
A Head Start on
Picturing America

Family Activities



*Family Night
at the Museum*



Event Goals: For Parents and Children

Goals for Family Night at the Museum

To provide parents and children with opportunities to:

- 1 experience art in a fun, family-focused setting
- 2 experience the kind of learning that will occur in the classroom through **A Head Start on Picturing America**
- 3 engage in conversations about what they are seeing
- 4 learn about American history
- 5 experience creative art projects and sensory activities

Event Activities: For Staff

There are four distinct activities that will bring Family Night at the Museum to life:

- 1 staff planning prior to the event
- 2 welcoming activities
- 3 experiencing the art activities
- 4 concluding activities

Overview

Family Night at the Museum can serve as a “kick-off” activity for parents, families, and Head Start staff to introduce **A Head Start on Picturing America**. The event is designed as an exploration of art and history in a fun, family-oriented way. Family Night at the Museum introduces families to what their children will be learning in the classroom through **A Head Start on Picturing America**. Family Night at the Museum can be implemented any time during the program year, even after children have been introduced to the artworks in their classrooms.

Family Night at the Museum invites parents and children to discover the *Picturing America* artworks through conversation and hands-on experiences. The event provides families and children with engaging and fun activities centered on viewing and responding to the artworks. Children and their parents can create bold, bright prints; collages; and other arts and crafts. They can create their own masterpieces as they enter the world of art.

Descriptions included in **A Head Start on Picturing America** Resource Guide contain background information about the art, the artist, and the historical perspective for each artwork. These informative summaries can be printed and posted next to the art station for any artworks a Head Start program chooses to display during the “museum” event.



Staff Planning

Logistics

To determine the amount of time needed to plan a Family Night at the Museum event, consider the following:

- 1 When is the best time to introduce **A Head Start on Picturing America** to families?
- 2 What is the size of the event space?
- 3 Where will the Family Night at the Museum take place?
- 4 How many artworks will be displayed?
- 5 How many art station activities will be set up?
- 6 How can community partners will be involved?
- 7 What supplies are available and what supplies may need to be purchased or acquired through in-kind contributions?

Responses to these questions will directly impact the planning time. For example, showing five artworks instead of 20 will affect the amount of preparation, time, and materials required.



Staff Planning continued...

Planning Meeting Tasks

Event Design

- Choose the space for the event, keeping in mind the number of families who may attend.
- Choose the artworks to display. Look at the full set of prints when making selections because each artwork poster is double-sided (1-A and 1-B, 2-A and 2-B, etc.).
- Choose sensory and/or creative activities to set up at each art station (see Appendix C).
- Choose the Parent-Child Conversation Starters you would like to post at each art station (see Appendix D).
- Identify the materials you will need to set up the event. Consider the following:
 - ✓ adhesive tape or easels for mounting the artwork
 - ✓ craft or art supplies for the art station activities
 - ✓ sensory materials for other art stations
- Decide whether to serve refreshments or a meal.

Invitations

- Determine the date, time, and length of the event.
- Draft invitations to family members (see Appendix B).
- Determine how many families plan to attend.

Event Outcomes

- Decide how you will obtain information about whether the event met the intended goals (See the Concluding Activities Section of this Guide and Appendix F for a sample parent questionnaire.).
- Discuss who will be responsible for ensuring that parent feedback about the event is collected.

Translation and Interpretation

- To the extent possible, ensure written materials are available in the family's home language.
- To the extent possible, arrange for interpreters with appropriate language backgrounds to be available for families who speak languages other than English.

Role of the Facilitators of Fun and Learning (FFL)

FFLs are teaching staff, family services staff, family literacy coordinators, parent educators, interpreters, other Head Start staff, and volunteers who will participate as part of the team implementing Family Night at the Museum.

The role of FFLs is to support families as they engage in activities, and encourage conversation about the artworks.

This is a great opportunity for family service staff, teachers, and other Head Start staff to work together.

- Identify colleagues who will participate as FFLs for the event.
- Identify who will be responsible for the following functions:
 - ✓ designing and setting-up the event space
 - ✓ collecting materials and supplies for the art stations
 - ✓ preparing the Parent-Child Conversation Starters
 - ✓ creating and mailing invitations
 - ✓ contacting families and following up to see who will be attending
 - ✓ contacting community members who might be willing to volunteer and contribute to the event
 - ✓ welcoming and introducing families to the event



Staff Planning continued...

- Be sure interpreters understand the goals of Family Night at the Museum and are familiar with the artworks prior to the event.

Community Partnerships

- Consider how your local library or museum may participate in the event and how else they could support **A Head Start on Picturing America**.
- Consider how storytellers, artists, or other creative experts in the community may participate in the event.
- Consider what other community groups might be willing to partner in this adventure.

Before the Event

Final Preparations

- Read and be familiar with the Parent-Child Conversation Starters (see Appendix D for examples) and the Art, Artist, and Historical Perspective descriptions. The FFLs should be comfortable talking with families or answering questions about the artworks.
- Obtain all materials needed for the art stations.
- Select Parent-Child Conversation Starters for each artwork. Copy and paste selections into a separate document and enlarge the font. Print the Parent-Child Conversation Starters for each of the selected artworks and post them close to the art activity station (see Appendix D for examples).
- From Section II of **A Head Start on Picturing America** Resource Guide, print or make copies of the descriptions of the art, artist, and historical perspective sections to display with each artwork.

Day of the Event

Preparations

- Display the artworks.
- Post the Conversation Starters.
- Set up the creative and sensory activities.
- Set up refreshments.



Welcoming Activities

Things to Keep In Mind

Follow the Child's Lead

Because there are so many fun things to do and experience at Family Night at the Museum, families can move through the different art stations by following their children. Family members may have different comfort levels and/or interest in museums or fine arts. If necessary, the FFL at each art station can show parents and children how to do the activities. The FFL can also explain how an activity relates to a particular artwork. In addition, the FFL can encourage conversations between parents and children about what they see in the artwork, using the Parent-Child Conversation Starters. Family participation in the activities and FFL support should lead to a positive experience for everyone.

Upon Arrival

Schedule of activities

FFLs may greet families as they arrive. Invite families to participate in pre-event happenings, for example refreshments and conversations with other families.

The following suggestions may help communicate the schedule of activities for the event:

- 1** Have a flyer listing the schedule of activities and hand it to families before or during the event.
- 2** Post a large, flip chart-sized schedule of activities for the Family Night at the Museum in a common area where parents are likely to see it before and during the event itself.
- 3** Remember to consider languages spoken by families as well as literacy levels of families.

It is important that a designated FFL provide families with an orientation to **A Head Start on Picturing America: Family Night at the Museum**. Help families understand why Head Start is offering this event and the learning that can take place with children both at the event and in the classroom.

Support Accessibility

When getting the word out to families about the event, FFLs should ensure that written materials, including letters and flyers, are available in the family's home language. During the event, interpreters should be part of the planning, welcoming, and creative activities in order to support the experience of families who speak languages other than English.

In addition, adaptations may be needed for children or adults with visual impairments or other special needs. In these circumstances, FFLs should be prepared to give rich verbal descriptions of the artworks. Consider printing the Parent-Child Conversation Starters in a large, easy-to-read print. In general, consider sensory options that will allow children to experience artworks through various senses.



Welcoming Activities continued...

Upon Arrival continued...

Use a Star (Voting Token) to Cast Your Vote

The FFLs who circulate through the event may distribute voting tokens to parents and children. One token equals one vote. Tokens can be store-bought or made onsite. A simple shape cut from colored paper, such as a star, could serve as a token. Once parents and children have had a chance to visit the art stations, encourage parents to vote for the artwork they liked best or found most interesting. Encourage children to vote for the artwork they liked best.

If the artworks are displayed on a wall, families can post the stars or tokens on the wall with adhesive. If the artworks are displayed on easels, use a small, clearly labeled bag next to the artwork to collect the votes. Also, in order to differentiate between parents' and children's votes, you may wish to use different-shaped tokens for each group.

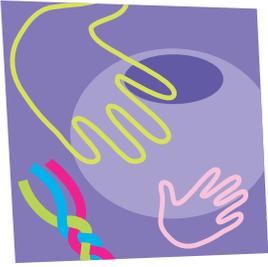
In the week after the event, you may choose to display the favorite artworks in a common area, such as a hallway or entrance. You may also use the votes to indicate which artworks could be explored further in the classroom.

Welcome to Family Night at the Museum

A brief 15-minute welcome is a very important aspect of Family Night at the Museum. The welcome should serve as an orientation to help families understand how Family Night at the Museum relates to Head Start family literacy goals and promotes a positive learning environment for parents and children.

The welcome and orientation should answer the following:

- What is **A Head Start on Picturing America**?
- What is Family Night at the Museum?
- Why are the art activity stations set up as they are?
- How will your program collect parent feedback about the event? (See the Concluding Activities Section of this guide for ideas and Appendix F for a sample parent questionnaire.)
- What are the goals and learning outcomes for Family Night at the Museum?
- Invite families to:
 - ✓ Learn more about art and history.
 - ✓ Create their own works of art.
 - ✓ Follow their child's lead as they engage in conversation and explore the artworks (See Appendix D for supporting details.).
 - ✓ Share their thoughts about the **Picturing America** artworks.
 - ✓ Discuss particular artworks with FFLs.
 - ✓ Have fun!



Experiencing the Art and the Activities

Displaying the Artwork

An example of the artwork setup is included in Appendix E. Programs can display as many as 20 artworks included in a single set. Selection of artworks for display is based on the size of the event space and consideration of the interest of the Head Start community. The spacing and arrangement of the artworks will depend on the size of the event space. The artworks should be displayed for easy viewing.

Suggestions to accommodate space:

- use both sides of easels stationed around the room
- use wall space and easels
- use adjacent hallways
- use additional available classrooms
- display fewer artworks

Art Station Activities and Tips

Art Station Activities and Tips include hands-on creative expression activities and sensory experiences that relate to an artwork and that can be set up adjacent to the artwork. These kinds of activities provide:

- hands-on experiences for children and parents
- opportunities for parent-child interactions and conversations
- chances to connect the artworks to real-life creative and/or sensory experiences

Art Station Activities

These activities include arts, crafts, painting, and other sensory experiences that offer parents and children opportunities to be creative in ways that relate to the specific artworks on display. Many examples of creative expression activities are identified in Appendix C.

Note: Choose activities that are the best suited for your program and families. Your planning team may choose to create additional activities that directly reflect current classroom teaching strategies.

Parent-Child Conversation Starters

The Parent-Child Conversation Starters reflect a research-based approach that has proven effective in supporting early language development and literacy. Active conversations between a child and adult can result from an adult following a child's lead. This specific approach is called "dialogic conversations" and focuses on the following:

- 1 Together, children and parents look at a picture book or something in their immediate environment (in this case, the Picturing America artworks).
- 2 Children and parents engage in conversation about it.
- 3 Parents use simple language to promote conversation with the child.

For the Family Night at the Museum, FFLs can help families apply effective and proven strategies that support children's development and school readiness, reflecting the following ideas:



Experiencing the Art and the Activities continued...

Parent-Child Conversation Starters continued...

- 1 Follow the child's lead. For example, when it is time to move to another picture, allow children to choose which artwork to view or talk about next.
- 2 Talk about what the child wants to talk about.
- 3 Wait 5 to 10 seconds after asking any questions to give the child time to think and respond.

Questions in conversations can help children expand many key language and literacy skills. There are several types of questions that are especially helpful in expanding children's responses:

- 1 Open-ended questions
 - a What is happening in this picture?
 - b The child practices putting his thoughts into his own words.
- 2 "Wh" questions (who, what, when, where, why)
 - a What is that? Why do you think that is that happening?
 - b At many different levels, children can put their thoughts into words.
- 3 Distancing questions
 - a What happened when we made your birthday cake?
 - b Children remember past events and relate them to the present and future.

For each of the artworks, there are suggested Parent-Child Conversation Starters listed in Appendix D. These include examples of open-ended, "wh," and distancing questions. Choose which questions to include at each art station or create your own. Copy the questions into a word document in a large size font. Remember to consider families' home languages and literacy levels. Print and post them near the respective artwork.

FOLLOW THE CHILD'S LEAD!!!



Concluding Activities

Counting Stars (Voting Tokens)

Toward the end of the event, let one of the FFLs count the voting tokens that parents and children used to designate their favorite artworks and activities. If you choose to gather everyone together for a formal closing, you may share the outcome of the voting by announcing the favorite artworks. After the event, showcase the most popular artworks in a common space where families are coming and going.

Communicating Upcoming Events

If you choose to gather for a formal closing, let families know about upcoming events related to A Head Start on Picturing America, both in and out of the classroom. Alternatively or in addition, as families head home, you may wish to give them a flyer listing future events.

Measuring Success

Design an approach to measure the outcomes of event. Consider the following options:

- 1 Hold a team meeting to debrief and share possible next steps.
- 2 Use a form that allows parents to share their feedback about the event and express their attitudes about the art. One example of a parent questionnaire for Family Night at the Museum that can be used as is, or adapted to meet your needs, is included in Appendix F.