely structured, informal and welcoming context where teachers, parents and carers can capitalise on the moments between a show or an experience at Out of the Box, in the knowledge that these more intimate moments can have as much impact as the large scale or spectacular ones. The key feature of the Play Spaces model is the permission it gives young ones and adults to pause, connect and reflect and allow the environment, the experiences and the learning to be shared between adult and child. Play Spaces will assist young Festival-goers to maximise their learning and enhance the impact of the highly stimulating surroundings in a more focused and authentic way, while assisting the most familiar adults in a child’s life to play an active part in the creative learning.

ART FORM FOCUS:
The Arts: Drama and Music.

KEY MESSAGES:
Sharing, playing and connecting in the early years of a child’s life can significantly influence the development of confident and capable young learners.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:
Play Spaces aims to make shared play easy, enjoyable and educational. Activities aim to draw on the surrounding stimulus, the works experienced and to give permission to pause and reflect together. The experiences offered in the Play Spaces Creative Learning Guide are transferable and can be used in the home, the classroom, the outdoors, anywhere...the important thing is to make and take the time to connect in even the simplest of ways. The suggestions use minimal resources to place the focus back on the face to face, interpersonal bond between adult and child.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

**TALK**
Children learn words by hearing them, so the more you talk, the more words children learn. This can make a big difference to how many words children know by the time they reach school.

**Babies**
Everyday activities are the best way for your baby to learn. Point to and talk about what your baby can see and hear during the day. You can do this at home or out and about. Pick up on your child’s cues – are they pointing at something or making noises you can respond to?

**Toddler and Preschoolers**

- Talk about what you are doing, what you see and what interests your child.
- Talk about what you are buying at the supermarket
- Talk about what you can see out the window when you’re driving
- Talk about what you’re making for dinner

- Talk about what is happening around you - at the park, shops, while out and about
- Add extra words to what your little one says
- Pause when you talk so your child can respond.

**School-age children**

- Make time to chat about your day, and try asking open-ended questions like ‘What did you enjoy about school today?’ You can talk while you’re doing something together like going for a walk or kicking a footy around. Talking together also builds your relationship with your school-age child.
- Talk about the future. Tell your child what you’re going to do on the next day or on the weekend, or ask them to tell you what they need to do before they go to bed.
- Play word games that encourage your child to learn sounds. For example, ‘I spy with my little eye something beginning with f-f-f. What do you think I’m looking at that starts with that sound?’.
- Ask your child about words that rhyme. For example, ‘What other words sound like car?’.
- Ask your child to make a sound or sound combination, then think of words with that sound. For example, ‘What’s a funny sound? Mo? What sounds can you make with mo? Moan, mope, moat … ’.
- Your child’s stories are probably longer and more detailed than when they were younger. The stories might be made up, or about things that have actually happened. They might have a theme, character or plot and contain actions and events in a logical sequence – for example, ‘The boat sank, so everybody had to swim to the beach’.
- As your child keeps learning and practising language, their storytelling will improve. It will be easier to work out who your child is talking about when they’re telling a story, and how the events in the stories fit together.
PLAY

Play is a child’s work. It gives children an opportunity to practice what they’re learning.

Babies
• Play peek-a-boo and hide and seek with your baby. This helps your baby learn about the world around them.
• You are your baby’s first toy – make the most of your face-to-face interactions. Your baby will love watching your face and your mouth move as you talk, read and sing with them. Play tickling games eg. Round and Round the Garden, sing songs eg. Twinkle, Twinkle.
• Play sorting games with household objects (pegs, kitchen plastics, the washing).
• Provide crayons and paper to encourage drawing. Encourage your child to talk about what they are drawing and write down their story. Ask questions such as “tell me about your drawing, it looks really interesting”, “I like the lines and colours you have used in your drawing”.
• Dance around with your little one. Singing and dancing to a familiar tune is a great way to bond with your child.

Toddlers and Preschoolers
• Play sorting games with household objects (pegs, kitchen plastics, the washing).
• Play with puppets, stacking toys, cuddly toys, simple puzzles and blocks. When playing with your baby talk about what you are doing together.

School-age children
• Encourage your child to write shopping lists or restaurant menus for pretend play.
• Point out different types of print when you’re out and about with your child – for example, on shop signs or movie posters.
• Ask your child to make you a book, with a word on one side of the page, and a picture of that word on the other side.
• Select a few alphabet letters and move them around to make new sounds – bat, tab, abt – and see which of them are real words. Practise sounding them out letter by letter, then saying the word – for example, ‘b-a-t makes the word bat’. Start with lower-case letters, so you don’t confuse your child with the two different letter shapes for each sound.
• Encourage your child to write their name and the names of other family members in greeting cards or on pictures. Once your child can use all the letters well, they will be ready for upper case and lower case (capitals and small letters).
• Play word games, including silly rhymes and riddles. This gets your child using their imagination to come up with answers.

SING

Experts in early literacy and child development agree – Nursery Rhymes are as important today as they ever were.

With benefits that range from boosting language skills to providing opportunities to practice fine motor skills, nursery rhymes are not just fun – they’re also great for growing brains.

Singing songs and rhymes as you go about your day is great for early literacy development. In the bath and in the car are both great places to sing songs and rhymes with your child.

Sing together. Make up silly songs as you go about your day or sing songs you know or in your home language. Benefits of singing include boosting language skills and providing opportunities to practice fine motor skills.
• It’s never too early to start – sing to your baby from birth
• You don’t need to be a talented singer, your baby loves your voice
• Babies and little ones learn from looking at your face
• Sing slowly so little ones can hear all the sounds
• Make up actions to go with the words
• Sing your favourite songs over and over again
• Learn new songs and rhymes at a free library early literacy session

Regular singing helps to build a love of words and sounds which all contribute to early literacy.

You can also try YouTube for inspiration and to learn the words of songs, rhymes and actions.

Search some of these favourite rhymes:

SPOKEN RHYMES
• Jelly on a Plate
• I’m a Little Cuckoo Clock
• Here is the Beehive
• Baby’s Nap
• Ten Little Fingers
SINGING RHYMES
• 1,2,3,4,5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive
• 5 Little Ducks
• Baa Baa Pink Sheep
• Der Glumph Went the Little Green Frog
• I Went To Visit a Farm One Day
• You’re My Little Baby
• Miss Polly
• Open/Shut Them
• Wash Your Dirty Hands
• Rain is Falling Down

School-age children
School age children enjoy nonsense songs such as those by Peter Combe eg. “Toffee Apple”, “Spaghetti Bolognaise”, “Wash Your Face in Orange Juice” (Mr Clicketty Cane). The early primary years are a perfect time to expose children to a wide variety of music from classical to country to pop. Sing songs together in the car and around the house, share music and songs you liked as a child. If you play a musical instrument play live music with your child and allow them to experiment with your instrument to make sounds. As your child develops, you can introduce musical concepts like loud/soft and fast/slow. Play instruments loudly, then softly. Then encourage your child to copy the way you played the instruments. Do the same with fast and slow sounds, then high and low sounds.

And you don’t even need instruments. Small, repeated, rhythmic actions, or body percussion, make good accompaniments to singing. You and your child can tap your shoulders, knees or elbows to the beat of a song.

READ
Keep a selection of books where your child can access them and let him or her explore them in any way they like. Keeping books around the house and in your nappy bag, car or pram helps to make books familiar and easy to access for both you and your child.

Encourage book sharing but don’t force it. Shared reading should be a positive experience for both of you.
• It’s ok to stop part-way through a book when your child gets tired or distracted. Reading and chatting about a few pages at a leisurely pace is better than rushing a book start-to-finish
• Skip the words and tell stories just “reading” the pictures
• Read slowly, and re-read the same favourites
• Explain words that are unfamiliar
• Ask your child questions about the story
• Ask your local library staff for recommendations that suit the age and development stage of your child

What books are suitable for your child?

Babies
In the first few months of life a baby primarily sees in shades of black, white and grey. Shades of black and white send the strongest signals to a baby’s brain. These strong signals can help stimulate brain growth and aid in visual development. Black and white board books are most suitable for young babies. Older babies enjoy sturdy board, cloth or vinyl books with simple, large pictures. Babies love looking at pictures that include photos of other babies and familiar objects.

Start a routine at bedtime that includes a story by mouth, a rhyme or song. A story by mouth could be one you remember reading when you were a child or a made-up one about topics your child shows interest in.

Toddlers
Toddlers enjoy simple picture and lift the flap books. Share books with a picture on one page and a small amount of print on the other. Toddlers love pointing and naming items.

Preschoolers
Picture books with slightly more detailed illustrations are ideal for preschool children. The print may consist of longer sentences or short paragraphs on one or both pages. The story will have a beginning, middle and an end. Children will be able to identify the characters and predict what will happen in the story.

One thing you can do to boost your child’s literacy development is to start pointing out street signs and shop notices and create conversations around them. Here’s some ideas on getting started:
• If there’s a sign you pass regularly, point it out and repeat what it says every time you go past. The repetition will help your child start to recognise how different words and letters look.
• Point out the different shapes of signs (eg. A stop sign verses a give way sign). Some signs have words (stop, give way, no entry), others have pictures (roundabout, pedestrian crossing).
• Choose a sign and see if your child can let you know each time they see it.
• For older children you could sound out the letters: S – T – O – P.
• Talk about how traffic or pedestrians need to respond and why.
• Ask your child if they can think of any words that rhyme with the words on the sign. For younger children, help them with some suggestions.
• See if your child can recognise any letters on the sign.
• Talk about what colour it is and what other things are the same colour.
• Make signs together. Let your child have a go at writing the words. Paste them onto some sticks and add them to your play. Use chalk or paths to make roads, add signs, cars and trucks and have fun!
• Like the popular children’s book, “We’re going on a bear hunt” by Michael Rosen, you could go on a sign hunt! What are all the different signs? What are they used for?

School-age children
• Tell stories and read books. Encourage your child to come up with new endings to stories or tell you what might happen next.
• Read stories and then talk about them. Ask, ‘What did you like about the story?’ or ‘Who was your favourite character? Why?’.
• Take turns reading. You could read half the page while your
child reads the other half. You could also point out single words here and there for your child to sound out. Start with words that are easy to sound out – for example, two-letter and three-letter words like ‘mat’, ‘on’ or ‘sip’.

- Older children love alphabet books – ask your child to tell you words that start with the same sound as the letter you’re looking at.

- Ask your child to make a storybook with their own pictures. They could do this on a computer or with pens and paper. Help them write the words or at least some of the letters in the story.

- When you’re out and about, ask your child to pick out or sound out letters or words on billboards, shop fronts, street signs or items at the supermarket.

OTHER RESOURCES:

REFERENCES:
www.first5forever.com.au
http://raisingchildren.net.au/