ARKANSAS IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Building the Reading Brain

Birth–5 Teacher Guide & Family Literacy Activities

Every Arkansas Imagination Library book is an opportunity to build the reading brain. This guide provides developmentally appropriate, play-based learning experiences aligned with the Arkansas Early Learning Standards to strengthen language, literacy, and school readiness through meaningful interactions with books.

What's New Daniel? by Micha Archer

Delivery Month: November

Group 4 - Ages 3-5

Learning Goals/Objectives

Language & Literacy: Develop oral language, retell story events, ask and answer questions, and expand vocabulary related to friendship, communication, and change.

Social-Emotional Development: Identify emotions, practice empathy, discuss changes in routines, and strengthen friendship skills.

Mathematics: Compare and sort objects by attributes, sequence events, and recognize patterns.

Creative Arts: Express feelings through art, storytelling, music, and dramatic play.

Physical Development: Strengthen fine motor skills through drawing and creating friendship projects.

Arkansas Early Learning Standards (ELPS)

SE1.1 Demonstrates self-awareness
SE2.1 Interacts positively with peers
SE4.1 Demonstrates empathy and caring
LD2.1 Engages in conversations
LD4.1 Expands vocabulary and language use
EL1.1 Demonstrates interest in books and stories
EL2.1 Demonstrates comprehension
EL5.1 Uses emergent writing and drawing

CD1.1 Curiosity and persistence
CD2.1 Problem-solving skills
MT2.1 Sorting and classifying
CA1.1 Creative expression

SCIENCE OF READING CONNECTIONS

Phonological Awareness

- **Syllable segmentation**: Clapping syllables in words (friendship, kindness, curious, communication)
- **Beginning sound identification**: Identifying words beginning with /f/, /k/, and /c/

Oral Language and Vocabulary

- **Conversational skills**: Engaging in conversations (LD2.1), practicing turn-taking during reporter interviews
- **Vocabulary development**: Explicit teaching of target words (friendship, change, notice, communicate, feelings, caring, curious, kindness, observe, life cycle, relationship, interview)
- **Questioning skills**: Asking and answering questions throughout the lesson, using "What's new?" interview format
- **Oral storytelling**: Retelling story events, practicing narrative language with the accordion flip-book ("First, Next, Then, Finally")
- **Intergenerational interviews**: Conducting family interviews to build conversational competence

Story Comprehension and Retelling

- **Story structure understanding**: Discussing characters, setting, problem, solution, and lessons learned
- **Sequencing**: Ordering story events with sequencing cards, arranging life cycle panels in order
- **Retelling**: Creating "My Friend Book" with dictated sentences, using accordion flip-book to retell nature transformations
- **Comprehension monitoring**: Pausing during reading to discuss what characters notice, feel, and experience

MATERIALS

What's New, Daniel? book
Emotion cards
Friendship photographs
Story sequencing cards
Chart paper
Art supplies
Pattern blocks
Puppets
Writing and drawing materials

ENGAGE (BEFORE READING)

Show photographs of friends spending time together.

Ask:
• What makes someone a good friend?
• Have you ever noticed something new about a friend?
• How do you feel when things change?

Vocabulary:
friendship, change, notice, communicate, feelings, caring, curious, kindness

Phonological Awareness:
Clap syllables in friendship, kindness, curious, communication.

Beginning Sound Activity:
Identify words beginning with /f/, /k/, and /c/.

EXPLORE (DURING READING)

Pause during reading to discuss:

• What is Daniel noticing?
• How do the characters feel?
• What changes are happening?

• What would you say to a friend in this situation?

Story Comprehension:
Discuss characters, setting, problem, solution, and lessons learned.

Print Awareness:
Identify title, author, punctuation, and repeated words.

EXTEND (AFTER READING)

SEL Activity: Friendship Web
Children share kind things about classmates while creating a yarn web connecting the group.

Literacy Center:
Create a 'My Friend Book' with drawings and dictated sentences.

Math Center:
Sort pictures of activities friends enjoy.
Sequence events from the story.

Creative Arts:
Create friendship bracelets, portraits, or kindness cards.

Dramatic Play:
Friendship Café where children practice conversation and cooperation.

Music & Movement:
Sing friendship songs and participate in partner games that encourage teamwork.

ASSESSMENT

Observe participation in discussions, understanding of emotions, story retelling, vocabulary use, cooperative play, and creative expression.

DIFFERENTIATION

Use visual supports, emotion cards, sentence starters, adaptive art tools, peer partners, and sensory supports. Visual learners benefit from story maps and pictures. Auditory learners benefit from discussion and songs. Kinesthetic

learners engage through games and dramatic play. Creative learners benefit from open-ended art and storytelling activities.

TEACHER RESOURCES & REFLECTION

How did children demonstrate empathy?
Which friendship concepts resonated most strongly?
How did children participate in conversations?
What evidence showed growth in oral language and social-emotional understanding?

FAMILY CONNECTION

Family Friendship Challenge

Families are encouraged to:
• Talk about qualities of a good friend.
• Create a kindness chart.
• Draw pictures of family and friends.

Conversation Starters:
• What makes someone a good friend?
• What new thing did Daniel learn?
• How can we show kindness today?

Family Literacy Night Activities

The "What's New?" Discovery & Life Cycle Reporter Lab

Inspired by *What's New, Daniel?*

Literacy Focus: Conversational Patterns & Questioning (*"What's new?" / "Guess what!"*) • Oral Language & Intergenerational Interviews • Vocabulary (*Notice, Observe, Cycle, Relationship*)

Science & Inquiry Focus: Life Cycles in Nature (Acorns to Oaks, Nestlings to Birds) • Observing Subtle Changes • Growth & Time

Big Idea: Paying close attention to the world around us helps us notice magical changes in nature—and asking the people we love *"What's new?"* connects our hearts across generations!

Learning Outcomes

Families will:

- **Practice conversational turn-taking and interviewing skills** by using a "What's New?" Reporter Microphone to ask caregivers and peers open-ended questions about their day and observations.
- **Investigate life cycles and nature changes** by sequencing interactive "Growth Cards" showing how tiny acorns become giant oak trees and eggs hatch into fledglings.
- **Construct an accordion-style "What's Growing?" Nature Flip-Book** that children can unspool to observe and retell transformation stages in nature.
- **Strengthen intergenerational bonds and emotional connection** using guided interview prompts designed to capture family stories and memories.
- **Create a Family Reporter & Discovery Kit** to take home to interview grandparents, neighbors, or friends.

Materials

Each Family Receives:

- **Family Reporter Kit Bag**
    - Paper lunch bag stamped with a nature lens design
    - 1 Toy "Reporter Microphone" (foam or papercraft craft roll)
    - 1 Mini clipboard with "What's New?" Family Reporter Journal pages
    - 1 Accordion-folded cardstock strip (4 connected panels) for the "What's Growing?" Flip-Book
    - 1 Set of nature life cycle stickers (Acorn, Sprout, Sapling, Oak Tree OR Egg, Hatchling, Fledgling, Bird)
    - Crayons and dual-ended markers

Station Materials (Shared Among Families)

- Tactile Nature Touch Trays: Real acorns, oak leaves, bird nests/feathers, pinecones, and magnifying glasses

- Table-tent "Reporter Question Prompts" for caregivers and children

Agenda (25–30 Minutes)

1. Welcome & Interactive Read Aloud: The Art of Noticing (7–8 Minutes)

Introduce the story by saying:

> "Tonight, we are stepping into the warm, reflective world of *What's New, Daniel?* Just like the classic, cozy feeling of a snowy day or a walk through the woods, this story reminds us to slow down, look closely, and notice the world around us. When we ask a friend or family member 'What's new?', we open up a quiet doorway to listening, learning, and watching things grow!"

Pause throughout the story to ask:

- *Look closely at this illustration—what tiny change did Daniel notice in nature that someone else might have missed?*
- *When an acorn falls on the ground, what does it grow into after a long time?*
- *How does your heart feel when someone sits down with you and asks, 'What's new with you today?'*

Introduce key vocabulary:

- **Notice**
- **Observe**
- **Life Cycle**
- **Relationship**
- **Interview**

2. Family Activity: Part 1 — The "What's New?" Reporter Interview (8–10 Minutes)

Invite families to take out their Reporter Microphones and Mini Clipboards at their tables.

Explain:

> "Now it's time to become **Life & Nature Reporters**! Great reporters know how to listen with their eyes and ears to learn what's new with the people they love."

Step A: The Back-and-Forth Reporter Routine

- Children hold the toy microphone and ask their caregiver: *"What's new with you today?"* or *"What's something new you noticed in nature?"*
- Caregiver answers, then takes the microphone to ask the child: *"Guess what I noticed about YOU growing bigger?"*
- Caregivers record 1 sentence or drawing on the mini reporter journal page (e.g., *"Grandma noticed the red leaves,"* or *"Daniel noticed a robin's nest!"*).

As families interview, encourage conversation by asking:

- *What was the most surprising thing you learned when you asked 'What's new?'*
- *How can we ask a friend, neighbor, or grandparent this same question?*

3. Family Activity: Part 2 — The "What's Growing?" Nature Flip-Book (10–12 Minutes)

Explain:

> "Nature is always changing and growing! An acorn doesn't stay small forever—it stretches out and becomes a grand oak tree. A tiny egg hatches into a soaring bird. Let me show you how to build a 'What's Growing?' Flip-Book to tell a nature story!"

Step A: Sequence Your Growth Panels

Families open their 4-panel accordion strip on the table. Children place their life cycle stickers in order across the four connected pages:

1. **Panel 1 (First):** Place the *Tiny Acorn* (or *Small Blue Egg*) sticker.
2. **Panel 2 (Next):** Place the *Green Sprout* (or *Baby Hatchling*) sticker.
3. **Panel 3 (Then):** Place the *Young Sapling* (or *Fledgling Bird*) sticker.
4. **Panel 4 (Finally):** Place the *Mighty Oak Tree* (or *Soaring Bird*) sticker.

Step B: Add Details & Labels

- Children use markers to draw rain drops, sunbeams, or nests around their growing nature pictures.
- Caregivers write or help label the sequence words at the top of each page (*First, Next, Then, Finally*).

Step C: Unfold & Retell!

- Children fold up their strip into a pocket booklet, then stretch it open like an accordian to reveal the full transformation all at once!
- Practice oral storytelling together:
  *"**First**, it's a tiny acorn. **Next**, it grows into a green sprout. **Then**, it becomes a sapling. **Finally**, it transforms into a mighty oak tree!"*

Closing (2 Minutes)

Invite children to hold up their microphones and give a quick wave.

Close by saying:

> "Every single day, something new is growing—in nature and in you! Remember to keep your eyes open, observe the little details, and always ask the people you love: 'What's new today?'"

Take-Home Family Challenge

The Grandparent & Neighbor "What's New?" Assignment!

Take your Reporter Microphone and Journal home!

1. **Conduct a Family Interview:** Call a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or visit a neighbor with your toy microphone.
2. **Ask the Big Questions:**
   - *"What was something new when you were 4 years old?"*
   - *"What is your favorite nature change to watch in the fall/winter?"*
3. **Draw the Memory:** Draw a picture of what your family member shared in your "What's New?" Reporter Journal!

Why This Works

- **Captures the Book's Artistic & Emotional Tone:** Honors the reflective, observational style of the story without forcing artificial high-energy chaos.
- **No Fidgety Hardware:** The accordion flip-book replaces fiddly brass fasteners with a simple, high-impact craft format that 3 to 5-year-olds can manipulate completely on their own.
- **Dual Focus (Relationships + Science):** Blends oral language/interviewing skills (*social connection with caregivers and elders*)

directly with early life cycle science concepts (*acorns to oaks, eggs to birds*).

Materials to Prepare

Family Reporter Kit (One Per Family)

- Paper lunch bag labeled "Reporter Kit"
- 1 Craft roll or foam "Reporter Microphone"
- 1 Mini reporter journal with clip
- 1 Accordion cardstock strip (4 pre-folded panels)
- 1 Sheet of nature life cycle stickers (acorns, oak trees, eggs, birds)
- Crayons or markers

Station Setup

- Nature touch trays (acorns, leaves, bark, pinecones, magnifying glasses)
- Table-tent interview prompts (*"What is something new you noticed today?", "How have you seen our family grow?"*